

## Pim Francie: The Golden Bear Days

*Al Columbia*

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**Al Columbia : Pim Francie: The Golden Bear Days** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pim Francie: The Golden Bear Days:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. So Much PotentialBy David SwanAl Columbia is one of the most enigmatic cartoonists alive and this collection will only add to his mystery. This book contains no story, only ideas and sketches pulled together and presented with some attempt to produce a very loose narrative. Collected here are the raw and disturbing images from the mind of an artist with seemingly no boundaries. If you've ever read anything by Columbia you'll know that he really doesn't do any self censorship and if anything this book is tamer than much of what he has produced. Columbia is generally characterized as such a perfectionist that his productivity is almost non-existent. This book would definitely back up that theory since many of these drawings are absolutely stunning and would only need some slight cleanup to be presented to the public in an actual story. As someone with a small bit of background in graphic design it saddens me to see pictures that clearly took many hours to create torn and taped back together.If the book did have a theme you might say it's the loss of innocence. It isn't the innocence of Pim and Francie since they are clearly corrupted from the get go. Early in the book Francie is shown attached to a laughing monstrosity by an umbilical cord while Pim, cigar in hand and face obscured by shadows, shouts, `whore, he looks nothing like me'. No, the innocence that Columbia tries to take is that of the reader. The book is littered with images of beloved Disney characters including one haunting drawing featuring badly damaged statues of Mickey, Pluto and Donald Duck's nephews. Mickey's mouth is a gaping smashed hole; an image that's hard to shake made all the more sickening by the skill and precision of Al Columbia. Columbia's `Bloody Bloody Killer' bears a slight resemblance to Goofy if Goofy had leering bulging eyes, a mirthless smile and a butcher's knife in each hand. There is an insane looking

picture of what appears to be Pluto with his face carved up and a look of masochistic delight while in another image Pim has Bambi on a leash having hacked off two of the young doe's legs and his tail. I would suggest visiting Fantagraphics website which offers 24 pages from the book as a preview. Al Columbia reuses a lot of ideas but again this is a sketch book of experimentation and not a finished product. There are a lot of images of multi-limbed creatures with arms at unnatural angles and a butcher's knife in each hand. Sometimes the creatures seem to literally have multiple arms while in others it appears that the knives may be getting juggled and the extra arms are meant to show movement. Besides being inspired by Disney and Fleischer I see similarities to a lot of comics from the 1920's, 30's and 40's. Some of the characters resemble political cartoons from the 40's that featured disgusting distorted images of opposing world leaders. They were typically drawn grotesquely fat with demonic claws and greedy tongues licking thick slobbering lips. In one picture two of these beasts are selling kittens to what appears to be the 'Bloody Bloody Killer' for God knows what purpose. If you look back at a lot of comics like 'The Yellow Kid', from the turn of the last century, many of the drawings look very disturbing today and I sense that this was one of the sources of inspiration. Not everything in the book will repulse. A lot of pictures are quite lovely and could easily be featured in a children's book without complaint but you always get the feeling of dread that one turn of the page will be a return to hell. One thing about Fantagraphics is they clearly care about what they put out. The cover is fantastic giving the appearance that the book is taped up. The paper stock is very nice and the binding is perfect. No worries at all in the presentation. I just can't help but feel that this whole endeavor is a desperate attempt to get anything out from Al Columbia. What I would have preferred was a compilation of his works from various comics many of which are extremely hard to get but the ultimate would be an all new book. I just cannot in good conscience give this book the full five stars because in the end it's an incomplete project. It's more of a tease or perhaps a sad reminder of lost potential. Al Columbia has some amazing stories rattling around in his head and hopefully someday they will get polished up and presented in a finished format.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AmazingBy SkylarI love the book, it was in great condition and if you like cartoon gore this is the book for you.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic Artwork a "Must Have" for any Al Columbia fanBy j.kyle winterHaunting, disturbing, grim, beautiful, discomfoting, and absolutely brilliant. I am a huge fan of Mr. Al Columbia I am so happy he decided to release all of this beautiful unused artwork he had hiding in his private works. I HIGHLY recommend you check this book out. It is by far one of my favorites in my very large collected library. GO PICK IT UP TODAY

Collecting more than a decades worth of excavations, comic strips, animation stills, storybook covers, and much more, this broken jigsaw puzzle of a graphic novel tells the story of Pim Francie childlike male and female imps whose irresponsible antics get them into horrific, fantastic trouble. The brilliant, fairy tale-like backdrops hint at further layers of reality lurking under every gingerbread house or behind every sunny afternoon. Their loosely defined relationship only contributes to the existential fear that lingers underneath the various perils they are subjected to, which are threaded together by text and notes by the artist.

From Publishers Weekly Columbia's legend over the last two decades has as much to do with the work he's destroyed or never finished as with the few spectacular, horrifying pieces that actually have seen publication. This, his first book, makes a point of being unfinished and unfinishable. These aren't actually stories about Pim and Francie, a pair of little-kid characters (drawn in a vintage animation style) who are perpetually stumbling into ghastly, wrenchingly violent scenarios: they're mangled fragments of stories, closeups of incomplete comics pages and animation storyboards, stained and crumpled sketches and notes. The book's spine calls its contents artifacts and bone fragments, as if they're what's left for a forensic scientist to identify after a brutal murderer has had his way with them; Columbia obsessively returns to images of bloody bloody killers. (His cartoon shorthand for destruction is a human tornado with lots of bent arms holding knives at daffy angles.) Many of the pieces are just one or two drawings, as if they've been reduced to the moment when an idyllic piece of entertainment goes hideously awry. But they're also showcases for Columbia's self-frustrating mastery: his absolute command of the idiom of lush, old-fashioned cartooning, and the unshakable eeriness of his visions of horror. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist Pim and Francie are a boy and a girl right out of early animation: crisply drawn in a handful of stock positions, with big shoes and three-fingered gloves, and usually identically posed when shown together, except when one or the other is in a chopped-up state. Chopped-up? Well, their grandpa and grandma as well as the Bloody Bloody Killer often turn up flourishing big knives and straight razors. This is all done in black and white, of course, like the early, silent, deadly Felix the Cat cartoons, and also in various apparent states of wear, tear, and draftsmanship (penciled, inked, half-inked, overlaid, palimpsest). Only vaguely narrative, nightmarish, but fascinating, especially for connoisseurs of pure cartooning. --Ray Olson [F]ascinating, especially for connoisseurs of pure cartooning. - Booklist

The twisted narratives and characters are presented so deftly with such humor and visual panache that their wrongness becomes right; and thus is the singular charm of Al Columbia. - Molly Young, We Love You So

Capable of rendering tight, stark, shudder-inducing figures, the horror-themed work of Al Columbia is some of the most

ravenously fan awaited in the indie scenedisarmingly comfortable and sinister. - Rachel Molino, WizardA lavishly produced portal into the fantastic and frightful world of Pim Francie. This gorgeous grimoire is part alchemy, part art book, part storybook, part comic book, and part conceptual art from the pen of Al Columbia, a longtime fan favorite contributor to comics anthologies like Zero Zero, Blab!, and, more recently, MOME....Never have such colorful, imaginative vistas instilled such an atmosphere of dread, and with such a wicked sense of humor. - Graphic Novel ReporterAl decided to dredge up old ghosts, unfinished pieces, trifles he had thrown away then reconsidered and offered them up to us as proof that he hasnt forgotten us. This 240-page book has certainly filled in some gaps for me as to what goes on in Columbias mind... There seems to be something both amazing and horrifying around every corner, in any dark space, in the thick of the forest, in the bulbous eyes of maniacal creatures and the straight realistic lines of buildings that all have a dark window somewhere... It is truly a viscous treat and I am sure this one will never wash off. - Rachael M. Rollson, Panel to PanelPim Francie: The Golden Bear Days is a downright sadistic journey through the lives of its titular characters... The book succeeds rather well as both an introduction to the artists work and as a standalone art book. Its simultaneously lush and sparse and terrifying and wonderful. - Brian Heater, The Daily Cross Hatch[T]heres one reason why Pim Francie pulls off the unlikely feat of being more than the sum of its fragmented, disconnected, half-inked parts: its terrifying. ... The book... hangs in your head long after you close your eyes. - Martyn Pedler, BookslutThere are no explanations here, and few conventional payoffs just images designed to remind readers what it was like to be a panicked, paranoid child, convinced that every nighttime shadow contained a beast more menacing and repulsive than any grown-up could conceive. [Grade] B+. - The Onion A.V. ClubThese distressed, distressing comics and illustrations repeat and escalate like a stuck record or never waking from a recurring nightmare. - Paul GravettGorgeously reproduced rough pencil marks, taped edges, discolorations, and all this might be the sweetest thing to stare at, dumbly, in my whole library. - Mario Z. Alipio, The Truth About ComicsIts possible to piece together narratives from the fragments here, the way you might reconstruct a crime scene from bits of evidence, or a nightmare from fading details. These stories may even be all the more potent for having to be inferred, like the phantasms we imagine when we listen to horror stories on the radio. - Tim Kreider, The Comics JournalThis is visceral, elemental terror that generally festers below or alongside invisibly human reckoning. ... Frontwards, backways, sneak-a-peek sideways, it all packs a monumentally disturbing wallop. - Rich Kreiner, The Comics Journal