



The Punisher, Vol. 2: Army of One

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After a twisted team-up with Spider-man, the one-man-army known as the Punisher packs his bags for Grand Nixon Island. This South Pacific scrap of dirt is home to psychotic mercenary criminals focused on the nuclear annihilation of....Brussels? It's a Punisher-style conclusion featuring complete and total carnage!

Includes Punisher (2001) #1-7.

The Punisher, Vol. 2: Army of One Details

Date : Published February 20th 2002 by Marvel Comics Group (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780785108399

Author : Garth Ennis , Steve Dillon

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Marvel, Graphic Novels Comics, Mystery, Crime, Fiction



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Timo says

These Punishers Ennis did before Punisher was turned to a MAX title lack the last punch. Do not get me wrong. These are entertaining as hell. Funny and violent but also deep and tragic. But lacking the last uuumph.

Steven Kirby says

I never cared for the Punisher until Garth Ennis (with Steve Dillon and later Goran Parlov) took over the title. His oeuvre starts with Punisher Marvel Knights, 'Welcome Back, Frank', then his 37-issue run on the same title, and finally his 10-TPB Punisher Max collection. These books (including this book) fully embrace the dark, sociopathic worldview of a violent vigilante. Ennis's work is twisted, profane and irreverent and he was the perfect match for the Punisher. He turned a boring and predictable title into an exciting and dark-humoured surprise. If you don't like the Punisher, but you like Garth Ennis, check it out. If you don't like Garth Ennis, but you like the Punisher, check it out. If you don't like either, don't bother.

Jordan Lahn says

Well, the Russian was my least favorite part of the last Punisher volume, so I was disappointed to see him return here. Glad he is definitely (?) gone now... Other than that the story was fine. There's a funny Spider-Man team up, and plenty of violence.

Sam Quixote says

Before I get into the review, let's talk about Garth Ennis' sense of humour: sometimes it's a bit much, I agree. As big a fan as I am of the guy, I gave up on Preacher because the "jokes" just weren't landing. I didn't laugh at the guy who discovered he was gay after he was raped; I didn't laugh at the "retarded because of inbreeding" descendant of Christ - but Ennis kept hammering these "jokes" over and over and over again until I gave up on the series in disgust (though I did laugh at Arseface!).

The Boys - Ennis went a bit overboard in places and quite often the joke was "haha, they do drugs and abuse people" which isn't funny. And sometimes Ennis isn't even as one-dimensional as that - have you read Dicks, his first comic with John McCrea? It's just blandly stupid potty humour for no reason and it's unreadable!

Ennis' humour is crass, dark, and crude, and there's a LOT of it in Army of One. But the difference is the joke is on individuals who aren't real and are there to be laughed at, compared to groups of people Ennis point and laugh at in some of his lesser moments, eg. homosexuals or people born with learning difficulties (though the word "spackers" is freely tossed around in the first issue - it's a derogatory term for someone

with cerebral palsy). So, this one has a lot of off-colour humour in it, and not all of it works, but it's ok to enjoy this one.

And we can all agree the French suck, right?

Alright, onto the review:

“So this is Christmas” deadpans Frank as he strangles a rapist, eyes not even fully open.

One of the greatest creative teams in comics, Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, reunite for another brilliant Punisher book in *Army of One*. This is the Punisher *Marvel Knights* series, the unfairly out-of-print run (except for *Welcome Back, Frank*) that led into Ennis' acclaimed *The Punisher MAX* series, which is actually *MAX*'s equal in terms of quality from what I've read of it.

Army of One is a rambling but compelling story that sees Frank save the European Union from a mad General with an atomic bomb. Along the way, Frank will have a brutal team-up with Spidey, fight a grotesque male Russian cyborg with giant bewbs, talk Detective Soap (yup, he's back!) out of suicide, and take out a former Army buddy who once saved his life in 'Nam.

It's also an incredibly tasteless comic that I make no apologies for thoroughly enjoying. Ennis and Dillon bring so much pitch black humour and gory, righteous violence to the Punisher that it's a delight to read. They manage to make Frank forklifting a cage full of men into the sea seem like a comedy routine (it's alright, they were bad men)!

Ennis is in full-on gross-out humour for much of this book, bringing back his punching bag, Detective Soap, for a single sick joke where Soap unknowingly sleeps with his mother (yes, I laughed)! After re-introducing the Russian, this time with huge boobs - seemingly for no other reason than it's funny to see a butch man with massive knockers? – Ennis throws in Spidey who instantly gets punched in the crotch! (If you haven't read *The Boys*, it's pretty clear from his Punisher books what Ennis thinks of the masks and tights that make up the Marvel Universe – there's a reason there are no *Avengers*/*X-Men* books with Ennis' name on!)

But it's not just over-the-top in a funny sense, Ennis gives Frank an endless array of targets to kill with a ton of devastating toys. In no particular order, Frank disappears into a tropical island's jungle and begins taking out scores of mercenaries by setting death traps; he blows up a plane; and, the coup de grace, kills thousands in one fell swoop. I think it was Anton Chekhov who said that if you introduce a gun into the story, the gun must at some point be fired; Ennis applies the same rule to a nuke.

After the comedic madness of the Soap issue and the excessive everything in the main storyline, Ennis shifts gears to a more solemn tone. There's a one-shot where Frank has to put down an old army buddy who's gone nuts and, having murdered his wife and kids, has begun killing anyone in his way. Frank talks to the reader about the man his friend used to be, who was a hero who saved his life, humanising him in a way that makes Frank's task all the more poignant at the end of the chapter.

It sounds insane to go from farce to ultra-violence to slapstick to sombre realism, but Ennis manages it effortlessly here. It doesn't feel awkward or out of place or even that surprising - that's how talented a writer this guy is.

The one issue I didn't think worked completely was the silent issue scripted/drawn by Steve Dillon that closes out the volume. It took me a couple reads to get what happened but even then it wasn't that great.

Dillon may be the definitive Punisher artist - and he is - but he needs Ennis, and vice versa.

Army of One is the funniest Marvel book I've read in quite some time. Maybe because Marvel just don't push the boat out that much these days (this book's over 10 years old) though it's probably because there's only one Garth Ennis. It's definitely not for the kids but if you've got a flexible sense of humour and don't mind a lot of twisted vulgarity in your comics, you'll love this - I sure did!

Another great Punisher book from Ennis and Dillon!

Ketan Shah says

A decent Punisher collection, though not as good as the later Max volumes. The Wolverine appearance is played more for laughs than anything else .

Stephen says

You will laugh your ass off. How many books can guarantee that?

Francisca says

this was even more bizarre than the first volume yet, oddly, more entertaining too

Nate says

More ridiculous goodness. The Grand Nixon Island storyline has got to have one of the most hilariously excessive endings to an Ennis Punisher story, which is really saying something.

Jedhua says

ABSOLUTE RATING: {3/5 stars}

STANDARDIZED RATING: <3/5 stars>

Freddy says

The "Don't Fall into New York" issue is a real highlight.

Carl Walker says

The Punisher, Vol. 1: Welcome Back, Frank was great, but this... is a letdown. With Ennis you've almost always got this awkward tension between compelling characterization and one-dimensional straw men, the latter too often being a venue for Ennis to indulge and revel in misappropriate cruelty. *Preacher* usually landed on the right side of this, as did *Hitman*, but there was one moment in particular here with Detective Soap (from the last volume) that really went out of bounds. Same with the French character; while Ennis does actually find something legitimate to castigate the French for, and somewhat hedges with his French-bashing based on whose mouths he puts all the insults into, it's still... trite, I guess? Pandering, at best. And not really that funny. On top of that, the plots are a bit threadbare. I've read that Ennis' run doesn't really pick up until it's rebooted as a "Max" series; perhaps once he can go farther with the violence, he can rely less on caricature? Eh, we'll see... if I get that far.

Josef says

Hv?zdi?ka navrch za Rusáka a Spider-Mana...

Red says

The first five issues are largely forgettable schlock, but the last two issues, written post-9/11, are fascinating. I remember hanging in the comic shop the week following the tragedy, issue after issue a flood of somber-looking super heroes looking on at Ground Zero impotently. But not the Punisher. These two stories (the second, told entirely without dialogue) drive home that New York is a cess pool, an indifferent black hole that swallows young and old, good and evil alike. A meat grinder, where every citizen is turning the handle.

This feels profoundly ballsy in light of how nervous I remember storytellers and citizens alike were in the aftermath, unsure of what could and could not be said about the city or its people. So hats off to Mr. Ennis and not giving in to the then-tempting notion to have Frank Castle collapse in tears in front of the Statue of Liberty. Comic book characters don't need to be indistinct pieces in the machine of societal coping, they don't need to bend their "good" to the world's needs. And Lord knows, the last person we need to feign compassion is the Punisher.

Rituraj Kashyap says

[The Russian (hide spoiler)]

Mike says

Solid, gritty, though not as terrifying as the later MAX series.

Couple of one-off issues round out this solid book. One story of mercy in the dark recesses of the city,

another - the Silent issue, which I think was a line-wide thing in 2002.

Ennis can craft a great story out of almost nothing and make me feel what's going through someone's head. Dillon surprisingly doesn't suck at storytelling either, when he's working without an Ennis script. Who knew?
