



Essential Captain America, Vol. 1

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The return of Captain America was one of the more unexpected events of the hurly-burly nascent days of the Marvel Universe. One of the company's original characters the World War II adventurer had been in limbo for years Now that super heros were popular again, though, the red white and blue superstar was revived and given new life suspended animation being cited as the cause of his continued youth years after the end of War World II. These adventures are now collected in Marvel's tremendously popular Essential format, 500-plus page volumes collecting over 25 issues worth of pulse-pounding action! See the Sentinel of Liberty take on some of the most fearsome foes of freedom, including Advanced Idea Mechanics, the sinister super-scientists responsible for the creation of the Super-Adaptoid android and the generically manipulated monster Modok. Also on hand is the French mercenary and master of the kick-fighting discipline of Savate, Batroc the Leaper, as well as Cap's long-time nemesis, the evil Red Skull. Over two-years worth of pricelss Captain America adventures are collected here in this accessible, affordable black and white format.

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From Reader Review Essential Captain America, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Mike (the Paladin) says

When I was 6 or 7 I was reading Superman and Batman. I read them in their various books for a while but when I was about 12 I found Captain America. It was 1964 or so and I had found my niche, my Comic book alter-ego. Other Marvel comics were great, I read Spiderman, I read the X-men, I liked Deardevil, but none of them (for me) approached Captain America.

I recounted this in my review of the Essential Avengers, the Avengers was (were) my second favorite comic book, why? Because for a long time from issue #4 (or 5 actually) and then often later who led them? Captain America. (Cap is actually discovered floating frozen in the ice in Avengers #4 but he takes over as leader quickly thereafter when Thor, Ironman, and Giantman decide to "take some time off".) Anyway as I have recounted elsewhere, I at one time owned a nice collection of Silver Age Comics, then my family faced, a finical challenge. (It was called the Carter administration.) I had to sell my collection, and I have often since missed them.

Why do adults (usually men) hearken back to comic books? Probably because they remind us of our youth, maybe they even carry us back to our youth. Also the heroes of that period were more sure, the threats they faced more clear cut. There was good and there was evil. Comic books (especially those of the Gold and Silver eras) carry the mythology our society is steeped in. It doesn't have to be a costumed Super Hero, it can be any of many examples of the "outside hero". The silent stranger who shows up unexpectedly, the gunslinger who turns out to be "the good guy", the U.S. Marshal, the detective, the swordsman warrior...or the super hero. With this book and others of the Essentials series we can relive those stories (even if only in black and white). I had to give it a 4 for lack of color but still it's a Marvel-ous book as are others especially for anyone who had or loved these books.

This is Captain America.

This one has black and white reprints of Tales of Suspense #59-99 and Captain America #100-102.

Enjoy.

Kate says

In a collection called "Essential" Captain America, I was hoping for something like the first issue where he made an appearance, the first time Bucky makes an appearance, some of the original World War II comics. This seems to be a collection from a later time, and was completely random, as far as I could tell. There was no over-arching theme, which would be fine, but there were many hints that these were a tribute to the original comics and not the originals. I read a few, looked at the size of the volume, and decided I'd had enough... It was amusing simply because the stories were so old-fashioned but I think I'll stick to the more modern comics.

The_Mad_Swede says

I must admit that I am a fan of Marvel's Essential format, though it took me awhile to get there. I have always preferred my superheroes in colour, well comics in general to be honest, though the rare exceptions have always existed and grown more plentiful over the years I confess. But comics intended for colour format can get dull without the colour. However, having got over that barrier after a trip down memory lane with Claremont's *X-Men* and the fabulous Wolfman / Colan *Dracula* from the 70's (the latter of which is actually quite possibly even better in b/w since it brings out Colan's illustrations so much better), I have hit the Essential wagon hard (and DC's Showcase Presents is coming along nicely as well). It's a cheap way to get A LOT of story (especially in today's market when the rule of decompressed storytelling even when it is good leaves one with very little story per volume and for one's money).

The volume at hand, the first collecting the early adventures of the revived Captain America (who re-appeared in the newly formed Marvel Universe in *Avengers* # 4 for those who did not know), includes all of Cap's adventures from *Tales of Suspense* #59–99 and *Captain America* # 100–102 and gives us both contemporary (read 60's) and WW2 tales about the red, white and blue wonder. Needless to say perhaps, but Cap solo (or with Bucky as in the WW2 tales) works best when battling evil Nazis like the Red Skull or Baron Zemo, or secret organisations like THEM or A.I.M. (later Hydra, which does not yet appear). The way these stories help to develop the concept of S.H.I.E.L.D. as Cap works with and for Nick Fury on occasion is also very interesting and I really hope to see an Essential collection of *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* in the future (or at the very least that the Masterworks edition that has been solicited actually hits the market).

All in all, the quality of the material vary in interest for me, but it definitely show how early Marvel's approach to superhero offered a broad palette of stories from the young life drama of Spider-Man and family squabbles of the Fantastic Four to the mysticism of Dr Strange, the technological tales of Iron Man and the much more action oriented stories of Captain America (with some clear spy thriller elements added into the mix). A fun read indeed.

Adam Graham says

In *Avengers* #4, Captain America, the hero of World War II was found floating in ice in Suspended Animation. In *Tales of Suspense* #59, Captain America got his own series as one of two stories in *Tales of Suspense* magazine opposite Iron Man. In addition, Captain America took over *Tales of Suspense* in Issue 100 and the book was renamed *Captain America* and this book has Issues 100-102 plus a story from Issue 10 of the 1940s *Captain America* magazine.

The book goes through various stages. The first four 10 page Cap stories were set in the 1960s. These were just great stories of Captain America taking on contemporary challenges. Then from Issues 63-71, the book shifted to World War II flashbacks as writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby retold some classic Cap Stories including Cap's origin and early battle, and rewrote the first Red Skull story and several additional ones as well as inserting brand new story into the Golden age about Greymore Castle. This was driven by Stan Lee's dedication to continuity and the thought that a hero couldn't be in one place in *Tales of Suspense* and another in the *Avengers*. At the same point in history, everyone with their own series left the *Avengers* except for Cap whose stories in *Tales of Suspense* were from the past.

However, this didn't last and the 27 of the remaining 28 10 page stories are set in the present, as are all 3 of the *Captain America* Magazines.

Perhaps the best to break this down is to look at the elements:

The Captain: Captain America is a great role model hero. In battle, he's selfless, determined, and never gives up. He's plucky, courageous, and humble. He's always trying to do what's right. He's the most believable idealist in the Marvel universe. The hero could be a stereotype but Lee gives him some wrinkles. Everyone he knew is dead or much much older. He struggles with the regret of losing his late partner Bucky. He desires compassion, love, and normalcy. Even at one time, he hangs up the SHIELD. Unlike with Spider-man, you don't feel it's angst or uncertainty, but the tiredness of a fighter, who still finds the strength to do the right thing. So Cap is both thoroughly admirable and thoroughly human.

The Villains: Modok and Applied Idea Mechanics feature in a few stories, as well as the Adaptoid, a robot created by AIM that can assume the identity and powers of Cap and the other Avengers. Batroc the Leaper was a Cap villain that appeared in three issues and Cap also faced off against an apparently resurrected Baron Zemo. In addition, Cap mixes it up a few times with Nazis, Commies, and with garden variety hoods.

And then there is the Red Skull. Of 44 stories in the book, Cap faces the Red Skull twelve times and spends three more issues battling the Skull's sleeper robots when the Skull was believed to be dead. While I think most of the villains were good, it was the Skull that made the book.

In so many ways, Skull is the perfect counterpoint to Captain America, an almost exact opposite. The two figures are perfect for a match up of good v. evil. They are polar opposites and their battles are nearly perfect. His plans, ambitions, and arrogance know no bounds. Theirs was a rivalry for the ages and its on full display here. We also get to see the introduction of the cosmic cube.

The Supporting Cast, Guest Stars: Cap's fellow Avengers show up for a few cameos. The big recurring guest star is Nick Fury who helps get Cap into a few adventures. In addition, he meets Agent 13 a female Agent of SHIELD who isn't quite well-developed early on. They're both in love with each other, but she insists that SHIELD and their duty must always come first. So yeah that romance is doomed.

The big highlight in terms of guest heroes is a team up with Black Panther in Tales of Suspense #97-Captain America #100 that led to the Black Panther joining the Avengers.

The book is not perfect by any means. There are a few plot holes. For example, under the Red Skull, the Nazis built Doomsday robots (the Sleepers) that would devastate the Earth in 20 years if the Nazis lost. The last of these could literally destroy the Earth. My question. **Why didn't they use this during the war?** There's also the writer's not giving Agent 13 a name for the longest time. Maybe the coming of *Get Smart* made them finally identify her as Sharon Carter so they wouldn't look like they were copying them.

However, for the era, this is a minor point. When Cap stories were good, they were amazing, exciting, and inspiring. When they were off little. They still weren't that bad. Plus you have the art of Jack Kirby on most pages, plus Stan Lee wrote all of them making this just a great product for its time and a wonderful read for fans of the Shield-slinger.

Brent says

Bringing Captain America into the silver age was one of my favorite Marvel moves and shows how much imagination was alive in the infamous old bullpen! That being said the stories here were pretty standard for the time with a few highlights.

Printable Tire says

Really been trying to finish all these books I started years ago. I remember putting this one down because it was TOO action packed. Cap lacks any interiority- whenever he's about to get introspective he's attacked by a million jump-suited greco wrestlers. The fight scenes certainly show off Kirby's chops (though they look better in color), but such cardboard dialogue gets a little boring after a while. Guess Stan saved all his good quips for the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man. Anyway, comic book dialogue only really began to evolve when it stopped ending each sentence... with a ellipses... and an exclamation!

Eventually, completely unsure of what to with its character, the comic stalls out and starts rehashing Cap's 40's adventures, all of which I have memorized thanks to the 1966 xerographic cartoons I watched a billion times when I was a kid. When the comic restarts back in "modern" times, it finds its footing, although the focus always remains on how much of a cipher Captain America truly is:

"Only when I'm costumed do I seem to come alive- to have a mission - a purpose! But, as Steve Rogers, I'm merely a name - a hollow shell- with no roots - no real life to call my own!"

I don't think anyone's ever been able to make Captain America anything more than an uplifting metaphor, but the stories sure get more interesting from this point on.

Christopher says

Wow, this is some bad stuff.

This was a gift and I'm trying to get a feel for the real silver-age comics, but this is bad. I know Stan Lee and Jack Kirby are comic legends. However, having your villain say how nigh-invulnerable he is on EVERY page is not characterization. Kirby seems like he has to get a shot of one of his futuristic weapons or circuitry boards in every issue or he'll be fired.

Maybe I'm just used to more modern stuff...and long-form comics at that.

Mark Short says

A really entertaining nostalgia fest.

Angel says

If you are a fan of Captain America, you will probably like this. This is a compilation of early Captain America comics by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The only major drawback to the collection is that it is in black and white; however, you do get a lot of comic in this volume. I think for readers today this can be a voyage down the good old days of comics when plots were simple (and fairly cheesy at times) but usually fun. You knew clearly who the good guys and the bad guys were. And they often wrapped things up in an issue or

two. Clearly these were comics for kids, but I found them good fun to read, usually one or two issues at a time. Overall, these were very entertaining, and I may look up other volumes.

Andrea says

It's impossible to rate this...probably because it's so bad it's good. Kirby's drawings pop of the page with incredible motion and force, and Lee's writing is exuberant. Sure the plotlines are weak, the heroes consistently and miraculously get out of tight spots to win it all, every time, and sure it's not convincing. I deeply dislike the insular nationalism (my own fault for reading Captain America I know), and that episode where the Viet Cong general is a giant sumo wrestler? Good god. But I like how the Cap's girl never listens to his ideas on what a girl should do, and I'll confess it's all rather satisfying on one level. The Wow! Kapow! Blam! and good wins the day against evil level. I like that level from time to time.

And there was a Marvel villain named the Peerless Planner! Wow! Kapow! Urban Planners take note!

Jennifer Nelson says

Quick read. Doesn't quite match up to the way things are in the movie but still fun to read.

James Hold says

Growing up in the 60s my comic book tastes were strictly DC. I'd see the Marvel covers and think they were too crude. DC had better artists; which was easy to say since it turned out Marvel had only two: Kirby and Ditko. Then by chance I picked up Fantastic Four 25, April 64 and was interested by the brief appearance of the Avengers. Over time I started adding more Marvels to my weekly stack. I hated Spider-Man because he was a whiny loser but liked Dr Strange for Ditko's mind-blowing artwork. If you really look at it Marvel's characters were mostly ripoffs but Stan Lee had such a brash attitude he got away with it. Shout it long enough and loud enough and people will come to believe you. It's the same way Vince McMahon pushed his WWF/E to the top even though it was then and still is complete crap.

Anyway, on to Captain America. CA is a pure ripoff of the Shield. The Shield appeared a full year before CA and wore a red-white-and blue outfit with stripes. In his earliest appearances CA's shield was the same shape as the Shield's chestplate. Still Marvel gets credit for creating the first patriotic superhero. All Marvel heroes are overwrought, but Captain America takes it to entirely new levels. That and the way Kirby draws him looks like he's straining to take a dump. Maybe he is. Being frozen for 20 years can't be good for the metabolism.

Here you get his 'modern-day' adventures, that is those from the 60's after he first thawed. Few make sense and the physical action involving himself and his throwing shield often defy gravity and physics. But if you want action, angst, and soap opera this volume lays it on extra thick. His mindset never does get past WW2 but that pretty much applies to all of Stan Lee's 60s characters. I grew up with it so I wasn't too jarring reading it again but new readers might go WTH/F. It's nostalgia for better or worse, and if you don't pick it apart too closely you can find it enjoyable.

Fizzgig76 says

Reprints Tales of Suspense #59-99 and Captain America (1) #100-102 (November 1964-June 1968). Steve Rogers is a man reborn. Thawed from an icy grave by the Avengers, Steve finds himself trying to adjust to a world that is not his own. Returning to his guise of Captain America, Steve finds himself battling old villains like the Red Skull for the safety of the world and remembering his adventures during World War II with his old ally Bucky. The United States is threatened and both it and the world need Captain America!

Written primarily by Stan Lee and illustrated by Jack Kirby, Essential Captain America Volume 1 collects Captain America's earliest solo appearances after his reintroduction to the Marvel Universe in Avengers (1) #4 (March 1964). The Tales of Suspense issues collected in this volume were shared with fellow Avenger Iron Man and these were collected in the Essential Iron Man volumes. Like all Essential collections, these issues are reprinted in black-and-white on rather cheap paper.

Despite being a rather generic do-gooder, I like Captain America. He has to walk a thin line between being a tool of the government and a voice for the people. That being said, this is not really an issue in the issues presented in this volume, but the concept is still an underlying theme.

These early issues like many early comics are a bit rocky. Marvel was leaps and bounds ahead of DC still at this point in developing more rounded characters with longer plotlines, but the issues are still very "comic book" oriented with simple adventures that wrap up really nice and neatly. The format of Tales of Suspense with the shared issues also lead to a compressed feeling to the comics that sometimes means a lot can happen in a page or two...something very different from today's comics which sometimes struggle to have anything happen in an issue or two.

Much of this volume is flashbacks to Captain America's adventures in World War II with Bucky so this almost doubles as a war book for Marvel. The series did help restore the Red Skull as a prominent Captain America enemy but did also introduce some other characters. Batroc the Leaper first appeared in Tales of Suspense #75 (March 1966), the Adaptoid (later Super-Adaptoid) in Tales of Suspense #82 (October 1966), and M.O.D.O.K. appeared in Tales of Suspense #93 (September 1967). The Cosmic Cube which became a plot point for The Avengers movie first appeared in Tales of Suspense #79 (July 1966).

These early adventures helped establish Captain America with an audience. With the character's popularity Tales of Suspense ended with Tales of Suspense #99 in March of 1968 and Captain America's solo comic premiered in April 1968 with Captain America (1) #100. If you are a Cap fan, this collection is a must, but also a general Marvel fan should check it out. Captain America's solo comic is collected in the following volumes of Essential Captain America so this is a definite lead in to Essential Captain America Volume 2.

Gary Peterson says

A book filled cover to cover with Lee and Kirby Captain America yarns? 'Nuff said! This edition spans Tales of Suspense #59-99, and Captain America #100-102, comics originally published from 1964-68. It was tremendous fun rereading these stories after many years, and encountering new ones. I used to read these in the Marvel Double Feature reprint comic of the '70s, and later I assembled a respectable stack of original ToS issues, long since sold off.

I liked the early stories the best, like in Tos #59 where Cap mixes it up with gangsters straight out of a 1930's Warner Bros. movie. Kirby loved drawing gangsters in suits, fedoras, and firing tommy guns. Tos #62's "Breakout in Cellblock 10" is a sentimental favorite, one of the earliest Cap yarns I recall reading and just a fun story with a classic twist ending. That's what these early Marvels were--fun! It wouldn't be until the end of the 1960s that Cap would be afflicted by all the "who am I and how do I fit into this modern world?" navel-gazing psychobabble and the lovesick teenage pining after Sharon. Ugh.

But fear not, this opening volume is as free from that melodrama as Essential Cap Vol. 2 is full of it.

Jay Hancock says

If you skip the first 38 issues, total five star action. I didn't and I kind of hate myself for it.
