



Batman Incorporated (2010 - 2011) #1

Grant Morrison , Yanick Paquette (Illustrator)

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Batman begins his international recruitment drive in Japan, with assistance from Catwoman. But when the Bat and Cat arrive in the land of the rising sun, they discover the local hero, Mr. Unknown, has been murdered!

Batman Incorporated (2010 - 2011) #1 Details

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?????? ?????? says

The first thing you need to understand about Grant Morrison's *Batman Incorporated* is that it had a very oddball premise. After Bruce Wayne was presumed dead during the old continuity (*Final Crisis*), he comes back from another dimension where he witnessed a future that he wanted to avoid from happening. He also realized that that his war on crime has been a narrow-minded pursuit all this time, so he decided to branch out of Gotham City. As the billionaire philanthropist Bruce Wayne, he began to fund Batman's crusade, and then he franchised a global vigilante corporation, recruiting masked heroes from Japan, France, England, Australia, Argentina, etc. This was how *Batman Incorporated* was founded.

Before New 52 rolled around, this series had been ongoing and was able to amass nine issues plus a special story concerning the global terrorist threat of the Leviathan. It has been an engaging, though at times confusing, series that had enough punches despite of its convoluted style and execution in a few issues. Nevertheless, it earned a second life for New 52 and *Leviathan Part One: Demon Star* is its sensational debut.

Artistically realized by Chris Burnham, *Demon Star* was invigorating in its action sequences; everything was naught with detail, amazing pacing and confrontations rife with plot significance. There was not a dull moment or misleading event in place, visually speaking which for me elevated Morrison's writing to a tee. What was also excellently juxtaposed for this issue is that it ties up Morrison's previous plots from when he wrote Dick Grayson and Damian Wayne as Batman and Robin of the same titular series (I was glad I finished the first twelve issues of that run before I jumped into this). There are also a few callbacks and references from the old continuity for long-time fans who know their Batman content best.

This time around, Bruce Wayne is wearing the cowl again and he and his estranged son Damian are making due adjustments to make their new partnership work which still feels strained and awkward in a lot of distinct places.

I have loved this relationship development in Peter J. Tomasi's own B&R run so seeing this again with Morrison handling the writing is very nostalgic for me. In spite of their personal issues, Bruce and Damian function well enough as the dynamic duo. This issue puts them in enough tension-filled and remarkably action-packed situations that showcase their instinctive understanding of one another's combat style. I've always observed that Morrison's overall tonality for his Batman stories is often non-traditional. But it works because it's different from the way usual writers interpret Batman. I'll always love Snyder and Tomasi's writing for Batman the most, but Morrison's own distinct voice is so much more entertaining because it can be bizarre and amusing one moment, and grim and poignant the next, often in the span of two pages! And it makes Morrison's stories all the more interesting.

So far, so good. *Batman Incorporated* feels fresh and exciting in a way its predecessor has been lacking. I can keep up with the elements it had offered for this installment so far, and Burnham's art style just blend so well with Morrison's narrative so I'm really appreciating the product these two have offered so far. I like the briskness of all the scenes; it kept me turning the pages until that very last shocking page.

I feel that the series is only warming up, building up to something that will include yet another ensemble team-up and global trekking in the later parts. In that case, I'll be ready! I think I'm more equipped to handle it than the last time!

RECOMMENDED: 8/10

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Merged review:

The very first Batman comic book I ever read was penned by Grant Morrison. I don't remember the title or the story itself anymore (I was eight years old and it was by chance that I picked up the comic, and forgot about it since). However, I carried his name with me when I reached that age where I started taking comic books seriously. Using him as the origin for my Bat-exploration, I picked up an issue of **Batman Incorporated** in high school. But since it was in the middle of the story, I put it down because I couldn't honestly understand what was going on. So here I am now, years later, more knowledgeable and devoted to the Dark Knight, so I am damn well ready to take this one on at long last!

But some of you novices may need some backstory before getting into this so here's a brief summary of what this series will entail. Firstly, you need to remember that Morrison's *Batman Incorporated* belongs to both the old continuity and the new. When New 52 was launched, this title was still pushed through with minimal adjustments to suit the new continuity of the DCverse. What I'll be reading and reviewing are the first eight issues of the 2010-2011 run. I'll be picking up the New 52 run within this year as well, but for now let's focus on this batch.

Another thing you need to remember is that there was a time in the old continuity after major events in the timeline (in one of DC's famed *Crisis* stories, that is) where, basically, Bruce Wayne/Batman was trapped somewhere and was presumed dead in his actual world. He did eventually return but something drastic has changed in him. He didn't readily come back as Batman to Gotham City just yet (which was why his apprentice, former first Robin Dick Grayson, took the mantle in his absence hence he became the new Batman in the last few runs of *Detective Comics* before New 52. To find out what that was like, do check out The Black Mirror series which is one of the best Batman graphic novels out there). Instead, Bruce decided that he needed to be something bigger than Gotham's watchful guardian. Hence, he invested on the establishment of *Batman Incorporated* where "he is prepared to take his war on crime to the next level, by essentially "franchising" it and drafting, training and commanding a global team of heroes who will answer to Batman himself called **Batman Incorporated** (Boucher, *Los Angeles Times*, 2010)".

That already sounds pretty badass, right? If you need more character and narrative background before getting into this series, you can also read the comics that came before it (such as *Batman and Son*, *The Resurrection of Ra's al Ghul*, *The Black Glove*, *R.I.P.*, *Final Crisis*, *Batman and Robin* and *The Return of Bruce Wayne*). But, to be honest, you can just jump right into this as long as you're familiar with the timeline and concept that drives this series. So let's do just that for this review.

What I enjoy about this series foremost is that we get to see Batman traveling around the world to recruit vigilantes who are interested to join his global crusade. In this story, the setting is Japan where a villain who fancies himself as Lord Death murders a Japanese superhero named "Mr. Unknown". The title of the issue is a spoiler alert already (*Mr. Unknown is Dead*). Meanwhile, Batman and Catwoman team up for a mission where it conveniently places them in said country which enables Batman to hit two birds with one stone since he's also there to recruit Mr. Unknown himself. Unfortunately, Lord Death beats him to it--but there's a twist. As it turns out, the Mr. Unknown persona is actually composed of two people; one is an old man in his fifties who does all the deductive side of the job while the other is an athletic young man who handles the physical stuff. Batman is of course now in pursuit of the latter who is still on Lord Death's hit list.

I think that's all I should discuss lest I spoil everything. So far, the series is so enjoyable in all the right

places. Paquette's artwork and illustrations are gorgeous! They're dynamic, detailed and full of life and vigor. The background looks amazing for every panel, and the coloring is quite top-notch too with both soft and hard edges depending on what the action and sequence would dictate. It's already a great sign when the debut issue is this magnificently paced, storytelling-wise. It makes you look forward for more. Batman and Catwoman working together is always a pleasure. I definitely enjoy their interplay for this series since Bats and Cat have always been chemical around each other and this story is no exception. The younger Mr. Unknown Jiro is instantly likable for me. I'm actually rooting for him already which was weird because I just met him. Perhaps it's because he reminded me of a young Dick (with his characterization and role as the apprentice to the old-man Mr. Unknown), and I definitely look forward to seeing him become a part of the Bat Inc. soon. His story still continues on for the next issue so we'll see about that.

RECOMMENDED: 8/10

Poised to become one of the great Batman series out there, this first issue establishes the many promises the series will fulfill in the continuing run later on.

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