



## American Flagg!: Definitive Collection

*Howard Chaykin, Michael Chabon (Foreword), Jim Lee (Afterword)*

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In 1996, after worldwide calamities, the United States government - and the corporations that owned it - fled to the relative safety of the planet Mars. By 2031, chaos had become the new world order, as the government and corporations, now renamed the Plex, continued to run things in absentia from the red planet. The only real law on Earth was enforced by a small band of hardcases called the Plexus Rangers. Reuben Flagg had been the star of an interplanetarily popular television series dramatizing the fictional adventures of one such Ranger. When Flagg was downsized and replaced by a hologram, he was drafted into the Plexus Rangers. With Raul, the smartest talking cat alive, and Luther Ironheart, the stupidest robot ever, and surrounded by a horde of the most beautiful women of the 21st century, Flagg has an uphill battle protecting and defending the American way of life - or rather, what's left of it. Features the first 12 issues of American Flagg!, the rarely seen prelude story, and additional cover paintings and promotional pieces by Chaykin!

## American Flagg!: Definitive Collection Details

Date : Published July 1st 2007 by Image Comics (first published February 25th 2007)

ISBN : 9781582404202

Author : Howard Chaykin , Michael Chabon (Foreword) , Jim Lee (Afterword)

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Science Fiction, Fiction

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## From Reader Review American Flagg!: Definitive Collection for online ebook

### Andrew Klein says

Warren Ellis mentioned this title in a recent blog post, putting it in the same category as Watchmen and Batman: The Dark Knight Returns. So naturally I had to check it out. I don't think it quite stands up to that high praise, but it's a fascinating comic nonetheless, and now stands as the best science fiction graphic novel I've ever read. Chaykin has a frenetic voice, heavy with ellipses and dashes, that is perfectly suited to the bizarre post-apocalyptic and yet strangely familiar world he's built, where everything is going 100 mph. His art is solid and chunky as a counterpoint to that, but the experimental layouts and over-the-top sound effects help complete the breakneck effect. The story is multilayered, with an impressive double plot structure that serves both one-issue stories and the multi-issue plotlines equally well. If you're gathering that it's a bit dense, you're right -- it took me a while to get into the world and figure out the characters. It is far from an effortless read, but it's worth the work, especially if you're interested in science fiction comics.

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### Travis says

In the future we all live in malls, the government is living on Mars, basketball is a blood sport and our only hope for justice is a retired TV star turned sheriff, his talking cat and a lunk-headed robot.

It's wild, political, cynical, sexy and the humor has a dark slap sticky feel to it. It's Howard Chaykin being Howard Chaykin before he got self conscious about his image.

too many cast members are up to something, but Chaykin was doing dark and flawed before it became trendy and he still does it better than 99% of the writers out there.

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### Paul says

If you want a glimpse of a possible future, just read this graphic novel.

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### Frédéric says

3,5\*

American Flagg is often considered as one of these milestones comics, one of those who influenced many authors who bloomed later. And I can see why. If you manage to go back in the early 80's Flagg is innovative, provocative, satirical and whatnot. This is probably the best period for Chaykin, boiling with ideas and creativity.

So, if I had read it even a few years late, say late 80's, early 90's, it probably would have blown me out. As it is, more than 30 years after the deed and thousands of comics under the belt I can't find it in me to be truly

amazed. I can see the creativity, the innovation and so on. Just as I've seen it through the authors that were influenced by it through my years of reading. Now I can see it's good, even great on a technical plane, but dated. Though certainly visionary in some aspects it screams "These are the glitterin' 80's" all over the place (though it's set in 2031).

So I wouldn't recommend this book to anybody. It really has to be contextualized to be fully appreciated. But the real buffs, those who love comics and the history of comics and their creators should definitely own a copy.

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### **Michael says**

Aces. Chaykin's vision of America's future is compelling. Rueben Flagg's brand of self-absorbed, bed-hopping heroism makes for a dynamic lead character. The excellent design work displayed throughout the artwork, from Chaykin's layouts to Ken Bruzenak's lettering, make for a unique reading experience. Put it all together and you've got a legendary comic worth all of its hype. People often point to one of these three elements when discussing why *Flagg!* is so highly regarded, but it's the combination of all three that really sets this series apart. Plenty of comics and sci-fi have been prescient about our future. Lots have anti-heroes. Some even have great art. Chaykin does it all, and does it better than anybody else.

If I have any complaint, there's a little too much soap opera with Mandy and Medea being revealed half-sisters, and the one tedious flashback issue revealing how their mother is still alive (it's issue #13; Chaykin stopped doing art after #12, so it's goofy and poorly drawn). Still, that's only a few small sequences and one issue in 15 issues of greatness. Definitely look for this one.

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### **C. Varn says**

Howard Chaykin wrote this strange comic that feels a bit like *The Running Man* and a bit like a Paul Verhoeven satire of the 1980s. The television references, the insane politics, the shoulder pads and high angled hairstyles. Elements of the satire are spot on: everyone living in malls, parody politics, mixtures of slapstick and ultra-violence. Chaykin's world is lush and you can feel the influence on comic book writers and artists like Frank Miller just a few years later. While this was sexy and transgressive from the 1980s, it's not as transgressive as soon of Chaykin's own work from the time period.

The dialogue bubbles and the over-saturation of content in the panels though can be distracting and make *American Flagg!* hard to read. It also dates itself more readily than other more old and grim comics from around the same period such as Alan Moore's work as well as Frank Miller's late 80s work. It is completely over the top and the plot is so convoluted, it is hard to follow. It's very good, but also very much limited by reading it almost 30 years too late.

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### **Robert Wright says**

*American Flagg!* is an indie classic from the 1980s that still holds up today in many respects. It's a brilliant satire that is spot on in its tone, if not in the specifics of any future predictions. The scary part is how relevant it still is.

Features sharp writing and great storytelling and craftsmanship/design by Chaykin.

If you think *Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen*, and *Swamp Thing* were the only great things happening in 1980s comics, you are in need of a history lesson. So much more was going on outside the Big 2 publishers. Amazing, exciting, influential work was going on at indie publishers, including First Comics which originally published *American Flagg!*

Check this out and discover (or rediscover) what made that era such a glorious time to walk into the comic shop every week.

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## Doyle says

I appreciate the influence that this series had on later groundbreaking comics, but Chaykin's pacing is just chaotic. His art is ridiculously lush (especially considering he was writing and drawing 28 pages per month at a time when the norm was only 24), but his story telling has never been a strong point. I read this series as original single issues and stopped after issue 13 (not collected in this book) when Chaykin gave the art duties away to some less talented artists but continued to pen his convoluted stories. Up to that point I wasn't exactly enjoying this book, but I continued to pick up the next issue none-the-less. (*Edit:* Chaykin comes back on to do art duties at issue 15. I continued reading up to about issue 30. His editors seemed to reign him in around issue 15 when they spent 4 pages of each issue doing a informative pin-up of each supporting character, explaining to the reader where we met this character and how they fit in. Chaykin also seemed to use about half the number of supporting characters for each story arc after this point, which helped.)

I had a hard time keeping track of the multitude of characters. In general it seemed that everyone was sleeping with everyone else and that everyone was related (which you would think would cut down on the sleeping with everyone).

My other huge complaint about Chaykin's story telling centers on his convoluted scene changes. Here is an example from *American Flagg! Special No. 1*. (This issue isn't collected in the book being reviewed here. It's just the issue I happen to be reading right now, but it is a typical example of how Chaykin changes from one scene to the next throughout *American Flagg!*, including the issues that are reprinted in the book being reviewed.)

Did you have any idea that between these three panels there were multiple conversations going on between characters at two different locations? I didn't the first time I read this, because the word balloons all use the exact same font, color and appearance, and they point to nothing. If your story has too many characters it become that much more important that the reader be able to *tell who is saying what*.

Many other reviewers have noted *American Flagg!*'s influence on later groundbreaking comic titles such as *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*. While the only similarity I can find with *Watchmen* is the dystopian future setting, *American Flagg!* may have been a stronger influence on *The Dark Knight Returns*. Chaykin and Miller both often used a panel showing a report by a TV news anchor as a narrative device. Also, Lynn Varley colored the first two issues of *American Flagg!* before starting her long career (and eventual marriage) with Frank Miller.

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## **Camilo Guerra says**

Muy clasico Byrne y Simonson, Miller es un monstruo, Moore es un clásico, pero no nos olvidemos de Chaykin que es una BESTIA.

Estados unidos y el mundo están rotos, y Flagg es un policia,ranger que se movera entre la violencia, el sudor,la droga y el sexo, intentando sobrevivir y arreglar un poco el mundo. Hay mucho de Robocop,Verhoeven, Mad Max, y el poder de esta obra se ve al dia de hoy en trabajos de Brian Vaughn ,Matt Fraction, aunque su arte tiene en momentos a ser roto y brusco, en otras viñetas es épico y preciosista. preciosa introducción de Michael Chabon.

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## **R.J. Huneke says**

A grim and realistic view of earth's potential crumbled future and the fallout being a pain in the balls.

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## **Robert Morganbesser says**

One of the best of the best. From First Comics (sadly gone now), American Flagg! was one of the most thought provoking, irreverant, beautifully drawn comics of the 1980s. I'm glad to see it available digitally. Whoever is doing this simply needs to add the entire run as fast as they can. I still have my originals, but this will extend their lives. This book features a brilliant cast and story, some of the greatest lettering (Ken Bruzenak) ever, and it endlessly entertaining. For me, this is Howard Chaykin's best work ever.

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## **Du4 says**

A clear precursor to the 1980s-inspired, media-saturated grimness of THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS and WATCHMEN, AMERICAN FLAGG! as a breakout work for Howard Chaykin is tough to describe. The narrative - complex and oft unnecessarily Chandlerian - is classic Chaykin, and it's pretty sharp to see his abilities as a storyteller evolve through the course of the story.

Still, after the years of hype around FLAGG!, I expected a lot more. Chaykin's art is certainly AWESOME to behold as it always is, but it's clear that he's grown in leaps and bounds from the new FLAGG! story included as a bookend in this edition. Enjoyable, but a bit of a chore to get through instead of being the seminally engaging standard so many comics pundits have tagged it as for the past 25 years.

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## **Michelle Cristiani says**

there are two kinds of confusion a reader can experience: one is the "I don't know what's going on, but it will probably be made clear later." The other is the, "I have no idea what's going on, and I don't think I ever will." This book had me wavering between the two types of confusion the entire time. That said, it is a brilliant dystopian world. I can see why this book is considered a classic in comics. It does so much that certainly

wasn't done before. The characters are well-defined, the World building is immersive, and the struggles are consistent. The art is jam-packed with all kinds of Easter eggs. The first few pages were work for me, and I wasn't sure if I would continue. But I'm so glad I did. This book is indeed a classic, and I haven't heard it spoken of nearly as much as it deserves.

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### **Damon says**

To update my previous in-progress review, this picks up a bit once you get into it. This is a comic that I've heard of throughout much of my comic-reading life, but had never read. I've been a big Chaykin fan for years, but these were never easily accessible, and I was never interested enough to track them down issue by issue. So I was excited at the release of this big collection of the first 14 or 15 issues. Then I got it and started reading it, and was no longer excited. I think it's like... This is maybe the "Pet Sounds" effect - every musician has "Pet Sounds" in their list of the greatest records of all time, so you think that "Pet Sounds" is going to be this mindblowing album. Then you hear it and... Well, it's a Beach Boys album, and you wonder why you expected it to be anything else. Maybe if you heard it in the 60s, but now... Eh.

That's sort of the case here - if I had read this in the 80s it probably would have blown me away. But I've read so much other stuff that came after or was inspired by this that it didn't have the immediate impact I was expecting, and it took me a while to shake off that initial disappointment.

But, the book itself - a really sharp collection, nicely bound with great looking pages inside. Definitely a well-planned and executed collection. The artwork is phenomenal - Chaykin at his best, I think, or at least during his best period. You could power a small city if you could harness the kinetic energy on the page here. (There's also a much more recent epilogue by Chaykin, and the contrast between the artwork in the two is staggering.) Storywise, it's a bit risque, but also a bit dated. Still funny, for the most part, but I doubt it'll shock or titillate like maybe it did 25 years ago...

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### **Vicente L Ruiz says**

It's fun, finally reading now in 2018 what Chaykin did in 1983, knowing everything he did afterwards. Sex, political incorrectness, uncomfortable political points of view, an sarcastic sense of humour, an acid social critique wrapped in a graphical deluge. What an amazing book.

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