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A teenager is climbing walls in Manhattan. Mutants are attacking the White House. Nick Fury, head of the elite espionage agency known as S.H.I.E.L.D., knows the only way to combat these strange new threats is with a team of his own superhumans. Backed by a billion-dollar budget, Fury recruits Giant Man, the Wasp, Iron Man, Captain America and Thor. And while the team is strong enough to engage in a ferocious battle with the Hulk, will they implode under the weight of their internal conflicts? Rising above their own agendas, the Ultimates forge ahead with the introduction of new allies and face a major global threat.

Collects THE ULTIMATES VOL.1: SUPER-HUMAN and THE ULTIMATES VOL. 2: HOMELAND SECURITY. PLUS: A hefty helping of DVD-Style extras!

The Ultimates Details

Date : Published May 24th 2006 by Marvel (first published October 27th 2004)

ISBN : 9780785110828

Author : Mark Millar , Bryan Hitch (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 376 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Marvel, Comic Book, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Ultimates for online ebook

Labyrinth Rossiter says

I'm being generous to these books and attempting to rate them as if I'd never seen Captain America, Iron Man, Hulk, or any Avenger before. They're not Avengers. They're "Ultimates." The story is fast paced, action packed, and cinematic, but I have to make this distinction because these certainly aren't the characters that I love.

For example, the Cap that I know is the best of all good characters, American VALUES. In the Civil War series, he chooses to American values over "America." As an "Ultimate," he represents old-time American NATIONALISM, and he has the flaws that would go with that type of character. After the Hulk goes on a rampage and is defeated, Cap kicks skinny Bruce Banner in the face. MY Cap would never do that because it would be wrong. Nationalistic Cap would because he's an authoritarian bastard (oops) who thinks Banner deserves a boot to the head for putting people in danger. He also beats the crap out of Hank Pym to "teach him a lesson" about spousal abuse. Right in character.

As a friend of mine pointed out, Hulk has been changed to a creature of pure Id, which is interesting, but in execution, he's no longer an avatar of anger but more a terrifying sociopathic frat monster. Nick Fury has been super-sized from "super spy who can't be trusted" to a man who carries out the "cold equations." We're obviously not in Marvel-Kansas anymore.

It's supposed to be gritty, edgy. The part of me that watches The Devil's Rejects and Reservoir Dogs over and over really likes it. Part of me rebels because I wasn't intentionally reading a "gritty" comic. I was reading a take on The Avengers, and these Ultimates are just not very heroic.

Caitlin says

The ULTIMATES showcases the good, the bad, and the rapey characteristics of comics neatly into one volume!

What started out entertaining quickly devolved as soon as Bruce began interacting with his ex, Betty. Banner is portrayed as a victimized male, boo hoo, who goes into a Hulk rapey rage. He murders hundreds of people, wants to eat The Avengers—oh, sorry, THE ULTIMATES—and can't stop talking about how horny he is and how he wants to sexually destroy Betty.

Then Betty blames herself and pities poor Banner. (Gag)

Later, Hank Pym abuses and then tries to murder(!!!) his wife while she's naked and apologizing to him, even though he started it in the first place.

Some heroes, Millar. Thanks.

I didn't read Volume 2 because why would I?

Jbainnz says

This is a really hard one to put my finger on. It was enjoyable to most extent, but some sections were a bit shaky. I originally gave it 4 stars cause it didn't deserve a 3, then again it doesn't warrant a 4 star either. Damn you GR for not including decimal points!

This is actually my first Marvel comic I have bought. I am and will always be a DC man, but above all I'm a comic book fan. And like hell I'm going to miss out on a good read just cause of the company name. After having a few people recommend this series I was expecting this to knock me for a six. Regretfully, it never hit the spot for me. The writing is good as the story flows much like a big budget movie, slowly introducing characters while showing very little action to start off with...actually to tell you the truth there isn't much action in this full stop. Aside from the big fight with Hulk towards the end nothing really happens. Speaking of that whole shenanigan, Bruce Banner turns himself into the big green to give the Ultimates (Avengers) someone to fight?! What the f*#k is that?! I mean come on, there has to be some other way to make Bruce go all angry. In this interpretation he is a sweaty little coward that no one has any respect for. Then when he does FINALLY turn Hulk he is overwhelmed by randy-ness, even to the point of being a little rapey. To tell you the truth I don't know how I felt about his whole personality. Hopefully his character will get some much needed development as this continues, cause at the moment he just seems like a pathetic villain. Speaking of villains, we don't see any in this book. That's right the closest thing we get to a bad guy in this is the questionable heroes. Jan Pym is apparently sucking face with Steve Rodgers behind Hank Pym's back, I didn't quite understand this cause there is nothing prior to this comment that would suggest that. Not to mention Hank's mad crazy outburst at the end of the book. And like I said earlier Bruce has...issues. Oh and his beloved Betty Ross is a complete BITCH!!!

The art is fantastic, although in the collection I got all of the 2 page spreads where messed up so I had to turn the page to see the other half! What the flying f*!k Marvel sort your shit out!!

Although it had it's shortcomings, it still proved an alright read. Like I said the script is good, but the plot isn't building enough yet to spike a major interest for me. I'll get the next volume at some point, I just won't be in a hurry to pick it up.

Bookwraiths says

This was a great story. The first half of the book was 5 stars easy. The second half was a bit less amazing though which drug it down to a 4 stars. Overall though my favorite Ultimate series easy.

Alex says

In the early 2000's, Marvel reinvented many of their flagship titles to appeal to the shift in demand for comic books. Basically, this addressed the fact that comic book fans had entered an alleged state of adulthood and they wanted their comic books to reflect their more "mature" state of mind.

With that in mind, I can totally picture the meeting in which the Marvel bigwigs decided on having Mark Millar write *The Ultimates*, which was their re-vamped version of Captain America's super-team The Avengers.

ED. 1: So, guys. Our market research analysis shows that adult males in their early to mid twenties are buying the bulk of the comic books in circulation. What do adult males in their early to mid twenties like to see in their funny books?

ED. 2: Snark and boobs!

ED. 3: Cynicism and boobs!

ED. 4: Boobs and boobs!

ED. 1: Agreed. Now, where can we find a writer who will add all of those things to the Avengers?

ED. 2: Have you ever read *The Authority* by Mark Millar? It has all of those things. The team revels in murdering their enemies plus they have a lady character who has to be naked to use her powers. It's great.

ED. 1: Fantastic! Get me this Mark Millar!

And the rest, as they say, is history.

It's funny reading this now after so much discussion about the sexism and chauvinism that exists within geek culture, because this book is rife with stereotypical fanboy trash.

There are several minor quibbles that I had with Millar's cynical take on the Avengers, but my guts really twinged when Bruce Banner finally lets his Hulk out. When the story begins, Bruce Banner is a washed-up nobody. Betty Ross has dumped him, and he's embarrassed about his inability to recreate the super soldier serum that gave Captain America his powers--it's actually pretty cool, because his decision to let the Hulk out comes from the fact that he has totally hit bottom and doesn't know what else to do. However, a potentially cool wrinkle in the story was totally wrecked when Millar has Hulk rampaging through the city trying to fulfill a twisted rape-fantasy that has been pent up in Banner's psyche. Oh, and after all of the male Avengers administer sound beatings to the Hulk, how does Wasp, the team's only female member, contribute?

With her boobs.

She distracts Hulk by showing him her boobs. Oh, and then her husband beats her up and orders a legion of ants to attack her while she's one inch tall and naked--which made my guts twinge yet again.

This really is a one star book--the second star is awarded for the Nick Fury/SHIELD/Avengers Initiative story that Joss Whedon cherry-picked for *The Avengers* film, because that's actually a pretty good idea--kind of like the idea of telling a story about imperfect heroes who *aren't* terrible people.

James DeSantis says

Originally gave this one a 5/5 but Upon re-reading some of the dialog really sucks haha. It's borderline silly and over the top. I especially dislike the way Millar makes out Hulk as a horny creature who just wants to fuck everything.

On the flipside I love this no fucks giving Cap. He will knock you out, be somewhat sexist, and racist, and somehow it works. I also really enjoy Tony and Thor in this universe.

I think it's a lot of fun, especially the first half, the second half is entertaining but slower paced and not as interested. I might give it a 3.5 overall but it's still so damn fun.

Bradley says

in 1963, Marvel comics consisted of a group of unconnected superhero titles, which, for the most part, ignored each other. Only in Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four had they even hinted that all these characters existed in the same world. Then Stan Lee created a new book, the Avengers, which threw these powerful heroes together for the first time. They were really just a superhero club, hanging out at there rich friends house and occassionally fighting bad guys.

Ultimates is a complete reinvention of the old heroes and the team they created. Compared to its 1960's counterpart, it is just leaps and bounds ahead. I'd compare it to the difference between the old and new Battlestar Galactica. This is not your father's Avengers.

No longer characatures, these heroes are real people with real lives and real problems. Giant-Man and the Wasp are in an abusive relationship, Iron-Man is a drunk dieing from a brain tumor and trying to go out in a blaze of glory, the Hulk is, well, a picked on wuss with anger management issues, Thor is an anti-government activist who thinks he's a god ... is he nuts, or the real deal? And finally Captain America, a man lost in time, driven only by his patriotism, but wondering why he alone is still alive.

This group of dysfunctional heroes must somehow come together in the face of public distrust and their own failings to forge a team to save the world from an alien menace.

Logan says

Ah, another Mark Millar book that I read before I decided to swear him off forever. This comic book has its fans, but I think people mistake hard edge for maturity. Like many "mature" books, the writing here comes off more as childish.

Before I bear my fangs, I will say that Millar does have the ability to write exciting stories. They're framed like movies, since nowadays he only writes books that he thinks could be adapted to screen. However, there are pacing issues with the book. Most of The Ultimates is about the formation of the titular group as the Ultimate counterpart to the Avengers. Where the original team was founded by the heroes as a reaction to Loki being a jerk (an element of the story that made its way into the movie), here its a preemptive move against possible threats. It's a good idea, and infuses the story with a real world subtext of over-budgeted

military defense as a countermeasure against terrorism. Unfortunately, since it goes on so long, Millar needs to fill the book with some drama to keep us interested.

Sadly, it's the way that Millar handles characters that makes him such a revolting writer. Here, Captain America could be seen as a deconstruction of a man from the 40s who wakes up 70 years later to a changed world. Unfortunately, Millar lacks subtlety, and exaggerates these dissonant aspects of his character that modern audiences would find horribly outdated. While it wouldn't be a surprise if a temporally displaced man from the 40s would be sexist, racist, and nationalistic, it comes across as Millar trying too damn hard. The result is that instead of a well intentioned bigot, we are instead left with a jerk who is unpleasant to read.

Remember how Hank Pym hit Janet that one time way back? It showed us that even good men can make poor decisions when they're upset. He immediately regretted the decision, which hung over him forever while he attempted to do good. Millar is apparently only familiar with this part of Ant-Man's story, and he makes wife abusing loser the beginning and end of his character. It's shallow, and only serves to provide Millar's beloved EDGE to the Marvel brand.

Speaking of Janet, she's the symptom of Millar's inability to write strong women. A strong woman is not necessarily physically strong, but somebody who is a rounded character. They have their wants and desires of their own, even if that means to be a good wife and mother. It's why Catelyn Stark is a strong character and the original Lara Croft isn't, even though the former is a housewife and the latter is a gun toting badass. Janet's only real purpose is to get beat up by her abusive husband, which provides motivation for her new boyfriend, Captain America. Yeah, the bulk of her characterization revolves around the two men in her life, not the most progressive way to portray women. While I'm not saying you can't write spousal abuse, it deserves to be treated with the seriousness that Millar lacks for the subject. Here, the action is used for cheap shock, just like in nearly all of his books as they relate to women.

Thor was one of the few characters I liked. Here, he's an anti-government hippy, and everybody thinks he's crazy because he claims he is the real Thor. We never find out if this is true or not, not in this book, anyway, though I'm sure later books would clear that up. It gives Thor some ambiguity, and it actually makes him interesting. As a brand new portrayal of the character, we can't be sure if he really is who he says he is, or just a really strong mutant. Do you trust a powerful mutant with your nation's security if you think he's crazy? There is no easy answer.

Hulk is the worst. Here he's a cannibal would-be rapist. Bruce Banner has been jilted by Betty Ross, and when he's angry, he hulks out and goes after, all the while screaming about how "horny" he is. Ugh. If you've ever read a good Hulk story (they exist, I swear!), then you know that his conflict is based around how he contains this unstoppable beast within himself, and when it's released, it's nearly impossible to control. In The Ultimates, any complexity is stripped away for, surprise, cheap shocks. Wow, after Millar's treatment of the Hulk in Old Man Logan, you get the feeling he doesn't really like or understand the character! I'm not saying you can't change the character, as I explained with Thor, but he should at least be as interesting as he was before.

Nick Fury and Iron Man were there too, but they don't really stand out. Hawkeye and Black Widow were even more forgettable.

Every time Mark Millar writes a halfway decent character, there's 10 more that are either horrible or disposable. The Ultimates is meant to be an ensemble story, but the only character I found interesting. Like with Thor, it was interesting to present the idea of an Ultimate Avengers idea as an ambiguous idea at best, or a money-wasting disaster at worse. Had there actually been engaging characters, this may have actually

been a really good graphic novel that even approaches Watchmen on its level of comic book to real world commentary. Yeah, this book actually had some potential. After all, you've got a superhero team that costs billions of taxpayer dollars to build and maintain, which was created to counteract a threat which may or may not exist. And even if the threat existed, does the US government really need the superhuman equivalent of atomic bombs? The real world parallel isn't exactly subtle, but Millar's not a subtle guy. But where Watchmen ended ambiguously, the fate of the world left to chance, the ambiguity of The Ultimates dissolves when aliens show up. C'mon, the only way that could have been a more convenient solution is if it was Galactus who appeared in the skies to destroy the world. It's such a cheap way to resolve the internal conflict with an external source. Here's how it could have gone: Hulk goes on a rampage, and the Ultimates finally work together to overcome the threat. The only issue is that Hulk would have never destroyed a city block had there never been an Ultimates team to begin with. This fact becomes widespread, and everyone immediately calls for the dismantling of The Ultimates. Of course, the government wouldn't want to admit that they spent all that money for nothing (just like real life!), so their superhero team stays. It could have ended there, and the story could have been salvaged, but no, there had to be an easy solution.

The goal of the Ultimates was to provide new interpretations of old characters and situations, while also freeing up continuity for new readers without resorting to a company-wide reboot of their entire line of heroes. Unfortunately, mainstream superhero books being what they are, they had to continue the story, which requires any conflict resolution. With the unsatisfactory ending and the poorly written characters, any good ideas the book had are weighed down by the bad ones.

I will give it this: The Ultimates kept me engaged, even if it was for the wrong reasons.

David Brown says

This book has Samuel L. Jackson. Done. Nuff said. Everything else is just icing on the cake. Beautiful panels check, interesting characters check, compelling story check. The Ultimates is modern and gritty. A retelling of characters that are decades old. Turning super Heroes into super stars of a digital age. Super stars that might have abilities the rest of don't, but they make mistakes just like everyone else. While vets of the genre may take offence to some of the changes, for new comers this is a great starting point. Rarely does Miller disappoint, The Ultimates is no exception.

Holden Attradies says

When I really started getting into reading super-hero comics this was the first thing that simply blew me away. The writing is amazing, the only word I can think of to describe the art work is "cinematic". There were moments that were so emotionally charged it brought me to tears from levels of sheer realistic uncomfortableness (the domestic abuse between the Pym's) and pages that brought me to tears of laughter (just about any thing where the Hulk had a line).

There have been comics I've read that had characters I liked more, that had art I liked better on a few pages, that had more emotionally charged lines or funnier lines, but nothing that could deliver all of those at once in such a high caliber as in this series. Except maybe Ultimates 2, although as a stand alone I think this work may be better.

Aldo Haegemans says

4,5/5 I like the take no prisoners attitude the ultimates seem to have compared to the Avengers

Gavin says

This massive Hardcover covers all of the Ultimates Vols 1 & 2.

As a whole, this is rather enjoyable, and I can see where some of the look for the Avengers movie came from.

There are however, parts I wasn't super keen on, and wonder if Mark Millar isn't actually mentally damaged...wife beating, teasing Hulk with stupid 13yr old comments, having most of the characters be gigantic assholes...

However, all this "new" characterization, and yet: Hank Pym still beats Janet; Tony Stark is still a drunk womanizer; Clint Barton is still a cocky SOB, Steve Rogers is still a man out of time.

The only one who's any different is Thor, but he's a GREAT character this time. I've already read his Ultimates book, which gives us events leading up to his appearance here.

World in peril, from major threats, only one team can save the world...

Also, I am guessing Millar just either hates Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver, or just couldn't figure out a way to make them incestuous lovers or something.

There's still much to enjoy here, but just turning up the negative parts on most characters doesn't make them 'edgy' and Millar is doing a great job marketing his book to the knee-jerk dolts who think Michael Bay movies are Oscar-worthy. There are parts that haven't aged well due to dated references (Freddie Prinze Jr., Playstation 2, Dubya).

Even with all my complaints I did enjoy it, so maybe that makes me a knee-jerk dolt as well?

Sesana says

The Ultimates comes very highly recommended, from more than a few people. But for me, it was far from living up to the hype.

The basic concept of the Ultimate 'verse is to make the familiar Marvel heroes more "real" and "edgy". In The Ultimates, Millar attempts to do that by making nearly every single character a complete jerk. Even unnamed extras are jackasses for no other reason than because it's "realistic" (no, it really isn't). Hank Pym is abusive towards his wife, and nobody seems to care much. Tony has become even more of an author fantasy character than he could be. Thor, the most bearable character, is horribly smug. Even Captain America, the last likeable character in the book, finally ends up as a xenophobic bigot with a line that Millar assures me in a nearly full-page sequence in the issue following that I should find hilarious. And I just don't find bigotry funny. I could possibly work with all the many, many character flaws if they weren't also sneering their way through every single scene.

But the plot, what about the plot? Well, for most of the book, there is no plot. The characters do nothing but sit around and do PR for most of the book. We're about halfway through this large, 13 issue volume when Bruce Banner finally Hulk's out. And God, what a horrible sequence that was. With the way he wrote it, I

was convinced that Millar really thought that Betty Ross was at fault for Bruce intentionally turning himself into the Hulk and killing 300 people while threatening to rape Betty because she broke up with him and wasn't pleasant to him after. At least, everybody in the book seemed to think so, including Betty, and nobody says that Bruce might be responsible for his own actions or that maybe it isn't cool to terrorize a woman into dating you. Maybe we, the readers, are meant to see that all as reprehensible and take the characters to task because they don't. But I don't give Millar credit for that kind of subtlety.

When an actual threat does show up, it's alien shape-shifter Nazis. Who are suddenly a dire threat despite napping for the past sixty years or so. I didn't find them a credible threat, and I thought that making them Nazis was a lazy way of making them evil without having to do any effort developing their specific threat. And the huge, sprawling, boring multi-issue fight that closed it out was less than compelling.

Oh, and a parting kudos to Millar for his bizarre sense of realism. A woman who can shrink to an inch tall at will? Realistic. Giving her a wardrobe that will shrink with her? Don't be absurd! Except then he admits in the interview after it was just an excuse to have dozens of panels of Jan naked. Thanks for that.

Hannah G. says

"You think this letter on my head stands for France?" still makes no damn sense and will never make sense because mark millar thinks he's an edgy and gritty writer when all he is is try-hard.

honestly, if you recommend ultimates to me and tell me it's a *better* universe and better depiction of the avengers because it's more "realistic" then we can't be friends. we just can't.

Jesse A says

The Ultimate universe, where apparently everyone is an asshole. Felt like a warped version of the Avengers we know and love. It is a very good Avengers story if you can just get past the Avengers being dicks.
