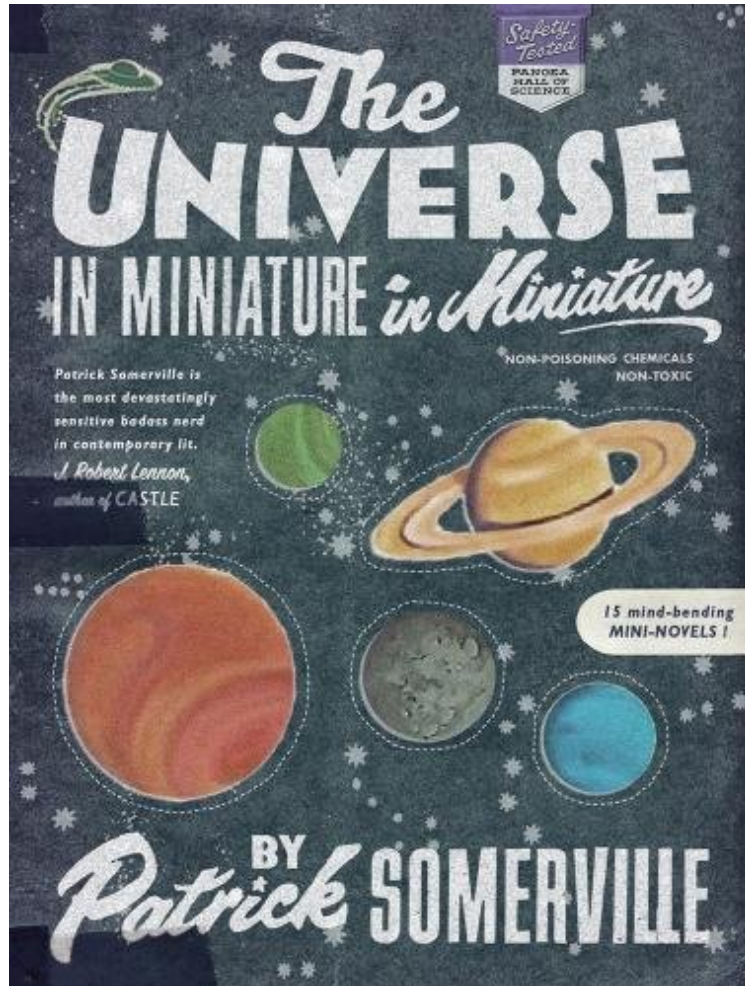


The Universe in Miniature in Miniature

Patrick Somerville

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Patrick Somerville : The Universe in Miniature in Miniature before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Universe in Miniature in Miniature:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Everlasting GobstopperBy G. NomadLooking for a collection of stories that never bores? That always retains its flavor and texture? In his new collection of short stories Patrick Somerville has, with scattered precision, invented a whole new genre. The stories are intertwined in an Escheresque way that allow you to discover them again and again, backwards and forwards, sideways and roundabout. If you are a fan of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and Alice Through the Looking Glass, if you enjoy science fiction and love stories, and if you like a little apocalyptic darkness mixed in with your post-millennial philosophy you will fall in love with these stories. If you want to know the answer to: what should you do with a billion dollars? Then read this book.Using his characteristic dry humor, keen observations, and quick prose Patrick Somerville keeps us interested to

the bitter end. An end, it turns out, that isn't all that bitter after all, an end that is really just a beginning. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Some good pieces By Elliot After reading Patrick Somerville's earlier collection "Trouble" (which I adored), I purchased this collection. Overall, I enjoyed some of these stories, but felt lukewarm about others. I did very much enjoy "Hair University" and "No Sun," as well as the quirky but somewhat rambling title story. Still, many of these stories felt too stream-of-consciousness or too loosely constructed to hold my interest, especially toward the end with the long series "The Machine of Understanding Other People." Overall the collection gets a thumbs up from me for creativity, but I went into it expecting another collection like "Trouble," and was a bit disappointed. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful followup to the Cradle By T. Madl After being seduced and entertained by Somerville's thoughtful storytelling in the Cradle, I found 'The Universe in Miniature in Miniature' to be a worthy followup. I don't really read much science fiction, and I didn't know what kind of subject matter Somerville would cover in this book. Or even that it would be a collection of short stories this time. But I found 'The Universe...' to be a delight from the opening paragraph. As with the Cradle, I have continued to consider the themes explored by Somerville's often odd, but always interesting characters, long after the last page was turned. So I'm already looking forward to his next offering.

In this genre-busting book from award-winning novelist Patrick Somerville characters, stories, and stray thoughts revolve around the The Machine of Understanding Other People, the story of a Chicago man who is bequeathed a supernatural helmet that allows him to experience the inner worlds of those around him. Through his lonely lens we peer into the mind of an art student grappling with ennui, ethics and empathy as she comes to terms with her own beliefs in a godless world. We telescope out to the story of idiot extraterrestrials struggling to pilot a complicated spaceship. We follow a retired mercenary as he tries to save his marriage and questions his life abroad. Mind-bending and cracklingly new, Somerville's broadly appealing and uniquely imaginative constructions probe the outer reaches of sympathy, death, and love in a world seen from the inside out.

From Publishers Weekly In "The Machine of Understanding Other People," the novella that concludes this marvelous set of loosely connected stories, the main character is bequeathed a helmet that enables him entry into the minds of others. Perhaps Somerville (The Cradle) had access to such a device as he crafted his wide-ranging yet wonderfully authentic narrators. Several stories offer intimate access into seemingly real life a teenager nurses a crush on a teacher as her parents separate, a man recalls a friendly relationship with long-ago proprietors of his corner store but Somerville's originality shines most when palpably human characters navigate mind-bending scenarios. Students at the School of Surreal Thought and Design are consumed by their vaguely artistic projects but have no instructors, classes, or campus; a new couple faces the aftermath of the end of Earth's orbit yet continue their mundane squabbles ("I was mad and she said, 'The world ended,' and I said, 'That's not the point.'"). These densely layered tales invite multiple readings, but even a glance uncovers profound human connection beneath Somerville's often whimsical surface. (Dec.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. After the restraint of his well-received first novel, *The Cradle* (2009), Somerville returns to the short story and unleashes the full force of his mischievous imagination. In this inventive and robust collection loosely anchored to the Midwest town of Grayson, and the mysterious School of Surreal Thought and Design, straight-ahead stories that take new slants on familiar themes family dysfunction, a high-school students crush on a teacher are yoked to bold tales that deliver psychological realism to the outskirts of speculative and science fiction. There's a hilarious vignette about a catastrophically inept spaceship admiral and a terrifying story about how people behave when the earth stops spinning. The spooky title story portrays a trio of rogue students embroiled in disturbing projects, while *The Machine of Understanding Other People* is a comic yet wrenching adventure story about a strange inheritance and a dangerous dream of preventing the destruction of the world. Attuned to the apocalyptic, Somerville, like Jim Shepard and Joe Meno, creates ensnaring plots involving characters in stories of melancholy and absurdity, failure and out-of-the-box heroics. Booklist *The Universe in Miniature in Miniature* is that rare thing, a formally inventive and profound book of ideas that also manages to stir the emotions. KGB Book Somerville has vast talent for invention and a flair for writing in a variety of voices, whether his character is a young female, a middle-aged male, or an alien. *The Boston Globe*