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On the brink of perfecting the long sought-after human/AI interface, Philip Kaufman finds his world thrown into turmoil as a scandal from the past returns to haunt him and dangerous information falls into his hands. Pursued by assassins and attacked in his own home, he flees. Leyton, a government black-ops specialist, is diverted from his usual duties to hunt down the elusive pirate vessel The Noise Within, wondering all the while why this particular freebooter is considered so important. Two lives collide in this stunning space-opera from debut novelist Ian Whates!

The Noise Within Details

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From Reader Review The Noise Within for online ebook

Jamie Revell says

A space opera in the style of Alistair Reynolds or Peter Hamilton, yet not really up to the standards of either. There are certainly some interesting ideas in here, and some good action, but it's let down by many of the characters coming across as rather flat. Kethi looks the most promising, but she has almost nothing to do here (I'm guessing she features more in the sequel). It's a pity, because much of the plot isn't bad, and the title 'character' makes for a worthwhile premise.

So certainly some good bits, but overall, nothing standout. The author's occasional habit of describing the same scene from different points of view - without adding much the second time round that wasn't already obvious - can be a little dull at times. It deserved to be better, and perhaps the second book (this one ends on a cliffhanger) manages to deliver on the promise of the first.

We'll see.

Richard says

A space opera romp that almost makes it. I was quickly drawn into the story and the two chief protagonists' lives. The pace kept me interested and it was rarely dull - those moments largely being concerned with other minor characters we travelled with for a while, some of whom I lost track of. Why, for instance, show the life of the kid - his story added nothing to the rest of it? While I did like Leyton, I felt he was a bit of a caricature, and would have found some more depth with him a better use of the pages.

Having just read a Neal Asher book, I was pleased to notice that I am not the only one to compare - much of the tech seemed familiar.

But then the descriptive passages got a little out of control, and towards the end the fights got a little more detailed... just as if a green author were attempting to add to the momentousness of the events being described, only it went the other way, and I was bored.

But, from the perspective of the book as a good read, it was enjoyable without being testing, and I am sure I will get around to the sequel.

Dale says

A mediocre book with potential, but ended with a ham-handed cliffhanger hook for a sequel that I hope will never come. Hate it when an author does that.

T.I.M. James says

I did not know what I was going to think of this SF novel by Ian Whates but from the moment I started it just clicked. There was something about the style that just appealed to me and that was something that started winning me over before the story really kicked in.

In some ways it reminded me of Peter F Hamilton, although not as big, which may well be considered a good thing. A futuristic universe where the technology in play is big, and fun, the kind of thing the inner child in you feels is just 'cool.' And to be honest, if I were ever going to try and write SF like this it is the kind of things I would love to play around with (in a totally different way).

It is a tale of a humanity straining to make progress, of talking guns, integrated AI and humans, of big ideas that work well, and at the core of the story that slowly draws everyone together is a mysterious ship, The Noise Within appearing out of nowhere and conducting acts of piracy while trying to recruit crew.

It is a great read, fast paced, while not overdoing the detail, giving the reader just enough to maintain interest, tell them what they need to know and moving the story on to a gripping conclusion while hitting hard with enough threads remaining to be picked up in the sequel, without hitting the reader over the head, demanding they return for the follow up.

Well written, well thought out, at some point I will be picking up that sequel.

Jason says

So much wasted time, so many pointless narratives, and still the charters are frustratingly one-dimensional. Of the four main points of view this book features, only one is particularly interesting (that of Layton, the enhanced military agent), and even then only some of the time. The rest serve little more than to fill pages. There were a few times (usually featuring Layton) that I almost forgot how bad the rest of the book was, but then a string of clichés or some random womanizing brought me back out of the story.

I'd say you could do worse and that this book could serve to pass the time on a long flight or a rainy weekend, but since the story is nothing but a setup for a sequel, I say steer clear.

Liviu says

Ian Whates' second novel in two months after the excellent steampunk science fantasy City Dreams and Nightmares, this one is a space opera from Solaris and a superb book with great characters and setting as well as lots of action, mysteries and all that you want in such

There are 4 pov's of which two get the most action:

Leyton is an "eyegee", (kind of like Cormac of N. Asher's novels), a special agent with an intelligent gun for the human government ULAW which was put together at the end of a century long war between the winners (de facto) ULW (United League Worlds) and the Allied worlds who got a smaller share of the ULAW (that A); we meet him in a superb beginning action sequence where he takes down a drug lord with multiple bodyguards, robot dogs, supposedly impregnable estate...

Philip Kaufman is the young CEO of the leading space engine firm, heir of genius father Malcolm who built the firm and invented the Kaufman drive and sort of uploaded himself into a pseudo-AI (here echoes of PFH and the Mandel series not to speak of the later ones); driven to make his mark, Philip is pushing hard at the one failure his father had, the integration of human and AI and the first AI piloted starship, when a strange

ship of the title The Noise Within appears from nowhere and effortlessly hijacks luxury liners and their rich passengers for ransom, though strangely encouraging people to "defect" and this is how we meet Kyle, ship engineer, war veteran, now bored mechanic on such a luxury ship, a sort of "just in case" since the vessel is super redundant; Kyle is the first to defect to The Noise Within and the strangeness there begins

Later we meet Kethi a human "intuitionist" (echoes of IMB) who is from a habitat that made itself scarce in the war, established a while ago by a reclusive charismatic "prophet" who believes that aliens will come and threaten humanity soon; since maybe The Noise Within is an alien ship (though Philip believes otherwise), Kethi makes her way with a crack team to investigate and she is the one that chooses the most likely spot The Noise will hit next

There is much more including a superb action piece where Leyton leads an assault on a rebel base, ship combat, a grand tour of the human space, slum world action, habitat action, a "hit-bar" where rich people leave names and amounts for the killing of enemies

The ending is partly cliffhanger and I am really eager to see where the series go since it starts so great (A+ and high potential to be among the best space opera series around)

StPaul Herrmann says

When a long lost, AI commanded ship reappears as a rogue pirate, threatening civilized space, such different skills like that of a trained mercenary and of the owner of THE space drive building company are needed. If these were just not so predictably being used. Entertaining, some cool ideas, but neither surprising nor with a particular wit, unfortunately.

James Morton says

This book is a frustrating read. Every time it seems to be picking up and getting interesting, the author slams on the breaks and re-adjusts the pov to something else. I also find it hard to connect to any of the characters, I'm not really sure that they are main characters - they seem to be secondary at times, coming across as mere convenient constructs to help move the story on. Which leaves you wondering were the main characters are. Kaufmann is hard to feel any sympathy for. Leyton comes straight from central casting, the others feel like extras who have the odd line of dialogue. As we approach the end (2/3rds of the way through atm) I am doubting that this will change.

Ok - a recap since I have finished the book. Suddenly it seemed to pick up towards the end, but frustratingly it was in the last chapter. I still hold to my original feelings towards some of the characters as being secondary. The lack of a strong central character or characters is very telling. The plot suffers as well. It been very confusing at times, the author likes to build up to a reveal, but then abruptly cut off. The characters seemingly act on what they have learnt, but you are playing catch up, trying to figure what it was they did learn. If this was to build up enough intriguing mysteries that would get you gunning for book 2, the sadly as far as I am concerned - it ain't worth the effort.

This book wants to tease you with a "big" mystery. Its not able to pull it off.

Liam Proven says

Not a bad book, but not a great one. It's a little immature and feels a bit rushed, and although my paperback edition has no indication that it's the first of a sequence, as you get into the closing pages with no real resolution or end in sight, you begin to realise that this is just Episode One... And then it ends on an actual cliffhanger.

It's got some fun, original ideas and the descriptions are reasonably done, but the characters do all tend to be steely-jawed & handsome or slim, leggy and beautiful, super-smart or deadly hardcases (or both), and there is not a huge wealth of character development, just occasional bursts of it.

It's all right. If you are not too demanding and like action and adventure, and you're happy to either wait for the complete thing or read it in instalments, it's fun. It's not big, deep or clever, but it's got some good strong original elements.

[Disclaimer: the author is a personal friend.]

Peter says

A pirate ship's been prowling the spacelanes, and special forces troops are trying to track it down. So is a businessman, who believes the ship is actually a lost prototype his company put out.. and designed to be the first ship piloted by an AI.

There is an idea that is central to this book. I get the feeling the genesis for the book came with that idea, and the rest of the story was built around it. I could be wrong, but that's the feeling I get. But it's an idea that's pretty nifty and well-articulated.

Unfortunately, it's the rest of the book that's the problem.

It's not awful, for the most part. It's competent in terms of prose, but... there just doesn't seem to be a whole lot of good, here. The characters aren't very interesting and often do things for bizarre reasons. Minor characters are set up with a lot of importance and disposed of in weird ways that make you wonder what the point of focusing on them was, and major characters were given long chapters where they basically go on vacation, which might be worth it with a more interesting protagonist, but not here. I can't for the life of me figure out why we needed the deep peek into the life of a teenager who was hired to tell one of the main characters if certain people he was looking for showed up, nor why we needed to see a scene from the perspective of both of them. Or learn about a rich businessman's adventures with recreational drugs and meaningless flings for pages on end. Some plotlines I can only assume are due to be resolved in future books, but in this book, that doesn't feel right. And the narrative jumps around with weird pacing, where I swear some major events were handled completely between chapters. There were some cool ideas, particularly the central one, but overall I was left with a feeling of "what's the point?"

And then there were the eyerollers, like a (pretty much unnecessary) main character who was introduced essentially as the pilot of a space luxury liner flirting/sexually harassing one of the stewardesses (I suppose it

was intended to be flirting, since she seemed to enjoy it). Like, what is this, the 60s? Or other characters being described as the most beautiful woman so-and-so had ever seen. Or the overlong depiction of hacking which (one of my pet peeves in the genre) seems to think of another system as a place your mind GOES and if it gets hurt there it might not be able to COME BACK, or at the very least while you're leaving a system you have to find your way home through digital back alleys, rather than, you know, pulling the plug and disconnecting immediately. In a generally better book, I might have looked past these groaners, but here, they're about the only thing that stuck with me.

Mike Flattley says

This was a really disappointing read. I can see how it might appeal to those who hark for the 1950s-80s era of good, hard, masculine characters with balls like colliding planets (pictured), along with a super-helpful dose of "internet chatrooms and avatars for dummies," but seriously - this is tired old territory covered spectacularly well by far more imaginative and technically savvy speculative fiction writers over the past 50 years, and this book had nothing new to offer.

There's a worthy moment of interest exploring the human/AI interface - essentially, the cyborg brain - as a plot device (hello, "Neuromancer"), and a worthy point of intrigue is the rogue AI "pirate ship," a fun idea which takes a big leaf out of McAffrey's "The Ship Who Sang" from the late 1960s, along with some good times with ethically problematic AI reconstructions of the main characters acting as personal servants ("I, Robot," "Westworld," "Real Humans," "Surrogates," "Battlestar Galactica" etc etc). Ultimately, it's a by-the-numbers, build-your-own SciFi novel. You can forgive all the derivative elements in the name of a rollicking good read, and despite a lack of any real engagement with the issues of mortality, evolution and spirituality that these sort of concepts can so spectacularly invite, I probably could have kept going with it if it wasn't for the sexual politics, frankly. There's a shallow, unexamined "boys will be boys" element throughout, all the lead characters are male, with women featuring as objects of desire and/or antagonists throughout. It felt like I was exploring a hairy-chested future populated by meth-fuelled clones of Robert Heinlein, and I kept finding myself distracted, speculating about the author's problematic relationships with the women in his life. This is probably quite unfair to presume, but it's absolutely not what you want from an escapist holiday read.

On the plus side, it got my appetite rekindled for the good stuff. I keep remembering Dan Simmons' "Hyperion" as a rollicking good ramble through Bonkersville, an immense, passionate literary outpouring of ideas, characters, stories. A fertile mind. That's what you want from an author.

Robin Oid says

The Noise Within exists only to set up a sequel that I don't want to read, because not only is there a lack of any kind of resolution to make me want to continue with this author, but it doesn't even set up a sequel well. Whatever the next book may be about, I assure you that this book won't be necessary to understand it, because The Noise Within asks so few questions and answers none of them that it's pretty much just filling time between a pointless beginning and whatever story Ian Whates had in mind when he wrote the thing.

Even ignoring the overall story, the book is filled with things like a full chapter detailing a rich guy doing drugs and sleeping with women. No, this isn't a characterization moment, and it has nothing to do with the story, it's pure wasted time. Ian Whates wanted an excuse for someone to bang large breasted girl number I-

lost-count, and this was how he chose to frame it. Because, as we all know, a book isn't mature unless it has sex and drugs every third page. And don't even get me started on the character who is first introduced after a long night of having sex with his own sister.

In short, avoid.

Christopher says

Readable but mediocre space opera setting up a series reminiscent of Neal Asher's Polity books. Too much awkward exposition from the omniscient narrator, too many cliché phrases, and not an original idea anywhere in it make this very skippable, but it did pass quickly and remind me (pleasantly) of an old Traveller campaign.

Mike Lowndes says

Not sure why I actually finished this. Displacement activity I think. Very mediocre. 'if you read Reynolds, Hamilton, Banks - read this' says Steven Baxter. Really? Maybe helping out a young writer? But no, not even in the same league as any of those. We let Hamilton ham it up because of the huge scale and intricate plotting, but no such excuse here. Not an original idea in the book, apart from already-dating web jargon this could have been written in the '60s when writers like Aldiss were already WAY more mature. So, yes full of sexism and immaturity. Horrible discontinuities between 'magic' future tech and stuff that's already doable today. side by side. Just poor writing too, I'm sure back in the day a good editor would have sent this back in draft full of red lines and 'must do betters'. But alas not these days. Even the cliffhangers are poorly managed. Somethings not quite right!? But What? Who actually cares? Not enough for me to carry on with this series. Unless I REALLY want to avoid working. Avoid.

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

The Noise Within is filled with intriguing elements and characters. The Noise Within is a rogue AI controlled starship turned pirate. Kaufman Industries developed the starship that reappeared after a 20-year absence. Mal/Malcolm Kaufman the developer of the starship is a partial, a computer generated presence left after Mal died. Philip Kaufman is his son who is developing a working AI/Human melding. Jim Leyton is an eyegee, an augmented human with an intelligent gun. Then there are the humans The Noise Within recruited as crew, an isolated space station waiting for something to appear and the aliens. Each and every one has a part in the story.

The Noise Within is great Space Opera that does not go in a straight line. Ian Whates has created an exciting universe overflowing with possibilities. The scenes in the book jump between places and characters. Most of the characters and events come together near the end of the book but don't expect any resolution. The Noise Within is a very good read but be warned the book ends with a lot unresolved and much up in the air. I was left with more questions than answers. There will be sequel later this year.
