



Pocket Full of Rain and Other Stories

Jason

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This multifaceted anthology—our 12th Jason graphic novel—wraps up Fantagraphics' near-complete collection of Jason's oeuvre (minus just a few pieces of juvenilia) by printing selections from Jason's early-1990s work, including his remarkable calling card, the novella-length thriller *Pocket Full of Rain*, which has never before been published in English.

Like a number of his initial stories, *Pocket* is actually drawn with realistic human beings instead of blank-faced animal characters—a true revelation for Jason fans. In fact, this book showcases three distinct styles: his earliest "realistic" drawing style (used to unsettling effect in some particularly creepy stories), an intermediate "bighead" cartoony style that still features humans (used for both humor and drama), and the "funny-animal" style he's now best known for.

Readers who like Jason's anthropomorphic style won't be disappointed, though, as the book includes a number of tales done in that fashion, featuring (among other things) Death, a guy waiting for a bus, and croquet-playing nuns; over 40 "daily strip" format gags; a trio of hilarious parodies of other pop media work including *Corto Mjautese* and an elaborate riff on Basil Wolverton's *Spacehawk* done Jason style; and much more.

Also included are a color section featuring Jason's painted covers for his original Norwegian magazine *Mjau Mjau*, color strips and illustrations, and more. Plus—God cheating at Trivial Pursuit.

Pocket Full of Rain and Other Stories Details

Date : Published June 17th 2008 by Fantagraphics (first published January 1st 1996)

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Author : Jason

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From Reader Review Pocket Full of Rain and Other Stories for online ebook

Abby says

Being a huge Jason fan, I was totally fascinated by this collection, which contains some of his earliest work (only now available in English). Maybe I'm just a nerd, but I always enjoy seeing an artist's progression and development over time. It is a bit weird to read these early comics, in which his drawing style sort of reminds me of Jason Lutes ("Jar of Fools" era) in an odd way. I didn't think I would like the stories that don't have his trademark animal characters with deadpan expressions -- but I loved the title story (which contains one of my favorite Jason panel sequences of all time -- see p. 30), and some of the shorter one or two pages stories, like the nuns playing croquet in the street and his encounter with a sad old man on the bus. Full of absurdity, black humor, loneliness, strange whimsy, and all the other great things that make Jason the comix genius that he is.

Jackson Nieuwland says

An extremely interesting collection for the fact that we get to see Jason draw actual human beings! However while his pictures of people are technically sound, they lack spark and come off as rather generic (the more simply drawn his characters become the more life they seem to have) despite the marvellous stories they are a part of. The title story takes up the first third of the collection and it is full of the things that I love Jason for (surrealism, humour, spare depiction of emotion) except they are not fully developed yet. A few of the shorts show Jason trying things that he has not continued with in his later works and while they are quite enjoyable (What Shall I Do When I Lose My Hair & My Life As A Zombie), and if I were to see them from an unknown artist I would be interested in seeing more of their work, but I am glad that he went in the direction he did and left these forms behind. The escaped prisoner strips were my favourite part of the book, they seemed fully formed and I think that they fit in well with the contents of Meow, Baby!

Michael says

This book, collecting many of Jason's formative early comics, is probably only for fairly hardcore Jason fans, but what it lacks in polish and emotional resonance, it makes up for in ambition and flashes of greatness to come. Nothing here is truly memorable, but if you've read his later masterpieces, *Pocket Full of Rain and Other Stories* is a nice roadmap to how Jason found his voice and greatness.

Zaz says

Usually, his graphic novels work well with me but this short stories collection by Jason was difficult to finish and I found most the stories uninteresting. The only good point of the book was to show how the author played with different art styles and stories.

David Schaafsma says

Early, formative experiments by the comics Jedi Jason. It would be tempting to say this was sub-par, and sure, in a sense, some of it is rough, but it is great to see. For Jason fans, especially, like me.

- 1) In "Pocket Full of Rain," actual humanoid figures by the guy who makes his living drawing animals, and even draws himself in a memoir (On the Camino) as a dog!
- 2) A pretty hilarious discussion on the topic, "If you were the ruler of the world, who would you execute first?"
- 3) A tribute to Basil Wolverton's Spacehawk
- 4) A great story, "Papa," based on Hemingway's "The Killers." Jason loves Hem. Great stuff.
- 5) A great short, "Kill the Cat" (as intro writer James Sturm says, worth buying it just for this one.
- 5) Great color covers from his Mjau Mjau

A re-read, six years since I last read this!

Joey Dhaumya says

The titular story is possibly the greatest comic I have read so far. Incredible.

Nathalie says

La couverture est trompeuse, il s'agit en fait d'une compilation des premiers travaux publiés par Jason et, dans l'histoire-titre particulièrement, les dessins ont peu à voir avec les personnages naïfs au regard lunaire auxquels l'auteur nous a habitués par la suite. Il y est question d'amour, d'extra-terrestres, de culture pop ("Et si on tuait tout ceux qui préfèrent *Sailor et Lula* à *Blue Velvet*?"), de hold-up et de vengeance. C'est souvent absurde et franchement désabusé et déprimant.

Sam Quixote says

One of the most interesting and original comics artists/writers of the last 10 years to emerge is the Scandinavian cartoonist Jason with his surreal, funny, and touching stories featuring strange animal-headed characters. But how does someone like this come to be? Well, "Pocket Full of Rain" is the pre-Jason, the book that features a number of early strips from the '90s where the artist would hone his craft and become the storyteller he is today.

It's odd to see human characters in Jason's books but the title story has just that. A police sketch artist starts a relationship with a girl only to find she has a jealous ex who happens to be a hitman. When they rip him off, they go on the run but he's hot on his trail. As is another mysterious character... Jason's excellent storytelling instincts are present in this piece and are instantly recognisable from other later works like "Tell Me Something", even if the artwork here is different. There are the surreal elements here that would go on to play a big part in later works. Bank robbing aliens, picnics on the moon, helpful ostriches, homeless zombies, hat rains, and a werewolf. This is the length of his regular 48 page books and just as good.

Oftentimes seeing the human characters rather than animal ones, it feels like you're watching a David Lynch or David Cronenberg film. It's easily the best part of the book.

There are early strips of the animal characters doing everyday things - stories about Jason's alcoholic landlord in France, going to the movies, drinking in cafes, nuns playing polo in a deserted street. One of the most interesting is a 3 page strip called "Kill the Cat!" which features a man with a suitcase walking down the street being accosted by a crazy homeless man yelling at him "Kill the Cat!". I won't ruin the ending but it's a brilliant strip. Jason also tries horror in "Glass" where a lodger tricks a young boy into his room.

There's a series of newspaper strips featuring a little prisoner who gets into odd scrapes in a twilit world of ghosts and talking cactuses. They're very funny and reminded me of the work in "Meow, Baby!".

All of these strips are in black and white but there's a colour section at the back with all of Jason's painted covers from his Scandinavian comics publication "Mjau Mjau" that're excellent and round off a superb book.

If you're a fan of Jason's you'll want to have this book as it shows off an incredible talent in his early years, but even then producing some brilliant works. For any comics fan or would be comics artist this is a fascinating collection of how someone finds their artistic voice and develops it. But for me, I just really enjoyed reading it. Jason is, as always, an amazing storyteller and "Pocket Full of Rain and Other Stories" is no exception. Fantastic read, highly recommended.

Summer says

The art was great. The stories just weren't my thing.

Anthony Vacca says

Guaranteed to initially shock more seasoned fans of the misanthropic Norwegian doodler with its drawings depicting actual humans sans anthropomorphic features, this satisfying collection of Jason juvenilia gives a clue to the man of one name's development as a comic book stylist. From FlashGordonesque kitsch to surrealist noir, these one-shots show a plethora of influences, most telling of all that of Ernest Hemingway's. (No, that doesn't mean his comics read like the Great White Bwana's, you narrow-minded Hemingway haters.) While I don't agree with his low opinion of Radiohead or David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* - and am genuinely confused at how he dislikes Robert Altman's films considering certain similarities between the two's styles - I do think you should read Jason, any Jason, pronto. Capiche?

Angélique Moreau says

This is pre-Jason. The first long story of his, with nearly all his recognizable characteristics, if not in place, then at least present.

There is an ostrich on the moon.

An alien robber wants the artist's autograph.

Her ex-boyfriend is a hitman.

The rain goes on falling.

Not all the characters are animal-like and there may be a little more dialogue than in (some) later works, but the absurdity of melancholy daily life suddenly disrupted by extravagant crime stories breaks through the page. It is realistic in its minimalism.

I usually prefer Jason's adventures with animal heads; I had read an anthology containing some of his earlier work with humans looking the part, but the animal heads paradoxically better conveyed the absurdity of it all, or how life can laugh at our human identity by depriving us of it.

But *A pocket full of rain* is a masterpiece.

You can almost hear someone singing «she wore blue velvet, bluer than velvet was the night» while you're waiting for the robins to come back.

(I realised after that I posted on the wrong edition. I read an old Norwegian paperback version of this book. Fine...I'll try to find this anthology of his earlier works)

[illegible]

Ceci est du pré-Jason. Sa première histoire longue, qui contient presque toutes ses caractéristiques, même si toutes ne sont pas abouties.

Une autruche sur la lune.

Un détrousseur extra-terrestre qui veut l'autographe de l'artiste.

Son ancien amant était un tueur à gages.

Et la pluie continue de tomber.

Certains des personnages seulement ont des traits animaux et il y a peut-être un peu plus de dialogue que dans certaines de ses œuvres à venir, mais l'absurdité d'une vie quotidienne mélancolique, soudainement interrompue par des crimes extravagants, crève les pages. Le minimalisme rend tout cela réel.

Je préfère généralement les personnages de Jason avec des têtes d'animaux; j'avais lu une anthologie contenant quelques uns de ses travaux des débuts avec des êtres humains dans le rôle, mais les têtes animales traduisent paradoxalement mieux l'absurdité de tout ceci, et la façon dont la vie peut se jouer de notre identité humaine en nous en privant.

A pocket full of rain est un chef d'œuvre.

On pourrait presque entendre quelqu'un chanter "she wore blue velvet, bluer than velvet was the night", tandis qu'on attend le retour des merles.

(Je me suis rendu compte après coup que j'avais posté sous la mauvaise édition. J'ai lu une vieille version norvégienne de ce livre. Mais qu'à cela ne tienne, je tâcherai de trouver cette anthologie de ses premières œuvres)

Archit Ojha says

This one line :

"I think you spend your whole life looking for someone who has had the same experiences as you have and

who you don't have to explain anything to,

who knows exactly what you mean....

Melancholic human characters from Jason.

The first story. This one started and stopped. Not the trademark flip flap alternating story lines like usual. Humans with faces this time around. Faces that show you emotions.

Look beneath the shades of black and grey, you just might notice the hint of sadness that fills the players. Like a blotting paper spilled with ink.

The protagonist, a sketch artist for the police, has a hard time with women. All the painters being pals with french models are a myth. He's emotional and blurts all at once when speaking to the opposite gender.

Until he runs into the special one. The talk and feel and love grows in its own peculiar way. Gravestones and fears are shared over coffee. Past of the girl finally catches up to her and she divulges the thing that is eating her. Her ex-boyfriend isn't over her yet. Our artist tries to playdown the turmoil until he gets to know that the man from the past is a hitman.

Life changes when the hitman kidnaps, beats the good guy up and threatens. The girl can not and will not give up her love from the fear of guns and muscle. They elope and are robbed.

A lot more happens. They weather it all. The good couple. The hitman succumbs to death. There is also an alien on the prowl and a man who was humiliated. The story has it all for a theater drama of elitist kind.

Only that the last scene unfolds in a different emotion.

The couple are no longer together and you are left gathering the pieces of your heart from the pavement.

Bryce Holt says

Normally by the third or fourth book, you get a fix on the author's process to story development, their character types and some of the purpose of their work. Jason, to this point, still confounds me. Yes, the characters are relatively the same piece-to-piece, but they are just all over the board. Sometime an idea seems totally new, and sometimes it is a straight rip from another author. All the while, I move from extreme focus and enjoyment of a piece to relative frustration and disappointment.

This short story collection of early work falls into the latter category. Obviously an early work (when he was still trying to find both his artistic style and his voice), this was an amalgam of different styles, thought and purpose, none of which gel correctly. I'm all for seeing where an artist begins, but this was more disappointing than I could have anticipated. Stick to his 'longer' short stories...at least they all have purpose.

Leif says

If anything, I adored this collection of Jason's early stories for their variety and narrative complexity. The surrealist blend of the story that lends the collection its title, for example, is jarring but oddly brilliant, full of flourishes and moments of extra-rational delight and horror, sometimes at the same time. What grounds Jason's aesthetic is his mordant sense of life's excruciating mundanity (waiting at a bus stop, no bus comes; the many frames of characters simply sitting in booths chatting about... nothing) and his acknowledgement of life's violence, symbolized by the guns that often come from nowhere to suddenly end a life.

My favourite sequence was the line-based moon sequence of prison inmates, moon cacti, and ghosts, but there's much here on offer. A close second runner is the brilliant inversion of "Invasion of the Giant Snails," which places a noir-parody in the midst of the mundane but death-oriented other strips. Here, however, where you would expect guns and death, you instead see a hero "shoot" mobsters with a banana; going down – "Aghh," "Ughh," "Hgnn" – they then proceed to count to one hundred, a schoolyard practice that at least one of the "dead" mobsters shows to be both familiar and tedious as he lies with his head resting sideways on his fist in the classic pose of boredom. "Drop the banana", Al Capone tells our hero, who reveals the story's artifice with a knowing rebuttal: "You can't kill me with a banana." The humour deepens when he pulls out an unplugged hairdryer as the next weapon of choice. Beauty.

Hamish says

So I guess this is the weak Jason book. Not that it's particularly weak, but it's a collection of his early stuff and it's not quite on the level of everything afterwards. For one thing, his art is a little rough and scratchy, which are not normally qualities you'd associate with Jason. Plus he draws...people. Like, human people. And they have facial expressions! It's surreal and strange. There are a few dog/cat/bird people like we've come to love, but even those don't quite look right. It's the work of an artist who hadn't quite found his unique thing yet. Though even with human people, the title story does feel like a Jason story. It's got a pulpy/b-movie esque plot masking what is basically a story about relationships like Jason's stories always do. But unlike later stuff, it feels a little...90s alt comix. A little too much Adrian Tomine and a boy and girl talking about how they totally get each other and stuff because they both like The Smiths (I mean, I love The Smiths, but you know what I mean). But it's also pretty well done for what it is. And the shorts that accompany it are mostly cute and entertaining.

Anyways, this is out of print and it probably isn't worth tracking down too strenuously, at least not until you have all of Jason's other books.
