



Shock Totem 5: Curious Tales of the Macabre and Twisted

K. Allen Wood (Editor) , Jack Ketchum (Contributor) , Ari Marmell (Contributor) , Darrell Schweitzer (Contributor) , Joe Mirabello (Contributor) , Kurt Newton (Contributor) , Mekenzie Larsen (Contributor) , Sean Eads (Contributor) , more... Jaelithe Ingold (Contributor) , D. Thomas Mooers (Contributor) , F.J. Bergmann (Contributor) , Nick Contor (Contributor) , Anaea Lay (Contributor) , Mercedes M. Yardley (Contributor) , John Boden (Contributor) ...less

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The fifth issue of *Shock Totem* is yet another eclectic mix of horror fiction and nonfiction. This issue features previously unpublished stories from the likes of Ari Marmell, Darrell Schweitzer, Joe Mirabello, Mekenzie Larsen, and others. There is also a five-part, illustrated microfiction serial, by Kurt Newton, a conversation with horror legend Jack Ketchum, nonfiction by Nick Contor, reviews and more.

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From Reader Review Shock Totem 5: Curious Tales of the Macabre and Twisted for online ebook

Steve Bouchard says

This is my first foray into the Shock Totem catalog, and it makes me wish I'd begun with the first. The stories here are all high caliber; even the ones that I didn't enjoy as much, I can't knock them for quality. Also of high quality are the non-fiction offerings. While I've never been much on non-fiction, the narrative piece by Nick Contor is very compelling. The series on horror and music is also a great read (and I'll have to re-read this segment, once I go back to the start of it, I'm sure).

Getting back to the stories... One of the high-points is "Little Knife Houses" by Jaelith Ingold. This is the winner of Shock Totem's flash fiction contest, a culmination of a year's worth of contest winners boiled down to one--and the story does not disappoint. While it has a humorous touch, it handles a very dark subject with style, and leaves the reader pondering if it's the narrator or the world who is unreliable.

Another high-point for me was Joe Mirabello's "The Catch," which takes an interesting perspective on an old trope, and constricts it with a deft touch of logistics.

As a whole, the magazine was everything I would have hoped for, and lived up to its expectations of delivering high quality dark fiction (and non-fiction)--curious, macabre and twisted indeed. I look forward to catching up on the previous issues.

The Grim Reader says

Super duper

Another great issue of this fantastic magazine. All stories are fresh and well written. If you like dark fiction folks, treat yourself. You will not be disappointed.

Drew Wheeler says

Another winner. Do yourself a favor and read them all.

Donna says

Shock Totem 5 contains a perfectly balanced mix of non-fiction articles, short stories and flash fiction. Not all of the stories worked for me but there were definitely some stand-outs. My favorites were: Jimmy Bunny by Darrell Schwietzer and The Catch by Joe Mirabello. Honorable mentions for To 'Bie or Not to 'Bie by Sean Eads and Postmortem by Kurt Newton.

Gef says

If there is a go-to place for me when it comes to horror stories, it's Shock Totem. The ST gang have carved out a niche for themselves in the short fiction landscape by honing in and highlighting some of the best dark fiction you can find in short story form.

"In Deepest Silence" by Ari Marmell kicked things off story-wise with a Lovecraftian tale set in a nuclear sub of all places. The claustrophobic atmosphere was handled well, with plenty of navy jargon that didn't feel overwhelming, and a cool premise of literally not being able to see the indescribable horror swimming in the ocean's depths. Cool stuff.

Before that though, there was a brief defense of the horror genre from Mercedes M. Yardley. Not her most heart-wrenching essay in ST's pages, but one I found myself agreeing with wholeheartedly. People may not want to call it "horror," but it's out there--and it's everywhere. There's plenty more nonfiction to be found in this issue as well, including an interview with Jack Ketchum.

Back on the story front, the assortment varied in styles, but kept a similar stark tone. From D. Thomas Mooers' "The Girl and the Blue Burqa" and its paranoia gone wild, to what may be my favorite from the offerings, Joe Mirabello's "The Catch." An quirky, creepy, otherworldly bit of horror that would fit in well with The Twilight Zone or The Outer Limits, with an annual fishing trip through time--and a Viking chauffeur. Plus, there's the other stories from F.J. Bergmann, Nick Contor, Kurt Newton (accompanied by some stunning artwork), Darrell Schweitzer, Jaelithe Ingold, Anaea Lay, Mekenzie Larsen, and Sean Eads.

ST ought to be on your radar if you love horror or short fiction. And if you love both, then you have no excuse. Really good stuff, and I already have Shock Totem #6 on my Kindle, and waiting for #7.

Lee Thompson says

Always great material from these guys.

Chris Riley says

More wicked stories from this publication. Love Shock Totem. The magazine is a winner for dark and strange fiction.

Mekenzie Larsen says

Having been published in Shock Totem twice, I'm ashamed to admit it took this long to pick up an issue and read it through. This is a great mix of weird and creepy. The interviews are enlightening and the reviews are snappy, and the "Howling Through the Keyhole" feature at the end, where the authors share the inspiration for their stories, wraps everything up in a neat little bow. And the covers! Gorgeous, possibly the best you'll see from a small press.

Personal favorites: "Postmortem" by Kurt Newton, "Jimmy Bunny" by Darrell Schweitzer, "Little Knife Houses" by Jaelithe Ingold, and "The Catch" by Joe Mirabello.

Now I just have to work my way through the first four issues. Excellent work.
