

It is hard to believe that Hellboy is twenty-one years old. Yet, it has been that long since the lovable stone-fisted working guy of a supernatural investigator first appeared in San Diego Comic-Con Comics #2 with a script by John Byrne and art by Mike Mignola. Those credits look very odd now after Mignola has spent so many years as the sole writer, and often the sole artist, on the series. Due primarily to Mignola's long stewardship, Hellboy has built a largely integrated, consistent canon that compares favorably in breadth and depth to those of much older characters from DC and Marvel. But what themes have driven this success? Simple continuity of authorship can't explain why the character, his setting, and his supporting cast have called forth such love and loyalty. The answer lies in the fact that Hellboy isn't primarily about Hell, nor is it at the fundamental thematic level about a boy from Hell. Defying many casual beliefs about the nature of comics, Hellboy is essentially an epic about change. It is the tale of a being ripped from one universe and placed in another. It is about how that being, that boy, grows up in ways natural to neither his home dimension nor his adopted one. It is about new friends, new adventures, and new ways of dealing with old problems. Hellboy is strong and smart and possessed of many supernatural abilities, but above all he moves. He moves through time at his own bizarre pace, aging physically with great speed and then plateauing out at apparent immortality, while his mind retains its teenage outlook for many years. He moves through situations and relationships and challenges with determination and heroism. The world around him changes and, unlike many heroes, he changes with it, while remaining constant in his moral essence. Hellboy and the B.P.R.D 1952 #1 shows movement in two realms. Three previous arcs, B.P.R.D.: 1946, B.P.R.D.: 1947, and B.P.R.D.: 1948, dealt with Hellboy as a child and his relationship with Professor Trevor Bruttenholm and the investigators of the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense. Now Hellboy, first brought into our world on December 23, 1944, is growing up. He is ready to undertake his first field mission, a decision that Professor Bruttenholm makes with great care but announces to his team of field operatives with disarming off-handedness. The team consists of the amiable Archie Murard and the sour Jacob Stegner, both introduced in previous series, as well as two new adventurers, FBI agent Susan Xiang and Princeton University security adviser Robert Amsel. The group sets out immediately for Brazil to investigate mysterious happenings at an abandoned Portuguese fortress. The simple plot serves only to introduce the main cast and set up the coming action. But beyond the plot lies the other axis of movement we see in this issue, a movement of creators. Mike Mignola shares the story duties with John Arcudi, while handing off the art to Alex Maleev. Maleev most famously worked with Brian Michael Bendis on a well-received Daredevil run from 2001 to 2007. From that and other work he brings his trademark thick lines, sharp angles, bent curves, and deep shadows, all suggesting a world more raw and more dangerous, but also more emotionally vital, than ordinary life. Maleev does not achieve the same broken, obscured look of a grainy photograph that often characterized his Daredevil work, but colorist Dave Stewart, whose work was on display last month from DC with Detective Comics #36, uses a muted palate of blues and grays and browns that give the images a faded, slightly distant quality. Letterer Clem Robins rounds off the mood with spiked fonts and crowded word spaces that suggest edginess and tension. The post Hellboy and the B.P.R.D 1952 #1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

Read more: <http://weeklycomicbookreview.com/2014/12/05/hellboy-b-p-r-d-1952-1/>