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Jack Kirby's O.M.A.C.: One Man Army Corps



Synopsis

In one of his last major works for DC, Kirby envisions a 1984-inspired dystopia starring corporate nobody Buddy Blank, who is changed by a satellite called Brother Eye into the super-powered O.M.A.C. (One Man Army Corps). Enlisted by the Global Peace Agency, who police the world using pacifistic means, O.M.A.C. battles the forces of conformity in this short-lived but legendary series! Witness the early tales of Jack Kirby's legendary creation O.M.A.C. in this new graphic novel collecting stories from O.M.A.C. #1-8 (1974-1975) plus artwork from WHO'S WHO!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up
•Through a powerful satellite known as Brother Eye, the Global Peace Agency transforms mild-mannered Buddy Blank into the muscled, mohawked One Man Army Corps. In an age when large armies are banned and atomic weapons strike terror into the hearts of men, OMAC
•with the aid of Brother Eye
•can perform superhuman feats of strength and power, allowing him to triumph over criminals. The original eight-issue comic appeared in 1974
•5, and the original artwork has been reconstructed for this handsome edition. Several of Kirby's uncolored pencil sketches are included between issues. The themes of unchecked technological advancement, globalization, and, of course, good versus evil will ring true with teens. Fans of Captain America should find this particularly interesting, but it is a good read for any fan of old-school superhero comics.
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After DC pulled the plug on Kirby's ambitious New Gods (see Jack Kirby's Fourth World Omnibus, v.1, 2007; v.2, 2007; v.3, 2007; v.4, 2008) in 1972, the artist was still under contract, and Kirby, who generated ideas like normal people produce dandruff, came up with more series concepts, including this one set in "the world that's coming, in which corporate drone Buddy Blank is transformed by the AI-enabled satellite Brother Eye into a superpowered "One Man Army Corps" to police the world for the faceless Global Peace Agency. Oddball even by the eccentric standards of Kirby's later work, O.M.A.C. opens with the image of a disassembled female "Build-a-Friend" robot-in-a-box that ranks among the more disquieting visions in mainstream comics. Lacking the loopy humor that typically leavened Kirby's stories of the time only heightened O.M.A.C.'s grim intensity, and his characteristically bold, kinetic artwork ratcheted up over-the-top fervency even further. The comic ended after only eight issues, when Kirby returned to Marvel. Although O.M.A.C. was revived and reinvented by others, Kirby's original stories are unparalleled. --Gordon Flagg --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Over the holidays I saw a news story about a woman who's currently charging people \$45 to vent their frustrations by smashing things to pieces in an Angry Room ... and Jack Kirby's OMAC from some 40 years ago instantly sprang to mind. In the very first issue, we see the same thing as part of corporate culture to keep their employees (little better than serfs) satiated & productive. In that same first issue, we see products like female Build-A-Friends (introduced on the single most disturbing splash page I've ever seen, a masterpiece of psychosexual nightmare-as-commodity). In subsequent issues, we find obscenely rich individuals renting entire cities for a night, in order to indulge their grotesque tastes & reward their willing flunkies; we find a world largely run by warlords & gangsters & CEOs (usually all three things in one person); and much, much more. Sound frighteningly current & familiar? It should. OMAC was definitely ahead of its time in extrapolating the direction of the world -- a world dominated by the shallowest & most crass human beings, the ones who have money & power beyond belief, but nothing except devouring emptiness within themselves -- a world of violence, corruption, and a loss of civilized values. Unlike our own world, though, Kirby's has OMAC, a super-soldier to do battle with those monstrous forces & strive to keep some measure of decency alive. For younger comics readers, the simplicity of his characters may be off-putting, as they'll be used to "realistic" dialogue & characterization. But Kirby dealt in raw,

powerful, symbolic figures drawn from the depths of the Unconscious. His characters here are allegorical more than anything else, as if a political cartoonist & satirist had decided to create a graphic novel rather than a single panel daily cartoon. And of course the energy levels of his dynamic art go off the scale! It's a pity the series didn't continue, as Kirby was clearly building toward something; but the (un)wiser heads at DC prevailed & pulled the plug on this distinct & unsettling story far too soon. Subsequent attempts to incorporate Kirby's creation into typical super-heroics have entirely missed the essence of what he was doing & are best ignored. So adjust your reading perception to a far more visceral storytelling style & immerse yourself in this furious welter of prescient ideas -- highly recommended!

If you are a Kirby fan, you don't need this review. You probably have already told everyone you know about how great this book is. You have also told everyone how great The Eternals are, that Kamandi is one of the best things ever put to paper, and that even Shakespeare could not have created something as great as Devil Dinosaur. The genius of Kirby is something that his fans already find obvious. Instead, this review is for everyone who finds his dialogue silly, his anatomy questionable, and his plotting bombastic and plodding at the same time. Trust me, we exist. So, why am I giving this 5-stars? Because this is one of those rare cases of calling something ahead of its time, and it being true. The dialogue, anatomy, and plotting are all still there, but for once, it serves the purpose of the story. It all pushes the satirical examination of society and "progress". It's brilliant, it's fun, and it's sublimely deep. So of course it didn't find an audience. While I appreciate what Kirby did, I am not a fan of most of his stuff. That said, I cannot recommend OMAC highly enough. It is only surpassed by his Mister Miracle work - either of which is great enough to base a legendary reputation on. Everything else is amazing gravy. (in case you didn't catch it, I just recommended getting his Mister Miracle also. Not because of the super-heroics, but instead because of the humanity and love found there. Add this to your cart then hunt Mister Miracle down to add also. You're welcome.)

Jack Kirby, unique among comic artists and writers for the joyful weirdness of his creations, turned it up to 11 when he had to come up with something to complete a contract for 15 pages a week. Though his character, OMAC, has gone through several incarnations in the hands of other creative teams, you have to read this to appreciate OMAC in all its oddly prescient glory: A decadent society, monitored extensively "for its own good," in which technology and wealth magnify every aspect, good or bad, of human society. Artificial pleasures, artificial lives ... like all science fiction, it's an

amplification of the time in which it was produced, and that time was the 1970s, in which the permissiveness of the late 1960s was amplified by nascent technology and increasing wealth. Into that steps a technologically enhanced hero who, with all the tech and social science at his disposal, generally solves problems with super-guns and super-fists. Then the multicultural (actually zero-cultural and zero-identity, except for one that (because of the rule of comics) seems to be an attractive lady indeed except for no facial features) Peace Agents sweep in and somehow manage to make you put your hands up by threatening you with a spray can of sleepy gas that you know is harmless. And if that doesn't work, well, Brother Eye erases every trace of you from the earth. You see, this is the paradox that, intended or not, lies at the heart of O.M.A.C. and much of our society: The wealth, the pleasure, the social science (or touchy-feely, if you prefer to call it that) are as nothing without someone willing to kick ass and maybe take names to protect and enable it. O.M.A.C. kicks ass so you don't have to. In the service of that is Kirby's wonderfully grotesque art, of undifferentiatedly attractive, if a bit on the severe side, girls; craggy looking good guys; and over-the-top ugly bad guys. The face of Fancy Freddy Sparga has stayed in my head since I first saw him as a kid of about 10; here he is again in all his weaselly, crude and cruel glory. He (and the equally crude but lovingly drawn Godmother) are easily the most memorable villains in this book. This book works as both an eerily prescient look at "The World That's Coming" which is in many ways the world we live in, and as a celebration of the art of one of the masters of comic creation.

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