



Vagabond, Vol. 2

Takehiko Inoue

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Vagabond, Vol. 2 Takehiko Inoue Enlightenment

Musashi sets out for Nara intent on challenging the warrior monks of legendary Hozoin Temple. But Musashi's growing feelings for his childhood friend Otsu; may prove to be a fatal distraction in his match against Inshun, the austere master of Hozoin's deadly spear technique!

Vagabond, Vol. 2 Details

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From Reader Review Vagabond, Vol. 2 for online ebook

Bruno says

The word is: cool.

Jesus Flores says

Vagabond 2

So Musashi after the fight with the school, decides to travel to Nara, and stop on a Monk temple in the road to fight them, because they are famous for having a good spear fighting technique, and if he defeats them then that means he is strong. That sound like a very stupid motivation and reason to fight happy monks. If it were “train me” that would be ok, if they were like evil monks, it would be ok, but just because they are good at fighting. Now probably that’s how it was back then, but still that just seem like a dumb reason.

But besides that, the travel and the fight with the spear monk, that is one excellent draw fight, with a great pacing and really gets you into it, that part was good.

And yes once defeated he then ask another monk to train him to fight again.

There are some scenes from Musashi childhood friend stealing the identity of some Samurai and being robbed of his money, and some mention of Otsu.

Besides the part I find dumb, the volume is a great one, and the art is again amazing.

4 stars.

Michael says

via NYPL - Reading the books with some delay between them, I'm forgetting a lot of the secondary cast, but it's still pretty powerful stuff.

Paulo Raposo says

The story of Musashi catches a optimal rhythm making the user ask for more. Characters relatable for they humanity and challenges along their journey in this volume makes it the definitive reason to not let go of this manga. Recommend to everyone that likes a good samurai story with a more adult approach.

Anastasia Antony says

4.5 stars

Terry says

3.5 stars

In the wake of his battle with the famed Yoshioka school in Kyoto from volume 1, Takezo (now known as Musashi) finds himself with a host of new enemies (not a new experience for the vagabond, nor one he is likely to shake) and reunited with the monk Takuan and a young boy named Jotaro...more troubling to Musashi's peace of mind is the presence of Otsu, whose beauty and compassion cause him no little distraction.

In search of a new challenge to face, Musashi decides to challenge the monks of Hozoin, renowned for their spear technique, and the bulk of the story deals with the swordsman's battle against the monastery's young prodigy, and second generation master, Inshun. Despite displaying his savage skill to the full and causing no small consternation to the monks who have never seen anyone so nearly equal to their master, this battle proves to be nearly too much for Musashi who finds Inshun's composure and unerring skill unbeatable. Mastered by fear for the first time Musashi escapes and it is only when he finds an old monk willing to teach him that he begins to martial his abilities and try to face up to the challenge before him. In the end both Musashi and Inshun look forward to facing each other again in the hopes that they have finally come upon the challenge that will bring their skills and fame to the next level towards perfection.

Meanwhile Matahachi, abandoned by Oko and down on his luck as ever, finds himself part of a work gang building a castle. Unable to keep up with the other workers he comes across a ronin willing to help him and whose untimely death would seem to provide Matahachi with the chance to make up for his past weaknesses...though in the end his true nature takes over and, despite the best of intentions, he takes advantage of the dead man's money and identity to better his own position.

The art is still beautiful, and the battle scenes are still sometimes confusing, but this is definitely an excellent manga, especially for those interested in the Tokugawa period. The fact that the manga not only concentrates on the battle scenes that underscore the physical component of Musashi's journey, but also take time to centre on his inner condition and the constant battle he wages against his own nature to better himself and learn from his mistakes in each step he takes towards perfection of the way of the sword makes for an enjoyable and enlightening read. Another area in which the manga excels is in its deep characterization. All of the characters come across as fully realized individuals with their own motivations, desires, and attitudes. Even though there are many characters that fall into the 'master swordsman' vein, from the main character to many of his rivals (including the confident yet placid Inshun, the dreamy and dilettantish Yoshioka Seijuro and his bullish, but chivalric brother Denshichiro, the cocky but clever Gion Toji, and the vengeful but focused bandit chieftain Tsujikaze Kohei) they all come across as different and unique, each pursuing the way of the sword for his own reasons and in his own way. Even the inept Matahachi is more than just a joke and shows complexity as he struggles (albeit unsuccessfully) against his weaker nature on those rare occasions when he allows his few flashes of self-awareness to motivate his actions instead of his more powerful self-interest.

Skjam! says

Quick recap: In 17th Century Japan, failed soldier Shinmen Takezo has reinvented himself as wandering swordsman Miyamoto Musashi. Dedicating his life to perfecting his own style of swordsmanship, he travels to Kyoto and starts a feud with the Yoshioka school of kendo. Unknown to him, his childhood friend Matahachi is also in town, and accidentally sets fire to the Yoshioka dojo.

This volume opens with Musashi being nursed back to health by the rough-edged Buddhist monk Takuan. Realizing he still has a long way to go, Musashi decides to travel to Nara, there to pit himself against the spear style of the Hōzōin Temple monks. A chance encounter with an elderly gardener may be more valuable than any battle.

Musashi is distracted by thoughts of his other childhood friend, the lovely Otsu. She's now the servant of a master of the Yagyu style of swordsmanship, who Yoshioka Denshichiro has come to train with in preparation for his next duel with Musashi.

Others are also on the road. Gion Toji of the Yoshioka school is tracking Musashi to kill him, and is none too restrained about maiming other people along the way.

Matahachi's on the run because of the arson thing, and a chance encounter allows him to also reinvent himself as the respected warrior Sasaki Kojirō. His sections of the story are tragicomedy, as he keeps having good intentions, but the flaws in his character prevent him from following through in a crisis, and we watch him make excuse after excuse for doing less than he ought.

Miyamoto Musashi is better at learning from his mistakes; while he is not the sharpest katana in the armory, he's partially grasped the concept of critical thinking and examining his own mindset. Still has a long way to go before being the best swordsman in Japan though.

The successor to the Hōzōin spear style, Inshun, has his own issues. He's a natural combat genius who has never known "fear", or had a truly serious challenge to his skills until now. Thus his growth has stalled; Inshun must learn how to deal with defeat to become stronger. His multi-chapter duel with Musashi is the centerpiece of this volume.

The art is stellar, but much of the credit for the plot and characterization must go to Eiji Yoshikawa, author of the novel this manga is an adaptation of.

There's a lot of violence in this volume, some of it quite bloody. There's also a brief sex scene with female nudity—this is a "mature readers" title.

This continues to be a good choice for fans of samurai action stories.

Eric says

Fight scenes are hard.

Whether it be a sword fight, a martial arts fist fight, a shootout, a giant battle set-piece, a car chase, or even a pro wrestling match, a fight scene boiled down to its essence is a violent physical conflict between two or more characters in the narrative. Fight scenes in film, television, and animation require a ton of time, effort, and cohesion from several people. Live-action film and shows for example require the actors, the stunt actors, the director, the cameramen, the fight choreographer, the editors, and (if any cgi is involved) the computer programmers to be on the exact same page. (Since I've never been involved in any such thing I'm probably forgetting other crucial people.)

Fight scenes are *especially* hard outside the above-mentioned mediums.

While fight scenes in film and animation require infinitely more exhaustive time, effort, and manpower to create they have one all-important advantage over comics and literature when it comes to action: *motion*.

It is so damn harder to maintain the seamless flow and pulse-pounding pacing that is essential to a thrilling fight scene *without* motion. Off the top of my head I can name several great fight scenes from movies, animation (western and Japanese), video games (cutscenes and boss fights)... Hell, even with the added difficulty of being live performance, I can give you a long list of exciting wrestling matches. I believe that you, fellow readers, can also easily compile a list of fight scenes you enjoyed immensely from films, cartoons, and video games.

But can you do the same with novels and comic books? As someone who labeled a shelf action even I would struggle with singling out a significant number of fight scenes from books as capital-G *Great*. There are several authors I've read and admired who when the time came in their story for an action setpiece it came across as merely serviceable more often than not. And I don't think any less of them for it because it's damn hard to create the visuals and motion that is necessary to a good fight scene with mere words. The closest literary equivalent would be every time an author describes the current location of their characters, but when it comes to scenery the author doesn't have to worry about the flow and pacing of their writing nearly as much they need to when it comes to describing a sword fight, or a shootout, or a wizard duel, or a battle between two armies.

Since they're primarily visual you would think that means comics would have an easier time of giving readers *Great* fight scenes... And yet I find it even *more* difficult to come up with any *Great* fight scenes from comics than I can from books. This is because its even more of a pain in the ass to maintain a kinetic flow and pace that a good fight scene needs with still images with word bubbles than it is with just words. If you're a good writer or storyteller there's at least a chance that the prose of your fight scene will have good rhythm and beats. Superhero comics are especially disappointing in this regard, and may explain why the writers and artists typically overcompensate with absurd feats for superheroes and super-villains. I'm a geeky male in my early twenties so I've seen my fair share of shonen anime, but the typical drawn out nature of most of the fights in the sub-genre have wiped out any desire of mine to see if the original manga versions of, say, Dragon Ball Z and Bleach have better paced fights (well, that, and their sheer daunting length). Before I reveal the reason why I decided to give the second volume of VIZBIG's edition of *Vagabond 4 3/4 stars* some caveats: I haven't read much manga period (looking to remedy that somewhat this year) and most of what I have read were rom-coms, and while I have read a lot of comics in the past two or so years the fact remains I only became a regular reader of graphic novels two or so years ago.

The centerpiece of this second omnibus of Takehiko Inoue's critically acclaimed series is the duel between the young, brutish Miyamoto Musashi and the second generation master of the Hozoin Temple, the

perpetually smiling Inshun.

Musashi vs. Inshun is the best fight I have read in a comic book yet.

Inoue either set out to make this fight *Great* from the outset, or realized he had the potential for something special while story-boarding since the entirety of the fifth volume of *Vagabond* is devoted to this duel when the previous volume leads you to believe that it will be Gion Toji who Musashi will be crossing swords with. That is a pretty damn bold move and shows how confident Inoue was in his drawing and storytelling abilities because as anyone who's read some superhero comics knows you're lucky if the writer and artists devote so much as most of one issue to a fight, *let alone an entire damn trade paperback volume*. Even more impressive is that Inoue was able to make the duel so intense, suspenseful, and, well, *awesome*, in spite of the fact that it is made crystal clear early on that Musashi has no chance of beating Inshun, no matter how hard he tries (and he tries his damnedest). Inshun is the young fighting prodigy of the Hozoin Temple, a monk so skilled and talented that the only person he considers an equal is Seijuro Yoshioka, the layabout master of the now burned Yoshioka school who refused to fight Musashi because he didn't want to kill him. Inshun is so good that he has never truly been scared in his life, which makes him a perpetually cheerful, good-natured ball of energy. Inshun makes a terrific foil for Takezo since he's essentially a well-adjusted version of him who actually received formal training from childhood. The reason I say this is that Inshun's drive to be the very best fighter he could possibly be is just as powerful as Takezo's. Arguably more powerful because Takezo ends up rather traumatized by his defeat.

There is more to this second VIZBIG edition. It deals with the aftermath of the events of the last edition, and we see what Takuan, Otsu, Gion Toji, and Matahachi are up to (Matahachi especially so). I won't spoil what Matahachi decides to do with his life but suffice it to say that part of you wants things to work out for him, and the other part of you wants to punch him (the same reaction most real-life screw-ups elicit). And, Inshun isn't the only new interesting character is all I say. Inoue's artwork remains breathtaking and it became apparent to someone with no previous experience with his work as early as volume two of this series that the man knows how to weave a tale.

I just had to gush about that Great fight scene, you guys.

4 3/4 stars

Bradley Farless says

Exciting and not cheesy or cliche. I'm enjoying the character development. I also like how the fight scenes are visually coherent. It's not just a mess of lines and shapes. I can follow what's happening.

Cedric Jafarpourdavatgar says

Scattered thoughts 2

- the art really becomes fluid here and is much better and more consistent than virtually any other manga
- it's hard for me to become attached to the protagonist with so little dialogue and stereotypical motives
- The side story with Matahachi was really interesting to read even more so than the main plotline to me

- the kind of experimental stuff with ink brushes is amazing to look at
- its hard to give something with art this good a score lower then 4 tbh

Nathalie Andrews says

The Vizbig edition offers three volumes of the Vagabond manga in one. I read the previous volumes in French so this was my first foray into the English language edition and I wasn't disappointed. Although the overall storyline feels fairly standard for manga (Musashi wants to be the Best!), the strongest parts of this are the humanity of the characters: their flaws. In this edition, Musashi fights a warrior monk and meets a greater challenge than he expected. The philosophy behind the swordplay is subtly interwoven into the story. Musashi is still young and fallible but is learning from his mistakes. By contrast, Matahachi just seems to make more mistakes! A great story with a lot of heart.

Helmut says

Besser als der erste Sammelband!

Litt der erste Band (mit Ausgaben 1-3) noch unter einem gewissen gehemmten Erzählfluss, wird dies hier doch deutlich besser: Ein Großteil des Bandes beschäftigt sich mit dem Kampf Musashis gegen Inshun, den Meister der Hozoin-Speertechnik. Dabei wird der Kampf ungemein detailliert dargestellt und man kann den Band kaum aus der Hand legen.

Über die Zeichnungen braucht man kein Wort mehr zu verlieren - Detailverliebtheit hoch zehn, soetwas habe ich sonst noch nirgends gesehen. Insbesondere das Splashpanel zu Ausgabe 53 ("Journey") ist hierfür ein Beispiel - Musashi klettert auf einen Baum, und wenn man möchte, kann man hier bestimmt tausende einzelne, jedes für sich schattierte Blättchen des Baumes zählen. Ich habe diese Seite bestimmt 5 Minuten lang nur begeistert betrachtet und konnte mich gar nicht satt sehen.

Ausstattungsmäßig identisch zum ersten Sammelband (dickes Papier, satte Farben), fällt mir nur ein Nachteil ein: Der Band ist insgesamt doch sehr schwer, und durch die enge Bindung muss man einiges an Kraft aufwenden, wenn man ihn z.B. im Liegen lesen möchte. Das ist aber kein Hinderungsgrund, diesem tollen Werk 5 Sterne zu geben.

Savina Tsataros says

4.9 Stars

This 3 in 1 edition was absolutely beautiful !

Volume 4, the introduction to Musashi's growth was intriguingly lovely, I loved the philosophical growth and seeing the barriers in which he was beginning to overcome.

Again with Volume 5, it was astounding. The humanity and resilience displayed was astonishing. It was by far my favourite volume so far, as we delve right into human consciousness and morality, these aspects captivated my attention and began rewiring the neurones in my brain !

It kept me thinking and rereading to fully encompass what Takehiko Inoue was conveying, it was beautiful I loved every minute of it !

Volume 6, The first half way great, I didn't love the end as much as I did the first half only because I despise Matahachi as a character but I believe that is the authors incentive. So I appreciate what Inoue has done to create conflict and drama in the plot. Nevertheless I loved it !

All in all I can now say I'm completely hooked, I love this series wholeheartedly and I'm super excited to see where it's heading !

I cannot wait too see this match between Inshun and Musashi :)

Cathy says

I'm fairly new to reading manga but I really liked this. I still have a little trouble distinguishing secondary characters at times. There is good character development. I need to read the next volume!

Andy Holmes says

the artwork in this is second to none
