

A MANGA

RECOMMENDATIONS

BY: Alina Diaz



I want to start this zine off by saying all these reviews are just my personal opinions, I'm not an expert of comics (even though I like to think I am) and after reading these I'd recommend you search out further information to form your own opinion on whether or not these series will be right for you. That being said I will try to give as much info as I can (no spoilers though). Not all of the series I will talk about will be appropriate for all ages, but my reviews and descriptions will be, each review will include a recommended age rating. To accompany each review I made a linocut (type of printmaking where you carve a linoleum block) print of the an important character to the series. I hope you enjoy reading my thoughts.

-Alina Diaz 2024



Akira: 16+

Background info:

Akira is a sci-fi manga series written/illustrated by Katsuhiro Otomo. It began serialization in 1982 and ended in 1990, it would end up being six volumes long. The story is set in the future after WWII destroyed Tokyo and it was rebuilt into Neo-Tokyo. We start following a teenage biker gang living in the city, led by a boy named Kaneda (one of our main characters). After riding around the city one night one member of the gang, Kaneda's childhood friend Tetsuo, would get into an accident after a strange looking child runs into the road. After this incident Tetsuo begins to exhibit strange abilities...

My thoughts:

As of writing this I finished reading this series a couple days ago, and at the moment I think I can confidently say this is the best manga/comic series I've ever read. I love this series for many reasons such as the gorgeous artwork by Otomo, the action, the interesting and varied characters (this series has probably the best written female characters I've seen in a manga) and the multilayered but comprehensible plot. I'll elaborate on each of these points one by one. Starting with Otomo's art, it is amazing in every way possible. The intricately detailed scenes of the city give the series its dark and grimy look. The designs of all the characters are unique and make all of them stand out in their own ways, they don't suffer from things like same face syndrome like other series I'll talk about (cough cough, Fist of the north star). Like I mentioned before the female characters really showcase this. Most manga series (especially ones from this time period) would have their woman characters wearing noticeably skimpier outfits compared to their male counterparts, even in settings where that kind of clothing is impractical. Now for the action and plot it was all pretty easy to follow, the action was well choreographed so you could see everything that was happening. The plot is complex with how it changes perspectives to different characters, but they all tie together and connect. Overall this is a series I recommend to anyone (especially sci-fi fans), even if you aren't a big comic person I think you will enjoy it.

YOU ARE
ALREADY
DEAD

ORHESZEMK



Fist of the north star: 16+

Background info:

Fist of the north star is a manga series written by Buronson and illustrated by Tetsuo Hara. The story is set in a post-apocalyptic earth following World War 3. It follows a man named Kenshiro who is the current user of the martial art known as hokuto shinken (fist of the north star in English). He uses his power to protect civilians against gangs and martial artists who use their strength for evil.

My thoughts:

To start this off I am only reviewing up to chapter 146/ VIZ Signature volume 11 as that is what is currently published in English (there are old editions that have it fully but those are expensive and hard to get). This series has been the inspiration for many series that came after it and continues to be referenced in modern media to this day. This is for good reason; Tetsuo Hara is an incredibly skilled artist and the series has many iconic moments (Ken's catchphrase "You are already dead" most notably). The fights are engaging and very well planned, Ken uses most of the same techniques every time, but they don't stop being fun to see. I generally like the main cast of characters too, but some can be a bit flat. Ken is a pretty straightforward hero good guy but his brutality when fighting balances it out in a way so he's not super boring. His main companions are Bat and Lin (or Rin depending on the translation), they are basically his motivation. They honestly really don't do much besides encourage Ken. But my favorite character of the series is Raoh, Ken's older brother. He's the big bad guy in the first half of the series and I like him because of the way he sticks to his ideals. Due to spoilers I can't say everything about that but I will say the big fight between him and Ken at the end of volume 10 is my favorite moment of the series. But story wise the series has its problems, my main gripe with this series is that it's somewhat repetitive. Each story arc follows a general villain of the week pattern with the small arcs and then will have bigger more interesting ones in between. But this only really becomes an issue when you read a bunch of chapters at once. I'm also not the biggest fan of the female characters, most of them are kind of just damsels in distress. Not all are bad, I think the character Mamiya is the best female character because she actually does stuff. Overall the series is an entertaining and violent post-apocalyptic martial arts fest.



Devilman: 13+

Background info:

Devilman is a horror manga series written/illustrated by Go Nagai. It was serialized from 1972 to 1973 and is 5 volumes long. The plot follows teenage Akira Fudo who after being told by his childhood friend Ryo Asuka that demons have awoken from hibernation and have come to terrorize humans undergoes a ritual to gain the powers of a demon. He then uses these powers to fight off these demons.

My thoughts:

Devilman is a series that would go on to inspire many other well-known comics and anime such as Berserk or Evangelion, so it deserves credit where it's due. It's one of my personal favorite manga. And like all the other series I've mentioned its due to a mix of a great story and interesting characters. The story starts by showing you a prehistoric earth and the demons who inhabit it, this really sets you up for the wild ride you're about to go on. For the characters I really like Akira as the main character, he's a pure good guy but isn't bland. From the way his powers turn him into a violent demon he's both a good guy but also a terrifying monster. One of the main themes of the series is about questioning humanity, what makes a human and a demon different? This is shown through how Akira and other people with his powers do good and protect people but despite that he has to hide this side of him from those around him. And once other people do find out we see them act in ways that make you wonder who the real monster is. Ryo is also a great character, due to spoilers I can't fully describe why, but he is a good counter to Akira's pure heartedness. Once again the art is amazing, Go Nagai has a wonderful cartoony style that can still be scary when it has to be. Overall this is a horror manga classic that still holds up today.



Berserk: 16+

Background info:

Berserk is a dark fantasy manga series written by Kentaro Miura starting in 1989 and is still currently on going (Miura himself sadly passed away in 2021 but his assistants have continued the series for him). The story follows a swordsman named Guts and his journey for revenge against his ex-best friend Griffith who has betrayed him and taken all that Guts holds dear. In doing so Guts has to fight demons and monsters of unimaginable horror.

My thoughts:

Berserk is one of my top favorite manga series and that is because of the amazing characters and well thought out story. It isn't without its issues but it has many more pros than cons. Starting with the characters, when you first meet Guts, the main character, he's pretty unlikable. He's angry and is a jerk to those around him, but once we learn about his backstory starting in volume four you start to understand him and looking back at the beginning realize he had very good reasons to be so angry. Griffith, the main villain of the story is written so well Miura manages to gaslight readers into forgetting he's the bad guy. We see the times when he and Guts were friends, and it foreshadows and builds to when he betrays Guts and everything falls into place. And the female characters are pretty good, there aren't many in the beginning of the series but as it goes on more become relevant. The main female character Casca is one of my favorite characters, although she gets sidelined and isn't really around for a huge chunk of the story. I like the way she's shown to be a capable swordsman. The story does a good job of portraying Gut's mental state at various points and how that affects his motivations. Like all the other series I've mentioned the art is gorgeous, Miura is so good at drawing knight's armor and demons. We see various types of monsters, each equally terrifying and it works so well at immersing the reader in this world. Overall Berserk is a great story with breathtaking art and many characters you will get attached to.

