Any horror nut worth their own weight in musty old comics can tell you that the EC Comics of the 1950s, along with Warren’s CREEPY and EERIE from the ’70s, are the upper echelon of the bite-size-illustrated-horror world, a benchmark that has been strived toward countless times. Very few, however, have come within a kidney-stone’s throw of capturing the same magic. But that’s why I’m terrifyingly tickled to tell you fright fans about Asylum Press’ upcoming release.

EEEK! is a four-issue series that may have slipped under your radar when it was originally published back in 2005 by Rat Race Comix. However, the kind folks over at Asylum are collecting them into one trade paperback, scheduled for a September release. Each of the 15 tales of terror is chock full of ghastly graphics, ironic comeuppance and that sick sense of humor reminiscent of horror comics’ heyday.

First up is “Deadline of Death.” Stuffed to the gills with winks and nods to some of the medium’s greats, this one tells the tale of Randolph, a wannabe cartoonist who will do anything—to anyone, mind you—for a job at Marvelous Comics. Next is “Lights! Camera! Murder!”; containing illustrations that appear to be partially oil-painted and heavily inked, this little bad boy spins the yarn of a director whose mistreatment of actresses may bring his life to a not-so-happy ending. Very reminiscent of a tale originally published in THE VAULT OF HORROR, “Stuffed” tells of a woman’s love for her collection of deceased pets, and her husband’s do-or-die ambition to rid the house of them.

The title alone of “Just Desserts” references a term coined by EC owner William Gaines, to represent the ironic, deserving fates of each tale’s antagonist. This one takes the phrase literally, as feared food critic Sol travels the world, ruining restaurants’ reputations in pursuit of his ultimate nosh. “Witness to Evil” introduces us to two door-to-door Bible salesmen whose

intentions, at first, seem pure. Along with a bittersweet ending, we get a glimpse into the author’s true feelings toward the Christian church, and the various levels of man’s perception of evil.

Next on the chopping block is “Easy Prey”. A snowy backdrop sets the tone for the desolate tale of a woman on the run who stubbles upon an orphanage for unwanted and forgotten children. One of the lengthier pieces in this collection, it does a stellar job of keeping the reader guessing exactly which character is the victim by unveiling each one’s cloudy past. “Colour Me Evil” is a simple yet effective tale whose intentions lie outside the realm of supernatural horror, and within the sometimes more frightening territory of one man‘s hate for others. And “Head Trip” is about a man whose eclectic taste in music leads him into possession of a record that is anything but easy listening.

That brings us roughly to the midsection of this terror tome. In an effort to avoid overstepping my bounds, I’ll leave the remaining spooky surprises for you to discover at your own risk.

Although I adore every aspect of this book, the original yet still slightly familiar artwork takes the meat cake. It’s guaranteed that if you were to flip through this book without any contributors’ names attached, you’d assume each tale was illustrated by a different artist—and you’d then be shocked to learn that Australian Jason Paulos did all the work himself! His flexible skills bounce from one style to another, ranging from crisp and clean to dripping and filthy. While some are painstakingly detailed, others are barren. Every story contains black and white panels, with varying levels of grey shading to lighten the mood or to keep it from becoming too heavy on the eyes, depending on the intention.

Obvious influences range all across the spectrum; there are hints of Al Williamson, Graham Ingels, Jack Davis, Bill Sienkiewicz, and, believe it or not, Daniel Clowes! I’d even go as far as to say that “Six Digit Disaster” resembles a long-lost Wally Wood-penciled WEIRD SCIENCE effort. But as much as these panels are loving homages to the greats, the mix of styles keeps the experience fresh with every turn of the page.

Not only does Paulos knock it out of the park in the illustration department, he also manages to deliver the goods with his morbid sense of storytelling. This book is filled to the cauldron’s brim with wickedly bad puns, (unfortunately) still relevant social commentary and enough winking clichés to inebriate a fanboy with a dual sense of pretentiousness and nostalgia. The flow of each tale is perfect, with a horrifying host or two woven throughout, with no flaws or

imperfections to take you out of the immensely enjoyable reading experience. Although some of the twist endings can be seen from a mile away, getting there is still half the fun!

If I were forced—and I mean forced—to say something negative about this book, I would have two very minuscule complaints. One would be the lack of interaction between the tale’s host and the reader; there’s no doubt Paulos could have conjured up some clever antics that would have scratched that itch. The other? As EEEK! is obviously formatted to replicate the classics, it would have been nice to see a few mock advertisement pages. I’ll never get tired of seeing coupons for sea monkeys, Venus flytraps and X-ray glasses! But then, if these two elements would have taken precious page space away from the twisted tales themselves, their omission is fine by me.

Whether you’ve been a lifelong fan of anthology horror comics or have yet to discover the morbidly magical pleasures found within them, EEEK! cannot be recomended enough. If you have trouble getting into the holiday spirit this Halloween season, I can confidently prescribe this book. However, I must warn you, side effects may include: the willies, the creepies, the spookies and the heebie-jeebies!

{jcomments on}