



Heavy Liquid

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Paul Pope brings a quiet, old-school sensibility to noisy, postmodern comics with Heavy Liquid. This graphic novel, set in the late 21st century, focuses on all the classic elements of detective and adventure stories: lost love, mysterious clients, a package everyone wants, and a tired, barely willing protagonist. The narrative details--such as the eponymous liquid, which is part munition, part drug, and much stranger than any character imagines--are calculated to foil the reader's assumptions, and the expressionistic artwork blends simple colors with bold lines to draw the eyes onward. It seems safe to say that cyberpunk's not dead.
--Rob Lightner

Heavy Liquid Details

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Author : Paul Pope

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From Reader Review Heavy Liquid for online ebook

Alex Panagiotopoulos says

"Have you ever faced art for art's sake?
I wonder if you have the stomach..to face death for art's sake."

This sums up the trippy graphic novel by Paul Pope. Playing with shades of green, red and blue, he creates the psychedelic experience on paper, accompanied by a solid noir/mystery story about a rare expensive drug and a guy that always runs from the ghosts of his former life.

Derek Royal says

Perhaps Pope's best sustained story. It is a unique twist on noir narrative, a detective-like tale with drugs and even some sci-fi thrown in. One could try to dismiss Pope's comics as being too hip or enmeshed in trendy youth culture (including the big manga influence), but that would be ignoring the depth and complexity of his storytelling.

Daniel says

I took awhile to finish this, but that was mostly from lack of appropriate times to get back "into" it, because it's a dense atmosphere that makes up 'Heavy Liquid'. Out of 5 stars, I lean more toward 3.5, only because I "liked it+" and it had some moments where I couldn't make out what I was seeing in a panel or two. That's mostly Pope's frenetic art stylings, and not necessarily a flaw.

Either way, this is a cool, broody book, kinda set in the future-ish. At least, there are some gadgets and such that elevate the "now-ness" of the story—pretty sure it's a fifty-to-a-hundred years on, or so.

Lastly, already I've compared Pope's art to Nathan Fox's, so I knew what I'd get here, and am glad I did. Pretty original stuff, and art that can really hook you.

Keith says

I love manga, I love comics, I love bandes dessinées, I love science fiction, I love rock'n'roll, I love to draw. I wanted to find some idea that would blend all these impulses in one story and come off like a barrage of visual noise and read like a comic book from the future. The scary future, the screaming future—a place where people are becoming machine-people, where people live in crumbling cities, where people sleep in cramped ghettos and move faster than sharks across vast blue oceans, a world of people with false-faces, addictions, secrets and conceits, people with hopes and losses, people snatching tiny victories from the jaws of a wasted world.

This is from *Heavy Liquid*'s endpages, from Paul Pope himself. And while HL is trying to be all the things he

wants it to, I'm still left pretty dissatisfied. Pope at his best performs effortlessness, --- 100%, the spiritual partner to this book, is effortless in every page. According to Pope, 100% was written by day, and this by night, so that both books came about in relatively the same period of time. And while *by night* should imply that HL takes the lion's share of the alchemic ballsiness laid out in the above manifesto, it instead just feels labored, overwrought, and premeditated. It certainly has clearer trappings of sci fi and noir -- a clearer sense of being the kind of book that it wants to be than 100%'s relative messiness could hope to aspire to.

But without the recklessness and improvisation infused in Pope's better work, HL lays bare his usual weaknesses -- all the hamfisted plotting, tin dialogue, and goofy swagger just feel a little sad. It's easy to forgive a book for being rough around the edges if it reads like it was tossed off in an afternoon. HL's concerted intensity and naked ambition, in this case, work against the book as a whole.

Samantha says

This comic is great; the illustrations and dialogue are all fantastic. It's so seedy and grimey you feel like you need to take a shower after reading it.

And if you ever come across a cheap copy, snatch it up because they are apparently out of print and the prices are way jacked up.

Mon says

sort of spoiler, but it's pretty vague since I don't understand the ending myself

So after 40 pages of volume 5 (the last one), Paul Pope went, 'Shit, I need another 10 pages. I think I've exhausted all moon, star, planets, and really big planets. Maybe I should draw some boobs. But damn the only female character I have is actually single with no love interest. Would a gun chase sequence work? Explosions? I don't want to look like Michael Bay though. He gets a lot of hate. Come on brain, I know you can do this. GAH! The acid isn't helping. Ok, fine, here's what I'll do. I'll make my protagonist an alien.'

Yeah.

Matt says

"Kid, if I had something snappy to say, I would. But I don't." – S, Heavy Liquid Chapter 4.

That line comes at the end of a scene full of snappy dialogue. It breaks a rhythm seemingly designed to lull the reader into a sense of security in order to break it before launching into a new set piece, shattering our expectations as it takes us somewhere completely new.

It happens a lot in this book. Just when Pope lulls the reader into thinking he knows what he's looking at and can relax, he comes out with a line like that. Or the image of a Cubist hitman walking down the middle of a crowded street, coming to pull our protagonist out of a cab stuck in traffic and blow his head off. This is Chandler by way of Philip K. Dick through a dirty Eisner lens.

We're big fans of his later Vertigo work, 100%, in my house, so I knew I would love whatever this presented me. I should have known it would be just as challenging. Although both start from a future New York City and both follow a group of starving and desperate young people, where 100% turns romantic, Heavy Liquid turns urban crime fantasy. Pope runs us through a dark, grimy, yet hip and alluring NYC just long enough for us to get comfortable there, then he sends us flying to a Paris out of our twisted dreams, then, by way of a black-as-ink tunnel, he sends us to the stars. I'm not giving anything away by laying all that out because the journey is the point itself. Heavy Liquid, like Pope's other work, is to be savored as it's consumed, like a red wine so dry and deep you have to drink it slow.

About the art: Pope's art always reminds me of an artsy underground punk band. Educated and trained to the point of boredom with form, Pope flies into wild and scratchy experimentation, keeping his layouts and his linework just grounded enough to never sacrifice story. The use of pinks and blues is evocative of the drug addiction and paranoia at the center of the book, keeping the reader sublimely unnerved. I could go on for pages. I'll just end by saying it's gorgeous and always pleases this reader.

Kevin says

I bought this to support my daughter's yard sale, but it turned out pretty good.

The art has a unique voice, sort of a surreal, dark, South American-ish feel. Thugs in face masks like Cubist art are chasing our hero. The plot is cyber-punk. Our tough looking hero has cybernetic implants that enable him to commune with special investigative devices that mine the world's data. He took this case partly to get the latest such, the "P'tit Salaud".

There's a new material, 'Heavy Liquid'. Our hero has stolen a bunch of it. It's explosive, addictive, expensive, and yet maybe even more, and more weird.

There's art, humour, violence, romantic pining, even an attack by spider robots. They are sent by a little girl in a pirate outfit serving an ancient wealthy crone. It's pretty weird.

I have two complaints. It's not complete. This is just a collection of the first several issues. Maybe it constitutes Act I of a limited work, or maybe it's just a serial that will drag it out as long as somebody will buy it. I don't know yet.

And the art is too murky. It's hard to tell what's happening sometimes, and it's much darker than it should be. Shouldn't South American-ish style be vibrant. Actually, the afterword by the artist brags, "I figured out how to make two solid colors into an entire color palette...", so maybe it was logistics, not choice. Weird I didn't notice before, it is only black and a sort of orangish-pink.

Matthew Murray says

Paul Pope has been one of my favourite comics creators since I picked up issue #6a of THB back in 2000.

Heavy Liquid, which I first read ages ago and am rereading now, is pretty much everything I love about his

stuff. The beautiful art, the ideas, the attention to detail, the fashion, the world that he created. *Heavy Liquid* is just an awesome cyberpunk comic about art and crime.

Kind of weirdly, the hardcover is not actually the best way to read this comic. If you can, you should try to track down the original five issues. There aren't any ads in them, they have some content that isn't in the collection (though admittedly, the hardcover has some stuff not in the issues), and the covers are in full colour. The colouring also seems to have been redone somewhat for the collection, and I like the original version better. (Plus, the final issue has a letter from Brandon Graham in it!)

Rachel says

Rarely have I been so entirely unaffected by a book I actually finished. The best thing I can say about *Heavy Liquid* is that it was short, but I don't have anything really horrible to say about it either. Paul Pope is not a great talent. His dialogue is damningly sparse and his artwork isn't kinetic enough to convey the action it's supposed to, so the story feels plodding when it should spark and muddy during ostensible moments of clarity/revelation. The relationships and archetypes are stamped on, and nothing more: Lover, Sidekick, Bad Guy, Really Bad Guy. I kept waiting for something to surprise me, and nothing did.

If there's a good bit to *Heavy Liquid*, it's the chapter intros. They're designed as *dramatis personae*, catalogue pages, TV Guide articles. They hint at a rich, fully realized world somewhere in Pope's head that he just can't quite commit to paper. This book was Eisner nominated, and I get the feeling that's because of the pricing guide to the protagonist's "tricentennial boots." That, or it was just a thoroughly lackluster year for comics.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

Wonderful science fiction/crime story that will keep you guessing till the end!

Ill D says

Heavy Liquid is a thoroughly enjoyable fusion of art and thrills. With a deceptively simplistic palette, light turquoise playfully intertwines with equally light pinks that could be found on ballet shoes. With blacks that range from wavy outlines toward more denser depictions, the simplistic duo drives the story until punctuated with strong overlays of red that convey urgency and poignancy.

The colors are great as so are the characters and the plot that guides them along. Following a not-so-simple drop off of narcotics, our main character is given a job from the local underboss. And I'll just let you read to discover what happens next.

Needless to say it involves lots of chases, action, art, the whole kit and caboodle of thriller fun in all its varieties. With a highly unique style of art and font (I suspect Pope created his own - which is pretty cool) action comics have never been so fun!

A true hidden gem waiting to be read.

2 thumbs up!

Jason Estrin says

Another 5 star PP Illustrated novella. Close to perfect. Nearly animated and come to life as it is read. Fast, tense, sexual, youthist, futuristic, restrained, smart, urbane, sweet, ripe....This is how I think PP would describe his own book.

It IS full of the juice of the generation it was written for and about. His best, most complete work, and the one that drops you off, just at the edge of a potential revelation/epiphany...the very last page and panels show you the glimpse of the solution to the puzzle of "Heavy Liquid", but it is for the reader to live with that teasing clue and to consider what goes on next, on that train, in the mind of S and of the riding passenger that has been alongside him all along.

Christian says

Pure cool. Neon cyberpunk noir starring Mick Jagger in an Aquaman shirt & a supporting cast of beautiful losers & gangsters in Picasso masks. Kinetic, night-time, fluid. Like Cowboy Bebop, stripped down

William Thomas says

paul pope is a genius. this book moves like an akira kurosawa movie on the pages, beautifully crafted in a very post-modern pop art pulp style. feels like a blend of techno-thriller ala william gibson fused with phillip k dick, only with such a cinematic feel that this book moves like a noir ballet. i am in awe of the storyboards, the panels and most of all, they style of his inks. what looks so offhand at first, begins to look so calculated, so stylish and so cunning in its strokes that it becomes intricately tied to the story, unlike other books that seem disjointed. i would compare it to sin city in this way, that the art and story are one and the same, symbiotic. brilliant.
