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Warren Ellis , Juan José Ryp (Illustrator)

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When America's premiere hero kills everyone in the White House in pursuit of his own brand of justice, his innocent former teammates become the targets of a massive military crackdown.

What happens when a crimefighting hero's pursuit of justice leads him to the horrifying conclusion that he must kill his President to save his country? When John Horus decides that no one is above his personal law, he kicks down the door to the White House and throw the entire country into chaos. Now, his former teammates in the Seven Guns -- some crippled, some crazy, and all considered guilty by association -- become live targets for a military determined to wipe them all from the face of the earth. BLACK SUMMER is Warren Ellis' graphic novel about where you draw the line, and where justice is nothing but death from above.

Black Summer Details

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Author : Warren Ellis , Juan José Ryp (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Black Summer for online ebook

Quentin Wallace says

This was shockingly good. I'm a fan of Warren Ellis, but he really outdid himself here.

This may be a little too political for some, as it comes across at times as a thinly veiled critique of the Bush Administration, but that's only part of the story. This is one of the "realistic" super hero stories that show just how things could be if super heroes were real.

When the top superhero in the world assassinates the most powerful world leaders, it's up to his team to stop him..or should they? The story is great with shades of grey as everyone questions their own beliefs as to what they should do next. While they don't agree with his methods, some of them think he has the right idea in mind. Then the government panics and decides the superheroes are probably all in it together and the only thing to do is kill them all as quickly as possible.

This review is really only scratching the surface of this story, but it's a very complex story involving politics and superpowers. Also, the art from Juan Jose Ryp is literally some of the most detailed art ever seen in comics. I've always thought he was an underrated artist in the vein of Geoff Darrow. The art just seems almost too complex to process, but in this case that's a good thing.

Overall just a very solid superhero story that really deserves more acclaim. If you like your superhero stories with a dash of realism you should read this.

Gianfranco Mancini says

[and if you read Conan Doyle, Tom's faked death was phoned for good by his codeword "Bakerstreet (hide spoiler)]

47Time says

John Horus, a member of the former superhero team called the Seven Guns, kills the president and demands that free elections. The team was disbanded and its tech-enhanced members went their own way. Tom Noir, Frank Blacksmith who created their enhancements, Zoe Jump, Angel One, Dominic Atlas Hyde and Kathryn Artemis are the other members left alive after Tom's girlfriend, Laura Torch, was killed by a bomb that also took Tom's leg. Frank, thought dead, orders a newer generation enhanced individual to kill Tom because of what he knows. Tom defeats his attacker and contacts Zoe to bring the rest of the team together. After escaping the authorities they regroup in a secret location with armed government forces on their tracks.

(view spoiler)

Sam Quixote says

In a world where superheroes police the world, one superhero goes ultra-pious and decides that the US President isn't good enough to lead the country and murders him along with his staff and key members of his administration. This leads the Army to take out the rogue superhero while his former colleagues wonder how it came to this - weren't they supposed to be doing good?

I wanted to like this book more than I did mostly because Warren Ellis is a wonderful writer and partly because I'd heard so many good things about the book but I came away from it thinking "Is that it?". The story seems very similar to Ellis' other famous superhero series "The Authority" where a group of superheroes police the globe and take things into their own hands and away from the governments of the world as they are too corrupt while the Authority are "more evolved". The fallout from that is similar to the chaos that ensues in "Black Summer" but the characters aren't as interesting as Hawksmoor, Swift, Jenny Sparks, the Engineer, Midnighter, Apollo and the Doctor.

The superhero's "powers" are kind of stupid too - super-guns give them the ability to take out tanks and helicopters but they can also say a password that turns them into a different shape (eg. Regular man says password and becomes masked muscle man) and have other powers. It's a bit too Manga for Ellis' gritty storylines and wasn't very compelling.

Juan Jose Ryp's artwork is amazingly detailed. His double pages of fighting and gore is eye-catching and have you staring at it for ages before turning the page. It reminds me of Geof Darrow's work but Ryp's style is more dynamic.

Not a bad book as superhero stories go and filled with more ideas and is far more interesting than your average DC/Marvel comic is but a disappointingly weak effort from the usual brilliance I've come to expect from Warren Ellis.

Rick says

Warren Ellis... sometimes you have to remember that one cool scene or nifty idea isn't enough for an entire story. I was hooked by the opening scene of a superhero killing the president, justifying it in his own twisted way. However, from there it goes down the standard path of, "Team of special soldiers were created, they've gone off the rails, now they need to be taken out." We've seen this plot played out in hundreds of different ways and this isn't that much different.

The majority of the book is spent not so much on plot but on allowing Juan José Ryp to meticulously illustrate huge panels of massive carnage. Gore has never been so eloquently depicted! Despite this attention to detail, it is not an excuse to shortchange plot and character development.

I will spare you from diving into spoiler territory since this isn't an altogether bad read if you're an Ellis fan, but the final plot "twist" is telegraphed so strongly early in the story that you are completely aware that everything you'll read will simply be getting you to that point. And once you reach the climax... if you're like me, you'll feel slightly let down. Yes, it's the only logical conclusion to the story, but it lacks the grand scale that Ellis I felt was trying for throughout the book.

Black Summer could have easily been improved by taking a few of the giant splash pages of violence and using them to develop the characters a bit further, dig into their psychological state, and explore some of the moral topic touched upon briefly throughout. That, and don't telegraph the ending so much!

Michael J. says

Black Summer is the first of a superhero trilogy that Warren Ellis wrote for Avatar Press, where more mature content is the norm and creators seemingly have free reign, continuing through No Hero and finishing with SuperGod. It's been favorably compared to The Watchmen but it doesn't come very close to what that landmark series achieved.

Ellis starts with an intriguing concept - a superhero executing the President of the United States, Vice President and advisors after finding them guilty of fabricating a rationale to go to war with Iraq (a not-so-subtle jab at the second Bush administration). It might have gone in more interesting directions from there, but Ellis sticks to the oft-used formula of government against the super-heroes allegedly turned criminal. To be fair, there are some interesting flashback scenes that shed light on the characters, but this is essentially a multi-issue free-for-all bloodbath that ends as you might expect despite the twisty reveal. What saves it is the outstanding art from Ryp, as Black Summer serves a brilliant spotlight on his work with double-page spreads of carnage. The art is hyper-realistic and sometimes so detailed that you've got to study it closely to understand everything that is going on. It's bloody and violent as hell, and very explosive and fiery - also a showcase for the colorist.

For those who haven't experienced the creativity of Warren Ellis before and want to see what he can do with capes and tights - I would recommend the Planetary series over this. It remains my favorite of his superhero work.

J. says

I have rarely been as pleasantly surprised as I was with this one. I picked it up entirely based upon the cover, and the fact that I generally like Warren Ellis's work. (But mostly the cover.)

The "heroes" in the book are technologically- or medically- modified super-people. Specifically, they all chose to get their powers, as opposed to the usual comic-book-accident kind of setup. It deals with why they were willing to go through with this and its repercussions. Of course, the quick description of the book tells you that it opens with one of them killing the president, and the book really seems to want to address that topic--can you go too far, even with good motivations?

The plot is too busy to delve too deeply into the characters, but they all get enough time to be fleshed out at least a little. It specifically takes time to flash back to the moments when they decide to go through the process and address their respective motivations, and you get a good sense of the strain between them from their interactions. Of course, during these flashbacks, Ellis takes the opportunity to give use the pseudo-scientific explanation for what, exactly, is going on. (And that's a lot of the fun from reading Ellis--I like a little science with my coffee.)

The storyline itself is a bit crowded. I rarely think graphic novels, particularly collected editions, are too short--the monthly comic format seems to lend itself to some level of padding. But this story really could have breathed a little more. I would definitely read more stories about the same characters. The characters

themselves, as well as the science, are both interesting on their own, and aren't showcased very well because of the time constraints.

The art itself is pretty incredibly detailed. It leaves me claustrophobic, or spending way too much time examining a panel because of all the detail. Having said that, it's a little TOO detailed, at times, because I spent way too much time examining a panel. You know, because of all the detail. So it's pretty impressive and awesome, but can be a little distracting at times.

Overall, I would compare it favorably with Watchmen, in that it seems to be addressing some of the same issues. But it's definitely more sci-fi, crowded, violent, and much less talk-y. The denouement itself uses a Chekhov gun plot device, so paying attention will pay off, but because of this it ends up being *very* slightly unfulfilling. (The suddenness of the ending probably also influenced that. Again, a little more room would be nice.)

But overall, excellent. I wish there was more like it.

James DeSantis says

This was a tough one to judge because there's things I LOVE and some that just kept nagging me.

So the story is about a superhero who decides he has had ENOUGH! He's ready to take control of the united states by...killing the president. I mean that's how the story starts it's not a spoiler. Once he does the deed he goes on national television and claims he will not let the corrupt government hurt the citizens anymore. That change MUST come. IN doing so the people of the united states government and army go after the remaining superheroes of the country. So thanks to John's actions of killing the president his old crew who worked with him to save people are now under fire.

Good: I really enjoyed the setting and idea in here. The idea of the president getting murdered and a new law of independence and revolution beginning is interesting. Tom and the crew are all entertaining. I mean NO one is really likeable but glimpses of the past that combine with the current actions it all makes more sense. I also really enjoyed the ending and while it might be bleak to some I thought it elevated the message.

Bad: The art wasn't something I particularly enjoyed. I didn't mind the bleak or doomed atmosphere but more than so many lines and such happening that the action was really hard to tell what was happening. Also everyone had that resting bitch face going on that just wasn't working for me. I also thought the middle dragged a bit and having one less chapter probably would have made it flow better.

Overall I enjoyed the story a lot and the characters despite them all being pieces of shit. I'd rate the story alone a 4 out of 5. BUT this is a graphic novel, and the art wasn't very good, or didn't gel with me. So for that art I'd give it around a 2. So together it's going to make a 3 out of 5. I think for the story alone this is worth checking out. Warren Ellis does a very good job there!

mark monday says

sturm und drang! John Horus, once the leader of the now-defunct superteam the Seven Guns, has taken a

hard look at the U.S. of A. and does not like what he's seen. so he takes matters into his own hands by bloodily dispatching the president (and the vice president. and several of their advisors) and issuing an ultimatum: hold new elections, create change... or else! only his former teammates can stop him. but do they even want to?

in *Black Summer*, Ellis riffs on the theme of *Who Watches the Watchmen*. he doesn't breathe new life into this familiar scenario, and his usual black humor is somewhat absent, but this is still an effective and often exciting story. Ellis' imagination delivers, as usual; particularly enjoyable are the Seven Guns' fascinating abilities and their intriguing backstory - I would love to read a story all about the Seven Guns' wresting control away from their home city's corrupt ruling powers and defiantly standing up to the U.S. government - and not only winning, but being embraced by the public. as an arch-progressive, I also enjoyed the fantasy of the American government finally paying for its misdeeds in the two Gulf Wars. although I suppose my private fantasies stop short at imagining the assassination of Bush and his cronies. or do they? *Black Summer* itself is fully cognizant of how any violent response to the government - whether leftist or coming from the right - is a first step into some exceedingly murky waters.

overall the flaws are minor and rather typical for Ellis: an occasional clumsiness with dialogue and a sense that the narrative is being rushed towards its climax. his story is really aided by Juan Jose Ryp's art; the back cover describes it as "insanely detailed" and I think that about sums it up, along with the words hyperreal and pyrotechnic (for the latter, quite literally at times - there's so much fire!).

best of all is the conception and design of John Horus. and his floating eyes! he pretty much blows all other characters away when he appears.

Zedsdead says

Riveting setup: a renowned superhero walks into a press conference covered in blood and announces that he has just "executed" the president, vice-president, and a number of advisers and secret service agents, for "war crimes and stealing elections". (Bush is never mentioned by name.)

The rest of the book fails to deliver, as bitchy, unlikable heroes fight their way to a dull, predictable finish devoid of tension. In the absence of a gripping plot, a story at least needs someone to root for. *Black Summer* provides neither.

Ill D says

Not too long after *Watchmen* was released to panoramic commercial/critical success, all sorts of people within and (far more importantly) without the comic community realized something (not so) profound: comics did not have to be the stupid, puerile, (Comic Code Approved) ethically-black-and-white fantasies that they always were (for the most part) from the Golden Age onward. With this insurmountable benchmark heavily radiating across all future publications, graphic novels have had the bifurcated choice to either

continue chugging immutably along or to continue to push the bounds of sequential narration, breaching the limits of the medium that Moore/Gibbons so well utilized, then deconstructed to revolutionary effect. Warren Ellis' *Black Summer* tries to stand in the same line with this giant of yore but, without a firm structure, finds its automaton of straw crashing and burning all the way to the end, falling far short of its ostensible influence(s) and most profound predecessor.

Where *Watchmen* begins with a murder – so to does *Black Summer*. Where *Watchmen* employs capes riddled with flaws and internal disagreements – so to does *Black Summer*. Both utilize then amplify well known tropes (i.e, anti-authoritarianism) which singe and tear across their respective stories. However, while *Watchmen* masterfully blended the old and established with it's own hefty dashes of the avant-garde and morally ambiguous to create a tale that was as coherent as it was brilliant in its conceptual analysis of Human Nature – *Black Summer* (no matter how well it tries to riff off of ...) devoid of any profundity, doesn't even deserve to be in the same orbit as such.

Appropriating the work of others is nothing new and is a phenomenon that has stretched across all cultures, religions, and societies throughout human history. Straddling the lines between homage/respect and “straight jackin'”/outright theft – incorporating the works of others into one's own can be a daunting minefield of sorts. While indubitably influenced by such: Ellis has done a crap job with his referential insertions that range from simple (the intro assassination) toward the maudlin and poorly-executed (dialogue between the protagonists does little to develop them let alone texture the story further). With little to care about, I felt just as dehumanized as the (faux) heroes within – fully covered facades obfuscating essentially non-existent characters and the paltry story they have been damned to be part of.

So that's really that. Jimmy Page might have ripped off the intro for *Stairway* from another band (*Spirit*) but was able to take the work of others and masterfully reshape it to fit his vision. Page might have created the most memorable song of all time yet, it's the stochastic process underlying it that musicians, authors, and artists have been employing for centuries. Most notably, the most recent and important development in the sonic arts, Hip-Hop, is propelled by the possession, repossession, cycling, and recycling of established works (no matter their quality). DJ's and MC's have a duty not just to, ‘move the crowd’ but, a far deeper responsibility to mine, interpret, reinterpret, then breathe fire into the works they have lifted. Ellis by contrast, has performed a weak cut-and-paste operation that is far to sparing in its application of external sources, and wallows way too much in it's own original constructions that could have gained immeasurably far more from without than within.

Kate Sherrod says

I admire the ballsy gutsiness of this story more than anything else. A fed up superhero may be the only thing that could save us from King Trump! But my eyes are smarting from the art. There's insanely detailed and there's baroque and then there's this. It's too much. And I wasn't a fan of the colors either. But what an idea!

Koen says

The "Guns" are enemies number 1 till 7 after Gun John kills the prez...

Storywise I thought this was definitely something new, but too far fetched and definitely towards the end I

found myself losing interest.. The ending then also let me down a bit, but all in all I had fun reading it. The artwork had me in doubt: at times I thought it was magnificent with all the details worked out, but then again it was too busy, giving me headaches ..

Still, definitely worth a gander if you happen to stumble across this one.

Anthony Vacca says

The lesser of the two Warren Ellises fails unimpressively here at his attempt to reimagine Watchmen for the post-Sept. 11 age. A plot involving one of an elite team of superheroes who goes bananas and butchers most of the executive branch serves as a platform for Ellis to make undercooked grumblings about the Bush administration, justice, vigilantism, and I dunno, I guess violence. Add some nonsense about superpowers being derived from highly advanced guns, a pack of bland sociopaths for heroes, careless cram sessions of uninteresting backstory and a fuckton of explosions, and you have the half-baked dump cake that is *Black Summer*. One star for an eye-catching cover, and another for artist Juan José Ryp, who at least seemed to be having fun.

Jesse A says

Didn't care for this one. Like Ellis was trying a little to hard. Interesting premise but not well executed.
