



Playgrounds of the Mind

Larry Niven

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ACE #1

The sequel to *N-Space*

Playgrounds of the Mind captures the startling range and variety of Larry Niven's spectacular career, from bestselling novels such as *Lucifer's Hammer* and *The Ringworld Engineers*, from his classic short stories of science fiction and fantasy, from his thought-provoking essays and non-fiction, from his innovative and seldom-seen work in comics (on such projects as *The Green Lantern Bible*), to an advance look at Larry Niven's upcoming projects.

Like *N-Space*, *Playgrounds of the Mind* is a feast for Niven's millions of fans-and an impressive tribute to the man Arthur C. Clarke called his "favorite writer."

Playgrounds of the Mind Details

Date : Published July 15th 1992 by Tor Science Fiction (first published 1991)

ISBN : 9780812516951

Author : Larry Niven

Format : Mass Market Paperback 704 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Short Stories

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From Reader Review Playgrounds of the Mind for online ebook

Peter says

WARNING: *Playgrounds of the Mind* contains about 99% recycled material.

Sometimes, when a writer gets older, they start recycling their work. Heck, some of them even do it when they're young. They put out book after book of short story collections in which a large numbers of the stories are duplicates from previous editions, and only a few of the stories are new.

It's sleazy, of course; basically an obnoxious way to rip off the reader. Unfortunately, in his declining years Larry Niven started doing this in a big way.

Playgrounds of the Mind includes short stories from a number of excellent Niven collections. If you don't have those books, they're well worth reading - but I'd recommend picking up those earlier books, not this one.

It also includes a **lot** of excerpts from various Niven novels. Personally, I find this extremely annoying for two reasons: one, I already **own** all those novels. Niven made me pay for the same material twice, and that indicates a real contempt for his readers. I'd excuse it as simple senility and greed, but *Playgrounds of the Mind* was published in 1992 - and Niven has written a good novel or two (and several mediocre ones) since then. Although admittedly those books were all written with collaborators; for all I know, Niven may effectively be a vegetable by now, and the novel that I took as a sign that he "still had it" might actually just be a successful counterfeiting of his classic style by his co-author.

The second reason that I am irritated by *Playgrounds of the Mind* is that **novel excerpts rarely work as stand-alone stories**. Yes, many of them are from Niven's better work. But effectively, they're just a set of teasers - if you like them, you'll need to buy the original novels to get completion. Again, this is simply reader abuse.

There is a very *small* amount of new material in *Playgrounds of the Mind*. Niven also included introductions for most of the material, usually at least a couple of paragraphs; for hard-core Niven fans, that's interesting. So this book wasn't completely a waste of my money. And given its massive size, it's a moderately useful "traveling" book, one that I can take on a vacation to read. But that's in part because I won't mind too much if it's damaged or lost.

If you're new to Niven, you'll probably enjoy this book. But I'd suggest trying one of his original short story collections instead, such as *Tales of Known Space*. If you can't find it in a bookstore, your library is sure to have it. If you like it, you'll be pleased to know that Niven is a rarity, an outstanding short-story writer who also wrote great novels. Just try to stick to his earlier work...say pre-1990.

Crnjolnir says

I gave this 5 stars because while it's not a complete story arc, it is a great sampler for intro into Larry Niven, and it really turned me on to his stuff.

Andreas says

If you've never read Larry Niven, these two collections are a great place to start. They are both a mix of essays, short fiction, and excerpts from novels. If you've already read practically all of Niven's work, there is not a lot of new material, but the convention essays still make the books worth the read.

<http://www.books.rosboch.net/?p=1089>

Kenneth Flusche says

Good short story book, If you read a lot of Niven you will recognize parts of many of his stories

Kathryn says

Just as good as "N Space". I love Niven's books, but I think he shines best in the short-story format.

Christopher says

This is Larry Niven's second volume of various essays, short-stories, and various anecdotes from his 40 years in science-fiction circles. The first was N-SPACE.

Some of the material in *Playgrounds of the Mind* is very interesting, such as his essay "Bigger than Worlds", in which he sketches out a number of interesting ideas for large-scale habitats, including his now famous Ringworld. His recipe for Irish coffee is sure to delight fans of the drink.

Nonetheless, the bulk of the selections in *Playgrounds of the Mind* do not make the book worth getting. Niven's non-Known Space material is infamously badly written. Many of the anecdotes about science-fiction conventions are dull, and will not entertain anyone who thinks the idea of a science-fiction gathering is somewhat silly. Furthermore, a great deal of the book consists of material available elsewhere. Chances are that, if you like Niven enough to buy this, you've already got all the Known Space books. And not only is the Known Space material available elsewhere, but what's in *Playgrounds of the Mind* is only the duds of the KS series, such as "The Soft Weapon" and "The Borderland of Sol".

I'd recommend *Playgrounds of the Mind* only to those who have already read the majority of Niven's works and honestly enjoy his non-Known Space works.

Foxtower says

I would have been happy with a collection of short stories, instead it turned out to be excerpts from his novels, way too much connectary about the stories he didn't write (who wants to hear about bad story ideas!), and just a few short stories (mostly about magic instaed of sci-fi. Dissapointment!

Darth says

I had read a good bit of what was here in other collections.

This is one of the last Niven books left that I have not read, and I am a bit bummed by that.

Fun author, long career, interesting ideas.

This collection is largely more of the same, with some funny personal stories and assorted anecdotes thrown in at the end.

Did not really care for the excerpts from books I had already read, but some people may find them an interesting introduction to some of authors previous works.

As readers, we tend to feel like we get to know our favorite authors, even if we never meet them.

The stories at the end of this go a long way to adding to that feeling - well done.

Erika RS says

A book of short stories, excerpts, with a handful of random stuff thrown in just for fun. Much of the material was excellent, but like many collections, some of it was "meh". A number of the random items and some of the commentary read like special messages for people in the know -- all well and good, but confusing to outsiders. Overall, it was a lot of fun.

Wole Talabi says

I enjoyed this book mostly for the essays and short stories in it. Niven excels at thinking big, really big.

However, excerpts from his novels left me confused in some cases and wanting more in others. I think the collection is really for fans of Larry Niven not really for new readers.

Daniel says

As usual, science fiction stories are the easily digestible and thought provoking fare, though I have to say I much prefer Asimov's and Clarke's short stories overall. This volume is definitely meant for those who are more familiar with Niven's writing and career. It's harder to appreciate for a newcomer like myself; too many anecdotes and references. I haven't even read Ringworld, but after this, I'm definitely looking out for a copy. The known space universe isn't much to my taste though, I have an innate stigma against science fiction with too many alien races for some reason. Perhaps that will change if I give more of Niven's books a read.

Bob Rust says

1 • Thraxisp: A Memoir • essay by Larry Niven

7 • A Teardrop Falls • [Berserker] • (1983) • shortstory by Larry Niven

16 • From Inferno (excerpt) • (1976) • shortfiction by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

25 • Rammer • [State] • (1971) • novelette by Larry Niven

- 49 • From "The Ethics of Madness" (excerpt) • (1967) • shortfiction by Larry Niven
 - 53 • Becalmed in Hell • [Known Space] • (1965) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 65 • Wait It Out • [Known Space] • (1968) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 71 • A Relic of the Empire • [Known Space] • (1966) • novelette by Larry Niven
 - 87 • From Lucifer's Hammer (excerpt) • (1977) • shortfiction by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
 - 126 • The Soft Weapon • [Known Space] • (1967) • novelette by Larry Niven
 - 168 • The Borderland of Sol • [Known Space] • (1975) • novelette by Larry Niven
 - 205 • From The Ringworld Engineers (excerpt) • (1979) • shortfiction by Larry Niven
 - 215 • What Good Is a Glass Dagger? • [Magic Goes Away] • (1972) • novelette by Larry Niven
 - 246 • From The Magic Goes Away (excerpt) • (1978) • shortfiction by Larry Niven
 - 250 • The Defenseless Dead • [Gil Hamilton] • (1973) • novelette by Larry Niven
 - 289 • From The Patchwork Girl (excerpt) • (1980) • shortfiction by Larry Niven
 - 292 • Leviathan! • [Svetz] • (1970) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 302 • From Oath of Fealty (excerpt) • (1981) • shortfiction by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
 - 311 • Unfinished Story • [Magic Goes Away] • (1970) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 313 • Cautionary Tales • (1978) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 316 • The Dreadful White Page • (1988) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 318 • Retrospective • (1980) • shortstory by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes
 - 328 • The Green Marauder • [Draco Tavern] • (1980) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 332 • Assimilating Our Culture, That's What They're Doing! • [Draco Tavern] • (1978) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 336 • War Movie • [Draco Tavern] • (1981) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 340 • Limits • [Draco Tavern] • (1981) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 344 • The Lost Ideas • essay by Larry Niven
 - 356 • Bigger Than Worlds • [Science Fact (Analog)] • (1974) • essay by Larry Niven
 - 372 • Ghetto? But I Thought ... • essay by Larry Niven
 - 383 • Adrienne and Irish Coffee • essay by Larry Niven
 - 388 • One Night at the Draco Tavern • [Draco Tavern] • (1991) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 391 • TrantorCon Report • (1974) • essay by Larry Niven
 - 394 • Why Men Fight Wars, and What You Can Do About It! • (1984) • essay by Larry Niven
 - 397 • Comics • essay by Larry Niven
 - 401 • From The Green Lantern Bible • essay by Larry Niven
 - 407 • Criticism • (1989) • essay by Larry Niven
 - 414 • From The Legacy of Heorot (excerpt) • (1987) • shortfiction by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle and Steven Barnes
 - 425 • The Portrait of Daryanree the King • (1989) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 433 • The Wishing Game • (1989) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 444 • The Lion in His Attic • [Magic Goes Away] • (1982) • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 461 • From Footfall (excerpt) • (1985) • shortfiction by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
 - 473 • From The Moat Around Murcheson's Eye (excerpt) • shortfiction by Larry Niven
 - 479 • From Fallen Angels • essay by Larry Niven
 - 481 • Wanted Fan • poem by Larry Niven
 - 481 • The California Voodoo Game • shortstory by Larry Niven
 - 487 • ?Letter (to Ralph Vicinanza Ltd.) • essay by Larry Niven
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