

## Polar, Vol. 1: Came from the Cold

*Victor Santos , Jim Gibbons (Editor)*

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Ripped out of retirement by an assassination attempt, the world's most deadly spy—Black Kaiser—is on a collision course with a stab-happy torture expert and a seductive but deadly redhead. His mission only ends if he dies or kills everyone out to get him, and he's not in the habit of dying. This webcomic hit has been rescripted for print!

\* A guns-blazing espionage action-adventure in the grand tradition of Jim Steranko and Frank Miller.

\* By Victor Santos (Mice Templar)!

"A beautiful, if bloody, webcomic... an engaging experiment in color, style, and wordless storytelling."—CBR's Robot 6

## Polar, Vol. 1: Came from the Cold Details

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Author : Víctor Santos , Jim Gibbons (Editor)

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## **From Reader Review Polar, Vol. 1: Came from the Cold for online ebook**

### **Josh says**

Mostly silent spy-thriller with art reminiscent of Frank Miller's Sin City. It's mostly black and white except for splashes of red when blood spills or lipstick has been applied. Very stylish, but sometimes hard to follow due to the abstract nature of some panels. Worth a look for fans of action, just don't expect to spend much time reading.

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### **Dawn says**

I really enjoyed this graphic novel, primarily for the art. Not that the story is not good, but it is a pretty familiar one by now - older spy who everyone is trying to kill, but amazingly survives and gets revenge (trust me, that's not a spoiler). But the art is what really makes it stand out. There is an obvious Frank Miller influence here, in a very good way. And the fact that this was first published as a "silent" comic is reflected in the images - they definitely tell a story on their own. It's all very, well, graphic and quite dramatic in just black, white and red. The book is worth a look for the stylized imagery alone.

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### **Wayne McCoy says**

Polar: Came From The Cold jumps right into the action and doesn't let up until the very end. In an unusual form factor for a graphic novel, the stark images leap off the page. It's a visceral and satisfying read.

An older man and a woman are in a snowbound cabin as assassins creep up on him. We learn that he is a former agent known as Black Kaiser. We also learn pretty early on that he is not easy to kill. But his former employers at the Damocles Agency are determined and relentless. Black Kaiser is kidnapped and tortured at one point. If he gets away is for you to find out.

The art by Victor Santos is striking. It's reminiscent of Frank Miller's Sin City work. Blocky, abstract, minimal color. Some of the full page works are genius. The story is not new, but serves as a vehicle here to deliver great art. That's not a bad tradeoff in my opinion.

I was given a copy of this graphic novel by Diamond Book Distributors and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to read this striking and artistic graphic novel.

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### **Flaminia says**

I read it completely out of curiosity because Netflix is releasing a movie based on this...

The reader is immediately drawn into the action. no premises, no introductions, the story will suck you in. The visceral images and art will keep you glued to the pages until you turn the last page and you're immediately ready to dive into the second volume of the series.

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## **Alison says**

Striking art! Amazed at how much can be conveyed with this style and layout. Hoping that volumes 2 and 3 provide more depth to the story. It seems volume 1 is the introduction. 5 stars for art, 3.5 for story.

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## **Lono says**

It's what the bastard love child of Frank Miller and Genndy Tartakovsky would look like. Simple yet satisfying spy tale filled with all the sex and violence a guy like me could hope for. The Black Kaiser is an old school spy being hunted by a variety of lethal "Bond" type villains that still manages to make time to knock boots with a couple a tramps between dodging bullets. Really a stunning piece of work. Victor's page layouts are outstanding. Buy this one for the black, white, and red artwork alone. Hope to see more of Victor's Black Kaiser down the road.

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## **Sam Quixote says**

Unstoppable spy/hitman/bounty hunter/doesn't matter takes on generic international baddies syndicate because action! Lots of guns, lots of dead goons, a whole lotta nuthin' - this is Polar: The Spy Who Bored Me!

Victor Santos' Polar is the most derivative comic I've read in a while. About the only thing that held my interest was noting Victor Santos' very obvious influences. The art style ranged from Frank Miller's Sin City to Eduardo Risso's 100 Bullets to Michael Avon Oeming.

There's very little writing and when there is it's eye-rolling action schlock dialogue:

"I won't tell you anything"

"I won't ask" (shoots him)

Golf clap.

The protagonist, who's basically Jim Steranko's Nick Fury, is an invincible killing machine, which is never interesting to read and instantly eliminates any tension in the near-continuous gunfights as you know he's always going to get through them to stagger onto the next one. The other characters are equally one-dimensional and the storyline was meaningless drivel – think John Wick, Taken, Bourne, Bond, anything of that sort!

Despite being a mix of better influences, Santos is a skilful artist and Polar comes off as very slick though it is the very definition of style over substance. Polar is a forgettable, unoriginal and unimaginative action thriller that fails to deliver even the cheapest of thrills.

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### **Barbara Costa says**

If Miller's Sin City had a stylish baby with an Old Man Logan graphic novel... well, not sure how that would work, but I like to think it would turn out like this book. There are a lot of cool things (we get some nice snowy landscapes, and even one of those badass corridor fight scenes \*Oldboy flashbacks\* filled with a striking "Pollock-ish" blood everywhere). I must say the visual style and lack of dialogue make it a bit confusing to follow sometimes (luckily for the sleepy readers, the protagonist has an eye patch, so it's easy to distinguish him from the mess).

An entertaining "read", with some gorgeous and bloody bits - 3.5/5 stars.

(If there is ever a movie on this, I just hope we get creepy Elijah Wood back, with his terrifying smile)

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### **Online Eccentric Librarian says**

*More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>*

Polar: Came From The Cold owes a heavy nod to Frank Miller's Sin City: a noirish cold-war era type of spy thriller drawn in two color black and red, with femme fatales and evil villains, hard bitten heroes and a lot of atmosphere. Expect bright red lips or hair on heavy blocky black illustrations and you get the idea of the style.

A deadly spy has retired but finds himself the target of an assassination out of the blue. He must track down the snake to the lair in order eliminate the threat and return to his idyll. But the path is rocky and full of danger, friends will betray, and women will seduce.

If the premise sounds familiar, it shouldn't be surprising. We really have seen this style over and over. It has all the noir cliches - embittered former anti-hero, buxom 1940s fashioned female temptresses, maniacal villains with quirky characteristics, the hard betray by those once trusted, etc. The story clearly owes a lot of James Bond as much as the artwork owes to Sin City.

Because this was originally a wordless comic, a lot is told in the images. Often, the reader is bombarded by a stylistic page of small squares full of little closeups. It can be a bit confusing. And yet, I did feel that perhaps the dialogue wasn't necessarily needed and more of a nod to 'stupid American audience who need to be told the obvious'. It lost a lot of the quiet feel by having the dialogue in there. And it focused intent that might better have been more nebulous and perhaps better left up to the reader to interpret. That mixture of disingenuous dialogue with ambiguous did bring the experience down for me, admittedly.

As romance is a draw for women, I think noir is the natural draw for men. Putting that into perspective, this is the opposite side of the same coin: a bodice ripper for the male crowd. The art, though well done, was just

too Sin City for me - I felt like I was reading Frank Miller's next book rather than an original work by a different artistic. As such, there wasn't anything new added here and I was left a bit disappointed.

There is a lot to see in the book and it bears up to repeated readings due to the graphic nature of the story. But at the same time, neither the plot nor the characters or illustration add anything new that we haven't seen before. Received as an ARC from the publisher.

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## **Jamil says**

frank miller/ steranko/darwyn cooke

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## **Craig says**

Pretty bad. The artwork is a ripoff of Eduardo Risso and Frank Miller and the best that can be said for it is that it's largely incoherent. Don't know what prompted someone to want to turn this into a movie (with Mads Mikkelsen as the Black Kaiser), even if it is a Netflix original. **\*\*Update 1/29\*\*** Watched the movie over the weekend and it, too, is amazingly bad. This is one of the strangest "comic adapted to a movie" combos I've ever come across...

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## **Realini says**

Polar, based on novel by Victor Santos  
Eight out of 10

Mads Mikkelsen is such a formidable, outstanding actor that he can carry a film to incredible levels.

Nonetheless, Polar is not this cinephile's genre and as such, it seems impossible for a cinematic God to make it worthwhile.

If anyone can, it would be Mikkelsen.

Matt Lucas is another extraordinary artist that has the role of the villain in this motion picture. I would rather see him anytime in Little Britain, a fantastic comedy series where he is amazing.

Mads Mikkelsen is Duncan Vizla aka the Dark Kaiser, a former assassin with incredible skills. Therefore, we have been in this territory so many times before and no matter what stunts, supernatural powers are brought into play, there is a sense of déjà vu.

Forced to retire, the former killer is called upon to eliminate another murderer who has taken out former colleagues of the protagonist

They have worked for an agency; a nefarious company controlled by the ultimate monster, Blut aka Matt Lucas.

His plan is to benefit from the insurance plans of his ex- employees, in the case of Duncan, the sum owed is

eight million dollars.

Michael Green aka Johnny Knoxville is terminated in the opening scenes, but it is an inside job.

The Dark Kaiser is told that Blut relies on his famous skills to take revenge for the killing of Green and a few others.

He has to travel to Minsk – by the way, the producers of film make the mistake of stating that Belarus is in Russia...the latter has great sway over the former, which used to be a Soviet republic, but they are different countries now.

This is where we see the hero in action for the first time and he kills with expected ease a Mexican hired gun and his acolytes, understanding that he is actually the target and this was a trap.

The skilled assassin uses a drilling machine to extract the truth from his archenemy, but he does not see at this point who is after him.

Duncan Visla has chosen a remote location, in the woods, where he has a cabin, takes a lovely little dog – Belgian bulldog. – which he kills in one of his nightmares during which he accidentally fires his gun.

He has found an interesting, if evidently traumatized neighbor, and he gets close to her, allowing an unexpected turn of events to change the tables, right near the end where friend becomes foe.

The film is bizarre and indeed cartoonish in that the team sent to eliminate the alleged best killer of them all is composed of some frenetic sadists, but a sane mind would not trust those people at all.

In the same way in which 007 could never be a real agent, for he is too obvious and attracts the attention where in real life he must blend in, these lunatics are so conspicuous as to be more of a group of crazies than a hit squad.

The well-prepared Dark Kaiser makes the mistake of engaging with one of the woman in the killing team, she has sex with him and during their very active embraces, and the other lunatics start shooting.

The hero escapes...obviously.

He is sent down by a former friend though...Porter aka Richard Dreyfuss.

In the torture that follows, Blut cuts the protagonist for Three Days!

Why not try to escape on the first day, instead of waiting for exhaustion and terrible trauma?

Anyway, the way to watch is would be to go along for the ride, not use the analytic functions of the mind too much, if at all.

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## **David Turko says**

This book is a love child of Jim Steranko and Frank Miller. The story is sort of a trope, old grizzled spy veteran comes out of retirement to kill a bunch of bad guys. That's pretty much it. I would've given this three stars if it wasn't for the gorgeous art. The art is well...incredible. It's abstract with numerous angles and shades among the detailed drawings. Not only that but the color red is used for a purpose in this book. blood, violence, emotions, sounds, they all have a reason to be colored in red. Definitely a re-read for the art itself a real page turner.

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## **Nicola Mansfield says**

I'm not sure what I'm going to rate this yet. I liked it, quite a bit actually, but it was missing something that couldn't make it completely thrill me. The art is superb and what I liked the most. It is abstract in many ways with lots of angles but also contains some detailed drawings. Red is used for a purpose. Some pages are covered in red, others may have a tiny splotch such as a drop of blood or a woman's high heels. Red is used for different reasons such as: sex, blood, violence, anger, emotions and sound. This is a book one could read more than once to just appreciate the art. Storywise, it was not what I expected for a thriller/spy story. The book is almost wordless and I've actually found out was originally completely wordless, with the author adding text for this new hardcover edition. Therefore the text is sparse and contains only dialogue, or inner thoughts. This can be confusing at times, takes a while to really figure out what is going on and of course means little character development. I was greatly intrigued with the story though. I'm not a big fan of wordless comics and that's my downfall with the book, overall. It took too much thinking on my part to "get" everything that was happening; having to reread some pages over and over before turning to the next. But in the end, I understood the whole thing, am fascinated with the main character and absolutely love the artwork. As you can see, I've come to a decision on my rating :-)

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## **Nolan says**

With the Netflix original film that debuted on January 25th, I figured now would be a great time to check out and review this volume. Being a big fan of Victor Santos' work, I am surprised at myself that it has taken this long to check out Polar. So, let's jump right into Volume 1 of Polar: Came from the Cold.

The book, in stark black, white and orange/red, kicks off with a snowy backdrop in the seemingly middle of nowhere, as a team is mobilizing outside, and a seductress is ready to make her move. But things go sideways with a BLAM as the targeted man shows why he is indeed a target. Enter the Black Kaiser, one of the world's deadliest hitmen who merely wanted to retire. But the organization he worked for last is out to tie up loose ends, which includes eliminating the Kaiser. But that is far easier said than done, as there is a reason the man is a legend in the underground.

Santos crafts a pulp story full of action, intrigue, and tons of blood. More to that, he shows how to expertly use the comic book medium to tell one hell of a tale. Crafted in landscape format, the book looks and feels different than most books on the shelves. I would call it a cross between Sin City and John Wick, which is a fantastic thing to be. The use of angles, zoom shots, silhouettes, and more gives the book a very cinematic feel to it, which makes for a delightful read.

The Black Kaiser is one of those tough as nail characters you want to see win, despite the impossible odds. He is an artist when it comes to the art of death, and it shows. Going up the ladder to who pulled his card, the Kaiser is in for the fight of his life.

I hope the Netflix film lives up to this incredible book, and from the looks of the trailer, it looks to be ready to hit its mark. Polar is one of the best action comics I have read, and one of the best examples of a master of his craft at work in the comic book art form.



