

review: Futureshocks

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- *From:* Roger Bagula <rlbagulatftn@xxxxxxxxx>
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Futureshocks

Edited by Lou Anders. Roc, \$14.95 paper (336p) ISBN 0-451-46065-0

A few of the 16 contributions to Anders's all-original anthology about the dark side of tomorrow simply present a Big Scary Idea with little storytelling; others offer the kind of thoughtful, full-bodied admonitions that SF can do so well. Sean McMullen's Engines of Arcadia, " for example, reconsiders the devolutionary theory of H.G. Wells's The Time Machine: what if humans weren't doomed to degenerate but instead could choose to survive happily for all time? Another side of humanity comes into play in Adam Roberts's "Man You Gotta Go," the story of a chirpy, helpful AI that gives us all the chance to explore the universe if we're willing to give up our physical bodies. The nature of a "human" soul is tested in Robert Charles Wilson's "The Cartesian Theater," in which artificial constructions die in agony for the audience's amusement. These writers stress human potential for bad choices. Evidently, we are the scariest aspect of the future. Read in short stretches, this volume offers a worthwhile assortment of jolting warnings. Anders (Live Without a Net) is the editorial director of Pyr, Prometheus Books' SF imprint. (Jan.)

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