

COMICS WAITING ROOM

The COMICS WAITING ROOM is: Reviews, Essays, and Other Assorted Fun From Marc Mason

Saturday, December 24, 2005

OKAY, I'M GOING TO TRY AND EXPLAIN THIS ONCE

This comic is actually a spin-off from a novel that won't be hitting bookstores until Fall 2006. However, if I understand what I'm reading, it isn't a prequel, so much as it is a companion piece.

HATTER M: THE LOOKING GLASS WARS #1

Story by Frank Beddor and Liz Cavalier and Art by Ben Templesmith

Published by **Image Comics**

The idea behind both the comic and future novel seems to be that, Lewis Carroll took liberties with the history of an actual place: Wonderland. And not only is that other-dimensional destination real, Alyss Heart originated from that place. She happens to be the crown princess. Her bodyguard is one Hatter Madigan, a man of deadly skill with the blade, whose hat becomes something of a flying guillotine when thrown properly. In HATTER M, he has slipped through a puddle to 1859, Paris, in search of the missing Alyss. His lack of understanding of our world, and the immediate disappearance of his hat, offer only the first of many obstacles he's about to face.

Whew. Got that?

Now, that's a lot to take on, especially right out of the gate, but once you settle in to the story and find its narrative logic, this becomes a nicely put together comic. Madigan is an amusing protagonist, and his lack of a grasp on our society leads to many amusing scenarios, not the least of which is that his efforts to defend himself leave him seen as one of the worst serial killers of the nineteenth century. But even more intriguingly, there does exist some magic in our world, in the person of an illusionist named Sacrenoir, and it will take all of Madigan's skill and cunning to match wits against the man's power.

The star of the show is Templesmith's art. Continuing his breakout work post-30 DAYS OF NIGHT, he delivers some wondrous and whimsical work in depicting what is a world gone mad to Hatter. The first few pages are a bit shaky, but when he settles in to the story, this book takes off. Beddor is the novelist whose book comes next year, so I'm guessing that Cavalier's role was one of perhaps working to adapt the concept to the comic book format. Whichever it is, this is solid entertainment, and it has done its work in making me interested in the prose to come.

/Mason