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Posted on 22 July 2019 By Jason Lutes

Houdini The Handcuff King by Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi Part I found this story about Ehrich Weiss, a.k.a Houdini, very interesting and easy to read, even though the writers aren't exactly sure if they guessed Houdini's escape methods accurately. In this day and age, Magician Chris Angel is burning up the tube, but back then, before T.V., the entire nation and the world actually all knew who the Magician Houdini was. It was said that no bonds, no matter how strong, could hold him. The only bonds that got him in the end were the bonds of death but even that didn't come through one of his escape artist routines. In fact, his death has a lot to do with his personality. If you want to know, read this short little number and maybe you can guess the reason for Houdini's demise. What are secrets worth? I'm doing my mean Michael Caine from The Prestige impersonation now. You can't hear me if you are reading this because you are reading and not listening to me. This is an example. The clip is of Michael Caine speaking in his own Cockney accent or less dampened by years of living in California smog. Once they know the secret the trick is worthless is what I'm getting around to. If you care about secrets Houdini The Handcuff King is not a book for you. It spills the secrets to one of his famous tricks diving off a bridge into a freezing river and removing his shackles underwater. His wife delivers him a pick with a kiss. I'm surprised no one contracted lock jaw har har har. Mariel, you are too damned funny. Sobs. I don't really care about secrets. I could figure out that there was a trick in there somehow and not NEED to know how they were pulling off the trick. I'm impressed with the skill it

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takes to pull off tricks What would drive a person to spend their lives thinking of ways to fool everybody else Are they pleased by the illusion and skill or are they happy to fool people for its own sake Jason Lutes wrote Houdini and Nick Bertozzi illustrated I had been looking forward to reading this comic book for weeks I liked Lutes s Berlin comics a whole lot If you care about this sort of thing I do , those were comics about life in Berlin before the Nazis came to power Outside forces and inside forces pulling out the people insides and outsides and forcing them to splatter on the same walls they d rather not touch that s why they have walls The drawings were the expressions I could go into a temporary visual coma staring at as the body language spoke over the panels into pages Reading the story through words and then there s another layer of subtext through subtly changing landscapes I d compare Lutes s work to the Hernandez brothers of Love and Rockets fame Growing to love the characters as if you were living with them That sounds easy but it isn t something I get every day Knowing Maggie through her weight ups and downs as if watching her body was a visual timer of the good and bad of her friendships and love lives If LR is your type of comic I d suggest taking up the Berlin stories According to wikipedia, Lutes was influenced by the Tin Tin comics I love those too This is probably true about Handcuff It s kinda deliberately old fashioned.Bertozzi s Houdini illustrations were something else I want to say this is a kiddie style without really knowing what that means Like if you read a so so young adult book and think that s for young adults and it doesn t mean that other ya isn t completely awesome that anyone could love It has a precursory feel to it Introductory level Harry Houdini, introductory level The scenes with his wife are Oh honey sitcom style Harry Houdini asshole to journalists and brags about himself a lot Yeah, he did that But there were other sides Harry Houdini who worked to expose others and thought of himself as a criminal too Maybe he wanted to be caught too Maybe the con and the praise were the whole trick for him I wouldn t have chosen to write about an outside surface look at a happy marriage Since when are marriages ever what they appear on the inside To give an outside look as inside felt really kiddie look to me.The pictures are colored as if in a black and white film not black and white Painted a blueish gray and

Delta of Venus

Metamorphoses

Lady Chatterley's Lover

Kushiel's Dart

Sappho's Leap

Claudius the God and  
His Wife Messalina

A Princess of Mars

The English Patient

Robert Mapplethorpe  
and the Classical  
Tradition

Tropic of Cancer

The Piano Teacher

I, Claudius

Sex and the City

The Nude: A Study in  
Ideal Form

Thy Neighbor's Wife

sometimes colored black It felt like the stylistic choice when you watch new films that are black and white because films from that period were black and white Why are they trying to emulate the films of the period, basing life off of a copy I think too much Maybe they want to be like their old idols like a kid magician becomes a magician because they had believed in the illusion to begin with They get stuck in the past that way, though The expressions were ego and triumph Boring How about a like bodied like like minded Houdini pose Escaping bonds of a regular job He represented a lot to a lot of people escape and yet he did not want anyone else to be him The wonderful thing about Tigger is that he s the only one What did he represent to himself Houdini The Handcuff King is never than a facade The mystery is better than this I would at least want a wow to make me wonder about how he did it being him. The back of the book comes with blurbs from scenes of the books with their historical contexts A reporter delivering his story by phone because there was no internet in those days One box is of Houdini running past a wall of advertisements for his stunt the one he is racing too I thought it would have been cool if Houdini advertised by running through the streets I m Houdini Harry Houdini Mesmerized A Generation Of Americans When He Was Alive, And Continues To Do So Years After His Death This Is A Snapshot Of Houdini S Life, Centering On One Of His Most Famous Jumps As Houdini Prepares For A Death Defying Leap Into The Icy Charles River In Boston, Biographer Jason Lutes And Artist Nick Bertozzi Reveal Houdini S Life And Influence From The Anti Semitism Houdini Fought All His Life, To The Adulation Of The American Public From His Hounding By The Press, To His Loving Relationship With His Wife Bess From His Egoism To His Insecurity From His Public Persona To The Secret Behind His Most Amazing Trick And It S All In Graphic Form, So It S Fresh, Original, And Unlike Anything Previously Published About This Most Fascinating Of American Showmen I suppose that when I read a book wherein the structure of the story itself reflects the tone, I should be appreciative In this case, I m just annoyed The artwork in Houdini The Handcuff King is sparse, not very structured, and, honestly, a bit trite The story is much of the same It s a little slice of biography about Houdini s chained and handcuffed jump at Harvard Bridge One of Houdini s minor

Atomised

Les Liaisons  
dangereuses

The Naked Woman: A  
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Body

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feats, though he plied it as a marketing opportunity, which, as the book relates, he was always seeking. Unfortunately, I felt that this was only a minor graphic novel that acts as a rather expensive advertisement for The Center for Cartoon Studies, which holds the copyright. I wanted to like this book than I did. The foreshortened story was stilted, even jarring sometimes in its incompleteness. This shoddy storytelling wasn't, unfortunately, made up for by stunning artwork. Outside of the panel of Houdini jumping from Philadelphia's Market Street bridge, the artwork was pedestrian and uninspiring. This is a book that could have breathed and been full of life. Instead, I felt much like Houdini must have while he was sinking into the cold water, struggling to be free of the claustrophobia of the story in which he found himself. He escaped. I didn't. Being myself a magician strictly amateur for around forty years now, give or take, I was predisposed to like this. This is obviously not a full biography of Houdini, an account of a single day not even a full one in his life. The story is well told. Both Lutes and Bertozzi are old hands at this sort of tale. There are some fascinating end notes after the story. If this has a major fault, it's that it's a little too short. It feels like the prelude to a full-blown graphic novel biography of Houdini rather than a stand-alone tale. It's over almost as soon as you start it, but it's still worth reading if you've any interest in the topic. On a recent busride down to San Diego to view the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the natural history museum, I figured it'd be good to bring some reading material. From my to-read pile I pulled the recently purchased Houdini: The Handcuff King. I was excited because I love Jason Lutes' work as previously seen in *Jar of Fools* and *Berlin*. And really, this book did not disappoint. There were, however, two surprises for me. Surprise 1: While Jason Lutes penned the story that comprises the book's narrative, he did not contribute to its art. Really, this should not have been a surprise as the cover plainly says Nick Bertozzi immediately beneath Lutes' own name and the art on the cover is plainly not the work of Lutes' established style. At first, this surprise was a disappointment to me like when you think your glass has Pepsi in it but your first sip reveals apple juice instead. But after my initial shock, I came to appreciate Bertozzi's line and recognized that he really was a good choice for the book. Bertozzi does do some fantastic work in the book,

managing crowd scene after crowd scene with enough visual grace that the reader never suspects just how terribly dull it must have been to compose these pages And even in the midst of these ink saturated pages, it is never difficult to see where the action is Bertozzi does a stand up job of directing the reader's eye and conveying the tension of the moments moments that could easily have been lost had the artist been too detailed or too simplistic in his execution Surprise 2 I had brought a book to busy me during the ninety minute drive, but finished it within forty five minutes Houdini is not a long book There is plenty to look at but little text per page, which makes it a fairly quick read Wholly apart from disappointing, the brisk pace of the story was refreshing I closed the back cover satisfied with a mid morning snack of graphic reading. When initially approaching the book, I did not know what to expect With the blue note set by Lutes prior works, I thought this might be an exploration of Houdini's last days and unforeseen death Instead the narrative picks up on a morning nearly a full decade before his mortality asserted itself and climaxes later that same day, presenting a slice of Houdini's life, a splash of what made him great And a snapshot of the people Houdini relied upon to feed that greatness Houdini The Handcuff King is really a charming little story and I would pleasantly recommend it to anyone with an hour to kill review courtesy of Good Ok Bad Houdini The Handcuff King is a graphic biography about master magician and escape artists, Harry Houdini Instead of trying to tell about Houdini's entire life in an eighty two page graphic novel, the comic instead tells the story behind one trick and how that one trick expressed so much about Houdini's life Here we are able to learn about his daring, his devotion to his wife Bess, his sense of showmanship, his insatiable pride, and demand for loyalty from his employees This paints us a picture of Houdini as a complex man, far from perfect, but no less interesting for it The illustrations for this comic are done with minimal lines and color that successfully manage to personify the emotions of the character, as well as create tension during the actual trick when Houdini jumps off a bridge into the Charles River The art is presented with several blocks on each page, except for a few important moments which are given full page spreads The several pages of further back story and in depth introduction, is just as interesting as

the comic itself. Though these pages we are able to see information on Houdini's life and death, as well as life in Boston and Cambridge during the early 1900s. Houdini: The Handcuff King is an effective graphic novel, both educational and suspenseful, that effectively tells the tale of one larger than life man whose great works are still remembered a hundred years later. NOTE: This review was written for a class. This was great. I gave it to a magician friend as a gift, and thought I should probably check it out myself. I'm not particularly a big magic or Houdini fan but found this graphic novel to be compelling and entertaining. It's really about the man, Houdini, his struggles with ego and fame, the antisemitism he faced, and his relationship with his wife. The artwork is beautiful, very clean and expressive. My only complaint is I wish the story was longer. I realize it is meant to focus on one particular event, one of his famous tricks/stunts, but I would have appreciated an extensive look at his life and career. It was such a quick read, even for me, that when I was finished I immediately wanted a great overview of Houdini and the challenges he faced in his life. A day in the life of Harry Houdini: The story follows Houdini as he prepares and executes a jump into the icy rivers in Cambridge, MA while handcuffed. I found this very interesting. I would have really preferred Jason Lutes to draw this as well. He's a fantastic artist. Nick Bertozzi drew it instead, and I didn't care for his misshapen, stylistic heads. Still, it was a quick, easy read for anyone wanting to read about Houdini.

