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Master and Commander Charles Hayden returns in the riveting new seafaring adventure from the bestselling author.

1794, the height of the French Revolution—Charles Hayden sets off aboard the ill-fated HMS Themis with orders to destroy a French frigate sailing from Le Havre and to gather intelligence from a royalist spy. On discovering French plans for an imminent invasion of England, Hayden must return to Portsmouth to give warning before it's too late.

But the enemy has been lying in wait for him, and so begins a dangerous chase out into the Atlantic and into the clutches of a powerful French squadron. After a thwarted attempt to masquerade as French sailors, Hayden and his officers are taken prisoner. A shipwreck following a storm and a case of mistaken identity befall Hayden and his men, as they try in desperation to escape in order to warn the Lords of the Admiralty. Failure will mean the invasion of England—and the guillotine for Hayden.

Take, Burn or Destroy Details

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Steve Smits says

Fans of the Patrick O'Brien will wonder if any seafaring fiction can match his masterful work. Probably nothing can, but this novel is good and an enjoyable read. Charles Hayden is the ship's commander at the onset of the war with the French. Hayden's mission goes awry and he is captured by the enemy. He speaks perfect French so he is able for a time to portray himself as a shipwrecked French sea captain. He is eventually discovered, but is returned to England in gratitude for his efforts to save French seaman from a foundering ship. Likely? Doesn't seem so. He has a sort of romantic interlude while in France which also seemed to stretch believability a bit.

Hayden has romance problems at home which are ultimately resolved, but this, too, seemed added just for balance. This part pales when compared to Aubrey's and Maturin's female relationships in O'Brien's novels.

These criticisms, however, are offset by the seagoing scenes in this book. They are detailed, vivid and exciting. (You might want to have your lexicon of naval terms handy as you read these adventures.)

Although not as good as the incomparable O'Brien, all in all, quite a good story. I would still read others in this series

Lauren says

"Take, Burn or Destroy," the third installment of the Charles Hayden series reads something akin to Patrick O'Brian's Post Captain. For fans of Jane Austen who appreciate the idea of nautical heroes set ashore and finding love to be a fair trade off for excitement at sea, it's not my idea of a great nautical read. Which is to say "not what I came for."

Where Post Captain sacrifices its more nautical elements in favor of exploring sailors set ashore with half-pay, it also allows its protagonists a chance to set up romances that are key to the series at large, some twenty books. Take, Burn or Destroy splits its narrative between Hayden, his love interest Henrietta (who readers of my previous reviews will recall I don't like very much) and Beacher, a new character created just to allow for a love triangle between the trio. While the adventure Hayden experiences makes for a tense and harrowing read, cutting from a perilous moment to "golly gee, I wish Henrietta cared about ME and not that dashing sea captain" from a character we've just met and have no real reason to care about is eyeroll-inducing at best.

Three stars. The characters and storytelling are all still very good, I just loathe the romantic subplot. (Odd because I usually don't mind them, but this one was just terribly forced in. Maybe Russell is just bad at writing believable, likable women.)

SPOILERS: My only consolation and the saving grace of the series is the resolution to the love triangle. We had to suffer an entire book about her for Russell to write the Henrietta character out but I hope she's gone for good. You don't need her Charles, carry on.

Nathan says

It's Horatio Hornblower meets Elizabeth Bennet. It's a great combination, and Russell has somehow managed to do very well with both genres. Excellent crafted scenes at sea in the Age of Sail, matching the best of a C.S. Forester with the witty banter found in a Jane Austen back on shore in the English countryside. I don't understand those who might criticize it for this. Regardless of which you may prefer or be more familiar with, if you open yourself to something new it's the best of both worlds.

Dallin Perry says

Well researched, well written, and an absorbing story.

Robin Carter says

Sean Thomas Russell : A Ship of War

Review

I have to admit I looked forward to this read, having read *Under Enemy Colours* and *A Battle Won* I already knew that Sean Thomas Russell could write, what I was more surprised about (again) was the differing nature of the stories with the story, this truly was a multi layered book. Normally you will have plots and sub plots in a book, and you will have threads that pull together at points in the book like fine stitching, and this book in most respects was the same, and yet different. On the one hand you have the blistering action, the harsh reality of nature on the high seas and the comradeship of those on board ship, and yet on the other you have Henrietta and her family, the family and social dynamic of the period, and the love, betrayal and formality of her relationship with Hayden, at times they feel like different worlds and different stories.

Without giving any plot away I have to say that the scenes written around the ship wreck are among the most harrowing I have read, giving the reader a real sense of the danger, the fear, the heroics, the cold and the power of nature, truly a great section of the book.

I had thought that Julian Stockwin was the Master of this part of the Historical fiction genre, but I'm revisiting that opinion after this book, it seems he has some serious competition.

I very much recommend this book, it not all balls out action, it has heart, soul and passion as well as action, danger and heroics.

(Parm)

Who is the Author

Sean Russell was born 1952 in Toronto. At the age of three his family moved to the outskirts of the city, where they lived in a cottage at the beach of Lake Ontario. At the age of ten he decided to become an author, and the fantasy genre caught him years later, while reading J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. After university, he moved to Vancouver, and two years later to Vancouver Island, where he still lives with his family. He published his first novel in 1991. His first historical naval novel *Under Enemy Colours*, published

in 2007, introduced a new Royal Navy hero, Charles Hayden, and HMS Themis, a fictitious frigate.

Books

Adventures of Charles Hayden

1. Under Enemy Colors (2007)
2. A Battle Won (2010)
3. A Ship of War (2012)

A Ship of War : Product Description (From Back of Book)

1794, the height of the French Revolution.

Charles Hayden sets off aboard the ill-fated HMS Themis with orders to destroy a French frigate sailing from Le Havre and to gather intelligence from a royalist spy. On discovering French plans for an imminent invasion of England, Hayden must return to Portsmouth to give warning before it's too late.

But the enemy have been lying in wait for him, and so begins a dangerous chase out into the Atlantic and into the clutches of a powerful French squadron. After a failed attempt to masquerade as French sailors, Hayden and his officers are taken prisoner. A shipwreck following a storm and a case of mistaken identity befall Hayden and his men as they try in desperation to escape in order to warn the Lords of the Admiralty. Failure will mean the invasion of England - and the guillotine for Hayden.

K.M. Johnson-Weider says

Russell does a good job weaving together the naval action and home front stories. It's quickly paced and my only complaints concern a few forced plot points and a couple underdeveloped characters but otherwise I enjoyed it.

David Hull says

Oh, what a treat! The third in the Captain Charles Hayden series of novels, and by no means the 'least'. Although rather slower in some parts than Russell's two prior 'Hayden' publications - A Battle Won, and Under Enemy Colours - this novel moved along quickly through its 500 pages, culminating in a sea battle so large and vividly described that you couldn't help but feel you were 'in it'. Well thought out, beautifully conveyed, and vividly depicted. Thank you Mr. Russell I just pray there will be further episodes of Captain Hayden's adventures, on land and sea, in the not too distant future! Please keep up the great work and reader-enjoyment!

Julia DeBarrioz says

[IT RIPPED MY HEART OUT!!! It hurts so good. (hide spoiler)]

D.w. says

Russell has dropped the ball, and I don't know if he is going to recover it. This series started strong with a lot of action. But since then it has become encumbered with long passages that take for ever to resolve. It often seems like we are watching water boil, waiting for the period Russell is guiding us through to move on.

Here we have two sequences, a battle, well handled at the end of the book, but before that, in the early part, a storm. And this interminable. Russell has had this trouble before and perhaps he is just not aware that we can only keep engaged for so long until we want to pull our hair out.

As readers we know a few things. When we get to the end of the book, our hero will be alive. So often life and death sequences are charged, but we know there is a light at the end of the tunnel. With the way Russell handles 80 page long chapters, the tunnel extends so long that we stop caring.

Further, there are a few asides that we really don't care about, and by investing us in them, takes away from what we do want to know. He has his female lead on stage as a POV character, and her cousin/confidante as well. This is all good if the time we invest in them has something for us, that they will emerge as leads as well, but they aren't. They are supporting and their ultimate actions end up not supporting our hero. We could have had all we needed from them in third person without long sequences of what was happening in their lives.

This series needs an injection of action and planning if it is to continue. I hope that Russell can pull things around and make our hero and his companions achieve something better in the fourth book.

John says

Disappointed, in that this one is somewhat burdened by the sort of "romantic" regent-style pageantry that is so unpalatable. All the more so here given the contrast between what Hayden must endure in his military service and the silly intrigues of Henrietta and her family at home. Let us hope that whatever fever induced the author to infect his work with such nonsense has passed prior to his completion of the fourth book, which I will certainly read because I will say that as soon as Hayden and Henrietta parted ways and Hayden was back at port preparing a new ship for sail, I was again giddy with excitement.

Docked one star for this suitorship crap. Otherwise, a five star book.

Alex says

The naval writing is actually very good. Possibly not as good as his first book, but certainly nothing to complain about. Whilst the plot might be slightly similar to the formula of all the other Napoleonic era historical navy fiction it is ok. Essentially the book ends with his small involvement in the glorious first of June.

Interspersed with the naval bits, however, are chapters concerning the love life of various shore-based ladies. These, in my opinion, don't add much and don't display the same quality of writing - they lack a realistic characterisation. It's almost as if he's trying to emulate the boring 18th century romantic writers.... So a bit of a mixed bag, I hope he gets back to concentrating on the naval bits which he does well.

Dawn says

I will confess to skimming all the chapters that featured Henrietta and her family. I have never been a fan of this particular part of the series and making it almost half of the book has led me to put this down as my least favorite book of the series so far.

I found almost the entire book to be boring and frustrating. Even those portions that took place at sea were not as good as before. A good old fashioned naval battle at the end was its saving grace.

Ruth says

c2012 (20) FWFTB: 1794, HMS Themis, frigate, prisoner, shipwreck. This was one of those books where I was close to DNFing but somehow the action/plot kept me turning the pages in spite of myself. There was a lot to dislike about some of the plot points and the side characters were actually much more enjoyable than the main ones. I certainly don't buy the French episode and I wonder if that was introduced more as something to be able to add in to later books that a way to make the 'hero' question his integrity. I preferred the title of the book that I read ie Ship of War and didn't realise that it was the third in a series. Hesitantly recommended to those in the crew that enjoy ship battles.

Jim says

THOMAS RUSSELL is a terrific writer of nautical adventures. TAKE, BURN or DESTROY is book three in the adventures of Captain Charles Hayden of the British Navy. This story takes place around 1794 primarily in England, France and off the coast of Brest (France). My only reason for giving it 4 stars and not 5 are the long interludes in England where Hayden's love interest, Henrietta, is going through her marital options.

Her confusion stems from two events - Hayden's supposed marriage to a young French woman (previous book) and Hayden's reported capture by the French and his death in a violent storm. Where Russell excels is in his descriptions of naval actions at sea, Hayden's captivity in France and the horrific storm Hayden and his crew battle. The characters populating this novel are well presented. The bad guys are few, the good guys numerous.

For fans of Alexander Kent, C.S. Forester and Patrick O'Brien, rejoice for there is another voice.

GO! BUY! READ!

Barbara Elsborg says

I've given this four stars because overall I did really enjoy it. I love Mr. Russell's writing and the characters he's created. I like the battles, the ships, the historical elements and the fact that he can make me like battles

and warships and all the drama that surrounds them, is very impressive. I don't read these sorts of books generally!

I really liked the first two books but this one, I have to admit, had elements I didn't like as much.

The business with Henrietta and her family held no interest - slightly surprised by that as I adore Regency romances. But that element in the book just didn't ring true for me. It was a distraction I didn't need.

The other aspect that slightly niggled was the way the story felt almost piecemeal. The link obviously is Hayden and his men - even if the ship changed but I didn't feel a thread other than that.

But the various dramatic incidents - won't say what and spoil things - were brilliantly written. I was there right in the thick of it and breathlessly kept turning the page.
