



Mr. Spaceship

Philip K. Dick

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A human brain-controlled spacecraft would mean mechanical perfection. This was accomplished, and something unforeseen: a strange entity called . . . Mr. Spaceship

Mr. Spaceship Details

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From Reader Review Mr. Spaceship for online ebook

Allison Barilone says

• 5 ?? Honestly didn't know what to expect when I started reading but man was I NOT disappointed! My second Philip K. Dick short story and I think I'm gonna keep reading him. It's a quick read and I highly recommend it for fans of sci-fi and it's easy enough to understand for non-sci-fi readers as well. Don't miss it! •

Erik Angle says

Pretty early on you can guess where the central premise of the story is headed, and I was happy to be along for the ride...then Philip K. Dick really surprised me by getting the twist out of the way early and moving into territory that I had failed to foresee. The social commentary was very interesting (tho I have the bias of already agreeing with the message), and I appreciated the usage of the human-brain-in-a-robot-body schtick in a new, non-humanoid context.

I reserve 5-star status not just for those stories which I like most, but those which really make me think, and may actually affect me in the long run. *Mr. Spaceship* matches those criteria, and also serves as being a quintessential 1950s PKD story.

Emre Han Ata says

enfes.

Paul Jr. says

An entertaining little piece, but I give this one only three stars because the interior logic of the story just doesn't track for me. The lead suggests a particular old man for an experiment because he remembers him well. But later, when things go awry, he states he didn't really remember that much about the old man. It just didn't make sense to me. Still an enjoyable read and while the ending may seem predictable today, it was far from such when first published.

Velma says

"Open the pod bay door, Hal."
"I can't do that Dave."

Kinda like that, but kinda not. OK, not very much at all, just one scene reminded me of 2001.

Interesting, but (probably due space limitations; ha, get it? I made a pun), a bit of a weak ending. Readable, with a modicum of the PKD wit to boot.

Sarah Cavar says

A touching story that rings as true today as it ever has. I'd love to study this through the lens of the self & other, and especially through disability & embodiment.

It's allusion to the relationship between all of humanity and all Being at large, and the intimate, interpersonal relationships in our lives is really brilliant — although to call it “ahead of its time” is to do PKD's forward-thinkingness a disservice, as it was also a product of its era.

Scott Harris says

One of Dick's short stories, *Mr. Spaceship* is a fitting account of the idea of merging man and machine, which has subsequently reoccurred in various science fiction pieces. In this case, it is an observation about the extension of the human lifespan and the god-like status accorded to one in charge of significant technology. Lots of interesting themes but the ending is a little underdeveloped

Tristram says

Brain Teaser

Mr. Spaceship sounds like an avuncular enough title, but this short story, which was published in 1953 in the magazine “Imagination” – a title that does full justice to Philip K. Dick – is very unsettling and probably one of the first to feature the idea of cyborgs, i.e. hybridizing man and machine.

The inhabitants of Terra, i.e. we, are, once again, at war, this time with a species of extraterrestrials called the Yuk. Now, the Yuk are a culture in which technological progress is not based on machinery, but on employing living organisms in new ways, and so the minefield our shapeships are meant to cross consists of living creatures, which make very intelligent mines, able to get the better of – and give the worst to – any Terran spacecraft by anticipating its moves. Our side counters by building a new spaceship that is steered by a human brain, and the brain that was chosen was that of a professor of mathematics who once taught our protagonist Kramer. The professor, mentally fit as a fiddle, but on the verge of death due to old age, readily complied with allowing them to use his brain under condition that they give him unlimited access to all its control systems, which they – bent on vanquishing the Yuk – do. What they create this way, getting more than they originally bargained for, is a super-intelligent starship, pursuing its own agenda – and kidnapping Kramer and his ex-wife in the process – and the proof that after all it will be the human brain that asserts its superiority over the machine by dominating and exploiting it, and not the other way around.

(view spoiler)

Like *The Defenders*, *Mr. Spaceship* starts with a breath-taking idea, but did not convince me completely with regard to its underlying message.

Estelle says

Very nice short story, well paced and dealing with interesting themes, but the ending kinda threw me off. I didn't expect PKD to pull the cheesy card on us, but he did! While I would have preferred a more ambiguous and thought provoking conclusion to the story, being totally surprised was refreshing. Yay for happy endings and second chances... I guess!

Mike Walmsley says

Creates a powerful and emotive image in the mind, but is spoiled by a forced final act. A book which might have been better without explanation.

John says

Earth is at the losing end of a war with an alien race, called Yuks, who are able to traverse the universe without spaceships. To turn the tides, Earth's military engineer Kramer devises a method of installing a human brain into a man-made mechanical spaceship.

Professor Thomas, who is in the declining years of his life, volunteers to transplant his brain into the spaceship and to strike at the enemy. However, after brain transplant, Professor Thomas kidnaps Kramer and Kramer's ex-wife Dolores.

Instead of war, Professor Thomas decided on a regeneration of the human race, with Kramer and Dolores cast as "Adam & Eve", on a far away planet where the human race would re-evolve sans the cultural proclivity to war.

Other than the ending of the story feeling a bit rushed and "cheesy", it is short and straight forward, and the story is an enjoyable read in-between longer novels.

My rating: ★★☆☆ (3 out of 5 stars)

Michael says

This is one of those stories that is written in such a way that, although it seems simple, it captures your imagination right away. Not a lot of detail or description is necessary, because you fill them in yourself as you read; a sign that the storyteller is a true master.

The setting is an undetermined point in the future. Earth has made contact with aliens on a planet orbiting the nearby Proxima Centauri. However, these aliens are not friendly, and mankind is soon at war. We find we are at a disadvantage, as these aliens are much more advanced. They employ weapons which seem to be alive; ships and mines which decide when to attack, or to act spontaneously and without obvious pattern, which confuses our robot controlled vessels.

An idea is hatched to connect a human brain to a spaceship, so that we would be on some sort of equal footing with our enemy. Though experimental, a donor is found, and the experiment proves successful. Until, that is, the brain-controlled spaceship proves that it still has a mind of its own, and it's goals aren't exactly in harmony with Earth's.

This is a quick read, but a thoroughly enjoyable story with rich characters.

Peter Derk says

Philip K. Dick.

The Pluses:

- Tons of great ideas.
- Still mined for movies on the regular.
- One of the better beards.

The Minuses:

- Prose a little weak.
- Dialogue downright tough.

I drove to PKD's grave not that long ago. It's an hour, maybe 90 minutes from my house. I took my brother's car because my own car wouldn't make it. Or, even worse, would make it and then not make it back, leaving me stranded in eastern Colorado where I'd have to find a new life either farming or working at the Dairy Queen. THE Dairy Queen, mind you.

He's buried next to his twin sister who died about a month after birth. It took me a while to find the grave, exactly. It would seem that a lot of graveyards aren't really that well manned, and you can tell they eventually just start cramming in the dead by the way the roads and plots spiral around in a way that's clearly not thought out from the start. I had another graveyard experience once, and it confirmed some thoughts that the people who run the graveyard aren't exactly on top of things. Basically, some groundskeepers were explaining to me how much they liked flat grave markers because you could mow right over them instead of

around, and how people get all pissed off when you scratch a headstone with a trimmer. They also explained that they hate when people leave shit because, well, they just have to throw it all away. So to them, the flowers or the teddy bears or whatever are no better than jamming a Butterfinger wrapper into the dirt in front of a grave.

Maybe it takes a certain kind of person to work at a graveyard.

PKD's grave had a stack of pens in front of it. I guess people leave a pen there, which I did too. When in Rome, do whatever the hell it is Romans do to graves, right?

Although I'm always ready to talk a little smack about his lines, the man had a shitload of pretty great ideas. And his prose didn't always blow me away, but he did get across some pretty wild ideas, so you have to give him some credit there.

There are quite a few 30 page Philip K. Dick Kindle books for free out there, and I recommend taking a look at one if you'd like to get an idea of what I'm talking about, or more importantly, what he was talking about.

And at times you'll see his endings coming. I'm thoroughly convinced that this is because the man has been so endlessly ripped off by the genre of sci-fi that it's hard to separate his work from the generalities that can show up in the genre.

Gary says

A theory of war with some creative twists.

Bill Kerwin says

Seven years before the coining of the word "cyborg," eight years before the publication of Anne McCaffrey's short story "The Ship Who Sang," Philip K. Dick published "Mr. Spaceship" in the magazine *Imagination* (1953). It tells the story of how, during a war with the planet of the "Yuks", a people who use highly sophisticated life-forms as weapons, a research team headed by engineer Philip Kramer attempts to craft a spaceship capable of comparable subtlety and maneuverability, a spaceship united with a human brain. And the donor chosen to provide that brain? Kramer's kindly old mathematics professor Dr. Michael Thomas (who, it turns out, has some interesting ideas of his own).

This is a straightforward science fiction tale, with a sprinkling of romance fiction thrown in for good measure. It is far from Dick's weirdest, and a good way from his best, but it is also a thoroughly enjoyable professional entertainment.
