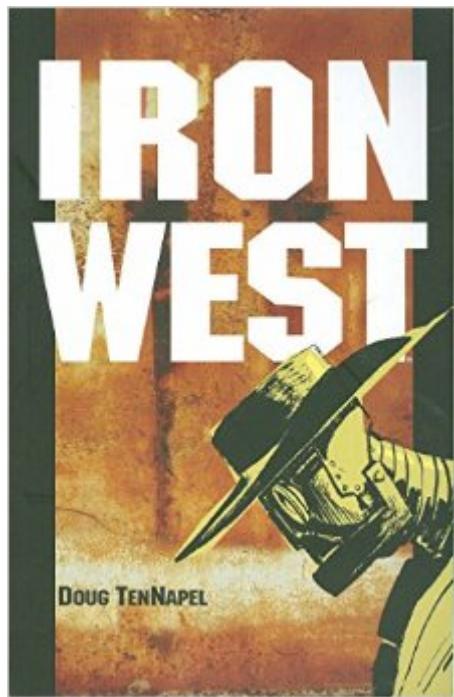


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Iron West



Synopsis

Preston Struck is an incompetent outlaw with a heart of fool's gold. He discovers an army of metal men bent on destroying central California. While Struck avoids any form of heroism, he gets a little help from a magical old shaman and his sidekick Sasquatch. Struck is going to need all the help he can get because he's deputized just as the mechanical men have taken over the railroad and are mutating the train into a giant demonic iron monster.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Image Comics; 2nd printing. edition (July 25, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1582406308

ISBN-13: 978-1582406305

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 0.5 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (39 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Iron West is a fun, well-crafted, and thoughtful comic book. The comic has an imaginative premise that's followed up with a great deal of action. It's 1898, and a Californian community is threatened by killer robots. As the menace approaches, outlaw Preston Struck has a choice: he can try to save the town with the help of Bigfoot and an old Indian shaman, or he can try to save his own hide. Struck picks the cowardly route, but his flight is complicated by the bounty on his head and his attraction to a woman. One can easily sympathize with this protagonist, an easygoing jokester who is essentially trying to avoid pain and death. Thus, the chases and confrontations toward the beginning of the story are engaging. They build up to a great battle that gets crazier with every page, and so the book becomes increasingly entertaining as it progresses. TenNapel works his material with skill, and transitions beautifully between fun action and quiet, touching moments, between humor and gravity. In terms of storytelling, he's in top form. Almost everything contributes to the plot, and what may seem at first glance to be a throwaway line could be central to the story.

The artwork is inspiring. The brushwork is fluid, yet precise. One sees in the characters a good sense of form, weight, and motion; they are lively, expressive, and appealing. The settings are handled with similar care, and the pages are well composed. The book is entertaining, and the storytelling is superb. The story is worth telling, too. Beneath the surface details, the comic implicitly raises a couple of interesting questions about the sort of thing a man is. Is he hardwired to act a certain way, as the robots are, or can he choose to be better or worse?

Robots invade the Old West with plenty of weapons, but no backstory. If this fascinating historical record is accurate, that's the best way to do it. If you're a homicidal robot, and you want to hybridize an established genre with hopes of revitalizing it, just get some buddies together, dress up like cowpokes, pass out the pistols, and put holes in the saloonkeeper, the ranchhand, and the stagecoach driver, all in the service of a spherical AI called the Demiurge. But don't offer any explanations, just subvert the Western trappings by engaging in robot-army- style killings. These are bloodthirsty automata who know how to acclimate within a genre that won't easily accept them: slaughter all humans, starting in Twain Harte, California. These rivet-riddled ravagers are so effective at eliminating cowboys and Indians they run the risk of erasing all traces of the Old West in this story within the first few pages, except for the scenery. But a small band of surviving humans rally and fight back. Ms. Sharon, Two Rivers the shaman, Sasquatch (who IS really a Sasquatch), and even the Sheriff rally round small-time train-robber and cheater-at-cards, Preston Struck...who does not want to be rallied round in the slightest. This coward spends much of the time trying to get out of town and save his own hide. But events conspire against him, and slowly he accepts his role as hero, leading a last stand against the robots. His biggest challenge comes when an entire steam-train morphs spectacularly into a giant metal juggernaut. Fighting alongside the Loch Ness Monster (wouldn't you rather read the explanation for yourself, than have me tell you what the Loch Ness Monster is doing in a robot-infested Western town?)

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