

Chad in Amsterdam by Chad Bilyeu

In 2017, after having lived in Amsterdam for coming up on a decade, the ex-pat native of Cleveland, OH, Chad Bilyeu wasn't sure what to do next. After a meaningful encounter with Harvey Pekar's original, self-published run of *American Splendor*, he decided: comics. And so he embarked on the journey that became the comic book series, *Chad in Amsterdam*, which has to date yielded six issues, all entirely written, edited, art-directed and self-published by Chad. These six issues have now all been collected in a spiffy hardcover volume from Scratch Books, along with a forward – well actually, a *voorward* – by El-P of alt-hip-hop fame, and an all new introduction – here, a *vlotte babbel* (to slide you into the Dutch swing of things) – by Chad himself; plus an appendix composed of annotations, a Marvel Universe-style capsule bio and a smattering of documentary photographs.

In these pages, Chad clearly demonstrates a good sense for comics talent as well as a good eye for art styles, and, crucially, the ability to recruit said talent to engage with his scripts. These abilities enable him to match artist to story in a way that is beneficial to both and so effectively curate each issue in a manner not too dissimilar to how a gallerist would curate a group show.

Sharp observations pithily noted and converted to teachable moments are inextricably interwoven throughout these entertaining tales of Amsterdammer life and Dutch culture, forming their bone and sinew. Also included are glimpses of Chad's pre-Amsterdam life in the USA.

Chad in Amsterdam has been well appreciated in its titular hometown, where Chad has now been a resident for nearly a decade and a half. The comics herein offer an at times blunt, unusually honest mirror to the city and its inhabitants, offering them new perspectives and allowing them to glimpse aspects of their city and themselves that they may not otherwise have noticed. This has brought Chad increasing recognition, one of the results of which is this hardcover collection, published by one of Amsterdam's foremost publishers of comics.

American readers will, on the other hand, receive the added bonus of a comics guided tour through the city, its people, its nightlife, its history & culture its thoroughfares and architecture all the while gaining insights aplenty. As might be expected, given Amsterdam's global reputation, readers will have more than one encounter with the red light district (where, in fact, Chad resided for a number of years), as well as witness copious partakings of the herb along with the downings of several jenever.

And, yes, in case you were wondering: this volume is almost entirely in English, have no fear. The majority of Amsterdammers can make their way through a modest English text such as this. That said, English readers will have yet another added bonus here in experiencing plenty of Dutch words in context and, for the most part – and certainly whenever required for comprehension of the story – also then translated into English, thus gaining the opportunity to learn a little Dutch along the way.

More on *Chad in Amsterdam* can be found in [Ryan Carey's excellent write up of the first five issues of the series](#). And then, keep going with [Andy Oliver's review on Broken Frontier](#) – which he then followed up a year later with [a nice interview](#).

Chad in Amsterdam is an engaging, enlightening, and unique work that can also lay claim to being a true heir to the legacy of Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*.

Hardcover | 192 pages | 16 x 24 cm (6 1/4" x 9 1/2") | B & W interior | ISBN 9789493166806