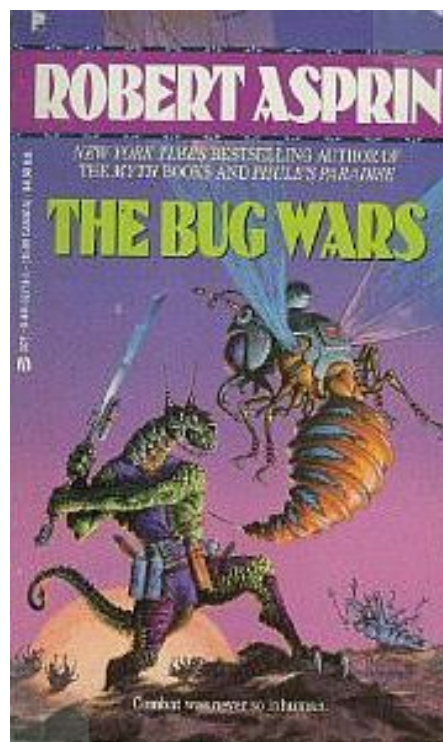




The Bug Wars

Robert Lynn Asprin

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The reptilian Tzen have battled their way to dominance in a hostile environment, honing their skills as fierce warriors and master strategists to a razor's edge. They will need these abilities and more when The Enemy swarms toward the planet of Tzen. Previous publisher: Dell.

The Bug Wars Details

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Author : Robert Lynn Asprin

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From Reader Review The Bug Wars for online ebook

Gary Ross-Jordan says

Overall, this is a well written piece, detailing a lizard races battle for survival amongst insects. Accepting the world's boundaries, the piece makes sense and even provokes thought about our own colonisation of countries in the past. However, it was hard to feel any empathy or wonder about the creatures and ultimately I didn't care what happened. For avid Sci-fi readers this may be a winner.

sj says

I got this book at a secondhand shop because the cover made me giggle, but ended up loving it. I like when my science-fiction is mixed with politics, and the xenophobia was an added bonus.

Greg says

Quirky but interesting sci-fi novel by Aspirin, who went on to write many notable novels and edit the Thieves World series. Basically it's an interstellar showdown between a warrior race of reptiles (the Tzen) and various insect races on some unnamed planet. It's a fun ride of battles and adventure if you read it as such, but there's also a lot of interesting ideas about leadership, colonization, militarism, collectivization and other big ideas that could lead to any number of interesting discussions.

The reptiles are like the Aliens of the film series in that they apparently live only to kill and reproduce and create more worlds that they can live on, with no real interest in the societies and creatures currently living on those worlds, except when it comes to discovering effective ways to eliminate them. The Tzen are concerned only with survival. Kind of makes you hope we humans have more in mind when we visit Mars or other planets than simply making them habitable for humans, no matter who or what is already there.

The reptiles' strategies are always interesting, and the way they deal with new technology and new threats as well. It's implied that both races are using technology they were given or took from humans, who are no longer in the picture.

It's an effective cautionary tale about finding our way in the universe with a more benevolent purpose, for those inclined to read it that way. Or it's a fun book with lots of crazy bug battles (think of the "last stand" in the Starship Troopers film). Either way, it's worth reading.

Ross says

A fun and fast paced space opera; chronicling the war between a race of mission oriented lizard warriors, and a coalition of relentlessly expansionist insect races.

The whole narrative follows a single lizard warrior through each phase of the war, and each phase of his career as a military leader.

Overall a quick and satisfying read that seeks only to entertain, and requires no deep examination or careful thought to appreciate.

Ringman Roth says

Totally awesome book! I picked it up for the sheer cheese factor, but in reality its a very deep science fiction that goes into political, racial, and philosophical issues. I think some politicians should read this, but they'd probably take one look at the cover and laugh. A must read for all science fiction fans looking for something different.

Andrew says

I remember being a kid and seeing this book on the spinner rack in a Food Mart with this cover:

<https://goo.gl/images/fbFDyp>

Something about the cover grabbed my imagination, but it was probably twenty years before I actually read the book. That was probably 20 years ago, so my memory is hazy. I remember liking this book and how it was staged.

AoC says

As the book itself points out in the opening song lyrics following events are set at some point in time before humanity was a thing, era when species of insects and lizards were vying for dominance of the stars. We follow the lizard race, so-called Tzen empire, as they embark on another phase of their seemingly long spanning war against the insect coalition comprised of wasps, leapers and ants. Compared to them Tzen are a monolithic and warlike race with their people bred for cast role and our protagonist Rahm is one of the warriors who puts together an unlikely team, because it's not all-warriors the way they're expected to be when headed by a warrior leader, and leads them out into various dangers as they get stranded, play a pivotal role in uncovering enemy intelligence and resolve their own tensions.

Short novel covers what he and his team were doing during multiple offensives made on the coalition, but I honestly think events themselves take a backseat compared to inner group dynamics we become witness to as we get a window into Tzen society. Because of the nature of the book and seeing that I consider this to be the main draw over story, characters and all else I really won't go into detail, but I'll just touch on some things like how warriors, technicians and scientists have mutual distaste for others' caste yet clearly need each other, how given that you can change your cast based on talents can lead to some interesting skillsets that come useful in the wilderness and how familial ties in Tzen can become a tremendous liability because they cannot stand in the way of doing your duty.

Sadly this also brings me to the main problem of the novel – it's incredibly dry in its writing style. What I mean by this is little effort is made for scenes to really flow into each other and god help you with the dialog because it's utilitarian to the extreme and Rahm in particular often resorts to simple “Explain” which is then followed by a paragraph long literal explanation from other characters that doubles up as in-character lecture and conveying the message to us, the readers. I wouldn't even pick up on this if it wasn't so pervasive and ever-present in the book. Events are also clearly disjointed in flow of time, but that could be well explained because Tzen soldiers go to stasis between operations and it's never established how much time has, in fact, passed between major events. One small touch I like is how we're talking generations here and old cast comments how these newfangled Tzen can actually tell colors apart and are brasher with more self-initiative,

but also less stoic and not as zealously willing to throw their life away.

In the end it's a pretty good read hampered by Asprin's writing style. I went in expecting action, and you will get some of it alongside exploration of lizard technology and military tactics, but the main appeal is most definitely the social angle. Ending probably left a much larger impact on me than I expected as certain someone wonders what will become of Tzen society now that it has to change.

Nick Sheridan says

My more in-depth review of this book is of course posted at CrapLookingBooks.com!

The Bug Wars follows Commander Rahm of the lizard Tzen across several campaigns against various insect enemies. Silly name, big premise, and evocative cover art... how could I not read it?

What I found in this little pulp science fiction novella (that retailed for just £1/\$1.50 in 1979!) was a series of apparent failings that steadily revealed themselves as effective devices.

Predictably, the “galactic death struggle” comes with multiple surprises, defeats, and failed initiatives, and it is in these that the narrative voice shines. It isn't explaining Tzen culture to an imaginary reading audience, but justifying Rahm's actions to some imagined military debriefing drawing on Tzen culture for excuses.

Often I felt as though I was reading the second book in a series, initially a disappointment given that the book that explains so much else in so much detail. A past campaign against “The Aquatics” is revealed only when necessary for the plot, and there is a breadth of missing information regarding The Coalition of Insects, how they formed, and how long the Tzen have been fighting them.

However, since the narrative voice belongs solely to Commander Rahm, it makes sense that concepts and activities are only explained if he deems them important. Rahm doesn't care how many colony ships his people have left, or how far their genocide has advanced, he only cares to follow orders.

When multiple members of Rahm's squad die, he lists their passing with limited emotion or detail. While at first this might feel like laziness in storytelling, it has an element of realism. Not every death we face is a dramatic, drawn-out cinematic experience that happens in front of us. More often than not, people just die “off-page” and we hear of their passing through the reports of someone else.

As Rahm rises through the ranks with each campaign, the equipment and troops he takes with him increase exponentially. Each assault on the insect homeworld brings with it more complex and powerful weaponry, while stronger insect species only make their presence known after successful offensive against their allies. The Tzen push them, and they push back harder.

This escalation of events was mirrored by an escalation in my enjoyment. The Bug Wars is a silly looking book with a silly sounding concept, and it could easily have been ridiculous, camp, or badly written, but it is none of those things. It makes excellent points about accountability, mortality and the inconstant state of large scale conflict, and it does so in a way that is both smartly crafted and enjoyable.

Nick

xx

My more in-depth review of this book is of course posted at CrapLookingBooks.com!

Bob Hodges says

How anyone can give this book less than five stars is beyond me. An original science fiction storyline is rare in this day and age, but this book is original through and through. If you read it once, you'll read it again and again ever couple of years and enjoy it each time.

Simon Ford says

In a time long gone I read this book, in my much missed youth, what I can remember though is an enjoyable tale of a battle between reptiles and insects told through the eyes and ears of a lizard protagonist, I think.

Will have to re-read when time allows.

Bob says

a book that only take a day to read. A wonderful story with intersting look at a culture coming to grips with change. An interesting side note is that no humans are mentioned or ever scene in this book.

Nighteye says

It's a okay space drama of a alian battle between a kind of lizard vs a collaboration of insects that threaten to take over the planets inhabited were the Tzen lives.

It's an okay novel, not fantastic in any way, and the Tzen warriors loyalty to their leaders reminds me of the Samurai warriors loyalty to do whatever their leaders says even if it leads to certain death, unexpected end of this novel.

DavidO says

Made it 3 chapters in. This is basically a book about space lizards versus space bees, and the space lizards being forced to survive for a week on a planet controlled by the bees. The characters have little or no depth, and there isn't much dialog. As far as I got anyway, this seemed like a comic book turned into a book, and probably would have been better as a comic book.

Mark Isaak says

It is rare that I encounter a book where humans make no appearance at all, nor even anthropomorphisms of other beings. This book tells of an interstellar war between a reptile race and an insect race, both intelligent

and formidable. The reptile race is different enough from human to seem distinctly alien; the bugs are more alien still, deliberately left largely as unknowns. Asprin succeeds completely at making these races consistent and believable. The reptiles are close enough to humans that the narrator, in facing his problems, gives an extended and relevant perspective on leadership. Unfortunately, the alienness of the reptiles takes the form of them being largely personally detached from each other and always ready to die for their cause. As a result, it was impossible for me to have much sympathy for any character. For the intellectual aspects, this book easily ranks as four-stars, but the weak emotional content brings my rating down.

Mars says

It's very light fare, filled with obviousness and a bit of inconsistency, but might prove very enlightening for kids, since it investigates how leadership works (know your people! duh) and the like.

Adam Duclos says

I read this book back when I was in junior high, and it has always been in the back of my mind as one of the books I compare new books to. It has a great feel to it, of nostalgia and progress.

The book is about a long standing war between a reptilian race of noble warriors and a implacable insectoid enemy... but although that does play out throughout the book, what I remember most is following the main character throughout his military career as he is repeatedly put into and taken out of a deep, stasis-like sleep (which is fairly common for his cold-blooded race), and promoted over and over due to his many successes.

In that way it is sort of a cross between two other book's I've read... the Star Trek novel *The Final Reflection* (where one character is frozen and unfrozen, although he loses his memories each time) and Piers Anthony's 'Bio of a Space Tyrant' series.

Throughout the book, the commander, a thoughtful and insightful type, battles the bugs along with his trusty companions, also frozen with him and promoted alongside him. As he faces each obstacle, he uses hard won first hand knowledge of the enemy and proven tactics that he has but the increasing number of younger subordinates are surprised by. By the same token, each time he wakes up he is confronted with strange new technology that he has a hard time assimilating, but is completely natural to the younger ones.

One of my favorite parts is when they discover 'color vision'. They had gone through the trouble of making a super tech camouflaged base using memory metal that could perfectly mimic the shapes of nearby forest down to perfect individual leaves, but were confused why the bugs could see right through it! Once they had figured it out, they realized that a few of the youngsters could see the difference, and those genes were incorporated into all future generations, driving a further wedge into the generation gap.

As the book ends, we find that his scientists are considering that perhaps even mammals might one day attain sentience, as astounding as that might sound considering their terribly short lifespans...

I remember this as being a great book...

J says

This book has a really fun concept. A space-faring race of lizard men are embroiled in war with a "coalition" of insect species. Having received their advanced technology from a peaceful race of now extinct highly advanced benefactors, both forces have similar weaponry and technological abilities.

The harsh reality of this book is that it really isn't very good. The editing job wasn't up to par. I can't recall reading a published work with so many spelling errors in it before. The entire book is written in first person perspective from a lizard man named Rahm's point of view and follows his progression up the ranks of the Warrior caste of his society(or Empire as they call it). First person perspective is not bad on its own. However, the author spends a great deal of time trying to model the antisocial duel ready bestial nature of the Tzen(lizards) while simultaneously spending the entire book making a hypocrisy of it. Tzen warriors don't talk to one another, they don't socialize, and they certainly don't think. Yet the book is almost entirely dialogue involving feelings between the crews and showcasing a highly developed and etiquette filled language.

Unfortunately this is only the beginning of the long list of oddities in the book. The wars aren't really wars and the battles are almost entirely talked through rather than shown. The technologies in the book don't make sense even from a reasonable standpoint. (You can't use hand held melee style weapons from a moving aircraft and ants can't manipulate technology and devise new electronics and devices.) Among the other nonsense occurrences of the book are a nocturnal species of lizards who can't fight in the dark without special sonar helmets and an apparent confusion by the author as to which planets are which and how exactly events occurred in early segments of the book he had written.

I can't say this book was good at all. I want to give it two stars because: I like bugs, lizards, space, and science fiction settings.

I have to give it one star because: I really can't say it was ok.

Jennifer Margulis says

"I'm not sure this is the book I would have picked out for you," my husband said when he saw me reading it.

The Bug War, written in 1979, is a very strange book. My husband read it when he was eleven years old and I've seen his beat-up paperback on our bookshelves for years. I was looking for something to read last week and wondered if Ender's Game (about the wars with the Buggers) had been partially inspired by Robert L. Asprin's first novel. So I decided to read it.

The story is told from the point of view of a cold blooded sentient creature, Rahm, a commander fighting for The Empire. A member of a race called the Tzen, Rahm leads his warriors on three missions in the course of the novel. Their objective is to destroy sentient insects: Wasps, Leapers, Ants, in order to inhabitant their planets as they expand their own colonies.

What's interesting about the book is the way Aspirin tries to relate the thought process of a creature who is decidedly not human. When anyone under his command disobeys him, the commander does not hesitate to kill them. He has no connection to his own offspring. And though he strives to understand other castes (the Technicians, the Scientists), he has little natural curiosity or concern for anything outside his narrow scope.

The book is a little disjointed. For a story about reptiles in flying machines and interspace domination, surprisingly little actually happens in the plot. There are long periods of waiting for the commander and for the reader. There is also a little too much weapon cataloging and a little too little character development for my taste. Still, I enjoyed the book. And I understand that Asprin went on to write dozens more highly acclaimed science fiction books, which makes me glad to have read one of his first novels.

Tiffany says

This book was bought was about 25 cents and I had to try and read it before it disintegrated in my hands. It was surprisingly quite interesting. This race of warriors, trying to defeat the insect coalition. The species was well thought out. They have their priorities straight. They missed some human factors, but yeah, they're lizards.

Trevor Vallender says

It's a difficult thing to write from the point of view of an alien; either you end up with characters entirely impossible to empathise with, or characters too similar to seem anything but human. Asprin does an admirable job of walking the line, writing of an alien race with absolute dedication to their Empire, and few human concerns. As the book progresses, Asprin seems to use this to examine exactly what does make us human, by looking at the changes the characters go through as their society evolves. It would have been nice if he had taken these thoughts a bit further and deeper, but The Bug Wars is still an enjoyable - if disposable - take on military SF.
