



Aleister & Adolf

Douglas Rushkoff, Michael Avon Oeming (Illustrations)

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Media theorist and documentarian Douglas Rushkoff weaves a mind-bending tale of iconography and mysticism against the backdrop of a battle-torn Europe. In a story spanning generations, and featuring some of the most notable and notorious idealists of the 20th century, legendary occultist Aleister Crowley develops a powerful and dangerous new weapon to defend the world against Adolf Hitler's own war machine spawning an unconventional new form of warfare that is fought not with steel, but with symbols and ideas. Unfortunately, these intangible arsenals are much more insidious and perhaps much more dangerous than their creators could have ever conceived.

"Rushkoff is a cultural treasure and an eccentric author of big, strange ideas, never less than fascinating and always entertaining." -Warren Ellis, author of Gun Machine, Red, Trees, and Transmetropolitan

"Douglas has been one of my personal heroes, and I've been a most attentive reader of anything he cares to put between covers, knowing that his combination of a cold eye and a warm heart is guaranteed to astonish and embolden my own thinking about what's possible in the world--about what's possible to enact in the space between one human being and another. He occupies the ground of our most immediate perplexities, and his reports of what he finds are breaking news." -Jonathan Lethem, author of The Best American Comics and The Fortress of Solitude

Aleister & Adolf Details

Date : Published November 15th 2016 by Dark Horse Originals

ISBN : 9781506701042

Author : Douglas Rushkoff , Michael Avon Oeming (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 88 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Historical, Historical Fiction, Comic Book, Occult, Fantasy

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From Reader Review Aleister & Adolf for online ebook

Dan says

review - <http://geekpronblog.blogspot.com/2018...>

Grayson says

This was really cool. The interpretation of the historical facts and the framing story were fascinating, and the art was astonishing. I got the library to buy this, but now I want my own copy.

Andrew Metadruid says

This graphic novel has it all. Sex. Magic. Sex Magick. War. Death. Occult symbolism and rituals. Conspiracies. History. Historical fiction. Horror. Hilarity. Oh also a great story & art.

cutflowers says

The topic raises an interesting idea but its execution of explaining these topics in any legitimate way was dismal. It was a massive reduction of ideas; a Wikipedia page regarding the topic would have been a more beneficial primer to the topic. This book only serves to introduce the idea of the occult's affiliation with WWII, occult symbols, and their relationship in corporate logos, and specific book titles. Aside from those, I'd say there is nothing in this book worth reading.

The black and white serves its purpose yet the comic is hard to read- sometimes I? did not know where to look, or I? did not know who was speaking or which character was who.

The story was less than average. It was hard to follow, and rushed. The title and cover imply that the story will include Hitler yet he is not present and any allusion to him is indirect. Instead the plot focused on another character and his love-interest as opposed to Hitler and Crowley. Quoting another reviewer, Allison: "Paints Aleister Crowley as a hero even though he was a disgusting pedophile." This book was a waste of time. If you're interested with the idea of the occult + WWII, start with an internet search.

Kayle says

I had high hopes for this. Conceptually, it was new and fresh. The material it draws from is interesting and had so much potential, but the execution was lackluster. My biggest complaint is the physical layout of the panels. They were difficult to follow and lacked coherent flow. The illustration is nicely done, and the black and white serves the plot well. However, it has little cohesiveness beyond that detail.

Waffles says

More like 2.5 stars. It was better than ok, but it just didn't grab me.

William Dramstad says

I talk about this book a lot. I think that the ideas in it are really cool and I tell people about the events in it as if its 100% true.

Melissa says

DNF

Ray says

Douglas Rushkoff is more well-known for writing explorations on cutting edge media, and critiques on the digital economy in particular of late, but he also has an impressively growing body of work in the medium of fictional comics. Aleister & Adolf is the new graphic novel--more like graphic novella sized--that takes up powerful ideas about symbols and utilizes such to delve deeply into the occult in the World War II setting. The Beast himself Aleister Crowley (in his later years) vs the Nazis, a great premise indeed.

It should be said that the black and white art by Michael Avon Oeming is excellent, with solid storytelling in expressive cartoony stylings with an ability to get psychedelic when the need arises. No critiques there, though color would be nice but can't complain about the power of the imagery. However, this review will be more about the writing content.

Aleister & Adolf would have fit well as a classic Vertigo book, but let's be honest Vertigo isn't what it once was and it's good to see Rushkoff at publisher Dark Horse Comics. His last graphic novella formatted book Adolescent Demo Division was published by DC/Vertigo yet the science fiction plot wasn't a perfect fit. Now with the post-Karen Berger comics world Dark Horse is taking up the job.

While I do like these short books like A.D.D. that can be read in one sitting, it would be preferable to have more to read. That's the main problem of Aleister & Adolf. It's too short. Which is a good problem to have; it's a great book and it leaves wanting a lot more. The nature of the comics medium does tell the story very succinctly and everything that needs to be said is said. But one still wishes that there could have been a miniseries several chapters longer to stay in this narrative longer...

Most of all, as for the comics medium, it's perfect for getting into the power of sigil magic upon our world. That's the overall point, isn't it?

So, the plot. Told in flashbacks, an aging war photographer agent goes on a mission to recruit Aleister

Crowley as part of a propaganda operation against Hitler during World War II. The ambiguity over whether the intelligence agencies believe in magick is wonderful. Is Crowley a magician pretending to be an agent or an agent pretending to be a magician? Does it matter if magick is literally "real" so long as the Nazis believe so and can be manipulated? Questions like that remain unanswered and we the readers can only speculate.

The conspiracy theory angle is also worth contemplating. Did Crowley really create the V for Victory signal in the fight against the Swastika? Were the Nazis really practicing genocidal death magic all that time (and if so, can sex magick win against that)? Was Rudolph Hess a part of this operation? Then there is the name-dropping: Ian Fleming, of course. Even Jack Parsons and L. Ron Hubbard is briefly mentioned, which is a delight to any fan of this kind of trivia.

Aleister & Adolf touches on so much, and it's a shame it ends after as quick a read as that. The journey shouldn't be over though: After reading no doubt one will be online all night further researching the power of sigils and all the above subjects.

There's more going on in the world than we might now, and the psychic plane of ideas may yet be more worth paying attention to than we have all been told... This short comic certainly doesn't have all the answers, but it's a great starting primer for learning more.

I know I'll be lending my copy around. In this uncertain age where it seems like the good ideas are losing, I hope more people start thinking this through. I hope more people will be reading.

Sotiris Makrygiannis says

I just read this waiting for the dentist and inside I found the history of modern brands

Jon Hewelt says

I finished this a while ago, but didn't know what to say about it.

The premise is very interesting, but the execution leaves something to be desired.

To my understanding and to my memory, Douglas Rushkoff is a media theorist with, at least later in his career, a particular focus on cyber-culture. Reading some of the titles of his work, I get a slightly conspiratorial vibe and wonder how factual his work might be. But make no mistake: I am intrigued, especially by the ideas he presents in Aleister & Adolf.

Aleister & Adolf is a graphic novel focused on the power of symbols, especially as they relate to the occult. It expands on theory that noted occultist Aleister Crowley aided the British in their World War II propaganda efforts by crafting symbols that were "more powerful" than Hitler's use of the swastika.

That, to me, is interesting in and of itself. From what I've read before, I know Crowley was not the type of magician who'd wave a magic wand. His magic was more primal. His magic focused on nature and the

human psyche, and not so much on alchemy or prestidigitation. With that in mind, it strikes me as completely plausible that Crowley could have aided in the war efforts, and that the use of symbols could be an effective means of psychological warfare.

If Aleister & Adolf were just about that--occult propaganda efforts during the war--I would have been very satisfied. Again, I don't know how factual the book would have been, but I could guess Rushkoff would have had some sources to back up his theory, and it would have been interesting to see that information illustrated.

Instead, Aleister & Adolf chooses to focus on a stupid fucking United States secret fucking agent trying to infiltrate Crowley's inner circle and the whole graphic novel gets bogged down in a stupid fucking romantic subplot. By all means, introduce a skeptical character: it's a great surrogate for the reader's skepticism, I'm sure. But when that skepticism completely derails the central ideas of the book!

Jesus Christ, man, what's your goal? Do you want us to understand and believe in the power of Crowley's symbolic tactics? A prologue and epilogue suggests you want us to connect his work with our present-day culture of advertising, logos and slogan standing in for something bigger than what the products actually represent.

But at times, it feels like you're just here to take the mick out of Crowley, paint him as an old fool who had no idea what he was talking about. And the illustrator seems to confirm this! After the book is done, there's a little blurb from the illustrator, wondering if Crowley was just "trolling" everybody. Again, I can understand the skepticism, but it's disheartening to read that from someone who just spent I don't know how many months to illustrate this damn thing. It taints the efficacy of the message, I think.

Augh, frustrating. I'd still recommend this as a primer on Crowley and what he's about. And the idea of symbols as power is an important one. I just wish the narrative these two built around that idea was a little more cohesive.

Ian Brunner says

Aleister and Adolf is an interesting take on what could have been happening behind the scenes of World War 2 Europe. It details a secret, occult war where Aleister Crowley creates a new weapon to combat Hitler's march towards victory. The story itself is very interesting, and has lots of little nuances that make you pause and think while reading.

As someone who has a macabre fascination with World War 2(it's what drew me to Mignola's: Hellboy) I really wanted to love this, and I can almost give it three stars. The art of is phenomenal, and the use of black and white makes the comic feel darker, but the pages feel busy. A lot of times I felt like I didn't know where to look on the page. Other than that, the story flies by. The suspense it builds is almost immediately broken because of the length of the comic.

Mainly I feel that the story works but has problems. Hitler plays almost no role in the story yet somehow generates most of the action. Rushkoff makes no effort to delve into Crowley's story. It feels as if he only took the time to skim his Wikipedia page. The story gets muddled and confused, and I found myself going back from time to time to sort out what had happened.

All in all it's a story I enjoyed but didn't get much out of. It's not something worth spending 20 dollars on.

Leah says

this was so promising. and so, so disappointing: all the predictable trappings of a WWII comic, with a dash of esoterica-lite.

Wim Dewilde says

I expected so much from this comic because of the praise it got from well respected authors, because of the subject-matter and because of the promising art. But somehow, all of this never coalesced and never catches the imagination.

Which is a pity because there is so much potential in the story. You have the ambiguity that is Aleister Crowley: a modern times shaman or a very clever fraud -happily the two aren't mutually exclusive.

You have the historically correct fascination of top-ranking nazi's with the supernatural. Be it Hess' dependency to astrology to cover up his uncertainties. Be it Himmler's weird world view, he could have been 'a true believer' but he could also been trying to rewrite history so to make the German people believe in new icons or idols... but it might also have been a slight of hand to distract the audience from what was happening.

But maybe the biggest missed opportunity is the role symbols play in our lives. From a shorthand to feelings and concepts, to building blocks or just the dumbed down, superficial reduction of ideas.

The black and white art serves the story well. Sometimes the black and white catches the diametrical point of views. Sometimes they add to the confusion of the protagonist.
But they fail at covering the gaps in the story.

Chad says

I had high hopes for this, spies using Aleister Crowley to subvert Hitler through his obsession with the occult. Yes, count me in please! Unfortunately, it just turned out dull and uninteresting. It did have some interesting concepts like the Nazi's were using the swastika fueled by death magic from the holocaust to help sway the war. And the V for Victory symbol was to try and counteract that power. What this contained most was a fat, old, naked Aleister Crowley spouting a bunch of nonsensical bullshit while severely lacking a plot.

Received a review copy from Dark Horse and Edelweiss. All thoughts are my own and in no way influenced by the aforementioned.
