
Subject: Dave's Comics Capsules for September 2023
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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>
Probably had COVID over Labor Day weekend, been coughing since.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): Spider-Man:
Across the Spider-Verse

In this installment: Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse, Adventure Finders Book 3 Chapter 14, Kuma Kuma Kuma Bear vol 2-6, Dinosaur Sanctuary vol 3, Final Fantasy XIV: Eorzea Academy, Magical Girl Incident vol 2, Iyanu Child of Wonder vol 2-3, Fantastic Four Annual #1, Fantastic Four #11, Moon Knight #27, Draculina Blood Simple #5 (of 6), My Little Pony Classics Reimagined: the Unicorn of Odd #1 (of 4).

"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.

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse: Marvel/Sony - Okay, so one of the things I like about most versions of Kamala Khan (trust me, this is tying in) is that her parents find out her secret fairly early on (Saladin Ahmed's reboot sucks), changing them from deuterioantagonists to actual supporting characters. I have really just gotten tired of "Oh no, my parents can't find out!" secret ID shenanigans. And as a result, the first half hour or so of this tends to grate on me, since it needs to set up the increasing alienation between Gwen and Miles and their respective parents over the Secret. But it does resolve (or semi-resolve) by the end of the movie, and even if this is Part 1 ("Beyond the Spider-Verse" is the sequel) and the main plot ends on a cliffhanger, the emotional arc of the movie does resolve pretty well. Yeah, there's impending doom and Miles is in a very bad place, but at the same time he and Gwen are both in a good place. Visually, of course, it's an amazing tour de force, especially the insane chase sequence. Assuming y'all aren't as bothered by "parents as deuterioantagonists" thing as I am, strongly recommended. Price varies by format and store, it's probably streaming

somewhere too but not Disney+.

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 14: Patreon.com - And we're back! Took a while for Espinosa's carpal tunnel to heal up enough to safely go back to work on this. There's a little at the beginning establishing that Clari and her group are on their way out of the underground, and a big boom at the end fixing this chapter against the whole Arao emergence, but otherwise this chapter is all about Herminia putting her long game into action. And just in case the reader didn't think she was justified in ripping off her relatives and setting out to create her own realm in the wilds...well, we get to see that it's not just low-caste women who get treated horribly. The rich ones just buy into their own abuse and tell themselves it's an honor. Simultaneously a dark, "the world is even worse than we thought, and we already knew it was largely run by worshippers of a demon dragon," thing, and a moment of Hell Yeah. Recommended. \$2/month or more on Patreon.com.

Trades:

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

Kuma Kuma Kuma Bear vol 2-6: Seven Seas Entertainment - Okay, really enjoying this series. As with the cliché of a lot of modern isekai, the protagonist's Modern World skills and knowledge let her rapidly accomplish things in the bog-standard fantasy MMO world she finds herself in. But it's not the big OP sort of skills and knowledge. It's cooking. And drawing. And knowing that mistreating kids is Very Wrong (she basically takes an entire orphanage under her aegis because she can't stand to see things continue as they were). The physical threats do keep ramping up, to the point that she's actually a little challenged, but the real conflict is between her desire to do the right thing, and her desire to be left alone and slack off. Gratitude and ceremony? What a DRAG. It's not quite social anxiety or antisocial nature, just...Miss Bear needs her Me Time. Story adaptation-wise, this is trailing behind a series of light novels, while the anime adaptation got underway during the last few volumes of this set, with some of the end of volume omake bits talking about progress with that...and fixing the timing of these volumes as right in the middle of COVID. Anyway, the farther I get in this series, the more I enjoy it. Not all cross-media adaptations work, but in this case it does. Any bugs in the plot

and characterization can be revised, and the included text pieces convince me that a lot of this works better in manga form than in pure prose. Recommended. \$12.99/\$16.99Cn each. Rated Teen, but mostly for implied stuff.

Dinosaur Sanctuary vol 3: Seven Seas Entertainment - As far as the main protagonist is concerned, she keeps up the work she's been doing, spending this volume with another of the sections of the zoo and managing to help things out in small and medium ways. The focus does drift off her a bit, with one side story focusing on a couple of regular patrons, and a flashback to the first job of the guy who runs the department she's in this volume. The running theme in all these zoo personnel stories is that the people who work at Enoshima are all true believers in the education mission, which makes them misfits in a world where it's mostly about entertainment. Recommended. \$13.99/\$17.99Cn

Final Fantasy XIV Eorzea Academy: Square Enix Manga - If you don't know who all the characters are and what their running gags or character beats are, this is a pretty standard "check off the boxes" high school Class Competition manga, if a bit more towards the Ranma 1/2 level than most. That said, if you do know the characters (and some require having done some of the optional and high level content, like Palace of the Dead or the Eden raids), it's hilarious. Recommended if you know the lore, very mildly recommended if you don't. \$14.99/\$19.99Cn

Magical Girl Incident vol 2: Yen Press - Okay, the worldbuilding is getting a bit clearer. While they don't come out and say it definitively, it looks like the protagonist's whole gender swap thing is standard for magical people. We meet several other magical girls and guys, and every one of them gender swaps. This lets the writer neatly sidestep some of the potential pitfalls of the concept, since everyone else just sort of accepts that it's the way things work and nothing to get freaked out about. Of course, the protagonist is still Special, because of course they are. Just, not because of the gender bending thing. The tone is a bit unsteady, mostly on the farcical side but occasionally trying to sell existential horror or supernatural terror. Recommended, if uneven. \$15.00/\$19.50Cn

Iyanu Child of Wonder vol 2-3: Dark Horse - At some point the title moved from Youneek to Dark Horse, with Youneek becoming a subline, although I'd have thought I'd have noticed it showing up in Previews (the Youneek volume I got had to be ordered direct). Looks like vol 2 hit during my shop transition of 2022 and fell through the cracks. Anyway, volume 3 just came out this month, so I ordered both on Amazon. Fortunately, most of the "craft of making comics" problems I had with volume 1 have been fixed. The layouts are still a bit confusing (a lot of "make weird panel layouts to be Dynamic" pages where the flow is unclear), but the coloring is less murky (still kinda murky) and the lettering is up to professional standards. That leaves the interesting ideas uncluttered by most of the production issues, and I'm

almost tempted to see if the Dark Horse edition of vol 1 fixed stuff. Anyway, the plot structure is a fairly tried and true "group of companions quest for the Plot Device that will let them Fix the World," although it takes until volume 3 for the group to finish coming together. There's also a lot of mostly talky scenes establishing how things got they way they are both in a general "after the failed singularity" sense and the specific "how the obviously evil guy ended up in charge" sense. A badge on the cover of volume 3 proclaims that this will soon be a series on Cartoon Network (and Max), one hopes that the adaptation fixes some of the pacing. Again, interesting ideas, but the craft of assembling them is often halting. Mildly recommended but shows promise. \$19.99/\$25.99Cn each.

Note, I'm currently working through the Franken Fran Omnibuses, but since it's a closed set I'd rather finish them all before reviewing any.

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.)

Fantastic Four Annual #1: Marvel - One of the downsides of a purely mail order pull is that I can't look at an Annual before deciding to buy it, and I have to remember to check solicits for Annuals. If I had done either, I wouldn't have bought this. It's part of some Annual-crossover "pit heroes against each other for Magic Reasons" thing, and while Zac Gorman's Human Torch snappy patter is amusing, the issue as a whole was basically a waste of time...and this for a hobby where I'm deliberately wasting time. Don't bother with this. \$4.99

Fantastic Four #11: Marvel - A Thing focus, bringing back another classic FF villain who needs to be beaten with brains rather than brawn. From way back, we've known that Ben is no idiot, for all that he plays at being the guy with rocks for skin and rocks for brains, but he tends to get overshadowed by the sheer genius of Reed Richards outside of some very specific and somewhat contrived circumstances, but a lot of North's issues have been solo or duo stories anyway. Recommended. \$3.99

Moon Knight #27: Marvel - The two Knights are back together, and on a journey into the mind of Vibro, probably giving more depth to the guy than he probably ever had. But that's kinda MacKay's jam on this title, digging up and fleshing out characters who often only exist in the Obscure Characters index. Recommended. \$3.99

Draculina Blood Simple #5 (of 6): Dynamite Entertainment - Not quite as involved as Spider-Verse, but Draculina and Vampirella get to continue

mucking about in alternate realities and timelines and stuff, including a sequence that's in black and white inkwork except for Vampi's red swimsuit. The question of Draculina's parentage is finally answered (as clearly as it's gonna be, anyway, given how she's a multiply looping time paradox possibly recycling some of Priest's ideas from his 1999 prose series). Part of it refers to a past event that apparently came out in comics this month, so Vampi's none to firmly attached to time herself. (Let's just sidestep her whole Superpowers crossover stuff for the moment.) Recommended, if a touch confusing. \$3.99

My Little Pony Classics Reimagined: The Unicorn of Odd #1 (of 4): IDW - The same art style and breeze "what fourth wall?" tone as the Little Women adaptation, this is based on the original novel rather than the Judy Garland movie, which combines with the ruthless digesting necessary to give a bunch of story beats not familiar to people who only know the movie and missing a lot of stuff expected by everyone with any knowledge of Oz. Breezy and irreverent fun. Recommended. \$3.99

Dave Van Domelen, "Besides, you only ever wear them when you're evil. I think the shoes might be cursed." - The Good Princess of the North (aka Celestia)
