



Avengers: Standoff

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Collects Avengers Standoff: Welcome to Pleasant Hill #1, Avengers Standoff: Assault on Pleasant Hill Alpha #1, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. (2016) #3-4, Uncanny Avengers (2015) #7-8, All-New, All-Different Avengers #7-8, New Avengers (2015) #8-10, Captain America: Sam Wilson #7-8, Illuminati (2015) #6, Howling Commandos of S.H.I.E.L.D. (2015) #6, Avengers Standoff: Assault on Pleasant Hill Omega #1.

On his 75th anniversary, Captain America is about to face a challenge unlike any other. Prepare for an assault on...Pleasant Hill! Three shield-wielders past and present — Steve Rogers, Bucky Barnes and Sam Wilson — find themselves in a standoff, with high and very personal stakes. And as this tense conflict quickly escalates out of control, it draws in three teams of Avengers, the Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. and more! But it all begins in an idyllic community with friendly neighbors...and a terrible, dark secret. What is going on behind Pleasant Hill's closed doors?

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Nick Spencer , Marc Guggenheim , Gerry Duggan , Mark Waid , Al Ewing , Joshua Williamson , Frank J. Barbiere , Mark Bagley (Illustrator) , more... Jesus Saiz (Illustrator) , Daniel Acuña (Illustrator) , German Peralta (Illustrator) , Ryan Stegman (Illustrator) , Mahmud Asrar (Illustrator) , Adam Kubert (Illustrator) , Gerardo Sandoval (Illustrator) , Marcus To (Illustrator) , Paul Renaud (Illustrator) , Mike Henderson (Illustrator) , Brent Schoonover (Illustrator) ...less

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From Reader Review Avengers: Standoff for online ebook

Relstuart says

A bit of a mess but I had to get it so I could read how Cap got his mojo back.

Brian Poole says

Avengers: Standoff whipped up an event for Earth's Mightiest Heroes whose after-effects may be more significant than the story itself.

The town of Pleasant Hill, Connecticut has a secret. Using shards of a reality-altering Cosmic Cube that has taken the form of a little girl named Kobik, S.H.I.E.L.D. director Maria Hill has created the ultimate supervillain prison. Kobik uses her powers to transform the villains' bodies and minds, entrapping them in a benign fantasy scenario that keeps them out of trouble and under the spy agency's supervision. But when the strong-willed Baron Zemo is sent to Pleasant Hill, he shakes off the conditioning and sparks a revolt that threatens to deal S.H.I.E.L.D. a major black eye. Alerted to the prison by internet hacktivist The Whisperer, three Captains America (Steve Rogers, Sam Wilson and Bucky Barnes) arrive in the town, calling in two different Avengers teams; all get swept up in the chaos en route to a big showdown. Meanwhile, The Whisperer lands in S.H.I.E.L.D. custody, but the New Avengers risk their tenuous legal status to rescue him, bringing down a fierce response.

As an event, *Standoff* is somewhat schizoid. It ran through a couple months of *Avengers* and other ongoing series, with some book-end specials, so it's not a focused, consistent story. Its central premise is rather clever and the various creators involved make good use of it in several different ways. But in collected format, it feels disjointed. The collection basically runs in chronological release order, which means the reader keeps getting pulled away from the more engaging action in Pleasant Hill. It's not that the related stories don't have their merits, but they essentially are side tracks and the decision to drop them in among the chapters focused on the main story saps momentum.

As has become the norm with these sorts of crossovers, several different creative teams contribute to the action, often with wildly different tones and visual approaches. The various chapters don't necessarily cohere seamlessly, but can be enjoyable in isolation. The main story, quarterbacked by writer Nick Spencer, does work up some decent narrative steam; had Marvel chosen to group the chapters so that the reader isn't drawn back and forth between two very different stories, the impact might have been greater when reading the collection.

Standoff might be more notable for what it set up following its run. For one, it brought Bucky, left in outer space as "The Man on the Wall" at the end of *Original Sin* a couple years earlier, back to Earth, giving him some strong interactions with Steve and Sam. One of the saga's key sequences was the restoration of Steve's youth and physical vitality after a stretch where he'd been rapidly aged and weakened. Fans didn't realize it at the time, but a crucial cameo from the Red Skull and some foreboding summary narration foreshadowed the highly divisive Hydra Cap/*Secret Empire* story. For better or worse, *Standoff* is a crucial link in the chain of Spencer's master plot.

Beyond that, Maria Hill is put to good use in a story that had major ramifications for the character's future.

More puzzling was the decision to create a new Quasar in the form of S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Avril Kinkaid. Especially odd since the original Wendall Vaughn version has always been a strong character who's perpetually underused. The impetus for the new Quasar isn't made clear in this story and given her sparse use since, one can argue the merits of this introduction.

Still, *Avengers: Standoff* does a lot of things right. It features strong characterizations, makes inventive use of its central premise, features some great action sequences and displays a welcome sense of humor. It may not be your top priority, but if you can find it at a discount, it's worth a read.

Rick says

I have to admit that I've not been very impressed with Marvel's track record on their crossover events. But having said that, I'd did enjoy Jonathan Hickman's Secret Wars (DC has, in my opinion, an even worse track record, but that's a whole other tangent). So I thought I'd give this new crossover event a swing and see what happens.

It is exactly what I expected it would be: a mess. Granted it's a well done mess (Marvel's has had there fair share of real whoppers of steaming dren piles: Secret Wars II; X-Men: Inferno; X-Men: The Fall of the Mutants, etc.). But this one has some interesting subject matter beyond just the usual let's-throw-all-our-characters-into-a-insanely-poorly-developed-excuse-for-a-crossover-just-to-make-more-money. What is so interesting is that the use of a dealing with criminals as presented here. This methodology is not new, in fact it is fascinatingly similar to the methods developed by and employed so effectively by the character *Doc Savage* all the way back in the 1930s. Sure, this method has been updated and modernized for comic book readers as much as it has been reworked to function within the context of Marvel's pseudo-science. Nothing wrong there, it just makes the implications of the story that much more disturbing. So there was lot's of potential in the opening chapters - unfortunately the wrap-up is little more than a loosely thrown together package that only leaves as much teasing about the *next* big threat (read: crossover) as it does tying narrative threads together. This was a good effort, and a solid (if predictable) read for fans of the *Marvel Now Universe*, but there isn't much of interest for outside readers to get excited about.

Gianfranco Mancini says

[
I liked a lot the premise: it was like "Cabin in the woods" meets the Avengers... You can't believe it? Watch that awesome horror movie and then read "Avengers Standoff: Assault on Pleasant Hill Alpha #1".

At the end this event is just another great "battle royale" and the return of old good Steve Rogers as a young Cap was phoned since the previous page with the introduc

Terence says

What is the biggest problem facing law enforcement in the Marvel Universe?

It's certainly not capturing villains because that seems to happen every issue. It's not having a place to put them, because Marvel has all kinds of prisons with cool names like The Raft. The biggest problem is keeping villains in prison. Marvel's jails are pretty much a turnstile as offending villains are back on the streets in an instant. *My solution would be super hero prison guards* or even anti-hero prison guards. Knowing The Punisher is sitting at a crazy vantage point with a sniper rifle and a missile launcher might dissuade people from escaping. Maria Hill had another thought altogether.

SHIELD Director Hill's plan was to use a cosmic cube to change unwanted circumstances. These plans were leaked to the public

and the Kobik project was shut down...It was supposed to be at least. Bucky Barnes the current man on the wall,

a role inherited from Nick Fury Sr., is shocked to learn there's a cosmic threat to Earth on Earth. He investigates and learns SHIELD has a sentient cosmic cube.

He alerts Commander Steve Rogers while The Whisperer is alerting current Captain America Sam Wilson. Let's say all is not as was expected as Maria Hill used Kobik to transform supervillains into ordinary people and housed them in a SHIELD operated town called Pleasant Hill. Of course nothing could ever go wrong with that plan...

Avengers Standoff is a strange mixture for a volume. The premise makes sense as supervillains always break out of jail so transforming them into non violent members of a small town makes a lot of sense...assuming they won't execute anyone. The oddest part to me was the weak attempt at humor. The author pushed hard for some laughs, but it fell short. Another strange part is that the sentient cosmic cube assumed the form of a four year old girl which should of been an immediate flag. I have a daughter who is past the age of four and relying on her to handle all the battle guys would be a mistake. Four can be an emotionally volatile age...at least for my daughter. Anyway things have to go wrong which they spectacularly do.

On a positive I did eventually enjoy seeing all the Avengers teams cooperating. I was surprised seeing that Iron Man remained basically silent throughout since he's become a major figure head largely due to his prominence in the MCU.

Avengers Standoff was solid, but far from being overly memorable. I'm glad I read, but I'm sure I won't read it again.

J'aime says

I only follow a couple of Marvel series, but usually buy all the event compilations. So, I had no expectations for this even” when I ordered it. Perhaps that is why I enjoyed it so much!

Winter Soldier took over as “The Man on the Wall” from Nick Fury – watching and protecting Earth from catastrophic events. He receives an alert that one is occurring, on Earth, and ends up at a SHIELD facility trying to discover what will set it off. He ends up fighting his way through SHIELD at three different facilities. Elsewhere, I young man with amnesia is taken to the small community of Pleasant Hill. Where he repeatedly tries to escape from the Stepford-like town. Everyone here is happy. Too happy.

Maria Hill has been using something known as Kobik, derived from Cosmic Cube fragments, to brainwipe supervillains and imprison them in Pleasant Hill. When several of them wake up, they launch an assault that brings multiple teams of Avengers (with several tongue in cheek jokes about how many there are), three erstwhile Captain Americas, and SHIELD into a showdown over control of Kobik.

Since I don't read most of the series which contribute here, I was unaware of the status quo when I started this. I didn't know how Steve ended up old; or how the various superhero team incarnations came about. But, it didn't matter. The story was self-contained enough that anyone could dive right in. I think the whole purpose of this event was to restore Steve Rogers to his youthful, powerful self, but that doesn't mean it wasn't a fun ride. The concept of the prison was really cool, albeit completely unethical. It fit right in with where SHIELD has been heading for years. The reveal of Kobik's true nature was also clever. And, I absolutely loved the appearance of the characters from the Agents of SHIELD television show! Melinda May, Daisy Johnson, Gemma Simmons, etc. are also involved in the story. Though it doesn't have far reaching consequences (except perhaps the renewed Steve Rogers), Standoff was a fun read.

Paul says

A lot of what is happening in the current Secret Empire storyline had its foundation in this mini series. I wanted some more background to enjoy the current event.

David says

It's a REALLY great idea for a cross-over mini-series. The cosmic cube. Villains mindwiped, brainwashed behind a bar-less prison. Villains transformed into new lives as happy carefree workaday Villeins.

The Captain America issues contained in the book seem to explore the ideas inherent with real gusto and relevance. Those are great fun and are the best parts of the book beyond the Alpha & Omega bookend chapters. The other intervening Avengers chapters are much less thoughtful to downright dumb and are all about moving around masses of characters - mostly who have no clue what to do. Or anything interesting to add to the "conversation". And an interesting conversation it could have been but all totally one-sided. Everyone seems to be against the prison. Even Maria Hill, who has set it up.

It would have made a much more fascinating book to have had factions. Clear cut. For and against. Prisoners who want to remain. Jailors who want to stay. Set against those for tearing it down.

But no. It's all set in one mode. Destroy it. And that's rather dull.

Captain American Issues = 5 Stars

LauraJade says

Not a bad event, fixes some fractured relationships that really needed fixing, but proved there are far too many 'Avengers' teams - to the point one character jokes about 'Adjective-less Avengers'. But the balance of humour and action was great, the core characters were great, issues of certain titles slowed it down a bit.

Michael Hicks says

Picking on some threads from the opening arc of Sam Wilson: Captain America, the all-new, all-different Marvel Comics launches its first big crossover event only a few months after the conclusion of its previous big crossover event, Secret Wars.

In Sam Wilson: Captain America, writer Nick Spencer introduced a Wikileaks-style hack against the super-spy agency SHIELD that resulted in The Whisperer releasing classified data about the Kobik project. The hack leads Wilson, as well previous Captain America's Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes, and the various Avengers teams to the idyllic town of Pleasant Hill, where the secrets surrounding Kobik are revealed.

In general, I'm not a fan of Marvel's insistence on one giant event after giant event after giant event after.... Following the relaunch of Marvel Comics post-Secret Wars, this event lands a whopping six issues into the current status quo. Some, like Agents of SHIELD, are in the middle of their opening story arc with writers forced to contend with a crossover event shoehorned into issues three and four of their big, new launch. It's a bit distracting to have this event serving as a B-plot to the larger, and largely disconnected, A-story for that particular book. And since this event ran across numerous titles, there's an awful lot of recapping over the course of this collected edition, and certain story elements that just feel like padding (a Kaiju attack, for instance).

That said, this was a lot of fun to read. Pleasant Hill is basically SHIELD's more nefarious version of Guantanamo and there's some good, if also somewhat half-hearted, explorations of the ethics behind the Kobik project. Having a character like The Whisperer operating in the Marvel Universe is a welcome addition and it adds a nifty new perspective to the political landscape (an obvious parallel to our own) our heroes operate within. There's also a fair amount of foreshadowing for what's ahead of us here. And if you know Marvel at all, you'll also know this event is a stepping stone toward not one, but two more upcoming events. A lot of the books involved here look like they're getting an entire month's reprieve before getting dragged headlong into Civil War II! Yeesh.

Chris Lemmerman says

For the 75th Anniversary of Captain America, Nick Spencer got to helm a massive crossover event that ultimately restored Steve Rogers to the role of Captain America. Of course, as with any massive crossover, it had multiple tie-ins, all of which are collected here and vary in quality.

Welcome To Pleasant Hill Prologue #1, Assault on Pleasant Hill Alpha #1, Assault on Pleasant Hill Omega #1, Captain America: Sam Wilson #7-8

These issues constitute the majority of the storyline, with the bulk of the actual story beats taking place here. The idea of Pleasant Hill is pretty solid - using a sentient Cosmic Cube in the shape of a little girl named Kobik, SHIELD have been brainwashing villains and placing them in a suburban town where they can live out their lives without murdering people. Of course, it all goes wrong when Baron Zemo recovers from his brainwashing and sets out to destroy Pleasant Hill from the inside. If you didn't read any of the tie-ins, these issues are the main ones you should bother reading. They're also the best in terms of artwork, with Mark Bagley, Daniel Acuna, and Angel Unzueta drawing them all.

Agents of SHIELD #3-4

Sigh. This is how not to do tie-ins. Standoff barely factors into these two issues, and they actually re-tell half a storyline that reappears in New Avengers later in the volume, word for word. The art is fairly bog-standard, if inoffensive from German Peralta, but these are tie-ins in name only, and will likely make no sense without the context of the other issues of the series.

Uncanny Avengers #7-8, All-New All-Different Avengers #7-8

These four issues are more of a mini-arc within Standoff itself as the two teams are drawn to Pleasant Hill by mysterious twin Maria Hills, and find themselves under Kobik's influence and assimilated into Pleasant Hill itself. This ends a little too quick, as if they're mostly just being forced into Standoff by editorial mandate. Oh, wait. Still, solid if unremarkable, especially for such good writers as Mark Waid and Gerry Duggan.

New Avengers #8-10

This, like Agents of SHIELD, barely ties into Standoff, instead stealing away the Whisperer character and trying to protect him. It also deals with another storyline that has been bubbling for a while in the pages of its own series as SHIELD takes on the New Avengers, leading to a battle between the American Kaiju (think patriotic Godzilla) and a giant Avengers Megazord. You can't make this stuff up. It's excellent storytelling, but again is barely Standoff related. It should make you want to go read New Avengers though, because that's awesome.

Illuminati #6

This issue looks more at the fall-out of Pleasant Hill than the actual goings on, as Absorbing Man deals with the fact he fell in love with another character instead of his wife Titania. I expect this plays out better in the main series, so this little snippet doesn't really work on its own. Some nice sketchy art from Mike Henderson though.

Howling Commandos of SHIELD #6

Howling Commandos as a concept should be great; SHIELD-sanctioned monsters fighting other supernatural threats. Instead, it was kind of a non-starter of a series with the blandest #1 I'd read in a while, so I didn't bother reading the rest, despite the potential. The fact that this issue is both a Standoff tie-in and the finale of the series means it has a lot to do in terms of story, tying in and wrapping up at the same time. The focus on Orrgo is different, but it's an ultimately unsatisfying issue since you're not invested in any of the characters reading just one issue, and knowing that the cliffhanger ending is never followed up just leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

So Standoff is, of course, a mixed bag. The Standoff story itself is great, but some of the tie-ins are poor or unnecessary. Your mileage may vary.

Oh! Standoff does resurrect the original Thunderbolts concept however, so that's a point in its favour.

Anne says

The first issue wasn't bad, but it was sort of hit-or-miss from there on out.

Warning: Spoilers

So one of my first reactions to this was just this mindless **rage** that Secret Wars hadn't cured Captain America of his *oldness*. So. Fucking. Annoying.

I mean, I just *assumed* that was the entire reason they were rebooting the Marvel universe! You know, to fix the egregious error made when *whatever asshat* decided it was a good idea to have Steve Rogers lose the Super Soldier serum...thingy, get depowered, age like a motherfucker, and start griping about these loud kids with their rock n' roll.

Awesome. Fix it!

And then I see that he's still OLD!

If this hadn't been a loaner from the library, I probably would have tossed it out the window.

And it's a good thing I didn't!

Ok, so for those of you (like me) who come *slightly* unhinged when your favorite superheroes get fucked with, then there's at least one thing about **Standoff** that'll make you happy: **CAP IS BACK!**

And, really, that's sort of the main thing that comes out of this one.

Well, besides the cosmic cube girl, Kobik, who was apparently used later to futz with Captain America...yet again.

And we all know how well that went over with fans, don't we?

(view spoiler)

The rest of the story is *ok*.

Maria Hill has overstepped her bounds as S.H.I.E.L.D. director (**surprise!**), and (against orders) used a unique cosmic cube to mind wipe villains, making them believe that they're...nice.

Then she stuck them all in a fake town, changed their physical appearances (see above cosmic cube), and gave them cutsie jobs.

Shockingly, it worked out well! Everyone was thrilled with their new lives, nothing went wrong, and they all grew fat and old together.

Or something like that...

Alright. I thought this was a bit on the long-winded side. The story sort of meandered around, and the only thing of real interest (to me) was the part where the Cosmic Kid ironed out Cap's wrinkles. Not horrible, not great. Kinda sorta ok.

Chad says

S.H.I.E.L.D. has created a new prison where they wipe criminals minds. Sam Wilson and Bucky found out about it and decide to do something about it. Things spiral out of control from there. This felt really disjointed. Things would happen in one issue, then it would jump to another book and there would be huge jumps in plot in between. Editorial really needed to sit down with the writers to create a more cohesive story. Plus one of the issues in the collected volume is out of order chronologically. Events in the book occurred like 5 issues before in another book. It had potential but felt bungled.

Sam Quixote says

I originally reviewed Avengers Standoff as two volumes because in Brit-land the publisher decided to cut the event in half for artistic reasons. Just kidding, it was for the filthy lucre! Anyways, both reviews, which cover the complete stinky event, are below – enjoy!

*

Avengers Standoff Volume 1 = 1 star

Welcome to Pleasant Hill, a perfect, 1950s-style small town complete with its own malt-shop straight out of Archie! The people here are friendly, Mayor Maria Hill is organising fun events like the forthcoming air show, Dr Erik Selvig keeps everyone healthy, and nothing bad ever seems to happen. But the community seems a little too idyllic for some... And the residents can't ever leave or remember much of their pasts - what the Jiminy Cricket is going on?!

I'll say spoilsies from here on out because the mystery of Pleasant Hill is about the only halfway interesting aspect of this otherwise flat, smelly comic.

So Avengers Standoff is the event book that takes place between Secret Wars and Civil War II and, as per usual with these kind of comics, it's not very good.

With Pleasant Hill, Maria Hill's basically constructed a different kind of prison for repeat offenders by using fragments of a cosmic cube (Marvel's version of a magic wand - though they have those too!). It wipes the prisoners' minds, gives them new identities and appearances, and keeps them out of trouble. The Avengers aren't pleased that Maria's doing this and the story becomes Avengers vs SHIELD.

Part of why I couldn't get into this one is that I don't really see a whole lot wrong with what Maria Hill's up to. Cap and the others see Pleasant Hill as a kind of Guantanamo Bay which is just ridiculous. The inmates aren't being tortured and prisoners like Crusher Creel and Baron Zemo are definitely mass murderers rather than suspects (they're also the only ones I could identify - Trapster, Moonstone, Fixer, Nitro, the Wrecker anyone?).

The traditional jails they've previously been in have basically been revolving doors and Pleasant Hill - a far nicer jail than any other in the world - is an experiment to see if a glimpse into a normal life could change them for the better. I mean, that's better than just sticking them in the Raft again only for them to break out in a few months and the cycle to reset again, right? I suppose it's doing stuff against their will but that's prison in a nutshell, isn't it?

I can understand being worried that Maria Hill's just doing whatever with the cosmic cube though because there's no oversight there and she could do anything. Even if all she's done is create a different jail for SHIELD's prisoners and there's no indication that she'll go further later down the line.

It's a flimsy setup that doesn't make for an exciting read. Most of the book is different groups fighting SHIELD, like AIM (the beekeeper villains) who are suddenly good guys for some reason, and the New Avengers. One fight scene between SHIELD and the New Avengers is repeated twice, word for word, beat for beat, but drawn by two different artists, and it wasn't interesting the first time.

Al Ewing's definitely a huge Pacific Rim fan because there's a big fight scene between an AIM Jaegar robot and a SHIELD Kaiju creature called American Kaiju - he has an American flag on his chest and is obviously a metaphor for SHIELD in this story: a supposedly out-of-control monster. Real subtle, Al!

I feel like Marvel thought about commenting on Snowden and Assange through Rick Jones who's the whistleblower on Pleasant Hill but they don't have anything to say about it here. Like a lot of things in this story it's another useless dead-end.

Then again Marvel don't really have much of anything with Avengers Standoff. It's just a badly thought-out, half-baked story almost no aspect of which is remotely compelling. The mystery at the start is sort of intriguing before it ends up becoming the usual dreary slug-fest between dull characters.

The first volume (the UK publisher chopped the story into two volumes because money) of Avengers Standoff shows why almost no-one read this event book: it's booooring! Nobody really cares about SHIELD even with their weak attempt at seeming interesting by turning "evil".

*

Avengers Standoff Volume 2 = 1 star

Superheroes are integrated into Pleasant Hill alongside supervillains which can only mean one thing: big pointless battle! Sigh... Avengers Standoff ends as poorly as it started!

There are way, way too many issues in this event for such a weak story. Nearly every issue in this final volume is characters realising that Pleasant Hill and their identities aren't what they think. It's so boring and repetitive. It was old by the end of the first issue in the first volume, it's not getting any more fresh at this point in the event!

Zemo once again falls into the generic supervillain template mould complete with unoriginal motivation - I'm gonna take over the world, wahahahaha! - and it's not in the least bit interesting seeing characters fight over and over throughout.

The "big moment" is a literal Deus ex Machina that was something everyone was expecting to happen to this character sooner or later. (view spoiler) The ending is one big nothing. One character is supposedly going to

be punished, and Rick Jones' whistleblowing fizzles out.

A garbage ending for a garbage event – Marvel have done it again!

Fernando Gálvez says

La premisa de Nick Spencer es lo más interesante de esta saga al convertir a Maria Hill en la Nick Fury de este nuevo universo Marvel. Destaca el apartado gráfico de Jesus Saiz, Daniel Acuña, Mark Bagley, Ryan Stegman y Marcus To. Muchos números tie-ins innecesarios pecando nuevamente la editorial en que se puede contar lo mismo con menos.

Este evento dejó las semillas de nuevos títulos y relanzamientos, en particular, el polémico Captain America: Steve Rogers.
