



Control Point

Myke Cole

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Army Officer. Fugitive. Sorcerer.

Across the country and in every nation, people are waking up with magical talents. Untrained and panicked, they summon storms, raise the dead, and set everything they touch ablaze.

Army officer Oscar Britton sees the worst of it. A lieutenant attached to the military's Supernatural Operations Corps, his mission is to bring order to a world gone mad. Then he abruptly manifests a rare and prohibited magical power, transforming him overnight from government agent to public enemy number one.

The SOC knows how to handle this kind of situation: hunt him down--and take him out. Driven into an underground shadow world, Britton is about to learn that magic has changed all the rules he's ever known, and that his life isn't the only thing he's fighting for.

Control Point Details

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From Reader Review Control Point for online ebook

Rachel Neumeier says

Okay, I am not normally inclined to review books unless I like them. I mean, I don't much care for negative reviews myself, right? And I hate to make someone else feel bad. And what if I run into the author at a convention sometime? Awkward much?

But there are limits, and this book ticked me off because of its wasted potential. Nothing wrong with the concept or the world, but . . .

Well, suppose you read the following first paragraphs of a novel:

The monitor showed a silent video feed from a high school security camera. On it, a young boy stood in a school auditorium. A long-sleeved black T-shirt covered his skinny chest. Silver chains connected rings in his ears, nose, and lips. His hair was a spray of mousse and color.

He was wreathed in a bright ball of fire.

Billowing smoke clouded the camera feed, but Britton could see the boy stretch out a hand, flames jetting past the camera's range, engulfing fleeing students, who rolled away, beating at their hair and clothing. People were running, screaming.

Beside the boy stood a chubby girl, her dyed-black hair matching her lipstick and eye makeup. She spread her arms.

The flames around the boy pulsed in time with her motions, forming two man-sized peaks of flame. The fire elementals danced among the students, burning as they went. Britton watched as the elementals multiplied – four, then six. Wires sparked as the fire reached the stage. The girl's magic touched them as well, the electricity forming dancing human shapes, elementals of sizzling energy. They lit among the students, fingertips crackling arcs of dazzling blue lightning.

Okay, your reaction is:

- a) Those poor kids are just scared and confused, that's why they're burning their classmates alive.
- b) My God, a magical Columbine – someone needs to take out those little sociopaths, quick before the body count hits triple digits!

Would it surprise you to know that the protagonist goes for option "a"?

And from the rest of the chapter and, indeed, the book, it's perfectly clear the author, Myke Cole, also goes for "a", and expects the reader to as well. So right from the beginning, Cole loses me – I'm having a problem with suspension of disbelief. I am totally out of sympathy with the protagonist, because are you kidding me?

And this problem with implausibly weird reactions go straight through the book from beginning to end.

Like, suppose you want to get somebody who's manifested a forbidden magical talent to surrender to you so that you can train him to use his talent in a secret war. You know that it's widely believed that people who

manifest talents like this are taken away and killed, but this is actually not true. So, when you have tracked down this guy with his extremely valuable (if forbidden) talent, and he says, “You’re going to kill me anyway,” you respond:

- a) “That’s for a court-martial to decide. Get on your knees and put your hands behind your head.”
- b) “Oscar, I know that’s what everybody believes, but I swear to you, it’s not true. You’ve already accidentally killed people; you know you’re too dangerous to be out on your own. The truth is, you just need to switch from the regular army to, well, let’s say special forces. You can learn to control your talent. Just settle down and we’ll get you out of this mess, I promise you.”

You’d think “b”, right? Nope, the government guy in charge of bringing Oscar in goes straight for “a”, which results in Oscar running and various assorted mayhem before he’s finally caught.

Not only that, but even though Oscar’s longing for a place to belong and a sense that he’s doing something worthwhile? Every single authority figure goes out of his way to make it clear that to them and to the supernatural branch of the army, Oscar’s just a slave and a tool. Why do all the officers treat their people like this? Even though it is clearly not very practical if what you want is willing, dedicated people working for you? Ummm . . . because they’re nuts?

Also! Can we have characters with layers? Complicated motivations? No, we cannot. The guys who seem like they might be rough around the edges but maybe they have a heart of gold? Nope, they’re just straight-up bad guys. You want to be a good guy? You’re just nice right from the first moment you walk on stage. And also stupid! Spoiler here, so stop here if you care about that:

Honest to God, my dog, with a brain the size of a walnut, could tell that letting the creepy scary evil Scylla loose would be a really bad idea. Like, a really really bad idea. But it never crosses Oscar’s mind that she might possibly slaughter people like cattle, even though, hello, she said she thought of normal people like animals. And he let her loose anyway? Good Lord above, what a shock that things didn’t work out! Oscar is just so STUPID. And vacillating. Like, decide what you want already! And then STICK TO IT!

This book picked up a couple of amazing blurbs, like “Hands down, the best military fantasy I’ve ever read,” and I can only say, seriously? Or is this the only military fantasy you’ve ever read? SHADOW OPS takes place in an technologically advanced alternate contemporary world, and that may make it unique among military fantasies. Can anybody think of any other fantasies which combine attack helicopters and magic and could fall into the same category of military fantasy as Cole’s book?

Because if not, if this is the best military fantasy out there, then I suggest sticking to military SF and heading straight to Tanya Huff’s VALOR series, which, I am not kidding you, is just infinitely better.

I’m giving this one two stars because, while I was extremely disappointed by the characterization and plotting issues, it is well written.

Mark Lawrence says

The was the first Advance Reviewer Copy ever sent to me!
(apart from my own work)

So, I really enjoyed this. On pretty much the first page I was confused by/angry with the main character, Oscar. It could well be my fault. I didn't understand that the young people in the opening scene who were busy killing folk were not actually in control of the magic doing the killing. So I didn't connect with Oscar's sympathy for them.

Oscar continued to annoy me (possibly with more valid reason) throughout the book. That sounds bad, but it isn't. Yes, he didn't choose a line and stick to it. That sounds like most people to me. A degree of inconsistency, especially under extreme pressure, is realism, it's the norm. Cole gives us a real man in extraordinary circumstances - and that's good writing.

When modern fantasy gives us grey and points of view that make both sides look valid ... why can't someone change their mind from time to time?

The mainstay of this book, and it's a very good mainstay, is the exciting magic. It's good old fashioned in your face fun/powerful magic. Stuff gets taken apart. Not for nothing did Peter V Brett call it Xmen meets Black Hawkdown. I suspect it's impossible to blow up so much shit between two covers, in such style, and not have a hit. I would watch it in 3D.

The rapid appearance of powerful magics among the populace leads to some interesting social dynamics, with the military having taken control of proceedings (and why not - these skills are powerful weapons). There are snippets of news/doctrine ahead of chapters that give a nice taste of the impact of these developments on society.

Action moves quite swiftly to a secondary world where it spends most of the book. For the most part the pace is fast and the action exciting. Cole uses his own military experience to provide an authentic feel to the whole thing and show the military/civilian tensions in a sub-populace that has been forcibly inducted into the armed services.

Anyway ... great read. Give it a shot. Cole puts the fun back into fantasy. Not the silly kind of fun, the kind that explodes.

I should also note that this trilogy gets better as it goes. Book one touches 5* with outstretched fingertips for me, book 3 stands on the 5* inviting more.

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Michael says

This book reads very much like a Jerry Bruckheimer blockbuster action movie. A fast, almost frantic at times pace. I think the concept is a nice change from a lot of the standard fantasy almost a cross between fantasy and military science fiction. In full disclosure, I have met Myke at a convention and speak with him on line from time to time, but that doesn't discount the fact that he wrote a very exciting debut novel.

Benjamin Cheah says

I didn't like the book. Straight off the bat, the cover lies. The tacticool attire on the cover plays exactly no role in the story. No magical character uses long arms -- only pistols, and only as backup weapons (for as-yet unclear reasons). The cover shows a strong black man leading a team of seasoned operators -- but the reality is a wishy-washy soldier without any discernable leadership skills in charge of a ragtag bunch of non-military misfits. The guy with lightning bolt in his hand doesn't even work for the protagonist.

This disjoint between the cover and the story hints at what could have been, but failed to reach. On one hand, Myke Cole has created fascinating worlds of military training, bureaucracy, privatisation of defence sciences, magic, and otherworldly creatures. Unfortunately, the prose is ho-hum, the plot almost nonexistent, and the characters stereotypical.

I really did not like the protagonist. Oscar Britton is a Kiowa helicopter pilot in the US Army, who suddenly manifests a form of magic that happens to be prohibited. The novel has him grappling with the consequences: him running away, being captured, and trained to be a killing machine. Throughout this story, Britton is reacting to events, putting little to no thought to long-term consequences. He swings between staying in the military and thinking of rebelling literally every other chapter, in direct response to what he has immediately experienced, without taking wider ramifications or even strategy into account. I get the sense that Britton is just an empty vessel, to be filled up and poured out to showcase more of the world, with no actual thoughts, history, worldview or perspective of his own.

The other characters are, simply put, stereotypes. What you see of them is exactly what they are. There's the drill sergeant nasty, infantile teenage girl, rebel without a cause, omnicidal maniac, effeminate man and so on. There is no attempt to make them any more human than they already are. As for the nonhuman creatures, they are almost all animalistic beings of apparently low intelligence and noteworthy only in their insistence on waging war.

The magical system Cole builds seems strange. In this story universe, the United States permits certain branches of magic, but not others. (Other nations are hinted to have different approaches) The actual reasons for American prohibition of magic aren't fully fleshed out, apart from a couple of sequences where the characters have to face villains who use prohibited magic. On first glance, it may look like it's because those prohibited schools have the ability to cause great harm. However, throughout the story, the ones who cause the most death and destruction (Britton aside) use legal magic.

Cole's prose is entirely utilitarian. It tells you exactly what is going on, but nothing more. It is as flat as his characters, and remarkable for its unremarkableness. As for the plot, it consists entirely of Britton reacting to events, and reacting to his reactions. At no time does Britton stop reacting and start acting, intelligently taking charge of his destiny instead of letting things happen to him. In this sense, he is less protagonist and

more viewpoint character.

The main selling point of this story is the action scenes. They are adrenaline soaked bloodfests that would satisfy combat junkies and showcase the characters' skills. This is the only positive I can say about this.

In the end, all I can see in this story is a story of what could have been. It could have raised tough questions on individual rights vs duty to society, what defines a man who has incredible power, framing of national security threats, and the use of military and law enforcement to handle said threats. And indeed it does, but they are overshadowed by so many flaws, the message is lost.

Patrick says

It's always dangerous picking up a first book by a new author. You never really know what you're going to get.

In some ways, it's even more dangerous if you know the author beforehand. What if you read their book and don't like it?

That's the position I was in with this book. I'd met Myke Cole on several occasions and really liked him. He's a hell of a nice guy, and a bit of an exception to the fantasy author cliche. He's not a bearded pugly ex-D&D geek. He's a clean-shaven, military-fit, ex-D&D geek.

Anyway, about the book. It's military fantasy, and that's not my cup of tea. I don't read a lot of it, because I don't find it really engaging.

But this book isn't *just* military fantasy. It has really interesting characters, an interesting world and magic. It's really about watching one man's ongoing conflict with his sense of duty, and how his government treats magically active people in this post-awakened world.

Simply said, I really loved it. Hooked me right in. Kept me interested. Good action. Good characters. It's not a book you have to be into military stuff to enjoy. It's just a great book.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.blogspot.com/201...>

Shadow Ops: Control Point is military science fiction, but definitely not the kind I had been expecting. And honestly, if I'd known earlier just what kind of excitement I was going to be in for, I probably wouldn't have let this one hang out so long on my to-read list.

Not long ago though, I was in a bit of a reading funk and was in dire need of a book to pick me up, and Control Point sure did the trick. The book follows protagonist Oscar Britton, an Army officer who suddenly manifests a power which allows him to summon portals between and within worlds. In a time when people with such magical abilities are strictly regulated and under surveillance, those who run from the government are immediately labeled renegades and hunted down. Panicked and overwhelmed, Oscar chooses to flee but

in time realizes there is a lot more to this world of magic than he's ever known.

The first chapter was like a pure shot of adrenaline, laying out everything I needed to know about this book and what I saw pleased me. It pleased me greatly. Sorcery and spec-ops tactics? Soldiers with superhero-like powers and codenames? This is a marriage of science fiction and fantasy made in heaven, where magic and futuristic technology co-exist in harmony with the unadulterated action of a military sci-fi novel, from an author who obviously knows what he's writing about.

The cover? Totally does not do this book justice. I wouldn't had a clue what was waiting for me within these pages if I hadn't dug deeper. Even the description belies the true nature of the world in this novel, which is unlike any setting I've ever encountered. An entire civilization has been altered, the existing social structure upended because of people waking up with magical talents, and Myke Cole does a great job showing this in is storytelling. A whole other realm also exists on another plane, home to a race of goblin-like creatures who are in constant war with the military base there. The magic system is also fleshed out and presented well.

I was also surprised to see that the story is not just nonstop action. Between the hectic battles and covert military operations, there is a real attempt at character building and exploration of the relationships between the main protagonist and the others around him. Britton is a much deeper character than I'd expected, a thoughtful man who struggles with his own feelings a lot, constantly asking questions and evaluating his situation.

Like most other reviewers, I've also noted Britton's indecision and his frequent switching of sides. To tell the truth, I didn't find it as extreme as some make it out to be, though my issue with this has less to do with his wishy-washiness and more to do with the fact that his inability to make up his mind often seems like a tactic to drive the story forward. It's obvious from his constant self-analyzing that Britton is a smart, introspective person, and yet on several occasions he will do things without thinking, and always much chaos and loss of life would be a direct result of his actions. He would be sick with guilt afterwards, but it's hard to feel for him after the first time it happens, especially when he doesn't learn from his mistakes. It's a very small gripe though, considering the pile of positives that more than made up for it.

This book offered me a side of the genre that I haven't seen much of before, and as such the author has my attention. I'm looking forward to see how the rest of this series will unfold; something tells me the next book will be just as much fun and full of surprises.

Bradley says

I come out of reading this horribly divided. On the one hand, I love the "give the audience what it wants" mentality, lots of explosions, driven and heroic characters, caricatured villains, and MAGIC MAGIC MAGIC MAGIC in a MIL-SF backdrop.

I wanted to just come out of this going: Well, that was a bunch of mindless hokey fun, a total popcorn read where I can turn off my mind and just WATCH THE DAMN ACTION MOVIE. Book. Whatever.

Story-wise, it's all boilerplate and totally classic, the hero falls in with the supposedly good crowd, questions everything, falls out. In the meantime, it's all explosions and portals and mini-epic fights and magic flying everywhere with death delivered to the page with a bright and shiny bow.

Nice, right? I thought so, too.

However,

I can't just sit by and see a lot of casual racism without commenting on it. I feel rather disgruntled. Sure, stereotypes abound in this book. It's what lets us dive right in without any learning curve, but some stereotypes can bite you in the ass. Like Native Americans. It's one thing to have them be the stereotypical resistance, but they're also the bad guys who let the "dangerous magics" run wild. We get one token Indian working for the good guys, too, but he's harmless because they've got him drugged to the gills. And then on top of that, if this wasn't bad enough, we've got the goblins. Who is a stand-in for the Indians. Including the token goblin working for the good guys.

With mirrored tropes like this, we're practically forced to assume a whole slew of things as if it is natural and obvious when in reality it's just a bunch of racism in disguise. Those damn goblins sure get drunk easy (on sugar). And don't think this is just me making this up. There are dozens of similar examples. It only LATER becomes clear that the author is *really* just talking about colonialism and it's *really* all about the Gulf Wars, etc., and maybe it is that, TOO, but the rest marred my enjoyment. Stereotypes like questioning heroes and the big bad military industry and politicians are all good fun, to a point, but others are a real landmine.

It's all under the surface for the most part except for a jerk who gets blatant about it, and our MC is always very PC, but I spent a good deal of the novel wondering if this subtext was going to be a major STORY issue because otherwise, I was going to have to quit this series.

Final estimation? Well, we're in with the indigenous at the end, so perhaps it gets better, but I need to see a lot more effort.

Jack says

Avoid this book. Move along.

This one is bad. Not in a ha-ha, B-Movie, campy bad, this is fun! kind of a way. More of a "okay, only 80 pages left, let's get through this and get the page-count credit for my Goodreads goal" bad. I will not finish this trilogy, even though I own the remaining books.

The main issue is our vacillating and whiny protagonist, Oscar Britton. His flip-flopping is annoying yet almost comical. Every chapter seems to be "How will Oscar feel today?" His wavering from "right" and "wrong" takes hilariously wide 180s, sometimes in the matter of a page or two:

"I hate this special military unit! They treat me like a mere weapon. I will not be used! Wait, no! I love it here, I'm part of a team! No, never mind! They treat us bad and it makes me sad!"

"Killing innocent indigenous goblin aliens is wrong and immoral! We invaded their home! But you, you lobotomized human who has powers like me and work for my enemy, I'll kill you! That's okay because WOLVERINES!"

The last 50 pages started to get good, with the final battle, but then Oscar got moody, killing people, then lecturing people not to kill, then pausing in the same conversation "wait a sec, I do have to kill this ONE

MORE guy, who happens to be helpless and tended to by his mom....Okay, he's dead, so, anyway, back to our plan?"

Just subpar in so many ways. Avoid.

Trish says

This book nearly killed me.

First things first: the content.

It's a world where magic suddenly appears (nobody knows why), giving people powers such as creating and controlling fire, wind, water etc. These magically enhanced people usually are not in control of their powers when they get them, are treated like the enemy by the government, and often even kill people (some do it on purpose even).

There is a special military unit responding to exactly that kind of threat and our protagonist serves in that unit as a helicopter pilot.

There are also people with a very rare gift such as healing or creating portals - the latter being a "forbidden" power (Anyone else smelling bullshit because forbidden means the government will have something to hide? Yeah.).

So far, so ordinary. And I mean REALLY ordinary.

Right at the beginning we get an incident with two mages in a high school. The author goes to great lengths in describing that most of the military personnel responding to that incident went to school there, therefore knowing the burning victims (yes, all people burn alive, pretty gruesome for a YA novel).

While the two teenagers (a fire mage and one with the forbidden power) rage through the school, those supposed professionals act like chicken whose heads have been chopped off recently.

Even I could have told them better tactics than what they applied (and this coming from a writer who was in the military).

There is - OF COURSE - one amongst them who is a mage himself because otherwise it would be too racist. *rolls eyes* And he is the one who wants those two raging kids to be history while our oh-so-heroic protagonist wants to save at least one of them. *cough - bullshit - cough*

After this glorious incident the scene switches to the hospital where one of the soldiers is being treated (the fire mage almost killed him) and *drumroll* our MC discovers a magic ability. And *louder drumroll* it's the forbidden one! Aw, our special little snowflake.

So he goes on the run, not wanting to end up dead because everyone turns against him (shocking turn of events, I know)! But of course he is captured and trained to be a killing machine (this time not like a soldier but like a soldier with magic abilities, because DIFFERENCE, people)!

And this is just the generic beginning (not even an hour into the 8,5 hours of this audiobook).

Naturally, our MC now discovers a whole new world (literally), the resistance forming against the government (Magneto would be proud - NOT), constantly debates in lengthy inner monologues what to do because our hero is a whiney ass. Oh, and a hypocrite. He also switches loyalties faster than you can keep

track. Not to mention the fact that (view spoiler)!

We also get a variety of magical creatures (goblins) that are of course all war-loving, animalistic beings of low intelligence as well as a government that prohibits certain magical abilities while being perfectly fine with others for no apparent reason (it is even hinted at that other nations have different evaluations/restrictions).

I need to get back to the whole race thing for a minute. It is clear from the start that the mages and (later) the goblins are supposed to represent Native Americans. The guy from the beginning who wants those amok-running teenagers dead? He's even called Apache for crying out loud! And this one trophy guy the Army has is drugged into oblivion to keep him under control because what else to do with a "savage", right?! For anyone not believing me about the Native American thing, the goblins even easily get "drunk" on sugar - which they only get if they do degrading tasks for the Army.

The rest is a blend of very flat characters. Like the flattest I've EVER seen (and I read the first 16 pages of 50 Shades of Garbage)! Total cardboard cut-outs.

Feast your eyes on the 3 female characters (yep, there are only 3 throughout the entire book):

#1 is a sociopath who believes that mages should rule the Earth

#2 is consistently portrayed like a child, incapable of making good decisions

#3 is the love interest

But it's not like the male characters were any better. Don't worry too much.

To make matters a little bit better, the author throws those cardboard characters into fight scenes. It's pretty obvious that that is the main selling point of this novel. I admit that some were not too bad, but it was always the same generic formula and I got tired soon.

Not to mention that this "graphic audio" version is really not my thing. The background noises (in case of the afore-mentioned battle scenes we're talking about various gun fire, explosions, screams, ...) are far too loud so you have trouble hearing the narrator or the dialogue from the characters. It honestly gave me a headache and made me stop the file often.

I can honestly say that this was one of THE worst books I've EVER read IN MY LIFE!

drops mic

And now

Felicia says

Hmm well, this book was enjoyable, the premise, that magic has appeared in modern-day and the military has to regulate it, was very intriguing to me. It was a fast read for me, it reminded me of a Vin Diesel movie (not a bad thing!) in that I pretty much knew what was gonna happen (shades of Avatar and other sc-fi movies everywhere) but that's fine, it was a good vacation read. I wasn't blown away by the characters, but I liked the magic system a LOT so I'll pick up the next book.

Robin Hobb says

Control Point is Myke Cole's military fantasy novel and an excellent entry into the field.

SF is often accused of being strong on plot but lacking characterization. This is certainly not the Case with Control Point. Oscar Britton is a fully realized character who faces real moral dilemmas as he serves his country in suppressing or controlling citizens who unexpectedly manifest powerful magic.

When Oscar himself begins to experience strange abilities that he can scarcely control, he knows the right choice is to report himself. If he can.

The deeper he is drawn into the government system for dealing with magic users, the more ethical dilemmas he will confront, as he himself becomes the Other.

This series just becomes more compelling with every book. Start here.

Recommended.

Peter says

I have been one of Myke Cole's alpha readers for many years, and think this is by far his best work. Control Point has an original premise: what if magic returned to the modern world and only one person in a million could access it? Answer: They'd be drafted.

This is a stellar book, combining all the military realism of Black Hawk Down with the social commentary and awesome spectacle of the X-Men. I highly recommend it and will write a more lengthy review closer to the pub date.

Jessica ☀️ ➡️ Silverbow ➡️ ☀️ Rabid Reads-no-more says

2/7/18 - ON SALE for \$2.99:

<http://amzn.to/2ygutUd>

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads

Congratulations, Myke Cole. You fried my brain.

I don't know if any of you have been to Oak Ridge during its Secret City Festival, but if you have, you know the rat-a-tat-tat in the background that sounds suspiciously like a machine gun . . . is a machine gun. And the beginning of CONTROL POINT by Myke Cole feels a lot like machine gun report---jarring and erratic.

You hit the ground running with an MC (Oscar Britton) first working for, then fleeing a government that seems to be both the Good Guy and the Bad Guy. It's so action-packed that everything else was overwhelmed by the constant additions to the equation.

And honestly . . . I didn't like Britton.

He's this military guy who bails the second he becomes the hunted instead of the hunter, causing the death of numerous others, and if he had his way, he'd've kept running as the bodies piled up behind him.

Did he *mean* to cause the deaths of those other men?

No. He didn't.

But that's the difference between murder and manslaughter, and guess what? Both land you in the slammer.

And then the nebulous dual nature of the government rears its ugly head: the government has a monopoly on magic, which I vehemently protest. BUT. Who else has the manpower to hunt down the assholes who rationalize their continued existence over the long lives and safety of others?

beats conundrum drum (with my head).

BUT.

It's not. That. Simple.

And when Britton stops running (18%), things calm to a manageable level.

In any other book, I'd hate, loathe, despise and abominate a character like Britton. He's selfish. He makes numerous BIG mistakes. He gives into his anger, lashing out at others instead of keeping a cool head.

But in CONTROL POINT, he's only one of a multitude of grey threads that contribute to the underlying principle that EVERYTHING is grey. There is no black and white. Right and wrong depend on context, not rules and regs. And when the good of ALL is dependent on the training of a single dangerous individual, are a few--or a LOT of--(questionably) innocent lives worth the tempering of one who could (maybe) change the world?

I just don't know.

But in this first installment of his SHADOW OPS series, Myke Cole makes a damn good case for withholding judgement.

I'm not going to lie, it was a frustrating journey. It was hard to not have a Good Guy to cheer for and a Bad Guy to hate. It was hard for the lines to blur back and forth, forth and back. But I really appreciate what Cole has done here (woke my foggy, trapped-in-the-status-quo brain the hell up), and I enthusiastically endorse it.

BUT.

You shouldn't pick it up when you want your standard UF fix. Oh, don't panic, it's a relatively quick and easy read, but if you revel in absolutes, this one will make your head want to explode. In a good way. Probably. If

you stick with it. Unless you're rigid and uncompromising, in which case I got nuthin' for you. Highly recommended.

Mike (the Paladin) says

This is an...interesting book. The best way to describe it (I think) is a sort of collusion involving Those Who Walk in Darkness, Avatar (the movie) and the X-Men with a touch of Full Metal Jacket. You'll see lots of familiar plot points and character types that you will most likely recognize. The book comes in for a 3 rating from me because there were times I thought surely it would be a 4 star read and other times when I thought it might barely be a 2.

We open up on a raid to "take down" a couple new magic users. For some reason magic has suddenly begun to manifest among the populations of the world. After a disaster we get a sort of thumbnail account of the government has clamped down on magic and no one is allowed to simply be a free adept. There are various schools of magic and the ones that are "allowed" must either join the army or be sent somewhere and live totally suppressed. If you are "gifted" in a forbidden school...well you're taken away and no one knows quite what happens. Rumors abound that these people are simply killed. If you run...that is when your magic manifests you don't call the authorities and turn yourself in, you're a felon and usually killed by a specialized military team that will show up to...take care of things, help with your problem, council you...take you down. You know, kill you.

Oscar Britton is a lieutenant in the army, a pilot and on one of these specialized teams. As the book opens he's just seen two teenagers killed...one apparently simply executed as she lays on a stretcher waiting for medical care. This somehow seems to Oscar as less than caring, not exactly cricket you know. It disappoints him with the operator who does it. He's not real happy.

He's even less happy a couple of hours later when he manifests...in a forbidden school. One of his best friends advises him to turn himself in, to the man he'd just seen execute the teenage girl. At first glance this seems to Oscar to be, well less than prudent.

He runs...and is now a felon. He can legally be killed on sight.

The first part of the novel is relatively fast moving as we get an introduction to the world and the people who are some of our main characters. I think it might have helped to give us a little more time to get to know Oscar before he manifests but then again a lot of what we need is at least laid out quickly in some background exposition as "things" happen.

Sadly there is then a period of sort of mental debate and world revelation that we go through. I found some of this interesting, some of it boring and some of it I almost lost interest in completely. For a great deal of the book Oscar swings sort of back and forth in his opinions and in his decisions. There is also a "problem" for him in deciding one way about how he will act and react to what he learns. The book does pick back up and begin to move again and tell its story. There are times when I'm sure (if you're anything like me) you'll beat your head on the nearest wall over something Oscar does (or doesn't do) that doesn't make sense. There are times Oscar seems to somehow lose a few dozen IQ points that he has demonstrated having not long before. But still those are not the dominate parts of the book and they didn't drive me off, though they may have

helped bring the book from 4 to 3.

I'd say there's enough good here that I can recommend that you at least try this one. The ending makes it quite clear more is planned for Oscar and the other people we meet here. Also be aware going in that the story telling is a bit heavy handed. Making a point about good and evil...right and wrong...and certain other things is not done with subtlety, it's done with a bludgeon. Still on the whole a good readable novel.

So how is this book "like" the examples I listed above? We'll put that under a spoiler tag as some might not want to know that much about the book before they read it... (view spoiler)

So, as I said I'll go three stars and say pretty good. I'd recommend you try it and see what you think.

seak says

Wow, what's with all the wind. I...can't...stand...up...straight. I mean I'm used to wind (I live in Wyoming, wind's nothing), but this is excessive.

Oh yeah, this book blew me away.

(Sorry for that, I know, that was really bad, but you're still reading right?)

As bad as my opening was, Shadow Ops: Control Point is one hell of a ride. Beware, if you pick it up, you may not be able to do anything until you finish. It's that good.

I'm going to attempt to explain this book in the next couple paragraphs, but bear with me, I just learned some military jargon by reading the book, I am in no way fluent. Plus there's military jargon specific to the book. See my problem?

The world has changed, and yet not. The Great Reawakening has come and a small percentage of the population has begun to manifest certain magical abilities. People can control fire, water, earth, air and health along with other prohibited types, but you'll find no Captain Planet here. As soon as you manifest, you enlist in the military otherwise risk being named a Selfer - a rogue magic-user who's all but dead in the eyes of the military.

Oscar Britton is a helicopter pilot for the Army, he flies Kiowas if you were wondering. As we jump into Shadow Ops, Britton's team along with a team from the SOC (Supernatural Operations Corps) is on their way to take down a couple Selfers at a local school. The problem is - these are just kids and Britton has a tough time going in to take them out, thus introducing some of the difficult problems with getting rid of due process for a minority group. They take out the kids, not without some clashing between Britton and the SOC team head, Harlequin (an Aeromancer - controls air).

Then, Britton wakes up the next morning manifesting in a prohibited school of magic, he's a probe and probes are dead on sight. What's there to do but run?

There's so much more to go into, but I really hate ruining anything, but lets just say that there are quite a few twists and turns, lots of fighting (both hand-to-hand and with magic), alien species, moral quandaries, and lots more.

As the author, Cole, has been heavily involved in the military and its interesting to see his take on the X-Men premise, when people start exhibiting magical powers. Cole's vision in this book has the government making it illegal and the military enforcing it - no ifs, ands, or buts. It's hard to say the government would just eliminate due process, but at the same time we *are* living in the time of the Patriot Act.

Oscar Britton is our primary focus throughout the story even though it's told from an omniscient perspective. While he's made the military his career, he still sees the flaws in a system that allows people to essentially become slaves of the system especially when they have no control over whether they inherit powers or not. But then again, that's the problem, people can't always control their powers.

Britton struggles throughout the book with whether he supports the military or not and the constant theme that training and preparation wins out over power is also prominent. He knows the military does good things, but is it worth the cost?

I've almost painted the picture that this is some moody, contemplative work, but that's not the case and I'm sorry to have lead you astray. These elements are more islands in the river of plot movement and action, which are never bogged down, only enhanced by such expositions.

Myke Cole is an author to watch and *Shadow Ops: Control Point* is possibly the best debut of the year. I know it's early yet, but I couldn't put this book down and that goes a long way for me.

4.5 out of 5 Stars
