

SYNERGY MAGAZINE

TEAR SHEET

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Dark Animus
Editor: James Cain
Web: <http://www.darkanimus.com>

Dark Animus is a high quality magazine produced in paperback format. The current issue is the combined issues 10 and 11 and is over 150 pages, illustrated with a attention grabbing colour cover. Dark Animus offers an anthology of superb horror, science fiction, fantasy and otherwise "strange" fiction coupled with poetry and some great illustrations. The editor of Dark Animus certainly knows how to choose the best tales to include; many stories from earlier issues have either won Science Fiction and horror literary awards or become finalists.

Dark Animus takes me back to my childhood when pulp anthologies of horror and science fiction (as well as strange/weird tales) were common and I saved every penny to get the next issue. Dark Animus follows in this tradition, packed with content, with little advertising and "padding" it is exceptional value for money. It offers all sorts of intelligent and challenging fiction aimed at the mature fiction reader coupled with some great art as well.

Many of the stories are from well established authors and it is nice



to be able to "sample" a wide range of writing styles and genres in a single publication. I think the novellas offered are just the right size; they have enough length to both develop a good plot and solid characters without becoming full sized novels in their right.

Rather than go through story by story, I will just discuss a few that especially took my fancy. "Just a game" is an especially apt tale exploring the world of the internet and total immersion computer games. Will such an environment make our world safer or will the violence and aggression of this virtual domain spill over into our world and, if it does, what has to be done to stop it.

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“Cold Desires” is a frighteningly powerful tale which slowly reels in the reader and carries him or her to the final climax which is confronting and twisted. It is a superbly transgressive experience. I am always a sucker for a zombie story and “Dig This” places the zombie tale in a new and intelligent context where nothing is at it seems, while “The Shape” concludes the volume with an impressive post apocalyptic story. There are twelve solid stories in this anthology, all of which are of the highest quality, while I have chosen a few to mention, all are of superior quality and I cannot think of one that fails to hit its mark.

Dark Animus has an “edge”, the stories included are always original, dark and gritty, they range in genres but the emphasis seems to be on tales which hold the attention

and stimulate the mind. While certainly some include a level of violence and “mature content”, it is never gratuitous or unnecessary, I really appreciate the editorial style of Dark Animus, it is clear that James Cain knows what he wants to read and what genre readers want to read and does not diverge from this standard one iota. At the same time this is why Dark Animus is not for profit with all monies channelled back into the publication – it is difficult these days to produce a publication with such an “authentic” vision and make money.

I would encourage anyone with an interest in edgy, intelligent and challenging fiction to read Dark Animus. It is a very rich smorgasbord and satisfying on so many levels. It is a publication which will not “date” and you will return to it again and again.

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