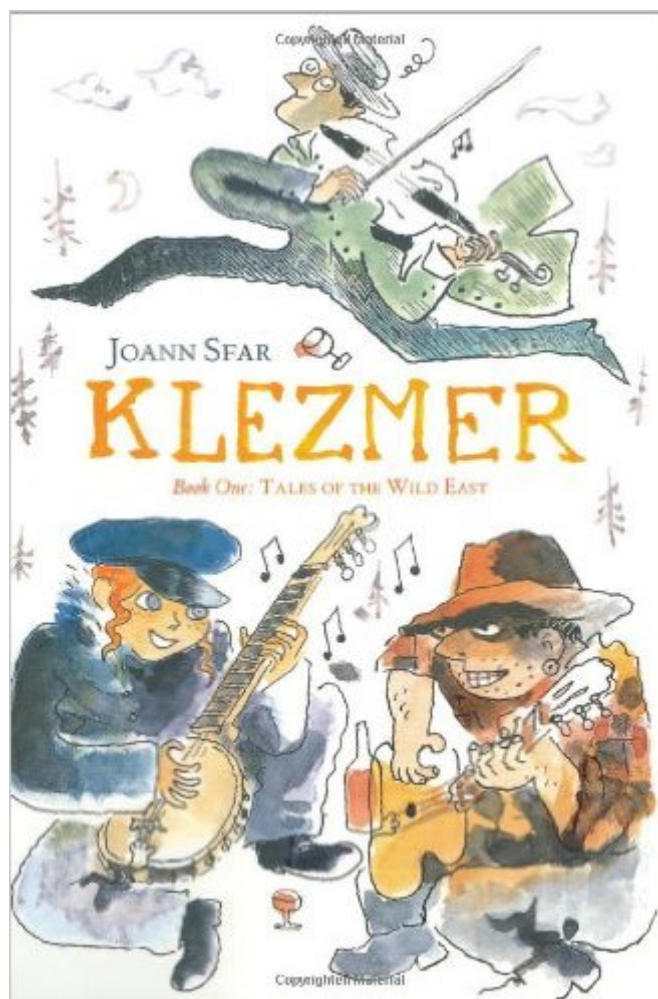


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Klezmer: Tales Of The Wild East



Synopsis

Klezmer tells a wild tale of love, friendship, survival, and the joy of making music in pre-World War II Eastern Europe. The Baron of My Backside is perfectly content as the leader of a traveling klezmer band, until his bandmates are brutally murdered. He sets out for Odessa alone, inconsolable even after he is joined by Chava, a beautiful girl with a voice like an angel. Meanwhile, Yaacov is expelled from his yeshiva for stealing; he too makes his way to Odessa along with Vincenzo, a violinist, and Tshokola, a gypsy entertainer. When these five misfits finally come together, they must set aside their differences and learn to work together (and rock a crowd) through their music. Tragic, humorous, violent, and tender, Klezmer's rich watercolor art and simple but moving story-telling draws you into the lives of these fascinating characters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Through expressive pen lines and emotive watercolor washes, Klezmer tells the interweaving stories of five wandering characters who eventually meet in Odessa and form a Klezmer band in order to survive. The novel opens with Noah (nicknamed "The Baron of My Backside") witnessing and narrowly escaping the killing of his band mates by another Klezmer band. After getting his revenge he is accompanied by the wily Chava, who wishes to escape her provincial village. We meet Yaacov a wide-eyed fifteen year old prodigy and Vincenzo an Italian violinist-both former Yeshiva students exiled for theft. Yaacov and Vincenzo inadvertently save the life of the gypsy Toshokola, (they happened to be sitting in the tree Cossacks tried to hang him from.) and he

convinces the two into forming a band performing Jewish songs for, " Jews are constantly getting married, circumcised, engaged. There's some money to be made." There is a lot of incorporation of Yiddish songs, Jewish and Russian folklore and text from novelist Isaac Babel. (A Jewish author who was murdered during the "Great Purge" in 1940's Russia.) The story is bizarre, incredibly whimsical and at times very funny. One of my favorite lines is from Toshokola who, when asked why Cossacks were chasing him, begins to tell a fantastic tale. When caught in his bluff he quickly replies, " Telling things exactly the way they happened is so ugly it ought to be forbidden. I'm telling you a story, it's the most basic courtesy." When Yaacov clumsily tries out the violin, he insults Vincenzo who is an expert violinist. Vincenzo quickly snatches the instrument from the boy's hands and dramatically states, " In my family everyone's a violinist. Even the maid. Even the dead." A wonderful read, highly recommended.

This book is gorgeous--I can't get enough of Sfar's talents...just open Klezmer to any spread, and see how beautiful his watercolors are. It's interesting seeing his range; Vampire Loves is awesome, funny, out there, and Klezmer is looser in style and a tad more serious (but still funny). A terrific read.

Damn those Europeans anyhow. They have a real nasty knack for taking a good old American art form, like rock and roll or comic books, and doing better with it than the Yanks. Almost since the comic's inception, the Europeans recognized the comic's potential to appeal to adults, but in the land of its birth, the comic never really got beyond its Kid Stuff label, and only recently has the art form gotten past the seventh grade. Klezmer cemented Joann Sfar in the constellation of my favorite comics creators. This rollicking tale of a bunch of misfit musicians who end up thrown together by circumstances as a traveling Klezmer troupe is proof positive, if any be needed, that the comic book is just an effective vehicle for serious storytelling as the novel, which Klezmer could easily have been. Sfar's squiggly visual style juxtaposes seamlessly with his subject matter to create a fantastical Jewish Eastern Europe rendered dreamlike by his tone, style, and the fact that it no longer exists. His characters, likewise, are brilliantly, earthily alive. Sfar's done his homework--Isaac Deutscher once wrote that the Jewish heretic is a part of Jewish tradition, and Sfar's Yaacov, an impish little apikoyres kicked out of his yeshiva for petty theft, is as perfect an evocation of that archetypal figure as I've ever read about. I can't wait to follow his troupe's further adventures (God grant that there are some) and Sfar's future work.

I loved this book. I bought it for my girlfriend who loves Klezmer music and has Jewish roots. At first I thought "mmmh, maybe I'll give it a go, but the pictures are a bit weird!"....however as soon as I started reading it I was hooked and as my eyes grew accustomed to the style, I realized how wonderful the artwork actually was, both as great illustrations in themselves and as perfect for the story. It's a fantastic story, almost like an old time adventure story but with much deeper and more interesting characters. It pulls no punches with racism/bigotry/violence/nudity which all gives it a real gritty, feel....can I describe it as an Eastern Western? Actually I think that's what the author does with the subtitle! To me it has the gritty feel of a Clint Eastwood Western. In this collectors edition there are some very illuminating writings/interviews/explanations from the author which really add to the interest and give it even extra depth....and thanks in no small part to this, I now have a real appreciation, love of and interest in the music! A brilliant book...I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in either Graphic Novels, good stories or Klezmer, but I think it would really grab the interest of and be hugely appreciated by, musicians who had never heard of Klezmer before. I can't wait for the 2nd part!

It's all over the place like the drawing and that's what makes it great. Sfar has a loose style that reminds at times of Quentin Blake. He's bold and fearless in his approach to drawing as if he's drawing on the fly.

This is delightful graphic novel with pictures and story by Joann Sfar. It's the first installment (of a two-part story, I believe) based on tales from the Ashkenazic side of Sfar's family. It is an adventure tale where a variety of characters meet-up and form a Klezmer Band w/ this volume closing on the verge of the band's "big break." This volume stands fairly well on it's own but the plot seems a bit anticlimactic. The story is charming, the characters are interesting and there are some very funny parts. Sfar's work is in a league by itself, very European.

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