

Echo Nova

Clint Hall

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In Clint Hall's exhilarating science fiction novel *Echo Nova*, time travel leads to the dehumanization of the people of the past.

In a dystopian future, eighteen-year-old Dash livestreams his nighttime parkour races in the hopes of lifting his family out of poverty in the Dregs. When a risky jump onto a moving train gets him noticed by the Dominus corporation, Dash signs on to be a timestar. He travels back in time, and his extraordinary adventures are aired online in his present.

When Dash is thrust into the spotlight, his handler at Dominus showers him with praise, offers him technological implants and physical enhancements, and makes promises with strings attached. At a whirlwind pace, Dash is flung from the Dregs to the Wild West to the exclusive El Dorado, where his integrity is tested. Indeed, the world of the timestars defies his expectations. Scenarios are contrived for the best ratings, and Dominus popularizes the narrative that the people of the past, called "echoes," are mere pawns for timestars to play with.

After falling in love with Ryoko, an echo from ancient Japan, Dash takes on Dominus, whose reach extends beyond reality television and into the control of time itself. No amount of money and fame can make him turn his back on his loved ones, even when Dominus attempts to rebrand him as a dispassionate hero.

The book's convergence of time travel and reality television is striking. It features a "self-correcting time phenomenon" and "lily pads" that timestars use to hop from one time to the next. Dash's subversion of the sentiment that echoes aren't real people warns of the dangers of allowing technological advances to outpace the growth of human empathy.

Echo Nova is a breakneck futuristic thriller about preserving loyalties despite promises of wealth and fame.

AIMÉE JODOIN (January / February 2025)

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