



Sirens

Kurt Reichenbaugh

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"Writing Drive, I wanted to update the paperback mystery novels I loved as a kid, to write a contemporary equivalent. Kurt's done about much the same thing with Sirens, I think, putting pulp sf/horror novels in fresh clothes, making them stand up straight and talk right. Honoring an old form with new life." --James Sallis, author of DRIVE

The Place: The Gulf coast of Florida

The Time: Just another Saturday night, sometime in the middle of that decade we call the 70s, when Disco was queen and shows like Charlie's Angels and Happy Days reigned on television.

But there are no angels, happy days or dancing queens for four bored friends, Kevin, Brad, Nick and Otto, who go looking for action on a sweltering Saturday night and instead get themselves involved in murder. A murder that spins them into a twisted web of vengeful rednecks, psychotic cheerleaders, a missing flying saucer, a hybrid creature on four legs, a sadistic ghoul or two, and one lethal bad-ass babe in a leopard-skin bikini who just might give our friends more action than they'd ever dreamed of.

Take a sweltering mix of swamp noir, drive-in grind house, sex and rock n' roll seventies style, and you've got what SIRENS is all about.

Sirens Details

Date : Published April 20th 2013 by Perpetual Motion Machine Publishing

ISBN : 9780988748835

Author : Kurt Reichenbaugh

Format : Paperback 270 pages

Genre : Horror, Bizarro Fiction, Science Fiction, Fiction, Mystery, Crime

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From Reader Review Sirens for online ebook

Jack Tripper says

(Full review 12/23/18)

I loved the absolute shit out of this. Others here seem to feel differently. But many of these others probably don't have the same fondness for pulpy horror, noir, SF, and 70s grindhouse flicks (especially as reimagined by Tarantino and Rodriguez) that I do. I had pretty high expectations for this novel --though I wondered at first how Reichenbaugh* could pull off such a genre stew -- and they were far exceeded. Full review to come.

=====

It's going on three weeks since I'd read this, and I've been avoiding writing this review. How the hell do you describe this thing? It's a horror novel. Okay, that's clear. And it's easy to tell that Reichenbaugh knows his stuff in that department. The tight, crisp sentences and the fatalistic atmosphere that slowly builds show (without even having to look at his GR reading history) that he loves him some pulp crime/noir as well. And some of the set pieces make known his appreciation for old-school late night creature-features and Golden Age science-fiction.

[FYI: I go over the plot in some detail, but mostly it's "back of the book" type-info].

So imagine a few 17-18 year-old buddies in mid-1970s Florida who get waaay out of their element when they end up at a secret backwoods "party" that an older friend dragged them to late one night. This so-called party will change their lives forever, and possibly the lives of everyone in their nearby small town as well. Imagine meeting a siren-esque beauty there that consumes your every waking and dreaming thought. You meet a couple huge wrestling mask-wearing rednecks as well. Plus a dog that -- in the dark at least --seems more lizard-creature/dog hybrid than just plain dog.

Imagine that after this "party" (where one of you won't make it back from) those scary wrestling mask-wearing rednecks and some psycho high school cheerleaders -- some of whom may or may not be undead -- are after you all, but you have to somehow proceed with your normal post-high school life while trying to figure a way out of all this with your buddies. But the beguiling siren won't leave your thoughts, and even seems to communicate to you through the radio. Could all this craziness have to do with the (now nearly forgotten) UFO sighting in the area from a few decades back?**

Mayhem ensues.

Now imagine it all directed by Tarantino. Actually that's just how I pictured everything while reading, probably due to the Pulp Fiction-evoking cover. Would be pret-ty awe-some, though. Hope you're reading this review, Quentin. I mean, you've done damn near every genre already, but have you mashed together supernatural horror, slashers, noir, and science fiction yet?*** Reichenbaugh has, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

4.5 Stars.

*Full disclosure: Reichenbaugh and I recently became GR friends, but that didn't affect the views represented here. I just saw we had extremely similar tastes in fiction, and I wanted a friend.

**I just realized that somewhere along the line I switched from third-person to second-person perspective,

but it's such a clusterfuck I don't know how to fix it.

***From Dusk 'til Dawn comes kind of close, but you only wrote the screenplay, Quentin, so it doesn't count. I'm sorry. And Grindhouse doesn't count either, as the supernatural and science-fictional elements came from Robert Rodriguez's portion, not yours.

Austin says

One of the pleasures afforded to consumers of an eclectic range of fiction is coming across a novel that traces the boundaries of established genres while at the same time poking well-aimed holes in those boundaries, allowing in a bolt of fresh air that changes the pleasingly familiar into something thrillingly new and unexpected. *SIRENS* is such a novel, and one highly recommended to fans of vintage pulp, the golden age of sci-fi, classic rock, unabashedly lurid exploitation cinema, grainy 35mm horror, and just about anyone who retains potent memories of what it was like to be a teenager in the seventies. Loaded with cultural references that ring true and universal in their specificity, this book is a nostalgic harkening back to a bygone era that with retrospect seems both more innocent and incongruously more deviant than our current American epoch. What's most impressive about *SIRENS* is how it keeps both feet firmly planted in seemingly incompatible styles of storytelling without losing its balance ... every twist of bizarro weirdness is countered by a resonant and relatable detail of adolescent life that grounds the book on a plane of common experience. I've long admired storytellers who can extract raw material from pop culture's lower shelves and build from it an elevated world populated by characters who are recognizably flawed, vulnerable and human. That's pretty much what Kurt Reichenbaugh has achieved with this startling novel, and adventurous readers will enjoy taking the trip with him.

Will Johnson says

I am a little biased because I know the author but this is a fantastic genre bending book combining elements of horror, sci-fi, gothic, mystery, thriller, exploitation, heavy metal and coming of age. Well worth your time.

I took the time to create a soundtrack for the book so if you have Spotify, check it out:

<https://open.spotify.com/user/1259082...>

Benoit Lelièvre says

I was hesitating between giving this novel a three or a four stars ranking, but given the absolute scorcher of an ending, I'll give it the benefit of the doubt. *SIRENS* is a flawed, but dynamic and original grindhouse horror novel with an element of coming-of-age. The cast is a little too large for my own liking and it ends up affecting the pacing of the novel, but I liked that Kurt Reichenbaugh focused on what he was good at, rather than try to do too much at once. *SIRENS* is well-told (if a little dragging at times) and features engaging leads (Nick and Stephanie) battling an unlikely and original foe. Reichenbaugh keeps it simple and compelling.

Tim Potter says

SIRENS, by Kurt Reichenbaugh, is a horror novel that is a success on all levels. It's a throwback to grindhouse horror of decades past and has many of the sensibilities of the 1970s, the decade in which it's set. There's old-school horror, science fiction, nostalgia and government conspiracy, a sort of four-of-a-kind for genre fiction. It's also extremely literate, has smooth prose with a great vocabulary and characters that matter to the story.

Currently \$.99 on Kindle, SIRENS is a steal. The book starts with the stunning cover design, courtesy of Matthew Revert, that puts the reader in the mood for the pulpy, exciting horror tale that follows. The book is rooted in horror, sci-fi and hard-boiled mysteries of a bygone era. Just the works of fiction referenced in the novel are enough to tell you that this story is coming from a great place. Richard Matheson's I AM LEGEND makes an appearance, since fiction masters Asimov, Heinlein and Clarke are discussed, Philip Marlowe merits multiple mentions, Hammett's classic character the Continental Op is there and the inimitable Travis McGee is there too.

The characters are organic, they grow and evolve with the story and their actions matter. It's the characters that drive the narrative, their relationships and decisions propel the story forward. The main characters are three high school friends of many years, they are individual and distinct, but they often function as one as real groups of close friends do. Their friends, the town jerk, the bookish nerd, the girl, are fantastic additions to an interesting ensemble. The villain is creepy and seductive, impossible to look away from even when you, and the characters, know you should. The associate baddies, especially the Luchadore-mask clad Cletus, really add to the atmosphere of the tale. The characters resolve well, if not always happily, and their individual fates are well earned.

The plot, quick moving, always developing around the specific actions of the characters, is tight and well executed. The three friends who are the main characters follow the town jerk into something they know they shouldn't, out of boredom and for want of beer. It's something just about any high school graduate can sympathise with. After that it becomes complicated, but is mainly driven by lust and obsession. Two more things just about any reader will be familiar with.

I can't recommend SIRENS highly enough. There's something for just about any fan of genre fiction here, and with such smart prose it's a treat to read. I was left wanting more, a desire that will be fulfilled by Reichenbaugh's forthcoming noir novel LAST DANCE IN PHOENIX.

Still says

This was a totally unexpected pleasure of a read for me. I'd avoided reading any other reviews or synopses of this novel before starting on it because that's how I like to go into things -with no expectations, no potential for accidental spoilers.

I anticipated something along the lines of an update on one of Gil Brewer's "bad girl gone psycho" plots - perhaps due to the terrific cover art and the fact that the story is set in Florida.

What I got instead was a fun house ride of epic proportions, thrill after thrill, twist after chilling twist, and cliffhangers that had me flying through page after virtual page on my Kindle edition.

At first I was struck by the masterful way in which -like Charlie Huston in his great *The Shotgun Rule*- this author handled the characterizations of his teenage protagonists. Kurt Reichenbaugh is at the very least as gifted a writer as Huston and is equally adept at having his characters propel the novel right along to its final poignant end.

Wanting something a little creepy given the season, I'd decided on re-reading Clive Barker's **Books of the Damned** but after finishing three stories in the 1st volume I felt like Barker was a bit too nihilistic to suit my mood. Lovecraft is my usual go-to guy for a Halloween read but I know most of his stories by heart after all these years.

This turned out to be the ideal October read for me.

While some of the exchanges between various characters were funny at times this novel consistently maintained an atmosphere that thrilled, chilled and filled this reader with a sense of dread and terror.

I suppose most readers would categorize this novel as being of the horror/science fiction genre. For some reason I find that to be too confining a label.

This review reflects my own fondness for this novelist's talent as a writer. He won me over early in the 1st section of the book before it took a sudden turn for the horrifyingly weird.

I loved the four protagonists, enjoyed their adventures together and truly hated to see the book end.

In fact, I had such a great time reading this I've had my wife order the paperback edition from Amazon as a present for my birthday next week.

Note:

For a more coherent take on **SIRENS** please see James Thane's review:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

UPDATE: August 21, 2017:

As riveting and as heartwarming and as terrifying as it was my first time through.

The author works strange, compelling magic with words.

Completely love this novel and so will you when you get around to reading it.

You should read it soon.

HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION

Michael says

"Sirens" ist ein Roman im Stil der klassischen Pulps; Kurt Reichenbaugh spielt mit den Elementen SciFi, Horror, Sex und Gewalt und kombiniert diese zu einem sehr unterhaltsamen Roman in der Tradition der Genre-Kost.

Im Zentrum stehen vier Freunde, die mit den typischen Problemen Heranwachsender in den Vororten der Siebziger Jahre zu tun haben: keine Freundinnen, dafür viel Langeweile; man darf mit 16 Jahren schon Autofahren, aber sich kein Bier kaufen. Kurzum: alles ist so öde, wie es nur für junge Menschen in dieser

Zeit sein kann. Doch dann begegnen die vier der unirdischen und äußerst verlockenden Schönheit Suzy und das Spektakel nimmt seinen Lauf.

Sie bekommen es zu tun mit einem Monsterhund, Untoten, verrückten Wrestlern und einigen äußerst attraktiven und sexbesessenen, aber leider auch bösartigen Cheerleadern, die unter der Kontrolle der außerdirdischen "Sirene" stehen.

Am Ende steht ein großes Finale, das so spannend wie blutig ist.

Wer das Vorurteil widerlegt sehen will, dass junge Liebe romantisch ist und in Kleinstädten nichts spannendes geschieht, ist hier goldrichtig: "It's a strange world" (David Lynch)

Fazit: kurzweilig, skurril, witzig und spannend zugleich.

Mauojenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

Poor Benny. That is all I have to say about this.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

"There's a whole lot of weird shit going on out there, just most people are too dull to see it."

I drank a big ol' cup of the Shelby Kool-Aid and bought this one due to her hilarious review. (Please everyone make sure you click over and like it – it's Shelby's #1 bucketlist item to be the most popular reviewer on Goodreads.) Unfortunately, this book ended up being kind of a big mess.

Our story takes place in

back in the 1970s and a group of kids looking for **A-PARTY-AT-THE-MOON-TOWER!!!** a piece of tail . . .

Makes sense since these were the days that revolved around grass, gas or ass – and no one riding for free. Well, no one except Suzie and her friends, that is

What begins as a simple quest for poontang, quickly morphs into something deadly . . .

And our heroes learn that upon hearing Suzie's siren song . . .

(Please note I do realize the reference is to the *other* song called Venus, but since this is the one that's been stuck in my head for a day I'm passing it on to all of you. You're welcome.)

they better familiarize themselves with the ol' . . .

Especially when the only weapons available are bicycle chains and lug wrenches. I mean, in a case like this you really only have one option . . .

This one didn't quite work for me due to the **abundance** of plotlines. We're talking sirens and aliens and dogankylosauruses and parasitic twins and luchadors galore. Buuuuuuut, if you want a cheap thrill (like ninety-nine cent kind of cheap) in the form of a "B Movie" quality type of horror story with some LOL-able moments . . .

"He didn't belong in a place where women shouted about their pussies."

Man, if I had a nickel for every time I said that . . .

Anyway, if any of that appeals to you, I suggest you run on over to Amazon, hit the one-click button, and settle in to the soothing sounds of Blue Oyster Cult playing on the 8-track while you wait for your download . . .

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

It's the 1970's and a group of teenage boys meet up with Benny. They really don't care for Benny too much but he promises them a good time of some action with some girls so they head off with him.

They end up in the swamp at an old run down plantation. They meet a hot girl named Suzie who is just dying to have sex. She takes them down to the lake for some fun.

They end up getting way more than they bargained for.

With some psycho masked wrestlers.

A dog named Polaris, who is not your normal kind of dog.

And Suzie herself.

They end up leaving one of them behind. There ain't no saving that.

They are told to never speak of what happened. Like anyone would believe them if they do.

The fact that they lasted a few months before running their mouths actually shocked me.

They can't get Suzie off their minds. You do know which brains these idiots are thinking with but alas. They end up stirring up more trouble than they can deal with.

Suzie has added to her arsenal of weirdness by now by adding in some crazy strippers.

This book would make a great B-movie horror flick. It's outlandish but the author somehow managed to pull it off.

Stay out of the swamps. There is some freaky shit hanging out there.

Booksource: Netgalley in exchange for review.

James Thane says

In Greek Mythology, Sirens were irresistibly beautiful women who lived on an island with a rocky coast and who lured unsuspecting sailors to their deaths by singing and calling out to them with their enchanting voices. Something of the same sort of thing occurs in Kurt Reichenbaugh's new book, *Sirens*.

Reichenbaugh has cleverly updated the legend to the Florida Gulf Coast in the late 1970s and has woven into the tale a couple of psychopathic redneck wrestlers, a dog-like beast with a killer tail; some sexy, nubile and deadly cheerleaders; rotting corpses that refuse to die, creatures from outer space, and four relatively clueless teenage boys. And, of course, there's Suzie, the devastatingly beautiful and alluring Siren whose actions propel the story forward. The cover blurb advertises *Sirens* as "A novel of obsession, horror and unearthly lust!" It's certainly all of that and more.

The story opens when three bored teenaged friends, Kevin, Brad and Nick, are joined by a loser named Benny. None of the three really likes Benny, but he's older and bigger and a hard man to refuse. So when Benny insists that they get some beer and go to a party he's heard about, Kevin, Brad and Nick reluctantly go along.

The four wind up out in the middle of nowhere in front of a dilapidated house guarded by a snarling animal that would send any sensible boys scrambling back into their car and screaming the hell out of there. But, of

course, if they did that, there'd be no story.

It seems pretty clear that there's no party going on here, at least not in the conventional sense. But then a stunning woman steps out onto the porch and invites the boys in. In the living room are two massive, ugly specimens who seem to pay little attention to the boys. The woman, Suzie, sizes them up and agrees to party with them. Now, even Kevin, Brad and Nick are beginning to get enthused about the evening. Suzie leads them out and through the woods to a strange lake and just as things are getting interesting, the two rednecks and their four-legged "pet" materialize behind the eager boys.

With that, the book is off and running and it's a wild ride to say the least. In less capable hands, this story could be formulaic and clichéd, but Reichenbaugh delivers the goods page after page, mixing horror, sci-fi, and coming of age themes into a great story. If "obsession, horror and unearthly lust" are the kinds of things that get your motor running, look no further. For that matter, the great pulp-inspired cover is worth the price of admission all by itself.

Lori says

Read 4/26/14 - 5/3/14

2 Stars - Recommended Lightly to fans of the bizarro-horror genre, and to those who don't mind the occasional strange sentence structure

Pages: 270

Publisher: Perpetual Motion Machine Publishing

Released: April 2014

I first discovered Perpetual Motion Machine Publishing through a happy accident on twitter about a month before reviewing this book. They've got a certain bizarro-horror charm to them and I had a lot of fun browsing their catalog and getting to know their publisher.

Sirens jumped out at me in a way the other books did not. Something about the pulpy cover, the drippy 1970's sex and rock-n-roll description, called to my inner noir-child. And I decided this book was a must-have.

Upon reading the first few pages, I immediately became aware of two things: One - I definitely made the right decision by starting with this novel because I could totally see myself getting into this rompy sci-fi subtle-horror literary mishmosh. And Two - I was going to have to fight the urge to cringe at the somewhat clunky and awkward writing style of its author Kurt Reichenbaugh. So much of what you'll find within its pages screams of 'first time novelist'. Though I am sure, as he matures as a writer, and works with stronger editors (no offense Max!) much of the sentence-structurey strange-nuancey stuff will work themselves out.

So here we are, in Florida in the late 1970's, hanging around with a pack of horny high school boys kicking around town, looking for something to do. A mismatched motley group, for sure. And when they are joined by the slightly older Benny, who spreads the promise of a bad-ass party happening out in the middle of nowhere, the boys reluctantly agree to accompany him there.

They enter into a familiar horror-typical situation when they turn down the deserted dirt road towards the dilapidated old house, meet up with red headed Suzie - a siren if ever there was one, and head down towards the lake for some good, clean fun. The sense of foreboding is a strangling one and we the reader find ourselves itching to warn them to get back into the car the moment they arrive. But of course, we can't do that. The story's already written. We are helpless, merely puppets, with eyes glued to the page, prepared for the worst, unsure at the moment of the exact type of hell Kurt is about to create for them. And oh what a hell it will be.

Suzie's other-worldly sex appeal is hypnotic and their lakeside conversation has a calming effect on the group. Almost calming enough to lull the boys into a false sense of awe, unable to believe their luck, to be hanging with such a gorgeous girl. Almost calming enough to cause them to warily regard the unnatural glow at the bottom of the water and the lumbering twin henchmen and their strange scorpion-tailed dog with curiosity instead of fear. Almost calming enough to convince them into ignoring that feeling of concern and uncertainty that creeps into their very pores and threatens to send them scurrying.

And scurry they will, the moment they witness Suzie and that dog tear their ole bud Benny to shreds, the moment their entire world changes forever.

In the days that follow, as they gather their wits about them and set off on a mission to make sense of the events that took place at the lake, Kevin, Brad, Nick turn to their schoolmate Otto, an unlikely resource who thrills at the chance to unravel a mystery. The foursome end up investigating strip clubs and skanky bars, while fending off Suzie's redneck henchmen; their dead friend Benny, who's apparently up and shuffling around again to do Suzie's bidding; and a duo of vapid, brainwashed cheerleaders who try to distract the group by practicing their own otherworldly siren skills.

Part every-80's-horror-movie-ever-featuring-teenage-leads-in-the-history-of-ever, part campy Killer Klowns From Outer Space (only replace the klowns with sexy ass sirens and replace the circus tent in the middle of the woods with a space ship sitting on top of a strip club), Sirens pokes fun at the horror genre while adding in elements that haven't existed anywhere else. I got the sense, as I finished it, that Kurt was attempting to woo the serious reader while engaging those who are just looking for a fun read. And while I don't think he completely nailed it, I certainly believe he gave it one hell of a try. So while I might not have been blown away with the book, something tells me this would make one pretty amazing film. It's definitely got that "better to see it" quality to it.... Someone should get on that. ASAP.

Dave says

"Sirens" deliberately takes you back to the 70s when every teenage boy had a Farah Fawcett poster and the good radio stations played Yes and Aerosmith and Pink Floyd. Back in those innocent days when there were geeks and cheerleaders and jocks and strippers and space aliens and more. Just like a teen scream horror film, the story takes several groups of teens going through their first dates and mean days and sneaking out of the house. But, after encountering the Redhaired siren and her twisted henchmen, these kids will think twice about sneaking out.

Yes, it's filled with UFOs, strippers, zombies, beast creatures, and a woman with cold empty eyes that no one could ever say no to. And amidst all the gore and terror, it's a compelling tale that you can't turn away from like the horror flick on late night tv you can't turn off.

It's also loaded with references to Gil Brewer and Mickey Spillane and the whole Gold Medal paperback milieu.

There many Grindhouse horror stories out there, but few as carefully crafted. It sticks to a story without getting too silly or ridiculous as some bizarro fiction does. After all, what's silly about space aliens and bestial monsters and bloodsucking cheerleaders?

Albert says

3.5 stars

Well, not sure what to say about this book. One word comes to mind, Chaotic. A sort of coming of age novel set in the 70's. Filled with horror clichés, but all twisted around enough to keep the reader guessing. Fast paced, a bit confusing at time. Overall this was a fun read.

Vincenzo Bilof says

I've never been to a drive-in movie, but I like to think *Sirens* belongs on a big screen with grainy video footage and audio that cuts out every few minutes. This book is a "throwback" in every sense of the word; a story that leaves you wondering how the "real" world could shatter so much innocence. Horror, as it relates to the inclusion of teenage characters, takes us on a ride through the nightmare-adventures we envisioned conquering; our need to feel empowered by realizing our greatest fantasies is a theme of our own young lives, and a concept Reichenbaugh uses to chilling effect to make his book come alive.

Fantasy is within reach, however; just as we can read the book and escape into the past with Reichenbaugh's well-crafted, concise sentences and subtle humor, the characters in this adventure flirt with their wildest dreams. The group of teenage boys who're forever ripped from their version of reality by a horrific event turn to an interesting young man who helps solely because he wishes to become like the fictional characters he idolizes; Otto is a stark contrast to the lustful dreams of his friends. The narrative is held together by the mystery behind the eerie powers and savage desires of Suzie and her companions.

Besides Otto, the boys seems fairly generic; I often had a difficult time distinguishing between the characters, but their desires helped me identify them as the story progressed. Reichenbaugh has a knack for creating an engaging setting with "evil" characters who're better written and more interesting than the "good guys." More details were used to distinguish Suzie and her twisted "friends;" I wanted to know more about them, and thankfully, some of the chapters ended quickly so I could get right back into the heads of the more twisted characters, or, specifically, Otto. The fast-pace of the chapters kept the story moving forward, while the author continued to leave a trail of breadcrumbs by allowing the characters to figure out what was happening--we're discovering the horror right beside them.

Mystery, innocence, and evocative antagonists infuse *Sirens* with the vitality of an endearing story that reminds us reading can be a fun experience--you'll keep turning the pages as if you're a hero from one of Otto's favorite pulp tales; eager to solve a puzzling question that leads to an unforgettable thrill-ride. There's enough here for an intelligent reader to respect and admire Reichenbaugh for his storytelling craftsmanship, and there's an entertaining story that left me eagerly awaiting the author's next book.

