



Seed

Rob Ziegler

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It's the dawn of the 22nd century, and the world has fallen apart. Decades of war and resource depletion have toppled governments. The ecosystem has collapsed. A new dust bowl sweeps the American West. The United States has become a nation of migrants -starving masses of nomads who seek out a living in desert wastelands and encampments outside government seed-distribution warehouses.

In this new world, there is a new power. Satori is more than just a corporation, she is an intelligent, living city that grew out of the ruins of Denver. Satori bioengineers both the climate-resistant seed that feeds a hungry nation, and her own post-human genetic Designers, Advocates, and Laborers. What remains of the United States government now exists solely to distribute Satori seed; a defeated American military doles out bar-coded, single-use Satori seed to the nation's starving citizens.

When one of Satori's Designers goes rogue, Agent Sienna Doss-Ex-Army Ranger turned glorified bodyguard-is tasked by the government to bring her in: The government wants to use the Designer to break Satori's stranglehold on seed production and reassert themselves as the center of power.

Sienna Doss's search for the Designer intersects with Brood and his younger brother Pollo - orphans scrapping by on the fringes of the wastelands. Pollo is abducted, because he is believed to suffer from Tet, a newly emergent disease, the victims of which are harvested by Satori.

As events spin out of control, Brood and Sienna Doss find themselves at the heart of Satori, where an explosive climax promises to reshape the future of the world.

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Seed Details

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From Reader Review Seed for online ebook

Justin says

<http://staffersmusings.blogspot.com/2...>

My self imposed hiatus on Night Shade Books failed miserably this past weekend when I couldn't resist their latest novel, **Seed** by Rob Ziegler. I was going to try to take a few weeks away from Night Shade to get at some of my rapidly overwhelming back catalog. While I did finish **Diving Into the Wreck** and started **Midnight Riot** and **Shadow Prowler**, they all fell to the side once I dug into **Seed**. Zeigler's novel is as haunting as it is believable.

Much like Night Shade flag bearer **The Wind-Up Girl** (Bacigalupi), **Seed** is a near term science fiction novel that centers around the impacts of climate change and over population on the world's environment. The Hugo Award winning **Wind-Up Girl** focused on Thailand, but hinted at the problems ongoing in America. In many ways **Seed** could be that story of America. That's not to say it's derivative of Bacigalupi, but there's certainly similarities in tone and texture to the world playing to the current fears that Earth is reaching 'critical mass'.

Seed is set at dawn of the 22nd century, the world has fallen apart and a new corporate power has emerged: Satori. More than just a corporation, Satori is an intelligent, living city in America's heartland. She manufactures climate-resistant seed to feed humanity, and bio-engineers her own perfected castes of post-humans. What remains of the United States government now exists solely to distribute Satori product.

When a Satori Designer goes rogue, Agent Sienna Doss is tasked with bringing her in to break Satori's stranglehold on seed production. In a race against genetically honed assassins, Doss's best chance at success lies in an unlikely alliance with a gang of thugs and Brood - orphan, scavenger and small-time thief scraping by on the fringes of the wasteland - whose young brother may be the key to everything.

What struck me most about **Seed** is the poignancy. Right away Ziegler jumps into Brood's nomadic life as he migrates from Mexico to the Mid-West with the imminent arrival of summer temperatures. With his special-needs brother, Brood lives just on the edge of survival. His imperative to protect crackles with emotion and his willingness to do anything to survive is heartbreaking. These threads continue into other parts of the story from the Satori lamenting the loss of their defective sibling to Agent Doss remembering her crippling childhood. Beyond the characters the world itself is bleak and desolate. Ziegler capably takes the small kindness of a drink of water and makes it a seminal moment of compassion.

Despite this being an 'American' novel Ziegler does a great job of integrating Hispanic culture into the pastoral fiber of the country. A pretty good amount of the dialogue is in Spanish often laced with Mexican slang. Elements of Hispanic culture are prevalent in the migrants and in many ways makes **Seed** not only a glimpse into the future of climate change and overpopulation, but a glimpse at the integration of culture on America's horizon. Juxtaposing this is the Satori which is so disturbingly self-interested and antiseptic as to be reminiscent of William Gibson's cyberpunk corporations.

My only real complaint stems from the lack of scientific underpinning to Satori. For a post-apocalyptic novel the science fiction felt very magical (not in the Arthur C. Clarke sense) in large part because Ziegler never takes the time to ground any of it in science. While he introduces the brains behind it all, they're never given the opportunity to expound upon how or why it all works. In that sense the novel 'reads' more like a fantasy than science fiction, something I believe is becoming a trend in the post-apocalypse sub-genre. Instead, **Seed** never lets up in its pace, keeping a constant tension throughout that

eschews any need for exposition.

As a narrative, **Seed** is a multi-view point third person novel that I believe stands alone and should continue to do so. Interestingly, I realized none of what I liked about it had much to do with the actual prose. I didn't find myself highlighting passages or even taking note of particularly nice turns of phrase. This isn't a negative. Rather than flowery descriptions or particularly evocative metaphors, **Seed** compelled me forward with... wait for it... a great story. And a great story told well.

Seed is Rob Ziegler's debut novel and another very good one from Night Shade's 2011 crop of new authors. Reading this review it might seem that this is a slow and morose novel. It's not at all. Woven in between scenes of migration and self-reflection is tons of action that culminates in a conclusion that's both explosive and cathartic. This is one you don't want to miss.

Seed is due out in the U.S. on November 1 (here). Follow the author on Twitter @Rob_Ziegler

Lianne Burwell says

3 1/2 stars, but GoodReads doesn't allow half stars.

Seed is a book that was both frustrating and intriguing.

Set in a future where oil has run out after wars were fought over the last supplies (it sounds like much of the middle east is now a nuclear wasteland after the US fought China there). What vehicles there are are now all nuclear powered. Zeppelins are favoured for air travel.

Meanwhile, climate change has led to higher temperatures and many droughts. Most of the US population is now migrants, heading to good locations to plant crops at certain times of the year, and migrating to better spots for shelter during the bad weather.

As for those crops, they are all grown from barcoded seeds from the Satori corporation. It does its work from a bizarre living city created in the ruins of Denver. Populated by genetically modified clones, they create the Seed, which is highly productive and climate tolerant. The four Fathers of the company have their own goals, though. As a result, a portion of the seed contains an infection that is called Tet when contracted by people who eat the produce.

Seed bounces between four characters. Brood is one of the migrants, whose brother has been taken (Satori wants people with Tet for experimental reason). Pihadassa is one of the cloned gene designers who has gone rogue and left Satori, and is being hunted as a result. Doss is a female soldier with what's left of the US government, tasked with retrieving Pihadassa, who was supposed to be defecting to the government. And Sumedha is Pihadassa's mate/other half, who is still working at Satori while possibly going insane without his mate.

The world building was impressive, and the characters intriguing, but the book was also incredibly violent, with a lot of sex as well. It was definitely a depressing, dystopic view of the future, and I'm still not sure I enjoyed it, even though I found it very engrossing.

Traci Loudin says

Really love the worldbuilding in this novel. I tried so hard to like it, but I've put it down and struggled to pick it back up too many times. I guess because there are too many sets of characters, which I know is hypocritical of me, because my own novel has a ton of viewpoint characters. I guess I haven't really been able to pinpoint what exactly left me disinterested in this novel. Love the apocalyptic world, though!

Daniel Devine says

Okay, but felt like it could have been better with a bit more development. Sort of a Mad-Max post-global warming dustbowl US with hardened men and women fighting to remain human but stay alive, kept alive only by a genetically engineered living city that is the only place really capable of growing food. Sort of depressing, but that fits the subject matter. There were 3 major storylines/viewpoints but to me 2 didn't quite click- the bad guys were weird but never as effective as they should have been given the power and influence they had at their disposal, the military types sort of do things at random without any real effect except getting their people killed--hey, here's an idea, next time let's use one of our really useful weapons/back-up plans BEFORE everyone in our army is dead (that whole storyline felt sort of ultimately unneeded), and the main characters have a sort of predictable ending, though I did enjoy the final scene.

Katy Stauber says

This book is way too good to be a debut. The details of the SEED world are fully formed and the characters practically crawl off the page so they can rummage through your fridge and Bogart the remote for the TV. I read plenty of books in the post-apocalyptic genre and this one was a stand out. It's not a nice pretty happy story but the ending rings true. These days I almost never finish a book in less than a week and I burned through this one in two days because I could not put it down.

Rob says

...Night Shade Books reeled in another talented author with Rob Ziegler. *Seed* is a convincing debut that will no doubt please fans of the post-apocalyptic sub genre. What impressed me most was the way the author combines the Buddhist sense of calm and being part of a greater whole, with the pent up aggression and inevitable, lethal conclusion that follows from their mastery of genetics. Satori is disturbing on many more levels than the environmental issue of producing sterile seed. *Seed* incorporates a number of themes I like to see in science fiction, for me personally, Ziegler has hit the bullseye. But I think that even for readers who do not share my peculiar preferences, this novel has a lot to offer. It is definitely recommended reading.

Full Random Comments review

Sam says

Author: Rob Ziegler

Genre: Post disaster

Exposition: Satori is a futuristic city that is alive. Pihadassa is a genetically modified woman who helps create the Seed, which feeds all those who live outside the city. She also placed a virus inside a percentage of the Seed to limit the population. She decides to leave Satori, and her twin lover, Sumedha is left to cure the virus she had created. Sienna Doss is an army ranger who is running a mission with Emerson, her partner. They get into an accident, and Emerson is hospitalized. She is then assigned to find Pihadassa. Brood and his younger brother Pollo are travelling thieves, and share a cart with an old man named Hondo.

Conflict: When travelling, Brood and Pollo are raided. The bandits take Pollo, but leave Brood to die. He doesn't, and plans to chase after his brother, who was taken to Satori for research. Sumedha has great difficulty curing the virus. The Fathers, the ones who created him, want the virus removed. Sumedha, however, learns that the Fathers want to leave Satori. Sumedha loves Satori, and refuses to leave her behind. He ends up killing his twin brother, Kassapa, and his twin sister, Paduma. He uses Pollo to find cure, but then kills the fathers. He plans to merge with Satori. Sienna ends up finding Pihadassa, but loses many of her men. Angry, she decides to assault Satori with her own personal army of children.

Climax: Sumedha joins with Satori, but Pollo does too. Sienna assaults the city, and Sumedha/Satori kill them. Brood also infiltrates the city, and finds his brother alive. Together, they find Sumedha, and kill him. Pollo decides to stay with Satori, and joins with her once again. Countless soldiers are lost, and Sienna loses some of her best men.

Resolution: Pollo decides to stay in Satori, merged with her. Sienna is simply tired and done. As a goodbye present, Pollo gives Brood a lot of seed, and he begins to distribute the cure for the virus. Sumedha and his genetically enhanced siblings are all dead. Brood decides to head back to the place where he was born, leaving his brother in Satori.

Theme: I think that one of the themes of this book is sibling love. Sumedha is actually romantically involved with both of his twin sisters, but he also loves them like family. It brings him great pain when he kills them all. Brood is also willing to infiltrate the most heavily guarded place on earth to get back his brother. He is also willing to let him go when Pollo wants to be. This is related to *Catcher in the Rye* in that Holden loves Phoebe more than anyone or anything.

Bree says

I had a really hard time getting into this one at first, I have to admit. I felt that the book started without much of an explanation of what was going on, and I was confused and admittedly, a little bit bored. I couldn't understand why these people traded Seed like money and lived a nomadic lifestyle instead of stopping and planting it somewhere and setting themselves up. It gets explained a little further on in the book, but at first I felt confused and frustrated by it.

Once I got past that and started understanding what was happening, the story got a lot better. There were several seemingly unconnected plot lines running at the same time, and while a little disorienting at first because of their stark differences to each other – one a nomadic group consisting of 2 boys and an old man, another a military officer in DC, and then the Satori (the source of Seed) and it's DNA-spliced "children". But as the plot moves along, all three come together at an amazing pace and I was left reeling.

There are some very awkward scenes in this book – like when the Satori engineers (who are genetically created twins and siblings) "connect", if they are actually siblings it's incest and pretty gross to think about.

But, I think what the author was trying to get across is that these weren't human beings, they were genetically modified with animal DNA and they weren't normal.

The idea of Satori was really well done – this odd dome-like area that is actually living, breathing, thinking. It cares for those inside of it, provides “meat” and seems all-knowing. The people *running* Satori were corrupt, but in a world that was as bad this dystopian future, Satori itself was something powerful and good.

The characters were not that likeable at first, but they grew on me with time. Brood and Pollo are wandering like so many others, what they are looking for is not really clear. They are thieves, taking what they want or need under the cover of darkness. But through the story, the author tells about their past and Brood starts shaping up as a good kid (Pollo as well). Sienna Doss is military and has some very bizarre ideas about right and wrong, but I ended up admiring her personality towards the end. I also really liked the “rogue bio-engineer”, I felt she was trying to do the right thing away from Satori, and was upset with the way society and government decided to deal with it.

Ultimately, this was really well written. While it doesn't seem like something feasible like some dystopian stories, the world was so intricately created and well-told that I felt I was there in that society, hoping for something good to come out of the corruption. I almost wish it *was* real. If you like dystopian stories, then you should definitely pick this one up!

usagi ?? says

If there's something that we definitely need more of as a sub-genre in adult sci-fi these days, it's biopunk. "Seed" delivers it, and delivers it hard with a delicious side of dystopian almost-post-America. "Seed" is intensely creepy while being both surrealistic and incredibly realistic at the same time. If you're looking for something new in sci-fi to wet your whistle, this is it.

The realism of a broken America complete with the breakdown of the central government, FEMA somewhat in charge (and obviously failing the people), while admitting that it's only in control to "distribute (Satori's) seed" to the newly-migratory American people was like a punch to the gut. It's so very disturbingly possible, and with Ziegler's brief, punchy style it kind of hits each point home without wasting words or energy. It really feels like Katrina one hundred times worse in terms of politics and tragedy, and it makes you ring hollow inside with how awful it is. At least, that's what it did to me. That's definitely a sign of awesome writing, if ever there was one.

All of America is now at the mercy of Satori, a bioagra-genetics company started by four guys (who picked the name "Satori" not because they're Japanese but because it sounded good to consumers), who create Designers, post-humans who create more post-humans to keep up the Satori empire (by creating weather-resistant plant seeds, hence the title), Designing more and more to keep it alive. In particular, it is mainly the journey of post-human Designer Sumedha (and to a lesser part, his sister/wife) to make sure the empire of Satori survives, no matter what. It is the journey through his grief and madness when his sister/wife defects, trying to "Connect" with other siblings, only to find despair at not being able to match up with them as perfectly as he did his twin. And on America's side, it is the joint journey of Agent Doss and migrant ex-La Chupecabra gang member, Brood, and how they meet in order to stop the spread of Satori and try to get America back up and running again in terms of being able to feed its own people. All of these characters finally meet in the end, and it's extremely explosive. It will leaving you thinking hard about how our environment and government are starting to break down now - and all of the what-ifs that may happen in the future. I definitely had a deep period of reflection about all of this because it shook me so much.

There are four main POVs (all written in 3rd-close), so the book is a bit hard to keep track of at first, but once things really start getting going around 1/4th of the way in, it's quite easy to track who is who and where is where, what is what. I found the descriptions of the living empire of Satori extremely creepy, but it was well worth it. I haven't seen a more creative use of biopunk in a very long time. It's one of those really neglected but awesome sub-genres that desperately needs new blood pumped into it (much like steampunk got that boost a few years ago). This version of a broken America that's not even a century in the future is just so eerily possible that I did have nightmares about it after completing the book, and about the Designer's creatures (especially the Advocates) chasing me in them.

The way Ziegler put together all of these sub-genres really worked. Biopunk and dystopia put together is usually a win-win scenario, but when you put current real politics into it, it gets even better. I just really enjoyed this read, even if it scared the hell out of me. So go ahead and give this one a try, guys. Biopunk needs some more love. Won't you feed it?

(posted to goodreads, shelfari, and witchoftheatregoing.wordpress.com)

Ted Cross says

An imaginative dystopian future story. I liked parts of it and other parts didn't work so well for me. What bothered me most was the bad editing--there were so many cases of words used with the wrong version of the spelling, and it's hard to believe editors would be so bad that they couldn't catch them.

Sarah (Workaday Reads) says

I had high hopes for this story. It has a great cover, and has a very interesting synopsis. It is a little long for a summary, but there is a lot going on in this story. Too much maybe. An one point I thought about stopping because there was just so much to keep track of.

This is definitely not a happy story. It only took a few pages for the bleak, stark, gritty feel of it to come alive. The people in it are starving and desperate, and the landscape is desolate. Everything really comes alive, and jumps out at you, but reading it will not improve your mood. This is dystopian at its very bleakest.

Overall, the writing is very skilled. The book has a very cohesive feel that comes alive. I just found the utter depressing-ness of the world and its people to be a little overwhelming. It left me feeling unhappy and not wanting to pick the story up again. But I did, and I'm glad I got to see the story through to its end.

Adam says

I'm biased, because I read the first fifty pages of an earlier draft and loved the hell out of them. But you know what? You want my biased opinion, because it is as awesome as this book.

This is every bit the ass-kicking adventure as it is an ode to the a lost world. It's the beginning of the 22nd Century, and things suck, all thanks to us in the 21st Century. The government has collapsed, as has business (so, looks like Grover Norquist has had his way, then been eaten by the bathtub), so the survivors of superstorms, droughts, famine, and disease now depend on Satori for seed. Who is Satori? You think I'm

going to ruin it for you?

Throw in a trio of marauders with hearts of tin (a lot more valuable than gold, 'cause you can't make gold cans of food) and a Secret Service agent who makes every badass female action hero look like Aunt Bea, and you have one hell of a tale. If you like Paolo Bacigalupi's work but want to hang yourself after reading his books, Seed is for you.

Claire says

A bit tropey but really compelling. I tore through this in a couple of days after having it in my to-read pile forever. Plot summary: a couple of centuries in the future, climate change has ruined the world and most people in the US are migrants, eking out a living in the surviving parts of the country. There are only two powers left - the US government and Satori, a biogenetics company/city/entity that dispenses adapted seeds to migrants, while pursuing its own agenda.

I really like ideas in scifi that are plausible, and drawn from our own world. Genetically modified crops have been a reality for quite a long time. And climate change is already changing our world.

I loved the characters in this. Doss and Brood have my heart, of course, but everyone felt well drawn out and Sumedha's journey felt convincing.

I read on the back flap of this that this was the author's first book, and he was working on a second one, which isn't out yet. I hope it comes out soon. The world in Seed is a hard one, but not a hopeless one, and it's great to see this done in a believable way. Definitely recommend!

Paul Genesse says

Review of Seed by Rob Ziegler (No Spoilers)

Seed is a brilliantly crafted post-ecological apocalypse novel set in the 22nd century where the starving remnants of humanity are dependent on the Satori corporation, which produces the seeds that can withstand the harsh climate that has turned most of North America into a barren wasteland during the summer, and a freezing tundra during the winter. Most of the population has become seasonal migrants, moving from north to south and planting and harvesting crops as the weather allows before having to move on. Everyone, including the small and ineffective U.S. government based in New D.C. (the old D.C. is under water) is dependent upon Satori, who is much more than a corporation who specializes in genetically altered seeds. Satori is interested in genetic engineering and evolving life-forms much more hardy than the human race. Satori itself, based in the ruined city of Denver, is a massive bioengineered dome of fleshy walls and bone pillars, which hides many secrets, which I will not spoil here. The Satori biodome is the most fantastical element in this science fiction novel, and sheer originality of it gave me great respect for Zeigler as a writer, though his greatest strength appears to be writing memorable characters.

The book focuses on three storylines: a Mexican-American teenager nicknamed Brood (real name Carlos) who is a survivor in every sense of the word; Agent Doss, a six foot tall black woman who works for Sec Serv after a distinguished military career in Special Ops; and a matched pair of genetically altered post-humans, Sumedha and Pihadassa, who are the Designers of the seeds produced by the Satori corporation.

Brood's storyline is the most bleak and poignant. He and his autistic little brother, Pollo, and their guardian, a grizzled old rogue, Hondo scrape and steal their way across the dustbowl of the Southwest trying not to get killed or starve along the way. Brood's story is gut wrenching and pulls you inside the horrific world of ecological collapse, and survival of the fittest. I cared so much about what happened to him, and that is the mark of brilliant writing. Brood is a doting brother, a silent killer with a conscience, and young man in love with Rosa Lee, a beautiful Tewa Indian girl he dreams of starting a life with someday. Brood felt like such a real person, and I rooted for him along every step. I'm never going to forget him, and he epitomizes everything that is ruthless and beautiful in human nature.

Agent Doss is my other favorite character. She is tasked with several things in the book, and is trusted with the assignments because she has followed one simple rule for her entire twenty plus year career, first in the military, and then in the Sec Serv, Don't Fu** Up. She has accomplished every mission for her country during conflicts with Iran, Russia, China--fighting the Chinese in Dubai, and several other places across the globe. She is the perfect soldier, an adrenaline junkie, and a fantastic leader. "Boss Momma," is what the boys call her, and she inspires those around her to valiant feats of courage and sacrifice. I loved her hard nature and her internal monologues, which showed the many facets of her personality. I kept picturing one of the tough looking black female power forwards in the WNBA when I read her chapters. She was incredibly bad-ass, and I loved it when she wore the powered combat suit, a little like the Mobile Infantry suits in Heinlein's novel *Starship Troopers*, and brought the smack down on her opponents. Agent Doss is the leader you would want to follow into battle.

The third storyline is the most hard to fathom, and is quite alien, as it should be. We get to experience the evolved minds of the post-humans, Sumedha and Pihadassa. They are twins, male and female, a matched pair, practically perfect, created by Satori to be the Designers of the seeds and many other genetically altered life-forms, the so called "landraces," humanoids with the DNA of various predators, or other animals mixed in to make them extremely good at whatever task they were bred for.

The two post-humans' storylines are the most difficult to understand, and are rife with clues about the endgame, but it is easy to be confused about what is going on in their minds, which are so much more complex than any human consciousness. Sumedha and Pihadassa can see the genetic code of anyone they meet, and have great mental powers. These are alien creatures, very far from the human point of view most of us readers are used to.

I found Sumedha's and Pihadassa's storyline very fascinating, but at times confusing, but the payoff in the end made it all worth it, and I think if I read the book again, I would get even more out of this thread, and have an even greater respect for Rob Ziegler's writing skill.

The three threads seem unconnected at first, but Zeigler weaves Brood, Doss, and the twins together expertly, especially at the end. As a writer and editor myself, I analyze craft as I read, and found this book to be incredibly well done in all aspects. The characterization is top-notch, the world building vivid, and the writing style easy to read, simple, and yet powerful, and poignant. I was moved to tears, goose-bumps, laughter, horror, and reverence several times. It was an immersive experience and so entertaining.

The dialogue is the best example I've ever seen of how to write realistic dialogue. Most of it is short, punchy, profane (there is a lot of foul language in this book, some in English, and a lot in Spanish). If you don't understand Spanish, you'll be okay, but will not comprehend a few phrases here or there, but don't worry. You can get most of it in context. No holds are barred in this novel, and with all the violence and sex I think *Seed* is most suitable for older teens and adults. It felt so realistic, and natural, I didn't have any problem with it.

After reading *Seed*, I am once again reminded about why I'm so in love with books. I went on such an awesome journey and it made me think a lot more about the pitfalls of genetically engineered foods, (and

life-forms), as well as the very real possibility of ecological collapse in the future.

I became obsessed with reading Seed. I could not wait to read more of it, and burned through it, finishing in a short span, two and half days, and when I was not reading, I was thinking about the book and the characters. The story has some excellent twists and is going to stick with me for a long time. I look forward to Zeigler's next novel with much anticipation.

SEED is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

Paul Genesse Author of the Iron Dragon Series and Editor of the Crimson Pact Series

Ryandake says

it's always a pity when a book has some really innovative ideas, then fails to be well-executed for other reasons.

in this book, we get the discarded of postapocalyptic america, many of whom have are punk teenagers with hispanic roots; a badass black, female special ops warrior; some way fun genetic engineering; and a sentient lifeform that may be a plant, may be an animal, that is able to produce the last viable seed for food crops in climate-change-devastated north america (alas, we don't really know what happened to the rest of the world). it's a great setup.

but then it pretty much all devolves to shooting.

the body count in this book rivals that found in war porn. people get shot, stabbed, nuked, chewed apart, dismembered, etc etc and with one exception (and that only barely), for the most part, we really haven't been given much cause to care. our spec ops heroine is the most efficient killer, and while it's nice to see a woman in that role, it's not nice to see her be just a guy with breasts and an armory.

the hispanic punks and their nonstandard argot are interesting, except that the main character's depth seems to have disappeared. he has a past, which we are dutifully shown; he has a brother, whom he tries to protect; he has needs and desires, even if they never get much beyond sex and food. but a reader never gets a grip on what moves him beyond these surface things; his heart remains entirely opaque.

so our two main characters--the spec ops warrior and the hispanic punk--are altogether too similar and between them have less depth than a puddle.

and more tropes: (view spoiler)

and one thing for which i will *unmercifully* dun the editor, proofreader, and publisher of this book: the typos and misspellings are awful. nauseated characters kept "wretching," which was miraculously corrected 2/3 of the way through the book, and then showed up again in the last chapters; the man whose skin "pealed off," and so on. and editor? mr. or ms. editor? you really should have called out the truly excessive use of truncated language in this book. a battery is always a "bat," a zeppelin is a "zep," even poor Colorado Springs, in its one cameo appearance, is "C-Springs." ya, i get that it's fun to mix it up with language, but one should be wary of becoming a one-trick pony.

and a final word, which i will put in bold so that it can't be missed: **it's just hateful that the book's standard collective noun for women is "bitches"!**

Josh says

This book was sold to be as absolutely amazing and "all that."

It wasn't.

It was quite good, and I need to resist being disappointed because it wasn't actually superbly great.

This is a post-soft apocalypse book, much like Soft Apocalypse, in some ways, but ultimately more upbeat.

It follows three or four (depending on how you look at it) different groups of characters. The first, and in my opinion least enjoyable/relatable, are a group of scavengers living in the great American desert that sprung up at global warming began to cause run-away positive feedback loop climate changes in the mid 21st century. Their lives are desperate and short and completely lacking in information about the world around them, except for rumor and prayer.

The second group is a number of U.S. government operatives. They work with limited resources, somewhat poor communications and intelligence (the satellite network is slowly failing), and a serious inferiority complex for the halcyon days of yore. The government has largely been reduced to nothing more than an armed escort for highway engineers trying to keep the roads intact, and for seed distributors, distributing seed that will grow in modern climates, made by the biotech company/commune/nation/monster Satori.

The third group is the set of four Satori Designers. Genetically engineered, based off a human template, to be perfectly suited to making new gene splices (including the seed), their true mission is actually to develop a form of immortality for the natural human board members of Satori. But they begin to rebel.

These three strands of narrative and characterization stay largely separate, but come together in the end to a satisfying, but somewhat deus-ex-machina, result. A lot of interesting storylines and characters simply disappear as they die before they can take their plans past step one. It's realistic, but the sci-fi fanatic in me wanted all those possible future to be explored in more depth.

Melissa Bennett says

I really looked forward to reading this book. I was very excited when I cracked it open. Alas, it was soon knocked off the pedestal that I put it on. There are some great things about this book and some not so great. The pros: - Cool story with a even cooler backdrop. Ziegler does an awesome job describing the terrain
- Neat concept and different take on the post-apocalyptic genre
- Had some really great characters. Brood, Pollo and Jake were my favorites.

The cons: - No explanation on how Satori came to be. It talks about her creators, you get some idea of it growing from the ground but there is no scientific background on how they created what they did. It just was.

- Even though some of the characters were great, most I could've cared less about. When each chapter is done up in sections with different characters, it made the ones you don't care about hard to get through.
- Some mistakes that could have been found with some editing. For example, in chapter 10 it

goes through the first time Brood and Pollo meet Hondo. When Hondo asks how old they are, Pollo says cinco (five) and Brood holds up eight fingers. Yet in chapter 4, they talk about the first job Brood did for Hondo and how he was 6 then. How could he have been 6 when he did his first job for Hondo when he didn't meet Hondo until he was 8? Little things like that tended to throw me off balance.

All in all, it wasn't a bad book. It just has some things that could have been better. Since this was Mr. Ziegler first book, I would definitely give him another try.

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 illegally.)

Whenever I think of the term "cyberpunk," easily my favorite literary genre back in the '80s when I was a teenager, I think of a very specific combination of qualities -- four or five different storylines that all merge into one at the climax, set in a day-after-tomorrow dystopia, one where the dizzying sci-fi inventions of Mid-Century Modernism have been turned on their heads, so that what the author is really exploring is the ways that cutting-edge tech has trickled down in a corrupted and heavily modded form to the street level of the lumpen proletariat, with the story's style and characters heavily influenced by the underground culture of its times (so in the case of classic '80s cyberpunk, for example, American and British punk music, which is how the genre got its name in the first place). And all of these things can be said about Rob Ziegler's contemporary *Seed* as well, a superlative cyberpunk novel but one you might not even recognize as such at first; for instead of revolving around pale computer hackers in London, *Seed*'s heroes move among the decidedly sweatier circles of Mexican skaters in the American Southwest, and instead of being obsessed with virtual reality, this book deals with the much messier proposition of intelligent wetware and the coming agricultural apocalypse. Set in a world dealing with an unnamed past catastrophe where normal plants can no longer grow properly, the plot in general is fueled by the conceit that one private company eventually became the sole saviors of the entire American populace, by being the first to create an artificial intelligence that not only could genetically engineer seeds that would grow in this post-apocalyptic environment, but also literal living buildings made out of biological skin and bone, maintained by a small army of sub-intelligent clones who all operate under a hive-mind system. The various small storylines we follow throughout the book, then, all deal in one way or another with this central conceit -- there are the scrappy Latino brothers trying to survive in an anarchic, gray-market society, there is the "manager clone" who is thinking of defecting from the company (and taking all its confidential intellectual property with it), there is the disgraced military commander who has been ordered by a now cuckolded White House to go find this runaway clone, and on and on in this vein, each of them giving us a small specific look at this grandly epic universe Ziegler has built up step by step.

Now, just to be clear, like most genre novels *Seed* is filled with things that will drive non-fans of that genre a little crazy -- the dialogue can be a little stilted at times, some of the characters a bit too corny, and of course you need to be into bizarre science-fictional concepts in the first place to enjoy it at all -- and let's also be clear that even SF fans that aren't necessarily into cyberpunk will find some faults with this too, a book that can sometimes fixate too much on the action sequences rather than the "big picture" topics being discussed. But if like me you are a fan of early William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, Charles Stross and other established cyberpunk authors, you will find this an *incredibly* satisfying read, nearly perfect at hitting all the beats that a story like this needs, while maintaining a fast pace and constantly offering up unique little speculative nuggets for your brain to chew on for a while. (I especially loved the reveal of who exactly is behind all these sinister goings-on at this shadowy company, but for the sake of spoilers I will leave that a surprise.) A book only for a niche audience, but a niche audience who will passionately love it for what it is, *Seed* will

almost certainly be making CCLaP's best-of lists at the end of the year, and it comes strongly recommended to those who think in advance that they might be interested in it.

Out of 10: **8.9**, or **9.9** for cyberpunk fans

Jay Sprenkle says

A post apocalypse story set in the midwestern United States. It has evil politicians, evil military, and a single remaining evil corporation.

This the most depressing book I've read in quite some time. The problem with this book is that the author wants to tell a story but does not want to entertain the reader.

The book has too many characters and none of them are sympathetic. They do terrible things to everyone around them. The concepts the book introduces are never explained so you quickly become lost. The book doesn't have an understandable conclusion it just seems to end.

After reading half the book I just skimmed the rest to determine if the author would wander anywhere near a point. I wasn't able to discern one.
I can't recommend this book to anyone.

11811 (Eleven) says

This was an impulse grab at my library. I don't read much dystopian fiction but this had an interesting premise. The author has writing chops but I wasn't getting jiggy with it. The story was slow and ultimately boring. I should have DNF'D.

The story also seemed to stop rather than end. I hate that.
