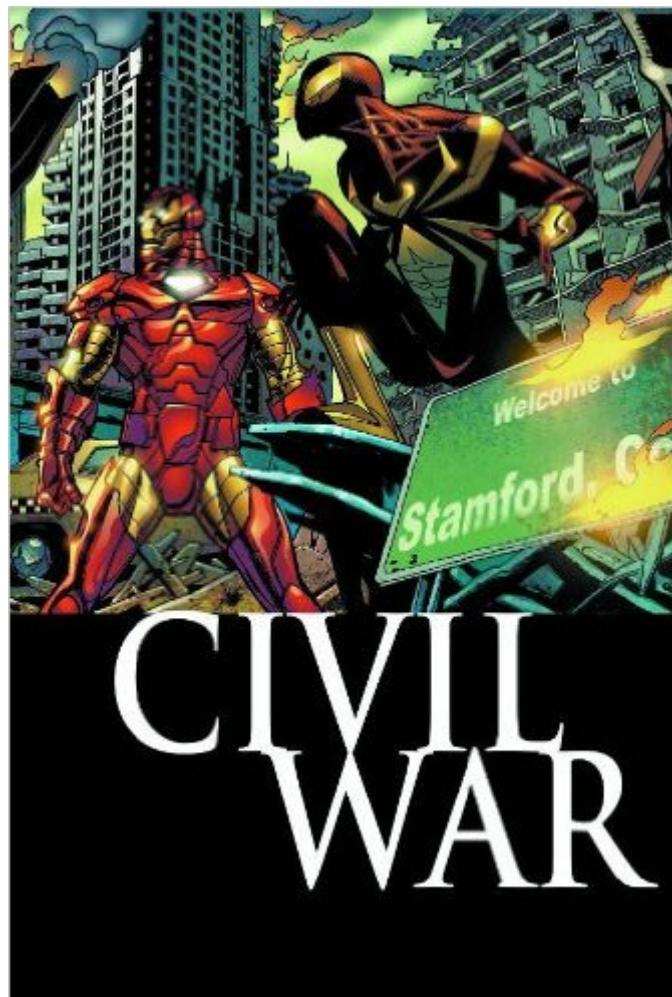


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The Amazing Spider-Man: Civil War



Synopsis

Life couldn't be more complicated - or more dangerous - for Peter Parker. After rushing to the aftermath of the Stamford Massacre to offer aid to its victims, Peter travels with Tony Stark to Washington, D.C., and the White House - where the enactment of the Super Hero Registration Act appears imminent. As the Marvel Universe braces for the implications of legislation that will forever change the societal status of super heroes, Peter is forced to make an important personal decision - maybe the most important decision of his life. As Civil War tears apart the super hero community, will Spidey stay true to that decision? Collects Amazing Spider-Man #532-538.

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Customer Reviews

I ordered Marvel Comics Civil War in a hardcover edition. It included all seven issues of the series. What I wasn't expecting was the bonus Spider Man comic "Parker You're Fired" issue which is laid out like an issue of the Daily Bugle. Also another treat was the interviews with the authors and the behind the scenes of how the script was written. All in all it is the best purchase I have ever invested in. I hope this helps people when they don't know if they want to buy this item...

Since the "Civil War" crossover event has been handled by others with varying opinions, probably far more effectively than I could ever do, and since, if you're reading this review, you are most likely already familiar with the concept behind the crossover, I'm just going to throw a few observations I had while reading this book [there will be some spoilers below]. The gist of the story is that a third-tier superhero team attempts to apprehend a team of super-villains, with disastrous results:

one of the villains uses his explosive powers, leveling, among other things, an elementary school and causing the deaths of 600 civilians, 60 children among them. The government quickly pushes through legislation in the form of a Superhuman Registration Act, which would require superhumans to reveal their identities and register with the government, in essence becoming government employees, complete with proper training, government funding and benefits if they decide to work for S.H.I.E.L.D. The fallout occurs when the one side in favor of the SRA, led by Iron Man, clashes with a second side opposed to the SRA, led by Captain America. The first issue I had, and one that was harped on by many, was the characterization of many of the major players, for example, Captain America, Iron Man, and Reed Richards. Instead of merely rehashing the "well, they did away with 40 years of characterization" argument, I offer a possible solution: The story might have been better served by having Captain America be in charge of the pro-registration side and Iron Man be against it. I get where Mark Millar was coming from; he basically hung his hat on the concept that Captain America has been characterized as "a man of the (American) people", someone who embodies the ideals of the nation, not necessarily beholden to the government. And since the SRA, to Cap, is legislation that tramples on the basic freedoms of superheroes to lead their lives free from government control, it violates their civil rights. Since Millar never outright SAYS this, instead alluding to it in a rather improbable confrontation between Cap and acting S.H.I.E.L.D. director Maria Hill, we have to assume that this is Cap's viewpoint. Iron Man, on the other hand, sees this as a natural outgrowth of years of the people putting up with superhuman activity, and that if we DON'T have the SRA, the result would be much worse: the government looking to outright ban superhumans. Now the reason I say that the roles should have been reversed is simple: Since Cap considers himself a man of the people, I figure it would make more sense for him to follow the WILL of the people, which is to HAVE the SRA. Iron Man, on the other hand, is the individual who has always been at odds with the government, since he feels all they want to use him for is his weapons. It would have made MUCH more sense for him to oppose the SRA, because in essence once he registers with them, he will be considered a weapon of the government, an end run-around leading to him becoming exactly what he has been trying to prevent. I just cannot buy that a heated conversation with Maria Hill would force Cap, one of the most level-headed characters in the entire Marvel Universe, to become an outlaw. After all, this is a man so respected that he has access to the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, and could very easily sit down with the POTUS and discuss the finer points of the SRA and how to protect everyone's civil liberties. On the other hand, Iron Man, the self-absorbed playboy who has always been Mr. Anti-Government, quickly acquiesces and becomes the voice of the government and, even more importantly, the voice of reason in this

entire debate. Part of the problem is with Millar's characterization; as I said before, Cap's blowup with Maria Hill *when the legislation hasn't even passed yet* and his subsequent thrashing of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents is so out of character that it makes no sense. One of the better moments in the story involves Daredevil being marched into the Negative Zone for his imprisonment; he gives Stark a silver dollar, calling it his 31st piece of silver, thus equating him with Judas. But if Captain America had been in charge of the pro-SRA group, I wonder what a chilling scene we COULD have had had Daredevil given the Captain, say, a copy of "Mein Kampf" and commented about how he once fought against the same thing he is now doing himself. As lonely as Stark looks in that final panel, imagine the gravitas of the situation with Captain America, a man who in essence was created to destroy Hitler and Nazism, now being equated with that same movement himself. And Millar could have gotten so much more out of Tony Stark being the leader of the resistance because he would now have to rely on the one man who he has been at odds with for so many years, Nick Fury, who offers support for the resistance in the form of hideouts and technology (since the government would cut Stark off from access to his technology when he becomes an outlaw). You would have Captain America and the government's S.H.I.E.L.D. technology vs. Tony Stark and Fury's S.H.I.E.L.D. technology. In essence, you would have an even battle between the two factions, boiling down to Cap's military experience and leadership vs. Tony's ingenuity. As opposed to what we wound up getting: Cap's resistance getting their butts handed to them in every major battle. Another problem with the narrative is that Millar, despite claiming to not pick any sides and creating a "who you root for will depend on how you feel about the issue" narrative, doesn't hide the fact that Captain America and his Secret Avengers are the sympathetic party here. The aforementioned scene with Hill, the clock turning 12:01 AM on enrollment day and a S.H.I.E.L.D. hit squad busting into Luke Cage's crib, and automaton Thor blowing a hole though Bill Foster's chest are all at odds with Iron Man's rather logical and well-nuanced support for the SRA. He is an advocate of the SRA with the passion and zeal of the best lawyer, and yet his tactics in defending it are those of a bloodthirsty mob enforcer. The moment that Bill Foster is killed, even the most ardent supporter of the SRA would have stepped back and said, "wait a minute, we've turned into heroes killing heroes. Something's not right here". Instead, Foster is buried (albeit with an assist from Tony Stark and his vast finances) and forgotten, with one character's logic of "well, it's no different than a punk getting blown away by a cop because he pulled out a gun and resisted arrest". And again, I can't help but think that Cap would have looked at the situation through a different POV than Stark, especially when it came to heroes killing each other over a piece of government legislation. Instead, Foster's death seems to make Cap even more obsessive, even taking on the Punisher as a

teammate (with disastrous results). A Captain America who would violate 40+ years of characterization by chiding those who would question why they're resisting and then allow the Punisher to become an integral part of his team makes you scratch your head. Likewise, a team consisting of Reed Richards, Tony Stark and Henry Pym, 3 of the most brilliant minds in the world, freaking out like a bunch of teenagers who went joyriding and crashed mom's car when Thor kills Goliath, then later realizing that, "gee, maybe we could have avoided this if we would have programmed human compassion in him" is patently absurd. It's little things like this that ultimately combine to bring down the entire narrative. Millar tries to make it epic, and while the book is entertaining (mostly on the basis of Steve McNiven's pencils) to some degree, it could have been so much more. Unfortunately, with Marvel's business model for crossovers, it's impossible to resolve everything satisfactorily in this volume because the story thread runs through individual titles like Spider-Man and Iron Man, meaning that if you wanted to get every single component and tie-in of this story, you would have had to buy a whopping NINETY-FOUR different books. So you can imagine how a 7-issue collection would barely be scratching the surface. And in the end, that's what it feels like, with Millar and company merely scratching that surface, swinging and missing as much as they connect.

So what does it take to break up two of the greatest superteams of all time, make Iron Man and Captain America mortal enemies, and many other old friends pound each other into the ground in the Marvel Universe? How about reality television? After a young 3rd-tier superteam causes supervillain Nitro to explode (his power) and wipe out a school full of children while filming their "Cops"-style show, public opinion forces the passage of a bill in Congress. The bill is one that would force all superpowered beings to register with and work for the government. Naturally, this is a terribly unconstitutional move that eliminates the most American of all values, freedom, from every superbeings' life. Thus the Marvel Universe is split in two with Captain America siding against his own namesake and forming the Underground Avengers (featuring Daredevil, Luke Cage, and Spiderwoman among others) and Iron Man leading the pro-registration forces along with Mr. Fantastic in rounding up all of the heroes who resist, imprisoning them indefinitely. It's a great concept that brings to light many fascinating debates and ideas on the limitations of government among other things. The problems with the story are in the execution. Many of the great heroes with 40+ years of history and character development behind them do things that are way out of character and others, bizarrely, do nothing at all. As much effort as Marvel has expended in various side-issues trying to justify the actions of Tony Stark and Reed Richards, the fact remains that they

behave more like megalomaniacal supervillains than the epitome of heroism that they've embodied for so long. That's not to say that there aren't consequences for both, what with the FF and Avengers essentially dissolved because of feuding members. The ever-sensible Ben Grimm even leaves the country. While Wolverine acts perfectly rationally (for him) in going after the real villain, Nitro, in his side-story (available in another TPB), the rest of the X-Men decide to remain neutral. This is particularly disturbing considering they have fought so vigorously against the Mutant Registration Act, which was essentially the same bill but much smaller in scope and with less teeth. I guess the writers knew that with so many heavy-hitters, a united mutant front would have tipped the scales too far in the favor of the rebels. Another big shocker involves a revamped version of the Thunderbolts, featuring many familiar but not-so-friendly faces, and let's just say that along the way sides are changed, long-standing relationships strained to the breaking point, and in the end, not everything will be as it was before. This is a cataclysmic comic event that certainly makes you want to tune back into the Marvel Universe if you've been tuned out for awhile like I have. This particular Trade Paper Back collects the essential events of the Civil War, but not necessarily the best. I'd highly recommend picking up the Civil War TPB's for Spiderman and the Fantastic Four because: a) they're highly entertaining and b) they offer a lot more perspectives on the events depicted in the main story. Also highly recommended are the Captain America and Iron Man TPB's since they are the two figureheads of their respective points of view. The ending, I think, is one that is unsatisfying in every possible way and really brings the story down. I know life ain't fair, but it just seemed like BS to me. Still, it's a journey worth taking if you're a comic fan who wants to see some of Marvel's finest go at it or if you're just intensely curious about how this huge event unfolds. There are plenty of great moments, it's just too bad that the story seems to dictate the characters' actions at times instead of the other way around.

im speechless This thing has it all one of the best comics I definitely recommend this book.

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