



Aama, Vol. 1: The Smell of Warm Dust

Frederik Peeters, Edward Gauvin (Translator)

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In the distant future, Verloc Nim wakes up in the middle of nowhere suffering from complete amnesia. He remembers nothing of his former life. But when Verloc is handed his diary by a robot-ape called Churchill, he is able to revisit his past. His life, he discovers, has been a miserable one. He lost his business, his family, and his friends because he refused the technological advancements of society - the eye implants, the pharyngeal filters, the genetic modifications — he went without all these. He was astray in a society he deeply resented until his brother, Conrad, took him to another planet to retrieve a mysterious substance called aama. Full of action, adventure, and strange characters, Aama is a unique exploration of society's dangerous relationship with technology.

Aama, Vol. 1: The Smell of Warm Dust Details

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From Reader Review Aama, Vol. 1: The Smell of Warm Dust for online ebook

Jan Philipzig says

The promising first volume of what is shaping up to be a trippy yet politically charged sci-fi thriller by Swiss cartoonist Frédéric Peeters. In terms of recent sci-fi comics, it reads like a cross between Remender's *Fear Agent* (alcoholism, broken family, need for reunion and redemption) and Graham's *Prophet* (amnesia, disorientation, mission) - less obnoxious than the former and more coherent than the latter. Peeters' drawings are a bit on the simple side, but a great, Moebius-influenced sense of style and gorgeous coloring ensure that the whole thing looks great anyway. What I enjoyed the most, though, were the iconic yet strangely relatable characters. I am certainly on board for the remaining three volumes.

Johananas Frugt Og Grønt says

Aama vol. 1 begins the story with futuristic socialrealism - but later will turn the volume up as a politically charged sci-fi. We meet our washedout hero who wakes up in nowhere, only accompanied by an robot ape.

From there on we find out he was taken on a journey by his more successful and likeable brother who works a a major company. As we explore the story through flashbacks and dreams, we delve into the ethics of human relationship with themselves and technology - accompanied by a thorough worldbuilding. The characters are well-deveoped and sympathetic even in their more unsympathetic moments, all in all a treat to read.

Tar Buendía says

Muy introductorio pero genial. Sienta las bases de manera sobresaliente.

Estoy deseando seguir.

'kris Pung says

This was pretty damn out there and I'm not sure if I liked it or not. I have volume 2 sitting in front of me so maybe I'll have a clearer picture after I finish that one.

Miriam says

You'd think a book that opens with a man waking up with no memory and reading his own diary about how

last week he was a drug addict being picked up out of a puddle by a robot in an ape suit would be memorable, wouldn't you?

That's unfair, though -- I did remember within two pages that I had read this a couple years back and failed to move it from one list to another. I think that I forgot it is due not to poor quality but to the fact that it is very much a beginning of a story. The plot is barely underway, much less resolved.

It is an interesting story, plotwise. The memory loss, the bleak future that is not precisely post-apocalyptic but simply after things have gone pretty badly. Disease, poverty, genetic damage, economic and political corruption. Nothing new. Verloc is a divorced, penniless addict when his lost-unseen (not lost, merely on poor terms) younger brother shows up with his ape robot and asks Verloc to accompany him on a mission to another planet where some sort of experiment was meant to be carried out, but was interrupted by crisis of five years prior. What have the scientists been doing for this years of abandonment? Well, that may be important to them but it isn't to their sponsors, who are more concerned with retrieving their valuable product -- or are they? Clearly more is going on than our lumpenprotagonist is aware of.

The prose is adequate and the art, although rather ugly, suits the story and is narratively fine. By which I mean I never had any difficulty telling the characters apart or distinguishing what was going on with the action. The artist is quite good at subtle expressions and does a lot more with eye contact than one usually sees in graphic novels.

This time I'll try to remember to get volume two!

Teresa says

Devo ammettere che a forza di non aver bisogno di nessuno mi ero ritrovato solo al mondo

Robot, correzioni genetiche, prodotti tecnologici rivoluzionari... Non sono appassionata di fantascienza, ma ogni tanto mi piace uscire dalla mia confort-zone e questo primo volume di *aâma* mi ha coinvolta. Il protagonista ha perso famiglia e lavoro. È pieno di problemi che cerca di affogare nello shia -una sostanza stupefacente- quando un incontro fortuito lo costringe ad un nuovo inizio, ad un viaggio ai confini della galassia che lo porterà a sentire l'odore della polvere calda e il profumo d'avventura. Interessante la ricostruzione a ritroso affidata ad un mezzo quasi dimenticato in un mondo ipertecnologico: un quaderno di carta scritto a mano. Tanti i punti ancora da scoprire non solo degli eventi sul pianeta *Ona(Ji)*, ma anche del passato di Verloc. Belli i disegni.

EisNinE says

[No spoilers; this review deals with the complete four-volume story, which is how I ordered it and read it -- a book in four chapters. I recommend buying them all if the story appeals to you, and more importantly, if the art appeals to you.]

Aama is a visual masterpiece, IMO; but Peeters' confident ligne-claire simplicity, combined with dry-brush texturing and spot-blacks, makes for a more subtle species of artistic genius and originality. He has used his early Blutch-influenced style for the depth and contrast, and a Giardino-style on the linework, but the synthesis is all him.

Frederik Peeters quietly turned a corner and climbed a fucking mountain some time ago (I guess while I was napping), taking his art from a gently impressive suburban proficiency to an Alpine Eyrie of Euro-comics genius. I've got love enough for both the Metal Hurlant school of high-art/low-story BD, as well as the literate and subtle artistry of those cartoonists published by L'Association and Cornelius; but there's always been a clear divide between them, like the distinction between mainstream and underground comics in North America.

Aama is the first real fusion of the two I've read -- with the notable exception of the oeuvre created by the prolific Jacques Tardi -- that appeals to both audiences, with no real designs on claiming either. Peeters has told tales of this kind before, clever and mature science fiction that concerns itself with characters and relationships more than the fantastic setting, most notably with *Lupus* and *Koma* -- suitably, the former is available as a gorgeously-produced 500-page hardcover from Peeters' independent publishing concern, *Atrabile*, while the latter is courtesy of *Les Humanoides Associes*, the house that *Metal Hurlant* built, founded by Moebius, Dionnet, et al.

While his previous SF tales are thoroughly excellent, Aama is goddamn brilliant. The story is instantly engaging, the characters are unforgettable, and the art is both unique and stunning. It's a seamless blend of mainstream and 'alternative', like a fusion of Moebius, Otomo, and Blutch.

This is just the first of four volumes collecting the entire 370-page space saga, the English-language version released by *Selfmadehero*; all four are available now. Despite being a bit smaller at 8" x 11" than the 9.5" x 12.75" Gallimard French editions, the format is still large enough to fully appreciate the details. They're otherwise very close, using the same thick and glossy art-book stock that I consider necessary for full-color art to look its best. *Selfmadehero* have been giving English audiences translations of David B.'s historical fiction and non-fiction, like *Black Paths* and *Best of Enemies*, as well as some of Peeter's other works, *Sandcastle* and the surrealistic mystery *Pachyderme*.

Pachyderme, by F. Peeters:

Aama, B & W promo art by F. Peeters:

The artwork really is fantastic in Aama, and it gets more spectacular as the story progresses; the final volume, "You Will Be Glorious, My Daughter", is suitably mind-bending in proper Jodorowsky tradition, but without lapsing into his boring mysticism or awful dialogue. There are obvious similarities to 'The Incal',

and I personally think Peeters has done something every bit as impressive -- I'm a Moebius fan, and I know how bold a claim that is. There's also moments clearly inspired by Katsuhiro Otomo's manga masterpiece 'Akira' (including a full-on Tetsuo-type metamorphosis), and Peeters has incorporated the intricate, realistic manga style of Otomo into his own (since the art of Otomo was itself strongly affected by Moebius and Francois Schuiten, that might become a kind of stylistic feedback loop). The expressionistic brush of Blutch has long influenced Peeters as well, and while books like 'Le Vitesse Moderne' are closer stylistically to Luples and thematically to Pachyderme, his debt to Blutch is still evident in Aama. The evolution of his inking seems properly organic; Luples has a much looser, sketchier feel, but with thick, confident brush-strokes combined with variegated texturing, reminiscent of the prodigious black-and-white pages of Blutch, Jens Harder, and US-based peer Craig Thompson. Pachyderme is full-color, and while the hatching and spot-blacks are still prevalent, the lines are cleaner. Aama isn't exactly 'ligne claire', but the refined linework suits the intricate details of the SF setting. I wouldn't be shocked to see Peeters return to the style of Pachyderme or Sand Castle for his next book.

There's so many incredible artists working in the comics medium, I get tired of throwing out praise. Seriously, it's easier and far more fun to tear apart shitty superhero comics in one-star reviews. I've got a far higher rating average than most people, and you could be forgiven for thinking I'm one of those smiley-face motherfuckers who just wants to hand out 5-star reviews and cookies for showing up and trying hard. No, I actually hate 99% of every-fucking-thing ever produced by man or woman... including children ;). So when I find an artist or writer I really like, I feel compelled to jabber at people passing on the virtual street about their work, even though I ran out of fresh superlatives a long time ago. How many different routes can you take to reach the 'I like this' destination? Let me count the ways. Peeling back all the redundant hyperbole and artistic comparisons, I'm saying little more than 'he draws real good' and 'he writes real good' and 'this book is real good'. Everything else is just linguistic set-dressing and bullshit to convince or reassure readers of the reviewer's -- MY -- sound aesthetic judgement, artistic erudition, and basic intelligence. Is there a point? Nope. Perfectly fucking spherical.

Buy volumes 1-4 of Aama by Frederik Peeters. He draws real good. He writes real good. These books are really, um, good. I am very smart and cool so you should heed my words. Me am like them stuff.

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Palimp says

Le pongo un cuatro por su gran imaginación visual, incluyendo ese robot con forma de simio que fuma puros y los paisajes alienígenas. También por la forma correcta de organizar la narración.

El pero que le pongo a esta y otras historias del autor es la futilidad de la trama, de poca consistencia y aires new age un poco empalagosos.

Petitpois says

Una historia que arranca con una presentación genial de sus protagonistas, que consigue el suspense y cautiva.

Thom says

I don't recall how this graphic novel (1st of 4 parts) from Swiss artist Frederik Peeters ended up on my reading list, but I am glad it did. The story is a very humanist science fiction, with many threads not yet revealed. Big (and likely genetic) things have happened in the very recent past. I am pleasantly reminded of one or two Space 1999 stories. Looking forward to reading the other three volumes.

Leah says

aama 1. The Smell of Warm Dust

Written and illustrated by: Frederik Peeters

Translated by: Edward Gauvin

First, before the review, I believe this is the first graphic novel I have read where the author and the illustrator are the same person. I think that Frederik Peeters has done a really decent job at both parts of this book. The art isn't as pretty as some of the comics I'm currently reading, but it's nice nonetheless. The writing was exceptional though, and I think that Peeters has done a great job telling this story.

The Cast of Characters:

Verloc Nim - Main character, addict, will not win father of the year.

Conrad Nim - Verloc's baby brother, works for giant evil corporation (Muy-Tang) as a communications liaison.

Churchill - Robotic ape bodyguard. BAMF award goes to him (probably always).

Professor Woland - Not really here, but seems extremely important. The creator of the AAMA experiment.

Professor Kaplan - Lady seems to have gone a bit crazy. Master Manipulator.

Fulmine - Biorobotics Researcher. Kaplan's right hand man.

Pilgrimm - The colony's math and computer whizz.

Myo - Biotech professor. Also a manipulative lady (by choice or necessity, hope to find out in #2).

Dr. Frienko - Colony's physician.

The mysterious little girl - Mute. Looks identical to Lilja, Verloc's daughter.

Silika - Verloc's wife (they're separated). Her boyfriend is the one that helped her to keep Verloc from Lilja (Silika and Verloc's daughter).

Lilja - Mute, daughter, kept from her father.

aama takes place in a distant future, and it starts with Verloc already on another planet - Ona(ji). The story is told through his memories, by him reading entries in his journal.

We see Verloc as this really depressing main character, and honestly, not a character I would ever see as a hero. He wallows in his self loathing and despair, drinking his loneliness away. That is, until his brother comes along, and give Verloc an adventure he didn't really want, but decided to go on, nonetheless. After all, he didn't have much going for him in his current situation anyway.

Conrad had been tasked by his company, Muy-Tang, to visit an uninhabited planet, Ona(ji) and to contact a colony that had settled there for the research and experiment conclusions of the colony's leader, Professor Woland. The colony had shipped out to this isolated planet five years ago, and prior to the Great Crisis (some type of economical collapse).

Verloc, Conrad, and Churchill make their way to Ona(ji), and that's really where the story begins to unfold, both in plot developments and setting. When they reach Woland's colony, they discover a lot has happened in the Colony's five years of isolation on this lonely planet.

The biggest discovery is that the Colony's leader, Woland, is no longer there. She had taken her project (AAMA) and left.

Why? Well, no freaking clue. **The Smell of Warm Dust** is definitely a book filled with world building and plot build-ups, and character developments. It should have been a boring book to me, but the artwork, and the writing really kept the story very engaging. I was truly consumed with wanting to know more about the characters and where the story was going, and when I reached the end, I really wanted to just pick up the next one and get back into this world ASAP.

However, I knew if I did that, I wouldn't end up writing out this review, and I really wanted to. This book is definitely worth looking into, but be prepared that it does take a little bit to get going, and with only 88 pages, I think some of the build-up was unnecessary.

But, who knows? I'm hoping that a lot of this build-up gets used in Book 2, and if that's the case, then of course, it was important.

I'm really looking forward to continuing Verloc's story. I think he's going to end up being an unlikely hero, a character that redeems himself, and becomes someone that I will admire and respect. I hope so anyway.

Leonard Gaya says

L'odeur de la poussière chaude est le premier tome d'une série de quatre albums (à ce jour) de bande-dessinée, signé par l'artiste suisse Frederik Peeters, publié en 2011 chez Gallimard et primé à Angoulême.

Il s'agit d'un récit de science-fiction où le protagoniste, amnésique et accueilli sur une planète inconnue par un robot singe fumeur de cigarettes, se rappelle à travers le journal qu'il a lui-même écrit, les péripéties qui l'on amené là. On y découvre, à travers différents flash-backs emboîtés, les bas-fonds d'une mégapole qui rappelle celle de Metropolis ou de l'Incal, le voyage vers la planète Ona(ji), le groupe de scientifiques qui y séjourne, dissimulant un mystérieux projet du nom d'Aâma...

Ce premier volume, s'il fait preuve d'inventivité en jouant avec les lieux communs de la SF, et s'il ménage un certain suspens, laisse toutefois le lecteur un peu sur sa faim (c'est sans doute voulu). Les dessins, souvent en format large donnent la part belle aux décors (le vaisseau spatial tuilé en forme de hérisson est particulièrement original). Les dialogues sont parfois quelque peu maladroits, mais le ton du journal intime est le plus souvent convaincant. Sans doute à suivre...

Romain says

Ce qu'il y a de bien avec la science-fiction c'est que l'on découvre l'univers en même temps que l'histoire. En marge de l'intrigue et des personnages, la découverte et la compréhension du monde constituent à eux seuls un plaisir intellectuel. Dans ce domaine, les bons auteurs de SF excellent et trouvent toujours des technologies, des systèmes sociaux ou politiques originaux et intelligents qui poussent le lecteur à la réflexion. Il pense à leur transposition possible dans le monde réel ou, plus subtilement, à reconsidérer son univers à l'aune de ces nouveautés.

Arrêtons là ces digressions pour parler de cette BD qui m'a inspiré ce commentaire introductif. L'auteur a su créer un univers particulièrement original — sans l'être trop — et intéressant, le dessin donnant corps et cohérence à l'ensemble. Au fur et à mesure que l'histoire progresse et, au delà de la découverte de l'univers dont nous avons déjà parlé, on découvre des personnages profonds. Loin des stéréotypes de la SF, ils sont complexes et n'ont pas livré l'intégralité de leur caractère dès les premières cases. Ils cachent encore leurs failles et de faiblesses. Ajoutez à ceci de l'aventure et de la profondeur dans l'exploration des sentiments et vous obtenez une BD de très grande qualité.

Le tout est servi par un schéma narratif efficace. La BD débute alors que le personnage principal se réveille sans souvenir. C'est en consultant les notes prises dans son carnet qu'il va reconstituer ce qu'il lui est arrivé dans le passé alors que l'histoire continue à évoluer dans le présent. La narration avance donc sur deux plans temporels distincts.

Je ne suis pas spécialiste de science-fiction en bande dessinée, mais c'est l'un des tout meilleurs album que j'ai lu. J'ai été séduit par son originalité et sa profondeur sans oublier une mention particulière pour les dessins. Cet album prouve qu'il est possible de concevoir une oeuvre de qualité sans faire de concession à la compréhension. De la très grande BD et la suite arrive.

PS: Je ne suis pas du tout fier de mon article, je pense que mon inspiration est inversement proportionnelle à mon admiration pour les œuvres dont je parle. Plus j'aime et plus je suis mauvais pour en parler — je dois être tétonisé par le talent des auteurs ou juste mauvais. Vous jugerez donc, grâce à cette indication, que ce livre vaut vraiment le détour. <http://www.aubonroman.com/2013/10/aam...>

Elizabeth A says

Book blurb: In the distant future, Verloc Nim wakes up in the middle of nowhere suffering from complete amnesia. He remembers nothing of his former life. But when Verloc is handed his diary by a robot-ape called Churchill, he is able to revisit his past.

This sci-fi graphic novel, the first in the Aama series, is a bit perplexing for me. I liked some of the ideas in the book - who could not love Churchill, and where can I get one of my very own? - but, overall this book

felt like a barely remembered dream. Maybe that was the point, but I was not along for the ride. The art is not to my taste, but the coloring is really well done. Still, I'm intrigued enough with the premise that I've got the rest of the series on request from my library.

David Schaafsma says

Aama was created by the author of mysterious Pachyderme. This one has some of that mysterious feel to it, but more sci fi thriller, it would appear. This is the first of five books, so as usual if I get into it more I might reread this and reassess, but for now I have to warm up to it a bit more. Lots of interweaving narratives, lots of hooks. Verloc is a drug and alcohol addicted delinquent father--our "hero"-- and his brother Conrad, who sort of rescues him and his gorilla robot sidekick, Churchill, works for some multi-galactic corporation. They visit other worlds. The father-brother stuff is supposed to humanize the world Peeters is creating. A woman Verloc gets to know may function in this way, too. There's this mix of existentialism and sci-fi thriller he is going for. I think Peeters is better at the mysterious feel than the sc fi, artistically, but the art is well done, for sure, overall. Apparently a lot of people like it or liked it a lot, as it was the winner of the Angouleme International Comics Festival, 2013, and just began releasing here in fall of 2014.

I was led to Peeters through his first translated text here, Blue Pills: A Positive Love Story, which is a memoir about his marrying an HIV-positive woman and having a traditionally conceived child with her. I got connected to that book because I had heard Craig Thompson had been influenced by Peeters, and I like graphic memoirs, and liked that book a lot, and generally like them more than gn sci fi stories, but this sci fi graphic tale seems pretty good to me so far, but not much has happened yet. Mostly world-building.
