



The End of All Songs

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For the hedonistic immortals who dwell at the End of Time, the return of Jherek Carnelian with Mrs. Amelia Underwood - a reluctant time-traveler from Victorian England - is cause for jubilant celebration. Led by Jherek's mother, the Iron Orchid, the immortals set off on a mad spree of spectacular festivities. And in no time at all, Amelia, with her radiant beauty and quaintly platonic way of looking at things (especially Jherek), becomes the toast of the End of Time.

But as the pandemonium progresses, some delicious and long-held mysteries are revealed and some distressing omens appear on the horizon. Due to circumstances beyond their control, immortality - at least as far as the immortals know it - will never be the same again.

The End of All Songs Details

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Mel says

The end of the trilogy and this book had some very glorious moments. I was a little disappointed there was not more time travel, but the end of the universe was pretty spectacular. I loved that in the last day Jherek was very happy. I enjoyed the development of Mrs. Underwood. I think the end of time lost some of its magic when it went from being doomed to an eternally secure heaven. I loved the decedance in the face of destruction more than decedance in the face of eternal boredom. Still this was a very satisfying end to the trilogy and the whole thing was lots of fun. I will definitely try and read some more Moorcock in 2011.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in February 2001.

The conclusion of The Dancers at the End of Time trilogy opens at almost the opposite point in the earth's history, with Jherek Carnelian and Amelia Underwood marooned in the distant past, in the Devonian period with a broken time machine. They are eventually rescued, and return to the end of time, depicted more sombrely than before, to witness the end of the universe that had been predicted by aliens, seeking to warn pleasure loving earth dwellers that their massive consumption would bring the end much sooner.

The way in which this points a finger at our society is if anything more obvious than it was a quarter of a century ago. The whole of the series is a commentary on the present, as much of science fiction is designed to be; this is a particularly successful example.

This third in the trilogy is much darker than the first two, and the description of the earth as the end approaches and things begin to fail is quite chilling. While pessimistic, the novel does have positive moments. All in all, it is a satisfying ending to one of the best trilogies in science fiction.

T.L. Barrett says

Didn't finish this one. I remember reading the first book about ten years ago. It was sweet. The second was a slog. The third, well... Moorcock is a very creative writer, just not always the best at keeping interest in plot and character.

Elric0791 says

The End of All Songs by Michael Moorcock is a story I have read many times. Moorcock excels himself with this amusing story of life at the end of time, and indeed many other times. The characters at the end of time are like Oscar Wilde on speed and equally as absorbing with their decadent and confronting behaviour, a real mirror on society and its norms. I love the way history is twisted by misinformation due to the tyranny of time and the way that all the beings are merely actors in life. Something to be preserved for ever.

Jim McDonnell says

My favourite 1970s science fiction book, bar none, and in many ways (IMHO), one of the best. Moorcock claims he wrote this as a riposte and critical response to the popularity of fantasy fiction like 'The Lord of the Rings', (which he called "epic Winnie-the-Pooh").

The trilogy is a joy from start to finish - a bit like Steampunk written by New Romantics, the Earth is populated at the end of time by carefree dandies with god-like powers. I'd certainly like to live there. Droll, funny, inventive, psychedelic, sardonic, a good plot with a satisfying ending (even though there are two more books ('Legends From the End of Time', and 'The Transformation of Miss Mavis Ming') that are considered part of the series). Moorcock's love of language is obvious - this is a trilogy that would be fantastic if narrated by Stephen Fry - and he seems to be having tremendous fun writing the fantastical events at the End of Time and elsewhere.

The only thing I can think of that even comes close to this in tone (though taking itself a lot more seriously) is 'The Diamond Age' by Neal Stephenson - apart from more Moorcock, that is.

Never gets old, never fails to delight. Highly recommended.

(Review applies to the 'Dancers at the End of Time' trilogy as a whole - 'An Alien Heat', 'The Hollow Lands', 'The End of All Songs')

Nathan says

The trilogy reaches its conclusion. What a strange, twisting tale it is. I love the universe of this series, but found the way it's used boring. I only vaguely remember how everything is wrapped up. There is peril, peril is averted, and life moves on.

Dan Schwent says

End of All Songs tied up the loose ends of the Dancers at the End of Time trilogy nicely. I liked it but it wasn't as funny as the first two.

William Cardini says

This is a review of the entire *Dancers at the End of Time* trilogy.

The setting is Earth at the end of time, and humanity has achieved immortality, seemingly inexhaustible energy sources, and highly advanced technology that you can use to create anything imaginable by manipulating power rings. But because the human race has been around for millions and millions of years, concepts that are so integral to our lives like work, religion, philosophy, art, and morality have lost all meaning. So instead of using their nearly unlimited power to create great monuments or explore the galaxy, our descendants throw elaborate parties where they try to one-up each other and have casual sex regardless of gender or familial relation.

It's never made clear exactly how humanity came to this point of ultimate decadence but it reminds me of the Stanislaw Lem short story "Altruizine," collected in his fantastic book *The Cyberiad*. In this story, the constructor Klaupacius travels to a planet with a civilization that has attained the Highest Possible Level of Development (H.P.L.D.). Instead of doing advanced scientific or altruistic works, the inhabitants of this planet (which is shaped like a cube) loaf about in hyper-intelligent sand and only pick their noses or scratch their butts. Eventually, after some coercion, an inhabitant of this planet explains that (view spoiler).

So, probably with a similar outlook, the inhabitants of the Earth at the end of time only party, trying out different styles, ideas, and experiences out of an unquenchable desire for novelty. Of course, if Moorcock's *The Dancers at the End of Time* was only this elaborate setting, the trilogy would quickly become boring. The conflict comes from time travelers that end up stranded in this idyll and find it disgusting debauchery but are unable to escape because of the nature of time travel in this cosmos. The protagonist, Jherek Carnelian, the last man born from a womb (rather than created as a fully-formed adult), and thus a darling of this future society, decides that his latest affectation is going to be falling in love with one of the time travelers, a woman named Mrs. Underwood from a 19th century suburb of London. The interplay and misunderstandings between Jherek and Mrs. Underwood form the comic core of these novels. Every interaction between a delight to read. And the plot is fast-paced. Moorcock throws up marvel after marvel, twist after twist. I highly recommend this trilogy, which ties in with Moorcock's multiverse, but is such a contrast to the grim seriousness of other Eternal Champions like Elric.

Shannon Appelcline says

A good conclusion to the initial Dancers series. It doesn't have quite the spark of the first book, but it's a nice return to the romance and characters of that initial story that does a good job of bringing things to an end.

However, my favorite element of the book is actually a pretty minor one: the Guild of Temporal Adventurers and their Time Centre. I've always been sad that Moorcock didn't write series about them!

Charles Dee Mitchell says

After the first two, knockabout volumes of this trilogy, Moorcock has to settle down and tie things together. It makes the book another hundred or so pages longer than the previous outings, and there is not the comedy or the slapstick. But he winds things up well. Secrets are revealed, relationships flourish, etc. Most importantly the true bleakness of this far distant future is exposed. Earth is a burnt-out wasteland sustained as a playground for its few inhabitants by the powers of ancient cities. The End of Time crowd are true aesthetes. They reminded me of art school students, constantly admiring or deriding one another's "work." In this case the fantastic environments they conjure up for parties, and given to casual sexual liaisons. They will survive the collapse of the universe by living out eternity in a weeklong loop in which they will still have the abilities that allow them to shape their environment anyway they wish. I am worried, however, that Jherek and Amelia are sent back to the Paleozoic age to jump start a new human race, The End of Timers don't seem to know much about gene pools and diversity.

Ben Jones says

i can't even believe i like these books so much- Moorcock is naturally a genius, but i really didn't have any

interest in reading this series but now i have it's undoubtedly one of my favourites! the best bit for me was Bastable and Una Perrson showing up near the beginning, and her asking if they were in Tanelorn- so exciting!

Robby says

This is a hard series to explain. It begins humorously enough, as a riff on the madness of a world without cause and effect. It continues along in its dark comedy through the three books, but the final novel hit home with me on a specifically terrifying level. The last half of the book seems to be a meditation on the nature of infinity, which is a concept I have wrestled with my entire life. For me, it was very difficult to read, late at night, wanting to shut down for the day. It forced me into a tangle of philosophical thought. What seems on the surface to be just a supremely absurd parody ends up being quite profound, IMHO. Very different from the Elric series (which makes it even more bizarre when he tries to combine the two).

Daniel Roy says

The third and last entry in the *Dancers at the End of Time* is a different beast from the first two books, *An Alien Heat* and *The Hollow Lands*. Gone is the lightness of the first two novels, for the most part; the End of Time, it seems, is growing up, insofar as there is a lot more darkness and torment on display here.

I understand what Mr. Moorcock was trying to accomplish, taking his lighthearted characters, especially Jherek himself, and trying to see them change and mature under the strain of events. I respect the decision to add depth to his emotions. But at the same time, I'm forced to admit that, in so doing, Moorcock has chased much of the joy and happiness that made the first two novels so much fun to read.

That's not to say the result is *bad*. Central to the conclusion of the trilogy is the growing relationship between Jherek Carnelian and his beloved Mrs. Amelia Underwood. It's a testament to Moorcock's greatness that he made Amelia into a full-fledged, complex, intelligent, tortured soul. Her struggle to adapt to the End of Time is poignant, fully realized, and harrowing at times. I'm grateful that she turned out much, much more than just a blank canvas that Jherek gets to project his love upon, which is often the case of heroines throughout fiction, especially in SF.

Another large part of *The End of All Songs* concerns itself with the fate of Time and the Multiverse. This large part of the story detracted from the characters' growth. This is made even worse by the fact that the first two novels "trained" their readers to not give much credence to doomsayers; we are shown that the denizens at the End of Time care very little about anything as boring as the End of the Universe, and so, when they turn around and start actually giving a damn, it's hard to do so as well.

Overall, the third volume of the series was worth it to see Amelia fully come into her own as a strong female character in her own right, and to see her relationship with Jherek grow, mature, and struggle to resolve itself. But by the time the novel ended, I felt I had overstayed my welcome a bit at the End of Time, and that it was time to put these beloved characters to rest.

Andrew Lasher says

Since this is the third review that I have written for this series (one for each book), you probably already have an idea how I feel about the series.

Basically it boils down to this. If you have read the first two books in this trilogy, I have no idea why you are reading this review. Get out there and finish the book! If you haven't read the previous novels, take a look there first. As I said in my review of an Alien Heat, if you like time travel and/or love stories, this is the book for you.

My only advice is that you read the books in order because they rely on each other heavily. Happy Reading!

Henry says

More Michael Moorcock absurd scifi/comedy of manners satire. This installment is perhaps the most ridiculous, but also had some of the best humor. The reaction of the various characters to the possibly imminent cataclysm is priceless. I thought the quality of this one was also the most consistent across the book.
