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Book Review: The City of Brass

Roxanne Roessner

July 20, 2020

Growing up, most children are read stories before bed of far off lands and the creatures that inhabit them. For Nahri, a con woman who lives in Cario in the 18th century, these fairytale stories become frighteningly true.

While Nahri uses her quick wits and uncanny abilities to survive, she also dips into her abilities to sense illnesses, understand languages and heal those around her.

Everything is going as well as it can in Nahri's life until she uses these same abilities and accidentally summons a djinn that is equally, or more so, cunning as her. For Nahri to continue to understand her own self, she must travel to Daevabad, the land of her origin, to not only understand her own past, but to make the future and her people one that she is proud of.

The plot

In this new world, Nahri must learn that politics reach not only our mortal realm, but also the mythical. When she learns that she is the long-lost heir to an ancient line of healers, Nahri tries her best to balance her mortal morals along with her newfound immortal ones.

The djinn that she summons, Darrio, has a dark past that he and Nahri have to come face to face with. The love hate relationship between Darrio and Nahri brings the reader on a literary ride to reach the end that they want.

However, this end is never quite what the reader is looking for. With every twist and turn of this novel, which is book one of three in the Daevabad Trilogy Series, the reader is thrown into the political and emotional turmoil that will not be satisfied until hopefully the third book of the trilogy.

History

The City of Brass was published in November of 2017 and the last book of the trilogy, The Empire of Gold, was published in June 2020.

The mythology of the Middle East is vast and ready to be consumed by the young adult literature audience as Nahri and those around her begin to understand that not everything is as it seems and that we all are warranted to change the world for the better.

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By staying true to oneself and the morals that they believe in, people can, and will, completely turn their own worlds upside down in order to do what is right.

Join Nahri and her cast of misfits as they change their world for, hopefully, the better and learn about the vast vault of Middle Eastern Mythology in a way that has never been seen before.

“The City of Brass” by S.A. Chakraborty and its counterparts are available everywhere books are sold. They are also available at various libraries.

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Retro Rewind: “Back in Black” by AC/DC

Maxwell Patton

July 21, 2020

The year was 1980. Australian rock band AC/DC had begun to reach through to the masses with their sixth album “Highway to Hell,” and planned on recording a follow-up album soon after its release.

However, tragedy struck the group that year. Bon Scott, their lead singer, died on Feb. 19 of that year due to alcohol poisoning. AC/DC considered breaking up due to Scott’s death, but they persevered and hired British singer Brian Johnson as Scott’s replacement. Five months later, one of the group’s finest albums made its debut: “Back in Black.”

Released on July 25, 1980, “Back in Black” contains four singles that are considered some of the band’s biggest hits: “You Shook Me All Night Long,” “Hells Bells,” the titular “Back in Black” and “Rock and Roll Ain’t Noise Pollution.”

The album has sold approximately 50 million copies worldwide and was certified 25x Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America in December 2019. “Back in Black” has been cited by critics as a classic album in the hard rock and metal genres, with the Guardian’s Tim Jonze describing it as a “high watermark” of heavy metal.

The band

Founded in 1973 by brothers Angus and Malcolm Young, AC/DC is one of the top selling artists of all time with sales of over 200 million albums across the globe. At the time of recording sessions for “Back in Black,” the band was fronted by Brian Johnson (formerly a member of Geordie).

Angus and Malcolm Young played lead and rhythm guitar, respectively, with bassist Cliff Williams and drummer Phil Rudd rounding out the group’s lineup. Currently, AC/DC is fronted by Axl Rose of Guns N’ Roses.

Malcolm Young passed away due to complications from dementia in November 2017, and his nephew Stevie Young took over as rhythm guitarist.

The group has so far recorded a total of 16 studio albums together between 1975 and 2014. VH1 ranked AC/DC at number four on their list of the best artists in the hard rock genre, and

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music producer Rick Rubin has referred to them as “the greatest rock and roll band of all time.” They were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003.

The tracklist

Opening “Back in Black” is the steady toll of a 2000-pound bronze bell as the song begins to descend into a heavy guitar riff. “Shoot to Thrill” follows, the inspiration for which, according to Johnson, was an article regarding narcotics sold to British housewives.

Angus Young has mentioned that the song’s breakdown, which occurs after the principal guitar solo, was inspired by the climax of “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.” Next up on the tracklist is “What Do You Do for Money Honey,” where Johnson taunts a woman who hooks up with wealthy men in order to elude her job.

“Given the Dog a Bone” features Johnson describing a sexual encounter with a woman using a variety of double-entendres. These sexual themes continue on the song “Let Me Put My Love Into You.”

The second side of the album opens with “Back in Black” and its iconic opening guitar riff. Cited as one of the greatest metal songs ever written, the tune was a tribute to Bon Scott. After this track is “You Shook Me All Night Long,” another sexually-charged tune fueled by Rudd’s drum beat which is a staple of AC/DC’s live performances.

“Have a Drink on Me” was another way for AC/DC to honor their fallen comrade, as they share a drink in his memory. “Shake a Leg” sees a troubled juvenile turn to rock and roll to escape his disastrous path, while the album’s closer, “Rock and Roll Ain’t Noise Pollution” served as an ode to their genre of expertise.

The song was rooted in tidbits heard in the news. According to Malcolm Young, “we were in London at the time and there were all those problems with the old Marquee Club because it was in a built-up area and there was this whole thing about noise pollution in the news, the environmental health thing that you couldn’t have your stereo up loud after 11 at night, it all came from that.”

The production

AC/DC originally scheduled three weeks of rehearsals for “Back in Black” at E-Zee Hire Studios in London, however, they received the opportunity to record at Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas. These recording sessions occurred between mid-April and May of 1980, and tropical storms began to hurt the studio’s electrical supply during this interval.

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The notably-horrendous weather conditions were referenced in the lyrics to “Hells Bells” (“I’m rolling thunder, pourin’ rain. I’m comin’ on like a hurricane. My lightning’s flashing across the sky. You’re only young but you’re gonna die.”)

The group completed their recording process with producer Robert “Mutt” Lange, who was a perfectionist when it came to recording Johnson’s vocals. Angus Young’s guitar achieved its tone on the album by utilizing a Schaffer-Vega diversity system, a wireless guitar implement.

Meanwhile, the distinctive bell that opens the album was recorded with a mobile studio owned by Ronnie Lane and slowed to half speed to create its ominous tone. Once the recording process was complete, the band headed to New York City to mix their album at Electric Lady Studios.

The record’s cover, which is entirely black except for the outlined AC/DC logo, served as a “sign of mourning” for Bon Scott, with the grey outline being a compromise with the group’s label, Atlantic Records.

What critics thought of “Back in Black”

Reviews at its time of release were mixed for “Back in Black.” Rolling Stone’s David Fricke called it “not only the best of AC/DC’s six American albums” but also “the apex of heavy-metal art: the first LP since ‘Led Zeppelin II’ that captures all the blood, sweat and arrogance of the genre.”

However, Red Starr for the music magazine Smash Hits saw the album as “yet another triumph for lowest common denominator headbanging—the new thoroughly predictable, thoroughly dreadful AC/DC album.”

Newer reviews have been more positive. Christian Hoard explained in his review for Rolling Stone that it was “the leanest and meanest record of all time—balls-out arena rock that punks could love.” Robert Christgau was less amused, finding AC/DC “primitive” and “unimaginative” in their songwriting.

Kitty Empire from The Observer mentioned that “Back in Black” was “a preposterous, drongoid record ... built on casual sexism, eye-rolling double entendres, a highly questionable attitude to sexual consent, a penchant for firearms, and a crass celebration of the unthinking macho hedonism that killed the band’s original singer.”

Still, it took its place as her favorite album of all time. According to Empire, it was “the obsessive soundtrack of my adolescence, the racy middle-brow thriller that spoke to me both as a tomboy

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who wanted to be one of the guys, and the increasingly female ingenue who needed to work out the world of men. Plus, teenagers love death.”

Rolling Stone ranked “Back in Black” at number 26 on its list of the best albums released during the 1980s, and later placed it at number 77 in a list of the 500 greatest albums of all time. Time magazine picked it in 2006 as one of the 100 best albums, and it was also included in the book “1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die.”

What I think of the album

AC/DC is a band that I’ve always enjoyed, and I am pleased with how the album turned out after the tragedy that was Bon Scott’s unfortunate passing. A few of the songs do sound a tad repetitive, but the instrumentals are still fabulously painted over a savage lyrical landscape filled to the brim with sex, drugs, and hard rock.

Many of the innuendos included over the album’s ten tracks are rather unsubtle, but it doesn’t take away from the power that courses through “Back in Black”’s backbone.

Mutt Lange’s production shines as each track slides into the next, precisely defining how a metal or hard rock record should sound to the listener’s ear. It’s a rousing tribute to a dear friend and the ideal way for AC/DC, as well as the listener, to celebrate his memory while headbanging to an iconic rock release.

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Huge Expectations for WSU Golf

William Baptist

July 23, 2020

The Wright State University (WSU) golf team is expecting to have an outstanding season and trying to carry their momentum from last spring into the upcoming season.

The WSU golf team finished first and second in five out of the eight tournaments last season, before the season was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. They are returning all starters from the previous season, and are hoping to reach new heights with the talent on this team.

“We definitely have the pieces in place to be one of the greatest teams in WSU history,” according to Brian Arlinghaus, the WSU golf coach.

In addition to returning all the starters from last year, they added grad transfer from Wittenberg, Cameron Willis. Willis is a second Team All-American, who was also part of the 2017 NCAA Division III National Championship team.

“Everyone is returning from last year, so we should be really good, we’re all trending in the right direction,” said Austin Schoonmaker, senior on the WSU golf team.

Dealing with last season being canceled

Every team across the country was dealing with tough circumstances due to coronavirus. The WSU golf team attempted to overlook what they couldn’t control.

“We were coming out in the spring really hot, and playing great. Coach emphasized to look for the silver lining in all of this and to stay positive,” said Schoonmaker.

There was so much uncertainty at the time and it was a challenge for the team to stay optimistic.

“It was an interesting couple of months. We went from the highest of highs, to coming home from the tournament in Orlando and finding out our next tournament was canceled. Then the following Friday, we found out the rest of the season was canceled,” said Arlinghaus.

The players seem to be more focused than ever, and will take nothing for granted going forward.

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“If coronavirus did anything for me, it showed me that something you love can be taken from you with no notice. So now I try to cherish every swing I take,” said Bryce Haney, junior on the WSU golf team.

How the team has prepared for this season

The coach isn’t allowed to organize any practices currently, due to NCAA restrictions. The players however, have been competing throughout the summer in tournaments to prepare for the season.

“I have been playing really good golf this summer, and trying to stay competitive and play tournaments throughout the summer,” said Haney.

Arlinghaus has confidence in his players to remain focused and continue to improve, even though he isn’t allowed to practice with them.

“I’m not allowed to organize practices yet, but these guys are work horses. They love to practice and they’re having an outstanding summer,” said Arlinghaus.

The players seem to be approaching the upcoming season as they would any other season.

“I haven’t changed my approach to this season really at all. If anything, online classes have allowed us to get out there and play even more golf,” said Schoonmaker.

There is still an enormous amount of uncertainty surrounding the season. The WSU golf team will be in a great position to be extremely competitive if the season can actually begin.

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Library Works to Ensure Safety for all Attendees

Kyle Jackson

July 24, 2020

The Library staff have worked hard to ensure that they create a safe and clean environment for all, by providing many services online and planning new arrangements in the library.

Distancing and procedures

The library has evaluated plans for the spacing of desks and study tables to ensure that they are properly distanced and have a maximum of two chairs per table.

“Staff will work with facilities to physically distance the tables according to CDC recommendations,” said Sue Polanka, university librarian.

Many of the desks and tables in the library were already properly distanced.

“When we renovated last year, we placed most of our third and fourth floor study tables 6 – 10 feet apart with only two chairs, so we are in pretty good shape with the location of study tables on those floors,” said Polanka. “We will remove chairs from most tables to encourage individual study rather than group study.”

The library will also be requiring face masks as well as introducing other common procedures to limit the spread of the virus.

“We will have much more signage about distancing, plexiglass shields will be installed at our service points to keep our staff and patrons safe, and tables will have fewer chairs,” said Polanka.

Patrons should expect to see a decrease in hours to allow more time for cleaning.

Students will be urged to bring their own computers to ensure a safer environment.

“We will have limited public computer workstations available and are working on plans to sanitize these,” said Polanka.

Another step that the library has had to take to ensure the safety of all patrons is closing both the individual and group study rooms.

Safe ways to get books

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The library will continue to offer safe ways for students to obtain the books and resources that they need.

“We will continue offering curbside pick-up of books for those who do not wish to enter the building,” said Polanka. “This service allows users to request books in the catalog and our staff pull the materials, check them out to the patron, and notify them.”

There will be two different days for pick-up.

“Right now we have established pick-up times (Tuesdays and Fridays), once we reopen, patrons can call us upon arrival and we will bring the book outside for them,” said Polanka.

After evaluating some research, the library staff have decided that they will be quarantining returned books for three days to ensure the safety of faculty, staff and students.

Virtual services

The library has decided to temporarily close the information desk and encourage students to get the help they need remotely.

“Students may still get assistance through the Ask a Librarian service – phone, email, online chat, online appointments,” said Polanka.

Remote services are nothing new to Wright State’s library. The “Ask a Librarian” service is over 20 years old.

The library is prepared to help anyone complete their research this fall through their online services, “Ask a Librarian” and “Ask an Archivist” as well as many online instruction material.

Students thoughts

Many Wright State students still plan to use the library this fall.

Jeffrey Shehee, vice president of black student union, normally uses the library once or twice a week.

“I will still plan on using the library a lot more this semester just to focus on myself, my classes and the work I need to get done,” said Shehee. “It will help me stay more disciplined and productive!”

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Shehee will not be impacted directly by the decrease in table seating.

“I usually am by myself when I go to the library, so I’m not really phased about more than one chair being at the table or not,” said Shehee. “But I think less interaction may help and hurt some students at the library.”

Samantha Ervin, WWSU 106.9 FM president, normally uses the library everyday to get Starbucks and to study.

“If the library is open I would like to continue using it for study purposes,” said Ervin. “Especially for my classes which typically require resources provided from the library.”

Jeremiah Penick, residential community association (RCA) President, normally uses the library about four or five times a week and sometimes with a group.

“Having a place to go outside of the dorms is hugely important to me as it provides a quiet place to study for classes,” said Penick. “I do plan on using the library these upcoming semesters but depending on regulations set forth by the university I may not be able to study at full capacity.”

The library has and will continue to be a place where students can study safely and take advantage of many provided resources.