

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 51 (2024)
Heft: 1: Behind the incense clouds, the dark corners of the Catholic Church appear

Buchbesprechung: Titeuf 18 : suivez la mèche [ZEP]

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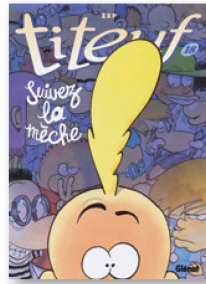
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Zep asks Titeuf to save the planet



ZEP
"Titeuf 18
– Suivez la mèche"
Ed. Glénat,
48 pages, CHF 19.00

The character of Titeuf has hardly changed since he first appeared in 1993. He remains a ten-year-old boy – having started out as an eight-year-old – with a prominent cowlick sticking up from his otherwise bald head. By contrast, his world has turned upside down. In "Suivez la mèche" (which translates loosely as "Follow the thread"), the 18th volume in the series, Zep's childhood games have been superseded by smartphones. In the old days, "we climbed trees, ran down the street and drew attention to ourselves by playing the fool," Titeuf's grandmother tells him. This was also Zep's world, whereas now the streets are full of sport utility vehicles and throngs of people all engrossed in their phones. Having failed to make the

grade in maths, Titeuf is yet to receive his own phone. "Suivez la mèche" features two motifs: the degradation of our environment and the impact of the screen. "When I'm big, I will be a key influencer and I'll be able to fix the mistakes of grown-ups... and reduce carbon levels," states Titeuf on the back cover. As with every Titeuf edition, the cartoon sees the world from a child's perspective. The jokes do not shy away from sensitive territory. For example, Manu, a friend of Titeuf, is approached by a pretty girl called Emma on TikTok. The image is actually a front for a dangerous paedophile, as the two friends find out. "But I am your real friend," Titeuf reassures him. Titeuf has more or less given up on winning Nadia's heart. He has grown closer to Ramatou, a vegetarian. Not eating meat is a statement by the children to show their opposition to the plundering of natural resources by adults, claims Zep. As regards romance, the Geneva cartoonist provides Titeuf with another option: Thérèse. This slightly otherworldly girl irritates our hero, as she never gives him a straight answer. She also intrigues him slightly. In any case, Zep declares a fondness for this character. Not least because Thérèse does not need followers. "Suivez la mèche" has something for adults as well. Zep touches on the gender issue. Does the fact that he practises kissing on his image in the mirror make him homosexual, autosexual or double-sexual? That is the question. The role of the father also comes up in an amusing sketch, where Titeuf's father does everything he tells his son not to do. Zep was unable to save the world. The future is in the hands of Titeuf.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

maybe the artists should advertise their own concerts more as they used to do 100 years ago. Young people have to be better at self-promotion." And maybe the younger generation should also put their trust in the older and wiser Gabetta.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS