



## The Filipino Heroes League: Sticks and Stones

*Paolo Fabregas, Budjette Tan (Editor)*

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Undermanned and under-funded, the Filipino Heroes League does what it can to fight against injustice.

It's tough being a superhero but its even tougher being a third-world superhero.

## **The Filipino Heroes League: Sticks and Stones Details**

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## From Reader Review The Filipino Heroes League: Sticks and Stones for online ebook

### Melissa says

Meet the Filipino Heroes League... or what's left of them. Kidlat Kid (a.k.a. KK), he's a tricycle driver on the side. Invisiboy, food lover. New recruit Slick, full time hustler and brother to Invisiboy. Youngest superhero (just a little boy, really) The Maker, makes discarded stuff into something awesome and useful. And Flash (short for Flashlight..hahahaha), oldest and recognized leader of the bunch, not to mention an aging playboy. There is also Charm, daughter of a veteran super hero, who instigated regrouping the Filipino Heroes League (hereby known as the FHL) at their old HQ -The Pride- somewhere in Taft. Their biggest supporter: Mr. X, appearing as mysterious as Charlie in Charlie's angels.

The story jumps right into the middle of the crisis the FHL is facing. No backstory or explanation given as to who the members are, and how these people with superhuman powers evolved. You just have to read on and discover on your way that the FHL was once a mighty team. But almost all of them now are "overseas" heroes, earning big bucks and remitting a lot of taxes to the Philippine government. The remaining FHL team are becoming useless, obsolete and unappreciated in their own country. No more big villains to fight. No more funding for the flipflop clad KK and his peers. Damage in crime prevention is bigger than their budget and officials are not happy. In the face of all these, corruption is still running in heavy currents. Evil antiheroes long thought dead are again weaving their evil schemes to take control of the Pinoys. Situation turns impossibly dire for the FHL when they are framed for the political opposition assassinations. Adding insult to their injury, a new set of local supers called the Republic show up and out-stage, out-power, and out-costume them.

The plot is totally dramatic, surprisingly ingenious, and outrageously hilarious in the way an all too familiar situation is presented deadpan! The stellar ending leaves the reader with anticipation for the immensity of the next FHL adventure! 5-stars it is for the super authors and artist behind the FHL!

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### Nicolo Yu says

Much has been said about *Trese*, especially of its team of Budjette Tan and KaJo Baldisimo, on how Baldisimo captures the mood of Tan's supernatural crime scripts with his gritty line art. A two man team working seamlessly as one.

*The Filipino Heroes League* is of a different sort. Here, writer and artist are one, where there is no chance that the other guy can misinterpret what the other intended. This setup does not flout convention as the past best indie comics work have creators like Gerry Alanguilan, Arnold Arre and Carlo Vergara doing double duty.

The difference though is that Paolo Fabregas has Budjette Tan to act as a consulting editor for his work. Most creators in the past self-edit their work. The rationale is that an outside influence may stifle their creativity. But in this case, Tan helps Fabregas to focus on his work on telling a story. What results is a slick superhero production with elements of American comics, but recognizable as truly Filipino.

Fabregas is a revelation. His work in *Book One: Sticks and Stone* is pretty solid and helped blow away my

preconceived notions of pretty boy actors dabbling in the most nerdish pursuit of producing indie superhero comics.

How Filipino is this graphic novel? You have the Philippines' best and brightest heroes retiring from their crime-fighting and working as "overseas Filipino heroes." The heroes that remain are either too old and disillusioned or too young and undertrained. Underfunded too, their patrol vehicle, an owner-type jeep has a faulty starter and their back-up vehicle is a pedicab.

This is the first book and already there is too much going for it, too many subplots begging to be explored. Hopefully, the promised second volume would tighten this story. But this is already an excellent first attempt at portraying a superhero team through Filipino sensibilities.

I will definitely be waiting for the second volume should it be released anytime soon.

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### **Eliza Victoria says**

I am late to the party. At the time FHL came out, I think, I was busy following Trese's exploits, and I (unfairly) judged and dismissed this book because the title and cover irritated me in a way empty platitudes like "The Filipino Spirit Is Waterproof" irritates me.

I can be a lazy book buyer, because if only I had flipped the book and had seen the back cover image, I would have picked it up in a heartbeat.

Like Budjette Tan, as he mentioned in his introduction, Paolo Fabregas had me at PEDICAB.

It was tough getting past the opening pages because it showed the World Trade Center and the Islamic Defenders (as villain) and I had so much conflicting emotions that I had to put it down.

When I picked it up again and read how the local news anchor put more weight on the exploits of Bomb Boy, a Filipino superhero who "made it big" by being the sidekick (not even a hero - just the sidekick that gets thrown like a discus) of an American superhero, I appreciated what the comics creator is trying to do with FHL's silly, heightened reality. It's funny because it's sad. It's sad because it's true. The fascination with showbiz, supers going abroad to earn more money, earning money so your relatives can spend it on frivolous things (I feel you Kidlat Kit, haha), living DIY-style (not even the cutesy DIY, it's the we-have-no-money-so-we-have-no-choice DIY), graft and corruption - it's the Pinoy reality, and it is presented here in an entertaining, effective way.

Looking forward to Book 2.

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### **Diane says**

Before I start, I would like to commend myself for reading a comic book! Yay for me! :P (Sorry, I'm self-centered) This is my first komiks ever (and I'm such a girl, apparently). I was looking for a light and funny read (This girl's exhausted and badly need to laugh) so I went to the bookstore to buy myself a Manix Abrera

Komiks but unfortunately, there was only "12" and more unfortunate was, it costs 500Php (Are you kidding me? It's THAT expensive???) so I instead picked up FHL and happy to say that it did not disappoint. :)

Bat mobiles are so OVER RATED! Real heroes ride Pedicabs! Yeah, that's how they roll. :P Undermanned and under-funded, these superheroes still do what they can to fight crimes and injustice. How very reflective of the current situation of this country. Hear this: Some superheroes have gone abroad to work in menial jobs. AND the only superhero who was credited as a superhero was some hero who was sidekick to an American superhero. SOBRANG PINOY ng kwento diba?. (Even the President in the book kind of looks like CGMA...:X)

We meet the superheroes, there were three at first, Kidlat Kid (who wears a tattered KKK t-shirt, the third K was covered with a cloth to make his initials), Invisiboy (guess what his power is?) and Flash Light, the leader. The three are underrated: their budget's cut (yep, they were gov't funded), the jeep does not start and Invisiboy's fat (LOL JOKE, he's not fat! He's big boned.). Oh and they were framed for the murders of the opposition members. The superheroes became fugitives. They still fight and investigate crimes while dodging the police and some new well-dressed supers who were very dedicated into killing them. What a life. They needed new recruits! They found Maria, the telepath, first, then Slick, who makes everything slippery and Bhoy or The Maker who can make anything from junk. The Filipino Heroes League is now complete and so ready to pick up chicks? Uhm no, they are so ready to save the world. :)

Paolo Abrera, the guy from the Coke Commercial??? Well, he writes comic books. And he does a real good job at it. The book doesn't have typos, thank goodness. Story's SUPER, I have not read any foreign comics but I pretty much think that 'may panlaban tayo' in the form of this book. It did made me laugh :D, I'm mababaw, I know, but it was really funny! :)

Visprint is very courageous to publish books like these. It's so hard to be published here in the Philippines except if you were writing for PHR or some other pocket books. The Filipiniana section is so untouched. In the National Bookstore here in SM Baliwag, which I frequent, Filipino books are only one shelf and the only books that were picked up were Bob Ong books. That's sad. I was happy that Visprint continues to print different kinds of books, keeping Philippine Literature alive.

So when will the movies come out? :D

Sana lang tagalog

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### **Ariel Acupan says**

Originally posted HERE.

### **FHL: The New Breed of Pinoy Super Heroes**

Move over Captain Barbel, Lastikman and Darna, Pinoy Graphic Novels got a new group of heroes Filipino comic readers would surely love. I am not saying that this new one would surpass what those pinoy comic heroes (well some of them I just knew because of the movies and/or pantaserye made base on their original comic series) accomplished so far, but they just might. A group of "super" connected to the government to

eradicate crimes and save lives. But unlike the characters of DC and Marvel young kids are familiar with nowadays, this group got some pinoy twist in them. Think about it, a mutant story in a Filipino setting. Heads up to Paolo Fabregas, what a promising start. A lot of loose ends and a cliffhanger ending to book one that would make you wish that the next would not be too far from its release. To sidetrack me from spoiling you, I'll just introduce the members of Filipino Heroes League:

**Flashlight** – The current leader of FHL. He's doing this gig for the chicks . A bit of a badass if you ask me, but he is a true leader at heart.

Power: He could create/shoot/blast a ball of fire using his hands.

**Invisiboy** – Big boned (not fat). Described by his brother (slick, will tell more about him later) as a law-abiding-rule-loving-boy-scout-alter-boy. He's like the goody two-shoes of the gang.

Power: Invisibility.

**Kidlat Kid** – When he's not doing heroic things, this guy is the fastest pedicab driver alive. A sort-of kanto boy who wears a tsinelas while fighting crimes.

Power: A speedster.

**Maria Constantino** – No code name yet. She is the granddaughter of "The Teacher". A Charmaine Riviera look-alike. You'll know who Charmaine is if you would read FHL, right Vis?

Power: Telepathy

**Slick** – The brother of invisiboy. He joins the FHL to help his brother and for a reason only Maria knows. A small time crook who takes advantage of others by using his powers for personal gains. Too shady for FHL but I think it is too early to judge him.

Power: He can make any surface slippery.

**The Maker** - A small boy with a big attitude. He knows way too much profanity for a boy. A bit too young to join the FHL but they really need all the help they can get.

Power: Can invent anything out of trash.

This is a very promising PGN (pinoy graphic novel). A round of applause for Visprint for being brave enough to publish artists/writers like Paolo Fabregas, Manix Abrera and Budjette Tan. They open up a arena that others thought was already closed. A success to those people like me who believe that we could revive the comic industry in the Philippines.

To view pages from this awesome PGN, click [HERE!](#)

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**jerica says**

Filipino superheroes? Count me in! I bought this book expecting a funny story and was surprised to realize

that this comic is quite depressing. Yes, the references are funny, the powers are quite cool (especially the Payatas kid's power), there's a blooming romance between a beautiful girl and an ordinary guy but the stark economic situation of the heroes individual lives and the corruption of the government disillusioned me. It's not enough for them to have low-tech equipment and costumes--the government treats them like shit as well.

It does have an interesting storyline so I will keep buying and reading. I just won't expect it to be Bob Ong funny next time.

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### **Carr says**

The Filipino Heroes League is set in a world where men in capes are regarded with casualness and where supervillains are able to serve as dictators of a nation. Specifically, the story finds itself set in a Philippines quite close to our own, yet something is different, far different. In this version of our poverty-stricken archipelago, superhero-ism is a profession that is not venerated and crime fighting groups are not idolized by many.

In the middle of this absurd scenario lies the Filipino Heroes League (FHL). First impression tells that the artist might have lacked some imagination when it comes to character designs. It is not Fabregas' fault, however, but the fault of the country's lack of support for these fictional crime fighters. During these times when people would choose to support overseas talents such as Maria Aragon and Thia Megia (neither of which fluent in our language), our local talents often find themselves plastered in the background, branded with the tiresome impressionistic labels such as jologs or baduy. The comic begins with the news overlooking the FHL's courageous feat of saving thousands of people from a fire in exchange for a full coverage of an Overseas Filipino Hero (OFH) becoming the sidekick of a famous superhero abroad. It is a promising premise that is not actually given much exploration, yet it is perfectly understandable why, as the story finds itself with only a few pages dealing with getting to know each character and knowing more about the threats. Hopefully the next book will delve more on our infamous crab mentality.

The comic focuses more on Hero vs. Society rather than Hero vs. Evil. It employs themes which made *Watchmen* a huge success, but it does so with a certain sensibility. For starters, it never forces its "Filipinoness." Most of the FHL's actions all throughout the comic are heavily influenced by what the entire country has imposed upon them. Halfway through they find themselves on the run from the law after a nasty frame-up, proving how susceptible the group is right from the start.

Overall, this is an incomplete yet satisfying first book, though the word "incomplete" is something more of a compliment rather than a stab. It is incomplete because the average reader yearns for more. The lack of answers and the huge amount of questions presented by this first book make us beg for the next.

And you might have already heard of the part where the heroes ride a pedicab to pursue some bad guys. It recently won the Komikon 2011 Award for the Best Comic Scene. That part alone is already an indication that someone needs to turn The Filipino Heroes League into a movie as soon as possible.

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### **Mapet says**

This is brilliant. Everything that I want to say has been already said by Budjette Tan in the foreword.

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### **DC says**

"The Filipino Heroes League". Just try chewing on that concept for a sec. Just think about a gang of supers running amidst not some skyscrapered American city, but among the road of EDSA, the community of Payatas, the incredibly politicized government of the Philippines. Yeah, I just realized how that looked like in my eyes.

Ok, I honestly can't say that I'm knowledgeable in the field of comics, but man, was I taken aback by this band of heroes. Okay, you may have heard of the detective Trese of Murder On Balete Drive, maybe even Zsazsa Zaturnnah of Ang Kagilagilas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Zsazsa Zaturnnah, or perhaps Andong Agimat of Ang Mundo ni Andong Agimat, and these personalities may have (if you're familiar with their stories) already given you beforehand of an idea of just how hard it sometimes gets when you wanna protect not just your family and friends, but the entire **Filipino** nation.

While I wasn't surprised to hear of politics weaving its way into these heroes lives, I suppose I wasn't prepared to see traces of recent history written in them too. The heroes themselves were very real and very human, while possessing their superpowers. [I wish I could make commentary on about how this volume is very much like or not at all like American comics, but sadly, as previously mentioned, I'm not very informed on the subject.] Their characters and habits are quite Filipino-like, really... Not to mention the setting and overall environment. (view spoiler)

The art was pretty well-executed. The dialogues are quite readable and understandable, and I have not seen a typo here or there, heh. (Yes, it's in English.) There's a lot of action, surprising revelations, the sexy girl and the dashing dude. There's even talk about costumes, of financial difficulties, of the unknown boss. There are definitely villains-- even supervillains! The thread that maintains what is good and evil is somewhat thin, and it's almost difficult to know who you should believe in. The storyline is interesting in itself, and I'm definitely looking forward to Book 2.

[Holy. I like reading comics made by Filipinos ([author:Gerry Alanguilan|38797], Arnold Arre, Budjette Tan, etc), and by God am I surprised to find this last book among a seemingly untouched Filipiniana shelf in some school supplies store. Suh-weet, I tell you ;) I was also rather surprised to find out that this volume was copyrighted in 2009. Two years ago! Interesting. Budjette Tan's foreword was dated Dec. 2010, though... Budjette Tan! Woo! Just... you know, mind blown n.nb]

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### **Ingrid Espinosa says**

I'm excited for the next one! It gave a pretty good picture of the Philippines yet didn't get too depressing. I just wish it were in Filipino, but I guess that it's in English will give it a wider audience :)

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### **Jayvie says**

Liga ng mga Pinoy na may Superpowers? Weh di nga?

E sila Kidlat Kid at The Maker lang ata ang pinoy. May naka-Amerikana pa. Tapos ang mga pangalan ay Flashlight, Invisiboy, at Slick. Aminin mo, kabilib-bilib ba ang mga pangalang yan? Hindi di'ba! Mas nakakabilib pa ata ang *Kapitan Sino, Super Inggo, Volta, Panday, Boy Bawang* at *Kapitan Awesome*. Mga superhero na totoong pinoy.

At dito ako nagtataka, tinaguriang Pinoy pero bakit English ang salita? Alam ko wala namang problema dun. Maganda pa rin naman ang kwento mapa-english mano tagalog, pero nasagwaan lang talaga ako nung magmura sa Kid ng "Pu\*\*\*\* i\*\*.", sabi ko, "Anu yun? English tapos Tagalog ang mura?" dapat "Mo\*\*\*\* fu\*\*\*\*." na lang. hahahaha. Ang kaso nakakatawa lang talagang isipin na ang mga Pilipino, nagmumurahan in fluent English.

Sa totoo lang, hanga naman talaga ako sa komiks na ito. Kahit pa nga sabihing may mga puna akong negatibo. Masasabi ko pa ting gusto ko ito.

Ito ang mga dahilan:

**1. TEMA** - Astig, mahusay si Paolo. Nakagawa siya ng pantapat natin sa X-MEN, Justice League, Avengers at Voltes 5.

**2. KWENTO** - Interesanteng kwento. Superheroes laban sa gobyerno. Mga makabagong aktibista at raliyista na may mga kapangyarihan at gumagamit ng dahas na kumakalaban sa gobyerno. Astig. Sino kaya ang mananalo?

**3. SUPER POWERS** - Super Speed, Invisibility, Telepathic, Super Slippery, Super Genius, at ang pinakagusto ko. . . . Chick Magnet.

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Ngayon kwits sa siguro. May mga ayaw ako at may mga gusto din sa komiks na ito.

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### **Kaiye says**

If memory serves me right, I saw Paolo Fabregas when he was playing the lead role on Repertory Philippines' "The Owl and the Pussycat" way back... when? I haven't seen him in any more productions after that (mainly because I wasn't able to watch much theater), so it was a pleasant surprise, after n number of years, to pick up a comic book by him.

Got me hooked immediately (pedicab, LOL) although it started pretty abruptly. The back story kind of develops a little later on. Reading the back cover copy, I initially thought it would be a light and funny read. It turned out to be a little serious more serious than I thought, which was fine as I think some issues it brushes at or touches upon, although Filipinos like to make light of them, root from serious matters. The plot itself is no laughing matter, but the sprinkles of humor are quite welcome.

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I need to go back to Fully Booked and purchase the sequel!

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### **K.D. Absolutely says**

I admire the many firsts that this local graphic novel achieved: (1) the appearance of six new Filipino comics superheroes in one book; (2) the artist, Paolo Fabregas is both the illustrator as well as the storyteller that ensures the seamless transfer of his ideas to his drawings; (3) the good-looking Fabregas was previously known as a TV boy-next-door commercial model and a popular stage actor. These did not surprise those who knew him personally because his father is a popular showbiz character actor and his mother is a poet. However, as a storyteller and graphics illustrator? This is his first foray in local literature and it surprised most people. They didn't know that he could draw!

And he did quite well. In fact, my young friends rated this book on a high side and I could not blame them because they are still young. Komiks also hooked me when I was young so I was not different from them.

Personally, at 47, I found this thin book simply corny. I just have to be true to myself, right? The reasons: (1) Fabregas copied so many ideas from other western graphic novels or stories. For example, the mysterious boss of the 6 superheroes, talking to them and giving them instructions is very similar to the boss in the TV series, *Charlie's Angels*. It's so 70's!; (2) He *localization* of the story by incorporating local flavors like Kidlat wearing slippers, superheroes becoming OFH (Overseas Filipino Heroes) and the President of the Philippines with mole in the exact place as that of ex-President Gloria Arroyo's face are just too obvious and feel contrived; and (3) the illustrations are mediocre. The faces of the characters are not striking and not one of them has the capacity to stay in your mind for a long time. For example, when I first read *Trese*, I could not forget the faces of some of the characters like Trese herself and the *nuno sa punso*. I thought that Kajo Baldisimo made a good job in capturing the thoughts of Budjette Tan.

But then, I am not among the target readers of this book. I just read this because this is one of the 100 Favorite Books of our bookclub here in Goodreads. Also, I am not rating this with 1-star even if I did not appreciate the work as a whole. Rather, I am rating this with 2-stars (*It's okay* in Goodreads) because of the many firsts that this work achieved. However, I hope Fabregas finds a way to have more original concepts while incorporating local flavors. For example, instead of the big old screen where the boss gives instruction, why not think of something original like the *nuno sa punso* of Budjette Tan in his *Trese*? Have some originality, please. I know you are an intelligent young man. And also, for God's sakes, why make your superheroes ride the *trisikad* just to give the local flavor? What kind of superhero would ride on that manually-pedaled sidecar if flying, running or even brisk walking can bring them faster to the crime scene? I know it looks cute and very *Pinoy* but it just does not make sense!

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## Tina says

### Original post at One More Page

A week after I finished reading *Kingdom Come*, I felt the urge to read another graphic novel because, well, I was sick, and actual wordy novels made me dizzy and/or sleepy. So I finally decided to pick up *The Filipino Heroes League Book 1: Sticks and Stones* by Paolo Fabregas, which I bought after Jason's very enthusiastic recommendation.

The Filipino Heroes League, or FHL, were a group of superheroes that fight injustice and help the police apprehend criminals in the Philippines. Well, they *fought*, but because of bad economy and the defeat of all Filipino supervillains in the country, some of the heroes have decided to take on normal people jobs using their powers, and/or migrate to other countries in hopes of being an international superhero and making it big.

We meet two of our heroes still loyal to the FHL, Kidlat Kid and Vis, who are off to catch bank robbers. After dismissing a warning from a kid who told them his classmate will kill a public official, they race off in a *pedicab* to catch the criminals, only to be scolded by the police after they set the van on fire with the stolen money still inside it. Meanwhile, government people who are in favor of the president's impeachment are being killed one by one. When the remaining members of FHL are framed for these murders, they escape, only to find out that (1) there's another group of "superheroes" who are off to get them *and* make them look bad, and (2) there's a bigger conspiracy that ties all these events together, and tells them that what the FHL believed all this time may just not be true.

Fresh from reading *Kingdom Come*, FHL turned out to be a very fun read. I loved the local references, and how these heroes are just so...*Filipino*. The characters were fun, the dialogue was so familiar and the story was so gripping that I almost wished I bought this when the second book is out just so I would know immediately what happens next. I thought it was very well-written and easy to read, and it served as great entertainment for the few hours that I sat down reading this. :) I especially loved Kidlat Kid -- he reminded me so much of Sokka from *Avatar: The Last Airbender!* :)

I thought it felt right to juxtapose this book with *Kingdom Come*, because they have similar elements: a team of superheroes, some of them forgotten and set aside, all trying to make things right with the best of their abilities. Of course, *Kingdom Come* takes well-known characters so it obviously has more punch, but I think FHL is pretty much at par with its foreign counterparts.

If you're looking for another good, local graphic novel to get you by while waiting for, say, the next *Trese* book, then I recommend the first book of The Filipino Heroes League. It helps that Budjette Tan edited this book, too.

And once again: I really, really can't wait for the next book. When is it coming out?

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**Pturingan says**

This was a lot of fun. I think the next generation of Filipino komiks is here. As a fan, I'm very optimistic.

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