



The Amazing Story of Quantum Mechanics: A Math-Free Exploration of the Science That Made Our World

By James Kakalios

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A highly entertaining exploration of the complicated science of quantum mechanics made easy to understand by way of pop culture.

As a young science fiction fan, physicist James Kakalios marveled at the future predicted in the pulp magazines, comics, and films of the '50s and '60s. By 2010, he was sure we'd have flying cars and jetpacks. But what we ended up with-laptop computers, MRI machines, Blu-ray players, and dozens of other real-life marvels-are even more fantastic. In *The Amazing Story of Quantum Mechanics*, he explains why the development of quantum mechanics enabled our amazing present day.

In his trademark style, Kakalios uses pop culture examples- everything from the graphic novel *Watchmen* to schlock horror movies of the '50s-to elucidate some of the most complex science there is. And he brings to life the groundbreaking scientists whose discoveries made our present life possible. Along the way, he dispels the misconception that quantum mechanics is unknowable by mere mortals. It's not magic; it's science!

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review In revolutionizing modern science, Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg somehow neglected the exciting plots and images of science fiction and comic books. Not to worry. Kakalios has now remedied that curious lapse. Indeed, Kakalios sees kindred kinds of imaginative daring in the appearance of the first science-fiction pulp magazine in the same year (1926) that Schrödinger and Heisenberg published their paradigm-shaping discoveries. This improbable connection between abstruse science and popular culture brings Buck Rogers, Dr. Manhattan (of the *Watchmen*), Dick Tracy, and—yes—even Dagwood into a no-tears foray into the theoretical physics that opened the world of lasers, laptop computers, DVDs, and cell phones. Though the book does not quite live up to the subtitle's promise of a "math-free" text, readers need no more than basic algebra to accompany comic-book heroes into well-illustrated explanations of quantum packets of light energy, of the wave functions of particles, and even of the angular spin inherent in both energy and matter. These basic principles illuminate the solid-state physics of semiconductors, the atomic magnetism of MRIs, and the nanotechnology of high-capacity storage batteries. And all of this conceptual heavy lifting comes with entertaining episodes from DC Comics and H. G. Wells' fiction. Physics has never been more fun! --Bryce Christensen

Review

"A quirky but sensible explanation of quantum mechanics." ---Kirkus

About the Author

James Kakalios is a professor in the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Minnesota, where he has taught since 1988, and where his class "Everything I Needed to Know About Physics I Learned from Reading Comic Books" is a popular freshman seminar. He received his Ph.D. in 1985 from the University of Chicago, and has been reading comic books for much longer.

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