



The Merchants' War

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The witty sequel to Frederik Pohl's & C. M. Kornbluth's legendary science fiction classic *The Space Merchants*, written 30 years later.

Great advertising agencies still dominate the world and control all governments and every aspect of human behavior. When a handful of renegades on Venus zealously opposes the so-called “benefits” of the hucksters’ paradise, it seems inevitable that the all-powerful account executives of Earth will stop at nothing, not even war, to force the rebels to submit.

But the Veenies have a plan....

The Merchants' War Details

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From Reader Review The Merchants' War for online ebook

Marcela says

A poor sequel to 'The Space Merchants.' The plot is almost identical -- an insider of the marketing/advertising governance comes to his senses with the help of a female love interest who turns out to work for the 'other' side. As a sequel, it's crap.

If, however, one looks at it as a rewrite, rather than a sequel, this novel is far more developed, nuanced, fleshed out, and, yes, interesting than the 'Merchants.' And, it could stand alone. If it *did* stand alone, this would be a five-star knock-out.

Cocodras says

Me costó un poco meterme en la historia. Desde el primer momento me pareció interesante la crítica al consumismo, sin embargo no acababa de engancharme. Analizándolo intentando ser objetiva, los elementos estaban ahí: conflicto tras conflicto, intrigas, acción. Quizás mi estado de ánimo era lo que me impedía disfrutarlo. La segunda mitad la disfruté más, me encanta el desenlace y la evolución de la personalidad del protagonista.

He visto que es continuación de otro, *Mercaderes del espacio*, pero se puede leer sin haber leído el primero.

Tim Fiester says

This book, for me, was sometimes brilliant, sometimes frustrating. Frustrating, because it was too similar to its predecessor, "The Space Merchants." Even more frustrating because too often (for my tastes) the real action seemed to be occurring off-stage, with our narrator oblivious to the happenings around him. *sigh* Another naïve protagonist who the other characters assign him a job to do to keep him busy while they become the real heroes doing the real work. Only the protagonist comes up with a plan that wrecks all their efforts to hell and manages to put him on top.

That said, I loved the parodies of modern advertising and consumerism, the notion of advertising bombs ("Campbellian ordinance"), and commercial zones where the unwary are bombarded with addictive advertising.

Erik says

better than the space merchants. characters were much better, satire more satirical. Plot not really predictable

you think its going to be a rehash of the old book, but it really goes in much different directions.

ending reminded me a bit of the diamond age.

still probably too short, but this book definitely achieved what it set out to do - a thoroughly enjoyable scifi satire in an ultra-capitalist universe.

RIP Frederik Pohl

Mark Hodder says

THE SPACE MERCHANTS, by Pohl and Kornbluth, is an all time classic satirical SF novel. Thirty years after its publication, Pohl wrote this sequel and, wow, he really delivered. As excellent as the original novel is, THE MERCHANT'S WAR is better. The satire bites harder, the plot speeds along without once flagging, and the protagonist is engaging and, initially, wonderfully faulted. The story of his rise, fall, and rise is brilliantly told, and the commercial world in which it occurs is really well crafted. I loved everything about this book except its lousy cover. A Google image search reveals that ALL its editions have lousy covers. I suppose that's quite ironic, considering the story concerns advertising and marketing.

Oscar says

Tennison Tarb, el narrador, es un ejecutivo publicitario, en misión diplomática en Venus, planeta que rechaza las prácticas publicitarias desatadas de la Tierra. Pero le queda poco para volver a la Tierra de nuevo. Sin embargo, un incidente lo cambiará todo y su regreso se acelerará. Ya en la Tierra, asistiremos a una trama publicitaria que envolverá a Tarb en un descenso a los infiernos.

‘La guerra de los mercaderes’ es la continuación, treinta años después, del clásico ‘Mercaderes del espacio’, esta vez escrito únicamente por Frederik Pohl, ya que C.M. Kornbluth falleció en 1958. En ‘La guerra de los mercaderes’, Pohl nos describe una sociedad absorbida totalmente por la publicidad, donde gran parte de la población sufre la adicción de ciertos productos, y malvive a base de nutrientes de calidad ínfima.

Sin llegar a la calidad de ‘Mercaderes del espacio’, esta continuación sufre de ciertos altibajos, aunque se lee bien. Entretenida sin más.

Tomislav says

This is Frederik Pohl's 1984 sequel to Pohl and Kornbluth's 1952 The Space Merchants. It is approximately one generation later, and while Mitch and Kathy had escaped Earth and established an anti-commercial society of Venus, the situation on Earth itself has not changed. This novel follows a new main character along a similar political journey, only now with the added complexity of "Veenie" agents operating on the Earth. There was still plenty of hyperbolic exaggeration to keep me amused. Still, the ending was naively optimistic - the Earth of this future has already passed the point of no return. But as satire, realism isn't so important, I guess.

Karen the Comic Seller says

What would the world be like if the advertising agencies took over - literally. If everything were an ad. If only two classes existed - those who worked for ad agencies - and consumers - whose only purpose was to buy, buy, buy - no matter what.

And what if a group decided they didn't want to live like that, and moved to Venus, where they outlawed any kind of advertising....

Ok, that's the "Space Merchants" written in 1953 by Frederick Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth left off...

And where Pohl picks up in this 1984 sequel, with Venus trying to stay ad free, and Earth trying to sabotage them...

But what happens when one of the up and coming bright lights of a major Agency becomes a Moke head - and worse, sinks to the level of - consumer!

Scott Holstad says

I really enjoyed this sequel to The Space Merchants, written decades earlier. Pohl's wit and satire are on full display through the entire novel. This is a futuristic world which is run by advertisers and advertising with protesters having migrated to Venus to escape. There are armies that "attack" aborigines to get them addicted to advertised products. It's pretty funny. Tension Tarb is a senior ad exec stuck on Venus, but due to go home to an earth that's polluted and run over with billions of people. He has a love interest and there are numerous plot twists and his career goes up and down throughout the novel. He almost immediately falls victim to a new kind of advertising on his return to earth and starts drinking Moke-Koke, a seriously addictive beverage that's a combination of chocolate, coffee, and cocaine. As this book was published in 1984, you can bet Pohl is aware of the powerful pull of cocaine at the time, so when Tarb becomes a Moke Head, he kind of beats it into you, but it still fits the story. Toward the end of the novel, Tarb discovers a Venusian plot to beat earth at its own game and essentially keep Venus advertising-free. The plot is at the highest levels of the advertising world, but he agrees to help them (to save his own skin), going against everything he believes in. By the time the rather abrupt ending rolled around, I found it very surprising and somewhat hard to believe, but I still give Pohl credit for a fairly original book and awfully good writing. Not everyone will like this because it's not hard sci fi, but if you like some wicked humor mixed with futuristic worlds, you might enjoy this book. It's a fun read.

Neil says

This was about what I expected, after reading the first book in the series (and the 'fact' that this book was written quite a bit after the first book). Granted, the title is very deceiving (just as it is for the first book, as well). It is more about the journey the main character has to travel in order to become a 'better' person (or a 'different' person). It moved at a decent pace, overall. There were some parts I felt could have been shorter. I think I almost wish the author had tried alternating 'first-person' with 'third-person' or even two different 'first-person' point-of-views, as it seemed to be lacking 'something,' being told entirely from Tenny's perspective. It has a "wicked" underlying sense of obnoxious sarcasm that permeates the story (probably why it's a satire, right?) that makes some of it outrageously funny (it made me chuckle a time or two).

It is not a 'war' in the sense that I think of warfare being fought. It is more along the lines of secret agents and double agents working to counter the opposition. Apparently Earth has been trying quite hard to sabotage

Venus and Venusian industry over the course of a generation or two; (view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

I did like the ending, to be honest. I did not expect it to go down the way it did. (view spoiler)

.

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

This book did start out slow, to be honest, and I wasn't sure how much I would like it. As it progressed (and, as it turned out), the 'tone' changed about two-thirds of the way through and I actually started enjoying it.

(view spoiler) It did pick up the pace a bit as it drew closer to the end. I did find myself enjoying it far more than I thought I would by the time I finished it, which was a pleasant surprise.

Ben Brackett says

Writing style was definitely dated, I started losing interest in the middle but it got brought back for a strong end.

Skylar says

Like all the best satire, Merchant's War stays close to the truth and explores how following a "greed is good" philosophy to its absurd extreme would look. At times, I was waiting for the Ferengi Rules of Acquisition to be brought out.

Elenaran says

I was kind of trudging along through this book, disappointed it wasn't as good as the original, but then I got to the end. What a triumphant ending! I have to say many books I read have weak endings - it's nice to read a good one for once.

Jacob says

A fitting sequel to The Space Merchants, even if it was written almost thirty years later. I read some reviews that complained this was just a rehash of the first book, but while it's very similar thematically the plot takes enough of a different path to be worth reading to me. I still enjoyed Pohl's product names ("ReelMeet" and "Mokie Coke") and although I kept thinking the plot would go the same way from the previous book, it

never really did. That may have been intentional; the effect is that you feel more heightened suspense waiting for the shoe to drop but it doesn't, not the way you expect.

I also felt the author handled the themes of addiction and dealing with the truth fairly well. The ending was wrapped up a bit too nicely and suddenly, but otherwise I think Pohl's emphasis on advertising is still quite relevant (where does Google make its money again?). Also, corporate influence on government hasn't exactly disappeared since this book was written.

I was going to give this book 3 stars (The Space Merchants was a 4.5 rounded down to 4 and I felt this was a 3.5 rounding down to 3), but after writing this review I think I've talked myself into rating it 3.75 rounding up to 4. So it's .75 points lower than it's predecessor even though they're getting the same rating.

Eloi Puig says

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