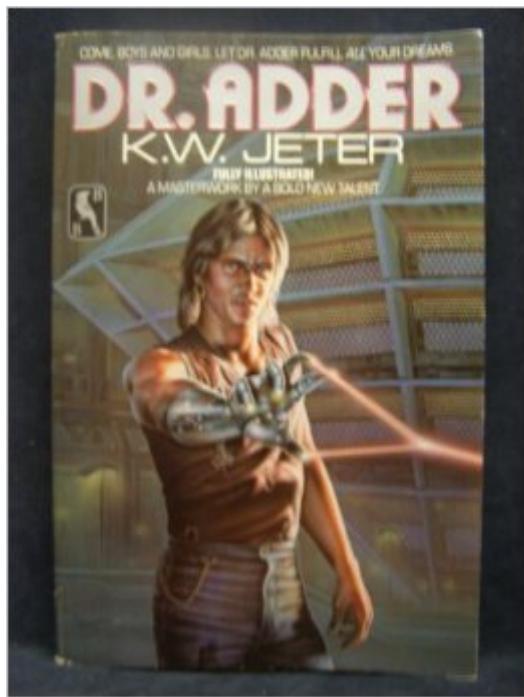


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Dr. Adder



Synopsis

Bluejay Books, 1984. Trade paperback, 1st edition. Cover art by Barclay Shaw, interior art by Matt R. Howarth, Afterword by Philip K. Dick. 1st in a cyberpunkish trilogy of thematically linked novels. The other books are "The Glass Hammer" (1985) and "Death Arms" (1987).

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (15 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Adder is one of those books that gets better the longer you read it. The story starts off thrusting the reader into the disturbing streets of a future L.A. where the title character is a specialist in transforming prostitutes into mankinds most twisted desires. Tempting to put down (as I did, regrettably, the first time I started to read it), the story begins to take on a life of its own. The story focuses not on Dr. Adder, but instead on E. Allen Limmit and his discovery of life outside the corporate home he spent much of his life. As his life becomes inevitably intermixed with Adder and Adder's arch-nemesis, he learns he is a pawn in a much larger story, one he was, literally, born to be. Written 12 years before it was published, the book is brilliant, one of those incredible first novels that shows the author knows more about writing than some long-established authors. The ending had me laughing for minutes, and though I had once told a friend that I would never read it again (while still in the disturbing subject matter of the first fifty pages) I look forward to additional readings of this classic in the years to come.

I highly recommend this book to any fan of Philip K. Dick. (At times Jeter's fiercely ironic style made me wonder if I was in fact reading a "lost" Phil Dick novel!) Jeter's perverse, dark vision of the L.A. of the future envelops your senses with a mixture of revulsion and fascination as the story unfolds.

Other reviewers here have already summarized the plot and setting, so let me just add that the book is disturbing and brilliant, and if you can stomach the sexual perversions and gore, you will come away astonished that somehow "Dr. Adder" (written pre-1972, anticipating cyberpunk by at least 12 years) has escaped your attention until now. The afterword by Dick is noteworthy too. One of the characters in the novel is based on Dick, although Phil mis-identifies that character in his afterword, in my opinion.

Dr. Adder by K.W. Jeter is about a dark and violent Los Angeles of the future in which terrorists can be heroes to a disaffected youth. One of society's idols, Dr. Adder, can, for price, plunge into a client's subconscious and dig up his or her deepest sexual desires, then provide the necessary surgical modifications to fulfill those desires. Hoping to wreak vengeance upon Dr. Adder and break his stranglehold upon society, his equally dark foe stages a violent end for Dr. Adder which is ultimately fought in a cyberspace-like melding of minds and television networks. Action-filled and a quick read, this book is recommended for fans of a sort of dark, pre-cyberpunk in the style of Philip K. Dick.

The first novel by K.W. Jeter, it was considered at it's time to be too taboo or just plain "sick" and so took a lot of struggle and a healthy dose of Phillip K. Dick to get it published. Apparently the world was a much more conservative place back then because by today's standards, it's fairly light reading. While there is an overt theme of sexual perversion, violence, and drug use, it is not excessive; the story seems to focus on the events surrounding these activities, but not necessarily as a direct result of such. The characters take a while to develop and the reader is able to keep them at arms length throughout most of the book so the suspension of disbelief is not as well developed as often occurs in Jeter's short stories and later works. Although vacillating between sparks of eureka prose and post-adolescent mumbling with the occasional Jeter fifty-word sentence, it is a quick read and, for being his first novel, wasn't too bad. As a special treat, I found the "illustrated" version. --Don't buy it for the artwork. Those already familiar with Jeter's work will appreciate the budding seed of the writer's voice in Dr. Adder; the rest may likely only consider the book a misogynistic dystopia of mutilated hookers and oddly segmented prose.

This was written while Jeter was in college, but it took years to find a publisher as it offended nearly everyone. Well, times rolled on and lo and behold, with the demise of many taboos, a masterpiece emerged. Not for the faint hearted or prudish.

This book is the beginnings of cyber punk, the combination of science fiction dystopia and nihilistic adventure. What makes it a bit more impressive for me are two things: the commentary on the human unconscious mind, and the bizarre but brilliant weapon called the "flash glove". This is also one of the most politically incorrect books I have read in a while. The edition is difficult to get a hold of and is out of print.

I looked for this book for a couple of years (before the net's book search engines) because it was considered a banned scifi book in the vein of Dick. Jeter's book does have the singular universe appeal of Dick but not a variant of Dick. Jeter is his own righter. The book is dark and never lets up. I will admit that it is an early work and shows some of the failures of a new author, but I will take this over his schck work (i.e. Star Wars and Star Trek)any day. I don't begrudge Jeter for making a living only I am not a fan of that work. I am surprised by how accurate much of Dr. Adder is. It is a scary version of speculative fiction that becomes less speculative with every passing year.

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