



The Fear Index

By Robert Harris

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The Fear Index By Robert Harris

High tech finance and sophisticated computer programming combine in this terrifying and fiendishly smart new novel from Robert Harris.

Dr. Alex Hoffmann stays out of the public spotlight, but within the secretive inner circles of the ultra-rich he is a legend. And now he has developed a revolutionary form of artificial intelligence that predicts movements in the financial markets with uncanny accuracy. As a result, his Geneva-based hedge fund is poised to make billions. But one morning before dawn, a sinister intruder breaches the elaborate security of his lakeside mansion. So begins a waking nightmare of paranoia and violence as Hoffmann attempts, with increasing desperation, to discover who is trying to destroy him.

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The Fear Index By Robert Harris Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Christopher Reich Reviews *The Fear Index*



Is there a genre of fiction that Robert Harris has not mastered? His first novel, *Fatherland*, set in a triumphant Germany's post-World War II Berlin (yes, triumphant!) ranks as one of the finest "what if?" stories ever written. *Pompeii* sends us farther back in time, to the slopes of Mt. Vesuvius only days before the volcano was set to erupt. Ancient Rome at its pulpiest. Who knew aqueducts could be so sexy? *The Ghost Writer* (winner of the 2008 International Thriller Writers award for Best Novel) claims the shadowy world of contemporary North Atlantic politics as its subject. Classy Brit espionage best enjoyed with a gin and tonic in hand. All were international bestsellers. All were page-turners non-pareil. But best, all were frighteningly intelligent. Thrillers that made you think as you maddeningly bit your nails.

With *The Fear Index*, Mr. Harris has turned his gimlet eye on the secret world of billion dollar hedge funds, namely those that seek to earn profits by computer driven program trading. The result is a wholly unique entertainment: a strange, compelling, and utterly propulsive novel. I'm not sure who would enjoy it more: George Soros, Arthur C. Clarke or Edgar Allan Poe.

The story takes place over a tumultuous twenty-four hour period in the life of Dr. Alexander Hoffmann, computer scientist, mathematical genius, and, of late, hedge fund billionaire. It begins (as a fine thriller should) on a dark and stormy night when Hoffmann is awoken by an intruder inside his sixty million dollar villa on the shores of Lake Geneva. A confrontation occurs, Hoffmann is injured, and in his attempt to solve just how someone was able to gain entry into his well-guarded palace, Hoffmann comes face to face with the greatest danger he can imagine: himself. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say: his intellect. To reveal more would ruin the adventure...and adventure it is.

There is, however, a backstory. Hoffmann was not always a stock trader. He began his career as a computer scientist at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) where his work in artificial intelligence involved modeling sophisticated algorithms that programmed computers to teach themselves. It is this mastery of algorithms, and how they train computers to mimic human behavior, that he has turned to such profitable use at Hoffmann Investment Technologies. And it is this mastery that will come to haunt him.

What Harris does so admirably--in my mind, better than any other writing today--is intertwine nifty, page turning plots with important historical, political, or in this case, sociological questions. The late Michael Crichton did this kind of story well. In *The Fear Index*, Robert Harris does it fantastically.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review If there's anything Harris can't write, he hasn't revealed it yet. He's equally confident with alternate history (*Fatherland*, 1992), ancient history (*Pompeii*, 2003, and the *Cicero* trilogy), WWII thrillers (*Enigma*, 1995), and contemporary intrigue (*The Ghost*, 2007). Now he turns in another masterful performance with this story of an artificial-intelligence researcher whose breakthrough in hedge-fund speculation seems to have led to a plot to discredit him, not to mention driving him insane. But as Dr. Alex Hoffman tries, increasingly frantically, to find out who has it in for him, we slowly begin to realize that he has no conception of just how clever the plot against him really is. In less sure hands, the story might have come off seeming either wildly implausible or just plain silly, but Harris displays a magician's talent for misdirection, focusing our attention on one thing while doing something else behind our backs. Full of sharply drawn characters and artfully revealed surprises—and a big dose of paranoia—the book is a first-class page-turner. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: The multitalented Harris throws another bull's-eye. His built-in audience stands to grow still larger this time, fueled by strong reviews, word of mouth, and extensive marketing support. --David Pitt

Review

“A pulse-pounding tale.” —*New York Post*

“Robert Harris is at the top of his game.” —*The Oregonian*

“Harris delivers a superbly entertaining read for our time.” —*Newsweek*

“A fiendish little tale that has the body of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with the head of Stanley Kubrick's HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey* bolted on top . . . It doesn't take a super-computer to know *The Fear Index* is a worthwhile investment of your time.” —*USA Today*

“Harris has shown himself a master of the thriller form, regardless of context . . . Readers may find themselves lying awake at night unsettled by the story.” —*The Wall Street Journal*

“Fleet-footed . . . Weaving copious research into a breathless narrative, much as he did in his historical best sellers, *Fatherland* and *Pompeii*, Harris in the opening chapters does an agile job of limning the elite world inhabited by Dr. Alexander Hoffmann . . . He expertly conjures a paranoid world where everyone seems to be watching everyone else.” —*The New York Times*

“Eerily troubling. . . . *The Fear Index* has enough suspense, cleverness and spookiness to warrant being added to your portfolio—er, I mean, your library.” —Dennis Drabelle, *The Washington Post Book World*

“Harris's brisk, movie-ready yarn may make you reconsider your mattress as a retirement-fund option.” —*Entertainment Weekly*

“Harris is a master of pacing—the story moves swiftly while never feeling rushed, and the tension increases subtly chapter by chapter.” —*Bloomberg News*

“Let it never be said again that high finance is boring. With a satirist's eye for detail and a note-perfect instinct for pacing, Robert Harris brings the Geneva banking scene to ominous life in his twisty new thriller. . . . So perfectly paced it should be read with a bag of popcorn.” —*Newsday*

“In *The Fear Index*, Harris creates from the thin air of cyberspace a financial thriller that's likely to unsettle the reader when Wall Street bells toll. . . . The *High Noon*—type showdown . . . brings the tale to a stunning

and disturbing finish.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Gothic horror. . . . [with] a high-tech twist.” —*The New York Times Book Review*

“If you want to get a feel for one of the most important transformations in our world today, read *The Fear Index*. Harris has been widely praised for his adept portrayal of the hedge fund universe. . . .” —*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

“As addictive as any thriller written. Pick this up on an airplane, and you won’t want to land.” —*Reuters*

“What Harris does so admirably—in my mind, better than any other writing today—is intertwine nifty, page turning plots with important historical, political, or in this case, sociological questions. The late Michael Crichton did this kind of story well. In *The Fear Index*, Robert Harris does it fantastically.” —Christopher Reich, bestselling author of *Rules of Betrayal*

“Like the best novels of this genre, it offers something to chew on—and it’s entertaining.” —*The Washington Times*

“Harris’s outstanding thriller, a worthy successor to *Frankenstein* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, will kindle readers’ minds from the first page. Get ready to enjoy a brilliant integration of fascinating research, compelling themes, and vivid characterization.” —*Library Journal* (starred)

“Full of sharply drawn characters and artfully revealed surprises—and a big dose of paranoia—the book is a first-class page-turner.” —*Booklist* (starred)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dorothy Marsh:

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Lorraine Paisley:

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