



Essential Classic X-Men, Vol. 2

*Roy Thomas , Gary Friedrich , Arnold Drake , Werner Roth (Illustrations) , Jack Sparling (Illustrations) ,
Dan Adkins (Illustrations) , Ross Andru (Illustrations) , Don Heck (Illustrations)*

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Enemies both infamous and obscure abound in another archive of the X-Men's early adventures! Guest starring Spider-Man, Doctor Strange and the Avengers, this collection also features mainstay malefactors such as Magneto, the Juggernaut and Factor Three.

Essential Classic X-Men, Vol. 2 Details

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Author : Roy Thomas , Gary Friedrich , Arnold Drake , Werner Roth (Illustrations) , Jack Sparling (Illustrations) , Dan Adkins (Illustrations) , Ross Andru (Illustrations) , Don Heck (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Essential Classic X-Men, Vol. 2 for online ebook

Summer says

I liked this better than volume 1, though it was still very cheesy and misogynystic.

Julie says

An interesting collection of the early X-men comics. I do find Roy Thomas's writing to be rather lacking though. Some of the plots and villains just have not aged well at all! I did enjoy reading some of the back stories of the characters.

Kevruzz says

This is what they call the sophomore slump. While the writing has largely improved and the characters have settled comfortably into their respective roles, it feels like all the best ideas were used up in the first volume. Writers Roy Thomas and Gary Friedrich are definitely trying, but not a single story stands out, not even the long-gestating "Factor Three" arc that ends with the death of Professor X (I'm sure he'll be fine.) It's not surprising that X-Men limped along for a few more issues before needing the all-new all-different reboot.

Adam Walker says

In this volume the stories started getting better as the characters became more established. Everything is still GLORIOUSLY over-written, and some of the comments, especially ones directed at Jean and other female characters, are quite cringeworthy, but that aside, it's quite a romp!

Andrew says

Well this collection isn't any better, and it is in fact worse, than the first essential. However it fills in the gap I've had in continuity. Roy Thomas serves as a Stan Lee clone, but to the detriment of this series. Arnold Drake's scripts at least sounded a bit different than Lee or Thomas. I did enjoy some of the steps in art, and was quite surprised by the Jim Steranko issues. Those were quite impressive if still fairly rough. The faces especially could use some refining.

The most notable events in this essential are the introductions of Banshee (yay!) and Polaris. And the apparent death of a certain character. Even if it isn't true, it helps give the characters a new direction and independence, which is important for the rest of the series before the cancellation. Almost all the villain introductions are pretty forgettable. Mesmero is the only one that gets some later play for the most part and even then not all that much.

So I won't recommend the book, but I still enjoyed myself quite a bit.

Next up Neal Adams!

Includes Uncanny X-Men #25-53 plus Avengers #53

The_Mad_Swede says

The first volume in this series was quite faultily named *Essential Uncanny X-Men* volume 1 (in order to separate it from the *Essential X-Men* volumes starting from the 70s relaunch, which were already on the market), but from this second volume of the earlier X-Men material has been turned into *Essential Classic X-Men* instead. This volume collects *X-Men* #25–53 and *Avengers* #53.

Roy Thomas had by this time taken over plotting and scripting duties from Stan Lee and he holds onto those reins until #45 when Gary Friedrich takes over for three issues, followed by six issues by Doom Patrol creator Arnold Drake which closes the volume. Artistically, the volume is dominated by Werner Roth (a highly underestimated artist, in my opinion) and Don Heck, although others contribute as well, e.g. an early Barry Windsor-Smith and a couple of issues by Jim Steranko.

Now, this stuff is not bad. There's a lot of fun to be found, encounters with Juggernaut, the introduction of Banshee, individual costumes, etc, but it's still not among the most high ranking of X-Men material out there. It is fun for continuity reasons, and to see the development of the comic over time, but the real pop, of course, comes with the team up of Thomas and Neal Adams, following Drake's run. Something that is material to be found in the next volume (or as in my own case, in the Masterworks edition collecting issues #54–66).

Not a bad read at all, but certainly not the best one to be found on the market either. Fun stuff for X-Men fans is guaranteed, however.

Chris says

The back of the book sums it up perfectly: "The Thunderous threat of Factor Three! The first appearances of Banshee and Polaris! Mimic vs. the Super-Adaptoid! Subterranean civil war!" 'Nuff said, true believers!

Peter says

this is a compilation of the second half of the first x men run. and it is clear while reading this, that this series was going in a downward spiral. some issues are better than others, but overall this is a compilation of very mediocre comics. and some of the sentiments and the pacing are very outdated.

James says

Much like Volume 1, Essential Classic X-Men Volume 2 initially suffers from predictable stories, with the same structure - X-Men practice their skills in their Mansion, ludicrously-named baddie who's only motivation is TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF EARTH pops on the scene, X-Men fight him (always him), and save the day. Towards the end of this Volume, things get a bit more interesting with the death of a main character (but obviously this being X-Men, no one really dies for long), and a multi-part story format that really kicks up a gear at issue 50 when the artwork and script both receive a boost. It's given me a hankering to start Volume 3 soon!

Rich Meyer says

One of the better Essentials volumes, simply for the diverse art styles. The original X-Men title was beginning it's way out (and was nearly canceled entirely after issue #66, when it became a reprint title), but that meant there could be a lot of experimentation by writers and artists. This volume has such diverse artists as Werner Roth, Don Heck, Ross Andru, Jim Steranko and Barry Windsor-Smith handling things.

Storyline highlights include the X-Men graduating into their new costumes, the finale of the Factor Three story, the first Cobalt Man tale, and the origins of the X-Men featurette.

This is one of the Marvel Essentials volumes that I can definitely recommend.

Steven Heywood says

The second half of the original X-Men run was a pretty incoherent mishmash of stories trying — and failing — to find some sort of direction. Having said that, there are a few good stories in here, and some of the sixties period vignettes are fun. Most of all, though, it's the art: Steranko provides a couple of graphically-staged set pieces; Don Heck, as ever, does a good workmanlike job; but it's the cruelly-underrated Werner Roth who does the business for me.

Brent says

There were some real duds in here, but it got a little better by the end. Loved the Jim Steranko art!

Mike McAdam says

I read the X-men comics when I was a kid. The issues were almost to 200 (if I recall correctly) and they were REALLY good. Great characters. Great stories. So I decided on a whim to go back and it read the X-men comics from the very beginning. I read the first volume and pretty much hated it. I read this volume and nothing has changed. The characters talk out loud to themselves (to further the story I guess) constantly. They all seem like mental patients. And, much worse, they are constantly able to do things that don't make

sense even with their mutant powers. When reading something like this, I always ask myself, "If something like this were to happen, could it happen like this?" The characters and the world they live in make sense but it felt like the characters and their abilities were being compromised or changed to fit the particular story. I hated that. And the villains in this compilation were mostly forgettable. There were some exceptions (Magneto, etc) but for the most part the villains were lame. And they all seemed to have lackies that were saying "You are the master! Our only wish is to do whatever you want!" I hated that too. I am going to continue to read them as I hear they do get better but I have to say that up to and including issue #53, they are dreadful.

Christopher says

Bleh.

There is a reason when Marvel started this Essentials line they (basically) started the X-Men when Claremont took over the book and skipped all the early drek.

Professor X dies in this book. But it was more annoying than shocking as I knew he'd be coming back at some point through some bullshit.

The best thing about this collection are the two issues with art by Jim Steranko. Wow, I can see why he is highly regarded. The next of these books I get may need to be S.H.I.E.L.D/Nick Fury to see more of his work.

Adam Graham says

This book collects 25-53 of the original X-men series along with Issue 53 of the Avengers.

The first 20 issues are the latter part of Roy Thomas' run on the book and it's mostly fairly mediocre villain of the month stuff. Even the two part return of the Juggernaut isn't all that impressive until Issue 35. The big highlight is Issue 35 with Spidey v. the X-men, Issues 37-39 with the X-Men battling a group of evil mutants, and Issue 42 with the death of Professor X. Also, in Issue 38, the book began to be divided in a similar to the Thor series, with the first sixteen pages dedicated to the main story and five or six dedicated to telling the backstory of the X-men. This was helpful in a way because the X-men were not as well-developed characters as other Marvel groups such as the Fantastic Four or the Avengers.

Gary Friedrich took over with Issue 45 and his idea was to separate the X-men into three different groups with the FBI giving the order. As established in this book, Xavier is established as having federal permission from them to start the School for Mutants. It was an early attempt to address the problem that all these Marvel Superhero teams were in New York, but in retrospect it looks kind of silly because even in three groups, five X-men can't cover the whole country. Given the massive number of X-men in recent years, this actually could work.

Friedrich's tenure was short and he gave to Arnold Drake in Issue 48. Drake was best known for creating the Doom Patrol for DC at about the same time as the X-men. The Doom Patrol had many commonalities with the X-men excepts they were actually more interesting. Drake reunited the X-men fairly quickly and then

introduced Lorna Dane in an epic story arc as "Queen of the Mutants" and apparent daughter of Magneto. The legendary Jim Steranko took over the art chores for Issues 50 and 51 in what is the highlight of the book. Steranko art is unique and it gives Drake's story an epic feel. It's a shame that Steranko didn't stick around to finish it in Issue 52 but Don Heck is no slouch. The book concludes with a melee against Blestar.

Overall, despite its failings, there's a lot to commend the book. The Arnold Drake stories are the best and Steranko makes the Lorna Dane story extra special. But even beyond that, the art is consistently good from cover to cover and a Spider-man guest spot and the Death of Professor Xavier (which wouldn't last of course) are enough to make this a worthy read for X-men fans.
