



## Fran

*Jim Woodring*

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For the past 20 years or so, Jim Woodring's beloved trilobular chuckbuster Frank has enjoyed one mindbending catastrophe after another in the treacherous embrace of The Unifactor, the land into which he was born and from which escape seemed neither desirable nor likely. And then, abruptly, in 2011's acclaimed *Congress of the Animals* (the second Woodring original graphic novel, following *Weathercraft*) Frank did leave the Unifactor for uncharted lands beyond--where, after a string of trials, he acquired a soulmate named Fran. This development raised far more questions than it answered. Would Frank become placid and domesticated? Would he be jilted? Would he turn out to be a dreadful cad? Would he become a downtrodden and exhausted paterfamilias staring vacantly into the dimming fire of life as obnoxious grandchildren pulled his peglike ears and stole his porridge? The answers to these fruitless speculations and many more are delivered in a devastatingly unpredictable fashion in *Fran*, which is in effect part two of *Congress of the Animals*. Fans of Frank, connoisseurs of bizarre romance, and spelunkers in the radiant depths of graphic metaphysical psychodrama will want to add this singular cartoon adventure story to their lifetime reading list.

## Fran Details

Date : Published October 9th 2013 by Fantagraphics (first published January 1st 2013)

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Author : Jim Woodring

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## From Reader Review Fran for online ebook

### Jan Philipzig says

Is it possible that Woodring is still getting better? What an absorbing, fantastically meaningful trip this was: all the way from romantic bliss to nightmarish breakup to sobering yet life-affirming basics. Wise, dreamlike, gorgeous, touching - when it comes to wordless comics, there is no one quite like Jim Woodring.

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### Derek Royal says

I loved this book on a couple of different levels. First, it concluded (I guess) the story that Woodring first began with *The Congress of Animals*, which came out in 2011. This is the second half of the story, basically picking up where that book left off. In *Congress*, Frank meets Fran (whom we don't yet know of as "Fran"), and that's how the narrative ends. The book *Fran*, as a second installment of this longer narrative, even turns back on itself, with visual references on the last page of the scene that opened *Congress*. But I also appreciate this book because it's perhaps one of the most psychologically engaging that Woodring has created. I love his Frank stories, and his hero's relationship with Pupshaw and Pushpaw does bring some "human" drama. But with the introduction of the character Fran, a companion and love interest, the stakes are higher in the area of interpersonal relations. As such, we see a more complex and complicated side of Frank. Reading these most recent Woodring books now has me wanting to go back and rereading those earlier Frank comics.

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### Keith says

I should not have said "whooooo" at the end of this, as if *Frank* could get weirder and more amazing, but it did, it got weirder and more amazing. Maybe not quite as good as *Congress of the Animals*, but omg the thing it does, it does.

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### Hamish says

When Mr. Woodrings suggested that this both preceeds and continues *Congress of the Animals*, I thought it was a typical flight of oblique Woodring fancy. So I just re-read *Congress of the Animals* and then read *Fran*. Then I understood. He was not exaggerating. You'll understand too. So then I decided to follow Woodring's advice, and read *Fran* again, followed by *Congress of the Animals*. It works both ways, though for best results follow the same pattern I did. In the dusk jacket of *Congress*, Jim talks about how change never comes to Frank's world, no matter what events transpire, until the events of that graphic novel. And in *Fran* we see that those changes have indeed stuck, until they unhappy, only to happen again? It's an unexpected play on the immutability of Frank's world. But if I had a criticism, it's that it follows the structure of *Congress* a little too closely. In both, some strange events happen that result in Frank going on a very bizarre journey and seeing a number of very bizarre things. But again, it seems like a play on what we usually expect from a Frank story: Frank's journey in *Congress* ends with actual change while Frank's journey in *Fran* ends with that change being undone. And as usual there's a lot of imagery that I can only begin to grasp at the meaning of, but confusion and uncertainty have always been the principle joy of Woodring's comics.

And as usual, it's magic. Not quite as Magical as The Frank Book or Weathercraft, though then again it might just be that his work is so familiar now that I take that magic for granted. I've generally had a really difficult time explaining Woodring's work to other people, as it always comes across as too reductive and describes only the most superficial aspects without getting at what makes it so special. So let's just say that it's magic and that it's unlike anything that anybody else is doing in any art form and that I genuinely believe that Jim is one of the greatest creative minds working today. We're incredibly privileged that he's working at the rate he is right now and I hope everyone will go buy this book to ensure that he's financially able to produce more.

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### **Troy says**

This review sums up my thoughts on the book perfectly. Woodring is an all time master. This is must read if you like him or weird / experimental / artistic / literary, or just flat out beautiful comics.

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### **Vanni Santoni says**

Tutti i lavori recenti di Woodring sono capolavori; questo forse è il migliore.

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### **Juju says**

Jim Woodring is amazing. Imagine Samuel Becket on a steady psychedelic diet making up his own Loony Tunes cartoon universe, then imagine it better. What always blows my mind is how Jim can craft these amazing parables about the screaming insanity of our seemingly mundane existence, and have it look so ridiculously gorgeous. Absolutely amazing.

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### **Carlos Jungstedt says**

Jim does it again.

This one works together with Congress of the Animals to form a sort of Möbius Strip of a comic story, there seems to be some sort of commentary on the nature of time and causality here, but I'll be dammed if I can articulate it in words.

Learning to deal with situations as they arise instead of trying to make sense of everything is a lesson that always comes to mind as I read Frank's stories, everything sort of flows and conclusions (vague as they may be) seem to come in the form of visual, instead of literal, thoughts.

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### **Jeff says**

A companion volume to Congress of the Animals (from the same author), Fran completes a circular journey of discovery, a process that is new for Frank, Woodring's best-known protagonist. Where the previous volume ended on something of a happy note, the beginning of Fran reveals that there has simply been a

pause in the flow of events, and there are many adventures and predicaments to be experienced before Frank can find his way home again. Once again, Woodring extends the possibilities of the graphic novel format, and the reader cannot help but be simultaneously comforted and overwhelmed by the author's extraordinary vision.

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### **Sam Quixote says**

Jim Woodring's carnival of the fantastique aka his latest creative vision, Fran, is another marvellous and enchanting comic set in his extraordinary world of The Unifactor. In typical Woodring fashion, Fran is billed as both a prequel and a sequel to his last book, 2011's Congress of the Animals, and actually manages to be both! You can read Congress first, then Fran, or vice versa, or just Fran – all variations work!

Woodring's long-time character, Frank, gets a girlfriend, Fran, whom he met in Congress of the Animals. Their relationship hits a rocky patch when Fran won't tell him about her life before she met him. This being a silent comic, ie. wordless, the sequence ingeniously plays out with Frank putting on a movie projector on his head and displaying the images on a white sheet. Fran refuses to do the same, gets annoyed, breaks the machine, and she and Frank have a bust up with Fran walking out on him. After a while Frank realises his error and goes after her, taking him on a journey of crazy backgrounds and weirder people.

It's hard to describe Woodring's comics to people unfamiliar with them. Using words like crazy and weird can be off-putting as new readers might think it means his work is abstract and unapproachable but while his imagery is certainly strange and bizarre (in the best possible ways), he's such a good cartoonist that his stories are absolutely easy to follow. The meanings of the stories are ambiguous, utilising a dream logic and feeling unanchored from reality but they're no less fascinating to read and enjoy. The scope of his imagination is simply astonishing and his Unifactor world is breathtakingly unique.

One thing you can say about a Jim Woodring book is that you never know where the story's headed because one second Frank's painting a picture and the next he's chasing a little mummy to an underground cave of treasures. And that's just part of the setup! He also has one of the best "Author's Note" sections on the inside cover that I've ever seen. Anyone who loves comics should experience Jim Woodring at least once but from my own experience you'll come back again and again – it's too good not to read.

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### **Ella says**

I dunno what to say apart from what tf did I just read

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### **David Schaafsma says**

This is either, Woodring says, a prequel or sequel for Congress of Animals, one of his Frank stories, where Frank is in a relationship with Fran, so it seems, more than other Frank stories, sort of recognizably humane and relatable. But... it just begins with them together. Of course they experience relationship "issues" and then the wild, hallucinatory "fun" begins for Frank who, I am told, has had his own experiences with hallucinations. This is as it always is with Woodring, a wild ride, but for me, it is one of my favorites.

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### **Joshua says**

Jim Woodring allows the reader to reflect on what would happen if you got into a really nasty argument with your girlfriend while on acid. And because it's also Jim Woodring, the story allows the reader to enter into a realm of pure possibility where one is left constantly wondering what is real, what isn't, what is the foundation of being, how does one maintain sanity when faced against near constant oddity, and what is the joy of returning home after said previous girlfriend tricks you into passing through a vortex back to your original plane of being.

I love Fran and can't wait for more.

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### **vostendrasamigos yotengolibros says**

this is my favorite character so far, I want a Fran tattoo now.

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### **Nick says**

This comic depicts an incredibly bizarre and imaginative world. The story has some cute moments, a few memorable scenes, a bit of adventure, and a cozy ending. Unfortunately, I find the book as a whole poorly story-boarded and rather dull. I don't feel that the comic panes lead into each other effectively or clearly enough in many cases. It also feels as if the author did a stream-of-consciousness artistic effort with various similar black and white semi-metaphorical creatures and creations. These creations, while freakish, are -- overall -- not very interesting. I find most of them aesthetically unpleasant, and the globules, amoebas, collections of eyes, and curvy-wavy lines just don't do it for me and are repetitive by the book's end.

A flight of fancy, certainly creative and worth a 'read' (wordless) -- particularly if you are looking for artistic inspiration.

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**True Rating: 2.4 Stars**