



MultiReal

David Louis Edelman

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Natch has just won his first battle with the Defense and Wellness Council for control of MultiReal technology. But now the Council has unleashed the ruthless cunning of Lieutenant Executive Magan Kai Lee. Lee decides that if Natch's company can't be destroyed from without, it must be destroyed from within. As black code continues to eat away at Natch's sanity, he faces a mutiny from his own apprentices, a legal onslaught from the government, and the return of enemies old and new. In desperation, the entrepreneur turns to some unlikely allies: a radical politician with an agenda of his own, and a childhood enemy to whom he has done a terrible wrong.

Natch's struggle will take him from the halls of power in Melbourne to the ruined cities of the diss. Hanging in the balance is the fate of MultiReal, a technology that could end the tyranny of the Council forever--or give the Council the ultimate weapon of oppression.

MultiReal Details

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From Reader Review MultiReal for online ebook

Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com:]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted here illegally. Sorry, the last few sentences get cut off today!)

All hail the mighty science-fiction epic trilogy! **Bow and tremble before the mighty science-fiction epic trilogy!** Because Lord knows, if you're a SF fan, it's not like you're going to be able to get *away* from the mighty science-fiction epic trilogy; there have been so many successful ones now, after all, starting with Star Wars and making your way down the financial chain, that they've become almost more of a staple within this particular genre than even standalone books. And there are some great things that come with this, of course, but also some complications, for both reader and reviewer: for example, like that you need to read book one of such trilogies before books two and three will fully make sense, that books one and two will never seem fully complete unless you read book three as well, and that in general the trilogy will eventually be judged as one related unit when it's finally all published, and that any review of an individual book within this series is ultimately a bit futile.

That said, I was lucky enough earlier this summer to receive a copy of David Louis Edelman's *MultiReal*, book two of his massive science-fiction epic trilogy "Jump 225;" and I did definitely want to do a write-up of it here, because I did definitely enjoy it quite a bit, even more than volume one which I reviewed here at CCLaP last year. But then this leads to the exact problems I just mentioned: that the first book simply must be part of the consideration when judging this newest one, that the yet-unseen third volume will undoubtedly change what I originally thought of this middle one. It's a frustrating situation, but one I'll try to muddle through today; because make no mistake, this is a series that genre fans will definitely want to check out, and an individual chapter here that could very well garner a Hugo nomination next year (or at the least is no worse than any of the 2008 nominees, four of which I reviewed here at CCLaP earlier this year).

So let's start, then, with the fact that this is a massive "universe-building" style of project, one that like the "Star Trek universe" has its own insanely complicated history and entire glossary of made-up terms; those with an interest will want to see the 500-word recap of just this background alone that I wrote in my review for the first novel, 2006's *Infoquake*, or of course you can always stop by the official website for the series [multireal.net:], containing a veritable Tolkienian amount of backstory and supplemental essays and complicated timelines and the like, the entire site actually programmed and maintained by Edelman himself. (In fact, for those who don't know, Edelman is still more of a professional web designer during the day than a full-time author, a situation he is trying to change these days through massive touring and public appearances; *Infoquake* was in fact his first novel, a surprise Campbell Award nominee and the true definition of a "sleepers hit.")

In a nutshell, the series is set on an Earth several thousand years in the future from our own times, one that in our near-future sees first the rise of artificial intelligence and then an apocalyptic war against these smart machines; it led essentially to a Second Dark Age, a period of hundreds of years where the only societies that managed to hold together were violent, extremely conservative and religious ones, so dedicated to avoiding another machine war that all knowledge of modern science basically disappeared for centuries. What brings it all back, then, in a period known as "The Re-Awakening," is basically the rediscovery of the concepts behind free-market capitalism, which in their far-future society they treat with the same reverence as we do the ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans (The Enlightenment 2.0?); this is then specifically applied to a

brand-new industry called bio/logics, the first time in a millennium that humanity has started building new computers and machines, designed this time not to replace natural human functions (which is what got them into such big trouble to begin with) but rather to enhance these functions, to help them along and fill in during weak spots. And that essentially breaks down into a three-tiered bio/logics industry, the whole thing an intriguing play on a democratic republic's checks and balances: there are the people who make the actual nanobots that run the system, billions of them that live inside your bloodstream at any moment; then the companies who develop all the software that run on these nanobots, hundreds of thousands of programs on the open market for everything from regulating heartbeat to changing the color of one's eyes; and then there is the governmental agency which maintains the objective medical databases concerning all this technology, and that publicly ensures all software on the market to be safe.

Last year's *Infoquake*, then, spent most of its time simply setting up this situation, told through the specific milieu of one of these thousands of entrepreneurial software companies, one owned by a Jason-Calacanis-type charming as-hole who goes by the name of Natch, along with all the underlings of his "fiefcorp," an organization which smartly combines the ideas of vested stock options with medieval apprenticeships. And then this *finally* gets us around to what volume two of the series is about; because what Natch ends up doing in book one is partnering with a mysterious world-renown scientist named Margaret Surina, a descendent of the original brilliant Sheldon Surina who invented bio/logics in the first place. Margaret, it turns out, has created her own brilliant new cutting-edge world-changing technology; it's called "MultiReal," and essentially (follow me here) lets a person use their bio/logics in order to shuffle through a million possible responses to a possible incoming situation, then choose just the specific set of motions or actions that would lead to the outcome you want. So, say, you're a football goalie, and someone's kicking the ball at you; you simply switch on your MultiReal (or, er, the software that's been designed to be used with MultiReal, that is), and you can suddenly dial through a million possible jumps and dives and other responses until you find the one where you save the day, and instruct your bio/logics to move your body in a split moment in that exact way that will let you catch the ball.

And in fact, if I can be a bit digressive for a moment, this is yet another proud tradition within mighty science-fiction epic trilogies, which Edelman is clearly guilty of as well; of the "science" part of the "science-fiction" being just a bit fuzzy, and with you basically having to squint at some of the details with half-closed eyes and not pay too much attention to them, else they suddenly making less and less rational sense. Because really, once you stop and really start thinking about it, there's no way a system like MultiReal could actually work in the way Edelman describes here; there'd be no way for the human brain to both rattle through a million possibilities in a microsecond *and* consciously choose one of those options and say to itself, "Yes, that's what I want to happen." Like other so-called "magic words" within the SF genre (Quantum! Singularity! Cyber Cyber Cyber!), it's best not to get caught up in the details of Edelman's bio/logics system, but rather do what he does and concentrate more on the overall story, more on the big ethical issues these sketchily-detailed breakthroughs would raise if they actually existed.

Because when it comes to all that, I'm happy to report that *MultiReal* is most decidedly a better-written novel than *Infoquake*, just as I prayed it would be in my original review; Edelman has for sure gotten better at dialogue, at creating arresting mental images, and in general on most of the building-block issues concerning literature that I most complained about last year with his first novel. And in fact, it's becoming clear that it's the painting of indelible visual images that Edelman naturally excels at, more than any other aspect of contemporary writing; I have to admit, for example, that his chapter describing the quasi-religious compound Andra Pradesh simply took my breath away at points, especially when describing the mile-high indoor atrium and glass elevator that zoomed swiftly into the loving hands of a giant concrete Sheldon Surina at the top, carved in bas-relief on the temple's ceiling. Man, talk about an image that will stick in your head for awhile.

There are still problems with this book, for sure; for one, like last time most of the characters are still coming off as too unlikable, which in turn makes the reader not care that much about their fates, which in turn makes the entire storyline a weaker one than it should be. And also, I have to admit, I wish that the dialogue on display here was even better than it currently is, although admittedly it's better than before, and in fact some people will undoubtedly argue with me over its quality in the first place; or to put it another way, I found a lot of the dialogue here on the same level as, say, a random episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which I consider a slight insult while others would consider a slight compliment. (And of course will make some of you indignantly sit up a little straighter, frown, and say to your computer monitor, "What the f-ck is wrong with *Buffy*, Pettus?" Another time, dear reader, another time.) All in all, though, I have a...

Enzo says

Easily a 4.5 but the roundup seemed necessary.

Where can Natch be? That is the question you'll be making to yourself as you read the second book in the series. Natch keeps running from everyone as he needs to keep the Defense and Wellness Council at bay. The second volume in the series and David Louis Edelman keeps tying us in knots at the fate of the Natch/Surina fief corp. The Defense and Wellness Council has now sent its top hunter Lieutenant Executive Megan Kei Lee. Lee has no brakes and plays by no earthly rules. Immediately suspending all the Fiefcorp members licenses and making life a living nightmare for Natch. Nothing is what you expect and at every turn new dangers.

But its not just Natch's enemies that make things tougher. Natch gets into the act and figures a couple of things on his own. The Surina's are also at it and MultiReal is in deep danger.

I really want to read the next book right now.

Ben Babcock says

MultiReal picks up right where *Infoquake* leaves off. Natch has successfully demonstrated the revolutionary new product to the masses—and now the Defense and Wellness Council wants control. He refuses and goes on the run (several times) while his fiefcorp dissolves into bickering and bureaucratically-induced chaos. Oh, and infoquakes continue on the Data Sea.

As with many middle books in a trilogy, *MultiReal* is one endless spiral of bad luck for the protagonists. From the red tape and threats thrown at them by Magan Kai Lee to the deleterious effects of the black code on Natch, it seems like our heroes can't catch a break. Eventually, the stress snaps the bond between Natch and his second-in-command, Jara, who is disillusioned with his petty selfishness. With Jara in control of the fiefcorp and Natch essentially forced out, the two of them go their separate ways, with the spectre of MultiReal floating in the Data Sea like some kind of digital child caught in a divorce.

Edelman captures some of the tension and philosophical difficulties inherent in a government's pursuit to control new technologies. Len Borda makes a convincing zealot, one who believes that control is the only way to ensure stability. Like many real-life politicians, he fears the development of technologies or other innovations that he can't regulate. On the other hand, MultiReal *is* dangerous, because of how it controls what people perceive as reality, what they remember and how they react. Its usage takes a physical toll, and

it is not just a toy. This book is much clearer on what MultiReal does and how it can be used, and it's a little scary.

But it's not *that* scary, mostly because—as Natch tries to point out to Brone—it doesn't scale. There is just no way that everyone could have their own set of infinite realities; the computing power doesn't exist. Managing the infinitely branching realities of a single person seems mind-boggling enough to me. Similarly, MultiReal is a powerful weapon, but it is still limited. It might let someone dodge bullets, but they can only do that for so long. Eventually they will get exhausted and get back to square one.

Edelman manages nevertheless to get me thinking and to help me articulate my own philosophies. I came down strongly in the, “Release MultiReal to everyone, unlimited choice cycles!” camp, and my position did not waver. Information really does want to be free, in my opinion, so it is just a matter of time before that scenario becomes reality (and I mean *the* reality). Might as well get it over with. While I don't always see eye-to-eye with the libertarian ideals of limited government, there are moments in the history of innovation when government cannot effectively manage the social change precipitated by new technologies. All it can do is ride out the storm as best it can—or, failing that, fold in upon itself as society experiences the turmoil of revolution.

It would be nice to see that, or anything like that, happening here. Unfortunately, *MultiReal* is mostly talk. It is incredibly slow-burning—oh, there are plenty of action sequences, and a lot of plotting and strategizing on the part of both sides. Yet none of this seems to come to much. Natch drifts in and out of hiding; Jara and the fiefcorp debate how they should proceed without his leadership; Borda and Kai Lee alternately cackle and threaten each other. It's a maddeningly flat plot structure that leaves me simultaneously enthusiastic and frustrated! There were moments, such as when Natch held his finger on the button at the meeting of the Prime Committee, threatening to release MultiReal to the public, when I could cheer. For the most part, though, all I could manage was a resigned apathy.

And I can't say this book did much to improve my opinion of Natch. He's not a nice person. To be fair, Edelman showed us how he got that way in *Infoquake*. But I can't muster much in the way of admiration or respect. Plus, Natch is much more reactive in this book. He runs away, licks his wounds, makes quick decisions based on what other people try to do to him. There is little of that lateral-thinking fiefcorp master whose scheming got him to the number one spot on Primo's overnight. At least that Natch could move some pages!

MultiReal, like the first book in this series, is a fun science-fiction thriller that asks some good questions about how technology is changing our lives. It's definitely my cup of tea, and it presents the kind of deep implications of computers and posthumanism, the questions about governance and religion and autonomy that seem so topical these days. However, it doesn't stand out against the rest of the posthumanism, post-governance crowd, and wow me with its unique characters or extremely memorable twists and turns. It's a competent but not compelling example of its ilk—and I must say I'm interested in how the trilogy turns out, but I'm not getting my hopes up for any big surprises.

My reviews of the *Jump 225* trilogy:

← *Infoquake* | *Geosynchron* (forthcoming)

Karlo says

The book continues the interesting take on far future economics started in Infoquake. I didn't enjoy it as much as the first volume, but that might be because the initial excitement about the economics was what for me its major draw. Also, it might be the classic 'middle book' problem in that things are not resolved.

My only small note of concern was that the ability of Natch to manipulate the world so easily smacked at little too much of Heinlein's "Capable Man"; able to do anything when called upon. A world so fragile didn't seem plausible given how it had to rebuild from such destruction.

It was a fun read. Looking forward to the final book.

Aaron says

An improvement on the first, which I gave 3 and 1/2 stars to, but I can't bring myself to give it a full four stars. The characters were great, and, as with the first book, the future world Edelman has constructed is stunningly complex and chock-full of cool ideas. The author's writing skills were also much improved from the first book. The story, however, was not that compelling. A ton happens in the novel, but very little of the action is the result of the characters' own efforts. Most everything is happening to them, not because of them. I guess that should be expected in the middle volume of a three-book series, as it sets things up for the characters to kick some serious butt in the final book, which I will definitely read. At least, I better, since I purchased it almost a year ago -- my "to read" stack (or should I say "stacks") of books on my nightstand is getting high.

Liviu says

Excellent follow up to Infoquake. Picks up where Infoquake ends and focuses on the multi-sided battle for control of the new and potentially world changing MultiReal technology - for better or worse depending on who controls it and whose point of view you take.

Natch is still up to his old tricks and is one step ahead of most of his enemies, but can he stay one step ahead of his presumed allies?

Jara struggles to keep the Natch/Surina fiefcorp together and do "the right thing" - but what exactly is the right thing?

The leaders of the world are in-fighting as well as trying to keep upstarts at bay, while in the shadows obscure participants move.

I really loved MultiReal though it took me a little to get into it since it's been two years since Infoquake and the wonderful and very well drawn world of Natch, Jara and bio-logic programming is quite complex. There are lots of appendixes about it though so you can refresh your memory without opening your copy of Infoquake. The table is set for an exciting finish to the trilogy in the third volume.

Highly, highly recommended

Tim Thraeryn says

Second part of Edelman's "Jump 225" trilogy, follows the events described in the book "Infoquake". Edelman's story gets even more original in this one while maintaining the very real, honest, possible feel of the first book. The potential technologies outlined in this book are tantalizing, and it's understandable that the fiefcorps all want to gain total control over it or completely prevent it from seeing the light of day.

Alexandra Harris says

A captivating read but the story continues to disappoint. I enjoyed the context of the book much more than the story, such as organised religion, central government and elected committees, technologically enhanced society.

However, the story is plain annoying - it's slow, the plot is underdeveloped, and it's inconsistent too. In the 2nd book main characters have become spineless wusses, there is no good or evil, none of them have master-mind qualities. None of them have charisma, they are just bland.

Rob says

Jump 225 is one of those rare sequels that is **better** than the first book. I think with Infoquake David Edelman was still pretty raw in his writing. The book read more like a fast paced movie, and none of the characters were very well developed. It was seriously plot driven.

In MultiReal he seriously stepped up the writing quality. The plot is both deeper and broader. The action sequences are completely awesome. The characters are much more interesting. In all ways, this is a better book, and the best of the trilogy.

Critically, it not only maintains the cool factor of the world of the first book, but develops and expands it. I loved the world he created, and even more continued to love that it was Cyberpunk for Marketers :) What's not to love about that.

If you're in tech, and in particular in tech marketing, this series is an absolute must read.

Jeanne Boyarsky says

While I loved part 1, I "merely" enjoyed this one. I read it once, but didn't feel the need to do so a second time. I think I enjoyed the setting up of the world in part one and had already experienced it. I also felt like there was a lot of plot and less moving forward than parts 1 & 3. I waited to read part 3 to review this one for comparison.

Wendy says

Dear David Edelman,

Most people's eyes are not really sapphire blue. Please find a new way to describe them.

When you wrote this: "His clattering metaphors made her teeth ache." I felt a strong identification with it. That is not good.

When you write a sequel, you might consider picking up where your last book left off. Just a suggestion.

I was intrigued enough by Infoquake to pick up Multireal (at my library instead of the bookstore this time, as I was not wanting to shell out more money on the series). The first two chapters of Multireal reminded me of my frustration with your first book. I will not be finishing it, although I might look it up on Wikipedia to see how it all ends.

Best wishes,
A frustrated reader

Ove says

Review from my blog cybermage.se

If Infoquake was cyberpunk-business then Multireal is cyberpunk-politics.

I am afraid I didn't like Multireal as much as Infoquake. Maybe it is suffering from sequel sickness. Everything was new and fresh in the first book. David Louis Edelman invented a whole new cyberpunk-business kind of science fiction with Infoquake.

Maybe it is the character's helplessness. In Infoquake Natch and his team kicked the oppositions ass. Here the team crumbles, the Defense and Wellness Council foils them at every point, taking the fiefcorp from Natch, leaving Jara in charge. Natch himself only react. I am unhappy for Jara in this book, she was the only likable character in Infoquake, here she is more the object of others manipulation than being the actor herself, perfectly in line with the story mind you. But I liked the taking-charge Jara from the climax of Infoquake. I have hopes for her in the final book of the Jump 225 trilogy: Geosynchron.

Don't get me wrong, it is a great story, but I am not happy about our protagonists.

At the center of the story is a new technology Multireal, that allows users to iterate through possible outcomes of an action and choosing the one with the preferred outcome. Used as a weapon in war or as a tool for oppression it would be unstoppable. Using it in everyday life would be a game changer of world shattering proportions. Infoquake introduced the technology and Multireal is about who should be in charge of it. The Defense and Wellness Council wants to suppress it and maybe use it to take control of society. Against them is Natch and his tiny fiefcorp, Natch is not totally defenseless, he ruthlessly uses both friend and foes, not stopping at worldwide insurrection to archive his goals. He also have Margaret Surinas, the

inventor of Multireal, legacy on his side.

There are other players behind the scene and by it's side. The world is about to change and Luddite groups are on the march, increasing their attacks. Then there is old enemies. Natch have gone through life making enemy after enemy and never looking back. Now when he is playing for higher stakes than ever, those enemies will come back to haunt him.

There are no space battles in this book but there is a firefight of epic proportions. And the twists and turns the story takes are as interesting and thrilling as any space opera.

One of David's strong point is the world building, he creates a believable and complex future world. With well thought out institutions, government and technology as are further explained in the appendixes to the book.

Multireal is the middle book in a truly epic trilogy and if you are seriously into science fiction you should read it and it's prequel Infoquake because it is a game changer.

James Williams says

This is the second book in a trilogy. And it fills that space in the traditional fashion.

It doesn't start the story. Its predecessor took care of that. And the ending leaves all of the loose ends lying there. Loosely. One assumes this is so its sequel will have something to do.

But the third of the story told in *Multireal* is competent. There's little else to say that I haven't said about the first book in this trilogy, *Infoquake*. This book isn't better than that. But it's not worse.

I think the characters are not drawn as well in this sequel as they were in the first. But that could just be a consequence of the characters, though they do fine in a single novel, not really being up to the task of filling out an entire trilogy. It doesn't help that Natch (the most interesting and entertaining character by far) spends a good deal of time absent with others saying "Where's Natch?!".

High drama, it's not. But, it's mostly unsurprising. And that's not bad for light (almost fluffy) Sci-Fi. Is it?

Stuart Reid says

Excellent! Infoquake set the scene - a futuristic, corporate thriller of sorts - and Multireal takes the story much further.

The story follows Natch and his fiefcorp apprentices as they fight for control of Multireal. As with many middle-trilogy stories, the team is broken up, face peril at every turn, and find themselves struggling to define who they are becoming.

The best thing about the Jump 225 trilogy is the picture of the future Edelman has painted. Multireal itself is

a good example, a tool that lets it's users cycle through every combination of action and choosing the right one for the job. Of course, he cleverly creates controls for this software, and it's thrilling as its possibilities are uncovered. Throw in other concepts such as it's vision of the cybervers (multi) as well as the whole ultra-capitalism-after-the-fall-of-the-old-order stuff and it's a rollicking good read.

If you liked Infoquake, or even like "ideas" scifi and cyberpunk style stories, you'll love this.

Ryun says

When David Louis Edelman stormed the science fiction scene in 2006 with INFOQUAKE, he created a one-man subgenre: speculative business-management fiction. On that premise, it could have been the most boring novel ever published. At its heart, it was a story about an aspiring businessman's effort to create a product that would make him the most successful businessman ever, like every crappy biography about Donald Trump or Bill Gates or whoever.

But because of rigorous world-building, meticulous characterization and the way-awesome future technology he created, Edelman wrote a book in which every chance he took paid off handsomely. It was already pegged as part of the JUMP 225 trilogy, so sequels were a given. Enter MULTIREAL.

<http://www.bookgasm.com/reviews/sci-f...>
