



Empire Builders

Ben Bova

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Dan Randolph never plays by the rules. A hell-raising maverick with no patience for fools, he is admired by his friends, feared by his enemies, and desired by the world's loveliest women. Acting as a twenty-first privateer, Randolph broke the political strangle-hold on space exploration, and became one of the world's richest men in the bargain.

Now an ecological crisis threatens Earth--and the same politicians that Randolph outwitted the first time want to impose a world dictatorship to deal with it.

Dan Randolph knows that the answer lies in more human freedom, not less--and in the boundless resources of space. But can he stay free long enough to give the world that chance?

Empire Builders Details

Date : Published March 15th 1995 by Tor Science Fiction (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780812511659

Author : Ben Bova

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction

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From Reader Review Empire Builders for online ebook

Bill says

AUDIBLE BOOK

future intrigue intertwined with global warming

Steven Brandt (Audiobook-Heaven) says

On Ben Bova's Wikipedia page, there is a list of all of the Grand Tour books, presented in the suggested reading order, which is not necessarily the order they were written in. *Empire Builders* is third on the list, and provides some background information on a few of the characters who are prominent in several of the later books. Dan Randolph, Big George Ambrose, the Yamagata family, and Kate and Kimberly Williams are all introduced here, and Ben Bova's character development is top-notch as always.

As with many other science fiction writers, Ben Bova displays a good deal of knowledge and concern for some of the problems facing humanity. In *Empire Builders*, the main topic is global warming. The characters in the audiobook find themselves facing a "greenhouse cliff", a maximum of ten years before the planet's climate begins to shift dramatically. As in our own reality, some of the novel's characters work to alleviate the problem, while others look for ways to profit from it. I like to see people addressing these issues, even if only to raise awareness.

Ben Bova's Grand Tour series has become one of my favorites in the science fiction genre. I'm very pleased that Blackstone Audio has made some of these available in audio, and I hope they continue working on the series.

Stefan Rudnicki has narrated quite a few of Ben Bova's audiobooks, and a lot of other science fiction audiobooks as well. He always does a good job. Ben Bova typically uses a lot of characters from different parts of the world, and Stefan Rudnicki handles the various accents and dialects well.

Steven Brandt @ Audiobook-Heaven

David says

Pretty disappointed... Action was good but the idea that businesses can be nationalized without due process or compensation due to a technicality is pretty implausible. Also, the fact that a multi-billion dollar corporation had a single lawyer on payroll doesn't make much sense...

Durval Menezes says

Standard, naive Space Opera: the good guys are 100% good, the bad guys (with a single exception) are really bad, and the formers beat unsurmountable odds to defeat the latters in the end, and get the girl to boot.

That said, it's a fast, fluid read and if you like that type of story and the aforementioned naivete doesn't bother you too much, you should find it engaging and enjoyable.

I've actually read that book quite a few years back (in the 90s) and just re-read it; I'm going through an effort to read all the books in Bova's Grand Tour that I haven't read yet, and was not sure whether I've read it or not, so started reading it up to the point I started recognizing some of the characters and situations, but decided to keep reading it to the end as it was not so bad. Not nearly as good as some other books in the series ("Mars" aka Grand Tour #4, was much better), but not bad either: I might have given it a 4-stars rating when I read it first, but on that second reading (perhaps because it's not such a novelty, out perhaps because I'm older and more cynical and naivete bothers me more than before, or perhaps because of those two factors combined) nowadays I can only give it 3 stars.

Louise says

Pretty good except I got annoyed in the beginning because the backstory on Jane and their relationship, as well as some of the history on Dan, didn't quite jibe with Powersat (which took place earlier in time).

Ty says

Reading this book was a bit like going to a picnic only to find that your two best friends won't be there, and they are only serving your third favorite beer. Yeah, it's free food, free beer, and better than sitting at home probably, but had you had to miss the occasion, you wouldn't have been upset about it for long.

To begin with, I found this book at the library audio section. The cover did not in any way indicate it was a sequel to anything. I didn't realize this until I was almost done, having happened to check out this Goodreads page for it. It works as a stand alone piece, but not a very interesting one. I don't know if having read "Privateers" would have made this book more interesting, but I tend to doubt it.

Other than the fact that it takes place in the future, where there are a whole lot of gadgets and such, this isn't very science-fictionesque. It's really a rather dull political thriller that's short on thrills.

Mafia. Political institutions. Mega corporations. Corruption and the few good guys to straighten it all out. Throw in a para-military firefight in a dark castle at the end, (which fizzles quickly) and you are left with an anti-climax that while not atrocious, is nonetheless not worth the investment you've made in the book.

The intervals with one-off characters drag out the proceedings. The scientific elaborations-cum-action are boring. The posturing on the issue of global warming (something I firmly believe is real) are overdone. We get it, Bova, you are warning us about global climate change. Where's the novel here?

Having been published in 1993, it has one unintentionally eerie component...a prediction of a large wave of water coming over the levees of New Orleans as a result of a tidal wave. Thankfully Katrina was nowhere near as deadly as the fictitious event presented here, but it gave me pause nonetheless when I read it.

Yet that's all that gave me pause, or made me think, or evoked any kind of emotion, really. This accidental quasi-prediction of water wiping out a good portion of NOLA. If that is all the book has going for it, then as

a sci-fi novel, it has nothing going for it.

Dave Packard says

Kind of sad, I forgot that I just read this and picked it up to start it again. I guess it didn't make much of an impression.

Steve says

This was a good one

Darin K says

Interesting to see how someone in the past imagines what the future will be like. Clearly written while the cold war was raging.

Will Hudson says

Another good outing by Ben Bova. I like the Dan Randolph Character, but really am not into the female love interest/protagonist, Jane Thorton. If there is one knock I have against Bova, it is the stereotypical way he writes characters. On one hand you can identify with them to some degree, but in other ways it makes them cookie cutter. Still a good read though.

Jeffrey Cavanaugh says

This book really deserves 1.5 stars, but as GR does not allow that I'm being generous in giving Empire Builders two because, at the very least, it was mildly entertaining.

Which was about it. The book was basically one part *Atlas Shrugged*, one part *The Day After Tomorrow*, one part *2001*, and one part any given James Bond flick. The result is an absurd amalgamation wherein a cowboy space capitalist saves the world from being taken over by a globalized Italian Mafia even as it is about to be destroyed by Global Warming. Oh, and an earthquake and a tsunami destroy New Orleans for no apparent reason.

Unrealistic? Of course. Full of libertarian rants against collectivist evil? Very much so. But that isn't the book's real fault as they are simply matters of taste. The real problem is the book's flat characters are at best parodies, at worst cookie-cutter stock characters right out of central casting that never do anything surprising. To say Bova depends on sexist, ethnic, and racial stereotyping to give his characters "depth" is an understatement.

Bova is quite simply no Kim Stanley Robinson, whose Mars trilogy is a real literary masterpiece and a great example of how high-brow sci-fi can be. Empire Builders is low-brow pulp adventure at best. Fun, but not exactly meaty, substantive, or thought provoking.

Still, I'll probably read more of his "Grand Tour" series because I like the genre and there is a dearth of "near-future" sci-fi that deals with humanity's colonization of space. I don't expect it to get any better, though.

Geoff Battle says

This outing for Dan Rudolph is perfectly readable as a stand-alone novel and has more of the gung-ho chauvinism and courageousness that is typical of early Bova. Set in an alternate timeline, Empire Builders still roughly adheres to the Grand Tour series, however it is less about science fiction than political power struggles and character building. Although that may sound off genre, there are plenty of entwined strands of deception, revenge and good old plans of murder. This is played out both upon the Earth and Moon with a sweeping story about (the then hot topic) of the Greenhouse Effect. Although at times stereotypical enough to make you wince and let down by a weak by-the-numbers finale, it is engaging and most importantly entertaining.

David says

Ok.

So.

This is not the *worst* book in this series, but that's a pretty low bar. The first half is actually pretty interesting and fast-paced (with a minimum of the romantic nonsense that Bova seems determined to inflict on us), but around the halfway point the mafia starts trying to use the effects of climate change to take over and rule the world. Then we just embark upon silliness for the final 200 pages, complete with a kidnapping plot, ninjas, hari-kari, love at first sight, horrifically phoneticized Australian accents, the destruction of New Orleans via flooding (a full decade before Hurricane Katrina), constant references to how much Italians love opera, and a (mostly) happy ending all tied up with a neat little bow.

Even so, it's better than *Privateers*.

AndrewP says

According to Ben Bova's website this is the second book chronologically in the Grand Tour series. On the cover of the older copy I have it says "sequel to *Privateers*", which confused me a bit. When I looked it up I discovered that *Privateers* was written in 1985 and was an early precursor to the Grand Tour series. It's kind of an alternative timeline between *PowerSat* and *Empire Builders*.

Similar to the first book, this one is more of an action adventure than an exploration of the solar system story. It has the same main characters as *PowerSat* and occurs several years later. Mankind has a permanent

presence on the Moon and some limited manufacturing facilities. Things on Earth are going to hell in a hand basket due to runaway greenhouse effect.

A lot of the plot of this book felt somewhat contrived. Overall it's not as good as the ones I have read from later in the series, but does fill in some of the background.

George says

A good listen that, were it not for a lunar thing, would be just good fiction. A hegemonic, Russian Communist style domination and is bested by the corporate good guys in white hats. Enter love interests, sister hating and other human foibles and this could just as easily been the 11th century. Good, fun read, but don't expect much sci-fi.
