

Snow Crash (review)

Written by Administrator

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If you are going to nit-pick **Snow Crash** for anything, you can bag it for being 20 years old. Okay, so there are light pens, some of the computer stuff is dodgy, Hong Kong was still independent and there are a lot of people whose pops fought in WW2. So in that, yeah, it feels old.

But even on the third reading, the story swept me up again. I can distinctly remember picking up a copy in a downtown bookstore and going to Pizza Unos for lunch (the brick-n-mortar store, the pizza chain, even the cutzy shopping district are as gone now as they are in Stephenson's gritty near-world). I fell in love in the first few pages, with Hiro Protagonist (yeah, what a name!) as a black/Japanese independent hacker and pizza delivery guy. The world we know (knew?) has fallen apart. The United States? Pretty much gone. Franchises run everything, the mafia is into pizza delivery, a televangelist (with a telecom mogul's backing) is making dangerous discoveries in ancient Mesopotamia, a wave of Asian raft people is about to beach along California: yes, the world is going to hell.

The book burbles with futuristic-wit and cyber-charm, doing what true scifi does best, mainly extrapolating a facet of our world and expanding it in the future. And here, **Snow Crash** goes after everything - the numbed middle class, the drones of a consumer culture, the privatization of everything, the swell of multinationals, the realignment of power from nations to corporations.

Oh, there are some long detective bits where Hiro attempts to pick apart history, to understand the makings of civilization and the Babel infocrash. I found these bits more interesting now as my own interest in ancients has broadened since '92. But overall, there will be enough action, fun, paybacks and turnarounds that even some of the action scenes can be mockingly hyphenated:

After that - after Hiro gets onto his motorcycle, and the New South Africans get into their all-terrain pickups, and the Enforcers get into their slick black Enforcer mobiles, and they all go screaming out onto the highway - after that it's just a chase scene.

And that's what **Snow Crash** is, one glorious, hightech, message-dripping chase scene. Brilliant!

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