



Underground

Chris Ward

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Beneath the dark streets of London they played a dangerous game with trains. Now it is their only chance for survival... Britain in 2075 is a dangerous place. A man known only as the Governor rules the country with an iron hand, but within the towering perimeter walls of London Greater Urban Area anarchy spreads unchecked through the streets. In the abandoned London Underground station of St. Cannerwells, a group of misfits calling themselves the Tube Riders seek to forget the chaos by playing a dangerous game with trains. Marta is their leader, a girl haunted by her brother's disappearance. Of the others, Paul lives only to protect his little brother Owen, while Simon is trying to hold on to his relationship with Jess, daughter of a government official. Guarding them all is Switch, a man with a flickering eye and a faster knife, who cares only about preserving the legacy of the Tube Riders. Together, they are family. Everything changes the day they are attacked by a rival gang. While escaping, they witness an event that could bring war down on Mega Britain. Suddenly they are fleeing for their lives, pursued not only by their rivals, but by the brutal Department of Civil Affairs, government killing machines known as Huntsmen, and finally by the inhuman Governor himself.

Underground Details

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From Reader Review Underground for online ebook

Caleb Blake says

Cross-posted from Papyrus Independent Author Reviews:

<http://papyrus.calebblake.net/2012/08/24/the-tube-riders-by-chris-ward/>

In a future Britain where travel is restricted and the Governor rules with an iron fist, the Tube Riders stumble across a secret and become Mega Britain's most wanted.

The Tube Riders is a book in which several scruffy, disenfranchised youths are the main characters. However, this does not mean that this book would comfortably sit in the young adult category. These kids have a dark background and the author lets the harshness of a cruel future Britain leak through the pages. Rape, prostitution, violence, murder and the omnipotent presence of a government which "disappears" people on a regular basis form the reality in which these teenagers survive - and survive they do. I feel the author offsets this harsh existence by presenting us with a bunch of intelligent, resilient and loyal friends who jump onto moving trains for entertainment. The setting, the form of entertainment and the young protagonists themselves had me hooked from the start. I sometimes felt the author was channelling Michael de Larrabeiti's *Borribles* trilogy, one of my favourite journeys into a darker folkloric London.

The action in the first part of the book was gripping. A gang war builds and in escaping, the Tube Riders accidentally discover a secret that could get them killed. And this is where the relentless manhunt across Britain commences. Relentless is a word that so accurately describes the chase itself and the pursuers, a mix of government agents and nightmarish creatures devised in laboratories run by a sadistic government. The author gives us a barrage of perspectives from which to observe the action bouncing from character to character. Sometimes this can be disorientating in a story, but I actually found that it helped flesh out different characters in the novel from the Tube Riders to the Governor himself. Consequently, I felt more invested in the story which can only be a good thing.

It's important to have disbelief in check throughout this book as the story pushes the boundaries in some places. However, I think the author tries hard to inject credibility. A group of kids can evade an organised manhunt because the country has been restructured to discourage organised movement. The character, Switch, steers our gang all too true, but revelations make sense of his eerily accurate bearings (although this is really pushed to the limit as the story progresses). The man-made paranormals, if I can call them that, are unlikely, but I still had difficulty scoffing and I thought their inclusion made the flight all the more desperate. Then lastly, the success of this self-appointed dictator of Mega Britain seems unsustainable until an equally fantastical explanation makes some sense of it. In any case, I became happy to check my cynicism at the door which means that something had to be working well.

There are several major characters that we spend time with thanks to switching points of view throughout the novel. However, Marta is arguably the principal character of the story. The leader of the Tube Riders remained an interesting blend of resilience and vulnerability to me and in some ways she was a hopeful look at what a teen surviving in such a bleak existence could be. The death of her parents and the disappearance of her brother do not rob her of humanity. She remains fierce, she does what she has to do, but she also remains compassionate and loyal. The Tube Riders become her family, one that she is prepared to fight for.

However, although Marta is the main character, there are more interesting characters in my opinion. The nasty knife-wielding Switch, shows several different shades of colour over the course of the story. Jess is

jolted by the horrific death of her parents and transitions from a sheltered, innocent girl through grief and loss into a callous and violent instrument of vengeance. However, most interesting to me is the walking horror that is Dreggo. Part terminator, part crushed spirit I enjoyed watching her battle for her own humanity knowing that there could be no happy ending.

There were a few issues I had with the book, but thankfully not too many. There were a few more errors than I'd like to see but none of them exposed an inability to use the English language. Additionally, I had a bit of an issue with the finale. The action by this stage had become fever pitched and rather absurd, but that wasn't as much of an issue as it remained immensely entertaining even if possibly pushing that suspension of disbelief a little too far. What bothered me a little was how unresolved the ending was. Because I was on every step of this journey with the protagonists I was invested in their success of failure, but the author left that hanging to some degree, the possibility of a sequel dangling with it. I could understand that it would take far too much at that stage to really provide a conclusion and some hundreds of pages of resolution reduced to a mere epilogue probably would have angered me more, but I couldn't help but feel a little flat.

My few reservations aside, I enjoyed *The Tube Riders* a great deal. The author has recently broken up the volume into three parts and I would highly recommend grabbing the first and giving it a try if a 500+ page novel from an indie author seems too high a risk. If you like your action set in a dark and cruel future - and who doesn't - you owe it to yourself to give this a go.

Cats of Ulthar says

Review of The Tube Riders by Chris Ward

An amazing adventure through a dystopian futuristic Britain that I sincerely hope no one ever lives to witness, "The Tube Riders" is an immensely creative and thoroughly imagined, riveting novel. I couldn't step away and I doubt any other reader could. Marta, Simon, Paul, Jess, Switch, and later Paul's brother Owen, and young Carl, undergo danger, horror, adrenaline surges, friendship, family loyalty, deaths galore-and what doesn't kill them does indeed make them stronger. "The Tube Riders" possesses incredible characters, and not just the "heroes." No, even the "villains": Dreggo, Clayton, the Huntsmen, Dr. Karmski, and the mysterious, elusive, incredibly powerful Governor of Mega Britain, are vividly imaged and truly four-dimensional.

Author Chris Ward weaves Dystopian society and culture with a natural outgrowth of the current rush-to-collapse seen in some segments of contemporary society, and with the history of decades of scientific experimentation, vivisection, and genetic engineering and manipulation. The quest to engineer a "Super-Man" in the Nietzschean sense is well more than a century old, but in the deft hands of this author, the quest reaches a horribly ugly but effective conclusion.

I was provided with an e-book copy of this novel by the author, Chris Ward, on Sept. 12, 2012, via the Goodreads Group Making Connections, in exchange for my fair and impartial review.

Christopher Carrolli says

The year is 2075; the location, the futuristic Mega-Britain in a post apocalyptic world. The once Great Britain is now ruled by an extreme totaliterian regime run by the mysterious "Governor" that few have laid eyes on. But, what many have laid eyes on are the ghosts that peer through the windows of London's underground trains. Yet, they are not ghosts; they're real. They are The Tube Riders.

The young band of train riding daredevils have formed a familiar kinship through their love of "tube riding," a secret and solitary activity in a country where perimeter walls are erected and dead trees have bent like old men toward the ground. TV, books, and internet are banned, freedom is a thing of the past, and all inhabitants must pay strict homage to the corrupt government.

During an altercation with a rival group of train lovers, The Tube Riders gain possession of vital evidence that could bring revolution and tear the tyranical government down forever, allowing a new world to begin. But, the evil government is not about to let that happen. And so the book continues with its thrilling suspense that begins on page one.

Chris Ward is an astounding writer, who has written one of the best Sci-fi thrillers to come along in years. Ward's fast paced action is riveting, while his description is vivid, placing one within the picture-perfect scenes. But most of all, Ward's characters are magnificently crafted and real. The vigilante Tube Riders are vibrant, powerful kids turned freedom fighters within minutes of a single instance in their lives.

The Government is also steeped in its activity of genetic engineering and soon unleashes the most frightening component of Ward's novel--The Huntsman. These indestructable, half-human, half genetically altered hounds are bounty hunters set on the trail of The Tube Riders. These and other characters serve as the spellbinding antagonists that keep the page turning continuously.

The Tube Riders by Chris Ward is a Sci-fi masterpiece and a must read for all! I anxiously await the the sequel and hopefully, the movie!

Opal says

Read my review here or at The Akamai Reader.

I received a free copy of this book for an honest review.

This book reads more like a YA novel as the Tube Riders are most like a gang of skateboarders. That doesn't make this story any less fun or unique. It's got a lot of action and the violence in the story seems to contradict my snapshot judgment of it being a YA novel.

Nonetheless, the characters in the book are all very young and their problems are very young. I don't want that to steer you away from reading this book though. I really did enjoy it.

Marta is the nominal leader of the group of Tube Riders and she's very well fleshed out. I was able to identify with her the most. She reacts in very human and believable ways to each situation. With each step of the way I was cheering her on.

Another of the Tube Riders I really liked was Switch. He had street smarts and cunning that made me admire him. He was loyal to his friends and deadly to his enemies. Switch was a true survivor in every sense of the word.

All of the Tube Riders were heroes in their own ways but those two were my favorites for those reasons. The villains were equally fleshed out which made the story all the more enjoyable.

Their harrowing escape from the powers that be takes them all over Mega Britain and they meet a myriad assortment of characters. From the sleepy countryside to the busy underground of Bristol, they keep on running from the strong-arm of the law and the inhuman strength of the Hunstmen.

The Hunstmen are scary cyborg creations that have inhuman strength and are unstoppable when they're on the path of their prey. The Tube Riders will eventually learn how they come to be during the course of their adventures. The answer will hit closer to home than they'd ever dream of.

It had heart-stopping action and heart-wrenching moments. A very entertaining ride!

Sarah says

I got this book for free through Goodreads First Reads (go up to the top menu, where there is a drop-down arrow next to 'Explore', and look at 'Giveaways'!).

While waiting for this book to arrive...my main intrigue is to why a book set in the London Underground has a Deltic on the front cover :-)

26th Dec 2012

I got about 20% of the way through the book, and just didn't engage with any of the characters. I don't think it's anything to do with the way it is written, but me as a reader - perhaps I'm not the intended audience for this, perhaps I would have got on with it better when I was the age that most of the characters were.

So there was nothing bad about the book, nothing I could point to as dreadfully wrong, just that I didn't have my interest held in what was going to happen in the next chapter, nevermind the next 400 pages.

As a result, things that wouldn't normally bother me were the things that grabbed my attention - such as the artistic licence in station layouts, which given that this is a *fictional* version of the London Underground should be fine.

But I spent my time wondering just where there's a sub-surface station which has a platform either side of a single line. I can think of surface stations that have that arrangement, e.g. middle line at Loughton or White City. I can think of sub-surface stations that have both platforms opposite each other, but with both an up and down line, e.g. Circle Line at Liverpool Street. When I realised my attention was more diverted by trying to find a station that could fit the description in the book rather than the story, I figured it was time to call it a day (given that I got a dozen new books to add to my 150+ volume waiting-to-be-read-shelf for Christmas, I have to prioritise).

So this was a reluctantly abandoned book, and I do really think it was more to do with me than the book.

Nicolas Wilson says

Review by Nic's wife.

Okay- I had a few pet peeves with some of the characterization in the beginning, and some of the plot twists toward the end, but I was overall really wowed by this book. I love dystopias, but got a bit burned out after a

string of fairly "meh" ones that really had nothing to add, and just ended up being pale derivatives of more popular properties with thoughtful themes and commentary. I'm not sure I totally understand the message implicit in the Tube Riders, but the world created is exhilarating enough on its own to suck me right in, and I do see seeds of a message in its crafting. Just not sure I understand it yet. Maybe I will by the time I finish the trilogy.

The adrenaline-lust of the Tube Riders (characters, not title) is ugly, but completely relatable (Take it from someone who's done her share of dangerous/stupid/illegal dares and bets). And there's several subversive twists in characterization and worldbuilding. For instance, men and women alike may have to resort to prostitution, and the most prominent character with that background is no less well written or relatable, because of his occupation. Between the usual victimized girl portrait papered over dystopian sex workers, with all of its fetishistic detail, being challenged, and the solid characterization, this was a breath of fresh air for me.

The plot moves fast, which suits the breathless narrative tone. That tone stuck with me long after I finished the book. The next book I picked up just seemed so slow, so plodding, I put it down for a week to give my mind time to settle. It was the most solidly written, and attention-catching book I've read in quite a while.

Jenny Twist says

Absolutely Riveting!

It is 2075 and Britain is now a dangerous, frightening place, ruled over by a cruel despot. The cities have become the stalking grounds of thugs and psychopaths and have been walled in to prevent the insalubrious citizenry from escaping to the countryside where the nice people live. Government agents prey on the people, transporting children to factories as slave labour or worse, to be fodder for the strange cyber experiments going on in secret places underground. Every so often space rockets are launched and fall back to earth, but nobody knows why. Somewhere in London the sinister 'Governor' controls the country but few have seen his face and there are rumours he has incredible supernatural powers.

There is no future and no hope for the young people of this shadow-land, so they find their excitement where they can. One small band rides the tube trains – on the outside, clinging precariously to wooden 'clawboards' clamped to the side, looking in at the terrified passengers. They become their own legend. Their ghostly faces peering through the windows assumed to be the wraiths of the dead – they are The Tube Riders.

This is, without doubt, the most exciting book I have read for some time. I was gripped from the first page. Chris Ward's dystopian 'Mega Britain' is chilling and utterly believable, as are his characters. I loved them all - the brave young people who strive not only to survive, but to incite rebellion and bring freedom to the oppressed people of the cities, the thinkers who keep their heads below the parapet and plan for the new day, even the dreadful cyber creatures, the 'huntsmen', who never asked to become monsters. Terrible things happen in this book, but there are also ingenious strategies and heroic stands. And most of all, there is love.

This is an epic work created by a superb writer. It is one of those books you will want to read over and over again, that will stay in your memory forever.

Ann Foweraker says

Like other reviewers here I gained this novel on a special offer - and probably wouldn't have chosen it otherwise, as I don't usually read sci-fi - however I do read Thrillers.

After a bit of a slow start where I wasn't 'in the world of the book' nor 'caring enough about the characters' I was suddenly tipped into a Thriller (albeit set in a dystopian future) with the whole government backed horror driving the story, characters (now fully fleshed out) to care about, and a goal to achieve that will not only save their skins, but the future of mega-britain and all who live there - hence ending up as a gripping read!

I see Chris Ward has now released this as a 3 part trilogy - It was a very long book so this might have been a wise move! Just let me say - give the story time to grow on you - you should be well on track before the end of 'London' but 'Bristol' and 'Cornwall' are full steam ahead!

Blaine Moore says

"1984" Meets "The Island of Dr. Moreau" Meets "Escape From New York"

This book describes a dystopian Great Britain run by a despot (who isn't but might as well be a vampire) that engages in genetic experiments after having segregated every class of citizen that he could into separate urban and rural areas with no travel or communication allowed. A group of kids stuck living in London get their kicks by jumping onto and hanging off the sides of the trains, but one day find themselves witnessing an assassination, thus beginning their attempts to escape from not just the city but the entire country, all while being pursued by a rival gang, the governments secret police, and a mutated human/dog hybrid that the government puts on their tail.

The story was pretty good; it did sag a bit in the middle and I wasn't sure if I'd finish it, but it picked back up and the last third of the book especially kept me pretty captivated. There **is** a lot of violence in the book so it may not be appropriate for a younger audience or for anybody that gets a bit squeamish from descriptions of blood and gore. Some of the more fantastic elements relating to the genetic mutations and experiments had me rolling my eyes a bit, but they didn't detract too much from the story. I felt that the ending of the book was very satisfactory in closing out the story, while providing a small and very minor cliffhanger to set up the sequel.

Christine says

Such an action-packed adventure from the very beginning, The Tube Riders had me on the edge of my seat from the very first chapter. This book is so incredibly orginal in its plot and it was so extremlly pleasing to read something that has a powerful story and captivating characters. I would classify this book as a YA, dystopian but most enjoyable for all ages.

This story takes place in Great Briton, in the future, in a world that doesn't exist in reality. But, fictionally, it's terrifying and alluring all the same. Coming from someone who is DEFINITELY not a risk-taker, I couldn't help but be drawn in to the idea of tube riding. I can see why these characters make tube riding their life.

The author has the "good guys" and the "bad guys" in this story. And then--to make matters even crazier--we're smacked in the face with a whole other group of antagonists that is almost scarier than the first.

Our main protagonists have to embark on a journey for their lives. After seeing something that they shouldn't have, everything is on the line.

The story kept me engaged, the characters kept me rooting for them. Chris Ward has made me a fan!

Christy @ Captivated Reading

Don Hebert says

I spotted this book free on the Freebooksy Facebook page and WOW! I read a LOT of science fiction and The tube Riders is by far the best book I've read in a very LONG time! It's one wild ride that keeps you up late at night reading to see what happens next when you really should be sleeping because you have to get up early for work in the morning. Book 2 is in the works and I can't wait to get it in my hands!

Eric Dunn says

The Tube Riders by Chris Ward was one of the best books that I have read in a very long time. I don't say this often because I hate movie adaptations of books, but I think this book would make an amazing movie. Chris is one of the best "builders" I have come across. Allow me to explain what I mean: the world that the tube riders live in is so rich in detail that I can totally see myself running alongside them as they are running from the government. I can feel myself hanging off the side of subway trains with them as they are rushing through the tunnels. The characters are well developed and easily loved or hated depending on whose side you are on. I love the internal struggles that some of them have throughout the book.

This book was great for me on other levels as well. I have a degree in psychology and I loved watching the interactions of the protagonists and the antagonists. I loved the fact that Chris let us into the minds of his characters. I think that adds so much to a book.

The plot is well developed and keeps you wanting more. I read some other reviews that called the book "gritty and rough", which I think is a great way to put it. There aren't a lot of frills, but man does this book keep you wanting more. I'm sometimes put off by 500+ page books, but this one was well worth the time that went into reading it. I would recommend this book to anyone that has a love for reading. I don't care what genre you like, this book is well written and you will love the depth of the plot and the characters that you encounter. Give this book a try. You won't be sorry that you did.

Overall Rating: 5/5

Kate says

I enjoyed this book, but I didn't love it, hence, it gets a 3 star rating on Goodreads from me. It's pretty long, and part of a trilogy, but thankfully this book ends with a satisfactory resolution to the plot of the novel, with an opening for the trilogy to continue that isn't too much of a cliffhanger.

It had lots of action...though beware if you aren't into heavy violence and gore.

It had an interesting premise...though the plot could have been tightened up quite a bit. There was a LOT going on.

It had decent characters...though some of them seemed a little too schitzo and therefore unbelievable. If those characters were developed a tad more so that every action they took was backed up by what I knew about them, then I could get behind the story more. (I'm especially thinking of Clayton here--he's ruthless enough to slit children's throats, supposedly, but he hesitates multiple times in the story, among other things. Some of the other villains seemed to be contrary, as well. Dreggo kind of went AWOL on the story to me. She had many more reasons to hate the Governor than the Tube Riders, am I right?) And there were so MANY characters that some were not developed enough at all, even some of the more prominent ones.

The world in this story was very intriguing...though it didn't seem to follow its own rules sometimes. The story presented some gaps that kept me from submerging myself in it. For one, why in the world had no one EVER escaped out through the train tunnels before? That in itself seemed so unlikely to me that I couldn't stop thinking about it. I mean, you have gigantic walls built to contain a rioting, despondent populace, criminals and desperate-to-survive "innocents" alike, yet no one has ever tried to walk out through these ungated tunnels before? Humph. Nor had these kids ever rode the trains beyond the stations they practiced in. I thought it was going to be because they wouldn't be able to hang from the train while it went through the tunnel, but that's not it, obviously. Also, how in heck did anyone survive at all in the cities? There was a lot of head scratching for me there. Seemed like you couldn't walk a block without something blowing up, yet there were still people like Jess and her parents about? Businesses and schools? Buses and tube service? Also, with all the crazy scientists making mutant cyborg freaks (and what we see in the end), I wondered why the evidence the tube riders had to expose the Governor was even considered important, compared to what he had obviously done to the country and it's citizens besides. It just didn't all completely jive.

But, hey, it was entertaining, and had only a small amount of typos and grammatical errors for the size of the text, which is rare in a free kindle download.

Iluzija O. Istini says

*The
Hell
Ends*

*There, where you decide you are not
Unable, you are not weak, you are not
Broken, tired, dead.
Even when they hunt you,*

*Ride you, scare you,
Island of Mega Britain will hear your voice,
Dead will cheer your life, whispers and sighs
Echoing through the tunnels.
Ride will take you further, to where
Sun can rise again.*

Yes, that is an acrostic poem about this book. *Shut up.*

This is not a book I would call a literary wonder. It is not beautiful or artistic. It is raw and it stings. **It is not there to help you evolve your emotions. It is there to make your adrenalin burst, and that it does.**

Writer showed an amazing imagination with characters, technologies and games that just kept coming. And talking about emotions, he showed us only one, but important thing, that even when surrounded with friends, everyone is alone in their pain.

"It was pretty in a desolate kind of way"

Still, at times I found it too long for adrenalin-packed type of book and at times too crude for my, apparently sensitive-to-that-much-violence soul. The result of that was that after a while it made me unimpressionable. Maybe that was the plan, overloading the reader with the action, just like his characters were, before the denouement. If that was the case, I must still be waiting to unload.

Jessica says

When I first came upon The Tube Riders, it caught my attention with the originality of the premise. Here is a world that is cut off, harshly governed, and mysterious as all get out. Add in a set of characters who are willing to put their lives at risk for a little bit of a rush, and you have my attention. I don't think I would have ever thought of riding on trains as a way to unwind. For these characters though? That's reality. It's fabulous!

More than anything else, I instantly fell in love with the characters in this book. Marta, Paul, Switch and Simon are all intriguing in their own right. They are all the family that each other have, even when things get crazy. If I had to choose some favorites, I'd go with Marta and Switch. Marta is a no-nonsense kind of girl who does whatever it takes to keep her family safe. Switch is a little off sometimes, but loyal as they come and deadly to his enemies. This group is so diverse that you'd think they'd argue, and sometimes they do, but they play off one another wonderfully. Above everything, I loved seeing how they survived.

The world that Chris Ward builds here is fantastic in its own right though. Mega Britain is an insane world that uses militant rule to keep people down. There is poverty, violence in the form of daily riots, and so many secrets that it'll make your head spin. When the Tube Riders uncover a sinister plot by accident, it sets in motion a series of events that will have you holding on for dear life as you read. These poor characters never really have a moment to rest. Running from the authorities, being hunted by half animal, half human creatures, and trying to just stay alive. It kind of puts the high that they used to get from riding trains in perspective.

If there was one thing that was tough for me, it was just the length of the book overall. That's not to say that it doesn't maintain a pretty steady stream of action. More that I felt there were some descriptions, and some events, that probably could have been left out and still made for a intriguing story line. Parts of the story just felt a little over written. Totally my opinion! It might be different for other readers. It obviously didn't stop me from reading all 500+ pages of this book. Rightfully so, because the ending was awesome!

Let's just say that if you're looking for something original and exciting to read, this is for you! Chris Ward once again proves that self-published works can be just as amazing (if not more so) than traditionally

published ones. I am extremely glad that I picked up The Tube Riders and I so hope that there is more. Now that I've been immersed in the world of the the Tube Riders, I'm not willing to leave yet.
