



## Astro City, Vol. 5: Local Heroes

*Kurt Busiek , Alex Ross , Brent Anderson*

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A witty portrait of life in a metropolis inhabited by super-powered heroes and villains, the critically acclaimed ASTRO CITY: LOCAL HEROES offers a realistic portrayal of the effect that these supernatural beings would have on the lives of ordinary humans. Told through the eyes and experiences of regular people, this enthralling volume includes tales of a woman's tragic attempt to expose a hero's true identity, a young lawyer's resourceful arguments to save his super-villain client, and a powerless doorman's act of selfless heroism.

### Astro City, Vol. 5: Local Heroes Details

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## **From Reader Review Astro City, Vol. 5: Local Heroes for online ebook**

### **Sean says**

Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson continue to shine a light on the citizens of Astro City and what it means to live in this world. Busiek asks and answers questions that normal people would have if their world were inhabited by these heroes and villains. While this collection doesn't tell an epic tale or reveal any world shattering secrets, it shows just how massive and historic the world he created is. All the stories were good with Anderson's typical solid artwork. I wished that some of the tales were stretched out a little longer but only out of greediness. Overall, a very good book.

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### **E.A. Lawrence says**

It was so good to be back in Astro City! I love reading the heroic stories set in this world. I particularly like how deftly Busiek tells compelling, character driven stories in this setting.

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### **Scott Waldie says**

As the title implies, this volume focuses more on the average citizens of Astro City, their struggles and their encounters with the heroes and villains of the setting. To that extent, it's not quite as thrilling as prior volumes, several of the stories take up just one issue, my favorite of which is the one about the retired Supersonic. All that said, it's still solidly written, has a few emotional punches, and does in its own way continue to build the world and flesh out little details of the myriad of characters we've seen alluded to or directly in the prior issues.

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### **Misha Husnain Ali says**

Quite excellent. Most people seem to enjoy the later volumes which focus on a single story, but I quite like these random volumes with self-contained and separate stories more because they let me see the world and characters from a variety of angles.

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### **mark monday says**

nostalgia porn minus the guilty feelings afterwards, and of course minus the porn. that perfect sort of nostalgia that makes you wish the world now was like the world then. idealistic yet still realistic, not annoyingly naive. a sweet and appealing template that I can return to again and again. Astro City is a great series!

a panorama of heroes, both super-powered and ordinary. but hey what's ordinary? you can't live in Astro city and be ordinary. there's a publisher facing down hero and villain alike. an actor who plays a superhero strives for something greater. a feisty political aide falls in love with a superhero and unwittingly torments him with her ceaseless attempts to prove his identity. a rebellious teen forced into the countryside for the summer finds the unspoken rules governing super-powered and ordinary relationships are quite different from the big city. a defense attorney learns that applying the rules created for heroes and villains to his gangster client will reap an unpleasant reward; a terrifying superhero known as the Blue Knight cuts a bloody path through the underworld. an old man dons his old costume, rises to the occasion, saves the day - and is still an old man. a young boy thanks his rescuer, an ordinary firefighter.

these are all short stories; Local Heroes is a series of vignettes depicting a range of time periods rather than one overarching narrative. the tone is bittersweet, which is typical for the series. Brett Anderson's art is delightfully retro. Alex Ross' covers are beautiful. the whole thing is mournful and hopeful and wonderful. on to the next one!

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### **Katie says**

Another fantastic book in this series.

James Robinson put it perfectly in the intro: "...under Kurt's expert hand, this comic is about the city itself and to a larger degree the human condition--what it's like as an ordinary person to live among giants, or what it's like (as a person) to don the mantle of giants with its responsibilities and woes. A lesser writer would have made this book about the fights and the powers and everything we've already read. Kurt allows us to tell those stories ourselves in our imaginations from every comic book we've ever read, while he concentrates rather on the stories we haven't seen before."

The stories are fantastic, the illustrations are beautiful...there is honestly no reason for you not to start reading Kurt Busiek's "Astro City."

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### **Ryan Mishap says**

The stories here don't deconstruct what it means to be a hero, they show us what it means--and it ain't about the fancy costume, of course.

The beauty of Astro City is the fact that while there are plenty of silly costumes and un-believable comic action, the stories are human-sized and down-to-earth. For example, the story about the kid who seeks out the firefighter who saved him from a burning building--who lost a leg in the process--to thank him and finds out that the one-legged survivor has his own heroes to thank (and they weren't wearing costumes).

Sigh, this is the last collection. On to the Dark Age line to see if it measures up.

## Asciigod says

Astro City is always a pleasure to visit, but chances are you already knew that.

Busieks consistently deconstructs the superhero genre with love and grace. Ingeniously he preps his canvas with the densest fill of miraculous wonders. Then he works backwards, chiseling away to outline the mundane and \*real\* dramas of the human condition. The results are absolutely representative of Universal Truths: flaws, strengths, confusion, love, etc. By imbuing his heroes and villains with such awesome strength, he leaves no room left over for heavy hands.

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## Stewart Tame says

I'm always happy to read a volume of Astro City. Kurt Busiek has a knack for writing the superhero stories we imagined we read growing up. I'm honestly not sure how his writing comes across to those who didn't grow up reading comics. His stories are layered with emotional complexity and nuance, filtered through a warm, nostalgic glow. He doesn't just write a Superman story, but the Superman story you've always wanted to read, even if you didn't know it. Obviously, DC owns the copyright to Superman, so, in Astro City, it would be Samaritan. You get the idea. There's a certain comfort and satisfaction I get from reading Astro City that I don't recall experiencing with any other writer.

This volume is composed of shorter stories, tales that only took one or two issues of the comic book to tell. A young girl spends the summer with relatives on the farm, and discovers that they have superheroes too (and I love the name of the town, Caplinville, a tribute to the creator of Li'l Abner.) A lawyer comes up with a novel defense for his client, with unexpected consequences. A soap opera star tries his hand at playing hero. A comic book publisher must deal with real supervillains annoyed at his depiction of them in his comics.

Sadly, as always, this visit to Astro City is over all too soon. As long as Busiek keeps writing them, I'll keep reading them!

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## Noah Turks says

Most of the stories felt unfocused and there was a lack of flow between the panels. It was difficult to attach myself to the main characters when there were new ones being introduced every issue. There just wasn't substantial enough characterization sometimes to make the newly introduced characters interesting or even likable. Like with the old doorman issue- it seems like it diverts at some point from the doorman's story, then comes back to him in a confusing, but nice enough conclusion. I've never liked Brent Anderson's work, and here isn't much different sadly. Alex Ross' covers kill though because they capture the essence of the issues so well and his photo-realist style is fittingly epic.

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## Dan Schwent says

Astro City is home to lots of interesting people: a doorman who never managed to leave the city, a comic book writer struggling to write about real super heroes, a lawyer who has to defend a man whom is most certainly guilty, the would-be girlfriend of a super hero, an actor who plays a hero on tv, a girl forced to

spend the summer with relatives in the country, and an old super hero who steps up when no one else is available...

Here we are, another visit to my favorite city. It's hard to keep finding new things to gush about. As with the last four volumes, there's a tremendous sense of history. What the hell happened with the Silver Agent, Kurt? Anyway, the familiar song is playing in the background instead of blaring in our ears and the humans take center stage.

The doorman's story in the first issue in this collection is a great slice of life tale. I wasn't as fond of the second one, mostly because I'm uneasy about super hero comics in a super hero universe. It was still good, though. The story of Atomicus was probably my second favorite of the book, a tribute to all those stories where Lois is trying to figure out Superman's identity. Leave Atomicus alone, bitch!

The Crimson Cougar's tale was good. There was a nice "coming to Jesus" moment near the end that I liked quite a bit. When the Samaritan is disappointed in you, it's time to rethink things. It ended nicely. Pastoral, the middle story in the book, was easily my favorite. It was the story of a girl from Astro City experiencing small town life and a small town super hero, much to her chagrin. It rang true on so many levels. So good.

The lawyer's tale was an interesting look at what a lawyer's life might be like in a city of super heroes and showed how broken our legal system can be at times. It would have been a little depressing if not for the Blue Knight. Supersonic's tale, the tale of an old man without a whole lot left to give, was another emotional one. Who can't relate to getting older and not being as capable as you used to be? The story wrapped with a tribute to 9/11 and it was short but sweet.

I see a lot of people bitching about Brent Anderson's art not being typical superhero fare. I don't think it should be since the story focuses more on the human characters. I think it suits the stories perfectly. Also, he hides things in the background. Check out Josh's reflection in lawyer story.

As with the previous four volumes, I feel like there are decades of old comics set in Astro City just waiting to be read in a storage area somewhere out there. I think the reason I like Astro City so much is because it doesn't keep rehashing the same tales of guys in costumes punching each other we've all been reading for decades. Instead, Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson go for the human approach. Four out of five stars.

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## **Tom Malinowski says**

This round, local heroes which consist of an actor, a lawyer, a super-hero's Mom, a reluctant hero, a girl who's not thrilled to be on a farm instead of in Astro City, and a writer for comic books. Busiek's writing again deals with everyday life in an extraordinary city. Crucial decisions that need to be made amidst a backdrop that is overwhelming.

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## **Sesana says**

Superhero slice of life. This one is more ground level than some of the more recent Astro City stories have been. The story that opens the collection, about a hotel bellman, is one of the better ones. It's take on how people would really feel about living in and visiting a city full of superheroes is, I think, true to life. Some of the other stories aren't as good. I was unimpressed by the two part story about an Astro City teenager going to spend the summer in the country, which was more to do with the obnoxious narrator than anything else.

But the young lawyer who uses superhero precedents (Evil twins! Mind control! Shape changers!) in a normal criminal case makes up for it by being sympathetic despite his sleazy tactics. And the last story, about a boy thanking the fireman who saved his life, is authentically moving. Overall, slightly uneven, but far better than not on the balance.

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### **Brian DiMattia says**

The only reason I'm not rounding this book up from 4 and 1/2 stars is that because as good as it is, the legendary "Confessor" and "Tarnished Angel" series from Astro City were even better.

Astro City is an alternative super hero comic book series. It tells the stories that dozens of other books haven't found time to tell over the decades that they've been published. To wit: What would the real world be like with superheroes in it? What would it be like when they got old? How would the justice system be different? What would life be like for second or even third tier heroes in a town filled with the best? And most importantly, how would someone with no power at all live a life in a town filled with it?

(As a side note, the excellent series "Spider-Man's Tangled Web" did actually try to stretch beyond the usual stuff and present interesting sidelights, but it didn't last that long.)

Local Heroes has several memorable pieces, like the one about a powerful, otherworldly hero who just gets sick of the clever, "Lois Lane" type who he keeps trying to protect, or the one about the defense attorney who thinks to apply super hero paradigms to the life of a very ordinary criminal. It's smart and incisive.

It's also creative! Astro can't tell stories about Daredevil, Spider-Man or the Punisher, so it has some fascinating stand-ins like The Street Angel, Jack-In-The-Box and the Blue Knight. But these aren't remakes, they're alternatives with their own stories that you wish you could read more of!

There are plenty of legendary comic book superheroes out there. But if you really want to think your way through these alternate realities, you need to read Astro City. And even though it's the fifth collection in the series this one could easily serve as a great introduction to it!

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### **Aaron says**

Well, I think I have to take back what I said in my review of volume 4. Up to this point, I'd been far less impressed with all the one-off stories of Astro City than I had been with the bigger arcs, which I'd loved. But then this came along. While I'm still underwhelmed with volumes 1 and 3 of this series, 5 really knocked it out of the park. It's a great collection from beginning to end, every single story engaging, thrilling, and very original. I think by this point Busiek had really figured out what his favorite part of Astro City was: the people.

Volume 3 focused heavily on the superheroes of Astro City. It did a decent job of telling some just-above-average, humanized superhero tales, but that's still all they were. In Local Heroes, though, Busiek focuses almost exclusively on the regular people getting by in this insane, Silver- and Bronze-Age superhero metropolis. The result is stories that take this high concept and push right it back down to street level, thoroughly grounded, dealing with issues we all deal with in real life, only seen through the eyes of people living in a fantastical world. I was totally hooked by this volume, and found it to be very touching in the way it harnesses the feel of superheroes.

This book was written roughly 9 years after Busiek's similarly-themed classic *Marvels*, but I have to say, I liked the stories in *Local Heroes* more. Maybe that's some kind of blasphemy since *Marvels* is revered so highly among comic book readers, but it just didn't hit me the same way *Local Heroes* did.

This could in part be due to the 9/11 story in this volume. I've read a few different 9/11 comic book tributes, and my general feeling has always been one of discomfort. The events of that day were so tragic and real, and when approached in comic books, usually came across pretty strange. Something about portraying the attack on the World Trade Center in a world where Galactus sometimes comes down to destroy the whole planet reads as false and exploitative, even if it is a genuine reaction from the artists involved. Not so with Busiek's. First of all, he doesn't set it in the real world, or attempt to draw a flimsy parallel to the attacks themselves. Instead, he writes a moving, thoughtful tribute to another regular *Astro City* inhabitant: a firefighter injured in the line of duty. As such we get an honest and original tribute to our own fallen heroes, that really echoes what a lot of people went through that day in the real world. Major kudos to Busiek for pulling that off.

All in all, *Astro City* is a series that NEEDS to be read by superhero comic lovers. It offers a totally new perspective on the genre that somehow just keeps on growing and expanding. It's tough to find a better superhero comic out there.

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### **Keith says**

Honestly, I dunno, I like *Astro City* okay? The one-and-done aw-shucks Americanism of it wears me down a little, but the *idea* of what it wants to be is just excellent. I don't know.

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### **Cathy says**

Back to the episodic format, as opposed to the last volume where the entire thing told one story. I had been thinking as I read that it was great that none of it felt dated at all, unlike some of the science fiction I've read that doesn't hold up even a bit more than a decade later. Until the girl in one of the chapters was sent to live with her country relatives for the summer and was shocked and appalled that they only had one telephone line and she'd have to wait for it to be available to be able to use their dial-up internet connection. Reading that in 2016, it's hard to remember when I had to worry about things like that. But other than that, part of the style is the way the stories all have a bit of an old-fashioned feeling, a very classic comic book style that makes it feel timeless, and I bet they will hold up well into the future. I liked all of the tales in this volume, although only one really moved me. The book felt like it was part of a plan to continue filling in the big picture of what *Astro City* is, one piece at a time. This book showed a lot of how living in *Astro City* affected some regular people, in all sorts of interesting ways. The best chapter by far was "Since the Fire," which was first published in volume 2 of *9-11 The World's Finest Comic Book Writers and Artists Tell Stories To Remember*. Everyone from the talent, suppliers, printer and distributors all donated their time and efforts and all profits from that book were donated to several 9/11 victims charities. The *Astro City* team of Kurt, Brent, Richard, JG, Alex Sinclair and Alex Ross created a wonderful short story about a little boy who wanted to thank the fireman who saved him. The fireman lost most of one leg when he went back into the building to save some other people after he rescued the boy, and the boy wondered if he regretted going to work that day. It's only a few pages long, but it's one of the best examples of the art of comic books I've seen, so moving, so effective. The team who created it worked together perfectly. I sobbed, of course. The book in its entirety was good, solid *Astro City* stories, capped off by a little masterpiece at the end.

### **Emily says**

I love this series. Volume 5 was another swell collection of stories.

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### **Michael says**

A return to the glory of Astro City's best volume, *Life in the Big City!*

Although I enjoy the more plot-driven books, *Confession* being the most brilliant example, I still prefer the KBAC books that focus on the normal people and their normal problems. Busiek does a great job using super-heroes as a prism through which to view the successes and shortcomings, dilemmas and troubles of people whom you could meet on the street.

Brent Anderson is the perfect artist for this series, carrying off the splendor of the super-heroics effectively but giving even more care to the emotional core of the characters.

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### **Mitchell says**

Another great book. All good stories, all different and unexpected. Real characters, good writing. Maybe a little bit too heavy on living in a superhero world as a non superhero, but hey I like that kind of thing. Even the city girl visiting the country worked better than expected and showed a possible difference in the rural superhero world. 4.5 of 5.

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