



Infinity Beach

Jack McDevitt

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We are alone, because centuries of SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) missions found nothing. Until Dr Kimberly Brandywine seeks her clone-sister and the last lost expedition from the Nine Worlds settled from Earth. The ship's log was faked. She loses her career and her lover, steals a starship, and learns *too much* truth.

Infinity Beach Details

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Author : Jack McDevitt

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From Reader Review Infinity Beach for online ebook

Peter Greenwell says

For reasons known only to publishers, this was called Slow Lightning here in Australia. OK, that aside, what we have here is an engaging work of science fiction. In fact, if you removed the spaceships/SF component of it, and turned Alnitak into a distant tropical island on Earth, it'd work just as well...and just as effectively, if not more so. Maybe, just maybe, it would've been a stronger effort for it. Sometimes I feel having things take place in a future setting actually interferes with a good story.

Either way, I enjoyed it. McDevitt's style is to keep things marvellously simple. There's no wading through acres of narrative here - it's all very concise and to the point. If you're after a satisfying blend of SF, mystery and horror, then don't pass up this one.

David Hibberd says

I have discovered something about myself. In my later years in life it appears that books I enjoyed reading years ago still appeal to me. It also appears that although I have some vague recollections of maybe having read a book a long time back, I don't remember much about them.

So it is with Infinity Beach, my third print book in a row that I read for a second time. Now, as back then, I enjoyed the story. This involves first, second, and subsequent encounters with intelligent life in the galaxy. Mankind has progressed to the Nine Worlds that Earth has settled. Dr. Kim Brandywine seeks answers to questions regarding the disappearance of her clone-sister, Emily who was one of four crew on the first encounter.

Kim resorts to a number of criminal activities to uncover the truth, including grand theft starship. She is able to discover what happened on the original voyage and get the answers she is seeking.

Roddy Williams says

'We are alone. That is the verdict, after centuries of Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence missions and space exploration. The only living things in the Universe are found on the Nine Worlds settled from Earth, and the starships that knit them together. Or so it's believed, until Dr. Kimberley Brandywine sets out to find what happened to her clone-sister Emily, who, after the final unsuccessful manned SETI expedition, disappeared along with the rest of her ship's crew.

Following a few ominous clues, Kim discovers the ship's log was faked. Something happened out there in the darkness between the stars and she's prepared to go to any length to find answers. Even if it means giving up her career... stealing a starship... losing her lover. Kim is about to discover the truth about her sister – and about more than she ever dared imagine.'

Blurb from the 2001 Eos paperback edition

In a future where Humanity has expanded out to a handful of settled planets and seems to have culturally stalled, Kim Brandywine is working for an institute still trying to search for Extraterrestrial Life. Kim is haunted by the death of her clone-sister Emily who was on an exploratory voyage and who disappeared,

along with another member of the crew, without trace after she returned. The two male survivors of the Hunter Expedition were subsequently involved in a mysterious explosion at Mount Hope on their home planet, an area which has since had sightings of ghostly apparitions.

Emily is contacted by the grandfather of the other missing girl who believes that there is something more to their disappearance than meets the eye.

Initially cynical, Kim begins to uncover small pieces of evidence which leads her to suspect that something is very wrong with the official story of the voyage of the Hunter and, facing opposition from her employers and the families of the now-dead crew, becomes determined to uncover the truth of what happened to her sister.

McDevitt gives us a gripping scientific detective story which combines a first contact situation with brilliantly evocative moments of ghostly horror and an old unsolved murder.

Interestingly, McDevitt succeeds well in realising a planet settled some six hundred years ago which now has experts researching its own history and archaeology. It makes for a very well-rounded society, if a tad Americocentric. The structure is well thought out, although perhaps a little cinematic. It is a bit of a cliché for the hero/ine to be not believed/discredited/fired and then have to solve the mysteries while the authorities are snapping at her heels.

All in all, though, it's a cracking piece of work. Nothing groundbreaking, just a solid piece of well-written SF with a detective thriller twist.

Tom says

This book is so good I read it TWICE!

Okay, so I actually read it a second time after I forgot I read it the first time. Let's be honest with ourselves: Jack McDevitt books mostly have the same plot (humanity thinks it's alone in the universe / finds a tiny clue that it's not / ALIEN ARTIFACT!!). So perhaps I can be forgiven this lapse.

At any rate, the main storyline of the book is so generically interchangeable with a thousand other sci-fi books that it wasn't until I started reading the big climax that I had the sinking realization that yes, I'd read this before. Not another similar book. This EXACT book.

It was after this incident that I started rigorously reviewing the books I read, if only for my own sanity.

Bob Rust says

Infinity Beach (2000) is a tale of Entropy: spread among the stars the human race has clearly become as marginal to the long narratives of history as is the protagonist of the tale to most of its action; only when she becomes as so often in McDevitt's work a kind of detective spelunking the gnomic backstory of the race does the book take fire.

Parijat Mishra says

Thoroughly enjoyable

No swashbuckling heroes here. Just well meaning people, some who are curious, some who are conservative,

and all fallible. Despite blunders, good intentions work out due to the courage of a few, and humanity meets another intelligent race for the first time. Alls well that ends well.

Hubcon says

I'd never read anything by this author before, but now want to read more. Slightly slow to start, but then becomes strangely gripping. Some interesting ideas about first contact, and a mystery thrown in. I got some of the plot ideas in advance of the main characters, who should have got them sooner. We all have preconceived ideas about first contact, and this book gives a good new one.

Roger says

Interesting story, but not all that great either

Mary JL says

This is on of Jack McDevitt's early SF works. The premise is interesting and he portrays a docile, almost decadent society. The assumption is that discovering we are alone in the universe has affected humanity's development.

Perhaps the author deliberately paced the first third of the book a bit more slowly to emphasis the languid, we-don't care attitude of most persons in the Nine Worlds.

But although this book did not grab me at first, as you keep reading it get much better. The main character--Dr. Kimberly Brandywine--is very well drawn and the supporting characters are also good. I especially liked Dr. Tolliver, so watch for that name--those chapters I found really likeable.

A really good premise; good characterization and dialogue and a bit of a slow start---recommended for any science fiction fan.

Craig says

This is an earlier Jack McDevitt novel which I'd somehow missed. I enjoyed it, and thought that it read like something of a dry-run for the Kolpath/Benedict or Priscilla Hutchins books. It begins, as do many of his works, with a mystery and the investigation leads off in many directions. I found it amusing that there was a spoiler in, of all places, the "Acknowledgements" page at the front of the book; I've complained of having spoilers on the fly-leaf or the cover or in blurbs, but this may be a first. Anyway, Dr. Kimberly Brandywine is a fine heroine, not quite as charming and clever as Hutch or as hard-core and competent as Chase, but a good character in her own right, and INFINITY BEACH is a very good interstellar mystery/adventure.

Peter Tillman says

Polished SF mystery-thriller first-contact story

Infinity Beach stands out for its polished, adult prose, and for its complex, conflicted characters, muddling through life. McDevitt's writing is clean and mature. The plot is twisty, genre-bending, romantic, recomplicated. Experienced readers will have seen all of his plot-elements before, but McDevitt plants enough red herrings to keep you guessing (me, anyway). This is a world-class novelist writing at the height of his powers. A Nebula award nominee, and not to be missed.

Infinity Beach features some of the creepiest aliens since, well, "Alien". At least three times, I felt the hair rise up on the back of my neck.... it's been awhile since that's happened. I liked this book a lot. A definite keeper. Review from first reading, June 2001

Reread notes, 12/22/16. Still a crackling good yarn, though this time it seemed a bit overlong, at 435 pp. (hardback). Could have used some tightening up. Kim, the protagonist, a physicist turned PR-person: it's interesting watching her develop from a goody-two-shoes to a very, well, goal-oriented person. 3.6 stars this time. Not quite up to the best of the Priscilla Hutchins adventures -- Deepsix is my favorite -- but certainly worth reading.

My 2001 review (when I first read it), with links, some dead:
<http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/nonfict...>

Marshall Pickens says

How would we actually react to first contact? Are there other civilizations out there among the stars? Does it even matter? Jack McDevitt is a master of setting good stories in a future world. His stories could be set at any time and still be just as good, he just chooses to set it in the future. This story is a mystery. A classic who-dun-it. But at the same time it raises the question about status quo vs. exploration. It is the age old question of the devil we know vs. the devil we don't. Humanity will always choose to suffer evil while that evil is sufferable rather than head off into the unknown. So why do we look out "there"? Are we looking for truth, for some meaning beyond what we can get here? I, personally, would love to find others out there. There are people I know who would say that aliens don't fit with their religious view point, and I really haven't thought that much about it, but I still would love to see aliens. Wander through their version of the great pyramids on a world with four moons. Awesome. Did God make us special and the rest of this is all just to show us how amazing He is? Could be. But that would be amazingly boring.

In the end I would recommend this book if you enjoy mystery novels because the sci-fi stuff is just there, and not that important to the story, and as a mystery it is above average.

Kerry Nietz says

Though I "discovered" Jack McDevitt after he was already a well-established sci-fi writer, I've read a good share of his books now—most notably the series featuring Priscilla Hutchins (Engines of God, Deepsix, Chindi, etc.). McDevitt does a great job, I think, at illustrating the grandeur, adventure and danger of space travel. I like his writing enough that occasionally I'll mine his older works. I'm sure eventually I'll have read

them all.

Infinity Beach is one of his earliest novels, and as such, I think it stands up pretty well. It does start slower than most, and as other reviewers have noted, the first third of the book is more a murder/disappearance mystery than a standard sci-fi novel. Only the fact that the mystery happens in the future makes it speculative at all.

After the initial mysteries began to get solved is when Infinity Beach really started moving for me. That's also when the "grandeur and danger" McDevitt style started to shine through. From there it was one revelation after another, mixed with some fun action and adventure, and a little social commentary.

Infinity Beach isn't my favorite McDevitt novel, but it has a great premise, good characterization, an interesting (though uneven) plot and a satisfying conclusion. Not a bad winter read!

Krishna Shah says

The storyline is well done and the characters well thought out. The mystery was good, it was slow to build but I really enjoyed reading this one.

Carlos Manuel Perez says

More detective novel than 1st contact sci-fi. Boring.
