



Fireworks

Katie Cotugno

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From Katie Cotugno, bestselling author of *99 Days*, comes *Fireworks*—about a girl who is competing with her best friend to become the new pop star of the moment—and all the drama and romance that comes with it—set in Orlando during the late-'90s boy-and-girl-band craze.

It was always meant to be Olivia. She was the talented one, the one who had been training to be a star her whole life. Her best friend, Dana, was the level-headed one, always on the sidelines, cheering her best friend along.

But everything changes when Dana tags along with Olivia to Orlando for the weekend, where superproducer Guy Monroe is holding auditions for a new singing group, and Dana is discovered too. Dana, who's never sung more than Olivia's backup. Dana, who wasn't even looking for fame. Next thing she knows, she and Olivia are training to be pop stars, and Dana is falling for Alex, the earnest, endlessly talented boy who's destined to be the next big thing.

It should be a dream come true, but as the days of grueling practice and constant competition take their toll, things between Olivia and Dana start to shift . . . and there's only room at the top for one girl. For Olivia, it's her chance at her dream. For Dana, it's a chance to escape a future that seems to be closing in on her. And for these lifelong best friends, it's the adventure of a lifetime—if they can make it through.

Set in evocative 1990s Orlando, New York Times bestselling author Katie Cotugno's *Fireworks* brings to life the complexity of friendship, the excitement of first love, and the feeling of being on the verge of greatness.

Fireworks Details

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Author : Katie Cotugno

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From Reader Review Fireworks for online ebook

Lola says

Olivia was meant to become the IT girl, not Dana.

She was supposed to get everything she ever wanted, but the day Dana accompanied her to an audition changed everything.

Dana was invited to become part of a girl band. She's a natural singer and dancer, apparently. Without any professional experience whatsoever. No classes, either. Ever.

Basically, she's been "discovered."

I thought this was a romantic and fairly revealing contemporary book that shows both the good and bad side of being in the show business industry, if that's what you wish to read about. Some clichés included.

Beware, however: this is not a realistic story. Sure, a couple of celebrities have been "discovered," but it's not true that what happens to Dana can just happen to anyone at any time. She hasn't even worked for the interview and, in life, you have to work to get where you want.

Katie Cotugno's writing is a pleasant one. She's good with words, making me feel as if a real eighteen-year-old was narrating this book, not a thirteen-year-old or thirty-year-old one.

It's too bad I found most characters forgettable. Dana has depth, and so does her love-interest, Alex, but I had trouble finding depth in the other characters.

Olivia is not devoid of it per se, but she's so... fake, sometimes. She deliberately changes her personality depending on who she speaks with. And while I admire all she has done to accomplish her dream of becoming a superstar, she seems to be after the fame alone.

Plus her starving herself didn't help change my mind about her at all.

It's a coming-of-age novel of a sort that shows fairly well how even if you do get something without having worked too much for it, you still have to do your best to keep that same thing. You know what they say, it's easy to join a group. Remaining in it, however, is another thing entirely.

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Dahlia says

This was exaaaactly what I wanted it to be. Loved it. And for anyone who approaches 90s-set books with apprehension, this did not give me *any* "author trying to relive her childhood" vibes; there's nothing that should be remotely difficult for a current teen to connect with here. Those of us who were kids in the 90s will recognize this as being O-Town/Eden's Crush-esque, but for kids who weren't, it'll just feel like being behind the scenes at a slightly tweaked *American Idol*.

Also, I ship it *hard*.

Jen Ryland says

Sososo excited about a story about boy bands and girl bands set in the 90s. Unfortunately, the part of the book I read did nothing for me. Dana is pretty but an average singer, yet still gets picked to be in a new girl band for her looks. She's a pretty unexciting narrator and a girl who doesn't even seem to care about the band, except that her (talented) best friend gets picked too and they can do this together - cue squealing. But ugh of course they both like the same boy. Who is in a boy band. Guys, I remember the 90s really well, and I wasn't feeling the 90s in this.

tl;dr: Hoped I'd love this, but for me the main character was seriously blah. I think N*SNYC said it best:
"I just want to tell you that I've had enough
It might sound crazy but it ain't no lie
Baby bye bye bye"

Andi (Andi's ABCs) says

This review was originally posted on Andi's ABCs

Sometimes you pick up a book and you just don't know how it is going to go for you. You've read books by the author and enjoyed one and was conflicted on the other. You like the premise but know it has the potential to go in a different direction than you expect. Because of these things you are almost scared to pick up the book. This was me with Fireworks. I was worried how I would feel about it. I was scared I wouldn't love it. I was scared I would be disappointed or conflicted. Instead I got one of my favorite books of the year. Simply put...it was freaking fantastic.

There was so much I loved about Fireworks. The setting, the characters, the romance, the friendship, the plot, the writing. I loved it all and I loved it all because it meshed flawlessly together. As soon as I started reading and realized these girls would technically be my age now, I was sucked in. Then I got the the 'boy band' part and I was transported to the 90s. Then I got to the romance and I swooned. And finally I got to the heartache of strained friendships and I bawled. The book was magical in its beautiful woven parts and made me a fan for life.

I really can't even find the words to tell you how genuinely in love I am with Fireworks. It was a book that just got me. I felt a connection to it and I just can't explain why. It wasn't what I expected yet it was what I wanted and more. Another must read in 2017.

Monica says

This book was cute, and I definitely plan to read more books by the author. I sort-of just felt like the romance in this book was kind-of unnecessary when the real star here should have been the friendship between the two girls.

Nadwa says

When I read Katie Cotugno's books, *How To Love* and *99 Days*, I instantly fell in love with her writing-style and the home-y and cozy worlds she built. I couldn't help but compare this book to her previous ones, and realize how different it was -and not exactly in a good way.

What I realized was how important Dana and Olivia's friendship was in the story. But here's the thing; what we got was a recap of a couple of memories showing how 'close' they were/are. I personally didn't see anything special in their friendship. You can't call a person your best friend just because you've known each other since forever -it doesn't really work like that. True friendship requires unconditional love and sacrifice.

It was hinted a couple of times that Olivia was anorexic. I understand that although Dana was worried about her, she didn't want to freak her out by pointing out how wrong the 'things' Olivia's doing to keep herself 'in shape' are. But ignoring the signs of her deterioration and just trying to convince herself that she was doing the right thing by giving her best friend privacy is not okay. How easy would it have been if she oh-so-delicately told Olivia's mom about her daughter's 'sickness', doesn't she deserve to know?

Alex. What I don't understand was how Dana convinced herself that she was actually in love with him. Sure, he motivated her and always had her back. But seriously, that was the most unrealistic relationship I've ever come across.

Overall, it was an 'okay' book. Definitely not what I expected from Katie Cotugno. I can't say that I didn't see the ending coming... I understand how significant Dana's character transformation was, but that doesn't make up for the defects in the book.

Tiff at Mostly YA Lit says

Review originally posted on Mostly YA Lit:

Fireworks by Katie Cotugno features Olivia and Dana, best friends who live in small town Georgia in the 90s. Dana is poor, with a mother who drinks too much, and no prospects after high school. Meanwhile, Olivia has been dreaming of being famous her whole life. **When the opportunity to audition for a new girl group by a famous producer comes up, Dana accompanies Olivia to Orlando** - and ends up being picked as part of Daisy Chain as well.

I'm a sucker for any kind of music story, especially ones where people have to train for success. I really liked how Katie Cotugno structured this book, though. **It's definitely NOT your typical training-montage-to-big-concert kind of book.** Instead, Cotugno focuses on themes of breaking out of a small-town existence, and being strong enough to understand, give, and receive love - platonic and non-platonic.

It's a unique way to approach a seemingly fun setting, but as you get into the book, you realize how perfect it is. **90s Orlando is glitzy with Disney and heat, but it's also a sleazy place where teens are seen as products**, and everything feels a little unreal.

[caption id="attachment_3799" align="aligncenter" width="575"] This is 90s Orlando to me: were you a Backstreet Boys girl or an 'NSYNC fan?[/caption]

It's also a place where teens can live relatively alone with little supervision. This leads to a lot of underage drinking and drug use going on, which felt realistic. **It's the perfect breeding ground for teen melodrama.** Not only is there a sheltered vs. worldly thing going on between the Daisy Chain members, but there's also a lot of jealousy, backstabbing, and frustration. And nowhere is that more obvious than when Dana ends up meeting and liking Alex, the lead in an up-and-coming boy band. Olivia has a crush on him, so there's a forbidden romance/love triangle going on.

I really appreciated that the love triangle was never, ever the focus of the book, though. Nor was the focus the 90s - or even the music. **While Fireworks does have moments of levity and 90s-ness, it's a bit deeper than I expected, exploring the realities of girl friendship.** Cotugno's writing is confident, and she has a real grasp of what she wants her themes to be. I loved how she used each facet of this one summer experience to show more of the friendship between Olivia and Dana - how they grow, change, move on and stand alone. Above all, **Fireworks is a book about learning your own strengths and what you really want** - outside of what people might want for you.

Book PLAYLIST:

I actually had to go and make a whole playlist for Fireworks while I was reading, because it made me super nostalgic for my teen years. I really couldn't decide on a specific song for this book, so just listen and enjoy - and feel free to hit shuffle!

The Final Word:

Fireworks is my first Katie Cotugno book, and I'm happy to say that it lived up to my expectations, with thoughtful, considerate writing, a strong and complex girl friendship, and a swoony boy. I went into this book expecting something fun and light, and came out with something more. While I personally would have liked a little more levity from it, I really enjoyed this classic summer contemporary. I whipped through it in a few days, and I'll definitely be reading more Katie Cotugno soon.

Heather says

This is a perfect summer read. Lighthearted, fun, revolving around becoming a girl band and set in the 90s! Overall I enjoyed this book, I didn't love it. If your looking for a quick, summer read I would recommend this!

Maria (Big City Bookworm) says

**Disclaimer: An ARC of Fireworks by Katie Cotugno was provided to me by Indigo Books & Music in exchange for an honest review. This does not effect my opinion in any way.*

Actual Rating: 2.5 Stars

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Initial post reading thoughts:

Yeah...I don't think this one was really for me. Things just moved too unrealistically fast and the insta-love was just a no for me. While it was fast paced and it kept me intrigued, I was never really full invested in this story and its characters. And that ending? Not a fan.

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What I Liked

The pacing. Unfortunately, the pacing was basically the only thing I enjoyed about this novel and probably the only reason I didn't DNF it. It was really quick and I was able to breeze through the audiobook, but this was maybe the only redeeming quality for me.

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What I Didn't Like

High school pettiness. I just can't with high school-esque drama anymore. I'm sorry...maybe my age is showing. I have no problem with novels that take place in a high school setting, but the drama that occurs for no reason or the drama that occurs because someone made a terrible life decision...yeah, I can't handle that anymore. I end up just rolling my eyes as I'm reading and that's never a good sign.

The characters. None of them were memorable or even remotely likeable. They all did things that angered me and made me think, could they really be this dumb? I didn't like our main character Dana, I didn't like her "best friend" Olivia & I did not like the love-interest Alex. There was just nothing to like about any of them really.

Insta-love. Alex could have been the best character in this novel...and then the insta-love happened which just tarnished him for me. I absolutely HATE insta-love in stories. I'm much more of a slow burn kind of reader. The relationship within Fireworks was just unrealistic.

Too easy. Speaking of unrealistic, the whole concept of this novel was too good to be true. Two girls go to an audition together, one just as support for her "best friend". while they're there, the one who's there just as support gets asked to audition out of the blue as the previous auditions were terrible. She sings Happy Birthday and a few weeks later she gets chosen as part of a 4 member girl group...out of thousands of auditions. Then magically she can sing and dance and what not. Everything just seemed to perfect and easy. I'm definitely not one to talk about the audition process, but this just seemed so farfetched.

The ending. Notice how I used quotation marks around the word best friend in the paragraphs above. Yeah. This ending was terrible.

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Overall, Fireworks by Katie Cotugno was just not the book for me. I've heard so many amazing things about this author though. I may still give her writing another chance, but it may take me a while to bring myself to pick up another novel by her unfortunately.

Olivia (The Candid Cover) says

Fireworks is the 90s stardom book I never knew I wanted. The hard work and intense training shown in the

story is exactly what I love to see, and the main character has a complex backstory and is so likeable. What I especially adored is the female friendship between the two main characters, since it is actually goals. Fans of Katie Cotugno's previous books will not be disappointed with her latest work!

As a sucker for any book related to the arts, I naturally loved this one. What I especially enjoyed is the fact that this book doesn't skip over the intense training of the band members and just mention the performances. The story is filled with voice lessons and intense dance practise, which I could never survive. However, there is also a cute boy band included, which I could definitely live with.

I loved Dana's character. She doesn't have an easy life and has a hard time fitting in with the other girls in the band. Dana is so considerate to her friends and just wants everyone to have a good time. I sympathized with her because she is such a nice person and has a hard time saying no to the other girls. Her character is also so complex and well-developed, which I always love to see.

One of my favourite things about Fireworks is the strong female friendship. Dana and Olivia have been best friends their entire lives and are basically sisters. Olivia even put an extra bed in her room for Dana to use during their frequent sleepovers. It really hurt to see the pressure of the music world start to come between them and watch them slowly start to drift apart. Even so, I think that the fact that Dana goes along with Olivia to live a dream that isn't really hers is absolute friendship goals.

Fireworks is a musical book filled with the behind-the-scenes aspects of a rising girl band. The main character is so complex and likeable, and the strong friendship is so adorable. I would definitely recommend this book, especially to fans of 90s music.

Jennifer says

Fireworks is a standalone Young Adult contemporary romance.

The narrator is Dana Cartwright. The book is told in 1st person POV.

The book starts off in 1997 in Jessell, Georgia. Dana and her best friend Olivia are 18 and have just graduated high school.

Dana lives with her mom and they are very poor. Her mom is a drunk who is never there for her. Olivia is in an opposite situation. She comes from a loving family and they don't struggle with money the same way Dana and her mom do.

Olivia has been performing her whole life. She brings Dana with her to Orlando to an audition. Everything changes after that audition.

The book was a cute YA story. I enjoyed it very much. The characters are 18 years old. There is some drinking and sex in the story. But it just read like YA to me. But it's probably not appropriate for anyone too young.

I liked Dana. I liked boy-bander Alex. There was a lot of stuff about pop stars in this story. And I really enjoyed that part of the book very much. It was fun to read about and I did not want to put the book down.

For the most part I enjoyed Dana and Olivia's friendship. It seemed genuine and I loved how close the author made these two girls. But there were definitely things that I didn't love, especially the ending. It really did

not work for me. There were a few things that were resolved. But there were other things that I wish had been addressed.

Also, the book blurb makes it very clear that the story takes place in the 1990s. But unfortunately I did not read the book blurb right before reading this book. There is only one mention in the book of it being the 1990s. I saw that but then it was never mentioned again. That really didn't work for me at all since I completely forgot about it. In retrospect there were obviously some current things like cell phones that were not in the story. But Dana was so poor that it didn't click for me. I wish that the time period had been mentioned a few times.

Overall, this was a cute YA story. And I did enjoy it for the most part. I just didn't love where the story went at the end and I needed more of a conclusion than I got.

Thanks to edelweiss and Balzer + Bray for allowing me to read this book.

Jennifer says

Thank you goodreads Giveaways and Harper for the opportunity to win an advance reader's edition of Fireworks.

Fireworks is a standalone, young-adult novel written by Katie Cotugno. The fictional plot line consists of two best friends who earn a spot in a major singing competition. Life lessons include the strain on friendship during competition, the shifting of group dynamics, sacrifices and boundaries, self-image and confidence issues when in the spotlight, and how to keep your head up when people disappoint you or when things don't go your way.

Although marketed to the YA audience, it should be noted that this story has language, underage drinking, oral sex, and sex. The descriptions during the sexual acts are minimal, but it is obvious what is happening.

As an adult, I did not enjoy reading this book. It took me a month to get through it. It is very YA for the exception of the content listed but the life lessons for the target population should not be ignored so I rated it as 3 stars. If you have an age-appropriate teen in your home who would enjoy this story of friendship and pop culture, then consider checking it out!

My favorite quote:

"Live your life forward."

3/30/17:

Status: I won! I am awaiting it via mail currently - will update accordingly.

Grace {Rebel Mommy Book Blog} says

I received this book for free from Publisher via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review. This review was originally posted on Rebel Mommy Book Blog

Sarah says

(I received an advance copy of this book for free. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“What are you going to do if you don’t do this?” she asked. “I mean it. I’m sincerely asking. Are you just gonna stay here forever?”

This was a YA contemporary story, about two girls auditioning to be pop-stars.

I liked Dana, but I felt like her relationship with Olivia was a bit one sided. Olivia seemed to always be the one deciding what they were doing and pushing Dana to do things that she maybe didn’t want to do, and I started to dislike Olivia a bit. I also found Olivia to be quite selfish.

The storyline in this was about Dana and Olivia both being invited to become part of a girl group called ‘Daisy Chain’, and what happened from there. We got a bit of fighting between the girls in the group, and we also got a bit of romance between Dana and Alex (a boy from a boy band). Olivia once again annoyed me though when the girls were made to compete against each other, as she totally turned her back on Dana when they had been best friends for all their lives.

The ending to this was okay, but I was kind-of shocked by what Olivia did to Dana, and I felt like things weren’t tied up very well because of it.

6.5 out of 10

Megha Patel says

3.5 out of 5

I really enjoyed this!

Going in I didn’t expect to enjoy it as much as I did. I was just expecting some crazy girl band drama but got much more than that. Yes, there was definitely drama but there was also friendship. Granted that the ending didn’t really sit well with me in terms of the friendship but it happened for a reason. Dana now will have lots of possibilities for her future.

Dana was a wonderful main character. She has seen a lot of struggle at an early age. Having to take care of her mom and providing to keep the family going. She really needed the chance to shine bright and she got it. She knew how much was at stake for her but still valued her friendship with Olivia more. And I loved her chemistry with Alex. He was so sweet and always believed in Dana. I loved their relationship.

And Olivia was just not good enough for Dana. I did not like her. It seemed like all Olivia cared about was for her career. It was so easy for her to forget her friends back at home and then isolating Dana as well. Nope, I didn’t like Olivia. Specially, with what she did in the end.

This was my first Katie Cotugno book and it's suffice to say it did not disappoint. I can tell I am going to enjoy her books quite a lot in future.
