



Magic Words: The Extraordinary Life of Alan Moore

Lance Parkin

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"In *Magic Words* Lance Parkin has crafted a biography that is insightful, scrupulously fair-minded and often very funny, a considerable achievement given its unrelentingly grim, unreasonable and annoying subject. Belongs on the bookshelf of any halfway decent criminal profiler." ALAN MOORE

For over three decades comics fans and creators have regarded Alan Moore as a titan of the form. With works such as *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen* and *From Hell*, he has repeatedly staked out new territory, attracting literary plaudits and a mainstream audience far removed from his underground origins. His place in popular culture is now such that major Hollywood players vie to adapt his books for cinema.Â

Yet Moore's journey from the hippie Arts Labs of the 1970s to the bestseller lists was far from preordained. A principled eccentric, who has lived his whole life in one English town, he has been embroiled in fierce feuds with some of the entertainment industry's biggest corporations. Â And just when he could have made millions ploughing a golden rut he turned instead to performance art, writing erotica, and the occult.Â

Now, as Alan Moore hits sixty, it's time to go in search of this extraordinary gentleman, and follow the peculiar path taken by a writer quite unlike any other.Â

Magic Words: The Extraordinary Life of Alan Moore Details

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From Reader Review Magic Words: The Extraordinary Life of Alan Moore for online ebook

Jack Bates says

I really enjoyed this, Moore is such an interesting fellow, which is not the same as being easy to get on with or straightforward. He's indefatigably Alan Mooreish though.

Something I love is when you've read about the same event from more than one perspective, and David J writes about that whole magical experience in his autobio too. SO satisfying.

Crystal says

Did not finish, managed to trudge through about 75% before I gave up...

While Alan Moore is an interesting figure, this book is quite dull....It reads a lot like a cut and paste research paper, very dry....not really anything original within, seems like it was more of a compilation of things I had already read about Moore....added one star for the physical quality, it is a beautiful book....

Jason Downey says

A well researched book. The writer had some very interesting things to say about V for Vendetta and Watchmen. I found the writing to be sub-par at times, though, especially when he ventured opinions on Moore's personality. Sometimes the writer seems to know that editors' and Moore's fallings out were more complex than he framed them to be, but it feels like he sacrificed an extended discussion on the nature of conflicting personalities and corporate/freelance working relations in order to have the book end on a cliffhanger: Was Alan Moore a stubborn grump--or was the comics industry a fool to ignore him?

Otherwise a decent book on the life of Alan Moore.

Evan McB says

I thought I knew everything about Alan Moore, but then I read this biography and realized there was still some things I did not know about Alan Moore. But now, thanks to this concise and compleat career retrospective, I definitely know everything about Alan Moore. I'm very much looking forward to the next biography of Alan Moore, and further revelations of Alan Moore's life and career of which I am currently unaware.

Also, if anyone at HBO is reading this AND I KNOW YOU ARE: Stop spending a dump truck's worth of money on both the hollowed-out husk of the intellectual properties Moore worked on three decades ago, and the work of people who are only capable of doing a substandard pastiche of Alan Moore! Take that dump truck full of money and back it up to Moore's house, and give him carte blanche to write 18 episodes of

ANYTHING HE F***ING WANTS!!! You're welcome for the obvious advice.

Jon Arnold says

Few comic writers are fascinating enough to merit a biography; often their stories are best understood with relevance to the context of the companies for which they worked and what they did with the shared universe characters they wrote. Alan Moore is undoubtedly one of the few fascinating enough to merit such a biography. It's the story of how someone who was expelled from school early and has always resided in the Midlands town of Northampton essentially conquered the comics world before deciding he didn't particularly enjoy ruling the world and retiring to his own private fiefdom to become a magician and pursue the projects he wanted to. It's got magic, betrayal, bloody-mindedness and a bunch of mythical heroes. Everything you want in a story.

Parkin's an adept and knowledgeable guide to Moore's life and work. He successfully manages to track both successfully and there's some excellent analysis of even Moore's least known works. He's careful to let others express their own view of Moore and isn't overly reverent towards his subject; he's perfectly willing to call out when Moore's stories don't work (and why), is happy to acknowledge the roles of timing and circumstance in his career and is quite happy to acknowledge that Moore can often be difficult to deal with in business. Indeed, he puts this in context of how the citizens of Northampton have been historically viewed and draws out how, despite his love for his hometown, its influence may have been as detrimental as it has been helpful. The comparisons with how Moore and Neil Gaiman dealt with the US comics industry are particularly instructive. Whilst he clearly admires Moore (and you don't write a biography of this thoroughness without strong feelings one way or the other for a subject) he commendably doesn't force his own view on the reader but allows them to make up their own mind (explicitly so in the last line).

What it does make clear is why Moore is a cut above other comic writers in technical terms; as a voracious reader in his youth he has a deep understanding of graphical storytelling, an intense attention to detail and, above all, is always seeking to engage the reader's brain and not merely entertain them for 24 pages at a time. His comics are a conversation with the reader rather than a performance seeking to dazzle an audience. It's not an earth-shattering conclusion, but a case amply built up over the course of the book and one which explains why others who've played with the toys Moore left them haven't quite grasped why he got them right. And that their being a specific reaction by Moore to time and place often leads to their qualities being bent out of shape in adaptation and misunderstood, imagery over substance. It comes across as a thorough guide to Moore and his works; the first point of reference for anyone wishing to learn more about the man after reading his works.

And this is also one of those books it's worth tracking down a physical copy of; the hardback version is beautifully designed to the point I'd feel heretical having bought a paperback or eBook. Given the medium Moore works in now makes great play of deluxe editions it's something that feels entirely appropriate.

Jason Bergman says

How much you enjoy this book will depend entirely on your interest in the subject matter. As a lifelong fan of Moore's, it's safe to assume I am quite interested, but I'm also well educated on his life and work going in.

But I still enjoyed *Magic Words*. Parkin does an admirable job illuminating the various feuds that define Moore's life (and let's be honest...Moore's life really does seem to be defined by the people he's fighting with in each era), as well as adding some nice context to his work.

I would have liked more information about Moore's failed, or still unfinished projects (particularly *Jerusalem*, his unfinished prose magnum opus). But as I said, I enjoyed the book. Recommended for fans.

Mel says

This is a good biography and bibliography of Alan's work. If you want to know what he wrote, in what order, and who he had disagreements with along the way this is the book for you. I've been quite a bit of an Alan Moore fan for several years now and I have to admit I didn't really learn anything from reading this (except a bit of an overview of his Doctor Who comics). The interviews quoted were also things I'd mostly heard before. (Annoyingly with the references, even the year, hidden away in footnotes at the back).

Lance does a reasonable job of explaining Alan's magical beliefs. Though in a rather dry and clinical way. I have to say I disagreed with both suppositions at the back of the book. I think of Alan as a writer who now has the freedom to write what he wants without worrying about how it will be viewed.

The book is beautiful though, with glimmering green covers and black edges. Though I must admit as books about Alan go I think I preferred *Storyteller* which focused more on the art and less on the disputes.

Katie says

Mostly an exhaustive history of the comics industry, seen the lens of Alan Moore's career. However, it definitely had a lot of interesting information about his life and work. I thought it was a very thorough and fair depiction of the man, the mystery, and his artistic achievements.

Jeffrey says

I'm not a die hard Alan Moore fan, but I usually enjoy his interviews, and I think artist biographies can always help inform an artist's work. I don't think there's always a direct connection - this happened, so this is what the work of art means - but I think this book helps situate Moore's comics work in a different context. An interesting read about a writer who's led an interesting life.

Clint says

This book only gets 3 stars not because most of the stuff inside isn't very interesting, it really is, but there are too many details about the business and publishing side of comics that I don't know enough about to find very interesting. Alan Moore as a subject, on the other hand, is one of the most interesting people I've ever read about.

He's interesting not only because of what he produces but also just as a person, he's really weird. A few nights ago I was reading this and sent a text to a friend of mine asking why no one was freaking out that Alan Moore had done albums with a guy from Bauhaus, and he replied, "Because that's probably only the 17th weirdest thing about Alan Moore." That pretty much sums him up, haha.

If you aren't into Alan Moore already, I don't think this book would have much value, but if you do like him, you should probably read this.

Richard says

things i did not know the first alan moore i bought was my first bauhaus record mask for which moore wrote the poem inside- the DR. Dee songs albarn wrote was first envisioned to be wrote/co-wrote with moore.

Alex Sarll says

My favourite *Doctor Who* writer doing a biography of one of my favourite writers full stop; I was always going to like this. But what surprised me is how critical it's prepared to be. Neither hagiography nor hatchet-job, its even-handedness puts it in perhaps the best position for a life of a living subject - though written as unauthorised, it has since won its subject's wry endorsement. But then, what people often miss when they see Moore's more outrageous diatribes in writing is that, though he takes his principles very seriously, he takes himself a lot less so.

Michael Allan Leonard says

You probably know before you crack this tome open whether it's for you or not: a painstakingly detailed and researched 400-page biography of one of the most controversial figures in comics history.

However, whether you're a fan of the man's work or not, any scholar of comics history will find this book indispensable (I learned more about British comics as a whole reading this one book than I've encountered anywhere else, for one), and for an aspiring creator, here's a textbook with many cautionary tales to be learned from: most notably that if you want respect from your publishers, you'll have to learn to bare your teeth once in a while and demand it, not just quietly cashing a paycheck to do whatever they tell you. Oh, and make good art with more depth that might be immediately visible at a quick glance.

Lance Parkin does a remarkable job of presenting a fair and balanced portrait of Moore, both celebrating his genius and not shying away from taking a critical look at some of his missteps and misbehaviors. This is an extremely honest appraisal of Moore's talent and contributions to pop culture, and all the more valuable for it, and a deep examination of his groundbreaking work and how elements of his life shaped each of those.

In an era where most mainstream comics professionals lack much of a spine or ethics and will roll with whatever marketing-driven drivel their overseers tell them to write and draw as part of their job-secure exclusive contracts -- basically undoing decades' worth of efforts of creators to improve their lot and producing reams of uninspired, pre-calculated mediocre product as a result -- Moore's maverick attitude of battling the suits and being willing to say 'no' to the easy money for making pablum is all the more relevant

... and a painful reminder of what comics used to be when creators wanted to make quality art as much as they did money, and with the right attitude and hard work, could achieve both.

Ramon says

Pretty good, and not afraid to call Moore on his own stubbornness and other faults (and I'm a huge fan; I mean, I guess I'd have to be to have read this). Surprised to see it endorsed by the subject himself.

Philip Sandifer says

Got to read an early draft of this over the summer - absolutely marvelous, and the most complete picture of the development of Moore's career published to date. Parkin demonstrates a clear understanding of the complex thought and philosophy of Alan Moore, and depicts its evolution in terms that are sympathetic but not hagiographic. I cannot imagine an Alan Moore fan for whom this is not a must-read book.
