



Box Office Poison

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This epic story of Sherman, Dorothy, Ed, Stephen, Jane, and Mr. Flavor is not to be missed. Alex Robinson's completely natural and inspiring knack for dialogue has made his story of dreary jobs, comic books, love, sex, messy apartments, girlfriends (and the lack thereof), undisclosed pasts, and crusty old professionals one of the most delightful and whimsical graphic novels to hit the stands in years.

Box Office Poison Details

Date : Published December 8th 2015 by Top Shelf Productions (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9781891830198

Author : Alex Robinson

Format : Paperback 602 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Fiction, Graphic Novels Comics

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From Reader Review Box Office Poison for online ebook

Licha says

The dreaded 3 star rating. I always hate giving a three star because it always looks like a book was just average. Sometimes it is the case, but what about when you really enjoy a book, it's just not necessarily earth shattering or important enough to make the 4 star or 5 star rating? So for purposes of distinction this one merits a 3.5 star rating from me.

This was like watching a marathon of Friends or any such twenty-something/relationship sitcom. I was sad when it came to an end because at that point I had become attached to the characters in this book.

The basics:

--Sherman: Works at a bookstore and absolutely hates it with a passion. He is tired of all the stupid questions he gets asked on a daily basis, yet he does nothing about it, with the excuse that he needs the money. He meets a girl named Dorothy and they start to date. None of his friends like her and neither did the reader, meaning me. But of course he can't see her "non-charms" and his friends don't want to interfere and tell him, except for Jane, who seems to have a personal vendetta against Dorothy.

--Jane: She is one-half of a couple, who rent a room out to Sherman. She's afraid of commitment and although she is very much in love with her better-half, Stephen, she refuses to marry him.

--Stephen: Jane's boyfriend, a very likable guy, who is the rational voice to Jane's rants.

--Ed: Sherman's best friend. He is a chubby guy who lives with his parents. He is an aspiring comic book writer and is waiting for his lucky break while working at his dad's store. Tired of the demands his dad makes on his time, Ed decides to work as Irving Flavor's assistant. Sherman is also a virgin due to his insecurities about his weight, looks, living arrangements, and anything else he can think of to put himself down for.

--Dorothy: Said hated girlfriend of Sherman. She thinks she's much more cultured than those around her and acts like she doesn't care about anything. She's manipulative towards Sherman, a slob, never punctual, always borrowing money from friends, and alcoholic, just to name a few of her flaws. Sherman is the only one who refuses to see her for what she really is.

--Irving Flavor: Grouchy, old man who created the Nightstalker comic book hero and was tricked into selling his rights away for \$50. Nightstalker is now a franchise that makes millions of dollars. Irving lives in obscurity and has resigned himself to his fate, until Ed discovers one day who Irving really is. A lot of the book gets taken up in the fight to give Irving back what rightfully belongs to him.

--Hildy: A lovable girl that can't seem to give Ed enough hints that she likes him.

It's easy, light reading and you can't help but become invested in the characters and the story. Would recommend for fans of graphic novels.

TJ Shelby says

I got totally hooked on the lives and inner workings of the characters and enjoyed the story.

Vivian says

After 600 pages, I guess I was just hoping for more. The plot was uninspiring, the characters were either meh or annoying and the ending was super rushed. I didn't hate it and there were definitely moments which I enjoyed but it just wasn't for me.

Sam Quixote says

I love comics and thought this'd be fantastic but man is it anything but. Two friends out of uni hit the city, get crappy jobs, one of them works in a bookshop and wants to be a writer. He makes fun of customers in the bookshop behind their backs for not knowing anything about books. Fair enough, I've met librarians who thought Charles Dickens was a novel by David Copperfield. But come on, easy target! Hardly engaging. Then we have the foreign landlady who shouts a lot of pidgen english, the crazy ex-girlfriend, the supposedly exploitative and soulless businesspeople. I'll stop there out of politeness. Basically it's a long list of stereotypes which have been mocked before and are mocked again. No new perspective just childish pointing and nasal laughing. Utterly pathetic.

And the plot? Lots of people frustrated in love or not frustrated in love. Single life in a city, following your dreams, slowly emerging from university like adolescence into adulthood where disappointment is the order of the day. Yawn. The only thing resembling a story was the old comic book guy's story of creating a Superman/Batman like character and signing away the rights because it was the 40s/50s and comic book writers had no rights, didn't know, etc, etc. If you know about Superman you'll know the story behind the creators. Also it's a story that's been explored before by others like Will Eisner's "The Dreamer" or Daniel Clowes' "Pussey!". Hardly new.

And the inanity of it all! Mundane boring lives of wannabes moaning about life. How utterly dull. And it's 600 pages! 600 pages of whinging idiots. "People don't read enough, people aren't creative enough, blah blah". Well I read plenty and that's why I know there are much better comics out there than this load of tat. I made it halfway before giving up on this wishy washy overrated and outdated brick of a book. Don't even bother picking it up fellow readers get something else instead. Or if you want to try Robinson I'd suggest his much better work "Too Cool To Be Forgotten".

Jeremy says

I would have enjoyed this book a lot more in the early '90s, back when college-age twentysomethings seemed like attractive, carefree jokesters as opposed to entitled, good-for-nothing space-wasters. As such types go, however, they're well-developed, occasionally amusing, and compelling enough to propel one through all googolplex pages of this graphic monster.

Peripheral stories often leave more of a lasting impression than the main narratives, such as a brief but rather wonderful vignette in which ursine history buff Stephen reluctantly accompanies his girlfriend to her family's house for Christmas, and to his initial shock and eventual delight finds himself enthralled by a slew of wide-eyed nieces and nephews in a Santa suit, having unexpectedly inherited the role from their grandfather. Spending the holidays at another family's house is a very specific brand of strange, and Robinson captures the details and tone perfectly. To watch Stephen make the transformation from uncomfortable fifth-wheel to Santa Claus himself is truly touching. I loved it.

Elsewhere, there's a lot of complaining and hanging out, and much like those activities, the book is comfortable but doesn't accomplish a whole lot.

Amy says

The style is visually beautiful and I love the way the text is integrated into the page design. I like the misdirect setting up Ed in the "best friend" role when it turns out he's hero material and no one knew it, not even himself. The ending puts a lot of things into a more impactful context but it comes too late. The pacing runs a little long for me-- a lot of the drama is pretty petty, I think in an effort to convey more realistic relationship dynamics, but it gets exhausting. As an outsider to the story, it is cool to see how the characters are able or unable to break away from their past traumas, but simultaneously it's maddening to get through. I'm glad I read it and there are definitely pages I would hang on my wall but I don't think I would read the whole thing again.

Kerry says

I grabbed this book when I saw it in the library the other day because Imogen was so vitriolic about it, and I expected it to be deliciously awful.

Instead, it was just mediocre. The art was pretty okay, and I liked a few of the characters. But the overall plot was boring and had no real point or resolution, the main dude (Sherman) was a jackass and his girlfriend was unlikable, and there were goddamned spelling errors. Like, homophone confusion. Like, "your" when he meant "you're." And he thinks "alot" is one word. WTF. Doesn't anyone hire editors anymore? Shit you don't even need an editor, a goddamned proofreader would do! Ridiculous.

But so yeah: not necessarily recommended, but if you see it lying on the ground and you've got nothing else to read, it's better than a cereal box I guess.

Keon says

I think it perfectly captures a group of imperfect, flawed but relatable people, growing up and making choices that define us in our twenties to thirties. The characters reminded me of real people I knew, myself included. It depicted them unflinchingly, with compassion but also with clarity about people's limitations. The graphic novel definitely improved (especially the art) as it went along and the pacing feels odd but I felt this was something you just have to delve into. It had a Dickensian quality with the characters and I love the cartoony look of the characters with such realistic dialogue.

Art the Turtle of Amazing Girth says

I started reading this a few hours ago, and could not put it down until I was done.

It was like reading a more adult, wittier, more sarcastic, better version of Friends.

How this is only #89 on the top 100 graphic novel list is far beyond me. These books are so damn good, I'm wondering what I've been doing wasting my life not reading them instead.

Fair warning, there is a lot of nudity, and swearing.

Sometimes, I guess, life just takes you in a path you aren't expected to take.

Like, Red and Andy said, get busy livin, or get busy dying, and we all know, that's damn right.

Alex Panagiotopoulos says

Δεν συμμερίζομαι τους γενικούς διθυραμβούς που ψουσα/διψασα. Ναι δεν λ?ω, ε?ναι ?να πιο ρεαλιστικ? και σκληρ? sitcom απλ? σε μορφ? κ?μικ. Και ευκολοδι?βαστο (αν και η ρο? του ε?χε μεγ?λα σκαμπανεβ?σματα και αν? σημε?α απλ? ?ταν τ?σο ανελ?ητα φορτωμ?νο με κε?μενα στην προσπ?θεια του να μεταφ?ρει το ?γχος των σκ?ψεων του εκ?στοτε πρωταγωνιστ? που απλ? τα προσπερν?σα γιατ? δεν ε?χαν καν?να απολ?τως ν?ημα) και συμπαθητικ? στο σκ?τσο. Μ?ρεσε το π?σο ευδι?κριτοι ?ταν οι χαρακτ?ρες και ξεχωριστο?, αυτ? αξ?ζει να τιμηθε? γιατ? γενικ? π?ζουμε σε κ?μικ που ?λοι φατσικ? ε?ναι ?διοι.

Δεν το 'χω γενικ?τερα με αυτ? τα ημιβιογραφικ? κοινωνικ? κ?μικ γεμ?τα με ρεαλιστικ?ς ιστορ?ες καθημεριν?ς τρ?λας. ?πως το blankets δηλαδ? και πολλ? ?λλα. Δεν ε?ναι κακ?, αλλ? δεν ε?ναι και εξαιρετικ?. Ε?ναι απλ? οκ, υπερβολικ? και ανα?τια μεγ?λο με μια ιστορ?α γεμ?τη κοιλι?ς που συνοψιζ?ταν μια χαρ? σε 250-300 σελ?δες λιγ?τερο. Σελ?δα για την σελ?δα και τ?ποτα παραπ?νω.

Ε?χε ?μως τις στιγμ?ς του σ?γουρα, ε?χε ενδιαφ?ροντα τρ?πο στησ?ματος των καρ? και της αφ?γησης σε μερικ?ς σελ?δες και το πως ?νωνε παρ?ν και παρελθ?ν χωρ?ς να σκαλ?νει τον αναγ?στη. Ακ?μα και οι υφ?ς στα μπαλον?κια κειμ?νου μου ?ρεσαν και το πως ?λλαζαν αν?λογα με την χροι? του μην?ματος που περιε?χαν. Το φιν?λε π?ντως μου ?φησε μια νοσταλγικ? γλυκ?πικρη γε?ση, ε?χα αρχ?σει να συνδ?ομαι με κ?ποιους χαρακτ?ρες (προφαν?ς ο Εντ, η Τζ?ιν και η Ντ?ροθι ?ταν μορφ?ρες).

Τ?λος, γ'αυτο?ς που γουστ?ρουν το ε?δος και την θεματολογ?α πρ?πει να ε?ναι απ? τα καλ?τερα, το καταλαβα?νω. Για κ?ποιους που το π?ραν επειδ? ε?δαν φως και μπ?καν, ?πως εγ?, ?ταν κ?τι "ευχ?ριστο" αλλ? μ?χρι εκε?, μια ακ?μα αναγνωστικ? εμπειρ?α. Δεν ξετρελ?θηκα αν και σε συγκεκριμ?νους που θα το πρ?τεινα, θα ξετρελαιν?ντουσαν.

Darko says

jel zbog strip tematike ili zbog tih svakodnevnih muško ženskih odnosa te raznoraznih referenci na kultne filmove i knjige ofucani holivudski film me podsjeća na Chasing Amy Kevina Smitha, a Chasing Amy mi je jedan od dražih filmova. preporuka za više popodnevnih uživanja uz kavu na balkonu dok se na playeru vrte the beatles i the police. 600 stranica zabavnog crteža s masu dragih likova i nekoliko iritantnih. Obavezna lektira za fanove dobrog stripa

Jeff Lanter says

I have been wanting to read a "slice of life" or more memoir focused graphic novel for a while and happened to see Box Office Poison on sale in the Google Play Store so I picked it up. I really enjoy this type of story and as a result, found Box Office Poison to be very enjoyable. The story focuses on a group of geeky 20-something year olds in New York in the 90's. As someone who has been to New York, was once a geeky 20 year old, and am interested in comics and the comics industry, Box Office Poison's other main focus, I found this to be a great combination. Sherman and Ed are the two main characters and both are flawed, but likable people who just want to establish their careers and fall in love which is mostly what the plot is about. There are quite a few side characters in the book as well and everything feels real. I would find it hard to believe if most of these characters were not mostly based off of real people and experiences.

What I didn't expect is the character of Irving Flavor, an old comic book artist from the "golden" era of comics who got completely screwed over, to be so interesting. He is a very unlikable old man and yet, the plot around getting him justice was very interesting and pivotal in the book. The ending of Box Office Poison was even more surprising and satisfying. Without giving too much away, the narrator of the book may not be exactly who you expected. What I liked best was just how messy the ending is. It feels just like real life where there are happy endings, but very rarely and certainly not for a lot of us.

The art style is simple, black and white cartooning and I liked it. The characters all look distinct and it is easy to tell that Ed is Latino for example and Sherman is white. This is one quality of good cartooning. I will say that there is a surprisingly high amount of naked people in this book so keep that in mind if you have a sensitive disposition. Overall though, the art is more or less what you would hope or expect in a memoir graphic novel.

Box Office Poison is a great book and the real question you have to ask is: is this a great book for me? Some people may find it boring or too routine, but if the characters, plot, or themes sound interesting or your kind of thing, then I definitely recommend hunting Box Office Poison down. I really enjoyed reading it and am glad I bought it on a whim.

Bob Dobbs says

Box Office Poison is one of the worst comic books I've ever skimmed. Its art is extremely simple and ugly, for starters. It looks like something a child would draw. All I got from it was that it was about this loser getting into a dysfunctional relationship with an alcoholic, all the while living in a shitty apartment in shitty New York City and holding down a soul-crushingly tedious job to support this lifestyle. Just page after page of crudely drawn characters in an ugly world of unhappiness, tedium, and New York hipster cultural

references, all drawn in an extremely simplistic style, reminiscent of how a child might draw.

Rinda Elwakil says

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Matt says

Reminds me a lot of many other pseudo autobiographical graphics that I can't even name at the moment. Great illustration, but a sort of mundane and soap opera storyline. Engaging enough, but after a while I found myself thinking "I'm only reading this to finish it -- I kind of don't care what happens". I need a way to describe that feeling... you know, the one you get when you're half way into a TV series and you just keep watching it because you're comfortable but not still interested. The banality of inertia? Sunk cost entertainment?

I'm really being too hard on this particular book, it's just I've seen this done so many times that it has lost a lot of appeal. Plus when there are greats like Pekar and Eisner out there, and modern guys like Clowes, Tomine and Sacco -- you should at least go through them first.

Jack Silbert says

Hey, I read 602 pages in less than a week! OK, fine, it was a graphic novel, your point is? So, this was published in 2005 but is set in 1994. And on the positive side, it's a pretty accurate depiction of twentysomethings in NYC in the mid-90s: bars, parties, bookstores, roommates, struggling writers, varying levels of romantic success, etc. etc. I got a bit nostalgic, shall we say? On the negative side of the ledger: I prefer comics to be on the edgier side, and this isn't. I'm a Daniel Clowes guy. The art here is what I'd call Clowes-light. The storytelling is OK but not particularly insightful. There's a Jack Kirby-inspired subplot that takes up way too many pages without being nearly compelling enough. A pleasing read, if not much more.

Subroto says

Remember the last time you were falling out of love that too with a person who you really thought was "your person?" Remember feeling attracted to random people just because you were so unhappy in your own

relationship ? Remember doubting yourself ? Remember wondering if this other attraction was the real thing or it was just another distraction courtesy your "sinful" hormones ?

Remember trying to break up but failing all the time ?

Remember sitting alone and telling yourself you are a jackass - a total coward and deciding that this time you will face it and end it ?

Remember ?

Remember the last time you together with a friend / colleague were taking on the world and suddenly you realized you were the only one who was looking at it that way ? That it never meant so much to the other person ?

Remember feeling suddenly left alone - not just physically by ideologically ? Somehow the latter feeling more cold than the former ?

Remember ?

Remember hating your job ? Remember being sure you would be so good at something else but never ever knowing what that thing is ? Worse still abusing and hating your job and yet dragging your ass to work every single day and one day looking at the calendar and knowing you've completed years ?

Remember living through your life - hoping everyday that tomorrow will be a better day till one day you realize its been 1/5/10/20/50 / a life time since tomorrow never came ? Remember realized that there are no more second chances - you just exhausted if not all then most of them- that your life - JUST PASSED YOU BY and you forgot to tip your hat !

Remember ?

Box Office Poison is like a lot of people here already have said, an extremely long and totally unremarkable book about unremarkable people. In fact till you have reached 50% of this book (300 or so pages) you wonder why should I continue reading ?

There's no powerful standing out character. The illustration's very normal. There's no overpowering twist to the story nor is there use of overtly intelligent / ornate language. It is as if someone made a comic on you - not the way you would like to think of yourself but in the way you somehow deep within yourself know you really are - very very ordinary and flawed - an imperfect person living an imperfect (even by your own standards) life! "Now why would i waste my money and time reading about things which happen to me - am i not already going through them. Is that not enough ? I read to escape not to fuck my own head." Right ?

Box Office Poison for some reasons has not even garnered enough positive "oh its so good" like others of this genre have to force you to read it and agree that its great so that you dont seem like a royal jackass on goodreads.com

Despite all that I the same guy who kept wondering if he should just quit reading it (before the first 50% of the book was over) will strongly recommend this book to anyone who liked Blankets, Habibi, Underwater Welder etc.

This is good stuff.

It moves you - it shakes you - it leaves you sort of melancholic - cos its so much about every day people like you and me and things which happen to us. Falling in love - falling out of love - sex - finance problems - discovering best pals - discovering that the best plan thing was only in your head - hating your job - still living with it - wondering what you are made for - wondering if your values by which you chose to live your life were worth it at all.

The best part about this book (in my opinion) remains that -

Remember those books which make you feel that you and your life are special - that everything you ever did was for a reason - that you can start a new life and a new chapter from tomorrow ?

This one leaves the reader (at least me) with the exact anti thesis - nothing is special, what happens to me has happened to a lot of people before me, sometimes i have just done that - screwed up - not according to some grand plan but out of my own foolish lack of judgement and lack of ability to action upon things.

And somehow not being special - also makes you special - just as this book is - too long, unimpressive dialogues, ordinary art - nothing special at all - but still special.

Read it - if you have some time on your hands and you are ok handling a bit of a depression for a night ! :)

PS : Please don't mix this book with alcohol - the results might not be very promising for your spouse / best friend.

Jon says

This is my fourth time through (and second time while wicked sick, funny how that goes.) I don't think I've ever spent more than three days; it's pretty close to all-consuming. So of course my thoughts about the book are tied up with my thoughts about my life when I first read it and particularly the (failing) relationship I was in at the time. While we're on the caveats, it is sadly starting to be a bit dated: cell phones being the hilarious part. More disturbing, at the time a guy in his early 20s dating a 16 year old was creepy not "call the cops"-- yes, that really has changed a bit even in the last twenty years. Some horrible things the characters say are meant to illustrate horrible characters; some (like one transphobic "joke") just sort of hit with a thud.

In the end, this is still one of my favorite books ever. It really only works in the graphic format, not just because the subject matter is nominally comics. It is raw, deeply human, nonjudgmental while still inflicting the consequences of their actions on the characters. The balance between revelation and secrecy is perfect; a lot of revelation happens in the interstitial character questions. In particular, there's a lot about Dorothy we clearly don't know, and we never get confirmation of one of her biggest claims. Just brilliant. Flawed characters in messy relationships.

Christopher says

This is a prime instance of the elusive *comic you needn't be ashamed of reading*. It's a graphic novel in the truest sense of the word; it's just regular novel with pictures instead of prose. It contains no men of steel or supervillains hellbent on blowing up Metropolis. Instead, it consists of well-conceived and -developed characters, emotional resonance, and true-to-life plot.

It's also an incredibly ambitious project. He's juggling a lot of characters and several storylines. It's the kind of book that may annoy with its overflow of brilliance and precociousness. I can understand how its unlikable characters may rub some readers the wrong way. Fortunately, it rubbed me the right way and I'm happy to add it to my favorites shelf.

Recommended reading for bookish people who think they don't like comic books.

Imogen says

I don't understand what the fuck people like about this book. Here's what I got from the first 150 pages (of 600), before I gave up: people who go to book stores are idiots; smugness is a virtue, as is feeling superior to everyone else all the time; misogyny is no reason not to publish a book; who cares if you spell a word wrong every few pages; Pete Bagge's art has been extremely influential; and transsexuals aren't real people, they're punchlines. Good work, Alex Robinson. Fuck all of these things that you taught me, though. Ew.
