



Usagi Yojimbo, Vol. 17: Duel at Kitanoji

Stan Sakai

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Nothing comes easy for rabbit ronin Usagi, not even being a spectator at the planned duel between his former teacher Katsuichi and Katsuichi's former rival Nakamura Koji. Before the duel even begins, Usagi becomes embroiled in a dispute between Koji and a local fencing school that demands the samurai challenge its master. Along the way, Usagi discovers a devastating secret - a weakness in Koji's style. It's a secret that could save his teacher's life, but at the cost of his own honor.

Usagi Yojimbo, Vol. 17: Duel at Kitanoji Details

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Author : Stan Sakai

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From Reader Review Usagi Yojimbo, Vol. 17: Duel at Kitanoji for online ebook

(Jen) The Artist Librarian says

Usagi Yojimbo (Book 17) Duel at Kitanoji is the collected issues #53-60 of Usagi Yojimbo Volume Three. Published in 2003, over 10 years after Stan Sakai began this fabled series, it's safe to assume that Sakai has hit his stride in his writing and illustration style.

Compared to other contemporary comics I'm familiar with, Sakai uses a traditional style of panels. In this book, I never observed any bleeds or open panels; only simple, rectangular and square-shaped closed panels bound by gutters. Though using only a single color (black) in his illustrations (minus the color cover), Sakai is a master with pen and ink. He judiciously incorporates linework, hatching, and other techniques to create a variety of patterning that helps to identify different characters and figures (e.g. the group of mountain bandits in "Vendetta" all sport unique designs on their happi coats and tunics). He is also able to get a variety of tones and shades by varying the weight and spacing of his lines. On page 62, to illustrate a montage type of sequence in "Images from a Winter's Day," Sakai uses thin, sketch-like linework to depict Usagi speaking with various people as he searches for a Patriarch's son. A normally-inked Usagi walks in the center of this panel, illustrating his travels and the time passing as his journey continues. Sakai also incorporates some manga iconography or symbols, but my favorite is one I think he made up himself! In "Vendetta" on page 27, he uses a huge black question mark superimposed on a white exclamation point to describe the surprise the mountain bandits have at being surrounded by law enforcement officers, which I thought was very clever.

I also enjoyed the episodic nature of the series. Even though I came into Usagi Yojimbo "mid-series," I didn't have any problems following along with the story. Each issue seems to contain one story arc, occasionally branching into more than one issue (e.g. "Crows" has 3 parts), but the narrative reminded me of Abarembō Shōgun, a Japanese television show my dad and grandparents love to watch. Sakai's work also reminds me of Brian Jacques' Redwall novels. They both use anthropomorphic animal characters, don't shy away from showing the consequences of combat (including death), and incorporate elements from historical worlds and codes of honor: Jacques' drawing from medieval Europe and their knights, while Sakai draws from Feudal Japan and their samurai. Having loved Redwall since middle school, I think I've found a new series to fill the void left by Jacques' death several years ago. I can't wait to read Usagi Yojimbo from the beginning.

Evan says

The overarching, titular duel brought all the shorts together, like some sort of nice, meandering travelogue. A+.

Oliver Hodson says

I wish the duel was a bit longer, but the book was very interesting in terms of the themes of masterhood and

fatherhood with usagi, his sensei and his son dwelling on the nature/nurture debate from the rabbit samurai angle!

Eric Mikols says

The whole volume was good but the Duel at Kitanoji was great. I also read it while my iPod was playing well-matched music so I got a pretty great experience out of the whole thing.

Alex Firer says

The genre of "deeply personal serialized adventure comics", those animals that are neither fish nor fowl in the endless ideological war between Marvel and Fantagraphics is a rich one and I can't believe a mere 17 volumes in and it feels like the adventure has just begun. How many months have passed in the story in the 65 odd issues I've read? About four or five? What a ridiculously addictive pool. Neither post modern nor purely commercial they give you that high without the vibe of an overly involved editor dipping his fingers in the filth pool. The only tragic thing is these series which are 27 (27!) volumes in are nigh impossible to read in order. OH WELL HERE I GO HOORAY

Brian says

I bought this volume back in July with a few others that I read immediately, but I wanted to prolong the enjoyment and give myself something to look forward to, so I held off on this one. I'm surprised I was able to hold out for almost three months, although now I'm bummed again that I don't have the next one yet. As always, this volume is phenomenal, a stunning example of impeccable storytelling.

Jose says

This whole series is awesome.

Alex says

I was soooo hyped about the duel between Katsuichi and Hoji. I think the events leading to it were a bit stretched and the duel could last a bit longer, but still. it was a great story with a lot of thrills.

Quality remains top-notch. In Usagi we trust. Off to 18th.
