

O BIG PLANET RBIT

Volume 10 #9

"News, reviews and opinions from the world of comics"

November 2006



Marvel: More than Civil War

By Ian Delaurentis

I've never been one to criticize a gigantic cross-over, but almost all of the comics being published by Marvel these days relate to their Civil War storyline in some way. This isn't necessarily a bad thing since a lot of these tie-ins are actually good entertainment, but the other day I read that there was going to be a Civil War cross-over involving Howard the Duck. That's not a typo, Howard the Duck is really on his way to the front lines of the biggest war in comics history. This insanity got me to wondering what books Marvel had on tap that were cool and could maybe provide a distraction while we wait for the rest of Civil War to reach an armistice. Turns out that there are some real winners on the way:

Bullet Points

I'm curious what J. Michael Straczynski thinks of that Heroes show on NBC. It's got some real odd similarities to Rising Stars if you ask me. Eh, I guess the whole experience must be what it was like for Gene Roddenberry to watch Babylon

5, but I digress. What I do know is that JMS writes some seriously awesome comics. Bullet Points is an Elseworlds-style series that looks at how one single bullet can change the entire course of the Marvel Universe. When both the scientist who created the Super Soldier serum and a young MP named Ben Parker are killed before Steve Rogers can become Captain America, what will the ripple effect be on characters like Iron Man, Spider-Man, The Hulk, and the Fantastic Four? The answers are going to definitely surprise you. It's no real secret that sometimes these non-continuity stories can be more concept than actual story, but it's a safe bet that Bullet Points will more than deliver what you're looking for.

Immortal Iron Fist

A couple years ago people started telling me that the Daredevil comic had gotten really good. I thought, "Who the hell cares about Daredevil?" but by the end of the Brian Bendis run I was swearing up and down that Daredevil was one of the best comics I had ever read. A few months from now a lot of people are going to be saying how great this Iron Fist comic is and you'll be thinking, "Who the hell cares about Iron Fist?" The trick here is that writer Ed Brubaker has the ability to make Iron Fist as good as Daredevil was. I say this because as much as it pains me to admit it, I think Daredevil has gotten better since Brubaker took it over from Bendis. And now Brubaker's stepping up to make something out of the nothing that was Iron Fist. He'll succeed for the same reason that both he and Bendis had landmark runs on Daredevil – they both cared about

the character. Brubaker has gone on record as saying that Iron Fist is one of his personal favorites, so expect him to go the extra mile to make this book a success. How exactly Iron Fist came to be one of his favorites is a good question, but one we won't be answering today.

newuniversal

Here's a semi-embarrassing story about me: One summer back when I was a kid I saw an ad on TV talking about this "New Universe" that Marvel Comics was creating. The ad seemed to imply that this universe was going to take the place of the existing Marvel where Spider-Man and The X-Men lived. I found this news deeply troubling and spent a lot of time wondering how Marvel could get rid of all of the cool heroes and replace them with a bunch of guys I'd never heard of. Keep in mind that this was way before the Internet existed, and I couldn't just go online to figure out what was going on. By the time the New Universe showed up on the stands, it was apparent to even a child that it was no threat to the regular Marvel Universe. It's strange now to think of comics having ads on TV, but it's even stranger to think that Marvel thought a series of books that included one starring the kicker from a football team would ever succeed. Either way, Warren Ellis has found some reason to recreate the entire New Universe again. Since, it's Warren, I'm more than willing to blindly accept that this book will be awesome. The premise involves normal people suddenly getting super powers after a comet passes the Earth. Hey that sounds oddly like the plot to Rising Stars...and Heroes...



Justice Society of America #1

I should start out by saying that I loved the first couple years of the last JSA series. It acted as the linchpin that held most of DC's continuity together, introduced characters and story elements that are still vital today, and it was excessively violent. I encourage you to go back and read the first few collections and see what I'm talking about. With that said, I found it kind of odd when the title drifted off into cancellation right before Infinite Crisis without the

promise of a brand new re-launch as soon as the cross-over ended. Regardless, here is a shiny new JSA written by Geoff Johns and featuring covers by Alex Ross. The team is pretty much the same as where we left it, which is a very good thing. This is a welcome return for this book.

New Avengers: Illuminati #1 (of 5)

"Retconning" is the phrase used in comics to describe what happens when new information is added to historical information via flashbacks or retellings. This new information effectively changes the previously established facts and creates a new status quo. This Illuminati mini-series by Brian Bendis might as well be called "New Avengers: The Retconning" because it examines all of the places throughout Marvel history where this secret group has intervened to shape events to their satisfaction. I'd like to point out that a third of this group is comprised of recovering alcoholics which explains their odd fascination with interventions.

Onslaught Reborn #1 (of 5)

The long awaited return of Onslaught? Because we



demanding it? Pencils and cover by Rob Liefeld? Is it April 1st already? Are we being "Punked?" Did somebody at Marvel editorial lose a bet? Between this and the retuning New Universe I'm expecting a Valiant Comics reboot at any second. What's left of my conscience compels me to point out that proceeds of this book will be donated to the Sam Loeb College Scholarship Fund. Now I feel bad for making fun of it and have to buy two copies of each issue.

Also On Sale:

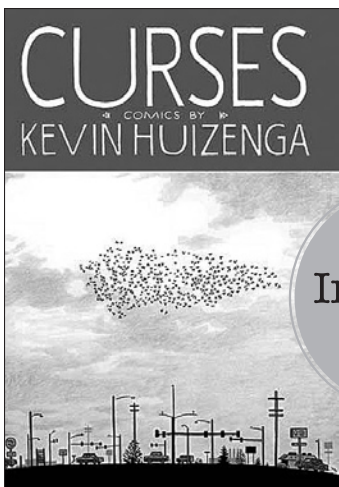
Both Hawkeye & The Scarlet

Witch return in **New Avengers #26**. ... **Criminal** by Ed Brubaker is better than half of the shows that debuted on national television this season. ... **Planet Hulk** is oddly fantastic and hopefully leading into an event that will top Civil War in terms of scale next summer called **World War Hulk**. It's shockingly good. ... Don't forget to check out all of the new Wildstorm books including **Midnighter**, **The Authority**, **Gen-13**, **Deathblow**, **Networks**, and Grant Morrison and Jim Lee's **Wildcats**. ... Speaking of which, Grant Morrison's **Batman** is wicked awesome. ... Huge props to Brian K. Vaughan's new **Dr. Strange** series. It's fascinatingly well conceived, and proves that good writing beats out gimmicky character reboots every day of the week. ... **Desolation Jones** by Warren Ellis has returned with issue #7 and should be considered required reading by this point. ... Garth Ennis says **The Boys** will "Out-Preacher Preacher." That'll be hard, but he's off to a pretty great start...



The Facts.
By Ian Delaurentis

Indyville
By Kevin Panetta



Huizenga is, I would recommend picking up a copy of Ganges #1 from Fantagraphics. You will not be disappointed. If you do know who Kevin Huizenga is, I would imagine that you're as excited about this book as I am!

A good portion of the book features Huizenga's stoic protagonist, Glenn Ganges, dealing with philosophical questions about everything from fertility to strip malls and shouldn't be missed by anyone who loves good comics.

Let Us Be Perfectly Clear by Paul Hornschemeier

This is one of the best things I picked up at SPX this year. The book is split down the middle like those stupid Marvel Adventures books they sell at 7-11 but with all the stupid sucked out. Half depressing

comedies and half comedically



depressing, Let Us Be Perfectly Clear is well executed, and in spite of Hornschemeier using a variety of art styles, the result is a surprisingly cohesive anthology.

Pirates of Coney Island by Rick Spears

& Vasilis Lolos

I love this book. It's got a good tight script by Spears and great art/coloring by Lolos. The punk rock meets The Warriors feel to Pirates is undeniably cool and lends itself well to all sorts of ultra-violence. Plus, The Cherries are the best girl gang this side of The Dagger Debs!

Project: Romantic by Various Awesome People

The third in AdHouse's Project series, Project: Romantic lives up to the high bar set by its predecessors. Hope Larson, Kaz Strzepek, Aaron Renier, Junko Mizuno, Joel Priddy, Scott Morse, Chris Pitzer, Liz Prince, Mike Huddleston and a bunch of other folks writing stories about love. It's great. Super-great even.



October was a good month for Indy comics. The Small Press Expo was great this year, so I thought I would talk about some books that made their debut at SPX 2006!

Curses by Kevin Huizenga

Well, if you don't know who Kevin

Wrestling With Civil War Problems

So here we are at the halfway point for both DC's 52 and Marvel's Civil War series. There have been highs as well as some really perplexing lows, and we still have a long way to go on both books. The current editorial and sales efforts at Marvel and DC make this an unprecedented time in comics and I'm not sure if it's for the better or the worse. Here's why:

I read an online column a few weeks back by a gentleman who has worked in the business side of comics for a long time. I've never really agreed with much of his ramblings, but his thoughts about 52 and Civil War seemed especially wrong to me. He stated a theory along the lines that Marvel and DC were blowing it with 52 and Civil War because the stories were tailored for existing readers from the comics market and not for readers new to the scene. This seems off-base for two reasons. First of all, every anecdote I've heard about 52 and Civil War is that they are bringing in new customers left and right. Both projects have managed to generate massive amounts of mainstream press. This has brought people who used to read comics back into the stores looking to find out more about what's going on. I think it's a lot smarter to try and build the market by enticing fans that have left the scene to come back then it is to look for first-time readers. New readers will come later, once the market has seen continued growth via the recouping of those who fled in droves over the latter part of the 90's. Taking what momentum DC and Marvel brought into the beginning of 2006 and using it to leverage new readers would have just alienated the core base they had worked so hard to put into place.

The other reason I disagree with this gentleman's argument is that 52 and Civil War are hardly the most confusing, continuity-driven stories we've seen in comics. In fact, 52 is remarkably easy to follow when you consider the immense scope of the plot. Basically, 52 is the story of what happens when Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman aren't around, and it involves a bunch of characters whose stories pick up at the



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first week of the series. On the other hand, I'm starting to think that Civil War isn't even set in Marvel continuity because it takes so many liberties with what's going on. And this is the point where I start to agree with Mr. Online Columnist that Civil War is messed up; I just have different reasons for reaching this conclusion.

I want to say right now that I think parts of Civil War have been extremely well done and that the entire premise is a brave and exciting thing for Marvel to have done. I just wish they would have spent some more time setting it up. Is it me, or did this whole Cap vs. Iron Man thing come out of nowhere? Marvel is spending over a year laying the

seeds for next summer's event with World War Hulk, but Civil War just arrived. Yes, there are inherent philosophical differences between Iron Man and Captain America, but those differences reaching a forever pitch this fast is hard to explain. A few smaller fights between the two last year and a few more events like what happened with the New Warriors to help explain the point of view of the average citizen in the Marvel Universe would have gone a long way toward making all of this feel more real.

When Civil War started, Marvel sort of insinuated that the series would be written from a non-partisan standpoint. That went out the window in the first issue. Iron Man and his crew are clearly the bad guys here. In fact, Reed Richards and Tony Stark are nearing crazy-villain status with their prisons and martial law. The Marvel characters have always had flaws — it's what made them unique — but now those flaws are starting to come off as the dominating parts of these personalities. It's going to be incredibly hard to undue this perception that Tony, Reed, Hank Pym and the rest of that group are anything but jerks (I wanted to use a much stronger word there). And this is why Civil War is off the mark so far.

Even if Marvel does find a way to make all of these declarations of character resonate after Civil War is over (and I think they will), I'll still be amazed by some of the things that happened on the way to this point. The heavy-handed political metaphors and jumps in logic are one thing. Hank Pym passionately referring to a recently deceased Goliath as one of his best friends after we haven't seen the character in 20-years is another.

Unmasking Spider-Man is another... but the Thor Clone is just too much. This is a lot like when they had two Undertakers in the WWE. Nobody cared then either because it was a stupid idea even by pro-wrestling standards. Think about that. The Thor Clone is dumber than an idea Vince McMahon had a decade ago to sell tickets to Wrestlemania. There better be a pretty freaking good excuse for this one. In the meantime I'll be printing "Iron Man 3:16" shirts to sell next summer at Wizard World.



Big Planet 20th Anniversary

Usually I use this space to show off something "astounding" from the history of comics (hence the title). Well, this month I'm writing about something that's completely astounding and that's the 20th Anniversary of Big Planet Comics. The best I can figure out is that I started shopping at Big Planet when I was 11 years-

Journey into Astonishment
By Ian Delaurentis

old (I'm 29 now...shudder.) I was the second person ever to have Box #80 in the old location on Cordell Avenue. My mom found Joel's ad in the Yellow Pages. As a direct result of that introduction to Big Planet, I've worked at all three stores, written 4,000 issues of this newsletter, been able to have a career in

comics, and use my Big Planet experiences at almost every turn. And I'm far from the only Big Planet alumni who is indebted to the stores for their further adventures in comics... we have quite the extended family.

Big Planet is without a doubt one of the very best comic stores in the entire world. What Joel, Greg, Peter, Jared and all of the Big Planet employees have created is a place where people

feel good about going to get their comics and a brand name that is respected in every corner of the industry. Running a comic store is a lot of hard work, but it is immensely satisfying especially when our customers have been as great as each of you have. Thank you for helping Big Planet reach that milestone, we hope to see you again in another 20. I'm sure that sentence just made Joel wince.



Captain America And The Falcon: The Swine TP

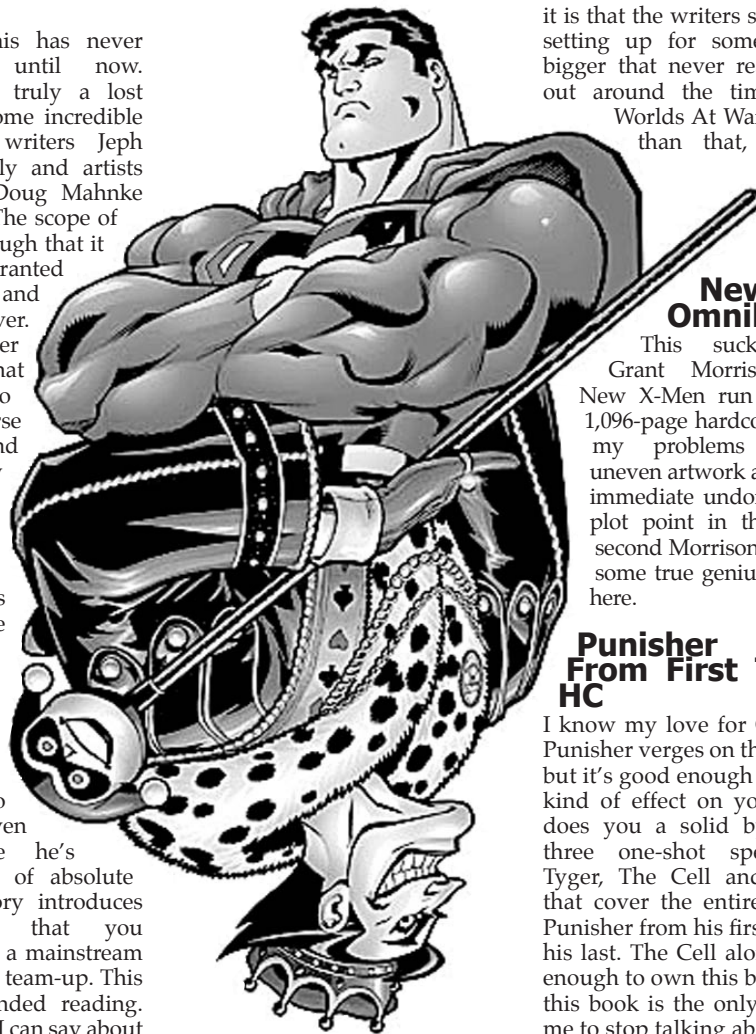
This volume collects an ultra-cool Cap story written and drawn by Jack Kirby that spanned issues #206-214 and Annuals #3-4. It guest stars the Red Skull, Nick Fury, S. H. I. E. L. D., Magneto and a unique collection of evil mutants, the X-Men, and some really off the wall Kirby stuff with a villain named the "Bio-Fanatic."

Trade Secrets
By Ian Delaurentis

Superman: Emperor

Joker TP

I can't believe this has never been reprinted until now. Emperor Joker is truly a lost classic featuring some incredible talent including writers Jeph Loeb and Joe Kelly and artists Ed McGuinness, Doug Mahnke and Todd Nauck. The scope of the story is big enough that it should have warranted "event" status and a giant cross-over. Basically, the Joker gains powers that allow him to reshape the universe in his image and rule over his new kingdom any way he pleases and Batman and Superman are left to try and put things back to normal. The great thing about Emperor Joker is that it plays the Joker as a scary, sadistic maniac who is made even worse once he's in possession of absolute power. The story introduces darker elements that you wouldn't expect in a mainstream Superman/Batman team-up. This is 100% recommended reading. The only bad thing I can say about



it is that the writers seemed to be setting up for something even bigger that never really panned out around the time of "Our Worlds At War," but other than that, I'm really looking forward to rereading this again.

New X-Men Omnibus

This sucker collects Grant Morrison's entire New X-Men run in a single 1,096-page hardcover. Despite my problems with the uneven artwork and Marvel's immediate undoing of every plot point in the book the second Morrison left, there is some true genius on display here.

Punisher Max: From First To Last HC

I know my love for Garth Ennis Punisher verges on the psychotic, but it's good enough to have that kind of effect on you. This HC does you a solid by collecting three one-shot specials (The Tyger, The Cell and The End) that cover the entire life of the Punisher from his first mission to his last. The Cell alone is reason enough to own this book. Buying this book is the only way to get me to stop talking about it.



Big Planet Orbit Volume 10 #9; November 2006 is published by Joel Pollack, Peter Casazza and Jared Smith for Big Planet Comics. www.bigplanetcomics.com

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