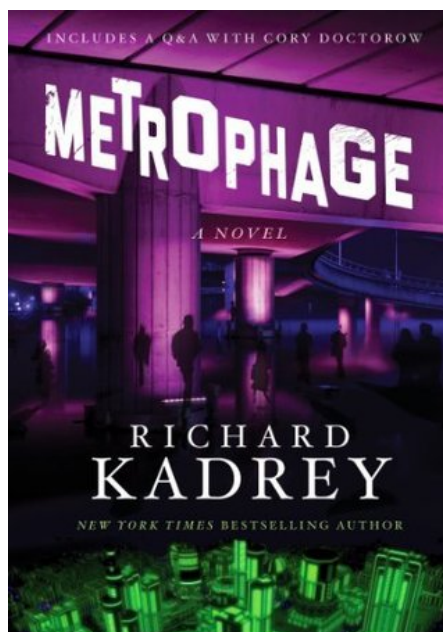




Metrphage: A Novel

Richard Kadrey

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Metrophage: A Novel Richard Kadrey

New York Times bestselling author Richard Kadrey's first novel—the cult classic dystopian cyberpunk tale—now back in print after twenty years in a special signed, collectible edition.

Welcome to the near future: Los Angeles in the late 21st century—a segregated city of haves and have nots, where morality is dead and technology rules. Here, a small group of wealthy seclude themselves in gilded cages. Beyond their high security compounds, far from their pretty comforts, lies a lawless wasteland where the angry masses battle hunger, rampant disease, and their own despair to survive.

Jonny was born into this Hobbesian paradise. A street-wise hustler who deals drugs on the black market—narcotics that heal the body and cool the mind—he looks out for nobody but himself. Until a terrifying plague sweeps through L.A., wreaking death and panic. And no one, not even a clever operator like Jonny, is safe.

His own life hanging in the balance, Jonny must risk everything to find the cure—if there is one.

The book will include a Q & A with Cory Doctorow.

Metrophage: A Novel Details

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Author : Richard Kadrey

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From Reader Review *Metrophage: A Novel* for online ebook

Danigerous says

I started this with a little bit of apprehension. It said it was the first published novel of Richard Kadrey's. Not that there is anything bad about it, and I'm not implying that being the first one it's supposed to be bad, but sometimes when you have read some of the more famous works of a certain author, the earlier not so popular ones somehow pale in comparison.

It's interesting how all the earlier pre-Sandman Slim novels all seem to be evolutionary steps towards the development of the James Stark character. Jonny seems like the original prototype and then Spyder Lee goes one step further in the direction towards the final image of Stark. And this one is also based in post-apocalyptic/dystopian L.A. (or Last Ass as it is dubbed) as in the Sandman Slim series. Also I couldn't help but make some sort of a parallel Ice = Candy and Sumi = Alice, but that maybe is me overdoing it a little. It also had some parts that were similar to Johnny Mnemonic with its references to Yakuza and the overall Japanese-themed references. Whereas his later novels, namely 'Butcherbird' and the Sandman Slim series are more urban fantasy, 'Metrophage' is more high-tech, therefore closer to the cyberpunk genre. It, definitely, is not lacking in action and plot twists. All in all, I'd say it was a pretty good first novel for Kadrey.

DJ says

What was that? Seriously, I'm asking...

Someone is going to have to tell me how to put images in my reviews because this one needs an image of Doc at the white board explaining to Marty that if you go into the future from this alternate 1985 we would be in the future of this crazy alternate 1985...Back to the Future II.

Which is why I added a star. For Michael J Fox and the ten year old me...

So this is supposed to be a punk dystopian story from 1989. And while a few things were brought up like the hologram everything (again that Back to the Future ii Jaws...In October of this year...) Crips and Bloods...and a few things I can glob onto as being late 80s early 90s, it was more a drug induced rambling tale that made less sense than a rubik's cube instruction manual. There are groups upon groups upon groups of gangs in this future, acid rain (do we even talk about that anymore?), space watchers and geez...I think I got so lost in there I couldn't tell if I was walking a straight line or in circles.

Should you read it? Maybe if your brain is great at separating out what's necessary from what's tedium. Maybe if you want Johnny Mneumonic meets Total Recall meets Predator meets Tank Girl meets hover cars meets end of the world events that make earth a super crappy place to live. Maybe if you're high and you'd find meaning...Otherwise...I say opt for something that has either stood the test of time, or something with a story line you can hold on to.

This just wasn't it for me. I'm kinda bummed. From the reviews I read, I had high hopes of experiencing something other than confusion. *heavy sigh* Time for something rom-commy and fun until I can pick the next different book...or I can unscare myself to crack open that Shining by Stephen King again.

Mark says

I've been reading and enjoying Kadrey's Sandman Slim novels recently, but I wasn't familiar with any of his earlier books. To my surprise, this book was sitting on a shelf in my office. I must have bought it years ago with several other New Ace Science Fiction Specials. Published in 1988, Metrophage is set in a hellish 21st century Los Angeles. With Japanese, Mexican and Middle Eastern corporations and oil cartels in control of a drug-addicted, modified populace, nearly every character is thinking about survival and little else. It's a bleak look our future, with an unsettling ending, in that nearly all the characters we might want to care about are dead and Jonny, who's been drifting with the tide, trying to make sense of what's happened around him, has been picked up by another wave and is heading out of town. Kadrey's story got me thinking. Are we almost in his hell?

Grace says

A very enjoyable read.

Timothy says

I enjoyed Kadrey's Sandman Slim novel as a whole ad well as the main character. Wanting to see what else he had penned, I added Metrophage to my read list. Unfortunately, after having read the book, I can say that I am sorely disappointed.

The main character is, as Easy says, an a**hole. Easy being one himself can vouch for that. Unfortunately, he's not a likeable a**hole, either. For most of the book I never really found myself caring about what happened to him. I initially felt bad for him when terrible thing after terrible thing chewed him up and spit him out of only because the author deemed it to be good. After a while, however, I felt nothing for him and his cynical stupidity. Most of what was wrong was his own fault.

Then there is the fact that everyone and their momma seems to what a piece of this guy... for no good reason! Except for a couple of "twists" towards the end, in every other dealing Jonny is special because the author said so.

The book overall was a pretty easy read and so I powered through it pretty quickly (in what free time I have). Unfortunately, nobody never put a bullet between his eyes as I was hoping for by the end. Even the ending was lackluster, going out with a fizzle instead of coming to any kind of satisfying conclusion to things.

All in all, if I hadn't seen what an amazing job Kadrey had done with Sandman Slim, I would definitely think twice about reading anything by him.

Sara Lastine says

The cyberpunk novel, Metrophage, by Richard Kadrey shows the life of Jonny, the cliché bounty hunter street punk that seems to roam every street in a cyberpunk world. He finds himself wrapped up in the affairs of the organization he used to work for, the Committee for Public Health, and finds himself torn from his mundane bounty hunter life to a spiraling adventure.

Despite this being the main focus, it is almost drowned out by a backdrop of gangs and cartels, aliens and drug lords. Even in the early chapters, we hear talk of the alpha rats and the zombies.

This is quite common in cyberpunk literature. Street culture is, of course, as shown by the name, a major part

of this genre.

The best way to describe a *Metrophage* would be, confusing. It tells of so many street cultures, gangs and cartels and alien colonies and past wars. It brings up plot points, only to forget about them.

It is an entertaining read, but the backdrop draws away from the story itself. In cyberpunk, there is a fine line between immersing the reader in your world, and drowning them with so many obscure details that they don't know who the main character is.

Metrophage leaped off this balance beam with a running start. It explained opso many minute details that I felt to be reading a history book. A badly written history book that doesn't explain anything's significance. *Metrophage* is a good read, but many times I had to reread a page because I was so focused on what this gang is up to that I forgot what Jonny was doing.

The cyberpunk novel *Metrophage* by Richard Kadrey tells a great story with plenty of twists and turns, but the story he was trying to tell is drowned out by the world he is trying to weave.

Simon Mcleish says

The problem with cyberpunk as a subgenre of science fiction is that there were too few top class writers involved. Apart from William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (and perhaps K.W. Jeter), it would be hard now to name another cyberpunk writer from its heyday, the mid eighties. The influence of the genre - which is considerable - is really the influence of Gibson and Sterling, together with that of the film *Bladerunner*.

Kadrey's first novel is one of the forgotten cyberpunk also-rans. It is told from the point of view of a drug dealer in decaying Los Angeles, who gets caught up in the events which surround an epidemic of a new virus rather like leprosy which is decimating the city. There are naturally clear parallels with the AIDS scare, at its height at the time of writing, but Kadrey doesn't really have anything of interest to say about contemporary events, something which prevents his novel being first class.

Like many first novels, *Metrophage* wears its influences on its sleeve, and it is actually quite interesting to catalogue them as you read it. The principal immediate influence is of course William Gibson, and the earlier writers who helped form Gibson are many of them clearly direct influences as well, from William S. Burroughs to Raymond Chandler. The whole coverage of AIDS and especially suspicions that it originated in a laboratory is the one thing without which the novel could not have been written, though earlier plague themed science fiction such as *The Andromeda Strain* probably plays a part.

Metrophage is not a great novel, but (for the unsqueamish) it is an enjoyable read.

Laci says

Not sure about the rating. Maybe it could be bumped up a bit? Dunno. Wasn't bad, but wasn't stellar, either.

Christina says

What the freakin heck is this? I don't even... Okay seriously this was awful. There was a plot in here but in

the end it didn't feel like it mattered one bit. Strike one. I certainly hope he writes better stuff than this.

Craig Todd says

Maybe more of an upper 3.x score. Many have criticized the lack of character development, comparing badly to other cyberpunk novels by Gibson, Sterling, and Cadigan (excellent!), but I think that a tad unfair as character development, as far as extras go, was never really present in other cyberpunk tales. Many characters were just concepts, or ideas, like much of rest of the story. Cyberpunk novels mostly named but usually never really described the tech, the people, etc., like stream of consciousness science.

This book does appear somewhat dated (this edition was a 20 year after-the-fact re-release) in many parts, the power player nations, the technology (tape players and the like), and the tale is obfuscated by a plot twist which is repeated too often.

It was an okay story, edgy and violent, but contained no characters who generated any real empathy. In the end it was just...so that happened.

John says

I got about halfway through and found myself begrudging the idea of carrying on, so I decided to call it quits. It had some good ideas but ultimately the lack of characters that stuck around long enough to get invested in really hurt its chances of making an impact!

AH says

*You can read this book online on Goodreads. This is a re-release of Richard Kadrey's first book.

Josiah Hawkins says

Technology surrounds us everywhere, as I write this review there are two other laptops in the room, a television, a tablet, and a smart phone. If we leave this room and expand to the whole house you'll find three more TVs, another computer, another tablet, two other smart phones, a Blu-Ray player, a PlayStation 3 and 4, and three iPod's. This is the head-space that we live in now, a world so steeped in technology that it permeates our entire life and will only continue to do so as we relentlessly move forward.

It is an advanced version of our world that *Metrophage* lives in, a world of virtual reality and pleasure, of instant gratification, of ultra violence, ultra drugs, augmented bodies, and a ruined government. It is a result of this tireless world building that elevates *Metrophage* beyond that of your average Science Fiction or Cyberpunk novel, but the world building alone cant make up for its short comings.

I do want to stress that Mr. Kadrey has done an exceptional job crafting the world that *Metrophage* lives in. The governmental climate was very interesting, the history of The Committee and it's war on the drug trade in Los Angeles, the various drug lords, and all of the technology and inventions that Mr. Kadrey brings into the world. The biggest problem that this book has is its characters, outside of the main character, Johnny, no one really has much substance, they all seem to exist just to fill roles in the life of our protagonist.

No one really gets enough time to develop because the plot is always moving, we see some really great outlines that get developed for our characters but they are never really fleshed out enough to make me care about them. In particular I didn't feel anything for the sense of longing that Johnny had over the two women in his life, we hear about the conflict they had with one another and their problems but none of it is explained why. I don't know why Johnny loves Sumi and Ice so much and I don't know why they need to be near one another, and these characterization issues are present among almost everyone in the novel except for the protagonist.

The other problem is a lack of focus, Mr. Kadrey has so many plot threads running that I really don't understand what is going on sometimes. The novel starts out simply enough with Johnny being tasked to bring a drug lord in to the Committee, but then we hear about a group of aliens that have taken over the moon, a revolution to dethrone the Committee and release the death grip it has on Los Angeles, and it isn't until really far into the novel that the main conflict is even introduced. By the time that conflict comes to the forefront so much else is going on that it can be very hard to understand just what is presented in front of you and how it all fits together.

Even as I write this review I'm not entirely sure what actually happened, how different groups fit together, and just how the conflict came to be. These are really glaring issues and the way the book ends gives me no actual resolution, it was just disappointing and made me feel terrible. Don't get me wrong, those kinds of endings can be fantastic, just look at *Gone Girl* for example. But the difference here is that *Metrophage's* ending is hollow, it has no real resolution of any kind, nothing was solved, nothing was gained, all that exists at the book's finale is loss seemingly for the sake of loss.

I give this book two stars because the setting is amazing, and the things that fill it are incredible. My writing mentor once told me that a book is like a snow globe, the setting is the glass sphere, the buildings and politics and technology are the buildings, and the people are the statues inside. This snow globe is beautiful to look at but a rapture has happened, and someone has taken all of the people.

Dan says

Probably the cheesiest book I've ever read.

Helina says

I want to start off saying that I really like Richard Kadrey's other works. I'm a huge fan of his Sandman Slim and Coop series, as well as his other one-shots like *Butcher Bird* and *Dead Set*. That said, I didn't care for this book at ALL.

The characters are one dimensional and we learn almost nothing about them-- including our main character Johnny, whose personality seems to be entirely comprised of "cynical drug addict who hates everybody and is continually crapped on by the world"-- which COULD work if there was anything remotely interesting about him. Unfortunately, Johnny is as bland as toast.

He's an ex Committee worker (dystopian regime killer-cop-enforcer type deal) but quit because dealing drugs with bad guys is easier on his conscience. He apparently knows everybody in town because everybody is buying, and his only friends seem to be his girlfriends (one of which has been MIA) and (revealed later) one of the smuggler/drug lords. This is basically all we learn about his past and his present relationships. We

don't really learn anything about his personality even through the story, or if we do, it's contradictory. One second he says how he hates killing, the next he's killing people for no reason. He hates the current corruption in the system, but he scoffs at anyone trying to change it and at the first sign of trouble, he's ready to bail town. This is probably meant to make him look conflicted, but it just comes off wishy-washy.

This is doubly irritating because everyone else in the narrative seems to think he is hot stuff and is trying to get their hands on him. It is not until the very end of the book (literally, like the last chapter) that it's finally revealed why two of the parties involved think it important to keep him alive, but before that it made otherwise pragmatic and cut-throat characters look uncharacteristically empathetic or stupid. Characters crawl out of the woodwork to aid Johnny, but even taking out the aforementioned two who are In On The Secret, there are still too many who have no reason to care about this guy's well-being go to great lengths to help him (looking at you, Groucho). Like, this world is built up as being pitiless and cynical, but there's too many random people showing up to help this schmuck.

In an effort at worldbuilding, Kadrey has all kinds of strange, near-post-apocalyptic-dystopian cyberpunk aspects, but while some are used to great effect, others are like drive-by narrative. For example, there is a crazy cult of geriatric murderers that live in the city that nobody has really taken down because it would be bad form to kill a bunch of old people. This group plays some role in the early chapter, then vanishes for the rest of the book. What.

Grand setups are introduced, but they never pay off. Plot elements are introduced, and you think, "ohey, maybe something will finally happen," but it never does. But then, on the exact opposite side of the spectrum, other plot elements are dropped in like 50 ton anvils out of nowhere.

At one point, a character gets a serious, debilitating injury and you think, "oh wow. This is serious business! How is the character going to adapt to this? How will it affect their conflict with the Bad Guys? Will this come into play later at a crucial moment-- either the character uses it to their advantage or suffers from it at a crucial moment? There's so much internal turmoil that can be mined from this!

. . . Aaaaand it's cured in the next chapter with little to no impact on the plot. Hell, even the cyber tech they use to cure it winds up having a neat feature, and you think we'll maybe this will come in handy!" It doesn't.

This book basically takes all the weakest aspects of Kadrey's other work, magnifies them tenfold, and then takes out any redeeming features. There is darkness without light (or at least without the gallows humor found in his other books). There are tough characters with no chemistry or personality. There is the anti-authoritarian streak that shows up in his other works, but there's no true fight against it, and for much of the book the main character doesn't even try to fight against it, just complain about how bad it is, and he insults anyone who does try to fight.

This book is joyless in a way I hadn't expected from Kadrey, and I am so very VERY glad that he moved away from this style and mindframe to bring us the better works I know him for.