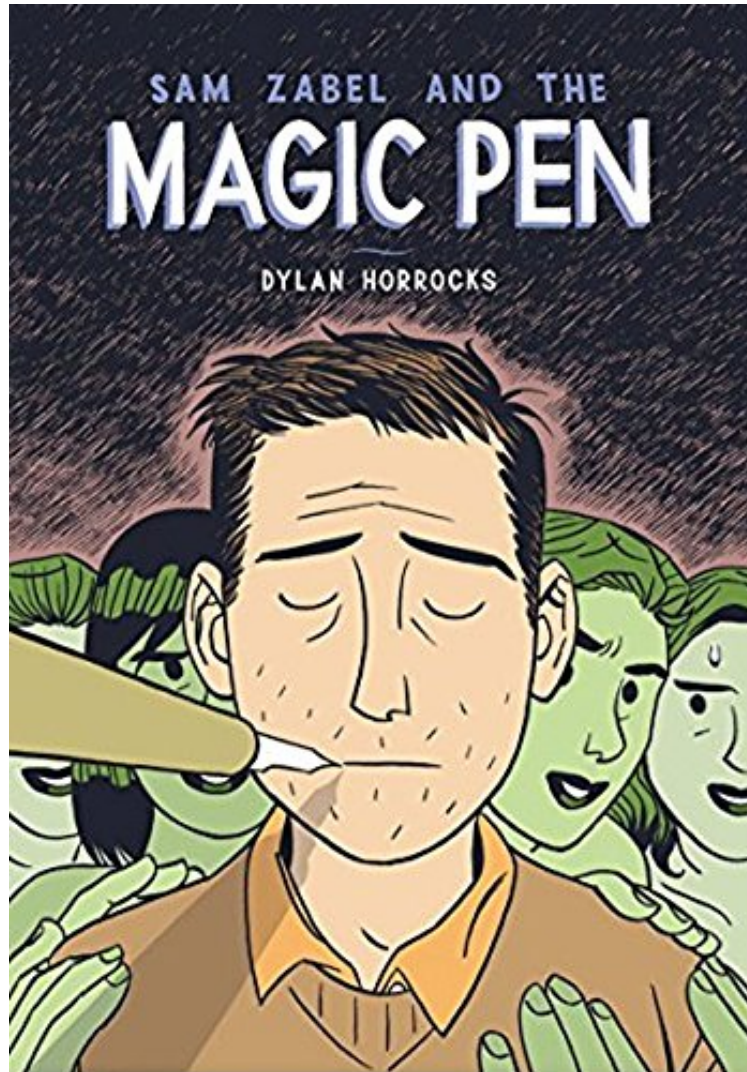


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Sam Zabel And The Magic Pen

Dylan Horrocks

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#1084378 in Books 2015-01-18Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.30 x 1.00 x 7.401, .0 #File Name:
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Dylan Horrocks : Sam Zabel And The Magic Pen before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sam Zabel And The Magic Pen:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. hold on, tighterBy RobIt has been less than half a year since I found Hicksville and in that time have devoured it no less than 5 times, each time being reminded of why I liked it so much the other times and also getting a little something extra every time. But you couldn't do that story again, and leading up to this book I was wondering how you'd do anything again hasn't the nature of the criticism of your last book ballooned your head in such a way that the reader won't help but notice in your next book? Weren't you scared that it would just be compared to that anyways and you'd crumple up your penciled paper in rash frustration? What would

this story be about oh, some dumb pen? I wasn't hoping for much. . .--Hicksville did a wondrous thing of celebrating comics within a comic about comics. It would have come off as pretentious if it wasn't so ball-swingingly honest with me right from the start. Each chapter of that book has a selected quote from the likes of Ditko or Lee or Tezuka that (sorta) sets up the following chapter. The Magic Pen gives us just two, right at the beginning. One from WB Yeats and one from...Nina Hartley, pornstar. They both concern fantasy, desire and responsibility. This book also uses the comic within comic style that Hicksville did, again with New Zealand's hidden gems being the focus. I was worried having a full color work would somehow detract from the experience. Hicksville sports a few pages that are so subtle in their wordless artistry that they're completely without peer to me. Not to worry. Dylan has done it again, and I should've recognized this when I got through the first sixty pages and thought the SAME exact thought that I had with Hicksville when I reached that mark: where's the story, man? See, The Magic Pen's story comes from real life. Its not in the comic! How are you gonna go and write a comic about something that isn't there, in the book? You start it with a completely self-deprecating and anhedonic tone. Did you know that I, another artist (both less and more failed than yourself), would pull back and lower my expectations? Did you know that I would pity you going into this world(s), seemingly distracted from its own McGuffin for much of its 200 pages? How responsible am I for my fantasies? seems to be the question of this comic. Without saying too much, it both celebrates and critiques fantasy in ways too numerous to count. The Japanese girl with rocket boots and an adorable book bag that burps and noms comics. A tree of literal life and homely retreat and a Martian ravine of adorable, rideable over-sized eyeballs. All of these things show us Horrocks' simple love of comics and the visual medium. And then there's his wife, kids and home life that get pushed to the side when Sam falls inside a comic book. But why set yourself up for failure? Why make the frame of the story so thin and fey its practically not there at all? The plot relies so much on the reader's pathos and knowledge and determination to re-read that it is no wonder why it took so long to come out (especially after the brilliant but no doubt realistic intro, reminiscent of the intro to Hicksville's rereleased version). Artists get that they're only failures with a couple successes here and there. This book is a xanadu of failures. The female characters are given focus, especially toward the end, when the point is hammered home. Is Horrocks white-knighting his way out of a proper climax? I don't think so. Its an apology for a life of creation ("now, blow") and destructive placation ("Sam sits in front of his computer all day long...keeping the wolf from the door"), but born of guilt it isn't. In maybe the best chapter (in a book full of great chapters) we learn from a golden-age comic heroine about a creator's role in order now, this is where the artist is holding a mirror to the world. She says the artist wants order in a senseless universe. S/he, the creator, wants... Well, I'll have to leave you to find out what that is for yourself. Sam's character finds out what that is for him and leaves us when that wonderful, glowing sense of the story's arch finally, gloriously raises its head JUST ONCE to eclipse the art itself and tell me, Hey, there's a story after all. Now take responsibility and just breathe. [xposted from my goodreads] 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent graphic novel By Steven Caplan Excellent graphic novel. Very enjoyable 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Wonderful Return!! By Leighton Kul was so excited to see the Magic Pen at my local comics store. Dylan Horrocks' Hicksville was a unique classic when it came out in 2002. A fine story made even more interesting since it was by a New Zealander and incorporated multicultural Maori themes. And then....almost nothing. I wondered what happened to Horrocks. I was in New Zealand a few years ago and asked about him at a local comics store and people confirmed that had not produced anything Well...he's back and follows the same themes about the role of comics and art in a commercialized world as well as the relation of art and imagination to reality. Welcome back, Dylan, we've missed you.

A burned-out superhero comic artist goes on an adventure that spans time and space with two female companions. Acclaimed cartoonist Dylan Horrocks returns with a long-awaited new graphic novel, the first since his perennial classic, 1998s Hicksville. Cartoonist Sam Zabel hasn't drawn a comic in years. Stuck in a nightmare of creative block and despair, Sam spends his days writing superhero stories for a large American comics publisher and staring at a blank piece of paper, unable to draw a single line. Then one day he finds a mysterious old comic book set on Mars and is suddenly thrown headlong into a wild, fantastic journey through centuries of comics, stories, and imaginary worlds. Accompanied by a young webcomic creator named Alice and an enigmatic schoolgirl with rocket boots and a bag full of comics, Sam goes in search of the Magic Pen, encountering sex-crazed aliens, medieval monks, pirates, pixies and of course cartoonists. Funny, erotic, and thoughtful, Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen explores the pleasures, dangers, and moral consequences of fantasy. Full color

This book is necessary for anyone paralyzed even a bit by the creative/spiritual confusion of the digital age. Horrocks explores the role and responsibility of storytelling, juggling genres, fiddling with the mechanics of the comics form, and reclaiming the sense of magic that once reigned the medium --a playfulness contagious for the reader. Like his Hicksville, a must have in every library. - Craig Thompson (Blankets, Habibi) Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen is a coming-of-age story for the fantasies of our past and a joyful bear hug for the storytellers of our future. An effortless, magical read from front to back. - Scott McCloud (Understanding Comics, The Sculptor) Horrocks intelligence and crisp,

colorful Tintin-esque art combine in an offbeat, incisive, and entertaining critique of classic comic tropes. - Ray Olson, Booklist...[A] thoughtful, layered graphic novel... The result is sublime: a breezy-reading rumination on the promise and the problems inherent in graphic novels complicated history, and the power the creator holds in shaping the medium's future. - Aaron Ragan-Fore, Eugene Weekly Zabel embarks on a journey [that] transcends the classic cautionary 'be careful what you wish for' tale, reflecting on gender politics in comics and how they intersect with fantasy. - Hillary Brown, Paste Sam Zabel and the Magic Penis, like Hicksville, a meta-comic, a story about what it means to construct and share fictions made out of panels, captions, pictures and words; like Hicksville, it presents a secret history of what comics could or should have been. ... Sam Zabel is, mostly, a thoughtful delight, a celebration of Horrocks' chosen medium, with powerful supporting characters helpfully present to save the day... - Stephen Burt, Rain Taxi It may sound very cerebral, but the energy and excitement of the storytelling makes Sam's artistically enlightening experience a thrilling adventure for the reader. [T]his graphic novel looks at how erotic imagery produced through the male gaze has evolved over the past century, but it never lets the intellectual elements get in the way of the fun. And this book is a LOT of fun Sam Zabel And The Magic Pen may contain nudity and (not particularly graphic) sexual content, but it's a great title for teen readers, offering valuable insights about the process of creation and the artist's ability to challenge or reinforce social ideals. - Oliver Sava, The A.V. Club More Calvino than Borges The story moves vertiginously between fantasy worlds, as Horrocks stages confrontations between comics pulp and frequently sexist past, and the more female-friendly webcomics and manga of present-day practice. [T]he book's real achievement is in the way it manages to be both besotted and furious with cartooning's speckled history plus be newly impassioned about the future of comics. - Sean Rogers, The Globe and Mail Rampant self-doubt and other real-world obstacles so often encountered by creative types temper the vintage sci-fi weirdness in Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen. ... [I]n artful page layouts and a well-built framework for his observations, Horrocks' deep love for comics is... apparent in Sam Zabel. - Dominic Umile, Washington City Paper... [W]onderful, and there's nowhere near enough Dylan Horrocks work in the world. - Kurt Busiek (Astro City, The Autumnlands)... [A] story that's fun, but ultimately reaffirms the importance of fantasy and escape in our lives. Sam Zabel is funny and thoughtful, moving and beautiful, and much like Horrocks' first book, is a thoughtful meditation on the comics form. - Alex Dueben, Comic Book Resources... Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen shows that when the loop of creation to appreciation is complete and better still if the creative energy spins out on its own unpredictable orbit that the relationship between audience and artist carries its own sort of eldritch power. - Evan Narcisse, Kotaku... [H]aving a book like this again reminds me as to why Horrocks is one of the most important cartoonists currently working in comics: his work is honest and often painful, permeating with a sense of heart and warmth and love for the medium that isn't always so visible in the work of his contemporaries ... Sam Zabel almost seems like a blueprint as to how we can take the stereotypical escapism overdone in the comics and turn them once again into something of true, earnest value... - Matthew Meylikhov, Multiversity Comics... [A] fast-paced and multi-level fantasy adventure with a progressive viewpoint and a good-natured wit. In Dylan Horrocks' hands, literary criticism becomes exactly what it is advocating comics to be and that's a precious feat. ... [The characters] bring forth one of the most unexpected, truest tear-jerkers I have ever seen in a comic you'll get misty-eyed for them and for comics in the best possible sense. - John Seven, Vermicious Dylan Horrocks is a master. The journey Sam Zabel takes through a magical comic book land is full of references and tropes we all recognize but it also features a moral component that is so thoughtfully laid down that the reader finds themselves thinking about the implications for a long time after finishing. - Aimee LoSecco, 13th Dimension Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen... is amazing and wonderful. As in Hicksville, the theme here involves fantasy, but with a more mature treatment, one reflective of today's comic reader. ... The images are astounding. ... Horrocks really understands the visual language of comics and how much can be done with it. ... I found Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen incredibly inspiring. ... Only someone who knows and loves the comic medium could criticize it this deeply and accurately. - Johanna Draper Carlson, Comics Worth Reading About the Author Dylan Horrocks lives in New Zealand with his wife and two sons. He is the author of the award-winning graphic novel Hicksville and the comic book series Pickle and Atlas, and has also written for DC Comics and Vertigo, including Hunter: the Age of Magic and Batgirl.