



Reviews

“Noir Burlesque”

By [Ryan Fitzmartin](#) | October 24th, 2023
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“Noir Burlesque” is a gritty story of murder, mayhem and gangster’s molls. Dangerous men and seductive women fill the pages of Enrico Marini’s brutal story about mob violence. It’s a dark and grimy tale, sometimes to the point of verging on parody. Enrico Marini is clearly in love with the world of “Noir,” and he crafts a story that while effective, sometimes feels too much in love with its own grittiness. The story isn’t as grim and bleak as something like “Sin City,” but all the tough guy talk starts to feel absurd after a while.



Cover by Enrico Marini

Written, Illustrated, Colored, and Lettered by Enrico Marini
Translated by Dan Christensen

An atmospheric, violent crime caper set in 1950s New York, with everything from femme fatales to double-crosses.

A heist gone wrong forces Slick to do a job for his employer, Rex, to repay the debt he owes. But Slick is in love with Caprice, Rex’s ex-call girl wife-turned-burlesque legend and Rex also has the only way for Slick to avenge his murdered father.

In this hardboiled noir thriller, everybody has everything to lose..

The story follows a street criminal named Terry, a.k.a. Slick, who loves women and money. He’s a bad dude with a big gun, and he’s no stranger to armed robbery or bashing in people’s faces. His first action is to rob a jewelry store, and his second is to make out with the lusty lady behind the counter. He’s not an entirely lovable protagonist, but he’s certainly a hard case, the kind that these stories seem to thrive on. Slick would be played by Robert Mitchum or Sterling Hayden in a 40’s movie, a guy with good looks and stone fists. He may be a stereotype, but he’s a perfectly realized one, a noir protagonist through and through.

Slick’s love interest is Deb, a.k.a. Caprice, the titular burlesque dancer and a long lost love. In typical noir tradition she’s the arm candy of a big-time mobster now, but she’s never lost her feelings for Slick. Caprice is the requisite femme fatale, a Lauren Bacall or Ava Gardner type. She’s as fast to kiss as she is to kill, and she’ll look equally good doing either. The rest of the cast is rounded out by gangsters with names like Punchy and Sharky. There’s also a Hungarian who dresses like a Native American named Crazy Horse. I’m a little shaky on whether this is an offensive portrayal, but it doesn’t feel great.

The dialogue itself can be wooden, and although characters are supposed to be hard-edged, it just comes off as over the top at times. Slick’s interactions with women are so charged and aggressive that he comes off as kind of a jerk. The gangster’s interactions with each other are so full of anger and bravado that it gets silly. Yes, this is a world of mean streets, but why is everyone so mad all the time? Why does Slick break a bartender’s nose for not knowing his specific drink? It’s all a bit too much.

The plot is simple, as Slick gets caught between two rival gang bosses, Rex, and Don Zizzi. Rex wants him to steal from Zizzi, and most of the action of the comic deals with the heist and the fallout from it. It takes a while to get going, but the heisting is bloody and thrilling, and the aftermath even more so. The plotting is often too predictable, but the action itself is compelling as Slick shoots his way through the mob. None of it is groundbreaking, but “Noir: Burlesque” feels faithful to it’s noir influences, even if the sex and violence is far more explicit than it would’ve been in a 40’s film.

The art is cinematic and faithful to the aesthetic of a classic black and white 40’s movie. Marini’s coloring is mostly black and white, with sparing splashes of red- very similar to Frank Miller’s “Sin City”. The red is often used to emphasize sexuality or violence, to make it really pop off the page. It’s used mostly for splashes of blood or a woman’s hair or dress. Occasionally it’s used for minor things like a ketchup bottle, which feels a tad distracting and takes away from the otherwise intentionality of the color palette. More often than not, the red is effective and a stylish addition.

Marini attempts to echo the visual style of noir films with long shadows and high contrast lighting. He likes to use low angles for intensity in the action, pitting the audience up at the characters as if they’re sitting in a theater watching the screen. The action itself is sharply drawn, and the fights are always clear and clean. The violence is bloody, but doesn’t go too far into being downright nasty. It’s definitely R-Rated but only barely. Marini’s faces aren’t particularly strong, and everyone just seems to be squinting and mad all the time in a monotonous way. In another comic, this would be annoying, but here, it fits the hard edged way the characters are written.

Overall, “Noir Burlesque” isn’t deep or clever, but it does effectively evoke a specific period and its archetypal set of emotions. The characters aren’t realistic or nuanced, but they aren’t boring either, and there’s always something exciting happening on every page. Marini clearly loves every aspect of noir films, and he’s done a good job crafting an homage to the genre, even if it does verge sometimes into self-parody.

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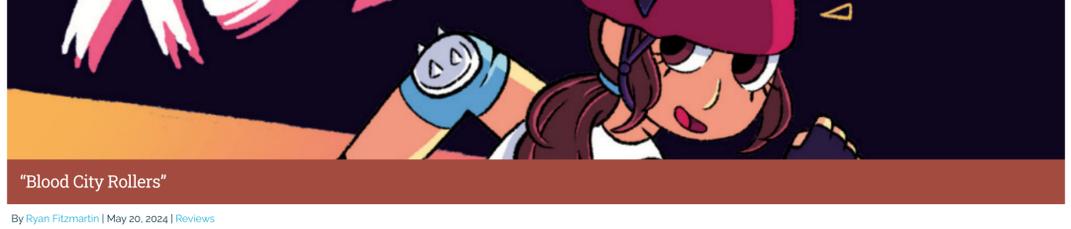
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“Blood City Rollers”

By [Ryan Fitzmartin](#) | May 20, 2024 | [Reviews](#)

Do you like your sports with a side of the spooks? Do you think that competitions of strength and skill could be improved with a splash of the supernatural? Well if the idea of Vampires and Witches playing Roller Derby sounds enticing, then “Blood City Rollers” could be for you! This inventive teen-targeted graphic novel [L.]

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