



Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1

Randy Chandler (Editor) , Cheryl Mullenax (Editor) , Jeff Strand , Adam Cesare , Monica J. O'Rourke , David James Keaton , Adam Howe , Robert Essig , more... Jason Parent , Clare de Lune , Michael Paul Gonzalez , The Behrg , Kristopher Triana , Lilith Morgan , Charles Austin Muir , George Palacious , M.P. Johnson , Tony Knighton , Jack Bantry , Pete Kahle , George Cotronis , Scott Emerson (Contributor) ...less

Download now

Read Online ➔

Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1

Randy Chandler (Editor) , Cheryl Mullenax (Editor) , Jeff Strand , Adam Cesare , Monica J. O'Rourke , David James Keaton , Adam Howe , Robert Essig , more... Jason Parent , Clare de Lune , Michael Paul Gonzalez , The Behrg , Kristopher Triana , Lilith Morgan , Charles Austin Muir , George Palacious , M.P. Johnson , Tony Knighton , Jack Bantry , Pete Kahle , George Cotronis , Scott Emerson (Contributor) ...less

Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 Randy Chandler (Editor) , Cheryl Mullenax (Editor) , Jeff Strand , Adam Cesare , Monica J. O'Rourke , David James Keaton , Adam Howe , Robert Essig , more... Jason Parent , Clare de Lune , Michael Paul Gonzalez , The Behrg , Kristopher Triana , Lilith Morgan , Charles Austin Muir , George Palacious , M.P. Johnson , Tony Knighton , Jack Bantry , Pete Kahle , George Cotronis , Scott Emerson (Contributor) ...less
Excerpt from the Introduction:

Editors Randy Chandler and Cheryl Mullenax put the call out to horror writers and editors of extreme stories, the hardcore stuff that breaks boundaries and trashes taboos, the transgressive tales you can't "unread" (as Chuck Palahniuk says). We staked out our territory and nailed this to the wall to guide us:

YEAR'S BEST HARDEST HORROR

Not your mama's best-of horror annual.

This stuff comes from the edge of the abyss,
stories you read at your own risk

because you feel the abyss looking right back into you
through the tainted lens of each twisted tale.

Some of the stories you'll find here are loaded with very graphic descriptions of violence, sex and depravities, while others may contain only one shocking moment of brutality. In others, the hardcore aspect may be less graphic and subtler than you might expect. Some of these quieter tales offer the reader some time to recover from the more disturbing ones preceding.

Most of the stories collected here are from small and specialty press anthologies, with a few from periodicals, like the prestigious Splatterpunk Zine in the UK and Thuglit here in the US. Bizarro is also represented with a couple of tales from the unlikely anthology Blood For You: A Literary Tribute To GG Allin from Weirdpunk Books. (If you're not familiar with the late GG Allin, you can find snippets from some of his outrageous and obscene punk shows online, which will increase your appreciation of those two tales.)

So for now, forget about that neighbor you suspect is a serial killer, don't worry about the drunk driver that could take you out on your next trip to the store, push those troubling news stories to the back of your mind and immerse yourself in the imaginary horrors at hand.

But don't be surprised if you sense something dark staring back at you from between the lines. That is to be expected when you enter these forbidding realms. With any luck, you may find something useful to help you survive the approaching Apocalypse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Year That Was

"Worth the Having" by Michael Paul Gonzalez

"Awakening" by Jeff Strand

"Readings Off The Charts" by Adam Cesare
"Reborn" by The Behrg
"What's Worst" by David James Keaton
"Dead End" by Kristopher Triana
"What You Wish For" by Lilith Morgan
"King Shits" by Charles Austin Muir
"Cleanup On Aisle 3" by Adam Howe
"Bath Salt Fetus" by George Palacious
"Bored With Brutality" by MP Johnson
"Exposed" by Monica J. O'Rourke
"Eleanor" by Jason Parent
"The Scavengers" by Tony Knighton
"The Most Important Miracle" by Scott Emerson
"Hungry For Control" by Clare de Lune
"Clarissa" by Robert Essig & Jack Bantry
"Where The Sun Don't Shine" by Pete Kahle
"Blackbird Lullaby" by George Cotronis

Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 Details

Date : Published May 29th 2016 by Comet Press (first published 2016)

ISBN :

Randy Chandler (Editor) , Cheryl Mullenax (Editor) , Jeff Strand , Adam Cesare , Monica J. O'Rourke , David James Keaton , Adam Howe , Robert Essig , more... Jason Parent , Clare de Lune , Michael Paul Gonzalez , The Behrg , Kristopher Triana , Lilith Morgan , Charles Austin Muir , George Palacious , M.P. Johnson , Tony Knighton , Jack Bantry , Pete Kahle , George Cotronis , Scott Emerson (Contributor) ...less

Format : Kindle Edition 302 pages

Genre : Horror, Short Stories, Fiction, Anthologies, Splatterpunk, Audiobook

 [Download Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 Randy Chandler (Editor) , Cheryl Mullenax (Editor) , Jeff Strand , Adam Cesare , Monica J. O'Rourke , David James Keaton , Adam Howe , Robert Essig , more... Jason Parent , Clare de Lune , Michael Paul Gonzalez , The Behrg , Kristopher Triana , Lilith Morgan , Charles Austin Muir , George Palacious , M.P. Johnson , Tony Knighton , Jack Bantry , Pete Kahle , George Cotronis , Scott Emerson (Contributor) ...less

From Reader Review Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 for online ebook

Janie C. says

I am not a fast reader, and for once I am glad, because I enjoyed the hell out of this book. I was able to savor it and take in each story at my own pace. I am no stranger to hardcore horror. I've read extreme narratives alongside the more subtle novels that allow your mind to do the dirty work. I enjoy both styles, especially if the extreme novels are well written and imaginative.

This collection of 19 short horror stories fit the bill for me. I was not once disappointed. I recognized many of the authors, though several were new to me. I have all 19 names on my list of books to look for.

While all of the stories have their share of graphic violence, sex or gruesome creatures, they all share a piece of the same heart. The characters are all believable, and whether they are evil or innocent, you can feel their pain. They are human and their feelings are real. There are also monsters lurking among the pages. One of them wants to make trades with you. The rewards you receive are amazing, but the price is excruciating. Other monsters have beaks and teeth, and some will inject you with venom. Some of them are serial killers. A couple of them may even be your father and mother.

These stories are as much about human struggle and conflict as they are about nightmares and the supernatural. Each story will make you feel something. It may be sadness, regret, disgust, terror or pain. Prepare for some foreign and creative landscapes. If you are ready to face the darkness without trepidation, this book is for you.

The only negative comment I have is that the book could have benefited from some tighter editing, which takes my rating of 5 stars to a 4.5.

I received a free e-copy of this book from one of the authors in exchange for an honest review. Many thanks.

Andi Rawson says

4.5 stars

A horror collection from some of the leading horror authors in the genre? Yes, please. I have to say that you had me at "Adam Howe," and when I saw some of my other favorite authors in the lineup, I thought that Christmas came early this year.

That said, it's an anthology. I didn't love every story in here, but the stories I loved, I loved hard. My absolute favorites were (in this order): "Reborn" by The Behrg, "Cleanup on Aisle 3" by Adam Howe, "Awakening" by Jeff Strand, "Eleanor" by Jason Parent, "Readings Off The Charts" by Adam Cesare, and "What's Worst" by David James Keaton. I liked a lot of other ones but those are the ones that stuck with me. These are also short stories so I'm not going to tell you what they are about so you are just going to have to read them yourself. You're just going to have to read your own dead baby jokes.

As an obsessive (I hate the word "avid") horror reader, I wouldn't exactly classify many of these as hardcore (at least I don't think so...), so if that's the only thing stopping you: suck it up buttercup, you're reading

horror, not Twilight. And really, what good is horror if it's not horrific? You aren't reading The Year's Best Pansy Stories Volume #1.

I received an e-ARC of this from Adam Howe in exchange for an honest review and here it is.

Char says

4.5 stars!

Normally, I'm more of an atmospheric horror gal than a gore lover, however, I do believe there's room for both in the horror genre of today. I picked up this volume when it first came out, but it was the offer of the free audio, (in exchange for my honest review), that made it possible for me to read it now rather than some time in 2017. This was my first book narrated by Joe Hempel and I think he did a fine job, especially considering the often shocking subject matter.

There were a few "new to me" authors here and my favorite among them was The Behrg and his story, **Reborn**. THIS, this is the reason people don't leave babies on the steps of churches anymore. Reborn is my favorite type of short horror story-no messing around, BAM!! It hits you right in the face! The Behrg has been on my radar for awhile and now I have to finally acknowledge him. (You were right, Kimberly!)

The Most Important Miracle by Scott Emerson. Now, seriously, who the hell is this guy? From what kind of sick brain did this story emerge? More importantly, are there more stories in there?

There were a couple of tales from authors I am already familiar with that I really liked-Adam Howe's **Cleanup On Aisle 3** was one of them. It's a BADASS turning of the tables type story that had me cringing and laughing at the same time.

Jeff Strand's contribution **Awakening** had me laughing so hard I almost fell out of my chair. Rarely are suicide pacts THIS funny!

Lastly, Jason Parent's **Eleanor** knocked my socks off. Boot-i-ful?? Yep, you bet! Sick, twisted and beautiful.

Overall, this was an above average collection that lost nothing in the translation to audio. Most of these tales are brutal, gory and shocking though, so prepare yourself before you go wading in. It gets deep and rather slimy the further you go.

Highly recommended to fans of hardcore horror!

Thanks to Joe Hempel and Audiobook BOOM! for the free copy in exchange for my honest review.

Bill says

I received a copy of this anthology from an author friend of mine and I am super glad he thought of me. Thanks to "you know who you are!" And yes, he did have a story in here, and yes, it was awesome, and no, I'm not telling you who it was. Ha! It really doesn't matter anyway, because all of the stories in here were at a minimum pretty good to quite excellent. (Of course, your mileage may vary.)

Whenever I start an anthology I am always hit with a sense of anticipation and fear. Anticipation that I may run across a great new author and fear that I won't find any or the stories will suck and I will have to plod thru it. Maybe less so, with this one as the line-up of authors I was familiar with was stellar.

Well, good news. I wasn't disappointed with any of the stories and what's even better is that I really enjoyed all of the stories from the unknown (to me) authors. A well done collection of stories and authors. Solid 4+ Stars. Highly Recommended.

Nathan Robinson says

Okay, there a few stories in this that made me think WTF. So I knew what I was getting into with a title that includes Hardcore and Horror. There are definitely some "out there" stories in this, but the mix is good. It's not all dead babies and pints of fecal matter. So I've dived in and picked the highlights.

"Worth The Having" by Michael Paul Gonzalez is a fantastic opener to this collection. It's old school, be careful what you wish for, spooky horror, with a little bit of blood to lubricate the way.

Jeff Strand lightens the mood with "Awakening", with perhaps one of the funniest tales, as a psychotic killer suddenly realizes he may, in fact, be a psychotic killer.

"Readings Off The Charts" by Adam Cesare, is one of the less extreme stories, but it has a nice, Hitchcockian build up, as a guy will do what he can to get inside the pants of an Extreme Ghostbuster.

"Reborn" by The Behrg. Be wary of what you find on your doorstep, as a group of Catholics discover one dark and stormy yet. Sometimes, children aren't the sweetest things.

"What's Worst" by David James Keaton. Well written but completely fucked up. This guy need helps. I don't even want to talk about it.

"Dead End" by Kristopher Triana, The Twilight Zone for the bizarro generation as a murderer finds himself on a familiar road as he disposes of his latest victim. Interesting take on a familiar premise.

"What You Wish For" by Lilith Morgan, takes a couple who meet by chance on the train, and lets loose their wildest sexual fantasies upon one another. Which begs the question; is this what women are into nowadays? A fantastic and intense ride which tortures the reader until the ending.

"King Shits" by Charles Austin Muir, A trucker deals justice to bullies. Bloody, bloody justice.

"Cleanup On Aisle 3" by Adam Howe, in an out of the way convenience store, a battle of wits and bullets shapes up between a shop keeper and his latest robber. Tarantino would approve of the fantastic over the top-ness of this balls to the wall shoot-em-up.

"Bath Salt Fetus" by Jorge Palacios. I never got into GG Alin. This makes me not want to. Extreme, funny and sick. I felt like I wanted a have a very hot bath afterwards. Do not read if you're with child, know anyone who is with child, or was once a child yourself.

"Bored With Brutality" by MP Johnson, Bizarro tale in which GG Alin (again) gives up on the extreme life and decides to settle down in Normalville, suburbia. What could go wrong?

"Exposed" by Monica J. O'Rourke, who's the villain? Those who commit the crime, or those that seek dire vengeance? This story asks this question of how far are you willing to go to right a wrong, with a surprising twist.

"Eleanor" by Jason Parent, Religious guilt-a-plenty as a priest discovers a young female on his doorstep, who he decides to adopt and raise as his own. But what happens when she grows up and their attachment becomes stronger than ever?

"The Scavengers" by Tony Knighton, a brilliant little adventurous tale about poachers in the African bush who deal with back-stabbing and worse as their plans turn sour. Ivory noir as the darkness brings teeth, reminding the reader to never fuck with the natives.

"The Most Important Miracle" by Scott Emerson. Things suddenly turn psychotic in a diner for one fry cook

as he descends into deliberate madness, or is it much worse, is it real?

"Hungry For Control" by Clare de Lune, explores sexual revenge and bad feelings continue for a young woman who seeks vengeance on the man who used her sexually before the apocalypse. But now she won't even let the end of the world get in the way of serving her comeuppance.

"Clarissa" by Robert Essig & Jack Bantry, brings us a fucked up Fritzl-a-like case of a young girl entrapped in a basement, who dutifully plans her escape from her captor, but the plot soon thickens thicker than blood.

"Where The Sun Don't Shine" by Pete Kahle is a wonderful monster mash told in two alternating parts as a camping trip goes very wrong for four friends. The viewpoints told from before the tragedy and the resulting aftermath, makes this two stories in one.

"Blackbird Lullaby" by George Cotronis. An unlikely gothic romance sprouts up from a grisly support group, the tale is delightfully macabre as it treats gore and severe injuries as nothing more than a casual annoyance as the couple are devoured piece by piece by their demons.

Kim BookJunkie says

STORIES: 3 stars

PERFORMANCE: 5 stars

OVERALL: 4 stars

WHY I GAVE THE STORIES IN THIS ANTHOLOGY 3 STARS

The majority of the stories in this anthology were exceptionally well written. Most contained eloquence and graphic detail that led to a sense of believability despite how unrealistic the paranormal entity and it's bizarre behaviors were. For totally fantastical tales of things that can and will never happen in real life to be written so well that they were somewhat believable says a lot about the talented authors who contributed to this collection. I was entertained most of the time, often finding myself squirming and saying, "ewe" and, "gross" while listening to this audiobook (which I received free from the narrator in exchange for an honest review). If only the endings of the stories were as great...

WHY I DIDN'T GIVE THIS ANTHOLOGY MORE THAN 3 STARS

I don't care much for anthologies and this compilation is the perfect example of why that is true. The majority of the stories contained in this audiobook were captivating and entertaining.....until they reached their end. I became totally immersed in almost every story in this audiobook only to be shocked (and very frustrated) when the story ended in a totally anti-climactic way. More often than not, I would be on the edge of my seat, loving the story one moment then unexpectedly crestfallen upon realizing that the story had ended. I kept listening to one story after another, experiencing the same disappointment over and over.

I felt that the editors could've done a better job as far as where they placed each of the stories. One time I had to doublecheck to see if a new story had begun; apparently the editors didn't think it would be problematic to place two different stories about GG Allen back to back??? The editors also chose to place two different stories referring to hiding glass in food back to back. Perhaps they didn't realize they'd done this or maybe they did do it intentionally; regardless of why they placed these stories after one another, it was annoying and confusing.

PERFFORMANCE

Mr. Hempel is a ++++5 star performer! Despite having to read multiple stories comprised of various

characters and scenarios, he rose to the challenge and thoroughly succeeded! Regardless of the story he was reading, Hempel was consistently able to adjust his tone, volume, etc., always finding just the right level to suit each situation. He spoke with a smooth, even keeled tone of voice when needed and wasn't afraid to get creative when appropriate. I loved how he occasionally used a more theatrical voice or an accent, improving the level of entertainment while also helping us listeners differentiate between characters. Whatever voice he used, it always sounded believable and flowed seamlessly regardless of whether he was reading mellow narrative or squealing like a psychotic female character! Hempel is truly an outstanding narrator! If you're new to recording audiobooks, he's who I'd recommend emulating!

Kate says

4.5*

I listened to the audio of this book and thought that Joe Hempel was a fantastic narrator. I did find a few editing mistakes and not all the stories were for me, for that I knocked off half a star. On the whole this was a very good collection.

The stories in order were:

"Worth the having" by Michael Paul Gonzalez - A somewhat stomach churning look at what happens when you get everything you wish for and the price you have to pay. This one had me cringing at the details in some parts, a great start to the collection.

"Awakening" by Jeff Strand - Hilarious story where a psychopath realises he's a serial killer. I love strand's style and this one didn't disappoint.

"Readings off the charts" by Adam Cesare - Paranormal investigators rope in an unsuspecting amateur as they try and collect data. This was a bit predictable and I realised what the ending would be about half way through. This didn't spoil my enjoyment of it.

"Reborn" by The Behrg - A story of why churches no longer take in abandoned babies. This one was pretty brutal and had the added bonus of making you question the narrator.

"What's worst" by David James Keaton - Jason sees a dead baby on the road and decides to take it for a drive in his car. Very trippy read that has you seriously questioning the moral compass of the narrator. It didn't do much for me except make me angry. This story will seriously test some readers boundaries.

"Dead end" by Kristopher Triana - A serial killer notes something very familiar with the hitchhiker he picks up. A nice twist in the end with this story.

"What you wish for" by Lillith Morgan - Two people live out their fantasies, consequence free. Only one of them hasn't bargained on being attracted to a fledgling killer. Some romance and sex mixed in with the gore for this story, I enjoyed the writing but thought it could have been edited better to condense the story a bit more.

"King Shits" by Charles Austin Muir - A trucker dishes out brutal justice to bullies. Very violent and highly enjoyable.

"Cleanup On Aisle 3" by Adam Howe - What should have been a quick robbery turns into a cat and mouse game as the storekeeper turns the tables. Great story with a satisfying ending, it was also a lot more emotional than I was expecting.

"Bath Salt Fetus" by George Palacious - Maria is pregnant and wants to get rid of her baby, to do this she tries a new drug which has interesting side effects. Wrong, just very, very wrong.

"Bored With Brutality" by MP Johnson - Rocker GG Allen decides to live a normal life. This was one of the weaker stories for me and didn't really hold my interest.

"Exposed" by Monica J. O'Rourke - A mother is desperate to find her child and decides to take the law into

her own hands. How far will she go to find out the truth. Some eye watering detail in this story which ends with a great twist.

"Eleanor" by Jason Parent - Father Stuart takes in disfigured baby Eleanor after she is abandoned on the steps of the church. As she becomes a teenager their relationship becomes more intense and confusing to them both. A slow burn story with a heartbreaking ending.

"The Scavengers" by Tony Knighton - Brutal story of 2 ivory poachers who will do anything to get a bigger share of the deal. Things do not go to plan. Great story, I love karma.

"The Most Important Miracle" by Scott Emerson - All hail the God of Breakfast. A diner cook turns psychotic and decides to cook a breakfast to remember. Short and not at all sweet but very enjoyable.

"Hungry For Control" by Clare de Lune - A woman who was in a mutually abusive relationship before the zombie plague, sees a chance to get some revenge. I really enjoyed the story even though I thought the MC wasn't very likeable and was just as sexually abusive as her ex.

"Clarissa" by Robert Essig & Jack Bantry - Pregnant Clarissa plots to escape the basement where she's been kept for years under the guard of her rapist. All is not as it seems as her chance arrives. Depressing and disturbing especially when you think of some of the real life equivalents.

"Where The Sun Don't Shine" by Pete Kahle - Gordy wakes up after being on a trip for 4 days but can't remember anything about the trip and is exhibiting strange behaviour. This starts off with Gordy waking up covered in blood, mud and vomit and then alternates between the actual trip and the continuing aftermath. Creature feature that was great fun to read.

"Blackbird Lullaby" by George Cotronis - Romance blossoms in a support group for people whose demons are literally killing them. A nice end to the collection although perhaps a little too short to get much out of it.

Scott Emerson says

I've got a story in here ("The Most Important Miracle"), so any impartial review would be impossible, but I'll say this: if you have a taste for extreme and uncompromising fiction, you'll find a wide variety of depravities in this anthology.

I also appreciate that, instead of just hitting the reader over the head with a barrage of sickening gross-out material, the editors chose some subtlety and nuance in their selections, and even challenge what the definition of "hardcore horror" can be.

Michael Hicks says

This one's a decent enough anthology, but not one that rocked my socks off. There's some good stories in here, but the volume, taken as a whole, left me a bit cold. The ones that I enjoyed, I really f'ing enjoyed, though!

Jeff Strand delivers a great and darkly humorous serial killer story, but it's The Behrg's "Reborn" that stood out the most for me. Violent and wonderfully gruesome, this story tells you why churches no longer accept babies left at their doorsteps. Other stand-outs include Adam Cesare, Pete Khale, Adam Howe, and Jason Parent. Khale is the only author in this group I hadn't read a prior work by, whereas I've read at least one or two titles, if not more, from Cesare, Howe, and Parent. I fully expected them to deliver, and naturally they did.

Narrated by Joe Hempel, each story come through smoothly. Hempel's a great reader and he injects plenty of fun, keeping the gruesome antics entertaining and vivid throughout.

Petra says

My original Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 audiobook review and many others can be found at Audiobook Reviewer.

I thought this collection of 19 horror stories would be suitable listening for Halloween week and it did indeed end up to be very captivating and entertaining. I don't actually listen to/read a lot of horror and don't very often pick short stories, so this was quite a change for me. Perhaps because of that, I was only familiar with one of the authors, The Behrg. But since finishing this I had to check out the work of some of the others because I was impressed by their stories.

The marketing blurb for this is actually true for once. These are truly hardcore, extreme stories that disregard taboos and boundaries. I'm not very squeamish and tend to enjoy dark and graphic stories but some of these actually had me screaming "yuck" and "gross" repeatedly. However, they weren't as scary and creepy as I was expecting them to be but instead with a much stronger focus on sex than I had anticipated. So be warned, while I would wholeheartedly recommend this collection, it definitely isn't for everyone.

Nonetheless, some of the stories are quite subtle and leave you time for a breather. There is a good range of different themes covered. From serial killers to supernatural occurrences, from strong females and weak priests to zombies, there is a lot of variety. Out of the 19 stories, I can honestly say there were only maybe two that I didn't particularly care for. One of the GG Allin stories? Maybe it's because I'm a mother, but I was glad to get to the end of that one!

The really strong point for me was that all the stories made you feel something, and I don't just mean the obvious terror or disgust. Monica J. O'Rourke's "Exposed" about a woman hunting down child abductors packed a powerful emotional punch. Considering these were short stories, the characters were surprisingly well developed. It wasn't short of humor either. Jeff Strand's "Awakening" had me laughing out loud, and "The Most Important Miracle" by Scott Emerson was pretty funny, too.

The entire anthology is narrated by Joe Hempel and he does a great job. His normal narrating voice was smooth and pleasant to listen to with great pacing, and when he voiced the different characters he used the right amount of acting, different accents, and tones to make this into a vivid, consistent and engaging performance. The production was flawless.

Story: 4 stars. Narration: 5 stars.

Audiobook provided for review by the audiobookreviewer.com

Malum says

Anthologies are really hard to make great. With different authors, all with different styles and ability, it is nearly impossible to make the entire thing a solid, great work. This book is no exception to that rule.

This book also suffers from its gimmick, because many of the writers in this collection sacrifice plot for shock factor. What's worse, there were few stories here that were actually shocking (to be fair, though, I have a VERY high tolerance to gore and "shock value" in fiction).

Perhaps most damning is the fact that none of these stories were the "stand out" story in the collection. After I had read over half of it, I went back to the contents and read the names of the stories again and I couldn't remember anything about many of the ones that I just read.

I will say this, though: the best stories were the "silly" ones that mixed gore with humor (the two GG Allin inspired stories, for example). The idea of "hardcore horror" is already kind of ridiculous, so when an author gave you that "wink" that showed that they were in on the joke, it was pretty fun.

David Dubrow says

Taking the title of Comet Press's anthology Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1 at face value rather than a product of the editors' preferences is a disquieting proposition, but we'll go with it. There's a great deal to be learned about the horror genre as it stands today from this collection, some of it good, some of it dismaying.

The three stories written by women all involve female protagonists making male characters helpless and doing unspeakable things to them. Lilith Morgan's What You Wish For adds a supernatural element to advance this motif, when a young man meets an apparently innocent young woman on the New York subway, and sexual hijinks with knives and blood ensue. Exposed by Monica J O'Rourke tells the story of a woman torturing a kidnapper of young girls. Clare de Lune's Hungry for Control takes us to the zombie apocalypse, where a bisexual woman finds (and ties up) the abusive cop she had been sleeping with before zombies destroyed civilization. That these three stories share the same theme is not accidental, but it must be left to the reader to draw any conclusions.

Masculinity, femininity, and sexual politics are addressed by some of the other authors in the collection. In Kristopher Triana's Dead End, a serial killer of women is called a misogynist, as though such a label is at least as bad as killing women and leaving their bodies in the desert. Jorge Palacios's Bath Salt Fetus judges Puerto Rico as "a hellhole seething with Catholic guilt, a judgmental attitude, and unfiltered sexism." In it, a young woman's self-aborted baby turns into the late punk rocker GG Allin: someone tough, strong, and who takes no shit (in fact, he eats some). The same GG Allin transmogrifies into a suburban husband and father in MP Johnson's Bored With Brutality, but it's an uneasy transformation, made more so when Allin's true nature must emerge to deal with an external threat. There are, it seems, no more recently dead degenerates to resurrect as male power figures. In furtherance of this masculinity deficit, the hapless, foolish protagonist Gordy in Pete Kahle's Where the Sun Don't Shine is described as, "the typical American white male," a disparaging description meant to tell you everything you need to know, and not just about Gordy.

Issues of faith also get a workout. The Behrg's Reborn involves an ineffectual Catholic priest unable to deal with true evil entering his church. Jason Parent's Eleanor also involves an ineffectual Catholic priest, along with said priest's unusual and grotesque ward. Both of these priests do like the ladies, however, a welcome departure from today's brave, shocking, and hackneyed portrayals of Catholic clergy as homosexual pedophiles. To round out the trinity, so to speak, Scott Emerson's The Most Important Miracle posits a bizarre form of worship and a disturbing, if delicious god to be sacrificed.

The stand-outs in the collection include Michael Paul Gonzalez's Worth the Having, where disturbing, generational bargains are struck; and Adam Howe's Cleanup on Aisle 3, a hilarious (and sickening) story of a convenience store stickup. Adam Cesare's Readings off the Charts is a fun piece that keeps you guessing, though it's a bit less hardcore compared to the other stories. Blackbird Lullaby by George Cotronis shows us the unfortunate members of a club you don't want to be part of, and Tony Knighton's The Scavengers deals with mercenaries, natives, and a terrible tribal revenge.

In just about every short story collection you'll encounter there are going to be stories you like, some you don't, and others you skip through. Pleasantly, in Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volume 1, the highs elevate the anthology far more than the lows drag it down. There's imagery in here to turn even the most seasoned

stomach (heh). Horror, as a genre, isn't what it used to be, and whether you embrace the change or not, I'm sure you'll find at least a few stories in this anthology worthy of your attention.

Kimberly says

4.5 stars!

I was amazed at the quality and versatility of the stories in the YEAR'S BEST HARDCORE HORROR Volume 1. Editors Randy Chandler, and Cheryl Mullenax compiled 19 tales with varying degrees of gore, mutilation, torture, violence, and sexual torment--bringing them together into one book for the fans of extreme, hardcore horror.

After I had read and rated each story, I was surprised to note that I had given a 5-star rating to seven of them, and a 4.5-star to an additional four! As in any collection, if I can say that I enjoyed at least half of the selections to some degree, I consider it a good purchase. In this book, I can honestly say that there were only two or three that I, personally, didn't care for. All of the rest, I felt, brought something new and "fresh" to the genre.

While I'm not going to delve into every individual tale--I'll leave that for other readers to discover for themselves--I will highlight some of my personal favorites.

--"Reborn", by The Behrg. This one still makes me shudder every time I even THINK of it!

--"Eleanor", by Jason Parent. I had read this one previously in the Dead Roses Anthology, and it was no less haunting and emotionally disturbing this time around! The ending will stay with you, indefinitely.

--"Exposed", by Monica J. O'Rourke. This one is not for the squeamish . . .

--"Awakening", by Jeff Strand. The dark, morbid humor he injects into his tales always make them a favorite of mine.

--"Worth the Having", by Michael Paul Gonzalez. A new fiendish approach to the origins of Halloween.

--"Cleanup on Aisle 3", by Adam Howe. An original concept that had me glued to every page of the story!

--"Where the Sun Don't Shine", by Pete Kahle. Nothing could have prepared me for this one . . .

Some other authors whose contributions made me want to look up more by them include Charles Austin Muir, Tony Knighton, George Cotronis, and Kristopher Triana.

All together, I felt that this was most certainly an above-average collection that fans of extreme horror will want to make sure they have a copy of.

Highly recommended!

I received an e-copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

The Grim Reader says

Comet Press' anthology of hardcore horror features some of today's brightest (or should that be darkest?) stars currently operating within the genre. I have read a great deal of work by many of the authors featured here and although there are a few gems, sadly there are some duds too. The title is a little misleading in that quite a few of the stories weren't in fact very hardcore at all. That's not to say they weren't good stories, but the suggestion is that these tales would turn the stomach and this was rarely the case. I am perhaps being a little harsh on this book but 2016 has seen some exceptional anthologies and for me this one fell a bit short in comparison.

Anthologies are usually hit and miss, though if you enjoy the majority of stories on offer then the editors have done a good job. There were a few tales that I really did dig. David James Keaton's 'What's worst' is hardcore, out there, weird. Some people will love it, some will hate it. I was still thinking about it long after I finished the book, so bravo, sir. The Behrg's 'Reborn' was another very cool story featuring a baby on a doorstep! I'm not saying any more about this story except that it's a good one. Jeff Strand does what he does best with 'Awakening' in the shortest story in the collection. It's filled with Strand's trademark wit and guts and though I'm not usually a huge fan of humour in horror, this one is great. 'Dead End' by Kristopher Triana was pretty damn good and a new take on a familiar tale. Of the duds, the two stories featuring G.G. Allin I definitely would've done without. I'm not a fan of the guy at all and particularly the story by M.P. Johnson (a writer who I usually enjoy reading) was a bit too bonkers and felt really out-of-place to me. Similarly with the tale by Charles Austin Muir, another writer that has impressed in the past didn't excite me at all with 'King Shits'. A couple of the later stories just sort of passed me by and I struggled to remember much about them at all. Things pick up with Monica J. O'Rourke's tale. It's really quite disturbing and very well done and I also really enjoyed Pete Kahle's story, though it did remind me a little of Nick Cutter's 'The Troop'. Still, it was gory, fun and kinda made my skin crawl, so job done! The best story, for me was Jason Parent's 'Eleanor'. Very dark, a little kinky and the ending was top-notch. I've read this one before somewhere but it is an absolute doozy. Great stuff! The final story 'Blackbird Lullaby' was also cool. Macabre, short but sweet.

The other stories weren't bad, just not very memorable. Whenever I finish anthologies I take a look back at all the titles and try to remember what they were about, delivering a brief synopsis inside my head. Unfortunately there were a few stories where I couldn't remember anything about them. Your mileage always varies with anthologies. Also, there have been some excellent ones released this year as I mentioned earlier. For me, this one was pretty good, but not great.

Daniela says

SO. GOOD.

Seriously, it starts off slightly weird then it escalates until it truly is hardcore; not necessarily because of the gore, but mostly because of the characters and the situations and emotions described. There is not a single bad story here; you will enjoy some more than others, obviously, but you won't dislike any story. You just cannot, they're way too good and the writing is unexpectedly good. This was an amazing surprise and I enjoyed every page of this anthology. I'll be checking on some of the authors for sure. The highlights, for me, were: Awakening, What's Worst, Dead End, Eleanor, The Most Important Miracle, and Hungry For Control. But they were all good, these were just amazing. Go read this weird book, have a glass of wine and praise the almighty God of Breakfast!!!!
