
Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 28-03-2008 12:25

First off, I'd like to apologise to those that are fans of graphic novels. For years I have considered them weird and nerdish. However, last week I read my first graphic novel, Persepolis. I loved it and will read the sequel over the weekend.

I'm looking for recommendations. I wouldn't be too keen on superheroes - watching them on the big screen is enough for me. Other than that I'm pretty open minded. Bonus for those that could be found in a library.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 28-03-2008 12:45

Damn!

I'd best be brief before Ginger Yellow gets here!

Basically, a mate of mine used to work in a comic book shop for years and would recommend me things. Amongst those I enjoyed the most were:

'Elektra: Assassin' by Frank Miller and Bill Sienkiewicz

'Blood - A Tale' by J.M. DeMatteis and Kent Williams

'Ed The Happy Clown' by Chester Brown

'Dracula - A Symphony in Moonlight and Nightmares' by Jon J. Muth

'Marshall Law: Fear & Loathing' by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill

'Black Orchid' by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean

'Meltdown' by Walter & Louise Simonson and Jon J. Muth

...and loads of others I've forgotten at the moment.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 28-03-2008 12:52

Prepare for a deluge of suggestions. :-) I know you've said that you're not too keen on superheroes but with any comics recommendations I'm asked about I'm obliged to mention two books in particular that deal with superheroes in a way that no one had dealt with them before (or arguably since).

The White Album/Sgt. Peppers of graphic novels is widely considered to be Alan Moore's Watchmen which is set in an alternate-reality 1985 and deals with what the world would have looked like if superheroes had actually existed since the 1930s (when the first superhero stories were written). Not surprisingly, the world of the superhero turns out to be a not-very-pleasant-at-all reality. My descriptions could never do the book justice. All I can say is it's one of my favourite works of art and is comparable to any revered work of literature - it is in that class. Moore's work is generally excellent so you might also want to investigate V For Vendetta (ignore the film), From Hell (a fictional account of the Whitechapel murders) and The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen.

If Alan Moore is The Beatles of graphic comics, then Frank Miller is The Rolling Stones. His take on Batman, The Dark Knight Returns, is also considered a classic. It's the first real portrayal of Batman as an ageing, psychotic freak and it placed a full-stop to his story in the mid-80's allowing for the much darker reinvention of a rather absurd character that we've seen in Christopher Nolan's movie. 300, while ludicrously revisionist and biased, is a gripping account of The Battle Of Thermopylae. I've not read The Dark Knight Strikes again (sequel to the first book) but from what I've heard it's best avoided.

Right, that's superheroes out of the way.

Art Spiegelman's Maus is the third great acclaimed classic of comics. I've not read it but I've regularly seen the title listed in Greatest Comics/Books Ever polls so you might want to check that out. It deals with The Holocaust from the perspective of a family of Jews (portrayed by mice) being exterminated by the Nazis (portrayed by cats).

From there, I would recommend reading the Hellblazer graphic novels by multiple authors (my favourite), Preacher by Garth Ennis (not to everyone's tastes but good fun) and the works of Warren Ellis (no, not the guitarist from The Bad Seeds).

I envy you. You're about to embark on a great adventure.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 28-03-2008 13:00

Heh!

I deliberately left those three alone, so someone else could cover them and CV did so admirably.

Yeah, it's impossible to avoid superheroes, I'm afraid, but from my suggestions 'Blood', 'Ed the Happy Clown' and 'Dracula...' are the ones that do just that. 'Ed the Happy Clown' is also the funniest thing of any kind I have ever read.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 28-03-2008 13:03

Cheers, evilC ;-)

Of course, I forgot to mention the works of Neil Gaiman. Virtually anything by him is brilliant, be it the Sandman series (about the god of dreams), The Books Of Magic, Midnight Days or any of his runs on mainstream titles (Gaiman penned just one issue of the aforementioned Hellblazer but it's one of the best out of hundreds of issues).

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 28-03-2008 13:12

I forgot to mention my favourite Batman novel: 'Arkham Asylum' by Grant Morrison and Dave McKean. That explores Batman's rather twisted sadomasochistic psyche.

For a while, Sienkiewicz, McKean, Muth, Williams, O'Neill and Steve Yeowell just ruled the graphic novels illustration world. It was always the artwork I was more interested in, really. Sienkiewicz did an excellent illustrated (though precis-ed) version of 'Moby Dick' too.

Edit: Actually, what I think I'll do is start up a separate thread on here dedicated to graphic novel artwork. That way, this discussion thread won't get swamped with images, hopefully. They do deserve a thread of their own, though.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 28-03-2008 13:41

From a quick look of my library's online catalogue they seem to have quite a few by Gaiman and Miller but not the ones recommended. Doesn't seem to have Watchmen either but has 3 or 4 of Alan Moore's work. It has Maus - I'll look out for that tomorrow.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 28-03-2008 13:54

I think you could easily read dozens of fantastic graphic novels without ever having deal with superheroes, nils.

However, there are many good suggestions - both superhero and non-superhero - made by evilC and CV. Just like best albums, there is a proliferation of lists of the 'best graphic novels ever' so you wouldn't be going wrong if you perused a few of these online and then went down to your local library and see what they had. Most local libraries have a pretty decent selection now. (And of course, borrowing then beats buying them, as graphic novels are notoriously quick to read and thus often not worth purchasing them unless you're a real fan or particularly like the artwork).

To add a couple more suggestions - Will Eisner was considered by many to be the father of the graphic novel form and his work of the 70s and 80s is definitely worth a look. He often bases them in and around the immigrant communities of New York.

Black Hole by Charles Burns is a great favourite of mine. Somone on the old board recommended it and it really was a fantastic read. Set in Seattle in the 1970s, it deals with a plague that takes over the town's teenagers.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_graphic_novels:_Award-winning

Just found the above list which is good as it lists the graphic novels which actually won awards. However, there are many more lists like this so dive in and enjoy!

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by 1890 - 28-03-2008 20:07

A little head up for a rather serious graphic novel from a chap from Geneva which won critical acclaim in the French speaking word and has now been translated into English, The Observer reviewer seems quite impressed...Of what I read in a French mag, there is quite a good little scene in French speaking Switzerland although very little of that superhero business.

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/interviews/story/0,,2267473,00.html>

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by 1890 - 28-03-2008 20:16

And this list has some interesting pointers. I read a bit of "L'autoroute du soleil", a manga style road "movie" by a rather well known French cartoonist, it's very good.

http://www.indyworld.com/indy/summer_2004/european_gns/index.html

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 29-03-2008 11:14

Here's the thing though. I find it quite irksome having to talk about graphic novels when really, 9 times out of 10 we're talking about comics.

Let's call a spade a spade for god's sake.

However, I do realise that many people are put off by the term comics and whoever coined the term 'graphic novel' should be given an award as some sort of a marketing genius as they are now reaching parts of public libraries, Waterstones and the broadsheets that the word 'comics' just couldn't get to.

I'll leave the last word to Neil Gaiman on this, in an interview from 1999:

"When I was in England four years ago I was at a literary party. It was one of these Christmas parties that magazines throw. I was invited and I went along and I got talking to a guy who turned out to be the literary editor of the Sunday Telegraph. He asked what I did. When I answered that I write comic books, he looked at me as if I had confessed to shoplifting or something. So we're standing there having a drink and he's looking uncomfortable, but before I can walk away he asked what kind of comic books I write. When I answered they were the Sandman series, he looks at me, says, "Hang on, I know you, you're Neil Gaiman. My dear fellow, you don't write comics, you write graphic novels." So as far as I can tell, it's just a difference between being a hooker and a lady of the evening. Basically. The nice thing about calling them graphic novels is that people who can't quite cope with comic books can cope with them under the term "graphic novels."

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by 1890 - 29-03-2008 12:31

Same thing with sci-fi Jon, you better call it "speculative fiction" or "dystopian future novel" otherwise, that's it...

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 29-03-2008 13:54

You'll probably want to read this thread at Comics Should Be Good on recommending non-superhero comics for a few pointers.

Besides the ones already mentioned, I thought I'd name a few to show you the range of the medium.

Joe Sacco's books, (you might want to start with Safe Area Gorazde or Palestine) use a comic form to do narrative, first person journalism. There are similarities to Spiegelman, but it's more outward looking.

Alice in Sunderland uses a dazzling array of aesthetics to talk about history and culture.

The Arrival tells an immigrant's tale with no words whatsoever.

Y: The Last Man, which has just finished its run, is a classic (non-superhero) sci-fi dystopian future. Inidentally, you can't really go wrong with anything else written by Brian K Vaughan either.

If you do end up wanting to delve into superhero stuff (and I understand your reluctance) there's a wealth of well written stories that could possibly best be described as "revisionist", in the manner of Watchmen. Most obvious is Miller's Batman work, but there's also Bendis's Powers, a detective story where the perps and victims happen to have superpowers, and arguably Astonishing X-Men by Joss Whedon, which is X-Men like you've never seen it before.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Not me - 29-03-2008 15:50

Doesn't the distinction between comics and graphic novels denote whether an ongoing series or a self-contained work is being referred to? Or is it just a case of "graphic novel" sounding posher (despite the fact that "novel" was once a dismissive term for serialised "amusements").

I'm not a comics/graphic novels person at all, but I finished Watchmen yesterday and From Hell a couple of weeks ago (they were the first things that caught my eye when I joined the library last month). Give those a go, Nil: Alan Moore's a fantastic writer who happens to make the most of a medium halfway between fiction and film. He's got a very mature sense of drama: his characters are complex - never 100% sympathetic or villainous - and always compelling.

<http://www.theharbinger.org/xviii/000222/comix1.jpg>

Watchmen is a great read, and I can see why it was such a big deal when it came out. The crux of it is roughly: life is very, very complicated; how would a set of people who actually dress up and act as vigilantes really fare? They're placed

very explicitly in the changing political context from WW2 to the mid-80s under the shadow of nuclear war. The artwork seems deliberately garish in the mould of your proper old superhero comics, which, paradoxically, emphasises the 'realistic' aspects even more.

I'd be interested to know how it was produced at the time. I got the impression that Moore might have been making it up as he went along, to some extent, as each issue came out: there seemed to be plenty of different directions he could have taken it, different characters he could have explored in more depth. The only element that fell slightly flat for me was the splicing of the pirate comic narrative with the present-day NY dystopia, just cause the former was a bit dull and not pertinent to present events beyond being about dire circumstances; but overall it's as good as everyone says.

http://www.comicbase.com/Tripwire/images/From_Hell_Church.jpg

The superhero-free From Hell ranks alongside my favourite novels and films ever, though. It's a staggering piece of work: integral to the fascinating, always surprising plot are some great observations on gender politics, architecture, class, empire, sexuality, myth, William Blake, the media, justice, Freemasonry, the royal family's suspected mafia-style tactics . . . it's just an incredible piece of work. I heard it took 10 years to research and write, and I can well believe it.

In the appendices (if you'll pardon the term in relation to a book about a murderer who gutted his victims), Moore emerges as a sterling guy. Having only seen pictures of him with his doom-metal beard, and having the impression he was vaguely into magic or some shit, I'd assumed he might be an accidentally brilliant crank; but he's totally got his head screwed on, and has a great critical distance from all the crackpots and absurdities in the Jack The Ripper industry. He didn't want to touch the story with a bargepole originally.

I don't even want to think about how the films of those two have or will come out. I bet they're real stinkers.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Not me - 29-03-2008 16:25

Oh yeah: I've not read it for about ten years, but I'm pretty sure Peter Milligan's The Enigma will blow your tits off. If we're keeping up the clanky comparisons, Moore would be Shakespeare, Frank Miller Marlowe, and Milligan roughly James Joyce crossed with Albert Camus and Taylor Parkes, having a late-20s crisis in Shitsville USA. There are superheroes and villains, but they're kind of psychosexual projections so it's easier to swallow.

<http://goodcomics.comicbookresources.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/02-18-2007%2002;16;39PM.JPG>

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 29-03-2008 23:17

"Doesn't the distinction between comics and graphic novels denote whether an ongoing series or a self-contained work is being referred to? Or is it just a case of "graphic novel" sounding posher (despite the fact that "novel" was once a dismissive term for serialised "amusements")."

Well, to me the distinction is whether or not the work is initially published in comic form or not. Most of the works discussed on this very thread (certainly the English language ones) came out as serialised comics first.

Eg, From Hell, Watchmen, Black Hole, Sandman, Maus. I could go on.

This is because sequential art in the English language has come from a tradition of serialised comic books. No doubt Art Speigleman, Alan Moore etc would prefer to have had their work published directly as a graphic novel and not have to go through a comic book serialisation process first.

Things are changing slowly now. Bryan Talbot fought long and hard to get Alice in Sunderland (mentioned by GY above) printed as a standalone graphic novel. Not only that, he made sure his publisher (Jonathan Cape) was an established mainstream one, making sure his work didn't simply languish in 'comic shop ghetto land.' (Interestingly, he didn't succeed in the US and had to make do with Dark Horse a comic-book publishing company).

Lots of great stuff from many people on this thread. And lots of stuff for me to check out, once I ween myself off my super-

hero obsession. I'm trying, I really am. But I'm currently on a big Superman kick at the moment.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 31-03-2008 07:31

My local library is being refurbished at the moment so they only had a very limited selection to choose from in the mobile library they have providing the stopgap service. I know I said I wasn't interested in superheros but when I saw the greatest superhero of all time I couldn't resist. That's right, ladies and gentlemen I borrowed The Adventures of TinTin.

Thanks for the tips all - I'll be browsing the library when it reopens in May with new stock.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 31-03-2008 10:07

Jon wrote:

Alan Moore etc would prefer to have had their work published directly as a graphic novel and not have to go through a comic book serialisation process first.

Not so sure about that. I remember watching a very early interview with Alan Moore (before he fell out of love with superheroes) where he spent some time praising the serialised comic book as a powerful and brilliant form of art that's accessible to people and kids in particular for very low prices (well, low prices back in the 80's). That it wasn't something that you needed an education in classics or an expense account in order to appreciate it.

Jon wrote:

I'm currently on a big Superman kick at the moment.

Some of his stuff is great reading, despite my reservations about his character, I have to admit. Have you read For Tomorrow by Brian Azzarello?

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 31-03-2008 10:18

I bit the bullet and read Marvel Zombies over the weekend. It was better than I'd expected, after a bit of a rocky start (it took me a while to get over the very un-canonical zombies), but I still prefer The Walking Dead by a considerable margin. Like I said on the other thread, I'm just not a Marvel person, or even a superhero person for the most part, so characters outside the X-Men, Hulk and Spiderman have no resonance for me.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 31-03-2008 14:59

CV - yes, I've read For Tomorrow and, although it started well enough, I got slightly bored in the middle and just didn't care by the end. Azzarello's 100 Bullets is great but his work on both Batman and Superman hasn't impressed me.

I agree with you about Alan Moore though. I wasn't sure whether to include his name in my original post, I just wanted to highlight the fact that some creators want to be seen as graphic novelists, rather than comic book writers.

It's an interesting opinion given by Alan Moore. Both he and I were brought up reading comics rather than graphic novels and therefore one tends to try to find a validity in the format. However, there's no doubting that trade paperbacks/graphic novels are the way forward in terms of sales, it's just that I prefer the term 'comics'.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 31-03-2008 15:10

Apart from 2000AD, I never read comics as a kid, and I only started reading monthlies a year or two ago. So Most of my collection is in TPB form. But I still find the comic/graphic novel debate silly. It's just semantics, and not in an interesting way.

I think comics are in a similar situation to video games, in that the current generation of critics and politicians and managers and so on think that they're "just for kids" and not very sophisticated, but the generation that consumes them as adults a) considers them part of the cultural landscape, b) realises they have much more to offer, and c) is about to take over those same positions. There's going to be a huge shift in mainstream understanding of games and comics in the next decade or two. I think comics have pretty much got there in the UK. The LRB ran Spiegelman's In The Shadow Of No Towers, you regularly read reviews of Clowes or Moore works in broadsheets, and most bookshops have sizeable sections dedicated to comics. Maybe it's because there are so many great British writers, or maybe it's because we didn't have the stigma of the Comics Code hanging over us, but there seems to be much less snobbery about comics in the UK.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 31-03-2008 20:25

The thing I wasn't happy about with For Tomorrow is the fact that it wanted to make Superman a darker, more brooding character, which he plainly isn't. All those confessions to the New York priest reminded me of something Daredevil would do, not Superman.

Maybe that's the reason you liked it, CV, because it is a very UnSupermanlike story. I prefer stories that really work from within the Superman myths. I said on the other thread I liked All-Star Superman for that reason. I'd add Superman Confidential too by Darwyn Cooke, who is shaping up to be a really good writer.

By the way, I saw a great episode of the Simpsons today, where another comic shop opens over the road from the Android's Dungeon and they get in Alan Moore, Art Speigelman and Daniel Clowes to do a signing. It's a pure, unadulterated geek-out for comics fans everywhere.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 01-04-2008 10:05

Actually, I think a lot of the criticisms you've pointed out are valid. For Tomorrow is absolutely by no means a classic and Superman is plainly not a dark character at all. I think the reason I responded to it the way I did is that I find Superman such a boring character most of the time that I appreciate any attempt to add some new depths to him. Now, in the end, the experiment was a failure but it was a worthwhile endeavour to at least give Azzarello some breathing space on the title.

(I should point out that there have actually been a number of Superman stories that I've liked but I'm not the kind of person who'd subscribe or anything).

What I really enjoyed about For Tomorrow was the artwork (Jim Lee's, if memory serves?) Beautiful stuff, very anime-influenced which is another reason I liked it.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 01-04-2008 20:42

I'm not a graphic novels guy, but bought and quite enjoyed this after reading a number of favourable reviews. It's a pen and ink travelogue that Thompson created while touring parts of Europe and N. Africa promoting his highly-acclaimed Blankets, which I'm half-way through.

<http://images.amazon.com/images/P/1891830600.01.LZZZZZZZ.jpg>

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 02-04-2008 02:18

I've had Blankets on my 'to read' pile for months now. let me know what you think of it when you're finished.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by JtS - 03-04-2008 08:58

I ordered Maus & Watchmen from Amazon last night, so they should turn up on Friday. I'll let you know what I think.

They'll be my first graphic novel since Asterix & the Britons.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gangster Octopus - 03-04-2008 09:35

The reason that I read books rather than comics is because you just don't know where to start with comics; they're usually half-way through a story, so if you miss the first one, you're bugged.

I saw a great episode of the Simpsons today! I'll be watching that in about five years...

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 03-04-2008 12:56

Yes, put me down as a Channel 4 Simpsons watcher too.

However, I was round a friend's the other day and he's got the whole of the new series. He said all comics fans should see this episode and it's true - more comic references and guest stars than you can shake a stick at. The only disappointment was it was only half the story - the rest of it was about Marge opening a gym.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed Miller - 03-04-2008 14:18

I don't even know where to begin with this topic.

Lately, I've been reading the original Ghost in the Shell manga (in English, of course). I think I prefer the film, but it's pretty good.

I also really like Darwyn Cooke. Most recently, I read his take on The Spirit.

I'm currently big on anything drawn by Christopher Mitten. Wasteland is awesome.

I'm sort of off of Jim Lee. His art is certainly attractive and I like how he draws Gotham City in his Batman work, but to a large extent he's like a lot of those artists that hit big in the early 90s - flashy but lacking in depth. All of his male characters are muscular and dynamic. All of the women look like models/porn stars. After a while, it feels sort of, hmmm, cold, I guess.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Kowalski - 06-04-2008 22:46

I'd recommend V for Vendetta, Superman:Red Son (Superman is a hero of the Soviet Union and not all-American)and various works by Joe Sacco.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Fatter Hipper - 07-04-2008 08:37

Chris Ware's 'Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth' is incredible. A pretty bleak work- it deals with failure, alienation, depression and delusion- but there's something indescribably beautiful about it. Poignant's an overused word, but probably the best one for this. The protagonist is a lonely middle aged bloke who imagines himself as a superhero (Super-Man, a recurring figure for Ware).

Not a lot happens for long periods, but it's not a lot that's integral to the mise-en-scene. Some of the drawings are stunning: bleak outskirts of rundown American Towns drawn like cigarette cards.

And they're not novels, but everyone needs a couple of American Splendor anthologies. They're nothing more than the day-to-day happenings of a sarcastic, grumpy but incredibly likeable hospital clerk called Harvey Pekar. The film (of the same name) is an absolute treat too. (If you like them then 'Our Cancer Year' and 'Our Movie Year' are 'graphic novels' by Pekar).

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 07-04-2008 23:01

Heh! Weird circularity (or maybe not?).

Harvey Pekar wrote the foreword for 'Ed The Happy Clown', which I mentioned earlier. It's then transposed into 'graphic' form by the author, Chester Brown, with himself as a giggly bunny rabbit and Pekar as a psychotically irritable dwarf.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by JtS - 22-04-2008 09:55

I'm about halfway through Watchmen and finding that it's good in places, but really poor in others. I also noted on IMDB that they're making a film of it. For that to work it would have to deviate a million miles from the book.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Not me - 22-04-2008 10:27

Which parts have you found really poor, out of interest?

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by JtS - 22-04-2008 10:29

The newsstand/marooned sailor bits. Some of the non-comic bits. And there was a section that was a bit all over the place.

The Rorshash stuff is quite good.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 24-04-2008 10:11

The main library in South Dublin has been closed for refurbishment for the last six months. It reopened yesterday so I went in for a look - they've done a fantastic job. It's bright, full of stock and lots of computers with free internet.

The graphic novels/comics section was a bit of a disappointment though - only one and a half shelves worth. They had got Maus though. I also got Old Boy - I'm not sure if the comic came before the film or not but it looks interesting.

I started reading Maus last night and am 120 pages in. It is superb - very moving, subtle and in parts funny. The four page comic strip about his mother's suicide is astonishing.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 24-04-2008 10:30

The Eisner nominations are out. Lots of nods for Whedon, Vaughan and Tan.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by King Mob - 24-04-2008 11:50

The latest Chris Ware volume I've seen is Acme Novelty Library No. 18, which is typically bleak but very affecting, worth a read.

There's going to be a huge shift in mainstream understanding of games and comics in the next decade or two. I think comics have pretty much got there in the UK. The LRB ran Spiegelman's In The Shadow Of No Towers, you regularly read reviews of Clowes or Moore works in broadsheets, and most bookshops have sizeable sections dedicated to comics

I don't know, it's the oft-quoted 'failure' of graphic novels that after the mainstream breakthroughs of Watchmen and The Dark Knight, nothing else has really escaped the chains of the 'genre fiction' label. The Sandman collections were supposed to be the next volumes to break the mould, but they didn't manage to shrug off their pigeonholing as goth fodder, and there's yet to be another graphic novel that looks like troubling the bestseller lists.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 24-04-2008 12:57

Sales is far from everything. Games now make more money than films, but they're still in a similar cultural ghetto to comics. Literary comics (for want of a better term) are always going to be niche, but then so is most literary fiction (or poetry, say). My point was more that the likes of Maus, Watchmen, V For Vendetta, Ghost World and so on are getting close to the cultural touchstone status within the establishment of their equivalents in other media, and this will only improve with time.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 25-04-2008 12:44

Thanks for the recommendation for Maus - it was an incredible read.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nathan Helena Handcart - 25-04-2008 17:26

I'll chime in with V for Vendetta, which I usually re-read once a year and always enjoy very, very much.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 25-04-2008 18:16

I think GY is basically right.

I think we've already reached the point where comics and graphic novels are accepted by a large segment of "indy" and hipster types, but as with everything its easier for small presses to reach those people because they usually "work harder" to find cool new stuff.

But there's still a distribution bottleneck. Comic shops, while fun to hang out in, aren't that plentiful and people who aren't arleady into comics aren't likely to go there. They tend to focus on the superhero, horror, fantasy and sci-fi comics because they dovetail well with their other product offerings - Magic: The Gathering, collectible toys, MacFarlane toys, games, etc and don't devote a lot of room to the artsy or obscure black and white stuff.

Book chains, like Barnes & Noble, tend to shove all their graphic novels into the same section as the Dungeon Master's guides and, as far as I can tell, usually only carry the best selling DC/Marvel/Dark Horse stuff.

Libraries are beginning to carry more stuff. Hopefully that will only continue to expand.

Meanwhile, I'm told the book chains sell a lot of manga, especially to 14-year-old girls. Unfortunately, that audience doesn't seem to cross over.

Most of the non-superhero comics getting anything approaching widespread distribution are in what I guess you could call "adjacent genres" - crime, cloak & dagger, sci-fi, horror, fantasy adventure, etc. I guess its because there's an established group of customers at comic shops who all like superheros, or at least did as kids, and will therefore be good targets for those genres.

DC and Marvel superhero books were among the only things to survive the comics code upheaval of the late 1950s, but then they came to totally dominate the medium because nothing else could get wide distribution. Its really remarkable. No other medium I can think of is so totally dominated by one sub-genre. It's like if all of a sudden 95% of movies were about gangsters or every tv show were about people stuck on an island.

It's a bit like why the cheaper pilsners were the only beer in America for a long time. There used to be other beers, but those were the most popular and therefore the only companies big enough to survive prohibition.

Unfortunately, now that means that most people have no idea there is any kind of comic but superhero comics.

As with the beer, it's going to continue to take time for non superhero stuff to find a way to get to readers.

I usually order things from Marsimport.com or amazon.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 28-04-2008 07:19

Book chains, like Barnes & Noble, tend to shove all their graphic novels into the same section as the Dungeon Master's guides and, as far as I can tell, usually only carry the best selling DC/Marvel/Dark Horse stuff.

...

Meanwhile, I'm told the book chains sell a lot of manga, especially to 14-year-old girls. Unfortunately, that audience doesn't seem to cross over.

This is one of the areas where I think there's a big divide between the UK and the US. In London at least (any comics fans outside of London, please let me know if it's different elsewhere) the book chains carry as much almost as much of the "high brow" stuff as they do the Marvel/DC collections. Every chain bookstore that has a comics section, and it's most of them in London, will have Sandman, Preacher, Transmet, Hellblazer, several Alan Moores, a few Clowes and Sacco books, and so on. They're not so good at carrying new books, it's true, but they certainly don't just concentrate on superheroes. And while they carry manga, it tends to be a smaller selection than in the US. I read somewhere that Naruto alone is responsible for something like half of all manga sales in the US, whereas it has no real cultural relevance here.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 28-04-2008 17:20

Superheros are mostly an American obsession. They never really caught on big in Europe.

Also, a lot of the books and authors you mention there happen to be British, so there might be a natural domestic content guideline influencing B&N's decisions on what to push in their stores.

Superhero comics have influenced a lot of anime and manga, and vice-versa, but American superheroes as we know them here are not big in Japan, as far as I know.

Our stores usually carry Sandman, Hellblazer, Transmet and stuff like that too, but those are all published by DC or DC/Vertigo and fall into genre's "adjacent" to superheroes.

Do you get the Queen & Country over there? It's among my favorite series. It's about British secret agents, but it's written by an American.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 28-04-2008 17:31

"Our stores usually carry Sandman, Hellblazer, Transmet and stuff like that too, but those are all published by DC or DC/Vertigo and fall into genre's "adjacent" to superheroes."

Sure, but they were just examples I'm familiar with - I'm a big fan of Vertigo in that era. Spiegelman, Sacco and Clowes don't seem to fall into that category.

Queen & Country is available over here, but I've never read it or heard anyone talk about it.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 28-04-2008 17:45

"Spiegelman, Sacco and Clowes don't seem to fall into that category."

No, and I don't know if every B&N in the US would have those, although they'd probably have Clowes' Ghost World because it was made into a film and possibly Spiegelman's Maus because it got so many positive reviews in the mainstream press.

Queen & Country is fun stuff. I highly recommend it. Rucka has also done two Q&C novels that fit into the ongoing storyline. Both are good page turning yarns.

Rucka says he blatantly ripped off a lot of the ideas for Q&C from a British tv show called The Sandbaggers, which ran for three years in the late 1970s. If you've seen it (I have not) then perhaps you can get an idea of what it's like. It's also a bit like the American show Alias, except better.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil a fhios agam - 29-04-2008 14:26

I've now read Oldboy and the Israeli Exit Wounds. Oldboy didn't grab me at all. That's probably because I've seen the film but the only thing I liked about the book was reading it Japanese style, i.e. from back cover to front cover, right to left. The content didn't interest me.

Exit Wounds was good but I was slightly disappointed with it - it started very well but tailed off towards the end. Perhaps I was spoiled by the fact the first two stories I read were so good.

Of course, the advantage of the medium is that it only takes about an hour to read a book such as those two.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 29-04-2008 15:07

I've heard nothing but praise for Exit Wounds. It was voted best comic of 2007 by the commenters over at Comics Should Be Good.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by loose cannon - 30-04-2008 11:52

It's disappointing how few French comics have been translated into English. As Reed remarked, English language comics are dominated by Superheroes, the French ones are so much more diverse. It's only recently that quality writers like Clowes & Spiegelmann have appeared.

Walk into any half decent bookshop in France or Belgium and you will find racks of stuff - and their artwork is much more diverse as well.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 30-04-2008 12:55

Very true - it's only the kids' stuff that gets translated. All the French adult comics I've read have been in the original.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 30-04-2008 14:24

Not many French comics are translated - nothing like the number of Japanese comics. I have Persepolis, however.

Superheroes aren't dominant in the total number of titles, but they are easier to find. At all of the comics shops I've been too lately, 50%-70% of the rack space will be DC, Marvel, Dark Horse and Image stuff meaning that all the other stuff is underrepresented and not every title that you could conceivably want will be there.

But with the internet, all is possible. Like I said, www.marsimport.com is great. As you may know, the comics retail business in the US (and maybe everywhere) is served almost exclusively by one distributor, Diamond (www.diamondcomics.com), but I think Mars Import gets stuff through other channels because they have stuff from publishers I haven't heard of anywhere else.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 30-04-2008 15:12

I've yet to read Persepolis. Worth picking up?

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 30-04-2008 15:18

I've only read the first one. I enjoyed it a lot.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by linus - 01-05-2008 00:30

Most of the french-language stuff came out of Belgium, the largest two sources being two periodicals, Tintin and Spirou, which were weeklies directed towards the youth, that featured many serial stories, the flagships of editors Dupuis and Casterman.

Dupuis had Spirou, Johan et Pirlouit (of which the Smurfs were an offshoot), Gaston and dozens of others. Gaston is a remarkable character, a hugely popular strip that featured one-page stories of a goofy office gopher, he is as popular a figure as Asterix in France, Belgium or Holland (where he is known as "Guust"). The strip is a sort of antithesis to Dilbert, featuring a creative, lazy, espadrille and turtleneck-wearing goof-off office hand who livens things up.

<http://www.gastonlagaffe.com/sitefr/gag.php>

http://echbd.free.fr/ECHBD/images/GASTON_01_100.jpg.

Tintin magazine had Herge's namesake character as well as other characters like Lucky Luke, Alix/Lefranc, Quick et Flupke, Tanguy et Laverdure. All of the comics mentioned above would be worthy of long posts, many of those aren't much far behind Tintin or Asterix in terms of quality and style. There are several excellent "smaller" characters/series that appeared in those magazines, like the outstanding Docteur Poche, a whimsical and sweet character.

A couple of decades ago, the aforementioned two weeklies became less central, as the genre fragmented and became much more adult-oriented, with most coming out from France as opposed to Belgium. One good example along those lines is the duo of Dupuy and Berberian, whose most famous series is Monsieur Jean, stories of a Parisian writer in his thirties:

<http://www.drawnandquarterly.com/imagesPreview/a443580561dd85.pdf>

the english version is published by Drawn and Quarterly (a terrific name for a terrific publisher based in Montreal.)

Dupuy&Berberian have published a lot of books, including non-graphic novels, books with some illustration. One of their most terrific work is "Bistronomiques", a great book of recipes from their favorite Parisian bistros, which includes lots of drawing and other impressions of the 21st century traditional bistro scene. Highly recommended.

http://www.duber.net/images/couv/medium_couv_bistronomiques.jpg

<http://www.duber.net/images/exposition/bistronomiques/bistros12gf.jpg>

<http://www.duber.net/images/exposition/bistronomiques/bistros5gf.jpg>

<http://www.duber.net/images/exposition/bistronomiques/bistros1gf.jpg>

They also did a book that came with its own soundtrack CD, "Francoise"

<http://www.duber.net/images/couv/francoise/30.jpg>

<http://www.duber.net/index1.htm>

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by linus - 01-05-2008 01:10

Two good American comic artists, who both happened to live just down the street from my place in Berkeley, CA a while back, are Adrian Tomine (Optic Nerve) and Daniel Clowes (Ghost World, Art School Confidential). They're somewhat similar in that their stories usually focus on young characters in urban settings dealing with every day life and relationships. Like the somewhat autobiographical character in Art School Confidential, Clowes is a bit on the nerdy side.

http://lambiek.net/artists/t/tomine_a.htm

Preview of a Tomine story:

<http://www.drawnandquarterly.com/imagesPreview/a462fba9cc8e66.pdf>

Tomine is published by Drawn and Quarterly, a great Montreal-based graphic novels editor, which has a great lineup of artists. that lineup itself is nicely produced in a series of small self-portraits on their featured artists page:

<http://www.drawnandquarterly.com/artHome.php>

You can't have a thread on modern comics without mentioning Robert Crumb, an eccentric artist who was a big part of the late 60s counterculture and was very influential in "blowing up" the genre.

<http://www.rcrumb.net/>

This famous poster of his, titled Short History of America, was presented frame-by-frame in a recent major conference on sustainable urbanism, it was a huge hit and really underscored some of the basic ills of modern land development:

http://www.crumbproducts.com/prints_images/sha.gif

There are some definite Crumb influences in Joe Sacco's approach. His most famous books, "Palestine" and "Safe Area Goražde" won the American Book Award and Eisner Award. "Palestine" is a remarkable book, as poignant a read as "Maus". The review that comes up on top of the Amazon customer reviews is remarkably spot-on:

<http://www.amazon.com/Palestine-Joe-Sacco/dp/156097432X>

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 17-05-2008 00:24

I just got this in the mail:

http://www.thepunishercomics.com/comics/appearances/archie_meets_punisher/punisher_meets_archie_1.jpg

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Cal - 17-05-2008 01:21

Clowes and Sacco are great -- but Peter Bagge and HATE sum up America about as good as it gets...

<http://www.peterbagge.com/>

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 17-05-2008 03:32

"Their stories usually focus on young characters in urban settings dealing with every day life and relationships."

I can't imagine ever wanting to read about that in any format.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gambrinus - 20-05-2008 10:26

Watchmen is fucking awesome, and the only comic I decided to take to New Zealand with me from Wales (I'm from Wales, not the comic).

Also Preacher, by Garth Ennis (?) is a fantastically fun read, especially the first three or four volumes, before it gets a bit daft.

The Invisibles, by Grant Morrison is a great conspiracy theory bollocks, but still a good read. Good art as well, mostly.

Constantine (Hellblazer) veers between really good, and fucking crap. I think it's at it's best when it steers clear of the magic-the Ennis story about the crashed Spitfire is one of the finest things I've read.

Y, The Last Man is good as well, if you can suspend your disbelief a bit. I haven't finished it yet though.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 20-05-2008 10:50

Gambrinus: if you like Y, you really should check out Vaughan's current baby, Ex Machina. It involves a similar suspension of disbelief, but it's really, really good.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gambrinus - 22-05-2008 09:41

Yeah!! Read the first four or five volumes of Ex Machina, but along with everything else, it's been dumped in my old bedroom at my parents for the moment...

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 27-05-2008 09:29

Nil a fhios agam:

If you're looking for something with a similar feel to Persepolis, you could try Zeina Abirached's Le Jeu des Hirondelles, about her family's life on the demarcation line in East Beirut in 1984. I've only seen it in French.

<http://img375.imageshack.us/img375/3210/hirondellesdx3.jpg>

You could also have a look at Guy Delisle's books, Shenzen, Pyongyang and Chroniques Birmanes. They're all published in France by L'Association, an independent BD publishing company who have a good catalogue. They're all available in English.

He's a French-Canadian film animator. The first two are about his experiences working in China and North Korea; the third is possibly the best and details his trip to Burma with his wife, who works for Medecins Sans Frontieres. Nothing spectacular happens, but they're interesting musings about life in each country. I like his drawing style.

<http://img527.imageshack.us/img527/6503/pyongyangsw7.jpg>

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 28-05-2008 13:30

Gambrinus wrote:

Constantine (Hellblazer) veers between really good, and fucking crap. I think it's at it's best when it steers clear of the magic-the Ennis story about the crashed Spitfire is one of the finest things I've read.

Do you know what trade paperback that story is included in, Gambrinus?

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gambrinus - 29-05-2008 08:32

It's in "Tainted Love", according to Wikipedia. The story's called "Finest Hour". And I think it may have been a Hurricane, actually.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by linus - 01-06-2008 06:50

Bafflin, those two works look great, thanks for the pointers.

The first one kind of reminds me of a movie called West Beirut, which was about the friendship between three teenagers across the demarcation line through the civil war in that city. Pretty good movie, somewhat autobiographical work by a director who moved to LA and worked with Tarantino there before doing that feature.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 06-06-2008 14:57

Mrs Bafflin has just been lent several books from the Loisel and Tripp series, Magasin Général, set in Quebec in the 1920s, and she likes them.

<http://img131.imageshack.us/img131/2694/loiseltripp02nk2.jpg>

There's an accompanying series subtitled "Arriere Boutique" which has, on alternate pages, the original pencil drawings and the finished, coloured versions. Often I prefer the pencil drawings.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Lyra - 15-07-2008 15:44

West Beirut is a lovely film, it's nice to see it mentioned.

However I totally could not get on with Persepolis. I just couldn't stand the central character, I'm afraid.

I just read Wanted because I won it at the BFI quiz. It was pretty good. I think the hardest bit about comics is that I always want to read on quickly and that clashes with appreciating all the lovely little details of the artwork.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-07-2008 15:57

I thought the film *Wanted* was actually better, although neither is brilliant. I found the comic to be so dark and nihilistic as to be a bit pointless.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Lyra - 15-07-2008 15:59

Yeah, I preferred the film. Lots more characterisation, etc.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-07-2008 20:12

Is *Magasin Général* available in English. That cover makes me want to read it. It's one of those images that makes you want to know the story behind it. Fantastic. I'd hang that on my wall.

Is it just me or has Frank Miller really jumped the shark? Everything he does seems to become dumber and more transparently right-wing. *Dark Knight Returns* was a bit right-wing, but with some subtlety and satire that was so well written and executed that it didn't really seem that way. I don't think it's the definitive Batman but it didn't ruin the character as some suggest.

Then he wrote (but didn't draw) *Batman Year One* which is, I think, the closest thing to a definitive Batman ever done.

But it's gone down hill since then, I think. *Sin City* is pretty cool, but it can't really be taken too seriously, gets a bit old after a few issues, and also has a bit of a right-wing vibe too it. *300* was sort of cool, but the film, which he blessed, was ridiculous.

The sequel to *Dark Knight* was crap. All inscrutable satire and style and no substance. Plus, more shitting on Superman, which isn't fair to the character or the creators who've done a lot of good stuff with Kal-El.

And now he's doing *All-Star Batman and Robin* with Jim Lee, going further down the road of Batman as *Dirty Harry* (he actually said in an interview that's how he sees him.) Batman isn't the sane-man-in-an-insane world like he was in *Year One*. He's just a psychotic, misanthropic, borderline-child-abusing douchebag. And Jim Lee's art is very pretty and he draws Batman well, but the way he draws every female character to look like a porn star is tedious. Yet it fits in with Miller's interest in prostitutes-with-a-heart-of-gold obsession.

Now he's working on something where Batman fights Osama Bin Laden and is spewing all sorts of simplistic sub-Hitchensesque clash of civilization stuff in interviews.

I'm so not impressed anymore.

BTW, anyone who's ever been even slightly entertained by Batman or anime should acquire the new *Batman: Gotham Knight* DVD and also watch all the extras. In particular, on the extras there are some really great episodes of the Bruce Timm animated series from the early 1990s that I'd never seen before.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 15-07-2008 20:38

Has he jumped the shark? Has he ever! *All Star Batman and Robin* has got to be the biggest fall from grace not just in comics but in any artistic medium, in the world. Ever!

Let's hope this shitness doesn't rub off on his film career - he has written and directed the new *Spirit* film and if it fucks it up I'm going to be even madder.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by linus - 15-07-2008 20:51

Reed, the publisher of Magasin Général is Casterman (of Tintin fame, in Brussels) so it will probably get translated, eventually. That serie has been really popular in France (one of the main characters is a French expat in Quebec)

There are some samples there: <http://www.regisloisel.com/maggen1.htm>

Lyra, if you liked West Beirut, you might like a new Lebanese movie called, "Under the Bombs" which just came out. I saw it last weekend, quite poignant and very well done:

<http://www.souslesbombes.com/>

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-07-2008 21:00

I think The Dark Knight Strikes Again marked the big fall from grace. This just continues the pattern.

I think the Spirit film will be ok although it will not be brilliant like Eisner's original work. It will be more Milleresque than Eisnerian, although despite the way the trailer looks, it's not more of Sin City. It's in full color, he assures us on his blog at www.mycityscreams.com.

It's appropriate that Tarantino and Rodriguez worked on Sin City. Miller seems to be a lot like them - brilliant with the visuals, but lacking anything resebling intellectual or emotional depth with the stories or characters, and all three love to wallow in homages to the favorite schlock of their youth.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 15-07-2008 21:32

Never read the second Dark Knight volume. Was put off by the bad reviews.

Sorry about my outburst earlier. I read the first few comics of All Star Batman and Robin. All bad but I remember one in particular that was so bad it has mentally scarred me ever since.

Just seen the trailer to the Spirit. It's not going to be very good, is it? Well, maybe I'm being overly harsh but as far as I can see, it's a comic that just can't be turned into a film successfully.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-07-2008 21:50

No need to apologize. I just wanted to clarify the chronology of the shark-jumping.

I think The Spirit will be a lot like Sin City, except a lot less violent and a bit more fun.

Without Will Eisner's cartoony art, the stories are just noir detective yarns. Nothing wrong with that, but there's nothing especially new and exciting about that either. It would be better as an animated series or feature.

On the plus side, the film version will not feature Ebony White, who was The Spirit's driver in the old comics. To a modern audience, he's a horrible racist stereotype, although Eisner says he didn't mean for it be degrading and the character evolved out of that stereotype in the later comics, which included some "normal" black characters.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 16-07-2008 14:14

<http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1809838857/video/8831867/>

As I suspected, this looks 100% Frank Miller and only a little bit Will Eisner. Still, it might be cool.

I thought that, in the comic, the Octopus never showed his face.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by jason voorhees - 17-07-2008 12:51

I hope I'm not sent to the bargain bin for liking DK2. I can't remember what I liked about it, but I remember liking what. (What if I actually didn't like it, and I remember it more fondly than I did ? UH OH.)

My favorite Hellblazer was when Constantine got cancer. The final shot in the book was one of the greatest and most powerful moments I ever felt in a comic. As with all of the Preacher graphic novels, but when Jesse Custer goes back to his hellish family and talked about how he first met John Wayne especially.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 17-07-2008 15:14

I liked DK2 at first, but as I read on, I liked it less. It's ok as a weird sci-fi satire, but as Batman and Superman stories go, it's poor.

As part of the movie hype machine, the History Channel had a program on last night about Batman with lots of commentary from the filmmakers some of the important Batman people at DC and a lot of psychologists and other academics. Good stuff. Much better informed and thoughtout then a lot of the bullshit pseudo-academic stuff that gets floated about the character, like a piece in the post the other day that wheeled out the old line about the Batman as a fascist. Although Frank Miller might go a long with that, it betrays a misunderstanding both of the Batman stories and, more importantly, the history of fascism.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nil Arshavin - 22-07-2008 18:59

Bafflin, I have only now noticed your recommendations. I'll be searching out the Delisle books, particularly the one on China. Thank you.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 23-07-2008 13:27

Oh dear. They're making a Watchmen videogame. And it's a brawler.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 23-07-2008 13:45

Eh. Video games for movies, no matter how good the movie, suck about 95% of the time, although the game based on Batman Begins was pretty good.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Mitch - 24-07-2008 08:48

Oh dear. They're making a Watchmen videogame. And it's a brawler.

What else would it be GY? It's a pretty violent story. Especially if they include the Vietnam stuff.

I mean, I'm sure it'll be terrible, but Watchmen isn't that bad a source material for a console game.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 24-07-2008 09:02

An adventure game? It is, after all, about a series of mysteries being solved/uncovered.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Mitch - 24-07-2008 09:17

Well yeah. Back in the day Infocom could have made a brilliant text-adventure out of it. But I can't see how that sort of dialogue-heavy game can ever exist on consoles.

But looking at it from the other direction, using the Watchmen characters in your standard GTA-style game would give it more depth than the competition.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 24-07-2008 09:29

That's the thing - there are many potential "good" choices of genre. But as a brawler it's only ever going to be another brawler, and there haven't been many good ones in the last decade (let's face it, it's not going to be God of War). And there are plenty of good, dialogue heavy adventure games on console -text adventures don't even begin to describe the range. You've got RPGs, action adventures, even point-and-click adventures. And, as you say, open world games. It's the laziness that pisses me off. Competenet brawlers are easy to code and easy to develop, unlike time consuming adventures and art intensive open worlds.

Anyway, more info. Apparently the episodes are going to be prequels, hence the brawling.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Mitch - 24-07-2008 09:37

It sounds like The Warriors game based on that description? Posh Double Dragon.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 24-07-2008 16:07

Gambrinus wrote:

It's in "Tainted Love", according to Wikipedia. The story's called "Finest Hour". And I think it may have been a Hurricane, actually.

Picked up a few of the Hellblazer trades recently and it's in Tainted Love, yeah. Brilliant story. Ennis was frustrating. His opening volley on the title was the best he ever wrote but, issues like that one we mentioned aside, were poor. Although I'm probably best to reserve my final estimation until I read Rake At The Gates Of Hell, the conclusion to his major arc.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Lyra - 24-07-2008 16:09

Does anyone know the name of the colony in Dead Space where the crew of the Ishimura first find the artifact??

Google isn't helping me.

edit: not to worry. I found it. Aegis VII, if you care.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 06-08-2008 15:49

Oh dear God.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 06-08-2008 16:04

I really don't think that has anything to do with whether or not the movie will be any good.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 06-08-2008 16:20

Awful music has no bearing on the quality of a movie?

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 06-08-2008 17:38

It doesn't help, but if it's just in the end credits then I don't think it matters much.

Better yet, maybe it's in a scene where the script calls for "shitty band doing a bad Dylan cover in the background."

It's probably some sort of cross-promotion being ram-rodged by the execs who think MCR can sell the soundtrack or whatever.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Guy Potger - 06-08-2008 18:35

In case it hasn't been mentioned, and I can't believe it won't be in over five pages, a "must read" graphic novel is the two-parter "My Father Bleeds History"/ "And Here My Troubles Began".

I can't recommend them enough.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 06-08-2008 18:39

Who is the author, GP?

Back to Watchmen for a moment.

These look pretty cool.

<http://www.superherohype.com/news/watchmennews.php?id=7562>

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Guy Potger - 06-08-2008 20:18

Art Spiegelman.

It's the "Maus" books.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 06-08-2008 21:50

Ah. I have the first Maus book, but I haven't finished it yet.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 27-08-2008 01:04

I thought this might be of interest to some of you here.

-

<http://www.ica.org.uk/thumbnail.php?max=408&id=5093>

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 27-08-2008 10:39

Yes it is evilc, except a Monday night in that London is impossible. However, I've a friend who I'm sending the link to and no doubt he'll go so thanks.

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 04-09-2008 11:33

I've just finished reading Grant Morrison's run on Animal Man. It starts off pretty inauspiciously, very earnest, fairly standard superhero stuff with an environmentalist twist. But it picks up dramatically from the second trade, and the finale is spectacular. Very meta indeed, drawing on the likes of Joyce, O'Brien and Tristram Shandy. More than anything else, it becomes a meditation on the comic form itself (specifically the foibles of superhero comics), much like Sandman becomes a story about storytelling.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Mumpo - 04-09-2008 11:37

I've been meaning to read Morrison's Animal Man for years and there's just an outside chance, GY, that your post might be the catalyst for me to actually do it.

I'm three quarters of the way through his four-volume Seven Soldiers Of Victory series and though it riffs, as they say, on alot of his favourite themes, it's worth a go.

=====

Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by centrifugal - 04-09-2008 11:48

Couple more recommendations; sorry if these have been mentioned before. Some these are ongoing series, but there's at least a couple of trades of each out there.

Scalped, which about an undercover cop on an indian reservation. That makes it sound really cliched, but it's told from the point of view of the cop, who ran away from the reservation aged 13. Really well written, with none of the normal patronising bollocks you find when native americans are written about.

Fables, about a group of fairy tale/ nursery rhyme characters living secretly in New York

Criminal, a real none-more-noir series. It's just won a few Eisner awards, and the actual comics themselves have all kinds of articles about, and recommendations of, assorted films and books in the same genre. Despite being marketed by Marvel, it's creator owned and feels like a real labour of love.

Also, Jinx, Torso and Sam & Twitch are all fantastic crime comics written by Bendis, before he started writing every book at Marvel. Can I also second the votes for 100 Bullets, y - The Last Man, and Ex Machina.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gambrinus - 06-09-2008 08:24

Was Fables some sort of Sandman thingy? I think I've read it, but it was a long long time ago.

Does Asterix belong in this thread? I've been reading these for about 15 years now.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 06-09-2008 11:18

Was Fables some sort of Sandman thingy?

No, although there are some similarities (it's also Vertigo). Basic premise is that fairy tale characters (fables) are brought into existence in another dimension (sort of) by the imagination of humans, where they do (technically did) what humans say they did. But a big baddy called the Adversary launches a massive war, and the Western fables flee through portals to our world, and form a settlement in New Amsterdam, where the bad fables are given an amnesty in return for living by Fabletown rules. The comics start in medias res, so it's modern day, and the fables are plotting to retake the Homelands. It's pretty cool.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 07-09-2008 23:46

Question:

I kind of lost touch with comics and graphic novels when my mate stopped working in a comic shop, so...

Were any of the Deadline characters/stories ever gathered together to form graphic novels of their own? I thought Accident Man was an interesting idea, you see. (Sorry for any thicky-ness inherent in this question!)

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Johanista - 08-09-2008 11:05

I also lost touch with comics after my mate stopped working in a comic shop (he was sacked for, ahem, giving stuff to his mates for free).

Anyway, Accident Man actually appeared in Toxic weekly (not Deadline), a short-lived rival to 2000AD. It did come out in its own comic for a few issues but, as far as I'm aware, there haven't been any graphic novels.

There were rumours that a film was gonna be made - which may have prompted them to reprint the old strips - but this was about ten years ago so I guess it never made it past the "development" stage.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 08-09-2008 13:27

Cheers for that, Johanista. I told you I was rusty about all this shit!

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Matej - 09-09-2008 13:05

I've run through a bunch this weekend, as I discovered that my library had received a bunch of new (to me) copies since last I checked.

Black Hole -lots of recommendations here and on the old board. Read it this morning on the train. Not really my thing, so I didn't really like it much.

League of Extraordinary Gentlemen vol.1 - I really thought I would like this. I didn't. (Cool 'retro' style artwork though.) Did not like it at all.

Sandman vol 1-3 Good, getting better. Feels far more similar to Swamp Thing than I would have expected.

Persepolis Quite good, basically on par with Maus I. Should I read the 2nd volume?

Usagi Yojimbo I don't remember who recommended this, but although it was the first one I read this weekend, it may be my favorite out of all of them. It's more than a bit Groo done seriously, but very enjoyable, something I'm not sure I'd ascribe to the others.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 09-09-2008 22:33

Usagi Yojimbo I don't remember who recommended this

That would have been me, Matej. Glad you liked it. There's loads of issues and the quality rarely dips below excellent.

Libraries are getting better and better about stocking a decent range of graphic novels, aren't they?

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by indysleaze - 10-09-2008 14:02

Jon wrote:

Libraries are getting better and better about stocking a decent range of graphic novels, aren't they?

It's an uphill struggle, trying to explain to otherwise savvy RDLs that buying volume 2 of the Essential Spectacular Spider-man, as a standalone title, really doesn't cut it.

But slowly, slowly, we're getting there...

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Jon - 10-09-2008 22:16

RDLs?

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by indysleaze - 11-09-2008 13:22

sorry, Reader Development Librarians

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Haribo West - 15-09-2008 23:44

Stewart Lee's interview with Alan Moore is rather ace: <http://www.stewartlee.co.uk/downloads/chainreaction-slee-alanmoore.mp3>

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Bafflin - 17-09-2008 06:39

Bafflin, I have only now noticed your recommendations. I'll be searching out the Delisle books, particularly the one on China. Thank you.

I keep forgetting to check out this thread, so I've only just noticed your comment. How did you get on with it? I read the three in chronological order - China, North Korea, Burma - and they develop both in terms of his drawing style and how he tells the stories. I liked them all, but I'm glad I read them in that order, because the Burma one is my favourite.

One recommendation I haven't made on here (although I may have on the old board) is Hanco Kolk. He has a really wide range of drawing styles, from almost Asterix style to the more linear stuff in his "Meccano" series. There's a profile for him on lambiek's website.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 04-11-2008 21:50

Comica 2008

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Gangster Octopus - 05-11-2008 00:48

Are you going?

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by evilC - 05-11-2008 02:23

Probably not, G.O., I'm afraid. I've really got to watch the pennies, these days and I've already got a few commitments coming up, so this is a relatively low priority.

However, I thought I'd just flag it up for those who can go. There's certainly some interesting things on that bill.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 05-11-2008 11:13

Ooh, that sounds great. Thanks, Clive. I'll definitely be going to the Spiegelman talk and maybe the Kirby, although I'll be nursing a nasty hangover on that day.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Eggchaser - 05-11-2008 11:56

Just got through Daredevil Legends 1, 2 & 4. I love Hornhead. And reading vol. 4 with the Typhoid Mary story transported me back to when I first started reading comics. I love Romita Jnr's angular art style and Nocenti's continuation of the "Daredevil can never be happy and all women that he loves must get fucked up horribly" thread that permeates the whole history of the comic.

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Re:Graphic Novels

Posted by Nigelwyn - 16-11-2008 21:16

I quite liked Gilbert Hernandez's Palomar stories.
http://www.amazon.co.uk/Heartbreak-Soup-Palomar-Stories-Rockets/dp/1560977833/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1226870063&sr=8-2

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