Truthfully, DEVIL (Dark Horse) doesn't begin on a high note. In fact, the premise and first couple of pages of issue one come across as something we've all seen before. You'll get the sense that while it's done well and doesn't shy away from splatter, it's really nothing spectacular. Then it goes a little bit crazy, and even though it never ends up "amazing," it settles nicely right under "intriguing and worth checking out."

DEVIL, written and drawn by Torajiro Kishi, is the tale of officer Takimoto, who, like most antihero detectives, is a certified bad-ass, and he's right in the middle of taking on a plague of " Devils." What's most easily described as a mix between the infected of 28 DAYS LATER and a vampire, Devils feed on human blood and are referred to as "Devil-possessed" by the rest of civilization. Takimoto is partnered up with agent Migiwa who is much more sympathetic, referring to the infected as sick and insisting they're still human. Migiwa, however, has never seen an S-Class Devil and Takimoto quickly reveals to her that all her training hasn't prepared for anything like what she's about to experience.

About halfway through issue one, DEVIL lets loose and you understand that these SCBS (Serious-Injury Chronic Blood-Sucker Syndrome) plagued individuals aren't your typical rabid, red-eyed killers. The highly evolved (or S-Class) essentially become beacons of light. They are highly powerful with supernatural abilities, and they are convinced they are the next step in evolution and higher on the food chain than humans (a la the novel of I AM LEGEND). Two main threats to mankind pop up in the form of Mariko, a cloned test subject infected with SCBS who believes she is a god, and Nishioka, her main disciple.

Issue three (out today) begins on a cliffhanger with Takimoto and Migiwa facing off against Nishioka for the second time, and things getting decidedly more chaotic and bloody when Nishioka rampages through a supermarket and takes Migiwa hostage.

Kishi's art is a pleasure to look at. Very much rooted in Japanese culture and anime, the illustrations are exciting and really give off the essence of movement, but thankfully, it's not unclear; every moment (and there are several) of carnage and mayhem is on display here. Kishi's writing, however, is a little less stellar. Sometimes his dialogue comes off as cheesy, cop-story fare ("You're not playing the lone wolf on this one! I'm coming too."), and the two main protagonists don't really go beyond the character types they mimic.

Even with the "new species" factor taken into account, DEVIL remains mostly unoriginal, but solid and a tale well told. The illustration and visual aspects are what bring the story higher, especially in crafting villains that, while we may have read or seen before, haven't been represented like this. Also, the idea that at some point in the future humans will no longer be as carefree and un-preyed upon as we are now, is a tad shuddering.

DEVIL may not be something you should rush to read, but there's no doubt it works and is definitely a kick-ass little book.

{jcomments on}