



## Saturn Run

*John Sandford , Ctein*

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The year is 2066. A Caltech intern inadvertently notices an anomaly from a space telescope—something is approaching Saturn, and decelerating. Space objects don't decelerate. Spaceships do.

A flurry of top-level government meetings produces the inescapable conclusion: Whatever built that ship is at least one hundred years ahead in hard and soft technology, and whoever can get their hands on it exclusively and bring it back will have an advantage so large, no other nation can compete. A conclusion the Chinese definitely agree with when they find out.

The race is on, and an remarkable adventure begins—an epic tale of courage, treachery, resourcefulness, secrets, surprises, and astonishing human and technological discovery, as the members of a hastily thrown-together crew find their strength and wits tested against adversaries both of this earth and beyond. What happens is nothing like you expect—and everything you could want from one of the world's greatest masters of suspense.

## Saturn Run Details

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Author : John Sandford , Ctein

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# From Reader Review Saturn Run for online ebook

**Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

[www.melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com](http://www.melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com)

This book wasn't entirely a book for me. I was thinking it was going to be a whole different story about astronauts going to find this space ship and making some kind of contact with aliens. They do go and find the space ship, but that is all I'm going to say, no spoilers.

It took me a little bit to get into the book. There were a lot of slow parts for me, but this is because I'm not really into all of the technical stuff that confuse my small brain. I think this is a very good book for those die hard science fiction fans that love that kind of detail and can understand it.

There are many characters in the book and they all have detailed stories of their lives and what they bring to the mission. There are some that stick in my mind more than others.

I was thinking about giving this book 3 stars for not being able to get into a lot of the detailed stuff as I mentioned before. After reading the book, I found there were several areas that I really enjoyed, I would say the most exciting for me was the ship finally making it to Saturn and the descriptions of all that you could see.

I wasn't too thrilled with all of the fighting with the Chinese on who is getting to the space ship first and all that conspired afterward.

After reading the author's note I can see why this book was written in this format and I appreciate all of the information that he gave about these particular things. It also made me think about the book more and change my view on my rating. Sometimes you just need someone telling things to you in a different light for you to see where they were going and I think all of the hard work put into the book deserves a better rating.

I do wish I had better brain cells to enjoy the book more, but I like I said before I enjoyed the parts I could understand.

I recommend for all of you hardcore sci fi fans, but if your looking for people going out to meet some aliens, you probably won't enjoy the book.

**\*\*I would like to thank Netgalley and Penguin Group for giving me a free kindle copy of this book for my honest review.\*\***

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**Beau says**

When I read a sci-fi book, I'm looking for a balance among the plot, the science, and the characters. Is there any reason for me to care about what might happen to the characters?

This book was a great ride. I cared about the characters, I loved the science. I especially liked the way that they made a whiz-bang kind of propulsion system to go to Saturn and back.

There was also a fundamental conflict between the Americans and the Chinese. I mean, sure, they were competing, but the conflict was one about whether they SHOULD be cooperating as humans, or competing as nations.

I thought it was kind of sad that the expectation that Americans would try to get an advantage over the rest of Earth was a given, to the point that it would be an accepted plot element. We really ought to think about humanity more than nationality, was the way I felt after thinking it over.

But you don't have to take this book that seriously. The dialog is snappy, and the characters are lots of fun. One of my favorites, John Clover, was a former NFL lineman who liked to cook cajun and was a world-class anthropologist and cat-lover. And doper. Like I said, it's a fun ride to Saturn, where you wonder about the aliens, the future of humans, and how cool the spaceship is.

I loved it. I'd like to read a sequel (oops. sequel).

(I too got a free advance reader copy in exchange for a review)

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## **Jim says**

I read one or two of his Lucas Davenport (Prey) series, but never managed to find them all in order so didn't read the series. Still, it was interesting & when I saw he'd written an SF book I was intrigued. Then one of my GR friends raved about it & my library had it so I took a flyer. I wasn't expecting much, but have been very pleasantly surprised.

The writing is very good; great characters, believable plot, & good SF elements. Even better, he's scattered some fun references throughout. One that made me chuckle today was Sandy reading a book by the Go master Nicholai Hel, the main character in Shibumi. There were quite a few other easter eggs like that, but some would be real spoilers. Fun!

The plot was somewhat typical, but that's not a negative. An alien craft is sighted & the world responds some 60 years into the future. China & the US are the big dogs in space, so politics flies to the forefront. Definitely realistic & not boring at all as they scramble. This plays out throughout the book in some predictable & unpredictable ways. Very well done.

Best of all was the tech. I'm no expert, but I've had a love of space all my life & read quite a few popular articles. This is 60 years in the future - enough time to allow for steady, believable progression in tech. Nothing crazy or magical. This, as much as the politics, keeps the situation tense. Very realistic to me. There was an afterword that was well worth listening to. I found out that the tech was so realistic & good because they spent hundreds of hours making sure it was.

Aliens... Can't say without a terrible spoiler, save that it was fantastically well done. Not what I expected, but it made such perfect sense that I had no trouble believing it.

I'm tempted to give this 5 stars. It's the single best first contact novel I've read in ages & it was so unexpected from a guy who cranks out a mystery thriller series even though he only co-wrote it. I really can't recommend this highly enough to all SF fans. It has humor, drama, excellent characters, a good plot, & solid tech. What more could anyone ask?

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## Bradley says

Strong points: Characterization and the science. We can classify this pretty easily as a realistic SF, even including the the scenes of "Meet The Aliens". It's a Go To Saturn and Come Back novel, after all. No real need for anything truly out of the ordinary. After all, the novel's strong points are in its characters.

I like Sandy and Crow. What can I say? The hooks were fantastic and strange and they just kept coming, adding some truly oddball mixes to the MCs. I never once got bored with any of the peeps.

The science, on the other hand, seemed like an old primer recapitulating on all the things we need to do a run toward Saturn. I mean, I can recall the first few novels I'd read that did this. A. C. Clarke was quite fun, after all, but after the eighth... well... there's gotta be something quite good about the novel for me to care about rehashing the same science over such a long stretch of pages. There wasn't anything wrong with it that I could tell. Nothing super obvious. Hell, to me, that's just an added bonus, especially since I read SF for the stories, not always to learn something new. Consistency is truly wonderful, but consistency can be internal or universal and still make a great tale either way. This one aimed for universal, and that's great. It can be a bit boring, to be perfectly honest, but I can appreciate it.

The characters made up for most of anything that went wrong in the novel. I truly enjoyed them. Hell, I think I enjoyed all of them. The author has a talent at writing engaging characters. What I didn't appreciate so much was the rather black/white depictions of governments and government functionaries. Sure, having a villain is good, sometimes, but turning the Chinese into such an obvious black hat and relatively incompetent to boot just stretched a lot of credulity. It's the whole culture-centric thing played relatively straight for American readers, and it's so ham-fisted that the cover artist should have added some red to the design. Then we'd all know, as prospective readers, that this was obviously a propaganda piece.

Fortunately, it also pulled off a good yarn, or at least a fairly satisfying one.

(view spoiler)

All in all, the good guys win, and don't we all love a great celluloid ending?

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## James Thane says

When I heard John Sandford announce a couple of years ago that he was writing a science-fiction novel, my first reaction was to be disappointed, principally because that meant there would be no Virgil Flowers novel published in 2015. I'm a big fan of Virgil's and I'm not that big a fan of sci-fi, so I figured that, on balance, this would be a loss. As is so often the case, though, it turns out that I was wrong. Even though this is a sci-fi tale, it has all the trademarks of a John Sandford novel, which means that it's enormously entertaining.

This is not a story featuring strange alien creatures from distant worlds set far out into the future. Rather, it focuses principally on people from earth on a journey through space in the relatively near future. In 2066, the

United States has sophisticated space stations orbiting the earth and China, now the nation's principal superpower rival, is preparing a mission to colonize Mars. But then an intern at Caltech, running a routine check after adjustments to a space telescope, discovers an anomaly in some photographs taken in the direction of Saturn. And even someone who doesn't normally read science fiction realizes that when somebody discovers an *anomaly*, this is probably a pretty big deal.

And so it is.

The computers confirm that some giant object is approaching Saturn and, more important, that it's decelerating. The fact that it's slowing down can only mean that it's a spaceship of some sort--natural objects don't behave this way in space. Since this was a totally random discovery, for the moment only the U.S. realizes what has happened. Very quietly, under directions from the president, a U.S. space station is reconfigured as a space ship to go to Saturn and figure out what the hell is going on out there. The official story is that we've decided to join the Chinese on their mission to Mars, and the hope is that before the Chinese or anyone else discovers what we're really doing, the U.S. will have a head start toward Saturn and no one else will be able to do anything about it.

Those plans are upended, though, when the mysterious space vehicle leaves Saturn in a blaze of propulsion that is noticed around the world. The secret is out and the Chinese quickly repurpose their Mars expedition to go to Saturn. Thus the race is on as the two superpowers compete to see which can get to Saturn first and perhaps gain an advance in knowledge that would give them world domination for years to come and, perhaps, forever.

Sandford and his co-author Ctein, have created a great cast of characters. Fans of Sandford's will recognize the type of characters that he likes to create and will bond with them pretty quickly. Sandford's quirky humor is also on display and, while none of the cast is on a level with that F\*\*\*in' Flowers, at least a couple of them are a lot of fun. The technology involved is, for the most part, based on science that is readily available now and does not require any real suspension of disbelief. No one in this book, for example, will suddenly be going into Warp Drive.

As is the case with any novel by John Sandford, the story moves at a rapid pace and the suspense is palpable. The stakes in this race are very high, and the payoff at the end is well worth waiting for. I'm really glad that I finally got around to reading this book, but that said, I'm also very happy to know that I now have a new Virgil Flowers novel waiting in the wings as well.

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## **Tim says**

John must have wanted to challenge himself away from great characters he has created. Writing science fiction is hard and technical details tend to be boring. The plot revolves around nationalism, science fiction and is saved by its good ending. 6 of 10 stars

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## **Carrie says**

In the year 2066 an unidentified object is spotted approaching Saturn and slowing down speed as if to land. The government is sent into a flurry of activity trying to figure out how to build a ship that will make the

journey to Saturn before the Chinese can launch their own mission in a race to see what is out there and obtain the technology that would be needed for such a ship.

I had such high hopes for this novel when I first read about it but unfortunately this is another case of it just wasn't for me. The synopsis sounded like a great sci-fi thrill ride but to me it reads more like a text book with all the technological and scientific information constantly included which made the actual story and characters get buried under my boredom of information overload.

The first half or so reminded me greatly of the space race back in the sixties where the US was in a rush to be the first into space and then to actually land on the moon. It was the gathering of the team to take on the task, the building of a ship and all that should end up exciting waiting to see if they launch and make it to space but instead it's detail after detail of every little part of the build. From there I'd hope it'd pick up but unfortunately it really didn't.

In the end just not my cup of tea but not a bad read if you like overly descriptive technological details to support a plot.

I won this book from Goodreads First Reads.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.wordpress....>

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## **Kevin Kelsey says**

Posted at Heradas

It's been a while since I've read some good old fashioned hard science fiction. Hard SF novels are a different sort of beast than most novels. I find they usually need to be approached differently and appreciated using a different set of metrics.

It doesn't have to be the case, but a lot of times hard SF will lose itself in the details, which can be fun if you're interested in those specific details. Other times, hard SF will sacrifice an ungodly amount of character development for those same details, which is a little less forgivable, but it's amazing what I can forgive in the narrative department when I'm really into the "hard" part of the science.

Saturn Run, unfortunately, falls victim to both of these pitfalls, but you know what? I don't care, I'm letting it slide. Different metrics for different books. It describes in detail one of the coolest conceptual heatsinks that I've ever come across. It's not particularly well written in the traditional sense, and the prose is merely passable, but the conceptual stuff here is fascinating, and it's really fun once it gets going.

I do think the novel nailed the sort of macro decisions that humanity would make in this sort of first contact scenario, but at a micro level the individual characters were not very believable to me. The story also dragged a lot in the middle. I would've enjoyed it much more if it were tightened up a little. But, it had a stellar second half and it really stuck the landing. Somebody could come along and adapt this into a fantastically entertaining smart summer blockbuster a la Interstellar.

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## **Susan W says**

Science fiction isn't really my cup of tea, and this book had a lot of technical, space jargon, which completely overwhelmed me. But finally, we got into a interesting plot line and it became much more readable.

I think i will stick with Sandford's current time frame mysteries, Lucas, Virgil the best, sci-fi... No thanks.

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## **Lindsay says**

A solar system exploration SF novel with a background of a future Sino-American Cold War. The Americans in a race with the Chinese to get to the Rings of Saturn and an alien presence there.

The Americans discover an object decelerating towards the Saturn system where it makes contact with something in the Rings. They are aware that the Chinese already have a Mars mission almost ready to go that's set to take a colony to Mars that could very easily be converted to something that could get to Saturn. So they hastily go about converting an orbiting US space station into a vessel that could make the trip. The race to Saturn happens with lots of events along the way and they do discover what's in the Rings.

The story is told through the viewpoints of characters that will eventually make the trip, but the real stars here are the spaceships and the propulsion technologies that they would require. It's a shame that not as much thought seemed to have gone into what life support would look like for these multi-year large man-count ships.

Overall, it's an entertaining story, and at times an emotional one, but where it falls down largely is with the politics. America good. China bad. Government corrupt and stupid. Political people psychotic. And there are (stupid) actions taken by both governments that are basically acts of war, and acts of individualism that save the day. Not really left-wing or right-wing politics, but definitely strongly libertarian.

Probably a 3.5 overall that I'm going to round up to 4 because it kept me along for the ride. Even though parts of the ride had me yelling "bulls--t!" quite loudly.

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## **Mike French says**

DISCLAIMER- I have never been a fan of SCI-FI !

I might be changing my mind after reading THE MARTIAN and now-SATURN RUN! Since I am a big fan of John Sanford 's Lucas Davenport and Virgil Flowers books. After the first few chapters,I was hooked! Very entertaining and enjoyable from start to finish.

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## **Charli says**

Honestly, I hate to say this, but as a John Sandford fan, this one was pretty bad. I've always loved John



Sandford's mystery novels but this foray into the world of Sci-Fi just isn't grabbing me. I literally cannot concentrate on the book. I can't even finish it - I'm 8 chapters in and have zero desire to ever finish it.

For one, there seems to be too much going on. New characters are constantly popping up and while I realize that each new character that pops up has something integral to do with the story, it is rather annoying. There is also the fact that the story just doesn't seem to have a clear cut place it is going - other than Saturn.

There isn't anything particularly exciting that is happening - nothing to keep my interest. Generally speaking, if I'm not engaged and wanting to read more, not wanting to put the book down by the 6th or 7th chapter, I'm not going to be. It saddens me because I really had high hopes for this book based on it being a John Sandford novel. Perhaps it is the collaboration with Ctein or perhaps Sci-Fi just isn't the genre for Sandford, but I just can't say I liked this book.

\*\* I received this book for free from NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion. No other compensation was received and all opinions are my own.\*\*

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## **Kemper says**

*(I received a free copy of this from NetGalley in exchange for this review.)*

I've read a lot of John Sandford novels so I was a little confused at first when there wasn't a serial killer on the spaceship.

In the year 2066 telescopes spot what can only be an alien ship near Saturn as it docks with a previously unknown object in orbit. The governments of the United States and China both want to get there first which leads to a rushed program to quickly put together ships capable of making the long journey. Political tension and potential sabotage make the voyage into space even more dangerous as crews from both nations race to Saturn.

Sandford (Real name John Camp.) regularly puts two new crime thrillers on the best seller's list every year so it seems a little odd that he'd forgo one of them to team up with photo-artist Ctein to do a pure sci-fi novel. However, Sandford's bio and his books have also highlighted his interest and knowledge of subjects like art, photography, archaeology, surgery, and computer technology so it shouldn't be that big of a surprise that his mind might turn to this kind of book outside his normal genre.

There's an authors' note at the end in which they explain that the core of the idea was based on needing to get to Saturn in a certain time frame. From the details in that you can tell it was the focus of their thinking on how come up with some realistic near-future spaceship propulsion methods. By working up a couple of different ways to accomplish this they set up a kind of tortoise and the hare race between the Americans and Chinese which also helps set up the drama to the story. (The authors' note also provides a very satisfactory answer as to why they decided to name the US ship after Richard Nixon.)

It also helps that Sandford has had a lot of practice at creating characters in familiar genre situations while still making them seem like real people who all work, bitch, commiserate, screw, take drugs, drink, scheme, and joke while risking their lives as part of a potentially disastrous contest with a rival nation to try and meet some aliens.

There are a few things here that make clear that Sandford's not working on his usual turf. One of his strengths is writing scenes in which people have to act fast when things start going wrong, and generally his pacing is nearly flawless when it comes to building tension. However, the nature of this story requires a timeline in which months of boring traveling is involved, and while they do their best to use this downtime to set up story, build characters, develop the setting, and add humor, it just doesn't have the sense of frantic momentum that Sandford can usually deliver except for a few scenes.

Plus, this is the only book of Sandford's I've read which doesn't focus on one single lead. While Sandy Darlington seems like he's going to be the main character at first this actually turns into much more of an ensemble book, and that added to a sense that the story is drifting at times. I also question how much time and effort was spent describing the various cameras and the best way of using them, but that's what happens when one of your authors is a photographer.

There's also a slight letdown related to what they discover when they get to the alien object. It's not a complete fumble, but it does show that Sandford and Ctein put more thought into how they'd get to Saturn rather than what the characters would find when they got there. (view spoiler)

It's still an entertaining read with some exciting fast paced parts, but those not interested in problems like how you vent excess heat from a spaceship engine might find it a bit dull at times.

3.64 stars.

(Also posted at Kemper's Book Blog. I also wrote a similar, but different, review for the Barnes & Noble Sci-Fi & Fantasy Blog for which I was paid after I had written and posted this.)

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## Christy LoveOfBooks says

What a great book! **Saturn Run** is an adult science fiction thriller that I found engrossing and exciting from beginning to the very last page. It's quite a ride, that's for sure.

The year is 2066 and the human race is about to be gobsmacked, because a huge alien spaceship has arrived. Well, technically it's parked out by Saturn doing who knows what, but one thing is certain, every country wants that technology. It becomes a race between China and the United States to get there first, and it gets intense.

Sandford wove a fantastic story with anticipation coming from all sides and a good mix of wit and humor. Seriously, so much happens! From the race to get the ships ready, to the race to get to Saturn, to what they find, to ... well, that's as far as I'll go, because that's the fun part of wondering what the hell will happen next. It all sounds so simple, but there's a lot going on that had me on the edge of my seat. It truly is a thriller.

This cast of characters rock! They're all fleshed out really well and had such distinct personalities. I definitely grew attached to them, while some were quite the surprise. I loved getting to know all of them and seeing how their roles would play out. I usually go on and on about the characters, but it's such an incredible collective, that I feel like I'd be at it all day.

I really like how this is futuristic, yet it isn't outlandishly so. The world is still very familiar, giving it a realistic feel. That's a big reason why I was so anxious about what they would discover once they reached Saturn. I was dying to know! And I love science, so I find it interesting when it starts to get technical. I like to know how things work and what the author came up with to put their ideas in motion, especially with something like this. It does get a little labored a couple times in the beginning, but really, any good science fiction tends to do that.

**Saturn Run** was definitely an experience. I felt like I was on the journey with them and didn't want it to end, even though I was going crazy with wanting to know what would happen next. It's a book I got so engrossed in, that it felt weird when it was all over, like my head had to adjust to being back in this world. So yeah, the author did his job of really transporting me there.

I honestly don't know what exactly it was that made me want to read **Saturn Run**, but I'm glad I did! So good! I'm already stalking Sanford's other books.

I just had to include this quote that made me smile, because I think we all know someone like John ...

"John, I didn't actually want to throw this out there before I heard your opinions, ... The President would like you to join the crew on the Saturn run."

Crow took some small pleasure in the surprise on Clover's face.

"You mean ... go out in space?"

"Well, yeah."

"Jesus, Crow, who'd take care of my cat?"

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## Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says

Up to probably just past the halfway point in *Saturn Run* (which I listened to, not read), I really liked this book. There were interesting characters, intrigue, enough science to satisfy my thirst for hard sci-fi, and just enough possibilities to really keep my interest. I really expected to be giving this book a top rating. It was just that good.

Unfortunately, by the end of the book, I was scowling and ready to throw it. I've never read Sanford before, so I went into this with no expectations whatsoever. The only thing I knew was that he was building up an awesome story, and it was a pleasure to listen to. That's why I was completely puzzled at how the book ended. It didn't end anything like I expected. It was almost like the first part of the book and the last part were written by two different people. Or maybe Sanford and Ctein just hit a certain point, and said "Eh, screw it" and just gave it an ending so it would be done. I don't get it.

My favorite parts of the book were the main characters themselves, and the science explained in the spaceships early on. The characters were awesome. You had the pudgy, sweet-looking genius from Minnesota who had to practice her stern face because otherwise no one would take her seriously. The ex-NFL player who cooked cajun, smoked weed, and gave anthropology lectures and refused to go anywhere-

even to space – without his cat. The veteran with PTSD who preferred to play the underdog and let everyone underestimate him. The interactions were fantastic, and the dialogue made me chuckle. The science was well-explained, fun to imagine, and seemingly realistic in scope. So why did it all pretty much have to disappear?

Why was it assumed that the Americans would do what they did? Why did the novel have to come down to essentially just the race between the Chinese and Americans? The authors could have went for this epic, overarching exploration of working together to further humanity as a whole. They could have made the novel so much more than it was. Instead, what it boiled down to was a “I want it!” “No, I want it!” “I got here first!” “You need to share!” “No.” “YES!” “No!” “YES!” “No! NEENER NEENER NEENER!” “We’ll see about that!” If I wanted to read about relationships that basic, I’d pick up one of my kid’s Junie B. Jones books.

Overall, Saturn Run honestly wasn’t a bad book, but it definitely doesn’t reach the bar that it set for itself, and it definitely frustrates rather than intrigues you. Its not one I could honestly recommend. However, the narrator (Eric Conger) was awesome and he has definitely entered onto my short list of narrators to look for when choosing audio books.

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