FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Clarion Review ★★★★☆ THRILLER

Access Point: A Psychological Thriller

Tom Gabbay
JMS Books (Apr 5, 2020)
Softcover $8.99 (217pp)
978-0-578-66695-2

Access Point is a clever mystery novel whose high technology proves powerful when it comes to solving inhumane crimes.

Tom Gabbay's high-tech mystery thriller *Access Point* combines classic genre tropes with near dystopian technology.

Set in London, the fog-shrouded capital of literary crime, the novel concerns the knifing murder of an American student, Mia. The case is taken up by Scotland Yard and Detective Inspector Sarah Boyd. The investigation is less than perfect, so Mia's landlady, Ula, who's also a neurological specialist, decides to pursue the truth on her own. Ula creates a novel software program that digs deep into Mia's past and finds much more than her killer.

Much of the novel follows Ula's investigation, which is focused on developing a more complex picture of Mia. Mia is revealed to have been conflicted, with a sordid past that played a role in her murder. The book also examines her life online, drawing upon the dichotomy of in-the-flesh interactions versus internet communication.

The writing is sharp, straight to the point, and full of great characterizations. Ula's genius is balanced out by her humanity, especially her pain over Mia's death. Ula's investigation also exposes her anxieties about the potentially dangerous software program that she deploys. The program "mates" with Mia's hard drive, allowing her to uncover the dead woman's secret life, further fueling her anxiety. Themes of memory and nightmares predominate. The killer is drawn from a rogues' gallery, their identity impossible to guess, no matter how astute the audience is.

Mia is present as a mystery, too—a cipher who is dead for the majority of the book. Ula's examination of Mia's dark secrets reveals an eternal truth: no one can ever fully know another person's desires, experiences, or private thoughts. Boyd is portrayed with sympathy—an honest investigator, even though the police investigation is a bungled mess. The book goes into sociology and contemporary politics, too, discussing London's current knife crime epidemic.

The interplay between technology and police procedures is handled well, with insights into both that most civilians are unaware of. Too much of the action takes place in cyberspace, though, leading to some estrangement from its excitement. Still, Ula's investigation is fascinating and realistic, and her use of internet technology holds attention.

Access Point is a clever mystery novel whose high technology proves powerful when it comes to solving inhumane crimes.

BENJAMIN WELTON (April 24, 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.