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Praise for *Dancing Barefoot*:

Dancing Barefoot is Genuinely Astonishing.

by Monte Cook

D&D Writer/Geek

<http://www.montecook.com>

Wil Wheaton accomplishes something in his new book, *Dancing Barefoot*, that is genuinely astonishing. He weaves true life tales that are both geeky and emotional at the same time. When the world thinks of geeks, they think of technically minded nerds who know more about hard drives and Star Wars than about affairs of the heart or real feelings. But we know they're all wrong. *Dancing Barefoot* speaks for all of us geeks, and embraces that introspective, quietly thoughtful side that we all have, while never once abandoning us to go sit with the cool kids. It's funny, it's poignant, and it's real.

This Guy Is A Good Storyteller

by Steve Jackson

<http://www.sjgames.com/ill/archives.html?m=May&y=2003#107>

I just finished reading a book. I hadn't intended to read the whole thing tonight . . . actually, I just wanted to make sure the PDF was good, and see how long it was, so I could decide where "Read Wil's Book" would go on The List. But when I opened the PDF . . . well, why not read a bit?

So I read a few pages, and it was a good story. Sad, but good. It was real. And I knew how he felt, not because I've had that experience . . . no doubt I will someday, but I haven't yet . . . but because this guy is a good storyteller.

So I read the next one. And the next one (which is about when he was 15, and has the Car Wars Deluxe Edition in it). And the next. And then I was in the last story, which is the long one about a SF convention. And there was no way I was going to quit reading at that point.

And then I was done. And you know something? When I started reading, I was pretty used up. It had

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been a long day, and not a good one. But when I finished, I felt better. (OK, I'm a geek, I'll say it: I got some hit points back.) Because this is a real guy, with a real life, and he tells good stories.

If you read wilwheaton.net, you know what I'm talking about. For the rest of you: Wil Wheaton . . . who long ago, as a kid, played a kid named Wesley on TV . . . is still acting, but he's also writing. A lot of people read his blog at wilwheaton.net. He's also written two books: the autobiographical *Just A Geek*, which will be out soon, and *Dancing Barefoot*, which is the one that made my day. It's out now. You can get it from his publishing site, Monolith Press. This is me saying you should read it. There are a lot of bad books out there. This is a good one.

Shedding a Skin Undeserved

by J.D. "Illiad" Frazer

<http://www.userfriendly.org>

For quite some time, the name and person of Wil Wheaton were equated with the Star Trek:TNG character of Wesley Crusher. Wesley was, by all accounts, deeply reviled by a significant portion of Star Trek fandom. This vilification carried over to Wil Wheaton the actor, and as I witnessed, was done with some glee.

This kind of behaviour is hardly uncommon in the world of entertainment. Art of any sort is often considered a pure reflection of the artist's character instead of a demonstration of that artist's depth and willingness to take risks. Of course, it's far easier to follow the drooling mob in their demonization of someone than it is to carefully cull the rhetoric from the truth, and thus the less perceptive (or lazier) members of geekdom will by default refuse to even consider the idea that the actor behind Wesley Crusher is more than one-dimensional.

And I did say "geekdom;" this book proves that Wil is a geek through-and-through. He demonstrates through his prose his curiosity and that he is possessed of a quirky and often self-deprecating sense of humour. The five short stories in Wil's book are strung together in an artful manner, giving the reader random glimpses here and there of a jigsaw puzzle that, when completed, deliver a clear picture of a complex artist with very common human feelings. The Wil Wheaton of *Dancing Barefoot* is a man who has learned hard lessons in humility, insecurity, sadness and joy, often at the hands of an unforgiving public. And yet, he clearly emerges from his experiences with greater strength and a greater understanding of himself.

It is an unfortunate irony that those who would most benefit from reading this book are unlikely to do so, as they are the same ones carrying the most prejudices towards Wil. On the other hand, those who understand the simple difference between an artist and his art will discover Wil's stories are a delightful read, laced with a sentimental yet amused tone, written with both humour and dignity. Beneath all of it in quiet repose is an artist who genuinely wants to do what he was meant to do.

Dancing Barefoot isn't just a book about a famous geek seeking answers to his own questions, it's a lens with which we can all see the world of celebrity in a real light. Recommended!

Dancing Barefoot with Wil Wheaton

By Christopher Holland

B-Movies Quarterly

<http://www.b-movies.org>

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If you've followed the recent phenomenon of "blogging" at all, you've probably run across the weblog (online journal) of Wil Wheaton at wilwheaton.net. Wheaton, best known to film fans as Wesley "The Boy" Crusher from Star Trek: The Next Generation, has reinvented his public persona from oft-derided teen idol to a kind of affable head-geek. From his web site, the thirty-something actor and writer dispatches frequent updates about his working and personal life, his memories and thoughts on the Trek experience, and the technology that fascinates him and his geek brethren.

After nearly two years of blogging, Wheaton compiled and edited an autobiography from his blog entitled *Just a Geek*, to be released in June 2003. Several of the stories which "didn't fit" into *Geek* have been collected in a smaller companion volume, *Dancing Barefoot*, which is now available from Wheaton's publishing company, Monolith Press (www.monolithpress.com). The legions of Trek fans who have rediscovered Wheaton as a guy much like themselves, as well as those weblog readers who enjoy Wil's humor but don't know the difference between trilitium and tribbles, will find *Barefoot* irresistible. Those with only a casual interest in Wheaton but familiar with Trek will find the book's showpiece, "The Saga of Spongebob Vegas Pants," well worth reading. Wheaton's conversational, intimate writing style may even convince them to read the rest of the book. Cartoon illustrations provided by Ben Claassen III are an excellent complement to the casual writing style.

Barefoot begins with four short pieces, essentially vignettes of days (or even moments) in the author's life. These range from the amusing (ruminations on teenaged lust and paths untaken) to the melancholy ("Houses in Motion," a paean to Wheaton's deceased great aunt), and one needn't be told that they were culled from journal entries, because they very much read that way. The best is "Houses" -- although it sometimes ranges into maudlin territory, it is also the most courageous writing in the book. Wheaton's generation has been raised on a diet of pop culture and cynicism, and it's invigorating -- if somewhat startling -- to see someone of that generation openly expressing such feelings of devotion and despair.

The man who spent his formative years aboard the starship Enterprise departs from the short form for the final and most engrossing portion of the book, the aforementioned "Spongebob Vegas Pants." It's the chronicle of a Star Trek convention held in Las Vegas, during which Wheaton tolerates the alternately ugly and kindly faces of fandom, but eventually rediscovers his enthusiasm for the Trek universe. Those who have attended such conventions will immediately recognize the fan archetypes, while those who have never been to such an event may decide that they never, ever want to. Fortunately, the story is less about the horrors of being a convention guest and more about the resolution of Wheaton's conflicted personal feelings about having been a part of the Trek phenomenon -- including his unpleasant run-ins with the original captain of the Enterprise, referred to repeatedly as "William F---ing Shatner."

Certain sections of *Dancing Barefoot* could have used another turn under an editor's pen. "Sponge Bob Vegas Pants," in particular, has a few passages that don't serve the story much, but as with the deleted scenes on a special edition DVD, some readers will be grateful for the extra material, regardless of how it affects the overall pace. Frequent atticisms will sustain the rest of the book's audience through the book's slower passages, though, and the author's humility is an effective antidote for the feeling that one might be about to read the memoirs of yet another self-indulgent celebrity blowhard -- which Mr. Wheaton certainly is not.

Given that the engaging *Dancing Barefoot* comprises the material that didn't make it into *Just A Geek*, it feels much like an appetizer to the larger work. Let's hope the main course is as tasty.

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Read this review online at: <http://www.b-movies.org/archives/iss1/db.shtml>

Stories for Geeks and Non-geeks Alike

by John Kovalic

Creator of *Dork Tower*

<http://www.dorktower.com>

It goes without saying that Wil Wheaton is one of the great geek stories of our time. But who'd have thought he could DELIVER some more great geek stories? Well, in the pages of *Dancing Barefoot*, the man behind Wesley Crusher does just that.

Full of humor and humanity, *Dancing Barefoot's* writing style is packed with the kind of easy, natural, honest quality that is so in evidence on Wil's award-winning Blog site. Touching, genuine and funny, these are true-life stories you don't have to be a dork to enjoy. Deeply impressive, I can't wait for his next book!

A Funny, Touching Book, by a Charming, Cool Guy

By James "Kibo" Parry

Internet Icon

<http://www.kibology.com>

Wil is a great writer, and the proof is in the way he makes you smile so easily. Like the magic Stephen King wove in *Stand By Me*, Wil has mastered the art of being funny while being serious, and being serious while being funny. His memories will show you the good along with the bad, and you'll lose track of the time as he takes you to very special places and times, from a 15-year-old's kiss to the bridge of the Enterprise to playing tag with his kids. And most importantly, this book answers the question, "Did Wesley Crusher really wear padded underwear?"

[This is a true story:]

I read this whole book on the train without even remembering that reading on the train makes me carsick. And you know what? I didn't get sick while reading Wil's book. That's just how engrossing it was. I got to destination and realized my butt was asleep, and said to myself, "Wow, that was the most enjoyable train ride ever." Wil's book put a non-stop smile on my face all the way to the last station, and beyond.

[This one's not worth using, but I thought you'd like it:]

Who is Wil Wheaton, and why is he in this book? I came here expecting to read some book about space dork Wesley Crusher, and instead I got this funny, touching book by this charming cool guy named Wil Wheaton. I demand my money back because Wil's not the loser he's supposed to be! *Star Trek* was a lie!

[and just a personal note:]

I was having a very tiring day today but once I started reading this book it became a great day. I finished reading it two hours ago and I'm still smiling.

A Life, A Universe, and Everything in Between

by Syd Mooney

WWdN Reader

I was lucky enough to be among those at Creation's Grand Slam convention in March 2003 when Wil Wheaton brought 10 fresh-from-the-printer copies of *Dancing Barefoot* to his table in the celebrity dealers' room. I got the third of those copies and decided to save reading it until Monday, so I could while away my commute.

The book blew me away.

I had already seen a couple of the stories--"Houses in Motion" and "We Close Our Eyes"--on his website, wilwheaton.net, but that didn't matter. The first had me sniffing back tears and rummaging for a tissue, and yet there was a quiet joy behind his sorrow, joy at having known, loved, and been loved by, the amazing Aunt Val. The second made me wish for a rainstorm and a cuddly wordsmith-geek of my own!

Failing that (darn it!) I finished *Dancing Barefoot* instead.

Wheaton's style is warm and friendly, with a feeling of one good friend waving to another and saying, "Come here, I gotta tell you about this!" He shares his thoughts and feelings with the reader humor, depth, and more than a little of the profound: while "The Saga of SpongeBob Vegas Pants" is, at one level, straightforward reportage of the weird and wonderful world of Star Trek conventions, it is, at a deeper level, the story of the weekend he reclaimed his soul.

Wonderful things can be found in this volume, augmented by Ben Claassen III's spot-on illustrations.

I can't wait for *Just a Geek*.

Step into Wil's World

By Jennifer Waters

WWdN Reader

Dancing Barefoot does what all good writing is meant to do – it draws you into the writer's world for a brief taste of the moment he creates, or in this case, reconstructs from memory. Wil Wheaton invites you to walk around in his life for a little while, and shows you how he has – and hasn't – grown up over the years. As you wander with him through four vignettes and the epic short story of the *Star Trek* convention experience, you can smell the chlorine in Aunt Val's pool and the perfume of the pretty girl; you can feel the cold November rain soaking through your clothes and the cold glare of grumpy Klingons; you can see the world turn to shadow in the setting of the summer sun and the stars go speeding by on the silver screen.

Not being a professional critic, I have the luxury of being completely subjective in "reviewing" this book. In listening to selections read aloud by the author at a recent convention, and particularly in reading the full "Saga of SpongeBob Vegas Pants," I was struck by two things: first, the story is that much funnier if you know that the cab driver has an Indian accent; and second, I was consumed by the same "hypernostalgia" that he vividly describes. When he is fourteen and stepping on to the bridge of the *Enterprise* for the first time, I am fourteen on the other side of the television screen, learning to love *Star Trek* for the first time. Wil and I grew up on different sides of the universe, but were still

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geeky teenagers together under the same Southern California sun.

Even if you weren't born in the seventies, or destined to be a geek, it's likely that you will enjoy, perhaps even relate to, these stories about love and loss and regret and epiphany. So, buy a copy already. And when you get to page 96, don't forget the accent.

"Well-written and thought provoking. Dancing Barefoot will take you back to your own childhood where you will reflect on how growing up turned out for yourself. Duke sucks."

-Drew Curtis

Fark.com

<http://www.fark.com>

"Five true-life anecdotes from Wil's life, which is as weird and interesting a 21st-Century existence as you can imagine."

-Cory Doctorow

Author, Down and Out In The Magic Kingdom

<http://www.craphound.com/down/>