

Cutting Edge

Francesco Dimitri

Mario Alberti, Illustrator

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Adventurers on a quest end up battling for the safety of the world in the graphic novel *Cutting Edge*.

A diverse group of super-skilled humans is gathered together by a group calling itself Leviathan, which sets a challenge before them. The task is a dodecathlon, inspired by the Twelve Labors of Hercules, but suited to the talents of the best minds in the world. A rich reward awaits the winners.

The first effort sets the team in search of a missing jazz musician. What seems like a pedestrian task is soon complicated by a strange convergence of technology and mythology. The book collects two distinct stories; what at first seems to be a predictable tale of one labor following another escalates in the second half of the book, when, while they're searching for John Dee's mirror, the team learns secrets about Leviathan, and takes on the larger goal of saving the world.

This is a compelling story peopled by complex characters, though its final chapters are rushed. The exquisite, intricate artwork makes the book a pleasure, though. Its backgrounds and textures are rendered in great detail, from the stone of statues to the shag at the end of a rug. The attention devoted to the main foci of each panel is even more notable: clothing hangs and moves in sync with the motions of the characters, and the personalities of heroes and villains alike emerge through their facial expressions, and the subtle positioning of their bodies.

Cutting Edge is a sexy, sleek, and surprising graphic fantasy.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2021)

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