"BRAM STOKER'S DEATH SHIP" #1 (Comic Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans Monday, 14 June 2010 09:56



In Bram Stoker's iconic 1897 novel DRACULA, there is roughly a chapter and a half devoted to the mysterious events that took place on board the Russian ship the *Demeter*. Having sailed from Varna, Bulgaria to the shores of Whitby, England during a violent storm, the schooner is discovered with no crew in sight and the captain's carcass tied to the ship's helm.

Aside from a few entries in his log referring to a "malevolent presence" onboard, little is explained as to exactly what happened after their departure. For over 100 years, this has been all the information we fright fans have had to go on concerning that doomed passage...until now.



IDW Publishing recently released the first issue of BRAM STOKER'S DEATH SHIP, a four-part miniseries (subtitled THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DEMETER, but unrelated to the long-in-development film of that title on the same subject) that intends to shed some light on that dark, cryptic excursion into hell. It's an ambitious task, adding original material to such a long-treasured text, but judging by the opening effort, this series will prove to be a nice little companion piece to Stoker's Victorian-era masterpiece.

We are introduced to a few of the key crewmen (the captain, nine mates, a cook and a young boy) in the opening pages, with a tragic past hinted at for one of them. The story is put into motion as the ship sets sail, complete with boxes of Transylvanian earth in the hold. Unknown to the ship's occupants is just exactly what's lurking within. But when the creature residing below decks decides to indulge its appetite one evening, the remaining crew begin to wonder what it is that they are trapped with.

"BRAM STOKER'S DEATH SHIP" #1 (Comic Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans Monday, 14 June 2010 09:56

Although we already have a rough idea of how this story is ultimately going to close, writer Gary Gerani (co-creator of PUMPKINHEAD!) does an excellent job giving us an all-new set of flesh-and-blood characters to be concerned for, all created practically from scratch. Being a fan of the original novel, I'm honestly not sure in which direction this story will sail next. Artist Stuart Sayger also plays a key role; his cartoonish pencil work and varied watercolors can go from bright and jolly to dark and ominous with a quick turn of the page. The essence of the era is captured perfectly with both pen and brush.

The 32-page debut issue (22 of them devoted to story) is adorned with that \$3.99 cover price which seems to have become more and more in vogue as of late. Assuming the pulse set in this issue continues beating throughout the remainder of the miniseries, I'm willing to bet we'll be at heart-attack status by the final confrontation.

8888

{jcomments on}