



Lake of Fire

Nathan Fairbairn (Writer, Colourist, Letterer) , Matt Smith (Artist)

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It is 1220 AD, and the gears of the Albigensian Crusade grind on. When an alien spacecraft infested with a horde of bloodthirsty predators crash-lands in the remote wilderness of the French Pyrenees, a small band of crusaders and a Cathar heretic are all that stand between God's Kingdom and Hell on Earth.

Collecting: *Lake of Fire*1-5

Lake of Fire Details

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Author : Nathan Fairbairn (Writer, Colourist, Letterer) , Matt Smith (Artist)

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From Reader Review Lake of Fire for online ebook

Chad says

This could have been titled Knights vs. Aliens. A spaceship crashes in 13th century France. Villagers are attacked by these animalistic flea / dog aliens. Knights show up and battle them. There's not a ton of plot here but I enjoyed the book nonetheless. Matt Smith provides art reminiscent of Jeff Smith of Bone fame. I dug it.

Received an advance copy from Image and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Jon Tully says

Not being familiar with Fairbairn's body of work, I picked up this title based solely on the premise: aliens + Crusaders + a good dash of religiosity.

I went in with no expectations and was pleasantly surprised.

My main complaint (which is really more of a compliment) is that Fairbairn created such rich and interesting characters that I wanted more of them.

Even though there isn't any internal dialog or lengthy speeches, the personality of each character is solidly portrayed. And almost each one is allowed a moment of growth or reflection which changes them.

I wish that Lake of Fire had been the first volume in a series. The ending is rather abrupt (but appropriate).

But if you enjoy historical fiction and sci-fi, this might just be the book for you.

Alex Sarll says

Pretty much the same set-up as Attack the Block, except that here the thugs start from the even less forgivable position of participants in the Albigensian Crusade, and instead of a mugged nurse their female victim-turned-ally is a Cathar. Which makes it sound like I didn't enjoy this, but it works surprisingly well. Yes, the characters largely talk and think like moderns, but there's a basic grasp of history here which avoids the serious sort of jarringly dumb anachronism you often find in far more high profile historical dramas. The art is simple but evocative, the aliens are nicely horrible, the plot and characters solid. If I have a complaint it's the unduly gentle treatment of that monster de Montfort (the fact he got a university named after him within my memory remains far more shaming than any Victorian relic of Rhodes).

(Edelweiss ARC)

Relstuart says

This book takes place completely in France during the Albigensian Crusade. You won't walk away from the book knowing anything about this Crusade and very little about the Cathars. No explanation of the psychology of siege and massacre to put the massacre at Beziers in historical perspective. Cursing is all modern instead of proper language of the time (God's Wounds!).

I subscribed to the single issues. The art work is solid and there is some decent character development. I do wish this story was an issue or two longer and addressed the history a bit better.

For anyone interested in reading about the Crusades in general I recommend checking out sociologist Rodney Stark's book: God's Battalions - The Case for the Crusades.

Daisy says

Quality Rating: Three Stars

Enjoyment Rating: Four Stars

Lake of Fire is a funny one. In many ways it's incredibly accomplished, and in others it misses it's potential. Based on the idea of if aliens invaded France in 1220, we focus a lot more on the characters and strong religious themes than aliens. In fact, we don't really see that many aliens. On the one hand, I think this is brilliant: making a story so intrinsically about the people experiencing it rather than cheap genre tropes - but on the other, I really would've loved some more aliens. Definitely worth the read and fascinating to think about, I'm excited to read more from this duo, even if I'm not sure what to make of this one.

Darcy says

What a terrific surprise this graphic novel was! I purchased it at a convention directly from Nathan Fairbairn and had him sign my copy without the faintest idea what the story was about. Once I began reading it I was swept away into a story about Knights of the Crusade (With all of their foibles and questionable morality of what they were doing) and alien critters (With all of their foibles and questionable morality!). The characters were well crafted, the story moved along at a good pace with lots of action, and there were no holds barred with regards to what happens. I really enjoyed this book and hope that Mr. Fairbairn and Matt Smith have collaborated on other projects as the story telling and art greatly impressed me. Well done and a must read!

Jessica says

More of this, please!

Michael says

My reading high that I was riding a few months ago has suddenly died. I can think of a few reasons for this – it's been spring and summer, which means a lot more outdoor activities, and slowly waking up from my winter hibernation, I've been taking the dogs for walks every night, which means I'm not using the treadmill as much (where I do a lot of my reading during the winter), but most importantly, I think my reading slump is a result of the novel I'm currently reading - King's Rising, the FINAL book in C.S. Pacat's mind-blowingly awful Captive Prince Trilogy. It's so bad that I have no desire to read.

I started Lake of Fire around the same time, as I like to have a novel and a graphic novel on the go at the same time. Written and coloured by Nathan Fairbairn and illustrated by Matt Smith, Lake of Fire, is... basically, a re-hash of the film Outlander starring James Caviezel – an alien ship lands on earth in the past, and heroes of the time are pitted against monstrous alien creatures bent on eating and destroying everything in its path. While the premise is the same, Lake of Fire takes place in 1220 AD in France, during the Albigensian Crusade, a crusade initiated by Pope Innocent III to eradicate Catharism, a Christian dualist movement, that had taken over the former southern province of Languedoc. Today the crusade is considered an act of genocide by the Catholic Church. Mark Gregory Pegg, an renowned Australian medieval history professor wrote that "The Albigensian Crusade ushered genocide into the West by linking divine salvation to mass murder, by making slaughter as loving an act as His sacrifice on the cross".

Lake of Fire isn't really about the crusade, it takes place during the crusade, and there is a Cathar priestess in the story, but I just really like history. It's one of my favourite subjects, I pretty much love everything before 1900... for some reason, as soon as we got to 1900-present day in history class, I just did not care. Oh, and also anything American. I'm from Canada, and while we didn't learn a lot about U.S. history, the little we did was super boring.

BACK to Lake of Fire! I'm not sure if it was because I was forcing my way through King's Rising, or because the seasons were changing and I wanted to be outside more, but I wasn't too fond of Lake of Fire. I found the story overdone – how many times are we going to re-hash the "dangerous aliens crash-land sometime in earth's past" plot. I would have preferred if this had been a story about the Albigensian Crusade, get rid of the aliens, give me some historical, medieval fiction. Because, to be honest, the characters were pretty interesting! There's the surly Baron Mondragon with his own issues with the crusades; the young knight Theo and his friend Sir Hugh (who I'm 100% sure has a thing for Theo); Bernadette, the Cathar priestess; and the villainous Catholic Priest who, of course, mucks things up. And some of these characters had interesting motives and character development, that I would've liked to see fleshed out more... without alien's getting in the way.

The artwork, however, is beautifully coloured and has a prominent "comic book" feel to it. It's nothing overly artistic (like Pretty Deadly, or From Under Mountains), it's more of a traditional art style, and while I enjoyed it because of its clear and concise depictions, I almost missed some of the more artistic panels that I'd seen in some of the other comics I've read.

So overall, it was a decent comic. Not my favourite, but also not the worst I've read over the last year. It was enough to peak my curiosity towards Fairbairn and Smith, and I'll be looking for some more work by both the writer and the artist.

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Donovan says

Lake of Fire is more concept than story, which is this: what if aliens invaded France in the Middle Ages.

Now, it's an intriguing concept and balance of sword-slashing knights and gory space monsters. Kind of a sci-fi "Beowulf." But "Beowulf" has Beowulf, the hero, and Grendel, the monster. Lake of Fire has a sprawling cast of underdeveloped characters...the proud young knight, his kind and faithful friend, the washed-up cynic hero looking for redemption, the marginalized but brilliant heroine, the vile and contradictory friar everyone hates. They all have potential, with more development, but that never happens. They're sketched out and never take on more depth. Which sucks.

Grendel is portrayed as a hyper-violent, black gnashing mass of teeth and claws, the epitome of evil and bloodlust, the embodiment of pain and death, with the suggestion that perhaps he gains power from death and fear itself. I don't get that from these Tremors meets Aliens monsters at all. They have no purpose but as mere plot device: seek and destroy. Not even the most basic sci-fi horror explanation of "world destruction" or "hive-mind domination" is given for these creatures. They just bite and kill. Once you've seen them there's no longer any fear or suspense. You just wait for the blood.

It's historical fiction. It's sci-fi horror slasher. But it's also partly (and hurriedly) satirical of the crusades and Christianity. The knights are sent on a "fool's errand" to fight for god, kingdom, and achieve their knighthood. Turns out they have something real to fight, but it's a horrific situation. Does this mean they're fundamentally wrong and faithless heretics? That they're the real evil according to "god's plan"? That the "heretic" heroine who is supposed to burn at the stake survives and is actually their savior? Could be. It could also mean that some very bad and violent things happen to our eager and newly introduced characters just for shock value.

At its core, I wanted more from Lake of Fire. There are deep metaphors of metaphysical hell and suffering, of dark personal demons and destroyed faith, but the story fails to scratch below the surface of the physical burning lake. The story is self-limiting as a goodies versus baddies, humans versus aliens blockbuster. It has potential, but instead is drawn toward an event horizon of a narrative singularity, wanting to be more but reduced by its own limitations. Oh well. It was bloody, at least.

If there's any consolation it's the artwork. Fantastic design, colors and lettering by Nathan Fairbairn himself, with clean semi-realistic illustrations by Matt Smith. It's dark and bloody, but don't expect any great depth from the story.

Alicia Riley says

The "worst" thing I have to say about this comic it's too short! A collection of all FIVE volume of Lake Of Fire in one volume is mix of historical fiction and sci fi. Set during the Crusade the book has band of Crusaders and Cathar heretic joining forces to fight bug alien that crash landed in France. Prepare to cry also. The art work is also good.

Sean Gibson says

Toss Cowboys & Aliens, Predator, Kingdom of Heaven, and Aliens into a blender and you'd get something like Lake of Fire, a delightfully entertaining mishmash of action movie clichés. Sure, there's not much novel

or groundbreaking happening here, but that's okay—a well-executed reheat is sometimes just the thing. Think of this as cold pizza for breakfast.

Robert says

One long flight from Phoenix to Toronto, one new series under my belt.

The writing and art are excellent, and the parallelism between jihadism and crusading is a clear and present reminder that we haven't overcome these tendencies in the past 800 years.

One thing irritated me, though: the extraterrestrial threats are so clearly inspired by Alien Xenomorphs, so was this a spec script for an Alien comic later repurposed or what? I'd be OK with that, but I'd like it clarified.

Courtney (Storybook Slayers) says

Not a fan of the artwork, the dialogue was quite boring, and the plot did not intrigue. Sadly, I will not continue reading this graphic novel nor the series.

Chris Thompson says

Reading the individual issues, the major complaint I have about this series is that it's too short. It's sad that a series with such great storytelling and heartfelt scenes has to end after only five issues. But what powerful issues those are. From the start, Nathan Fairbairn took time to develop his characters and his plot. Characters like Sir Raymond and Hugh are likeable because they have some surprises up their sleeves and they wield real emotional power. Admittedly, Bernadette, the sole female character, is not as well-developed, though she is clearly a strong character. And the monk, the only villain that is human, is one-dimensional and what happens with him is predictable.

But that's not to say the emotional weight of the conclusion is lessened any. There's plenty to enjoy, from the scenes of humor to the wonder of the unknown, and the horror of said unknown. That the series is about an alien race that crashes into France during the Middle Ages seems silly, but Fairbairn plays it straight. The alien creatures are fearsome and frightening and the reaction to them feels right. That many questions won't be answered is only natural enough, but I don't want to say anymore for risk of spoiling anything.

The artwork by Matt Smith is quite good, enhanced by Fairbairn's coloring. Fairbairn sometimes opts to tint whole panels in reds or another color, but in most scenes his coloring is vibrant and helps bring the story to life. Smith opts for a realistic approach, perhaps to add to the credibility of the plot, as realistic as hand-drawn characters and actions can be, at least. There is a strong attention to detail, with a focus on character expression and on the gruesome when terror rears its ugly head.

The length is unfortunate. I wanted more. I wish Fairbairn could have spent more time in this world, but he doesn't rush his story much. It might be tough to justify the high price tag (\$16.99 on Amazon for pre-order) at only 5 issues. Those who read it will be in for a treat, though.

Matt Graupman says

As I've stated in other reviews, I'm not a big fan of fantasy; I usually find the whole genre to be pretty tedious. "Lake Of Fire," written by Nathan Fairbairn and illustrated by Matt Smith, isn't technically a fantasy comic but it has enough knights and swordplay and bloodshed that it at least seems closely related to stuff like "Lord Of The Rings" or "Game Of Thrones." Set during the Albigensian Crusades of 11th century France, it has the one element that could convince me to embrace a fantasy-ish graphic novel: aliens!

In an absurdly enjoyable twist, as the Crusaders battle one another for Christian dominance or whatever, an alien spaceship crash lands into the French countryside, unleashing a horde of deadly fanged beetle/pillbug creatures. Mashing up genres isn't anything new in comics but Fairbairn and Smith pull it off so well in "Lake Of Fire" that you'll wonder why no one had thought to do it sooner; it seems like a natural fit. I bought the book because I've been following Smith's work online for a while and his pages here don't disappoint whatsoever; his stuff is clean, bold, and stylishly cartoon-y. Fairbairn's story is crisply paced, surprisingly progressive for the time period, and his double-duty work as colorist on the comic is unfussy and beautifully varied.

So I guess my review is kind of a cop out: "Lake Of Fire" isn't really a fantasy comic, it's technically a historical drama that's actually more of a sci-fi comic in disguise. Whatever you want to label it, it's super-duper-fun. I mean, who wouldn't want to read a comic where Lancelot fights a Xenomorph?
