
Subject: Dave's Capsules for November 2019
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Dave's Comicbook Capsules Et Cetera
Intermittent Picks and Pans of Comics and Related Media

Standard Disclaimers: Please set appropriate followups. Recommendation does not factor in price. Not all books will have arrived in your area this month. An archive can be found on my homepage, <http://www.eyrie.org/~dvandom/Rants>
The Netflix "Green Eggs and Ham" series is very good.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): Open Borders: the Science and Ethics of Immigration

In this installment: The Midwinter Witch, Open Borders: the Science and Ethics of Immigration, Agents of Atlas #4 (of 5), Ghost Spider #4, Ironheart #12, History of the Marvel Universe #5 (of 6), Deathstroke #49, Vampirella vol 5 #5, Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #1, Midnight Sky #3, Kaijumax Season Five #1 (of 6), My Little Pony Feats of Friendship #3 (of 3), My Little Pony Friendship is Magic #84, My Little Pony Holiday Special 2019, Transformers #14, Transformers Galaxies #3.

Current Wait List (books either Diamond didn't ship or my store failed to order): Nothing this time.

"Other Media" Capsules:

Things that are comics-related but not necessarily comics (i.e. comics-based movies like Iron Man or Hulk), or that aren't going to be available via comic shops (like comic pack-ins with DVDs) will go in this section when I have any to mention. They may not be as timely as comic reviews, especially if I decide to review novels that take me a week or two (or ten) to get around to.

The second half of the new DC Superhero Girls season dropped on Netflix, but between She-Ra, Dragon Prince, and Green Eggs & Ham also coming out this month, I didn't get DCSHG watched before posting time.

Digital Content:

Unless I find a really compelling reason to do so, I won't be turning this into a webcomic review column. Rather, stuff in this section will be full books available for reading online or for download, usually for pay. I will often be reading these things on my iPhone if it's at all possible.

Adventure Finders put out some extras this month (an Inktober set of training montage stuff), but the next issue didn't drop before my posting deadline.

Trades:

Trade paperbacks, collections, graphic novels, pocket manga, whatever. If it's bigger than a "floppy" it goes here.

The Midwinter Witch: Scholastic - The third book in the Witch Boy series. Now that the title "Hidden Witch" of volume 2 is part of the cast, it's time to widen the world further. As someone who hasn't grown up in the magical community, Ariel Torres provides a different "explain to the reader" viewpoint character than the they-aren't-called-Muggles human friends of previous volumes, since she actually gets to participate directly in the community of magic and has a greater stake in knowing what's up. She ends up in conflict with Aster, the "Witch Boy" main character of the series, not out of ill will, but because both are intent on proving themselves as valid witches despite their unorthodox origins (Ariel is an outsider, Aster's very existence as a male witch violates social norms). On top of that conflict, Ariel also has a more immediate conflict of found family versus birth family, and really does take the top spot plot-wise in this installment, making Aster more of a supporting character. Good storytelling and art from Molly Knox Ostertag, and several effective metaphors for purely mundane reasons young adult readers might feel invalidated. Recommended. \$12.99/\$16.99Cn

Open Borders: the Science and Ethics of Immigration: :01 First Second - This is written by Bryan Caplan, economist who wrote The Myth of the Rational Voter, and drawn by Zach Weinersmith of the Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal webcomic. SMBC is one of the "nerd strips" in which you can be fairly sure that not only will nerdy topics be addressed, but they'll be well-researched. And this is basically a persuasive text with the rigor of a scholarly work. Full disclosure, I went in already feeling that open borders would probably be a better long-term plan than our current fortress mentality, and yet this comic changed my mind...replace the "probably" with "abso-****ing-lutely" in that position. The general thrust of argument is aimed at those willing to be convinced, but it repeatedly offers strategies for facing off with those unwilling to be convinced. Basically, it's a handbook for helping turn believers in open immigration into effective advocates for it. Strongly recommended. \$19.99/\$26.99Cn

Floppies:

No, I don't have any particular disdain for the monthlies, but they *are* floppy, yes? (And not all of them come out monthly, or on a regular schedule in general, so I can't just call this section "Monthlies" or even

"Periodicals" as that implies a regular period.)

Agents of Atlas (2019) #4 (of 5): Marvel - Pretty talky for a penultimate issue. A few brief physical conflicts in which ACAB is fully in force even in a multidimensional futuristic city, but mostly it's people in costumes standing around arguing about whether the city of Pan is more good than evil or vice versa. Pak is aggressively writing for the trade in this issue. Mildly recommended, mostly worth reading for some snappy dialogue here and there. \$3.99

Ghost Spider (2019) #4: Marvel - Generally losing interest here. Still has some good bits, but the whole "Gwen versus two different Professor Warrens" plot doesn't really interest me. The Jackal always felt to me like a character who should have been left behind in the 70s, rather than dug up (sometimes literally) every few years to anchor another major event or plotline. Mildly recommended and sinking. \$3.99

Ironheart #12: Marvel - Welp, another dead title. While the arc does get to resolve somewhat, it goes through a lot of flashback infodump to get there, and there isn't really any resolution. This was clearly meant to be just Act 1, but Ewing manages to get some fairly hasty resolution on Riri's big emotional issues thing that she started the series with. Basically, two Cosmic Plot Devices interacted weirdly and took her to therapy. Then she beat some people up and made them run away. Mildly recommended...this feels like it could have worked out better if the book had another year to work with. \$3.99

History of the Marvel Universe #5 (of 6): Marvel - Wow, nothing throws the Event of the Month nature of the current era of comics into harsher relief than trying to pack 17 years' worth of it (1996-2013) into a single summary. Just to keep up with the events that involved Congress passing laws would require that Congress be passing and retracting a dozen PATRIOT Act-level packages in that time...clearly the Marvel version of Congress had absolutely no gridlock. More like legislative diarrhea. So many "this changes things forever" events that were undone two or three events later...reading this makes me sad. I can only imagine how Waid felt compiling it. Recommended for the effort, at least. \$4.99

Deathstroke #49: DC - Oooh, a gimmick cover! A clear outer cover has part of the scene printed on it, and when it's lifted aside it reveals the next panel, as it were. The outer cover makes it look like the book has been retitled "Jericho," while the inner cover preserves the Deathstroke logo. Amusingly, they make use of it on the house ad for Batman: Damned on the back cover too. As suggested by the outer cover, this is mostly Jericho's issue, wrapping up his series-long arc of self-discovery (and he isn't thrilled by what he's discovered) and setting up the series finale. Pretty heavy on flashbacks, useful for anyone picking this up because the cover intrigues them. Also, the mystery of the origins of the other Deathstroke is finally

resolved. Recommended. \$3.99

Vampirella vol 5 #5: Dynamite - I think the lesson to take away from this whole arc is that Vampirella's acquaintances are incredibly messed up in a lot of creative ways. I'm also curious how she got licensed to substitute teach...must be a pretty desperate district. Recommended. \$3.99

Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #1: Ahoy Comics - This appears to be set before the Alpha/Omega swap, before the Omegaverse's Stinger died...and I get the feeling that he's not gonna survive this arc. This takes the same premise as the Free Comic Book Day issue by showing the same basic adventure in both universes, demonstrating how the plot could be adjusted for light or dark while remaining fundamentally pretty similar. Thing is, I found it more interesting to see how each of them dealt with living in the other's universe...straight up parodies of Batman '66 and Dark Knight aren't as interesting. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Midnight Sky #3: Scout Comics - You know, the aliens would do better with their "No, wait!" revelations if they didn't start saying them as the killing strike was already in motion. Every time. These guys have inhumanly bad timing. We find out a bit more about them in between resolving one cliffhanger and arriving at another (although this second one seems like it'll be more socially awkward than lethal). It's also clarified that while it's always cloudy, there is a distinction between day and night (explaining the somewhat confusing flashback last issue). This was otherwise mostly a pause to fill in details. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Kaijumax Season 5 #1 (of 6): Oni Press - Things are slowly getting back to normal on the regular Kaijumax site, with some attention paid to personal grooming issues among the monsters, and Pokemon getting their turn in the sun. Or in the pit, as it were. With much of the "command structure" of the various gangs killed off during the prison riot, the Pikadon could find himself doing pretty well for himself in the 'Max, but for now he seems to be more of a side plot. Instead, an old case from the Showa Eiga is rearing its...head, I guess. Eyestalks? Given the profusion of lead-ins this issue, it's hard to say what the main plot will really be, but it's definitely intriguing. Recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony Feats of Friendship #3 (of 3): IDW - Okay, for all that this story was running as a rehash of episodes of the cartoon, they did manage to pull it into a new direction for the final chapter. And it does make it clear that this isn't the Student Six's first Friendship Rodeo. This might even be setting up a possible long-term antagonist for the "Season Ten" comics coming next year. Recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony Friendship is Magic #84: IDW - Only Nixon could go to China, and only Twilight Sparkle can teach Ocelus about the dangers of, well, "Twilighting" on a project. Recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony Holiday Special 2019: IDW - A little smaller than last year, just a regular saddle-stitched comic rather than square bound. No framing sequence, just two standalone holiday stories. The first involves Rarity trying to have a whirlwind holiday experience and reaping the whirlwind instead, while the second (rather short one) has the Equestrian version of the Krampus. James Asmus writes both, Price draws the main one, and Forstner stays aggressively on-model in the backup. Mildly recommended. \$4.99

Transformers #14: IDW - Just in case it wasn't already obvious that the Ascenticons are more than a political party with philosophical differences, they pull a really stereotypical villain move this issue. In spades. It was good to see Nautica practicing her new-continuity skill set to good effect, though. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Transformers Galaxies #3: IDW - The rest of the origin story of the Constructicons gets told in flashback, ending with their exile to a satellite. Raimondelli's art is...followable, at least. But the way everyone's optics glow as if they're the only light sources in the scene is a bit annoying. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Dave Van Domelen, "The REAL Slade makes Daniel Cormier look like Stephen Colbert." - Rose Wilson
