



Elric: The Stealer of Souls

Michael Moorcock , Phil Hale (Illustrator)

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This 11th volume of The Eternal Champion Series is dedicated to the most popular incarnation of the Champion: the doomed emperor Elric of Melnibone. In order to achieve his destiny and begin a new age after the Armageddon that threatens to destroy the world, Elric must risk his very soul.

Elric: The Stealer of Souls Details

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From Reader Review *Elric: The Stealer of Souls* for online ebook

Heather Perreault says

This compendium of truly pulp fantasy fiction stories was a Kindle freebie, so I decided to read what is considered by some to be one of the original works of modern sword and sorcery (from the 60's or so). Very interesting to get a little historical perspective on the genre, and I enjoyed the stories for what they were - nothing very substantial, but a fun read.

Charles says

Parts of this book actually appeared in the volume entitled "The Weird of the White Wolf." This is, I believe, an earlier version of that material.

Adam says

The stories in this collection are mostly very good, some of them classics of the fantasy genre. The collection as a whole, however, is a bit awkward as it is arranged "chronologically" in order the full history of Elric as opposed to order of publication. There are wild shifts in style and tone from story to story and it doesn't have the cohesiveness that the editors were probably hoping for. In fact, the White Wolf editions have been out of print for some years. Del Rey currently has the rights and has recently been reprinting the Elric stories in order of original publication with a whole lot of extra material that may or may not be worth reading. The original stories themselves are still essential and highly influential. Worth seeking out in whatever form you can find them.

Stuart Lutzenhiser says

The first of four volumes republishing the stories of Elric in the order of their publication rather than a chronological order - which I think is what was attempted in the novelizations from the '70s that I read the first time (starting with Elric of Melnibone and ending with Stormbringer).

Most interesting, I thought, about this edition is the additional materials that were included. Two of them are explanatory letters written at the same time as the stories, roughly. Seeing them in the published context chronologically is also very interesting as this shows how Moorcock's ideas evolved over time and as he fleshed out the material.

Recommended if you like classic Sword and Sorcery novels in the vein of Fritz Leiber.

Chris says

This, combined with *Elric: The Song of the Black Sword*, is just one of many ways to read the core books of the Elric saga. These two omnibuses were published by White Wolf, Inc. in the 1990's. "White Wolf" is

actually named after Elric himself, as it turns out, that being one of his many nicknames.

This particular volume includes these Elric books:

#4, *The Sleeping Sorceress*, aka *The Vanishing Tower*

#9, *The Revenge of the Rose*

#5, *The Bane of the Black Sword*

#6, *Stormbringer*.

Books #1-3 and #8 are found in the first omnibus.

Honestly, the core books to me are the first six in the regular paperback series. The seventh was a collection of odds and ends, while the 8th and 9th were strange returns to Melniboné that Moorcock wrote years later. *The Revenge of the Rose* is included here, and is worth reading. Unfortunately, due to being written some 30ish years later, the flow is thrown off when one wedges that between books 4 and 5. It seems to be reset then when one gets back into 5. Ideally, the best way to read the series might be by going the SFBC way of the four volume *The Elric Saga* which puts them out in a more linear order. The first two volumes of that would then be the core series.

That said, this was a very enjoyable read. Elric isn't pretty, and he isn't always nice. He's something of a bastard at times, mostly by necessity. And his sword, Stormbringer, is as wicked evil as a weapon gets. It's one feisty bitch and even when Elric tries to do the right thing, sometimes this sword has a way of changing the game.

Paco Paco says

I obtained this book for free on my Amazon Kindle. The format was slightly confusing on the Kindle, as the book was interspersed with history from the publishing of the original Elric saga in the Fantasy zines back in the 60's.

As a story, I see it as a sark and harsh version of the reluctant universal hero who must sacrifice himself for the good of all. It is hard to truly identify with the hero, or any of the characters, it reads more like a heroic saga with names and places and little emotion.

i was more intrigued by its place in the history of fantasy writing, and a new darker approach to fantasy that did not follow the Tolkien formulation. I can see where Moorcock may have been one of the progressive fantasy writers that have influenced other writers.

in the end I was able to muddle through the story, but have no lasting connection with the sotry or it's albino hero.

Tamcamry says

- Overall, I feel this was a good summary of the Elric character. I was a little irritated that there were some stories in this book that had been in the previous Elric book, but I understand why he put them in. Some of the extras like the letters and the review of Stormbringer were somewhat interesting. When I was reading those I got the feeling that this is something that Moorcock is incredibly proud of. He should be proud of it as Elric is a great character. It does seem that Moorcock believes that Elric is the greatest Science Fiction character to ever live. He's not. He is interesting and I look forward to reading the last Elric book, but let's not go overboard. This book is a good read, though.

Wm says

Elric has its moments, but it lacks that extra layer of humour and lightness found in Fritz Lieber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser.

So very emo. I guess the issue is that the promised decadence never really went beyond the conventional and I never fully bought the soul sucking sword.

Still worth reading, though.

February Four says

Did not finish. I got to page 79 out of 493 (so my e-book reader tells me). Clunky prose that I just could not handle. A large part of those 79 pages were Michael Moorcock talking about how Elric had affected so many people's lives. Perhaps this is a book that requires one actually read the other books first (official fanfiction?) because I just couldn't bring myself to continue with this book after those 79 pages.

Frank Roberts says

Actually didn't read this all the way through. Dropped it about halfway in.

It was easy to see the Elric stories as D&D style adventures, but if so, then the campaign arc never became clear to me, and the stories just became a series of self-contained narratives, with no larger arc and sometimes no clear flow from one to another. Too much Deus ex machina involved as well.

Randolph says

The first thing you need to do when writing a Michael Moorcock sword and sorcery novella is divide your 60,000 words into four sections, 15,000 words apiece. Then divide each section into six chapters. Allow a major event to happen, something astonishing, every four pages. How about a plot? How about we have only six days to save the Multiverse? Now draw a map of your world so you know where you are at any given time. Now begin...

Sounds easy, right? Well, maybe for Moorcock. Seriously the major weakness with *some* of Moorcock is

seeing through the planogram writing style. It still doesn't mean it isn't fun but Elric, Corum, Hawkmoon, Von Bek taken in too large doses will kill the intended effect. This is the good and the bad about these White Wolf/Borealis collections of Moorcock's Eternal Champion works: too much of a good thing makes one's stomach ache but we all want the whole story.

The best bit in here is The Revenge of the Rose. The other two long pieces, The Sleeping Sorceress and Stormbringer, are not nearly as good or memorable. The former is too much of the "make it up as you go" style and the latter, while nicely tying up the entire Elric saga, drags on a little too long (but has a nice denouement). The short pieces in the middle gain from the tighter plotting inherent in a short story versus a novella.

This is volume 11 in the US Eternal Champion series. I think Elric: Song of the Black Sword (volume 5) was a little stronger than this one but between the two you pretty much get all of Moorcock's Elric, at least as it stood at the end of the century.

Bizarre creepy cover and interior art that seems to have little to do with Elric but looks cool nonetheless.

Gordon says

Mostly re-read this because it was a freebie ebook.

As I recollected, but it reinforced, many of the tragic-anti-hero aspects of the stories (and their anarchist bent) remained but what I had thought was merely average writing seemed much poorer here.

The Elric/fantasy novels were always wildly signposted and somewhat transparent (in this book, which is a compendium of magazine shorts and letters-to-skim-through, it is even more obvious, if explainable).

There is little feeling of suspense, there is little feeling of excitement, and any insight into Elric's tortured character is WRITTEN IN VERY LARGE LETTERS rather than inferred or implied.

There is always the chance some great literary subtlety is occurring that I am completely missing of course.

Somehow, however, these are still fine to read, and are pulp fantasy with an obsessive cult anti-hero and a soul-sucking demon for a sword. If you read fantasy then somewhere along the line, you should at least read the stereotypes, and it might be quite fun (the Hawkmoon saga is the better of the Moorcock's IMHO).

Christian Herro says

Re-read this and its White Wolf published companion omnibus. Little more to say in this review, but as the second part of the Elric saga, Moorcock's writing tends to get stronger as his style developed and he pieced together his mythos. There are still the heavy (and enjoyable) whiffs of pulp fiction, but it never becomes cloying or overdone.

Mouse says

I'm re-reading the Elric stories for the 1st time since my teenage years. The stories to my surprise hold up nicely. Plus, for me, they are bringing back a lot of pleasant memories.

I love these stories. They are in a class by themselves.

If you have any love at all for "sword and sorcery" fiction & haven't read these, you have to add them to your list.

Joel Mitchell says

There are multiple editions of Michael Moorcock's "Elric of Melniboné" story cycle. This particular anthology is the continuation and conclusion of the cycle as begun in *Elric: Song of the Black Sword* (aka volumes 5 and 11 of the American version of the *Tale of the Eternal Champion* series). This volume features Elric dealing with the aftermath of his act of anger and vengeance at the heart of the previous volume (see first comment for what that act was if you don't mind a spoiler from the previous book).

Elric is an interesting, if rather unpleasant, character. He is the last sorcerer-emperor of a cruel, amoral race dedicated to chaos and the "dukes of hell." Unlike his countrymen, Elric has some shreds of a conscience/morality that drive him to try to be a better person. Conspiring against his better side are his continued reliance on black magic and his sickly albinism which leaves him dependent on drugs or his evil soul-sucking sword to keep up his strength. In his adventures, he is driven by vengeance and hatred as often as by nobler motivations.

The stories themselves are dark, trippy swords-and-sorcery fare with some sci-fi-like traveling to various alternate planes in "the multiverse." Some parts of the stories become repetitive and predictable (Elric summoning supernatural aid, Elric going into superhuman berserker fury with his sword, Elric wallowing in self pity and self-loathing, etc.), but the overall story arc was satisfying in a grim sort of way.
