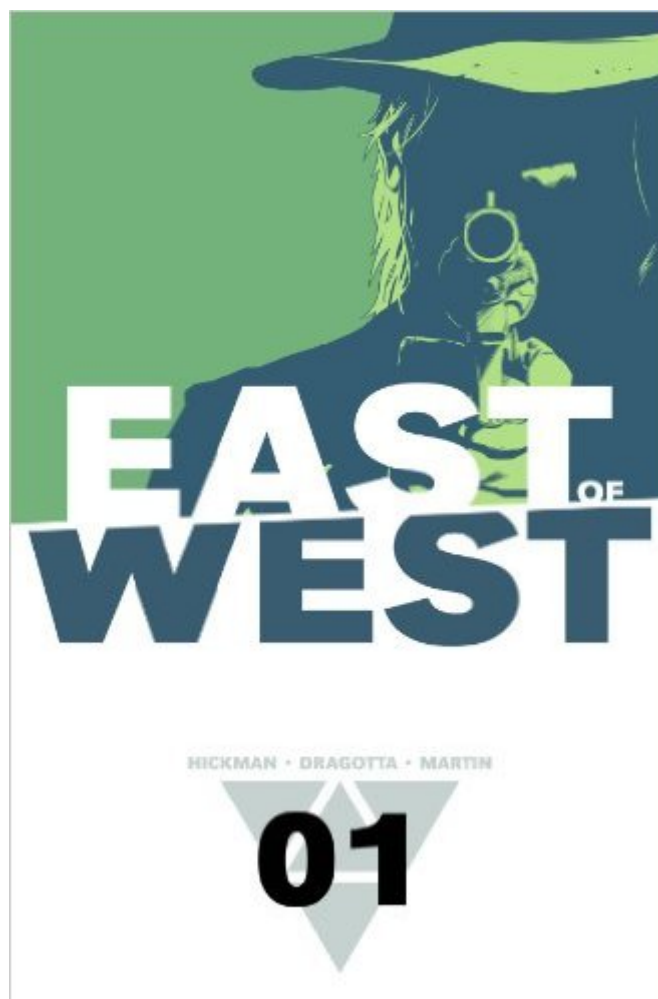


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# East Of West Volume 1: The Promise



## Synopsis

This is the world. It is not the one we wanted, but it is the one we deserved. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse roam the Earth, signaling the End Times for humanity, and our best hope for life, lies in DEATH!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What is it like in Jonathan Hickman's head? From what appears on his pages, we can only assume it to be a creative tempest. Here is a writer who thinks big thoughts with a capital BIG, who brings together ideas that can charitably be described as disparate. When everything clicks, the result is nothing short of brilliant. Consider, for example, his tragically stalled "S.H.I.E.L.D." series. In it he brought together Archimedes, Newton, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Nostradamus, and Zhang Heng and Tesla (to name just a few) from our "real" world and mixed them with Nathaniel Richard and Howard Stark (the fathers, respectively, of Mr. Fantastic and Iron Man) to synthesize one of Marvel's most interesting comics in years. Even when Hickman falls short, as in the "Manhattan Project" (in which the atomic bomb is the least interesting creation of world's great minds, here reimagined as drunks, space aliens, lunatics etc), one cannot but be impressed. Now with "East of West," Hickman has introduced yet another world, one totally new and staggering in its scope. A fantastical fantasy masquerading as an alternative history, "East of West" takes place in a future (2064) dystopian North America divided in seven separate states (nominally Union, Confederate, Native American, Texan, Chinese, etc). Twenty-Sixty-Four could be 3064 or 20,064 for all it would matter. This is a

world awash in high technology, mysticism and mutants. The cultural flavor varies but we spend most of our time in a futuristic old West (think Butch and Sundance riding robot horses) and eventually the Chinese empire (ruled by Emperor Mao V). As the book opens, a nameless lone white figure rises from the earth. Then we see him in cowboy regalia on a killing spree. Shortly after, three children (horsemen of the Apocalypse) rise from the same place and we come to understand that the white cowboy is Death and here is for vengeance (though it takes us a while to understand for what). As usual Hickman serves up plenty of metaphor and visual humor. Here artist Nick Dragotta work stands out as just amazing. While I've seen his stuff before, I don't recall ever being so impressed. Possibly Hickman's work more than others requires just this sort of fine artistic match to bring his stories to life (as Waver did so well in SHIELD). Lots of reviewers have reasonably complained that this series can be confusing. I suspect this is triply so if you read it in issue format. Indeed, I can't recall the last comic that seems to ill-suited to being served in such short chapters (Vaughn's "Saga" comes to mind as a close second, though for all its oddness, that is still a straight forward Romeo/Juliet story). No, this is a series meant for a longer form. Reading the five issues included in this volume, most of the initial questions are answered in ways that intrigue and made me want more. While the world at first appeared vast enough to provoke agoraphobia, Hickman's virtuosity left me wholly confident that he knows where we're going and it's a trip I don't want to miss.

When I was sent this trade for review I was very excited because I have never read a Western comic. All the titles I read are superheroes, gods, devils, angels, sci-fi and magic. So I was a little bit bemused when I opened this comic to three adolescents being 'birthed' from inside a magic circle. Fortunately only a few pages in it became apparent that I had the wrong impression all the time as this is an almost steam punk style western set in an equivalent but different modern day. This is the beauty of blind reviews as I have no preconceived ideas of what the comic will be about and therefore I can give a truly unbiased opinion. I have to hand it to the writer, normally reading speech bubbles with 'accents' written in gets really old really quickly, however there is just the right amount of inflection to really make me hear that accent, without making it hard to read. I would love to be able to name the accent, but being from Old Blighty I would probably just embarrass myself. However if it comes through strongly with me, I expect anyone who is very used to hearing that accent would read it even more clearly than I do. It is very hard to review a trade without giving away some spoilers. I have discovered that with individual issues you tend to be able to go up to about page 7 or 8 without spoiling the comic as up to that point was already spoiled by the teasers or the

cover. With a trade such as this which evolves and grows throughout, never quite giving you all the information you need to understand the story it is hard to give any form of plot without ruining half the book. At its core this story breaks down to the idea of the four Horsemen, given bodies, in a world slightly in the future of ours where slightly different events took place than did on our world. The United States is not merely the USA, it is the entire world, ruled over by seven individuals. At some point they conspired to separate Death from the other horsemen and now those rejuvenated children seek their former partner to bring final apocalypse to the world. There is some wonderful borrowed iconography in this book. The Black Tower is clearly reminiscent of Star Wars and the moment where Palpatine's shuttle docks with the Death Star. The White Tower, while looking like a massive trigger button, also has a very Fifth Element/Star Wars feel about it with the rows of flying cars around it. I am certain if my knowledge of Western films extended beyond brief moments of my mother watching them on Saturday afternoons then I would see them in the moments around the campfires. It is a really clever use of homage that does not make the comic feel too much of a copy of other ideas, but at the same time draws upon our knowledge of them to remove the necessity to explain things further. Disclaimer: This book was received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

To begin with, I would be remiss if I did not say right away; This is a beautiful comic book! The artist is amazing and the character designs are unique and imaginative. This may not mean as much due to the fact that we are talking about a comic book, but this is a different kind of comic book all together. The story is one of a kind, and the writer blends his tale so well with the artist that we get to see one of the rare cases in which they both surpass everything that has been done and bring the reader a very special treat. I saw the cover and a few pages inside the book and figured this is just another western, but it is much much more than that. This book is part western, part apocalyptic thriller, part sci-fi adventure and ALL ADRENALINE. The characters are bad to the bone and the story grabs you by the throat and sucks you in, holding on for dear life as you ride the edge of your seat at 135 miles per hour from beginning to end! There are slimy back-stabbing politicians, holier than thou royal families, demonic religious fanatics, gods, legends come to life, heroic texas rangers that kill with little or no remorse, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse! All drawn in a style that is both beautiful, sinister, and iconic. I am completely hooked on this book and although there are some truly great titles out there like CHEW and Morning Glories, this is the best brand new title, the best that has been released in the last 12 months. Not only does it hold its own with those others but it beats a couple of them into a thin puddle of goo. There will probably be many awards on the

horizon for this creative team. I hope the book continues to be this good for many many issues to come and I will pray that it gets a very special hardcover treatment in the near future. GO. Read. This. Book.

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