



Complete Concrete

Paul Chadwick

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Concrete, a political speech writer who found himself trapped in an alien body composed of living stone. His new body can accomplish feats that flesh and blood could never conceive of - he can swim the Atlantic, be a rock star's bodyguard, or climb Mt. Everest alone - but at heart, Concrete is the most human character you'll ever meet in comics. Winner of more than a dozen top

Complete Concrete Details

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From Reader Review Complete Concrete for online ebook

Alana says

Another loan from Matt-in-my-shopping-center.

I loved the Concrete's character design and the Maxfield Parrish-ish ladies. I liked the concept, but given that Ben Grimm is my favorite comic character, I couldn't help spending a lot of the time contrasting the two.

I also have 'Think Like a Mountain' which I've been told is a better story, and I'm looking forward to reading it. My first impression of the series was that there was going to be a strong environmental bend to the stories, and I'm hoping for more of that in the next book.

Lastly, the character Concrete was a speechwriter before being turned into the creature that he is now. I am not sure if the sometimes heavy-handed writing style is intended to reflect the fact that Concrete is indeed A Writer, or if it's the author's natural (somewhat heavy-handed) style. Occasionally, I'd be struck by how nicely turned a phrase was, but more often I'd be left with the impression that someone was *trying* to be evocative and missing the mark.

D.M. says

I think I'm done with Concrete. I've just read my way through the volumes I have featuring him (this and the two Short Stories collections) and I can't see anything of any particular merit here. I've reread these books several times, and as I get older they just get worse. Chadwick's art, which was striking at the time, now looks bare bones competent (though he does some striking things with layout and perception). His writing, too, just manages. Though conversations seem to have a natural flow, too often his characters are given to unreal pontificating (especially the eponymous character) and over-coherent rumination.

This book collects all ten issues of the Concrete mini-series. This seems to have been a place for Chadwick to have explored a few concepts he wanted to try (Concrete's 'help' mission on a family farm, his stint as bodyguard for the thinly-veiled Prince doppelganger Duke) as well as to fill in spaces he'd left by mentioning them happening in the short stories he started with (the origin story, the climb of Everest, the swim across the Atlantic, Concrete's dead mother). Unfortunately, he's chosen to tell a single story in each issue, which makes it feel less like a series and more like a run of one-shots. Each issue contains its tale and nothing else forward or back. It's a clunky construction and one that is too akin to the short format to which he was accustomed. A book this size merits a continuing story.

These Concrete stories and the characters therein are likely to have more appeal to a less seasoned reader, to whom they might seem idealistic, adventurous and possibly even deep. To me, though, they're just overwrought soapboxing with adequate art and a clever twist to the narrator, and I'm done with them.

Anjan says

"If you liked Fraiser and also like comics then you may also like Concrete". A senator's speech writer -> deux ex machina -> concrete becomes a travel writer.

According to in story TV producers, Concrete is "entirely too urbane and sophisticated" for mass consumption on late night TV. He spends most of his time and many panels overthinking and worrying about stuff outside of his control, attempting to Sherlock his way out of trouble but fumbling due to hesitation and clumsy fingers. Luckily for him, he was gifted with physical resilience and crawls out of whatever hole he happens to find himself in and starts the cycle all over again in a different place.

The comic is realistic enough that it could be boring if you aren't into the theme.

Heck, one of the story lines revolves around (view spoiler)

I enjoyed following concrete on his travels, and found myself learning more about the physical world through his explorations, felt kinda like reading NatGeo. Going to find and read other stories with the character (this isn't a complete selection, despite the name).

Brendan says

A superhero comic where the hero ain't so super. A man stuck inside a cyborg concrete body decides to go adventuring, helping people sometimes but also testing the limits of his new body's endurance. This could have been a corny superhero story, but instead it ponders the difficulties of someone stuck in a bizarre situation. A thoughtful and well-written comic.

Filipe Siqueira says

Achei esse gibi perdido na minha estante, após ter comprado baratinho numa Fest Comix da vida. Não é ruim, mas como não é recente, já li o que está ali em outros lugares. Trata da principal questão envolvendo super-heróis (e gibis) em geral: inadequação.

Os poderes não apenas te colocam acima da humanidade, mas contra ela. Nossa espécie luta para destruir os diferentes justamente por representarem uma ameaça. Mas a história do Concreto consegue ter algumas facetas interessantes que geralmente passam batidas em gibis similares.

Concreto é um sujeito de, bem, pelo de concreto com uma origem misteriosa por algumas páginas, mas que depois é escancarada — ele teve o cérebro transplantado para um corpo alienígena. É o clássico grandalhão sensível. Para evitar que a população e jornalistas o investiguem, o governo diz que o sujeito é fruto de uma experiência federal com ciborgues e cria uma superexposição dele: brinquedos, reality shows, canecas, camisas, tudo é criado para saturar a imagem de Concreto e murchar o interesse por ele.

Mas aí vemos que ele busca algo mais que ser um boneco do governo. Ele quer explorar o mundo, viajar, ajudar pessoas. Mas quando tenta (sendo usado em negociatas políticas), Concreto acaba fazendo merda e piorando as coisas. Felizmente, Concreto não se entrega a condição de inadequado e faz o possível para usar seus poderes para se tornar uma pessoa feliz, expurgando de si a missão de fazer algo pela humanidade.

O interessante não é apenas o desenvolvimento da personalidade dele (se ficasse nisso seria um sub-Monstro do Pântano apenas), mas sim colocá-lo em um caldeirão político envolto em mistérios. Ainda assim, fica aquém de um Monstro do Pântano da vida, mas não deixa de ser um gibi agradável sobre a condição humana, esvaziada quando se é diferente, ainda que super poderoso.

Paul says

I actually read *Concrete* in its 7 volumes, but I won't star each one because they ran together.

Honestly, I was a little disappointed. The concept for the character - basically taking a superhero origin story where the character was not a superhero but trying to live a normal life - was interesting, and I liked the idea of the first bits, where Concrete takes advantage of his new abilities to do the kinds of exploration and adventure that he'd always wanted. But it started spiralling downward when Chadwick politicized the story. I have nothing against politics or messages in a story, but they seemed egregiously out of place in *Concrete*, as though Chadwick had said "Well I have this comic book and I'm really liberal, let's rock this!" Concrete's adventures with Earth First! or with the Overpopulation crusade just felt kind of cheesy and out of place, and made me miss the wasted potential of what started out as an adventure series.

Top this off with "comic-book dialogue" which can only be considered stereotypical at best, and you've got a package with promise which sadly wastes it.

Jeff says

Geary Gravel's short introductory essays told me to expect superlative visual and literary artistry. He didn't say that i should adjust my expectations, so i will say it for us all: **Read *Concrete* from an adolescent's point of view.**

Paul Chadwick's 8 major issues of *Concrete* are collected under this one cover. I read them start to finish as i suspect he intended. They tell the story of Ron Lithgow, a senatorial speech writer who has been transformed against his will into a 1200-pound anthropoid concretion? cyborg? superhero? What exactly is he? That seems to be the theme here. The US gov't forces him to claim *they* made him this way as part of a secret program that failed with all its other subjects. Ron can't even tell people what his name used to be. So in classic storytelling fashion, he loses his old self and has to find his new self.

As a youth he admired adventurous men, so he decides he'll become a man of derring do and appeals to the public on *The Tonight Show* to mail (this is set in the mid-1980s) their suggestions to him. His first endeavor (Chapter 1) is to save men trapped in a collapsed mine. Next he attempts to swim across the Atlantic Ocean. Chapter 3 contains his origin story, narrated to his personal aide, Larry Munro. In Chapter 4 he's inexplicably the bodyguard for Michael Jackson-slash-Prince-esque popstar known simply as Duke (the weakest chapter of them all). Concrete returns to noble deeds in Chapter 6 wherein he attempts to single-handedly save The Boreson Family's farm from foreclosure in one season (ahhh, but there's a family secret). Chadwick succumbs to the urge to tell a chapter-long "joke" in the next one, but at least the payoff is not only sensible but also somewhat amusing. Though the getting there could be a bit trying, it was a reasonably shortish chapter. Then again, the romantic intrigue—even this deep into the tale—continues to ring false for me. Next, our intrepid trio (i haven't mentioned throwaway ice-queen character Dr. Maureen Vonnegut) travel to Asia to make a documentary about Concrete building a bridge in the Himalayas. This saga involves commentary on ethical media, more life-threatening situations, another distasteful dalliance for suave(?) Larry, and even some political intrigue. Finally, the conclusion entails what one might expect to be an emotionally fraught drama about family, but instead appears to be about the (literal) objects of nostalgia.

All told, this set satisfies on the main level of praise pointed out by Gravel:

Concrete seems like the perfect embodiment of this childhood fantasy; the Compleat Explorer combined with the Ultimate Spectator, a man who has been given the chance to live the life so many of us hope we would live, if we just had the means (and the guts)—free to take all the risks and dare all the great deeds about which [we/he] could only dream.

Each chapter could be read independently of the others. As such, this doesn't feel like a cohesive novel. Lots of non-graphic novels possess this type of granularity. Each title page reiterates the principle characters' relationships to each other. To me, this makes it very hard to ingest the single book as if it were really a single book. Why does that matter? I have no idea. It doesn't. Not in any large sense. I just don't like it?

Jemir says

This is not a super hero comic book series. This is not a series about what a man - a before then less than ambitious speech writer- with amazing abilities trapped (via brain transplant) in an alien body for reasons he has yet to discover might do with the abilities he was given as a result ... though that happens, too. This is essentially a deeply engaging, smartly written, series that long time comic book fans that ever wondered what would the "real world" benefits and ramifications of being a character like, say, "Thing" (from the Fantastic Four) who is just trying to live their lives in a world that refuses to "let them" be normal or live their lives away from the public realm. Reading this omnibus from cover to cover will take patience but will leave you with answers to questions about the human condition that are worth asking ... even if you have to endure a little entertainment to see what they are.

Michael Knolla says

Decades ago during my very first run reading comics almost by accident came across a Concrete story where he simultaneously existed everywhere he'd ever been; a man shaped concrete form stretching back and forth across the world. I recall it being a very meditative story and the antithesis of the Image era roided, weaponized and multi-pocketed super heroes of the day. Depending on a small comic shop in middle of nowhere New England never came across it again during that first run.

Now well into my third run reading comics returning to the source was a rewarding experience. While my daughter and son grow up in a world where it is common knowledge that comics can tell a breadth and depth of different stories Concrete had been my first glance.

Robert Kiehn says

My review from Amazon:

This is one of the best comic books and graphic novels I have ever read! I got this by chance at Pass It On Thrift Store in Crestwood, IL here in the USA. It was a great book to read filled with an interesting and exciting

cast of characters, storyline, plot and drama not to mention comedy, action, adventure, romance and plenty of ads in a few panels advertising real world products or knockoffs of them.

Paul Chadwick did a great job writing this series and this particular book in general.

The Complete Concrete by Paul Chadwick is a most awesome graphic novel and a different take on the superhero genre.

It stands out from other books and graphic novels in that it has a somewhat different story than most superhero comic book and graphic novels.

The cast of characters, dialogue, story, images, product ads and events and people we can relate to along with numerous pop cultural references make this a fun and interesting graphic novel to read along with plenty of drama and tension at times.

Many of the same dilemmas, challenges and emotions that we face in real life is what Concrete and his companions face even adversaries at times.

A great graphic novel.

I give it 5/5 stars.

All in all a great read and a must have along with Watchmen and Batman Year One and Batman The Dark Knight Returns.

;)

From wiki

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concrete...>

"Concrete is a comic book series created and written by Paul Chadwick and published by Dark Horse Comics. His first appearance is Dark Horse Presents #1 (July, 1986). The eponymous central character is a normal man whose brain was transplanted into a large, stone body by aliens, and who lives an extraordinary life on Earth following his escape.

The Concrete series focuses on realism. Apart from the aliens (which disappear in the origin issue and are never heard from again) and Concrete's own high-tech artificial body (which includes superhuman sight), there are no supernatural or science-fiction elements to any stories.

The hero tries to use his body for noble endeavors, such as helping out on a family farm. Later, Concrete climbs Mount Everest, becomes involved with a group of hardline environmental militants, and reluctantly

agrees to become the spokesperson of a campaign to voluntarily reduce the earth's population.

Concrete's sexuality is addressed in the series. An artist at heart, he collects paintings of female nudes. He is notably embarrassed at his lack of sexual organs.

Real-world physics apply to Concrete. Examples include Concrete breaking objects by sitting on them, or Concrete being shot forward from a braking car, due to the momentum of his large body. He is constantly breaking telephones and doorknobs, and must hire an assistant Larry Munro, because his hands are too clumsy to handle a pen.

The series makes frequent use of thought balloons, showing characters' interior thoughts and feelings.

In addition to the comic, Paul Chadwick has drawn Concrete in many paintings. Most show the character wandering in nature, perhaps looking at a flower or some other natural curiosity."

"Awards and recognitionThe series won the Eisner Awards for Best Continuing Series for 1988 and 1989, Best Black-and-White Series for 1988 and 1989, and Best New Series for 1988, and their Best Writer/Artist Award for Paul Chadwick for 1989. It received the Harvey Award for Best New Series in 1988, and won Chadwick their Award For Cartoonist (Writer/Artist) for 1989."

Ronald Koltnow says

Dark Horse for years has published some of the most literary graphic fiction. This series by Paul Chadwick is a treat. One of the great joys is trying to figure out how Chadwick devised the concept. A political speechwriter, divorced, chubby, diffident, is captured by aliens and turned into a 1,200 pound giant with superpowers. This is quite literally THE WEST WING set in stone. Ron Lithgow, commonly known as Concrete, tries to save trapped miners, swim the Atlantic, save a family farm, and climb Everest. He is a bodyguard to a Prince like rocker. He loves a woman but dares not reveal it. He even grows horns, perhaps out of jealousy, when she attempts to reunite with her husband. Although many of the political references are now dated (the series was written in the late 80s), CONCRETE takes on Celebrity culture, alienation, and the resilience of the human will. Although absurdist, it touches upon some very honest emotions. Great stuff!

Dominick says

This got a lot of praise back in the eighties when it was first published, but I never read it at the time. I can't say it looks like I missed much. Ron Lithgow is abducted by aliens and has his brain transplanted into a rocklike cyborg body--hence his sobriquet "Concrete"--and manages to escape. The aliens decamp, and apparently never are seen or heard of again--serving as a plot device to create Concrete, nothing more, or so it would seem. Anyway, the government is interested but lets him live a public life as long as he allows Dr. Maureen Vonnegut (no relation to the author, which is a repeated joke) to monitor him. And he hires an assistant. Then he engages in a few adventures--bodyguard for a rock star, Atlantic ocean swimmer (he fails), saver of the family farm, bridge builder, Mount Everest climber (he succeeds but loses all the evidence). It's not bad, but not terribly impressive, either. Chadwick's art is serviceable enough, but that's about all you can say for it. I suppose by the standards of 1980s comics it's reasonably well-written, and Chadwick does try to

avoid cliches and stereotypes, but it often descends into trite philosophizing and at least brushes against the borderline between sentimentality and mawkishness. I'd call it a noble and partially successful attempt to do something a little bit different with the basic concept. Rather misleadingly titled, since it in fact is only the first ten-issue series, not the "complete" *Concrete* at all....

Paul says

Concrete is not a superhero. He's not the Hulk smashing everything in his path. He's not The Thing shouting «It's Clobberin Time» before going into action.

In fact, there is very little action in Concrete's life. In some ways, you even get to pity the poor schmuck that had his brain transferred into a big pile of rock by a bunch of mysterious aliens. He actually probably lost more than he gained... his sense of touch is practically nonexistent, no more taste buds, no more sense of smell either... also try to imagine what a guy like him's sex life is like... he doesn't wear any clothes and, well, it's pretty obvious there a part of male anatomy that just aint there. OK, so he got these amazing eyes and great strenght. But in world where superheroes are innexistant, he makes due as any of us would with what he's got on a day to day basis trying not to let his «handicap» pull him down.

One could say that Concrete is one of the most normal guys in the world. He could be anybody you just happen to cross on the street on any given day... except he's big and, you know, made of concrete.

I was lucky enough to get my hands on the limited hardcover edition of this book signed by the author Paul Chadwick and numbered 984/2000.

Contains a bunch of short stories compiled mostly from Dark Horse Presents into a neat and nice package

James says

he's a good rock

Ken-ichi says

~~I think this is one of those graphic novels I lent out once and never got back, which is a shame, because it's awesome.~~ Wrong! I still have it, and it is still awesome. Concrete is sort of eco-realist-fantasy. There's this guy, whose body becomes huge and rocky, and he's very strong and durable, but that's where the craziness ends. From there out its politics, environmentalism, relationships, and basically dealing with the real world. Highly recommended.

On re-reading in 2010

Holds up quite well. Definitely has the hokey show-and-tell quality of older adventure comics, especially toward the beginning, but that's a minor qualm. The only fanciful tale in the collection is the origin story, which involves alien abduction and brain transplantation. Other stories concern matters like saving a farm, or building a bridge. I guess the characters aren't quite as fleshed out as they could be, but the stories are more about the real world around us than the world within, which frankly is unusual subject matter for a superhero(ish) comic.

