



# Orbit

*John J. Nance*

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## **Orbit** John J. Nance

In this "heart-pounding" ("Seattle Post-Intelligencer") aviation thriller, "New York Times" bestselling author John J. Nance ventures forward to 2009, taking readers on a riveting journey of life or death. His once-in-a-lifetime chance...

Disillusioned with his life, when Kip Dawson wins a passenger seat on one of American Space Adventure's commercial spaceflights, it's a dream come true. Although his acceptance of the prize strikes terror in his family, Kip sets off, ready for adventure. But a successful launch quickly morphs into chaos -- a micrometeor punches through the wall of the spacecraft, leaving the radios as dead as the pilot.

...becomes a global fight for survival.

With nothing to do but wait for death, Kip composes his epitaph on the ship's laptop computer. Little does he know an audience of millions would soon discover his cries -- sparking a massive rescue mission in his honor. With no idea the world can hear him, his heroism in the face of death may sabotage his best chance of survival.

## **Orbit Details**

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Author : John J. Nance

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## From Reader Review Orbit for online ebook

### Sdwolfpup says

This book was difficult for me. I found the basic idea fascinating, and the scenes with real action and tension all worked well for me. But the majority of the book I had real problems with. The use of present tense was fine for the previously mentioned action/tension scenes, but made the quiet and emotional scenes fall flat. I found Kip to be mostly obnoxious instead of as likable as the author clearly found him. All of the female characters in the book (all three of them) were one-dimensional and mostly shadows, except for the supposed 'love interest,' whose relationship with Kip I did not find believable at all. The set-up to get Kip into space was tortured, but, as I started with, the idea of him up alone in space and facing himself and his life is an interesting one. I just felt much of this book fumbled with that idea, though the inner workings of NASA felt like they were very realistic. I think the book would have been better off focusing more on that and less on the emotional subplots.

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### David says

Pandora's Clock by John J. Nance

My rating: 4 of 5 stars  
Nance does not disappoint.

Here's the background:

Kip Dawson wins a contest for a trip into outer space. It is supposed to be a "three hour tour" but after an accident leaves the pilot dead, Kip is stranded without a radio and no connection to earth. The head of NASA is giddy with delight that the private company running the space tour is in trouble. Kip is left incommunicado. However, he wants to leave a record and he finds a laptop inside the cabin. There he begins to record intimate and private thoughts. He lists his regrets, his loves, his passions, etc. Meanwhile, the words he is writing don't go unnoticed. He does not know that there is a link to an internet server and somehow these words are going out to inner net and after their discovery by a hacker-- they soon are going out to the whole world. It isn't long until pressure begins to build for a rescue operation that Kip doesn't know is coming. Kip's ordeal emotional moves almost everyone on the planet as they begin to read what he thought were private cogitations that might be read in thirty years.

Nance, as usual, does a great job with the tech and flight stuff. This time, however, he uses Kip's written permutations as a highway for his message about living life to the fullest. Along the way he damns some religious ideals and glorifies sexual desire while solidifying the ideal of family ties and other moral values.

I did not agree with the philosophy, but Kip turns out to be a hero more for his ability to put his feelings into words and Nance uses that to advance a life philosophy.

While Nance deals well with human emotion, I think he hits the human emotion nail a little more solidly on the head with "Turbulence."

Still, this books was really, really, good.. another page turner by an excellent author.

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### **Kevin says**

In short, a very very fascinating exploration of the idea of how emotional honesty and transparency (and an attendant voyeuristic-fascination by others) as such coincide in the life of one man chronicling his final 5 days of air aboard a low-altitude earth orbit space craft, and the life reflection such a situation brings about in him.

I recommend this book to every person, if only for the challenge to persons to be more emotionally honest, and intentional about vision casting for their own lives. It is a clean, albeit honest book.

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### **D. E. says**

An Aviation novel about the first passenger or rider other than the pilot and co'pilot. The launch is a success and the space draft is supposed to orbit Earth a set number of orbits before returning home. Halfway through the flight a meteorite hits the spacecraft, killing the pilot, and almost knocking the space crate out of orbit. The co-pilot is injured, but fortunately there is a space draft design engineer in board. This is an excellent read for the genre.....DEHS

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### **Jared Bird says**

"The Martian"-lite.

Honestly, just reread The Martian. This book does a handful of things well, like covering the effect it would have on a person where the whole world gets to read your most intimate thoughts. Honestly, this book is better when you realize that that is the plot of the book- what if the whole world got to read your diary? Everything else is superfluous fluff (And I mean fluff, like the backstory of Kip's wife, the corporate espionage, and worst of all, the supposed tension created when a military plane takes off without a full tank. I mean, a team of highly-trained professionals make a stupidly rookie mistake in a moment that matters? That's actually par-for-the-course for this book.)

You don't get much face time with Kip. That's fine, because he's basically Homer Simpson in space. In fact, I could see this book making for an excellent plot for a Simpsons episode. It would be hilarious, and even heartfelt. This book does have its moments, like I said. When the author shifts in tone from his awful present tense narrative into the musings of a man faced with death, it actually is meaningful, deep, and poetic. At the same time, there are mistakes like Kip saying he's not a poet and then five pages later revealing that he actually is one.

So there's a strong message at the end of the book about death and being with loved ones (it sounds hokey to write, but it actually works in the context of a condemned man sharing the message), but then there's the actual ending where we are expected to believe that a guy with mild aviation interests is able to pilot a sophisticated spacecraft through hazards and land it. These scenes represent a true misstep because we are not led to believe that Kip has any degree of competence, and then he becomes a genius. Plus, the author degenerates into using aeronautical terminology that would alienate the general audience. I tried following along, but it was too much for me.

Honestly, read The Martian or watch Gravity. You'll get the same emotional pull without the hokey story.

## Stewart says

I feel bad about disliking this book, since I met author John J. Nance at an ALA event a few years ago, and he autographed my copy. Still, even a signature and a platitude couldn't save this joyless, preachy, needlessly technical mess.

I'm glad I read *The Martian* before this one, since they are both ridiculous stories of men abandoned in space and can thus be reasonably compared to one another. While Andy Weir's book (my review here) was also overcomplicated at times, at least he had some fun with it with a hilariously vulgar and engagingly human protagonist whose journey culminates in a ludicrous, over-the-top, beyond-belief-yet-awesome climax that will surely translate poorly to the silver screen.

John Nance writes *Orbit* straight, and it's the poorer because of it. Kip Dawson's life and marriage is dull and joyless, and his son hates him, and he wins a free seat on a commercial orbiter for a few swings around the planet. Chaos eventually ensues and he's trapped alone onboard without communications, yet somehow a keylogger on the onboard laptop still works and is for some reason downlinking to the internet, and he happens to decide to author his life story after realizing he's likely to die in a few days from CO2 poisoning. Billions of people, including the president, are captivated by this shlub's life and tribulations as if somehow he's the only person willing to speak the truth about modern times. Because no one else on (or off) Earth knows they will be dying in the near-immediate future. So it's trying to be feel-good, but instead it's creepily preachy, like *Pay It Forward*. And it's boring. All of the remaining characters read like they're coming out of a Tom Clancy novel and are looking around in bewilderment at the story they're supposed to be executing. And the end? It went on for so long that I didn't care at all whether he lived or died.

My favorite part of the book is when the erstwhile love interest slash PR person for the commercial aerospace company, who happens to share a name with a legendary Motown singer for no reason other than for a few lame jokes at the beginning, Googles herself and only comes up with a few hundred hits. I almost hurt myself with the facepalm.

Not recommended.

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## Kathy says

In some ways this novel reminded me of the movie, *Gravity*. Individual trapped alone in space with little of no chance of survival.

What makes this one different is the fact that Kip Dawson, in *Orbit* is the winner of a passenger seat on a spaceflight, sponsored by a privately-owned spacecraft company. This makes the story (written in 2006) pretty timely with today's news. When tragedy strikes, Kip and the world believe he's doomed. He begins typing a "stream of consciousness" journal about his feelings, his past mistakes and successes, and his regrets. Through a quirk in the design of the spacecraft everything he types actually downloads to a server on Earth and, eventually, nearly everyone on the planet is following his writings in real time.

The impact all of this has on the world and Kip is more of the story than any of the science fiction aspects. But it is moving in many ways and worth the quick read.

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## Keith says

\*POSSIBLE SPOILERS WITHIN\*

It is not often that I am embarrassed for a New York Times bestselling author, but this is one of those cases. An average concept (space tourist all alone in orbit) was squandered by Mr. Nance. A thriller this was not. The premise used to get to the concept was thin, the implementation weak, the characters shallow and the main character's impact on the world overexaggerated to the point of farce. Raised eyebrows and skipped pages were the norm for this read. The longer the book lasted, this effect snowballed for me, and I should have just quit reading it.

A melancholy retrospective on a wasted life, perhaps this is. A chance for the author to indulge in a bit of autobiographical catharsis, perhaps this is also. A gripping science fiction novel this is not. On a personal note, if this book really is autobiographical, Mr. Nance, I feel sorry for you on another level.

The plot was so telegraphed, I kept checking the book's spine for the name "Western Union." The "space bureaucracy/espionage" part of the story was boring and hollow.

If you're looking for a cure for insomnia, this book is the trick. Nance put me to sleep no fewer than a dozen nights as I mindlessly skimmed pages and slogged my way to the book's inevitable, obvious, underwhelming conclusion. He almost took away my desire to read entirely.

I'm really not sure what anyone saw in this book, but I advise you to summarily dismiss it on all levels and never read it.

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## Chris says

I liked this book more than I thought I would based off of the other reviews of it. I didn't think it was that bad though and was a pretty easy read. I can definitely see something like this happening in the future with where everything is quickly headed.

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## Becky says

this was my first introduction to this aviator thriller author. it was a compelling read, like watching a virtual pseudo-death. it's the story of this guy who wins a space shuttle trip orbiting the earth, and during the first orbit, the spacecraft is hit by debris, killing the pilot and disabling the communication system with earth. so this poor guy is orbiting the earth, knowing he is certain to die when the air runs out, and he begins writing his thoughts on the computer, just rambling and putting things in order, and a 12 yo super hacker kid in australia discovers his feed and turns it in to the space facility, and from then on his every word is broadcast all over the world, unbeknownst to the guy. and people are reacting. a unique plot. well written and thrilling. felt like i was in orbit myself. and it reinforces the wisdom of living each day as if it were your last...

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## Maggie says

The premise and execution of this book were both exciting and engaging! Some of it was pretty technical, and some parts were needlessly preachy, especially about the differences between men and women, but overall, I enjoyed it. My favorite parts were when you could see the same event through different perspectives.

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### **Krystl Louwagie says**

Wow, I did not like this. I'm not even sure where to begin, to be honest. It felt so much like a wish fulfillment for an unimpressive, entitled, mis-guided, lazy, sexist, white middle class man. Not to mention that it felt very unbelievable-in plot as well as widespread love for this character. As a woman, I'd have NO interest in this man or his stories, or personality, or plight, etc. This man is supposed to play the role of an "everyman", one that everyone relates to-trust me when I say my boyfriend wouldn't and that's why I'm with him. Maybe the character is an average man. I'm not impressed.

Also, this man had 4 kids. But he literally only talks or focuses on one. We only get to see perspectives from that one. Nope, not OK. Oh, and of course, it's a son, not a peep about his daughters.

I feel a little like this was trying to latch on to a bit of what the Truman Show accomplished, except that does an awesome job of it, and this botches everything up.

Definitely just not my type of thing.

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### **Michel Sizaire says**

Different kind of novel.

Joe Average gets a free trip to orbit the planet 4 times. All hell brakes loose.

The roller coaster ride between his getting in orbit and the final out come, is well worth the read.

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### **Thom says**

Overall I enjoyed about as much as I didn't about this book.

First take the premise. Who wouldn't love to be alone in space? Highly introspective stuff here, and most astronauts express some of the same ideas. Next, the laptop link. This was kind of cheesy and not well explained, although necessary for the story. So, assume positive and move on. The politics of NASA and others? Very believable cast of characters there. The female characters? Only three or five with names, all mostly static. I read a few other reviews which cried foul on the landing. I disagree. The author gave the main character glider experience, and landing a glider is a lot of what you need to know about aviation. The main character knew to keep an eye on rate of descent, stall speed. When you sit the average Joe in front of a simulator and say "land that plane", rate of descent is more than half the reason for a crash. Back to the ramblings of a guy who has accepted he is going to die. Interesting to think of, to put yourself in those shoes. The whole world watching? Maybe. Certainly reality TV shows lead one to believe this could happen.

The conclusion? Rough writing in a few patches and wooden female characters made this a harder read than it should have been. The wonder of space and contemplation of the human condition made this a good thing. The fact that the book was the author's sounding board about the meaning of life was a little too clear behind

the veneer of the story. 3 stars.

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## **Donald says**

Well narrated and a great story for narration. The idea of winning a lottery for a chance to ride a private company shuttle into low Earth orbit is not that far fetched. But what if the other three seats had to back out for one reason or another and it would be just you and the pilot? Would you go?

What if something happened to the pilot while you were up there? Could you figure things out and bring the craft back? These are things that happen to the main character, Kip, who discovers a laptop computer and begins pouring his heart out in a word processor program. He figures it won't be read for another fifty years or so and keeps it honest. But with all other forms of communication severed, Kip doesn't know the laptop has a link to the internet that a kid in Australia hacked into. So as he types his life story, his fears, his regrets, and his do-over, everyone on Earth gets his story in real time. Kip becomes a cult favorite and a hero overnight.

It is a great story idea. If you listen to it and you don't at least choke up a little, then you weren't paying attention.

This one will have you thinking after the narration is complete. My favorite one-liner: "Guys give love to get sex and girls give sex to get love."

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