



EYES TO THE FUTURE

2015's graphic novels move us forward

A consistent rallying cry among graphic novel enthusiasts is that, with so few new comics aimed at young readers, the art form might not last.

Happily, a talented team of numerous, all-female funnybook creators is doing its level best to address the problem with the charmingly upbeat ***Lumberjanes to the Max Edition Vol. 1*** (BOOM! Box, \$39.99).

At a wilderness camp for girls, a clique of campers bands together to survive the summer, given their pesky propensity for encountering enchanted animals and ancient gods out in the forest.

With a fierce dedication to friendship and adventure, the Lumberjane scouts are diverse, enthusiastic, girl-positive protagonists. The book makes a perfect gift for that kid (of any gender) in your life who loves the outdoors, magic or friends ... and hey, who doesn't love at least one of those?

Leading the pack of compelling comics for adults is ***The Private Eye: The***



Cloudburst Edition (Image, \$49.99). Imagine the fallout if everything you did, said and searched online was instantly laid bare. Writer Brian K. Vaughan (*Saga*, *Y: The Last Man*) teams with illustrator Marcos Martin to bring to life the techno-noir Los Angeles of the year 2076, after an enormous "Cloudburst" data breach has made private online lives completely public.

When internet searching is no longer trusted, the best way to get answers to life's mysteries is to hire PI, a pseudonymed private investigator with an invisibility jacket and a chip on his shoulder. Full of car chases, chain-smoking and femmes fatales, *The Private Eye* turns the traditional detective yarn on its head, along the way charting the border between security and privacy. It's Raymond Chandler by way of Philip K. Dick.

Speaking of femmes fatales, ***Lady Killer*** (Dark Horse, \$17.99) presents Josie Schuller, a 1962 Seattle homemaker who

inexplicably moonlights as a contract killer, hiding her true vocation from her husband and children. Creators Joëlle Jones and Jamie S. Rich have created a complex, stylish

antiheroine who at once embodies an uplifting, Kennedy-style space-age optimism and the steely-eyed pragmatism of a professional assassin.

Dripping with lush mid-century modern design and punctuated by Tarantino-esque ultraviolence, *Lady Killer* is a breath-in-your-throat thriller that makes the most of its 1960s setting, with

Josie going undercover in lavish set pieces that range from the seedy (a strip club) to the sublime (the Seattle World's Fair).

In his thoughtful, layered graphic novel ***Sam Zabel and the Magic Pen*** (Fantagraphics, \$29.99), New Zealand writer-artist Dylan Horrocks introduces us to his alter ego Sam, a weary cartoonist who finds himself artistically stymied at his career's midpoint.

Sam tries to get his mojo back by way of a fantastic stylus that allows readers to enter the worlds of their own comic book collections. Along the way, Sam both enjoys and endures a walking, talking crash course in comics history, entering the universes contained in medieval manuscripts and anthropomorphic animal comics, and in manga and superhero adventures.

A worthy successor to Horrocks' early 2000s magnum opus *Hicksville*, the plotline is a sort of *Harold and the Purple Crayon* for adults. *Zabel* is not for kids. The magic pen allows ultimate wish fulfillment, including some less than politically correct fantasies surrounding diversity, gender and sexuality. The dramatic tension arises from Sam's efforts to negotiate his bizarre method of supernatural travel while retaining his 21st-century ethics and standards.

The result is sublime: a breezy-reading rumination on the promise and the problems inherent in graphic novels' complicated history, and the power the creator holds in shaping the medium's future. — Aaron Ragan-Fore



You're Never Weird on the Internet (Almost) by Felicia Day. Touchstone, \$16.95.

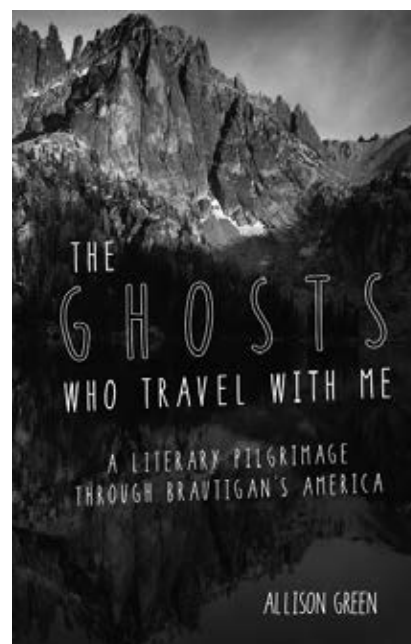
As a person, Felicia Day has a kind of lovable oddness that translates perfectly onto the page, as exemplified in her memoir, *You're Never Weird on the Internet (Almost)*. Known best for her appearances in Joss Whedon productions as well as her web series *The Guild*, Day has written a memoir that is humorous, self-deprecating and strikingly inspirational. The book describes her wayward childhood as a homeschooled oddball who educated herself mostly through reading whatever she could find. With the advent of the internet in her teenage years, Day connected with an online community and felt for the first time that she belonged somewhere. It's the only memoir I've read in which the internet plays a significant role in the author's formative years, and as a 26 year old, that hits home with me.

Day's story is one of perfectionism, as she nearly wipes herself out to maintain her 4.0 in college, double majoring in mathematics and music and graduating by the age of 20. It's also a story of whimsy and misdirection — she spends years in

L.A. trying to survive as an actress and ultimately finds the lifestyle unsatisfying. Through the internet, Day finally finds meaning and success in her life, pursuing a web series built on her passion for video gaming.

Her message repeats endlessly: Be who you are. If no one in real life likes what you're doing, there's a community for you somewhere on the internet.

Even if you know nothing about the online world, Day's story is a quick read, and her mantra of self-acceptance resonates on a very human level. — Amy Schneider



The Ghosts Who Travel with Me by Allison Green. Ooligan Press, \$15.95

The Ghosts Who Travel with Me is a necessary read for all wanderlusting folks of the world. Author Allison Green recounts her story of exploring Brautigan's route through Idaho from his novel *Trout Fishing in America*. On her own literary pilgrimage, Green grapples with her deep relation to Brautigan's writing as a woman, a lesbian and a feminist. She tells of the discoveries in her own life that this literary filter provides her in a voice both poignant and clever.

The book is short and sweet. It gripped my attention

for the full three hours of reading.

In that time Green takes readers on a journey that will resonate with anyone who holds a love of adventure and literature in their soul.

When you find yourself stuck by the fire this winter, pick up a copy of this tale for a quick and lovely escape. — Kory Bowlin