ForeWord Reviews

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

Yesterday's Tomorrows
Chris Reynolds
Grant Morrison
John Freeman
Raymond Chandler
Tom DeHaven
Rian Hughes, illustrator
Image Comics
978-1-60706-314-8
(November 2010)

Unless one is a graphic art professional or a commercial art junkie, it's unlikely that the name "Rian Hughes" would mean anything to the average reader. But even a glancing invocation of his moniker in the company of his fellow craftsmen or followers of commercial art and design will evoke the bold lines, elegant designs, and almost preternatural command of color that distinguish his work. Among the cognoscenti, Hughes has secured a position as one of the pre-eminent graphic artists and designers of the last two decades.

Among another, perhaps more rarified, group, Hughes' name conjures memories of the brilliant, iconoclastic comic books that a younger, equally impressive Hughes created for a series of small, independent British comics publishers over a quarter-century ago.

Yesterday's Tomorrows gathers together those hard- and simply impossible-to-find comics under one cover in an inexpensive trade paperback, along with an expansive sketchbook section and an illuminating introduction by Paul Gravett, an internationally recognized expert on the comics medium. Gravett is also, not coincidentally, the editor who published Hughes' earliest comic strips.

Encompassing work created between 1982 and 1993, the stories themselves were written by some of the leading Young Lions prowling the British comics scene of the day, and one well-established, if long dead, master of prose. Regardless of their origins, tones, or the particular genres they explore, every one of these yarns is immensely enjoyable.

There's science fiction—a long-lived staple genre of the British pop entertainment complex, and of British comics in particular—scripted by Tom DeHaven, John Freeman, and Grant Morrison; modernist alienation and introspection from Chris Reynolds; and an

outstanding adaptation of Raymond Chandler's noir masterpiece, *Goldfish.* Throughout, Hughes' art displays an assured grasp of his tools, the medium, and his palette, making for an engaging, even entrancing, reading experience.

Considered as a whole, *Yesterday's Tomorrows* is a richly rewarding volume that can be embraced and enjoyed with equal ardor by both the casual comics reader and the serious student of the medium. Perhaps more importantly, it is also a significant contribution to the art form, and a lasting testament to the impressive storytelling abilities of its primary creator, Rian Hughes.

Bill Baker