



Avengers Arena, Volume 2: Game On

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The history of Arcade is revealed! How did the former punch line become the sadistic scene stealer that now torments Marvel's teen heroes? Find out in this shocking behind-the-scenes story! Plus: what are X-23's secrets? What is Darkhawk's big reveal? Secrets explode, alliances shatter, and Apex - the mean girl you love to hate - makes her move, as the next chapter of the Arena's deadly game begins!

Collecting: *Avengers Arena* 7-12

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Author : Dennis Hopeless (Writer) , Alessandro Vitti (Artist) , Riccardo Burchielli (Artist) , Kev Walker (Penciler) , Jason Gorder (Inker) , Rain Beredo (Colourist) , Jean-Franois Beaulieu (Colourist) , Joe Caramagna (Letterer) , more... Dave Johnson (Cover Artist) ...less

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From Reader Review Avengers Arena, Volume 2: Game On for online ebook

Chloe Natasha says

Things Nico did: That!

Still fun, but not as fun as the first volume. This series seems together dragged through the dirt by many reviewers, and I understand why, but also... it's not that bad. It's just mindless fun, but maybe I'm biased because Laura Kinney is my girl.

2.75 stars!

Shantal Murillo says

Almost a 4 but not quite. Much stronger middle than the start

Callum Shephard says

Longtime readers may remember that we looked at the first issue of this series some time ago. That ended with one of the lowest scores ever given to a work of fiction on this website. Unfortunately it turned out that first issue was the high point of quality for this series. Everything proceeded to drop like a stone from there.

The series follows the story of the villain Arcade as he kidnaps multiple teenage and young characters of the Marvel universe to pit against one another in Murderworld. Determined to get the highest ratings possible, and even citing the Hunger Games/Battle Royale as a direct influence, he somehow overpowers them all at once and starts killing off people at random. Pain, misery and very lazy writing ensue.

Let us make this clear right from the very start: This is badly written. Hopeless can certainly turn out a good story when it puts his mind to it, but this? Not only does it feature some of the worst understandings of characters ever written, but the explanations to anything are poor hand-waving at best and little to no comprehension is shown of the very series they come from. Here's just a few examples from quite early on in the series:

For example, Mettle's personality is dumbed down from a complex, well developed character in a loving relationship to "I'm in love with Hazmat! and little else." He also engages in actions which completely go against his character arc from Avenger Academy's Final Exam story.

Hazmat herself has her entire acidic and snarky personality turned from a coping mechanism which arose with her powers to "I've always been a hater" Not to mention the fact she relentlessly jumps at the chance to kill people and is turned into a poor cardboard cutout of an excuse to create strife.

Chase is suddenly reset to square one, with Hopeless' ignoring the character development and maturity she underwent with Joss Whedon's writing.

Then we get Juston, whose character is utterly destroyed so he can be defined purely by depression and revenge. Little else is ever actually given to him beyond being used as a punching bag.

Every character in this is written following the Brian Bendis mentality of “I didn’t write it, so it doesn’t matter” with characterisation, development and history sacrificed for cheap shock ploys. It only gets progressively worse as the series goes on. These are also just the problems which arise with the characterisation within other series as well. Take for example X-23, who is soon established to be constantly calculating ways and methods to best kill everyone around her if need be. She is then shown repeatedly using Leeroy Jenkins charges without any strategy or even basic caution against whoever she fights, repeatedly getting punched into oblivion. This is not to mention the fact we occasionally have characters turning up with clothing items and equipment they never arrived with, despite having no way to have possibly attained them in this survival story.

No only does the story not work when ignoring basic established continuity of the characters, it doesn’t even work with basic established continuity from issue to issue!

So what about the story itself though? Beyond the characters what substance is there? None. There is nothing here which is of genuine substance which does not ultimately come down to extremely poorly handled efforts to generate rage about the comic. Everything here simply boils down to having someone die each issue. This is not only a very cheap ploy to draw drama which has not only been parodied relentlessly over the years, but proves Marvel learned nothing from Avengers Disassembled and the like. Deaths only matter when there is genuine meaning behind them, not because the contrived plot demands that they be killed.

Just to show how poorly handled this is: We have one character unintentionally commit suicide by flying into an invisible ceiling, killing herself before she can utter a single word in the comic. We also not only have the only black character die first, but character spouting lines like “My boyfriend exploded all over me!” without the slightest hint of self awareness, even as the comic demands you take it seriously. Even if, if, you could somehow take it all seriously Hopeless then includes something which completely destroys all drama in these fights: Health bars. No, that’s not a joke, as fights go on we actually have bars of health appear above character’s heads showing their remaining life. Not only is this like something out of a bad parody but it destroys any semblance of drama within the story’s fights.

Admittedly, said fights are hardly helped as the majority of characters are used as fodder to beef up one new figure invented by Hopeless himself who serves as the villain. She constantly wins only because the characters repeatedly forget how their powers work or even how to operate as a team,

The pacing and focus is all over the place, unable to latch onto a single character and suddenly advancing in jerks of blinding activity after long pauses of nothing. Breaks in a constant pace work, but only when there is a constant momentum. Here there’s nothing of the sort within this story and it feels as if Hopeless was making things up as he went along. It’s without a single direction so much as a series of spasmodic moments of lucidity followed by a sudden change in direction or effort to make the audience are by pointlessly killing someone.

The brief moments of self awareness Avengers Arena does display do not result in anything good. If anything the attempts to solve problems by just highlighting them but never go that extra mile of doing anything to solve the problems. Merely showing awareness of Arcade’s sudden jump in power or the fact he has made himself a target for the Avengers, Excalibur and just about every superhero on the planet does not mean you have closed the gaping plot hole of the comic’s premise!

Perhaps the only thing which might merit some praise is the art of Kev Walker. As a genuinely talented artist he has a great ability to depict events, and handles textures, characters and varied environments extremely well. However, it’s a little hard to praise that when he is constantly drawing borderline gore porn with

characters having their flesh burned off, being run through with blades and the like.

Don't get this one. Don't even waste your time looking into it for the controversy surrounding this comic. It's bad, pure and simple, without a single redeeming quality to be found among its pages. Don't reward Marvel with money for churning out such a lazy, poorly produced and wasteful idea for a series. Remember it only as a mistake and a sign of just how far this company has fallen when it comes to treating its characters with respect.

Michael says

The arena's set, the players are in place, and Arcade's having the time of his life watching his young charges murder the absolute bejeezus out of one another at his behest. The first volume might be mostly introduction and back-story, but Volume 2 of Dennis Hopeless's mean-spirited trilogy is pretty much all action, with a few surprises thrown in to boot. There's a bit more character exposition, some explaining of background, and a cut-away to explain why none of the adult mutants who should be looking for these characters are doing so, but by and large the bulk of this book is exactly what you'd expect: teams forming, sides squaring off, betrayals, sacrifice, and death galore. If you've been holding your breath to see X-23 pop her claws in preparation for a colossal slash-fest, prepare to exhale.

Pretty much everything I wrote in my review for volume 1 applies here, so I'm not going to recap. Just know from here on out, things get a hell of a lot more hectic for the surviving kids. The real question is if Hank Pym or anyone else on the outside will figure out what's going on in time to save anyone, or if the mini-Avengers will be forced to continue culling their ranks as the 30-day threshold draws ever closer.

Jeff says

[Pelican Girl flew too high, Lil Cap'n Britain got decapitated, Metal Butt Boy got blown up (hide spoiler)]

Viola says

This thing is really good about making you skip over the obvious flaws while reading it, but they sort of just come back and hit you in the face after. Is Bloodstone even a character? Why does Hazmat shit on Reptil for peeking when she's just hanging round in her underwear? Did she even care about Mettle? Is Chase really stupid enough to be all "woah daz cool" about being Darkhawk and not even caring about the FREAKING CRYSTAL THING IN HIS BODY? How does Death Locket cope with being... Deathlokette and completely controllable by Apex? Who gives a shit about Aiden and Nara? Everything about this was so... meh.

Jessica says

I really didn't care for the first volume.

On the other hand, I LOVED! LOVED! LOVED! Volume 2. I was unimpressed by the first volume, I almost hesitated from picking up the second volume---I was definitely going to read it in a Tony Stark blase fashion:

AND THEN

I LIKED the back story of the villain or AA Gamemaster. He IS a sucky villain, I love it! He's so sucky, he creates a sucky world, and puts little sucky teenagers to have an overload of hormones, problems, friendships, self-esteem/control-thyself-issues----and best yet, it's epic---turn on the other teammate issue.

OMG, YES, GIVE ME MORE!

I just love the twin twist, I love the British witch, the whole beach mirage life that crazy little Hazmat is dealing with---The Reptile kid... I mean, *OMG* It's like being stuck in high-school all over again, with people that I particularly do not LIKE (or may like) and we are all given superpowers----and a chaotic landscape where---no one's safe. I mean it's like Hunger Games fanfiction brought to life in comic book format. I think this volume worked well because the characters were more interesting, and the trashy friendships/triangles/teendrama was at the forefront.

I have so many plot theories going on right now---especially since they ended it with, "WAIT THEY MIGHT NOT BE DEAD?!" WHAT A LAB-BOR-A-TORY----orrrrr---

My favorite is debating the scenarios of either a) who will be the one b) who will be the power couple c) who will be the one to figure out how to 'unite everyone together...' GOD THERE ARE SO MANY DOORS! SO MANY---it was like thinking about the Community episode entitled: *Remedial Chaos Theory*

There's so many places this comic could go. Will they succeed my initial expectation of the series. ABSOLUTELY. Will it let me down---PROBABLY---but in the moment---I want to treasure this emotion:

Connor says

A continuation of the story. Interested to see what happens next.

Adam says

Holy crap. I'm crazy surprised this series is turning out to be this incredible. It's fun. It's action-packed. It's awesome!

Sam Quixote says

The casts of Avengers Academy and Runaways are still in Murderworld, an intricate closed environment filled with deathtraps created by the villain Arcade, and the last man standing deathmatch a la Battle Royale/Hunger Games continues. Some characters died in the first volume, some more die in the second, and probably a few more will die in the third. Dialogue is spoken in between fight scenes. It is a non-comical comic. My edition was printed on paper.

The first volume didn't blow me away but I didn't hate it as much as a number of readers did. Yes it's derivative and totally unoriginal but I hoped it would keep going further, becoming trashier as the series went on. Alas, it hasn't and now I join the ranks of readers who despise this series. The problem is that it's trying to seem like a real series with real characters and, because it's not accomplishing this, it's become a real bore to read.

One of the biggest obstacles this series has is how unknown most of these characters are going to be for anyone who hasn't read Avengers Academy/Runaways (like me!). We get Apex's backstory and I can only say: was laughter the desired response? I don't know who Chase is but every time he transforms into a lamer version of Iron Man – Darkhawk! – it's a big deal, and I don't get why. Dennis Hopeless is trying to make you care about characters you don't know who're given the barest of background information in a story about them all dying – it's not an approach that works or should've even been attempted.

I suppose if you're an Avengers Academy/Runaways fan already then this obstacle doesn't exist for you, but those titles were both very low-selling comics for Marvel so I can only imagine that the majority of readers picking this up aren't going to know who's who and why we should care about their deaths.

There are some fights but unfortunately not enough death. The one series where Marvel could deliver more on their superhero fights than just boring stalemates and they flub it! Even when a certain character does bite it, they come back to life later on! Meanwhile, the ones that do die have been minor blips in the series so far so I barely noticed they'd gone when they had. And when they're not fighting ineffectively, they're bumming around on the beach! Is the subtitle, "Game On", referring to a game of friendly volleyball or something?

I liked the opening issue explaining how and why Arcade came to create Murderworld. He's definitely gone up in my estimation as a more interesting character because of this series and I wish he'd play a bigger part in the book given that the alternatives are so dreary. But one good issue out of six ain't enough to recommend this book. It's definitely not shaping up to be a must-read comic.

Avengers Arena Volume 2 sacrifices the potential craziness and fun of the silly concept to deliver a maudlin, lo-fi, and very dull book. It's a disappointing addition to a series that could've been much more enjoyable if it had been handled a different way. Maybe it'll mean more to Avengers Academy/Runaways fans but to everyone who's not, the story is unlikely to make you care about these characters nor make you want to rush out and pick up those other books.

Ho hum, I guess I'll go read the third volume for completion more than anything...

TK says

Questions for you to ponder:

Does loving this series make me human garbage?

Did, my girl, Nico Minoru really just kick some fucking ass like that?

Is this a collection of the most absurd unbalanced characters ever?

Is the last book going to let me down??

TinTin Kalaw says

A villainous backstory! An evil, narcissistic, single-bodied twins! Death! New alliances! Betrayal! Trauma!
And a serious-as-hell-long-needed-power-upgrade! This was an interesting volume indeed :)

Cecilia says

How will this end?!

Nelson says

This was even better than the first volume. We get a cool strategic "villain" type, which in turn causes other characters to bring out their big guns, upping the stakes and really getting the deathmatch going. Katy's and Nico's arcs are amazing in this volume. Not gonna spoil anything in this review though, so I'll keep my excitement contained.

Unfortunately, the art had some changeups. Luckily, it still looks great. Some amazing spreads in this one.

This series is just a lot of fun. Refer back to my review of volume 1 for a more in-depth review and an explanation of my score (tl;dr: IT'S FUN!!)

Eli says

[he's gay! I love it. He has unrequited feelings for his best friend, Anachronism. So cute. (hide spoiler)]
