

## Review of “Henri le Chat Noir”

By Pooella Purrsons, for [catboxpress.com](http://catboxpress.com)

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### Henri le Chat Noir Videos

**Pooella’s rating: 5 Tails Up!**



**YouTube.com, [HenriLeChatNoir channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)**

A series of 12 short videos starring Henri le Chat Noir. Black and white, narrated in French with English subtitles. Written, directed, filmed and produced by human Will Braden. Free on YouTube.com.

My purr-sonal favs:

“Paw de Deux” 2012 (Over 8 million views on YouTube!)

“Henri3, Le Vet” 2013

“Henri6, Cat Littérature” 2013

“Henri8 – Artiste” 2014



Henri 2 Paw de Deux

Henri le Chat Noir (Henry the Black Cat) first pounced on the scene several years ago in an obscure video titled simply, "Henri." Since then, with the help of his human caretaker and filmmaker, Will Braden, this striking feline with his unique existential philosophy has leaped into stardom. Henri has attained viral (meaning wildly popular, *not* a pet disease) status on YouTube with almost 45,000 worldwide subscribers and many millions of views. Braden's work has won international recognition and numerous awards, including the 2012 Internet Cat Video Film Festival's coveted Golden Kitty award.

Unlike others in his species that have been propelled to fame using only vulgar displays of congenital deformities, Henri is a noble creature with a handsome puss, and he is a true intellectual, an "*artiste*." Following in the paw-steps of great Existentialist philosophers, such as Dogstoyevsky, Jean-Paw Sartre and Camew, he reflects upon his being, his *raison d'être*, bathed in self-doubt about his feline existence, a misanthrope misunderstood by those around him.

Henri articulates the dichotomy of feelings so many house cats share. The films project the cat's anxiety and confusion as he ponders the paradoxical nature of his life. He is physically comfortable yet emotionally disconcerted in a home where he is well cared for by his humans. He is loved and pampered yet unfulfilled, fed delicacies but never satisfied, free yet tethered by an invisible cord. Henri lives in a constant state of ennui and low-level despair. His cardboard box is a metaphor for the emptiness in his soul; the open and closed pet door symbolic of his frustrating search for metaphysical freedom.

Despite his obvious superiority, Henri must suffer the indignities that are part of the lifestyle of an ordinary household pet—the often humiliating degradation of mundane activities, such as a trip to the vet ("Henri3, Le Vet") and being dressed in a Halloween costume ("Henri4, L'Haunting"). He speaks often about being forced to cohabitate with a feline he regards as a vacuous creature. "The white idiot," as he refers to him, is an insufferable sycophant that earns Henri's disdain as he happily fawns around the humans in return for affection and treats.

Henri struggles to fund his purr-pose despite the absurdity of his being—his life of luxury juxtaposed with the unrelenting, indescribable angst that haunts him and cannot be alleviated, even by extended catnaps and Party Mix. He is plagued by something he cannot quite fathom...a certain *je ne sais quois*.

Braden's use of black and white film serves to amplify the bipolar nature of Henri's existence and highlight his stark reality. Henri narrates in French. Though he speaks French only adequately, like a second-year student, *je comprends* he must communicate in the only language that effectively conveys the depth of his profound introspection. And the English subtitles serve not only to translate, but to underscore the dialog. Existential piano pieces provide a melancholy musical backdrop for Henri's contemplations.

Throughout the films, though Henri portrays a character with self-inflicted depression, his droll, sardonic humor and wit are also evident and often hilarious—"LOL," as they say on the Internet. Henri expresses some resentment at his human. He feels "the thieving filmmaker" may have used him as a pawn to achieve success. However, Henri has been able to launch an independent endeavor with his first litter-ary offering: *Henri, le Chat Noir: The Existential Musings of an Angst-Filled Cat*. (See the reference following this review.)

Though he sometimes displays the self-centered arrogance inherent to many grrr-eat thinkers, most viewers will feel empathy for Henri, having to slog through 9 lives feeling so despondent...Me-OW! Quick, somebody get this cat a Kitty Prozac and a bag of catnip! All-in-

all, these films are a rare, catty treat. They provide paws-itive, intelligent, entertainment, and I purred loudly while watching them. I give them 5 Tails Up!

Pooella Purrsons 🐾



## Henri's Book



### *Henri, le Chat Noir: The Existential Musings of an Angst-Filled Cat.*

Ten Speed Press. Berkeley CA. Hardcover, 96 pages. First edition, January, 2013.

Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). (Also sold as an ebook.) Average customer review: five stars.

Henri's first book followed several of his films after his popularity soared. Frustrated by his humans' success using his talent as a platform, he decided to strike out on his own and write his autobiography. This gift book is a collection of Henri's unique, existential reflections and black and white artistic photographs of Henri. "...a window into the tortured soul" of a world-class feline philosopher.

*Note: I have not yet read or reviewed Henri's book. -PP.*

## Henri's Website

<http://www.henrilechatnoir.com/>

Contains links to William Braden and Henri's work, news updates and a store with the inevitable t-shirt collection.



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## About Poella Purrsons

Ms. Purrsons is a guest reviewer for Cat Box Press. Her feline flair for purr-snickety scrutiny and her catty remarks provide readers with entertaining insight into a variety of media about pets.

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