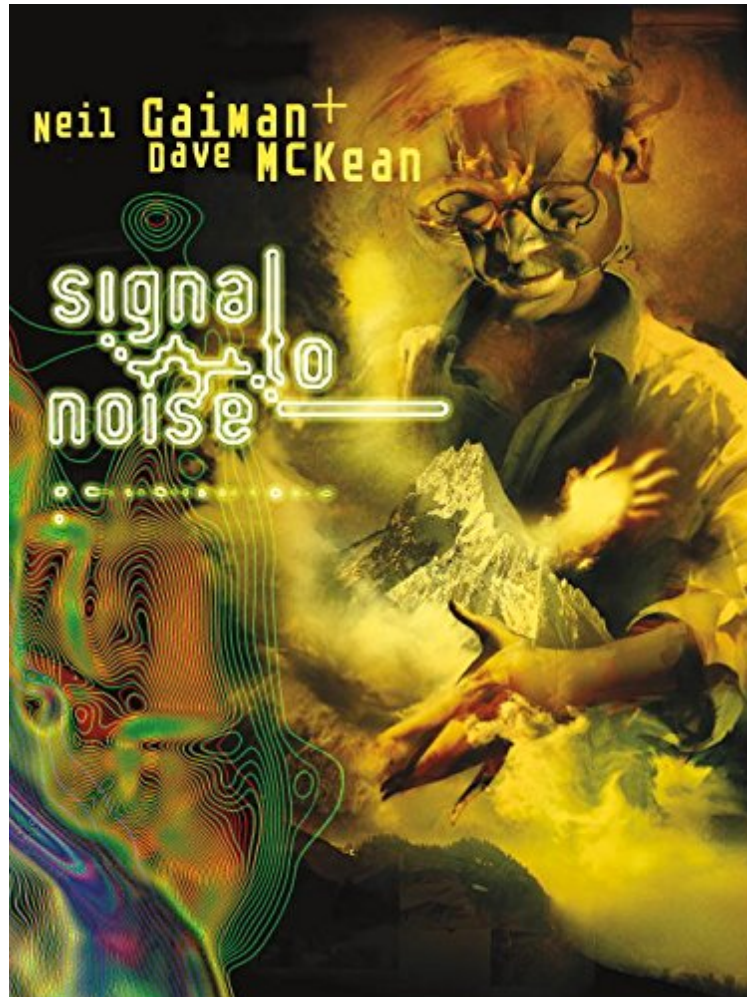


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Signal to Noise

Neil Gaiman

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Neil Gaiman : Signal to Noise before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Signal to Noise:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A beautifully realized meditation on death and memory. By Clint Hale Previously published on my blog, www.Darkofthings.com At first glance Signal to Noise is not a horror story. For one thing, it contains none of the genres familiar trappings. For another, it reads more like a mans last confession than a terrifying plunge into the realm of the weird. Despite these differences, the graphic novel offers one of the darker, more unsettling narratives I've come across. At the onset of the story we are introduced to the narrator, an accomplished film director recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. He tells us he has been given only months to live and must begin to put his things in order. He instead chooses to disconnect from the outside world, limiting his interactions with other people as much as possible. As the days turn to months, and his mortality looms ever closer, he

resolves to devote himself to the only thing he has left: creating his magnum opus - a film titled Apocatastasis. Only, with no time to actually produce the film, he begins to shoot the movie in his head. From this moment we are treated with a meditation on living and dying, escapism and what value our creative endeavors have after we're gone. In short, the narrator is no longer just facing his own death, he is also facing the death of an idea, perhaps the idea, and by extension his legacy as a creator and a human being. The book opens on a scene inside the narrator's head. He describes a group of villagers in the year 999 A.D. that come to the realization their world is about to end with the coming of the millennium. The colors McKean uses in these recurring daydream sequences are muted, relying heavily on black and dark blue in contrast to the yellows and grays of the real world. Interestingly, as you continue to read, the colors from the dream world begin to bleed into the real world, showing a subtle shift in the emotional proximity of the man to his hopeless actors. This bleeding of color eventually culminates in the man imagining himself as one of the people in the film. He soon retreats to their snow-covered hills, joining them as they wait for death. The voice of the narrator is integral to the story, and Gaiman proves more than capable of giving us the necessary insights into the character. He shows us our world through a drastically different lens than we were used to, and it is very easy to sympathize with the narrator as he waxes philosophical about his approaching death. If you read this story casually, which is not advised, you are likely to miss the horror embedded in its narrative. While the plot is mostly overt, the grief the man experiences for his own death is subtle and relies on you being empathic enough to relate to it. If you take time to excavate the themes and the meaning behind the words you will find a gem buried in the bleakness, a light amidst the terror of dying while the world carries on without you. Signal to Noise tells us that stories can live forever, so long as there are people left to hear them, and that a time will come when they must exist without us. And we die, because things that matter end. This is a subtle, introspective story that offers the reader an exceptional blend of light and dark. Fans of the Sandman series will feel right at home, and anyone who appreciates McKean's unique art style will find plenty to gawk at. Highly recommended for those interested in a short, albeit haunting experience.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So Very Different By Travis Starnes The story in this book is simple; a middle aged film director has been diagnosed with cancer. The story takes place almost entirely in his own flat, or inside his own mind as he writes a story of the turn of the millennium, the 999 one. It has to be said that this book came out original in shorts in 1989 so the whole millennium craze was quite big around that time. The problem with the film is that it is one he will never make as he is refusing treatment and he only has months to live. Normally I would not spoil the ending, but obviously he dies and you know that is the end point from the moment you start reading. There is quite a lot after he dies about what happens to his story and the places it goes and I do wonder how much of it was put in because of the original success of this book. There are a mass of editor's notes at the beginning detailing its original publication in 1992 as a collection, through plays, radio dramas, rewrites and redraws and on to this second publishing. So when you read through the final few pages it almost blurs that line between the story in the story and the reality of this book and its own story as it has evolved in the real world. If you enjoy a book that gives a lot of re-reading value, one that you can spend minutes on each page just looking into the art, rereading the words and trying to find hidden meanings, then you will utterly love this. However if you like to read purely for enjoyment and like dynamic art that flows with the writing, neither one requiring effort to fit into the narrative, then you will hate this and even worse, will probably not understand it. From my personal perspective, I am stuck right in the middle. I can appreciate what this is trying to achieve and I think it manages it very well, but it simply is not my idea of a fun read. What will stay with me are the last two panels before it goes into the epilogue Millennium and it would have been a better ending had it stopped right there.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Redefines graphic novel, but you could expect no less from Gaiman and McKean By Wayne A McCoy Signal To Noise kind of defies or reinvents the meaning of graphic novel, or maybe morphs it into something even more artistic. This is hardly news to anyone familiar with the work of Dave McKean and Neil Gaiman and their collaborative work over the years. Signal to Noise is actually an older work that is seeing new light here. It's the story of a filmmaker who finds out he has cancer. He's working on a film that deals with an apocalypse. The themes of worlds ending is strong in this book. When your world falls apart, do you let your creativity die? Do you try to finish something that might outlive you? It's a shorter work, but it packs an incredible emotional punch. McKean's work illustrates, but enhances the story. There is an entire story being told in the art alone. Gaiman's work is haunting and memorable. I've been wanting to read this one for a few years and I'm so glad I finally did. I was given a review copy of this graphic novel by Diamond Book Distributors and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to read this excellent and enduring work.

A film director is dying of cancer. His greatest film would have told the story of a European village as the last hour of 999 AD approached bringing Armageddon. Now that story will never be told. But he's still working it out in his head, making a film that no one will ever see.

About the Author Neil Gaiman was born in Hampshire, UK, and now lives in the United States near Minneapolis. As a child he discovered his love of books, reading, and stories, devouring the works of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, James Branch Cabell, Edgar Allan Poe, Michael Moorcock, Ursula K. Le Guin, Gene Wolfe, and G. K. Chesterton. A

self-described "feral child who was raised in libraries," Gaiman credits librarians with fostering a lifelong love of reading: "I wouldn't be who I am without libraries. I was the sort of kid who devoured books, and my happiest times as a boy were when I persuaded my parents to drop me off in the local library on their way to work, and I spent the day there. I discovered that librarians actually want to help you: They taught me about interlibrary loans." Neil Gaiman's work has been honored with many awards internationally, including the Newbery and Carnegie Medals. His books and stories have also been honored with four Hugos, two Nebulas, one World Fantasy Award, four Bram Stoker Awards, six Locus Awards, two British Science Fiction Association Awards, one British Fantasy Award, three Geffens, one International Horror Guild Award, and two Mythopoeic Awards. Dave McKean is an illustrator, photographer, comic book artist, graphic designer, filmmaker, and musician. His work incorporates drawing, painting, photography, collage, found objects, digital art, and sculpture. After a trip to New York in 1986, during which he failed to find work as a comics artist, McKean met writer Neil Gaiman and the pair collaborated on a short graphic novel of disturbing childhood memories, *Violent Cases*, published in 1987. This was followed in 1988 by a *Black Orchid* miniseries (again with Gaiman) and *Hellblazer* covers for DC Comics. Beginning in 1989 he produced the covers for Gaiman's celebrated series *The Sandman* as well as all its collected editions and many of its spin-offs; and the Batman graphic novel, *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*, with writer Grant Morrison (1989). McKean has gone on to collaborate further with Neil Gaiman in both print and film.