



Reviews

“Kali”

By [Ryan Fitzmartin](#) | October 20th, 2022
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Violent, energetic, and frenzied, “Kali” is an erratic whirlwind. Thinly scripted but heavy on extreme violence and gorgeous action. Kali comes from the *Mad Max: Fury Road* or *Crank* school of storytelling. This is a comic that is loud, aggressive and in your face. Writer Daniel Freedman and artist Robert Sammelin have crafted a tale of post-apocalyptic desert revenge. “Kali” is vivid, brutal, but it’s also strongly lacking in good characters or interesting dialogue.



Cover by Robert Sammelin

Written by Daniel Freedman
Illustrated by Robert Sammelin
Lettered by Michael David Thomas

From Daniel Freedman (Raiders) and Mondo and DICE artist Robert Sammelin comes an original graphic novel that’s a nonstop, high-octane existential action spectacle that perfect for Mad Max: Fury Road fans.

Stabbed in the back, poisoned, and left for dead by her own biker gang; Kali sets off on a one-way road of vengeance across a war-torn desert battlefield. With impending death coursing through her veins and a fascist army hot on her tail, Kali will stop at nothing to get her revenge, even if it’s the last thing she ever does.

The plot follows the titular “Kali”, former leader of a girl gang known as the Matrikas. Kali has been betrayed and taken captive by a fascist organization known as “The Machine”. When the comic opens, Kali plans to escape and take revenge on her betrayers. As the book goes on, Kali slices and shoots her way through fascist troops and her former gang members. Sammelin has clearly put some thought into his world, although it’s not entirely easy to follow. He sketches in broad strokes, leaving lots of unanswered questions. It’s enough to tell the narrative, but reading it, one is left grasping for context.

Unfortunately, Sammelin’s dialogue leaves much to be desired. Most of the dialogue is angry ranting or repartee between hated enemies. Occasionally the plot pauses for random philosophical musings. Typical exchanges are insults and expletives, with exposition peppered throughout. It’s so aggressive at times that it begins to verge on satire. At one point Kali tells a gang member to “Go F— herself”, and the gang member replies “F— Me? No, F— you!”. If the intent is to come off as dark and gritty, it goes too far at times, and becomes more than a little repetitive. It’s not engaging and it gets dull fast.

As a result, the characters are written somewhat thinly. The reader is not really given much reason to like or sympathize with Kali or her quest. She doesn’t have much depth beyond wanting revenge for crimes that aren’t fully detailed. A few flashbacks fill in the blanks but don’t paint enough of a picture. Most other characters in “Kali” only exist to oppose or support Kali in her quest, it doesn’t seem like anyone has their own individual lives. They exist only in the moment. It’s enough to get the story and meaning across, but it makes it hard to get truly invested.

While the dialogue and character are serious weak points, “Kali” is balanced out with some truly terrific art. Freedman’s illustrations are striking, with great use of color and composition. “Kali” is visually appealing while also looking very dirty and rough. Freedman doesn’t draw pretty faces, but harsh ones, shaped by their savage environment. Everyone looks as if they’ve been through the wringer even before they ended up in this story. The facial details are asymmetrical and splotchy, even the prettiest people have a rough edge. It’s a stylish and creative way to draw characters and environments, and it lends more to the characters than any of the dialogue does.

The combat, which takes up most of the book, is kinetic, vicious and nasty. Bones break, spines snap, and blood bursts as Kali kills. Freedman does an excellent job of making the action feel fluid and clear. He mixes angles and compositions to create energy, avoiding repetition in a book which is mostly action. Tight close ups for a train fight contrasts with huge splash pages for a shootout in a field. Overall, the art is so powerful that “Kali” could almost be a comic without dialogue. It might’ve even been stronger to remove all the talking and tell the story purely with motion. The plot is barebones enough that it could almost work.

In summation, the strength of the art in “Kali” outweighs any weakness in the dialogue or character. Freedman’s artistry is so strong, and the action so exciting that there’s ample thrills derived from the combat alone. After all, a book like “Kali” isn’t meant to run on dialogue any more than a Jason Statham or Arnold Schwarzenegger action flick is meant to. “Kali” serves up the kick ass action, and that might be enough for some readers. If you’re looking for interesting characters, or deep meaning, you won’t find it here. If bareknuckle, hardcore action is all you require, than “Kali” has that in spades.

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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 a Roller Derby sounds enticing, then “Blood City Rollers” could be for you! This inventive teen-targeted graphic novel [.]