



Our Friends from Frolix 8

Philip K. Dick

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For all the strange worlds borne of his vast and vivid imagination, Philip K. Dick was largely concerned with humanity's most achingly familiar heartaches and struggles. In **Our Friends From Frolix 8**, he clashes private dreams against public battles in a fast-paced and provocative tale that ultimately addresses our salvation both as individuals and a whole.

Nick Appleton is a menial laborer whose life is a series of endless frustrations. Willis Gram is the despotic oligarch of a planet ruled by big-brained elites. When they both fall in love with Charlotte Boyer, a feisty black marketer of revolutionary propaganda, Nick seems destined for doom. But everything takes a decidedly unpredictable turn when the revolution's leader, Thors Provonni, returns from ten years of intergalactic hiding with a ninety-ton protoplasmic slime that is bent on creating a new world order.

Winner of both the Hugo and John W. Campbell awards for best novel, widely regarded as the premiere science fiction writer of his day, and the object of cult-like adoration from his legions of fans, Philip K. Dick has come to be seen in a literary light that defies classification in much the same way as Borges and Calvino. With breathtaking insight, he utilizes vividly unfamiliar worlds to evoke the hauntingly and hilariously familiar in our society and ourselves.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Our Friends from Frolix 8 Details

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From Reader Review Our Friends from Frolix 8 for online ebook

Patricia Ulrich says

Sehr fesselnd und regt zum Nachdenken an -wie von Dick gewohnt.

Pickle Farmer says

Definitely one of Dick's better novels--maybe even top 10. Reads like a more religion-obsessed "1984". Read my full (if brief) review here: <https://never-stop-reading.com/2017/0...>

Lyn says

Our Friends from Frolix 8, first published by Philip K Dick in 1970 is classic PKD.

An observant student of Dick's work will recognize many recurring themes such as government surveillance, isolation, affinity with the working classes, Biblical and classical references, rejection of elitism, paranoia and drug use. This one turns drug use on its ear, as many drugs are legal but a "dealer" in this novel sales illegal tracts from a revolutionary minority political hero.

There is also an underlying absurdist Kafkaesque quality to PKD's science fiction that is especially highlighted here, though Frolix is not one of his wilder plots. Similar in tone to his masterpiece Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said, Frolix examines life from the streets in a future harsh with its own understated dystopia yet close enough to be recognizable for us. PKD's talent for spot on characterization is also in full form here. The character Charlie is an archetypal, pre-cyberpunk, who may have been a template for William Gibson's Molly Millions.

Also evident is Dick's remarkable visionary ability. There is a scene where a man has a "personal speaker system" built into his clothing. A reader in 2013 will read past this with little notice, but when one realizes that he wrote this in the late sixties, when vinyl record players and 8 track tapes came equipped with huge, cabinet sized speaker systems, his ability to see into the future is remarkable. This anecdote is only one of many that proclaim once again that Philip K. Dick was one of the greatest science fiction writers of the past century and may be considered one of America's most innovative and farseeing writers of speculative fiction or in any genre.

Denis says

First off, I loved the artwork for the hardcover Book Club edition by Kim Whitesickles - it took a while to find a decent copy. I consider this as PKD's last 'pulp novel' of his career.

I know that "Sandy" (in my opinion, GR's most respectful PKD reviewer), pointed out a multitude of mechanical flaws in the narrative, and he surely is correct. To be sure, some editor should have sorted all of these oversights out before sending this manuscript to press - but as I understand it, it was way past the deadline by the time PDK got it done and so, I imagine, Donald A Wollheim of Ace books would have been very eager to get it out in circulation trusting all was in order. It was Ace pulp after all...

I had more issues with the creepy element of two men over forty being infatuated by "a small, black haired, pug nosed sixteen year old with sensual lips, and elegantly formed cheekbones, who's smile illuminates her whole face, bringing it to life, named Charley."

Getting past that, I did love the idea of three types of peoples living on Earth: The Under Men (regular normal men), the New Men (big brained evolved supermen) and the Unusuals (men with telepathic or kinetic abilities) - not any women in these categories as far I recall, by the way. Best character of all was the huge protoplasmic alien being from far out in space.

All the elements of previous great PKD novels such as the colourful characterization and interestingly rendered dialogue is there. The ending is also very cool (if not a bit disturbing).

So glad to have finally read it. A flawed little gem in a magnificent cannon of work by one of the most talented and imaginative authors of our time.

Milo? Dumbraci says

recenzie (în română?) la <https://recomandarisffh.wordpress.com...>

Michael says

The main thing I remember about this book is that I got it from my ex-wife when we split up (she had read it and wasn't interested in keeping it) and that I read some other science fiction writer's denunciation of it right about the same time. I can't recall who it was (possibly Thomas Disch?), but it was in the context of a general discussion of PKD's work, and I recall the wording as, more or less, "...of course, no writer is perfect, and even Dick had his bad days. Could anything possibly be worse than *Our Friends from Frolix 8*?" So, I went into this book with pretty low expectations.

But, I didn't really feel that Disch (or whoever it was) was fair in lambasting it so cruelly. It may not be on quite the same level as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* or *VALIS*, but it seems to be equal to a lot of the work Dick was putting out by the late-60s and early-70s. In fact, this strikes me as sort of a dress-rehearsal or early draft for *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, which came out a few years later. Since Dick never edited anything, it's possible to sometimes watch him develop ideas over time through the published works, and it seems to me that a lot of what he explored in *Flow...* has its basis in *Frolix 8*. We get a similar shift from viewing a victim of an ultra-powerful totalitarian society to perceiving it from the p.o.v. of one of its chief enforcers, and we get a similar tepid love story (Dick was terrible at romance). *Frolix 8* may shock some folks because the older men are all interested in a 16-year-old girl, but that's sort of par for the PKD course.

The aliens are the main thing that differs Frolix from Flow... They seem like an attempt to consider some of the same aspects of Weltanschauung that Heinlein was working with in "Stranger from a Strange Land" - without all the sex, of course. Also that the Earth tyrants are supposedly mental mutants who dominate due to their evolved intellects, but when we get inside their p.o.v.'s, it never really seems to me that they are all that clever, and they are very petty gods by comparison to the Frolixians. Although Dick seems to be interested in discussing the nature of God (or the gods) in this book, I'll admit that he never quite makes it, but I'd say it's an interesting ride for Dick fans.

Darwin8u says

"We may all be that soon. Unhatched eggs sat on by a cosmic chicken."

- Philip K. Dick, Our Friends from Frolix 8

I'm not sure how it stands as far as pages read, but in books read - no one is close for me to Philip K. Dick. I think this makes 29 or 30 of Dick's novels I've read (I won't count the LOA versions for the total, obviously). Just in case you are wondering, Nabokov, le Carré and Roth and the 2, 3, 4th place finishers (so far). When I think of PKD - the two-word description I keep coming back to is *messy genius*. In many ways (and this may just be influenced by some recent readings of Vollmann, etc.) Dick is similar to William T Vollmann (bear with me). They both are hypergraphic in their need to make some sense of the world (PKD peers ahead, Vollmann peers into the now and the past) through their words. They aren't aiming for polish, they are searching for truth and truth might just require 100,000+ words. Dick's genius seems to be not just that of a futurist, but as someone who is able to look forward with available information, see where technology, politics, religion will converge in the future (and I'm not sure there is anyone with a better grasp of this ever) AND then explore all the moral, social, religious ramifications. If he was just a futurist, that would be one thing. He reads the future and then writes about the consequences.

Anyway, 'Our Friends from Frolix 8' explores a future where political power rests with "unusuals" (telepaths) and "new men" (hyper-geniuses). Again, it is interesting to read this book along side Yuval Noah Harari Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow. Harari is trying to predict what will happen with the future evolution of man, man and machine, and machine. Dick is already there and his paints are wet, canvas tight, and brushes moving furiously. I think this PKD novel is probably under-read, under-appreciated. It doesn't have the same cachet as his more popular and more notable novels, but there is something deeply arresting about it.

I have written in other reviews about Patrick O'Brian and how I'm amazed that he could write 20 fantastic novels about basically the same thing (2 friends on a boat?). Here is additional proof that all someone needs are some good themes (drugs, paranoia, technology, religion, corporatism, consumption of the individual, etc.) and a genius can produce an almost infinite stack of entertaining books.

Debbie says

In future Earth there are 3 types of citizens: the New Men (super-smart) and Unusuals (psychic powers) control the government. Most citizens are Undermen and perform menial tasks. When children are around 12

years-old, they are tested to see if they qualify as New Men or Unusuals. The tests are rigged, and when Nick Appleton's very bright son fails the exam, Nick decides to take up with the resistance movement. The story zooms along with a love triangle, messy divorce, flying car (squib) chases, political assassinations and of course, our Friend from Frolix 8 – a 90-ton, 6 million-year-old alien. It was a quick, fun read and would make a terrific movie.

AccessDenied says

VALUTAZIONE PERSONALE: 3

Strano a dirsi, ma è il primo romanzo di P. Dick che mi capita di leggere.

Trovato per puro caso in una cesta di libri lungo una strada che percorrevo, per andare in tutt'altra destinazione, il titolo (ed il prezzo) hanno subito attratto la mia attenzione: certamente non è l'opera più famosa dello scrittore, nemmeno per sogno, non avendola mai sentita nominare neppur per sbaglio, e di sicuro nemmeno la più riuscita.

E di sicuro non è nemmeno il miglior libro per iniziare a conoscere P. Dick, ma mi sono detto: prendiamolo lo stesso, così, a scatola chiusa.

Ed ecco che nella prefazione subito vieni ad apprendere il motivo del perché la suddetta opera è poco citata: essa è stata scritta in un periodo di crisi di ispirazione da parte dell' autore, periodo nel quale le sue idee non erano delle più originali e che tutto puntava sulla dissacrazione delle più comuni situazioni che caratterizzano il romanzo distopico: un governo dittatoriale guidato, a turno, da due sottospecie superiori di uomini, il controllo di massa esercitato sulla popolazione e lo stato di polizia vigente, nonché gli immancabili campi di "rieducazione", qui in questo romanzo vengono illustrati meno causticamente di quanto si possano descrivere, soprattutto perché l' attenzione rimane focalizzata sulla folle irrazionalità del leader supremo, tanto spietato nel dirigere la propria politica quanto immerso quasi sempre nella propria vita privata, andando a confondere spesso e volentieri i due aspetti, la qual cosa porterà inevitabilmente a situazioni assurde che, dico la verità, rispecchiano totalmente la mancanza di inventiva che P. Dick affrontava in quel particolare momento della sua vita, durante la stesura di questo suo romanzo, il quale senza dubbio era alla ricerca di escamotage per portare avanti la trama, ma che allo stesso tempo non fanno nemmeno storcere troppo il naso, poiché il romanzo è senz'altro godibile ed intrattiene non poco, anche in virtù dell'epilogo in salsa agrodolce che lascia sì quasi un senso in incompletezza (che tra l' altro dicono essere una caratteristica dell' autore, non avendo al momento altro di lui non posso basarmi su una opinione personale), ma che allo stesso tempo fa riflettere, e non poco, su quanta possa essere legittima e spietata la vendetta, e su quanto relativo possa essere il concetto di giustizia.

Insomma, non mi è dispiaciuto affatto: probabilmente la mia valutazione è influenzata dal fatto di non aver mai letto nient'altro, finora, di questo autore, ma lo consiglio lo stesso, soprattutto se non pagate il libro a prezzo pieno.

Per quanto possa risultarvi insoddisfacente, rispetto alle altre e più rispettabili opere, insomma, sempre di P. Dick si tratta!

James says

I'll be honest, I didn't really get it. As a huge fan of a lot of his other work (I'll resist the urge to suggest I'm a fan of Dick). And, I wanted to love it, I really did. I just didn't get it.

Maybe I'll give it another go sometime...

Jim says

Whenever I read Philip K. Dick, I react in exactly the same way. The first few pages, I tell myself that, after all, he isn't very good. And then the jagged paranoid genius of the man kicks in, takes hold, and carries me along. And what a ride it is! Some 200 years in the future, the earth is under the control of Willis Gram, a telepath who sits around all day in pajamas, robe, and slippers while his "New Men," geniuses with bloated heads, give him advice. If one is not an "Unusual" (telepath) or New Man, one is an Old Man who is effectively prevented from joining the Civil Service and participating in the reins of power.

The hero is one Nick Appleton who runs into an underage girl named Charlie, who is 98 pounds of ferocious energy. They spend much of their time trying to escape the pissers (or PSS, the police), who are trying to nail them for various infractions.

In the meantime, hurtling toward the Earth is Thors Provoni, who had escaped in a souped-up spaceship and encountered an alien from Frolix 8 who returns with him. Gram and his minions attempt first to shoot him out of the sky, and then to aim giant lasers to kill him, but his friend from Frolix 8 absorbs all their attempts and even thrives on them.

No way am I going to divulge what happens. It's a fairly interesting story, even though this is not one of Dick's better-known efforts. (That's probably why I read it: I needed something to keep me from thinking too much. It worked.)

Think of Dick as a hyperdrive from outer space that can take you faster and farther than you ever imagined, and leave you off somewhere where you can feel the dew on the grass with your bare toes.

Marissa van Uden says

This isn't my favorite PKD (it sits pretty low in the pack), but it's still PKD which means I had a ton of fun reading it. I'll list a few things I enjoyed.

- Wives criticizing their husbands in a manner described as 'wifewise' (lol)
- A gov organization called THE EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY
- A world where alcohol is illegal (punishment is one year mandatory confinement without possibility of parole) but where drugs are legal and used casually;
- Society's equivalent to street pushers are pamphlet dealers, who pick up their goods from secret 'printing stations' and who tend to be volatile, aggressive, and abusive to their young girlfriends.
- Genderless police officers who have had all their sexual organs removed;
- more insights into Philip K Dick's wandering eye, infidelity, and his obsession with young black-haired girls;
- people who are so intellectually advanced they have huge bobbleheads and need neck braces;
- protoplasmic aliens who become fretful and anxious when humans do that weird sleep thing once every 24

hours, where our minds 'disintegrate' into deeper interior levels and we interact with archetypes and primordial entities we've never met. That IS kinda creepy when you think about it.

- A ship-encompassing alien who wants a pet dog when he reaches Earth because his analysis has shown him cats are insincere hypocrites.

These, and many more brilliant explosions of imagination, are why I love PKD's writing and why this book is still very good, even though it's not one of his greatest.

A deeper review/discussion will appear on the SFF Audio podcast where I join Jesse Willis and Paul Weimar to chat about this book. Will post the link when the episode drops.

*edit - Here it is! SFF Audio Episode 406

Long live Dick.

J.P. says

Typical very cool Philip K. Dick book with rampant paranoia, people with different psychic abilities and a dark future. This is one of his best that he wrote late in his career. This is also the funniest book by him I've ever read with a few outright hilarious lines. And you won't believe what the protagonist does for a living. The only science fiction author who can come up with such bizarre ideas and yet make it all work.

Sandra says

Just finished reading it; still undecided what I think of it.

Thought this book was meh, until the ending. The conversation Nick has with Amos Ild hit me especially hard (partially because some parts relate jarringly to my own life at this point).

Spoiler Alert

Thoughts to ponder over:

1. The Frolixian keeps emphasizing the fact that he/his race has no wish to invade the Earth, destroy human beings, etc. However, we don't (and will never) know his mind for sure. I found his method (eliminating New Men's and Unusuals' powers) quite disturbing. Maybe it's their race protecting themselves. Think about it: he's effectively eliminating the evolutionary higher beings, preventing them from invading *their* own planet.

Or perhaps he really does have good intentions, and this is a point Dick is making: that to eliminate such entrenched power structures perpetuated by (in this case) intellectual abilities, it requires such abilities to be "re-balanced" among the people. (I'm not explaining this well. It's like the apartheid. Dealing with it on the political level isn't enough because the blacks are still on a lower socioeconomic level and hence discriminated against.)

2. So, is removing all the New Men's and Unusuals' powers the only way of destroying the power structure

they had? How else could the Frolixian have done it?

3. Dick suggests that people care about their immediate, personal lives more than ideology or fighting for a Cause or something. Is this true?

Can't think of anything else right now. 1.20am time to sleep.

Janice says

i love pkd, but this book runs around at the height of his "wives are horrible, pathetic shrews; the only other women are vibrant pixie sex monkeys" bullshit.

the end is awesome, though.

but he forgot to tell us that these "new men" have big heads until halfway through, which is kinda bullshit.

Joey Woolfardis says

Most of the sci-fi elements were pretty cool and very interesting, but not much explored to the extent I would have liked. The characters were all annoying and boring and kind of stereotypical and I didn't much care for what happened to them, but thought Thors Provoni and his friend from Frolix 8 were probably the best thing of the whole story.

I don't feel qualified to really write anything substantial in sci-fi as I'm so new to it and so lacking in having read any of it, but this felt really lacklustre from PKD and nothing that wonderful, unlike a couple others I've read from him. Still some really good ideas and I think a glimmer of the imagination to be found elsewhere in his works.

It's written well, if, as said before, kind of full of stereotypes which made it slow and boring sometimes. But the story didn't seem to go too far and the conclusion was rather annoyingly vague, perhaps trying to be too profound. Not his best, I've no doubt, but not one to put me off reading more.

Sandy says

Unlike Philip K. Dick's previous two novels, 1969's "Ubik" and 1970's "A Maze of Death," his 27th full-length sci-fi book, "Our Friends From Frolix 8," was not released in a hardcover first edition. Rather, it first saw the light of day, later in 1970, as a 60-cent Ace paperback (no. 64400, for all you collectors out there). And whereas those two previous novels had showcased the author giving his favorite theme--the chimeralike nature of reality--a pretty thorough workout, "Our Friends" impresses the reader as a more "normal" piece of science fiction...although glints of Dickian strangeness do, of course, crop up.

Of all the Dick novels that I have read, "Our Friends" seems most reminiscent of 1964's "The Simulacra." Both books feature the downfall of entrenched, duplicitous governments and sport an extremely large cast of characters (56 named characters in the earlier book, 48 in the latter). In "Our Friends," the Earth of the 22nd

century is ruled by an oligarchy of two ruling groups: the New Men, bubble-headed mutants with tremendous IQs, and the Unusuals, who command various telepathic, telekinetic and precognitive abilities. The overwhelming ruck of Earth's billions, the Old Men, are precluded from any sort of government/civil service employment and must make do with their menial-labor positions. In the book, we meet Nick Appleton ("the name a character in a book would have," he is told), a "tire regroover," who is shaken out of his mundane existence when his young son "fails" a rigged civil service exam. Swiftly becoming politicized, he drinks illegal alcohol, buys anti-government tracts from a feisty 16-year-old tomboy, and is soon embroiled in the thick of things in this Big Brotherish, dystopian world. A good thing, then, that Thors Provoni, a space wanderer who had left Earth a decade earlier to seek help for mankind's lot, is about to return...with a "90-ton, gelatinous mass of protoplasmic slime"; the telepathic, titular friend from Frolix 8.

Swiftly moving and filled with humorous touches, simply written yet complexly plotted, alternating furious action sequences with thought-provoking discourse, "Our Friends" is yet another delightful Dick confection. It finds the author dealing with some of his pet topics, such as divorce (Appleton leaves his wife during the course of the book; Council Chairman Willis Gram plots to kill his), Carl Jung ("A Maze of Death" was replete with Jungian subtext; he is referred to by Provoni as "the greatest of the human thinkers"), drug use (drugbars are ubiquitous in the novel, and every citizen seems to possess the knowledge of a Walgreens pharmacist) and 20th century fighter planes (this pet subject of Dick's had received especial attention in previous works such as 1967's "The Ganymede Takeover" and "Ubik"). Nick is an especially well-drawn everyman-type character, and the reader's sympathy for him never wavers, not even when he strikes his wife, Kleo (named after Dick's second wife out of five). No dummy, he recognizes the music of Victor Herbert and has a Yeats poem, "The Song of the Happy Shepherd," committed to memory. Charley, the young tomboy "gutter rat" with whom Nick has a rather icky love affair, is also memorable; in one sweet scene, the two make love in the one acre left of Central Park, and she spins around in circles, arms out, when Nick tells her that he loves her.

The book, however, good as it is, has its share of problems. As in "The Simulacra," several plot threads and characters simply peter out, never to be mentioned again. Worse, the author seems to be guilty here of a good deal of inconsistencies over the course of his story. For example, there is the matter of dates. We are told that the New Men have been in power for 50 years, since 2085. So the book takes place in 2135, right? But wait...Provoni later tells us that he was 18 years old in 2103, and now he's 105. So it's 2190, right? But hold on...his 10-year-old spaceship is a model from 2198. So it's 2208, right? See what I mean? Elsewhere, Dick mentions that there are 10,000 New Men and Unusuals on Earth; later, that figure changes to 10 million! He mentions that the army commands 64 different types of missiles; that figure is later said to be 70! He says that the government maintains detention camps in southwest Utah; later, they are said to be in southeast Utah! Provoni lands on Earth 1 1/2 hours earlier than expected; later, he is said to have landed eight hours earlier than expected! And perhaps most surprising, history buff Dick mentions that the name "Ashurbanipal" was Egyptian, whereas it is fairly common knowledge that the dude was Assyrian! (Granted, that last COULD be a bit of ignorance on Provoni's part.) Anyway, you get my point. Dick and his editors surely would have benefited from another rereading of their manuscript before publication. But despite all these many gaffs (very uncommon for this author, to my experience), the book is still as fun as can be. And really, how can you dislike any book with a 90-ton mass of telepathic slime?

Roddy Williams says

Nick Appleton lives in a world governed by two new types of human, the New Men and The Unusuals. Children, like Nick's son Bobby, are given a test when they are eleven, to determine if they are fit to work in

government. Nick is convinced that the tests are not rigged but his son knows otherwise.

The tests are rigged, and we are privy to a discussion in the testing centre before Nick and his son even arrive, deciding whether the boy should pass or not. Bobby is quite cynically convinced he will not pass. In this society, alcohol is illegal but drugs are freely available at drugbars. Alcohol can be obtained on the black market as well as the illegal literature of the Undermen, the writings of a political prisoner called Cordon who beams his writing out via a transmitter implant, after which it is edited and sold in pamphlets illegally,

Nick works in a garage for a man called Zeta, where he regrooves bald tyres to make them look new, while making them more dangerous.

Cordon is a disciple of Thors Provoni, a man who set off on a ship decades before looking for help from advanced aliens.

The narrative follows Appleton, a law abiding citizen ostensibly committed to following the rules of society. A man called Darby Shire (an ex-colleague of Appleton's) arrives at the house in fact, attempting to entrap Appleton into illegal activities. Then his boss, Zeta, takes him to a Cordonite apartment where he meets Denny Strong, an alcohol addict, and his girlfriend, Charley. Denny flies into an alcoholic rage when he finds Cordonite literature that Charley has hidden and attacks her. Charley escapes with Nick, who realises that he has already crossed the line of law-breaking and become an Underman.

The New Men and Unusuals believe that the announcement of Cordon's impending execution has turned many standard citizens into Undermen. They have of course, been monitoring everything and know where Appleton has been.

The kingpin of the government is Chairman Willis Gram, a corpulent old telepath. he has begun to ignore the advice of his aides and orders Cordon's immediate execution.

Then comes the news that Provoni is returning with friends. Friends from Frolix 8.

This is one of Dick's more frenetic and disjointed novels. It can be read as a warped mirror of Orwell's '1984' in terms of this world of relentless surveillance and control, where the 'evolved' humans, the New Men and the Unusuals, control who can and can not enter government service.

There are odd religious themes and concepts creeping in. At some point earlier, a ship had discovered a large frozen corpse in deep space which most humans believe to be God.

Cordon in a sense is an apostle, a John the Baptist figure who distributes his gospel directly through a transmitter implanted in his body.

Thors Provoni is returning – symbolically – from the dead with hope for all mankind. Dick being Dick, however, the nature of the help that the Frolixians is offering is ambiguous.

As is common to many Dick novels, the female characters are more fascinating than the males, and here we have a contrast between Appleton's wife, a nervous paranoid woman, and Charley, the girl he leaves her for, a complex psychotic woman whose motives and actions are ambiguous and unpredictable.

Cliff Jr. says

I have really mixed feelings about this one. The main character is a bit of a scumbag. But you're seeing everything through his eyes, so you wind up feeling kind of dirty, like you're not supposed to think he's a scumbag. If you can keep those feelings at bay and maybe care still care what happens to the guy anyway, then this is a great story.

In classic PKD fashion, this one sets up a situation that's very clearly unjust, infuriatingly so. Then he proceeds to pick at the complexities of the situation, and then when it's resolved, you're left with a lot to think about. You can see your initial gut reaction to the situation was naively simplistic. And the whole thing ends on a note of compassion and empathy, which is good.

As in most PKD novels, a lot of crazy stuff happens, and nobody's ever 100% sure what's going on and why. The far-out sci-fi premises do a good job of making you feel like you're finding your way in an indecipherable universe, gradually making your way up that Mercerian hill. This is what regular, day-to-day life feels like to me, so it's nice to find somebody who gets it.

Luke Devenish says

What a quirky little oddity. I haven't read Philip K Dick before - a somewhat embarrassing thing to admit - yet I'll certainly be reading him again, even though, I somewhat suspect, this isn't the finest example of his sci-fi genius. While certainly entertaining, this book is a bit like two hundred pages or so of extended foreplay. By the time the real excitement starts, it's all over in a hail of brainwaves. What I loved most was the telepathic Council Chairman Willis Gram, a hilarious villain, whose casual cynicism and poorly conceived scheming had me laughing out loud in places, and I have no doubt that Dick intended him to be funny. Gram's dialogue was delightfully un-villainous, which served to make him particularly memorable for me. I greatly enjoyed Charlie, too, although her end rather bewildered me. It seemed all a bit pointless after everything that had come before. Oh, and her violent drunk boyfriend Denny was most definitely sexy. Loved him. But overall, 'Our Friends From Frolix 8' promises rather more than it quite delivers. It lacks some decent pay-offs. For all the obsession with Provoni, and the absolutely marvellous return that he makes, we never really know him and he never really goes anywhere. Has he been absorbed by the big blob of an alien? Is he merely a husk now? I suspected that he was by the end, but it didn't seem to matter much. Another vague disappointment was the big-headed Amos Ild. It was a marvellous scene when it became clear that Gram would have to follow his lead, but this never quite amounted to anything before his bulbous pear-shaped scone had been fried off screen. That aside, his final cretinous chat with hero Nick was absolutely terrific.
