



Coming Home

Jack McDevitt

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Thousands of years ago, artifacts of the early space age were lost to rising oceans and widespread turmoil. Garnett Baylee devoted his life to finding them, only to give up hope. Then, in the wake of his death, one was found in his home, raising tantalizing questions. Had he succeeded after all? Why had he kept it a secret? And where is the rest of the Apollo cache?

Antiquities dealer Alex Benedict and his pilot, Chase Kolpath, have gone to Earth to learn the truth. But the trail seems to have gone cold, so they head back home to be present when the Capella, the interstellar transport that vanished eleven years earlier in a time/space warp, is expected to reappear. With a window of only a few hours, rescuing it is of the utmost importance. Twenty-six hundred passengers—including Alex's uncle, Gabriel Benedict, the man who raised him—are on board.

Alex now finds his attention divided between finding the artifacts and anticipating the rescue of the Capella. But time won't allow him to do both. As the deadline for the Capella's reappearance draws near, Alex fears that the puzzle of the artifacts will be lost yet again. But Alex Benedict never forgets and never gives up—and another day will soon come around...

Coming Home Details

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Valerie says

This was a great story, even though I accidentally read this first out of the series. Loved the characters and the dual plotlines.

Growing up with parents who care a lot about history and museums, it was definitely interesting to see this perspective of that. I liked the idea that at least the people they sold antiques to really cared about having the item and were excited about it. I do understand the importance of having things in museums, but I'll not appreciate some of it as much as others would.

Time travel is another concept I like to see from different angles of possibility. I'm pretty sure I missed some of the background for this from a previous book though.

Jerry says

I'm coming home, I'm coming home, tell the world I'm coming home...

(Sorry; couldn't resist referencing that song.)

Seriously, I enjoyed this one.

Jon says

Another very enjoyable entry in the Alex Benedict series.

What struck me about this one was the way McDevitt balanced the dramatic tension in an unusual way. There were dramatic moments in the story, but there were a lot of moments of, "This could turn out to be a red herring, but we're going to investigate it," where it did turn out to be a red herring. That could have fallen flat, but it didn't, at least for me.

Part of this book felt a little bit like "fan service" -- the reference to the Priscilla Hutchins books, for example. All in all, I got the sad sense that this may be the last Benedict book, as it has the most connection to the first book, *A Talent for War*, of any of the sequels. I'm still looking for whatever McDevitt comes up with next, which if I remember correctly, is going to be a sequel to *Time Travelers Never Die*. (That remind me, there were also various references to a book from the year 11252 called "Time Travelers Never Wait In Line". Funny, but it helped give me the sense that the book was not as deep as others in the series.)

Metaphorosis says

reviews.metaphorosis.com

2.5 stars

Antiquarians Chase Kolpath and Alex Benedict search out lost space-age artifacts and participate in an attempted rescue of a spaceliner trapped in a spacetime warp.

In reviewing the prequel to this book, I said I feared the series was growing tired. *Coming Home* is unfortunate proof of that suggestion. The prose is good in some places, clumsy and repetitive in others. The series has never been based on action and adventure, but this book overdoes the dry descriptions of past excitement. I kept wishing I were reading the book about those adventures instead.

I couldn't find much of a plot, to be frank. Things happen, and Chase and Alex wander slowly around looking for artifacts. Mostly, though, Alex goes on talk shows, Chase has an active love life, and they talk with their clients. There *is* one fairly exciting development, but downplayed so far that it's hard to care much about. McDevitt also sets the stage for a change we've all seen coming from the start, but that change doesn't actually happen, and at this stage, won't until book ten.

The book reads more as an excerpt from Chase's diary than as a story with beginning, middle, and end. That didn't work for me even as a dedicated reader of the series, and I imagine anyone who tries this as a stand-alone work will be mystified as to the series' appeal.

If you really love the Benedict series, pick this up. If you don't feel so strongly, I advise leaving well enough alone. *Firebird* was an uptick after the disappointing *Echo*, but it appears to have been temporary. Based on the last three (of seven) books, it looks like the series is pretty well played out, and even McDevitt has lost his interest in it.

Ashley says

First line: When Alex Benedict graduated high school, his uncle Gabe, the only parent he'd ever known, provided the ultimate gift: a flight to Earth, the home world, the place where everything had started.

Summary: The year is 11,256 C.E. Earth is no longer the only inhabited planet in our galaxy. Thousands of years have passed and new worlds have been discovered but the artifacts from the Golden Age (early space travel) are rare and valuable. Many items have been destroyed or lost as Earth has dealt with flooding and other disasters. When an artifact is brought to Alex and his assistant, Chase, they begin to search how the item was just discovered and where it may have come from.

At the same time, a ship has been missing for 11 years. The passengers are believed to be dead. However, when the ship appears it is only available for a few short hours. For the passengers aboard they believe it has only been 3 days. How are all the people off the ship in such a short time?

Highlights: A very imaginative science fiction novel with a very intriguing plot. This was recommended to me and I was immediately interested. The idea of space travel and that items from our lives are considered ancient artifacts is fascinating. The science is not overwhelming which is perfect for me who has very little scientific knowledge. I liked the mysteries intertwining. I kept trying to think what I would do in the situation if I were stuck on a ship not realizing that 11 years had passed by in the blink of an eye. What would I be willing to do to get back to my family who have moved on? Highly enjoyable novel.

Lowlights: The book is part of the Alex Benedict series but he was in the story very little. It mainly followed the assistant, Chase. We never found out too much about him but those details may have been included in

other books in the series.

FYI: Part of a series but can be read as a standalone. It has references to other books in the series but not enough to hinder the reading of this one.

Nick says

This book, for some reason, didn't seem to catch me as much as the earlier ones did. The book was enjoyable, but the narrative - normally McDevitt's strongest point - seemed a little lacklustre when compared to earlier books in the series.

Unlike the previous stories, this one does introduce a permanent change to the circumstances of the main characters, in the person of Gabe Benedict, but it will remain to be seen in the next novel whether he allows his characters to grow from that, or to remain fairly static as they have done so far.

On the whole, enjoyable, with sections that did keep me reading until long past when I should have put it down, but lacking when compared to the earlier efforts.

L.E. Doggett says

Might even be 4.20 stars.

McDevitt is excellent. His posts flow well and his descriptions are very well done. In this one he gets into some political stuff as a side issue but still worth reading. This series isn't action packed and violent as many SF books are these days. It is more of figuring out a mystery. One that is very old. This book has two events going along, plus a couple of minor mysteries, which you need to pay attention to but that's good.

I do recommend it fully. You could get away with reading just this one but start at the beginning to get a better understanding of what is happening.

Kyle Aisteach says

I wish I had time to do a proper review on this one. If you're planning to read *Firebird*, do so first, because this one follows on the action of that one pretty closely and will spoil a fair bit of it. However, like most of the series, I think it stands alone just fine. Definitely an engaging read.

Kevin Kelsey says

The Alex Benedict books are always hit or miss for me. This one is a miss, but it's still very much worth reading if you're a fan of the series. It wasn't incredible, especially following 'Firebird' which was definitely a high point along with 'A Talent for War' and 'Seeker'.

Storywise it's a direct continuation from 'Firebird'. It was full of things that needed to happen in order to close off the series. Ultimately, that is why it struggled; it didn't function well enough as its own story.

I guarantee that McDevitt isn't completely satisfied with how this one turned out either. As it's winding down he has his characters discussing how the conclusion of their journey was "a bit of a let down", and how sometimes the "narrative just gets away from an intriguing setup". It's very tongue in cheek, and I love that he did that. He knows.

There was also a really fun tie in with McDevitt's Academy series of novels, which I've also thoroughly enjoyed. Definitely some fan service nodding.

I think this will probably be the last Benedict book for a few different reasons. But I would be fully on board for more. I just really love this series. It's extremely comfortable adventure akin to Sherlock Holmes or Indiana Jones, if they were antique dealers 9000 years in the future.

Nathaniel says

I read this book because it was a nominee for the Nebula award for best novel (although it didn't win). It's the third or fourth Alex Benedict novel I've read, and I really don't understand them.

The premise of these novels is kind of Indiana Jones in the 15th millennium. Alex Benedict goes around the galaxy recovering valuable historical artifacts to sell to private buyers. But I'm always very, very confused by the temporal scope: the stories are set 13,000 years in the future but the people and culture and politics and society are vanilla 20th century. Not even 21st century, but really *twentieth*.

Couple of quick examples: at one point someone Alex had disliked says nice things about him on a talk show. When informed of this, Alex says "Maybe I'll send him a Christmas card this year." Later, Alex also sees some kids on a boat off the coast of Florida (he visits Earth in this novel) and wonders if they're on Spring Break.

Again and again there are these kind of details that show that the next 13,000 years of human history are effectively meaningless. Almost literally nothing changes. There's FTL travel and there's some AIs and there's artificial gravity, but each technology is just treated as a minor, superficial tweak to 20th century society.

This isn't that unusual for sci-fi, a lot of military sci-fi or space opera does the same thing, but in those cases the focus of the story is on an exciting plot. But--and this might just be a personal mismatch in taste--it seems especially perplexing to treat 13,000 years of history as basically meaningless when the focus of the book is on precisely that 13,000 years of history. That's what Alex does: he goes and finds some artifact from the past 13 millennium. So in passage after passage you hear a listing of great figures of the past that will go something like, "The great explorers Christopher Columbus, Neil Armstrong, and Harrison Burnside" (where the first two are historical and real and the third is fictional). So the focus is always on the past, but it's an oddly sterile, antiseptic past that didn't have any effect.

This particular novel had the added problem (SPOILER) of being really obvious. In the first couple of passages, you learn that ancient (e.g. 23rd or 24th century) space habitats are prone to blowing up if you turn the power on when you rediscover them. Then they find that an archeologist obsessed with that time period had been hiding a priceless artifact in his closet, slightly singed. Where did he get it? Why didn't he tell anyone? If you're guessing "Because he found a stash of ancient artifacts, accidentally blew them up, and this

is the only piece that survived and he was too ashamed of his carelessness to reveal what he had discovered" then congratulations: you've solved the mystery of the novel. The only reason I had any doubt was that I thought surely there had to be more to it. There wasn't.

This is the seventh novel, so I assume that there are folks who really get into them. I just don't really understand why. I don't *dislike* the books, I just don't really get them.

Mike says

Jack McDevitt books, especially the Alex Benedict/Chase Kolpath novels, tend to be books that, when they are released, I put down whatever else I'm reading to read the new one. And I did so with this one. Overall, it was OK. It tied up some things from the first book (indeed, that set the whole series in motion) but overall it felt like a shaggy dog story. A well-written shaggy dog story, but a shaggy dog story. In fact, it almost seemed like it would have been better as a novella (or two novellas, each dealing with one of the plots). And Chase seemed kinda dumb in this one. But that's the problem with having a character a lot of people like that has to be slow enough for exposition, but sharp enough to be believable as writing a series of memoirs: I think someone who's really as slow as you need them to be for the story would not know they were that slow (and hence would not say things to the effect of "Maybe I'm dumb ..."). Anyway, mostly recommended for Benedict completists, but still an OK read.

Megan Baxter says

I have never read a Clive Cussler book. It's just not my normal sort of fiction, although I have nothing in particular against it. Reading Jack McDevitt's *Coming Home*, though, I kept thinking that this book was an awful lot like what I would expect a Clive Cussler book to be, just set in the future, with space-hopping treasure hunters and antiquarians, instead of being bounded by the confines of the Earth.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Bradley says

This series continues to be a solid and consistent read. There are several plotlines going on simultaneously, with one picking up on the spaceship rescues from those outside of time, including relationship angst for Chase, and also the delightful return to Sol.

Of course, a return to the Earth and our solar system is roughly on par to returning to Sumeria a few thousand years from now to try and figure out, from scratch, what those people were like.

It's really a shame that humanity had a breakdown about 5k years ago and anything that wasn't written in stone was lost, or else this little job of trying to figure out what a cell phone is or how the cradle of civilization had gotten to the moon in the first place would have been a much easier proposition.

Ah, but our favorite characters *do* have tidbits and hints from the diligent work of previous archeologists, at least, and some names have passed through 9k years relatively intact, the God Einstein not being one of those intact personages. ;)

Still, it's fun uncovering our present and our near future through the very distant eyes of these characters, thereby becoming a wonderful mirror to ourselves trying to figure out Sumerian culture or architecture from the scant clues that are left to us. The idea that our pasts, including what we might call our pre-written history, might actually be nothing of the sort.

Things fall apart. We could have come from a very advanced past, outgrowing so many kinds of needs, but even if they had all made things to last, the fact is: This is a Very Long Time. Nothing lasts. We just cannot know.

I feel pity for Alex and Chase, but pride in the fact that they're trying.

This is a very thoughtful novel. Not so exciting as some of the previous ones, but being thoughtful is good, too. :)

Walt O'Hara says

I've said many times (often, in reviews on Goodreads.com) that a day with a bad McDevitt novel beats a day with no McDevitt novel whatsoever. The last two or three Alex Benedict novels haven't been *bad*, exactly, but they have struck me as increasingly repetitive. *COMING HOME* follows closely on the heels of *FIREBIRD*, and the two share plot elements, particularly about the disappearing ships plot thread. The standard McDevitt plot structure is in play here (see my *Firebird* review for a rehash of it all), so there are no great surprises.

COMING HOME is probably the first novel where I've actually sort of egged on the author to get past the expected twists and turns of the standard plot structure and get to the meat of it all-- when a mysterious white skimmer shows up to shoot up Chase and Alex at one point in the story, I found myself saying "*Yeah, right, we all know they are going to get past that.. so move on why don't you?*"

I won't reveal much about the plot, except to say that the big McGuffin this time is a mysterious long-lost cache of Earth artifacts, from the early days of space exploration. So this gives McDevitt a chance to write a novel set on Earth in the far future, after severe climatic change and political/social evolution has had its effect. As the artifacts being sought are largely from the 20th and 21st century, we get to see the past from the perspective of someone searching for knowledge we take for granted as readers. It's an interesting literary device-- for instance, we learn that in the far future, only a relative handful of Shakespeare's plays survive intact. *Coming Home* is also the most self-referential of the novels so far, as it features Chase Kolpath discovering the life of Priscilla Hutchens, the star of the other big McDevitt series. Hutch lived millenia before Kolpath, it turns out. A nice Easter Egg. For the first time, as well, Chase mentions writing her memoirs in the real time narrative so we experience Alex's reaction to them.

This is a SPOILER. The other great reveal, the one we have been building up to since *Firebird*, was the rescue of Alex's Uncle Gabe from the hyperspatial rift his passenger liner fell into 20 years previous. When it actually happens, it's kind of a non-event. For such an influential character throughout the series, Gabe kind of comes off as a non-starter. He'll need fleshing out in later books.

SUMMARY: *Coming Home* wasn't my favorite of the Alex Benedict series of novels. It was solid and workmanlike, but the repetitiveness is starting to become increasingly obvious with every novel and that is

starting to affect my enjoyment of them.

Bill says

McDevitt fans always delight at the release of a new Alex Benedict novel. This novel is no exception for delight by the telling of human activities over 9 millennia in the future. In this story Alex and Chase are on a search for artifacts from the Golden Age of Space Travel, especially from the Apollo missions.

I was struck by an immense notion of history reading this novel. Events of my life are put a in historical perspective by my era being viewed as a time many millennia in the past when we are ancient history. So much has been lost due to a dark age and time. So much has been misinterpreted due to lack of context. Think of how we try so miserably to understand human civilization during the post-Roman dark age, before the burning of the Great Library, before writing was invented.

McDevitt uses the current state of our civilization as the foundation of the collapse leading to our coming dark age—Climate change and global warming, the failure of capitalism and its destruction of democracy, fascist governments and dictators, the accumulation of most wealth by the few, corporate rule...and the failure of our tribalized civilization to do anything to prevent it.

Coming Home is not only about the archeology of our time, but also a prediction of our near future.
