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# Ant Colony



## Synopsis

BEST OF THE YEAR NODS FROM THE GLOBE & MAILL, .COM, QUILL & QUIRE!"The Toronto cartoonist's first full-length graphic novel follows a clutch of misfit ants, trying to maintain some semblance of civilization in the shadow of war. Psychedelically gorgeous, uncomfortably funny."-Sean Rogers, *Globe & Mail* Best Books of 2014The debut graphic novel from a dazzling newcomer with a singular, idiosyncratic styleIn the few short years since he began his pamphlet-size comic book series *Lose*, Michael DeForge has announced himself as an important new voice in alternative comics. His brash, confident, undulating artwork sent a shock wave through the comics world for its unique, fully formed aesthetic. From its opening pages, *Ant Colony* immerses the reader in a world that is darkly existential, with false prophets, unjust wars, and corrupt police officers, as it follows the denizens of a black ant colony under attack from the nearby red ants. On the surface, it's the story of this war, the destruction of a civilization, and the ants' all too familiar desire to rebuild. Underneath, though, *Ant Colony* plumbs the deepest human concerns-loneliness, faith, love, apathy, and more. All of this is done with humor and sensitivity, exposing a world where spiders can wreak unimaginable amounts of havoc with a single gnash of their jaws. DeForge's striking visual sensibility-stark lines, dramatic color choices, and brilliant use of page and panel space-stands out in this volume.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*Starred Review\* A colony of black ants serves as a vehicle to examine the human condition in this stunningly accomplished graphic novel. As the denizens go about their ant-like activities—the

males seek food, service the queen (depicted as a grotesque colossus), and wage war on a nearby red-ant colony, while the infertile females tend to the children— they fret, bicker, and gossip in a recognizably human fashion. A cataclysmic clash with the red ants results in the destruction of both colonies, with the fate of their civilization resting on a handful of survivors—a homosexual couple, a youngster imbued with strange powers of prophecy from inhaling earthworm particles, a cowardly cop who dodged the battle, and a baby red ant. The story’s conflation of the peculiar and the prosaic is reflected in DeForge’s artwork, which offsets a disturbingly bizarre drawing style, reminiscent of Mark Beyer but even more idiosyncratic, with straight-on camera angles and a nearly unvarying nine-panel grid. A quietly unsettling, masterfully realized work that marks DeForge—who has a handful of comic books and a stint as a designer on the Adventure Time animated series to his credit—as a leading figure in the alternative-comics scene. --Gordon Flagg

“DeForge always seems utterly in control--from the dreamscape-on-drugs palette of electric blues, acid tangerines and lemon yellows, to the deft world-building worthy of Jack Kirby, to the winged terrors that nod to manga horror master Kazuo Umezu... DeForge is apparently of our species, but as a keen observer of multifaceted behavior, perhaps no cartoonist has a better compound eye.” The Washington Post “[Ant Colony] is . . . absurd and existential . . . [DeForge] grants no victors and no spoils.” Harper’s Magazine “Ant Colony goes beyond any of his previous work, laying out the psychosexual hang-ups and strange power dynamics of characters who are as deep and complicated as an anthill’s network of caves.” National Post “Ant Colony is a sort of life-during-wartime love story in which the characters happen to be stylized ants, centipedes and spiders inhabiting a world rendered with outsized surreal flair.” Montreal Gazette “With its striking design, strong characters and parallel references to kiddie-fare animal antics and soul-crushing adult decisions, Ant Colony is compelling work.” Chicago Tribune “With an unusual style that is equal parts adorable, grotesque, psychedelic, and earthy, DeForge tells an epic story . . . the hallucinatory imagery works wonderfully with the emotional honesty of the writing to make Ant Colony an outstanding spectacle with personality and depth.” AV Club “A book this thought-provoking and gorgeous deserves acclaim.” Paste “Every so often a book comes along that knocks you flat on your ass and makes you wonder where the hell you’ve been and why you haven’t seen anything like it sooner. Ant Colony is exactly that kind of book . . . an intensely

charismatic, thoughtful, evocative little world that DeForge has filled with memorable characters, burning philosophical questions, and moments of true humanity that shine through the stylized thoraxes and angled antennae of his kooky creations. The year may be young, but I am confident when I say that this may just be the best graphic novel of 2014.  Nerdist

An intriguing novel that I went into without any expectations and came out very satisfied. This comic is bizarre, edgy, surreal, and at the core of it, is about the intricacies of different types of male-male relationships: a) paternal b) fraternal and c) sexual; as told by ants. Alternatively, it can just be read as story about a bunch of ants *la Antz* albeit directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. The artwork, frequently containing solid, single-panel backgrounds with dull colors, grew on me quickly. DeForge manages to mix it up by placing surreal, psychedelic art at odd intervals as well. The main protagonists of the story evolve from three different sets of black ants living in a colony that is on the verge of collapse. The story in itself is about their struggles with very few triumphs. Red ants, spiders, caterpillars, earthworms, and other critters are humorously depicted as seen through the eyes of the black ants. All in all, I would recommend it if you like your dose of strange with a side serving of introspection.

I read "Ant Colony" back when it was just "Ant Comic," serialized on DeForge's blog. I loved it then, and I love it now  and I'm overjoyed to have it in this frankly beautifully-produced form. It's a hell of a lot nicer than the hack-job bootleg press of it I made back in college. My only complaint: DeForge's gorgeous bestiary/cast page (published after Ant Comic ended) is missing from this volume. This is the only flaw in an otherwise perfect publication.

Very unique. Great visuals. Very dark content for the barely-above-average graphic novel enthusiast. I enjoyed it, but wouldn't recommend for everybody.

fun read

very nice object to own in its entirety. the color palette is simple, solid and effective. pretty much the same impact can be felt for the art and storytelling.

i really love this artist. he's fantastic. this book is hilarious and beautiful. get it. read it. love it. buy more of his books.

Everything about this book is beautiful. The artwork, the themes, the story, etc. It's a dark and existential book basically about ant colonies at war with each other, but it's also about love, loneliness, and faith. It does all this while being really weird and funny as well. Can not stress enough how visually appealing the clean artwork is. This book made me an instant fan of Michael DeForge and I highly recommend it!!

This is the first book I've read by Michael DeForge, and I'm very impressed. His artwork is clean, sometimes very detailed, complex, shocking, easy on the eye. His story, about an ant colony and some of its more unusual members, is fascinating. He captures the perspective of different bugs in a thoughtful, eerie, and humorous manner. I would definitely like to read more DeForge books and this has to be one of the best graphic novels of 2014. I would recommend it if you like Chris Ware, Dan Clowes, Ernie Bushmiller, Tom Gauld, or George Herriman.

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