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On the eve of World War Two, Nazi sorcerers come gunning for Cade but kill his family instead. His one path of vengeance is to become an apprentice of The Midnight Front—the Allies' top-secret magickal warfare program—and become a sorcerer himself.

Unsure who will kill him first—his allies, his enemies, or the demons he has to use to wield magick—Cade fights his way through occupied Europe and enemy lines. But he learns too late the true price of revenge will be more terrible than just the loss of his soul—and there's no task harder than doing good with a power born of ultimate evil.

The Midnight Front Details

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From Reader Review The Midnight Front for online ebook

Patrick St-Denis says

After Ian Tregillis' excellent Milkweed Triptych trilogy and Kay Kenyon's compelling Dark Talents series, which both combine magic and World War II, comes David Mack's Dark Arts sequence. And although the premise was similar to those of the other series, I was nevertheless intrigued by The Midnight Front and decided to give it a shot.

Sadly, though Mack's worldbuilding was well-done, this novel wasn't as captivating as the Tregillis or Kenyon books. There is definitely room for improvement in the upcoming sequel, The Iron Codex, yet there is no denying that the opening chapter of the Dark Arts wasn't as interesting as Bitter Seeds and At the Table of Wolves turned out to be.

Here's the blurb:

On the eve of World War Two, Nazi sorcerers come gunning for Cade but kill his family instead. His one path of vengeance is to become an apprentice of The Midnight Front—the Allies' top-secret magickal warfare program—and become a sorcerer himself.

Unsure who will kill him first—his allies, his enemies, or the demons he has to use to wield magick—Cade fights his way through occupied Europe and enemy lines. But he learns too late the true price of revenge will be more terrible than just the loss of his soul—and there's no task harder than doing good with a power born of ultimate evil.

This is an alternate history novel, and David Mack managed to integrate the magical elements of his tale with the important historical details of that period. The author did a great job depicting the atrocities committed during World War II. The Midnight Front covers the six years of the war and takes readers across Europe, from occupied France, to the Auschwitz extermination camp, and to the heart of Nazi Germany. Mack came up with a new magical system in which the practitioners, called karcists, can summon and harness demons from Hell and their powers. The same can be done with angels, but the process is more difficult. These rituals and their repercussions were quite interesting, but too many scenes were only meant to show the protagonists blow stuff up. There were also countless massive info-dumps pertaining to how the magic works and these bogged down the narrative in many a chapter. I understand that Mack needed to convey the information to his readers, but I wish he could have found a way to do it in a more seamless fashion. Such scenes got in the way of the storytelling time and time again, and that definitely took something out of the overall reading experience.

The characterization left a lot to be desired and was the aspect that prevented me from fully enjoying this book. The old trope of the Chosen One was taken up a few notches too far with Cade Martin. And as the central protagonist of The Midnight Front, I just couldn't connect with him. The author made him dense and stubborn to compensate, but that did not quite work. The same could be said of Adair MacRae, the novel's badass alcoholic Gandalf analog. Other than complaining non-stop using old British slang from the 40s and the 50s, the sorcerer's main task was to train Cade before all is lost. His backstory was fascinating, but I felt that his characterization fell rather flat. Stefan and Niko were more likeable, true, but acted in decidedly stupid ways when the fate of mankind was at stake. Anja Kernova was by far the most engaging protagonist of the bunch, yet Mack was unable to make her really shine through. Another problem was the fact that Kein Engel and his acolytes were often depicted as generic bad guys with no substance.

The pace can be very uneven. At times, the rhythm can drag dreadfully. Especially when you get caught up in a chapter featuring one of those huge info-dumps, or an action sequence showcasing Cade and the others duking it out with inferior German karcists. David Mack has a cinematographic eye for detail when it comes to battle scenes and I have a feeling that some readers might enjoy those magical showdowns a lot more than I did. And yet, there is no denying that if you take away all those battles, in the end *The Midnight Front* has little else to offer. On the other hand, sometimes everything was rushed for no apparent reason.

Still, the endgame and the finale were exciting enough. Mack tied everything up a little too neatly for my liking, but I still might read *The Iron Codex* when it gets published. The sequel will deal with the Cold War and I'm curious to see if the author can elevate his game and avoid the pitfalls that plagued this novel.

Some cool concepts and ideas that were spoiled by poor execution and lackluster characterization; that's *The Midnight Front* in a nutshell.

Check out www.fantasyhotlist.blogspot.com for more reviews.

Mary Fan says

Amazing worldbuilding and a fascinating premise. A brutal, unsparing war drama mixed with rich fantasy. Like *Supernatural* on Steroids plus *Inglourious Basterds*.

Here's my (spoiler free) tweetstorm about it: <https://twitter.com/AstralColt/status...>

And my (spoiler free) live tweeting while reading it: <https://twitter.com/AstralColt/status...>

Scott Williams says

I would not have picked this up based on the description or the cover but I am a fan of David Mack's work and I'm glad I read it! In *The Midnight Front*, Mack has created an entertaining blend between a gritty WWII story and a magical adventure tale.

Mack does a good job of unveiling his Dark Arts universe as the story unfolds. Where most writers would probably spend more time at the top of the book delivering a lot of exposition and world-building, Mack lets the reader find their footing along the journey.

There are three characters that could be described as being members of the LGBTQ community. None of them makes out terribly well but Mack treats them with respect and I'm interested to see where their stories go next.

Mack doesn't shy away from describing the horrific tragedies of WWII. This is definitely a war story; in fact, it is two war stories. There is the surface war that everyone is familiar with and then a war of Dark Arts that's waged simultaneously but outside of the knowledge of most people. Mack cleverly gives magical reasons for historical events, blending the two wars together.

Mack has created a really interesting tale of demonology, sorcerers, and heroes. I think it will be fascinating

to see where the series goes next.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum [https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/02/08/...](https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/02/08/)

The year is 1939, and aboard a ship bound for North America on the eve of World War Two, a young Oxford student named Cade Martin watches in horror as a sea monster drags his parents to their watery grave right before his eyes. Alone and stranded at sea, Cade is eventually rescued by a mysterious cabal of sorcerers led by a charming old Scotsman named Adair MacRae. With the Soviets on the Eastern Front and England on the Western Front, Adair claims that he and his associates represent a lesser known third theater of war clandestinely referred to as the Midnight Front. He further explains that the Nazis have their own dark magicians working on behalf of Hitler, and that they were the ones behind the monster attack that killed Cade's family. As the Allies' secret weapon, the Midnight Front is dedicated to waging the magical war from behind the scenes, and now they are looking to recruit Cade to their ranks.

Swearing vengeance upon those responsible for his parents' deaths, Cade readily accepts the offer and immediately begins his training with Adair and his three adepts Stefan, Anja, and Niko. Thanks to his magical heritage, Cade masters years of skill and knowledge in just a few months, and before long, he and the other members of the Midnight Front are getting ready to depart on their individual assignments for the war effort. While the focus of the book remains on Cade as the central character, the story also allows us a good look through the eyes of the other members of the group as they travel through different parts of Europe bringing back their personal experiences and perspectives.

Without a doubt, the novel's greatest strength is the world-building. David Mack has created a very robust system of magic that involves the summoning and harnessing of demons. Called karcists, sorcerers who deal in this type of magic can hold up to eleven demon servants at a time, giving them the power to fuel their abilities. However, this can be very taxing on the karcist, and even those who are well-versed in the art can succumb to the chaos of their demons, developing self-destructive habits like unconsciously scratching their skin to shreds or tearing out their own hair. At the age of 357, Adair MacRae is one of the oldest and most experienced karcists, but his arch nemesis Kein Engel who is working for the Germans has proven to be just as dangerous and cunning. Occasionally, the story's perspective even shifts to the villains' side so that we can get a glimpse of what's going on behind enemy lines.

Speaking of which, Mack pulls no punches when it comes to depicting the horrors of war, the fantasy elements of his novel notwithstanding. Readers familiar with the history of WW2 may recognize a lot of the places and events mentioned in this book, as well as the tragedies and atrocities associated with them. The story takes you into the thick of things, and doesn't hold back when it comes to the darkness and violence.

And yet, even with the phenomenal world-building and historical aspect, something held me back from enjoying this book fully. If I had to hazard a guess, it would be the plot, which I thought was weakened by a few overused tropes. The "Chosen One" cliché was especially heavy-handed and impossible to ignore given the way our protagonist breezed through that obligatory training montage (because don't you know he's "special"?) as well as the constant reminders that "Without Cade, the war is lost!" In truth, I found Cade to be a lot less interesting than some of his fellow sorcerers, and frequently caught myself wishing the narrative had instead focused more on Anja, whose background, story line, and personality were all more compelling.

For pulp-ish entertainment, I suppose this novel would do just fine, but I can't say the story really resonated with me, and I have my doubts that I'll remember any of the plot details six months from now.

That said, don't let anything keep you from reading *The Midnight Front* if the premise strikes your fancy; there's a lot here to like for fans of alternate history, especially if the idea of a secret magical war being fought alongside the real Second World War interests you. Sure, it's nothing too deep, but at the end of the day this was a novel I had fun reading.

Shelley says

Source NetGalley

Genre Historical Fiction

Rating 3.5

Thoughts

The Midnight Front is the first installment in author David Mack's *Dark Arts* series. Like the series name, this story is very dark. It takes place during World War II (1939 thru 1945) when the entire world was at war or holding its breath to see who would be victorious. The story encapsulates the Nazi death camps, the Allied landing at Normandy, the German invasion of Russia, the Allied bombing of Dresden, as well as the American bombings of Japan. But, it also includes a war within a war that might change the course of the world.

Full Review @ Gizmos Reviews

<http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...>

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

The Midnight Front is the first installment in David Mack's *Dark Arts* series, and without a doubt, the author has done an exceptional job coupling a cool concept with gritty, realistic World War 2 action. For those who find alternate history stories filled with magic their cup of tea, this is an adrenaline filled affair that is well worth their reading time.

In 1939, a young man named Cade Martin finds his whole life ripped from him when a sea monster kills his parents. Stranded at sea, only the timely rescue of a group of sorcerers led by the Scotsman Adair MacRae saves him from certain death. Quickly thereafter, young Cade learns that his rescuers are magicians working in the secret cabal called the Midnight Front, that they are foes of the Nazi magicians who killed Cade's parents, and that he is a gifted magician as well, one who must join the ranks of the Midnight Front in order for the allies to triumph in the war.

Filled with a deep need for vengeance, Cade falls in with Adair and his fellows, breezing through his magical training due to his innate abilities, and gaining his own assignment in the war against the Nazis. His new path

taking him down into the gritty, bloody and horrific events taking place across the globe during World War 2.

As an alternate history fan, the greatest strength of *The Midnight Front* was the outstanding world building, as David Mack does a superb job of realistically portraying World War 2 in all its brutality, highlighting the atrocities committed by all sides, and imparting the tragedies shown with the emotional weight they deserved. The magical elements of the tale seamlessly integrated into this true-to-life reality; the use of demons and the side effects of said use both amazingly interesting and splendidly portrayed.

The only real weakness of the story is quite honestly the main character himself, Cade Martin. This youth is quite obviously a “Chosen One” from the very beginning, one who’s identity is spoken of in hushed tones and who’s importance to the war is constantly heralded by those older and more experienced than himself. The fact that Cade never has great difficulty gaining his magical powers, breezes through his training, and instantly finds himself able to stand toe-to-toe with powerful sorcerers pushes the boundaries of believability beyond the breaking point at times, which did detract from my overall enjoyment of the tale.

Overall, *The Midnight Front* is an entertaining alternate history romp where the familiar events of World War 2 take on a far different appearance with the introduction of demon controlling sorcerers running around behind the scenes engaged in ultra secret, deadly magical battles which are shown having great affect on outcomes. And if this sounds tantalizing to you, then you need to pick up this novel and get ready to enjoy an action packed adventure in a familiar but far different war tale.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I’d like to thank them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

Jordan Dennis says

I really wanted to like this one, but it failed to entertain.

I like the idea of WW2 fought with magic. But *The Midnight Front* tried to cram in too much. I think this book would have made a better series. There were a ton of characters, and they were all paper-thin. Even the main protagonists and antagonist. A series specifically about these characters would develop the character's motivations more. If they were likeable, I would have been more interested in the story.

There were several big set-piece moments that would have worked well as the climax of the story. For example, the battle of Normandy was the end of the book's second act. It could have easily been the culmination of a novel, especially considering the stakes presented.

Also, I didn't like the magic system in this one. It was one-dimensional and boring. The description of when characters used magic was in the following format: [Something cool] caused by [Specific Demonic Attribute]. The use of magic felt like a GURPS roleplaying game combining WW2 and Warlocks. I wish there were different sources of magic, too. I didn't like that (view spoiler) I guess I was pampered by Bitter Seeds, where the magic had a more emotionally resonant source AND the Nazis got their powers from a different source than the Allies.

Also, the book doesn't have anything original to say about religion. It's a tired, lazy re-tread that is easy to

see for miles off. For a book that has so much to do with the religion-inspired supernatural, it comes off as trite.

All-in-all, a disappointing read. I doubt I'll continue with the series.

Kend says

A friend recently introduced me to the term "beige" as an adjective to apply to literature, and specifically this book. I have to agree. Mack has a perfectly serviceable premise and a perfectly serviceable style, but there's little here to glitter or appeal to my queer little language-loving heart. We have an alternate history setup, with arcane magic meeting WWII-era Europe as a setting, which, okay. Fine. Everyone *else* is already doing WWII-era Europe as the setting for *their* alternate histories. Why does nobody ever pick Malaysia in the 1300s or Australia during the time of its megafauna (Carnivorous kangaroos?! YES PLEASE.)?! And I get why WWII is of endless fascination to authors. Really, I do. Still ... been there, done that a million times. Beige.

Here too, the characters are bland. We have a prototypical white boy's magical "coming of age" (which ... yeah, that's only been done a gazillion times as well), during which time he earns the grudging respect of his sexy-but-damaged-and-oh-so-smart female fellow magician (don't even begin to try and argue Anja's not a manic pixie dream girl) and receives the tutelage of an older, father/grandfatherish figure. Mmm, nyah. Mack has the skill to do much, much better than this.

Hanzel says

Ok, so this has so called demons/devils in it, and it happened to one of my favorite period in human history, World War 2.....that is why I forgot all my previous books to do read this(sadly as I was so excited I forgot to put this one on this site, you might think I finished this in one seating unfortunately no it was two weeks worth of seating).

First Chapter, I was ok this is it, mood setting, rather dark and you can feel the panic people must have felt when Nazi Germany attacked, as the story continued, I felt the pacing a bit slow, but of course since we are dealing with the start of WWII, maybe it was just like that, after a few chapters, my exuberance faded, I was a bit disappointed, not only was demonology an unimportant part of the big picture but it was used in the shadows, this book felt like what spies would be doing if they had the ability to call up demons(term here was yoking), and yes it was like that we have a group of good demonologists going after their opposites, as usual the protagonists are on the losing side, historically the whole of Europe was on the losing side then specially from 1940-1941, and so the story continued, 1942 came and Europe was starting to fight back, still the German flattened all oppositions, on the magickal side the protagonists are losing their members one by one.....

Reading the succeeding chapters, we never saw our heroes triumph on a large scale, everything felt like a minor irritation, If I were the opposing karcist(oh yes demon yoking magic users are called by this appellation)I would have also laughed, the only redeeming part was 1945, or D-DAY, this is real action here no magic, no nothing, just simple human will to succeed against a dangerous ideal and a truly horrible person, by this time I was just reading along, trying to finish this one, why??? Well no more magic, demons

were.....well you will know, if you read the novel.

Much as I hate to stop reading this, I guess the concept of the whole thing still excites me plus there is a sequel(please Mr. Mack make this a real breath taker) and a sample chapter, as of now I am still hoping!!!

Katie says

This was hard to rate because I think that overall, it was well-written, but not to my tastes. Set during WWII, Hitler & the Allies both have magicians that indirectly affect battles. They aren't in the middle of the fray, blowing up tanks, but rather use magic to protect key leaders (such as Hitler), cause havoc, and create favorable weather conditions. (The book is about the battles between the magicians themselves, since this is historic fiction. Hitler dies, D-Day still happens, etc)

So, we have the 'good' mages & the 'bad' mages...except they BOTH summon & bind demons to their souls. Using the names of angels & God. This just didn't sit well with me. The internal logic seemed broken & I couldn't get over it. The good guys used animals or enslaved demons as their blood sacrifices and the bad guys used children....but they're both making offerings to evil beings for power. It was interesting, there were lots of fights and gore, but overall, I was glad to be done with it. If you believe the ends justify the means, then this might be the book for you.

Jonathan Wilson says

4.25 Stars

Mike says

I think the pace hurt this one a bit as both the characters and the magic could have used to a little room to breath. Otherwise, this is still an entertaining and breakneck romp full of magic and mayhem.

Amber says

I really loved the beginning of The Midnight Front.

The magic system is so intense, and the intricacies David Mack describes are fascinating. You know every step of what it takes to become a karcist and even though there's a *strong* Chosen One vibe, it's very interesting and I lived for the casting scenes.

However, in order to have an intricate world like this and not lose the reader in the folds, the pacing is very, very slow. Painfully slow. It's something I'm willing to forgive for books that shine (Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones) but ultimately, I didn't feel like the Midnight Front lived up to my expectation.

What David Mack does very well in descriptions and setting (there are descriptions of the war zones and ghettos that will give you chills), he falls short in plot. The book was easily 100 pages too long, and the "grand finale" was ultimately neither supremely grand, nor a finale. By the end, I was unimpressed.

That said, I think this is a *really good* book for someone in the right genre. I'm close, but I think this is a better book for people who like war stories and appreciate fantasy rather than someone who loves fantasy and tolerates war stories. In the right hands, this could be an instant favorite.

Roy says

Quite disappointed with this one. I was expecting a really cool UF world war 2 style novel but this was not the case. The plot was a little too familiar and I felt like it had been done before with the magic system. I just found it overly predictable as well. My biggest issue was with the characters. Cade was a spoilt brat and I had a hard time really following him and seeing him fight off the evil guys. The characters were all a little cliched as well. The dialogue was stilted at times and the humour was what you'd expect from the more cliched jokes. I also felt at times the style bnb of characters and dialogue suite the present time more than it did the past. A little miss here for me but hopefully there is some improvement in book 2. Will definitely find an audience that will adore the read just unfortunately wasn't me.

Rituranjan Gogoi says

An entertaining read with a dashing mix of war and dark magic. It is extremely fast paced with tons of action and gore, flavored with tension. David Mack brings a cinematic and graphic depiction of the violence in war through the story. It is very well-written with slight doses of wry cynical humour, and maintains the grim dignity of a war story.

'Midnight Front' is a book with excellent worldbuilding. Its setting is the Second World War, and, it describes the situations and circumstances with a surgical precision. The extermination of Jews in Nazi Germany, the war of Stalingrad are depicted with all its brutal grandeur and bloody detail. Mack weaves the element of Demonic magic to add adrenaline to the story. The Axis and the Allied forces are fighting the war on several fronts, and, one of the secret fronts is related to the dark and magical warfare fought in the shadows. The sorcerers called as Karcist harnesses the demons of Hell, make pacts, and wield fearsome powers trying to win their own war.

This is mainly an action oriented and event-centred book. So, there is little scope of character development. The protagonist Cade is a special prodigy who brisks through his training and gains awesome Demonic powers. He is confident and determined, but is without any complex personality and conflict which we want in a character. The master Adair is the typical Gandalf, albeit a little foul-mouthed and a sobered drunkard at times. However, Anja the Russian girl is a deeply scarred, flawed and a complex personality. She is one character I hope to read more about. The antagonist Kein also appeared pretty simple to me, despite his magical prowess and intelligence. He is opposed to science and yearns for total magical domination of the world, and this is his only motivation for his grisly acts. In contrast to him, Briet his apprentice is a complex fickle bitch. She is a character who could've made a better villainess. I would definitely love to see a confrontation between her and Anja.

David Mack has written a brilliant war story brimming with demons, angels, and dark magic, which has a thrilling taste of its own. There are a few minor twists in the midst, but, otherwise the events of the story appears quite predictable. The writing is simple and easy to read. It's not overly descriptive, neither analytical, but hovers in the midst, which best suits the purpose of the story. The historical accuracy is kept throughout, and we get to see a few figures like Eisenhower, Churchill, Stalin, Hitler, in cameos. Also, the major attacks like in France Pont De Huc, Dresden, Stalingrad are done with excruciating details. Especially, the killing of the Jews will fuel your hatred towards the fucking Nazis and Hitler. The explosions, the gunshots, and the bloodshed will haunt the reader for days after reading this book.

I greatly enjoyed reading 'Midnight Front', and I finished it in just two days which says a nice deal about the book. It isn't something extraordinary, but, rather a book which you can breeze away. As the setting of this novel was the 2nd World War, I think the next one will be set during the Cold War era which would be even more interesting. I'm eager to see what David Mack does in the sequel 'The Iron Codex'.
