



Sensation

Kevin Hardman

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Like millions of other kids, Jim grew up wanting to be a superhero. Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, Jim actually had the goods: a plethora of super powers that would have been the envy of any meta on the planet. But when his tryout with the Alpha League - the world's premiere group of supers - goes disastrously wrong, Jim basically becomes an outcast.

Two years later, Jim is still bitter about what happened to him. However, he soon finds himself the centerpiece in an odd turn of events that gives him a second chance at his dream. But nothing is as easy as it sounds, as Jim soon discovers. Among other things, he's made an enemy of a prospective super teammate, he's being stalked by an unknown pursuer, and a shadowy cabal bent on world domination has identified him as the only obstacle to their plans.

It's a lot for one super to handle, even with a smorgasbord of abilities. But if saving the world were easy, everyone would do it...

Sensation Details

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Author : Kevin Hardman

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From Reader Review Sensation for online ebook

Ben Langdon says

Sensation, Kevin Hardman (I&H Recherche Publishing)

*playing with new toys
a cast of thousands, bright sparks
aim too big, you miss*

The first Kid Sensation book shows the author's roots: the writing is okay but can't really contain all of the ideas he has. The influences from comics are rich, but again, there are too many. Hardman has obviously spent a long time setting up the world, and with his expansive series available out there, I guess he does have a lot of material for his hero and the universe. However, I genuinely think there is too much in this story for it to read fluidly.

The sheer number of characters (whether they be given a sentence, a paragraph or even a chapter) actually detract from the central storyline. I understand the need to show how detailed the world building is, but I think a lot of the characters mentioned in passing could have been merged together – cut down the number of characters and it really doesn't affect the outcome. What is their individual purpose?

The main character also suffers from a bit too much of everything. While most other supers have one or two powers, Kid Sensation has pretty much every conceivable standard power – except super strength. It's clearly a case of Mary Sue, and he suffers a bit from being too confident, too snarky and overall too accomplished for the first book in a series about a teenage superhero. While I understand there's clearly an over-use of newbie superheroes in books out there, there is room to write a character who isn't too naive or too worldly-wise. I guess I'm hoping for some balance. With great power... there should be some kind of weakness. The Kid gets tricked a few times, but never seriously, and he always escapes with ease.

One of the things I love about superhero novels is the depiction of powers, and how a character's powers can represent their personality or situation – to serve as a metaphor. Keeping the number of powers smaller, keeping them consistent and linked, allows a reader to imagine the character's abilities and the extent to which they can or cannot do something. Kid Sensation has none of these boundaries. He can do anything.

Hardman is good at writing powers though. There are three great characters within these pages:

Braintrust – a collection of clones, with no real sense of a true body. "He" reminded me of the blue-skinned clones from Giffen's Legion of Super-Heroes – a comic I absolutely loved. Braintrust served brilliantly as the Kid's 'go to man' and I'd liked to have read more of him.

Electra – a teenage girl who was raised by superheroes and has a healthy dose of teen-angst which manifests as a powerful sonic scream. Loved her first scene, and the description of her shout. She proved to be resourceful and intelligent. (If we forget her brief moment as a girl in distress, Electra is a pretty cool character).

Kid Sensation himself is a bit too powerful, too confident, to really make his way into my proverbial reader's heart. I didn't really care about him, even at the end when his family secret is revealed. I think it may be partly because of the narratorial style of writing – the Kid tells the story in a blow by blow way, not really

ever touching on his feelings or reactions to things. Perhaps it would have been good to see his actions which were then contradicted by his thoughts.

Going back to my first comment, my first train of thought... I think this book is a good glimpse into Hardman's early writing. He has written a lot since this book, and I am sure his style (like his character) has matured through each book. I'll be checking out the later books to see how he goes because, really, he has managed to create a good superhero world.

[6.0/10.0]

Leah says

[the love interest betrayal to the d

Justin says

Not my normal type of book but I enjoyed it

Carrie says

I didn't notice how short this was when I picked it up, but it was fun! I kept picturing the movie Sky High which I also liked.

Jonathan says

I received a free copy in return for a honest review. This is the fourth superhero novel that I have read. So far it has been the best so far out of those four books (by different authors). It would be a dream to have as many powers as Kid Sensation. I enjoyed it from start to finish and have since got other books in the series. I highly recommend to anyone interested in superheroes.

Ceilidh says

A good, quick read if you're looking for an action book. The sheer number of names (Jim's included) kept throwing me off balance. Otherwise, I totally recommend! I enjoyed it a lot because, although about teens, there is no cursing.

Sabrina says

This is a world where super powers are not quite as uncommon as our world, it is a cool mix of YA and superman.

Jim is a normal teenage boy with all the usual teen issues to deal with, along with something extra, he seems to have more superpowers than all the other heroes put together and this doesn't make his life any easier.

I really enjoyed this book and didn't want to stop listening, unfortunately life got in the way and I had to take 2 sittings to finish the book.

BookJunkie777 says

I enjoyed this audiobook. Interesting characters, storyline, & plot. This story is packed with action from the start with surprising twists, interesting villains, treachery, & intriguing situations. The story would likely appeal to teens, young adults, or fans of superheroes.

Roger Royer says

Let me just say that I wish more novels were written in this genre. I love my comic books but novels will always be my first love and there was a series of short story collections I read back in the 1990's that had super heroes in them and I loved them. The stories were by some of the best authors of the time and I would like to say that this one could have been included among them. The story is well paced and detailed enough that you get the idea of the world very fast. The idea of super beings is one that is hard to write without getting into something that has gone before and sounding overly rehashed but even though some of those elements exist here from both movies and comics the way they are used here is very interesting if not unique at least it isn't as rehashed as some stories I have read in the past where things are almost a word for word copy. The Academy is actually the only real issue I have with the book. Mostly because in most worlds that have super heroes they have them and, even in the Marvel and DC worlds, they do not press the issue of how bad the government would want to control super powered peoples or exactly how badly they would be discriminated against. If we as a race cannot overcome our hatred of ourselves in a world without powered individuals by discriminating race and sexual orientation then how would we as a race react to supers?

The book is an amazingly fun read and I would love to see another. This book is generally good for teens and I would even say younger people. Though I would like to mention that the deaths in the book should probably have had more of an impact on Jim than they did. Once again this is my opinion and should be taken as such but a young man of his age confronted with death as he was should have had a more serious reaction.

Either way a good book and one I would gladly tell others to read.

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

When Jim, otherwise known as the 'Kid', tried out for the superhero league, he didn't expect to become a fugitive. Now on the run, Jim uses his myriad of superpowers to stay anonymous while still being a good guy. When the forces of evil deign to track him down for their own nefarious ends, Jim is caught between the struggle of good and evil and must face temptation, broken alliances, and blossoming romance.

Sensation was a genuine surprise to me. I generally don't read male POV (I do make a few exceptions – the Shift series by Kim Curran is also does excellent teen boy POV BTW) and I did have to read the blurb a few times, trying to read between the lines of what might actually happen in the book. Of course, the cover is gorgeous, so that decision was easy :P What can I say, I like colourful, shiny things.

Hardman is a competent, confident writer with only a few mistakes often seen in newbie tomes: there was a distinct lack of character voices (two different characters both happened to say 'Voila' when unveiling something), and overuse of unneeded parenthesis and a startling and annoying repetitious habit of 'cutting a long story short': 'Basically' an awfully high percentages of sentences began with 'essentially', 'moreover,' 'frankly speaking, 'ultimately,' 'in essence,' 'in short,' 'needless to say,' and so on. It seemed like superfluous word padding, and unfortunately after reading some author blog posts I also see it's a habit in non-fiction writing as well.

There was also some issues with deciding what to include as dialogue and what to summarise, but it didn't really impact the overall story and I expect Hardman to get better as he writes more. I'll also add that Jim's narrative voice didn't seem particularly 'teen' but I will also point out that there is such a thing as a mature teen boy, and he had more important things to worry about than girls and sex and whatever else teen boys think about (seriously, I'm not one, so I don't know).

The plot of Sensation was really great, a strong typical 'coming of age' plot for a teenage protagonist anonymous superhero fugitive. I would have liked more angst, especially when it came to Jim's absent father, and there seems to have been an entire aspect missed concerning his mother as well. Unfortunately, as usually is with boys' stories written from a male author, the book seemed to revolve entirely around males. The only females present were either sexually interested in Jim (or pretending to be), or his mother. I guess I'm probably not the intended audience though, as I highly doubt many teen boys would give a shit how many women show up in the novel and what they talk about.

Overall if you want to read a YA book from a teen boy perspective, and you want to see what a really well written self-published novel can do, I do recommend Sensation, though I don't think I'll be reading the sequels.

Thanks to the author for providing this review copy for an honest review.

S. Thomas says

Kevin Hardman brings the often explored genre of superheroes into the world of novels and delivers a fast paced adventure with good storytelling in Sensation. Jim is a sixteen year old boy who has put off learning to drive, doesn't have many friends, and deals with anger issues. What sets him apart from many who share those traits is that Jim has developed nearly every super power in the book!

I received a free copy of the audiobook initiated by my request, and I'm glad I sought it out! I used to read a lot of superhero comics as a kid and feel they influenced my tastes in reading and writing. Aside from the occasional Marvel or DC movie, it's a genre I haven't visited in better than fifteen years and it turned out to be fun.

We learn from flashbacks early on that two years before our tale begins, Jim blew his big opportunity to join the world's foremost superhero team, the Alpha League. He now operates under a different alias with the

help of his grandfather, a retired telepath, and Brain Trust, a hive mind of clones who want to know everything.

Under pressure from his mom and Grandpa to fit in with other kids, Jim attends a superhero teen football pick-up game where he becomes acquainted with some of the Alpha League's junior members. The adventure unrolls in expected and well delivered comic book fashion.

Foreshadowing in this book was well done two pieces in particular played out exactly as I thought they might. No real surprises, but it's a superhero book, so I didn't expect a jack-knifing plot like in a suspense or thriller.

The first person storytelling allowed for the occasional info dump on some of the finer details of super powers. One example I enjoyed was when Jim finished a shower, he simply phased himself off from being solid matter, so water dropped away rather than needing to be towed off.

I listened to the audiobook which was well narrated. Supporting characters had distinct voices or accents which always makes it a bit easier to keep the story straight during dialogue heavy scenes.

Like any good superhero adventure there are more opportunities for sequels sprinkled throughout the story than I can count and a quick look at Mr. Hardman's Goodreads page confirms he's made good on at least six of them.

I took off one star because I feel that Hardman introduced the reason for Jim's freak out and voluntary two year seclusion without really explaining why Jim felt it wasn't actually him that had such an anger problem. Then Jim continues to have anger issues later on, although to a lesser severity.

Heather Hayden says

I don't often stumble upon a good superhero novel, but this one had all the ones for me--sympathetic hero, interesting setting, and a cliche in just the right way plot. After a disastrous tryout for the Alpha League, Jim plays superhero in the shadows. But he's not a vigilante--he has his grandfather and a powerful superintelligence called BT helping him capture and turn in supervillains secretly. It's only when trouble really begins to rise that he realizes he'll have to embrace who he is--Kid Sensation--in order to save the world.

I loved Jim's voice throughout the piece; he comes across as very human in spite of all the powers he has and all the training his grandfather has given him. He and the other characters bring the story to life, and it's rather larger than life in some ways, just like a superhero comic might be.

If you enjoy comics and superheroes, I highly recommend this story.

Michelle says

Loved it! Can't wait to jump into the next adventure of Kid Sensation!

NotAnotherJenn says

Two years ago Kid Sensation (Jim) had a disastrous tryout for the Alpha League, the world's premier super hero team. He's spent the last two years working as bounty hunter Mohawk and trying to develop and hone his abilities. He quickly gets pulled into a plot involving a mysterious group of evil-doers who are trying to take down the league and rule the world.

I thoroughly enjoyed the novel. I thought Jim was a likely kid who stuck by his principles and generally tried to do the right thing. He has a unique lineage, being descended from alien royalty and the world's greatest telepath, and this has gifted him with a plethora of abilities. His skill set was almost too much, so much so, that an entirely new power is introduced, utilized, and quickly forgotten about within about ten pages. At one point his mentor, Braintrust, comments on his skills and remarks that Jim doesn't need teleportation AND super speed because they are basically the same thing. I found myself agreeing with him and probably would have liked to see Jim make due with only a few good abilities and give the other characters a bit more breathing room.

The pace of the book was good and very easy to follow. There are moments where the novel jumps to the evil-doers perspective and I don't think that really advanced the story and probably could have been omitted. There is also a twist at the end that was easy to figure out and the moment it happens could have been fleshed out a little bit more. Jim is very mature for his age and often makes very rational, adult decisions so perhaps it was handled in line with that. It was very refreshing to read a novel told from a male's perspective and I appreciated that there weren't any real attempts to slide in a romance sub-plot.

I was given a copy of the novel in exchange for a review.

Lana Mason says

I love comic books, super heroes and villains fighting against one another in a perpetual struggle. I love conflicted heroes and vigilantes, who struggle against their inner darkness. I love villains who do what they do because they don't consider themselves the villains, but the heroes in their own stories. I practically learned to read from comic books. That's why this book was such a disappointment to me.

It may have gone a different way had I not loathed the main character so much. From almost the very first sentence I didn't like him... he had everything! Telepathy, telekinesis, invisibility, shapeshifting, teleportation, and on and on and on and on... practically everything but super strength which, as the lead pointed out many times, he could fake. He was a teenager, which isn't bad in and of itself, but this teenager took out a super hero team without hardly breaking a sweat. Not only that, but he and his grandfather decided for him to hold back when trying out for the local super hero team, which was a decision I didn't really understand. I mean, if he wanted to be a hero or wanted to be famous, why not show off how awesome you are? Or, if you wanted to keep your abilities hidden, why try out in the first place? It didn't make sense.

That's not the worst part, though it was plenty bad. The worst part is that much of the first part of the book was told via flashback. Instead of starting the story with the young Kid Sensation, about how he got his first power when a bully picked on him, or about the try outs, or going through high school while all this was happening to him, or training with his grandfather... that stuff is told in flashbacks. The initial scene has us watching him be a bounty hunter while under disguise as "Mohawk". We then see his fancy apartment and all his super powers and so on, which just made this... I don't know... "Bestest With The Mostest" vibe. After that, it was hard to feel sympathy for the character at all. Why should we? He had all of these advantages and yet still finds stuff to complain about? Granted, he's a teenager, but... he's a teenager! Should he really be besting the premier super hero team? And should we be seeing it in a flashback? If we had grown up with him, watched him be bullied by mean kids, and how he developed his first powers, and how awkward it was to have all this, then maybe it might have worked. Instead, we get page after page of past tense battles and shenanigans which put me to sleep. When it wasn't boring, it was almost painful to listen to. Last thing (off the top of my head at least), I know it's a YA book, but the lead character didn't sound like a kid, not in the slightest. The way he "spoke" (as it's in first person POV) was way too adult at times, using words like "ubiquitous". Granted, I know what ubiquitous means, but the average kid isn't going to. One shouldn't "dumb it down" for young adults, but the way the lead character spoke didn't sound like a young adult at all. That was another thing which made it hard to relate to him.

There are, however, a couple of bright spots. The narrator was very good, and I enjoyed his voice. I think I'll have to cleanse my audio palette before trying him again, but try him again I shall! He had a lot of emotion in his voice, and he did the best with what he was given. For the text itself? The lead character was African American, which made me really happy. There are so few minority protagonists that I feel this must be pointed out. I really wish I liked the protagonist at all, but I appreciate seeing minorities in positions of power. AND on top of it, the author called out racism within the book, which was great! It's not enough for me to bump it to 2 stars even, but it was good to see that! I also liked Brain Trust. The idea for BT was really quite interesting, but we didn't see enough of him-or-her.

Overall, I would definitely pass on this book. While the narrator was excellent, and there were a couple of bright spots, the book overall felt like watching a train wreck, except without the compulsive 'can't look away' aspect. This book was given to me for free at my request and I provided this voluntary review.
