



## Adventures of Luther Arkwright

*Bryan Talbot, Michael Moorcock (Introduction)*

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## **Adventures of Luther Arkwright** Bryan Talbot , Michael Moorcock (Introduction)

Across a multitude of parallel universes, dark forces operate in the shadows, manipulating mankind's histories throughout countless timelines. The agents of these Disruptors all work with a single purpose - the recovery and activation of Foxfire, a long-hidden doomsday device whose unspeakable power is capable of consuming the galaxy in all its incarnations. Standing in the way of the Disruptors is Luther Arkwright, a human anomaly who exists only in a single universe, a man of vast psychic powers and capable of travelling between the parallel realities to counter the Disruptor's malign influence. But the Disruptors are aware of Arkwright and his abilities, and while Arkwright searches the myriad Earths for the location of Foxfire, the agents of darkness race to destroy him... and to ensure their unthinkable ends.

## **Adventures of Luther Arkwright Details**

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## From Reader Review Adventures of Luther Arkwright for online ebook

### Aaro Salosensaari says

Aika-avaruusagentti seikkailee tulevaisuudessa ja vaihtoehtohistorioissa, tehtävänään maailman pelastaminen tai jotain sen tapaista ...

...ei, tämä ei ole Valerian, vaikka hieman tiivistellen muotoiltu synopsis saattaa kuulostaa tutulta. Luther Arkwright on itsensä vakavasti ottavaa synkeää ja kovaksikeitettyä seikkaluscifiä brittilästä. Totta puhuen ei tämä oikeasti ole mikään täydellinen sarjakuvateos, ja liian vakavan kriittisellä silmällä arvioden Cromwell-dystopia on paikotellen suorastaan hupsu ... mutta sarjakuvan kasaritunnelmassa on jotain niin tavattoman mahtavaa etten voi välttyä antamasta viittä tähteä.

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### Raj says

I'm really not entirely sure what to make of this graphic novel. It was very dense, in multiple senses of the word, and I did get lost more than once. Luther Arkwright can travel without technological aid between the worlds of the multiverse, and he's working with the stable, ordered Earth of zero-zero to try and prevent a weapon that will destroy Earths throughout the multiverse from being found and unleashed.

The first thing that hit me here was Talbot's art style. As someone who's only really familiar with his work through Grandville and its sequels, this is very different indeed! Lots of line work and intricate detail, it's lovely but in a way that requires more effort than the clean lines of Grandville.

The story itself is a twisting, turning tale encompassing parallel universes, variations of Earth where the British Empire never fell or where the English civil war waged for three hundred years. It's on this latter plane that we spend most of our time, as Arkwright manipulates the nations of this world into a position where the enemy will be forced to reveal themselves, rather than to work through shadowy agents. And that's another facet to the book: conspiracy theories to your heart's content, along with secret societies and hidden manipulators of worlds. It's all here.

Oh, and, of course, the religious symbolism is fairly intense, especially later on. The recurring motif of the figure dying with their arms outstretched (view spoiler) is a powerful image.

There's a lot to digest here, and I suspect it's a book that would reward rereading.

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### Lionel Valdellon says

What it is: A universe-spanning action adventure where Arkwright hops from parallel to parallel in order to save the multiverse by inducing revolution and drawing out the dominant alien enemy who is seeking to wipe out all parallels via a power gem.

The Bad: Overly verbose writing. Mostly hollow characterization, especially of the supporting cast. Art that

suffers from inconsistency and poor anatomy and perspective. Monologue upon monologue. Lengthy. Although a lot can be forgiven if you take into account that it took him around 7 years to finish the tale and publish the story.

The Good: Black and white art whose attention to detail is often astounding. Visual sequences that capture silent action dramatically. Overlapping storylines / parallels which are early attempts at non-linearity and which predate the storytelling technique of comics like Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles*.

Overall: A brave attempt to critique history, government, dictatorships, corruption, religion and power, while mixing in the minutiae of each of these topics into the overall storyline. Sadly, though this makes author / illustrator Bryan Talbot the equivalent of comics' Umberto Eco (IMHO, the master of minutiae in literature), it doesn't help smoothen the writing of this epic.

It's a little like *Watchmen* in that a main character catalyzes a crisis in order to save the world; a little like the Jet Li flick *The One*, in which parallel universes are accessible and contain parallel characters; a little like *The Matrix* in that the protagonist must evolve beyond his apparent humanity and take on the expanded powers of a more highly evolved species (*Homo Novus*).

Still, the work is clearly groundbreaking in its graphic as well as narrative techniques, and the effort alone that it took to conceive and execute this graphic novel is worthy of mention. I just don't know how it will make anyone's "Top 10 Favorite Graphic Novels of All Time" list.

Originally posted on my blog:  
<http://lionel.valdellon.com/?p=621>

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### **Toolshed says**

I can understand why some might dislike this one. It's fairly complex, at times over-indulging in philosophical rant with a bit more modernist sense of narration that the average graphic novel reader is accustomed to, and the protagonist is, well, basically a superhuman in every sense of the word. But heck, did I like it a lot.

I'm just attracted to alternate history as a narrative device and am immediately intrigued when an author decides to go down that lane. The world depicted in *AOLA* is rich, well-thought and utterly, utterly interesting. The political/social aspect of the story would be enough to keep me going, but there's more. The illustrations, for one, are simply marvelous. I usually prefer color to black-and-white style but man, this one was so great I didn't mind the B/W one bit; quite the contrary. The amount of detail is staggering at times, yet everything is clear and even people like me who are not exactly graphic novel aficionados can follow what's happening very clearly without losing track of the storyline. The more "hallucinogenic" bits truly captivate the vast, cosmic nature of depicted events.

Story-wise, it might seem a bit complicated but the actual premise is, in fact, quite simple. I especially enjoyed the little tidbits thrown by the author here and there and making the overall picture of the world that much clearer (newspaper articles, reports on disastrous events in various parallel realities etc.). There were times that I thought the author had actually gone "too far" on the philosophical/metaphysical front: covering several pages with a stream-of-consciousness-like insight into Luther's thoughts, with sexual fantasies of every variety, but having been an avid fan of this narrative method, I actually appreciated it after all - even

though it might have taken me some time to sink in.

And that's the case with the whole graphic novel. It takes a while to process all this. There are times I thought that AOLa actually encompasses everything on 220 pages - there are multiple universes, there is truly A LOT of intertextual/mythological/philosophical discourse splattered all over the pages, there are some strong messages about the nature of warfare and mankind as a whole, there is some old-time action (laser guns and the like), there is a lot of sex and some romance as well, there is a hell of a lot of politics, there are some hard-SF elements... you name it. It's a lot to swallow and I guess that nobody can really like every part of it, but the contribution of AOLa on the British comics scene and even literature as a whole cannot be stressed enough.

And, for a graphic novel, there's quite a BUNCH of text to read through.

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### **David Katzman says**

Mind-bending, freak-ass sci-fi mysticism. Grant Morrison wishes he was this good.\*

Both this graphical novel (black & white) and the sequel, *Heart of Empire: The Legacy of Luther Arkwright* (in color) deserve to be in the collection of anyone who likes literary comics. *The Adventures of...* (first issued in 1990) was just reprinted by Dark Horse, so this is a great chance to snap up both collections.

Bryan Talbot writes (sophisticated storytelling, complex characters) and illustrates (beautifully) this master work. Amazing to see how his art got even better in part two. The storyline is a re-imagined history of England if the empire kept growing, rather than collapsed under its own weight, and became a regime much like Nazi Germany. Oh, and if it was supported by dark forces from across parallel universes, of course. You get the idea...no, not really—both novels have more twists and turns than Timothy Leary's intestines. Features shamanism, sex magik, critique of power, politics, journalism and many other tasty treats. Fans of Alan Moore will love this.

\*Not quite true. *The Invisibles* was genius. Let's say, Morrison *lately* wishes he was this good. (snark!)

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### **Ramón Nogueras Pérez says**

Hay que esforzarse o tomar muchas drogas para entender este cómic. Pero si haces el esfuerzo, encuentras uno de los cómics más originales que habrás leído. Así que merece la pena el esfuerzo.

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### **zxvasdf says**

There's the inevitable parallel to Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius, who was the first in a chain of a whole new skew of fiction for me, in mindblowing read after mindblowing read. I don't think I would have appreciated this book had I read it five years ago. More familiar with Talbot's more contemporary, historical work, I was astounded at the level of his skill. I'd say this is a perfect visual reference for any reader of Moorcock's Cornelius... you get an idea of how he moves through the multiverse, only I think Una Persson is a singular,

original copy while Cornelius is the prolific chain of existence throughout the worlds.

Arkwright stands strong on his two feet though, here, ending with a bang as several forces twine together like a cord of jute. Talbot's grasp of historical futility, tyranny, and unlearned mistakes of empires give this tale more credence.

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### **Phil says**

While my awareness with British comics is mostly limited to second-hand knowledge of Judge Dredd, I had seen praise for this series and decided to check it out.

The book begins with a foreword by Michael Moorcock, which is extremely appropriate. The story that follows reminded very much of Moorcock's New Wave SF work on the Eternal Champion series and the Jerry Cornelius character in particular. The hero is a (somewhat groovy) super agent who journeys to various parallel Earths in a semi-mystical struggle against the Disruptors, a shadowy high-tech group trying to bring about their own ideal timeline.

Luther Arkwright debuted in the mid-70s, and the comic is definitely a product of its time. In addition to high tech weapons, over the course of his adventures Arkwright makes frequent use of psychic powers, meditation, and consciousness-expanding drugs. He powers-up via Tantric sex (narrated with myth-heavy stream of consciousness narration) goes on walkabout in Tibet and encounters mysterious Buddhist monks. The story never drags, but the psychedelic, Carlos Castaneda-style mysticism made the story feel a bit dated.

It's a very British story as well, dealing heavily with alternate history versions of Oliver Cromwell, the Royalists, and Roundheads. As an American reader I probably would have gotten more out of the story if I had more knowledge of the English Civil War. The twists where the story diverged from the true historical events were mostly lost on me. That's a problem with this reader and not the narrative, but it kept me from enjoying the story as much as I could have.

Minor issues aside, the comic was very interesting throughout. The artwork was excellent and with so many twists and turns it was impossible for me to predict the outcome. If you're a British Moorcock fan with a fondness for psychedelia, this is probably the ideal comic for you.

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### **Daryl says**

This graphic novel has been sitting on my shelf for years. I picked it up a few times, meaning to start it, but flipped through it a bit and put it back. Finally, I decided to take the plunge. Wow. I'm glad I looked up the book online to get an idea of the plot, as I wouldn't have got much from reading it. Confusing doesn't begin to cover it. And the words...my god. There were pages that probably took me 10 or 15 minutes to read. A single page! Talbot is a good artist (I've enjoyed his work in other comics), but the amount of words in this graphic novel is absurd. I give it a couple of stars because there are individual scenes here and there that are enjoyable, but they don't add up to an overall satisfying read. Some people have commented on the influence this book has had on other writers, like Alan Moore and Grant Morrison, in terms of their more spacey, out-

there, fiction dealing with the idea of reality, and I can definitely see that here, but I don't much care for that aspect of Morrison's work, for example. The artwork is dark and it's occasionally hard to figure out what's going on. I'm glad this book is no longer on my shelf, but I'd like back the time it took me to slog through it.

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### **Jeff Raymond says**

While this was a great comic and a great read, it has aged incredibly poorly in style. The overall result of this book is one that is a multidimensional literary achievement that is rooted in British history and various tropes, but has such an old feel that is difficult to overcome.

Get past the style and you have a wonderful read, though. A must for those who like their comics a little more esoteric and strange.

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### **Miriam says**

This is what I was in the mood for, except I wanted it to be larger and ideally in color. I don't know if the original series run was in a different format, but I could hardly make out some of details, especially in the ephemera-style writings, and reading the blocks of tiny print gave me a headache. This is a fairly text-heavy graphic novel, too, and the only punctuation the author seems fond of is the colon. The lack of punctuation was for a 70s-style altered state stream of consciousness.

Physical manifestation aside, I liked most things about the story. It was a bit difficult keeping the parallel dimensions straight, but eventually it seemed not to matter. My favorite character was not the protagonist, who was a little too super-powered Chosen One to be interesting, but Rose, the woman who could communicate with her alternate selves on all the parallels. I usually am filled with mockery when authors employ tropes like tantric sex expanding characters' minds into oneness with the universe, so the fact that I still enjoyed this book is a impressive.

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### **Adam says**

The sixties new wave lingers strongly over this comics masterpiece. Moorcock's *Nomad of the Time Streams*, Cornelius Quartet, Keith Robert's *Pavane*, Burrough's cut-ups, and stream of consciousness combine in a dense, mythic, non-linear narrative with beautiful black and white illustrations. Hugely influential but more than worthwhile on its own. Moorcock always does something interesting with intros and here he provides an essay on post-empire/war Britain.

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## **Jason Hissong says**

This book is like Lou Reed and the Velvet Undergroung. It's the guy behind the guy.

Talbot's book has influenced the face of modern comics so greatly that it seeps into everything. Morrison, Moore, Ellis, Carey, Ennis. . . . They all come from Talbot. And from Arkwright.

It's worth a read, for sure. And it's worth and oversized hardcover treatment as well.

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## **Nicholas Whyte says**

<http://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2164391.html> [return] [return] It's weird to think that this is over thirty years old, though not published in book form until some time later. It's also a bit embarrassing that I hadn't read it before, given its seminal importance to the comics genre in the UK. I liked a lot of things about it very much: the interplay between Royalist rebels and Cromwellian puritans, the latter still ruling Britain in the 1970s; the role of Arkwright, agent of order, but not necessarily of good; the fantastic detail in the art, and the intricacy of the plotting. Arkwright is clearly based on Jerry Cornelius, and Michael Moorcock returns the favour with a warm but also very political introduction to this edition. I am, however, a little relieved that the fan consensus is that the sequel, *Heart of Empire*, is easier to digest, to the point that some recommend starting with it instead. I shall try to get hold of it.

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## **Lauri says**

Kahtlemata on vaeva nähtud, minu jaoks oli tulemus aga suht ilge ja puine üpriski loetamatu saast. Kunstipool oli muljetavalだav, Talbot on üks kõvemaid hetke koomiksikunstnikke, aga no sisu jah... Postmodernistlikku soga täis leheküljed, kus üritatakse miskide sõnade, lausejuppide ja vabade assotsiatsioonidega edasi anda tunnet, päris kompleksne setting - võibolla isegi sest pudrust ja kapsastest oleks lõpuks aru saanud aga no see puine storytelling kattis kõik oma pahahaisulise vaibaga ja lõpuks sumbus eikuhugi... Ja no ma ei tea, igasugu netikilgete järgi ammutasid siit siis inspiratsiooni (ja ideid) näiteks Grant Morrison oma "The Invisible" jaoks - aga vähemalt minu jaoks ei olegi *The Invisibles* üldse midagi erilist, suht keskmise tasapaks soga. Ja nii edasi ja nii edasi. Üliraskesti loetav, ambitsoonikas aga paraku (minu jaoks) totaalselt põrunud projekt. Üliraske, ülitüütu ja masendavalt igav, julgeksin lõplikku hinnangut anda.

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