



Hellblazer: Bloodlines

Garth Ennis , Will Simpson (Illustrator) , Steve Dillon (Illustrator) , Mike Hoffman (Illustrator)

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Collecting two pivotal storylines and a one-shot from acclaimed writer Garth Ennis. Reprinting HELLBLAZER #49 (featuring a very special Constantine Christmas), #52-55 ("Royal Blood," which pits Constantine against the demon Calibraxis), and #59-61 ("Guys and Dolls," which sets the stage for the final showdown between Constantine and the First of the Fallen).

Hellblazer: Bloodlines Details

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Author : Garth Ennis , Will Simpson (Illustrator) , Steve Dillon (Illustrator) , Mike Hoffman (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Hellblazer: Bloodlines for online ebook

Jay says

Though Jamie Delano helped create John Constantine, Garth Ennis writes him best. Ennis is the Samsung to Delano's Apple. Yeah, you created the smart phone, but I made it better.

Maria Ella says

Read on a hurried pace is a mess.

I am a mess. - _____ -

Quentin Wallace says

Possibly my favorite Hellblazer volume to date, along with the Garth Ennis Dangerous Habits volume. I like Jamie Delano, but it's hard to top Garth Ennis.

In this volume we see vengeful ghosts, the King of Vampires, an awesome story dealing with Jack the Ripper as well as an unholy union between an angel and a succubus demon. (I wonder if this is where the idea from Preacher came from?)

I have noticed something about the art in Hellblazer. It really fits the gritty horror tales of Constantine, but I think on a superhero title the art would be terrible. Just an observation, as the art fits this book well.

If you're a Constantine fan this one is a must read, really good stuff!

Shannon Appelcline says

In this original edition of Bloodlines, you have to ask what in the world DC was thinking, as it's a semi-random assortment of issues from a full year worth of comics. Oh, you get coherent stories (and they're the important ones), but I never understood this era where publishers thought you'd just want trade paperbacks of a few of the "best" stories.

Lord of the Dance (49). Ennis really does like his pubs. Still, this is a nice story because it has a genuine British feel to it and because it shows Constantine's good side [7+/10].

Royal Blood (52-55). Ennis again manages to give this story a British feel, moreso than any of his other arcs. It also shows Constantine as a right bastard, working in a world of right bastards. It's a strong, memorable story [7+/10].

Guys & Dolls (59-61). This is mostly setup, but it's a good setup that really identifies the players in Ennis' Fallen drama. Ellie's story and Constantine's proactive actions are both great [8/10].

Elizabeth says

Constantine finds happiness in a relationship while some of the most gruesome stories go on. Charming meets charnel... I do love it when they grouse about Thatcher.

Lionel says

As good as it gets for an Hellblazer story. My favorite, way better than Delano's

Gregory Kiefer says

Much as the 1970s were a golden age for mainstream serial comics, so the early 1990s were for alt labels like DC's Vertigo or Dark Horse. I hadn't read a Hellblazer comic since the '90s, and I was happy to find that it is even better than I remembered. One thing I like about the way Ennis and Simpson present the narrative is that, unlike the mainstream at the time, the art is almost never flashy or overwrought. The result is that when I turn to a full-page spread of a demon ripping out and eating a man's intestines, it stands out as startlingly graphic and horrifying. I also love that John Constantine is a salt-mouthed commoner who likes his booze, sex, and cigarettes. He's not a particularly good guy, he just got caught up in the divine struggle along the way.

M— says

Wow, I enjoyed this one even more than Hellblazer: Rare Cuts. The stories were weightier and more long-spanning, and I really liked the heft of the tales. This book might not have been a bad place to start the series, either.

“The Pub Where I was Born” (Hellblazer, #47), written by Garth Ennis, art by Will Simpson.

“Love Kills” (Hellblazer, #48), written by Garth Ennis, art by Mike Hoffman.

Oooh. Constantine's got himself a girl. Also, ghosts avenge themselves on the living. The worst thing is the opening description of the pub was fantastic and left me thinking, *Gosh, I'd love to drink there, and then the place goes up in flames*. Sidenote: Simpson does not render tears well. And this girl, Kit Ryan, is fabulous. Kit's response to a thug threatening her with bloody death is, “Oh, aye?” *Then* she nearly rips his balls off. Seriously, Kit, can you be more awesome? ...Something horrible is going to happen to you later in this series, isn't it.

“Lord of the Dance” (Hellblazer, #49), written by Garth Ennis, art by Steve Dillon.

A fine one-shot sort of Christmas story. Nobody dies, good things happen, somebody's life is improved directly because of Constantine's actions, and Constantine even gets a present.

“Remarkable Lives” (Hellblazer, #50), written by Garth Ennis, art by Will Simpson.

All right, I’m not quite certain about the point of this story or its placement. It’s neat and interesting as a summation story and has some nice foreshadowing, but should it really have gotten set smack in the middle of a graphic novel? While I like how this graphic novel collects a largely sequential run, thematically I think “Lord of the Dance” should have ended a book and “Remarkable Lives” should have started a new one. I guess it was Constantine’s interactions with Kit that lead to “The Pub Where I was Born” being set as the start of this particular novel? She must be even more important than I understood. Also, I want to know learn more about Constantine’s past with Brendan Finn and Kit. And who is this King of Vampires character who I’ve never heard of before but apparently terrifies John to no end?

“Royal Blood” (Part One: The Players, Hellblazer, #52), (Part Two: Revelations, Hellblazer, #53), (Part Three: The Good Old Days, Hellblazer, #54), (Part Four: Dog Eat Dog, Hellblazer, #55), written by Garth Ennis, art by Will Simpson.

Fabulous gory story about flesh-eating demons and politics. *British* politics, of course, which seems to make the end result polite, bizarre, and cut-throat all at once. I frankly think the demon could have gotten out of the handcuffs quite easily by stripping the flesh from his hand and sliding the bones through.

“Guys & Dolls” (Part One: Fallen Women, Hellblazer, #59) and (Part Two: Nativity Infernal, Hellblazer, #60), written by Garth Ennis, art by Will Simpson.

“She’s Buying a Stairway to Heaven” (Hellblazer, #61), written by Garth Ennis, art by Will Simpson.

Ellie is shaping up to be one of my favorite characters. I want to read more about her; her past with Tali is fascinating. Is their baby alive? How exactly involved in these plans of Constantine is she going to be? Sidenote: Why would the First have nipple rings? I mean, seriously? And I notice they are gone in later scenes. Also sidenote: Simpson has moved on from bizarre tears to improbable water droplets. I’ll buy Ellie lounging on a bed in naught but towels around Constantine because she *is* a succubus and that’s just what she does, but, Simpson, if a girl gets out of the shower and puts her hair up in a towel, locks of it do not hang around her face. And if she’s still so wet from the shower that the water is running down her skin, those locks would be too sodden to be softly curling. Hmph.

Reading order: 2

Publication order: 18 (2007)

Chronological order: 7

J.M. Giovine says

Intriguing, fascinating and raw. That’s the best way I can synthesize my depiction of the Hellblazer comics, or at least, the ones I’ve read so far. A friend once told me that the best way to be introduced in this world would be with the Ennis run, and hell, he was right. Although, I don’t have much of an experience in regards of the entire Hellblazer stories, Ennis clearly knows how to handle the character, in order to make him unique and attractive. Guys and Dolls is the direct continuation of Royal Blood (a great volume, needless to

say) and it all focuses on *The First of the Fallen*. Given how strangely mixed the entire VERTIGO universe is, it is explained how many “devils” are in it, thinking it more forward, we should remember there’s an spin off of this title called *Lucifer*, but since I know nothing about it, I can’t really say if it’s also connected with, let’s say, *Sandman*. But anyway, *TFOTF* is technically, and according to this issue, the first official devil in the universe, so the guy is craving for revenge against good-old pal John, after the events of *Dangerous Habits* (fantastic volume), so he’s pretty much planning, while John, meanwhile, is feeding upon his relationship with a demon called *Chantinnelle*, who’s been hunted by *The First*... and her maker, *Triskele*. She asks *Constantine* for help against the demons, since she’s a demon who fell in love with an angel, conceiving a child of that relationship, provoking the rage of both, heaven and hell. The other issues show us some history about *Constantine*’s family, and a family issue among his own, and the other is a hilariously-touching issue in which John celebrates his 40th birthday. Gotta say, even when the plot and story in general, the characters are so ridiculously well written, is almost a crime to finish these volumes. *Ennis* does it once again, and *Will Simpson*’s art mixes perfectly between dialogue and scenes. *Steve Dillon* does the last two issues, and even if I’m not a huge fan of his art, is still decent enough to hook you in regards of our interest towards the character. *Constantine* continues to be one of the best written and depicted characters in comic-book history; not only he is a complicated individual, he is in struggle and his torment became the reader’s concern as well. We crave for this guy, even when we’re not supposed to. I haven’t read any other take on the character, but so far, my money is on *Ennis*’s runs. I can’t wait to continue the story, even after *Ennis* departure, which I know is closer than I’d wish, but this stories and characters are so great, and the entire teasing of the confrontation against *The First* has been so far so good, I can’t help but to feel eager.

Gopal Rao says

Swamp Thing, which introduced the character of John Constantine and set the stage for the Vertigo imprint, is the comic book which reignited my interest in the genre, after decades of neglect that began towards the end of junior high school for me. Aimed at mature readers, *Swamp Thing* introduced the idea of the Vertigo Formula, as I call it, which ties together things like history, politics and folklore along with the supernatural.

Hellblazer, which continues the adventures of John Constantine, is the series which initially propped up the new imprint, along with Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*.

The first few dozen issues of *Hellblazer* were all over the map in terms of both storytelling and art style, which gave it a sort of unbalanced feel, which could be very stimulating or very confusing. Writer *Garth Ennis* stepped in at some point, and brought a sense of cohesiveness to the series which might have been lacking up to that point.

This series is probably the high point of *Ennis*' run on *Hellblazer*. The stories flow very smoothly, and *Ennis* is a master at maneuvering the reader through a series of subtle set ups, only to pull the rug out with some startling plot twist that ties everything together. It's a very thrilling style of writing for this type of material.

The downside to it is probably that *Ennis*' *Hellblazer* is noticeably more superhero-y than the preceding run. The villains are muscle-bound and glowering, seething with frustration and menace; chomping at the bit to enact some kind of retribution upon the meddlesome *Constantine*, who always manages to keep one small step ahead of them, no matter how powerful or demonic they are.

Still, *Ennis* makes good on the Vertigo formula, infusing the stories with sly bits of cultural cross-reference and historical and literary allusions.

I enjoyed this series quite a bit though, and read it enthusiastically while travelling in southeast Asia. Comic

books make good travelling companions for me for some reason.

Brooke says

This one was okay, I suppose. It alternated between being interesting and seeming like it was trying too hard to be ghastly and horrific. I think I'm ready for a long break from John Constantine and all his demons.

Robert says

I'll be reading all the collected volumes over the next few weeks, it's refreshing to get the unsanitized originals as their depth allowed more personal storylines. Far too many comics get lost in a 'danger to the planet, no galaxy, no UNIVERSE' spiral of threat escalation. Stories on that scale are so mind bogglingly stupid that all sense of character and pathos is lost.

(This whole review poached from my own comment made about a previous volume of Hellblazer)

Printable Tire says

This collection really shows what a good writer can do with the Constantine character: create tight, lucid inner monologues and horrific nihilist world-building.

The first two Ghost Whisperer stories are fine, though I just encountered a "death of magic/rise of man" story in the last Hellblazer collection I read yesterday, so I've already reached my Christian-bashing quota of the week and "Lord of the Dance" was just overkill. Constantine's meeting with the King of the Vampires was sadly anti-climactic for me seeing as how I read all these collection out of order and already know how that storyline ends.

The bulk of this collection concerns a silly concept taken to extreme graphic measures: Prince Charles as man-mauling serial killer possessed by the demon that controlled Jack the Ripper. I've also reached my Jack the Ripper quota for the week (stupid Strangers in Paradise v. 5!) and the violence and gore here was too over-the-top, the harsh indictment of Brittain's rulers too preachy, for my liking.

The last story was a bit of a flop, and was mere set-up for a bigger story brewing (which again I've already read, unfortunately).

Still, this collection was never yawn-inducing, and Constantine, and especially his relationship with Kit, was charming and likable. This is probably altogether a filler collection of stories but all in all (and despite everything I've said above to the contrary) they were pretty fun to read.

Steven Guitink says

Original Sins
The Devil you Know

The Fear Machine
The Family Man
Dangerous Habits

Bloodlines in a lot of ways is structured like Original Sins. Rather than one big storyline comprising the entire volume, it's a collection of smaller ones with a couple of one-off stories added in for good measure. That doesn't make it bad. But it does make it different. It also means that we have several different illustrators on deck, so it means I get to talk about the art some more. YAY!

The Pub where I was Born: Freddy and Laura run the Northampton Arms, one of those pubs in London that feels like a second home. They've run the place for a long time. They love it and they love each other. But Freddy has passed on and unbeknownst to Laura, someone's going to make her follow him. This is a nice issue, pleasant but also kind of sombre. Most of the story takes place around the pub itself with lots of discussions about changing times and while a lot of the dialogue is friendly and upbeat, there's a subtle tone of misery underneath. Which makes the ending all the more shocking. The art by Will Simpson is a mix of detail and stark shadows, with shadowed areas done in flat colours and hatching which is decent but nothing that sets my arse on fire.

Love Kills: The pub's been burnt down, with Laura inside it. Except this wasn't an accident. And John's getting to the bottom of it. Except....someone else is too. The art by Mike Hoffman is a little cleaner this time around, although some of the detail in the pencil work is a little lacking in spots. It makes it look a little lazy at times. The storyline plays out pretty smooth, with John being more of a backseat driver here, watching as things play out around him. It's also cool to see Kit hold her own. There's some of the old ultra-violence that Ennis is known for but it ends on a somewhat happy note that reminds us that you have to move on, perhaps find love.

Lord of the Dance: A Christmas issue! It's Chrissy time and John's looking for a present for Kit. Except a ghost is following him. And that ghost is a former God of Celebration, pushed out by time and culture. But maybe John can help him with that. This is a nice issue and proof to me that Ennis is far more capable of real human moments than his detractors give him credit for. It has Ennis's trademark disdain for religion but overall the whole issue just has a jolly, happy vibe to it, peppered with good time cheer, friendships and love. I will say going forward, that Steve Dillon's art is kind of hit and miss for me. His designs are distinct but when you examine them in detail, you notice he's really only capable of about six different faces at best.

Remarkable Lives: John and Kit are a couple and have spent the better half of three days shagging. Except someone wants John's attention. And they're not taking no for an answer. William Simpson is back for this issue on art duty and as usual, his art is a mix of rough hatchwork and shadow. And while it's a bit choppy in spots, overall it's decent. The story itself is in effect one long verbal confrontation/sparring match between John and the King of Vampires. Intercut between their discussion is a short story detailing the King's life and John's history and overall reads like a short gothic novella. A good chunk of the dialogue from John is him throwing shade on other DC comic heroes of the time (this was when Vertigo was still connected to DC, albeit loosely) and while it does feel like Ennis venting his feelings about superheroes, given that John has never been one for fawning about with costumed loons, it fits fine. It's a slow burn of an issue but I've no major problems with it. Also the King is drawn like James Dean so there is that.

Royal Blood (Parts 1-4): A killer is stalking London, tearing people apart, eating parts of them. And John's been called in by one of the upper class to handle the affair. But what happens when it turns out the killer is a member of the British Royal Family? Just as Delano put his feelings towards Thatcher and the British conservatives onto print, so too does Ennis and his feelings towards the Royal Family and the upper class. And they're not nice sentiments either. They're pretty on the nose, what with a place called the Caligula Club and all. And Ennis does bring up the old Freemason chestnut as well. But for the plot and themes of the story they work. In comparison to Delano who, during the Fear Machine, threw out all pretense of story by the end

to rag on about Earth Magic and environmentalism, Ennis weaves his disdain for the upper crust into the narrative. The Freemasons were an old sect of rich buggers and since the nasty blokes in this story are the upper crust, it fits the storyline. Simpson's art as before, is serviceable. Up close, there's plenty of detail although on some midrange and long shots, the designs are a little choppy. The violence is graphic and vicious and the subtle reveal of the killer makes those scenes all the more horrific.

Overall it's actually one of my favourite of Ennis's stories, although I can understand why others might not like it.

Guys and Dolls Part 1, Fallen Women: Ellie's on the run. The First of the Fallen is looking for her and John's being conscripted into helping. Because the First is gunning for John. First off the art in this one seems a lot cleaner. There's more colour variance, the designs seems a lot more crisp, there's less shoddy background design and overall its a definite step up for Simpson's work. I like it. As for the story, it's okay. It's a nice set-up to what is coming. There's a few references to Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, DC's *Etrigan* and even what would become Mike Carey's *Lucifer*. On its own, its not much to speak of, but that's because it feels like its building up the next issues.

Guys and Dolls Part 2, Nativity Infernal: So a while back, there was this angel and this demon right? And one day they bumped uglies right? And then the demon got.....hang on....haven't I read this before?! Okay in all fairness this came out in 1992, while *Preacher* came out in 95, although I suspect this may have been the initial inspiration for that. Overall it does go a ways of explaining why the cosmology of John's universe is so fucked up and overall we get enough of a continuation that feels like its building to the next issue. We also get a reference to Nergal which I like. It shows a commitment to the continuity of the setting. Overall its a good issue that does a good lot of expanding Ennis's universe.

Guys and Doll Part 3, She's Buying a Stairway to Heaven: So here we go. The showdown. The First has found Ellie, but what has John done? How has he managed to frig up the First's plans? I'm.....a little conflicted about this issue. I know it's about John protecting Ellie and Ellie sorting out the remainder of her existence but as for the final confrontation between John and the First....seemed a bit anticlimactic to me. I dunno, I don't really know what I was expecting. But I guess I was expecting a little more than what was offered. On the plus side, we get a bit of foreshadowing in that Ellie now owes John a favour, a favour she seems to be gleefully on board with. So overall, not bad, but a little flaccid for my tastes.

And that's *Bloodlines*. Overall a good stint of issues and stories, only really let down by some shoddy art in places and some weak plot points in others. Hope to see ya soon for *Fear and Loathing*.

???? ???? says

In the previous collection, *Dangerous Habits*, Garth Ennis had to share credit with Jamie Delano since the latter contributed to a good forty-percent of the bulk for that volume.

In this collection, however, Ennis becomes the official writer for the *Hellblazer* series. *Bloodlines* is comprised of the Christmas Special about the Lord of Dance, the *Royal Blood* arc (#52-55), and *Guys and Dolls* arc (#59-61). This was a good second follow-up to the critical success of *Dangerous Habits* although this is far from Ennis' best.

One thing consistent and formulaic about the stories in this volume is Ennis' tendency to create bad guys with no redeeming qualities about them whatsoever, making it easy for readers to root for John Constantine's victory over them. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, Ennis had given satisfactory endings for his villains in a way where they get punished horribly. However, it offers little to no varied range of morally

conflicted characters unlike his predecessor's run whose stories have villains who are not entirely evil per se, but have done heinous things for ambiguous motivations, much like the titular hero himself.

Speaking of John: Garth Ennis had written Kit Ryan into his stories since *Dangerous Habits* and as John's newfound love interest, she has given him all the support and dedication that marked a healthy relationship between them where John even has a stable home life to get back to at the end of the day after solving gruesome cases. I think John's personal growth and development at this point in Ennis' hands are noteworthy and a refreshing change of page that is slowly turning him into the hero he is always meant to become since this series started. I'm totally enjoying this brand-new John Constantine. He has a promising, optimistic attitude and there is less guilt and self-destructive impulse about him this time around. And to think that it only took him almost dying to make amends and forgive himself for his transgressions in the past! As someone who adores this complex character, I'm so thrilled to see him at peace, with the help of Kit and John's own choice to grow up and change.

As for the stories themselves, I find them rudimentary yet still entertaining. I'm still getting a hang of Garth Ennis as a writer and so far I think he's off to a good start and needs to polish some aspects to his storytelling which I think will get improved upon in the next arcs he will produce. *Royal Blood* was an average story that didn't really appeal to me to much while *Guys and Dolls* definitely had a riveting premise but its brevity by the third act made the resolution anticlimactic. I would have much preferred if this volume included the standalone stories like *This is the diary of Danny Drake* (#56) and *End of the Line* (#62) which were better written and more satisfactory to read.

I just have to admit that I'm a masochist and that most of Delano's painful and gritty characterization of Constantine has worked for me that now I can't shake it off and sometimes I find myself struggling to really focus and discuss Ennis' contribution to this series which has been great, really, though I know I don't have much to say about it unlike with Delano's run.

I did enjoy *Guys and Dolls* overall which is the main attraction of this volume. That being said, there are some parts of this entire arc that weren't completely resolved mostly because they weren't completely explained either. I feel as if this was rushed. The two earlier installments were great pieces but this one had to bear the weight of the climax, falling action and resolution. The climactic part of this issue was simple in execution that it diluted its impact once we reach the supposedly falling action and the ambiguous resolution didn't really help. I just thought that it would have been better if we get another issue to wrap things up more neatly and with more power behind the punch. Ennis is not exactly a risk-taker when it comes to endings.

I've noticed that he tends to go for the easier, more predictable route. The bad guys don't win and suffer the consequences, John lives to fight another day--it's a stark opposite to Delano's own approach for this series. Ennis' formulaic style of narrative is still okay for me at this point but if this keeps up in the next issue I may get annoyed. It's only acceptable now because I want to believe Ennis is still finding his stride as well as his definitive voice but *Hellblazer* is such an exceptional and flexible series and I just feel that he's not making most of its potentials.

I think Garth Ennis' twelve issues so far have been a mixed bag but the pros really outweigh the cons so I'm still riveted enough to keep reading.

RECOMMENDED: 7/10

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