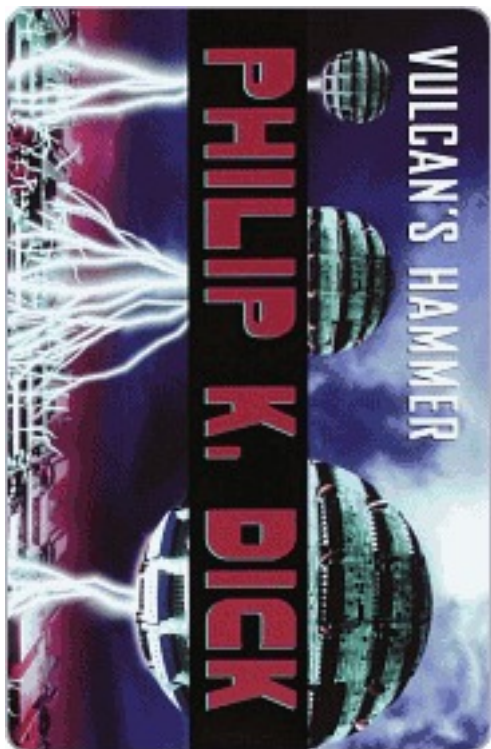

Philip K. Dick

Vulcan's Hammer



Title: Vulcan's Hammer

Author: Philip K. Dick

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Description

Objective, unbiased and hyperrational, the Vulcan 3 should have been the perfect ruler. The omnipotent computer dictates policy that is in the best interests of all citizens—or at least, that is the idea. But when the machine, whose rule evolved out of chaos and war, begins to lose control of the “Healer” movement of religious fanatics and the mysterious force behind their rebellion, all Hell breaks loose.

Written in 1960, Philip K. Dick’s paranoid novel imagines a totalitarian state in which hammer-headed robots terrorize citizens and freedom is an absurd joke. William Barrios, the morally conflicted hero, may be the only person who can prevent the battle for control from destroying the world—if, that is, he can decide which side he’s on.

Winner of both the Hugo and John W. Campbell awards for best novel, widely regarded as the premiere science fiction writer of his day, and the object of cult-like adoration from his legions of fans, Philip K. Dick has come to be seen in a literary light that defies classification in much the same way as Borges and Calvino. With breathtaking insight, he utilizes vividly unfamiliar worlds to evoke the hauntingly and hilariously familiar in our society and ourselves.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Insightful reviews

Scott Holstad: Philip K. Dick's *Vulcan's Hammer* was a good, quick, and entertaining book to read. Published in 1960, it envisions a world run by the Vulcan III, a Skynet-type computer that oversees all of the world, its governments, and citizens. (There were two previous iterations of Vulcan -- I and II.) Only the Unity Managing Director, Jason Dill, has access to this computer. Early in the book, a regional director named William Barris becomes suspicious of some things, particularly as there is a populist uprising amongst Luddites and social parasites instigated by self-named Healers. Why hasn't Vulcan III issued any proclamations on the Healers over the 15+ months they've been revolting against Unity? Is Dill withholding information from the computer for some obscure reason?

This is one of Dick's most straightforward and "sci fi" books he wrote. There are lasers and flying cars, super computers taking over the world, and little flying killing "hammer" robots. The plot is fast-paced, so character development takes a back seat in this novel, but that's okay -- it's an enjoyable book anyway. Dick's paranoia is ever present, although not drug-fueled (thank God!), and people who don't obey societal dictums are taken to the feared Atlanta, where they undergo forced psychotherapy. Egads! Heh.

Barris becomes suspicious of Dill and flies to Geneva to confront him, where his suspicions are confirmed -- Dill has been holding back from the Vulcan III. He's doing this because the Vulcan II, still in operation, has warned him that III has become a living entity and may become uncontrollable -- which is exactly what happens. Civil war occurs, the Healers try to take over, Vulcan III starts operating on its own, and everything becomes crazy. In this novel, there's war,

there are murders, there's sexual intrigue, there's technology, there's mystery -- shoot, there's a little bit for everyone. What isn't here is Dick's oft-used dealings with alternate realities, and I was a bit taken aback by that. Doesn't every Dick novel deal with alternate realities? Apparently not. This book actually reads like one of his excellent short stories and at 166 pages, is close to being one. Is this work Dick's finest? No. Are we satisfied with the ending? Perhaps. Is this still a bit of enjoyable escapism at work? Most definitely. Heartily recommended for Dick fans, sci fi fans, and people who appreciate reading speculative fiction.

Chloe: There are few things better for me during the gloomy overcast months of winter than a good genre fiction bender. On those days when the sky seems especially oppressive, there is nothing I like more than tucking into a bit of escapist reading and forgetting that the world at large even exists outside the page. As such, I've been on a rather satisfying science fiction binge lately, running the gamut from urban fantasy to a classic approach to that most-satisfying of dystopias, the War Against the Machines.

This has been a tried and true trope of sci-fi long before James Cameron brought the wrath of Arnold reigning down on Sarah Connor. No, even that great god of the Golden Age of science fiction, Asimov, was concerned with the coming conflict while crafting his three laws of robotics and between H.A.L. and his Rama robots Clarke made deft work of the AI question. Familiar ground though this may be, there are few authors able to evoke the sheer terror of confronting a coldly logical machine horde than the prince of paranoia, Philip K. Dick.

In Dick's budding dystopia, humans have outsourced all decision making to Vulcan, a supercomputer that is two parts SkyNet to one part Mycroft Holmes (the genial AI that assisted the miner's rebellion in Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*) that is fed endless streams of information in order to better facilitate its decision-making. By approaching all policy-making from a purely emotionless and logical position, Vulcan's reign is an era of unquestioning peace. Humans are endlessly fickle though and, while many happily line up to serve as Vulcan's agents at large, a faction comprised of mystics and luddites arises that seeks to destroy Vulcan and the new serfdom that it has inadvertently created. Inevitably, after realizing that it can never fully compensate for humanity's inherent madness, Vulcan realizes that humans are too irrational and prone to chaos to be left to their own devices and the subjugation must commence! The only thing standing in the way of its success is a bureaucrat who is starting to doubt the wisdom of not thinking for oneself.

This is classic Dick, before he went completely off the rails and began spouting off about meeting angels and spotting federal agents lurking in every shadow. No, here he keeps his paranoia in check, sprinkling in only enough so that the reader can realize not only the dread that Dick felt at the abdication of human free will to binary monsters but also the personal disgust that he held for any who would willingly serve such a machine. You could probably stretch the analogy to encapsulate Dick's distrust of large institutions in general and governments in particular, but that would just be forcing too much meaning into what is, at its core, an entertaining romp through a future that is both insufferably dull and existentially horrific. Aficionados of Dick's more psychedelic writings such as *Ubik* or *A Scanner Darkly* may be dissatisfied by this story's more traditional science fiction approach, but it is still an entertaining yarn that has withstood the passing of time without becoming too outdated in its descriptions.

Mike: An early Philip K. Dick's science fiction novel, written in 1953, but published in 1960. A not terribly original sci-fi concept for a book written in the 1950's: After a destructive nuclear war, the governments of the earth unit under a common government. All policy decisions are made by the supercomputer Vulcan 3, which operates solely on rational calculations, rather than irrational human emotion. I remember reading a series of short stories by Isaac Asimov from about the same time with a similar premise (Mastercom? Something like that). Anyway, it turns out humans get annoyed when a big box of wires bosses them around. The battle scenes near the end between the humans and Vulcan's robots reminded me a little bit of the Terminator movies, but robots battling humans was hardly an original idea, even in 1953. The stuff about the stifling, paranoid technocratic society was pretty good. The rest was forgettable.

Jurgen_i: This e-book was once released in 1960. The writer describes destiny global with a few remarkable and exceptional moments - examine them with reality. 1. through Dick: close to Geneva, underground, features Vulcan-3, a supercomputer that ideas the humanity - in reality: close to Geneva, underground, services huge Hadron Collider, one of many greatest and strongest fulfillment of human inspiration and technology. 2. by means of Dick: in 1993 have been followed The Lisbon Laws, which validated the rule of thumb of the supranational govt headed by way of Vulcan three - in reality: in 1992 was once signed and got here into strength Maastricht Treaty, constructing ecu Union, a supranational unit, in 2007 used to be signed and in 2009 entered in strength Lisbon Treaty, an contract that bolstered supranational point of eu Union. There is additionally one prophecy second in Dr. Futurity. OMG, who was once Philip K. Dick????!!! i do not believe in prophets, but additionally i don't think in coincidences... i don't be aware of what to think.

Charles Dee Mitchell: Even Lawrence Sutin, PKD's biographer, refers to this one as dreck. As in keeping with ordinary for Dick's novels of this period, there was a devastating warfare within the 1970's, and this time round humanity's undesirable inspiration for a way to deal with post-war society it to show every little thing over to computers. those machines' judgements could be dependent basically on logic, battle will come to an end, yet after all an difficult police process needs to be positioned into position to take care of this logical utopia. Underground hobbies are breaking out around the globe. The desktop has had 3 incarnations, Vulcan I, Vulcan II, and the present Vulcan III that just one guy can entry in its impregnable stronghold deep underground in Switzerland. the present director continues a keenness for dusty outdated Vulcan II. He enjoys making the punch playing cards that feed it info after which analyzing the printouts it releases, even though these messages now absorb to an afternoon or so that you can appear. there is something a bit creepy approximately Vulcan III with its electronic monitors and its suspicion that its people should not telling it the entire story. Of course, Vulcan III makes a decision to issues into its personal hands. Dick's novel has the whole lot in position yet then has nowhere to compliment them. the realization is as predictable because it is anti-climactic. Vulcan's Hammer used to be the "B side" of an Ace Double, so it has if not anything else the advantage of brevity.

Lyn: Vulcan's Hammer through Philip K. Dick was once released in 1960 and is one in every of his extra motion packed offerings. published by way of pulp generator Ace Books, i couldn't support wandering how a mobile dialog among Dick and his editor went "we may perhaps use extra action, laser beams and robots, the youngsters LOVE laser beams and robots". Well, accounts need to be paid and books have to be released to be read. now not one in all his best,

yet certainly now not undesirable either. There are a few concessions made to a much broader audience, however the constitution and tone are natural PKD. this can be a dystopian international following a nuclear war, and a paperwork runs the world, being aided through a brilliant computer, yet who's particularly working things? The interventions of a insurgent strength make issues extra interesting, and PKD throws in a few enjoyable twists. all of the same, this can be Dick writing and there's lots of time for a few introspective philosophy and social commentary. PKD topics money list: paranoia, autocracy, dehumanization, psychological illness, and rage opposed to the machine. 1960, quite early on, so now not a lot drug use or theological ravings, yet nonetheless a enjoyable journey with Phil.

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