



The Boys, Volume 8: Highland Laddie

Garth Ennis, John McCrea, Keith Burns

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Out of Dynamite Entertainment's critically acclaimed title, The Boys, comes a special story featuring everyone's favorite pint-sized Scotsman, Hughie, with The Boys: Highland Laddie, written by Garth Ennis, with covers by Darick Robertson and art by Herogasm artist John McCrea. Mind reeling from recent events in The Boys, Wee Hughie heads home to Auchterladle - the semi-idyllic Scottish seaside town where he grew up. All Hughie wants is some time to himself, to return to the bosom of family and friends, and get his head together after two years of unimaginable chaos. But our hero's luck has always been more cloud than silver lining, and the familiar surroundings he craves are not all they might be. You can go home again, but with old pals warped beyond recognition and strangers in town up to no good, whether or not you should is another matter entirely. Collecting issues #1-6 of the Highland Laddie series, along with a complete cover gallery.

The Boys, Volume 8: Highland Laddie Details

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Author : Garth Ennis , John McCrea , Keith Burns

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From Reader Review The Boys, Volume 8: Highland Laddie for online ebook

Kate says

4.5*

Oron says

A kinda-boring sidestory. The interesting parts could be concentrated in a single issue, definitely not a 6-part story. Oh well, let's get on with it.

Jennifer Juffer says

I really enjoyed this issue.

It was a nice little break from the Boys and the Supes.

Getting to know Hugie and where he came from, I thought, helped the storyline overall.

Bringing new characters into the mix made it funny and sad at the same time.

As usual, just the right amount of humor and empathy.

Filipe says

I particularly enjoyed this volume. I know it's not a crucial part of the story, being a side-story of the main series, but I really liked it.

We get to see a little bit more of Hughie's Scottish background, his hometown in Scotland, his childhood friends, his family. We also get to see some of his personal struggles. A really good storyline.

The artwork was jaw dropping. The Scottish landscape is amazing and we really get a feel of being there.

Albert Yates says

Probably one of my favourite books in the series so far. We get to spend a great deal of time learning more about Hughie and what made him the man he is today. We are introduced to two of his childhood friends, one is transitioning and the other has a nasty smell and wears a gas mask all the time.

on the outskirts of town is a little cove called smugglers cove a fitting name for some drug runners to be bringing a product into the country. this is the same location where Hughie and his friends stopped another smuggler back when they were kids.

Annie, aka Starlight, pays him a visit and proceeded to share her entire life story with him to get him to understand the events that happened when she joined The Seven.

Nick Scott says

This volume focuses on Hughie as he returns home to Scotland to see his parents and sort himself out. I enjoyed seeing his friends and family from childhood, but I feel like his back and forth over his time with The Boys and his feelings about Annie is getting a little tiresome. I'm ready to see him make a decision and move forward. There's some stuff in here about drugs being trafficked through the town, but it felt more of a "well we needed to have some kind of action is this arc" then anything to really push Hughie's development. There are hints that this might end up having more meaning later on, but it didn't do much for me within this volume.

Luana says

Dear lord am I happy Ennis redeems himself in this one by explicitly and emphatically condemning Hughie's misogyny in the last volume as a character flaw to be excoriated by the very woman who was on the receiving end of it, reducing the poorly conceived Simon Pegg lookalike to a mess of tears, rather than the righteous anger of a Nice, Regular Guy In The Face Of Foul Decadence.

While perhaps a diversion from the main superhero plot, small town Scotland and its simple-minded denizens are pretty close to what Ennis knows, and I found the low stakes drug dealer plot interspersed with scenes from Hughie's childhood pretty entertaining in all.

Big Bobby will probably send a lot of people running to the tumblr alarm bell, but in the opinion of this solitary non-binary person, I found her a fairly well-intentioned trans woman made to fit in the crudity of working class Ennis Scotland.

Michael Cairns says

Garth Ennis has been one of my favourite comic authors for some time now.

I say that up front in case you think I'm biased in my writing of this review.

The Boys is the best thing he's ever created. It's disgusting, crude, completely over the top and fabulously funny. It's also an original take on the question of what morally ambiguous people might do if bestowed with super powers. And what the government would really do if they cracked the secret to the super soldier serum.

In this eighth volume, we step far away from the wild antics of the earlier works to head back to Scotland and explore our hero's past. We meet Hughie's old school chums, much changed in some ways, but in others exactly the same. We meet his foster parents and uncover a drug dealing plot involving people who swear even more than The Boys, and a rather large woman with some shears.

More importantly, we get to explore the unravelling relationship between Hughie and his super-powered girlfriend. And along the way we get a deeper look into Hughie's psyche and what makes him tick.

It's the almost perfect blend that Ennis so often strikes of ludicrously horrible and obscene comic action with real storytelling and emotional weight.

I can't recommend this series enough and while this one feels a little draggy compared to earlier ones, as a fan of comics that do more than action, i really can't complain. Would be four and a half stars if I could.

Gavin says

To quote Wee Hughie: "I Ken sez tis shite".

This is a diversion from the Boys into a Hughie backstory/sidestory.

It could have been interesting; instead it was a meandering, boring, impossible to understand (literally, the dialogue is stupid, and I grew up with a Scottish Great Gran and neighbours, but I could barely figure some things out).

Throw in 5 issues of Hughie whining about EVERYTHING and I just wanted to bitch slap him like the boring piece of shit he acts like in this.

He visits friends and complains about them, he complains about his parents, he complains about his EX, who then shows up and of course, in a long rambling conversation, manages to get back into his good graces.

It also involves a subplot of Hughie and his mates being the Fucking Hardy Boys or some shit. (yawn) and talking to an older fellow like a free psychiatrist and taking his food for free.

By the end of the book, Hughie is a weeping baby of a pathetic sack. I have no problem emoting, and cry at Christmas commercials, but this volume did nothing but make me skim. I may just be at saturation for Ennis, or maybe it just jumped the shark, but I nearly just walked away from this book, and I'm not sure I want to rush into the rest of the series...

It makes it clear to me, that Hughie is supposed to be our entry point to relating to this, but he's too boring. This book just highlighted it and did everything in Ennis' power to undo the last 7 volumes of good work.

I couldn't suggest any stronger an option to anyone but to skip this and go right to Vol. 9 from 7.

Ugh. Terrible Shite.

Fat jokes, tranny jokes, sex jokes, dumb violence. Either Ennis slipped, or this is just what he's become and he can't hide it anymore...I was NOT impressed.

Michael Hitchcock says

This may be the weakest individual volume, but it plays such an important and intelligent role in the series.

On the surface, this story serves as a break from the tension of the previous volumes. Hughie has ran far away, as far away as anyone can. When a child wants to get away from their troubles, they run away from home. But an adult who wants to escape can find solace in running back home.

In this case, it's the small isolated township of Auchterladle in Scotland. (I can't help but think this is an in joke based on the Scottish pronunciation of the letter r, as there is a real township called Auchterarder, but unless Garth Ennis reads this, or I meet him someday, I have only my hunch)

This volume explores all the familiar tropes of an adult returning home story- the crazy characters from your hometown and your special friendships have lost their shine through obsessive handling. They can never live up to your worshipful memories.

But that's only because your trouble always follows you. In this case that trouble is compound V- that's the central trouble of the entire series, really, as it represents and reinforces the trouble with one person having too much power.

But on a structural level this story is very smart. This is a living breathing series and as such, it inhales and exhales. It begins on an explosive exhale- with a picture of a Captain America type getting curb stomped and then a quick breath in to regain our composure as we learn a little about the history of the team.

This pattern continues throughout the series, alternating extreme tension and disgust with background until, to stretch the metaphor, the series is panting. Of course, the lines are blurry because Ennis is such an economical writer and every story element serves a dual purpose, but that's the general trend of the series.

Hughie and his two best friends from high school do a lot of hanging out and bullshitting, but eventually get wrapped up in interfering in a Compound V laced cocaine smuggling operation. Annie January has followed Hughie back here because she ultimately doesn't believe he meant any of that mean shit Butcher manipulated him into saying.

The main story is Hughie getting his head right, but the main action is this drug smuggling caper. Both are supported and contrasted by scenes of Hughie and Annie working out their relationships and Hughie hanging out with his new friend, Mister Taggart, the only person around seemingly not connected with his past in any way.

After Hughie hashes out all his problems with Mr. Taggart, during the course of which we get as full an origin story for Hughie as we got for Mother's Milk, Frenchie, and the Female in Volume 6, and is ready to return home with Annie- yes he has come to think of NYC and the team as "home" too- he gets a name and number on a paper and finds that Mr. Taggart was actually Mallory, the former team leader and strategist.

All of these plots and subplots combined to tell a good version of the you can never go home again story. But I perhaps wish Ennis had been able to go all the way pastoral with this one and not externalize Hughie's conflicts; given him no actual villains.

But, as you know or should know, what a story could have or should have done isn't even a bit as important as what a story did do.

And what this story did was let us completely understand Hughie and Annie both as individuals and as a couple.

Annie shared a very sad memory of a superhero pageant she attended as a girl where one of the contestants didn't make the cut and started crying her eyes out. This is Garth Ennis, so this idiom was made literal and we are "treated" to a visual of the gelatinous eyeballs slipping down the little girl's face as smoke drifts out of her empty eye sockets. Annie explained the way Vought-American people came to take (and presumably

destroy) the girl with chilling economy: "Then the little shape of her was gone."

All of Annies backstory here and earlier in the series does sort of subvert the criticism that she is too stereotypically responsive and does not drive her own story. Because she had been manipulated at every turn, she has a character reason to be less active. And, more importantly, because she is finding her power and trying to break free of all chains and strings that bind her, she is not a thoughtless aping of the trope of the powerless woman, but rather a thoughtful response to it.

For his part Hughie, still unable to see the manipulations of Butcher, believes he must be a bad person. He even tries to prove it by telling Annie about the worst thing he's ever done. I love this part because, not only does it show what a good natured little sweetie Hughie really is, but it also shows that strange struggle the good-hearted have when they do something they know is terrible and that they ought to be better than, but everyone they tell it to laughs at them because it's not even that bad.

Here Hughie tells a story of throwing rocks at a puppy who was stranded on a rock in a river. Before he even hits the puppy, he panics and runs in to carry him back to his owner, miles away in the next town, all the while surrounded by images of evil and danger.

But it's not only a cute conflict, it shows the more subtle type of strength that makes him different from Butcher's overt menace. Hughie is finding himself here and becoming almost a counterweight to Butcher, a man who's shadow looms so large, he still seems to drive this story from the other side of the Earth.

Hughie and Annie will return to NYC with no idea how their relationship will affect their teams, which are still involved in life or death brinkmanship with one another, but they are totally solid in themselves and in their love for one another. They have come to a brave conclusion here, to love one another and by now we sort of love them too.

The story ends with Hughie and Annie riding a bus out of town, as Annie comforts him, holding him close to her and telling him it's going to be ok. But she is looking ahead, literally and figuratively and she is not convinced of her words. It's just what he needs to hear right now.

Knowing the pattern of the books, we know there's an awful lot to be worried about and an awful lot still hanging over their heads. But they have a moment of peace in this moment, and the last panel is just a shot of the bus riding into the distance through the quiet country.

D'Iberville Library says

This installment of The Boys is not as action packed as previous ones. Hughie has gone home to figure things out after such a trying time during the previous book. He is trying to figure out what he is doing with his life and where he is going to go from here. There are flashbacks, but not enough to be confusing. Mainly, you get to see his childhood friends, both are quite unusual, and finally meet his parents - his adoptive parents. So, this is mainly a very good look into Hughie's past while he figures out his future.

Highly recommended series.

Stewart Tame says

The pace slows down a bit with this volume, but that's fine as Hughie (and I) needed a break after volume 7. He returns to Scotland to see his family and friends and generally get his head together. We also meet someone who is probably going to be important in upcoming volumes. Not as much action in this one, but there are some fine character moments. This series continues to impress.

mark monday says

Wee Hughie finds out his girlfriend has a past of her own and his friends all knew about it and he's the last one to know as usual, so he goes home to Scotland to have a good ole pout.

Ennis perfectly illustrates how many people in their late 20s-mid 30s feel about going home again, i.e. *you can't go home again*. it's not like home is bad or your old friends are terrible or the family is embarrassing. it's the slipping into old roles, back into the role of child, back with the old friends and their old mannerisms, the petty irritations returning, the feeling that you're not your true self when you go back to your past world - the feeling that you have gone backwards into a prior iteration of yourself. the understanding that your new life is your actual home.

the author also does excellent work with Hughie and Starlight's slow reconciliation, if it can even be called that. he doesn't spare his male protagonist in the least - from the constant whining and lack of understanding, to his slut-shaming and buried homophobia, to his stupid stubbornness in resisting understanding so that he can luxuriate in feeling like a misunderstand victim. and yet he also renders Hughie as understandable, relatable, even sympathetic. when Hughie finally pulls his head out of his ass and comes to grip with his own confusions and hypocrisies, I felt like cheering.

unfortunately Ennis stumbles in a couple major ways too. the appeal of the lil' Scotsman was that he was a schlubby Everyman. going back to his amazingly strange childhood and his time as a kid detective certainly took that all away. and yet it doesn't appear as if Ennis even realized what he was doing in giving Hughie such an idiosyncratic backstory: by making him so unusual, he has rendered him less unusual, at least in terms of the comic he lives in, where *everyone* is unusual and has a crazy backstory. *sigh* also, the side plot about smugglers and drug dealers was eyerollingly bad. *grimace*

still, this volume continues to bring a deep level of emotion to what was a fairly shallow comic, and I can only applaud that while looking forward to reading more.

the art is okay.

Sam Quixote says

I don't know how he's done it but Garth Ennis has turned one of the most promising series of recent years into an uninspired, meandering, dull mess. When the series started I knew Wee Hughie was going to be the character the readers were supposed to see the series through but to be honest he isn't interesting enough to

warrant his own book, and "Highland Laddie" is evidence of this.

One of the side stories to the series has been Hughie's relationship with a supe in the foremost supe team and neither of them knowing each other's true professions. Well, he finds out in the last book what his girlfriend is and how she came to join the club. If you've been following this far, and if you're reading this review then of course you have, it was kinda dark. But that's how Ennis rolls.

But that side story has somehow become the main story because it seems Ennis doesn't know how to get going on the main one. "Highland Laddie" is Hughie moping around the Scottish village he grew up in, reminiscing with his parents and friends until Starlight shows up and the soap-opera takes up again. And the book ends as you would expect.

The reason "The Boys" was so interesting was the premise of a CIA-type group policing the supes and their secret world. That storyline has been completely ignored in this book and Hughie's dull life and even duller relationship take centre stage and it really didn't need to. It could've worked as a spinoff to the series, something the hardcore fans could read, but as part of the overall series? This book doesn't add one thing to it.

I kept turning the pages wondering when anything was going to happen and then the book ended. Ennis has officially run out of ideas if this is the best he can produce for this series. If you're wondering whether or not the series has picked up with this book or whether it's worth buying this to see how the story is going, don't bother - it hasn't and it isn't. Totally missable, I'm wondering whether this series is even worth seeing to completion if this is the level of storytelling Ennis is at these days.

Jesse A says

A fairly dull diversion with Hughie.
