



The Steampunk User's Manual: An Illustrated Practical and Whimsical Guide to Creating Retro-futurist Dreams

Jeff VanderMeer , S.J. Chambers (Editor)

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Steampunk, the retro-futuristic cultural movement, has become a substantial and permanent genre in the worlds of fantasy and science fiction. A large part of its appeal is that, at its core, Steampunk is about doing it yourself: building on the past while also innovating and creating something original. VanderMeer's latest book offers practical and inspirational guidance for readers to find their individual path into this realm. Including sections on art, fashion, architecture, crafts, music, performance, and storytelling, The Steampunk User's Manual provides a conceptual how-to guide that motivates and awes both the armchair enthusiast and the committed creator. Examples range from the utterly doable to the completely over-the-top, encouraging participation and imagination at all levels.

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Xerxes Grant says

I thought this was a wonderful book but it was above my lexile so I only understood some of it. I love the topic of the book. It helped me understand the culture and what steampunk actually is. It mentions a lot of Steampunk artist and Authors in this book which is a good way to get more books to read. I also like how the book was set up. It was set up so if you wanted to only read about steampunk music or steampunk fashion you could do that.

The people who would enjoy this book the most would be people who already know a little about steampunk but not a lot. It isn't so much for people who know absolutely nothing about steampunk because it sort of jumps right into things. This book has wonderful pictures and art in it and the cover is very eye catching. So its a very beautiful book about steampunk.

Overall I really liked this book but there were some bumps in it where it was hard to read or it got boring. So thats why I gave this book "The Steampunk Users Manual" three stars.

Donna says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway which didn't influence my review.

The Steampunk User's Manual is a well made, high quality book that is beautiful to look at, from cover to cover, with plenty of glossy photographs in between, highlighting the various components of the steampunk culture. It is also very informative, taking the reader on a grand tour of the imaginative world from which it came.

Before reading this book, I only knew of steampunk as a sub genre within fantasy that inspired artwork in two and three dimensions. I knew nothing about steampunk as a mindset and a way of life for those immersed in it.

This book features all the basic areas in which a person can express an interest in this retro futuristic universe. The book is divided into sections showcasing art and architecture, music and performance, fashion, and storytelling. Leaders and innovators in these fields provide instruction and encouragement to the reader to pursue his dreams and create something original within steampunk, bypassing the cliches that come to mind from their overuse.

Whether the reader is an expert on steampunk or a novice, he can gain insights and inspiration from this book with the energy coming off all the creative people interviewed, encouraging others to join in.

I also liked the history lesson included in the book of steampunk's origins and the analysis of its appeal to so many people. I don't know if I'd be up for creating any of the projects featured in this book, but the excitement surrounding them was infectious, making me want to create something.

I recommend this book for creative people of all kinds who are interested in being original and stretching

their limits in whatever genre or whatever form that takes. A good companion to this book is The Steampunk Bible by Jeff VanderMeer.

Lisa Ahlstedt says

For anyone who is interested in the Steampunk movement, this is an invaluable book. The authors have interviewed many artists who are active in many different areas, including music, art, design, storytelling and the book includes many beautiful photos of their work. The book is also very useful and inspirational for people who want to create their own works, with such topics as coming up with ideas, incorporating Steampunk into your own area of interest, and developing your skills. There is no shortage of ideas and inspirations included in the book! The last part of the book asks for "big ideas" from various artists -- asking them to describe their dream if-money-were-no-object projects. As someone who is not at all creative, the ideas and photos in the book are really amazing. I received a copy of this book from Goodreads First Reads.

Jonathan says

Jeff VanderMeer, this time collaborating with Desirina Boskovich, presents another curious insight into the steampunk genre. Contributors new and old tell how the genre inspires them and their creative process. The book is divided into chapters covering different elements of steampunk, these cover art and making, design, writing and music. It's all as fascinating as the book's predecessor The Steampunk Bible. In fact this book is very much a fitting companion piece.

As an aspiring author I obviously found the writing section the most useful and inspiring. The advice from established writers is very useful, some of which are actually friends of mine, which added a more personal touch for me.

The Steampunk User's Manual feels almost like a college prospectus of steampunk as a whole and is very much designed to inspire readers to go and create their own steampunk ideas. There are a few projects for you to try; they are clearly described and easy enough to follow. However, I feel that it is a book much more committed to inspiration and advice than acting as an instruction manual.

Rosie Reast says

A truly inspiring book. I picked this book up because it had a section on writing Steampunk. While that section was good, the other sections on Steampunk art etc were wonderful. While reading this book I realized that I had more skills than I thought I did and should stop being scared and try making things.

I am now actively looking round for materials that can be used in creative projects. I have rediscovered a love of making things I'd buried long ago.

Nicki Markus says

The Steampunk User's Manual was an interesting read. It was not quite what I had imagined when I bought it (I think I need to check out VanderMeer's Steampunk Bible instead); however, I still found it enjoyable. This is a good overview of the different aspects of steampunk from clothing to writing to music. I found a few

writers and musicians I intend to check out. The projects included were interesting, though some were rather involved. If you are entirely new to steampunk, you probably want to check some other sources first, but if you are starting out and looking for further inspiration, this could be the book for you.

Matthew Kresal says

Like The Steampunk Bible before it, an interesting look for novices and fans alike into this fascinating genre. Whereas that volume offered an overview of the works of the genre, this volume focuses on the fans and DIY aspects. As a result, readers' mileage with the book will likely vary greatly depending on where their interest lies. For example, I found the storytelling (i.e. novel and short stories) section of the book to be the most interesting as that is my creative field but other sections covering artwork, fashion, and music all had something of interest. If you're a fan of the genre or have just been curious about it, this is well worth giving a read.

Kara says

An excellent overview not just of the Steampunk culture but, more importantly, the people of the community, and the incessant push to include EVERYONE of all genders, nationalities, ethnicities, etc., and not be dicks like some other communities we could mention.

These are all awesome people and I LOVE their imagination - both of a cool retro-future world - but, more importantly, imagining a world that includes all of us. :-)

Beth Cato says

I won this at the book's launch party at World Fantasy in Washington D.C.

As a steampunk author, I often have to explain what steampunk is to family or other folks. I wish this book was a bit more portable, because it would sure be nice to flip it open to any page and say, 'See this? Steampunk!' This is really a coffee table-sized volume, full color and packed with photographs and artwork. It's truly a feast for the eyes and the text is likewise illuminating.

The title might mislead some to think this is a DIY book for makers. It does include step-by-step instructions on several fascinating projects, but the subject matter is much more broad. It elaborates on steampunk as a phenomenon within literature, clothing, music, and stage, and where these artists find their inspirations. The pictures alone are great for a newcomer to steampunk, even though the overall content might overwhelm them. I really see this as being for someone who is familiar with steampunk and wants to know more and/or to have a downright gorgeous book to keep on display.

Didem says

I always had a thing for slightly dark, neo-Victorian things, whimsical machines, retro-futurism, post-gothic

art, black lace, and corsets. Turns out this is an artistic movement called steampunk, as I recently learned. Apparently, a lot of the stories I relished belong in the steampunk genre.

With this realization, I wanted to learn more about steampunk and read this book.

It was mainly about DIY steampunk art and design and I have absolutely no interest in creating similar things, but I still read it with interest. The book also had a chapter about steampunk novels and storytelling, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The book opened me a new different world that I didn't know had a name and I learned a lot about it.

A.J. Bauers says

This book provided a nice generalized overview on the way Steampunk is currently impacting our current society. Some of the interesting things this book introduced me to was the fake machines created by Jake von Slatt that were powered by the Aether and crystals. This prompted further research into these concepts and how they historically relate into the Steampunk concept. It also taught me there are certain overdone cliches in the Steampunk genre, including googles, gears and clockwork insects. This doesn't necessarily mean that I as an author should avoid them, it just means their placement should be intentional and make sense in the scope of my story.

While these points were interesting, I found the book a bit too focused on the modern placement of Steampunk with crafts, music, and whatnot. Still, it was an good read.

Sarah Capps says

Beautiful artwork and illustrations are found in this book. The Steampunk User's Manual offers a sound overview of many of the different disciplines within steampunk, and is great for those new to the genre as well as the old hand. I thoroughly enjoyed paging through this, reading the hints and tips, and contemplating whether or not I could pull off the featured DIYs.

I received this book as part of a Goodreads First Reads Giveaway.

Karen says

I was intrigued by the thesis in an early essay in the book that Steampunk is a reaction to the increasing sleekness of industrial design; gears and ornamentation to counteract the smooth plastic and glass devices we never have far from our reach in the modern world. I liked some of the descriptions of artistic process. I stopped reading, though, because I wasn't interested in the projects and don't really connect with the aesthetic.

Abigail says

Pretty pictures.

Nancy says

This was a really interesting book to flip through, but again, I picked it up in the hopes that I would see something creative and simple that would inspire a teen program. It was a great book all about Steampunk and the history, how it is expressed in art, design, costume, architecture, etc. Plenty of great color pictures of professionally created pieces, but not a whole lot of actual DIY directions for the average Joe, like me. Hence, the 2 stars.

Some of the projects that I thought were awesome was a steam powered orrery, because of course most people have the tools to laser out the various gears from a plank of pressed board. But it did look quite impressive. I really liked the collaged steampunk stand up greeting card which is eerily similar to an adult program I am already planning this summer. It consists of cutting out Victorian-like images and creating a 3 dimensional collage (like a photo of a woman, then gluing buttons and tulle to her to make a skirt, etc). But the one I really liked and was also a bit terrified of, was the giant bean bag seating made to look like 20 foot long squid tentacles. I'm charmed, but also frightened... But that's exactly the combination of emotions bean bag seating should arouse, right?
