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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Charlie Stone and His Greatest Adventure

Charles Reece
CreateSpace
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In Charles Reece's debut sci-fi adventure, Charlie Stone straddles the past, present, and future. The novel chronicles Charlie sharing stories with his son, Curtis, in the present day, incidents in Charlie's boyhood in 1969, and his subsequent time-travel to the year 2269.

The author skillfully makes the past come alive for young readers, especially the fervor surrounding the first man on the moon. For an audience likely accustomed to modern-day technology, Reece's descriptive language captures the excitement that eleven-year-old Charlie and his best friend, Danny, share as they watch the moon-walk on a small black-and-white TV. While the events of 1969 are far removed from today's generation of young readers, they nonetheless will be able to relate to the main character who, with his best friend at his side, waits in great anticipation on a momentous event.

It is also refreshing that the author frequently alludes to Charlie's Cherokee ancestry, but keeps him free of any Native-American stereotypes. Indeed, Charlie's heritage promises to be important for reasons that are never quite made clear in this novel, but hopefully will be revealed in the sequel.

Time-travel lovers may be disappointed by how long it takes Reece to get Charlie to the future. Once Charlie does reach the year 2269, however, it's a rollicking joyride of androids, self-driving cars, and virtual reality sure to entertain any reader. Charlie's relationship with his android father figure, Art, is fully developed, much more so than his relationship with either his parents or his best friend back in 1969. Even so, it is odd that Charlie feels little homesickness for his own time, especially given how much emphasis Reece places on the protagonist's friendship with Danny. Charlie's friendship in 2269, with a girl named Sissie, pales in comparison.

In any case, the slow spots with Sissie won't matter to action-loving time-travel buffs because the plot moves fairly quickly once Charlie arrives in the future. Readers will keep turning pages to see how Charlie handles each challenge. In turn, they will enjoy watching Charlie face each situation with ingenuity and aplomb.

Reece delivers bits of slapstick humor that will surely draw chuckles from his audience. And while the plot relies too much on facts that pop up a bit too conveniently, that will not keep readers from enjoying this fun-filled, fast-paced tale.

JILL ALLEN (December 7, 2011)

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