
Subject: Dave's Capsules for December 2021
Posted by [dvandom](#) on Thu, 30 Dec 2021 06:02:49 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

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>
Welp, so much for COVID going away. Hello, Omicron.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): Kaijumax Season Six #5 (of 6).

In this installment: Venom: Let There Be Carnage, The Return of Captain Invincible, Hawkeye (Disney+), Adventure Finders Book 3 Chapter 6, Action Activists #2, Love and Capes in the Time of COVID, Liberty Brigade (and associated material), The Dire Days of Willowweep Manor, She-Ra: Legend of the Fire Princess, Himitsu Sentai Gorenger, Moon Knight #6, Vampirella Dracula Unholy #1, The Blue Flame #6, White Ash Season 2 #1 (of 6), Kaijumax Season Six #5 (of 6), My Little Pony Generations #3 (of 5), Transformers Shattered Glass #4-5 (of 5), Transformers Wreckers: Tread & Circuits #3 (of 5), Transformers Beast Wars #11, Transformers #38.

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.

Venom: Let There Be Carnage: Sony - I generally enjoyed this, and didn't have nearly as many problems with it as most seem to have. However, I did have one big problem, and it did make the first half drag pretty badly. Specifically, when writers of a sequel have no idea how to deal with a romantic or even brotherly relationship established in a previous installment, the cliché is to break it up. No matter how well things seemed to be going when last we saw the friends or lovers, it's breakup time, because writing around a healthy relationship is hard, while breaking one and then getting back to the status quo ante is trivially easy. Now, there's a difference between this and "showing how no relationship is perfect" stories,

in which a couple works through problems. This is quick and lazy break 'em up. The second half does sort of explore some of the complexities of a polyamorous relationship (when one of the three is an alien symbiote), but it felt like lazy padding to just spend the first act tearing down everything Eddie had managed to accomplish in the first movie. If you can endure the first act relationship cliches, the rest of the movie is pretty good. Mildly recommended.

The Return of Captain Invincible: Seven Keys - Okay, this is an old movie, from 1983. And, surprisingly, given the blatant "bump it up to R" swearing and nudity in the first "present-day" scenes, it's rated PG (to be fair, the nudity is mostly of the "pause and have a good copy" variety background stuff, foreground is kept to naughty underwear stuff). I found out about this because its show-stopper number, Christopher Lee singing "Pick Your Poison," was going around Tumblr. And the songs are the main thing this movie has going for it, having been written by Richard O'Brien of Rocky Horror Picture Show fame. It's a superhero farce musical starring Alan Arkin as a WWII kinda-Superman who went into an alcoholic tailspin after McCarthy went after him, and ended up a drunk in Australia. When Mister Midnight (Lee) steals a Hypno-Ray, the President sends out a call to find Captain Invincible, who spends much of the rest of the movie trying to remember how to use his powers. If this had been done in the early 70s, it might have done okay, but this followed several Christopher Reeve Superman movies and barely has special effects up to the standard of George Reeves. His powers are a grab-bag of "stuff we can do cheaply and badly for laughs," including an "amazing computer brain" that doesn't even make sense for a WWII hero (not that anachronism is the worst of this story's sins). Basically, the clip of "Pick Your Poison" is very much the high point of the movie, and there's not enough other good stuff in it to be worth the time watching. Don't bother with this.

Hawkeye: Disney+ - Another six episode miniseries, and while you might want to watch Avengers: Endgame and Black Widow before watching this, most of the relevant information is supplied along the way. Kate Bishop saw Hawkeye fighting the Chitauri in New York when she was a little girl, which inspired her to become a hero, and one day she runs across some of Hawkeye's old Ronin business, getting tangled up in stuff way over her head. Based loosely on the recent comics, although some characters are just reusing names and no more. There were a few scenes I felt clunked (notably the LARPer stuff), but I was generally left satisfied. The final episode cameo villain raises more questions than they answer, of course, but IMO the presence of the actor playing the character does not automatically mean that their previous appearances as that character are part of the MCU canon. Recommended.

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 3 Chapter 5: Patreon.com - Meanwhile (after a brief check-in with Sister Arirarra), Asogog runs right into the Arokian version of Derek Chauvin and...things escalate. While Clari's fate is unrevealed, things are starting to look up as one of the separated heroes manages to accomplish things, even if those things are relatively small. An emotional turning point after several issues of teeth-kicks. Recommended. \$1/month on Patreon.

Action Activists #2: NYC Department of Education - Van Lente and Dunleavy turn in another free public education comic about activism, this time focusing on a trio of stories in and around New York City (underground railroad, Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, and the garbage issue in Harlem in the 70s). <https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/action-activists-copy/> is where you can find it. Like #1, the writing does sometimes get a little For The Kiddies (a problem with their Action Presidents books too), but it's educational and interesting, plus it's free. Recommended.

Trades:

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

Love and Capes in the Time of COVID: Maerke Press - These pages were all posted to Thom Zahler's Patreon over the last year or so, and collected as a Kickstarter project. As with most L&C books, it's more about the personal lives and downtime than about the superhuman battles, although there's a couple of those. Zahler deals with the "Couldn't superheroes fix this?" issue reasonably well, but mostly spends time on how Crusader tries to keep his family afloat. Of course, the somewhat optimistic "the worst has passed" ending was written before Delta, much less Omicron, but maybe the heroes made enough of a difference in that world that COVID wrapped up before Delta got a foothold. Recommended. \$9.99 cover price.

Liberty Legion: Thrilling Nostalgia Comics - Another Kickstarter, this one has at its core a 100 page graphic novel, but there's also a #0, a selection of deleted scenes (which we're told fit in after page 34...but the GN has no page numbers and near as I can tell the deleted scenes go in earlier than the 34th page), and a Heroes of the Golden Age style OHOTMU book done by the writer who does Heroes of the Golden Age. Oh, and another #0-ish book that's mostly pin-ups. A really large percentage of the page count is just "Hey, here's an update of another public domain hero/villain, maybe with a new name since the name got grabbed by someone else" but there's a surprisingly dense story in among the pin-ups and side story narration.

Loads of artists, although most of the actual story pages in the main book are by Barry Kitson/Mark Gray and Ron Frenz/Josef Rubenstein. Michael Finn does all the writing and Mark Waid the editing. Finn shoots for an All Star Squadron sort of tone, not "Golden Age comics as they were written," but "Golden Age heroes as they might have actually talked," but it's a sometimes awkward fit. Despite the cast of dozens, the main characters are a pair of new heroes created for the book, National Anthem and Bill of Rights, who do spend a fair amount of time on the Kyle Rayner Tour of being told that they're valid heroes by heroes with actual reputations. Anyway, a decent read, but I don't know where you might buy it, because the publisher (Ka-Blam.com) doesn't have any in stock, and the company that included a \$10 gift card along with the book only sells a variant cover for collectors' prices (like, \$60). I suppose it'll be available in other ways eventually.

The Dire Days of Willowweep Manor: McElderry Books (Simon and Schuster)
- Written by Shaenon Garrity (Narbonic, Skin Horse) and drawn by Christopher Baldwin who I'd never heard of and who seems to be something of a CalArts type in his figure drawing. I feel called out by this book, because the protagonist is someone who is told by her literature teacher she can't do a book report about her favorite genre (okay, her favorite single book), something that happened to me in high school. She then ends up dragged into a world that seems to be right out of a gothic romance (her favorite genre), only to find she's really in a Shaenon Garrity book and reality has gone all collywobbles. Generally a fun read, but it feels like it's maybe 20% too long? Some of the tropes get really belabored, but not to the point of being funny again (where that's even possible, which it isn't always). Mildly recommended. \$14.99/\$19.99Cn

She-Ra: Legend of the Fire Princess: Graphix (Scholastic) - This came out last year, but I didn't notice it on the shelf until recently. I decided to give it a shot, and kinda regret it. Part of the problem is that She-Ra was fairly tightly plotted, not leaving a lot of room for a big "Hey, maybe there was one more princess gem" story. There's not a lot to work with unless you do a story purely with secondary characters who have a lot of unaccounted-for time, with the major characters only showing up incidentally. However, I think the main problem is the flanderization of so many characters by Gigi D.G. Each is reduced to a single gag, which gets driven into the ground. About the only character who doesn't get written poorly is Entrapta, and she doesn't have a whole lot of lines. Mild recommendation to avoid. \$12.99/\$16.99Cn

Himitsu Sentai Gorenger: Seven Seas Entertainment - This is a collection of translated manga from two sources, accompanying the seminal Gorenger show (the original Super Sentai show, the descendants of which would come to America as Power Rangers). Gorenger got two different adaptations with two main audiences, so the two halves of the book have different tones and don't really fit together. This is the dawn of the Super Sentai, so while they do have a big ship and smaller vehicles, they don't have a giant robot to help

them in fighting evil robot monsters. An interesting read, although you can see the places where the tropes have yet to really come together in terms of splicing together Ultraman elements and super spy elements. There's a few translation notes at the end, largely explaining how the translations were non-literal in order to make more sense to modern American readers, but then pointing out what the original references were and meant. Recommended. \$24.99/\$31.99Cn (Hardback).

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.)

Moon Knight #6: Marvel - The main focus of this issue is on Badr, the other priest of Khonshu who recently entered Marc's life, setting him up as an effective "compare and contrast" foil. Where Marc rejected faith (something brought up again recently in this volume), Badr wondered why he could never find it despite doing all the Right Things. Each has found a god, and each treated that discovery in the opposite way. And yet, both serve, in their opposite ways. Act I is now complete, hopefully MacKay gets the room to let the other acts unfold at their own pace. Recommended. \$3.99

Vampirella Dracula Unholy #1: Dynamite - AKA Priest's Vampirella #26. As happened in #25, it opens with a dream sequence that's almost but not quite plausible, as dreams tend to be. And as with #25, the point is to contrast the Dramatic Way of doing things with the prosaic way Vampi is actually trying to get stuff done. She desperately wants to be boring and low-profile, while the dreams are exciting and high-profile. Of course, there's a little too much whistling past the graveyard, and the graveyard whistles back...okay, the metaphor got away from me. Recommended. \$3.99

The Blue Flame #6: Vault - Now we get to see more about Blue Flame's team, as it starts to look more and more like the cosmic stuff is just how Sam is processing things. (Slight quibble, I don't really see how I-43 through Green Bay is gonna get a fugitive to Canada...from Milwaukee it's probably quicker to go the other way and cross at Detroit, plus it gets out of state a LOT faster.) The Night Brigade, both mundane and cosmic, are portrayed as very Watchmen-style heroes with clay feet, acting out of misplaced aggression and guilt. I do worry that things are getting a little too stretched out on the matter of which story (if not somehow both) is real, and that maybe Cantwell thinks it's been established already but forgot to make it clear to anyone but himself. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

White Ash Season 2 #1: Scout Comics - The first chunk is just the FCBD 2021 story, so that was totally missable, I guess. A lot of this issue is

denouement from season 1, characters following up on stuff that otherwise only got a few panels in v1 #6, or no attention at all (like the cop doing an investigation into the stranger who did some kidnapping and killing in v1). There's a couple of Aleck and Lillian out in the woods scenes, one of which ramps up the romance and the other tamps it back down a touch, both of which involve fighting monsters because that's how their dates are. Mostly, though, it's a lot of throwing out plot threads for later consideration. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Kaijumax Season Six #5 (of 6): Oni Press - Whoog. This is mostly Nobuko and Whoofy's issue, focusing on the darkness hidden behind the Kid Friendly parts of Showa (Nobuko being a sort of merger of Tetsujin and Gamera, and Whoofy being Minilla). Both have hit emotional rock bottom, haunted by their past and their inability to change the present, albeit in different ways (Whoofy has been literally haunted by a kid he believes he killed through negligence, while Nobuko merely wallows in memories of the corruption she ran away from). In the end, each is confronted by the present in ways that motivate them to do something about it. The penultimate installment of what amounts to a 36 episode series (unless Cannon follows the gag of "Six seasons and movie" and gives us a GN after this), and definitely an emotional climax. Guilt can carry you a long way, but eventually it has to be dealt with. Strongly recommended. \$3.99

My Little Pony Generations #3 (of 5): IDW - Things get worse thanks to the Smooze-ponies' efforts, although a lot of it is tell rather than show in the first half of the issue. Decently creepy way of letting Twi and the others figure out something about what's going on, if a touch convenient how they so easily find a way into the G1 universe at the end. Necessary, of course, if this was going to be a proper crossover, but still. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Transformers: Shattered Glass #4-5 (of 5): IDW - So much narration and angst-ridden internal monologue. And it doesn't even really resolve anything in the end, just sets up a second miniseries that may or may not happen. I think this concept would have been better served as five disconnected Spotlight style issues without trying to have a Big Important Plot. Very mildly recommended. \$3.99 each.

Transformers Wreckers: Tread & Circuits #3 (of 5): IDW - This is the sort of running fight scene that would normally be the climax of the series, which suggests that the actual climax will be quiet and behind the scenes. It does sometimes feel like the script read "insert fight scene here, I'll write dialogue when you're done." Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Transformers Beast Wars #11: IDW - Speaking of big running battles, the one started in #10 continues, with very little happening in terms of actual story until near the end. There is a pretty good plot point there, but it's mostly "fun fight scene bits of business". Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Transformers #38: IDW - Time to catch up with Ultra Magnus, fresh off his arc in Galaxies and "inducted" into the Senate, as it were. And then it's Smokescreen running a heist movie, drawing together a number of other threads that have been fallow for a few months. Well-executed, and moving more quickly than Ruckley normally does...could he be getting the hang of pacing at last? Recommended. \$3.99

Dave Van Domelen, "The powerful will do ANYTHING to keep their power, and do NOTHING to RISK it." - Nobuko, Kaijumax Season Six, #5 (of 6)
