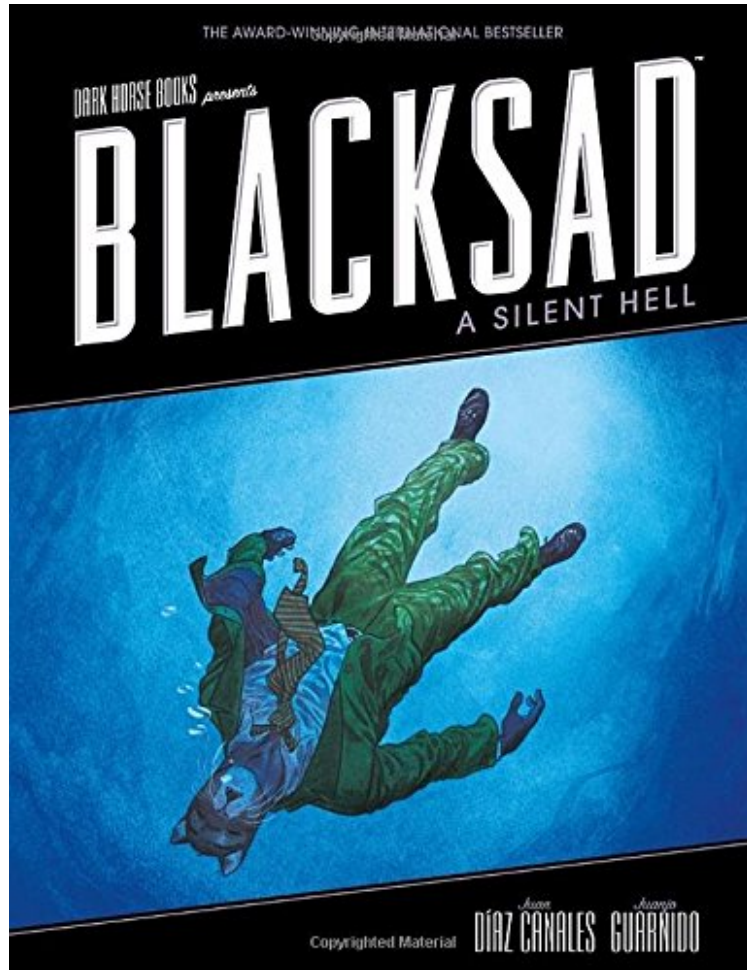


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## Blacksad: A Silent Hell

*Juan Diaz Canales*

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#122488 in BooksColor: multi-colored Dark Horse 2012-07-24 2012-07-24Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 11.12 x .52 x 8.67l, 1.45 #File Name: 1595829318112 pages\*2011 Eisner and Harvey Award-winner!\* an extensive making-of section, with tons of preliminary sketches and watercolor studies\*Hardcover, measures 8-3/8x 10-7/8"\*112 pages, full color\*Brand new Detective John Blacksad returns, with a new case that takes him to a 1950s New Orleans filled with hot jazz and cold-blooded murder! Hired to discover the fate of a celebrated pianist, Blacksad finds his most dangerous mystery yet in the midst of drugs, voodoo, the rollicking atmosphere of Mardi Gras, and the dark underbelly that it hides! | File size: 70.Mb

**Juan Diaz Canales : Blacksad: A Silent Hell** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blacksad: A Silent Hell:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Sharply written noir with amazing artworkBy RJ SmooveBlacksad: A Silent Hell is the fourth novel in writer Juan Diaz Canales and artist Juanjo Guarnido's collaborative noir series that revolves around Private Detective John Blacksad, a black cat. The Blacksad series would most likely be classified as "funny animals" due to its cast of furry, feathered, and scaled characters, but it is anything but "funny". The series is

the Spanish interpretation of American Film Noir from the 1940's and 1950's. Film Noir is classified by lead characters usually being a private investigators, moody settings, and the mystery at the center of the story. Blacksad has all of the above, with noir (or black) even being in the title character's name. Blacksad is very cinematic in quality, and reads just like a film. In fact, I am surprised there has not been an attempt to adapt any of these stories to film or television, as they are perfectly suited for it. The novel is riddled with Film Noir tropes, like shadowy locales, neon-lit streets, murders, mysteries, plot twists, and seedy characters that give the reader a tour of our familiar society's unfamiliar underbelly populated by the criminal and the corrupt. Canales and Guardino crafted some of the most beautifully illustrated and sharply written noir that I have seen in any medium. The use of animals as characters is deceptive, because it could lead some to assume these novels are lighter fare, appropriate for young audiences, but that would be underestimating the maturity of its gritty subject matter. The author himself calls into question whether we, the readers, see his use of animals as symbolism or typecasting, and it makes for an interesting dynamic to analyze why characters are presented as the specific animal they are. The animal characters are meant to be representational of human characteristics and personality traits. In the introduction to the American translation of first novel, Blacksad (which technically contains the first three Spanish novels), Canales claims that he wanted his characters to be people who resemble animals, and not the other way around like your typical zoological animation where animal characters are personified. The funny animal subgenre can open you up to all kinds of creative ways to tell a story, and Canales uses this quite well. The introduction also referred to "Who Framed Roger Rabbit", the 1988 Robert Zemeckis film where cartoon animals are at the center of a noir story. The comparison is apt, because I cannot think of many other noirs with animals, and even that film does not consist solely of animal characters. So, Blacksad is something unique and inventive, as far as I know. The image and text interplay throughout the novel is intriguing right from the start, and especially on the last twelve pages as the plot twists are revealed and the loose ends are tied. One particularly interesting contrast near the beginning (page 8) as we see a dancer undressing with captions of what "Hell" means to the person giving the internal monologue. In typical noir fashion, our lead gives many internal monologues, done mostly with non-sequitur transitions as characters' captions appear over unrelated scenes. But the vast majority of the story is done very cinematically, with lots of action-to-action and scene-to-scene transitions. Entire scenes are bustling with activity and life (page 13, for example). There are also scenes with slow build ups that explode into action like in a Quentin Tarantino film (pages 16-17). Guarnido's expressive artwork serves these moments perfectly. The layout remains Traditional/Conventional all the way through. Your focus is certainly meant to be plot-intrinsic, and not distracted by creative and fancy layout structures. Such layout structures are not even necessary when we are provided with such high quality art. The artwork is so beautiful that I contemplated on several occasions whether, or not, this is the best comic book art that I have ever seen. High praise for sure, but well deserving in many instances. After the story concludes, there is a section in the graphic novel dedicated to Guardino discussing his methods for the art, and particularly his use of water colors and how his style developed into him using it. He said he switched from ink and satin paper to water colors and grainy paper after the second Blacksad novel because it offered more control and cleaner movements than traditional ink and paper, and you can tell. The fluidity of the story and the movements of the characters are natural, and unlike any other comic book art I have seen. Reading the novel, I had no idea that each panel was painted, but it makes perfect sense. Being noir, the use of color is significant for setting the tone of the scene and the mood of a particular location. On page there is a full page panel of the main character chasing a villain through a Mardi Gras parade that encompasses an entire city block. It is a sight to behold because the page is rippling with vivacious hues that represent the traditional New Orleans Mardi Gras purple, green, and gold. What is especially satisfying about the page is that we are able to locate both the villain and Blacksad at different ends of the page, because of what they are wearing. There were quite a few times that I found myself hesitating to move on because I wanted to just soak in the immense detail of the artwork. As much as I hate to say it, I think the artwork is the true star of not only this novel, but the entire series. The writing is top notch, and the characters are very well developed, but there is just magic in Guarnido's hand-painted panels. To say I highly recommend Blacksad: A Silent Hell, and its predecessors, is an understatement. These novels are essential for anyone who is a fan of Film Noir and enjoys reading graphic novels. Along with stories like Frank Miller's Sin City, Ed Brubaker's Criminal and some of the best of Batman, I would say that Blacksad is my favorite noir available in the comic medium. In my youthful ignorance, I am sure I have not read many other titles deserving of mention, but hopefully I will eventually. For now, Blacksad is some of the best for your money.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Why aren't you reading Blacksad?! By Rosewater I'm not the biggest fan of detective fiction. I mean, I enjoy The Maltese Falcon as much as anybody, but it's not a genre I make a point of seeking out (though perhaps I should). What I'm saying is that you don't have to be a hardcore genre fan to get the incredible appeal of Blacksad, one of the best comic series running today. Blacksad himself is the just this primordial kind of cool: always getting into situations that are seemingly too big for one cat to handle, always having tragic love affairs, he wears cool clothes, he likes Jazz. I want to make special mention of the artist on this series, Juanjo Guarnido. This has to be the most gorgeously rendered comic art I've ever seen. Each page is an overwhelmingly beautiful painting, and it avoids the danger that that can entail: namely, that it becomes a bunch of beautiful but static images, not working in sequential form. That's not the case with Guarnido, as these paintings are

moving! His work as an animator (for Disney) is in full display, as the action erupts from panel to panel, and the emoting from the characters (both facial expressions and body language) are superb. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Worthy of its fame By Alex If you were lucky enough to have read the first Blacksad volume (Blacksad, Artict Nation and Red Soul), you will love the second volume (if you were not lucky enough, go get the first AND the second volumes, now!). This volume contains one long story (A Silent Hell) and a couple of short ones. Silent Hell is set in New Orleans, more on the jazz scene of the city in the 50s, following Blacksad and Weekly tracking Sebastian "Little Hand" Fletcher, a jazz prodigy and heroin addict. All the noir elements of the first album are there, and the fantastic art of Juanjo Guarnido. Cannot give all the details of the story (it is a detective story, for Pete's sake!), but if you ever liked Marlowe, or Sam Spade, there is no way you will not fall on your knees with Blacksad. The short stories explore some more intimate aspects of The Cat, both some of his political attitudes, as well as one of his few friendships. Little pearls, which ornate the main story. There are, moreover, Guarnido sketches and different attempts to convey a scene at the end of the story. It is quite interesting to follow the various alternatives he explored in terms of light and color until he got the one actually used. Great to see an artist at work. So go get your copy (the iPad version is OK, but nothing compares to the real thing), and, if you do not have the first one, go get it too and tell me if it is not one of the best things that has appeared in comics in a long, long time.

Detective John Blacksad returns, with a new case that takes him to a 1950s New Orleans filled with hot jazz and cold-blooded murder! Hired to discover the fate of a celebrated pianist, Blacksad finds his most dangerous mystery yet in the midst of drugs, voodoo, the rollicking atmosphere of Mardi Gras, and the dark underbelly that it hides! \* Features an extensive making-of section, with tons of prelim sketches and watercolor studies. \* 2011 Eisner and Harvey Award-winner!