

DMZ, Vol. 2: Body of a Journalist

Brian Wood , Riccardo Burchielli (Illustrator) , Kristian Donaldson (Illustrator)

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America's worst nightmare has come true. Having neglected the threat of anti-establishment militias, the U.S. government is in danger of losing control. Middle America has violently risen up, coming to a standstill at Manhattan or, as the world now knows it, the DMZ. Matty Roth, a naive, aspiring photojournalist, lands a dream gig following a veteran war journalist into the heart of the DMZ. Things soon go terribly wrong, and Matty finds himself lost and alone in a world he's only seen on television. In this volume, Roth's star power as a wartime reporter rises both within and outside the DMZ and the embedded journalist lands the break of a lifetime: an interview with the infamous leaders of the Free Armies.

DMZ, Vol. 2: Body of a Journalist Details


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From Reader Review DMZ, Vol. 2: Body of a Journalist for online ebook

Jan Philipzig says

"I Never Paid Attention to Politics..."

Economic inequality in the United States has grown rapidly since the 1980's. By the year 2007, the country's richest 1% owned no less than 34.6% of the country's overall wealth, while the poorest 40% had to make do with only 0.3% of their country's overall wealth. More and more people are falling into poverty, and the consequences are devastating. Since the year 2010, for example, U.S. American women have the lowest life expectancy among the women of all forty-one so-called developed countries. Just in case you are wondering - those are the facts, not fictional statistics from *DMZ*. In reality, major conflicts about wealth distribution are inevitable, and in that context the notion of another civil war does not appear all that far-fetched.

So is Brian Wood's fictional civil war rooted in reality? Is *DMZ* socially or politically relevant in any way? This second volume promises to finally reveal what the civil war at the heart of the series is all about, yet all we get is more hot air. The protagonist himself apparently has no idea why there is a war going on: "I never paid attention to politics." So he decides to sit down and read some back issues of *The New York Times*, because... well, that's where you find in-depth information on what's really going on in the world, right? Right?!? We are not told what *The New York Times* has to say about the roots of the war, but our hero appears to be stunned with what he finds out: "This is not what we learned in school." Clearly, he has the whole conflict figured out now: "This is a war of extremes pushing against each other. But the stories lie in the middle." What the...?!? I kid you not, that is his analysis of the situation after reading all those newspapers, and it is the only analysis the reader gets.

In summary: America is divided by "a war of extremes pushing against each other," a fact that is too disturbing to be taught in school but is revealed by the most reliable of all newspapers, *The New York Times*. Hmm... Brian Wood often makes me think of a 15-year-old who can't be bothered with politics but wears a Che Guevara t-shirt because he wants to be perceived as rebellious - a comparison that is probably unfair to most 15-year-olds wearing Che Guevara t-shirts.

It is becoming increasingly clear in this second volume that Brian Wood cannot really be bothered with the central themes of his own story - politics, economics, and the role of the mass media. So what does he do? He turns to popular culture for inspiration, of course, to movies such as John Carpenter's *Escape from New York* and other comics such as *Transmetropolitan* by Warren Ellis. Sure, *DMZ* neither has a character as engaging as Snake Plissken nor the insight or wit of *Transmetropolitan*, but hey, we are talking about a comic book here - nobody will notice, right?

Kris says

Great series. Totally believable? Nah. But fun. The art is still growing on me. When it's landscapes, it's fantastic. But the people leave something to be desired. Excited to see what comes next.

Brownguy says

It was a cool graphic novel. I picked it up used cos Vertigo seems like a good comics company and I was not disappointed. Interesting idea pretty well executed. I liked the art, even though it was extra dark and girty (I realize it's a book about war) but the main character's motivations were a little perplexing to me. I did really like how the political situation was explained throughout though.

Joseph says

Given away (to Craig?)

See also my review of the first volume.

Most of the book deals with the abduction of a journalist and the ways in which the government tries to use his experience as a propaganda tool, but this kind of forced drama just seems to squander the potential of the book's central idea.

I guess it's "urban," or "street," or "gritty and realistic" to have the government be willing to kill innocent people as an excuse to fight a war, but it's not particularly fresh or exciting. Maybe it's just me, but I'd be more excited by a nuanced look at how people on all sides of the issue might react to a modern civil war. The "let's bomb 'em all" military stereotype seems too played out.

This volume also includes a look back at the forced evacuation of New York before it was turned into a DMZ through the eyes of one of the side characters. Unfortunately, it's painted in such broad strokes so as to be totally wasted. On the one hand, you've got the saintly med-student hero who fights nobly to save lives before cutting and bleaching her hair now that she's chosen to live in the DMZ. On the other hand, you've got the fat ex-cop who wears his 9/11 t-shirt and beats up people in the street because he loves his America and has a gun. Would those people exist in this world? Sure, but they're not particularly interesting.

And finally, there's a "Guide to the DMZ," describing the various communities on the island. It's probably the best idea in the whole book, or would be if it was told organically through the story. Isn't that the whole point of a project like this?

Roy says

Its good but I slowly wss losing interest towards the latter issues. I likedl Roth as a character but I'm not sure he can develop much more. Very political and I guess current for the times. Not a big follower of US politics being from Australia, so didnt flow or hook me as much as I would have liked.

Intortetor says

vien quasi da pensare che il primo numero fosse la preparazione a questo secondo volume, semplicemente perfetto: è qui che la trama prende una piega nuova, che viene chiarita la natura della guerra tra usa e stati

liberi e che il personaggio di matty si sviluppa completamente. fumetto dell'anno, e uno dei migliori del decennio. da rileggere più volte la splendida "guida" che chiude l'albo, che contribuisce a far diventare la new york di "dmz" più reale di quanto si possa immaginare.

Mark Desrosiers says

First of all, no matter how high I suspend my disbelief, I still can't get with Brian Wood's notion that apocalyptic war zone NYC could also serve as some hippie vegan organic utopia. Second, the protagonist here -- one Matty Ross -- has to be the dumbest major character I've seen in recent comics. All he does is scowl, vomit, and explode with diarrhea. And finally, there's DMZ issue #12, entitled "New York Times" (ha ha), which is supposed to be a homemade Lonely Planet guide to post-NYC's rubble and anarchy, yet seems to be just illustrations of skinny tattooed hipsters with bikes on their shoulders, publishing fancy zines, or somehow gigging in clubs. Very cruel to inflict that shit on this unsuspecting reader.

Felicia says

Great followup to the first. Loved it. Definitely provocative and timely.

Michael says

Hard for me to be completely unbiased about this series, because I spend so much time in the DMZ, so for me, it's fascinating just to see how Wood depicts the various neighborhoods. He must send a ton of pictures to the artists, because some of the blocks and buildings are completely recognizable.

Anyway, second arc, Matty gets caught in the middle of a negotiation between the USA and the Free States, and the residents of the DMZ are going to lose no matter who wins. So Matty has to find a way to protect his new home. And he goes freelance, finding another network that will file his reports, even the ones that don't flatter the USA.

Great writing, great art, extremely believable characters, good, logical twists, and convincing dialogue. I really enjoy Burchielli's art too; he's great at capturing the rundown quality of the DMZ and still making it feel like Manhattan. Kristian Donaldson's fill-in art was good, as was Wood's "New York Times" tour of the DMZ - though I'd rather the book skip a few months and stick with Burchielli instead of having fill-in art. Just my preference, I suppose that the monthly market forces being what they are, it's not very likely or even practical.

Wealththeow says

America is in the midst of a civil war, and New York City is a battle ground popularly called the DMZ. Matty, who grew up a privileged annoying richwhitestraight guy, is still pretty privileged and annoying in the DMZ. The plot is weak and certainly not novel. The art is typical Vertigo--lots of harsh lines, cross-hatching, gratuitous female nakedness (without matching sexy male nakedness). An obese woman in a bikini

is blown apart in the opening scene. There's a whole page of a guy getting shot in the head in graphic slo-mo. So...there's that. Those (big) caveats aside, the DMZ itself takes a larger role in this trade. What kind of food is available (mostly vegan), water shortages, zines, PTSD, what neighborhoods are left--all of it is at least mentioned, although not explored in-depth.

Annie says

I came to this book having just read volume 3 and volume 2, in that order. In this one the mayor has to get to the bottom of a blackout, and we see more of what he did on September 11 (and people think they stretch out the backstory in Lost!). I enjoyed this just as much as the previous books, but damn that sketchbook at the back for tricking me into thinking I still had lots of comics to go.

Gavin says

This fantastic series continues here, with rookie photo-journalist Matty having now been in the DMZ for nearly a whole year. Suicide bombers, kidnappings, food and water rationing...NYC just like Iraq/Afghanistan. Terrorism, resistance, government manipulation, competing media trying to get the scoop by any means necessary, and the real issue, the condition of the people living in the DMZ, just forgotten amidst the chaos of the powerplays.

This is an angry book, written by someone who has watched what's going on overseas and what it's doing to those affected on the ground, those whose homes are gone, and those who are just pawns in a game.

In spite of it all, Matty tries to find his way, decide what needs to be shared with the outside world, who are wholly ignorant of what life is like, while still maintaining his own safety and friendships within the DMZ. Watching him navigate it is a joy.

A very strong series, happy to keep at it. HIGHLY recommended.

Craig says

Enjoyed the personal story and many of the politics, but the back story of the history leading up to this point is spotty at best and ludicrous at worst. One must believe that everyone in the mountain states is a gun toting libertarian to swallow the premise that no one stood up to the free armies as they started their campaign. As someone who has lived much of their life in Wyoming (and a big chunk in New York as well), I just don't see it going down the way it is portrayed here. There are enough groups with completely different political aims in the west that they would never be able to march through these states uncontested - militarily or politically. I also think it is a pretty awful thing to assume that everyone in the national guard would abandon their posts in a situation like this. Overall, the logic is just flawed on so many levels. A HUGE suspension of disbelief is required. Not that I'm saying a civil war over these issues isn't possible, but I don't think the history was well thought out before Wood started writing and it shows. His people all have such simple motivations and thoughts... Basically, a bunch of people in Montana who loved guns and hated big government were able to march all the way to NY more or less unchallenged and along the way convince nearly everyone to join them?

And that is saying nothing of the idea that what remains of the US forces are holed up on Long Island - probably the least defensible spot in the whole continental states. And, besides, I've lived in Long Island. If that's all that's left of the U.S., it's time to face the fact that we've lost.

Also, the history is still somewhat spotty. I was particularly ticked off when the New York Times issues were shown large enough to read, but the articles were all just random letters. How hard would it have been to write up articles to provide even a little backstory? I'm sure that is to keep people reading, but at this point, my interest is pretty much lost.

Robert Timmons says

Volume 2 of DMZ definitely builds on the first volume and moves it forward greatly. The main character no longer looks out of his depth and has matured a lot between the two volumes which makes the story more believable. The artwork is still fabulous and the back story for some of the characters brought a lot to this volume. Four stars from me

Jeff says

Volume one was good, but this volume (2) makes a huge jump in quality and world building. Some loose ends from the first volume are tied up in an excellent story arc involving Matty's father* and the two opposing elements here: the US government and the Free States of America. Events that led up to NYC becoming the DMZ are explored through the character of Zee. Life and the culture that has sprung up in wartime Manhattan since the American Civil War started is explored in the excellent final issue of this volume.

Brian Wood and Riccardo Burchielli are to be commended for bringing a fresh spin on the tired dystopian genre.

*August is now officially Graphic Novel Daddy Issues month! Greeting cards, bumper stickers and coffee mugs will soon be available.
