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From the author of Savage Membrane and Guns, Drugs and Monsters comes thenewest Cal McDonald mystery. Full color.

Criminal Macabre Details

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Author : Steve Niles , Ben Templesmith (Illustrator)

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Download and Read Free Online Criminal Macabre Steve Niles , Ben Templesmith (Illustrator)

From Reader Review Criminal Macabre for online ebook

Laura says

With a supernatural world that's totally unique, and eerily dark, beautiful, and blurry artwork, this tale of a PI investigating a vampire sighting quickly devolves into a crazy monster summit that Cal finds himself involved in. Interesting, and certainly not for everyone, this was a slice of some dark pie indeed.

Kite Johnson says

Having never read Criminal Macabre, knowing anything about Cal McDonald or even what the series was about except for something to do with the supernatural, it made it intriguing to delve into. Our protagonist, our hero – sort of – is quite the complex character. He is a little Sam Spade and a little Donald Lam, a little Sam Durell and a little Sam and Dean Winchester with some Constantine sprinkled in. He's brash, sarcastic and tough with hints of vulnerability that might come to pass in future issues yet to be explored. As it stands, he is a complex man with a little problem – he attracts the occult and the superordinary like a magnet, whether he wants to or not.

The series opens up with our reluctant gumshoe, and he is reluctant as it is soon explained later on, sitting in a police station and trying to describe to some unwilling detectives just what happened to cause so much property damage and why there were bodies to be found and he along with them. The problem is the story involves vampires, werewolves, the undead and a plague from hundreds of years ago. Simple enough, but no one is buying – much to Cal's chagrin. During his story we are introduced to Cal and the world he lives in and it is far from normal. Because the book was named Criminal Macabre, it should be expected to be a little different.

Even though Cal had appeared in a couple of comics beforehand as well as two prose novels, this first miniseries from 2003 would be the start of Cal's run in the four colour world up until this day all written by Steve Niles. It is a good start being both funny, engaging and daresay, macabre featuring appropriately moody artwork from Ben Templesmith. The series is gritty and gruesome under Templesmith's pencil and is a good fit for the book, much like he was on 30 Days of Night for IDW with Niles.

There have been a lot of follow-up series to this first mini, and if they are half as good as this one, then it looks to be good reading moving forward. Niles has proven himself many times over on many titles and his creation, Cal McDonald, can stand proud among many of literature's great detectives.

4 out of 5

<http://thetelltalemind.com/2013/11/24...>

Grayson says

Cal MacDonald is an ex-cop, who became a private investigator after he spectacularly failed the department's drug test. He has a nose for the weird, and this collection features a mystery that starts with some strange

behavior by local monsters and takes Cal to the sewers and other odd places.

The writing was absolutely superb, and I intend to read every issue of the various miniseries and novels Steve Niles has penned about Cal. Templesmith's art was great, although occasionally I had to stop and really study a panel to figure out what was going on. Still, it was worth it for the dark tones it gave the story.

Wonderful book.

Damon says

This is pretty good. Templesmith is right on here, as usual, so not much needs said there.

Steve Niles often doesn't do much for me - I basically bought this because it was super cheap and I knew I'd at least like the art - but it's not a bad read.

There's definitely no new ground being broken, and the main character is that same wisecracking degenerate supernatural private eye character that pops up all over these days, but eh... It's still okay.

Just about everything in this book is super obvious, but even with that, there were still a few parts that made me chuckle. I dunno - it's not going to be on my all-time favorite list, but I won't pass on any other stuff I see around either (as long as it's the stuff Templesmith).

Sean Carlin says

At the heart of *Criminal Macabre* is a conceptually clever notion: take the hardboiled detective archetype epitomized by Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe and recast him as a contemporary occultic detective à la Alan Moore's John Constantine. Cal McDonald is the story's cynical, hard-drinking antihero with friends in low places (and they don't come much lower than the underworld!).

The story's central mystery -- which I won't spoil here -- turns out to be quite clever, and anchors Steve Niles' take on monster mythology in a catalyzing event right out of the ancient-history books. That, for my money, was one of the coolest aspects of the story.

Now, Cal himself is a pretty cool customer, but I ultimately don't think taking the archetypal hardboiled gumshoe and making him an investigator of the *supernatural* was enough to distinguish him -- to make him a truly memorable character. He doesn't have a transformational arc, or even any appreciable emotional investment in the case. Now, one could certainly argue Philip Marlowe never had much of an arc -- he was a serialized hero like James Bond, who solved one case and then moved on to the next -- but if you look at more modern reinterpretations of that archetype, like Jake Gittes in *Chinatown* and Joe Hallenbeck in *The Last Boy Scout*, those detectives served plots that tied directly into their traumatic backstories and gave the stories themselves real emotional resonance. If nothing else, Marlowe was at least given to profound philosophical reflection ("What did it matter where you lay once you were dead? ... You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you fell. Me, I was part of the nastiness now."), and we don't get much of that from Cal, which seems like a wasted opportunity to endow *Criminal Macabre* with some thematic depth.

And there's no reason even a *paranormal* investigator can't have an emotional stake in his case, be it a serialized hero (like Fox Mulder from *The X-Files*) or one-off protagonist (think Frank Bannister in Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh's *The Frighteners*). Stories about crime (the work of Richard Price, for instance), as well as those about the supernatural (Stephen King, for starters), are fertile ground to explore themes of morality and mortality; *Criminal Macabre* is about both crime *and* the supernatural -- it's right there in the title! -- yet lacks the kind of philosophical heft one might expect from a genre hybrid like this. Ultimately what we're left with is a "cool" story without a lot of genuine heart.

One other criticism: The story is set in Los Angeles (where I've lived for fifteen years), but feels like it could take place just about anywhere: St. Louis, Gotham City -- wherever. It doesn't feel *specific* to its chosen location the way *The Big Sleep* and *Chinatown* did. Why set it in L.A. if you're not going to explore those particular Tinseltown tropes? A lot of it, actually, is spent *underneath* the streets of Los Angeles, and I'm not altogether sure such a network of subterranean passages even exists below the pavement here as it does in, say, New York.

Given that this is a *graphic* novel, I should briefly address the illustrations: Ben Templesmith's moody, atmospheric artwork has a certain "sketchbook" quality that really suits Niles' script. There's something vaguely seedy about it, and despite often minimal details and a limited color palette, Templesmith compels the reader to take a close look at each panel, same way you might study the frame of a horror movie for monsters lurking either in shadow or off-camera. It's almost as though he *forces* your eyes to readjust to each new panel, same as they would if you stepped into a darkened cellar. It's minimalistic but *very* effective.

In summary, *Criminal Macabre* is a quick read, and worth it if you like this kind of material, but it is too narratively underdeveloped to ever be considered a classic of the genre. Too bad.

Jayna says

I really liked the story here: hardboiled detective, monsters, legends, plague... The concept and overall plot were great. However, it started off a bit slow, with mostly text, and not that much need for images - although I enjoy reading, I was starting to wonder why this wasn't a prose novel. It did pick up, the last two thirds or so were really good, up until the very end - the climax seemed to resolve a bit suddenly, but part of this feeling may have been from the art.

How I felt about the art changed from panel to panel. The spooky horror atmosphere was fantastic throughout, but sometimes the style of drawing characters just threw me - in some panels they were so distorted I wasn't entirely sure who the character was (usually I could pick it up from dialogue or context, but couldn't visually recognize them), or what was happening. This was especially apparent in a few panels during the climax, where I'm still not entirely sure what happened. On the other hand, there were also panels where characters looked fantastic - I especially liked the stylized and very scary shadowy version of werewolves.

Overall, I like the concept, the story, the feel, but was thrown in a couple of places by pacing and distorted art style. I still enjoyed the story, and would try another Cal McDonald book.

Rob Findlay says

This is the best god-damned comic of the decade so far....and I'm not exaggerating. Niles and Templesmith's

masterpiece.

BUY IT NOW, IT WILL OWN YOU BITCH!

Evelina says

It was a very good read, but what mostly drew my attention were the superb Ben Templesmith's drawings. They add to the scariness so much! Cal is strong, complex protagonist, a mix of Sam Spade and Winchester brothers, a tough sarcastic detective with a ghoul for a partner. They are up against monsters like alien zombies and vampires and meanwhile Cal turns to drugs and alcohol every now and then to help him get through the day. The storyline was flawless since it had everything in it, perhaps a bit dense because at moments it felt like I was reading a novel.

Christopher says

I am extending SPCtYPDKED because I made it up so I can do what I want! Ok, this one is from Dark Horse, so you've probably heard of them if you ever read anything that isn't Marvel/DC, but whatever. Close enough.

I came to LA following a severed head, and I've been here ever since.

Criminal Macabre is a noir comic about an ex-cop, Cal, who attracts monsters in a world that doesn't believe in them. Monsters like vampires, werewolves, zombies, etc. The usual. Cal does what anyone would do if presented with monsters constantly. He drinks. A lot. And pops pills. A lot.

There's a lot of good atmosphere in this one. Cal is a smart-ass and a mostly functional alcoholic. He has an informant ghoul, because why not. And he solves cases for people, usually of the weird variety.

This particular set of five issues is about a series of crimes that don't make sense. There are a group of werewolves acting as thieves instead of murdering people for food. There's a group of vampires assaulting a ghoul, again, not for food. There is collaboration between monsters that just doesn't happen. But Cal doesn't start off too worried, because after all, the old superstitions aren't true, and everything dies to a bullet.

Like I said, you can kill a vampire with a bullet. But you better damn well be sure your gun's loaded.

Like any good noir, it has a little bit of cheek to it, but never goes for laugh out loud funny. But the humour fits the tone, and is as snarky as needed.

I thought vampires were cursed?

They just like to think they are. You know, for the drama.

The art is something a lot of people are going to have a problem with. It's odd in that part of me wants to just say it isn't good. But part of it is certainly just the style, which is done to fit, and help set, the mood of the series. This series shouldn't have clean art. Though perhaps it should have better art than this. I'm not versed enough in the style to know how much "better" art would actually hurt the tone the series is going for. Have a sample....

Overall, this is a solid noir joint. It's not amazing in a "you must go out of your way to read this now!" sort of way. But it's good if you like noir and comics and happen to have it in front of you. There's nothing particularly wrong with it, which is way more than most comics I read have going for them. I'm going to read some more of Cal McDonald's adventures.

3.5 stars

Do you trust me?

Well... yeah.

Do you think I'm crazy?

Of course.

Mouse says

I really like the idea of this book and the noir type vibe it gives off. It's just really a shame that I can't tell what the Hell is going on because of the art. I understand it's a particular style, but seriously it's just so dark and scratchy that I can't make things out! There's a part where Cal is in the Evidence Warehouse and there's a guy in there and apparently he turned into a werewolf, but then he just died and I couldn't tell how! It's really frustrating at times!

The good thing is that this book introduced me to Cal McDonald and I found out that not only are there other graphic novels, but there are also novels written about him. So maybe reading a Cal novel might be a better fit than one of these trades.

Lindsay says

This could easily be someone's five star read, but it ended up being out of my comfort zone. Steve Niles has created a character who is both sarcastic and vile, which resulted in some seriously magical moments. Cal MacDonald is not your typical gumshoe. He attracts the bizarre. We're talking werewolves, vampires and ghouls. In fact, his partner Mo'Lock is a member of the undead. Is it any wonder Cal turns to drugs and

alcohol on an hourly basis? Original, yes, but overall, I found the stories to all be relatively the same. I received a copy of *Criminal Macabre* from Netgalley, although I don't think this is the one I read. There doesn't seem to be one here on Goodreads that fits it. It had the same cover, but was over 500 pages long.

Chris says

Wonderfully fun graphic novel. The artwork takes an already cool story and makes it even better. Because the drawings are often blurred, you have to take extra effort to follow the story, which makes it more involving and scary -- an effect that worked equally well in *30 Days of Night*. Cal McDonald is an awesome character who's wisecracks add a much-needed dose of humor to the generally dark story.

Patrick Nichol says

Wow, Sam Spade meets *Supernatural*!

What a cool collection. I bought this book after meeting the fabulous Steve Niles at a comic convention in Calgary a couple of weeks ago.

And I'm glad I did. Cal McDonald is a hard-boiled detective who investigates monsters and has a ghoul for a partner.

McDonald is a pill-popping, coke-snorting, chain-smoking, whiskey-chasing cynic who's our last line of defence against the paranormal.

Brain-sucking weasel? Check.

Alien zombies? Check.

Vampires? Check.

Anybody who loves Carl Kolchak or Sam and Dean Winchester should check out this collection.

Cal's a keeper.

III D says

With naught but a glance, I immediately noticed artwork redolent as reminiscent of another comic I particularly enjoyed years ago: Warren Ellis' (still incomplete) *Fell*. Indeed, Wikipedia proved my suspicions correct, the talented Templeton showed up on this track as well. Featuring his grimy take on watercolors, an evocative feel became increasingly well nestled in with Niles' good writing.

As smooth as my kind intro might sound, definite faults prevent this offering from achieving anything beyond that of a 3-star rating. A plot almost as murky as the jet blacks and gooey greys within became overshadowed within its own, admittedly, convoluted vision. Grafting the essence of John Constantine in a

more atmospherically inclined work, *Criminal Macabre* is more derivative than O.C. (original content).

Ultimately this is the first course of many so say what you will about books and covers. Hopefully portending something greater my fingers are tepidly moving toward the next one.

Paul Mirek says

This is the first in what's arguably the author's second-best-known series (and as unlikely as it was that *30 Days of Night*, Vol. 1 made it to the screen, I'm not holding my breath for the incorrigible Cal McDonald to head to Hollywood anytime soon). Niles does good work when he's riffing on a solid genre framework -- here, the hardboiled gumshoe drawn into a case a few rungs above his paygrade.

This is popcorn pulp, lacking the emotional depth of some of the author's other work but making up for it with a zany sense of humor and Templesmith's Steadmanesque scribblings. Sadly the ending is a little too pat given the nihilistic tone up to that point, but I understand the attraction of lining everything up nicely for the next series. It may be less than memorable, but it sure is fun while it lasts.
