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This series advances the story of Kabuki started in Circle of Blood through the eyes of the other Noh agents. In a truly fascinating style, each agent is drawn by a different artist. This medium allows, in my opinion, each character to have a separate identity and personality--more so than one artist could have accomplished. Compelling storytelling and wonderful art at its best.

Kabuki, Vol. 3: Masks of the Noh Details

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From Reader Review *Kabuki*, Vol. 3: *Masks of the Noh* for online ebook

Jan says

The art in this book was pretty cool but the story sucked. I guess it was really written for a much younger reader. I found it boring and hard to follow. It may have been better if I had read the two volumes before this one, but I doubt it.

Paige Hadley says

The *Kabuki* series opened my eyes to the boundless potential of the graphic novel genre. Not only is the plot the definition of epic, but its gorgeous art style destroys expectations. The core of *Kabuki* is personal transformation – rewriting one’s identity, history, and culture to live a new narrative. It explores the binary of inner/outer self, with the motif of masks to protect/represent true self. I’ve lost count of all the times I’ve raved about this series to friends. It is an unforgettable contribution to the “war of art”.

CHARACTERS & KEY MOTIFS

If you don't like the story your culture is writing... It's not enough to say you don't subscribe to it... You have the obligation of writing your own story... To be a contributing author of your own culture – Kabuki Vol 7. The Alchemy

The character of Kabuki is unravelled layer by layer throughout the series. In Vol. 1 *Circle of Blood*, she is a government assassin, hiding in plain sight as Noh TV’s Big Brother-esque weather reporter (“media as a manufacturer of public consent”). As a child, her identity was defined by her shameful facial scar, referencing her murdered mother the Kabuki dancer. Now, her Kabuki mask is her trademark and a motif vital to her story of transformation. Her narrative of fighting death to rewrite her future is powerfully uplifting to anyone who has lost sight of the light at the end of the tunnel.

I didn't have to be labeled by my scars, my job, my lineage, or my history. Once I learned to free myself on the inside, I became free on the outside as well – Kabuki Vol. 7 The Alchemy

Kabuki features a cast of deadly female characters, of whom we only get to see the tip of the iceberg. In Vol 3. *Masks of the Noh* and Vol. 7 *Scarab, Lost in Translation*, each of the Noh operatives are portrayed by a different artist, with the aim to express their individuality through unique art styles. This technique made me mindful of each character having their own private world beyond the main *Kabuki* plot line.

The revolution is the action not the subject. Once the revolution becomes the institution, you

have to revolt and revolve, all over again. Stagnation is death. Status quo is death. Celebrity is death. Once a government or agency is set up to worship itself and make itself richer, and forget the ideas it is founded on, it is no longer for the people, or by the people – Kabuki Vol. 7 The Alchemy

THE WAR OF ART

When I first started reading graphic novels, I held expectations based on genre stereotypes – think panels, speech bubbles, and black and white art. However, the art of *Kabuki* surpasses my wildest expectations. In fact, Mack makes art like he's never faced a boundary in his life. While the volumes are congruent as a series, each plays with whatever mediums best communicate the heart of that particular chapter. For example, Vol. 1 is an electrifying theatre of dark and light, while Vol. 2 *Dreams...* drifts between life and death. *Kabuki*'s subconscious thought is represented by surreal mixed modal paintings, blending water colour, paper cut outs, photography, and lace. My personal favourite is the very “meta” Vol. 7 *The Alchemy*, which celebrates as many textures and dimensions as you can imagine.

Just as the art goes over the lines, so does the story. When Akemi introduces *Kabuki* to the “war of art” in Vol. 7, it becomes clear that the series aims to be a subversive, stimulating contribution to culture – blurring reality and transcending the boundaries of traditional storytelling.

Each letter is alive and fertile with intent of the idea... That is unlocked and activated when someone reads it ... You must accept your role in the energy exchange by passing on your truth or story to those willing to unlock and open... and unfold that in themselves... Part of the global War of Art – Kabuki Vol. 7 The Alchemy

As a reader and as a content creator, *Kabuki* motivates me to look deeply at the world, and see past perceived boundaries to my creativity and identity. Keep *Kabuki* on your to-read or re-read list for any day you need to stoke your life's fire.

This review can also be found on my blog [Paige's Pages](#).

Jessica Bingham says

I thoroughly enjoyed this graphic novel and was sad when it was over. In this volume we get to know *Kabuki*'s fellow assassins a little bit more. Tiger lily and Scarab start to have an actual friendship, without the masks.

Anna says

2.5 - Great to finally get some time with the other assassins, but the plot and characterization are barely there. Having a different artist portray each of the assassins is a neat idea, but unfortunately Rick Mays

hypersexualizes Scarab and Tigerlily to the point where it's just plain embarrassing.

David Katzman says

Kabuki is a series about transformation. Yes, it has beautiful art. Yes, it has great writing. And while the central theme of the narrative is transformation, what I found even more powerful is the way the art of the stories transforms from collection to collection, seeming to mirror the character's evolution.

I have met David Mack a couple times at Comicon, and I've been meaning to ask him if he always intended from the beginning for the story to be about transformation and to move from standard comic style to collage. I like to think that it's something he came up with as he went along, and the writing of the story transformed as he developed it. That the book evolved him as the story itself evolved.

On a plot level, the story begins in rather mainstream comic fashion. Kabuki is set slightly in the future, primarily in Japan. The main character, Kabuki, is one of a group of eight female assassins called The Noh who wear iconic masks and stylized costumes. They are a team managed by the government and sent out to instill fear and kill gangsters and various corporate criminals. However ... not all is as it appears. A multi-layered conspiracy ensues. Seven graphic novels complete the story.

Kabuki Circle of Blood. Mack wrote and drew. Black & white. Has a grim, raw style. The art seems a bit underdeveloped to my eye. Has a bit of Sin City tone but more surreal. With more emphasis on emotions. The story is overall, fairly straightforward to this point.

Kabuki Dreams. Mack wrote and drew. Takes a huge leap forward in style and has more of the Mack signature look. Collage style begins, color is introduced. Blends pencil sketching, ink drawings, painting and even photography. This is a book of interior monologue and, as the title would lead you to believe, is trippy.

Kabuki Masks of Noh. Mack writes and draws some scenes, but this is primarily guest drawn. The style returns to black & white, but overall more refined, precise and graphic than Circle of Blood. Rick Mays draws a pretty phenomenal Scarab. The various artists seem to be chosen to help represent the style of each of the assassins. This sequence consists of short stories introducing us further to the other members of the Noh.

Kabuki Skin Deep. Mack returns to both draw and write. In Skin Deep his incredible artistic skills beginning to shine. He can morph like a chameleon from cartoonish renderings to realist representational paintings to pencil sketches.

Kabuki Metamorphosis. Mack writes, draws, letters and designs. For the sheer brilliance on display, I think Metamorphosis is the most beautiful of the series and my favorite. The diversity of techniques is breathtaking.

Kabuki Scarab Lost in Translation. An action-packed side-step featuring everyone's favorite assassin, Scarab. Illustrated in graphic black & white by Rick Mays, the coolest artist from the Masks collection. Just as the art harkens to outstanding comic illustration style, it doesn't push the envelope in content or technique. A fun diversion.

Kabuki The Alchemy. Mack takes his signature collage style even further, using cut up items and diverse materials including envelopes and letters sent to him from fans of the series to tell the existentialist, inspirational conclusion of Kabuki's epic story. Although visually, I prefer Metamorphosis, I truly admire The Alchemy for showing the potential of comics. Yes, many artists like R. Crumb and Chris Ware have achieved fame for non-superhero stories. But Mack essentially demonstrates the potential before our eyes to move beyond the dictates of the superhero form. A series that begins with ultra-violent superhumans fighting battles for stereotypical reasons ends with artistic explorations of our inner potential as creative beings. Kabuki moves beyond standard comic book "hero" tropes into a story of heroic action as self-transformation, moving beyond the dictatorship of the system, the fear of change and the psychological control of the past. The hero is one who evolves not one who kills everything. And Mack says we each have the potential, regardless of what has come before, to evolve. Perhaps best of all, the transformation that takes place goes much further than within the narrative; it is a transformation of the form of graphic storytelling. Now that is truly inspirational.

Highly recommended!

Derek says

Scarab says, "I'm looking at the city through a broken heart," This is probably one of the greatest lines in comic book history.

The masks of Noh, like every other Kabuki is sure to leave you in a state of anguish. The writing is visceral & vivid giving a three-dimensionalism to the characters even the ones that haven't been explored in detail, the artwork is so psychologically intense, subliminal and rife with transformational beauty, that it makes you want to dive into the pages and lie beside Kabuki, on her mother's grave, interrogate Johnny Yamamoto with Snapdragon, meditate with Butoh, etc, etc.

This Volume follows the search for Kabuki, dead or alive. It is a platform for all the other Noh agents to shine, and boy, do they shine, especially with the culminating Act 4 where they storm the CONTROL CORPS FACILITY to retrieve Kabuki. In their words, "Our mission is simple... Find Kabuki. If she's dead, bring back her corpse. If she's alive, bring back her corpse."

Saint Lart says

Huh, I must have missed that this was vol. 3 when I bought it yesterday... Now I know why I diid not like it as much as I thought I would. I'll save off rating it, until and/or if I get the res of the series.

Chris says

Fantastic about sums this up.

Jeridel Banks says

Even though I have the individual floppies for the comics that make up this Kabuki book, I still enjoyed reading this volume. If anything, more aspects of Kabuki and David Mack's art make more sense because of the 5 years I spent in Japan. I can't wait to read the next volume.

Darrell says

According to the introduction, this volume gives a look inside the individual personalities of Kabuki's fellow masked assassins. Not so much. While we do catch brief glimpses of the Noh outside their role of assassin, the focus is centered on the violence. I'm beginning to suspect the only volume of Kabuki worth reading is the first. The artwork in this volume is black and white and mainly done by other artists, so if you're a fan of David Mack's art, look elsewhere. It's standard comic book fare with scantily clad women killing and torturing people and dodging bullets by doing handstands. The perfect marriage of sex and violence. Perhaps to avoid being accused of appealing to the lowest common denominator, Mack throws in some bad poetry, as if we didn't get enough of that from Vol 2. Also, his characters refer to themselves as comic book characters multiple times in an attempt to be clever. All the multiple layers and subtle nuances of Vol 1 are gone, making this an average run of the mill comic book.

Kevin Fanning says

Totally good. I guess some David Mack purists would complain about him not doing the art for this book, but I like that he uses different artists for the different Noh agents. The art for Ice is my favorite. And this is the first time that you really get a sense of the personalities of the different agents (Snapdragon: still super creepy), so it is all aces with me.

Phillip says

It took a minute to get into the language, but once I did, I found it to be more poetic than I might have imagined. The drawings are all top-notch, and the story, well, might be the weak link in the chain. Nonetheless, it was worth reading and again, I was surprised that the language worked as well as it did....a nice surprise.

Amanda says

Not my favorite of the Kabuki series, probably because the art was done as a collaboration between several different artists. I prefer the books where David Mack does all the work. The rapid-fire, ten-pages-per-character pace didn't work for me either. I wanted more time with each character. Of course, Mack says he plans to do a separate book for each character, but the only one he's done so far is Scarab, and once again, he didn't do the art for the book. Perhaps my favorite feature of this book is the cover art :)

Amir Mishali says

While better than Dreams, this volume is nowhere near the quality of Circle of Blood. The plot still moves agonizingly slow, and instead of the cool David Mack art we get some mediocre art by some other artists.

Also, the story lacks any cohesive structure, lacking a beginning and an end.

VeganMedusa says

Read during the readathon.
