

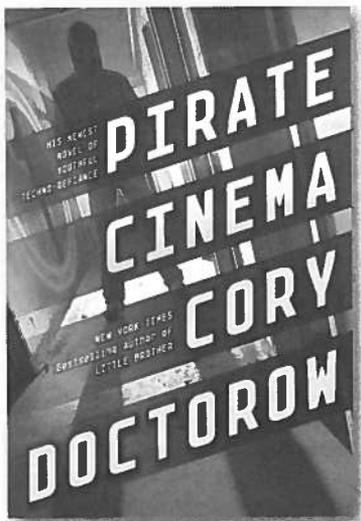


Pirate Cinema by Cory Doctorow
Tor Teen, 384 pages, \$19.99
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<http://craphound.com/pc/>

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Most content that you would find in this magazine looks at the social and technological impact of living our lives with computers. This piece is a bit different. I wanted to write a review for a book I recently read that I would say is highly entwined with hacker culture. The book is called *Pirate Cinema* and the author is Cory Doctorow. Hopefully, most people reading *2600* would know who Doctorow is. The important part here is that he's worked with the Electronic Frontier Foundation as well as with the Creative Commons movement. In case you haven't seen it, he presents an amazing talk on "The Coming Civil War over General Purpose Computing" (<http://boingboing.net/2012/08/23/civilwar.html>) that anyone who owns a computing device should watch. Alongside all of this work, Doctorow also writes young adult fiction. In October 2012, he published *Pirate Cinema*.

First and foremost, I'm not a fan of young adult fiction. Most of it ends up being angst-y and plays against teenage anxiety. This story was different than that. It centers on a British teenager who gets his family's Internet connection shut down for illegally downloading copyrighted material and then it takes off from there. The story is set in the near future and is equal parts story and philosophical discussion on downloading, big media owning politicians, and the right to remix. It also delves into topics that align with the hacker mindset. For example, the hero of the story builds himself a new laptop with help from another character



and the scene plays out with a discussion of how to really learn about how a computer works. The hero is told: "Your problem is, you're trying to understand it. You need to just do it." And with that, the hero moves forward understanding that he needs to approach with curiosity and intrigue.

The future depicted in the novel is a very frightening one that hackers work hard at every day to make sure doesn't happen. It is a society where all downloads are monitored by the government and people are sent to jail for the slightest infraction. On second thought, it isn't that far off from the world we are in today. If you have any friends who don't really get what hacking is about, tell them to read this book to get a great introduction on why it's important. I won't delve any further into the plot but I wouldn't give away much if I said the ending is gut-wrenching.

Another thing to note is that Doctorow distributes all of his books as free downloads from his site (<http://craphound.com/pc/download/>). In this case free means free of cost, and free of DRM. This is a great arrangement that lets you, the potential reader, at least sample the book before deciding to buy it. Which, if you do decide to buy, it will be made available to you free of DRM (sounds like another publication I know of that will sell you its content with no strings attached). I'd recommend the book, even at the very least to see a world where using the Internet like we do today is seen as a crime.