
Subject: Dave's Comics Capsules for February 26, 2020

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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>

Cancer's all gone, woot. Still recovering from being sliced into.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): The Way of the Househusband vol 2.

In this installment: Batman: The Killing Joke (movie), The Way of the Househusband vol 2, Hilo Book 6: All The Pieces Fit, Ghost Spider #7, From Beyond The Unknown #1, Vampirella #7, Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #4 (of 5), White Ash #2, Midnight Sky #4, Kaijumax Season 5 #2 (of 6), My Little Pony Friendship is Magic #87, Transformers Valentine's Day Special 2020, Transformers #17, Transformers Galaxies #4.

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.

Batman: The Killing Joke (movie): DC/WB - Okay, this is a few years old, but it was re-released to coincide with Joker Oscar hype, so I decided to pick it up. This is pretty much a standalone adaptation and doesn't seem like it's trying to fit in with the other direct to video Bat-family stuff. And because it's standalone, the first act is all new material to justify why Batgirl exists and is retired in time for the infamous proto-fridging. Most of the new material works pretty well to set things up, but while Barbara gets a little more agency than in the GN, it's overall probably WORSE, because the "Barbara retires because she realizes she can't control her anger" message they'd been setting up gets obliterated by "Barbara retires because she had rooftop sex with Batman and now can't achieve emotional distance." The feeble attempt to turn things around at the end by splicing in the "becomes master of escrima sticks and establishes the Oracle" identity

doesn't really redeem the writing either. (Also, it's not the 20th Century anymore...there's zero excuse to put an independent person in a 1950s hospital wheelchair with handles and a high back.) Does it succeed on the purely technical level of adapting the Important Graphic Novel? Yeah, and if you still like The Killing Joke despite how horribly it has aged, you'll enjoy this adaptation. But the changes really only made it clearer how many problems the core story has. Price varies by format and store.

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.

Nothing this month. Adventure Finders is a bit back-burnered due to health issues and a private commission.

Trades:

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

The Way of the House Husband vol 2: Viz - More of the same, which is good. Highlights include an Instagram throwdown with a former Yakuza rival, spending time with his wife's parents, and a backup story in which the Immortal Dragon's cat is much like his owner. Strongly recommended. \$12.99/\$17.99Cn/#8.99UK

Hilo vol 6: All The Pieces Fit: RH Graphic/Random House - Judd Winick's update of Astro Boy comes to a finale as Razorwark's identity has been revealed and Izzy's plan for him and Hilo is finally revealed. Many explosions and huzzahs ensue. There will be a volume 7, but this is the culmination of the storyline set in motion in volume 1. All the mysteries revealed, all the resolutions resolved. The story is over, but life and its attendant weirdness goes on. Recommended. \$13.99/\$18.99Cn

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.)

Ghost Spider (2019) #7: Marvel - Still no Jackal, good. The "Sue and Johnny Storm of Earth-65" thread dominates this issue, and yet another non-native character gets a short but ominous page of setup...just because a universe got kinda destroyed in a crossover doesn't mean everyone in it died, you see. Ghost Spider seems to be trying to carve out a middle ground between "what multiverse?" and the full bore crazy of Spider-verse-branded stories. So far, so good. Recommended. \$3.99

From Beyond the Unknown #1: DC - So, DC has been doing "exclusive" (Walmart gets a one month or so lead before anyone else can sell them) 100 Page Giant comics for Walmart for a while now, using a mix of reprints and (hopefully) new-reader-friendly new material. Some of the new material has later been collected in e-comics, such as the Titans Burning Rage stories. On a whim, I decided to check this one out, since it has a new "Levitz Legion" story in it. The issue leads off with a new 18 page Green Lantern story, an 8 page new Kamandi story, and the 8 page new pre-Crisis Legion story (which costume cues put in the late 70s or early 80s, shortly before the Baxter series, since Cham isn't get in his yellow and purple costume but Invisible Kid II is on the team) by Jurgens. The rest of the issue is reprints from DC Comics Presents #3 (Superman and Adam Strange, by Micheline and Garcia-Lopez), The Brave and the Bold #113 (Batman and the Metal Men by Bob Haney and Jim Aparo), and Green Lantern Annual #3 (the F-Sharp Bell story by Moore and Willingham). Gotta say, the BatB story gives me major mental whiplash...I see the Aparo Batman and expect Serious Batman, but Haney writes at an almost Adam West level (and Batman's more than a little whiny). The new GL story is fairly continuity-free and recapitulates the old "Hal spends too much time on Earth and the rest of his insanely large sector suffers for it" plot, the Kamandi tale is very Inventory Story. Not much to recommend the Legion story other than nostalgia either, but it's passable. The Adam Strange/Superman story dominates the cover and is the longest single piece, and it definitely shows that late pre-Crisis "Trying to not be totally goofy anymore, but damn it he just pushed the Earth slightly out of its orbit by pushing on the ground" mentality. Even the well-regarded F-Sharp Bell story is more of a clever idea than an interesting execution, but I'm glad to have finally read it. Oh, and even without the reprint credits in the back, it's really obvious which stories are reprints, because the new stories are full-bleed and the reprints have glaringly large margins by modern standards. I've added it to my pull list, but due to the exclusive lead time even if it's monthly I won't see #2 until April. Mildly recommended. \$4.99

Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #4 (of 5): Ahoy Comics - The parallelism gets a lot more strained this issue, since the Alpha plot is still focused on beating the badguy while the Omega has turned into Dragonfly versus Stinger. To the extent they share a theme, it's cybernetic alteration, I guess. I'll finish off this miniseries, but I think I'll be skipping any other "flashback" books. I'm still somewhat interested in where things go in the swapped worlds from the original series, but I'm not at all interested in more of the "early Silver age story redone for the Iron age" stuff. Neutral.

\$3.99

Vampirella vol 5 #8: Dynamite - The side story of what happened before The Crash wraps up, giving Vampi a chance to flex her "it's not magic, it's science" muscles while Benny shows that if you're gonna be an anthropologist you might want to be a bit more careful around potential anthropophagists. Recommended. \$3.99

White Ash #2: Scout Comics - I only had one book in my pull for the last week of the month, so despite not having read #1 I decided to give this a try. While it lacks a "story so far" note, it wasn't too hard to pick up on what was going on...and that this wasn't another "Rural Crime/Horror in a depressed Appalachian mining town" story. Oh, it's set in a depressed mining town all right, but even in the opening scene it's clear that something is up. And the names of characters and places immediately got me thinking about what SORT of thing might be up. And, icing on the cake, Stickney didn't drag it out any farther than this issue, which has the Big Reveal. (I was thinking in a slightly wrong direction, as it turned out, but next issue promises to lay the cards on the table and it's possible I wasn't that wrong after all.) Recommended. \$3.99

Midnight Sky #4: Scout Comics - While this isn't organized into a series of miniseries (yet, anyway) and doesn't have formal arc titles (or issue titles), this feels like the end of an arc...and not just because it's #4. On a character arc, several characters make important steps or revelations, and on the storytelling arc, pieces finally start to snap into place: we have enough information now (even if some of it is wrong/misleading) to see why things are happening. The aliens are a little more humanized, and the humans are a little more alienated. That sort of thing. Recommended. \$3.99

Kaijumax Season 5 #2 (of 6): Oni Press - The trial of Pikadon starts, and of COURSE his legal team is...well, that's a spoiler. But if you know anything about Pokemon, you'll immediately get the gag, and it's a good one. As usual, a few of the other plot threads continue, including Warden Kang cleaning up after the massacre that ended Season 3, and realizing that even monsters have something akin to humanity. Recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony Friendship is Magic #87: IDW - After a string of one-shots, it's time for a To Be Continued story, in which Big Macintosh's heretofore never mentioned childhood friend shows up and drops a bunch of new backstory ("Seems to happen A LOT around here." - Yona), while in the background the insidious stallion of fortune Sacks Roamer plans to use the Draytona 500 race as cover for his artifact smuggling scheme. (He has a mustache, but not a Fu Manchu.) So, a mix of pulp treasure hunter action and Speed Racer. Interesting start, if a bit prone to tapping on the Fourth Wall. Recommended. \$3.99

Transformers Valentine's Day Special 2020: IDW - Ah, a new running gag

(continued in TF #17)...Gears gets launched into space accidentally while working on a low-G moon. But that's in the backup...the main story takes convention-originated characters Rook and Glyph (originally redecos of Bumblebee and Cliffjumper) and has their working relationship slowly evolve into a romantic one. It's largely in the form of "brief scenes over the course of a long time" storytelling, which can feel kinda shallow, but Ehlers (I think...they don't split the writing credits up by story) makes it work. Pitre-Durocher's (again, presumably) Cosmos/Astrotrain piece is shorter, told mostly in the form of texting between two spacefaring Cybertronians who never come within visual scanning distance of each other (until the end, of course), and it has a lot more potential to be grist for the main storyline. Recommended. \$3.99

Transformers #17: IDW - Chekov's Gun is a statement about scene dressing in a play: if there is a gun on the mantelpiece at the start of the play, it had better get fired before the end of the play. It's about not putting misleading foreshadowing into your story by accident. It doesn't have to be a gun, of course. Just something that could cause major complications. In a lot of SF, "beanstalks" or other orbital elevators tend to be Chekov's Gun elements...if it's there, someone's gonna sever it and drop hundreds of miles of plotdevicium-strength cable from low orbit onto inhabited areas. And it's time for that particular trigger to be pulled by another Transformers-specific Chekov's Gun. A few more IDW1-created characters get brought in, along with ones showing up in the Generations toylines (and interestingly, a minor G1 character I'd have thought would be part of Earthrise but is as yet unannounced). Things are happening, at least, which is an improvement. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Transformers Galaxies #4: IDW - The end of the opening arc. The Insecticons perform atrocities, help the Constructicons power up and perform their own differently-flavored atrocities, and everyone parts ways satisfied that they've done their part in the larger plan, whatever it is. Raimondelli continues to manage to be murky when everything is brightly lit, and glaringly bright even when things are dark...his contrast dial is stuck on +50 or so. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Dave Van Domelen, "Does it LOOK like I've got pockets in this outfit?!"
- Vampirella, Vampirella v5 #8
