



Age of Reptiles Omnibus, Vol. 1

Ricardo Delgado

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Forget the Silver Age, and bag the Golden Age - this is the Age of Reptiles! Ricardo Delgado, winner of the Eisner Award for Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition, and a prolific development and storyboard artist (Men in Black, The Incredibles, WALL-E, X-Men Origins, Wolverine, and The Matrix series) has crafted epic tales about the most unlikely cast of characters, dinosaurs!

This volume collects long-out-of-print Age of Reptiles miniseries Age of Reptiles and Age of Reptiles: The Hunt, the never-before-collected third series, Age of Reptiles: The Journey, and a wide assortment of bonus material, including supplementary text pieces, a cover-art gallery, and sketchbook material.

Age of Reptiles Omnibus, Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Ricardo Delgado

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From Reader Review Age of Reptiles Omnibus, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Peacegal says

The artwork was very gorgeous. These dinosaurs are quick and intelligent, but still more reptilian than bird. (Lots of scales, no feathers on these dinos.) The coloring of the creatures is wild, even psychedelic.

I wasn't a huge fan of the artist's tendency toward cartoony reaction shots and anthropomorphism to a ridiculous degree, such as turning the Velociraptors (or maybe they were Deinonychus?) into unrepentant bad guys. It seems that the realism of the artwork deserved better than this silliness.

The final story, which depicted a great migration of numerous species and was obviously based upon studies of similar migrations that have been occurring with modern-day wildlife since time immemorial, was the most realistic and reined in the series' cartoonishness.

Philip Higgins says

A cool comic book full of lovely dinosaur pics. The writer/illustrator deserves all the praise he gets from luminaries such as Ray Harryhausen & John Landis in the intro: the art is awesome (roarsome?) with some gorgeous prehistoric landscapes, from lush forests to arid deserts. The dinosaurs are red in tooth & claw and pretty graphic in terms of gore: should I have attempted this whole review in rhyming couplets? The T Rexes and similar predators are magnificently rendered and some of the tableaux are breathtaking.

Dropped stars due to the lack of satisfying story. I appreciate it's a documentary style that mostly eschews anthropomorphic Disney tendencies, but this is still a narrative. I struggled to differentiate some of the dinosaurs and each of the three books meander along before finishing with a big "what, is that it?" Pity, because those pictures are superb. The velociraptors are still sneaky bastards, ditto the mammals who are just starting to appear (whatever happened to those little critters?)

The kindle edition I read was good value and lends itself well to tablet viewing. The author outlines his childhood influences in some informative end notes. He is clearly a decent chap and even shares some family pics...which is nice.

Sarah says

I guess this won awards? It was super-highly reviewed? I don't see the appeal; like 1 and 1/2 stars.

This is a wordless graphic novel; it's very hard to follow the action because of the very small pictures of various similar-looking dinosaurs. In one of the introductions-- there are 2 by 2 different people-- the writer talks about anthropomorphizing the animals and seeing emotion on their faces, making it such a deep story. I looked really hard for that and couldn't find it. I don't know if this isn't the book for me, or if I'm not right for this book.

Diz says

This comic about dinosaurs tells its stories without words, so it helped me appreciate how important visual storytelling is. Surprisingly, I got really attached to some of the characters, which gives the book some emotional weight when those characters go through hardships, and oftentimes those stories end in tragedy. It was a darker book than I expected as many of the featured dinosaurs get eaten. The illustrations are beautiful, but be aware that the violence is depicted quite graphically, so if you are squeamish, that might be a problem, and be careful not to buy this book for a dinosaur-loving elementary school student. Other than that, I highly recommend it.

Ruth says

Just not my style. I'm not into wordless graphic novels, or--for that matter--many graphic novels, period. So I paged through a couple of pages and called it a day.

Kaitlynn says

While some feathers can be seen, these are largely more old-school dinosaurs with a vibrant, glowing pallet. While the linework is sometimes busy, the art is absolutely gorgeous. Lifelike poses and motion, with some exaggeration in the faces for character - each dinosaur is an individual with recognizable features and its own personality. There's gore, but the violence is realistic and akin to what one might see in a nature documentary (as opposed to a slasher film or survival horror game).

The stories are pretty simple and straightforward but have deep themes. Of the 3, Tribal Warfare is the strongest, with the clearest action and deepest relationships.

It is the 'silent film' of graphic novels - there is no dialogue, no narration, no sound effects. They aren't missed. The visuals are so, so strong and evocative you don't notice the difference after a couple pages. While you can blaze through it, it really benefits from a slower, contemplative pace where you can drink it in.

My only real complaint is that the pacing was a bit uneven and it was so short. Even going deliberately slow it ended too soon. I wanted more.

Chris says

Remember Rite of Spring sequence in Fantasia? That's this. Awesome.

Darth says

Very cool to look at, but sometimes hard to understand exactly what's happening.

Seth T. says

Silent comics are really difficult to pull off well. They've got a lot going against them. Exactly half of the linguistic repertoire being forbidden, the creator is forced to rely wholly upon visual language for all exposition. When characters cannot exposit their own motives to the reader, they must rely on illustrated cues to make their purposes, intents, reasons, and passions both knowable and then known. And as difficult as that sounds, the requirement upon the artist of these characters is phenomenal. Not only does the artist have to reliably draw characters recognizably and convey story through panel-to-panel storytelling transitions (as is the case even in comics featuring dialogue and narration), but beyond this, the artist *must* be able to convey all those burdens generally carried by the writer of words. Personality. Interaction. Interrogative. Exclamation. Thought. Emotion. Reaction. Success in these tasks takes the hand of a master.

Silent comics are really difficult to pull off well. So it shouldn't surprise or disappoint us to discover that Ricardo Delgado's *Age of Reptiles* doesn't find a good pace until its final third. This is no slight against Delgado's abilities or craftsmanship. For the one, the silent comic is an incredibly difficult undertaking and I've rarely¹ seen it accomplished well. For the other, he's telling stories in which his characters are dinosaurs, which compounds his storytelling issues expansively. And for the last, Delgado *does* end up succeeding—it just took him a while (understandably) to find his sea-legs. Delgado takes a high-concept comic fraught with potential but held back by its own experimentations and turns it into a masterpiece.

Age of Reptiles Omnibus, vol 1 is composed of the first three *Age of Reptiles* miniseries,² each following the experiences of some dinosaur or other. Watching Delgado's evolution over these nearly two decades is a pretty wonderful experience. As he ages, one gets the sense that he becomes more and more comfortable with his production. What initially seems (for all its grandeur) forced soon becomes a thing of easy comfortability. His style, technique, and storytelling mature and the direction of his narrative becomes more profound as well.

Delgado's first series, "Tribal Warfare," features very detailed penwork. Every crease, crevice, and fold in his dinosaurs' skin is rendered in crisp black lines. Delgado's attention to detail is somewhat awe-striking, but generally (and despite a good sense of visual presence and doing a lot with negative space) the art in these pages feels exceptionally busy. It's possible that this line-heavy style could have worked with some of today's advanced colouring techniques, but Delgado was stuck with 1993's primitive colouring tools. Instead of softening his drawings' hard edge, his colours are garish and serve mostly to heighten the uncomfortability of his art.

Still, his³ choice here is fascinating. Where he (or colourist James Sinclair) could have made his dinosaurs from a palette of earthy tones—tans, greens, rusts, the occasional spark of a subtle blue—he puts forth a rainbowed array of reptiles. "Tribal Warfare" opens with a lime-green pteranodon whose neck is striped with

vibrant white and blue and whose crest is bright yellow with a red-spotted pattern. As well, each wing features a large red spot like a Japanese Zero. There are much more colourful dinosaurs in store. The colouring was dissonant but it did make distinguishing different reptiles easier. Still, while I see what Delgado was aiming for and I think the choice both bold and imaginative, I don't think it ultimately helps so much as it could.

On the positive side we do see Delgado occasionally insert broad vistas or well-positioned actors in ways that presage the wonderful scenes he would produce in the future. In fact, even in his earliest series, Delgado's ability to craft pages that impress is powerful.

The second volume contained in this anthology, "The Hunt," is a step in what looks like a better direction visually. Delgado's work is still incredibly detailed and he sometimes overwhelms his art with his lines, but his pen seems leaner, less heavy on the page. He's not quite there yet, but he's trying something different and that's good. As the book was published in 1997, comics colouring was undergoing a computer revolution. Artists hadn't quite evolved to the point they're at in the late Two-Thousand-Aughts (where colourists like Dave Stewart rule the roost with their phenomenal technique), but as with his linework, it's a step in a healthy direction. Delgado continues to favour wild colour variation for his dinosaurs—only now the transitions of colour on a single beast are less jagged and favour smooth gradients. Strangely, while I think this smoothing works pretty well on his landscapes, for the dinosaurs themselves I actually prefer the abruptness in the colour-design in the earlier work—after all, if you look at the stripes and splotches on a fish at your local pet store, you'll note that they don't gradually fade into the base colour of the fish.

[Click image to view larger]

Where "The Hunt" really takes off is in Delgado giving greater reign to his penchant for one- and two-page spreads and to larger set pieces. The third chapter of "The Hunt" is especially compelling, as Delgado takes an excursion from the story of a lone allosaurus to follow several winged pterosaurs in an exciting dogfight. The chapter is filled with gorgeous skyscapes and some scenes of the flying reptiles that could have been cribbed from Miyazaki's *Porco Rosso*. It was a beautiful chapter and fit (along with chapter four) as a nice break from the less-exciting-though-titular hunt that comprises that volume's storyline.

In the final installment of this omnibus, "The Journey," Delgado seemingly rights all wrongs. Created twelve years after "The Hunt," he's come to a design and illustration sense that is finally easy on the eyes, powerful in communication, and still adept at conveying the wonder of the earlier series' best moments. His style now resembles some happy hybrid between Guy Davis and Mike Mignola. His work is still incredibly detailed, but he shows a marvelous sense of restraint, allowing abstraction where needed. As well, there are moments such as a partially devoured ankylosaur floating in a river that are magnified by Delgado's talent with framing and negative space (I think it may have been this instance that put me most in mind of Mignola). What may be most jaw-dropping in "The Journey" is just how many dinosaurs Delgado draws on every page. His story calls for it for sure, but it's still a minor wonder to behold.

[Click image to view larger]

Further, colouring for the book has come into its own at last. I'm not sure if the solution was bringing Jim Campbell on as colourist or if it was just a matter of Delgado witnessing the evolution of computer colouring over the intervening decade. Whatever the case, "The Journey" makes *Age of Reptiles* a beautiful book. The colours are muted and more in line with what a reader might expect from a book about dinosaurs. Delgado's

reptiles still have distinctive markings but they aren't any longer gaudy, flamboyant party-goers. Bravo, whoever was responsible for the shift.

Where "The Journey" also excels over the prior two series is in story. To illustrate, however, I'll have to complain about something central to the earlier two books.

The reason, presumably, that Delgado chose to make *Age of Reptiles* a silent work is that dinosaurs are not people. They presumably have little facility for language and if they did and we could translate it, their way of conveying meaning might be so alien to us that we wouldn't understand anyway. My guess is that this book was made wordless in a bid for realism.⁴ It's a good idea if one can do it well—and by time "The Journey" arrives, Delgado is doing it well.

The problem, if realism is Delgado's reason for not verbalizing anything, is that the first two stories are built almost entirely on personification. "Tribal Warfare" features a grudge between a family of T-rexes and a family of utahraptors (I think they're utahraptors). The lead tyrannosaurus scares the raptors off their fresh, rightful kill and initiates a back-and-forth war of attrition that lasts four chapters and ends in all-out battle. It's a fine story but not a fine dinosaur story unless you want your dinosaurs fixed with embedded human motivation. "The Hunt" follows a young allosaur as he flees from the murder of his mother by some wildly coloured raptors. Their pursuit of him lasts for what seems years. Long enough at least for him to grow to full-size. Both the raptors' dogged pursuit of the allosaur despite there being far more docile game everywhere and the allosaur's plan to revenge himself against them left me incredulous. I couldn't be sure why Delgado didn't just give these animals voices if he was going to give them human motivation.

"The Journey" solves this problem in two ways. The first is that Delgado gives no opportunity for these reptiles to act in any way other than as the animals they are. The other is that "The Journey" is not the story of a dinosaur protagonist but instead the story of a massive migration. I'm reminded of Planet Earth's segment on the migration in Africa toward the Okavango Delta. Delgado depicts a collection of herbivore dinosaur herds moving from arid lands toward a lush forest. Their way is perilous and they are followed closely and picked at by predators. If there is a protagonist at all, it is the combined herd, striving forward while being winnowed and whittled. It's magnificent and I'm so very glad that Delgado chose this direction for the third series.

While "Tribal Warfare" and "The Hunt" are each forgettable, "The Journey" makes me curious if there will be a fourth series. I will read it if there is, because Ricardo Delgado has improved that much.

Notes

1. Off the top of my head, I can't actually think of any stellar examples beyond Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*.
2. This volume contains three *Age of Reptiles* stories: "Tribal Warfare," "The Hunt," and "The Journey." (Published in 1993, 1997, and 2010, respectively.)
3. I say "his" here, but it's entirely possible that these choices belonged to colourist James Sinclair, who colours both "Tribal Warfare" and "The Hunt." Still, I have a hard time believing that Delgado didn't at least direct Sinclair's choices by laying out a house style.

4. Interestingly, Delgado doesn't even use onomatopoeia. No sound effects. No grunts or growls or moans. This, I think, is a great idea. Too often, creators will personify their creatures through clever use of animal noises that stand in for human intonation. A dog that looks quizzically and says: "ARF?" Question mark included. Any sense that this is a real dog is shattered the moment he says ARF with a question mark attached.

[Review courtesy of Good Ok Bad]

Joshua says

Dinosaurs. That's all I really need to say.

Matt Garcia says

First off, let me just say that I love dinosaurs and pretty much anything to do with them! If something has dinosaurs in it then I'm instantly interested. So I was very happy with this omnibus. It has terrific artwork and the lack of words allows you to appreciate the incredible artwork and let the illustrations do the talking. Visual storytelling at its finest. It's essentially like reading a storyboard for an animated film or cartoon. I found this to be a very clever way to use this type of format to tell a story. Delgado is able to put so much detail and raw emotion into his drawings that you understand and feel what each dinosaur is feeling at that very moment. This omnibus feels like reading a documentary about dinosaurs that we would see on a wildlife channel of some sort. All in all, Age of Reptiles is Dino-mite! (Sorry, I couldn't resist! Lol)

Lloyd says

So, go into this book knowing it's ALL pictures. Well, other than introductions and various other essays. I bought this book on sale because I love watching artists tell stories. Granted, I wasn't a huge fan of the colors on the first portion of the book, but by the time I got to the end of this volume the artwork was beautiful. It is a fast "read", but I imagine one could examine the volume again and again.

Andrew says

Rating is for "The Journey", as I've reviewed the other collected books in their own separate pages.

The journey is the best Age of Reptiles book of the lot, which is unfortunate considering you can apparently only find it here (outside of the original comics). The story is pretty apparent, it concerns a migration of friendly dinosaurs, who get hounded by the more predatory creatures. The art is pretty sexy, and this book has more complex paneling than previous volumes. The absence of anthropomorphic traits is a big plus for this volume, I actually felt like I was watching, for the most part, real dinosaurs.

Abraham Thunderwolf says

The day I come across a book of dinosaurs without picking it up is the day that I am truly dead inside. This Age of Reptiles collection combines two things that I've dug since I have first experienced them, dinosaurs and comic books. The dinosaurs hunt in packs, sleep in circles with their horns out, have chameleon like abilities, lurk in the bush waiting for prey, are painted in vibrant hues, all of which truly fit with the action of the book. It's no surprise that Ricardo Delgado is an accomplished story board artist. Delgado's art reminds me a little of Geoff Darrow's, particularly the big T Rex and Mososaur featured in a duel near the end of The Journey storyline. A dinosaurs index would've been handy for people who haven't been admired dinosaurs for most of their lives. I'm pretty sure that if these stories had come out a few years ago as opposed to the mid 90s the dinosaurs would have feathers on them (if you think a theropod with feathers is ludicrous, like I initially did, then you gotta look at Lammergeier aka Bearded Vulture . Those have feathers and are terrifying.) The stories center around the epic lives of dinosaurs, from inter species clashes or mass migrations. Of course it's not a cold work of pure science, but that wouldn't be very good for a comic book. Totally read this.

Tim says

This would have been an easy 5 stars had Delgado colored all of the series himself. That said these are fantastic stories that really highlight that you can tell powerful, emotional tales without one bit of dialogue.
