

## “PLEASURE MODEL: NETHERWORLD BOOK ONE” (Book Review)

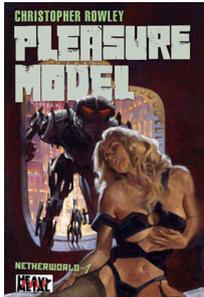
Written by Michael Compton  
Sunday, 28 March 2010 11:08

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When watching films such as *BLADE RUNNER* or *DARK CITY*, it becomes quite clear that, while there are some great suspense-noir flicks out there, and there are some great science-fiction features, a hybrid of the two genres (be it tech-noir, future noir or cyberpunk) is nigh unbeatable. *HEAVY METAL*, “the world’s foremost adult illustrated fantasy magazine” has always been well aware of this.

Its creators knew so back in the '70s, when they published the sci-fi/fantasy comics of Enki Bilal and Moebius (the latter of whom was the chief artistic influence behind the film *THE FIFTH ELEMENT*); they knew it when *HEAVY METAL* became the 1981 animated feature, which included the hardboiled segment “Harry Canyon”; and the tradition is still maintained today. A new *HEAVY METAL* feature slated for 2012 is set to be helmed (at least in part) by David Fincher, director of such neo-noir favorites as *SE7EN* and *ZODIAC* (not to mention the grossly underrated *ALIEN 3*).



The magazine, now under the more than ample guidance of editor-in-chief Kevin Eastman, recently partnered with Tor Books, a publishing outfit equally well-known for its sci-fi/fantasy titles, to produce *Heavy Metal Pulp*, a line designed to team the top illustrators and designers in modern comics with the best noir/sci-fi writers in the biz. The idea was to create a series of illustrated novels blending science fiction and detective noir, and the first product to be pumped out was *PLEASURE MODEL: NETHERWORLD BOOK ONE*.

Written by Christopher Rowley (author of *BRAZIL BROKETAILED* and *STARHAMMER*) and illustrated by Justin Norman (*ELEPHANTMAN*), *PLEASURE MODEL* is set in the year 2068, when all facets of the police, military and political system are rife with corruption and greed. We’re introduced to the ever-jaded Rook Venner, Senior Investigating Officer, Homicide of the

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HudVal PD. A new case falls into Rook’s lap, and it’s just the type Rook has spent his entire career trying to avoid: the ugly, allegedly political assassination of General Manuel Sangacha. Rook’s key eyewitness is Plesur, an illegal, genetically spawned female designed for one thing and one thing only: the sexual gratification of its owner (erotic fiction being yet another genre HEAVY METAL has always specialized in). PLEASURE MODEL is jointly the story of Mistress Julia, a high-end dominatrix and the only other witness to the Sangacha murder, now on the run from the authorities as well as anyone else who may have it in for her.

Nothing particularly new here; we’re all familiar with stories like this, though PLEASURE MODEL does make enthusiastic use of these popular archetypes to tell a story that’s incredibly fun, if not always fresh. The book also conveys the social/political climate and technological advancements of its invented future world in unique ways that are subtle and flow naturally within the narrative, where many other books of this type simply beat you over the head with such information.

Aside from the movie’s so-so Sammy Hagar title song, HEAVY METAL has seldom let down its ever-growing multimedia fan base—and this latest venture only further distinguishes it as the be-all/end-all brand in adult sci-fi/fantasy entertainment.

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