



Animal Man, Volume 3: Rotworld: The Red Kingdom

Jeff Lemire (Writer) , Scott Snyder (Writer) , Steve Pugh (Artist) , Yanick Paquette (Artist)

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The world has fallen to the Rot!

Animal Man, a.k.a. Buddy Baker and Swamp Thing form an uneasy alliance as they find that after facing down the undead forces of Anton Arcane that the world has fallen deep into a decrepit future where the world is consumed into a withering land of decay. The two heroes travel the decimated planet, scrounging up misfit crimefighters, whose appearances and histories have been changed by this new hell-cape. Will Animal Man and Swamp Thing be able to stop the forces of the Rot and change the world back to what it was?

New York Times best-selling authors Scott Snyder (*Batman*) and Jeff Lemire (*Sweet Tooth*) team-up to conclude a story that began with the New 52.

Collecting: *Animal Man* 12-17, *Swamp Thing* 12, 17-18

Animal Man, Volume 3: Rotworld: The Red Kingdom Details


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From Reader Review Animal Man, Volume 3: Rotworld: The Red Kingdom for online ebook

Fizzgig76 says

Reprints Animal Man (2) #12-19 and Swamp Thing (5) #12 and #17 (October 2012-June 2013). Animal Man and Swamp Thing take their battle directly to the Rot. Unfortunately, Swamp Thing and Animal Man discover they've walked into a trap and that Arcane has won. Now, the world is under the Rot's control and Animal Man finds himself in a desperate attempt to reunite with Swamp Thing and stop Arcane. If Animal Man can succeed in freeing the world, his life could still be changed forever!

Written by Jeff Lemire with help by Scott Snyder, Animal Man 3: Rotworld—The Red Kingdom is the New 52 relaunch of the Animal Man series. Following Animal Man 2: Animal vs. Man, Animal Man 3: Rotworld—The Red Kingdom is a tie-in with Swamp Thing 3: Rotworld—The Green Kingdom and wraps up the Rot storyline.

The Rot was a good idea to give Animal Man some punch when the series kicked off with the New 52. The concepts of the different worlds Red, Green, Gray, Black, and others tied in with the whole spectrum of the Green Lanterns and added some direction to series. I liked this as it started, but it did carry on a bit too long.

Fortunately, the series did not end everything quickly and anticlimactic. This volume shows a real battle (on two fronts if you read Swamp Thing) and the ending fight was a good conclusion. The series has a bittersweet coda much like Swamp Thing in that everything didn't turn out well. The death of Cliff (and his nasty mullet) echoes Grant Morrison's run which killed Animal Man's whole family...which leads to a quest to resurrect Cliff in the final issues of the series.

The art for the series is pretty traditional comic book art which is a bit of a disappointment from the early days of this series. Travel Foreman provided a really unique view of Animal Man and I wish he had stuck with the book to keep it moving. I tried to imagine how he would have portrayed this volume and found myself wishing he had done the art (though it wouldn't have mixed well with Swamp Thing's art).

Animal Man is a good book that got a bit too bogged down in the story. It is kind of like how X-Files needed to mix in an occasional monster-of-the-week to make the story alien mythos stories less oppressive. I do think they did a good job wrapping up the Rot story, but wish Animal Man was allowed to have some fun. Animal Man 3: Rotworld—The Red Kingdom was followed by Animal Man 4: Splinter Species.

Oz Barton says

[ZOMBIE JUSTICE LEAGUE.

Other

Gavin says

Green Theme Buddy Read with the Shallows...The Green is more Swampy's territory, but it's part of the trifecta with the Red and the Rot, and they're all here...so ya. Plus Swamp Thing. Oh and a Green Lantern shows up, plus Green Arrow has a panel.

Well...that was...terrible. Dark and depressing, I won't be surprised if Buddy Baker becomes a raging alcoholic pill popper. Rot world was a crossover on the Dark-horror edge of the DCU spectrum....Animal Man, Swamp Thing, Constantine, Black Orchid, and so forth. There's also lots of heroes who appear and get turned into zombies by the Rot...Buddy should have learned the best way to predict the future of your wife is to look at her mother...and they are both enormo-cunts. Like somehow it's his fault that their daughter has powers? The real problem is that they spend more time chewing him out than listening to him or curing that crime against follicles that is Cliff...

The talking cat makes me think of Sabrina the Teenage Witch.

Swampy is more interesting because his life partner isn't a fucking cunt. Also, when did she start looking like a librarian? I think they ugged her up on purpose. The art is also terrible. By the end everyone is just a mess of lines and smudges and blechy colours. Not pleasant to look at, way too many thought and speech bubbles and internal monologues.

Oh and to top it all off, even in a book he doesn't appear in, Batman saves the world and the day. Yup. Also, the Justice League manage to be useless twats as well. I did enjoy Frankenstein showing up...I like a lot that New 52 has a mandate for Frank to be in 33% of everything.

This was also just dumb. I think I went onto autopilot about halfway through the book.

I won't be rushing to volume 4.

Disappointing for sure. I also hate super kids. What do u think is going to happen if you have kids with a superhero dude? Idiots. Also, who brings there mother in law on a road trip and doesn't leave her in Wichita? Dummy.

Just not worth it. Lots of DCU grit. But not at all pleasant. No point other than depressing me. Yay.

Julian says

Jeff Lemire hasn't ended his recent story arcs well, he does begin them well though.

I don't know where the fault lies on this one, Lemire or Snyder, but DC's events are a serious drain on any sort of core narrative that might have existed in the individual series. Take Gail Simone's Batgirl for example:

- groundwork is provided for sociopathic brother plot.
- informed of Joker's-Return-Batman-Event.
- Joker is now the lead villain.
- brother plot exists in the background when it is suddenly rushed into and then speedily wrapped up (while the Joker-event is resolved in a separate series).

This type of storytelling (where one storyteller tells the other storytellers what they have to tell) makes for average-y to below average-y books. The reason the first volumes of the New 52 were so successful is because they avoided these superfluous and largely uninteresting connections. It would be a whole 'nother thing if this interweaving actually benefited each series. Unfortunately it usually only benefits one book, a book which happened to be good without everything else having to tie-in anyway. As the New 52 chugs along it brings back all of the things that it shrugged off and only to its detriment.

Sadly, all of these detriments attach to Animal Man Vol. 3. The Rot is ending the world and only Animal Man and Swamp Thing can save it (spoilers – they do!). This book has none of the charm, fun or originality contained in the first volume (the series has also suffered since the loss of artist Travel Foreman). Animal Man Vol. 3 no longer does anything new or interesting – just like most of the other New 52 books that have to align with larger, usually world-ending, events.

After the lackluster conclusion of Sweet Tooth (see here: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>) I won't be reading a Lemire book again until I can read the ending first and make sure it's done well.

Aaron says

The most enjoyable Animal Man volume so far, mostly due to the fact that this story rips Buddy Baker away from his unbearable family and sets him off on a solo quest to save the world and return to them. That doesn't mean it's *good*, but it's definitely the most readable of them all.

Unfortunately, the story just isn't all that fresh or thrilling. As I mentioned in my review of Swamp Thing Deluxe Edition, which this directly crosses over with, the third act of this story of Animal Man & Swamp Thing vs. The Rot rockets them into a post-apocalyptic future where The Rot has won, which we of course know cannot be the final outcome of this battle, so inherently the stakes are nonexistent. We're just waiting for several issues for them to figure out a way to solve it, and there aren't enough surprises or twists along the way to keep things interesting.

Also, I've mentioned before how corny I find Jeff Lemire's penchant for having his characters give other people nicknames, and this is out in full force in this book. The goat warrior dude from volume 2 makes a repeat appearance, for example, and never stops calling Buddy Baker "Butter Baker, Blondie Man." It's so annoying, I started just mentally fast-forwarding through all of goatman's dialogue. Like, I know that goat thing can speak English. Why does he think his name is Butter? Why Blondie Man? It's forced quirk and it's aggravating.

Anyway, as I said, the one thing this dystopia does for the reader is pull Buddy away from his horribly-established wife and mother-in-law who only exist to get in his way and nag at him. Unfortunately, this reprieve is short-lived. Eventually, Buddy makes it back to the present (of course), and there they are again, and now they're EVEN WORSE. The trope of having an overprotective wife/mother constantly undermine her super-powered husband/daughter/whatever is just so old fashioned and borderline sexist. "Women just

won't let us BE!!!" I truly cannot stand these characters.

So, this is another one I can't recommend, and at this point I think I may be done with Animal Man. I gave it 3 volumes and a full story arc, and I just find it too frustrating to continue. RIP Buddy Baker and family. You were annoying.

William Thomas says

Well this was... bad.

Just when I was beginning to think Lemire could do no wrong, it appears that I was incorrect. With everything at your disposal, with Buddy Baker, one of the most powerful cape in the DCU, this is what you give me? A time travel story?

See, the problem I have with time travel stories is that at the end of the day they are absolutely worthless. There are no repercussions for the characters involved, because, inevitably, those repercussions are erased by the writer during the climax of the story. So anything that happens isn't worth a damn in the end. That's exactly what we got here with volume 3 and the end of Rotworld- a whole bunch of nothing.

Was it cool to see the future world? Yeah, for a minute it was. Novelty wore off fairly quickly and then it became tiresome. Instead of having Buddy and Alec fight Arcane in the regular continuity, we see a battle in the future that never really takes place because of that lazy plot device called time travel. Gimme a break, Lemire, and gimme something real.

Aside from the time travel trash, the entire thing ends in the most anticlimactic way possible. A very serious letdown from what began as the crown jewel of the Nu52.

Pugh does some serviceable work on the art side, but every other artist who worked on this volume (and there were a handful) was just godawful. Remedial art.

Writing: D

Art: D

James DeSantis says

Finally, the first volume I actually loved.

Listen, I get it, crossovers can be annoying. This one worked though, for me anyway, and you know why? It's self contained, and works well even if you just read this volume.

So together Animal Man and Swamp Thing go into the Rotworld. They get lost below and come out a year later with the entire world overrun by the Rot. This is a very interesting world just because most heroes we know are not filled with Rot. From Flash to Superman, watching our favorite heroes zombieified is super fun.

The ending is heartbreaking and the very last issue is REALLY good and I hope volume 4-5 deal with the

fallout well. The art isn't nearly as chaotic or crazy and the end result makes for a lot of great storytelling if done right. This is top notch horror superhero stuff. Let's do it!

Pamela says

I enjoyed the first two volumes of *Animal Man*. Much as in *Dial M*, DC is trying to revive a character who, by his very nature, is patently ridiculous. Lemire is good at writing broody, family tension, and *Animal Man* plays on that a lot--being married to a superhero isn't easy. Especially when your husband is Buddy Baker, *Animal Man*, who can summon the power of different animals to fight crime. As you do.

Oh my gosh, this is so tacky. It's like the Wonder Twins but there's only one of him and no ring and he can't become a waterfall (which, while not much use in a fight, would be an interesting existential experience).

However, the New 52 tries to inject some darkness into this character by making him a player in this age-old match between good and evil, only here it's the Red and the Green parts of life (red being animal, green being vegetation) versus the Rot, which is pretty much what you think it is. Death, decay, destruction, despair--all those fun d-words rolled into one disgusting deposit. Lemire starts telling a Chosen One story, but it's not about Buddy: the Avatar of the Red (I honestly still have no idea what this means but it does sound pretty cool) is Buddy's four-year-old daughter, Maxine. The family goes on the run when the agents of the Rot come after them, but thankfully, they have their talking totem cat, Socks, to guide them with cryptic wisdom.

Okay, I can't lie: this is ridiculous and I have no idea why I read the first two unless I was taking cold medicine at the time, or in some other equally decision-impairing situation.

But I loved the *Essex County* trilogy! I really liked *The Underwater Welder*, even though it was bleak as Saskatchewan in winter! I have this ridiculous soft spot for Canadians. I was really hoping that Lemire could pull this off.

Alas, poor Buddy Baker, your story is a heaving, rotting mess of decayed tropes, trippy bad guys, and art that relies on cramming as much as possible into each panel so (tee-hee!) the reader doesn't realize how sloppy the art actually *is*. That may work when you're baking cookies, for example (peanut butter toffee coffee chocolate chip sounds pretty delicious to me!), but a comic book is not a cookie. I know the art is bad when I see a panel and think to myself, "Wow, that looks like something I drew!" To wit, a panel close-up of Buddy's face is ... smooshed, to use a very technical term.

Plus, we have to deal with Buddy making horrible decisions, Swamp Thing making horrible decisions, and the Baker family making horrible decisions. Everyone in this comic is an idiot. See, what happens is that Buddy and Swamp Thing jump into this mystical pool (I am not making this up) and climb down a ladder of bones into the heart of the Rot. But just before they can destroy it, the evil Avatar of the Rot shows up and cackles about how they fell into his trap.

As it turns out, when Buddy and Swampy entered the pool, they doomed the entire world to destruction by rot, so when they emerge from ... wherever they are ... it's a year later and everyone has turned into zombies. Okay, technically no one ever says zombies, but they're zombies. Only superheroes with connections to the Red and the Green, like Beast Boy and Black Orchid, or those with no flesh at all, like Steel, survive. Oh, and John Constantine, but I guess the rules don't apply to him. No one has any idea how to write his

dialogue, which is 90% him saying "mate" or whingeing about cigarettes.

So anyway, Buddy reappears and everyone's all, "Ooh, Animal Man has come back!" but he just wants to find his family, which means another full-on charge into the lair of the enemy. Along the way, they meet up with Frankenstein's monster (I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP) with his army of reanimated corpses and rescue the world's dorkiest Green Lantern, Medphyll, who is a plant-based alien with wheat stalks for hair.

There are pages and pages and PAGES of superheroes fighting, which is more like figures being tossed around panels in a chaotic frenzy. Batgirl is now literally a bat and Wonder Woman gets sliced 'n diced. It's ridiculous and boring at the same time. Then, because the DCU can't really keep operating when all of its heroes are Rot-Zombies, there is a lovely *deus ex machina* and everything is as it is before--kind of. Time travel, you guys: not as helpful as you would think.

And then there's the actual writing and plotting of this ... thing. With much respect and admiration to both Jeff Lemire and Scott Snyder, it is not cool to pull dialogue directly from *Star Wars* in order to further your version of the Light Side of the Force versus the Dark Side. now with 500% more tentacles and vines! And yes, I know that *Star Wars* draws on a long storytelling tradition of good versus evil, of the Chosen One and the rogue and the princess, of Shakespearean daddy troubles and wise old teachers. However, some of this dialogue, in conjunction with the main concept of this world, is really obvious.

Observe: Yoda Cat (AKA Socks, which is the silliest name for a super-powerful "totem" animal ever) tells Buddy Baker, Animal Man: "Dig deeper, Buddy Baker. Let your consciousness touch the near infinite number of things that swarm this old swamp. Become one with the Red." "Stretch out with your feelings, Luke ... Let go, Luke." Yoda Cat.

Abby, Swamp Thing's girlfriend and the niece of the Avatar of the Rot, solves the problem of impending world doom by intuitively possessing knowledge of where the "Parliament" of the Rot is. Yoda Cat tells her that no one knows where it is, but she replies that she does. "Somehow, I've always known." Look, Abby, I like your haircut and the whole vine thing going on with your skin, but you are not Princess Leia.

Felix Faust to John Constantine: "Together we could rule the rotlands!" That's nice, Darth. I mean Felix. Whatever.

I know it's not a particularly unique line, but Steel shouting, "There's too many of them!" just brings back Grey Two (Y-Wing)'s words at the Battle of Endor.

Also, a proofreader would be nice. Earth's new Green Lantern, doesn't exactly have the best grasp of English grammar (although, I mean, really, I can't blame him since he's an alien. Let's blame the writers!). Buddy asks what imprisoned him and Medphyll returns, "Not what. WHOM." Look, if you're going to correct someone's grammar, please actually correct it instead of just making the problem worse. There is a really easy way to test whether you've used the correct pronoun: put it back in the original sentence. "Whom imprisoned me" simply doesn't work because we need a bloody subject pronoun! "Who imprisoned me" works! Hooray, English! Boo, writers!

Every time I read something in the DCU I'm reminded of why I prefer the Marvelverse. At least Marvel embraces the weird, the goofy, and the just plain off-the-wall WHAAAAT? and runs with it. Like, "Yeah, this guy wears spandex and has ... spider ... powers, but we're totally cool with that! That other guy works for chimichangas. You got a problem with that?"

And then you've got Mr. Strength-of-a-Hippo over here trying to save the world and his precocious daughter, but how in the name of Cthulhu am I supposed to sympathize with him when he inflicted *that haircut* on his son? I'm done, Buddy Baker.

Ivy says

Glad they were able to stop the Rot. Hope Buddy will be able to be okay without his powers. RIP Cliff. The Rot is disgusting.

Anne says

[not to mention that his son dies at the end (hide spoiler)]

Jbainnz says

Since this book was a crossover with both Swamp Thing and Animal Man I thought I would save time and just write a review for the story as a whole.

To put it simply, I loved this story arc. It was dark, emotional, well scripted and full of action. Snyder's run of Swamp thing has made this title one of my favourites of the N52. And this team up with Jeff Lemire made the conclusion end with one hell of a bang. In both the Red and Green books in the Rotworld title share issues, but we also get to see what happens to each of them as they have their own separate encounters on their journey. We start the book as Buddy (Animal Man) and Alec (Swamp Thing) enter the rot, which happens to be a trap by Anton Arcane and they are thrust one year into the future. A future of where the rot has taken over the world, along with most of its heroes. I loved seeing all the characters of the DC universe come together in this twisted future, whether they were dead or alive. I would have to say Frankenstein was one of my favourite cameo in this, and I haven't even read his series yet, which I am going to delve into next.

The art changes throughout the issues, some are noticeably different, but as a whole it didn't take away from the story. The differences between the rot, the red and the green were done beautifully, giving the reader a real feel for the story. This tale was woven together amazingly with great twists and turns, but I'm a huge fan of both Lemire and Snyder so of course this was going to be a hit with me. The way they ended both of these books was phenomenal, with both relief and heartache. Very bittersweet way to end it all, but I think that's also what made it feel so real.

If your going to read either of these titles make sure you pick up the corresponding books as well so you can get a complete experience of the story arc. To put it simply, this is simply a damn good read!

Koen says

[they shouldn't have messed with the time line... read enough stories with space/time jumping (hide spoiler)]

James says

If I never read a "super-hero goes to dystopian future and needs to make things right!" story again it will be too soon. I expect better from Lemire.

Kyle says

This was a pretty solid collection of the Rotworld event from the animal kingdom side of the story.

I really enjoyed the artwork and some of the horrific imagery that was used to tell the story; in fact, the artwork has been fairly consistent throughout the entire Lemire run of Animal Man. I felt the stakes were placed very high for our hero even though the conflict wasn't fully realized. Sadly, it all felt too familiar and formulaic. There were some good opportunities to really break away from comic book cliches with this story; but, sadly, it's the exact same good-vs-evil story that we always get with crossover events.

Lemire spent a lot of time in the first volume building an interesting and detailed world for Animal Man. I think the decision to cross it over with the Swamp Thing universe really placed limits on where Lemire could have taken the story. In the end, the Rotworld event was shallow, surface material that left me longing for the Animal Man from issues 1-6. I hope, now that the event is over, there can be a return to what Lemire had taken such care in creating when the New 52 began.

Still, it was a solid read, but not mind-blowing.
3.5/5

C. Varn says

I will spare you the spoilers, but the arc begins strong and has real stakes and consequences at its end. The cross-over between Swampthing and Animal Man makes logical sense and fits the re-working of the metaphysics in the New 52. However, Lemire seems to lose the thread in the middle about what makes Animal Man different from other comics: it was not just the metaphysics of the Green, the Red, and the Rot. A metaphysics that frankly feels a little lifted from 1990s White Wolf games. Animal Man, in Morrison's original run and in Lemire's New 52, is mostly about the effects of being a cosmic entity and superhero on a regular family. Lemire's writing is most developed and interesting when dealing with family dynamics and humanizing relationships within comics. This book started a trend that I have seen increasingly in Lemire's superhero comics whether he is working for Valiant, DC, or Marvel--they are becoming more and more like standard superhero comics. In Animal Man, that absolutely does not really work. Having two cosmic avatars travel a hellscape collecting misfit superheroes to fight hordes of unpersons loses interest fast, and the tropes about the father-daughter dynamic are also tired here. What was interesting in the first two volumes is clearly beginning to lose steam. Also some of Synder's influence is felt here and not in a positive way: I have liked

Synder's work on Batman in all three continuities he was worked on it on, but Animal Man is awkward fit for him and this moves this book even more into the elements of comics where Animal Man simply doesn't shine as a concept. Pugh and Paquette's art is solid, but house-style and most efficient. While in other comic properties, I would rate this a little higher, I expect more from Lemire, Synder, and Animal Man.
