TRADE WAITING
TPB & GRAPHIC NOVEL REVIEWS

Last week, I reviewed the **first trade** of the **Hatter M** comic series and, in addition to sending me the first volume, the folks from Automatic Pictures (the publisher) were kind enough to send us over a review copy of the second book. Hit the jump to see what I though of **Matter M Vol 2, Mad With Wonder**.

By: Kirk Warren

HATTER M Vol. 2: MAD WITH WONDER

Written by Frank Beddor and Liz Cavalier
Art by Sami Makkonen

The second volume of Hatter M is very much a continuation of the first in a lot of ways. Aside from continuing the story, it also continues with the same level of quality, though it is both better and a little worse than the first volume at times.

Again, the story still involves **Madigan's** search for **Alyss** with him following a possible clue to the Princess's location in our world that brings him to America. It very much follows the same formula of the first trade. He is searching for Alyss, doesn't find her, but learns some important information about our world or something that can help him on his quest. Although the story follows the same basic formula, I found it to be a lot more enjoyable this time around, and there are several reasons why.

First, the story is no longer introductory in nature, so there is a lot more room to expand on the characters and concepts of the book. There's also some nice backstory for Madigan as well as some general world building and I enjoyed those aspects of the book. Although I don't think the concept is living up to it's fullest potential, I do think that **Beddor** and **Cavalier** are doing some very enjoyable things with their take on the **Alice in Wonderland** premise.

Another thing that made the story more enjoyable to me was that it seemed to be

more surreal that the first volume. Some of this has to do with the story itself while some of it has to do with the art, which I will get to later. The story takes place in the American South, during the last year of the American Civil War, and though it has only a little bit to do with the story, directly anyways, it does provide a nice back drop for it. Part of the story also takes place in an insane asylum, which helps to contribute the surreal vibe the story has as well has things like a carnival freak show. It all helps to move the story away from the more mundane aspects that were present in the first volume.

As for the Civil War stuff, it is mostly background settings that is setting up plot points for the third volume. It's not bad and doesn't really distract from the main story (it actually ties into it to a small degree), so I didn't really have any problems with it.

The art, on the otherhand, is completely different from the first volume. It is very much in a similar vein to **Ben Templesmith's** style, but looks more abstract and, to me, worked a lot better with this volume than the previous. The art itself definitely adds to the surreal tone and feel of the story and does a better job of contributing to it than Templesmith's style did. It is more of an acquired taste though and I didn't really enjoy it at first, but it grew on me the deeper I got into the story.

Verdict - Check It. Although I enjoyed this volume more than the first, there is not a big leap up in quality and it continues with the same general quality of the first, which I found enjoyable.