

# 741.5

# THE AUTUMN OF OUR DISCONTENT

GRAPHIC HISTORIES REVEAL THE REALITY OF  
**ATTICA, CAMBODIA, KENT STATE**  
PLUS...CRUEL SUMMER

OCTOBER 2020 - NO. 43



The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of

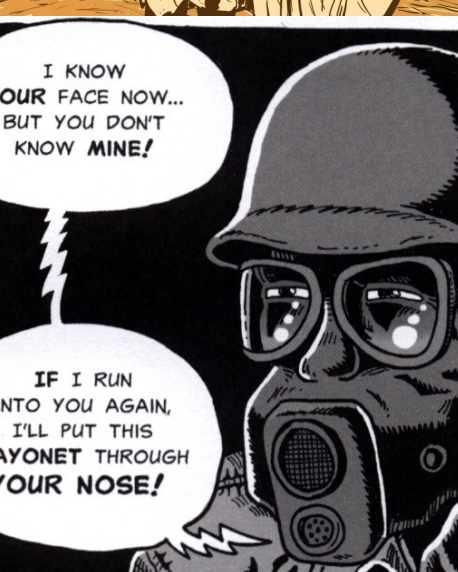
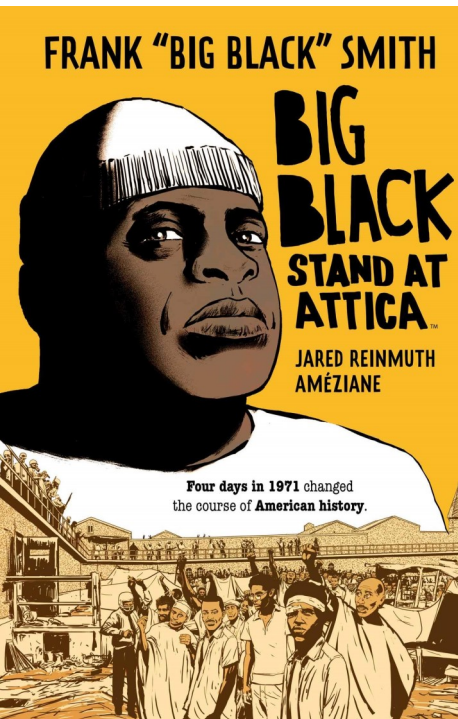


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Reading Is Just the Beginning!



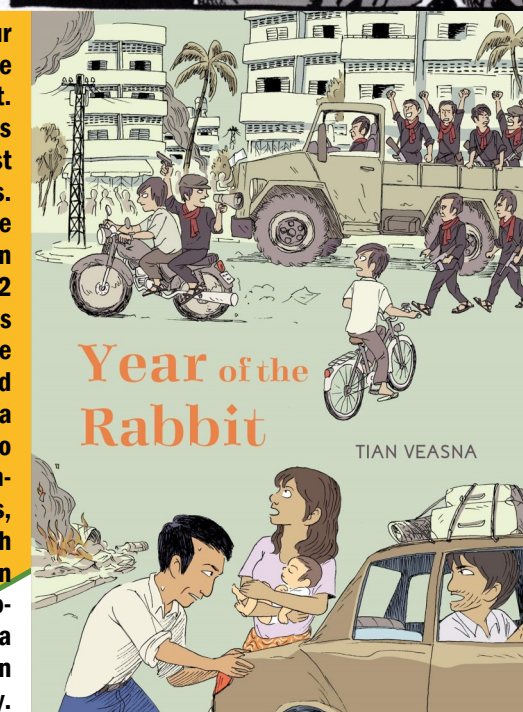


We live in a time of increasing civic dysfunction, racial unrest and political violence. But then, as Americans, we usually have. Sometimes the discord simmers and sometimes it boils over. Our decade is one of the latter, the late 20-teens the most volatile period since the 1960s. Now three graphic non-fiction works take us back to those days of rage. *Big Black: Stand at Attica* (Archaia) is the first person account of Frank "Big Black" Smith. A young and dumb Smith was sent to Attica, New York's notoriously harsh state prison. Large and in charge, he was known as "Big Black". Smith became an ambassador between the various prison factions. That's why he was chosen as a spokesman for the prisoners of Attica when they took over the prison to protest inhumane conditions. Despite Big Black's best efforts, it all ended in carnage as the uncompromising Governor Nelson Rockefeller unleashed the state police on the prison. Dramatist Jared Reinmuth follows Smith's recollections with a sympathetic but honest script, while the photorealistic art of French cartoonist Ameziane puts the reader right in the middle of the action, where you can smell the sweat, the smoke, the blood. *Attica* (365.97479 Sm55b) also details the words and actions of the authorities, especially the cold-blooded Rockefeller, who describes the massacre as "a beautiful operation" to Richard M. Nixon. The famously paranoid President saw the prison strike as not a homegrown reaction to oppression but further evidence of "an international conspiracy." That was the viewpoint of many politicians of the day, such as Ohio governor



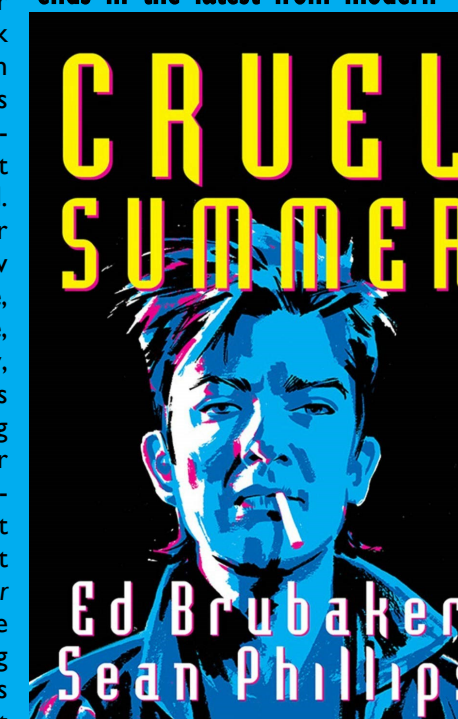
Jim Rhodes. As college campuses across the nation were overwhelmed by protests against the Viet Nam War, baseless conspiracy theories and outlandish rumors ran rampant among both citizens and leadership.

Guardsmen. That divide, so much a part of our current crisis, reached its bloody nadir when the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia with an iron fist. Vengeful rustics determined to create a glorious future out of the agrarian past, the Communist victors of their Civil War cleared out the cities. The family of Tian Veasna were among those many thousands relocated to the countryside; in fact, the author of *Year of the Rabbit* (959.6042 T431y) was born during the diaspora. Veasna's father Khim struggled to keep his family alive while enduring separation, forced labor, and constant surveillance by finks and zealots. As a doctor, Khim was in danger of falling victim to the never-ending purge of professionals and intellectuals. Firing squads, pistols and pickaxes, even crocodiles: these were the means by which Angkar, the State, eliminated every man, woman and child it considered a threat to its filthy Utopia. But beyond hell lies hope, as the Veasna family persevered and prospered, as described in this fine graphic history from Drawn & Quarterly.



The summer of 1988 is cruel indeed to young Ricky Lawless, his hooligan father Teeg, Dad's new squeeze Jane, and Dan, the private dick obsessed with Jane. Ricky is a bad apple fallen far too close to the tree. The book opens with him ripping off an old pro wrestler, then follows the kid's slow but steady journey toward disaster. Teeg can't be bothered to help his kid. He's too busy planning a major heist with his crew, which now includes Jane. Teeg loves Jane, madly, deeply. Ricky hates Jane, and plots with Dan Farraday, the detective who considers himself her knight in shining armor. Each character gets their time in the limelight as the reader is pulled from present to past and back again. Like all the best hardboiled fiction, *Cruel Summer* portrays without judgment the sad stories of bad people doing sordid things. Ed Brubaker's tough but humane script yet again finds its best expression in the shadowy art of Sean Phillips and the subtle but strong colors of son Jacob. *Cruel Summer* is available at Central, Tates Creek and Beaumont.

Sex and violence collide as four people connected by crime and blood race to their bittersweet ends in the latest from modern



noir masters Ed Brubaker and the artistic team of Sean & Jacob Phillips in the latest tale from the pages of *Criminal*.



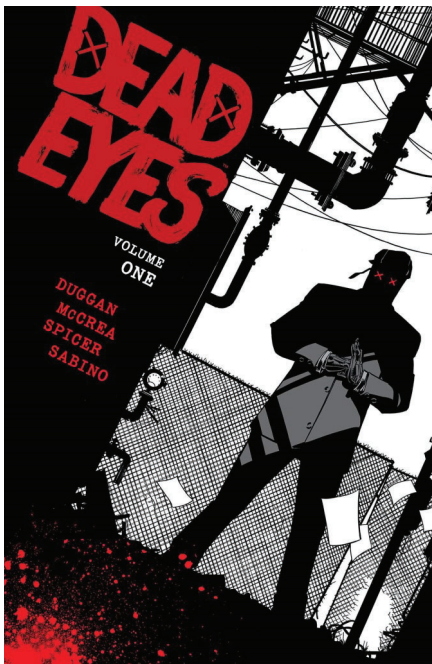
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**KENT STATE**



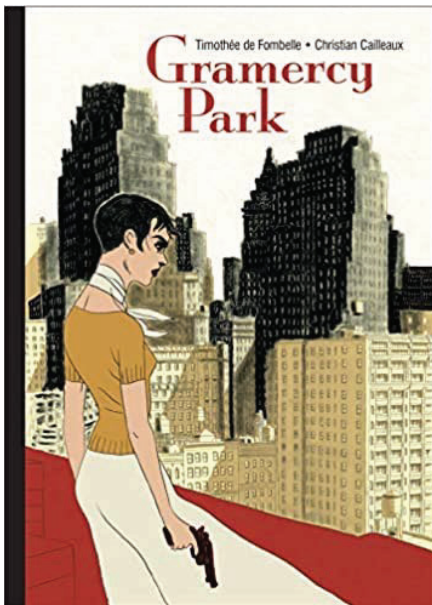
That's one reason Rhodes sent in the National Guard to quell student unrest on the campus of Kent State University. The explosive mixture of mysterious provocateurs, police informers, exhausted and angry Guardsmen and increasingly militant students led to "four dead in Ohio", as the song said. In *Kent State* (Harry N. Abrams), Ohio boy Derf (*My Friend Dahmer*) Backderf follows all the different participants in this horrific episode in American history. Located under 378.771 K418d, this meticulously researched comic shows both sides of the conflict, and the tales they told themselves to justify their actions. But the main part of *Kent State* deals with students Alison Krause, Jeff Miller, Sandy Scheuer and Bill Schroeder as they move toward their deadly fate. Krause and Miller were among the protestors that day; Scheuer and Miller were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Miller was, in fact, a member of ROTC; as a friend says, "You don't have to worry about being sent off to war, Bill...the war has come to you!" One thing fueling the fires of Kent State was the growing animosity between cosmopolitan America, represented by the students, and the rural heartland that was home to many of the







Long before he wrote the hit comic that inspired the hit TV show *The Boys*, **Garth Ennis** brought his beery, brawling style of cynical heroics to the DC title, *Hitman*. That (extremely) 1990s series was drawn from first issue to last by **John McCrea**. Now McCrea joins writer **Gerry (Deadpool) Duggan** for some more criminal mischief. The Nineties were also the prime of *Dead Eyes*, the legendary hood and heist artist that ransacked Boston at will. *Dead Eyes* disappeared after a massive score taken from the Mob. In reality, he retired for the sake of his marriage. But his wife is sick, and the bills are outrageous, crooked even. *Dead Eyes* (Image) follows the man with the red Xs for eyes as he chases down that notorious Mafia haul...which, BTW, he didn't steal. But the hoodlums think he did, and they want their money and their revenge. This riotous Robin Hood saga is blood-thirsty and heart-warming in turn, as *Dead Eyes*'s relation-

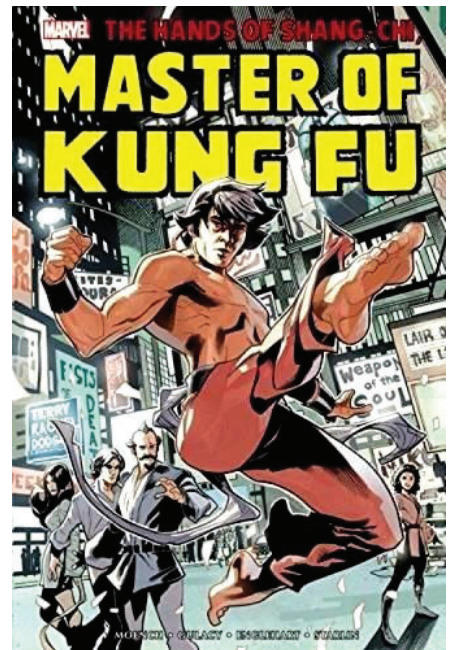


## MEANWHILE

ships are as central to the story as his robberies. Relationships are also the motivator for the denizens of *Gramercy Park* (Euro-Comics). The towers of New York, 1954, are a refuge for a beautiful young immigrant tending to her rooftop beehives and a gilded cage for the crime lord across the street. The connection between the two unfolds like the flowers that feed our heroine's bees. Writer **Timothée de Fombelle** spins a subtle tale of bad decisions made for love, a romance wrapped in a detective story rendered in the quietly exquisite artwork of **Christian Cailleaux**. This slim but haunting novel can be found at Beaumont, Central and Tates Creek. A callous cad sets in motion the heart-broken hi-jinx that fill the colorful pages of *An Embarrassment of Witches* (Top Shelf). This sweet and funny look at twenty-something relationships happens in a magical yet mundane world where everyone has a familiar—with a deadpan owl nearly walking...er, flying away with the book—but everybody still has to get up and



go to work in the morning. BFFs Rory and Angela have them post-collegiate blues: Rory, because her plans go bad; Angela, because everything goes according to plan. Rory was set to go study dragons in Australia when she's dumped at the boarding gate. Angela has snagged a choice internship with the leader in the field of cryptopharmacology, none other than Rory's formidable mother. In their first novel, webcomics collaborators **Sophie Goldstein** and **Jenn Jordan** answer the question *What happened to Harry and the kids after they graduated from Hogwarts?* It's always tough, the first time you leave home and meet the world. Especially when that world turns out to be the exact opposite from what you were raised to believe. Martial artist Shang-chi learns this the hard way when he kills a man he believes to be a menace, only to learn the true threat is the man who taught him to kill. For Shang-chi's father is one of the world's greatest villains, the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu! Shang-chi starred in one of the best comics of its decade, Marvel's *Master of Kung Fu*. Originally published to exploit the Kung Fu Craze of the 1970s, writer **Doug Moench** and artist **Paul**



**Gulacy** moved beyond the Yellow Peril clichés of the early issues to develop *MOKF* into the finest spy series in American comics. Reserve this monumental Omnibus from Eastside while we wait for more new comics to come in. Meanwhile, **Sean Murphy** has written and drawn the best Batman novel I've read in ages. *Batman: White Knight* was released under the DC Black Label imprint for mature readers. After years of escalating warfare with the Dark Knight, the Joker surrenders, in a way, using experimental medication to become citizen Jack Napier. He uses the legal system and social media to expose the corruption nurtured by Batman's caped crusade. Napier becomes a folk hero as both Gotham and his allies turn against Batman. But where's there's Batman, there will always be a Joker... Go to [lexpublib.org](http://lexpublib.org) to reserve this and all these other items!



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