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Amazon.com Review

From the opening line of his breakthrough cyberpunk novel *Snow Crash*, Neal Stephenson plunges the reader into a not-too-distant future. It is a world where the Mafia controls pizza delivery, the United States exists as a patchwork of corporate-franchise city-states, and the Internet--incarnate as the Metaverse--looks something like last year's hype would lead you to believe it should. Enter Hiro Protagonist--hacker, samurai swordsman, and pizza-delivery driver. When his best friend fries his brain on a new designer drug called Snow Crash and his beautiful, brainy ex-girlfriend asks for his help, what's a guy with a name like that to do? He rushes to the rescue. A breakneck-paced 21st-century novel, *Snow Crash* interweaves everything from Sumerian myth to visions of a postmodern civilization on the brink of collapse. Faster than the speed of television and a whole lot more fun, *Snow Crash* is the portrayal of a future that is bizarre enough to be plausible.

From Publishers Weekly

In California of the near future, when the U.S. is only a "Burbclave" (city-state), the Mafia is just another franchise chain (CosaNostrastet Pizza, Incorporated) and there are no laws to speak of, Hiro Protagonist follows clues from the Bible, ancient Sumer and high technology to help thwart an attempt to take control of civilization--such as it is. When he logs on to Metaverse, an imaginary place entered via computer, Hiro encounters Juanita Marquez, a "radical" Catholic and computer whiz. She warns him off Snow Crash (a street drug named for computer failure) and gives him a file labeled Babel (as in Tower of Babel). Another friend, sp ok/pk Da5id, who ignores Juanita's warning, computer crashes out of Metaverse into the real world, where he physically collapses. Hiro, Juanita, Y.T. (a freewheeling, skateboard-riding courier) and sundry other Burbclave and franchise power figures see some action on the way to finding out who is behind this bizarre "drug" with ancient roots. Although Stephenson (*Zodiac*) provides more Sumerian culture than the story strictly needs (alternating intense activity with scholarship breaks), his imaginative juxtaposition of ancient and futuristic detail could make this a cult favorite.

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From Library Journal

Hiro Protagonist, delivery boy for Uncle Enzo's CosaNostra Pizza and freelance hacker in the virtual reality called the Metaverse, tangles with religious cultists, computer virus/drug dealers, and a human bomb known as the Raven in a freewheeling first novel that picks up where cyberpunk left off. Rapid-fire action scenes interspersed with snippets of Sumerian mythology and vignettes of a franchise-dominated 21st century

combine to produce a heady, surrealistic pastiche of the not-so-distant future. Satiric sf at its best, this novel is highly recommended for all libraries.

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With the strange new designer drug, Snow Crash, making zombies of nearly everyone and a deadly computer virus striking down hackers, Hiro Protagonist, the last of the free-lance hackers, comes to the rescue.

- Sales Rank: #987111 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Bantam Spectra
- Published on: 1992-01-01
- Released on: 1992-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.60" h x 6.50" w x 9.20" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 470 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Amazingly good

By Nigel Farquharson

"Snow Crash" is a great science fiction cyberpunkish novel. Brilliant, exhilarating, very funny, highly intelligent, very well informed, and at the same time highly pessimistic about the future. It imagines a very bleak future in which the United States federal government has been reduced to a few fortified areas, there is no rule of law, most of the country is dominated by a small number of criminal corporations, one of the most powerful ones being the Mafia. This picture of the future is not completely consistent, but overall the novel is excellent.

The main characters are a 30 year-old man, who is apparently the best samurai swordsman in the world, one of the best hackers or software programmers (Stephenson uses the words more or less interchangeably; one must keep in mind that this book was written in 1992), and also a Deliverator, which is a fancy name for a pizza delivery man working for the Mafia, and a 15 year-old girl (very full of "attitude") that works as a "Kourier" (messengers that deliver packages riding some super high-tech skates). The Mafia apparently controls all the Domino-like pizza-to-go business in the country. The whole setup of the novel should make smile even to the most cantankerous readers.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A book like this is hard to rate

By GFein

A book like this is hard to rate. It is seminal to the cyber punk genre, so any slight of its cliches or stereotypes may just be a backwards-looking judgment. However, the book has a very misguided sense of plot. While there are great ideas and entertaining moments in the book, the tendons that hold the story together are kinda flimsy. The story exists to get the characters from one cool moment to another.

Speaking of, this book lives and dies on the "Rule of Cool". Neo-punk skateboards out of the FBI headquarters while telling them to suck it? Check. Motorcycle race-battle in cyberspace? Check. Protagonist hero literally named "Hiro Protagonist", who is also one of the architects of cyberspace and one of the best swordsmen of all time, check. You roll your eyes at the silliness of it all, and yet there's a kernel of intellectual thought at the core of the story.

That core orbits around the idea of language and the power it has to actually gestate ideas within people. The book takes the idea to the literal extreme, positing a universal language that actually can program people like a virus. Take that for what you want. But, the concepts underneath the silly drive to make everything/everyone "cool as hell " are intriguing.

However, the ending is a massive letdown. I had to check my book twice to make sure I wasn't missing pages, since it just kinda...ends. No closure and no real pay-off for the concepts of the novel or the characters that he built. However, I quickly got over it since the characters existed as either conduits of plot or puppets to be cool.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Another Stephenson masterpiece, to be enjoyed over and over again, at least once a year.

By Biased Insight

Whatever I could or would write would be euphemistic; even the most lavish praise; the most groveling compliments; the most blatant and overdone positive review; alas....it needs to be said, there i(s no w)ay around it, I've been crashed, totally and utterly. Sheer genius, unrivaled creativity, peerless depth, originality and most importantly, FUN. If you read these Stephenson books for passing time during a break or at home, ensconced in your most luxurious sofa with your sights on some much needed evasion then this is it. I wrote before. "AT LAST, an author that can rival the genius of Frank Herbert..." and frankly, I believe we have a new master sci-fi story teller on our hands. I only wish us readers many more Stephenson titles in the future, I have declared myself an official hard core fan. Hey, I have to uphold my biased insight approach, enjoy!!!

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