



Marvel Masterworks: The X-Men, Vol. 6

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1969: The X-Men, Marvel's poorest selling title, flagging in sales and on the verge of cancellation, was in dire need of a shot in the arm. A new direction. A new vision. Enter Roy Thomas and Neal Adams, and True Believer, you had better grab onto your hat and get ready for one of the most amazing evolutions in Marvel history! These two titanic talents threw caution to the wind with sensational stories that brought the X-Men in synch with the thriving youth culture of the late '60s. Adams' lavish and dynamic visuals merged with Thomas' challenging and contemporary stories to create a comic book series that throbbed with the pulse of the times like none other. Prepare yourself for the introduction of mutant mainstay Havok, the vampiric villain Sauron, the Mutates, and X-Man-to-be Sunfire! Not to mention, the Living Pharaoh, a classic team-up with Ka-Zar in the Savage Land, as well as the return of Magneto and Professor X! Unquestionably a high-water mark of the '60s X-Men, this massive volume, loaded with extras, caps off-but will not end-the original team X-Men Masterworks! Collecting X-MEN #54-66.

Marvel Masterworks: The X-Men, Vol. 6 Details

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From Reader Review Marvel Masterworks: The X-Men, Vol. 6 for online ebook

Mike Wierzbicki says

See review for Vol. 3.

Ulrik says

Har endelig fået læst alle afsnit af den første omgang X-men fra 1960-erne hvilket for det meste var ret skidt. Men dette sidste bind var faktisk rigtig god især takket være især en fænomenal Sentinel-saga af Roy Thomas og Neil Adams. Sauron- og Magneto-historierne er også rigtig gode men bogen er stadig plaget af nogle få problematiske issues i begge ender af bogen. Ekstra ros også til Roy Thomas der har skrevet en meget interessant introduktion som til gengæld er omkring 3 gange længere end de sædvanlige man finder i masterworks.

Jessica says

Neal Adams is amazing. I would recommend this book to anyone learning to draw sequentially (I am trying to learn a bit of the art and plan to dig these up right away). Psychedelic and dramatic, this was a great departure from what had gone before and I would have to say the first essential X-Men story. This is the first time in X-Men that the pages really jump to life, but really, these pages outdo much of the art that comes after it in vision and execution.

Christopher Rush says

Too little, too late, really. These final dozen issues of the series' initial run are generally better than the abyss of the recent output, but not even the creation of Lorna Dane, Alex Summers, Sauron, Sunfire, and the return of Xavier can resurrect the waning series, either in creativity or sales. The partnership of Roy Thomas and Neal Adams goes a decently-long way to revive the artistic aspect of the series for a time, though Thomas sends returns to his habitual shortcomings (reviving old enemies with no significant movement) and even Adams's artwork eventually decays into monotony (all the guys start looking alike). As with most of Thomas's work, plenty of good ideas arise, yet they are all hampered by an inability to bring them to a satisfactory or significant conclusion. Part of the problem, perhaps, is the bizarre in-house decision to eschew multi-issue storylines. This isn't as big of a factor, though, since most of the episodes in this collection span more than one issue. Not in a cohesive way, always, but there is enough connectivity to expect the audiences' familiarity with recent events (though the ever-handly "as seen in issue #___" footnote is ever-near for the benefit of those who tuned in late). The creation of Alex Summers is certainly the highlight of this collection, moreso than the nondescript return of Professor Xavier, who had been assuredly dead for over two years in real time. He just wheels in one day, the X-Men react more to Jean than to him, and life goes back to normal.

He doesn't even get a decent full-page splash (perhaps those hadn't been invented yet). Magneto and the Sentinels return, but the need to make them palatable diminishes their impact as well. The only thing allowed to change in the X-Universe at this point, essentially, is the number of characters and the uniforms of the heroes. Things aren't that much different now, though, come to think of it. Ah, well. The final panel of the final issue is a sentimental farewell, which somehow avoids being mawkish. Had it truly been the end of the X-Men, we probably wouldn't be talking about it 40-some years later, but fortunately it wasn't the end. Come, Chris Claremont: your canvas awaits.

Heather Fryling says

So, that's the end of the original X-Men. Awesome! Issues 64 and 65, both calls for unity and world peace, are as good as any comics I've read. I'm looking forward to seeing what the X-Men do in the era I'm more familiar with. 1980's, here I come.

The_Mad_Swede says

Collecting *X-Men* issues #54–66, and most notably of all the Roy Thomas / Neal Adams run included therein, this a collection X-fans must not miss. While Thomas and Adams didn't manage to save the title from cancellation, their brief and powerful run did get it back on the stands if only, initially, as a reprint book. But it is equally valid to say that not only the sales of that reprint book, but also the stories themselves (and the artistic vision of Adams) was crucial to Len Wein's relaunch of the new X-Men some 30 issues later, and the vision of these new X-Men that Chris Claremont brought to a new generation of X-fans, first accompanied by Dave Cockrum and then by John Byrne (both very classic *X-Men* runs in their own right).

In short, this run mattered. And there are many reasons for that. The least of which certainly not being Adams' art. As usually it leaps off the page and really strikes a chord in terms of visual storytelling. Thomas' plots and writing is also at its finest (which is saying something, given Thomas' long career as a comics writer).

However one looks at this, this two fat thumbs up and big go get, get reading recommendation. X-Men stories can certainly be this good, but I'm not sure they can get any better.

Edward Davies says

This run of X-Men, from issues 54 to 66, is possibly the best run in the series to date, featuring the return of The Sentinels and Magneto, the first trip to the Savage Land, some brand new X-Men joining the team, and a fight with The Hulk! What followed for the next six years was nothing but reprints, but then came Giant Size X-men issue one and the rest is history...

Mike McAdam says

These old comic books are not my favorite. I know the X Men title VASTLY improved at some point but it

was after these issues. Interesting just to see how the comic book evolved over time and there is some improvement here over the beginning issues. I do understand why they discontinued this title after #66. I am glad they revived it so it could become great but it is not even remotely great here.

Kevin says

Finally! Neal Adams shows up to do the art and these start to feel like modern comics. Until then, it's pretty rough-going.

Tony Romine says

My intention in reading this was to understand where Marvel was at with the X-Men before they went on hiatus for 5 years (issues 67-93 were just reprints of the original series until Chris Claremont took over writing duties). This collection encompasses the last year of the series (issues 54-66 running from 1969-1970) and is almost exclusively written by Roy Thomas with Neal Adams doing the artwork.

For a comic that was on the verge of cancellation there were some really excellent storylines happening, but they were hindered by a lack of focus or direction. Professor X being killed off and the recruitment of two new X-Men, Havok and Lorna Dane, were some good jumping off points for the book to really get some steam.

The problem is it still reads like the very early issues where characters weren't developed beyond 'the smart one', 'the female', or 'the ladies man'. I had no emotional investment in these characters and, aside from Sauron and Havok, the newer characters introduced are just so plain and boring. The storylines lacked depth and seemed to revolve more around surprising twists or introducing new villains than actually telling a decent story. You can see why readers would have been done with the X-Men by this point. The saving grace, to me, was Neal Adams revolutionary artwork which at this point in it's run was a breath of fresh air to series.

Not terrible by any means, but nothing groundbreaking either. Recommended.

Kami says

- What has happened to the paperback versions of these? It is like they never existed! Now my comics won't match!! Grrrrr!

- This one wasn't as good as others. The plots weren't so great.

- Learning more about Sauron was cool. I love that he wanted to take on a Tolkien name. Sauron has been in previous issues, but it was like they were introducing him for the first time.

- The art is getting better. There is more definition.

- Angel changes his outfit about 3 times in this volume. I like the last one the best.

Javier Muñoz says

Mira que me gusta la patrulla-x, pero los cómics de la patrulla x original nunca han estado entre mis preferidos y esto no es una excepción, el dibujo de Neal Adams tiene buenos momentos, pero los guiones son demasiado arcaicos para mi gusto

Ritinha says

Usando uma expressão que muito apreciei quando a ouvi num determinado contexto: o argumento de Roy Thomas claramente *não acompanha* a arte de Neal Adams. E esta última é um regalo memorável.

Kevin Mann says

Adams & Thomas. I would rate this 2nd behind the Claremont/Byrne run in terms of quality, if only for the art. (i skipped the 1990s, forgive me if you are a jim lee fan, i missed it, sorry) . However these issues are nowhere near perfect, but this is worth having if you are an original X team fan, mainly for the Neal Adams innovative (at the time) beautiful, unique mind-blowing artwork. As always Neal puts on a clinic. But the Roy Thomas writing & plotting is typical craptastic 1960's Marvel goofiness, some of it is borderline genius & some of it is SO BAD, the writing will make you LOL & also cringe often. -- Sadly, the maturity of the writing does not match the advanced state of the artwork. And as for the few issues in this TPB that do NOT have Adams art, they are extremely bland & very pedestrian, indicating why the title was already about to be cancelled when Adams came on board, much too late to save it.

Zac says

After reading some origin stories and then skipping ahead to the early Claremont issues, I was a bit confused as to how Havok and Lorna Dane came to be in the team. I then noticed that this was apparently explained during the Roy Thomas/Neal Adams run, which was also mentioned in the '1001 Comics You Must Read...' book. So I tracked down Marvel Masterworks Vol. 6 at the library as it collects X-Men #54-66.

The volume begins with a couple of issues (#54-55) that introduce Cyclops' brother Alex (soon to be christened Havok). The second of these also introduces new writer Roy Thomas, but illustrator Neal Adams is yet to appear on the scene. These stories aren't bad - they definitely have less omniscient and intrusive narration than the Claremont issues that come later. The art is pretty un-noteworthy - fairly flat, with backgrounds that often consist of a solid colour. The Heck issue (#54) uses a few unusual panel shapes, but mostly these issues have straightforward grid-conforming layouts. The backup stories featuring Angel are entertaining enough.

With #56 enters Neal Adams and there is a marked improvement from the very first page. Adams' figures are beautifully posed and the characters are consistently rendered. His backgrounds are detailed, and there is

a dramatic sense of perspective. The panels have oblique borders that the character occasionally transcends. Everything about the art in these early issues is just excellent, and I almost gave it 4 stars just for this, but the writing just isn't great and sadly the art declines throughout the volume.

#56 finishes off the Living Pharaoh storyline, which has dragged on by this point. #57-59 is a battle with the Sentinels that has a cool ending but, like most of the book, the plot is not very economical and there are too many fight scenes. There is a fairly sexist Miss Marvel backup story thrown in too. None of this matters too much because the art is excellent. #60-61 see the X-Men fight Sauron. The pterodactyl-man's monstrous appearance (with some panels evocative of Wrightson) and the tragic ending gives it more of a horror-comic vibe. #62-63 see X-Men travel to the Savage Land and fight Magneto and some weird villains, but it is not very satisfying, and I feel that Adams' is starting to get a bit lazier.

So with #64 Adams has a break and Don Heck returns to art duties, but now he has borrowed some ideas from Adams, with a lot of great detail on the characters and some fluid layouts during one flashback sequence. I quite liked the villain, Sunfire, who has some believable motivations and source of mutant powers.

With #65 Adams returns for one more issue, but Thomas has been temporarily replaced by Dennis O'Neill (who would soon after team up with Adams again for notable run on Green Lantern/Green Arrow). Adams is a shadow of his former self, now using the square panels and flat backgrounds of his predecessors. The story (X-Men! In space!) and villains are pretty dumb too. It's pretty disappointing as the volume is fairly readable up to this point.

The final issue in this volume (#66) is mostly about the Hulk, and is kind of cute. The Hulk looks pretty stupid to me - like a green kid in a carnival mirror - but the artist here later worked on Hulk for 10 years so perhaps this is his definitive look?

I don't know whether its because I'm aware of and intrigued by the Marvel-style of production and unconsciously looking out for these things but — it seems the writing doesn't match the art particularly well. It's like when you play that game with the TV sound down and pretend to do the voices of the characters, and sometimes you need to buy some time because you can't think of what to say and you just fill the space with a description of what is happening, like "Now I will just step onto this plane", "I am flying through space now". etc etc. Well these issues are not that bad, but you perhaps get my point. The stories are definitely not told economically, nor with an acceptable level of sassy dialogue. A further criticism is that it's sometimes not clear which text bubble to read next. I imagine this is all the result of doing the art first and text later.
