

“NOCHE ROJA” (Graphic Novel Review)

Written by Jorge Solis

Saturday, 29 January 2011 10:24



NOCHE ROJA (Vertigo Crime, arriving February 22) is a mind-bending crime thriller that will leave you breathless. A private detective searches for an unstoppable serial killer in the wastelands of the border. Money, corruption and sex, all tie-in together as the investigator faces against lawless and frightening figures.

In the hot desert, just south of the border, a string of mutilated female bodies have been uncovered. Each of the disfigured corpses has an identical scar, as if done by the same perpetrator. So far, the local police have found no leads to follow and no suspects to interrogate. As the serial killer runs free, the authorities have put a halt to their investigation and decided to look the other way.



Exiled and secluded from the rest of the world, ex-private eye Jack Cohen could care less about the recent murders, preferring to drown himself in alcohol. In the tradition of classic noir, a gorgeous client demands his help, sending him into the seedy crime underworld all over again. As danger lurks at every corner, Jack must face a terrible tragedy from his past, something he has been running away from for so long.

During his pursuit, Jack unexpectedly finds himself confronting the wealthy and charismatic Mayor Hank. Hoping to win his latest reelection, Mayor Hank wants the maniac found, but on his own terms. Jack must capture and deliver the killer to him, instead of the authorities. Hank eagerly awaits to watch the murderer scream for his life while the mayor's pet tigers devour him alive.

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Jack realizes he shares a deadly connection to the serial killer, who is protected by ambitious politicians and greedy mobsters. If the perpetrator is caught, he will confess to his crimes, including those of Cohen's. Jack contemplates turning away from the case, but if he does, the killer will surely strike again.

Using elements of classic noir, author Simon Oliver (of the cult horror series THE EXTERMINATORS) conveys a criminal underbelly filled with perverse sexuality, racism and political deception. Oliver's tight plotting deepens the mystery as he crowds the narrative with untrustworthy and immoral characters. Readers beware, though: the story starts bleak and gradually gets worse. The ending is such a downer; its topical message will leave you unsettled and bothered.

Artist Jason Latour (SCALPED) illustrates with a minimalist approach toward his black and white artwork. Less is actually more in his depictions of violence. This technique may be dramatic, but in certain panels, the style occasionally has its faults. When the characters are fighting, Latour presents glimpses of action, which could confuse some readers, who may want to know what's going on.

NOCHE ROJA is a dark and edgy crime thriller that packs an emotional wallop. This is a compelling read right from the start! If you are looking for something that will strike a nerve, this is the comic you've been searching for.



{jcomments on}