



Fogtown

Andersen Gabrych , Brad Rader (Illustrator)

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A gritty, graphic pulp fiction about the temptation, damnation and redemption of Frank Grissel, an aging, hard-knuckled private eye--and a deeply closeted homosexual, set in the very real world of 1953 San Francisco.

Aided by his long-suffering secretary (and sometime live-in lover) Loretta, Grissel's search for a runaway girl winds up with him becoming a suspect in a string of gruesome murders. The case takes twists and turns through the Golden Gate's greasy underbelly: the beguiling arms of Chinese shipping heiress (and smuggler) Lady Tze; an unexpected reunion with Betty Grey, the daughter he abandoned long ago; the loss of Loretta to the sadistic clutches of the high-powered "Colonel;" and finally the horrifying gender-bending truth about the runaway and the murders and all those missing organs. Frank also confronts his own "horrifying truth," earning his daughter's forgiveness and, perhaps, the love of another man.

Fogtown Details

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Author : Andersen Gabrych , Brad Rader (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Fogtown for online ebook

Michael says

interesting. weird. rating is probably 2 3/4 stars, but oh well...

Berry says

Set in 1950s San Fran, this Vertigo Crime graphic novel "Fogtown" is a pulp tale about a hard-boiled, dick-loving dick. And it's nearly fantastic.

The plot and most everything else is pretty straightforward noir fare; what makes "Fogtown" atypical is its progressive and honest approach to sexuality. Specifically, the sexuality of the main character. Gabrych's take on the gay man (albeit closeted, mostly) is admirable and hopefully we see a lot of this in the future - in more comics, in more media in general. Gabrych's characters treat homosexuality how it must've been in the 50s and it feels authentic. It's not PC, it's not preachy, it's not what you'd expect, and thank God for that.

Beyond its main plot, this story is about faith, fortune, fucking, and family. And our anti-hero Frank has problems in all of these areas. He's not only deep in the closet, but he's a drunk, he has whore issues, girlfriend issues, ex-wife issues, a daughter with daddy issues, case issues, boyfriend issues, hirsute issues, and the shit hits the fan when his personal, professional, and private worlds collide along with all of these, well, issues.

The art was definitely more than serviceable. It feels very pulpy, very 1950s. Black and white, heavy on the ink, thick lines. Rader's storytelling skills are mostly strong (save a couple obfuscated or contextless panels). But this book ain't exactly firing on all cylinders, hence the four stars. Cliches abound, for one. I expect and forgive them, sure, given the limitations of the form and the genre, and while Gabrych earned from me enough goodwill with this character that I can forgive him anything, it's the prose that keeps the book from truly singing.

Recommended for fans of detective fiction or pulps or film noir, but a must for gay comics fans in general since we populate far less than "ten percent" of the comic book universe. It's slim pickings, but here, at least, the pickings are good.

David Schaafsma says

Hang with this one. You might be bored and offended by the first thirty pages, but let me just say there are some surprises. The art looks flat and pulpish, but hey this is pulp, and commentary on pulp, really, so finally you can't complain about that too much, really, as it fits.

Kasandra says

The art's great, but the story is totally unbelievable, full of too many coincidences even for a crappy pulp novel, which is what this is. In addition, even though this is presented as a "classic" noiry type of private-dick story, the level of misogyny and homophobia evidenced here really turned me off. Disappointing.

Quentin Wallace says

I love hard boiled crime stories, but this one just didn't appeal to me. The story seemed to spin it's wheels, and seemed almost like a parody of the genre. The artwork wasn't very impressive either. So far the Vertigo Crime imprint, which I thought I'd love, has been a bit of a mixed bag. This is my least favorite of the imprint I've read so far.

Bruce Dixon says

I really enjoyed this for the most part. The shocking portion of the piece didn't really do it for me, though. The art was great and fit the bill perfectly.

Eli Bishop says

A comic that's a really dark private-eye story set in San Francisco and that pushes back against the straight macho sexuality of Mickey Spillane... would be a good idea. This isn't the way to do it. This is just clunky, ineptly lurid and embarrassing.

Robert says

Went in blind based on the rep of the publisher - an excellently twisted take on detective noir.

Judah says

Decent art, but the plot feels a bit mangled and far fetched. The twists feel a little belabored, as if a long narrative was sandwiched into a shorter one.

Natalie says

This is the second book I've picked up from the Vertigo Crime imprint and I think it will probably be my last. I try not to give spoilers in my reviews so what should I say about this?

A lot of it was very cliché. All of the most overused tropes are dragged out and combined with strange LGBT themes. I was left with a rather ambiguous idea of whether the author was trying to say that

homosexuality is a perversion or not. On the surface he seemed to be saying no but some of the subtext was telling me a different story...

Parts of the book feel like the author was getting a bonus for every four letter word or vulgarity he could squeeze in there.

The art isn't what I would describe as beautiful but it does lend itself well to the type of story being told. Too bad the story itself wasn't that great.

It wasn't what I was expecting and altogether went away from the experience feeling a little unclear. Like I didn't even really want to tell anyone that I actually read something like this. And yet I kept flipping the pages so there was something there; it could have been better, but it wasn't.

Alex Panagiotopoulos says

Nothing special. Incoherent plot that leaves the reader with loose ends, even by noir standards. Design was bad most of the time, with the main characters having a slightly different face from panel to panel and the almost complete absence of backgrounds made for a comic sketchy and empty. Even the attempt of drawing close-ups that pay homage to the hollywood crime movies of the '50s didn't come out good (pg. 100 & 121 for example).

Wouldn't say it was a waste of money, but it wasn't that far from it. They're much better noir/neo-noir graphic novels out there, avoid "Fogtown".

Ashkin Ayub says

Fogtown is an amazing piece of literature, not only by graphic novel standards but also by literary standards. This graphic novel follows Frank Grissel, a hardened detective who makes his living solving crimes and charming the ladies. However, he has more than a few secrets locked in his closet !

The novel features all the characters you would expect from a noir - the private dick, pimps, shipyard owners, the city's grit, sordid sexual underbelly, and a bevy of unsavory characters.

The story has so many twists and turns and such a frenetic pace that it would make an amazing film. It's like one of those picturesque typed novel. It's a truly engaging and thrilling page turner. It is definitely a must read for noir fans, gay comic book geeks, and mystery lovers.

The art in this book is as stylish and off beat as the story itself. Rader's illustrations, cartoonish yet realistic, are like the ones you find in the old 60s underground comics. Think of his art style similar to art style of the legendary ZAP COMIX. A Real quirky one!

Story – 4/5

Art – 4/5

Michael says

Another Vertigo crime book, another predictably "noir" protagonist and another series of reveals that strain credulity.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

1953: San Francisco - a down and out private eye - a great read for a foggy night.

Lisa Hechesky says

I found this book at my local library while searching for graphic novels done in the film noir style. At first, I was happy to see this story, the hard-boiled detective and all of the trappings.

However, as many others have noted, the plot is weak and convoluted. Filled with every genre cliché. While I'm not adverse to swearing or sex in stories, the crass and vulgarity of story just seemed out of place. It was almost cursing for cursing sake.

The storyline was clunky and had too many subplots.
