

Instrumental

Dave Chisholm

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It's not often that one sees successful cross-pollination between the worlds of comics and music, but Dave Chisholm accomplishes just that with his graphic novel (and accompanying soundtrack) *Instrumental*.

Chisholm is an accomplished jazz trumpeter, and he draws on personal experience to create a convincing world for his central character, a talented but frustrated trumpet player named Tom Snyder. Snyder is tired of playing to small audiences, so when a mysterious stranger gives him an old trumpet that captivates listeners and poises Snyder for next-level success, he doesn't question his good fortune. But others are in pursuit of the trumpet, and Tom's friends notice a change in him. The trumpet is revealed to have a destructive provenance, and Tom is forced to question what art means to him, and the role and importance of commercial success.

The personalities of Tom and his friends are unique and appealing, from the old-time bassist who played four dates with Ornette Coleman and distrusts music schools and the Internet, to the young drummer who defends her college major in jazz drumming, to the piano player/florist who compares creating a flower arrangement to putting together a perfect four-piece rock band.

It's appropriate that *Instrumental* is a multimedia experience, as the questions it raises are universal to any form of art: as Tom's pianist points out to him, "If all you love is the result or even whatever reward the result gets you—/—it's just chasing your tail. You'll never be satisfied."

The black-and-white artwork in *Instrumental* is dynamic and inventive, perfectly illustrating both the transcendence of music, and Tom's struggle as he falls under the influence of the trumpet and everything it represents. *Instrumental* is recommended for any reader, but perhaps most for those who have a love for music. (Note: each copy of the book will have a QR code linking to a free download of the soundtrack.)

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2017)

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