

"TALES OF FEAR #1" (Comic Review)

Written by Svetlana Fedotov

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Some say that the horror comic magazine is as dead as a week-old corpse, never to walk and love again. Few brave souls, however, have taken it upon themselves to ignore such opinions, attempting to give the forgotten medium another shock to its undead heart. Of course, who could really blame them? With comic companies re-printing every old mag they can find, the sudden rise in popularity for the classics has rekindled a love for all things "eerie." Morality plays, ghoulish hosts, and dangerous women are back with a passion! TALES OF FEAR #1 is a recent addition, a one man's pursuit to cut out a niche into the already huge cake of the horror world. Though the comic is kind of rough to look at, the passion that creator Gary Scott Beatty has for the bizarre clearly shines through.

TALES OF FEAR (Aazurn Publishing) is very similar to the old, TALES FROM THE CRYPT-type horror. Each story is self-contained and presented by a skeletal figure who plays the part of host. The stories have such interesting titles as "Zombie Porn," that's about, well, zombie porn, and "Crack," about a group of vandals that break into a house looking to score drugs and end up finding something more sinister. The stories all play with a bit of irony and have a twist at the end similar to THE TWILIGHT ZONE. In fact, the story "Giants Fishing" almost reads as a bit of an homage to an episode of the seminal series that plays out very similarly.

As much as this writer loves old horror comics and subsequently, homages to them, there were a few things about this particular collection that left a bitter taste in my mouth. Though Beatty has expressed that his art is a creative alternative to traditional comic illustration, it proves more a distraction than anything else. Instead of the pen and ink technique that dominates comics, he went with a more photo-realistic attempt, which unfortunately might actually be photos of people posing that were Photoshopped over. A lot of the images end up stretched out and over exaggerated, which really takes away from the writing. The tales, meanwhile, often start off strong and slowly break down halfway through the collection, becoming tedious and employing clichéd twists. Still, TALES OF FEAR is a fair attempt at entering the horror world through the back door of comic magazines. Perhaps, given time, it'll prove itself to be a magazine to be feared.

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