



Wasteland Vol. 3: Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos

Antony Johnston , Christopher Mitten (Illustrator)

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Wasteland: Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos Bk. 3 One hundred years after the world-changing catastrophe known as the 'Big Wet', the city of Newbegin faces its most dangerous challenge yet - an army of Sand-Eaters bent on destruction! Jakob joins the Watch to defend the city, and intrigue grips the council. Full description

Wasteland Vol. 3: Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos Details

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From Reader Review Wasteland Vol. 3: Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos for online ebook

Tyson Adams says

Keely's review covers my thoughts pretty well:
<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

I felt like there were too many tangents happening and 'head hopping' that was poorly handled.

Craig says

Starting to wonder if this is going anywhere. A lot of treading over the same ground as in book 2, only from the perspective of the mutant sand-eaters, complete with page after page of dialogue in a weird, guttural dialect that is almost impossible to read and make sense of. All the political infighting is getting to be a bit much, too. The story just doesn't seem to be moving forward. And the artwork continues to leave much to be desired.

Michael Robertson says

I like this story but I'm finding the pacing to be quite slow. There are also quite a few main characters and while I love the art, I think there could have been more effort to make the characters easier to identify. Sometimes I don't know what character I'm looking at. Sometimes that's because new characters have been introduced with very little introduction.

Xisix says

Stepped into dis one blind Think would have gotten more out of graphic novel if read the other 2 books first. Was peculiar since started with "Sand Eater"'s phonetic language. Bit like 'Clockwork Orange' where the mind attempts to comprehend foreign words. Entertained though not captivated.

Meran says

Exceptional, and different, both in story and art.

J.G. Keely says

This story is promising, but the execution continues to disappoint, and it's becoming clearer why. A few

issues into this run, the author decided to write something from the point-of-view of the monstrous zombie/ghoul creatures of his post-apocalyptic world, in an attempt to paint them as more than simple villains.

He chooses to depict their speech as a near-human vernacular, which was received variously by readers. Some found it to be interesting and unusual, others found it completely unreadable. I didn't find it to be either. I just found it to be awkward and stilted. It was not clear, easy to read, or evocative.

Johnston is hardly the first author to try to write 'in dialect', but it's an experiment that rarely turns out well. To write a vernacular is a careful balancing act between readability and unique feel. Good vernacular can be a great way to make a character or world feel unique. Bad vernacular is like watching a Hollywood starlet chew their way through Shakespeare: both painful and nonsensical.

But, on the list of literary crimes, replacing 's' with 'z', 'i' with 'eeee', and deleting all the spaces between words, while certainly annoying, is hardly worthy of condemnation, especially since he only toys with it briefly. But then, in the letters section of the next issue, as he replies to some complaints about this failed experiment, we get this gem:

"[people were] saying they shoudn't have to work to understand a comic (Mother Sun knows what they'd do with an Eco novel)"

Let's clarify something: despite what many people seem to think, just because something is difficult to read does not mean it is any good. A dyslexic ESL student's paper is not a work of brilliance because it takes two hours to decipher it. Replacing letters and deleting punctuation does not make you into Umberto Eco (despite what Cormac McCarthy might think).

Johnston's little spelling experiment does not make his work deep or interesting, because it adds nothing to the work. It doesn't produce any extra meaning, there's nothing subtle about it, and it reveals no further insight. It does create some character for the zombie/ghouls, but it's so unwieldy and poorly-executed that it's hardly worth the trouble.

Remember authors: the payoff has to be bigger than the work that goes into it. No one wants to read 300 pages of building mystery only to find out that the murder was committed by someone who wasn't introduced until the last chapter. That's the problem with shows like LOST, which keep building and building, but in the end, don't deliver the conclusion they promised.

And that's the feeling I'm starting to get about Wasteland in general: a lot of ideas flying around, a lot of backstory, but it isn't coalescing into anything, it's just a lot of discrete thoughts tied together through a story that, while nominally an adventure, spends a lot of time in exposition dialogue between a wide range of disappearing/reappearing characters.

The art has improved, and has more depth and shading, but can still get a bit muddy. The characters, while recognizably different, are mostly differentiated by hairdos, beards, and clothing. The art does not lend distinct looks and personalities to the characters, so even though they are different in appearance, they do not feel particularly distinct. It just goes to show that drawing elegantly and distinctly can be as challenging as a more complex, ambitious style.

It is both troubling and telling that the author seems to equate simple convolution with depth, and if that's his philosophy in general, don't be surprised if the Wasteland plot keeps meandering towards an inevitable,

predictable conclusion.

Neil says

It's pretty ballsy to name a chapter of your saga after the Public Enemy's opus, it better not disappoint. Sadly this wasn't as good as the previous installment, and had some hokey bits with this story's equivalent of tusken raiders, but ended on a cliffhanger confrontation of factions in the city of Newbegin (i assume that's their reason for the title), so we'll see what happens when we get back there.
