



# AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER EDGE

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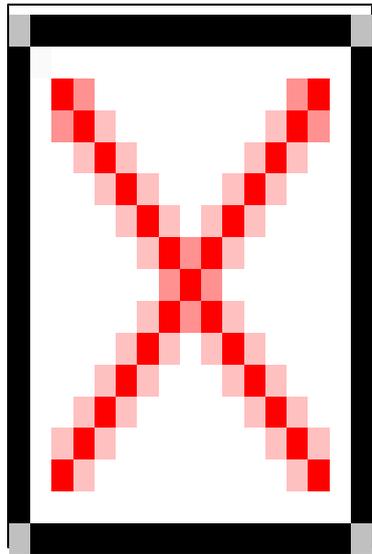
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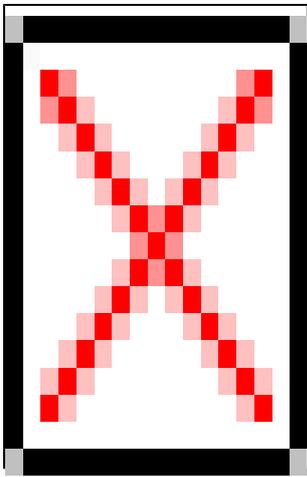
The author talks about his new book **The Jamie Drake Equation**.

With a string of novels to his name, liked by critics and young readers alike, as well as a series of books about writing for children, **Christopher Edge** has put science at the heart of his latest stories. **Philip Womack** interviews him for **Books for Keeps**.



Christopher Edge's last book, [The Many Worlds of Albie Bright](#) [3] (Nosy Crow), was about a boy travelling through various quantum universes. His latest, **The Jamie Drake Equation** (Nosy Crow), sees the eponymous hero, whose father is an astronaut, dealing with the enormous and terrifying question: are we alone in the universe? Like in the previous work, Edge mixes careful scientific research with pure invention, creating a humorous and moving portrait of a family, with its roots in the science fiction and fantasy of Edge's youth. I ring him up on a rainy February afternoon to talk as he sits in his little office in the bottom of his garden.

Born in Manchester, there is a soft Mancunian lilt to Edge's voice, often modulating into an infectious enthusiasm. He always



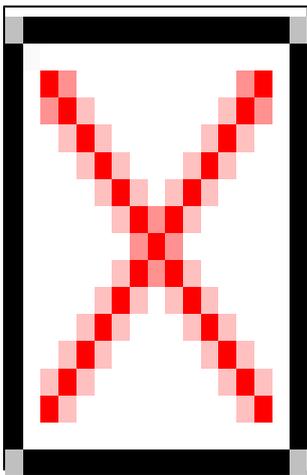
enjoyed reading - he was a a 'child built of books,' but when he moved from teaching into

educational publishing he had an 'eye-opening' experience on reading Frank Cottrell Boyce's [Millions](#) [4]. 'A fabulous book,' he says. It was this that made him realise that these were the sorts of books he used to love reading, and therefore the sorts of books that he wanted to write.

I ask him whether he was always a fan of science fiction, and he laughs - he's won tickets to see the 40th anniversary of **2000AD**. This magazine he used to read illicitly on his paper round, shoving the rain-spattered copy through the letterbox when he arrived at the subscriber's house. He also loved films such as **ET** and **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**, as well as, on the more literary side, the fantasy novels of Ursula Le Guin and Susan Cooper. He doesn't however remember John Wyndham's **Chocky**, which also features a young boy telepathically linked to aliens, but acknowledges there might be a subconscious relationship with the book.

When it came to **The Jamie Drake Equation**, he was more inspired by the idea that a film like **ET** is really 'a film about divorce.' In the book, Jamie's family are breaking apart, and his adventures are in part linked to the realisation that his parents are splitting up. 'It's a human story, really', says Edge.

The idea also grew out of the popular mania around the astronaut Tim Peake. He mentions his children running home and looking outside so that they could see where the International Space Station was that night, and it led him to think about the families of astronauts: 'He's a hero, but his family are heroes too - how would you feel having to share your dad with the world?' There is a lovely scene in the novel where Jamie is taken into a school assembly on his birthday, and shoved onto the stage, where his father offers him a present via a video link. It perfectly encapsulates the distance and the closeness between them.



So the book at its core is about the complexity of family life, and that moment in childhood

when you learn that your parents are not perfect. Yet the scientific research is paramount: 'I'm obsessed,' he admits, 'I end up reading far too much.' In the novel, Jamie's father is in charge of a project to send tiny nano-robots into the

furthest reaches of space - something that Edge has based on Mark Zuckerberg's **Project Starshot**. This scientific authenticity links the narrative firmly to a world a child would recognise.

To finish, I ask him whether he'd like to go into space: '12 year old me would say yes!' The question prompts him to think about the moment when astronauts landed on the moon, and how they looked back at the earth and 'there was this sense that you could obscure it. I think that the people in charge should be made to look back at the earth and think more like a human race.' So would he like to go? I ask again, and he laughs. 'I'd like to keep my feet on the ground.' I don't blame him. There's plenty of excitement and interest in the pages of **The Jamie Drake Equation** - and when do make an appearance, they are a cleverly handled delight. If there's life out there, let's hope it's as benign and as wise.

**The Jamie Drake Equation**, Nosy Crow, 978-0-8576-3840-3, £6.99 pbk

**[The Many Worlds of Albie Bright](#)** [3], Nosy Crown, 978-0-8576-3604-1, £6.99 pbk

**Philip Womack** is an author and critic. His latest novel, **[The King's Revenge](#)** [5], is published by Troika Books and concludes the **Darkening Path** trilogy.

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