

Music Review: Dsblade – The Jupiter Tape

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

Dsblade, an electronic music producer from NYC, released his debut album *The Jupiter Tape* in November of 2019. It fuses various sonic textures and styles, inspired by 80's music, hip hop, psychedelic electronic, rock, and artists like Boards of Canada. I discovered this album through an ad I found on Instagram and thought I would listen to it because the featured track sounded cool. I was pleasantly surprised by my discovery.

The tracks are short, the longest being three minutes and 27 seconds long. Each one shares a similar feeling: a driving beat with synthesizers providing soundscapes in the background. Most of the songs seem to be no more than simple experimental sketches; they keep your attention, but it is easy to pick them apart, not necessarily being a bad thing at all. In minimalistic style, less is more, and my guess is that this is the nature of the music.

Despite this, I wish Dsblade would go more in-depth with his ideas, though I suppose there is not tons of room for that considering the album is already 38 minutes, a standard length for an LP. Some are more interesting than others, like “River Bottom,” which is one of my favorite tracks. For the most part, though, it seems like there is no development in the songs, and many of them end abruptly. Unfortunately, this leaves me with a feeling of wanting more. The track “Alien Storms,” whether intentional or not, uses this as an element to keep the track going. The track stops at about the 2:12 mark but then resumes a moment later, keeping the listener in suspense.

What keeps me most interested is his use and experimentality of timbre. While he certainly sticks closely to the 70s and 80s aesthetic, there is evidence of exploration, which I can appreciate. Another thing I appreciate is how well it is produced. Overall the mix is solid. It is easy to tell where the different sounds are coming from, and it is easy to hear all the sounds, which is important. Everything is in its place and perfectly balanced, as all things should be.

These are my highlights from this album.

The opening track, “Girl’s [sic] Like You,” deceptively opens the album with a soft ambient soundscape before plunging into a beat. It is a nice intro to what is to come. “Are You Surprised” is one of the few non-instrumental tracks, and uses some very interesting, strangely nostalgic sounds. “River Bottom” has a nice rock groove to it and uses cool harmonic properties of some of the sounds. “Liquid Rocks” is the song that was on the ad I

found and is probably my favorite track on *The Jupiter Tape*. It deeply reminds me of the work of Boards of Canada. If that duo had gone into mainstream dance music, I think they would’ve produced music that would sound a lot like that song. “Blast Off” is a highlight because of its use of texture painting, in which there is a big dramatic tempo-slowing shift between the “pre-blast off” section and “blast off” section, and it uses ascending and descending tones in portamento, which paint the picture of this intense flight.

Overall, this was an enjoyable album, though the endings of songs are a little jarring, creating a strange stop/start feeling throughout it. I think people who appreciate simple but driving and sonically interesting music would enjoy this album. I am interested to see where he decides to take his music, whether he decides to go down a more mainstream path or continue experimenting.

Scythe Book Review

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

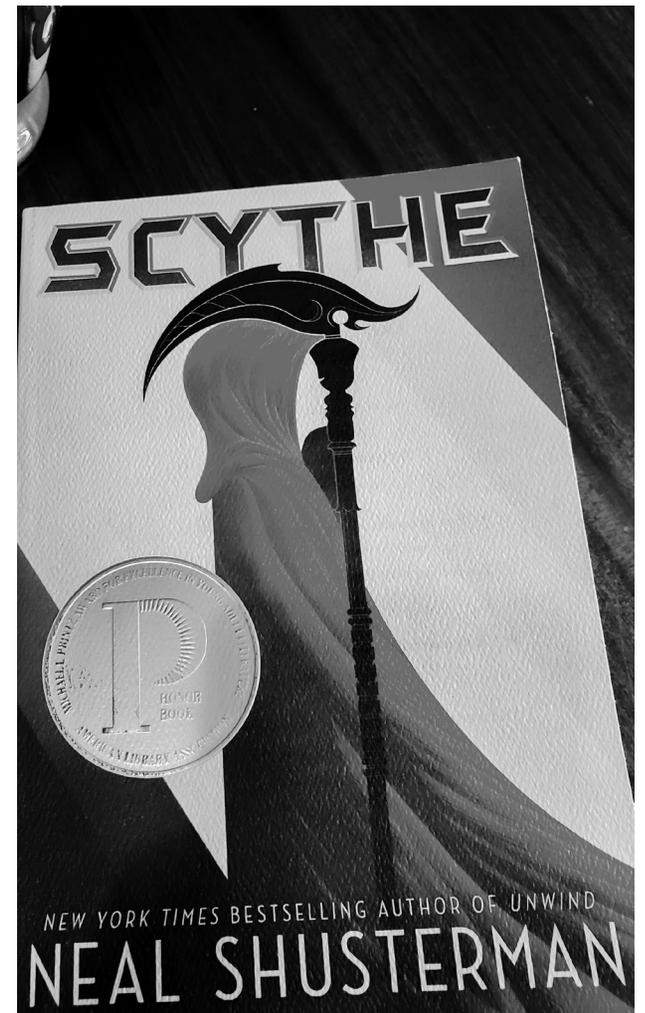
The *New York Times* bestselling author of *Unwind*, Neal Shusterman, creates a world where humanity has conquered everything, including death. In the first book, *Scythe*, “thou shall kill” is one of the commandments used in the futuristic society where the human race is immortal. The only ones who can control the human population around the world are Scythes. Their job is to kill people by random selection based on death ratios. The Scythes call killings gleanings because they are maintaining the balance of life and death. This book has shown that living in a perfect world doesn’t exist because of the hard price it pays to the rest of society.

Main characters Citra Terranova and Rowan Damisch are brought together by Honorable Scythe Faraday to become his apprentices in learning the “art” of taking lives. Once scythes have chosen their apprentices, they must attempt to complete the tasks given to them. If they fail, they will return to their normal lives. The Vernal Conclave determines whether or not an apprentice will pass through to the next steps into becoming a Scythe. Citra and Rowan face challenges along the way; their thoughts are expressed throughout the novel with gleaning journals along with other scythes throughout the conclusion of each chapter.

Most Scythes glean because they have to, but some enjoy killing their selected targets. Honorable Scythe Goddard is the antagonist of this first trilogy series. He takes Rowan under his wing into becoming a scythe a different way than how Honorable Scythe Faraday taught him about the “art” of gleaning people and selecting them.

Honorable Scythe Curie shows Citra how to become a better scythe than Goddard and shares secrets relating to the times when she first became a scythe along sided Faraday. I would recommend this book to those who enjoy reading thrillers and futuristic genres.

Overall I would rate this novel five stars for its brilliant storytelling and leaving the audience thinking about characters in unexpected ways. All the scythes also choose their names after a meaning either from a famous person from history or other reasons. After enjoying the first book, I would recommend reading the two sequels. I also thought the book was well thought out for Shusterman’s idea of a perfect society that has its flaws within the system. In addition, the audience should also look into other books by the author because they can provoke thought in the futuristic sense.



A review on Neal Shusterman's *Scythe*. CREDIT: Davina Bellinger