

the Fine Print

Patrick Hambrecht

Xers relate to 'Hate' adventures

If your parents or associate English professor really wants to "get to know" the instantly cliched Generation Xers, tell them to throw their Douglas Coupland novels in the garbage and get a copy of Peter Bagge's suburban odyssey, "Hate."

The comic chronicles the amazingly true-to-life adventures of Buddy Bradley, a scruffy under-achieving grunge relic who still lives with his parents and works at a used-record and collectibles store. Sound familiar?

Nearly everyone who reads "Hate" comics says the same thing — "I know someone just like this!" Buddy, Stinky, Lisa and the Bradley family all seem frighteningly akin to the grumbling, placidly apolitical people who work and scheme around college campuses every day.

In one issue of "Hate," Buddy becomes the reluctant manager of a not-talent Seattle rock band called "Leonard and the Love Gods." A satirical riot, the comic exposes the inherent stupidity of the grass-roots rock scene and its telephone-pole poster culture.

In another adventure, Buddy gets into a fight with his squirrely live-in girlfriend Lisa. As hormones and bored frustration rage back and forth, the comic reads like a documented case of domestic dysfunctional behavior, or like a transcript for any number of UNL students last Saturday afternoon.

Buddy's social awareness changes slowly. He starts as a twerpy teenage racist and ends up uncomfortably sharing an apartment with a black roommate.

Bagge's sensitivity and subjectivity with race issues makes "Hate" part of the slim minority of literature that doesn't make me itch with the feeling the author is trying to indoctrinate me, or impress me with liberal virtues.

Bagge portrays the racism, sexism and similar ills of white middle-class society without demonizing or patronizing his characters, a rare feat for a novel, much less a comic book.

With an intuitive feel for language, Bagge is able to combine realistic dialogue and social insight with some of the funniest images I have ever seen. His art seems to draw on ferocious Aztec images and 1970s hot-rod culture for a hyperactive, manic vision of America.

Bagge's most outrageous work appeared in Robert Crumb's "Weirdo" magazine. Hired by the 1960s visionary, Bagge later took control of the magazine and introduced a new generation of cartoonists to the art scene.

Along with "Weirdo," Bagge went on to produce "Neat Stuff," the direct predecessor of "Hate." Featuring bizarre characters like Goon in the Moon and Girly-Girl, the comic combines the natural laws of "Tom and Jerry" with a vicious social wit.

All of Bagge's work can be bought at local comic stores like Trade-A-Tape/Comic Center, 145 S. 9th St., or ordered from a free Fantagraphics catalog that is available by calling 1-800-657-1100.

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WRITING For the RAZORWIRE

By Patrick Hambrecht
Senior Reporter

In the Revolutionary War, aristocratic British vampires routinely captured rebels and ate them. The Americans were stripped naked, tortured and dismembered alive while the vampires drank their blood in goblets and toasted the queen.

Welcome to the imagination of William Harms, as featured in the story "Red Coats" for Boneyard Press' "Flowers on the Razorwire" comic book.

A former Daily Nebraskan reporter and 1995 UNL graduate, Harms has begun to earn a reputation in the comic book world by writing some of the vilest, most disgusting horror stories available today.

And in a market already full of depraved, gore-soaked tales, further eroding the boundaries of good taste is no small accomplishment.

"I don't believe in excessive gore," Harms said, referring to the concept, not the practice.

"You've got to push what boundaries you can. If people say 'I don't want to see heads flying,' then the horror genre is just going to stay where it is."

For those who do believe in the concept of excessive violence, they might find proof of it in Harms' new series for "Flowers on the Razorwire," "The Fall."

In "The Fall," two Catholic priests are corrupted by a legion of satanic sewer-dwelling vampires. These undead subterraneans, dressed like punks in bondage gear, fight amongst themselves for control of their clan and then begin to take over the world.

During this spooky scuffle, numerous decapitations, disembowelments and other miscellaneous maimings are skillfully drawn by artist Albert Holaso.

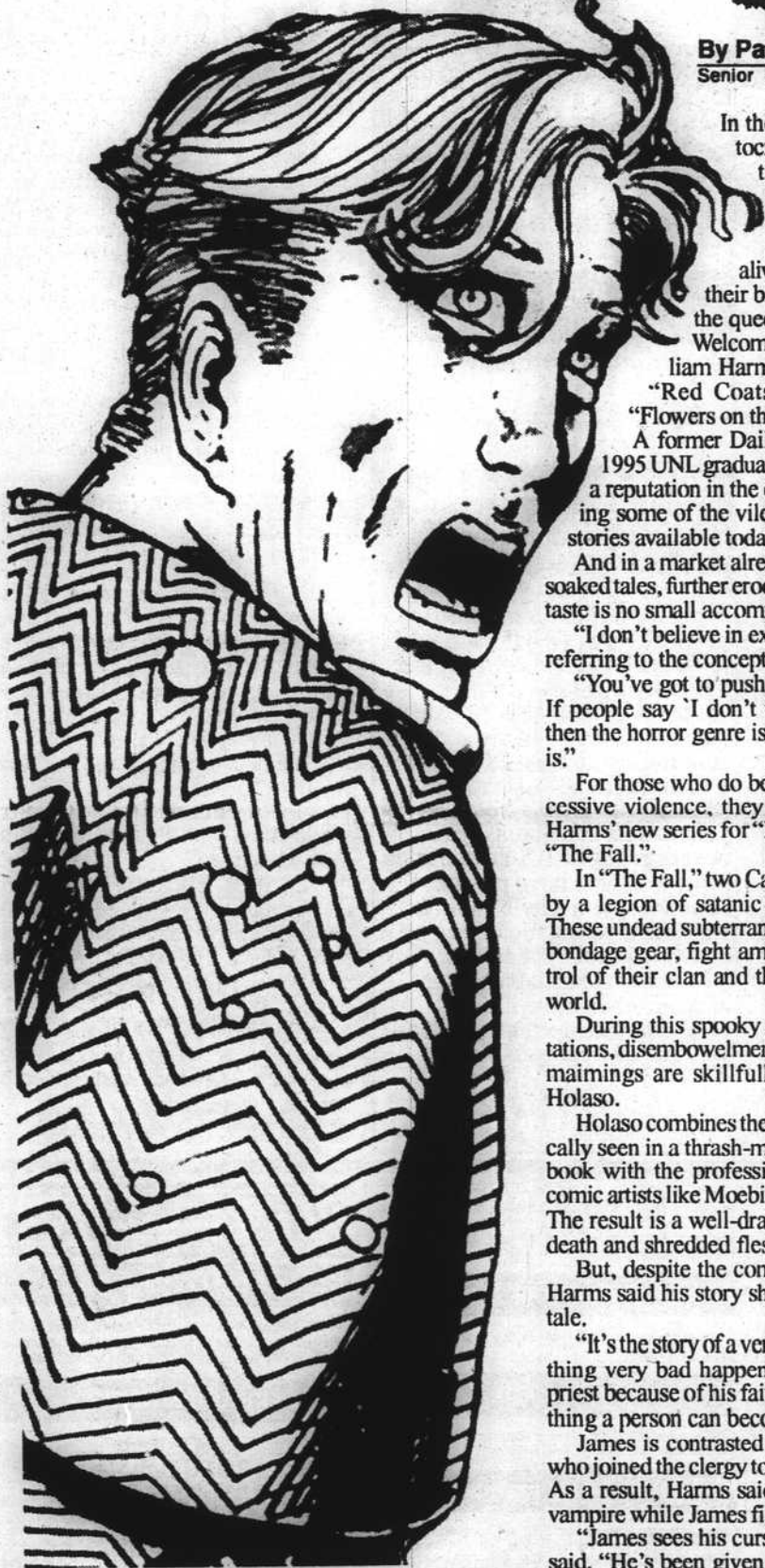
Holaso combines the creepy excess of gore typically seen in a thrash-metal fan's junior high notebook with the professional inking techniques of comic artists like Moebius or Barry Windsor-Smith. The result is a well-drawn, clotted mass of fangs, death and shredded flesh.

But, despite the comic book's violent content, Harms said his story should be seen as a morality tale.

"It's the story of a very good man who has something very bad happen to him. James became a priest because of his faith, and what's the most evil thing a person can become? A vampire."

James is contrasted by his fellow priest, Paul, who joined the clergy to escape the evil in his heart. As a result, Harms said, Paul enjoys becoming a vampire while James fights his supernatural curse.

"James sees his curse as a test of God," Harms said. "He's been given power for a reason, to kill vampires. But he has to kill innocent people to survive, so that he can eventually kill all the vampires."



Artwork by Albert Holaso

This weighty paradox is at the heart of Harms' series, and he said he hoped people didn't see "The Fall" as "just another vampire comic."

"I really don't like vampires very much," Harms said. "The reason people like vampires so much is because they never die, never grow old, and are unstoppable — and in today's consumer-driven world, that's the ultimate."

"It's a very American attitude: I want it and I want it now and I want lots of it."

Harms also is working on other non-vampire related projects, including a miniseries for Slave Labor Graphics called "Cain and Abel." The comic will be based on a story about two brothers that he wrote for "Lorus," an annual UNL literary publication.

In addition, Harms is writing a comic called "Thorn" for Pariah Books.

Previously, Harms worked at Marvel Comics as an intern and wrote a story for "The Ren and Stimpy Show," No. 34, in which the daffy pair mistakenly believe they've won the lottery and go on a spending spree.

Harms attributed a lot of his success to the popularity of "Red Coats."

"People were coming up to Hart D. Fisher (owner of Boneyard Press) at comic conventions and saying that story was great," he said. "And I got to do a lot more stuff because of it."



Issue 7 of "Flowers on the Razorwire" contained the first installment of Harms' "The Fall" series.

'Kids' faces consequences of bad story line

By Fred Poyner
Film Critic

A journey into nothingness best describes "Kids," a movie depicting the never-ending partying of America's urban youth.

Without a doubt, this movie portrays the worst aspects of the next teen generation, but the story line is as weak as the images are jumbled. After the first 15 minutes, viewer boredom replaces disgust at the sight of an endless train of empty 40-ouncers and acne-ridden faces.

One interesting figure is the character of Jennie (Chloe Sevigny), who discovers that she has AIDS after accompanying a friend to a New York clinic. Her pathos as a victim is highlighted by the apparent-

ness that no supporting structure — not family, not friends — exists for her to fall back on.

Another lost soul called Casper (Justin Pierce) presents a nearly comical view of the punk stereotype on a never-ending binge (he wakes up when the movie ends.)

But actions are followed by consequences, and this is where "Kids" fails. Its characters' lives seem to exist in a partying void. Sooner or later, reality does intrude. But, by glossing over the consequences of each scene, the director is leaving out an important part of the whole picture.

The controversy surrounding this film in 1995 was misdirected, with debates over a possible NC-17 rating at the center of attention. And, although some of the scenes are sexually explicit and warrant the higher rating, this view of '90s street life and the effects it has on its younger participants lacks depth — graphic or otherwise.

By the time anyone could get around to giving this film a rating, any message the scenes

The Facts

Film: "Kids"
Stars: Chloe Sevigny, Justin Pierce, Leo Fitzpatrick
Director: Larry Clark
Rating: NR (language, violence, adult content)
Grade: C-
Five words: You'll never trust kids again

itself, would have been long forgotten. "Kids" runs tonight through Sunday and Jan. 25-27 at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

Movie Review

