



Nowhere Men, Vol. 1: Fates Worse Than Death

Eric Stephenson (Writer) , Nate Bellegarde (Artist) , Jordie Bellaire (Colourist) , Fonografiks (Letterer)

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"Science is the new Rock 'N' Roll!"

So said Dade Ellis, Simon Grimshaw, Emerson Strange, and Thomas Walker at the dawn of a new age of enlightenment that ushered in a boom in scientific advancement. As the research supergroup World Corp., they became the most celebrated scientists of all time.

They changed the world - and we loved them for it.

But where did it all go wrong?

And when progress is made at any and all cost, who ultimately pays the price?

Collecting: *Nowhere Men* 1-6

Nowhere Men, Vol. 1: Fates Worse Than Death Details

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Author : Eric Stephenson (Writer) , Nate Bellegarde (Artist) , Jordie Bellaire (Colourist) , Fonografiks (Letterer)

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From Reader Review Nowhere Men, Vol. 1: Fates Worse Than Death for online ebook

Emily Green says

Nowhere Men: Fates Worse Than Death begins with the media blitz of World Corp., a company founded by a team of four genius scientists. The company manages to create several meaningful inventions, including technology that allows the blind to see. However, in the midst of their fame and rock star status (a T-shirt on the cover of the comic book declares “Science is the new rock ‘n’ roll”), the group begins to have disharmony, spurred by the unorthodox methods of Thomas Walker and trailed by rumors of his drug abuse. As the story of the company continues, it twines with the story of one of World Corp.’s space ships, which has been abandoned in space, as it is infected by a strange flu. The question that each founding member of World Corp. is trying to answer: did we do the right thing?

The story is told by book excerpts and magazine articles, including interviews, along with comic panels. Very little of the story focuses on the beginning of the company, and instead highlights their splitting into factions and the changes each man has undergone in time lapse fashion. The volume ends with a cliff-hanger. Eric Stephenson might indeed be on to something, and I would not be adverse to reading the next volume.

Dawn says

Collecting the first six issues of the comic, this is a dense and sometimes complicated read. But in a good way. The genre is sci-fi with the primary focus on “rock star” scientists and what they’ve done to improve the world. It covers a virus, mutations, space stations and teleportation. It’s a very detailed story with a few twists and some interesting characters. As a whole, it reminded me of Watchmen, not only with some of the plot, but also the way the panels were interspersed with articles that delved deeper into the characters and back story along with ads, art and news stories. As a whole, Nowhere Men isn’t for everyone, but it will appeal to those into the science side of sci-fi and anyone wanting a deep, character driven plot.

Sam Quixote says

Let me take you down... ‘cos that’s where Nowhere Men’s taken me after reading it!

Four hippy scientists are apparently “rock stars” for their amazing research or something. They create World Corp that becomes the world’s biggest corporation (yup, we’re in simpleton land already!). Fast forward to the present. We’re on board a space station and the crew are sick with some unknown disease. The hippy scientists broke up because... the woorrllld... is roooooounnd... nah, it was about money or something stupid! The space station crashes. Somehow this is all connected and is supposed to mean something.

Nowhere Men is the dumbest “science”-themed book ever. There’s no actual science, just people standing in labs talking about who’s boning who and other peoples’ appearances. Then we’re repeatedly told “science is the new rock ‘n’ roll” – did Eric Stephenson also come up with those lame posters you see in school libraries

like “Hey, Kids -Reading Is COOL!”?”

Do we see what the fruits of all this amazing science is? No. Do we ever see whatever they did being used in the wider world? No. How exactly did they change the world with their work? No clue. Totally unconvincing “scientists”.

And let’s dispel this notion that this has anything to do with The Beatles. The title, the fact that a couple scientists are deliberately made to look like John and Paul, and that mega-naff “science is the new rock ‘n’ roll” motto (so you’re told to believe these scientists are considered rock stars even though there’s no reason given as to why) are the only things tying in to this idiotic idea.

But the real problems of Nowhere Men are that I read a full six-issue arc and still have no idea a) what the story is supposed to be, b) who the characters actually are, c) how the characters connect, and d) massive pacing issues that means the story is told at a sluggish crawl. Stephenson is a shockingly incapable writer, totally unable to juggle the various storylines he’s got going on – the flashbacks and the two threads in the present. He pastes huge chunks of texts on every page and still can’t get the basics of competent storytelling down. Exposition litters the comic entirely and none of it is engaging.

In addition, he thought it was a good idea to include faux magazine/newspaper articles and profiles on the characters slotted throughout the book. These boring and gimmicky page-length blocks of text add absolutely nothing to what we already know and after the first few, I just stopped bothering reading them. And really, profiles on the characters? Do I need to know what Scientist A’s (of course I didn’t retain their names!) favourite Beatles song is? It’s so irrelevant and it slows an already lethargic story even further. Stop telling us who the characters are and SHOW us, Stephenson! Also, when I pick up a comic, I want to read a comic, not a magazine or newspaper – that’s why, duh, I picked up a comic!

Even if Stephenson were a decent writer, I’m not sure Nowhere Men would be worth reading anyway. There’s a Stargate, there’s the mad scientists creating monstrosities in the secret lab like The Manhattan Projects, there are people transformed in space into superheroes like the Fantastic Four – everything in here has already been done and done better elsewhere. Why bother with Nowhere Men?

Good gravy, what a mess! Nowhere Men was a convoluted disaster full of things that looked like story and characters but felt like neither. How does a sloppy writer like Eric Stephenson get published by Image? Oh, that’s right, he’s the publisher of Image! Well, Nowhere Men is possibly the worst Image comic I’ve ever read. No wonder it got cancelled so soon!

A fate worse than death? Reading Nowhere Men!

Murphy says

This was by far one the most interesting and unique comics I've ever read. Though I wasn't attached to any of the particular characters, the overall plot was exceedingly compelling.

Many of the events in these issues are all over the place, but in my opinion the chaos is welcome as it creates an engrossing energy able to drag readers into the narrative while experiencing the same mix of confusion and curiosity its players are.

The use of fabricated interviews, magazine articles and biographies to give further context into the lives of the featured fictional scientists was a brilliant idea. It allowed the writer to avoid awkward explanatory dialog and for the readers to become further absorbed into this world. Every detail in the construction of these pieces was well thought out, and I felt as if I was simply reading media from an alternate universe.

Altogether I thoroughly enjoyed both the science-fiction and mystery elements of the story and relieved I managed to understand them with only minimal puzzlement. This first arc did end with multiple loose ends, but that only adds to my excitement of seeing what happens next.

Gavin says

This one started off with a ton of potential, then just got way too wordy for me. That makes me sound like a troglodyte, but no, it just had way too much going on. The stuff all looked very good, art and graphic wise, the little info things included like fake newspaper articles and magazine covers was cool, but kinda pulls you out of the immersion when you have to read so very carefully.

Premise is, something like what if the Beatles had been 4 scientists instead of musicians? But not exactly, because one of them has a Beatles song as his favourite. However, a few of the characters look strikingly like John and Paul (John is the practical one, Paul is the one who wants to make \$\$\$\$), and I'm trying to figure out which one is George (I think the one who learned to use his 3rd eye and took a lot of LSD, but that's more Syd Barrett than Harrison) which would make Ringo the moral compass...?) So ya, not a fully formed theory, but if so, then this writer is NOT a Wings fan, and worships at the altar of Lennon.

Back to things, these 4 dudes start a huge science company (the Apple of science mixed with the domination of Microsoft and the ubiquitousness of Coca Cola). So a HUGE company. They make big discoveries and inventions, get rich, and shit falls apart in less than 10yrs...maybe this IS the Beatles after all?

Anyhow, one of the main things they did was send 12 people into space, after they bought the ISS and staged a crash, so that no one was supposed to know that the Space Station was still in orbit. There, the people are pretty much black ops secrecy level, and they get some kind of infection, and instead of sit around waiting to die, one of them invents a teleportation device (like the one in Stargate) and escape as the station explodes (not all of them make it I think...)

The infection ranges from no noticeable changes to full out mutations, and they arrive back on Earth and other places...then the guys who started the company decide they need to get hold of these survivors (and it's John VS. Paul, Ringo siding with John after waking from a long coma where he gains George's power of the 3rd eye and Telepathy!)

Holy Fuck I sound like a stoner...

Anyhoo, the volume ends with them all scattered about to see what happens.

I skimmed the last few pages because shit just got RIDICULOUS STUPID. I couldn't handle it.

This seemed like a potential for cool ideas, but I do think, if this is all some Beatlemaniac's fan fiction pretending to be a comic, then well done sirs. That would actually be cooler than a backwards playing record with Satanic Messages.

Enter at your own risk...I think this may be Grant Morrison's new favourite book though...I may re-read whilst under the influence of something....

Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

Nowhere Men is an intelligently written, nuanced, and very intriguing book that perfectly makes use of the graphic novel format. I was enthralled from the first few pages and consider it one of the best graphic novels I have read.

The story starts in a very 1960s feeling America (but clearly an alternate universe) where four men, hailed as the hope of the future as brilliant young scientists, start a corporation with a ludicrously simple goal born of idealistic youth: to make life better for everyone. But as the book progresses, dissent, conflicting goals, and the changes wrought by the onset of maturity, hubris, and even greed causes the group to fracture into separate fiefdoms. Separate, they will fight each other, to the point that one will set into motion a devastating event horizon that will forever change the world they sought to make better.

Right from the beginning, the intriguing notion of what the world would be like if scientists, rather than rock stars, became the media obsession. The four young scientists dressed in 1960s floppy haired splendor at the beginning, are compared to the Beatles. And like the Beatles in the 1970s, each goes very separate ways in an era of drugs and pleasure. Two stay good friends, one drops out altogether in a haze of drugs and psychoanalysis, and the last becomes a megalomaniac.

The story alternates through time periods though the main arc throughout is what is happening in current time. Additional characters, affected by the Machiavellian machinations of the scientists, bring context to the larger story through their own personal struggles. Yes, as with any story focusing on scientists, it does veer very much into 'science gone wrong' dead end alley. But when you start a story with brilliant, idealistic, scientists who gather together to make the world a better place, you know it will probably go very wrong. Fortunately, there are no evil moustachioed twirlers to cheapen the plot. And the actions of each of the four scientists truly baffles the others as they subconsciously battle to outdo achievements or even stop potentially dangerous actions.

Along with the layered story is a graphical presentation that is a marvel - as a reader, I can see how much work went into this book. It's not just a story with some pictures. Serious design work went into different types of presentations to help disseminate the world building and character growth. Unlike similar efforts by well known comic artists such as Alan Moore (and the mess that is the Black Dossier), the factoids, newspaper clippings, profiles, business documents, blue prints, magazine covers, book excerpts, etc. are well integrated, have great writing and illustrations, and are set up to look very real. Fonts, design, even interviews really look the part. Paper with foxing on the sides from book pages, friendly adverts of the products the scientists created, even fashion spreads of scientists dressed up as supermodels - it all works spectacularly. And the back stories presented further shape the story and understanding of the characters and world.

The illustrations for the panels of the graphic novel are well done - clean and clinical as befitting a book about science. There are no glitzy rainbow explosions of colors or hyperactive lens flares off metal rim glasses. The illustrations are in color and further the story perfectly, with emotion and gravitas intact.

I also appreciated the interesting references in the book. From Donald Fagan's album Kamakiriad (an album about driving into the future) to a very 1960s type of interview with a presenter greatly resembling Dick Cavett. Even the X-Men, a fundamental aspect of the story, are casually thrown out there. As well, the writing for the magazines/books/etc. are amazingly well done and representative of the medium. I really have to give kudos to the authors who wrote the supplementary material for meticulously researching those mediums and then creating the style of writing so perfectly.

It is interesting for me that I had just read Avi's graphic novel "City of Light, City of Dark" and mourned the complete waste of the graphic novel format for that story. And here, in Nowhere Men, I have such an excellent example of what happens when creative minds get together to tell an interesting story in a very visual format.

Received as an ARC from the publisher.

Nelson says

I don't read many comics but this one was really cool. The plot is really interesting, I really want to know what happens next. The art is also very good and the 60's 70's advertisement influence in a lot of panels is really cool. This a text heavy comics but it helps to flesh out the characters a lot more.

Recommended.

mark monday says

sometime in the future, science is the new rock 'n' roll. a Fab Four of science idols build an amazing company together and their inventions help to change the world. in kaleidoscopic fashion, Nowhere Men explores their various fates and those transformed by their ideas.

this required a much larger suspension of disbelief than I'm used to, as I can often casually accept weird alternate worlds that include zombies, superheroes, and president trump. but for some reason it was really hard to swallow the idea that "the youth" - not to mention the rest of the world's population - would adulate scientists to the point of elevating them to Beatles-level status. LOL yeah right! but eventually I just had to accept it because that basic idea permeates every level of the story. I sort of wish it hadn't because it created many an eye roll.

Eric Stephenson is rather brilliant and that brilliance is amply illustrated by his storytelling (if not necessarily his ideas). he plays with time and narrative in exciting and interesting ways but always makes certain his puzzle pieces fit into a recognizable picture. the story shifts radically chapter by chapter and includes a lot of text such as various magazine articles, interviews, even an exhaustive Year End Best Of list; all of that is handled well. a central part of the story follows the trials and tribulations of a group of space station scientists who are exposed to a toxin that evolves them into beings with strange powers; this familiar idea -

shades of both Fantastic Four and Inhumans - is handled very well and is the strongest part of the story.

the art by Nate Bellegarde is mainly top-notch. unfortunately that does not include his work with faces, which for the most part all share a kind of unattractive, constipated look.

overall Nowhere Men is creative and compelling. I'm looking forward to reading the conclusion of the story.

Cheese says

A very different and enjoyable book which I'm really looking forward to delving into more.

It's like manhattan projects about four genius scientists who were like the Beatles of science in the 70's. One of them becomes greedy and creates a virus which starts evolving people into creatures with powers.

Som really cool characters in this and all of them easily defined making it easier to follow.

Shannon Appelcline says

This volume has a fascinating premise: what if the Beatles (or people very like them) were rock-and-roll super-scientist stars? There's also lots of fancy use of unusual storytelling techniques. Unfortunately, *Nowhere Men* never really fulfills it potential.

To start with, the story makes constant use of flashbacks and different time periods, which I'd usually love, but it's largely incomprehensible here, as you struggle again and again to figure out what's going on when. I think this problem was made worse by the lack of chapter dividers in the TPB, which turned it all into one muddy flow. Then we come to the text pieces & "ads" where are constant in the comic. Neither of them added much to the story, and the text pieces were entirely dull. Finally, you get to the plot, and minus all these tricks it's ... OK. As for the characters: the four super scientists are interesting, but the 12 characters who fill out the B plot have almost no characterization.

So, a bold, worthwhile failure for me. I'm frankly astounded it continues to get so much great attention. I was skimming the text pieces by halfway through the book, and by the time I got to the inconclusive ending, I was skimming the rest of the comic too.

Cathy says

"Science is the new rock and roll"

The story begins in the 60s, where a young group of four scientists is compared with Beatles. We are introduced to four idealistic characters who have distinguished themselves in the field of science and created a corporation jointly, to make the world a better place.

The story line alternates between various periods of time and space, which can make all the reading somewhat confusing. But overall , I believe that there are several very interesting ideas behind this comic.

First, can you imagine a world in which society sees scientists as public figures? With fans? With an immediate impact in the media? This hypothesis is spectacular for me. I live in Portugal, and news reports are filled with football news. To me it makes some confusion, because all they do is play football, they have no importance in the practical life of anyone. But scientists? Yup!

Second, the focus given on the changes of ideals that we suffer lifelong. We all go through an age in which we were very idealistic, and then we evolve to more realistic or unrealistic ideas. In this comic, social and media pressure, individual growth and experiences with hallucinogens promote conflict in the group of scientists, making it unforgiving. The four separate. Two remain friends, other surrender to drugs and another becomes megalomaniac.

Third, what is the long term impact of the scientific developments we are experiencing? This comic focuses on the negative aspects of science and its consequences. What price are we willing to pay for the scientific advances achieved?

I enjoyed the graphics, but I believe that the media magazine / books / interviews was too extense. I believe it ended up cutting the pace of the story that was faster. For the rest, the concept was for me very well used.

I received this book from NetGalley for an honest review#

Jeannette Nikolova says

Also available on the WondrousBooks blog.

I will go with **No**. This is one of those books where the characters are over-hyping themselves and each other, because otherwise it would be hard for the reader to realize that something supposedly important is happening.

"Oh, these guys are rockstars!", "He is a legend", "Their research changed the world!" Okay then, if the author made his characters call each other brilliant, then we must be reading about truly amazing individuals. Not.

Nowhere Men is a very confusing, messy, and unconvincing attempt at sci-fi. There is no science anywhere in the entire volume, just a bunch of characters that make things happen and you are supposed to buy into the idea that they did it thanks to science. However, considering that the author doesn't bother to give any information about the level of actual technological development in this world, or on where humanity was before the science Beatles came into the picture, this so-called "science" could as well be magic, for all the reader knows.

There is a large jumble of seemingly important individuals, including 4 interchangeable scientist gods, who did... something, and then... something happened, and some substance was created somehow. Sometime in the past someone somehow decided to put it on a spaceship for some reason, which created some kind of a virus, which is not actually a virus. Now you know as much as I do, having read the first volume.

If you stripped the story to its bare bones, you would find a striking resemblance to the *Fantastic 4*, including the design of the characters on the space ship. The science rockstars remain a mystery, as does their importance, however, the reader must be aware that even though they seem like a bunch of squabbling,

greedy old assholes, apparently all of them are geniuses.

It's really hard to find any characters to care about, or to be convinced to believe in any part of the story. The self-explanatory articles and interviews with the characters don't help. On the contrary, they make the story even more dragged out, and they nudge the reader into the land of "Who cares?".

The part that I did like, more or less, was the art. It was solid, well-made, and comforting. I was glad to see that they didn't go for anything more experimental, because that would have added to the overall ridiculousness of the volume.

Thanks, Nowhere Men, see you never.

Sonic says

This is hands down one of the coolest and most original graphic novels that I have read in a while. Brilliant science fiction that refers to the Fab Four while also reminding me of the Fantastic Four. The art is absolutely first rate!

And though I loved the interviews and magazine articles and such that pepper the book giving us a real pop-culture feel for these characters, towards the end of the book it felt a teensy bit over-done, as it kinda messed up the pacing of the story. That would be my only criticism, ... that and the fact that we are left wanting more! :)

L. McCoy says

Image is putting out so many great titles that make it clear why they are the biggest publisher of creator owned comics right now... this book is not one of those great ones.

What's it about?

From what I gathered the story is pretty much about some famous wannabe Beatles/scientists and a group of supposedly sick people who need to go through a portal of some kind.

Why I hate this book:

The story is boring.

The art is just awful. Okay, in all fairness, I have seen art that is much worse than this. I would dare say the art in this is still better than the art in most of the other comics I have given 1-star but that does not at all mean it's good, it's still pretty fucking awful.

The characters... ugh. We have wannabe Beatles who are all sciencey and kinda d***hey, as someone who's not a fan of d***hey characters, science or The Beatles I did not care at all for those characters. We have the sick people who are generic AF. There's some other people who are just annoying.

The narrative and way the book is made in general is kind of awful. It's told in a way that makes it a bit

harder to follow what's happening (though I still got the story) and I'd dare say about 85% of this book is just people arguing.

The few action scenes aren't even good.

The dialogue is not good.

This book does that annoying thing I often find myself having to rant about which is mixing comics and prose in one book. Pick. A. Format. In this it's worse than usual too. It's very frequent, it's boring as s*** and I skipped some of it because the text was tiny (prose often hurts my eyes with normal sized text). At least when I complained about this being in Watchmen the text wasn't this tiny and it was actually kind of interesting.

I know I already said it but it's boring, I just can't put enough emphasis on that. It's possibly the most boring book I have sat through.

Lots of filler.

Overall:

This book is just so terrible. I almost gave it one point for being unpredictable but even then it still was so awful that I actually would say that a lot of the other books I have rated 1-star are much better. This book was actually painful to read. I can't not recommend this enough unless you're looking for something to force your worst enemy to read... and even then, that might be a bit too harsh to that enemy.

Alan says

Personally, I think good science fiction has been missing from the U.S. comic shelves for some time. I know this puts me in the minority, but neither Saga nor Manhattan Projects does it for me. Stephenson takes his core concept, which is scientists as rock stars and crafts an interesting sotry using multiple story telling techniques.

The standard panel and words balloons are there. Stephenson, in working at creating an chronicle of events put in news papers interviews, magazine pieces, and sections from books about Thomas Walker, Emerson Strange, Simon Grimshaw and Dade Ellis. When this "fab Four" get together to form World Corp they make Bill Gates and Steve Jobs (hmmm.. wonder if they served as models in some ways) seem tiny both financially and intellectually. Just like the Beatles the band falls apart piece by piece.

The story stretches not only around the world but to the I.S.S. We're talking fringe science here, yes much in the vein of the television show. Teleportation, genetic manipulation and a few other small things are tossed in. For me, the characters are crafted well enough, with my issue being that Stephenson plans a second volume, if for no other reason than to conclude hanging story points but there is no word as to a publication date for that volume.
