



## Starr Creek

*Nathan Carson*

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*Starr Creek* is the debut novella by Portland writer and musician Nathan Carson. Set in 1986 rural Oregon, *Starr Creek* features Heavy Metal teens, Christian biker gangs, and hopped up kids on 3-wheeled ATVs. They all collide when strange occurrences unveil an alien world inhabiting the Oregon woods.

## **Starr Creek Details**

Date : Published November 15th 2016 by Lazy Fascist Press

ISBN : 9781621052265

Author : Nathan Carson

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Genre : Horror, Science Fiction, Lovecraftian, Young Adult, Coming Of Age, Novella

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## From Reader Review Starr Creek for online ebook

### Gensho Welsh says

Initially got my hands on an uncorrected proof. This novel is *exactly* what I seek in strange fiction - the realities of growing up in the 80s swirled with mind-fucked, gibbering madness!

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### Michael Adams says

My review is based on an advanced, 100 copy, limited release

Starr Creek is a fast-paced, fun, compulsively readable novella from emerging author Nathan Carson. It tells an interweaving series of tales about shady backwoods lowlifes, some day-tripper teens, a biker gang, a couple of kids up to no good, and an inexplicable cargo cult, and that's all before stuff really starts getting weird. It's set in rural Oregon in the early 1980's, but never gets mired down in ticking off pop-culture references for 'authenticity', anything mentioned in that vein is organically part of the story, told from the perspective of someone who really lived through that time. The strange concepts start coming fast and furious about midway in, and there are fun allusions to a lot of literary and film tropes including having the kids find and befriend an alien, underground labyrinths, ancient-astronaut-theory spliced with local legends, and the inevitable and climactic showdowns that the whole town shows up for. All the while the bizarro mash-up meter is going right off the charts. Definitely a big recommendation to fans of fresh, funny, and inventive spec-lit stuff.

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### Marvin says

Nathan Carson's debut novel *Starr Creek* is a very ambitious book despite its under 200 pages length. There is a lot going on in it and succeeds in some areas very well. Let's discuss where it succeeds.

The author has created a very interesting Oregon environment of tune-outs, drop-outs and turn-ons. Some of them are the exiles of society and others are just teens stoning out for the ride. While none of them grabbed me as essential and fully developed, they are all meant for the plot and speed it along nicely. Carson seems to have a counter-cultural sensitivity and it shows well here. His style is quite poetically descriptive and memorable lines keep popping out at the reader. I sense a little Brautigan here and the residents of Starr Creek seem be similar to the eccentric population of Christopher Moore's Pine Cove with a much darker sense of humor. But Carson's horror and Lovecraftian elements shine through too. The author has seized upon a fine plot where the residents encounter strange beasts and strange occurrences without really knowing until the end where they are coming from and what their intentions are. And of course, every character sees and react on this based on their individual motives. It's a nice bit of plotting.

It is also a frustrating piece of plotting. In Carson's ambitiousness he seem to be spreading out too many characters. There are a lot of intriguing dudes and scoundrels here but none are given enough room to really shine. Kira comes the closest but there just isn't enough rounding out of character even for her. It basically comes down to great writing and insufficient structuring for so many ideas. It's a common error in debut novels and it really shows here. But still, there is a good sense of environment and atmosphere that keeps me

reading.

Then there is the end. I loved the build-in to it. But without giving it away, it ends suddenly. My big question is : is it a definitive ending that makes any thing else in this story moot or a cliffhanger. I'm kind of hoping it is a cliffhanger because the Starr Creek gang with all their flaws have real promise.

You probably noticed I said little about the actual plot. This is because if you do read this it is best that you go in with little knowledge to get into the atmosphere and to let the surprises sneak up on you. Carson is clearly showing off his counter cultural experiences and has his own unique perspective. Wherever he goes in his writing, *Starr Creek* is a good if incomplete example of his work and can only get better.

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### **Jayson Shenk says**

Not a bad mix of 80's culture and Lovecraftian Mythos, but it tries to do way too much in too few pages.

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### **Dan Clore says**

This fast-paced, enjoyable and entertaining weird novella tells the intertwining tales of juvenile/teen/adult characters in backwoods 1980s Oregon that collide in an explosion of Bizarro genre-bending revelation after genre-bending Bizarro revelation.

The time of release, the ages of the character groups, along with the mix of science fiction, horror, and other fantastic genres, and certain details like the inclusion of a gaming session of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons and Eggo waffles, make comparison with the season's genre sensation, *Stranger Things*, inevitable, though neither could have influenced the other. Unlike *Stranger Things*, *Starr Creek* was written by someone who knows the milieu from experience, not from watching *E.T.* and the *Goonies*, and describes it accurately (as I can attest from my own experience). It was a time when kids were just expected to go off on adventures, and if those adventures involved the quest for porno magazines, playing with machetes, heroic doses of LSD, and encounters with goat-kissing Lovecraftian rednecks, at least the kids were out of their parents' hair. Nathan Carson also happens to be drummer in the doom metal band *Witch Mountain* and a fixture in Portland's Bizarro literary scene, and brings a refreshing countercultural aesthetic sensibility to his material compared to the mainstream TV series.

While I found that the stripped-down, action-packed pulp narrative style worked well (in some parts reminding me of A.E. Van Vogt's technique of adding a major plot twist or revelation every few hundred words), I would probably have preferred a more fleshed-out, detailed, and atmospheric version with a more evocative prose style. That's more of an observation regarding my own personal taste, though, hardly even a criticism. Recommended for genre and Bizarro fans.

Note: Don't miss the video trailer for the book, or miss my appearance in it as central "backwoods lowlife":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8-3O...>

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## **Autumn Christian says**

A great mix of elements - Lovecraftian, acid, D&D, and rural hillbillies with some fairly good writing. However I had difficulty relating to any of the characters or their motivations. Nobody seemed exactly human, and I was never drawn into their struggles or the swirling motif of the books different elements. It never seemed to coalesce into anything tangible that I could care about - and then abruptly ended.

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## **Andrew Stone says**

It's like Stranger Things with copious amounts of acid. The story follows multiple narratives that, as the tale grows, brings the different groups of characters together. I really enjoyed Carson's debut book.

On a separate note, this is one of my all-time favorite book covers. Buying Starr Creek is worth it for the cover alone, but everything inside is equally as delicious.

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## **Danger says**

A twisted and drug-induced journey through the intersection of Lovecraft, heavy metal, and occultism - Starr Creek managed to whiz by at 100 mph, and left me with barely any time to get my head on straight. So while it never gets stale or boring (as each chapter brings on a slew of strange new delights) the brevity of the story sometimes works against it, and Starr Creek doesn't always let it's atmosphere breathe. As such, on occasion, some of the tension is lost to a more action-filled and kinetic kind of storytelling. In fact, I'd call it harrowing, if anything. And once the pace is set, it stays the course, ramping up to a bizarre and satisfying conclusion that ultimately left me wanting more. Carson can certainly write, and he's got a head full of weird ideas, and if this novel was his debut, then I can't wait to see where he takes me next.

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## **Tony says**

Highly recommended for all fans of Lovecraftian horror and the Stranger Things series. Despite the fact that this book was started long before Stranger Things was out, there are a lot of similarities. It takes place in a small town surrounded by creepy woods (this one in Oregon in 1986 rather than Indiana in 1983) and features two sets of protagonists — pre-teens and teenagers. What bothered me about Stranger Things is that no way would these kids in a hick Indiana town be listening primarily to post-punk. Sure The Clash, but Joy Division and Television? Not likely. They would much more likely have been into Sabbath, Dio, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. Carson would never make that mistake, having served as the drummer and founding member of the doom metal band Witch Mountain for over 15 years. Metallica among other bands are the soundtrack for these kids. He's also a veteran writer, having done thousands of reviews, and transitioned to writing fiction. With a few horror themed short stories under his belt, the writing in his debut novella is crisply economical but with an evocative atmosphere that drew me in quickly. I finished it quickly, within a couple days, and it was a nice break from Alan Moore's unwieldy new novel Jerusalem. Just a warning, parents might not want to buy this for kids younger than 16. There's creepy hillbilly violence, horrifically gross demon sex, and copious drug use in this sweet little horrible baby.

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## **The Grim Reader says**

Nathan Carson's 'Starr Creek' has a little bit of everything. At its core, it is a sort of coming-of-age story that reads like a mix between 'Deliverance', 'The Explorers' and 'Dazed and Confused', so you can probably imagine that I had a great time with the book.

Firstly, let's get the little negative out-of-the-way. It actually took me a little time to really get into this. At the start I was bombarded with different characters in quite a short space of time and I was worried that with it being novella length they were going to be rushed and largely forgettable, fortunately this isn't the case, things settle down quickly and the story slides into a nice smooth groove, Carson's characters come to life quickly and I was hooked.

As a child that grew up in the 1980s, there is a lot in this story that I am able to identify with. Not so much the ten strips of acid that Bron, Allen and Kira take before journeying into the woods but in the way that Carson crafts his characters as youngsters without fear, uncaring in the way that they approach drugs and potential danger. It's all very innocent when compared to the way things are these days and I love the feeling I got. 'Starr Creek' is set in the mid 1980s, Oregon. Mentions of 'The Last Starfighter' and various other 80s pop culture references feel included for a reason, not simply thrown in for the sake of authenticity. The story has a real charm to it and I can't help but think some of this is autobiographical.

The novella is, of course labelled as a Bizarro book and things certainly do get stranger and stranger, particularly towards the end when there appear a string of truly odd but thoroughly entertaining scenes. 'Starr Creek' has appeared at a time when shows like 'Stranger Things' are rekindling an interest in the 1980s, but it doesn't feel like Carson is simply someone jumping on the bandwagon. Instead 'Starr Creek' feels like a book written by somebody with a good memory of times past, somebody who walked in those shoes and somebody who enjoyed the freedom of youth.

A really great read.

4.5/5 stars

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## **Jemiah Jefferson says**

Highly recommended for those of you for whom the evocations of ordinary nerdy kid life in the 1980s was the best thing about Stranger Things, but if the uneasy balance between the mundane and the horrifically, inexplicably unusual is also appreciated, this book is most definitely for you. It's a quick read - a sunny, undisturbed afternoon would be perfect - and its pacing and rhythms keep the reader gripped from beginning to end.

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## **Wendy Wagner says**

One problem with Lovecraft's Mythos is that it ignores the entire West Coast of the United States. If HPL had grown up in Oregon, this novella is what he would have produced. Plus, the inbred villains in this riotous

little volume would teach the folks of Innsmouth what it really means to put outsiders in their place.

Cosmic horror and occult mystery bleed together in a landscape populated by white trash, commune-dwelling hippies, and motorcycle gangs, all of whom collide while a band of teens and pair of eleven-year-olds dig into the deeper truth moldering in the forest. The kids all have a delightful sense of innocence about them (even as they're selling oxycontin and downing LSD) that makes them a joy to spend time with. I liked the characters so much I found I couldn't put down this fast-paced novella.

Carson is a fresh new voice in Lovecraft country, and his prose dazzles. I only wish this had been about twice as long, as the ending in particular feels a little rushed. But I still loved it!

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### **Rodney says**

Starr? Creek? is? fresh? and? addictive, combining? the? freedom? of? youth? in? the? 80's? with? otherworldly weirdness,? altered? states? of? consciousness? and? backwoods? creeps.? The? best? part? about? all? of these? facets? is? their? organic? and? subtle? use? in? building? this? surprisingly? polished? debut.? The? prose? is extremely? visual? yet? maintains? readability.? Near? the? middle? things? get? stranger,? escalating? from there? to? the? finale.? Simply? great? reading.

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### **Janie C. says**

This is a book that I literally could not put down. While evoking feelings of nostalgia for childhood and teenage years, the element that made this novel shine was its ability to paint a picture. I was drawn immediately into the prologue, and I could visualize the preternatural scene as clearly as moonlight. There is a joie de vivre throughout the book that pulls the reader through the pages. I "saw" every part in 3-D and full color (no hallucinogens were involved on my end). If you enjoy the combination of weirdness, believable characters and ... well, more weirdness, then look no further. This is the perfect trip.

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### **Matthew says**

Brilliantly creepy and bizarre storytelling. Full review to come, but I loved it!

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