

The Buy Pile: Valiant's Handbook Saves The Week

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WHAT IS THE BUY PILE?

Every week *Hannibal Tabu* (winner of the *2012 Top Cow Talent Hunt*/*2018-2019 City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Trailblazer*/ *blogger/novelist/poet/jackass on /head honcho of *Komplikated**) takes on an between seven to thirteen reviews (or so) to share his opinions with you. Thursday afternoons you'll be able to get those thoughts (and they're just the opinions of one guy, so calm down) about all of that ... which goes something like this ...

THE BUY PILE FOR JUNE 26, 2019

Valiant Universe Handbook 2019 Edition (Valiant Entertainment)

Jump from the Read Pile. Handbooks, sourcebooks, or whatever you call them have always been a favorite of this column, an encapsulation of hundreds of dollars worth of comics, delivering unto anyone who held them a license to be right in any discussions of subjects covered between their covers. This one is frustratingly vague about details (Ninja-K and Archer are both listed as "Master Martial Artist" with no referential way to know which is functionally superior) but can give anybody a running start at getting into the characters, epochs and storylines published by Valiant. Plus, it was a slow week. Deeply rereadable due to its data density, this issue is well worth the price of admission. **RATING: BUY.**

War Of The Realms #6 was loud and charming and messy and funny and insane, often at the same time. There were a lot of little things that worked: Frank Castle at war, time travel providing a Spartacus solution, some nice turns of dialogue, the rise of kings. There were things that didn't -- symbiotes make for visually cluttered fight scenes, Malekith needed a few more good villain turn lines but got crowded out by the likes of Ben Grimm. It's an ending that sets up a nice symmetry but staggers across the finish line instead of marching triumphantly. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Angel #2 has a third act that feels very much like a TV show, in a good way, as it moves characters around in an interesting way. Unfortunately, the threat at hand remains disturbingly vague, despite a very nice show of its power in effect. This issue is a mixed bag as the series still tries to find its footing, but it's got some good elements here. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Fantastic Four #11 had a number of legitimate chuckles and an "aw shucks" ending with a ridiculous antagonist. This issue a consummate show of craft from masters of the form that might not have exactly taxed their greatness. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Canto #1 is a clever if somewhat vague fantasy yarn with a very sweet core to it and an oppressive vibe to be escaped. The structure is solid but its threat lacks distinction and its mystery is just a hair too impenetrable. If it sticks the landing down the line, this may all be like those early episodes of *Game of Thrones* that seem so much deeper in retrospect. Today? **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Superior Spider-Man #8 cements the case for a buddy book with Quentin Quire while its arrogant protagonist actually learned something in between the raindrops of a larger story. This was by no means good enough to own, but it's the best *War of the Realms* book we've seen in a while. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Action Comics #1012 had no fewer than four top notch character moments, things that engage and connect the reader to the *dramatis personae* here. The plot didn't do as much work, darting around points that may seem connected down the line but felt disparate here. Not bad, but it feels like it wants to be an OGN and not monthly chunks. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Like this week's installment of *Action Comics*, *Doctor Strange* #15 has some good character bits, where the lead's longing for the past and his resolve to save the future clash interestingly. A story this big -- and it's crossover big, really -- feels cramped in this space, though and there are way too many pieces on the board for this to connect with 90% of them. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Thief Of Thieves #43 is a whirlwind of double crosses and flashbacks, culminating in an origami plot of global economic madness. This was quite a verbal spectacle, but with way too much going on to breathe any of it in. As a last chapter of a collection, this will feel quite satisfying. **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Star Wars Age Of Rebellion Darth Vader #1 has a little bit of a technical weirdness at the end for a somewhat amusing story about Vader learning the Sith way to work inside the boundaries of a nascent Imperial hierarchy. There are some moments that should be epic, awe-inspiring shows of power but they get montage-d into irrelevance. In a novelization, this would be amazing, but as sequential art ... **RATING: HONORABLE MENTION.**

Flash #73 has all the bones for what should be a great work, but a pedestrian origin montage, wooden performances by the lead and his romantic interest and an annoying inability to see the obvious kept this from achieving more. **RATING: MEH.**

Dial H For Hero #4 cranks the ridiculous up way past any kind of safety recommendations with ... well, the less said about the "heroes" conjured, the better. In any case, the twisted

history of the Detroit JLA team comes back to mechanized life via a serial screw up and a flash of art styles from the Sunday funny papers. This issue? It, uh, happened ... **RATING: MEH.**

Bloodshot Rising Spirit #8 had a serviceable use of the interrogation flashback framing device, outlining some early challenges with the Bloodshot program. It was cleverly put together but didn't have any time to show the characters as beings to care about. **RATING: MEH.**

Silencer #18 was quiet ... *too* quiet. Given the goings on of *Event Leviathan*, Talia al Ghul's vendetta has gone surprisingly silent (no pun intended), leading to an issue where so little happens you could almost hear a pin drop. The balance of two lives remains disturbingly lopsided and unresolved, which submarined this snoozer of an issue. **RATING: MEH.**

WHAT'S THE PROGNOSIS?

Well, nothing was really bad (though a couple of "meh" books not worth this many characters tried), so this week could be damned by faint praise.

THE BUSINESS

Tonight from 1AM-2AM PST, check the *It's Komplikated* mix show on [KQBF-LP Community Built Radio 101.5 FM](#), available wherever you are.

Get a sneak peek of what's next in season five of [#wildfirewednesday free web comics](#) before it goes on hiatus for the thick of convention season.

The writer of this column isn't just a jerk who spews his opinions -- he writes stuff too. A lot. Like what? You can get [Scoundrel](#) (historical fiction set in 1981 east Los Angeles), [Irrational Numbers: Addition](#) (a supernatural historical fiction saga with vampires), [Project Wildfire: Enter Project Torrent](#) (a collected superhero web comic), [The Crown: Ascension](#) and [Faraway](#), five bucks a piece, or spend a few more dollars and get [New Money #1](#) from Canon Comics, the rambunctious tale of four multimillionaires running wild in Los Angeles, a story in [Watson and Holmes Volume 2](#) co-plotted by *2 Guns* creator Steven Grant, two books from Stranger Comics -- [Waso: Will To Power](#) and the sequel [Waso: Gathering Wind](#) (the tale of a young man who had leadership thrust upon him after a tragedy), or [Fathom Sourcebook #1](#), [Soulfire Sourcebook #1](#), [Executive Assistant Iris Sourcebook #1](#) and [Aspen Universe Sourcebook](#), the official guides to those Aspen Comics franchises. Love these reviews? It'd be great if you picked up a copy. Hate these reviews? Find out what this guy thinks is so freakin' great. There's free sample chapters too, and all proceeds to towards the care and maintenance of his kids ... oh, and to buy comic books, of course. There's also a bunch of great stuff -- fantasy, superhero stuff, magical realism and more -- available from this writer on [Amazon](#). What are you waiting for? Go buy a freakin' book already!

Got a comic you think should be reviewed in The Buy Pile? If we get a PDF of a fairly normal length comic (i.e. "less than 64 pages") by no later than 24 hours before the actual issue arrives in stores (and sorry, we can only review comics people can go to stores and buy), we guarantee to try and review the work, if remembered. Physical comics? Geddouttahere. Too much drama to store with diminishing resources. If you send it in more than two days before comics come out, the possibility of it being forgotten increases exponentially. Oh, you should use [the contact form](#) as the CBR email address hasn't been regularly checked since George W. Bush was in office. Sorry!

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