



Marvel Masterworks: The Avengers, Vol. 2

*Stan Lee (Writer) , Don Heck (Artist) , Jack Kirby (Artist) , Larry Lieber (Writer) , Paul Laiken (Writer) ,
Dick Ayers (Artist)*

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Collecting 'The Avengers' 11-20, this volume includes some of Marvel's most recognizable characters, such as Kang the Conqueror, Wonder Man, the Space Phantom and Baron Zemo.

Marvel Masterworks: The Avengers, Vol. 2 Details

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From Reader Review Marvel Masterworks: The Avengers, Vol. 2 for online ebook

Dan Creel says

This trade collects the second set of ten issues (numbers 10-20) of the original run of The Avengers. The first half of the issues reprinted in this edition were subpar to say the least. It was obvious that Stan Lee had either lost focus or was really missing the input fellow creator, Jack Kirby (following issue 8), because the first half of the issues were very subpar. I had trouble finishing single issues in one sitting and left a story in mid-stream numerous times.

The stories only pick up after the now-historic shake-up of the team's roster in issue 16. It must have been a big risk at the time to get rid of most the publisher's heavy-hitters, leaving only Captain America, and replace them with a trio of B-list former villains: archer Hawkeye, speedster Quicksilver and, his sister, the Scarlet Witch. And, it worked. The last few stories get a bit more punch and depth, and there's actually some amount character development which was sorely lacking in the previous run of issues.

Travis says

More classic Avengers goodness as the team goes up against a ton of classic villains and we see the very first changing of the team's line up.

While we're used to team members coming and going, at the time this was a pretty radical move. Get rid of all the big name heroes and replace them with a couple ex-villains and a second tier hero.

Yet it works. The heroes want to prove themselves, while not wanting to be treated like kids. Captain America is still trying to keep the peace, but in a different way.

and when they go up against a big menace they have to break a sweat to win. With lesser powered heroes not every story has to be fate of the world or seem too easy.

Scott says

There's definite improvement in this volume, especially after the more rambunctious and physically weaker team of Captain America, Hawkeye, Quicksilver, and Scarlet Witch come on the scene. There are some lame attempts to "correct" some misread dialogue in the reconstruction. There's nothing too great here, but it's gradually getting up to the standard set by Spider-Man, FF, X-Men, and Daredevil. Lee and Heck were still riding on the thrill of seeing the popular Marvel superheroes together, and the reconstructed team is much more interesting in terms of character relationships. The Commissar story is kind of a lame rip-off of *The Wizard of Oz*, however, and the Swordsman is an interesting villain, having a strong degree of honor that makes him tread a fine line as to where they are going to go with him, although I understand that he died fairly early on (although he's very much alive at the end of this volume).

As with the contemporaneous *The Mighty Thor vol. 3*, there is a story opposing communism in Asia, this time in a fictitious country called Sing-Cho. Unfortunately, what is called "communism" in this propaganda is more like oligarchical capitalism. Of course, I oppose oligarchical capitalism, but calling it communism is Orwellian newspeak (although it's certainly true that Russia and China had plenty of this, and no true communism).

Dimitris says

Ah.. I can excuse so much stuff because it was the 60s and well, we have to factor in lots of stuff, but.. it's so.. stupid and cringe-worthy at times, that I can't say anything positive about most of the stories back then other than "it was written for kids" and "it was the 60s" and pretty much stuff like that.

Oh well, the artwork was and still is one of my favourite things ever. Don Heck or Kirby, both of them were amazing artists!

Evan Leach says

This collection contains issues 11-20 of the *Avengers*, published from 1964 to 1965. Overall this was another solid Stan Lee collection, featuring crazy plots, aliens, kooky supervillains, and everything else you'd expect from 1960's Marvel.

One thing I did not realize – in issue #16, the entire roster (minus Captain America) turns over. Iron Man, Thor, Giant Man & Wasp are gone, replaced by Hawkeye and the siblings Quicksilver & Scarlet Witch (of X-Men fame). This surprised me, although the quality of the series didn't really suffer. I didn't think any of these issues were incredible, but I enjoyed nearly all of them and would recommend this collection to any fans of Silver Age comics. **3.5 stars**.

Jeff Bleyle says

Nostalgic slice of Silver Age comics that missed a dash of the Jack Kirby artwork that made the first volume of this series so enjoyable. Also the dated and shallow characterizations of the female characters, particularly the continual swooning The Wasp demonstrates over seemingly every male character she encounters, was a bit cringe worthy. Entertaining enough for me that I have queued up the third volume in this series to read over the coming weeks.

Chelsea says

I enjoyed this one a lot less than the first one, to be honest.

The original Avengers line up only lasted about 14 issues before all the founding members left? It's a bit jarring.

The treatment of Jan is worse. She's referred to as "girl" and "the female" quite a bit. Even in the issue where she was in surgery because of a serious injury, the doctor refers to her as "the girl". It's gross and Hank's treatment of her is so annoying. I wanted to duck tape his mouth several times. Jan deserves so much better.

Now, Wanda has arrived and it doesn't look as though her treatment will be much better.

I loved that she and Pietro were fans of Tony Stark and Iron Man at first. Yet another aspect the MCU ruined for me. Tony's legacy as a founding Avenger should mean a lot more than it does in the films. Here, he leaves the team (although I'm not entirely sure why) and gives this great line about how the line up of the team should always be changing but he'll never forget the words "Avengers Assemble" and what they stood for and, my god, if the films had actually given me a real team, I would kill to have RDJ recite that speech.

But I digress, the OG Avengers leave and Hawkeye, Pietro and Wanda take their place. I must admit, the friction between Cap and Hawkeye was entertaining to see. I like that this is a lineup pretty much based on characters trying to earn redemption in the public eye.

I'm hoping the next volume is better but I'm taking a Tales of Suspense break.

Shannon Appelcline says

The first four issues of *The Avengers* V2 are relatively mundane. There's only so much you can do with this same group of heroes showing off the same series of personality quirks. Still, there's some nice variety. Some of the issues continue to integrate with the larger Marvel universe: when Kang returns, Spider-man makes a guest appearance (#11), then the Avengers fight two FF foes, the Mole Man and the Red Ghost (#12). Other issues continue to expand the Avengers' own mythology: besides the return of Kang (#11), we also get the introduction of Count Nefaria (#13), who's just a rich mob guy with inventions in this debut, and the space-faring Kallusians (#14), who are barely ever seen again. But overall, these stories are just OK.

The first joy in this volume comes at the pivot point (#15-16), a two-part story that revisits the Zemo and the Masters of Evil, with a new roster that rather delightfully combines the two earlier memberships. But it's not their return that's a big deal, it's the fact that Zemo *dies*. Meanwhile, these issues also feature the original Avengers retiring, offering up in their place the Cap's Kooky Quartet of himself, Hawkeye, Quicksilver, and the Scarlet Witch. Both of these plot points say the same thing: the *Avengers* was willing to totally reinvent itself, to move forward its plots and make space for new ones. To a certain extent, that was a recurring motif in the early Marvel Age of Comics, but it was a game-changer for what had come before, and particularly apparent in this title.

Cap's Kooky Quartet deserves a bit of additional thought: why in the world did Marvel replace their top stars with this set of second-rate villains? Stan Lee's much later explanation is that he was having troubles tracking continuity between the titles, so he settled on a team without titles of their own. Certainly, there were other potential advantages too: having characters whose home base was the Avenger allowed the possibility for changes to the characters, something that Gerry Conway focused on years later in his own *Justice League Detroit*, and this team of ex-villains also offered more room for dissension.

And there's definitely dissension (thanks mainly to Clint) and more notably strong characterization of all of our main characters. We get to know these characters much better, and it's mainly to the comic's benefit (except, perhaps, for the characterization of Rick and Steve, which is mainly Rick whining about not being an Avenger and Steve whining about not being a secret agent of SHIELD).

The comic really feels like it hits its stride again with the intro of the Swordsman (#19-20). We get an intriguing new villain and a team of strongly characterized individuals working together as a team. It's a good sign for the future, even if the Mandarin has the same old motive of defeating the Avengers just-because.

As a whole, this volume is weaker than the predecessor, because the innovation and excitement of the first volume is no longer there to hold up the weaker scripting and characterization that was common in this time period. Fortunately, Cap's Kooky Quartet comes along just in time to bring new innovation and excitement to the comic. (Call it 3.5 stars, with the half-star in the latter half of the comic.)

Scott Thompson says

1965 seems like it was a magic year for Stan Lee. All of his works noticeably improved this year. Most everything up to '65 was really not good. Plot was terrible. Writing was too descriptive (much like film, comics should follow the adage of "if it can be shown, show it, don't say it;" Stan Lee did not follow that at all). And characters were entirely unrelatable which left you not really caring if they lived or died, which took the tension out of every storyline.

While there are still problems at this phase, he finally hit his stride. He cut out a lot of the descriptiveness and relied more on his illustrators. The cut out an number of their underperforming titles (Human Torch solo series and Giant Man, namely; I think Howling Commandos get cut in '66), and they added in new titles such as Sub-Mariner, Nick Fury: Agent of SHIELD, and bringing back the Hulk in his own series. They cleaned up their cover pages so they weren't filled to the brim with text balloons, giving the illustrators a lot of free reign to give great illustrations right off the bat. The formats also stopped being so static. Very few pages have nine equally spaced panels anymore. They start getting creative with them.

The biggest improvement however were better plots, 3-dimensional villains, and characters that are relatable. These solid points of any story really changed the overall delivery of all the stories. I don't know what changed in '65, but I'm glad it happened. Now as I'm reading through these early Avengers comics, I find myself not wanting to put them down, and after a cliffhanger ending, I put off other things to open the next issue and find out what happens.

David Dalton says

Another great classic collection. Between this and Vol 1, we are introduced to the Avengers. Simple, basic stories for sure. But stories that led later to more thrilling plotlines, better art, and classic heroes and villains.

Looking back, the first group of Avengers really did not last long, breaking up in issue #16. But we all have to start somewhere. In these early stories, the Avengers lived in a mansion that was broken into almost every other issue, and the heroes did not the secret identities of the other heroes. Oh how simple things were back

in the early 60's. Even in the Avenger mansion alone, Captain America would have his full costume on, with mask.

Learn your Marvel history here, in Vol 1 and Vol 2 of the Marvel Masterworks: The Avengers!

L. (Vacation All I Ever Wanted) says

The first portion of this collection has us hanging out with the old guard of Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, Giant Man/Ant Man, and the horniest Avenger of all, Wasp. But then Marvel decided to shake things up by dumping these tried and true heroes (with the exception of Cap) to bring in a new line up of Avengers who aren't all that interesting or heroic. The worst one is Hawkeye. All he does is argue with the guys and belittles Scarlet Witch. (Stop calling her 'doll'! How would you like it if she constantly called you 'dickless wonder'?) At least the annoying Rick Jones and his Teen Brigade drop off the map.

Aaron says

The Avengers start their long tradition of changing membership in this volume, starting in issue 16 with the rest of the founding members (Thor, Iron Man, Giant-Man, and Wasp) leaving the team and former villains Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch, and Hawkeye joining Captain America. Notable returning villains include Kang, the Mandarin, Mole Man (taking a break from causing the Fantastic Four problems), Zemo and the Masters of Evil, and new ones include the Swordsman, Count Nefaria, and the Maggia, Marvel's version of the Mafia.

After (view spoiler) in issue 15, Captain America makes his way back home with Rick Jones (ugh) as the rest of the Avengers fight the Masters of Evil in NYC. By the time Cap gets back in #16, the founding members decide to take a break and Cap is stuck in command of at least two new Avengers who don't like taking orders. Starting in #17, Quicksilver and Hawkeye start back-talking Cap and trying to prove that they should be leaders of the team, which sounds interesting for maybe a couple issues, but goes on well into the next collection and gets exhausting. Cap should have replaced the replacements, even if they did quickly prove they could handle Avenger-level threats. Still, the new cast makes for an interesting new dynamic and holds up fairly well for a while. Rick Jones also disappears after the membership change, which is very welcome.

It might be blasphemy, but I seem to prefer the more uniform, detailed art of Don Heck to Jack Kirby, though I assume Heck is mostly going off of Kirby's original imaginative designs.

Timothy Villa says

Less impressive than book one. The stories and adversaries are weaker overall. The good includes first appearances of The Swordsman and Count Nefaria, Cap's Kooky Quartet, the finale to Baron Zemo I, and much better work with The Scarlet Witch than with Wasp. The bad includes two pretty awful Mole Man stories, the entire plot about saving Wasp's life, the terrible Commisar character and story, the whiny whiny Rick Jones, and the bitchiness and just plain nastiness of Cap towards anyone and everyone.

Joseph says

I'm not sure which FF issues are concurrent with these avengers stories, but Stan Lee was more on his game here than over there, at least in the early issues. A lot of standard Stan Lee plots, but it's fairly fast paced and interesting. Plus, there's the first major membership shakeup, which was rather novel in the days of the stable JLA roster.

One similarity with FF is that the characters all have personalities, even though it seems with the new team, they spend more time yelling at each other than anything else. Both the Wasp and, later, The Scarlet Witch, play the Sue Richards role of peacemaker and upholder of "traditional" feminine virtues. Neither Jan nor Wanda seem to get as much action as the boys, just like with Invisible Girl.

After the great Jack Kirby art on the early Avengers issues, Don Heck took over. Now, I can remember when folks said Heck apparently drew with his feet, and his art isn't as dynamic as The King's, but it's fluid enough, and his girls are pretty. He details some pretty good fight scenes, also.

On to volume 3!

Mike (the Paladin) says

Perhaps if I were strictly neutral and completely unbiased I might go with a four star rating here as there are a couple of issues in this compilation that might be considered a little weaker than the earliest issues of the Avengers...perhaps. But I'm not neutral or unbiased. When I open this book, I'm 12 years old again. I fade back in time as completely as if Harry and his friends hadn't broken all the Time Turners..as thoroughly as if Doc Brown had loaned me his DeLorean or H.G. had stopped by and given me a lift. Frankly, I love these books. Captain America was my favorite comic character, the one I ran down in any and every publication I could find...and hey let's face it. I was a 12 year old male. Scarlett Witch is hot. I have the next in this series of books and am watching and hoping for the release of a few more of my favorites (in this wonderful paperback format as I can't afford the hard covers LOL).

This is the second in the Marvel Masterworks Avengers series. It includes what was the first Avengers comic I bought...before I went on a quest for back issues. We get to see the Avengers who possess more physical power, who carry the biggest KA-BOOM factor as it were retire (or at least take a leave) and Cap faced with forming a NEW team with 3 ex-criminals (misunderstood and reformed of course). They face a pretty wide range of villains...argue, banter, fall for fairly obvious traps, all in all fun is had by...well all.

Yes the stories are a bit dated (you're reading a series of comic books from the '60s what did you expect?). No they don't look like comics do today nor are they written as comics are today...in my opinion that's actually a good thing.

So threats to all life on Earth...the Earth itself, invaders from other worlds, the future and elsewhere; Super villains of every shape, size and description; fun, action, a bit of snappy dialogue, a wise guy rebellious new member of the Avengers (Hawkeye) a rival for (the aforementioned) Hawkeye with a chip on his shoulder about the size of a Sequoia Redwood, my hero and roll model Captain America and of course...Scarlett

Witch.

What more could you want? Enjoy.
