



Lord of the Isles

David Drake

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Into this world, as the wellsprings of magical power rise to a millennial height, a sorceress from a thousand years past is cast upon the shore of a small island. She has survived the cataclysm that destroyed the powerful empire of the Isles in her time. She finds herself in a small town far from the new centers of power, but among a small group who, all unknowing, will become the focus of a new struggle for dominance and magical power that will shake this world, and others. For The Hooded One, the most powerful sorcerer of all time, has also survived the ancient catastrophe he created. The peace of the small village is destroyed in an instant, and the young principles must set out on a quest to meet their destiny.

Lord of the Isles Details

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Author : David Drake

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From Reader Review Lord of the Isles for online ebook

Jim Pike says

While it started out very slow, and I found myself almost ready to quit reading, I pushed on. I'm glad I did. The pace picked up, the plot thickened, and the characters became more interesting. A good book is when you find yourself rooting for certain characters. I found myself rooting, and worrying for them. Some events made me gasp, while others shocked me. Many times, I found myself thinking "Well, I didn't see that coming." Very good read, and looking forward to the next book.

Jake says

Character Driven story with an excellent pace that catches you in the first pages and drags you along with it.

C says

I'm tempted to put a new category for my bookshelves: Didn't have anything better to read. But I guess I wouldn't have many books to put there, since I am usually able to put a book down if it's this bad. However, being that I was traveling (and partially that I'm just a bit compulsive about finishing books) I read it all the way through. It's not so easy (or cheap) to get books when traveling in Thailand, especially far from Bangkok. And as I have so many books already, I thought I'd just stick with the ones I've already purchased. But it may have been worth it to buy one.

That said...I'm appalled that the book got any kind of positive reviews. It's a deus ex machina all the way. Everything that happens in it is so orchestrated, it's just awful. Something happens and someone arrives in a small hamlet...and then other people arrive at nearly the same time, for no apparent reason, just because. Then shortly after, more people arrive. There's no real reason for all these things happening at the same time, they just do. The characters are flat. FLAT. The "hermit" Nonnus is the best character in the book, and he, of course, dies, because he's a supporting character. But Garric, Cashel, Ilna, and Sharina have next to no personality. They are country people, but educated, or if not educated, then gifted with extraordinarily keen insight into how things work, why people from other places behave a certain way, etc. I got sick to death of reading how tough someone was because they were from a small, country hamlet. I got the feeling that if Drake had chosen city rat kids for his heroes, we'd be reading about how tough city kids are.

It's truly a pity that fantasy writers pay so little attention to characters, strangling them with some self-important sense of omniscience.

This book was only good enough to fill time I didn't have anything better to do with. And only just barely.

rivka says

Took me a year to get through this; partly because I read ebooks slowly (except when traveling; then I read

them in great gulps), but largely because it never really grabbed me. Interesting world, some pretty good characters, but too much going on for me to keep straight . . . and in the end, I don't really care all that much about **any** of it.

Won't be continuing with this series.

Jay Daze says

At one point in **Lord of the Isles** a character thinks how when weaving you need to have the pattern in mind before you start or else you'll be a poor craftsman. This seems to be a nod to the reader that Drake has carefully planned out his story, has got the pattern straight before he has begun. And indeed the broad outline of this first book in a nine book series is a familiar pattern of characters raised in humble circumstances rising to heroic nobility. The problem with the book is not the familiar archetypical patterns, it is how David Drake improvises within them.

Drake does action really well. He knows the mechanics, the feel and the energy, and makes them sing. It's not surprising he's known for his military fiction if the action in *LotI* is any indication. I actually grew to like his 'good' characters (this is traditional fantasy with a heavy demarcation between good and evil. At first I only could really distinguish Nonce, the hermit, and Iternia, the old wizard woman, but eventually the four younger characters emerged, mirroring inexperienced youths slowly accumulating knowledge and experience. It was a slow emerging though, and probably listening to the story rather than reading it helped me get through the rather blank character spots at the beginning.

So Drake does good good, but unfortunately his treatment of evil undermines his goodness. To put it bluntly: Drake's forces of evil are all unremitting arses. If you are evil in this book you are an asshole, not only are you an asshole, which I could accept with an evil dude, you're also a complete idiot. In any type of fiction, good characters get to shine when they have a worthy villain to go against, in this book the evil dudes seem to be continually offing themselves leaving the hero standing around and the reader wondering why the hell we needed to read the story.

This leads to the problem of how Drake uses magic in the book. Except for Tecnotris, who is the goodie, nobody seems to know how to use magic. The evil guys use magic all over the place, indiscriminately, and they're always getting blow up cause they don't use it wisely. I mean, why are there any evil wizards in this world? They should have killed themselves in the first five minutes. While in a book like **The Wizard of Earthsea** the young hero is taught the rules, it feels like the characters in this world are playing with the nets down. It is no fun, frustrating and makes for an anti-climactic ending. Drake would do much better if he followed the example of someone like George R.R. Martin, who's said that magic should be used very lightly, like a strong spice, not as the main ingredient.

Jacob Aitken says

Drake says he's using Sumerian mythology to build his story. Smart move on his part. There are very few Sumerian-oriented fantasy novels, so Drake is guaranteed to produce something original from this angle. More on that below.

Granted, Drake's thesis is rather cliche: farm boy with a mysterious past goes on a journey and finds out he is secretly the king. Meanwhile, the world is about to suffer cataclysm or some evil wizard, etc. I suppose that's inevitable. One simply can't get around that.

While I don't know much about science and physics, I know a lot about philosophy and the philosophy of science (e.g., interpreting scientific trends from an a priori base). And I do have a passing interest in physics. At times in the book the characters, be they sprites or wizards, mention about living on "another plane" (earlier in the prologue we see--yeah, this is a spoiler but it is only 10 pages into the book, so you can deal with it--one character bend space and time and send another character into the future, but not exactly). Well, given the Philadelphia Bell experiment, along with the idea of aether theories and tortion physics, this is not exactly far-fetched.

I understand the talk of "other planes" can bother some Christians. Fair enough. It does sound a bit like New Age nonsense, and in Drake's case it may very well be just that. However, Christians do believe in other dimensions (not just "heaven"). The Nicene Creed, while putting a lid on much neo-Platonic speculation, does say that God is the creator of all things visible and invisible. Early Christians--well, even well into the late Middle Ages--did not simply believe that God exists and other beings don't. It was not uncommon--if not at times entirely Orthodox from a confessional standpoint--do believe in other beings--call them spirits, angels, whatever--living in other dimensions. Or to see different folds within dimensions (the Calvinist scholar Herman Dooyeweerd actually has some interesting thoughts on this. He calls it "enkapsis").

Melissa says

Totally awesome fantasy series.

Jess Mahler says

Good read, original world, well developed characters. Tenoctris may be one of my favorite wizards in all of fantasy.

Similar to The Wheel of Time, the story quickly splits the main characters and follows them separately through their various adventures. Unlike the Wheel of Time, Drake keeps it relatively easy to keep track of who is doing what and weaves the various subplots back together at the end of the book for an impressive conclusion.

Kristen says

The setting of the book is varied and interesting and just enough different from your usual fare to hit the pro list. It's a mix of medieval and renaissance-like cultures and societies which is par for the course for the genre. He liberally grabs into the goodie bag for other planes, demons, demon dogs, sprites, nymphs, undead, Bug-people, reptilian people and much more. So much more. It's a crazy mix but it works. And interestingly the religion is based of Sumerian religion which also twists the setting off the well-trodden course of celtic/norse et cetera's and therefore also a plus. I wrote a whole lot more on this on the blog so you'll have to swing by for the full (spoilerfree) chuckle:

Todd R says

Made it half-way through this...I give books at least that much until I decide to keep reading or stop. This one is pretty good, had me interested most of the way moreso because of the writing than anything else. The story is the usual - Boy (girl) has an extraordinary heritage or destiny they are unaware of, plug in the heroes that aid them or the villains that use or want to destroy them. The characters, the main ones at least, were bland and boring....moving on.

Derek says

I was a bit disappointed. I came to Drake via his military SF, beginning with Redliners, and have read pretty much everything he's written in the genre, as well as the writings of his frequent collaborators David Weber and Eric Flint - the holy trinity of military SF. This book was an enjoyable read, and an original concept, but ultimately not, in my opinion, up to the standards of his SF.

Still, I'll read the next book in the series!

Colleen says

This was a nice little throwback to some great 90s fantasy. That may sounds snarky, but I was in high school then, and I have a great fondness for that period of SFF. This reminds me of Kate Elliott's Crown of Stars series, Steven Erikson or perhaps early Robert Jordan or late Terry Brooks. In any case, if you were reading and loving epic fantasy in the 90s, you probably read and loved this.

The plot spools along at a good clip, with interesting characters and locations. Drake puts his characters through absolute hell, and you can't help but ache for them. The plot "twists" weren't particularly twisty, though I can't speak to how they were received on publication. But really, you're not here for the plot twists. You're here for a great ensemble epic fantasy of the 90s. And Lord of the Isles perfectly delivers.

I'd like to say I'm going to continue with the series, and I may. Drake brings this first episode to such a satisfying conclusion, though, that I'm not immediately pulled into the next (good for my TBR, probably not best for Drake).

Lucinda says

An exciting modern fantasy that is highly original and filled with such spectacular characters.

I was so excited when I discovered magnificent writer David Drake, who appeared within the fantasy genre with a refreshingly new fantasy epic as to rival many top writers. Similarly to stand-out authors like Robert Jordan, who is a master of heroic fantasy, or Terry Goodkind whose phenomenal imagination and power is

simply mind-blowing Drake stands equally alongside them. This inspired work of creativity and individuality is breathtaking and which is certainly one of the finest epic fantasies of the decade ~ to date. I was utterly enchanted by the extensive world-building, the engrossing saga and magnitude of this creation which I envisage as a very detailed, lengthy story.

Unlike most modern fantasy, David Drake's Lord of the Isles contains such thrilling action and exquisite multi-layered texture it is truly wonderful. If you are looking for something with memorable, well-rounded characters that propel the story forwards and who are likeable then look no further ~ Lord of the Isles has it all! From treacherous Queens to faithful and faithless courtiers, peasants and shepherds who are more than they seem, wizardry and magic alongside your heroes and heroines. This powerfully evocative tale beautifully blends vivid characterization with spectacular imagery and intensely gripping action, as to have you glued to the pages entranced...

The epic adventure begins in book one, which is filled with magic and passion set within an extraordinarily rich world where the elemental forces begin to stir. Survivors of such an event include Tenoctris; a sorceress swept out of the past as her civilization sank beneath the sea, and the ghost of a great ruler King Carus of the Isles, together with a magician (the hooded one) who was the sole reason for this catastrophe.

Reminiscent of Kate Elliot's Crown of Stars series, this is a mighty tale in which heroes are created and evil is fought against. Drake's take on magic is wonderfully complex in this ambitious work, and his settings and magical creatures provide such drama and surprise to make it quite colorful. This substantial fantasy, in which moral and physical threats are serious and wherein actions have consequences, will appeal to those who delight in mythological works. (i.e JRR Tolkien or Arthur for example).

Lindsay Stares says

The world-building seems decent at first glance, but it didn't feel like there was enough to it. You have your generic euro-fantasy peasants and traders and politicians, and a handful of "foreign" cultures. The most inventive part was the various jellyfish-looking monsters, shaped like giant alligators or made out of dead people. I felt that I was supposed to think there was some greater history behind what was shown, but that it was just a facade. The various human cultures didn't quite feel real, and I wasn't sure whether I was supposed to see an Earth parallel or not.

It bothered me that as I learned more about each character, it began to seem that theirs had been a whole village of secret changelings with special powers. It ended up a little silly, and I couldn't bring myself to care about them as much. After each revelation, I was a little more frustrated that most of the characters were only able to survive or accomplish their goals because of the specialness (seee-cret specialness!) of their parents. With few exceptions, Drake never convinced me that their success was due to anything in themselves.

See entire review at [The Blue Fairy's Bookshelf](#).

Scott Marlowe says

Rating

Review

*** This review originally appeared on Out of this World Reviews. ***

There were two problems I had with *Lord of the Isles*: (1) the characters didn't reach out and grab me and (2) the author didn't allow for any time for the characters to reach out and grab me before the story swept them away. Unlike a Robin Hobb novel, for example, where the reader is introduced to the characters with a steady, depthful narration while the story moves along in like fashion, Drake dumps both characters and story on us with such brusqueness it was difficult to enjoy either.

The prologue details magic gone awry as a sorcerer successfully repels an attack by invaders but sinks his own city in the process. A trireme is thrown off-course from the resulting choppy seas and comes upon a small, out-of-the-way town where they discover the missing daughter of an important count and countess who were slain years before. Next thing we know this young woman is aboard the trireme and being whisked away to claim her birthright. Meanwhile, her brother, who we now know is not really her brother, looks to also be leaving the town via a visiting merchant. I stopped at that point, so I can't say what happened next.

While Drake is an accomplished writer of military fiction, he fired a blank on this one. *Lord of the Isles*, unfortunately, isn't worth your time.
