



The Voices

F.R. Tallis

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In the scorching summer of 1976—the hottest on record—Christopher Norton, his wife Laura and their young daughter Faye settle into their new home in north London.

The faded glory of the Victorian house is the perfect place for Norton, a composer of film soundtracks, to build a recording studio of his own. But soon in the long, oppressively hot nights, Laura begins to hear something through the crackle of the baby monitor. First, a knocking sound. Then come the voices.

For Norton, the voices mark an exciting opportunity. Putting his work aside, he begins the project of a lifetime—a grand symphony incorporating the voices—and becomes increasingly obsessed with one voice in particular. Someone who is determined to make themselves heard . . .

The Voices Details

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Author : F.R. Tallis

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From Reader Review The Voices for online ebook

Leah says

Uses imagery and atmosphere to evoke an insidious foreboding that the reader *feels* long before it's acknowledged on a conscious level.

The Voices was the very definition of what I think of as psychological horror. The majority of the story's pages were devoted to its characters' inner thoughts, relationships with one another, and ins and outs of their careers. Accordingly, the pace, although consistent, was quite slow. Not as slow as a sloth, more a snail's pace. I'm a huge fan of the slow-burn style of horror, yet the numerous descriptions of how sound equipment worked tested my patience.

Given that the story was told in chronological order, each chapter a new week or a new month, and that the big climax happened during August 1976, around page 281 of the total 374-page novel, I have to assume Tallis wanted to explore marriage, parenting and ambition more than he wanted to tell a "ghost story." I definitely would've preferred this novel start at page 281 then went on from there for 300 pages, because the story of Edward Maybury was far more compelling, to me, than the deteriorating marriages of a bunch of narcissists. Seriously, what's to like about Christopher or Laura?!

All in all, not bad, but I would only recommend this one to *extremely* patient readers of psychological horror.

3 stars

Danielle (The Blonde Likes Books) says

This probably would have been a 4 star review if it weren't for the ending. I feel like I was left with a lot of unanswered questions...

Tressa says

SPOILERS!

What I love about British horror, especially from the seventies, is the slow build and the offhand remarks and actions of the characters that can be quite chilling; much US horror tends to rush the scary parts and beats one over the head with its gore and message (if there is one; does not apply to T&A horror).

The Voices is an odd book: it is good but not much in it is great. There are some things that happen that don't lead anywhere (Christopher's affair), and some things that aren't cleared up (the dirty shoes of Simon and Christopher). And I never got to know the little girl very well, so didn't feel anxious about the danger she was in. And the ending is a little confusing. At first I thought maybe the mother is nuts and killed the girl, but then remembered that the stairs were obstructed by the garden and had just been uncovered. (I listened to this on audio while doing other tasks and realize thinking back that when I hear a story, I tend to miss details.) If the supernatural killed the girl, did we need to "see" the gory details? I just assumed Christopher and his

daughter were "absorbed" into the house a la Jack Torrence in *The Shining*.

Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says

Okay... Well... I don't know what to say. This succeeded on some levels but failed on others. I was rapt but the ending doesn't make any sense. No, no, you don't get away with giving such a vague ending. There was no explanation at all. No reasons why. We're not told what happens to Laura either and why them? That makes no sense either.

But this is horror that kept me rapt for much of this book so I gave it three stars. Decent horror, all in all, is really hard to find these days.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.blogspot.com/201...>

To some, *The Voices* is going to be just another haunted house ghost story. To others, it will be one of the most terrifying books you'll ever read. I'll admit I came very close to not reading this, simply because the novel's description made it sound much too scary. As a parent of a toddler, I had a feeling this one might cut to close for comfort and give me nightmares. But true to form, in the end I just couldn't resist a good horror.

The year is 1976, the hottest summer in the United Kingdom since records began, and Christopher Norton and his wife Laura and baby girl Faye had just moved into their a grand old Victorian era home in the desirable neighborhood of Hampstead. A composer by trade, Christopher spends much of his time in his attic studio recording music, and before long he starts to hear strange voices on his tapes. Around the same time, Laura begins to notice knocking sounds from the baby monitor and baby Faye seemingly to babble at something unseen...

Haunted houses have long been a horror fan favorite, and whether you love it or hate it, they're here to stay. The reason why certain tropes tend to stick around is because they're so effective – if you can't feel safe in your own home, then where can you? – and though I've read plenty of books and seen many more movies based around this idea, I don't seem to be tired of it yet. It's interesting because the narrative structure of *The Voices* actually reminds me so much of watching a movie, with regards to the use of familiar themes or the way particular events have a very cinematic quality to them. The book is also intensely atmospheric, heightening the creep factor and delicious sense of dread.

In truth, *The Voices* is a rather uncomplicated novel. But the author, being a clinical psychologist, knows just what to say to make you squirm. Tallis builds his story around a very believable, very flawed couple, giving them a depth of emotion not often found in characters in this genre. Christopher and Laura might not be parents of the year, but their thoughts and reactions towards the strange happenings in their house are so realistic you just can't help but feel a connection. There were a couple scenes that really shook me up, because 1) they involved a baby, and 2) I know how awful it feels to worry for your child. There were things here straight out of my worst nightmare.

But the haunting is also just one single aspect of *The Voices*, a piece of a larger story with a complex web of

relationship dynamics. I liked that there was more substance to this novel than just the horror elements, and in fact, my only complaint is that these minor plot threads weren't more cohesive and connected to the overall picture. There were a lot of other things going on with Christopher and Laura's lives outside their creepy old house, and while I got the feeling they were all relevant to the story, I just couldn't figure out how. A little more direction would have probably made for a tidier conclusion, but I was still overall very impressed at the well-roundedness of the novel.

If you're in the mood for a good ghost story or a classic haunting, *The Voices* is a very good choice. It's one of the more memorable and chilling horror novels I've read of this type, and a genuinely freaked me out in more than a couple instances.

Claire says

Well, this was a huge waste of my time.

The author clearly thinks that replacing words with their thesaurus counterparts constitutes good writing. It doesn't. I enjoy reading, but the amount of unnecessarily complicated words really threw me off. I don't mind high language, in fact I enjoy it, but not when a simple word would do the job twice as well!

The plot left a lot to be desired. Nothing really happened until the end, and that was very 'wham, bam, thank you, Ma'am'. The characters are flat and unlikable. The ending predictable. Nothing was 'wrapped up' or explained, it just left unanswerable questions.

That's it. A dull and lifeless review for a dull and lifeless book. I'd skip it if I were you.

Holly Vane says

Oh my God! Where to start....

First off spotted this in my local bookshop and sounding like my thing, bought it. Worst thing i ever did! What drivel! It's my policy to not put other people's work down but this didn't just suck! It made me flippin' angry! None of the characters are likable, but you do start to feel for Laura and Faye for having a pig like Christopher in their lives!

The supernatural was more of a background story and i found it long winded and it droned on and on about useless things, we didn't need to know.

All in All this is the worst book I've ever read and wouldn't recommend it or the author!

Jade Hoggins says

Clunky exposition, ham-handed anvilicious lead up, awkward dialogue and actual spelling mistakes, this would have benefited from much more vigorous editing.

The only cringing I did was in response to the writing.

Dark Matter says

This book was reviewed on Dark Matter Zine; for more reviews, interviews and articles, go to Dark Matter Zine. Alternatively, this link is just to Dark Matter Zine's reviews.

A review by C J Dee

It's the summer of 1976 in London and it is sweltering. Christopher Norton has just moved into a brand new home with his wife Laura and baby daughter Faye. At first the family is happy in their new home but strange things begin to happen. Then come the voices. The voices of those who were but are no longer ...

When I first read the blurb for this novel, I told Nalini it was a book that I needed in my life. I tell her this about most books that sound deliciously spooky, so I was thrilled when it arrived to be reviewed. My enthusiasm was well rewarded because *The Voices* downright gave me the heebie jeebies.

The Voices has a very interesting plot. Has the "family move into a new house and get harassed by spirits" thing been done? Of course it has. Does Tallis's novel give it some chilling new twists? You betcha!

One of the things I loved about *The Voices* was the interesting plot twists the author has managed to entwine. Some of the routes Tallis takes his readers down were so unexpected that they caught me completely unaware.

What made *The Voices* even more enticing was the period it was set in, the 1970s. The 1970s are not so far removed from modern times to disassociate the reader but still leave the characters without the convenience of modern technology. Although in this case a mobile phone might just add to their problems as the spirits use electronic devices to communicate.

The time period also allows for other plot devices that simply wouldn't be accepted as the norm in today's society. Blatant and unabashed male chauvinism abounds in *The Voices* but not because the men are bad people, they are just products of their time. As a result, Laura won't speak up about her concerns for fear of sounding hysterical and is meek in the face of an authority figure who infers that her concerns are all in her head. These points sound like they would detract from the quality of *The Voices*, but in fact they only add to it. As with the helplessness of not having modern technology during a crisis, not having anyone listen to or really acknowledge Laura's concerns only adds to the suspense. I wanted the budding feminist to be more persistent throughout *The Voices*, to stand up for herself and her fears, but it just wasn't in her.

The diversity of characters in *The Voices* was fascinating and impressive. Weaved throughout the ghost story are narratives on homosexuality, infidelity, mental illness, obsession and feminism. This is done in such a way that it comes together in harmony.

If you enjoy movies like *The Conjuring*, *Paranormal Activity*, or *Poltergeist* and want to read something with a similar vibe, I would recommend starting with *The Voices*.

Paula Cappa says

I have to say this novel is highly suspenseful and mysterious. It certainly falls into the "quiet horror" subgenre, which I like very much. Personally though, I found Tallis' style of writing, his formal narrative distance of "storytelling" failed to go deep enough for me. As a reader, I like to be inside the skin of the characters and feel their fears and emotions with them on the page. With Chris and Laura, I felt more like an observer, watching from the outside as they struggled through their marriage problems, the supernatural events, and trying to protect their baby daughter Faye. I read this book in two sittings, so it does grab you and move fast despite the subplots that didn't quite gel for me. I disagree that this is a ghost story. This is EVIL that goes beyond hauntings. Lots of themes here: infidelity, feminism, mental illness, the power of evil, magic, isolation, drugs. As for the ending, OMG, very disturbing. And I confess to being very unhappy with it. This was my first time reading F.R. Tallis. I'm glad I tried him out.

Adam Nevill says

Continuing in the fine vein he set up in *The Sleep Room*, Tallis invests various modern periods with the true spirit of the Gothic - seventies London here. Always a compelling scientific angle in his stories, matched by enigmatic suggestions of the supernatural. One of the best modern writers of horror novels in my book.

Diane S ? says

3.5 what a fine story teller Tallis is as he has proved with his Liebermann series. This is a stand alone, about a house, a couple and their young infant. From the beginning things are just not right with the house, husband and wife concealing many of the events from the other. Not horrifically scary but insidiously creepy. As the husband learns of the magician who had owned the house previously, the wife slowly deteriorates.

The last half of the book takes a turn I was not expecting and the ending was a complete surprise, a terrible one. Again Tallis does not hold our hand in providing the answers but leaves the reader to figure out their own conclusion as to what happened.

ARC from publisher.

Helen Christer says

Disappointing.. thought the story initially was good but yet the writer seemed to loose the momentum of the plot and be drawn into unnecessary side stories which added nothing to the main story.

Lynda says

I love a good paranormal story but this is not one of them.

Set back in the very hot summer of 1976 the spooky house is bought and renovated by a young couple.

The guy is into music and sets up a sound studio.. his job is music for films.

The girl who was a model has her baby.. all nice and cosy up to now.

Then mumble voices on the sound studio tapes and on the baby monitor.

Guy thinks "great make music to dead peoples voices"!

Girl thinks.. "oh my baby is in danger"!

The story then falls apart for me...but everyone has their own paranormal tastes.

I like my horror stories to make a little sense.

Ginger Nuts says

Horror while being a genre that is in a constant state of innovation, is also a genre that likes its staples. Just go and check the shelves, you will find numerous zombie novels, and numerous vampire books. You will also find what is probably the Granddaddy of all horror staples, the Haunted House story. When you consider the heritage and the vast period of time that these books have occupied a space on your dusty bookshelf it is surprising that these books still have the power to unsettle a reader. Perhaps it is because they deal with a real fear. Our home is our castle, and the fear of it being invaded by either natural or supernatural forces is one that sits deep down in everyone's subconscious. You may not be aware of it but this fear is there in all of us, and when a book or a film manages to tap in that fear, and elicit an icy chill that rises in the pit of your stomach, then you know you are onto a winner.

It is 1976 the country is in the middle of a scorching heat wave. Film score composer Christopher Norton and his family have just moved into their new home. An oppressive Victoria house, a house which Christopher believes will be the ideal setting for Christopher to build his own recording studio.

Not long after moving in a knocking sound begins, Christopher's wife Laura can hear them through the spaces in the static on their baby monitor, Christopher is convinced the knocks are just an artefact the old house, then the voices start. Christopher starts to become obsessed by them starts to work on a symphony one that will feature the recordings of the voices. But is his obsession and recordings drawing the voices source ever closer to their home. Is he inviting something terrible and frightening into his home

Most horror doesn't really scare the reader, yes it can shock, and it can disgust, it can upset a reader.

However a lot of the time this is achieved by simply being gross, by going to the lowest common denominator. When this done right it these books are whole lot of fun to read. For a book to be terrifyingly scary it needs to move away from the cheap scare tactics, and through the use of an ever increasing sense of dread, draw the reader into the book to the point where they are completely immersed in the book, then subtly play on the readers fears.

The Voices, is one of these books, it is a masterful example of a horror novel that has the ability to really scare the reader. Superbly written, The Voices, draws the reader into a slow burner of a novel, where, thanks to perfectly pitched sense of ever building dread will chill the reader to bone.

The use of the scorching hot summer of 1976 is a backdrop to the novel is an excellent narrative tool, the hot and oppressive nights serve as a perfect backdrop on which to hang this claustrophobic and suffocating story.

This narrative twist really helps to up the fear quotient. Another way in which the narrative excels is in the use of the voices. The way in which the voices ever encroaching march into our reality mirrors the increasing distancing of Christopher and his wife's relationship is a joy to read. The voices are talking but our protagonists are not. A man who can communicate emotions through the power of his music is unable to communicate properly with his family. When the actual source and back story of the voices is revealed the chill factor of this book goes into overload as Tallis preys on another extreme fear of a parent.

Relentless in its ability to pile on the chills The Voices is one of those novels that has a real ability to scare. As you get ever drawn into the story it won't be long until that mysterious creaking noise, your house has been making for years, will start to have you praying that you left the upstairs hall light on. The haunted house novel has a new owner, why don't you knock on his door, I think you find him to be a perfect host.

- See more at:

Ginger Nuts of Horror
