

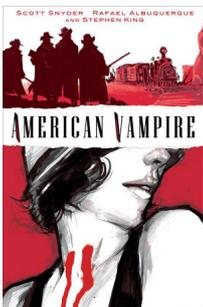
"AMERICAN VAMPIRE" #1 (Comic Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Wednesday, 17 March 2010 13:18



For horror fans, the first reaction to issue #1 of Scott Snyder's AMERICAN VAMPIRE is the sigh of relief they'll experience as they realize it's a far cry from the bloodsucking bandwagon most of Hollywood finds itself on. Once they've happily exhaled though, the second thought should be, "This is a damn fine comic."

The new ongoing title from Vertigo is attempting to chronicle the life and times of the first American vampire and a host of others along the way. Snyder doesn't begin his series with the primary bloodsucker, Skinner, however. Instead, the story opens in 1925 Los Angeles amongst the glitz of Hollywood's silent era. Pearl Jones is a struggling actress working three or four jobs to make ends meet, all while trying to get her moment in the spotlight. Eventually, Skinner does make a cameo in her tale, but his real story is relegated to the second half, penned by none other than Stephen King and set in what many consider to be the icon of Americana, the Old West.



What could be surprising to learn is that "Big Break," Snyder's half, is actually a bit more engaging and enthralling than King's. That's not to say the master author's portion is bad in any way, just that Pearl is a great protagonist and someone who's immediately likeable. She's a strong and funny woman who you'd like to take this journey with, so when things go bad (and by the end of her first issue, they do), you're invested in her fate.

King's bit, "Bad Blood," ramps up the action a bit more as you're introduced to Skinner as a very human murderer and bank robber in 1880 Colorado on a one-way train to the gallows. The railroad is derailed by a pack of thieves waiting to help him escape the custody of the agents who brought him in. This change in gears could be a bit jolting, but artist Rafael Albuquerque holds the whole show together excellently. The art is stark, vivid and full of color, not missing a

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detail of the story or action. And his work with light and shade is beautifully impressive on many occasions, particularly toward the end of "Big Break" and when sundown hits in "Bad Blood."

What Snyder, King and Albuquerque have done here is craft an excellent introduction to these stories. The issue gives you a nice insight into all of its major players, and Snyder begins creating an interesting world inside both periods in American history. The two decades have European vampires living amongst the political and entertainment elite, with a (ahem) stake in society. And while we don't get an amazingly clear view of the creatures just yet, what you do see showcases that mere fangs aren't what separates us from them. These creatures take on transformations into full-on demonic forces when they turn, making them that much more repelling. The authors and illustrator are reinstating the idea that vampires aren't loveable, but bloodthirsty, dangerous and above all, scary.

AMERICAN VAMPIRE has enough to love in its first issue, but also leaves plenty to anticipate. It's definitely worth a pick up, as it's essentially two great little period stories for the price of one. And if it's any indication of what's to come, the entire series should be one to watch.

***1/2

For more on AMERICAN VAMPIRE, you can check out our feature interview with Scott Snyder [here](#)