

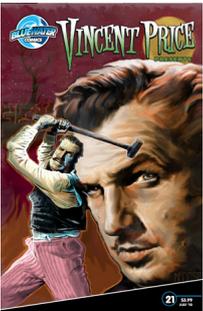
"VINCENT PRICE PRESENTS" #21 (Comics Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans
Saturday, 21 August 2010 15:37



Ronald Bassett's 1966 novel *WITCHFINDER GENERAL* tells the partially fictionalized story of Matthew Hopkins, a notoriously vicious 17th-century witchhunter. Two years later, the book served as the basis for Michael Reeves' oft-censored and controversial film of the same name (released in the U.S. as *THE CONQUEROR WORM*), starring Vincent Price in the title role. Now, 42 years later, Bluewater Publications has tossed its hat into the ring with a comics sequel as part of its *VINCENT PRICE PRESENTS* series.

The Rondo Award-nominated title has been hit-or-miss for me so far. In the beginning, issues were structured in the classic horror-anthology format: three or four short, shriek-inducing stories with a horrifying host (in this case Price) introducing each tale. Rarely did one of the tales completely blow me away, but I'm a sucker for even the worst bite-size horror comics, and the odds that at least one of them would put a ghastly grin on my face were enough to keep me coming back for more. Later on, the issues became single servings, containing only one long story apiece, and with that change came the growing amount of entire issues that simply didn't do it for me anymore. But for the most part, I've enjoyed the previous efforts that served as tie-ins to classic Price films, including *THE TINGLER*, *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES* and now this one.



The latest addition, simply titled "Witchfinder," reveals the origins of Matthew Hopkins. There are no witches on his mind at this point in his life, however—only Bethany, a fellow villager. They have had very little interaction in the past, but that doesn't stop him from being insanely infatuated with her. One morning, a witchfinder rides into town, nervously greeted at the town square by villagers who can sense the impending doom. Completely oblivious to the situation, Matthew still only thinks of Bethany and their first momentary encounter the previous day. It's obvious she doesn't reciprocate her admirer's psychotic feelings, but to what lengths will Matthew go when he realizes this?

There is very little in the way of dialogue or narration contained within these pages. It should

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only take most readers a few minutes to breeze through this little monster, but for a story not containing very much substance, it is somewhat enjoyable, since the lack of character interaction helps pick up the pace of a rather dull midsection.

The reader gets a sense early on where this story is headed. The only question is: How despicable of a person will Matthew become? It's as if writer Mark Miller spent all his time and effort baking two delicious pieces of bread, then forgot all about the meat for his sandwich. It should have been cut in half, making way for an additional terror tale to be included.

When it comes to the artwork, the idiom "don't judge a book by its cover" could not fit this series better. Jim McDermott's strikingly painted Price portraits have graced the covers of numerous issues, his Basil Gogos-esque color schemes making each one jump right off the rack and into your hands. However, after a quick glance through the innards, you'll quickly notice the load was blown on the front, and you'll be tempted to put it right back where it came from. There isn't much that can be said about Alex Lopez's illustrations for this issue; they art is quite simple and unstimulating, while the computer-generated colors make it even more of an eyesore.

VINCENT PRICE PRESENTS #21 is one I'm not sure if I can recommend or not. Although I did enjoyed our brief time together, it's far from well-executed. It's certainly not the worst comic you could be purchasing, and if you're a fan of the source material, you might get a kick out of this one. And hey, it's such a quick read, you might be able to get away with just reading it in the store and saving yourself \$3.99.



{comments on}