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32 STORIES

THE COMPLETE OPTIC NERVE MINI-COMICS



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In 1991, Adrian Tomine self-published the first issue of *Optic Nerve*. Consisting of three xeroxed sheets of paper, and with a print run of twenty-five, it was a less-than-auspicious, largely unnoticed debut. In the following three years, though, *Optic Nerve* developed at a startlingly rapid pace: the artwork and writing evolved with each story, production quality improved, page counts increased, and by issue seven, sales had reached 6,000. In 1994, Drawn & Quarterly took over the publishing duties of *Optic Nerve*, and the original seven issues sold out and were left out of print. 32 stories presents these rare, early editions, collected for the first time in a single volume.

32 Stories: The Complete Optic Nerve Mini-Comics Details

Date : Published February 1st 1998 by Drawn and Quarterly (first published 1995)

ISBN : 9781896597003

Author : Adrian Tomine

Format : Paperback 96 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Fiction, Comix, Short Stories, Graphic Novels Comics

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jess says

If you read other Tomine or you have appreciation for how storytellers develop, this is a collection not to be missed. Such a weirdly intimate, raw slice of life/lives (fiction and not).

Megan says

The best thing about Adrian Tomine's earlier work is that it's so inspiring. You get to see him working from crude drawings done with sharpies and ball-point pens and then slowly refining his technique, learning to use brush and ink, learning to compose a panel, learning how to frame a scene. It's hard to believe this is the same guy who does the more current manifestation of Optic Nerve with its uber-sleek illustrative style. It gives me hope.

Some of the stories in this are merely ok, but there are one or two - like "Smoke" and the one where Tomine dreams of all barbers going on strike in the middle of his haircut - that I absolutely love. This is definitely worth reading for indie comics fans, and a must for anyone who aspires to create comics of their own.

Kristoffer says

I've read this book so many times I've lost count, but what I noticed this time around is that Adrian Tomine has had multiple writing and drawing styles, and it was interesting to watch how he progressed from a self-published sixteen-year old comic artist and writer to a nineteen-year old one who received a contract from Drawn & Quarterly by the end of the Optic Nerve Mini-Comics series.

Though I appreciated watching his growth as a writer, I found myself wishing that he retained some of his multiple drawing styles and employing them accordingly to this day, rather than remaining loyal to his current style, which is delineated in the stories "Happy Anniversary" and "Grind."

"Two in the Morning" remains my favorite comic in the entire Tomine catalogue; I could read it several times in one sitting and still find so much satisfaction in it.

Adan says

There are some hits and misses in this collection of Tomine's earliest work, but what fascinated me the most was watching Tomine's progression as an artist and storyteller. He starts out quite raw and scratchy, but only seven issues later he proves how amazing he really is. My favorites are easily "Smoke" and "Happy Anniversary", both about relationships that should have ended long ago but don't because of inertia, complacency, and low self-esteem.

Shazia says

I'm very back and forth on what rating I would give this and I really wish I could just give it a 2.5 on Goodreads. I feel like a 2 star rating is just tooooo loooowww and not at all how I felt about this book. However, I think the reason why I can't bring myself to give this a 3 is because a lot of the stories were just...okay? But then again there were a few that did get a reaction out of me. 'Solitary Enjoyment' was a good short comic that high school me would have loved (but I mean present day me also really liked it). 'Rodney' was great, which made me think maybe I only like the comic strips that featured Amy. Then it turned out that there are strips with Amy that I didn't like. And of course I loved 'Smoke' and 'Happy Anniversary' because I thoroughly enjoy stories featuring dysfunctional couples. Oh and I really liked the strips that portrayed some of Tomine's dreams. So there were more than a few comics I liked but not enough that I can justify giving this a 3 star rating. But I don't feel too bad about the low rating because I am definitely going to check out more of Adrian Tomine's works! I just think his mini-comics are too short and there's not enough in each story for me to connect with.

Keith says

Back around the time I was lagging through my last dangling college credit after 9/11, I got on an Adrian Tomine kick and thought I wanted to try making autobio comics. My life was definitely sad and meditative enough at the time to mirror any of Tomine's *oeuvre*, but around the fourth panel on the first page I drew myself on top of a dinosaur, and that was about it for autobio comics.

Tomine's flat and starkly realistic style is sort of bracing in its nonjudgmental immediacy, even if his characters wander through emotionally murky worlds of quiet gloom. Tomine's books are sort of frustrating because they're equal parts hipster fantasy and shocking truth. His short stories fascinate me, intimidate me and make me want to punch him in the face. Everyone should read him once.

g026r says

It's interesting to watch as Tomine's ability to both write and draw a story improves, and impressive in many regards for the young age at which he produced them. That aside, the majority of the stories contained within are ultimately slight and show the clear signs of the aforementioned young age of their artist at the time.

An interesting historical document, and there are some real gems present, but it's really solely for those who are already fans.

(The recent re-issue gets an extra plug for reprinting the comics in the exact format they originally appeared in, ads and all, making it even more of an interesting historical document.)

Austin says

I picked this book up at Hungry Head Books in Eugene. (Is that place even still around?) As a kid raised on superheroes, indie-comics were completely unknown to me, and I had never read anything weirder than DC's Vertigo books. But there was something about what I saw that appealed to me, and I took it home anyway and read it through. I was instantly hooked.

I started getting the *Optic Nerve* book that was coming out, and used to talk up Adrian Tomine whenever people asked what I was reading. I used to think that he was sharp, funny, and had a sense of timing that was impeccable, and I would re-read these 32 Stories, wringing out of them the emotion that seemed to be seeping out of every panel he drew.

Time passed in its singular motion, and I took another look at Tomine to check in with him and see if my friend-in-comics was still up to his old tricks. I was shocked to find that I didn't like it. I went back and re-read everything I owned, and found myself sort of grimacing and wondering why it was so depressing.

It's not that his work is bad; far from it. He is a skilled cartoonist who can write and draw quite impressively, and more than once I've been impressed with little tricks and nuances that appear in his work. But it seems to me that the consistently dour tone of his stories, and the fact that they always focus on the worst moments of hipster relationships, is sort of like hitting the same note endlessly. I like a good drone as much as the next guy, but as I get older I don't want to wallow in this kind of storytelling, even if it's beautifully executed.

Renee Alberts says

32 Stories collects the first several issues of Adrian Tomine's long-running comic strip *Optic Nerve*. The selections are from the first strips Tomine initially photocopied and distributed himself, beginning at age 15. His artistic evolution serves as a subtext to the plots of the stories, as his clean-line style and poignant storytelling emerge. He depicts these characters with a delicate care to preserve the spirit of the muses who appeared to him in laundromats, coffee shops and dirty apartments.

The strongest stories are vignettes into the small triumphs and failures of everyday characters' lives. A young insomniac describes the diners and bike rides that occupy her nights. A couple interrupts their anniversary with a conversation they'd rather not have. A woman mails a letter to her boyfriend, then regrets it. Several characters rebel against the frustrating conditions and coworkers of their minimum-wage jobs. Tomine finds these men and women at their least heroic, lying in bed rehearsing the witty comebacks they should have said, or recollecting anticlimactic, yet significant memories. His characters shoe-gaze and sport awkward haircuts and ill-fitting clothes. They smoke too much, think a lot, feel even more and say very little. The magic of *Optic Nerve* is that we're included into their surreal dreams and absurd moments with an intimacy that allows us to smile in recognition as they laugh at themselves.

Shannon says

There is nothing special about this, at all. And I really wanted to like it- b/c judging from the author pic (yes, I judge authors/everyone by their appearance- deal with it) and his introduction, he's an awesome guy. I kind

of want to be friends with him, though it'd be kind of awkward, I think, when he turned one of our conversations into some lame comic and I'd have to pretend that it was good.

Though, as some people pointed out, it's kind of cool to see how he's progressed. But as a whole, it was lacking. Also... his understanding/portrayal of human behavior, in a few of the comics, seems to be really... bad. He's clearly a very moral, upstanding young man. Which is fine, but hardly makes him qualified to talk about the way the horrors of shoplifting tear apart a relationship. B/c that seemed pretty ridiculous and contrived. Unless that was based on an actual experience, in which case I stand corrected, though I somehow doubt it.

Anyway...a kind of half-assed effort, but it had its moments. I'd be open to reading more by this guy, if there is more, b/c I think he has great "potential" which sounds like an insult (and kind of is) but I mean it.

Also.. this guy is from Sacramento. I still maintain that the only really impressive thing to come out of this city is Cake (the band).

I was going to give it one star, but that's really not fair, it's like 100x better than The Da Vinci Code. Two stars.

Eissenn Downey jr. says

Funny and sometimes haunting. This is Raymond Carver in comics form.

b pierce geary says

It is perfectly natural and understandable for an artist to be self conscious about their earliest work, and from the introduction to this edition you can tell that Adrian Tomine is among the most nervously trepid, but there is so much innate skill and mature vision in these comics that they hardly seem like the doodles of a distracted high schooler. He should be entirely proud of these. They're not perfect but they are precisely what they ought to be and most comics done by novices are a far cry from even that. I love how you can see the precociousness of the artist and his learning trajectory through these seven little pamphlets. Each one is so brief but the incredible leaps in ability and precision with each progressive issue belie the relatively small output making me want to see all those sketches and comics Adrian must have kept all to himself as he honed his incredible talent. I mean look at his stuff now. He's a master.

Michael says

Stories are so-so. You can see potential, but Tomine's really not that good yet in these early comics. What I do love, however, is the format of the new edition. Tomine agrees that these stories aren't quite ready for public consumption, but rather than try to hide them, he chose to reformat 32 Stories. The earlier book-edition is out of print, replaced by this new version: a small box with seven replica editions of the actual mini-comics, which enforces these stories as relics of their time. It's a great package, with a new mini-comic

of introductory material written (in prose, no comics here) by Tomine and publisher Chris Oliveros.

Ill D says

<https://i.pining.com/736x/ba/b2/73/ba...>

Did you know that Andy Warhol used to draw weird shit like Del Monte peach cans? Of course not! Because no body gives a shit about Del Monte peach cans. Nor did they give a shit about a ton of other of earlier shit he did.

They care about Monroe! They care about Elvis! They care about Pop Art!

This same collection akin to an "early years," album is the style du jour of Adrian Tomine's: Optic Nerve. Sometimes it fun to see an artist grow and change. And sometimes it's not. This paper thin compendium has more in common with the latter; far more miss than hit.

Except for whatever reason, people not only like(d) it but, evidently, they paid money for it.

Go figure.

And just for the record, I'm generally loathe to criticize art work. I'm quite lacking in the fine motor skill department so I feel it a little disingenuous to criticize others for what I myself cannot do. However, the art here ranges from lack-luster, to mediocrity, and then back to lackluster again. With a few 3rd tier gems here and there, it all seems quite garish in retrospect. Yeah, yeah. "He was a high school student," you'll say. But irregardless, some of the visuals are just gross to look at. Not vile - just gross.

Ew!

Sure, no one is perfect. But, the stories are even more 3rd rate than the nasty-ass illustrations within.

Blech!

Never exceeding more than fix-six pages in length, the stories feel more like skits than anything. And as anyone who listened to more than a few Hip-Hop LP's, more often than not they do amount to filler. Except what would otherwise be filler here, is actually the main course. And to be charitable, sure there are a couple moments of charm but, they are unsurprisingly few and far between.

After giving this a thorough once-over, I feel like Adrian Tomine's optic nerves were shot when he made this.

Two Thumbs Down!

Kirk says

I wouldn't recommend this collection unless you're either a big fan of self-produced comics (of which this

box set is a facsimile of the originals) or a big fan of Tomine and eager to trace (or ink?) the development of his style. While I was initially drawn to Tomine's work by his clean black and white style, I've never been that interested in his characters, especially the autobiographical stories. Granted, this collection features a very young Tomine's work, and I guess that in that light it's good, but not something I, at 26, want to be reading.

What I enjoyed most about this collection was seeing now-famous (for their medium) artists like Jason Lutes and James Kochalka, among others, writing in to Tomine and appearing on the Letters pages. And it was neat to read the comics in replicated form, with the original covers and letters and all that.
