



Bodies

Si Spencer (Artist) , Tula Lotay (Illustrations) , Phil Winslade (Illustrations)

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VERTIGO brings you a graphic novel with four detectives, four time periods, and four dead bodies - all set in London. Edmond Hillinghead is an 1890s overachiever who's trying to solve a murder no one cares about while hiding his own secret. Karl Whiteman is our dashing 1940s adventurer with a shocking past. Shahara Hasan is 2014's kickass female Detective Sergeant, who walks the line between religion and power. And Maplewood, an amnesiac from post-apocalyptic 2050, brings a haunting perspective to it all.

Si Spencer (HELLBLAZER: CITY OF DEMONS, THE VINYL UNDERGROUND) executes a centuries-spanning murder mystery like nothing you've ever seen before, with four sensational artists illustrating a six-page chapter in each issue: Dean Ormston, Phil Winslade, Meghan Hetrick and Tula Lotay.

Collects BODIES #1-8, the complete miniseries.

Bodies Details

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Author : Si Spencer (Artist) , Tula Lotay (Illustrations) , Phil Winslade (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Bodies for online ebook

Marjolein says

Read all my reviews on <http://urlphantomhive.booklikes.com>

I requested this graphic novel because of the awesome cover. Then came in all the one star reviews from my friends and I started to get afraid of starting it.

Four detectives, four time periods, four completely different styles, one body.

It's always a tricky thing to pull off multiple timelines with different styles in one and the same story. In this case it didn't really work. The only two stories that could hold some of my interest were the 1890s and 2014 plots, although the 2014 one was the only one that really had an original idea following all the discrimination and racism a female, Muslim police officer has to endure.

The frequent jumps between the different story lines made it difficult to really get into the story, and the story to tie them all together wasn't that strong. I didn't really care for the art (although I liked some better than others).

For me, it was not a one star read, definitely not the worst I've read, but also definitely not as good as I had anticipated based on the cover.

Thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Cora Tea Party Princess says

DNF page 37.

This just wasn't doing it for me. It was a great idea, but it felt like it was trying far too hard to be quirky and different, and it just ended up being a chore to even read a page (never mind a character/era).

I received a copy of this for free via NetGalley for review purposes.

Marti Dolata says

Rating system, 5-superior, 4-really enjoyed, 3-OK, 2-waste of time, 1-waste of paper.

An ambitious plot that suffers from the kitchen sink school of writing. The author tried too hard to make this shocking, and the basic story suffered from all the add ons to make this noir attitude. Mutilated bodies with four different detectives in four different time steams isn't enough, let's throw in jack the ripper, pedophillia, orgies, blood drinking, gratuitous torture, etc etc. He would have done better to have simplified his plot and made it clearer.

I did particularly like the art of Meghan Hetrick.

Rob Slaven says

I received this book free for review from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Despite the privilege of receiving a free book, I'm absolutely candid about it below because I believe authors and readers will benefit most from honest reviews rather than vacuous 5-star reviews.

This graphic novel is a multi-threaded time travel murder mystery of sorts. It has many mythological aspects and delves into the ideas of secret societies, ancient texts and even manages to rope in bog bodies. The narrative is exceptionally complex and at times, honestly, is beyond total comprehension. I was able to unravel the overarching concept of the book but many of the details simply escaped me completely.

To the positive, the book does touch on some interesting concepts and its use of language is a joy. I found myself heading to the dictionary quite a few times and there are dozens of wonderful period English colloquialisms. The artwork is solid, sometimes shocking and exceptionally adult. This is not a novel for the kiddos of any age. There is much sexual congress, drinking of blood (straight from the proverbial 'tap') and outright murder.

To the negative, as I said, I just couldn't quite tease out all the meaning in the various storylines. I know generally what happened and the storyline is reasonably satisfying but there are so many loose ends in my head that I think it would take a couple more readings to properly sort out. The text isn't terribly dense it's just that there are so many threads and there is little visual difference between some characters to properly tell them apart. Adding to that the rapid switches between timelines make it difficult to know not only who is acting but also when they are in time and where they are. It is certainly a bit of a puzzle.

In summary, for intense fans of the genre, this is probably a winner but for me as a more casual fan this blew my head apart. It's graphic, innovative and complex but maybe a bit too complex for my addled mind.

PS: I hope my review was helpful. If it was not, then please let me know what I left out that you'd want to know. I always aim to improve.

David Schaafsma says

A very ambitious book with a sort of patriotic message for and about Olde England (and the wider world): Stay tolerant and as you always have been--richly multicultural. That part of it is a tad preachy, though it's a message of tolerance I happen to agree with, in the debate about immigration everywhere.

There's no sense trying to do a proper review as thorough and insightful as Sam Quixote's, so read that, I'd say. I learned a lot, as usual, from him.

The basic idea is that a murder happens in four different periods in the same location in London: 1890, 1940, 2014, 2050. Four different "non-traditional" (that is to say, not Sherlock Holmes) detectives are on the case each in every period; a gay man, a Muslim woman, a corrupt guy, a crazy/amnesiac woman. All told by Spencer, and drawn and illustrated by four different artists, and colored by one colorist in very different

styles. Has potential, yes? I think it does, and it may be better than I say, since I am not sure what it all means, really. Maybe.

There's a few things to not like besides the aforementioned preaching:

*The title is not descriptive. Well, there ARE four bodies, but this is about ideas, not bodies. Murdered bodies, okay, but it's what gets these bodies murdered that the book is about. If it's REALLY about bodies in some metaphysical sense, then it is too esoterically configured here.

*The use of "HH" is a marker throughout is confusing, though Sam's double helix theory is probably right. Until I read his review I literally had no idea what was going on.

* The phrase "Know you are loved" is said throughout, in every period. Where does that come from? Somebody tell me!! I assume it is something commonplace that I just don't know. I like intertextual clues-y books, I teach English, but I had no idea here.

*The ending is confusing.

*Because there are a lot of ideas here, HH, Mithras, dybbuks, and so on, that you have to know a bit about to make sense of the ending.

**The cover I initially liked quite a bit, it was why I picked it up at the library off the shelf, though I have to say a brightly colored 40s woman whose white blouse is a bit spattered with blood is not what this book is about. It's like it's about that tv show, Dexter, a dark comedy about serial killers. That cover is confusing.

And you either love or not the four different artists reflecting four different periods of art and history. I liked the idea of it more than the actual clash of artwork, finally, though I get it and acknowledge it as interesting.

I like:

*that message, as I said

*the ambition itself. Spencer gets a point for that from me, if not from all of the Goodreads readers who absolutely HATED this comic as merely confusing and incoherent. It IS confusing, and it MAY be incoherent, I'm not yet sure.

*each individual story quite a bit.

*Spencer's attempt to link all the murders ideologically

*the period dialogue, usually.

*the Muslim woman detective a lot.

Overall, it was fun and challenging to read. A very British comic, as Sam sez.

Erin *Proud Book Hoarder* says

Received from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

First I need to point out this groovy cover - great right? Draws the eye, it's pin-up, pulp, fun, and blood splattered.

It's hard to describe the plot well since it's too confusing for my simple brain; plus this is catered more for the British audience. I think they'll get the cultural identity conflicts and connections stronger than I can.

Basically the collection (8 series joined together in one edition) jumps frequently between four different detectives in London over four time periods. Edmond Hillinghead in the 1890s, Karl Whiteman in the 1940s, Shahara Hasan in 2014, and Maplewood in 2050. Each detective finds a dead body, a weird symbol, and frequent lines said to them, "You are loved."

Edmond was my favorite with his bizarre secrets and even if the events in his time period were just as twisted as the others, it seemed somehow less flummoxing. Karl just comes across as an asshole who dresses the best. Shahara worked as a different, strong woman who didn't take crap from her co-workers but retained a sense of humor. I detested the annoying Maplewood - she and the other characters in 2050 irked me.

The unusual style of shifting these story lines took awhile to get used to. By the time I was used to it in the middle, it had worn thin on me by the end. And the end is not a big bang explosion, but a soft finale. With all the back and forth, I'm not sure if something better could have been creaked out by that point.

A saving technique would be to have the flashbacks less frequent, sections of the story being in one time period instead of shifting all the time, with the end and it coming together. I realize since it was a serial published independently, that probably wasn't possible - but it would have made reading this compilation more enjoyable.

There's violence, but nothing gore-drenched. You get blood when it should be there. There's some mild sex silhouette scenes. Kudos dished out for the artwork, it totally worked. The story may have had one author, but he used four artists for the different time periods. I liked that concept. The future stands out as bright, blocky and manic with its uncomfortable intensity. I can almost feel the noir style seep through the pages in the subdued 1940s. 2014 displays a calmer but deeper, more convincing colorization. The 1890s were dark, broody, and rocked the bloody scenes.

Overall this wasn't a bad deal, but it wasn't something my brain likes wrapping around. I don't care for frequent shifts, and the confusion caused by this was too tiring to be enjoyable. The art is stunning, like the colorization differences among time periods, the storyline just failed to impress.

Sesana says

(Received from Netgalley for review.)

I admit to not knowing the first thing about this book before I requested it from Netgalley. But I was intrigued by the cover, with its blood-spattered pinup, and the idea of a murder mystery spanning over a century was right up my alley. And it all starts very strongly. The individual detectives are all quite distinctive from each other. And though I didn't particularly like two of the four (the 40s detective on the make and the futuristic amnesiac) I quite liked reading the other two's stories. The repressed Victorian detective was a decent piece of period work, and the present day Muslim detective was by far my favorite character.

And then the ending becomes increasingly out there, and it just wasn't working for me. Maybe it will work for other readers, and maybe I just wasn't up for the major twist in tone towards the end. But it also felt a little preachy in the last few pages, and I don't know if I'd ever be entirely up for that. Still, there's some solid work here, and an ambitious concept, and I think the writer's heart is in the right place.

Sleeping with Ghosts says

What that hell of deception! The cover cheating on you if you think the story is about of the years of the drawing. How wrong I was! It's about many stories from four timelines: London, 1890 (Jack, The Ripper storyline), London, 1940 (gangster), London, 2014 (Etnian and multicultural problem) and London 2050, (a distopic future). All around about the founding of a death body in every year. Didn't like the characters, didn't like the story, didn't like it. I just wanted more or another story behind the cover...

Yasha says

I wish I could unread it.

Althea J. says

I really, really, really want to discuss this book with someone who has read it.

The premise is phenomenal. The 4 time periods, brilliantly depicted by 4 different artists, giving each period its own distinct look and feel. Each artist does a tremendous job of bringing their time period to life. I was initially attracted to this book because of my interest in Tula Lotay's art, and was happy to see the contrasts and strengths of the other artists as well.

But it's the story I want to discuss with someone else who has read this. Surely, tying these 4 time periods together is an ambitious project. I can't tell if the writer bit off more than he could chew, or if he needed more pages to flesh out what he was trying to say. Or if he could have said it more succinctly were he not tied to the format of a set # of pages per time period per issue.

It's also possible that my vague understanding of the thread that ties the story together would be sharpened by nuances that I failed to pick up on (hence, my desire to talk about it with someone else). I really wanted to like this more than I did!! There are ideas about love, acceptance, identity and goodness -- all ideas I enjoy seeing tackled in the art I consume. I love encountering stories and art that illuminate these concepts via new

contexts and frames of meaning. But I'm not sure that I understand what exactly is being said in this book. There seem to be good intentions of cool ideas that are just beyond my reach.

I definitely enjoyed the experience of reading this! I just wish I had finished it feeling more certain of what I just read.

Liz Janet says

I've never been more scared about the phrase : *Know You're Loved*, in my life.

This is a story to leave you feeling sick and icky everywhere. Whenever I read an issue, I felt disgust over something, whether it was the sex, or the racism, or the repetitive phrase that took forever for me to figure out. Hence, go into this story knowing this will not be a pleasant journey.

The story follows four detectives, Edmond Hillinghead, working after the times of Jack the Ripper; Karl Whiteman, a very corrupt man in 1940; Shahara Hasan, a Muslim woman in 2014 who is facing fascists; and Maplewood, filled with amnesia in 2050, as they try to discover who murdered a man filled with scars, missing an eye, and double h's crossed carved on their arms. All but one detective was actually interesting, Maplewood. I have no idea what the hell was going on with her, her character was too extreme for anyone to make any sense, and her plot-line was my least favourite.

I do adore that each of these characters, no matter their background or story, are members of British society as much as anyone else, and that is the main point.

The ending was a sort of letdown, too obtuse for my taste, but better than a lot of the comics I've read. So, if you like weird characters, murder mysteries spanning a few centuries but easy to finish, gory art, incomprehensible narrators, a creepy phrase, secret organizations, and an okay ending, this is the book for you.

Pamela says

I found this ARC lurking in the depths of my Adobe Reader. If Adobe Digital Reader has depths, that is. I kept meaning to review it, but immediately after I read it I was simply so confused that words didn't seem to work properly. I wish I'd made more notes in my ARC because this is just straight-up bizarre, when all I really wanted was a quirky, intelligent take on murder mysteries.

The premise of *Bodies* is pretty solid: four murders, four time periods. All of them occur in London. All related.

In 2014, D.S. Shahara Hasan combats riots in London's East End. She's called over to a dead-end alley to find a corpse that's flayed and mutilated far beyond what any ticked-off rioter could do.

In 1888, Inspector Hillinghead interrupts a quick session between a gent and a whore and discovers a badly mutilated body. Thoughts immediately go to Jack the Ripper, but this victim is male, which doesn't fit Jack's M.O. Cut to the meeting place of the Order of Mithras, which we know is Very Bad because the windows are tinted red. Woo. Two mutton-chopped fellows ominously discuss the beginning of "the long harvest."

2050: Life as we know it is over. Detective Maplewood suffers memory loss because of a "pulsewave," but continues to patrol the city. She, too, discovers a mutilated body, and her long-buried police instincts return ... as does her favorite toy, a red ball. Which then turns into a girl named Bounce who tells Maplewood, "Know that you are loved."

1940, London during the Blitz: a corrupt policeman tortures an Irishman with an acetylene torch, leaving him for dead. The building explodes, and a new body appears: a man who's been tortured like the rest of the bodies we've seen so far. Inspector Weissman--that's *Whiteman*, thank you very much-- is on the case ... in Longharvest Lane.

Now we start cycling through the ages, following the investigations. The near-future one is so trippy that I can't follow what's going on. Maplewood is so fried that she just says things like "Shiny!" Shahara delivers a rousing patriotic speech on being British and Muslim and having "sexual congress" with a good ol' "Anglo-Saxon." Hillinghead is a closeted gay man who also hangs out with the Mithrans and asks a few questions too many. Weissman is a pathological liar who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto after murdering his niece and the Nazi who tried to rape her. Because, you know, logic. And family ties and all that. The Nazi paratrooper captured after the bombing informs him, "Weisst du geliebt werden." Now, I haven't practiced my German in a while, but I would have gone with "Weiss Sie geliebt werden" because I do not think that a prisoner and his inquisitor would be on an informal-you basis. But I try to err on the side of politeness in languages that make such a distinction.

Things just get exponentially weirder from here. Bodies disappear from morgues, men are driven mad by paintings, hermaphrodite ghosts show up, a guy gets "initiated" into a higher echelon of the Order of Mithras by murder, but is saved at the last minute by a dead man who recites the well-known "Know you are loved" schtick, and a great crowd of humanity shows up at Maplewood's hideout in London.

Turns out that the corpse just keeps reanimating. His name is John Bull, and he's a time-traveling, nudity-loving, savior of ENGLAND. YEAH ENGLAND ... and stuff.

Like ... at the end, I don't even know what was going on. Why introduce this wild mythology with cults and sigils and code words and dead bodies when none of it really matters anyway? Why does Inspector Weissman look like Todt from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? How did a Polish refugee become a police inspector? Why did Shahara pretend to be a terrorist? What purpose did the 1888 timeline arc serve other than introducing a gay policeman who gets tipsy and runs around yelling that he's a "Sodomite" who's proud to be British?

I'm sure my Irish and Scottish friends would just *love* this (don't personally know any Welsh people; sorry!). It's all about England. England, England, England--so bloody important. This is some weird propaganda tripping on LSD. Don't get me wrong--I would excoriate this just as much if it were pro-any other country. Because it just doesn't make any sense and I wasted far too much time reading and reviewing it.

I received an ARC of this title from Netgalley.

Christopher says

4.5 stars

This may be the one that breaks me of looking at GR ratings. Yes, I realize I should have been ignoring them all along in favor of reviews, but it's hard! Reviews on this book are all "I don't understand! (1 star)" "I was confused! (2 stars)" "I was expecting something simplistic because comic book how dare this be moderately complex! whaa!"

Ok, maybe that last one is unfair, but I really don't feel that these comics are worthy of those ratings. Sam's review nails this one, though I liked the ending, so read that.

I really think the trouble here is expectations. The cover art is not indicative of any of the internal art, though I think that is a cop-out because that is the case for almost all comics. There is a heavy dose of scifi/fantasy/something that comes on unexpectedly and plays a central role in the whole thing. If one was expecting murder investigations covering 200 years to follow our reality, one may find things off-putting. And, of course, it is fairly complex compared to your average comic.

But there's the warning. This is involved, doesn't tell you everything, has a strong dose of wtfery throughout, and is really quite good. Now I need to see what else I've put off reading due to its low GR rating.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

DNF! Din't like the art, dind't like the story. Well, I liked the part from 2014, but the rest was frankly just boring and the art made my head hurt! Damn you nice cover!

½ star

I received this copy from Vertigo through Edewleiss in return for an honest review!

Sam Quixote says

Four detectives, four different eras, one murder victim, same MO, same location - appearing to each detective. Who killed John Bull?

Bodies is a very tricky murder mystery to unpack and puzzle out but I will say it's the first Vertigo book in some years that I really enjoyed. That comes with some caveats but, all said and done, it's a fine comic.

The story is divided into four different storylines each drawn by a different artist: Edmond Hillinghead is a closeted detective in 1890, drawn by Dean Ormston; Karl Whiteman is a corrupt detective in 1940, drawn by

Phil Winslade; Shahara Hasan is a female Muslim detective in 2014, drawn by Meghan Hetrick; and finally Maplewood is a detective/amnesiac terrorist in 2050, drawn by Tula Lotay. I really liked all the artists' contributions - very solid work from everybody.

Si Spencer writes all the different parts and he does a fine job of presenting each in a different voice though the four artists help to separate the segments from one another with distinct visual styles. Colourist Lee Loughridge does excellent work too, giving each era a unique look and feel - dark and bloody for Victorian London, too bright and unbalanced for the future.

Each character is tasked with investigating the murder of an unknown man found in Longharvest Lane with similarities cropping up for each. Besides the identical victim in each era, a double h symbol "HH" appears for them all and phrases like "Know You Are Loved" are repeated.

I think the double H could be a reference to double helix which is the term given to double-stranded molecules like DNA. This ties into our bodies but also the main theme of the book: what makes up our national character. I should say this is a very British comic as Spencer seems to be focusing specifically on multiculturalism and cultural identity in Britain through his characters.

The four detectives could be classed as "outsiders", ie. the non-traditional standard as opposed to the stereotypically "normal" British types: a gay man, a Jewish man, a Muslim woman, a mentally-ill young woman. But they're all British - they are Britain, and they make up our country as much as any Anglo-Saxon straight person. Each is a strand of DNA in the national body.

You could look at Bodies as a character-driven piece, though it has a clear plot, and in that sense I think it's very successful. Hillinghead, Whiteman and Hasan are all well-written characters who are distinct and real. Maplewood/Maggie May Belwood/Bounce - her character was straight up bizarre. I didn't really understand any of the 2050 storyline to be honest and, though she's supposed to be an amnesiac, she comes off as having borderline Alzheimer's!

Besides Maplewood's, the storylines themselves are also easy to follow, up to a point, and are very compelling. We see Hillinghead's investigations lead him through the same Whitechapel streets "Saucy Jack" claimed his victims two years previously, up to the Masonic societies and a conspiracy seemingly along the lines of Alan Moore's From Hell.

Whiteman's unpleasant journey from the claws of the Nazis to setting himself up as a detective on-the-make in blitzed London is also interesting to see, though he's very easily the most dislikeable figure in the group. Hasan's storyline exploring race tensions in contemporary London through the prism of a young woman struggling with reconciling her two cultural identities as a Londoner and a Muslim in a difficult field like detective work is fascinating.

Here's where the caveats come in: it is a really involving book with the mystery driving the reader on and the characters becoming more complex and interesting the further we get in. But by about the last fifty pages I realised there wasn't going to be a satisfactory ending - Spencer had strung on the mystery and been much too cryptic for far too long and he wasn't going to be able to tie it all together coherently. I don't even know if that was the plan anyway, but I can't say I fully understood all of what was happening.

So: Bodies is a great read - maybe a bit too long at 8 issues; it might've been more effective at 6 - but it's an enjoyable journey that's worth taking. There's a lot to like here and Spencer's created a rich, ambitious and unique story with some excellent characters and a fine mystery at its core.

That said, the ending is impenetrable and though you get the impression that it's a happy ending, you're not sure why - but then the weak ending doesn't ruin the rest of the book either. Bodies is still mostly a really good comic so long as you don't mind not knowing what's happening at all times and can forgive the author being obtuse with the finale. Fans of Grant Morrison's weirder stuff and David Lynch films will get the most out of this comic.
