



Alias the Cat!

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At the center of the novel Kim Deitch deftly places himself and his wife Pam—a passionate collector of Halloween cats from the 1920s and 30s, whose collection is impressive to say the least. But when she buys a mysterious old cat costume, she and Kim find themselves in wholly new territory: the lost world of Alias the Cat who, in 1915, appeared not only in a comic strip and film serial, but in real life as a freedom-fighting superhero.

When Kim begins to research this forgotten figure, he uncovers one almost unbelievable story after another: about the Furries, a tiny subculture of people who dress up as cartoon animals in order to have sex; about Keller and Frankie, two seamen stranded on a Pacific island, forced to make cat toys to appease the natives; about the secret lover of Alias's alter ego, Malek Janochek; and, of course, about Deitch's own Waldo the Cat, the common thread weaving the stories together as Kim and Pam move toward a fateful showdown in Midgetville...New Jersey, of course.

Alias the Cat is Kim Deitch at his eye-catching, mind-bending best.

Alias the Cat! Details

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Author : Kim Deitch

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From Reader Review Alias the Cat! for online ebook

Still says

Always a huge fan of Kim Deitch stories and artwork but this surpassed my greatest expectations. Probably my favorite fantasy-mystery tale ever.

Affectionate acknowledgement of old codgers like myself who collect every pre-World War !!! trinket they come across.

Old 78's, old comic books, old pulp magazines, old paperbacks, old movie lobby cards, and assorted other old pop culture detritus precious to no one other than other old pre-World War !!! geezers who still have the financial wherewithal to hoard aforementioned beloved ephemera.

Such a gentle, sweet, kind affinity for those of us crippled from what we just missed by a couple of decades. One of the best times I have ever spent with a book that wasn't written by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea or performed by The Firesign Theatre.

Highest Possible Recommendation!!

Elizabeth says

OK, so I'm weird. I absolutely LOVED this seriously wacko book. I read it twice in a single evening and kind of swam in the memory of it for the next few days, and I really wish there were more.

The author and his wife, in comic-book style, unravel a fairly complex mystery that took place in real life, movies, and the funny papers nearly a hundred years ago (one periferally involved character does turn up in the present at the age of 104, but she's fairly out of it). I like the book partly because it references a ton of things that I have no real knowledge of but find kinda fascinating: weird collectibles from the 1930s, moviemaking tips from the silents, NJ politics, etc. Even an obscure (for good reason) Frances Hodgson Burnett book called *Little Saint Elizabeth* which I happen to own (it was a GIFT, honest).

Lest any reader be lured into a false sense of documentary veracity about the Tiny Town Bakers and Midgetville, there is a strong element of the surreal about the main character, a blue semi-human cat named Waldo who transcends time and distance and is only visible to people with pretty far-gone dementia (and the occasional sage).

Compelling, bizarre stuff.

Fabian says

Perilously close to the full five stars, this one reads like the *Citizen Kane* of comics. Storywise, it's a novel of detection. Also, like that film, you just have to watch it. It's kinda mandatory. The themes of war, history, iconography prevail. The pictures are mega-rich, lush, complex & just really really beautiful. Read!

Ryan says

I really love everything Deitch puts out. If I could criticize this story in any way it would be that he folds so many narratives on top of themselves that it's sometimes hard to remember where the story began. The author includes himself as a character yet again. And on one occasion he is recollecting listening to anecdotes by another character who is recalling a story that another person told her 50 years prior. It's pretty brilliant because Deitch seems like the ultimate in un-self-conscious storytelling. What I'm trying to say, and poorly, is that he just tells this crazy story, regardless of how ridiculous it is and occasionally his art is not perfect. But he doesn't seem to care. He just lays it all out and it's so weird it's brilliant.

Paul Eckert says

Alias the Cat does what Kim Deitch does best – wacky metafictional storylines about neurotics, eccentrics, and obsessives and the oddities that lurk behind everyday life.

The story starts out with Kim Deitch's wife on a search for an addition to her collection of cat knickknacks from the early twentieth century. They meet a man with a peculiar doll that he refuses to sell, and he tells a story involving an island of strange people that worship a mischievous recurring character of Deitch's, which then leads into a storyline about a cartoon that was also a movie serial which was also staged in real life. The character from this cartoon/movie serial was *Alias the Cat*, and Kim becomes obsessed with finding out the truth behind his story. He finds several people who tell him different perspectives about what "really" happened, and each tale deepens the storyline's complexity and oddness.

As always, Deitch's artwork is superb and creates a world all its own where the ordinary and extraordinary exist without one necessarily knowing about the other. His illustrations set the tone of the story and make the characters real even before they utter a word. His dialogue and narrative pacing are just as good, and together they form the complete package of Deitch's gift as a storyteller.

If I had any complaint, it would be that a few times the pacing gets bogged down with a lot of wordiness. There were a few sections that were almost completely words with a few small pictures. It wasn't bad, just that it was retreading the storyline that the reader was already familiar with. This was probably because this was originally released in sections, so he repeated the storyline so people could remember what happened.

Deitch's work is a special gift to me. Reading his stories take me out of the immediate world and plunge me into the psychedelic world of his creation, and it's a fun place to be. Know those drug awareness commercials about kids saying how some hobby of theirs is their "anti-drug"? Well, Kim Deitch is one hell of an anti-drug, and the trip you get is way better than what a drug-addled mind could've come up with. Deitch continues to be among the small cadre of my favorite comic book writers.

Allie says

This was better and much more complicated than I was expecting from just flipping through the pages in the library. I loved how all the different narratives came together, with the sinister cat Waldo lurking in all of them, and the way that Kim Deitch inserted himself into the middle of the story. Also, the Alias the Cat costume is genius, just the right level of insanity. This was the first I'd read by Deitch, but I will definitely be looking for more of his work.

Sam Quixote says

Kim Deitch's wife Pam becomes obsessed with collecting old cat toys from years ago and it's this obsession that takes them one night to the flea market where they encounter a stall selling a rare cat toy. They try to buy it and wind up listening to a maniacal story about shipwreck, desert islands, and a demon cat who enslaves a native people. The story continues from there to a cat suit originating from the early 20th century, before WW1, and the story of early film, comics, war profiteering, and a pioneering superhero who dressed in a cat costume and called himself Alias. And from there it gets weirder, taking in a small town of small people (called colloquially "Midgetville") which ties all the storylines together into a terrorism plot.

Deitch is an imaginative writer and his storytelling is excellent throughout, as is his art which has to be seen to be believed. He's one of the most underrated cartoonists from the 60s, and while R. Crumb gets a lot of recognition, I feel Kim Deitch's work is as iconic and original and certainly deserving of a wider audience. Unfortunately "Alias the Cat" being his most printed book in the UK, it isn't his best.

While the story is imaginative and goes off on wild tangents, it's never as interesting - I can't explain it, it just felt like it was bizarre for the sake of being bizarre, not because it served the story. The odd choices which should have added to the book felt a bit forced and not nearly as clever as some of his other books.

The sequence in the 1900s and 1910s just dragged and repeated itself a few times adding to the hard going of the story. Midgetville was ok but was mostly exposition from Deitch's most famous creation "Waldo" who appears at the end to explain most of the book's strange meanderings.

I think Deitch is an utterly fantastic comics artist/writer and I felt a bit disappointed that "Alias the Cat" didn't live up to his usual high standard of work, but I urge those interested in finding out more on Kim Deitch to check out the recently republished "The Search for Smilin' Ed" which is much better, and "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" if you can find a copy (it's out of print for some reason). He is a brilliant artist but this book doesn't showcase his abilities nearly as well as other books have.

Martha O. says

It is weird. Very good weird.

Bryce Holt says

I've been on a bad stretch of books lately, and this was by far the worst. Elmer's does not produce enough huffable glue to make this story readable. Within three pages there is a story within a story within a story. Ladies and gentleman, this is not "Inception." This is about a couple who goes to flea markets and the lady tries to find stuffed cartoon cats and she finds one from a crazy guy who tells the story of how he got the cat after being swept on an island where he lived with naked local natives until the cat washed ashore and ruined it all and the cat made the natives slaves and, oh Christ, my face is going to explode! And that's all in the first 10 pages and...(BOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!!!!)

Michael says

Deitch is quickly becoming a favorite cartoonist of mine. I've now read two of his books, and both are amazing! This one starts with an autobiographical bent, with Deitch and his wife looking for collectibles at a local flea market, before careening into a lunatic story that spans most of the 20th century, involves old movie serial stars, a town of midgets in New Jersey, a bread factory turning out munitions for the World Wars and a living cat demon who looks suspiciously like Felix the Cat!

Near the end of the book, a character asks Deitch why he doesn't focus on the problems of the world, and Deitch replies that as a cartoonist, he can create worlds as he wishes they were. He's created a world of sideshow freaks, B-movie superstars and magic, and he does a brilliant job unfolding the story for the reader by revealing pieces of the whole picture as he himself searches for the answers, so the reader finds out the answers at the same time as Deitch himself does!

Brilliant, and complete madness. I can't wait to get another of his books.

Mel says

This is a fun little graphic story about a cat and Kim Deitch's (and his wife's) obsessive search for this particular cat toy and it's origins which lead him on a very surreal journey. It entertained me and the art was very cool. I wasn't really looking for much else when I read this. I give it a thumbs up and it was a fast read plus I got it at the library which gives it a double thumbs up.

Brittany says

Sick, twisted, amazing. Pure genius.

Pamela says

What a crazy, wonderful mess of a book.

Alias reads like a dream (or a nightmare): what begins as the author and his wife's quaint hobby of searching for vintage cat dolls and costumes at flea markets unspools into a tangled web of narratives, all revolving around this luridly crude cartoon cat named Waldo. I won't even get into the plot; I just want to assure you that you'll find yourself on unsteady footing as you walk the line between purported fact and ostensible fiction.

As for Deitch's form and technique, Alias the Cat is clearly the work of a master: any English major would have a field day with this book and its looping narratives, its moments of metafiction, and its fluid changes in graphic form (from straight-forward comic to newspaper clippings to film stills to comics within comics to graphic depictions of an oral history).

This is my first Kim Deitch comic, so I have no way of comparing it to his earlier works. Regardless, I feel it would be safe to claim that Alias the Cat ranks among his best.

Stephen says

For me, this was not nearly as iconic or as hypnotizing as Boulevard of Broken Dreams, but that's not to say that it wasn't good. The more I learn about the true secretive, dark, and desperate lives of early Hollywood/comic creators, the more I come to the conclusion that they were all nutty, drunk, sex freaks.

BoBD was powerful, and this, in comparison feels rushed in every way. The art is filled with more solid blacks rather than lines the artist agonized over. The story is similar, dealing with 'lost' characters and their wacky origins, so you get the feeling that someone at the publisher told him to make another BoBD...and hurry up about it.

So I end this review not necessarily slamming this book, but rather I would prefer to wholeheartedly refer uninitiated readers to check out his Boulevard of Broken Dreams.

Peacegal says

I usually like off-the-wall stories, but this one was just too weird for me. The comics, based on the author's imaginings of the stories behind his wife's antique toy cat collection, pass through bizarre and eventually get to boring.

Or, occasionally, stupid, as when our narrator, Kim, and his wife, Pam, visit Ron, a lonely, joint-puffing toy collector. As they sit down at the dinner table, Ron announces:

"I hope fish stew is okay. I guess I should have mentioned that I'm a vegetarian."

Pam replies:

"No problem. So am I!"

In the immortal words of Sparky the parrot, "Oh, for fuck's sake!" Dude, seriously. When you start mixing up the animal and plant kingdoms, you need to lay off the wacky weed. Fish aren't vegetables.

