



Stray Bullets, Vol. 1: Innocence of Nihilism

David Lapham

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For the first time ever, the complete award-winning first arc of Stray Bullets in paperback! Follow the lost lives of people who are savagely torn apart by events beyond their control: The innocent world of an imaginative little girl is shattered when she witnesses a brutal double murder. An introverted young boy on the verge of manhood gets a lesson on just how far is too far when he falls for a needy woman who lives life in the fast lane. Or party with a pair of low-rent hoods who learn what is really important in life just when they shouldn't. And even learn the story of the most infamous gangster who ever lived, Amy Racecar, who talks to God, lunches with the President, and just may be responsible for the end of the world. These are some of the tales that will rip out your guts and break your heart.

Stray Bullets, Vol. 1: Innocence of Nihilism Details

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From Reader Review Stray Bullets, Vol. 1: Innocence of Nihilism for online ebook

Filipe Siqueira says

Temos aqui um interessante estudo sobre a violência. Não apenas um olhar geral sobre a violência sistêmica e completa, mas como ela se manifesta de forma sutil até mesmo nos indivíduos aparentemente mais blindados a ela.

A ideia do autor David Lapham é demonstrar como a violência (e mais ainda a violência urbana e criminosa) parece um ser tentacular e cheio de cabeças, capaz de se perpetuar. O gibi traça um painel em que indivíduos (geralmente desajustados) são envolvidos em uma teia sutil que descampa para episódios cruéis de violência completa. Aqui não existe redenção. As histórias geralmente se entrelaçam ao longo do volume e com mais e mais histórias lidas e possível entender que o trampo do cara é cheio de camadas e ideias narrativas.

Em alguns momentos dá a entender que será uma obra-prima, mas não chega a tanto e se mostra um ótimo gibi, indigesto e que faz pensar. Talvez seja como um primo mais novo de "A História da Violência", que inspirou o filme de David Cronenberg "Marcas da Violência".

Sam Quixote says

It's tricky to talk about Stray Bullets without acknowledging Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, which came out the year before Stray Bullets debuted in 1995. The clever dialogue, likeable criminal characters, and violent, interlocking stories must've felt derivative like the million Tarantino copycats that popped up in his wake. And yet Stray Bullets is its own thing. It shares only superficial similarities to Tarantino's masterpiece and possesses notable differences to make it stand out separately.

Innocence of Nihilism collects the first seven stories in the series. It opens in 1997 where a couple of lowlifes are looking for a spot to bury a body before things go to hell and they shoot up a diner. From that explosive beginning, we're thrown back to 1977 where we meet Ginny, a young girl who witnesses a brutal murder in an alleyway. The stories then jump ahead to different years, 1980, 81, and 82, featuring new characters like Spanish Scott, a charismatic killer, and Orson, a high school kid whose entrance into adulthood is something of a shock.

Pulp Fiction took place over a day or two while Stray Bullets is set over at least a couple decades. Also, while I admire Tarantino's work, I don't think he writes real characters – they always come off as cartoons, so that when something emotional happens to them, it never affects the viewer. With David Lapham's stories, you do feel an emotional connection with some of the characters, especially with Ginny, who we see change after seeing the murder.

Ginny's mind begins to unravel, her relationship with her mother falls apart, she tries running away, she stabs a kid at school with a pen, and then we see her beloved father contract cancer. It's a rich, powerful arc that makes me hope we see more of her in later volumes of the series.

And then there's Amy Racecar – if ever there's a story in this collection to distance himself from Tarantino comparisons, it's this character! Set in the 31st century, Amy meets God who tells her the truth behind

human existence. She spends years in bed with this knowledge until a truth machine gets it out of her and the information brings down the world's governments! Amy becomes the world's greatest thief and most sought after woman - until she blows up the world!

I suppose Amy's criminal element ties her story thematically to the others, but otherwise what an unexpected and quite brilliant break in the book! In fact, all of the stories do away with expectations as they go on. Ginny's second appearance, the Bonnie & Clyde story, where she decides to hitch a ride west and gets picked up by a pervy old dude makes you think, uh oh, she's a 10 year old girl on her own and she's gonna have to fight off a sicko's advances; and then you read the ending which completely flips the story around!

The characters are fully realised and fascinating, the stories are equally compelling, the artwork is very accomplished and expressive, and it all comes together perfectly as a whole in this book. Stray Bullets transcends its genre and comparisons to similar works to become an absolutely amazing and singular title with its own identity. I'd recommend this one to every adult comics reader, unless you're sensitive to violence.

Cool beans, David Lapham!

Printable Tire says

At least the pictures were neat. This collection of tales stretches from the morbidly retarded to the why-you-gotta-be-so depressing, yet the storytelling and sequencing sometimes show genuine talent. The portrayals of low-lives and shitty family dynamics are a little too real, with all the good-time chunks thrown out and replaced with basic bareboned black humor. The more interesting stories tie together the same loose company of strangers (think Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, do doubt an inspiration) through various time periods, and each chapter ends super-dark, or at least with a little dark high school-nihilist asshole smirk.

In the end it's something like listening to an overeducated mall goth or a really talented high school geek: Good, great, I get it guy, life sucks, and you bring your point home masterfully. But I think I'd rather spend my next evening watching a rerun of Scrubs than with a negative nelly like you again.

A Reader's Heaven says

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

Follow the lost lives of people who are savagely torn apart by events beyond their control.

As the innocent world of an imaginative little girl is shattered when she witnesses a brutal double murder.

Or an introverted young boy on the verge of manhood gets a lesson on just how far is too far when he falls for a needy woman who lives life in the fast lane.

Or party with a pair of low-rent hoods who learn about what is really important in life just when they shouldn't.

And even learn the story of the most infamous gangster who ever lived, Amy Racecar, who talks to God, lunches with the President, and just may be responsible for the end of the world.

These are some of the tales that will rip out your guts and break your heart.

This book collects the first seven issues of *Stray Bullets*.

This is a collection of 7 loosely connected crime stories. For the most part, they have all the ingredients (in stories) that I like: violence that is definitely right there, but never over the top silly; characters that I can connect with - both good guys and the baddies; and razor-sharp dialogue that actually brought this book from 3 stars to 4.

The artwork was the surprise, though - it was very, very good and really did a lot of the work for the reader. It is dark and moody, creating an atmosphere that words alone cannot do.

Why only 4 stars? I would have liked all of the stories to have been connected in a more cohesive way. They weren't bad stories, I would have just liked to have had a sense of continuity to the plot of the book.

Paul
ARH

'kris Pung says

A great collection of short semi-related stories.

Sridhar Reddy says

In a post-*Pulp Fiction* world of crime storytelling, the use of multiple, interlocking storylines has become a commonplace device. When employed with skill, it can create a rich and textured universe with depth and veracity. When used ineffectively, the separate storylines become episodic and exist as disjointed short stories stitched together only by a title.

David Lapham's *Stray Bullets* falls into the former category as a complete, defined and utterly fascinating world of crime and morality. Lapham however exceeds the cartoony caricatures of *Pulp Fiction* by creating a host of characters that are clearly entrenched in our world, and it is this veracity that makes it one of the truly great crime epics of the past decade.

Stray Bullets is indeed a vast and sprawling crime story, but unlike the works of Hammett, Puzo or Tarantino, its world is not populated by criminal masterminds or slick mobsters who know exactly the right thing to say at exactly the right time. In fact Lapham's characters seem to specialize in saying exactly the *wrong* things at the wrong time, and it is their fallibility which gives this series the essential dose of realism that takes it to the next level of crime storytelling.

Amongst the large cast of characters there isn't a single admirable protagonist - they all display signs of rage, of violence, of ignorance and sometimes of blatant stupidity. They are bumbling small-time crooks making their way through life in the most convoluted and amoral ways possible. As aforementioned there are no Tarantino-esque clever one-liners, quotable catchphrases, or even slight pop-culture references in Lapham's work. His characters speak in everyday vernacular, at times with accents and differing pronunciations, much of it lewd, snarling and vastly inappropriate. In actuality, there is no real reason for we the readers to

personally like any of the characters, but this certainly does not mean that we cannot identify with them. This is where the true power of Lapham's work resides.

Lapham, through his expressive artwork and penchant for details in design and vernacular, creates characters and situations that we all, regardless of our moral compass, tend to find ourselves in and associated with; the small girl who is picked on, the young inexperienced boy with self-esteem problems, the father who feels he has let his family down, the people who can't see an immediate way out. Because of their emotional authenticity and Lapham's ability to set them in a real world (his details of clothing, physicality and environment are simply spectacular) the characters ring as true, and because we identify with them we can actually care about what happens to them, because they are people just like us. This despite the book containing extremely graphic and heinous acts of violence, scenes which we would never hope to witness or experience in our own lives. But even with the violence we still care, which is a remarkable feat and one of the rarest accomplishments in recent comics, which have specialized in desensitized and emotionally empty violence.

Recent books like *Jimmy Corrigan* and *Asterios Polyp* craft characters and worlds that exist within our reality, and it is what makes these books the prime examples of the artform. David Lapham's *Stray Bullets* certainly belongs in that canon, and in many facets surpasses these works by eschewing literary pretensions for deceptively complex declarations of simple, basic truths. These are not just interweaving crime stories, they are the paths of everyday people living life in its most unglamorous and naked self, a collective web of experience that is both beautiful, shocking and thought provoking. Essential reading.

Note: This review applies to the first eight issues of the series, and not the collected trade listed here.

Shannon Appelcline says

This is an amazing first volume. I love the structure of the book, with its kaleidoscope focus on some many characters in some many timeframes. More than once I found myself flipping back and forth to make sure I understood the connections. The storytelling is also very strong, with most of the issues ending with rather shocking moments of the sort that a more traditional comic would be afraid to include, because they'd create too much change.

But the interconnections aren't just critical for this arc, "Innocence of Nihilism" sets up years (decades) or storytelling. Some of these stories look like they're incomplete, but they're focused on really long-term storytelling.

#1 is the furthest forward the series has ever been, which means that it's probably the frame that we'll return to in the end. It also offers a look at an adult Joey.

#2 is the secret origin of Ginny.

#3 details the party that's a foundational event for the extended "Sunshine & Roses" arc decades later (and it also introduces Beth, Nina, Rose, young Joey, and lots more of our characters), then #5 follows that up with Orson and his relation to Rose in the same time period.

It's all of these characters that really make the volume. In particular, this is Ginny's story, as she's beset by too much young tragedy. However, we also get an interesting focus on Joey (and his mother Rose.) As we

see these young people grow up, it's easy to reflect upon what we learn by what we see.

The one issue I didn't love was #6, with Amy Racecar. It's a wacky and violent future story that only gains context when you realize that it *must* be a story written by Ginny. Read in that context, it has some additional weight (and even sets up some things in issue #7).

Overall a *very* readable and rereadable comic!

Manuel Alejandro says

I just began to read Stray Bullets and I already feel frustrated that it took me so long to begin it. This is the kind of stories that I usually feel interested in, but don't found as often as I would like to.

Judging for the first seven issues, the comic book is formed from one issue stories that happen in the same world with different characters crossing in different stories. Also, it is a story that occurs through different decades. There is even a story in the future with a very unexpected future.

From the seven stories I would have problems saying which one is the best. They all were great in different ways. It was a great mix of dark humor, social commentary, violence and human tragedy.

There is also the fact that David Lapham writes and draws which I think it is a bonus. Some of the best comic books come from the vision of only one artist. From Frank Miller to Stan Sakai, there is something really wonderful about the storytelling abilities of a one-man army.

Great comic book, highly recommended for anyone interested in great noir stories with broken characters and sad endings.

Tom Mathews says

A collection of interesting, loosely linked stories won the Eisner Award. The black and white drawings get a bit too busy on occasion but this is otherwise an engaging graphic novel.

Andrew says

Really awesome art and stories. I hope the stories become more connected in the following volumes. Only a few of the 7 stories presented here contained the same characters. I wasn't shocked by any of the violent themes, although at first they did seem to only be there to shock and entertain. The later stories, however, were more restrained. For a slim graphic novel this explored a lot of territory.

I'd recommend this to fans of comics, as well as fans of violence/crime stories.

Michelle says

My first five-star read of the year!

I've been meaning to read this book for years. I can't remember where I came upon it, but I read someone somewhere compare it to Quentin Tarantino (who I was a big fan of when I was a teen - I've watched Pulp Fiction more times than I can count), which is what persuaded me to add to my neverending to-read list.

I wish I had picked this up sooner, because it's already shaping up to be one of my favourite comics series ever and I'm only one volume in.

The work reads like a series of interconnected stories. Lapham jumps around chronologically and follows different characters, some re-occurring, some not. Readers mostly follow gangster criminals who work for an enigmatic man named Harry. There's also a story that follows Amy Racecar, a girl from the far future who sees God and eventually destroys the world. I have no idea how she fits into the larger narrative that Lapham is creating, but I can't wait to find out.

Lapham's art is all b&w and he mostly uses a seemingly simple 8-panel format to great effect. Because he jumps around chronologically within the narrative, it's important that the characters are recognizable when you see them appear in different stories. Lapham's character designs are clear and distinctive, so you'll never muddle anyone up, which I was very appreciative for. I also liked that even though this is a crime/noir type of work, it doesn't have the machismo or male gaze that are usually inherent in that genre (ie. I'm thinking of series like 100 Bullets, which I've grown to like, but those elements do bother me).

I've already ordered the Stray Bullets: Uber Alles Edition only a few days after finishing this first volume, so to say I loved it is almost an understatement. I can't wait for my bindup to come in so I can binge-read the rest of this series. :)

Wayne McCoy says

'Stray Bullets, Vol. 1: Innocence of Nihilism' collects the first seven issues of the series from the mid 1990s by David Lapham. The art is great and the well written stories veer crazily out of control between morbid humor and outright violence. Ready?

The stories take place over a variety of years and a few of them are linked. From low lifes sent out to bury bodies, to an innocent young girl who's life is changed when she witnesses a murder. Things take place at a crazy party where a bright young man gets in with the wrong crowd. There is even a story about Amy Racecar, notorious bank robber and tall tale spinner.

The characters are memorable, even when they are less than savory. The art is black and white, but really good. I liked 'Murder Me Dead' for it's noir quality, and I like this one for it's similarities to the movie Pulp Fiction by Quentin Tarantino. I think it's a fair comparison and a compliment to the author. Gritty and enjoyable.

I received a review copy of this graphic novel from Diamond Book Distributors, Image Comics and

NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this great graphic novel.

Eric says

4 1/4 stars

Becca says

So my friend told me this story once how she accidentally rented 28 Days Later, the zombie horror flick, instead of 28 Days, the warming tale of an alcoholics journey to recovery. She said she had a blanket over half her face and kept wondering when Sandra Bullock was going to show up.

This was me and Stray Bullets. I'd heard recommendations for 100 Bullets, but it had been awhile and when I saw this title I picked it up. So I'm starting to feel like shit as I read about these people and drugs, sexual exploits, bullying gone horribly horribly awry and possible child molestation... and think, "I didn't sign up for this." But I trudge through anyway. I get to the end, where against all odds one of the characters takes an unexpected turn. You've read enough of these degenerates that you think you understand his motivation, but you find your mouth dropping open and half chewed peices of red herring falling out. It's redemption. Almost. So it made me close the book, sit back and think about the twists and turns, the threads between the stories and really start to appreciate it.

All in all I find myself thanking my goldfish like memory, or surely I'd have passed this book by.

Christopher Mclean says

An interesting collection of loosely interlocking violent crime stories, that left me with intrigued but mixed feelings.

This volume collects a number to self contained, typically violent, crime focused stories, which when read together start to show some connected characters (with one exception set over 1000 years after the other stories). Individually each story works quite well, often playing with the readers expectations and taking the story in the opposite direction from what is expected.

While I enjoyed each story individually, and appreciated the self-contained nature of them, I would have preferred a little bit more in the way of an overall cohesive plot, particularly as I found myself really enjoying a number of the characters, and hoping we would see more of them.

I'm interested to see where this series goes over the next few volumes as I feel that while flipping the readers expectations is an interesting plot device, when it is overused it can become predictable. Given the quality of this first volume I will be reading more soon, and hopefully Lapham takes advantage of this great start to continue to deliver interesting stories.
