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Star Wars: Darth Vader Vol. 2: Shadows And Secrets (Star Wars (Marvel))



Synopsis

Bounty Hunters on the attack--against the Empire! Vader has a new mission to do for the Empire. Unfortunately, it's completely at odds with his own mission. What's a Dark Lord to do? Plus: Who is Tagge's mysterious new agent? COLLECTING: Darth Vader 7-12

Book Information

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Age Range: 9 and up

Grade Level: 4 and up

Customer Reviews

Since this is the second volume of this ongoing comic series, I knew more of what to expect. But just as the first volume did, this volume started out in a very interesting place and then just meandered along with the story. I have definitely found that I like event miniseries more than just this continuing story. Hopefully that means I'll love Vader Down, which is a crossover event with the other ongoing series, Star Wars. This volume begins with Darth Vader at the remains of the Lars homestead, where Luke grew up. I really enjoy how Marvel is taking characters and places from the movies that didn't interact and placing them together. Aphra is yet again a big part of this story. For part of this volume, she seemed more of a lead character than Vader. Her droids are coming into their own, paving their own path as not just evil clones of C-3PO and R2-D2. A new Imperial investigator is assigned to Vader, Thanoth. I enjoyed his Sherlockian deduction skills. A far better character than the twins and the robo-Mon Calamari, in my opinion. I enjoyed this volume and will continue reading it. I want more big things to happen, but I can tell all these missions are leading up

to some huge things. I give this volume a 4/5.

I've never been a fan of Vader Anakin, but I read this and the first volume because the other Marvel Star Wars (both the ongoing SW book and the mini-series) have been great. Unfortunately this just didn't do anything for me. I found myself a bit confused by character motivations at certain points, and worse, certain scenes just didn't flow well for me, making me think I was missing panels. In particular when the twins were chopping up some rando and Vader interrupted, I didn't really know what was going on. Aphra is a decent character... but nothing has really made her stand for me out so far. The less said about the twins and Greivous knock-off the better. They are empty vessels. The evil C-3PO and R2 still feel like they exist solely for "LOL bizzaro" purposes and their antics often feel like obvious overkill. Finally, while the art is great (although Aphra seems to have a different body type in each scene), I found a lot of the art to be lazy, with lots of assets recycled instead of re-drawn. This was particularly so in a scene where Vader stands in front of a squad of stormtroopers - I spotted 4 original troopers and about 50 literal copies, without even an attempt to cover it up. Bleh. Yeah anyway, I know a lot of people like this. I just didn't. My two cents.

After showing off a strong opening volume with Darth Vader and his supporting cast, writer Kieron Gillen and artist Salvador Larroca continue to shed more light on the dark lord himself. Whereas the first volume introduced readers to Vader's supporting characters and planted seeds for future plots, volume 2 sheds more light on Vader's own goals and the lengths he takes to get them. Collecting issues #7-12, by now Vader knows of the Emperor's secret super soldier/Sith-manufactured beings, has his own underlings (Aphra, Triple Zero and BT-1), and a droid army at his disposal to come into power. But Vader needs a few other aspects to properly be a dominant power in the galaxy: money (credits) and workable connections from the crime underworld. Vader kills an intergalactic kingpin and takes their enormous fortune away on the grounds it gives Jabba the Hutt faith in Vader as mutual business partner and hands the fortune over to the Empire (since Vader is still working for them after all). But Vader has Aphra and crew steal the credits from the Empire to make it all look like a simple robbery. Now Vader has all the things he needs to run his own empire and search out for Luke, but Grand General Tagge will not allow Vader to search for Skywalker and wants him to instead investigate who really stole the raided money by assigning a new assistant to Vader, who happens to be a deductive investigator. Now Vader has to lead this assistant away from finding out it was Vader who planned the heist, while also having Aphra's crew look into Luke's location and keep up the façade to the Empire. I

know my general summary sounds like a lot "and it is-, but there are many details Kieron Gillen puts forth into this second volume and managed to me glued to what happens next. Gillen makes Vader put on a strong face as enforcer for the Emperor and the Imperial Empire, while trying to build up his private armada in secret. It's not a volume that pushes the narrative forward greatly, but it's just encapsulating to see Vader playing a game of cat-and-mouse under the Empire's nose to cover his tracks, while he strengthening his own plans with strong character development as well. As volume 1, Vader found out he had a son. This makes an interesting setup for the comic and fill-in for the movies. If you think about it, it makes sense. Vader was portrayed as the villain with no redeeming aspects about him in A New Hope, but he does seem to have softened up by Empire Strikes Back. Gillen's Vader being put into position as one who wants to destroy the Emperor for lying to him about Padme fills in the void wonderfully, almost as if he is undermining the Empire for the Rebels. This is what makes Vader a character to root for, even if he still is the all-powerful villain. So Gillen's handling of Vader is well done on all fronts. He says things just right, displays power, calmness, and intellect to be a scary main character and compelling one as well. The big factor this time around is Aphra and her crew get about half the page time as Vader, which might seem to hinder things as I felt Aphra was a bit too happy-go-lucky in the 1st volume. This time around, she's more likable because we get more of a serious and even conniving change to her as she is doing Vader's dirty work behind the scenes, as well as coming to grips if (and/or when) the day comes she will be expendable to Vader to cover up his own plans. It makes both her and Vader's story run parallel and comes together by issues #11/12 pretty well. Again, all art is done solely by Salvador Larroca to great detail. There are occasional panels that look a bit awkward, but it's solid art and conveys the cloak-and-dagger, espionage very well. Especially Vader himself, which even with no visible emotions, conveys power and intrigue with every page. While I thought this is an improved second volume, I think it also replaces the problems from volume one in other ways. As much as I enjoyed the intrigue of Vader trying to be a general and hiding his true motives, one could argue it adds a lot of unneeded complexity and characters to the time. Quite a bit of the issues is of Vader's new assistant babbling on in great detail over the investigation that could have been shortened, as well as invoking a host of new characters like Vader's assistant, bounty hunters, and some general akbar-like creature that will (or will not) mean anything in the future. There is a lot of moving pieces here that could confuse people. And although the integration of the Prequels is not as prevalent here as vol.1 (which was still small), there comes a major aspect in the story that still reverts back to those films which I know some fans will hate. And the very last aspect is the ending wraps up a bit too sudden considering

Gillen spent 5 issues moving things slowly and then speeding it up at the end. Other than that, DARTH VADER VOLUME 2: SHADOWS AND SECRETS is still an awesome series for looking deeper into Vader and his actions from Episode IV to V. He's still incredibly interesting and portrayed properly, his supporting cast has improved (Triple-Zero and BT are hoots for their dark sense of humor), great art, and complex story telling. It may be overly confusing for some or too drawn out, but it's still a solid series that I will continue to read more about, especially the cliffhanger ending. Which things will change up pretty dramatically as 3-issues of Vader will tie-in to the VADER DOWN crossover under Jason Aaron. I've already read the entire event, but I'll write about for the next review. After that event, the story of Vader will get back on track under the creative team of Gillen and Larroca.

I enjoyed the first volume of the new Darth Vader comic enough to keep reading, but it had its issues. I'm glad I did. Volume 2 has moved beyond the issues of volume 1 and come into its own. Volume 2 picks up where volume 1 left off, with Vader searching for Luke, making his own moves against the Emperor, and trying to cover his tracks. The artwork is still fabulous and a highlight of the comic. The plot primarily concerns the confiscation and theft and subsequent investigation of a large amount of credits (which strangely just look like small gold bars). Alphara (along with Bizarro C-3PO and R2-D2) is mostly making moves without Vader and remains a big favorite. But she may not be favorite character from the comic. That might go to Inspector Thanoth, Vader's new Sherlock Homes-esque adjutant and a much worthier adversary than his last one. The story is very strong. Vader is forced to use his wits against Inspector Thanoth, for once, and it intertwines perfectly with the heist storyline. The suspense remains taut throughout.

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