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The Extraordinary Adventures Of Adele Blanc-Sec: Pterror Over Paris And The Eiffel Tower Demon (The Extraordinary Adventures Of AdÃ©le Blanc-Sec)



Synopsis

Classic comedy-thriller by one of France's greatest, released to coincide with the film version! Both a rip-roaring adventure series set in pre-World War I Paris and a parody of same, Adele Blanc-Sec has been enchanting, thrilling, and puzzling readers worldwide through four decades. With various American attempts to publish Adele having dribbled into nothing decades ago, Fantagraphics Books, fresh from its triumphs with Tardi's West Coast Blues and You Are There, launches a spectacular, newly re-translated, hardcover series that intends to collect every one of its nine (soon ten) volumes. In this premiere installment, Adele becomes involved in an interlocking series of mysteries that involve a revived pterodactyl, a frightful on-stage murder, a looming execution by guillotine, and a demon from the depths of hell • plus of course moronic gendarmes, loyal (or perhaps traitorous?) henchmen, and a climax atop the Eiffel Tower. The Adele Blanc-Sec series is currently being adapted into a series of films by the renowned action director Luc Besson (The Professional, The Fifth Element), bringing this quirky, very French series to a new worldwide audience. 96 pages of full-color comics

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Recalling Tardi's great work from the American edition of Heavy Metal magazine back in its early years in the late seventies, I had to assume that the storyteller had lost some of his edge over the years. The truth is he's a pleasant surprise with that same sharp wit and cunning storytelling skill, and still a master of the form. He's lost none of the edge that made him a popular import all those

years ago. What is striking about this collection of two tales that intertwine with rich complexity and humane brevity is that by the end of the tale Adele remains an enigma full of questions unanswered and a lot hinted at, remaining unresolved. The cynical wit and razor's edge escapes as well as the delightfully off kilter twists and turns makes this a fun, engaging read with promises of a lot more to come. I hope there will be at least several more episodes of this series to read over the coming years. I can't wait to see the film, subtitles and all.

I was given the french original many years ago, and fell in love with the art. I have gradually made up a story to explain what is going on - with the help of my high school french, and the occasional french visitor. Well, nothing comes close to finally reading the real thing in English. The story does not disappoint, and Adele is a complex, interesting character. I can't wait for the next volume to learn more about her. The hardback is well produced, and the price at is excellent. (Also, the trailers for the Besson film look great!)

In 1967 Paris revised its building code, producing a master plan which threw out the old requirements that building height be limited by street width and that buildings be aligned with each other. Meant to encourage fashionable contemporary ideas on city planning, it resulted in massive, impersonal modern skyscrapers shattering and fragmenting old neighborhoods and the accompanying rise of automotive traffic. Although the code was revised in 1974, a great deal of damage had already been done. I think that background has to be considered in the 1976 publication of the first of Jacques Tardi's comics of the Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec. Murky, confusing, and frustrating, these illustrated adventures are a lovingly detailed tribute to the Paris that used to be. From the first panoramic view of the dramatically night-lit Jardin des Plantes (and then its marvelous museum interior), "The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec" is a beautifully-drawn evocation of 1911 Paris, a jaw-dropping marvel of visual historical research. Tardi has a good intricate pen technique that demonstrates a real affection for the past. The colors are dark and murky. All the reds are brownish-reds, all the blues grayish, all the yellows mustardy, the greens olive. The only bright color is the red of blood when someone is wounded. But ... I hate the story. The main character, Adèle Blanc-Sec, is an enigma. Is she a hero? A villain? She is introduced as kidnapping someone, but we don't know who or why. There is a bizarrely convoluted plot involving a hatched pterodactyl, and ... well, I'm not exactly sure what. I can't make it out. The men are extremely difficult to tell apart from one another. All the people are drawn in a cartoony fashion, and all the men seem to have the same craggy faces, huge noses, and

ridiculous black moustaches. It does not help that the plot involves hidden identities, double-crossing, disguise, and betrayal. Important explanations are done in massive word balloons of text filled with names, almost impossible to follow. I suspect it of being nothing more than an absurdist excuse for drawing all those lovely vistas and interiors of old Paris. Mlle. Blanc-Sec scowls all the time, her expression almost never changing (it was quite astonishing to see publicity photos of a new film based on the books, in which Blanc-Sec never stops smiling). In fact, nobody's expression changes much. The men tend to look either blank or befuddled, but the women all seem furious about something. So far there are three women in the entire series: the ever-scowling Adèle, the ever-frowning Edith Rabatjoie of the pointy nose and little glasses, and the ever-glaring Clara Benhardt, a nefarious actress. Characters betray each other, steal things, are killed, but it's hard to care. We know almost nothing about any of them. As an artist, I can't help but admire Tardi's beautiful linework and sensitive, detailed, plausible renderings of Paris of a century ago. As a reader, I am bewildered and annoyed. EDIT: I found the second volume of this series (comprising the third and fourth story of the original series) to be funnier and less frustrating than this one. I'm glad I kept going.

My friend gave this to me with this preface: "The woman at the bookstore who sold it to me was going gaga over this book, but after I read it I have to admit I don't really get it. Here, maybe you'll like it." And thus Adele Blanc-Sec made its way into my collection. The plot is hard to follow and I read it in a half-bemused, half-interested state, but I did finish it and I enjoyed it. I loved the art style and the way the period was set and illustrated, and that alone was really enough to carry me through it. But the strangest part was after I read it I kept thinking about it, day dreaming in Jacques Tardi-esque panels. I also picked up volume 2. I would definitely recommend this if you want to read something different and have a little cash to drop. Don't have high expectations, just let it wash over you and enjoy the art on every page. As for the story, well, it's an excuse for the art. Even so, the unusual style and muddled storytelling definitely charmed me.

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