



Wednesday, October 15, 2008
Hatter M Webisodes

To coincide with the release of the paperback versions of Hatter M and Seeing Redd tomorrow, Automatic Pictures is also beginning a series of webisodes further detailing Hatter Madigan's search for Princess Alyss on Earth. Frank Beddor and Liz Cavalier are back on writing duties aided by the art stylings of comics newcomer Tyson Schroeder.



The story begins on a train on its way to California. Clearly, some time has passed since the end of the first Hatter story, but since that story had a fairly complete ending, there's no need to be up to speed with all of the details to jump right into the webisodes. Madigan, following a potential lead, leaps off the moving train into the wilderness. He there encounters an unusual being called Realm who helps to point out some flaws in his single-minded thought process. He also meets some somewhat famous friends to help him on his journey.

What first impressed me was the writing. Most of the previous pieces of this multi-media story have relied on somewhat extended explanations to set that piece of the work in relation to the others. This does work for the novels, and it would make sense that Beddor would continue that notion in other media. But now, the explanations are either left to Schroeder's art or, in one case, a single line of dialogue. Although the

original Hatter M story wasn't overly verbose, it wasn't especially efficient in its use of text. Again, not very surprising given Beddor's background. However, he's evidently learned very quickly when to let the art speak for the story and not to second-guess it. A number of panels are left wordless, and the dialogue is generally sharp and to the point. Which not only serves the story better, but also fits more in line with Hatter's character (if you've read the books).

Schroeder does a surprisingly good job at telling the story. Surprising in that, as near as I can tell, he has no prior sequential art experience. He has a painterly approach, working mainly in watercolors. Overall, it works well for the blustery outdoor winter scenes, but I felt his pen work to showcase details was a little erratic. It worked well in some instances, less so in others. These scenes are fairly small in number, though, and they do seem to work reasonably well more often than not. This is perhaps the biggest artistic difference between Schroeder and previous artist Ben Templesmith -- Templesmith had a better handle, I think, on his linework so it flowed more smoothly. I don't think Schroeder has quite figured out how to marry the two seamlessly yet. But, for a first time out, it works well -- there were no problems with the actual storytelling, which tends to be the bigger issue with new comic artists.

From the previews I've read so far, it's difficult to tell how long the webisodes might be extended. That could very well have been deliberately left ambiguous until they gauge its success. I enjoyed what I've read so far and think it adds some nice background to the main Looking Glass Wars storyline. That said story is specifically making a point to cross media platforms and venues is also intriguing to watch unfold. I hope the webisodes are successful and continue; definitely worth adding to my webcomics list if it does.

The first webisode will be online tomorrow and should be linked up here.