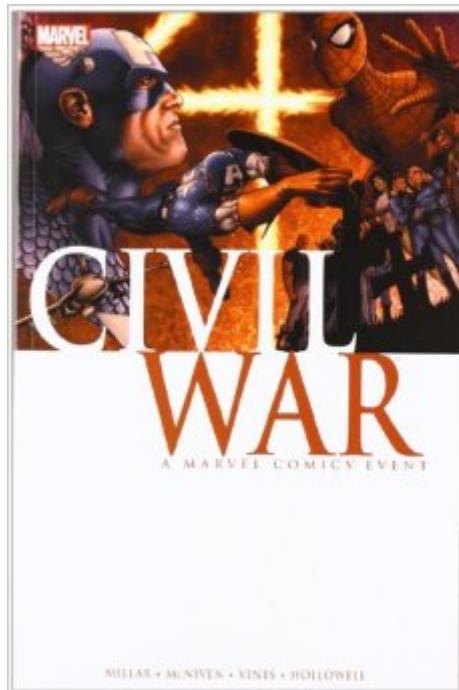


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Civil War



Synopsis

The landscape of the Marvel Universe is changing, and it's time to choose: Whose side are you on? A conflict has been brewing from more than a year, threatening to pit friend against friend, brother against brother - and all it will take is a single misstep to cost thousands their lives and ignite the fuse.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Marvel Comics; 1st Printing edition (April 11, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 078512179X

ISBN-13: 978-0785121794

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 0.4 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (740 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

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.

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 Dardevil, 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.

I posted this as a response to the review by Art, but I thought it worth pegging it up on its own, with edits: There are a lot of mixed and negative reviews of this book. My review bounces off those, rather than the book itself, which I'll just say I thoroughly enjoyed. If you are going to enjoy this book, first of all, don't take superhero comics too seriously. This isn't supposed to be "Palestine" or "American Splendor", this is the Fantastic Four we're talking about. It is goofy entertainment. If you are going to criticize fundamental genre conventions, do it from further back. That is, criticize fundamental genre conventions, don't roast this one particular manifestation of them as if it exists in a vacuum. That being said, I think some reviewers are a bit off on some specific points. One major complaint some reviewers make is that this story doesn't fit into the

relationships/characterizations/stories they have come to expect from these Marvel superheroes. That is only the case though if you haven't been keeping up with Marvel comics over the past few years. Starting from "Avengers Disassembled/House of M", this story has been building in all the Marvel books for years. The tension between some heroes/groups over the registration issue, and over the nature of the heroes' relationships with conventional law enforcement/military, has been cleverly woven into many Marvel books. So to see it all finally come to a boil here is satisfying to those that have been following things. For those that haven't, you'll just have to fill in that gap with your imagination--that's the price of enjoying serialized entertainment. The same must be said for the tensions between certain heroes/groups of heroes.

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