



Point Blank: the Graphic Novel (Alex Rider)

By Anthony Horowitz, Antony Johnston

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The Alex Rider Adventures are #1 bestsellers the world over, and following in the footsteps of the graphic novel adaptation of *Stormbreaker* comes the second book in this phenomenal series. Like *Stormbreaker: The Graphic Novel*, this edition features bold, edgy, manga-like illustrations that make the graphic novel form so immensely popular, and brings the young spy to life in a whole new way. For existing fans of Alex Rider, this will be a must-have; for those yet to discover the series, this will be the perfect introduction.

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Point Blank: the Graphic Novel (Alex Rider) By Anthony Horowitz, Antony Johnston Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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As in *Stormbreaker: The Graphic Novel* (2006), rapid-fire action, appealing manga-style artwork, and a heavy reliance on the James Bond formula drive this second graphic adaptation of Horowitz's best-selling Alex Rider books. The plot maintains the basic premise of the eponymous novel, published in 2002: Rider, a 14-year-old British spy, is sent to a mysterious Swiss boarding school to investigate the nefarious plot of its headmaster. With clear lines and carefully toned coloring, the art makes the most of the creepy castle setting, twisting passages, gadgets, and death-defying snowboard escapes, while the mix of perspectives and panel sizes helps to reveal clues in quick succession. Suspense builds right up until the terrifying conclusion, which, because it involves body doubles, has high impact in this visual format, which showcases the mirror effects. A sure hit with both fans and newcomers, particularly reluctant readers. Grades 6-9. --Gillian Engberg

About the Author

Anthony Horowitz's life might have been copied from the pages of Charles Dickens or the Brothers Grimm. Born in 1956 in Stanmore, Middlesex, to a family of wealth and status, Anthony was raised by nannies, surrounded by servants and chauffeurs. His father, a wealthy businessman, was, says Mr. Horowitz, "a fixer for Harold Wilson." What that means exactly is unclear — "My father was a very secretive man," he says — so an aura of suspicion and mystery surrounds both the word and the man. As unlikely as it might seem, Anthony's father, threatened with bankruptcy, withdrew all of his money from Swiss bank accounts in Zurich and deposited it in another account under a false name and then promptly died. His mother searched unsuccessfully for years in attempt to find the money, but it was never found. That too shaped Anthony's view of things. Today he says, "I think the only thing to do with money is spend it." His mother, whom he adored, eccentrically gave him a human skull for his 13th birthday. His grandmother, another Dickensian character, was mean-spirited and malevolent, a destructive force in his life. She was, he says, "a truly evil person", his first and worst arch villain. "My sister and I danced on her grave when she died," he now recalls.

A miserably unhappy and overweight child, Anthony had nowhere to turn for solace. "Family meals," he recalls, "had calories running into the thousands.... I was an astoundingly large, round child...." At the age of eight he was sent off to boarding school, a standard practice of the times and class in which he was raised. While being away from home came as an enormous relief, the school itself, Orley Farm, was a *grand guignol* horror with a headmaster who flogged the boys till they bled. "Once the headmaster told me to stand up in assembly and in front of the whole school said, 'This boy is so stupid he will not be coming to Christmas games tomorrow.' I have never totally recovered." To relieve his misery and that of the other boys, he not unsurprisingly made up tales of astounding revenge and retribution.

So how did an unhappy boy, from a privileged background, metamorphose into the creator of Alex Rider, fourteen-year-old spy for Britain's MI6? Although his childhood permanently damaged him, it also gave him a gift — it provided him with rich source material for his writing career. He found solace in boyhood in the escapism of the James Bond films, he says. He claims that his two sons now watch the James Bond films with the same tremendous enjoyment he did at their age. Bond's glamour translates perfectly to the 14-year-old psyche, the author says. "Bond had his cocktails, the car and the clothes. Kids are just as picky. It's got to be the right Nike trainers (sneakers), the right skateboard. And I genuinely think that 14-year-olds are the coolest people on the planet. It's this wonderful, golden age, just on the cusp of manhood when everything seems possible."

Alex Rider is unwillingly recruited at the age of fourteen to spy for the British secret service, MI6. Forced into situations that most average adults would find terrifying and probably fatal, young Alex rarely loses his cool although at times he doubts his own courage. Using his intelligence and creativity, and aided by non-lethal gadgets dreamed up by MI6's delightfully eccentric, overweight and disheveled Smithers, Alex is able to extricate himself from situations when all seems completely lost. What is perhaps more terrifying than the deeply dangerous missions he finds himself engaged in, is the attitude of his handlers at MI6, who view the boy as nothing more than an expendable asset.

The highly successful Alex Rider novels include *Stormbreaker*, *Point Blank*, *Skeleton Key*, and the recent *Eagle Strike*.

Anthony Horowitz is perhaps the busiest writer in England. He has been writing since the age of eight, and professionally since the age of twenty. He writes in a comfortable shed in his garden for up to ten hours per day. In addition to the highly successful Alex Rider books, he has also written episodes of several popular TV crime series, including *Poirot*, *Murder in Mind*, *Midsomer Murders* and *Murder Most Horrid*. He has written a television series *Foyle's War*, which recently aired in the United States, and he has written the libretto of a Broadway musical adapted from Dr. Seuss's book, *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*. His film script *The Gathering* has just finished production. And...oh yes...there are more Alex Rider novels in the works. Anthony has also written the *Diamond Brothers* series.

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