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MetaGame

By Sam Landstrom

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Speculative science fiction at its finest, *MetaGame* by Sam Landstrom is a ‘future gamers’ field guide and a philosophical cyberpunk adventure. In this original and disturbingly irreverent prospective world, gaming is more than a diversion—and gamers are, literally, in it for life. The OverSoul, an enigmatic, unifying force, offers winners points that add up to currency. Reigning champs are given the gift of immortality—while losers are condemned to aging and death. D_Light is one of the best players in his Family and will do anything to win, even if it means committing murder. When he’s invited to a MetaGame—an exclusive, high-stakes competition—he jumps at the chance. But after the first quest, D_Light’s overly ambitious ways brand him a renegade. With a warped sense of freewill that is needed to prevail, D_Light must either kill someone he’s grown to love—or lose everything.

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MetaGame By Sam Landstrom Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: A Q&A with Sam Landstrom

Question: *MetaGame* takes place in a futuristic world where biotech, nanotech, gaming, and "religion" merge to blur the lines between fantasy and reality. How did you dream up the story line?



Sam Landstrom: Funny you should say "dream," because that's literally how it started. One night I had a vivid dream in which I was a devil in a ghetto apartment complex and was being hunted by the police. The whole idea took off from there. Gradually, I built a world around that single scene. For months, I fleshed out the world in a private blog with over 60 posts with titles like "Fashion," "Economics," "Religion," "Lingo," "Work," etc. I continually worked to hook these together logically, keeping in mind that one aspect of this futuristic society would influence the others. Once I felt I had a reasonable world, I hung a plot outline on it (including my dream scene). As I wrote the book, the world continued to evolve; in fact, the present book has only a slight resemblance to those early blog posts I created two years ago.

Question: You've previously worked in a lab programming robots to help sequence the human genome. Did this experience and background knowledge play a role in the story?

Sam Landstrom: At a high level, yes. Back in the lab, before I got interested in software, I wanted to be a genetic engineer. I felt then, as I do now, that biotechnology will eventually become ubiquitous in our lives and so I wanted to help design that future. At the same time, I wondered what exactly that future would look like. To me, being able to engineer the living is an incredibly powerful technology that can do wonderful things for humanity, but, at the same time, elicits in me a primal dread... just the sort of stew I like for fiction! Obviously, I'm not the only one with such an outlook, since biotech is a sci-fi staple.

I don't include lab techniques or techs from that job because they would be far obsolete in the future. Heck, they're completely obsolete now, and it's only been 10 years! Given this, the technology I wrote about is a wild extrapolation, an entertaining guess, really. About all I tried to convey in the book from my time at the lab, in a literal sense, was the genuine passion and intelligence I observed in those who work in this field.

Question: What research did you do while writing *MetaGame*?

Sam Landstrom: Most of the research I did was related to confirming that the future technologies presented in the book are even theoretically possible and how they might be implemented. For example, how can a machine read and write to a person's mind? With difficulty, as it turns out! Luckily for my readers, I only used this research to color my descriptions and confine the scope of these future technologies, not to provide in-depth specifications. Thanks to this balance, I think *MetaGame* gets to stay in the hard sci-fi category while remaining, first and foremost, an entertaining book.

Question: What authors or books have influenced your writing?

Sam Landstrom: Lucky for me, the public school system forced me to read *1984*, *Brave New World*, and *Fahrenheit 451*. These books were more about sociology and philosophy than technology, and they taught me that sci-fi did not necessarily require aliens or spaceships.

In addition to these stand-alone books, I really enjoyed the Dune series by Frank Herbert because he built up a fully realized universe that included components of religion, politics, economics, and even ecology. Dune had a big influence on *MetaGame*.

I have heard from several readers that *MetaGame* shares elements with Neal Stephenson's work. This might not be a coincidence since I read *The Diamond Age* and *Snow Crash* before writing *MetaGame*. Good stuff.

Question: *MetaGame* fits solidly in the sci-fi/cyberpunk genre, but also weaves in philosophy and thriller writing. Have you considered trying your hand at other genres in the future?

Sam Landstrom: Yes, in fact I'm writing a fantasy novel now. Magic, monsters, infinite dimensions, a high school kegger.. You get the idea--not hard sci-fi, but entertaining and, hopefully, a bit thought provoking.

Question: Have you always wanted to write? What other careers have you pursued?

Sam Landstrom: I've wanted to write off and on over the years. When I was really young (like 8-9 years old) I pumped out books; however, these quick reads emphasized pictures over writing. The art sported a lot of guns blazing, swords swinging, blood spraying, heads flying through the air, etc. I went to a hippie school that wasn't big into formal education. I remember my older cousin reading one of my books, after which he told me, "You need to start a sentence with a capital letter and end with a period." First of all, I didn't know what he was talking about and second, who cares? I didn't understand why he wasn't praising me for the awesome action scenes. I mean, you just didn't see that kind of stuff in books I found in the library, much less at school! I like to think my writing has improved since those days, although my grammar could still use some work. Thank God for good editors.

As an adult, I've had many different career interests I considered pursuing, including underwater archaeology and neurology. When I started college, I actually went in with the intention of becoming a doctor, but quickly discovered I was more into the science of medicine than the actual application of it, hence the degree in molecular biology. Aside from working in software (my current career) and in biotech, I spent a lot of time on the water as a deck hand, first on a passenger ferry, and then on a small cruise ship in Alaska. I was really considering a life at sea. However, it turns out I was ill suited to the regimen of a sailor's job. Captains were not impressed with what I thought were creative solutions to problems, nor with me setting my own priorities.

Question: What's next for you?

Sam Landstrom: I'm sort of writing three books at once--the fantasy novel I mentioned earlier, as well as a prequel and sequel to *MetaGame*. I've made the most progress on the fantasy, so that's what I'll likely finish

first. On the side, I also started developing a smart-phone application that is a virtual boyfriend for young women. I hope to make him handsome and charming, even as he speaks in a computer-generated Stephen Hawking voice. I've heard you can get a long way with flattery, so I'm hoping a phone can successfully use the same strategy. I'm not sure when I'll finish that, if ever. By the way, I'd make a virtual girlfriend too, but giving men what they want through a phone (or any media) is too easy.

About the Author

Author Sam Landstrom studied molecular biology at the University of Washington before working at a DNA sequencing lab that helped sequence the human genome. Presently, he works in the software industry. *MetaGame* is his first book.

Users Review

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Victor Brown:

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