



Ecko Rising

Danie Ware

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Ecko: Rising is a unique genre-bending fantasy–sci-fi epic following a savage, gleefully cynical anti-hero. After awakening in a dimension-jumping inn to find himself immersed in his own sardonic fantasy world, Ecko joins a misfit cast of characters and strives to conquer his deepest fears and save the world from extinction.

Ecko Rising Details

Date : Published September 28th 2012 by Titan Books (first published September 23rd 2012)

ISBN : 9780857687623

Author : Danie Ware

Format : Paperback 528 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Science Fiction, Fiction, Abandoned, Science Fiction Fantasy, Cyberpunk, Adventure, Dystopia, Adult, Speculative Fiction

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From Reader Review Ecko Rising for online ebook

Sharon Kennedy says

I wasn't sure what to expect when I read this, but was highly impressed.

Ecko (silent G!) is an assassin, and lives in a high tech world, where the majority of the citizens are plodding along, doing what they're supposed to, without causing any trouble. He has been modified, with a perfectly camouflaged skin (hence (G)Ecko), and targeting systems built in.

While on assignment to take down one of those involved in the creation of this Utopia, he is suddenly flung into a world where nothing is familiar, and ends up in a tavern which moves every night.

So from beginning as a Bladerunner-esque society, you are suddenly flung into a version of Conan's world, with magic, centaurs, swords and sorcery (or saucery, as it keeps being referred to!). I loved the little quoted in-jokes, such as the reference to needing forty thousand hit points and a sword of bad guy slaying, and the references to the old Dungeons and Dragons books, where you made your choice and turned the page.

The writing simply flowed along, until you stopped thinking about the fact that Ecko was in the wrong world, and just cheered him along with all of the other good guys. I look forward with anticipation to the second volume, and the return of the Wanderer.

Paul says

Ecko is an unlikely saviour: a savage, gleefully cynical rebel/assassin, he operates out of hi-tech London, making his own rules in a repressed and subdued society. When the biggest job of his life goes horribly wrong, Ecko awakes in a world he doesn't recognise: a world without tech, weapons, cams, cables – anything that makes sense to him. Can this be his own creation, a virtual Rorschach designed just for him, or is it something much more? Ecko finds himself immersed in a world just as troubled as his own, striving to conquer his deepest fears and save it from extinction.

If Ecko can win through, he might just learn to care – or break the program and get home.

Imagine taking a character from a cyber-punk thriller and transplanting them wholesale into a fully fleshed out fantasy novel. Danie Ware's debut novel, Ecko Rising, does just that.

Ecko is terrifically smart, more than a little inquisitive and great at what he does. So good in fact, that he is a trifle cocky about it. Does this make him a bit irritating/smug at times? Perhaps, but that's all part of his quirky charm. Ecko's journey is the core of this novel and it's a voyage of discovery. He finds himself in a world totally different from anything he's used to, where he has no idea of the rules.

Ecko is such a fun character, and such a palpable presence, that I missed him when he wasn't in every single scene. That said there are some other fantastic characters that managed to hold my attention in his absence.

There is a warrior called Rhan who has been around for so long that he's become rather complacent with his lot. He spends his time drinking, partaking in illegal substances and reminiscing about the good old days. Ware uses Rhan to great effect, deconstructing the hero myth and dragging him through the emotional ringer. It's always fascinating to watch a character, particularly a flawed one, get metaphorically taken apart by the events in a plot. It is surprising how emotive his plight becomes. Initially, there was admiration of this near god-like hero, and then anger at some of his actions, followed finally by pity. Rhan has a couple of wonderful moments of self-realisation that are particularly well observed.

The other two characters that spring to mind are Triqueta and Redlock. It quickly becomes obvious that there is an existing relationship between these two. The writing very quickly establishes a sense of history between them both. This adds a welcome extra layer of depth to their characters. Redlock in particular is a joy, he spend quite a lot of time running around trying to decide what to attack first with his axes, how can you not love that?

The best thing about this novel is that, like Ecko, you very quickly start to buy into the fantasy world he finds himself in. Everything just feels so vivid and alive. In each new chapter you get hints about what is going on, but the full truth is never entirely revealed. Based on the final moments of the novel there has to a sequel (please let there be a sequel!). Ecko Rising is a fantastic genre-bending mashup that will appeal to anyone who likes intelligent thoughtful writing, with just the right amount of action. Just wait till you discover the delights of The Wanderer. Yes, I'm being a tease, but you can thank me for it later.

In retrospect, 2012 really has produced an exceptional crop of debut novels. Ecko Rising has more than earned its place as part of that select list. Judging by the writing on display I expect many more great things from Danie Ware in the future. She is undoubtedly an author to keep an eye on.

Yzabel Ginsberg says

I had to bring this one back to the library, and just couldn't muster enough interest to finish it on time. The beginning was interesting, but I couldn't get into the fantasy part, whether it came to the "good guys", the politics, or (what I assume is) the bad guy and his smouldering-dominates-the-girl attitude.

Maybe I'll try again later. Or maybe not.

Tim Tofton says

Excellent, well thought out plot and believable characters. Now for pt 2 !!!!!

Paul says

Ecko is an assassin, that has had very possible upgrade, done to his body, from, enhanced skin, telescopic eyes, and razor sharp senses. He is not the biggest job of hi life when it suddenly goes wrong and he has to exit from a very hostile situation very quickly. He drops of the side of the building and into another world.

He comes to in a tavern called Wanderer, and in this world with two moons there is no technology at all. Just magical creatures and an evil force that is threatening the whole world's existence. With his enhancements, Ecko realises that he holds some of the powers to win against this evil.

This is such a difficult book to quantify, being part dystopian cyberpunk sci-fi and mostly a fantasy book. It is hinted at that the world that he has fallen into maybe a augmented reality, but it seems so real to him that he isn't sure. Not a bad read in the end, but could have easily bee 100 pages shorter and the writing could have been tighter.

Joanne Hall says

Danie Ware's debut novel, like its eponymous star, is not quite what it appears to be...

Ecko has been taken, upgraded, turned into something both super and sub-human. Beneath a veneer of cynicism and wise-cracking, deep down, he wants to be a hero. Catapulted into a fantasy world of centaurs, golems, fallen angels and pubs that vanish at dawn and re-appear where their owners need them to be, Ecko gets his chance. But is it a game, a glitch in his programming, or real life?

The cover looks like SF, and the novel certainly starts off that way. But it's more of a light veneer of SF over a world that is resolutely fantasy at heart. If you like your SF hard you may be disappointed, but if you're a fan of Fantasy and SF, the mash-up works well. Danie Ware paints subtle parallels between the stagnating land of the Varchinde, fallen into a monotonous cycle of trade, and the London of the future, with its apathetic populace held in thrall to a dictator, plugged into video games and blind to the horrors of the world outside. Both worlds need shaking up, need monsters to fight and heroes to fight them. Even heroes in unexpected guises...

Ware's origins as a gamer and fan are obvious; her enthusiasm for all things nerdy is apparent throughout the book (There was a particular nod to Lord of the Rings that had me grinning), but this is no colour-by-numbers D&D ripoff – even if a Bard, a warrior and a werewolf are having a drink in the bar when Ecko literally drops in. It's bigger than that, and smarter.

Ecko Rising isn't flawless. Some of the prose needs polishing, and Ecko can be by turns brilliant and irritating. The narrative jumps between viewpoints rather quickly, particularly near the end, when I really wanted to be looking through Ecko's eyes. But it is a strong, competent debut, and the ending leaves no doubt that it's the beginning of a longer series that will see more paths cross between stifling London and the Varchinde grasslands. What this means for both worlds is left for the reader to speculate...

Monique Snyman says

There's nothing I love more than finding a book that pushes the boundaries, especially when it gives new meaning to the word "imagination", and Ecko Rising is one of those books. Blending together dystopian sci-fi with fantasy, Danie Ware was able to capture my attention and keep it throughout the duration of the book. Ecko – our anti-hero – is a loveable and wacky character that kind of makes you grin whenever he talks. I don't know why that is, either way he out-shined all of the characters by far (even though I love Lukan too) and always had me grinning like a fool. What's more is that, Danie Ware continuously makes you wonder what's going to happen next and funnily enough my predictions were always wrong. In other words, it's bloody good fun and incredibly entertaining.

Coming Soon!

I particularly like Danie Ware's writing style. Yes, I know usually I bitch and complain whenever people write in dialects, but it wasn't so bad this time around. Other than that though, the writing style isn't as clunky with over-descriptive rambling, and yet you know exactly what the author is trying to say. I think that also contributed to the fast-paced reading and frankly, I think some writers can learn something from Danie Ware's way of writing.

The editing was good, I love the cover, the only thing I would have changed about Ecko Rising is that I would have preferred it as a hardback book. I don't know why that is, but I personally would have liked this

trilogy in hardback... that's just my opinion though.

Personally I felt empty when I finished Ecko Rising though, merely because I have to wait like everyone else to get my hands on the sequel, Ecko Burning. Alas, it gives me time to process everything, and who knows I might just read it again before the sequel gets published, just for the hell of it. So, keep your eyes open for this book and for the sequel. If you like whacky genre-bending awesome, you're going to love Ecko Rising and I'm sure Ecko Burning will be just as good, if not better.

(Review originally posted on www.killeraphrodite.com)

Helen Petrovic says

Meet "The Ecko": Pyromaniac, megalomaniac, assassin, and just a little bit loco.

When Ecko recklessly endangers his mission, he finds himself catapulted from futuristic London into an alternative 'fantasy' universe. No longer able to separate reality from fiction, Ecko struggles to understand his purpose, and to remain uncaring in the face of tribulation.

This is Thomas Covenant gone high-tech; Ecko is a cybernetic experiment to the extreme, equipped with flame breathers, heat sensors, turbo-boost, and chameleon skin which blends into any environment. He is reckless, ruthless, savage – and he likes to say f**k a lot.

Ware's writing is smart and razor sharp. Her sci-fi opening is fast-paced, punchy and oh so enjoyable, instantly immersing you in the matrix-style world. It is easy to see why some people would be disappointed when she switches to the fantasy genre. But Ware writes fantasy like a pro too. Her world is well-developed and teeming with terrifying beasties, and kick-ass warriors up to the task of taking them on.

Ware is able to take a tongue-in-cheek approach to the fantasy genre as only someone who has been immersed in the genre a long time could do. Ware tips her hat to trope and classic alike; D&D, Choose your Own Adventure, Alice in Wonderland, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court – all get a mention in Ecko's furious inner dialogue. Even her decision to have Ecko wake in a tavern satirises the usual D&D cliché.

Ware's fantasy world is large. She writes with an omniscient POV and includes a host of interesting, original characters, each as compelling as the next. This is a big read, but there's plenty to keep the pages turning. There's a lot of fighting, but Ware blends in a healthy dose of prophecy and political intrigue for good measure. With fast and furious action and more than a smattering of sex, violence, gore and swearing this is the kind of novel where you hang onto your seat, and enjoy the ride. I'm looking forward to the sequel.

From www.highfantasyaddict.wordpress.com

Sars says

Another case of 'I really enjoyed that — until the ending'. I mean, what was that? It came from nowhere, had nothing to do with the story and answered no questions. There were a lot of plot points left unanswered — pretty much all of them, actually.

As a writer, she shows promise. But I hope her next book is more cohesive.

Laurie says

I picked up this book thinking it was futuristic sci-fi. It isn't. This is a fantasy novel. I enjoy fantasy in very small doses and I enjoyed this book. The story was gripping and the characters likeable. There seem to be a lot of complaints from other readers about the profanity in this book. I did not think it excessive and would probably not have noticed it at all if other reviewers had not mentioned it. This is not marketed for YA. I also did not have a problem with the ending. I thought it brought the sci-fi aspect back into the story nicely and I was glad to see Lugan again. Am I dying to read the next book in the series, no, but I will eventually and will recommend it heartily to my friends who love fantasy.

Aaron says

I need to start by saying I'm not a huge fantasy fiction reader. So Ecko Rising was reading (somewhat) outside my genre. That being said, the story is not, strictly speaking, fantasy fiction. As the cover blurb says, it's 'genre-defying' and I love that about the story. I also loved the world building, the cyber gadgets (see, I said it wasn't strictly fantasy), and the...the fauna, yes, that's the word. Monstrous fauna, but still, fauna. Critters. There're beasties in here that'll om-nom-nom you before you can say "But, I'm not a cookie—!"

So, what's the story about?

Meet Ecko

High level Thief-Assassin; AC: damn good, St: guessing 16, Dx: 18+, Con: gonna say 13, Int: who cares, Wis: what?, Cha: um...yeaaahh, about that. Alignment: I'm going with CN on this one, but he leans CG from time to time. Perfectly acceptable behavior for a CN character, because, I mean, who knows what those guys are thinking at any given moment? Even they can't answer that question to their own satisfaction.

That description should give you a good idea of where this book aims to please, and who. Ecko starts his tale as a resigned sidekick to a couple of far future London coppers. They're on the case trying to save London from a decaying ambivalence (think: what happened on Miranda from the film 'Serenity'). Ecko goes on the hunt, aiming at the heart of the operation that's threatening the very existence of London (and by extension the known world). In the space of a few short chapters heavy with action and suspense, Ecko ends up hanging off the edge of a building, nearly gets perforated by a gunbot, and ultimately lands himself in...The Wanderer.

That's the name of a tavern. All good adventures begin in a tavern. If you do not know this, then Ware's humour and much of the story will be less entertaining for you. Go join a weekly RPG club, kill your first orc, then read the book again. And have a good chuckle this time.

So, how does Ecko get from far future cyberpunk London to the swords and magic and monsters surrounding the mystical tavern called The Wanderer? A tavern that has a funny habit of growing a pair of (metaphorical) legs with seven-league boots every night, like a dimension traveling Hut of Baba Yaga. Parallel universe of course, and Ecko doesn't waste a tic figuring this out the minute he wakes up. He meets Karine the brawny (and busty) bar wench, Sera the burly bouncer, Roderick called The Bard, Kale the werewolf cook, and a host of other characters who fit nicely into the fantasy world of The Varchinde, an island world populated by a people bereft of metal to work or the magic to control any of the elements really. Ecko's predicament starts

with figuring out just what the hell happened to him and grows to become saving the world.

This world, by the way, is fabulously conceived. A full map of the Varchinde graces the first page, showing mountain ranges, plains, oceans, outlying islands, rivers, and major cities. Inside the story, the reader visits Fhaveon, Rovinarath, and Amos, and meets with tribes like the Banned, tavern keeps (Karine and Sera), guardians of secrets, and politicians bent on doing what politicians do best. Ware has built a setting that I'd love to role-play in, and by that I mean When does the kickstarter launch?

Ware also handily employs the tropes one would expect from a story rooted deeply in the fantasy (and occasional ribaldry) of role-playing games. Yes, there's sex. Not too much, and not badly written. If it feels a bit campy, I think that's the intention. This is fantasy, after all. My one complaint is with the level of profanity (not during the sex). I don't mention this for puritanical reasons (I was in the army and played in a metal band; you can't burn my ears anymore than they've already been damaged). It's that I felt Ecko's curses became excessive. The other characters used various turns of phrase to express profanity, some idioms of Ware's invention, and a few choice 4-letter words of their own from time to time. But Ecko's voice suffered, for me, from being overly full of f-bombs in places.

Overall, the story moves along well, even through perspective shifts after the main characters are separated. However, and this is purely a subjective call, my lack of taste for fantasy writing did make some of the political intrigue less than exciting to read. For me, the story was most compelling when Ecko was in the spotlight (even with or perhaps because of his abysmal Charisma stats, f-bombs notwithstanding) or when the characters faced off against monsters. I had a difficult time keeping interested when Ecko split from The Bard, who ended up on a discovery quest that filled in some of the plot. I was much more excited to read the scenes featuring Jayr the warrior and her scholar companion, Ress, whose discovery quest not only fleshed out the final pieces of the plot for me, but involved more action and actual threats to the characters themselves. That's one thing about fantasy writing that I've always balked at. It's difficult to put fantasy characters into positions that will feel truly life-threatening. The thrill of reading (and role-playing) their exploits can be overwhelming, and I'm tempted to criticize Ware's characters for being a little too capable. However, they do face threats to life and limb, and there are plenty of believable scenes in the story that had my heartbeat up. The battle sequences with nasty monsters are page turners and exceptionally well written.

The story really ramped up when the final team comes together, with Ecko joined by an axe-wielding barbarian, an archer with a knack for winning at dice, and a young soldier. Ecko and Redlock's (the axeman) interactions reminded me of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser from my early RPG days playing in the Lankmar setting, and the descent to the "big bad nasty's lair" was both a thrill and a barrel of laughs. Ware cleverly uses Ecko's commentary to stand in for what the reader is thinking, making it that much more compelling to identify with the character, and giving Ware plenty of opportunity to employ pop-culture references and inside jokes to hilarious effect. Titan Books also publishes two of my favourite zombie thrillers, (Plague Town and Plague Nation) which are likewise full of pop-culture in jokes and are great stories. Readers with an eye for fun writing and well written action scenes will probably enjoy a lot of what Titan has to offer (No, I'm not signed with them and have no submissions in their queue).

Robin Burks says

When Titan Books sent me a review copy of sci-fi meets fantasy novel Ecko Rising, I imagined a story that was much more subtle than the in-your-face story that I got. Successfully covering two very distinct worlds – one that involves high tech cyber science fiction the other containing a dragon-slaying fantasy universe – is not an easy thing to do. But Ware somehow pulls it off.

Ecko Rising stars a character only known as Ecko, a savage and cynical cybernetically-enhanced assassin who operates out of a high tech future London. After a job goes wrong, Ecko finds himself sucked into a world that is the exact opposite of that – this new world is a place where technology is replaced by magic – and centaurs. Ecko Rising is a classic fish-out-of-water story, but never actually feels like it, except when it does.

Let me explain myself – I was uncomfortable reading the first half of the novel. The two worlds are never more different than during those chapters when we first see the fantasy universe from Ecko's eyes. Not only does it feel as if Ecko doesn't belong there, but it almost feels as if the reader is unwelcome there, too. As Ecko starts coming up with an idea that none of it is real, the reader, too, will grasp solely to that concept. We do find out the truth of reality vs. fiction in the epilogue, but even that is left to speculation.

Ecko is the ultimate anti-hero. He is foul-mouthed and selfish and gets angry at himself when he realizes that he's starting to care about the situations and people he's been thrown into. Other characters are also as richly realized, such as Triqueta – a mighty female warrior, member of the Banned. It's these characters that made me want to embrace this new world, real or not. I was pulled into by their stories as surely as Ecko was.

Ecko Rising also features a lot of action. Each chapter is packed with something the characters must figure out and overcome. Some characters lose their minds, some lose their lives, but none are untouched by whatever it is Ecko seems to be fated to fight. If you're fan of series like A Song of Ice and Fire, you will certainly appreciate this.

Danie Ware has created something unique with Ecko Rising. With a successful blending (by not blending) two diverse genres, she has created a quality story that is difficult to put down.

Ivo Crnkovic-Rubsamen says

Ecko Rising is quite bad. The blurb on the front cover reads "this is sc-fi with the safety catch off." I thought this was depressingly accurate, as Ware spends the whole novel firing clichés in all directions without much thought. I've often said Sci-Fi is at its best as a vehicle for amazing new ideas, and there is nothing new or original in Ecko Rising. The precious little Sci-Fi in this book is just a grittier Brave New World rehash, with a populace addicted to corporate video games and/or drugs in a grimdark capitalist future. The fantasy is garbage also, but I don't read enough fantasy to give a properly acerbic review, so I'll just say when you go from future London to Ye Olde Timey Pub, as another review on this website so fittingly put it, prepare for the book to get much much worse.

I'll spare a few sentences for the fight scenes. They are incredibly stupid. Very graphic and thoroughly unbelievable, the enemies are immensely physically powerful and yet never accomplish anything except spilling horse guts all over the pages.

Don't read this book. It's long and thoroughly unrewarding.

Jim Gunnee says

* Update *

I've upgraded my review to 5 stars, because the previous average didn't do it justice. The following was written with a 4 star review in mind:

I wish I could talk about this book without mentioning genre... Somehow it seems that a 4 star Fantasy or Sci-fi epic has less value than a 4 star anything else. But that's simply not the case.

Ecko Rising is a great read, with convincing, well rounded characters, an interesting plot, and fantastically detailed fight scenes.

Would be a 5 star read except that the fourth fifth (if you see what I mean) dragged a little, and as a whole it felt unresolved. Obviously they'll be another book (at least there better be).

This doesn't feel like a first novel, and certainly comes from an author steeped in the lore of fantasy and Sci-fi.

Tony says

The main reason that I picked up this book was that I read the Anarchy Books anthology Vivisepture and really enjoyed the story by Danie Ware (there are other great stories in that anthology). The first thing that surprised me when I got the book was how big it is. At over five hundred pages it is a meaty tome so don't expect to read it in an afternoon. This is a cyberpunk book, no actually it is an epic fantasy novel. Hang on, this is an epic fantasy inside a cyberpunk story. Or at least I think it is. The next book could quite easily turn and twist that further and really boggle my mind. I don't want to give you any spoilers so it is easier to say that this is a fantasy story inside a cyberpunk tale.

Although this is a long book it doesn't seem to drag at all. I didn't find myself skim reading it at all which can happen during long expositions. I really like the main character Ecko. He's sarcastic, piss-taking and generally a bit of a fool. Wrap that up inside a child bullied so much that he endures painful adaptation after painful adaptation to become a silent and deadly killing machine and you have a fun character. A lot of Ecko's sniping comments are very familiar and I particularly enjoyed the reference to Wembley Stadium. I'm not going to directly quote anything because each one is a gem and will make you smile.

I expected to be saying that this book is too long before I even started reading it, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that it felt a lot shorter than it was. The ending left me wondering whether it was the fantasy or the cyberpunk portion that is real. It could be either or in fact both. I want to read the second part of this story and I want to read it now. This is a great debut novel and well worth a read.
