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Incognegro



Synopsis

Writer Mat Johnson (HELLBLAZER: PAPA MIDNITE), winner of the prestigious Hurston-Wright Legacy Award for fiction, constructs a fearless graphic novel that is both a page-turning mystery and a disturbing exploration of race and self-image in America, masterfully illustrated with rich period detail by Wareen Pleece (THE INVISIBLES, HELLBLAZER). In the early 20th Century, when lynchings were commonplace throughout the American South, a few courageous reporters from the North risked their lives to expose these atrocities. They were African-American men who, due to their light skin color, could "pass" among the white folks. They called this dangerous assignment going "incognegro." Zane Pinchback, a reporter for the New York-based New Holland Herald barely escapes with his life after his latest "incognegro" story goes bad. But when he returns to the sanctuary of Harlem, he's sent to investigate the arrest of his own brother, charged with the brutal murder of a white woman in Mississippi. With a lynch mob already swarming, Zane must stay "incognegro" long enough to uncover the truth behind the murder in order to save his brother -- and himself. He finds that the answers are buried beneath layers of shifting identities, forbidden passions and secrets that run far deeper than skin color.

Book Information

Hardcover: 136 pages

Publisher: Vertigo; First Edition edition (February 6, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 140121097X

ISBN-13: 978-1401210977

Product Dimensions: 7.1 x 0.6 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #498,015 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #376 in [Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Graphic Novels > Historical & Biographical Fiction](#) #927 in [Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Graphic Novels > Mystery](#) #29253 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical](#)

Customer Reviews

The brows are furrowed and teeth mightily clenched in Pleece's noirish artwork for Johnson's pulpy tale of a black journalist who goes undercover in the 1930s South to investigate a possible trumped-up murder charge against his brother—a charge that could lead to a lynching. Zane

Pinchback, who is so light-skinned he can pass for white with a little cosmetic help, writes the Incognegro column for a Harlem newspaper, and his beat (like that of many a brave black journalist at the time) is the bloody circus of lynchings still claiming lives in horrendous numbers. Johnson's tale is a smart and fast-paced one, particularly when dealing with Pinchback's reluctance to return to Mississippi (wisely preferring his comparatively sheltered Harlem life). Once he's back down South, the twists and turns of the story come fast and thick, goosed by the not particularly trustworthy explanations being given by Zane's moonshine-distilling brother, and the attention-drawing antics of Zane's playboy friend Carl, who invited himself along on a lark. Johnson and Pleece have done a mostly commendable job, though the plot gets too knotted for its own good long before the conclusion, but they give a cracking Chester Himes kick to what could have been a sub-Walter Mosley imitation. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

As a light-skinned African American growing up in a predominantly dark-skinned neighborhood, Johnson was electrified when he learned about the early exploits of Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, 1931-55. In 1919, White used his own pale skin to pass for a white and investigate lynchings in the deep South. Inspired by White's experiences, Johnson tells the similar story of Harlem journalist Zane Pinchback, whose own eyewitness reports of lynchings are regularly written up in a New York periodical under the byline Incognegro. Pinchback is on the verge of abandoning his undercover work for an editor's job when he discovers his own brother is in jail and days away from lynching for apparently murdering a white woman. How Pinchback tracks down the real killer, saves his brother's life, and narrowly escapes an angry mob form the plot of a riveting meditation on racism and self-reliance. The beautiful chiaroscuro pen-and-ink illustrations provided by veteran artist Pleece bring to vivid life one of the darkest chapters in America's racial history. --Carl Hays

I thought this was a powerful read. While it doesn't have the visual and narrative complexity of some of the more full-fledged graphic "novels," it works very well as a more straightforward comic book that still has an important story to tell. Some of the content is graphic in another sense, as in, shockingly violent. But it's actually less violent than such things as superhero comics. The shock comes because the events depicted here really happened. Lynchings and horrific abuse of black people were just as bad, and often far worse, than the ways they're depicted here. And people really did keep and trade photos and postcards of these hellish "picnics."The story is fast-paced and

gripping--I kept reading to find out what would happen next. However, in this war between blacks and whites, the white people are a little too uniformly evil. I thought there was some hope for one in particular, but he turned out to be almost as much of a sicko as the rest of the Southern "crackers." A white character with some depth and humanity would have made the story less starkly . . . well, black and white. I was led by this reading to learn more about Walter White, a real-life investigator who did even more dramatically heroic undercover work against murderous racism than this book's fictional hero performs. The recovered history in this book, and its invitation to remember more of it, is the most valuable part for me. Thank you Mr. Johnson and Mr. Pleece for infusing a format aimed at young people with such serious and relevant, yet also engaging, content.

Incognegro was a refreshing experience. I enjoyed the dialogue and the artwork, as well as the emersion into an Afro-American-centric storyline. The story recognized the limitations of one man in a society that was pre-disposed against him. It recognized that the main character could not right every wrong or find justice for every atrocity, but at the same time, the familiar phrase coined by Spider-Man kept coming into my mind as I read about this light-skinned brother--"With Great Power comes Great Responsibility." The main character put himself in harm's way for the good of his race and the exposure of the ugly truth. The story put me in the mind of a movie called Black Like Me, where a white journalist disguises himself as black and goes undercover in the South; although he did not face the same dangers as in Incognegro. Even though I grew up on comic books, this was my first graphic novel that I've read in a long time. The only criticism that I can give is that many of the characters are stereotypes themselves, but the story was still entertaining.

The other reviews here have summed up "Incognegro" well-- this well-paced graphic novel by Mat Johnson deftly explores racism in the South and the steps that one courageous newspaperman takes to combat it. I was fascinated by how the book tackled "passing

This is the first time I ever purchased a proper graphic novel. I'd read a few that had been leant to me from time to time but I'd never found anything that had compelled me to purchase. This book's topic certainly seemed like it had the makings of being worth the purchase and I was not disappointed. The drawings were phenomenal adding real value to the storyline whilst the story itself was excellent. Not a book I'd show to kids, but something I've recommended and leant to many friends since buying.

This book is well worth the purchase price. It succeeds as a noir murder mystery, social commentary, and as an indictment of social mores. This story is disturbingly, intuitively realistic in its portrayal of upscale Black life (the title character is a reporter for a Black newspaper) - which at the time had certain humiliatingly rigid similarities with Black life no matter the class, educational background, or economic station. The artwork in this tome is chillingly perfect for the tale told. Interestingly, there seem to be some direct parallels between the era portrayed in this riveting novel, and present-day American society, which the author subtly draws, as his story-telling prowess is displayed to good end in this great graphic novel. This book is a must-buy, must-read, must-share, must talk-about; for Americans of all walks!

Most books I enjoy reading, this one not so much. For a mystery it's very simplistic. visually was not bad. seller was prompt.

I read this for a College English course and I was really impressed. This comic covers a very important time in American history and it's great for a class such as Graphic Novel.

I read this in about an hour. Great book. Had to read it for class. Overall, it was a sad, sad story.

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