



The Rock Rats

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Visionary Dan Randolph is dead, but his protégé, pilot Pancho Barnes, sits on the board of his conglomerate. Randolph's rival Martin Humphries wants to control Astro and drive independent asteroid miners like Lars Fuchs out of business. Humphries wants revenge against Pancho, and flame Amanda, now wife to Lars. Many will die. Many will thrive.

The Rock Rats Details

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From Reader Review The Rock Rats for online ebook

Newton says

It's been several years since Dan Randolph died on the first voyage to the Asteroid belt in the first fusion powered spaceship. And it's up to the rest of his crew to carry on his vision. Pancho Lane, pilot and astronaut, now sits on Astro Corp's board as Randolph's heir, leading the charge to build a station around Jupiter. Lars and Amanda Fuchs have their own small business, selling equipment to the Rock Rats, those who mine the asteroids, and helping them build a government. But all isn't well as Martin Humphries makes his move to control the belt.

To that end, he sends war criminal now mercenary Dorik Harbin to start killing independent prospectors. Meanwhile, Humphries sets his sights on the Fuchs as a way to get at Astro, bringing the war to Selene's (formerly Moonbase) doorstep. It's all Doug Stavenger, the eternally young hero of the Moonwar, can do to prevent Selene from being dragged in. But his attempts at peace fail when Fuchs, having lost everything at the hands of Humphries, gathers a crew and starts a wave of piracy to fight back.

This was....not a good book. Bova clearly set up Pancho Lane in the Precipice as the next main protagonist, which is why it's really confusing to see Lars Fuchs as the main character. He wasn't particularly well developed (which was fine since he was a tertiary character in the previous novel). But for him to be the protagonist? In addition, this book had no direction. A space pirate vs a mercenary isn't a "War" and now we're done with two books of the Asteroid Wars WITH NO WAR. I really don't know what Bova was going for here. He had a good set up but he just couldn't deliver.

Andy says

Follow up to The Precipice, this one picks up after Dan Randolph's death as many are racing to the asteroid belt to claim the riches that it entails. Many familiar characters from the previous novel return as Martin Humphries continues his evil ways to prevent anyone but him from gathering the resources everyone so covets. It is debatable what Humphries wants more, the money or the woman he clearly cannot have, Amanda, who happens to be married to one of the ones Humphries is trying to knock off. Bova manages once again to mix politics, science fiction, and human emotion in ways that he is so well known for. Of note also is Bova's treatment of Pancho, who was tapped to succeed Randolph after his untimely death. Pancho pretty much inserts herself into the line of fire as the leader of those who oppose Humphries, much to her peril. Bova has another winner here.

Nancy Shaffer says

Would someone put Humphries out of my misery and out of Amanda's misery, too? But don't let her get back together with Lars. She does better without a guy. I swear, whenever one of her husbands leaves the room to scamper off on one of their business trips or adventures, her personality 180's from lobotomized, morally clueless damsel in distress to interesting, independent woman so fast I get tennis spectator neck strain.

I think BB just forgot everything he wrote about the Precipice characters and started from scratch in this book, because everyone's unrecognizable. Except Humphries, but excrement is boring, nauseating, and homogeneous.

Devon says

Good Stuff: It's near-future SF. I'm a sucker for near-future SF. The conflict between characters takes center stage, personal motives are clear. The asteroid belt is an enormous wealth of resources, but this setting doesn't get enough attention in space SF. Good on Bova for that. The last quarter of the book is much better than the rest, enough to bring it up to a 2-star performance overall. Barely.

Bad Stuff: For the first three quarters of the story, the main characters are shallow, stupid and predictable, with lots of melodrama. The writer's craft is mediocre. Character viewpoint is sloppy, some scenes just leave you wondering why they are part of the story, and Bova is a case-study for why you should "show" rather than "tell" in writing. Too many times there are severe logical problems. For example, hero's spaceship is answering a distress call to rescue his buddy whose ship was crippled by a pirate. During the two days journey he doesn't bother to ask what happened. Then when he rescues buddy, they realize the pirate is probably still lurking nearby and they'd better alert authorities...but hey, let's have lunch first! With dessert! And nice hot showers! Oh no, we wasted too much time and now the pirate blasted our antennas off!

There are also some very basic logical problems with the premise, such as why Earth would be importing materials from the Belt rather than from near-Earth asteroids. This storyline would make sense in a more developed interplanetary society with a large space-manufacturing industry. There are problems with internal consistency, such as why they were building spaceships with nanobots in book #1 but apparently forgot how to use nanobots by book #2.

Charlotte says

Wish I had known it was part of a serial. Didn't miss not knowing earlier books, but now stuck in following furter books in series.

Story by itself stands alone with an openend downer ending - which is typical of a series -- but I confess to almost giving up on the story when I saw where it was heading toward a crappy ending, but came back to it after I cooled down and the writing was good throughout. I read this book on recommendation, but I should have been informed it was part of series, as I like to start on book 1 of any series - as the story and interest starts to wain as the series dissolves into further books with new characters and killing off or dropping old characters - reminds me of my experience with the TV series LOST.

Michelle Stone says

I love Ben Bova's books. This was no exception. The rock rats mine the asteroid belt for valuable metals to quench humanity's never ending hunger for the stuff. Politics and some attention to real science made the

story very interesting to me. Bova's politics seemed slightly petty at times, or so I thought when I originally read the series. I couldn't say that now. I think he was prophetic in that regard.

I've always wanted to travel to space. This book took me as close as I'll ever get.

Whizilliam says

Great space opera, really epic.

AndrewP says

The second book in the Asteroid Wars subset continues the story of the human race moving out to exploit the resources of the asteroid belt. The two main corporations, Astro and Humphreys are still fighting for control with the prospectors and miners (the rock rats) caught in the middle. Things eventually escalate to violence and destruction.

most of this book as about corporate scheming and plotting, with a bit of action thrown in. The main villain is a never ending source of subterfuge and dirty tricks so I hope he meets a miserable fate at the end of this four book series.

Looking forward to the next book 'The Silent war'.

Ned Leffingwell says

Ben Bova writes enjoyable, character driven hard sci-fi. This is the grimmest of his books that I have read so far. Most of his other stories have focused on exploration. This one focused on the lengths that people will go to get what they want. I think that this book has one of the best examples of how space combat might actually work. I did read the book "Venus" before reading this one. It has the same characters but takes place at a later time so there were some things in the story that were spoiled for me.

Weez says

Prospectors, espionage, pirates, space battles...oh, and Amanda. This would have gotten a higher rating from me except for one single character. She is described as both beautiful and intelligent but she certainly doesn't behave like an intelligent woman. The character of Amanda is a goop. She marries a guy she isn't that crazy about just to avoid another man's affections. She desperately wants to return home but she lives in shabby conditions on Ceres for years to please her husband. When he eventually abandons her she uses it as an opportunity to marry a man she detests. Half long-suffering martyr and half talking Malibu Stacey doll, Amanda seems determined to be miserable. She is a spineless tea-towel and a weepy doormat. Why? Don't ask her, she's just a girl...

Abbey says

The Asteroid Wars in a series by Ben Bova, one of the four sci fi writers I read most often: Bova, Bear, Benford, and Banks. I think Bova indulges in too much melodrama, but he's also very good at providing plausible (sometimes barely plausible) explanations on how humanity overcomes the distances of space, creates artificial gravity, alleviates loneliness, lives in a dreary tin can without going mad, sends communications across light-years of distance, dispenses justice in a vacuum of law and atmosphere, and generally disperses itself across the sky.

Emanuel Landeholm says

This is not a solid scifi-work. Just look at the cast. All the relevant women are Venuses and the men are ruggedly handsome. The Venuses and the ruggedly handomes have fantastic sex. Venuses ask "but why?", and ruggedly handomes tell us what we already figured out. That is Bova's entire repertoire right there.

Well, I did finish the book. There's actually more to the book than Venuses and ruggedly handomes, you just have to keep on reading... A bit of interesting politics / space opera in there if you look closely enough. Still not solid scifi, but I love the theme and the setting of the series.

Dark-Draco says

Lars and Amanda Fuchs are barely surviving as prospecters in the Asteroid belt, but they want a better life for themselves and their fellow Rock Rats. They begin to build a habitat and open a supply depot, and they are a moderate success. But Humphries doesn't like this as it drastically interferes with his plans to rule the belt himself. He hires assassins to prey on the independant contractors and soon piracy is a common occurance. When Lars gets no help from the authorities, he takes matters in his own hands and decides to fight back. If all out war isn't going to break out, a lot of people will have to compromise - when all they want is to prove themselves in the right.

I quite enjoyed this. It isn't a complex story, like a lot of the SF I usually read, but it is a good adventure/thriller. I don't really 'get' why Amanda agrees to what she does in the end, although I guess it's to set it up for the last two novels in the series, but it does seem slightly odd. Still, I suppose I'll have to read those to find out if Humphries finally gets his comeuppance.

Sedagive says

Competent space opera, continued next week.

Andreas says

Part two of the Asteroid Wars. I used to keep coming back to Bova and his Grand Tour of the Solar System. Maybe I'm just a sucker for near future tales of men and women trying to tame the solar system. This book made me stop. It is just plain boring. Amanda may be beautiful but she and the other characters feel about as emotional as puppets. Furthermore, I simply don't buy the story. After slogging through about half the book, I gave up.

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