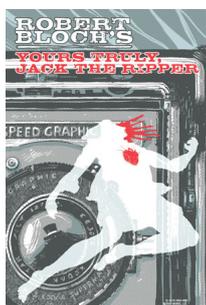


"YOURS TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER #1" (Comic Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans
Saturday, 31 July 2010 13:27



Best known to fright fans as the author of *PSYCHO*, Robert Bloch had an enormously prolific writing career. With over 20 novels, hundreds of short stories and even a few screenplays under his belt, he received acclaim and numerous awards for his crime, science fiction and horror stories, and was at one point a protégé of H.P. Lovecraft. Many of Bloch's short stories were published in pulp magazines such as *WEIRD TALES*, including one of the first examples of Jack the Ripper fiction in 1943.



Enter, years later, Joe R. Lansdale, a seven-time Bram Stoker Award-winner (among various other prizes) who has also written over 20 novels, has had close to 30 collections of short stories published, wrote a few screenplays and is known to dabble in the comics world as well. The average fright fan might know him as the author of the novella that inspired the film *BUBBA HO-TEP*—which, in some circles, may well be just as cherished as the film that's Bloch's greatest claim to fame. Where do these classic and modern literary genre giants meet? Well, remember that 1943 Ripper tale I mentioned earlier?

Lansdale, with his brother John, has adapted Bloch's "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" into a three-issue comic book miniseries for IDW Publishing, with illustrations by Eisner Award-nominated Kevin Colden. The story takes place in contemporary (meaning 1943) Chicago, where numerous corpses begin turning up, all sporting Jack's trademark mutilations. The crimes pique the interest of both fast-mouthed, quick-thinking reporter Jenny Davis and a determined, dumpy detective from England, Guy Hollis—whose father, on the Ripper case until the day he died, passed the torch to his son. The two team up and discover a pattern within the murders that might be a clue as to who, or what, is responsible. Could it be the same culprit behind the original set of crimes, 55 years ago?

A good chunk of the debut issue is character development, wherein the two protagonists meet and discuss the recent goings-on. It isn't until the last few pages that we get a taste of the carnage to (hopefully) come. It's what you'd expect from the first installment of any series, but with this one already a third of the way down, let's hope the pace picks up quickly in subsequent

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issues.

Colden's artwork really ruins this title for me. He's not necessarily bad at what he does (his work on FISHTOWN is quite good), but it would have helped if an illustrator whose style better fits the subject matter's dark tone had been chosen for this one. The characters are rendered in a far too cartoonish style, and the obviously computer-generated ben-day dot shading simply left a bad taste in my mouth. Evidently the intention was to evoke a sense of the period, which could have worked nicely, but the execution still carries way too modern a feeling.

There isn't much good to be said about YOURS TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER aside from the intriguing plot—but then, that's just the same as recommending you read the original Bloch tale it's based on instead.



{comments on}