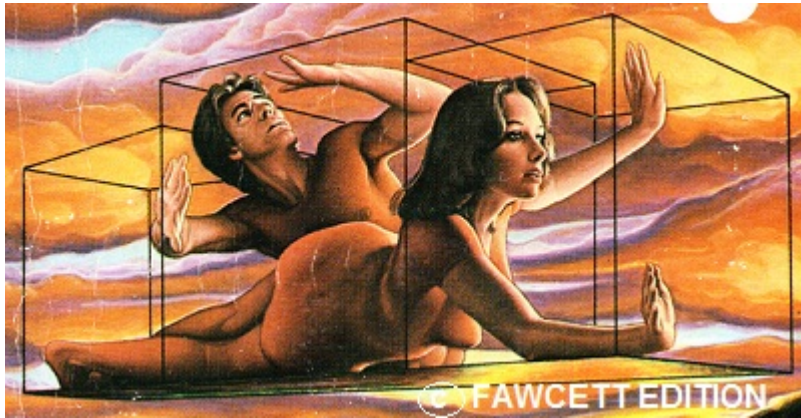


This perfect book

David Boaz



Ira Levin should be remembered for his dystopian novel This Perfect Day, which ranks alongside Brave New World and 1984

Ira Levin - who died this week at the age of 78 - was known for his bestselling novels Rosemary's Baby, The Stepford Wives and The Boys from Brazil, all of which became successful movies. But another of his novels, This Perfect Day, deserves to be better known than it is. Indeed, given its tight plot about a revolt against an all-providing world government, I don't know why it hasn't gained the attention of Hollywood.

As libertarian historian Ralph Raico wrote in The American Enterprise back in 1998:

This Perfect Day belongs to the genre of "dystopian" or anti-utopian novels, like Huxley's Brave New World and Orwell's 1984. Yet it is more satisfying than either. Not only is its futuristic technology more plausible (computers, of course), but the extrapolation of the dominant ideology of the end of the 20th century is entirely convincing.

The novel is set 141 years after the Unification, the establishment of a world government guided by a central computer. The computer, Uni, provides all the members of the human race with everything they need - food, shelter, employment, psychotherapy, and monthly "treatments" that include vaccines, contraceptives, tranquilizers, a drug to prevent messy beard growth, and a medication that reduces aggressiveness and limits the sex drive.

It's a perfect world, as described in the children's rhyme that opens the book:

Christ, Marx, Wood and Wei, Led us to this perfect day. Marx, Wood, Wei and Christ, All but Wei were sacrificed. Wood, Wei, Christ and Marx, Gave us lovely schools and parks. Wei, Christ, Marx and Wood, Made us humble, made us good.

Everyone loves Uni, which gives them everything they could want. And the great medical advances of the Unification ensure that everyone lives to the maximum human lifespan of 62. No one questions the wisdom and benevolence of Uni. Except Chip, whose crotchety grandfather gave him that secret and illegal nickname and urged him to try to think about things just before he got his monthly treatment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/nov/16/thisperfectbook>