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Frank Herbert's Dune series is one of the great creations of imaginative literature, science fiction's answer to *The Lord of the Rings*.

Decades after Herbert's original novels, the Dune saga was continued by Frank Herbert's son, Brian Herbert, in collaboration with Kevin J. Anderson. Working from Frank Herbert's own notes, the acclaimed authors reveal the chapter of the *Dune* saga most eagerly anticipated by readers: the Butlerian Jihad.

Throughout the Dune novels, Frank Herbert frequently referred to the war in which humans wrested their freedom from "thinking machines." In *Dune: The Butlerian Jihad*, Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson bring to life the story of that war, a tale previously seen only in tantalizing hints and clues. Finally, we see how Serena Butler's passionate grief ignites the struggle that will liberate humans from their machine masters; here is the amazing tale of the Zensunni Wanderers, who escape bondage to flee to the desert world where they will declare themselves the Free Men of Dune. And here is the backward, nearly forgotten planet of Arrakis, where traders have discovered the remarkable properties of the spice melange....

The Butlerian Jihad Details

Date : Published September 15th 2003 by Tor Books (first published 2002)

ISBN : 9780765340771

Author : Brian Herbert , Kevin J. Anderson

Format : Paperback 684 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Butlerian Jihad for online ebook

Athena Shardbearer says

Buddy Read with Markus!

Nothing's impossible.

JBradford says

When I was young and foolish, I was as taken with Frank Herbert's Dune at the rest of the world, but I found myself significantly less enchanted with his sequels. I subsequently became aware that his son and another writer were continuing the series, but I stuck my nose in one of the books at a book store and decided I was not interested. Last summer, however, I purchased one of them at a library book sale, only to discover that the very thick book I had purchased was in fact the sequel to a book that was a prequel to another set of prequels to Dune, so I set it aside until such time as I might find the first of the two. This is that first book, and I find it troubling. What can I say? Brian Herbert collaborated with his father on at least one novel, and he has published several prize-winning science-fiction novels in his own right, and Kevin Anderson has published some thirty-odd science-fiction novels; there can be no doubt that they are professionals, well learned in the craft. But this book reads largely as though it were written by a high school kid with a big vocabulary--big because it is filled with made-up words. The characters are more two-dimensional than Dickens's much denigrated characters were, and their dialog (what little there is of it) is so stilted that it seems almost Elizabethan. There is plot aplenty--a sweeping plot that covers the cultures of a 41 different planets, 68 different characters (all with difficult names, and several of whom have two different names at various times), and a variety of spaceships and weapons and places and creeds that are named but never really described or defined. This is 612 pages of pure drudgery, much of it seeming to be foolish. And yet ...

And yet I have sat herein my kitchen chair late into the night for too many nights, unable to stop turning the pages, to go on for one more chapter and then another and then another, even when I was so tired I could hardly keep my eyes open. How are we to measure the value of a book other than to say it had to be finished? There was never any question of putting it down uncompleted. As silly as the young lovers were, I had to find out what happened to them. As inane as the various subplots were (and there are many), I had to see how they worked out. And did I? No! This 612-page book is merely the first half of the story, and now I must go find and read the book I purchased last summer ... hoping all the way that I will find the story to end there, and not be continued in some other successive installments I have not yet been made aware of.

The time is some ten thousand years before the advent of the Dune episode ... and a thousand years after 20 teenagers took over Earth's empire, which had grown complacent and dumb, which at that time consisted of some 14-odd planets. Those 20 hooligans employed unexplained life-extending techniques and then followed that up by transferring their brains into robotic bodies, in which they continue to enslaved and terrorize the rest of humanity. Along the way, however, one of them got careless and let the robots with artificial intelligence take on too much power, until one of the latter developed so much self-awareness that it took

over the empire itself, which thus became known as the Synchronized Worlds, with the “evermind” now ruling the 20 conquerors. Aside from these there are some 18 planets which have managed not to become synchronized (that is, maintaining an unexplained independence from the “evermind” that is the central AI intelligence), called the League of Worlds, along with nine other planets that belong to neither side and are called the Unaligned Planets. On one of the League worlds there is an incredibly accomplished and beautiful young woman named Serena Butler, the daughter of her planet’s Viceroy to the League, who falls in love with an equally incredibly accomplished and handsome young soldier. He wants to fight the evil robotic empire; she wants to incorporate the Unaligned Planets into the League (even though most of them seem to be backwater societies that would not be of much use). Then the evil robotic empire strikes, and the story begins.

There are numerous subplots that never get resolved; I have to presume that they will be continued in the sequel, which I seem to remember to be as thick as this one. I can hardly wait ...but first I think I’ll go cleanse myself by reading a couple biographies of real people.

Dana says

Seems to have major continuity issues with the original novels. Much more shallow and less intellectually rewarding than the books written by Frank Herbert.

Lena says

"Humans, with such fragile physical forms, are easily crushed."

Dune is my favorite work of science fiction in large part because of its staggering sense of history. I still have yet to read *any* story that goes so far into the future. The Butlerian Jihad is the first story of the history of Dune and gives us glimpses into the far past, but still not far enough to touch our time. Let me break it down:

There once was an Old Empire, it was peaceful and good and spanned many planets. People had enough resources and technology to live comfortably.

But not everyone was satisfied.

Some teenagers with high IQs, aspirations, and no empathy found each other online. They would take over the old empire with a violence that was unknown and shocking. Ruling under the names of old gods they were known as the Titans.

Unwilling to lose their power even to death the Titans transferred their minds into cymeks. The Age of the Titans lasted a long time.

But eventually they too grew complacent and had their worlds taken over by the artificial intelligence known as Omnis.

Some worlds successfully fought for their freedom and retained it since the age of the Titans. But some humans chose to run instead of fighting and settled on remote worlds under rustic circumstances, like on Arrakis. Sometimes these people are hunted down and sold as slaves on free worlds. But whether or not a world allows slavery no one likes or respects the cowards that ran or their descendants.

Got it all? Good because this is where the story starts. I've read many negative reviews criticizing this book for not having Dunes depth. This is where the story *starts* people! This is the shallow water, the fountainhead of great ideas, of galactic revolution.

My favorite characters were Zufa Cenva the Sorceress of Rossak, her daughter Norma, and her lover Aurelius Venport. I could have read a book this size on just them.

Now for what I didn't like, which is petty and spoilery so feel free to skip. (view spoiler)

I'm going to go with a weak four stars here. Yesterday I was pissed enough to give it two stars so I might be overcompensating...

Manny says

Thou shalt not make a book in the likeness of a Dune.

Didn't any enterprising Iranian cleric even *consider* a fatwa? And, by the way, "to-read" actually means "not to read, unless threatened with waterboarding, stress positions, dogs and sleep deprivation". Even then, I'd try to hold out a bit.

Donster says

Fans of Frank Herbert and his excellent Dune novels should avoid the dreck produced by his offspring at all costs. You're better off buying sci-fi comic books.

Gerard says

An abomination that should never have been written - which is true of all that Herbert Jnr and Anderson have contributed to the Dune series. Putting aside the pedestrian writing, the authors have failed entirely to capture the complexity of Frank Herbert's universe, characters and ideas. They seem incapable of subtlety. Nothing is implied. Everything is stated. They do tell a story but with none of the sophistication of the original. Life is far too short to be wasted reading this money-spinning insult to the memory of Frank Herbert.

Dori says

I listened to this on audiobook and it was dreadful. I couldn't even finish it. I made it about 3/4 of the way through and had to stop torturing myself.

Jon says

This book was Action Packed! A real page turner, full of cliff hangers. Amazing characters to root for or hiss at. I loved it!

image:

Exparrot says

To be fair Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson do an okay job in continuing with Frank Herbert's Dune legacy. When I mean okay, I mean sure the book doesn't have the same philosophical flow and continuity, it also lacks finesse and would appeal to the younger generation X crowd who's more action and less thought BUT again, if you've been aching to know history behind Dune, then read this book. It gives the origins of the Bene Gesserit, the reason behind the *kanly* between House Atreides and Harkonnen, and foremost it gives the explanation behind the whole man versus the machine backdrop prevalent in the original Dune series. A lot more of Dune can be understood when reading this book.

Er says

If I could give a negative star I would. It read like bad fanfiction.

retroj says

I can't remember ever having read a worse book.

I was optimistic about this Brian Herbert / Kevin Anderson Dune prequel, and though I knew full well going in how controversial their Dune books have been, it proved difficult to sort through the controversy to see whether I should read the Legends trilogy or pass it by. Weighing in favor of reading it was mild curiosity about *Hunters & Sandworms*, which I understand to have some dependency on having read Legends. I consider myself a fairly forgiving reader, and am willing to put a certain amount of effort into appreciating a book for its better qualities, so I don't automatically trust the bad reviews. For example, *Paul of Dune* and *Winds of Dune* have both had their share of criticism, but I enjoyed both of those books (with caveats on the former), and *House Atreides* was campy, but I felt that it added meaningfully to the series. With those things in mind, I picked up *Butlerian Jihad* to give fair witness and find out for myself. What a disappointment.

The only part I enjoyed was the story of Selim, which actually had nothing to do with the Butlerian Jihad, and would have been better presented as a separate novella. It was the only part that felt like it fit naturally into the Dune universe as I have come to understand it. I am considering cutting the Selim chapters out of my copy, and throwing the rest of the book away.

The rest of this book is an odious heap of stupidity and contradiction, a thorough demonstration by the authors of their own lack of creativity, research, rational thinking, and understanding of Frank Herbert's Dune universe. The protagonists were cardboard (par for these writers); the villains were cookie-cutter evildoers whose only defining characteristic as artificial intelligence machines was being labeled so by the authors; battle tactics were brain-dead stupid on all sides; technology was inconsistent, often uncharacteristic of Dune, and universally poorly thought-through; I believe the book itself says it best in the epigraph on page 622: "**The Butlerian Jihad arose from just such stupidity.**" Yes. Yes, it did.

Chief among the problems with this book was the authors' use of faster than light travel as a crutch when they couldn't use space folding, thus allowing them to reuse their campy space-opera formulas while at the same time missing the point completely that Dune is *futurist*, not *fantasy*, undercutting the importance of space folding to the depicted social order of the chronologically later books, and undermining the idea of a Guild monopoly on space travel in *Dune*. The differences between the civilization depicted in *Dune*, and the civilization depicted in *The Butlerian Jihad* are shown to be superficial, as if the span were 200 years instead of 6000. Instead of telling what could have been a fascinating tale of how civilization changed leading to the strange feudalistic social order of *Dune*, the question has merely been pushed back by another couple thousand years. That further implications of FTL are never once treated or considered in this book proves it for the plot hack it is.

Machine intelligence is also never considered seriously or rationally in this book, which is odd for a book ostensibly about the perils of machine intelligence. The book does spend a great many words babbling on about the superiority of compassionate humans over cold machines, and expounding on the virtues of the human capacity for irrationality, but these topics have been covered in much greater depth by Star Trek (Spock and Data), which isn't saying much.

Finally, and without wishing to detract focus from the broad, general problems outlined above, here is my complete list of FAIL:

(view spoiler)

Markus says

Buddy read with Athena!

Princess Irulan writes:

Any true student must realize that History has no beginning. Regardless of where a story starts, there are always earlier heroes and earlier tragedies.

Before one can understand Muad'Dib or the current jihad that followed the overthrow of my father, Emperor Shaddam IV, one must understand what we fight against. Therefore, look more than ten thousand years into our past, ten millennia before the birth of Paul Atreides.

It is there that we see the founding of the Imperium, how an emperor rose from the ashes of the Battle of Corrin to unify the bruised remnants of humanity. We will delve into the most ancient records, into the very myths of Dune, into the time of the Great Revolt, more commonly known as the Butlerian Jihad.

The terrible war against thinking machines was the genesis of our political-commercial universe. Hear now, as I tell the story of free humans rebelling against the domination of robots, computers, and cymeks. Observe the basis of the great betrayal that made mortal enemies of House Atreides and House Harkonnen, a violent feud that continues to this day. Learn the roots of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood, the Spacing Guild and their Navigators, the Swordmasters of Ginaz, the Suk Medical School, the Mentats. Witness the lives of oppressed Zensunni Wanderers who fled to the desert world of Arrakis, where they became our greatest soldiers, the Fremen.

Such events led to the birth and life of Muad'Dib.

If that passage doesn't make you extremely excited, then you've either not read all the Dune books that came before this, or you didn't enjoy them. Either way, this book isn't for you!

This is the stuff of legend. Virtually every single fantasy and sci-fi series has its great war in the distant past. The War of Wrath, the Battle for the Dawn, the Great Hyperspace War, The War of Power... Shaping events that made fictional universes what they are. And they all fade away before the mythic crusade that was the Butlerian Jihad. I cannot remember having read of an event so hallowed and revered and shrouded in mysteries and legends as this.

This book has plenty of flaws, is more of a dystopia than an epic sci-fi, and is far from the quality of the best Dune books. But if you've enjoyed *Dune* and its sequels, then you will definitely want to read this.

Matthew Williams says

This was hands down one of the worst books I have ever read. As a fan of the elder Herbert, who's read every Dune book he ever wrote, I was curious to know how his hints about a holy war against thinking machines would be portrayed. Needless to say, I was both insulted and bored to tears with this work, and aside from thinking I'd wasted good money on it, I began to seriously worry about the direction these two were taking with the Dune franchise.

First of all, the characters were one-dimensional cliches, the kind of cardboard cut-out heroes and villains

you'd expect to see in children's cartoons. The bad guys are too bad, the good guys too good, and there's no sense of motivation to any of them. Why, for example, do the "Titans" hate humanity so much? Why did they reprogram the machines to take over the universe and kill billions? Are they Evil the Cat? And the good guys are so saccharine and perfect that it makes you want to barf.

The evil thinking machines are no better. Erasmus and Omnis are the names of the two main badboys - one is a sentient machine who is busy studying humans, which consists of murdering them in all kinds of nasty, scary ways, while the other is the big hive mind controlling all the other robots. Boy, a lot of thought went into those two! Almost as much as the disembodied brains known as "Cogitors" or the evil "Cymecks". My God, they seemed like something out of a kid's pulp sci-fi magazine, but with more gore and cheesy dialogue!

The plot was also laughable and totally predictable. Basically, after generations of stalemate between the League of Nobles (i.e. the resistance) and the machines, war resumes and Serena Butler (aka. Joan of Arc/The Virgin Mary) is kidnapped and her son killed. In response, humans begin to revolt and the League decides its time to purge the universe of the machines. Their solution? Nuke em. Yes, after generations of war, they decide that what's been missing all along has been a religious angle which involves nukes.

And that's the big explanation for the Butlerian Jihad... In spite of the fact that machines have killed billions, one innocent child motivates a galactic crusade. And after generations of stalemate, the humans' solution for breaking it is to simply use their nukes. The only reason they didn't do this already was apparently because they didn't want to be "as bad as Omnis". And strangely enough, the machines didn't seem to anticipate this either because they have no defenses against it!

C'mon you guys, this is supposed to be the Dune franchise! This is the series that taught readers to take science fiction seriously. Are we really to believe that Frank Herbert would have been okay with these two reducing it to the kinds of recycled, cliched crap that we could get from Terminator and Matrix fan fiction? The only thing that even compares for me is the Star Wars prequels, and even they were better than this!

Not only did they completely misinterpret the meaning of the Butlerian Jihad, which Frank strongly suggested was a sort of Luddite rebellion that took place on a galactic scale, but their portrayal as this being some sort of titanic struggle between good and evil was just plain laughable and insulting. Save your money, avoid at all costs!

Phillip Lozano says

Honestly, I couldn't get very far in this book. None of the Brian Herbert/Kevin Anderson collaborations are very good, but this one is staggeringly, mind-blowingly awful. It reads like super-shitty fan-fiction, except that fan fic usually takes a moment to remember what universe it is set in. It's unbelievable that even two writers could churn out over 600 pages of this utterly pointless garbage - and it's only the beginning of a three-volume story arc! Holy cow. Money actually changed hands for this atrocity.

A.j. says

Just Remember: It's NOT Dune

This book is such a guilty pleasure.

Naturally it lacks the depth, sophistication, poetry, philosophy, genius, etc., etc., of DUNE. But still it manages to provide something else quite unexpected:

Good old fashioned Space Opera FUN!

Just overlook the (mostly) 2-dimensional characters and you'll find yourself immersed in a huge, sprawling, edge-of-your-seat sci-fi adventure like the classic serial adventures of old.

Those old serials were well before my time, but this (3 book series) evokes that era to great effect and is just a plain fun ride -- particularly after the Robot/AI Character 'Erasmus' is introduced.

He is easily the most entertaining, fascinating and fully developed character in the entire series, and he is a major reason why the book is such a thrill; along with the Authors' breakneck paced plotting.

If you enjoy Space-Opera, and don't approach the novel expecting DUNE, you may also find a lot to enjoy in this series.

vonblubba says

I'm only halfway through this book but I already feel the urge to write a review. Because it's that bad.

Premise: I'm a huge Frank Herbert fan. His "Dune" is one of the handful of books that shaped me as a reader, opening my (then) young mind to the infinite wonders literature had to offer.

But, having already read the first prequel trilogy from Herbert Jr. and Anderson, I knew I needed to keep my expectations low. So I did. And still, I was disappointed.

What irritates me the most is the complete shallowness and lack of effort of the whole. Whoever read anything about Herbert (and I mean Frank) knows that he was perfectly capable of hitting you with entire paragraphs of philosophical musings that left your brain gasping for air (in a good way, usually).

What do we have in this novel instead? A story without a hint of an original idea. Mono-dimensional characters you can barely remember the names of. Empty dialogues. Oh, the dialogues! I want the verbal duels from the original "Dune" back!

And don't get me started about writing style. Completely flat. They don't even try to rise above the flatness. Flatness as a lifestyle. Not a single sentence or paragraph stayed on my mind for more than 2 seconds after reading it.

I probably should not get this heated up about a novel, but seeing what is probably the best crafted universe in the history of sci-fi wasted this way is something that really pisses me off. I can only hope that Villeneuve will do it justice in his upcoming movie(s). The man knows his trade when it comes to sci-fi.

Liz says

The seven dollars I spent for this book would have been better used buying a cup of battery acid to pour into my eyes.

More detailed ranting here.

Kevin Xu says

The only reason this book is so good is because this is the ORIGIN of the whole DUNE universe! Without this story, there would be no DUNE! This is the only prequel novel that needed to be written at all!

M.L. says

Long, long from now in a galaxy too close for comfort, humanity (fondly called "feral humans" by the thinking machines) is struggling for existence. Besieged as they are, the humans themselves are of course not entirely blameless and many of them have not discovered the concept of "human rights" and "equality." Bravery, treachery, deceit, galactic battles - it's all there - lots of fun. Seen through the long glass of our future prospects, based on where we are now, the concepts are believable.

It's a good read, has good pacing, with each chapter having a nice arc to it, and the characters are colorful/interesting/flawed, many having great obstacles to overcome. The perspective has a certain distance, being not as far as historical reading, but not as close as first-person or day-to-day following one person through various doings. I like the perspective very much and think the authors did a great job managing the parallel threads of the story. I plunged right into the next one, The Machine Crusade.
