



Deadstock

Jeffrey Thomas

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Punktown - a crime ridden-metropolis on the colony world of Oasis - is home to the scum of countless alien races. Stalking the mean streets is private detective Jeremy Stake, whose destiny is set on a collision course with Fukuda and a one-of-a-kind living doll.

Deadstock Details

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From Reader Review Deadstock for online ebook

Joseph Farand says

Punktown on the planet Oasis is a sprawling metropolis home to a wide variety of alien races. DEADSTOCK has two narratives that converge on the mean streets of Punktown. The first features Jeremy Stakes, a haunted Blue War veteran and mutant private detective with uncontrollable chameleon-like abilities. A wealthy client hires him to find his daughter's stolen one-of-a-kind living doll. The other features Javier Dias, an over-the-hill gang leader with no hope in the future. In their search for a missing member the gang finds themselves trapped by belfs (bio-engineered life forms) and must work with a mutant gang to escape. Meanwhile the living doll is growing in size, intelligence and power. Jeffrey Thomas gives the reader an extremely creative story with a nice blend of sci-fi mystery and lovecraftian horrors. DEADSTOCK is a launch title for the new Solaris imprint and hopefully the first of many quality works from Thomas.

Amanda says

I wanted to love this book so much. It seemed like the absolute perfect book for me. Unfortunately, I enjoyed it but it turned out to not be anything really special imo.

I liked the setting of Punktown but did not believe the plot aspects were all that original. I did like the 'ouija phone' idea. I will read more by Thomas and, in fact, already have Blue War: A Punktown novel but this author didn't turn out to be the amazing discovery I had hoped he would be.

Zephyr says

Yeah, no. Right off the bat, our 'hero' has a creepy, sexualized relationship with a young teenage girl whose doll he is supposed to be finding. One of her teenage friends casually sucks a teddy bear-thing doll's penis (apparently it contains juice) while he watches, and he ogles them all ceaselessly.

Other female characters in the book, in as much as they exist, are fridged and/or portrayed very negatively.

Even aside from that, the book is badly written, with infodumps and clumsy sentences that are sometimes hard to parse. And it just comes off as trying to hard in its attempts to be gloomy and weird.

It has glowing cover-blurbs from Jeff VanderMeer and China Meiville, both of whom are great authors and masters of New Weird fantasy, but I'm baffled by that. This book doesn't come anywhere close to their works in terms of quality. It doesn't get near as weird and dark (apart from the gross pedophilic dark) either, and yet comes off as grosser.

I liked the chameleon powers premise, but it's not worth it.

David Barbee says

Jeffrey Thomas' Punktown is one of my favorite worlds to visit. It's a place that's so far-flung into the future

and yet it reflects a lot about modern society and culture. Punktown is a mirror for ourselves, showing us that the more things change, the more they stay the same. War, poverty, corruption, love, business, family, and struggle all exist in Punktown the same way they exist right here and right now. In *Deadstock*, Thomas tells two stories. One is a hard-boiled detective mystery featuring Jeremy Stake, a soldier-turned-sleuth who has a mutation that makes his face mimic any other face he looks at. The other half shows two street gangs trapped together in a seemingly abandoned building, trying to survive against a futuristic security system gone amok.

While mysteries are unfolding, Jeffrey Thomas makes sure that we see all of his characters from all sides. They're not just good or bad people. Everyone is after something and has their personal demons to deal with. Thomas is usually good about showing us both sides of every story. While his setting is the weird and hyper-futuristic Punktown, his characters stay true to basic human nature. While some of these people may be clones, mutants, aliens, or even a demon-god going through an apocalyptic metamorphosis, these are people with regular thoughts, feelings, and motivations. I feel like I didn't get to see enough of Punktown or its unique culture, but that's because Thomas puts a lot of time towards fleshing out these characters.

Similar to "Everybody Scream!", *Deadstock* has a large cast, and not everyone makes it out alive. But while "Everybody Scream" was more cohesive, held together by the strange carnival setting, *Deadstock* feels less focused. I feel like the two main plots were really great ideas for short novels that were put together to form a full-length novel. They strike different tones. As soon as I started grooving on the hard-boiled detective stuff, the chapter ends and I'm thrown into the survival-horror genre. And vice versa. Plus, those two plots eventually converge. As the demon-god called Dai-oo-ika constantly evolves throughout the story, Stake's missing toy case and the survival of a dozen gangsters suddenly lose weight.

"Everybody Scream!" remains my favorite Jeffrey Thomas book, along with several of his short stories, but *Deadstock* is still a really good read. Punktown is always a fascinating place, and *Deadstock* treads new territory as hard sci fi with a soul.

Taylor Preston says

Great introduction to the world of Punktown, a nightmarish yet beautiful city populated by humans, aliens, mutants, robots, clones, and extra dimensional beings on the colony planet Oasis. Ex-soldier turned private eye, Jeremy Stake, investigates the disappearance of a young girl's bioengineered doll and learns a terrible secret about her father's corporation that could spell the destruction of the city. Cool mix of futuristic SF, dark urban fantasy, and hard boiled detective fiction.

Mike says

Love the Punktown!

J.H. Glaze says

Was this story prophetic? After I read it, the scientific community announced the experiments to grow MEAT in the lab! It was a genuine treat to read this story.

Darian says

I read a short story by this author in some sci-fi anthology and liked it enough to seek out this book (set in the same universe.)

Book begins well enough (almost like a horror story), but deteriorates rapidly between the second and third act--due in some part to too many characters and perspectives; if you're reading this in several sittings like I did, it can hard to remember who's who/what (esp. with those alien characters with weird names.)

Most damning however, is the fact that the protagonist doesn't have much of a personality (kind of funny in a sense, since he's supposed to have a chameleon-like power and is struggling with issues of identity in the novel...but this can't be a legitimate excuse, from a writer's perspective.)

I think Jeffrey Thomas is a very creative writer, but I'm a bit disappointed with this novel. That said, I'm still willing to try his other books/short stories, if I can find them.

Katie says

I highly enjoy the concept of this book - set in the future, where primitive life forms are grown in a lab for entertainment purposes, including living dolls for teenage girls. But what happens when those primitive life forms take on a life of their own, a life much less primitive? Thomas has created a cool universe. Some of the subplots don't tie together quite as well as I'd like, but it's still a good story. The author also has an annoying habit of repeating certain phrasings/similes etc. word for word, and there is a lot of crude language used if that bothers you, so be warned. Overall though, good story.

Mary says

Jeffrey Thomas is another smaller press writer that I highly recommend. His particular brand of fiction is in the area of science, mystery, horror and mythos. Deadstock is his first Punktown novel featuring his character Jeremy Stake, a private investigator with very unique abilities. And I am happy to say that it looks like we will be seeing alot more of Jeremy Stake in the future. This book was published by Solaris Books, a relatively new publisher of sci fi and fantasy that is aggressively putting itself on the map with the quality fiction it is getting it's hands on and publishing.

Did I also mention that "Deadstock" has just been nominated as a finalist for the John W. Campbell Award? I cannot recommend this book, or any other of Thomas's work enough.

Carpentermt says

Deadstock is the latest offering in Jeffrey Thomas' Punktown saga. Mr. Thomas is pretty well known to most fans of horror and outré fiction for his stories set in the city Paxton on the planet Oasis, and for his interest in HPL's mythos. He is on the verge of making it to the big time. Previously his work has been released as short

stories in genre magazines, then compiled in anthologies or single author collections, or as novels published by various small presses. As I understand it, Deadstock was a direct release to mass Markey paperback, a first for Mr. Thomas, and a signal that his backers think he can generate a significant audience.

Deadstock is published by Solaris, an imprint of BL Publishing in the UK. The evocative cover art is by Darius Hinks and, I think, superbly captures the futuristic feel of Punktown and the mutability of the main character in the novel. Page count is 414, although the text itself starts on page 9. All in all, good value for the money.

I think it is difficult for a novice reader to come into this story and fully appreciate it. Although Mr. Thomas tries to place everything into context, you need an appreciation of much of his previous output. First of all, you need to be familiar with Punktown itself, from the various short story collections (Punktown, Punktown: Shades of Gray and Punktown: Third Eye) to really have a sense of how gritty, crime ridden and tense the setting is. It would also be helpful to have already met the various human and humanoid races who inhabit this world, like the wide-mouthed Choom native to Oasis, the blue turbaned, gray skinned Kalians, the tentacle eyed Tikkihotto, etc. The reader also needs to be conversant with the fiction of Lovecraft. Mr. Thomas is a noted mythos author. Most of his stories are in the collection Unholy Dimensions from Mythos Books, which I highly recommend. More recently the author has attempted to blend his love of the mythos with Punktown. It's nothing new for him; you can read his series of short stories about the Old Ones in Unholy Dimensions. This new books is a direct descendent of Monstrocitiy published in hardcover by Prime Books in 2003, although it is not per se a sequel. There is no overlap of characters but the events and locations of Monstrocitiy are fresh in Punktown's recent past. The Great Old Ones of Lovecraft and Derleth are not solely or primarily concerned with Earth and humans, and are not constrained by time and spatial dimensions like we are. They can manifest to nonhuman races. If they lost a war with the Elder Gods (Nodens et al) and they are trying to regain primacy in this dimension, then they will manipulate whoever they must to open the interdimensional gates that will allow this to happen. So it should be unsurprising that the races that share Oasis have some myths, legends and horrific truths in common. Cthulhu and its ilk are the Outer Gods to the Kalians. In the future, no one raises cattle or chickens any more; they grow "living" lumps of chicken or beef flesh. Well, in Monstrocitiy, one of the growers of these foodstuffs is using the technology to raise monstrous creatures, spawn of the Outer Gods, to allow them to penetrate our sphere. Monstrocitiy deals with the discovery and confrontation of the cult doing these unspeakable things. That finally brings us back to Deadstock, set some time in the aftermath of Monstrocitiy.

***** Spoilers may follow, stop reading now if that bothers you.*****

Deadstock presents two stories that intertwine but never really mesh. Jeremy Stake, a veteran of the transdimensional Blue War, is a private eye. He is also a mutant whose features will mimic those of the person he is looking at, giving him characteristics a bit like a chameleon. He is hired by John Fukuda, a wealthy magnate of the artificial livestock industry (or deadstock, giving the novel its title) to retrieve a rare doll that was lost by or stolen from his daughter Yuki. These kawaii-dolls are all the range with Punktown teen girls. They are essentially artificial life forms. Yuki's doll, Dai-oo-ika, was the rarest, completely unique, and now it's gone missing. It turns out hers was vaguely anthropoid, with wings and claws, and feelers instead of a face. Sound familiar? Anyone who has read enough mythos fiction can catch a glimmering of where this is going. It also eventually comes out that it was fabricated with the same technology used for such ill purposes in Monstrocitiy. As Stake slowly unravels the whereabouts of Dai-oo-ika, he also begins to unravel some inconsistencies in the lives of Fukuda and his daughter. We learn more about his experiences in the Blue War, where he had experiences that would not be out of place in a novel about Vietnam and fell for a blue skinned sniper who could easily have been modeled after the enemy trigger woman in Full Metal Jacket. In parallel with this, an outcast Punktown mutant gang and a gang of tough street youths are trapped in an unoccupied building that was designed by Fukuda's brother. This apartment was to have nonhuman robotic servants for each apartment directed by an encephalon, an artificial brain, and they have now run seriously amuck. These disparate gangs are trapped together and try with increasing

desperation to escape the merciless onslaught of these automatons. As Slake, Yuki and Fukuda are ultimately drawn to this building where the gangs are trapped, the two groups never meet or directly interact, even after the story reaches its climactic moment. What ties them together are how they are affected by the slow transformation of Dai-oo-ika, who is making its way to this apartment building also.

I never wrote a review of Monstrosity because I was not blown away by it. Unfortunately I am left with a similar impression of Deadstock. I really really like Jeffrey Thomas' short fiction, and my review of Unholy Dimensions shows how much I like his mythos stories. Unfortunately this novel fell a bit flat for me. None of the characters were really developed well; some of them came across as clichés. For example, I could have done without the whole interlude-in-flashback to the Blue War which read like a Vietnam knock off. I never got a good feel for why Stake fell so hard for an enemy combatant and I really disliked the deus ex machine denouement of his relationship with her. After all the build up the plot seemed to fizzle out a bit, and I can't understand why the two plot threads were not more closely tied together to give the novel a greater sense of cohesion. I also was very put off by a shameless self plug in the middle of the book. Stake is trying to research the cult of the Outer Gods and on the web comes across two reference books. Oh, not the Necronomicon or Mysteries of the Worm, but rather Monstrosity and Everybody Scream. And the name of the bookstore where they were for sale was Shocklines. Of course, it is old hat for mythos authors to use the names of their friends and colleagues in a mythos story, but always as an inside joke for devoted fans. Maybe this was meant to be humorous? Sure didn't work for me!

So much for the bad. What was good? Well, Mr. Thomas has an accomplished hand at descriptive prose. The whole book was very readable and filled with interesting little asides and vignettes. He can also pencil a mean action sequence. The battle scenes were very exciting. He has the mythos in his blood; his descriptions of the development of Dai-oo-iki were nicely creepy and rang very true for the genre. Even though I didn't care for some broad brushstrokes of the plot, I liked the parts greater than the whole. In fact this book is a page turner that I read through in a couple of days. I never set it aside like I have been doing with Black Sutra. And, dang it, I just plain like everything about Punktown. I'm glad to have this book but I doubt I'll be rereading it soon. Maybe the mythos and Punktown work better for me in short stories than novels. I dunno. Your move.

Robin Edman says

I was so excited to see that Blue War had finally come out as an ebook that I took the opportunity to grab the rest of the Punktown books, rendering my collection complete.

Deadstock is still my favorite of the Punktown books, possibly because it is my first. Mr. Thomas gave it away one year during an event called Read an Ebook Week, and I was enthralled. The story is just so vivid; even the monster pulls at your heartstrings a little (in fact, for me, the monster is the very most sympathetic character, followed by the telepathic dwarf Mira).

Punktown is an excellently imagined setting, although this book gives you only a little taste of its richness. If you want to go in with a bit of primer experience, you should probably read the short story collection before tackling this book. Though this book won't present much in the way of entry barriers. People are as people are.

David says

Deadstock does a good job of portraying a unique future world. The story keeps you involved. There's an interesting mix of action and mystery. In one plot thread, there's action with a street gang fighting bio-engineered creatures they encounter while looking for a missing gang member. In the other plot thread it's more of a mystery. (It wouldn't be the most effective mystery by itself, but in combination it works well enough.)

This isn't for "serious reading", but should be good for "entertaining reading".

Ryan Pidhayny says

I'm usually a big fan of Thomas's Punktown series but I just couldn't enjoy Deadstock. The continued worldbuilding was good but unfortunately that's all the good I can say about it. The characters came off flat and there wasn't a single one I cared about. This apathy extended to the plot of the book. It revisits the story from the conclusion of Monstrosity, but with the extensive and original setting, I don't understand why this needed a pseudo-sequel when there are so many more interesting avenues to explore. It comes off as just another Lovecraft pastiche with a cool setting. The two plot threads read like two separate novels that don't mesh well together. Unless you want to read the Punktown series in its entirety, I would give this one a pass.

Steven Guitink says

Jeffery Thomas was the second New Weird author I read after I had my China Mieville fix and remains one of my favourite authors to boot. Deadstock is not the first in the Punktown series but it is the first I read of his work and also remains one of my favourite novels from him to date.

The plot is standard but the way in which Thomas seeds the world with a variety of strange and interesting concepts makes it unique. It goes from being a missing doll case, to something much darker and stranger with everything coming to a pretty brutal ending.

The characters are all particularly well done. A lesser author would have seeded the world with strangeness to cover up flat characters (Im looking at you Simon R Green), but here Thomas gives all characters a voice, even if that voice is only a few pages long.

One thing I will definitely thank Thomas for is his handling of sex and violence. Its something I dont understand about a lot of writers. They're all fine with blood, gore and brutality but when it comes to sex, they get all squeamish. Seriously people, get over yourselves. But Thomas demonstrates that he can handle such subject matter in a mature and meaningful way.

If there is one thing that knocks it down a notch its the subplot with the Punktown gang. They're not badly written but they don't feel like teens and the story doesn't really add much to the story other than feeling like padding.

But Deadstock is definitely up there in terms of good New Weird Fiction. I just wish that more writers were willing to dabble in this field. I'd love any recommendations people could give me.
