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**The 2030 Spike: Countdown to Global Catastrophe, by Colin
Mason**

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exposed to yet again another irrelevant discourse—the fable of the sugar, the helix, the DNA and life’s progress from chaos to coherence.

If oil fields were spread more evenly all over the world rather than concentrated in a few feudal theocracies, the price of oil (minus its marginal cost of mining) would rise ever so gradually until a “choke-off price” was reached—namely crude oil would be replaced in the marketplace by alternative resources. Fifty dollars per barrel may be in the neighborhood of that “choke-off price.” However, because of the political instability in the Middle East, the price of oil may free-fall \$25 over a month. The expectation of sharp oil price fluctuations deters private capital investment in both renewable unsubsidized energy or, for that matter, in exhaustible resources like tar-sand refineries in Alberta. Huber and Mills did not address this problem.

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The 2030 Spike: Countdown to Global Catastrophe. By Colin Mason. Earthscan 2003. Pp. 250. \$29.95 hardback.

Apocalyptic, yet hopeful, Colin Mason’s book, *The 2030 Spike: Countdown to Global Catastrophe* lays it all on the line—the good, the bad and the ugly—and gives its readers a dose of well-researched facts regarding the state of our earth and what will happen if we do not do something immediately to save it. Complete with the usual shocking statistics and sparking interest through the use of clever quotes from celebrities of many disciplines, the book claims to reach out to those with no prior knowledge of the subject and offers “over 100 priorities for immediate action.” However, while Mason states his priorities in neat little square boxes at the end of each chapter, he admits that his suggestions are not quite feasible for the common man. Rather, Mason writes to educate, to inspire thought, and to motivate us to come together as a civilization and force our governments and multinational corporations to recognize the threats and to follow a global plan. The author contends that consumers have at their disposal one of the most powerful tools to improve the state of our world—our spending power. Yet, our greed, our ignorance, our denial, and our thoughtlessness remain the earth’s worst enemy. The most basic step toward a better world depends on widespread awareness and changes in human behavior based on it.

The book is organized into four sections. Part one, “Crisis Mode,” introduces what Mason terms the “six drivers of 2030”: depleted fuel supplies, population growth, global climate change, famine caused by water shortages and soil erosion, worldwide divisiveness, and conflict

and terror with very real nuclear possibilities. According to Mason, if these six adverse influences are not controlled, they collectively will gain unmanageable power and send the world into an irreversible tail-spin in just 26 short years. Mason calls this global catastrophe the "2030 spike." However, there is plenty of hope. Given societal advances in technology, agriculture, education, and medicine, this generation is handsomely equipped with the knowledge and the resources to promote change. While we have the means, the question is whether we will have the will to make the twenty-first century the most peaceful and prosperous in human history. Despite the stark realities of the present situation and the fateful effects of the "drivers," change, and thus hope, is in our hands.

In part two, "Directions," Mason details two axioms upon which the world's outcome is based. The first is, "Useful change is likely to come only if it can provide as demonstrable, equal and general benefit as possible to the community in which it is planned." Axiom two is, "If proposed solutions don't take the lowest common denominators of human nature realistically into account, they will not work." Assimilating these axioms, Mason proposes "Oneworld," a collaborative world authority with enforcing power over the selfish interests of individuals, multinational corporations and nation-states. Unlike the United Nations, where paying dues is essentially voluntary, Oneworld would require global membership and support. This agency would be responsible for maintaining a global agenda that would balance environmental interests with economic and individual security.

Another idea, not quite so utopian as "Oneworld," is found in Mason's call for a planned shift of resources and direction from weaponry and space research to alternate energy technology and discovering cures for diseases. Denouncing the present use of half of the world's scientists on defense research, he suggests focusing intellectual effort and finances toward developing applicable solutions to benefit us all, not just the well-endowed.

Part three, titled "Upgrading the Individual," focuses on the psychological and sociological needs of individuals. It addresses the pursuit of happiness, freedom, education, and religion and tries to put aspects of our society in context with the drivers and directions for our world. While parts one and two articulated and discussed the actual problems facing our world today and gave specific ideas for change respectively; part three was vague and esoteric. Full of familiar clichés and nuances, this section was not as thought-provoking as the first two, but the author correctly identifies human sociology as a necessary component in avoiding the 2030 Spike.

Part Four, appropriately titled "The New Society," pulls everything together and addresses the mechanics of change. It concludes

with one final review of the drivers, what could happen and will happen if the issues are not addressed and some faithful encouragement on how to proceed.

Overall, in *The 2030 Spike: Countdown to Global Catastrophe*, Mason presents an honest and comprehensive accounting of the current state of our earth in 2004 with viable alternatives to halting the 2030 spike. His training as a foreign correspondent allows him to remain grounded among controversial theories and predictions and thus provide a neutral perspective, preventing his book from becoming yet another gloom-and-doom account. Lay readers and experienced academics alike will find his version illuminating. Good structure and sequence helps the reader understand and conceptualize ideas and most importantly allows everyone to walk away empowered with the notion that we can and shall control the destiny of our earth.

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