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The Thrilling Adventures Of Lovelace And Babbage: The (Mostly) True Story Of The First Computer (Pantheon Graphic Novels)



Synopsis

THE THRILLING ADVENTURES OF LOVELACE AND BABBAGE . . . in which Sydney Padua transforms one of the most compelling scientific collaborations into a hilarious series of adventures. Meet Victorian London's most dynamic duo: Charles Babbage, the unrealized inventor of the computer, and his accomplice, Ada, Countess of Lovelace, the peculiar protoprogrammer and daughter of Lord Byron. When Lovelace translated a description of Babbage's plans for an enormous mechanical calculating machine in 1842, she added annotations three times longer than the original work. Her footnotes contained the first appearance of the general computing theory, a hundred years before an actual computer was built. Sadly, Lovelace died of cancer a decade after publishing the paper, and Babbage never built any of his machines. But do not despair! The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage presents a rollicking alternate reality in which Lovelace and Babbage do build the Difference Engine and then use it to build runaway economic models, battle the scourge of spelling errors, explore the wilder realms of mathematics, and, of course, fight crime—for the sake of both London and science. Complete with extensive footnotes that rival those penned by Lovelace herself, historical curiosities, and never-before-seen diagrams of Babbage's mechanical, steam-powered computer, The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage is wonderfully whimsical, utterly unusual, and, above all, entirely irresistible. (With black-and-white illustrations throughout.)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had been seeing this book around, but I was really hesitant to pick it up. Why? Well, as a woman in software engineering, I'm painfully aware of what a controversial figure Ada Lovelace is. She's been hailed as the inventor of computer programming -- which has led to some incredibly virulent backlash, accusing her of having been some sort of hack who merely copied down other people's ideas without even really understanding them herself. Now, let's not kid ourselves. If a man had written the article Lovelace wrote, There's no way we'd see the same sorts of ferocious efforts to prove him incompetent. OTOH, if it had been a man, we hardly would have heard about him at all. He'd probably be accepted by some as the "father of computer programming"... in kind of a footnotey, nobody-cares kinda way. But in my line of work, it's dangerous to talk about sexism unless you want a ton of it to rain down on your head, so I wasn't terribly interested in miring myself in this controversy. Thus a book that looked like it was probably a sunny-and-dry retelling of team Lovelace's side of the story didn't jump out at me as something that would be appealing. Boy was I wrong!! Surprisingly, the author used the oldest trick in the book for dealing with an acrimonious controversy: present the evidence. The primary sources. And then even-handedly discuss the controversy in light of the evidence. Now, if that sounds more boring to you than "a sunny-and-dry retelling of team Lovelace's side of the story," here's the genius of it -- it's not boring at all -- it's wildly fun and entertaining!! Quite sincerely, I think the author of this book has invented a new genre, and a brilliant one at that.

The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Computer by Sydney Padua is an irreverent and quirky view of what could have been the most outstanding scientific collaboration that didn't happen. Padua tells her tale in a graphic comic format with artwork reminiscent of early turn of the century (the 1900s) political cartoons. Its fun! Its awesome! Its over indulgent cheesecake for the geek universe! Charles Babbage is Victorian London's unrecognized inventor of what would become the modern day computer with his plans for a monstrous mechanical calculating machine. Ada Lovelace is the Countess of Lovelace and daughter of the mad and brilliant poet, Lord Byron. Ada Lovelace translates a description of Babbage's calculating machine with annotations that were three times longer than the original plans. These footnotes from Lovelace actually contain the first known general computing theory, a century before the first actual computer was built! Unfortunately Lovelace passed away before her paper was ever published and Babbage never built his brilliant machine. Sydney Padua creates an alternate reality where Lovelace and Babbage create their awesome calculating machine. A behemoth that grows and grows in steam

powered engines, and gears, and analytics, and doo dads and just freakin' awesome stuff. They will open up and explore the wild and untamed dimensions of mathematics! They will create economic models to stave off depressions! They will battle the demons of spelling errors! And for the Queen herself, create dot matrix kittens! Tongue in cheek perhaps, totally geeky surely, but fun all the same. Original. Thought provoking. Full of "what if" and untapped potential.

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