

difference engine

The Urth list — 6 messages, 6 voices, 13 May 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5026>

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Stuart Hamm — 13 May 2008, 23:39

Hmm...should I go back and re-read it?

I am a huge W Gibson fan...my 2nd CD was "Kings of Sleep",,,but I really didn't like DE and read a book by the co-author (Islands in the Net ??) and thought it was, as Roddy Doyle says.."A Gob of Shite"

Would really recommend "Pattern Recognition" by WG and lots of early Paul Auster..not exactly sci-fi...but there are some similarities with GW

"New York Trilogy"

"The Music of Chance"

"Leviathan"..about the uni bomber

"Timbuktu"..from a canine point of view..

Anyone else read them?

Stuart Hamm

M (415) 786-3624

Skype stuart.hamm

Jeff Eoff — 14 May 2008, 00:03 · in reply to Stuart Hamm

I enjoyed The Difference Engine, though it's been years since I read it. It wasn't amazing, but it was by no means a regrettable read. I recall the setting and atmosphere being stronger than the plot or the characters.

-Jeff Eoff

Stuart Hamm wrote:

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Russ Allbery — 14 May 2008, 00:50 · in reply to Stuart Hamm

Stuart Hamm <hammstu at sbcglobal.net> writes:

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I personally have not read it, but from having discussed SF quite a bit in other places, my estimate is that about 95% of the people who have read it didn't like it and only about 5% liked it. So probably not.

The general consensus seems to be that it was a low point for both authors. I've read other things by Bruce Sterling that I quite enjoyed (_Heavy Weather_, for example, although it's not what I'd call great literature).

Sometimes the collaborations work and sometimes they just don't.

Russ Allbery (rra at stanford.edu) <<http://www.eyrie.org/~eagle/>>

Lane Haygood — 14 May 2008, 03:30 · in reply to Russ Allbery

Sterling is a good writer; just not all the time!

I, too, liked Heavy Weather, but more for seeing my native land portrayed in fiction (not by Cormac McCarthy) and because it was a decent cyberpunk novel, but largely derivative. His Schismatrix stuff is lightyears beyond the other books I've read by Sterling.

Lane

On May 13, 2008, at 7:50 PM, Russ Allbery wrote:

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Russ Allbery (rra at stanford.edu) <<http://www.eyrie.org/~eagle/>>

Robert Thornton — 14 May 2008, 10:00 · in reply to Lane Haygood

I agree about Schismatrix. It is a great book and his most ambitious work though later books are better written IMHO. As far as his later work, I am a big fan of *Distraction* but otherwise I'm not very fond of them. I think his short stories are better. Of course I like the older story where my hometown Rockville, Maryland becomes the center of global power thanks to biotech....

As for *Difference Engine*, I'd agree with the majority view. The ending was interesting but you had to slog through a lot of dreck to get there.

rob t.

On May 13, 2008, at 11:30 PM, Lane Haygood wrote:
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Russ Allbery (rra at stanford.edu) <<http://www.eyrie.org/~eagle/>>

Dave Lebling — 14 May 2008, 23:50 · in reply to Robert Thornton

Rob, I grew up in Bethesda and Rockville, MD myself, and attended Richard Montgomery High School. I've lived in the Boston area for umpty-foo years now though, after being engulfed by MIT and never quite getting over it.

I find that many of the authors I really like have been mentioned previously. To those who found Crowley a tough read, I suggest trying "Engine Summer" as a starter, just as "The Crying of Lot 49" makes a good start on Pynchon (I recently reread "Gravity's Rainbow" and am working on "Against the Day").

I'm very partial to Bruce Sterling (his short stories are better than his novels, as a rule: try "Bicycle Repairman" and "Kalamantan"), William Gibson, Michael Swanwick ("The Iron Dragon's Daughter" is steam-elf-punk), Charlie Stross ("The Atrocity Archive" and "A Colder War" and several others), Ken McLeod ("The Execution Channel" is not his best; start with "The Cassini Division"), Iain Banks (I just finished "Matter" recently), Ian McDonald ("River of Gods"), Neal Stephenson (I am inordinately fond of "The Baroque Trilogy"), John Scalzi, Rudy Rucker, and even China Mieville (who seems to be less-than-favored locally). I wish Jack Vance were still writing (though I hear he is dictating an autobiography, which should be interesting).

My tastes in non-SF fiction are fairly pedestrian: Patrick O'Brian, Cormac McCarthy, Carl Hiaasen, Alexander McCall Smith, etc. I periodically reread George V. Higgins ("The Friends of Eddie Coyle" is one of those nearly perfect novels) and wish he was still around, but I console myself with Dennis Lehane.

I love history and have been reading up on my Byzantine and late Roman stuff, which is actually pretty useful if you want to reread the New Sun books.

-- Dave Lebling, aka Vizcacha

Robert Thornton wrote:

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