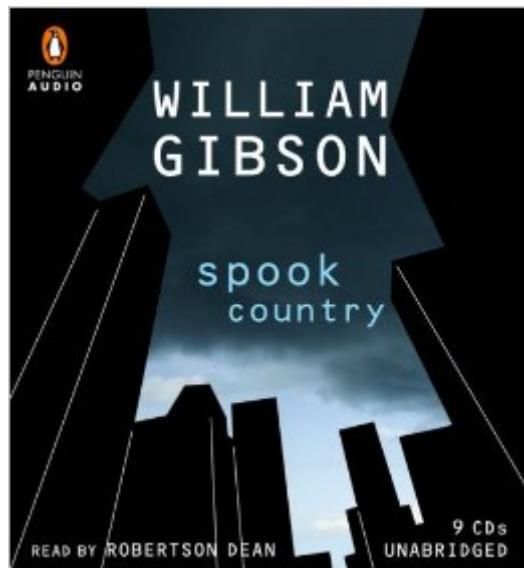


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Spook Country



Synopsis

William Gibson's first new book in four years-like the bestselling Pattern Recognition, a contemporary novel with international implications.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Penguin Audio; Unabridged edition (August 7, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143142208

ASIN: B003156CH6

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.6 x 5.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (238 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #5,528,248 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (G) > Gibson, William #3768 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction #4411 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy

Customer Reviews

I have always been a fan of Gibson's, and so I was surprised by some of the negative reviews of this book-- and even more surprised now that I've read it! Gibson's writing hallmarks are here-- deft characterization, gorgeous writing, a way of presenting the world of (as one reviewer put it) product placement through a new perspective. In this book, echoes of other characters can be found-- musician-turned-journalist Hollis reminded me of Marly, and tranquilizer-addict Milgrim drifts through his experiences with a distance much like Laney's in Idoru. What's changed, however, is that instead of projecting his story into the future, it's set in a present-day which is as much science-fiction to most people as the future could be-- a world where wartime corruption, Malay straits pirates, artists working in GPS, and Ativan addicts come together and drift apart again. Gibson himself pokes fun at his own Neuromancer vision of VR, and suggests that we are all doing it now-- just without the gloves and goggles. This book was clever, thought-provoking, and surprisingly gentle in the end, with its characters and also with its vision of our (possibly not all that bleak) world, with lots of possibilities for redemption or at least continuing forward-- and, I thought, well-paced from beginning to end. One warning: a lot of the reviews below, esp. the negative ones, have spoilers in them.

I've read everything William Gibson has written, and I guess that in and of itself betrays that I like his work. He has a sort of detached writing style, reminding me of "Blade Runner" or "L.A. Confidential." The characters don't reveal much of themselves, and sometimes their material possessions seem more important than how they feel and who they are. Spook Country was the hardest book to read of Gibson's, a very difficult read. Is he getting obsessive-compulsive? Try the shoehorning on page 71: "Inchmale understood it, though, and indeed had championed it, as soon as it was digitally possible pulling guitar lines out of obscure garage chestnuts and stretching them, like a mad jeweler elongating sturdy Victorian tableware into something insectile, post-functionally fragile, and neurologically dangerous." Really? On the other hand, some of the descriptive verbage to me borders on genius - 126, "The Frankfort School, as they'd called themselves, had wasted no time in plunging their intellectual ovipositors repeatedly into the unsuspecting body of old-school American academia." So you have to really like William Gibson - which I do - to fight your way through a difficult but enjoyable read. Pierce Scranton M.D. author, "Death on the Learning Curve"

Gibson's Pattern Recognition is brilliant, Spook Country is not. While not a particularly awful book, it's just not a very good one. Gibson tries to tell 3 disconnected stories in parallel - a narrative device that never seems to really connect. When the 3 story lines of the novel do finally collide, the payoff is so weak and anticlimactic that it makes the arduous journey through this book feel even more worthless. There are some interesting moments in Spook Country and some good characters, but just when you start to connect with them Gibson yanks them away. The problem here is focus, Gibson seems to be trying to do too much in Spook Country and he isn't able to do all of it well. Had he picked one thread and developed it better he would have had a much better book. I bought this book in Hardcover right when it was released with the expectations that it would be in the league of Pattern Recognition. Unfortunately it isn't. I won't completely warn people off this book because there are so many books out there that are much worse. But I don't feel like I particularly got my money's worth.

Much has been written about the similarities between the works of William Gibson and Don DeLillo. Certainly, as I read both Pattern Recognition and Spook Country, I couldn't help thinking of White Noise: Text and Criticism (Viking Critical Library), one of the great books of the past 50 years. Gibson captures the same sense of lurking dread DeLillo masterfully describes, but could never be accused of being a mere imitator. Here, as in his other novels, Gibson has his own way of drawing

us in and pulverizing our emotions. I found this a compelling story, maybe not as gripping as Pattern Recognition, but nevertheless a marvelous story. So, why all the negative reviews here? After reading many, which I did because I was so perplexed by the response to a book that had received considerable acclaim, I reached the conclusion that there is a core of Gibson fans who want him to write Neuromancer over and over and over again. Well, I loved that book as well, but I think Gibson has grown as an author, and his recent works are just as gripping but are not as rapidly paced as his earlier work. There's less adrenalin rush here, but much greater psychological depth. Gibson continues to grow as a writer, and when that happens some readers will be left behind, like the pop music fans who show up at a concert begging an artist to play their hit single with a bullet from 20 years earlier when the artist wants to share new work with the audience.

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