



Clarity

R. James Stevens

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Discovery. Salvation. Redemption.

Three individuals; three separate paths. All will be irreversibly entwined as they search for the answers in an attempt to reassemble the pieces of their broken lives. But will they find what they seek, or will they stumble upon the devastating truth that lies just beyond their reach?

The Epsilon series explores the events seven years after the catastrophic death of a technological society.

The first installment, Clarity, begins in 2084 and focuses both forward and back on the raw, emotional journeys of former friends and partners. Will they band together to help right wrongs and restore order to the scattered remnants of the populace? Or will their quests for individual fulfillment tear apart an already worn bond?

While not their primary concern, Clarity is indeed what they will find.

Clarity Details

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Author : R. James Stevens

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From Reader Review Clarity for online ebook

Michael Meyerhofer says

I had the good fortune to stumble across this book a couple weeks ago. I "met" the author online and he gifted me with a free copy, in exchange for an honest review. Right away, R. James Stevens scored points with his professionalism, though he won even more with his writing.

As other reviewers have noted, this is not a "traditional," linear story. Instead, it features lots of flashbacks that give it a somewhat postmodern feel, which I appreciate. In another review, I saw "Clarity" referred to as a "thinking man's" book. I completely agree. This is one of those books that I had to read slowly--not because of any deficiency on the part of the author, but because I wanted to really appreciate the obvious care put into the narrative.

On the surface, this is a sci-fi dystopian novel with some dark/horror elements, but what I really appreciate is its ambitious way of weaving together several different character arcs, with all the characters feeling distinctly unique and different from the others (a rare feat in spec lit). I often complain that too many modern speculative writers trust usual settings and/or dramatic events to win the day. Not so with "Clarity."

Stevens wisely keeps the emphasis on the characters, so that in one sense, this novel is something of a character study. However, Stevens supplies plenty of well-written action to keep things moving. In that sense, despite their different genres, he reminds me of George Martin or Raymond Feist, with a little Stephen King and Mary Shelley thrown in.

Put another way, this is a book that thinks highly of its readers and conveys a great deal of respect for its genre. It asks a lot but it pays off the reader's investment tenfold. I'm anxious to read more of Stevens' work and I wish him much success!

A.D.T. says

Strangely put together, but a worthwhile read.

This is a funny book. The story is built around a future in which technology has betrayed us in, unfortunately, an eye-rollingly overdone way. Kudos to author Stevens for bringing a spark of life into this predictability, however on a personal level these downfalls overwhelm the story. The main characters are great, though, and (much as I am with really intense horror flicks) there were times where I just wanted the personal dramas to take over from the rest, and leave them behind. I know it's classed as a science-fiction, but to me that was the weakest part. Obviously, as with any first novel in a series, it needs certain elements to be introduced no matter how tedious, and sometimes these brought my reading efforts to a stand-still. The jumping back and forth in timelines was also a bit of a stress for me personally.

However, upon finishing the book I was left satisfied, mainly with the three leads and their stories.

I think if you're looking for an easy read, this wouldn't be it, but if you're after something deep, check it out.

Judith Rook says

Past and Future

The novel “Clarity” (‘Epsilon’ Book 1) by R.James Stevens makes a very decent read for connoisseurs of thrillers, intrigue, and future projection.

One of its particular strengths is the very high quality of the many episodes involving military confrontation, which the author presents with authority and conviction. Stevens has a gift for writing action scenes of all kinds, and he does not hold back when embarking on vivid descriptions of destruction and mayhem.

The two main protagonists both military men, are both well developed as characters. Their lives and personal relationships are the main thread which holds this very complex narrative together.

Other characters are not as firmly rounded, although two of the villainous contingent bring in an unusual and engaging colour. The female protagonist, a young intellectual prodigy who has broken all the glass ceilings around, has a potential that is not fully developed during the course of the novel, but she is used effectively to support one of the many strands which together form the intriguing plot.

The structure of the novel is unusually intricate; it leaves the linear flow of time and turns to the world of the flashback, so that light from the past clarifies the present. Although on occasion this technique of fluctuation between times and states of being is distracting, Stevens keeps it under control, and excursions into dreams and cyberspace become completely necessary parts of the narrative.

However, even with the continuous invoking of the past, the theme of the book is not easy to discover, although the reader picks up the impression that there is something rather dark waiting for humanity in the future.

In some respects, “Clarity” is a slightly obscure and puzzling story, but it does engage a reader’s interest. The pace is fast, some of the concepts are thoroughly intriguing, and in general the novel offers a pleasant and memorable reading experience.

Claire says

Clarity has the potential to be a very gripping read but a few things distracted me. The setting of the book is after some kind of event that destroyed the country's infrastructure but we never learn what that is. The book follows two comrades from a military unit and jumps back and forth in time to tell the story which makes sense as a plot device but it happens a little too frequently to read smoothly plus there are several timelines. We are told part of how & why the military unit were tested upon but it doesn't feel explained fully. Brig's love life suddenly springs to life part way through the book with an apparent old flame he left behind when he went to military school - wouldn't he have been 11 or so at the time? And the amount of bodily injuries he is able to sustain is somewhat incredible, stretching even the concept of super soldier. You do feel sorry for Clive, the injury and the subsequent fallout. Brig's slow realisation that maybe everything he does puts everyone in danger is also a good reveal. I don't feel like it was sufficiently explained as to what was on the decryption discs, how they related to the ex military characters and why Steele was so affected by it that she killed herself. Plus ... I have issues with the incredible cliche that is the name Steele Fox. It took away some brevity. That being said, it was a page turner, I wanted to know what was going to happen next, how many beatings Brig could endure and consequently I was a little disappointed at the abrupt ending.

Ronald Smith says

was a winner in the Goodreads giveaway so let me state right from the start I had never heard of R James Stevens before seeing the giveaway but glad to say I now know him and I am glad I do , this is a book I pick up one evening and from then i really couldn't put it down its fairly fast paced loved the way the writer made the three main players it the story interact with each other and the use of flashbacks keeps one engaged

Amy says

I was given this book free, in exchange for an honest review.

This is a thinking man's book. I say that not because it's difficult to read, it's not. I say it because it makes you think about the future and what if.

Clarity is filled with plenty of plot twists and turns. There are even sub-plots that are buried deep in the book. It's brilliantly written and executed. I enjoyed this book, it kept me on my toes. The characters were all well rounded and likeable. I was continually wondering what was going to happen next, what was the next twist and where was it going to lead me! At one point I swear I was a member of the team! Mr. Stevens swept me up with his detail and put me right in the middle of the action.

There are flashbacks in the book that explain a lot of the history. Sometimes it was confusing, but it's clearly marked 25 years ago, or present. For me something didn't always need explaining, did it take away from the story? No. The history ties into the present, you slowly come to realize how everything is entwined.

I didn't tweet much about this book, because I was so engrossed in the writing style and skill that is set forth. I hope book 2 is equally well written.

(;Missy.Lala;) says

4/5 STARS!!!

This book was my very first book that I won from a giveaway in exchange for an honest review.

So, here goes:

Clarity is about three different individuals going on separate paths. They will unexpectedly come together as they search for the answers in an attempt to reassemble the pieces of their broken lives.

(The events happen seven years after the catastrophic death of a technological society, just to let you know).

Clarity, begins in 2084 and focuses on the journeys of former friends and partners. They band together to help right wrongs and restore order to the scattered remnants of the populace.

(short summary of book to give you an idea what your reading incase you were wondering)

Things I <3 about this book:

1. The way the world was set up, this is actually my first time reading a book that is set on the future, but I mean WAAAAYYY in the future (2084??? That's crazy!!!)

2. I also liked the characters, they were very different from each other in their own ways, but somehow they come together, and work together, and work passed their differences, and that's very hard to do :) So I like that as well.

3. I also liked the experience that I went through, to read this book carefully, and understanding everything about it (since it was very different from what I usually read, I'm not going to lie, but it was a little difficult at first, but throughout the book I started to get used to the writing and the format, and understanding the story and I'm so glad I received a copy of this book :')

Things I didn't like so much:

1. I didn't like that at first the book was very confusing (but that's probably just me because this is my first time reading a book like this :)

2. At first, I thought I wasn't going to like it because of the way the cover looked and the description was a little vague (but this was like WAY before I started reading it trust me) but then I looked at it a second time and I saw that it was a different type of book then the ones that I am very familiar with reading, so I decided to give it a shot. (and thank god I did)

So, in conclusion this book was amazing! If you ever find this book at the store or something, o me a favor and please get the book, and read it :) It's really worth the time, and I'm positive you are going to love it (it may take a while though, for me it did)

So plleeeeaaasssseeeee get it if you see it :)

Highly Recommend

Melonie Purcell says

You know that movie Crash, where all of the characters come together in a big accident and then you follow them backwards and see how their completely unrelated lives intertwine? That is how the characters in Clarity fell in at the end.

Stevens does a nice job creating complex believable characters in a futuristic setting and then leading us through their journeys as he weaves their pasts and presents together in a well-designed plot. The world building is well thought out, but not the crux of the story. Anyone familiar with scifi should have no trouble navigating the nuances of the familiar and the created future.

My struggle with this book was the pace. For me, it dragged. There are a lot of flashbacks in this book and many of them go on for quite a long time. The constant back and forth from past to present make it difficult for me to stay enmeshed in the characters and their perspectives. That said, Stevens does a good job with his transitions from past to present and back again.

The strength of this novel was for certain the characters themselves. They are each unique and believable while still managing to be fresh and enjoyable to read. The sudden and violent change in the world that is the basis of the story is well fleshed out and it leaves the reader questioning what you thought you knew about humanity.

Clarity isn't an easy read, but if you enjoy a good mental workout, this is an enjoyable book with a rich exploration of the nature of mankind.

Christian Nadeau says

Clarity is a very interesting piece of shattered storytelling that unfortunately fumbles from the midpoint and fizzles by the end.

As I started reading this novel, I was engrossed. It had great characters, an interesting world (though it threads familiar ground), and flashbacks piled up for a progressive reveal of the events leading up to society's collapse.

Like mentioned, characterization was great. So great, that I positively hated the main character by the end of the book and rooted for another main character entirely. Moreover, the cast was varied, they weren't invincible bulldozers, and I found their interaction interesting...right until a love story between two characters was tacked on. Readers will be free to make up their own mind on this one, but with the story's shattered structure, for me it didn't make any sense not to be even remotely aware of the two love interests until it became a factor in the present.

Still, I applaud the fragmented storytelling, it's well-done and most of the flashbacks are justified. Some people might find the sheer quantity of back and forth a little too much, but I felt most of them had purpose, until the story's mid-point. That's when things started to lose focus.

Up to that point, we were learning at a steady pace about the world, about the circumstances leading up to the collapse. Right when I would have expected the pace of learning to increase, for us to know more on what happened and the circumstances of it. The opposite happens. We're on the cusp of learning significant details which would have fleshed out the world and made me dive in for the rest of the ride, but the story holds back and we're left in the dark.

Despite my gripes with the lack of the world's background exposure, I applaud the avoidance of most of Hollywood's clichés (which I won't name to avoid spoilers) in the better part of the novel, and the sole place where I found the story threading that line, the outcome is satisfying.

If you've read Tad William's Otherland though, this novel suffers from the same shortcoming as the first entry in William's series; things come to a head, there are dramatic consequences (which I liked), but we're kept in the dark about the information propelling the story forward.

And we're left on a cliffhanger. If there had been some reveals on the story's major points, I wouldn't have had any problems with that choice, but it's not the case.

So, for characters that compel emotion and a glowing premise, but with an unsatisfying conclusion, I rate "Clarity" three (3) stars. Despite its last half's shortcomings, I liked it, just not enough for a warm recommendation of 4 stars.

Jason Potnick says

Clarity, is the first book in the "Epsilon" series of dystopian science fiction stories R. James Stevens is currently writing. I met Mr. Stevens on twitter and he gifted a copy of Clarity to me for an honest review.

You can find the book on Amazon.

Discovery. Salvation. Redemption.

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The first installment, Clarity, begins in 2084 and focuses both forward and back on the raw, emotional journeys of former friends and partners. Will they band together to help right wrongs and restore order to the scattered remnants of the populace? Or will their quests for individual fulfillment tear apart an already worn bond?

While not their primary concern, Clarity is indeed what they will find.

"It was the right thing to do..."

One of the main characters in Clarity, Brigadier Stroud, says this to justify his actions throughout the book. On the surface, I agreed with him. Put in dark, unwinnable situations, he tried his best to let his conscience lead him. He breaks protocol and shuns orders to save innocents. Yet many times, doing "the right thing" led to unspeakable tragedy.

This is the darkness of the world R. James Stevens created in his "Epsilon" series. 70 years from now, the URA (United Republic of Americas), a nation uniting both American continents, is gone. Destroyed by a cataclysm the book only hints at, those still alive fend for themselves in a broken landscape, filled with the remnants of a past technological super power. The world of Clarity is both dark and believable. It is obvious Mr. Stevens put significant effort into building this world and has a lot of back story still to reveal in future books.

Mr. Stevens is unapologetic with his form of story telling in Clarity, which can be jarring at times. I was reminded of the TV show "Lost", as the book jumps around often with numerous flashbacks, while leaving the reader guessing as to what is really going on. I admit, this built up the suspense, but at times frustrated. Many scenes left out the details of what a character saw or thought, even though the scene was written from that character's point of view, as a way to keep the reader guessing.

The book is much longer than the other IndiePub books I reviewed in the past, but at 500 pages, it is by no means overwhelming.

I was most impressed by the action scenes in the book. The story is full of brawls, military engagements, and heists, and Mr. Stevens imaginatively choreographs each. They kept me guessing, pulled me in and kept me wanting more throughout the story.

In between the action, the book slows at times. I feel like the author could have edited these scenes to tighten them up more. I would suggest looking at a book like Rayne Hall's The Word Loss Diet to help these parts of

the story flow better, and remove unneeded words that slow down the prose.

I commend Mr. Stevens for finishing and publishing Clarity, a dystopian sci-fi novel that looks at a world torn apart by the technology it trusted. It is dark and gritty, and I believe gives a believable glimpse of the human condition. The action is solid and pulls you in and keeps you guessing, even if at times the story telling can slow down and confuse. I can tell Mr. Stevens has a lot more to say about the world of the "Epsilon" series, and I encourage him to continue.

For anyone looking for science fiction in a dark dystopian future (one of my favorite genres), I recommend Clarity and the future stories of the "Epsilon" series.

Evan says

Incredible. I'm not exactly sure how to describe Clarity. All I can say is that I really liked it.

There are a number of flashback sequences throughout the book and one must pay attention to what is going on - which is actually not that hard to do as it is rather not difficult to get absolutely engrossed in the story. I'm not quite sure I've ever read a story written quite like this one. R. James Stevens really nailed it.

Eric says

In Clarity (Epsilon #1), R James Stevens has taken a challenging world and tossed us into it. This combines military fiction with a complex dystopian future.

Here we mostly follow Brigadier and the people in his life (present and past) through the events that molded them into who they have become.

These are shown via a combination of the current world with lots of flashbacks that show how things happened or got to today.

Although we get a good look at the world, it is clear that there is much more for us and the characters to explore in book 2.

Kayla Krantz says

With action and suspense, the author tells a tale of the bleak future, using scenes from the past to illustrate who the characters are now compared to who they used to be. Combining a mix of military fiction and dystopia, this story is a page turner—even for someone like me who doesn't typically read books in the military fiction genre. I admit that the story was a bit confusing at the beginning, and because of the time jumps, I originally had a hard time getting into it, but afterward, once the foundation of worldbuilding had been set, I really got into the story and found myself rooting for the characters, for Clive and Steele especially.

A.A. Bavar says

Mr. Stevens is clearly a motivated writer and his novel, Clarity, is an ambitious piece that shows great potential. The story is complex with many twists and turns - at times, too many - and interesting and well defined characters. It does, however, suffer from over-telling, exaggerated use of flashbacks, and awkward writing.

Is the story original? At its core, no not really. It's a dystopian novel with two factions vying for power, a hero in turmoil trying to find himself while saving his loved ones and battling to save the world, and a super villain intent on killing them all.

The novel follows the story of Brigadier, a former Epsilon Warriors major, who is struggling with his current mental state and wants to die to get relief. As the story unravels, through a series of flashbacks, we learn about his strained relationship with his best friend, Clive, the fact that his headaches and mental transformations are a side-effect of experimental drugs that were given to him while in the EW, his childhood and relationship with his father, and a lost love.

Are the characters well developed? Yes and no. Although each character has a distinct voice and backstory, the amount of "unknowns" and the slow revelation of facts didn't let me truly get involved with their situation. I understand that this was supposed to build suspense, but for me it did the exact opposite. I never felt like I was in the story.

Does the story move at a good pace and keep you wanting more? No to pace, yes to wanting more. This is an action packed story, but the continuous breaks with flashbacks kill the pace. As a reader, I wanted to read more of the present story which is quite intriguing, but was faced with flashbacks every other chapter! Talk about a buzz kill!

Done correctly, flashbacks should as quickly as possible fill in the pieces of information behind a character's motive; the backstory that justifies the action in the present. But even so, they should be used sparingly because they break the tension of the moment, the action sequence that is presently going on. This is because even the best-written flashback comes with an inherent disadvantage: by definition what's being presented is already over, so there is no tension or sense of immediacy. It's just information.

Worst of all, I found myself having to go back and revisit the present story to remember what was happening; especially after long flashbacks. Eventually, I started skimming the flashback chapters.

Is the manuscript well edited? Technically - dialogue structure, formatting, and spelling (despite small errors here and there) - everything looks good. However, I found a lot of problems with continuity, which may be due to the fact that the story is interrupted so frequently. There is also way too much telling and describing of things even after the action shows us. For example, if a character furiously slams his fist on the table, I know he's mad, you don't need to reaffirm that he's mad by telling me. The manuscript would benefit greatly by eliminating repetitious descriptions of characters and reducing the step-by-step descriptions of action and emotion.

There were points in the story that didn't quite make sense, but...

Do you recommend this book? I definitely would after a re-edit.

Bill Laughlin says

I received this book as a GoodReads free copy in exchange for an honest review.

Mr. Stevens I hope that you take the time to read your reviews on your book Clarity. I say that in the hopes that you are setting down right now and writing the second book in this series.

This book is described as Science Fiction which in some ways I would agree. But to me the main theme is the characters and how they interact with each other in the story. I really enjoyed the way that Mr. Stevens entangled the three main characters and their struggles with each other. In one of the reviews for this book a reader said that this is a thinking man's book and I would have to agree highly.

There are a lot of flashbacks in time with the different characters. At first this was a little confusing but then you get an understanding as to the reason of how these people become who they are.

I would highly recommend this to fans of sci-fi or to anyone that really enjoys a book that explores the relationship of people and their desires to make one another believe in them.

So Mr. Stevens after reading the last page I know that you have more to say so get busy writing.
