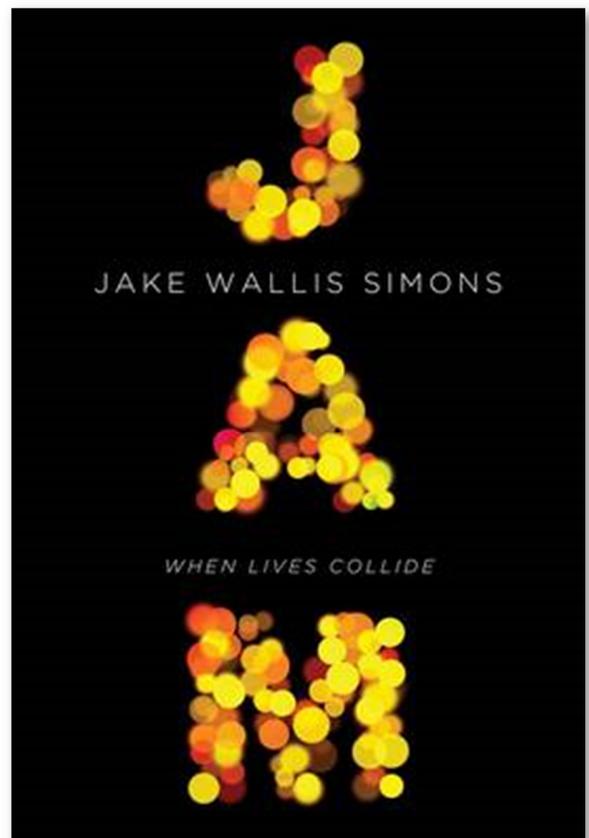


## LoveReading Reader reviews of JAM by Jake Wallis Simons

**Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.**

### **Jade Craddock**

*The M25 is the setting for Jake Wallis Simons' perfectly delivered state-of-the-nation novel, 'JAM'. From seemingly mundane roots – a traffic jam – comes a powerful exploration of modern life, human interaction and social behaviour. A couple suffering marriage problems, three friends on the way back from a football trial, a supermarket van driver on his delivery route, three uni students travelling from a festival, an expert on bugs, a professor of history, a woman with a hangover after a humiliating wedding and three men caught up in radical politics are amongst those whose lives become randomly entwined. Whilst little happens action-wise, after all the cars are backed up in a stationary queue, emotionally, psychologically and behaviourally events are life-changing for many. **Intriguing, original, ominous and sinister, this is a thought-provoking and magnetic read.***



### **Angela Rhodes**

*As darkness fell on the M25, the traffic comes to a sudden standstill, Minutes pass by, then more minutes, and still no car moved...*

*Slowly people begin to get out of their vehicles and start to mingle, discovering things about themselves and each other.*

*As I read I could feel the darkness, silence, closing in around me, filling me with a feeling of foreboding, dread and fear. The more I read, the faster my heart*

*beat, the dryer my mouth became.*

***I Loved this book!! It reminded me of Dean Koontz, and early Stephen King, when they made you afraid of the dark. Jake grabs your hand and imagination in a tight grip and never lets go until the very last page.***

### **Kath Thornton**

***What an amazing read with its colourful language and mix of people.*** All travelling along the M25 anxious to get back home when the motorway grinds to a halt. There is no movement of traffic at all, nor phone signal, which is a disaster in itself for some travellers more than others and there is no apparent reason for the hold up. Certain characters stand out more than others. Max and Ursula who have their own child in the back of their car and a friend's child also. Their child is allowed to watch DVDs in the car but their friend's isn't, all of this adds to the friction. Then there's Waitrose Jim who won't open his van to give anyone anything to eat or drink for fear of losing his job. There's the footballer just having had a disastrous trial where everything went wrong, so to relieve the boredom they have a football game amongst the cars. Harold and Hsio have an interesting time in a camper van. In the morning when traffic finally moves life will be very different for some of these travellers. ***This truly is a modern up-to-date read.***

### **Judith Smith**

***Beautifully and sometimes acerbically observed.***

*Imagine what it would be like to be stuck in traffic on a motorway for hours; no mobile phones, no information, just all that traffic. Jake Wallis Simons' beautifully and sometimes acerbically observed story gives an insight into what could happen. A story that definitely doesn't "go anywhere" even if the well developed characters desperately want to. A good and unusual read although liberally sprinkled with expletives!*

### **Alison Layland**

***I found this a thoroughly absorbing read – a wry comment on the state of the nation's motorways that gives us an engaging portrait of the state of the nation.***

*A disparate cast of characters are thrown together by a hold-up on the M25 one*

*evening and we see how their lives intertwine briefly, and in most cases are changed irrevocably by the experience. The novel is beautifully written, with an almost lyrical opening chapter consisting of tiny snapshots of totally unconnected London lives, a background to the dramas to come, and portrayals of lives in analogies that ranges from gritty reality to poignant beauty. As we home in on the M25 we see the effects of the jam on the vehicles' occupants who vary from a frustrated couple with a baby daughter to a pair of racist thugs, with all shades of interesting people between, such as the hapless but likeable Jim "Waitrose", whose enticing locked van of groceries forms a focal point. The characters' lives are vividly described and the snappy dialogue is wittily realistic. Despite the static setting it is full of life, tension and drama. I enjoyed it from start to finish and was left wanting to know more, an indication of the insightful storytelling that leaves you engaged with the characters after only a brief encounter.*

**Kathryn Eastman** - <http://nutpress.co.uk> @katheastman

***If, like me, you've ever caught yourself wondering about the lives of random people you see while out and about, Jake Wallis Simons' 'JAM' is just the book for you.***

*While a novel set on the M25, the nightmarish orbital motorway that almost encircles London, might sound a little odd, I was immediately hooked. 'JAM' opens as Dusk is falling on London and sweeps over the Capital, picking out people and places within it and providing a snippet of information about their lives. If, like me, you've ever been on a train or bus journey and looked out of the window into the backs of people's houses or gardens and wondered what their lives were like, or caught yourself doing the same thing about people sharing any other public space with you, then Jake Wallis Simons' latest novel, 'JAM', is just the book for you. Being somewhere with a bunch of total strangers is all very well when it's for a known limited period of time or you're just passing through, but 'JAM' looks at what happens when you're forced to spend time together in a traffic jam on a stretch of motorway in a signal blackspot. How will people thrown together by circumstance, rather than through choice or common interests, react to what's happened? Will they interact with each other and, if so, how? 'JAM' is a terrific read: a fascinating, well written and beautifully structured look at a cross section of modern society and human beings in general.*

## **Megan Williams**

*'JAM' is an intense, moving study of humanity in its various forms and colours all contained within a traffic jam on a motorway. Jake Wallis Simons assembles a cast of characters that are developed with a depth that makes them all very real, painfully so in some instances. As the lives of these characters begin to intertwine as the situation on the motorway worsens each and every one of them sets off on their own personal journey of discovery, from the confines of their car and the small strip of motorway.*

*I found the novel fascinating as it observed the manner in which the characters reacted so very differently to the extended length of time they were forced to spend in the confines of their own vehicles and with themselves. In some instances cracks in relationships were exposed; other characters explored new depths in themselves, unearthing fears, problems and loneliness; and in other cases frustration and anger erupted with terrible consequences. Wallis Simons cleverly builds the tension as the traffic jam continues, leaving the reader anxious and yet eager to find out what happens next.*

***A really interesting, thought-provoking read, which I'm sure will please most readers.***

## **Suzanne Beney**

*I thought this book was beautifully written in places, and provided a really interesting glimpse into the lives of lots of different characters all brought together by a traffic jam.*

*I was skeptical of how the story would pan out - and how my interest would be kept through the entirety of the book. But the story managed to weave across all the characters, taking them on a journey.*

*It was interesting to see how some of the characters pulled together, whilst others kept themselves separate. But, I was also slightly disappointed that these relationships only scraped the surface and some characters felt like they were really unnecessary to the story. I would of preferred to have focused on fewer characters and dug deeper into their stories.*

***That said, I would recommend this book - we've all been stuck in traffic at some point and this realistically explores the resulting possibilities.***

**Alex Hetherington -**

<http://boylestalkaboutbooks281.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/jam-by-jake-wallis-simons-review-for.html>

***It is anything but a circular journey and constantly ponders new questions and keeps its feet firmly in reality despite its suspicious surroundings.***

*Jake Wallis Simons has brought in characters from “all walks from life” into an apocalyptic scenario and forces the consequences to slowly unravel before us. The setting for this novel is the M25, which has suddenly come to a standstill. As time moves on and the cars and lives of the people inside them fail to progress, people start to get out of their cars and this is when the story begins and their lives start to collide. It reminded me lots of ‘Capital’ by John Lancaster, a community of people all bundled together but this time it was by force and in a chilling scenario.*

*This book stretches beyond the ‘JAM’ they are stuck in and goes further than the ring of the M25. It is anything but a circular journey and constantly ponders new questions and keeps its feet firmly in reality despite its suspicious surroundings. Whilst it’s inner layering is to wonder what’s happened, it quickly stretches away from that and the character’s stories and their human instinct takes over. It displays each element of human nature but it’s a very tribal novel, shades of ‘Lord of the Flies’ in 2014; although with modern day society, questions about leadership and control soon overtake as the characters are at a standstill.*

*This is mostly definitely a novel about lives colliding and the consequence of people from all backgrounds having to unravel the mystery of why they are stuck on the M25. ‘JAM’ is most definitely a book well worth getting stuck in.*

**Victoria Emerson**

***An Interesting book that some people will love and some people will hate.***

*I was excited to read this book as the concept intrigued me.*

*The book was well written, set entirely in a traffic jam on the M25. It is obviously character driven rather than plot driven, and in order for it to work the reader must be interested in the characters, and unfortunately I was not. None of them were particularly interesting and I nearly gave up on the book two thirds of the way through. The story seemed to be very slow paced and I*

*felt that the back story of the characters sometimes contained far too detailed information. I did finish the book but it was simply more of the same.*

*As I said at the beginning, it is well written and I'm sure some people will enjoy it, but it just wasn't for me.*

### **Peter Baiden**

***The M25, is at a total standstill.***

***How will people react, as night falls and it starts to rain?***

***When the traffic moves in the morning, lives have changed... In the 'JAM'.***

*Taking a major incident on the M25, we are introduced to a wide range of characters, all held-up by the traffic jam.*

*Each of the sixteen characters introduced, have their own reasons for being there; each has other, personal, problems that they need to resolve.*

*Some are stereotypical. The "White van racists", the drug taking students and the footballing Asian young men. They all meet the almost low expectations expected of them!*

*All but one of the others have some sort of relationship problem and meeting with each other they come to realize that they are not on their own. Jim, is trying to keep his delivery van and its contents protected, prior to delivery.*

*As the book draws to a close and their stories have been told, the reader is drawn into their lives as they all begin a 'new journey' of personal reflection and resolve.*

*Jake Wallis Simons writes as a journalist, and this is a book of cameos, drawn together in what is an enjoyable look into modern society.*

### **Daran Bellingham**

***Something unusually different to read with solid characters and the backdrop of the M25.***

*A great idea for a novel, at various times in your life you will meet these people, but to meet them all one night in a traffic jam on the M25 could be hard to take in. Jake Wallis Simons helps you to do that by introducing various characters from all backgrounds giving you a window into their lives.*

*Explore for yourself what can happen when the lives of people from different backgrounds and cultures become intertwined on the M25.*

***An interesting novel based on a good idea, I enjoyed it.***

### **Sue Broom**

***Haven't we all driven along a motorway in our metal bubble, caught a glimpse of others in their bubbles and wondered who they were? If we met, would we get on or wish we'd stayed in our bubble?***

*This author gathers a group to represent the British population, drawn from the range of ages and ethnic and social backgrounds. So we have an unhappily-married couple with children, a few single professionals, an older man from the traditional working class, some students, a group of aspirational Asian youths, plus a bunch of white racist thugs. The author creates a situation to throw them together out in the open overnight (the motorway traffic jam of the title), adds quantities of boredom, lack of sleep, alcohol, drugs and sees how they interact.*

*In this book, with all too predictable results. Some just want to hunker down, some need companionship, some crave food and drink or a light for a cigarette, some like each other, some don't, some are itching for a bit of action and look for a way to kick it off.*

*This is not a long book, certainly not long enough for any of the characters to gain enough depth that I could really connect with them. They were all a little stereotypical. I finished it feeling underwhelmed and sorry that the author hadn't made more of his idea and his characters. Probably the most interesting part for me was the information about the M25 itself and the area of England it dissects.*

### **Clair Chaytors**

***Full of immense and intense description. A perfect read...***

*The Blurb of this book attracted me and it certainly didn't disappoint. 'JAM' is a huge success at portraying what happens when random people are thrown together by a traffic jam on the infamous M25. Jake's writing is second to none and from just the first chapter his descriptive technique has you hooked.*

*There are a vast range of characters we meet during the Jam, many are your average everyday people simply driving along minding their own business and once stuck finding themselves with too much time on their hands leading them*

*to question and ponder on their life choices. These characters use their time wisely to make decisions on what they really want from their life. However, there are also the odd few characters whose behaviour and attitude leave a lot to be desired and who shockingly are involved in something quite sinister as the story progresses. Each character was perfectly drawn and most of them had redeeming qualities as the story developed but I especially loved the gentleness of and the subsequent relationship between both Hsiao May and Harold.*

*The tension and the atmosphere of the night builds with each character as time lingers on and tempers begin to fray very subtly as you would expect in such a situation and as a reader you are eager to know just what is going to be the outcome of such an unusual night.*

### **Linda Hill**

***A well researched gritty narrative of what might happen set firmly in the here and now of modern Britain.***

*Despite some almost poetic turns of phrase that appeal to a range of senses and an appreciation of how the author has researched and authenticated his writing, 'JAM' was not for me. The idea has real potential - a group of people bound together overnight by a complete traffic jam on the M25, but I found the execution disappointing and much of the writing repetitive. Characters felt one dimensional except perhaps for Harold, and their actions seemed predictable and contrived so that I had no empathy for any of them. It felt as if Jake Wallis Simons tried to include every theme ever used in narrative from racial tension, marital problems and sexuality to violence and honour in a scattergun approach. I also found the use of expletives so prolific (even from four year old characters) as to become irritating and unrealistic.*

*However, all the elements that I didn't enjoy may well be what would make this a compelling read for others and I think it's the kind of text you have to read, and judge, for yourself.*

### **Diane Hinchley**

***A very interesting book written about people and their different lives who interact with each other whilst being confined within a traffic jam on the M25.*** *The author brought characters to life with their descriptions and you could just imagine the characters as real life people. Not a book I would normally choose to read, but on this occasion it was an enjoyable read.*

*Made me want to read more about the characters when I came to the end of the book. **Well recommended** for you to try.*

**Katie Hoare** @boggedoff

*'JAM' is about a traffic jam that happens on the M25 that goes on for miles, and where the occupants of cars are unable to get phone signals. The story is based on some of the people who are caught up in this jam and are in different cars. This is based on the interactions within sets of occupants in different vehicles, and those who get out and interact with other stranded people.*

*The traffic jam continues over night and **you learn a bit about each of the characters**, who they are as a person and where they had been earlier in the day. Each set of people are very different, **and you are given an insight how different people cope with a difficult situation that is out of their hands**. Some, are cooperative and helpful, some are a rather tense, and some are friendly.*

*The book is readable, but in a couple of places rather clunky, as the author seems to go off on a bit of a tangent, while he is trying to give you too much historical or other factual information. This can be a bit annoying and takes you away from the storyline, and these bits would probably have been better as an appendix.*

*You are given an idea that something goes wrong between a couple of the groups that turns out badly to give some tension and helps to heal a rift, as well as dealing with a sense of relief.*