



Life With Mr. Dangerous

Paul Hornschemeier

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Somewhere in the Midwest, Amy Breis is going nowhere.

Amy has a job she hates, a creep boyfriend she's just dumped, and a best friend she can't reach on the phone. But at least her (often painfully passive-aggressive) mother bought her a pink unicorn sweatshirt for her birthday. Pink. Unicorn. For her twenty-seventh birthday.

Gliding through the daydreams and realities of a young woman searching for definition, *Life with Mr. Dangerous* showcases acclaimed cartoonist Paul Hornschemeier's gift for deadpan humor and dead-on insight with a droll aftertaste—an unlikely but welcome marriage of the bleak and the hopeful.

Life With Mr. Dangerous Details

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From Reader Review Life With Mr. Dangerous for online ebook

Federica Guglietta - illunedideilibri.it says

L'ultimo graphic novel di Hornschemeier infonde massicce dosi di empatia endovena, da assumere tutte e subito: solo così possiamo capire meglio la nostra vita, specchiandoci in quella di Amy, insicura ragazza del Midwest.

Leggi la recensione completa qui: <http://illunedideilibri.it/la-vita-co...>

Joey Alison Sayers says

Ugh. This was my second shot at reading a Paul Hornchemeier graphic novel and once again I was pretty disappointed. I guess I just don't see the point. Another comics dude writing about younger woman coming into her own. It feels flat and unbelievable. There was no plot to speak of, the characters were wooden and lifeless, and overall I felt like I was reading something intended to be "thoughtful" and "real" without any emotion or depth to back it up. Somehow graphic novels are given a pass for being light on content if the art is nice. Thankfully comics are a quick read. I would never waste my time with a novel this insubstantial.

Marc Weidenbaum says

One of the things that distinguishes comics from text-only fiction is how much more clearly influence bleeds through. You can read Jonathan Lethem's *As She Crawled Across the Table* and not necessarily note the imprimatur of Don DeLillo. You would be hard put, though, in work even as solid as comics artist Paul Hornschemeier's not to see in his drawings and settings the presence of Daniel Clowes, Adrian Tomine, Chris Ware, James Kochalka, perhaps even John Pham, and others. That's fine, as those artists draw from each other, but it's still a distraction here.

The story itself is sweet. The suggestion that it is sweet probably counts as a "spoiler," because by all appearances -- that is, to the extent that it resembles several other artists' work, artists who are more associated with downer than sweetness -- it is not to be uplifting in any way, and by any means. A young woman in a dead-end job whose life eerily resembles that of her deader-ender mother recounts her past failed relationships in between ending her most recent and trying out her various next options, all the while avoiding acknowledging to herself just how much she is pining for one person in particular. Her addiction to a cartoon provides the book's title and her moral compass -- to a fault: she ditches one seemingly pleasant companion because he doesn't like the cartoon.

Part of what makes Hornschemeier's work work is that he doesn't have the almost eerily mechanical agility of those other artists (well, put aside Kochalka's playfulness for a moment, and just focus on the others mentioned above). He tries for it -- still figures with slumped shoulders who seem to move even more slowly than the inadequate life around them -- but the subtle variation in how his characters are drawn gives them a life, seemingly despite his attempts at being artfully diagrammatic. It would be great to see him put aside the well-documented comic-book norms of rigid slacker domesticity and take advantage of the variation in his own line. His story is sweet, and his drawing could be, too.

George Marshall says

Everyone has already said it- OK but not great and derivative. All I would add is that the twenty something girl/dreamer/insecure neurotic seeking love graphic novel has been done very much better (with gorgeous art) in the Nao of Brown. And that the retro kitsch story-inside-a-story of Mr Dangerous is now a tired cliché of comics-including Dan Clowes' David Boring, Hornshemeier's other book Three Paradoxes, Brian Fies disappointing Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow and lots of Matt Kindt...new ideas needed.

Never says

It's been awhile since I read any slice-of-life type comics and this reminded me how much I really love the genre. P-Horn's art is always pitch-perfect and is what really drives this story, which is super relatable. Spellcheck has just informed me that "relatable" isn't a word unless you hyphenate it, but eff that. I think this book is especially refreshing because of the over-representation of the same type of story from a male perspective where a character like Amy's is represented only by her actions on the date and her motivations for doing what she did aren't clear and the result ends up being "wtf why is this woman acting so crazy/irrational". I'm pretty done with the self-loathing emo boy who is convinced he is such a nice guy and that no women like him because they only like douchebags or whatever. This is a nice take on dating that doesn't do that. And I honestly like the ending, which I won't spoil, though some people might want something else from it, I think it works and is good and refreshing. Thanks for this book, P-Horn. It's nothing earthshattering, but it's nice and comfortable and welcome in all kinds of good ways.

Raina says

A dead end retail job.

Lunches with a mother who also has a dead end retail job - in the same mall.

Riding the bus.

Obsession with a snarky cartoon.

This comic captures a moment in the life of a latetwenties woman with no real direction to her life. She crushes on a guy who recently moved away, and occasionally tries to fill the void with casual encounters with strangers.

I liked how the story captured geekiness - though it's depicted with a heavy dose of snark/pity. It also encapsulated how hopeless life can feel without momentum. Including the mom added a weight that really hit me at times. I feel sad for this character.

I wasn't super thrilled with the ending. I'm not convinced I'll find this particularly memorable. But it's the type of story that's candy for me. I ate it up fast and hard, after a hiatus from enjoyable comics. Very readable, and well executed.

Dov Zeller says

Apparently it is not a day for generous reviews. I worry I'm being a bit harsh, giving more than one two-star

rating in one morning. Especially after a beautiful (much needed) rain storm (always lightens my mood.) But here I am, feeling frustrated with the comics I've been reading and for now, giving out some twos.

"Life With Mr. Dangerous" is a bleak, vague, and not terribly delightful book. It's one of those works that is trying to represent "regular" or "plain" folks, whatever that means, for whom not much happens. There are so many interesting and under-represented people and communities, so perhaps I feel a bit resentful that this boring straight white people book is getting published when there are a lot of authors who have very beautifully represented the plight of young-ish people working at 'dead end' jobs. Joe Ollman, for example. And I think Same Difference also covers this territory quite nicely. And Empire state is another graphic novel that is in a similar mood. Not to say that there isn't more room for exploring the bleakness of working at malls or living in towns in which not much is culturally happening. But if it is true that this is a book whose subject matter has not been over-done, then it is also true that the things that might have made this particular story have more of a singular voice -- the mother-daughter relationship, Amy's trips to comic-landia, a deeper sense of the history or meaningfulness of her relationship with Michael -- are simmering at the same temperature the whole time, without so much salt. So, in a way, this is more of a bland broth than a book.

In other words, I feel like I am reading one of any number of indie graphic novels that seem to be entranced by a sort of twenty-something gloom and emotional inertia. Dating awkwardness and difficulty connecting. Job dullness and related existential malaise. All things I am fine reading about if I am reading something that is doing something formally or otherwise compelling.

But alas, I didn't find this to be compelling. There's not really much of a story here and the Mr. Dangerous stuff isn't developed or braided into the story interestingly and just feels thrown in. This book feels similar to some memoir comics on similar topics, but those tend to be much more biting and funny or intimate and the form of the graphic memoir offers different frameworks for structural engagement.

Two books come to mind as I review "Life With Mr. Dangerous." One is "Rust", a quietly beautiful graphic middle-grade adventure story I recently read the first volume of. It has so much to offer a reader. The art is wonderful, the storyline curious. It's not without its flaws, but it offers both plot with a capital P and quieter complexities as well. History and broad range of characters.

And "The Polish Boxer", a sometimes uneven but utterly captivating prose novel I finished reading last night, that also deals with a kind of existential directionlessness and discomfort, but clearly there is a raw philosophical and artistic and emotional grappling going on in it that takes the story out of the mundane without offering heroic action in any conventional sense or easy answers or resolution.

Sam Quixote says

Amy is a soon-to-be 26 year old retail clerk in a clothes store. She just broke up with yet another bad boyfriend, hates her job, doesn't really know what she wants to do with her life, and pines for Michael, a friend whom she calls every night because he lives far away in San Francisco. Her only friends are her cat and the TV show Mr Dangerous. That's right, it's another instalment of: Sad Bastard Comics!

Life with Mr Dangerous appeared in 2011 at the tail end of the indie-comics boom of the late '00s when they were suddenly moderately popular and big publishers like Penguin and Random House began putting out non-superhero comics, ie. Graphic Novels, about glum folk. They didn't sell like they hoped and that experiment came to an end.

Unfortunately, Paul Hornschemeier's *Life with Mr Dangerous* is probably his least engaging, mostly for being repetitively miserable like too many other books. Miserable is fine but there are tons of comics about single young people looking for love, not enjoying their jobs, and finding disappointment with their lives, and you can only do it so many ways before it becomes a worn out conceit.

Dan Clowes is the master of these kinds of comics but plenty of other cartoonists have done variations of this kind of story themselves. Jeffrey Brown, Adrian Tomine, Dean Haspiel, Peter Bagge, Charles Burns, Julia Wertz, Kevin Huizenga, the Hernandez brothers, Chris Ware, Dylan Horrocks, Jason Shiga, Alison Bechdel, Box Brown, Charles Burns, Alex Robinson, Alison Bechdel, Seth, Joe Matt and Chester Brown, to name a few.

What does Paul Hornschemeier bring to the table? Nowt much. His art is very pretty but his story is not especially deep or insightful and the *Mr Dangerous* cartoons are a bit of an obvious metaphor for her life. However, Amy's an identifiable, realistic character who's well written as the drifting twentysomething, and the quietly belligerent conversations between Amy and her mum are pretty good – if there's one thing Hornschemeier does well, it's parent/child relationships. You get the sense of desperation lurking beneath the surface of the story, for all the characters, but can also guess how Amy's story will resolve itself, particularly if you've read any of the creators above.

Life with Mr Dangerous is a moody melancholic piece, like all of Hornschemeier's books, but this one feels derivative of too many other comics to stand out. No wonder the indie comics bubble went kaput – the gloomy gits kept going round in circles!

Postcards from far away says

La vita vissuta a lunga distanza da sè stessi.

Amy ha ventisei anni. La sua vita è piena di negazioni che, a volte, si impone da sola: ha un lavoro che non la valorizza per il futuro, non le piace e le toglie energie per fare altro quando arriva a casa. Ha una mamma che la considera ancora bambina, la sprona a parlare ma, una volta approcciata al dialogo, è la stessa madre che evita i discorsi della figlia.

La vita amorosa di Amy è abbastanza disastrosa; c'è qualcosa che la blocca interiormente e le sue relazioni ne subiscono le conseguenze.

L'unico amico che ha è lontano chilometri e lo sente solo per telefono. L'unica compagnia che Amy si concede è la televisione che trasmette il suo cartone animato preferito: *Mr. Dangerous*.

Amy è emozionalmente bloccata. Non ha entusiasmo, non è eccitata se, per esempio, un cliente carino la invita per un concerto in città. E' schiva.

I suoi rifugi sono le sue immaginazioni e quel televisore che funziona sempre.

Di conseguenza, la sua vita è piuttosto monotona ed insoddisfacente.

Questa, oggi, viene chiamata "crisi del quarto secolo" e sfido chiunque sia della generazione a dire "non mi è mai capitata una cosa del genere".

Le tavole di Hornschemeier sono limpide, senza nessun tipo di sfumatura nei colori, tutto è rigorosamente geometrico, i colori predominanti sono il marrone e il blu. Il che rende tutto più opprimente e i balloon vengono tagliati per lasciare spazio ai silenzi o alle fantasie di Amy.

Non è una graphic novel così semplice da leggere, da chiudere e rimettere a posto sullo scaffale.

Personalmente mi ha lasciato addosso uno spesso velo di angoscia, paura e confusione.

E' davvero così per tutti? Letteralmente no, ma mi sono vista molto vicina al personaggio di Amy.

Sopravvivere non è vivere, bisogna solo trovare quella grossa motivazione per cui vale la pena essere se stessi.

Diane says

This is a bittersweet story about a 26-year-old woman named Amy who is stuck in a rut -- she doesn't like her job, her mom doesn't understand her and she just broke up with her jerk boyfriend. There are only two things she enjoys: watching a TV show called Mr. Dangerous and talking on the phone with her friend Michael, who moved away to San Francisco. The few times she goes out on a date she is overcome with anxiety and obsesses over mistakes she's made with men.

The cartoonist drew Amy's angst well, including flashbacks to her childhood and past relationships. This seemed to be a very personal story for the author, and I was impressed by how well he conveyed Amy's emotions about her body, her sexual experiences and her uncertainty around men.

Things come to a head for Amy when she sticks up for a coworker and risks getting fired. I was happy to see Amy grow in confidence by the end of the story (otherwise this book would have been too bleak).

I was impressed enough with this graphic novel that I plan to look up other ones by Paul Hornschemeier.

Megan says

I read this because I really enjoyed *Mother Come Home* and wanted to see if this author/artist's other works were just as good. Although I didn't like this one as much as the previously mentioned sobfest, I was quite impressed with how poignant and dead-on accurate this dude is about young women. This graphic novel reminded me of the HBO show *Girls*, and if you're a 20-something chick with premium cable channels, you've probably watched it and thought holy crap, Lena Dunham kinda gets me. Chances are you can relate to at least one of the characters on the show and remember something from your younger years that you're not so proud of or that you wish you could forget. This Paul guy gets girls. His protagonist, Amy, just turned 27, a scary and kind of depressing age which I will be turning in July. Amy works a crappy retail job, has a strained relationship with her mom, a string of deadbeat boyfriends, and she talks to her cat a lot. At this point in life, you figure you would've had all your shit together and be a happy, productive adult (or so you thought as a naive sappy little kid), so it's pretty depressing when you find out that actually life kind of sucks. It's not all depressing though and there are happy parts, but you have to work for them and really appreciate them as opportunities while you can, which Amy eventually learns. This book offers some lovely yet at times graphic life lessons for young (late-teens/early-20s) girls and gives them with brutal honesty.

Norman says

Not NEARLY as sad as *Mother, Come Home* (a masterpiece!) but still pretty damn good. Sure, the Clowesian nature of it - the bitterly angsty drifting protagonist, the clean-cut lines and colors, and the realistic surrealism of life - makes it none too original, but I found it oddly relatable. Maybe it's because Amy is just turning 26 and is trying to figure out her life like me. Or maybe it's because she seems to hate people, often having inner torturous dialogue about people around her. Or maybe it's her insecurity and lack of verve for life beyond her eccentricities. OR maybe I like overly emotional characters because I am one

myself. I don't know. I just liked it.

Mza says

Having enjoyed some of Mr Hornschemeier's previous comix, I was unpleasantly surprised by this timid show'n'tell concerning several weeks in the life of a depressed slacker. Amy, 26, lives with her cat in a one-bedroom apartment in an unnamed city (in the Midwest, says the book's back cover); works in a retail clothing shop in a mall; has broken up with a boyfriend who just wasn't that into her; spends Friday nights watching an **Adult Swim**-esque cartoon called *Mr Dangerous*; and is inconveniently in love with her long-distance best friend, with whom she communicates via landline. That primitive communication device, alongside Amy's college-rock wardrobe and her TV (not Internet) addiction, suggests a 1990s setting; it's also a physical manifestation of the inconvenience that plagues Amy every day. The people on the bus get on her nerves. The boy she loves, who sends handmade art to her in the mail, lives in San Francisco. The local prospects for romance are uninspiring. One guy she ends up having a one-night-stand with has never even heard of *Mr Dangerous*. Her mother, who also works retail full time, gives her a crappy birthday gift. Customers at work are assholes. Her cat has been known to hurl on her stuff. Up until near the book's end, Amy reacts to all of these little trials with a consistent passivity. She makes sarcastic comments. She mopes. She dreams allegorical dramas that take place inside the candy-coloured *Mr Dangerous* universe.

If it's hard to work up any passion for any of this, it's not because everyday life is boring, but because our sympathy for Amy is assumed, not earned. She's moping from Chapter 1, Scene 1, and doesn't quit until love comes a-knockin' in Chapter 10. Not all good stories have sympathetic protagonists, and not all good stories require their tellers to judge their protagonists good or bad, but if I'm to feel uplifted by the ending of this love story, I'm going to have to feel bad about love's absence in the beginning.

In the movies, it is sometimes enough to show a lonely female character on the screen, to win an audience over. Emotional intimacy works differently in the movies -- we see an actor's actual face. Not so in the comix, where the abstraction of the human body causes all sorts of magickal effects. I might project my own consciousness into a drawing of a female body; or the drawing might make me say, "You're my friend, little drawing"; or I might have strong urges to fuck the drawing. Hornschemeier's drawings of Amy are at the exact level of abstraction and cartooniness that repels my usual attempts at psychic identification. I suppose that is an achievement in itself, but I couldn't escape the notion that the author himself -- with all of his sensitive-guy neuroses -- was trapped inside this depressed, lazy, stupid girl.

On the plus side, we do get a strong sense of the architecture of her apartment.

karen says

another sad book from paul hornschemeier.

not nearly as sad as *Mother, Come Home*, the book that makes most people cry, but more of the gentle sorrow that just permeates all existence. no?? just me, then? kay.

this one is about a girl in her late twenties, drifting. unsuitable men, awkward relationship with her mother, which spans the spectrum of love to embarrassment, crappy job, and a faraway friend who owns her heart.

he does the small internal terrors so well: the judgmental "this guy doesn't like what i like", and the "oh, god,

leaving a phone message is so stressful and what will he think aaaagggg" and the pride goeth before a fall feeling of standing up for someone that didn't want your help. just the little pockets of self-conscious humanity. in cartoon form.

we all know i don't know anything about art, right? but i like his drawings in a way that i do not like the similar-but-somehow-less-appealing art of dan clowes. these are a little softer, more approachable. that's how they get you. they lure you in and then - zinggggg!! sorrow-arrow!!

i did not cry at this one.

but it was beautiful and touching, and the "cat compress" scene was perfection.

my cat is the same way. why would you not want to be my cat compress??

Miguel Jiménez says

RECOMENDACIÓN: Si deseas saber en sí lo que me pareció el libro y omitir la experiencia memorable que he pasado con él, puedes irte hasta el segundo párrafo.

—Esta es la primera novela gráfica que leo de manera física, en mis manos, dándole vuelta a la página, viendo cada viñeta. Puedo decir que me ha servido de mucho. He reconsiderado este medio de expresión apreciando un poco más lo que hacen estos artistas. Más viendo la obra como un objeto, el cual yo hice, una obra personal, con mis ideas y mis historias que no solo está para mi sino que es distribuida a miles de personas que también tienen eso que yo creé. Es en general, también para los libros de narrativa, y en sí cualquier obra artística que sea difundida. Quizá es algo muy obvio y evidente pero nunca me había puesto a meditar y considerar la magnitud, todo lo que representa una simple creación—.

En cuanto a la novela gráfica en sí, le encontré dos interpretaciones:

1. La protagonista tiene una personalidad muy especial. Derrocha tristeza y parece siempre estar deprimida(quizá exagero un poco). A pesar de esto(por más absurdo que sea) tiene algo por lo cual vivir o sentirse orgullosa de esta vida: un programa de televisión. Eso es muy importante, que tengas algo que te motive en este mundo lleno de porquerías pero también de cosas buenas, muy buenas. Este programa de TV es muy curioso, sus escenas aparecen de repente con personajes medio surrealistas e historias sin mucho sentido o incluso violentas. Me recordó algo a Tom & Daly, el programa que ven Bart y Lisa, de *Los Simpson*.

2. La absurda idea de creer que somos los que más sufrimos en la vida pensando en la terrible relación que tenemos con nuestra mamá, o el trabajo/escuela que detestamos y esas relaciones amorosas que nunca van bien cuando hay personas que ni siquiera tienen tiempo para pensar en eso porque lo primero que necesitan es encontrar un lugar donde dormir o haber si hoy sí logran comer algo. Que todos actuamos de la primera forma, y está bien, pero digo, no pasa nada si tenemos un poquito de consideración con la vida que tenemos. El ser conscientes de nuestro entorno y no dejarnos llevar tanto por lo que vivimos y los supuestos "sufrimientos".

Los dibujos, más allá de su forma, quiero resaltar los colores en general que le da el autor al libro. Me gustó mucho. Una buena combinación de colores oscuros agradables pero sin caer en lo Todo Oscuro, también hay espacio para lo claro. El final de la historia no lo creo tan bueno. Se da de repente o muy rápido. Tiene un punto interesante que no se revela y obviamente yo no diré cuál es ese punto en que se deben de fijar(pa' no

echar a perder la novela), pero en sí es muy claro de notarlo.

La historia como tal es aceptable, si me quisiera ver "buena onda" le daría 4 estrellas, claro que considerando, por ejemplo, lo de los colores, que al fin es un plus que suma. Pero está bien con 3 estrellas el libro.
