



It was a quiet day in the *X-Press* office. Kirby was out, Sean was busy and Carol was in one of her rare peaceful moods. I stretched out on the couch, my hand naturally fell upon the recent promotional material from DC comics. Idly curious, I flipped past the shapely Catwoman on the cover and tried desperately to find something interesting. After passing by the *Bloodlines* hype, and giving *Knightfall* a most cursory glance, I found something to be really excited about. In amazement, I scanned the page to make sure it was really happening. I think I even pinched myself.

Then I said, in tones of almost religious wonder, "Jonah Hex is back!"

Carol and Sean looked at each other, then looked at me, and asked innocently, "Who's Jonah Hex?"

What I said to that was unprintable. There aren't enough 'r's in Scotland to put that scream on paper.

But for those of you asking a similar question, let me fill you in. Jonah Hex was the best and most enduring of the DC comics characters based in the old west. He was created in the early 1970s as a part of DC's *Weird Western Tales*, alongside the amusingly over-dramatic El Diabolo (A catatonic Spaniard who became a black-garbed spirit of vengeance whenever his Native American servant chanted an old ritual... picture Zorro crossed with Ghost Rider and you've got the idea) and the embarrassing Scalphunter (A stereotypical Injun with a twist: he was a paleface, raised by the Kiowas, who rode around denying he was a paleface). Jonah rose to eclipse them and got his own self-titled series. That lasted until about 1984.

But Jonah hasn't been heard from in nigh unto seven years. And why didn't anyone wonder where he went?

Because a man called Mike Fleischer saw fit to send poor Jonah into a 21st-century nuclear wasteland. The series

based on this absurd premise was called *Hex*; Fleischer took a great western and turned it into garbage. On purpose. The series was so bad that it lasted only 18 confusing issues, but by then, the damage had been done. All but the most die-hard Jonah Hex fans had abandoned him to the obscurity that is comic book cancellation.

But he's back, he's in the Old West, and I'm so happy with the new mini-seires that I'm in danger of exploding!

I was never much into Westerns when I was a kid. I didn't like *Gunslinger*, *Bonanza*, or even Louis L'Amour. If I saw some mysterious stranger waltzing into a saloon, I got up and changed the channel.

But for reasons I've never been able to figure out, I have always enjoyed *Jonah Hex* (as long as he stayed in the Old West). There was something different about Jonah's West. It was a grim place, and it was fairly realistic by comic

book standards. The Natives in Jonah's world were just trying to survive, and were not the thoughtless savages of most other Westerns. Dead was Dead. Anyone could be a friend... or an enemy. And of course, there was Jonah himself; he was a man with a deadly kind of charisma, who inspired fear and loathing wherever he rode. No-one was ever glad to see him.

And now, thanks to DC's mature readers line, Vertigo, *Jonah Hex* is back!

*Jonah Hex: Two Gun Mojo* is one of the strangest comics you will ever read. There are many things about it that are, well, disconcerting.

The first thing that seems weird is Jonah himself. He's always had a grotesque appearance. The right side of his face was scarred when he was tortured by unfriendly natives (I apologize for not giving the name of the tribe, but it's been years since I read the story). His

right eye is swollen and dead, and his cheek was torn open and healed strangely: that side of his face is twisted into a permanent death grin, with a flap of ragged flesh joining his upper and lower lip. Kinda gruesome, huh?

The second thing is the setting. Yes, he's in the Old West, where he belongs (and should stay forever), but this isn't the same Comics Code Approved Wild West you remember. It's a grim and realistic West, the kind of place Jonah should have inhabited all along. Like *Unforgiven*, this is a revisionist western. The romance of the gunfighter vs. the badmen is still there, but the backdrop is radically different: Indians are treated like garbage; the streets are full of rotting refuse; and the corpses of the badmen are stuffed and put on display for tourists. It's the West as it really was, only worse.

Thirdly, there's a whole new element thrown into the mix. Horror. Rotting corpses come to life, under the com

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