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Subject: Dave's Comicbook Capsules for April 2021  
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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>  
Gonna be teaching face-to-face again in the summer term.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): The Way of the Hive: A Honey Bee's Story

In this installment: Wonder Woman 1984, MechStrike Captain America, Adventure Finders Book 2 volume 1 Chapter 15, The Way of the Hive: A Honey Bee's Story, Primates, The Comic Book History of Animation TPB, Galactic Rodents of Mayhem #1, Squadron Supreme Marvel Tales #1, Maestro War and PAX #4, The Trials of Ultraman #2 (of 5), USAgent #5 (of 5), RWBY/Justice League #1 (of 7), Sacred Six #8, My Little Pony Friendship is Magic #96, My Little Pony/Transformers II #1 (of 4), Transformers '84 Legends and Rumors 100 Page Giant #1, Transformers Beast Wars #3

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

### "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.

"In cinemas." Well, it was, but I sure wasn't.  
Wonder Woman 1984: DC/WB - The basic premise is that a sort of monkey's paw wish-granting artifact has destroyed numerous civilizations, and now it has popped up again in the hands of yet another take on Maxwell Lord. The plot device has a number of arbitrary rules to it, most of which seem to be there just to drive plot conflict rather than for any sort of internal logic (if refusing its gifts is supposed to be so hard, why introduce unnecessary flaws like Diana's got, for instance?). As comic book logic goes, it's not that bad, but it does raise the Hitchcockian question of Why Are You Doing It The Way Things Are Always Done? Other than having to ignore the plot device

behind the curtain, though, it was generally enjoyable, and stylized in the way stuff set in the 80s tends to be done. It doesn't happen in 1984, it happens in how 1984 looks through the lenses of GenX nostalgia...lots of pushing the neon and bad fashion choices hard (although the one thing they didn't push past my lived reality was the big hair). It was enjoyable, but its attempt to make it as impactful as the previous Wonder Woman movie mostly fell flat. Mildly recommended. Price varies by format and store.

MechStrike Captain America: Marvel/Hasbro - When the MechStrike comic came out, I was kind of confused...it was non-continuity, and there didn't seem to be a toy line to go with it. Turns out the toys were just a little late. There's a full line, with some roleplay pieces (notably a segmented Captain America shield that expands), \$10 action figures with mech-ish shields, and \$20 mech suits (not purchased, but seen: Iron Man, Thanos). The suit is 8" (20cm) tall, the pilot figure is 6" (15cm) tall. These are basically like a slightly better version of the old Transformers Pretender shells, hinged at the top of the head and snapping at the feet. It comes with some assembly required, and a lot of force needed to get the boots to snap fully into place. The suit's arms have universal joint shoulders and hinge elbows, but the suit is otherwise a brick. And it's a "Landmate" style brick, with the inner action figure's arms sticking out the sides. The suit has several sockets for attachment of accessories, but annoyingly they're not all the same size. A wrist blaster has a larger peg that will go on either forearm, but the shield (which can be used by the inner figure as well) uses a smaller peg that only goes on the shoulder sockets or on the wrist blaster. So he can't put the blaster on one arm and the shield on the other forearm (um, and I can't get the blaster off anyway, so maybe it snapped into place? Or I'm misremembering and it was never loose in the first place, I guess). The inside pilot figure is comparable to most of the \$10 Marvel action figures of late (and the standalone \$10 MechStrike figures appear to be the same molds, albeit with altered colors). The knees have universal joints, though, which is better than a lot of the \$10 figures lately, and it has forearm sockets for the shield (and a back socket that holds the shield or secures the pilot inside the mech). Worth \$20? Not really. A good representation of the suits in the comic? Also not really, those were truly giant robots where you'd have a pilot figure a centimeter or so tall to be at proper scale with the suit. The aesthetics are okay, if kinda generic. Neutral. \$20 price point.

#### Digital Content:

Unless I find a really compelling reason to do so (such as a lack of regular comics), I won't be turning this into a webcomic review column. Rather, stuff in this section will generally be full books available for reading online or for download, usually for pay.

Adventure Finders Book 2 Volume 1 chapter 15: Patreon.com - The cover

changes the title to "Adventure Found," to signal that the extended tutorial is over and the PCs have hit the Main Plot in the Arao-dominated New Elderbrass. There's a last round of gear-upgrades and prep before the core cadre heads into town...just in time for the Arao-ists to lean hard on the Daughters of the Crown. In an inversion of their dominant position in the first issue, the Arao-ists are basically gnats posturing angrily at a bugzapper. This is not to say that Clari et al can just cut a swath through the entire patriarchal power structure, but the bad guys brought mooks to a boss fight. Technically ends on a cliffhanger, but there's not a lot of threat for Our Heroes. As with recent previous issues, it ends with an exchange of letters among various antagonists reacting to the events we've been seeing on screen. Recommended. \$1/month on Patreon.

#### Trades:

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

The Way of the Hive: A Honey Bee's Story: Harper Alley - This is an update of the Clan Apis collection, in full color and with a new section in back discussing more of the science that didn't fit into the narrative. Hosler says that there's also minor updates here and there, but it's been about twenty years since I read the original, nothing really jumped out at me. Anyway, it was Strongly Recommended then, it's Strongly Recommended now, just in color. \$21.99/\$26.99Cn (hardcover edition)

Primates: The Fearless Science of Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas: Square Fish (MacMillan) - I continue to catch up on the last few years' worth of Ottaviani's science comics (reading them slowly, Hawking is almost done and Naturalist is still in the stack). This one has art by Maris Wicks, who also did Astronauts, and it's structured in a similar fashion: it follows more or less chronologically the careers of three prominent women in primate studies. Their lives touched upon each other's and had Louis Leakey in common, but each studied a different group of primates in a different part of the world (Chimpanzees, Gorillas, and Orangutans). As with Astronauts, each woman has a distinctive caption box style to keep the narratives distinct, and while a lot of things were fudged for the sake of the story, there's ample primary sources used to craft the tale. It's a bit darker than Astronauts, but given that space exploration is inherently more hopeful in tone than the battle to understand and conserve species, that's to be expected. Recommended. \$13.99/\$19.50Cn

The Comic Book History of Animation Exclusive Kickstarter Backer Edition: Evil Twin Comics - So, I've been reviewing the individual installments as we got them, but now I have the collected edition, and a non-exclusive version should be available to non-backers soon enough, so it's worth commenting on just the physical presentation of the completed story.

The consistently black gutters make it all the more striking on the rare occasion when an image violates panel boundaries, and give the impression of viewing a screen in a darkened theater. While the early parts are mostly black and white or grayscale, even they do have occasional spot colors for emphasis, so the transition to full color is a little less jarring...probably so people know to expect color later? Anyway, worth picking up once it's available to the general public. Recommended. (No price on this edition.)

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.)

Galactic Rodents of Mayhem #1: Scout/Nonstop! - I grabbed this on a whim as part of my "Try to expand my reading" plan. Unfortunately, it's one of Scout's TPB preview deals, where there will never be a #2, just rebuying this issue as part of a trade. It stars anthro capybaras in space, and in case the TMNT homage wasn't obvious enough, the fight scene at the end rubs our noses in it by having ninja turtles show up to collect a bounty on the capys. Even if this was going to be something I wouldn't have to own two copies of to get the rest of the story, I'm gonna pass. While the very beginning is interesting, most of the rest of the issue is trying too hard to be a "30 years late to the party" TMNT riff. Neutral. \$3.99

Squadron Supreme: Marvel Tales #1: Marvel - A squarebound floppy reprint collection of Avengers #69-70 (first appearance of the Squadron Sinister) and #85-86 (first appearance of the Squadron Supreme). Somewhat annoyingly, #70 ends on a cliffhanger, but I guess the Squadron didn't appear in #71? (The Squadron barely appears in #69, I'd rather have seen 70-71 than 69-70.) I picked this up because I'd never read the original stories, all written by Roy Thomas in full "No, this isn't the Justice League, whatever do you mean?" mode. Worth picking up if you haven't already been getting all the Masterworks or Essentials volumes that contain these. Recommended. \$7.99

Maestro War and PAX #4 (of 5): Marvel - The Pantheon's inevitable defeat is kinda boring, unfortunately. Yeah, as a prequel to a story where Maestro is the only real power left on Earth, you know anyone other than Rick Jones who might oppose him gets dealt with, but...eh. There was a good bit with Doctor Doom trying to take over Dystopia, but the citizens have gotten bored with that sort of thing. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

The Trials of Ultraman #2 (of 5): Marvel - Even in a world where daikaiju stalk the streets, there will be conspiracy theorists who have it totally wrong...and yet somehow have the resources to be a problem anyway. They mostly manage to give the protagonists a hard time by consistently being

so badly wrong that they end up being dangerously effective by accident, though. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

U.S.Agent #5 (of 5): Marvel - Yes, that's me getting a credit down at the bottom of the title page. I helped Priest figure out how to get a Kaiju into the story (and researched a few other things that didn't work out). Too bad the fight-heavy issue is so hard to follow, thanks to Jeanty's art. Thinking back to my previous Jeanty experience, The American Way, there was a fair amount of questionable visual storytelling there too...he seems to specialize mostly in people standing around talking or sitting at vehicle controls (e.g. Firefly comics). When your final issue needs to combine kaiju fighting with a high stakes melee in a crashing Helicarrier, the artist needs to be able to pull off the action, and Jeanty does NOT. Priest does seem to have adjusted to Jeanty's failings by this point, though, as the dialogue spells out a lot more of the stuff that the art would normally carry. And Priest's USAgent is clearly someone who does his homework...the very opposite of the "low information" type the Saint calls him. He may have come into this situation pretty clueless, but he puts the pieces together on the literal fly. Mildly recommended, would be recommended with better art. \$3.99

RWBY/Justice League #1 (of 7): Rooster Teeth/DC - This is one of those books that started as short installment ComiXology releases, then collected into regular-sized comics for hardcopy release. It seems to be set around Season 2-3 or RWBY, the academy is still doing fine and Yang has her natural arm. This isn't a crossover in the sense of dimensional travel, rather it's a sort of Elseworlds where there's versions of various Justice Leaguers on Remnant (e.g. Clark has a solar-powered semblance, Bruce is a bat faunus, etc). This issue introduces two of the pseudo-JL and sets up the mystery driving the series, and is...okay. Marguerite Bennett's writing is okay, and clearly written for the half issue stories (as she did back on Bombshells). Aneke's art is passable, but occasionally favors splashy FX over clarity of storytelling. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Sacred Six #8: Dynamite - Holy roller redneck bikers attack, so a lot of the issue is a fight scene, with most of the character moments going to Nyx. That's not to say the others get ignored, but their bits tend to be shorter and tied more directly to the fight scene, rather than getting extended flashbacks. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony #96: IDW - Back to the diplomatic ventures, this time in Abyssinia. Rather than the warm welcome Zecora's group got, the greeting awaiting in the capital city of Panthera is...not warm. At all. Technically, this is the Capper-focused arc, but the big character moment to me is how Discord reacts to his predicament in Panthera...he's used to facing consequences for his own actions, but for once he behaved himself and STILL got in trouble, and he doesn't care for that one bit. Recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony/Transformers II #1 (of 4): IDW - Fingers crossed that this one will be better-planned than the first series. But it's not looking good. As with the previous series, there's two stories in an issue, the first one sets up the new conflict (Megatron tries to raid Equestria for magic, awakens Sombra, who decides to conquer Cybertron), and the second looks at one of the events during the attempted conquest. Thing is, the second story requires that Scootaloo was captured in the first story, and Scootaloo doesn't even appear in the background...no real editorial oversight. Again. As for Cybertron itself, move over Axion Nexus, this is a cynosure of all cartoons and comics. G1, IDW1 and IDW2, Prime, Cyberverse, even Armada. Looks like another, "Do whatever you feel like, don't worry about it making sense," series. Meh. \$3.99

Transformers '84 Legends and Rumors 100 Page Giant #1: IDW - Another reprint omnibus, but this time I actually have all the issues, oops. It has #1 of the Marvel Transformers comic, the Man of Iron story (Marvel UK Transformers #9-12, later reprinted with modifications in the US series), and Transformers '84 #0. The seams show badly in the three tales, but this is basically a way to get all the background needed for the current Transformers '84 books without buying a bunch of trades. I am not really the target audience for this book, mildly recommended for people who got into Transformers comic later on. \$7.99

Transformers Beast Wars #3: IDW - Onyx's short term purpose is revealed, and while it's not exactly fridging, it's not far off...she isn't killed, but is tortured and that's motivation for a male character to change his ways (okay, not really a spoiler, this whole series has been written on the assumption that every reader watched the original cartoon...it's Dinobot's face turn). That said, it does more effectively drive home why Dinobot might switch sides and stay switched than the cartoon did at the time. Still don't like the art. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Dave Van Domelen, "You're with him -- 'Angarr the Self-Loathing'?" - Morrie, USAgent #5 (of 5)

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