



Spent

Joe Matt

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Spent Joe Matt

Spent by Joe Matt

Meet the original antihero Joe Matt: a master of a domain that includes more than twenty-three self-edited eight-hour-long videotapes of bootlegged pornography; a penny-pincher who never fails to make a dime off his friends; a chronic masturbator who doesn't understand why he never has a girlfriend; an obsessive collector frantically searching for the toys of his childhood; a callous son who throws out every gift his adoring mother gives him; a man so lazy that he urinates in a bottle rather than walk to the bathroom.

Everyone and everything is fodder for Matt's autobiographical comics, even having lost the love of his life for documenting his crush on her best friend in the pages of his legendary comic book series *Peepshow*. Matt's biggest target for ridicule, however, is himself. Wearing his neuroses and fetishes on his sleeve, he knows he is a jerk and does nothing to hide it. This humiliating honesty has made Matt a comedic genius who has been hilariously and shamelessly chronicling his pathetic existence for close to twenty years.

Spent Details

Date : Published July 10th 2007 by Drawn and Quarterly

ISBN : 9781897299111

Author : Joe Matt

Format : Hardcover 120 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Graphic Novels Comics, Comix, Autobiography, Memoir

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From Reader Review Spent for online ebook

Twan says

A book about a wanker, wanking that isn't wank.

David Stewart says

I have never read a book, comic or otherwise, with as much raw, unfettered honesty as is within the pages of Spent. Joe Matt relates a very short span of his own life that delves into the deepest, most disturbing parts of his own mind, and it's like watching a train derail and come spiraling in through the kitchen window.

The title implies the subject matter. Spent refers to the feeling Matt has after he's pleased himself. He boasts an addiction to pornography second to none, and spares the reader nothing in describing every minute detail of his particular habit. It's frightening to read, but also astonishing and in many ways wonderful. He claims at one point in the book to lack self-awareness, but here is a man who, unlike millions or billions of other men, is not lying to himself. He may not have his head on completely straight, but he's honest. Whether or not that makes him happy is the dispute of the story.

This is a book I would not recommend to just anyone, but for anyone wishing to peer into the dark room of a chronic masturbator, or even for someone who needs to look in a mirror and see a warped reflection of their own habits, this is something worth reading.

MJ Nicholls says

Joe Matt unleashes a vision of bachelor hell in this graphic novel adaptation of *Notes From Underground*. It isn't really, but if there was ever a modern exploration of Dostoevskian self-loathing and seething hatred for mankind set in a shared house in Canada, it's this frightening piece. A confession: for a brief period in my teens I exhibited signs of such obsessive masturbatory proclivities (such as storing up sex scenes on VHS for easy midnight use), but this ended when the hormonal eruptions passed. This book explores a lifelong involvement with pornographic movies over actual meaningful relationships. Most men have secret dirties on their hard drives or materials for personal autoerotic use beyond adolescence, and any denial of this fact is a LIE you horny losers, but the question remains: why do men hate themselves so much? And is the answer simply, feebly: because they can't get women to like them?

Martin Amis said in an interview that it is pointless to feel resentful towards women for refusing to like you, since they can detect a bachelor's simmering resentment and loneliness a mile off, and will keep as far away as possible, thus trapping the bachelor in his woman-hating fume forever and ever. Or words to that effect. So the easiest option for the nerd is to face the potential humiliation and embarrassment of the dating scene and take each gradual annihilation of confidence and self-respect on the chin. Hmm. Thank God we have Geek2Geek in these enlightened times. This is scabrous self-parody, fun but with worrying ramifications for the author's sanity. Most of it is probably charming exaggeration.

Ill D says

In contrast to the verdant tinted artwork reminiscent of the occluded world of *The Matrix*, Joe Matt's, *Spent* is a highly exposed piece of comic book smut with perhaps too much openness. In fact, not perhaps, it is way too open in all aspects, overflowing with indulgence, pointless discussions, and an unceasing litany of Frat House type jokes that lose any charm (that they ever had) after their first offering. *Spent* proves Joe Matt to be the pathetic piece of shit his auto-biographical cover would suggest: alone, exposed, and spent of any vitality, fluid or otherwise.

True story: it wasn't until I graduated from college that I actually spent a significant amount of time reading comics. It was during this time that, for whatever hidden forces at work at my local library, I ended up reading a lot of autobiographical ones that magically appeared on the shelves. Instead of triumphant stories of success and battles won, they for the most part, amounted to pathetic tales of drudgery and failure. Having recently graduated college, I was able to sympathize and commiserate with all the characters within. In an aimless state of mind, I really enjoyed these unabashedly human tales that fit so perfectly into the aesthetics of a comic. Whether the tale of a despicable alcoholic, the victim of a mediocre bildungsroman, or even the famed Harvey Pekar's banal early years, the realness of human life was comforting. Unflinching mediocrity reflects the vast majority of most people's lives, unless you're born into wealth or have killer looks, and these unfiltered stories had a real impact on me.

Since I enjoyed those, I was excited to dig into Seth and Chester Brown's comic book colleague Joe Matt's auto-bio styled work. I giggled at the cover page as I swiped it off the shelf. After the first part I giggled no more.

What went wrong? You might be asking. However, the right question is: what was ever right?

Where Kevin Smith's 1994 classic, *Clerks* shares a similar duo-chromatic veneer and an equally ribald subaltern verbiage, it's loaded with charm and laughs that delight throughout, *Spent*, on the other hand, ejaculates all of its charm within the first few pages with a refractory period that lasts for the next 100 pages. Once you get past the shock appeal of a cartoonist talking about pornography addiction and his ensuing chronic masturbation, the novelty evaporates quickly. Do you really want to read a comic about a grown man's relationship with his right hand? Do you really want to hear about and then see the quantity and quality of his narcissistic activities? I don't and I doubt you do either.

When he's not expositing his perverted solo activities, Joe Matt curiously discusses esoteric Canadian comics, mutual fund interest rates, and wait for it... his piss jar collection. Yup, our sicko author has more in common with /b/tard neckbeards than we would expect. In between leaks into the piss jar, porn is dubbed (who the actual fuck does this?) and complains about an ex-gf and life in general throughout most every other page.

Even when there is an iota of charm, too much time and repetition are spent on it. This gives *Spent* the feel of an aimless comic because that's exactly what it is. 10% memoir, 90% perversion, and 100% degeneracy, Joe Matt is the Bodhisattva of human shittiness – finding Nirvana in the bliss of a self-propelled orgasm.

Just when I thought Joe Matt hit peak degeneracy, I was completely unprepared for his coup de grace of disgrace. Not only does he speak glowingly about giving his ex a black eye but, even fantasies about hunting her down and shooting her. This fantasy is utterly unconscionable. During both of these instances Joe Matt is either smiling or laughing with glee.

What a sick fuck.

Just because a person in a story is despicable doesn't necessary mean it's a bad tale but for Joe Matt's Spent, his awful character is the fetid cheery on an already rotting sundae of awfulness. With unfunny jokes, dull repetition, and pointless narration that is literally just Joe Matt just talking to us through himself in the comic, Spent is a worthless piece of literary shit.

The author's very words on page 121 make my very point for me, "It's not even a story ... Just page after page of me whining about porn. It's masturbation in comic form. At some point the readers going to realize that it's going nowhere... No payoff, no epiphany, no nothing... He has no self-awareness or insight, they'll say... And They'll be right."

That's right Joe Matt! You have no awareness or insight you self-absorbed narcissist fuck.

*P.S. I lost all my respect for Harvey Pekar with this little gem of his from the back cover: "I dug Spent; it's funny, poignant, and solidly constructed." No Harvey it's not funny and it has a foundation of sand as its base. Screw you!

Jeremy says

I think Joe Matt should do a Joe Matt version of everything everyone writes. But that's just me. Though few will argue that the man can draw, the events and attitudes he conveys with his talents range from egotistical to mundane to downright repellent, some might even say bordering on psychotic. So much the better. Joe Matt thrives on exposing his basest instincts and embraces his seemingly many faults like beloved playthings. I have a feeling I'd get along with him really well, eventually regretting that we ever spoke while still looking forward to our next conversation. Or maybe he's nothing like this in real life, but for some reason I hope and believe that's not the case.

It just dawned on me that my two best male friends, both of whom exhibit selfish and vulgar qualities constantly and alternately delight and infuriate me at every turn, are actually named "Joe" and "Matt"! I just blew my own mind!

Marissa says

Joe Matt desperately wants to be Robert Crumb. Unfortunately being uncomfortably honest about your porn addiction, your urine jar, your miserliness, your intense misogyny, your self-loathing, etc. ad nauseum does not make you a comix legend anymore. Sorry Joe! I'm afraid that particular niche market has already been snagged! Not to mention that at least Crumb is an incredible artist, while even the drawing style in this looks exactly like that of fellow self-loathing nebbish and close friend, Seth. I don't understand why when men whine about how hard it is masturbate 20 times a day, it's somehow seen as brave and counter-culture. But I guess my favorite part of the book would have to be when he talks about how proud he is of giving his ex-girlfriend a black eye by punching her in the face. Way to be REALLY repulsive! High fives!

Manish says

Chester Brown in "Paying for it" used the medium of comics to narrate his trysts with prostitutes and

portrayed the moral and ethical challenges around 'paying' for gratification and in a way opened up the debate about the whole stigma of visiting a brothel. I loved the book for the diligent approach it adopted to drive home uncomfortable options and politically incorrect actions. Joe Matt's "Spent" follows the same template but unfortunately fails to achieve the greatness of the former. This, in my opinion, is primarily due to the subject being handled - addiction to pornography-driven masturbation. Since the subject here is much narrower, the focus is mostly on him devouring hours of pornographic videos, painstakingly using a video recorder to create compilation videos and of course masturbating to extreme limits of physical endurance.

While the book wasn't enjoyable, I can still see merit in the work. The sheer size of the global pornographic industry, the social impacts of porn on marriages and sex and the fact that most of us have a partial "been-there-done-that" understanding of the subject make this book worth reading. At least once!

Palimp says

Otra entrega autobiográfica del autor, centrada parcialmente en su tacañería y su adicción al porno. Se deja leer. Más que nada porque si tu cómic se centra en explotar tus defectos, y estos son tan cotidianos y tan poco relevantes como ser un perezoso, un tacaño y un pajillero, no vas a llamar mucho la atención.

Robert says

"The Poor Bastard" himself, Joe Matt, continues to chronicle his miserable existence in comic book form. Not as good as its predecessor - the story doesn't have as clear a trajectory and the wrap up isn't much of a wrap up - but not without its warped charm, and his artwork just gets better and better. This time around Matt directly addresses the fact that much of this "autobiography" is pure fiction, underlining again that there is a level of self-awareness and self-satire that doesn't always register with his often-appalled readers (myself included). Still, I really hope he's got some new material to mine for his future work - a third time around regarding the author's travails with porn addiction, etc. wouldn't exactly be the charm.

Paul Bryant says

Hamlet thinks of himself as neither a saint nor a villain, a middling kind of guy

I am myself indifferent honest

Which makes his next remarks startling

but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in.

He's unexceptional, and therefore unexceptionally vile – we all are, that is what he is saying :

What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?

There's such a wellspring of self-loathing in human beings, and Joe Matt's series of deliberately repellant autobiographies continue a tradition that started with St Augustine, passing on through Thomas De Quincey and Henry Miller, so he's in good company. As censorship falls away and becomes something quaint like antimacassars and doileys the self-revelations become ever more scortatory, ever bleaker, ever nastier. Joe Matt's unflinching self portrait as a girlfriendless chronic masturbator and porn addict (which comes first?) is, we hope, earnestly, exaggerated for comic effect, and there are a lot of grins to be had through the frequent barfing the reader will be doing. As it happens, I'm also reading Edmund White's *My Lives*, a book of autobiography and though these two authors are possessed of very different perspectives, yet they share the same compulsion to tell us everything, I mean, everything. They're the Ancient Mariners of sex addiction. Edmund includes the imagined reactions of his friends (*Did you really have to put that in, Ed? Did you ever hear of TMI!?!??*) and Joe includes a chapter which tells of the emotional fallout caused by the revelations we've just been reading about (since the 6 chapters in *Spent* were issued as 6 separate comics).

Ever more self revelatory, ever more self loathing, ever more frankly disgusting, this is the literary version of reality tv.

I feel the need to reveal to you that I kind of love this stuff, but I wonder where we're all going on this darkening road.

Sam Quixote says

Look at that cover. This book's exactly that: a cartoonist wanking himself into oblivion, literally and figuratively - and it's brilliant!

I loves the superhero comics but if it weren't for great indie cartoonists like Joe Matt, I'd probably have left the medium behind years ago. When indie creators are as compelling and gifted as Joe Matt is, reading about an ordinary schmuck talking about his life in an empty room is vastly more exciting and gripping than seeing the Green and Red Lanterns fighting in space for the fate of eternity or whatever for the umpteenth bloody time!

But I get it, for some people superheroes are all they want from comics full stop and that's fine. And really this kind of meditative and literal masturbation isn't going to appeal to many either, but I adore the indies and for anyone else who does Joe Matt's books are a must-read.

I especially liked *Spent* because of Joe Matt's friendship with fellow cartoonists Seth and Chester Brown, whose comics I also love and who both appear in this book. Joe and Seth go book-shopping and end up bickering over an obscure Canadian comic called *Birdseye Center*; later Joe, Seth and Chet meet up for lunch and Seth and Chet end up ribbing Joe's cheapness.

It doesn't sound like much but their interactions made this book for me. They're clearly close friends and it's great to catch these "behind the scenes" glimpses into their friendship to see what these creators are like (or at least Joe Matt's version of them) though Seth and Chet do seem a bit mean to Joe too.

But if Joe makes Seth and Chet look a bit bad, that's nothing compared to how he mercilessly depicts himself here. He talks about his porn addiction, how he spends hours and hours editing porn tapes, the grotty rooming house he lives in, the jars he pees in so he doesn't have to leave his room and head down to the bathroom he shares with several other tenants.

At one point he even starts tearing apart his own books, critiquing his art style and admitting that the ending to *The Poor Bastard* was made up and the portrayal of his childhood in *Fair Weather* was completely false, despite both books being supposedly autobiographical. It's fun to watch Joe beat himself up on the page though!

All of it - the art, the writing, the insight, the self-deprecating humour, the voice in these pages - is wonderful and shows a perfect understanding of comics storytelling. He manages to give substance to the seemingly insubstantial which is remarkable. That's why it's sad that *Spent* is still his last book even though it was published in 2007 (his laziness is part of the pasting he gives himself too - the man's nothing if not self-aware!).

Besides a handful of original pages for the 25th D&Q Anniversary book last year, Joe Matt's only other comics contributions have been as an archivist of the Frank King Gasoline Alley strips from the early 20th century. He's a collector of those strips and their republishing was made possible thanks to his hobby. It's still a shame that a man of his talents isn't doing anything with them but I guess he's just fed up with making the effort and getting no money in return.

Yeah, Joe Matt's a gross, pathetic dude and not a terribly great person either but he's got the guts to unflinchingly look at himself honestly, fearlessly revealing his flaws and publicly dissecting them to create a book that's uniquely his own - and that's quite something. He's also a helluva cartoonist who manages to make a navel-gazing exercise hugely entertaining for the reader.

If you like indie comics and especially the kind Seth and Chester Brown produce, their compadre Joe Matt is every bit as fantastically skilled as they are and *Spent* is definitely worth checking out. Spend some time on this quality read!

Jennifer says

Un autre emprunt au hasard à la bibliothèque. Il y avait longtemps que je n'avais pas "rencontré" un auteur/personnage aussi désagréable et méprisable que celui-là. À éviter pour rester de belle humeur. Sans compter que ça ne mène nulle part.

Fabian says

No one ever said that porn addiction is easy. Joe Matt is rather brave in including his/his character's depravities, with so much talk going on. So much empty philosophizing. What strikes me problematic is just how similar every single frame in the graphic novel is. Its like xeroxing the pictorials again and again, with only the dialogue changing, but not really. In this way, I guess, it mirrors that grievous addiction (which usually has no name)--it is a plateau of sameness you would rather overcome*.

*he he

Tom Waters says

Firing Another One Out: Joe Matt's *Spent*

Like many older comic readers (and we seem to be quickly determining the course of the market by our numbers alone as the main demographic), I prefer not to buy single issues of comics. Were it my only hobby, perhaps things would be different, but it's not, and as a former single issue and collector, I prefer to read the compilations and graphic novels for the story value instead of the market value over the course of a few decades. Occasionally, this can be maddening, because the reader has to wait for months on end to digest story arcs that fellow comic readers are up in arms about. In Joe Matt's case, it's a gift and a curse to hold my breath until his Peep Show collections are released in larger volumes.

His newest collection, *Spent* (2007, Drawn & Quarterly) is every bit the masterpiece that his two previous collections were (*Poor Bastard* and *Fair Weather*, respectively). The author/artist paints himself as a character top-heavy with flaws: compulsive masturbation, social avoidance, an obsessive need to collect comic strips and classic radio shows, and a nigging desire to squirrel enough money away that he never has to work another day in his life by living off of his 'nest egg'. I actually learned that Matt defected to Canada (until 2002) because the American/Canadian exchange rate was more beneficial for his dream of being independently wealthy.

What makes Matt's work so endearing is his ability to expose all of these reprehensible (and oftentimes identifiable) character flaws in a comical light. Panel after panel delves into the disgust of fellow cartoonist friends (Chester Brown's disdain being at the top of the heap), Joe's own neurotic 'hamster wheel' of self-loathing, scheming and his love/hate relationship with pornography, which he painstakingly edits onto EP formatted videotapes after removing any scene with a man's face. The reader feels repulsed by this 'character', yet identifies at times, relates and even feels a twinge of sympathy at the cheapskate of a corner he's painted himself into. I almost wonder how he lives on such a near-impooverished budget now that he lives in LA.

In *Spent*, Matt grapples with his the critical hindsight he applies to his previous work, agonizes over whether or not he can continue to invest so much time into his pornographic dubbing while finding and maintaining a meaningful long-term relationship at the same time, and defends himself at the verbal slings and arrows of his relentless and longstanding friends in diners where he refrains from buying food (because it would cut into his budget). There is so much to love about his work that I'd rather not ruin all the laughs, the neuroses and the internal soapboxes crammed into this 120 page gem. At \$20 (in a beautiful hardbound edition, no less), buying this book was a no-brainer for me. It rounds out his other two comedic black-and-white masterpieces perfectly. And one can see that the artwork he bashes in previous strips has undergone a marked and laudable improvement. Well done, Joe. Now I have to wait patiently for the next compilation.

S. G. R. says

A masturbatory book - delivered mostly in soliloquy by the author, or in conversations about the author, in simple square grids - about how compulsive masturbating and pornography curating is preventing the author from doing any cartooning: like one of those old men who are permanent fixtures of a bar, this book calmly acknowledges its own failure in its unintentionally serious jokes at its own expense. It adds nothing to the world other than another instance of the author's name.
