



The Starman Omnibus, Vol. 6

James Robinson , Peter Snejbjerg (Illustrator)

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In this final STARMAN OMNIBUS hardcover, Jack Knight's worst nightmare becomes reality, as Opal City burns to the ground and chaos ensues, with hundreds of villains seizing the chance to strike. Then, after a meeting with Superman and a final talk with his brother David, Jack must uncover the mystery of the Starman of 1951 — by going back in time to meet him face-to-face!

The Starman Omnibus, Vol. 6 Details

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From Reader Review The Starman Omnibus, Vol. 6 for online ebook

Sesana says

This is the end of Starman, and it wraps up just about every loose end possible. Don't misunderstand, this is no neatly tied package. But it is a satisfactory conclusion on every level.

One of the things that really appealed to me about Starman is that it is, as a whole, about something. Not many superhero comics are, not as a whole piece. Starman is, in so many ways, about living up to the legacy of those who came before you, including (perhaps especially) your parents. It's also about walking away from that legacy and starting your own. This volume in particular neatly summarizes that theme. Jack Knight may not become the man his father was, but he does become the best man he can be.

It also drives home just how important it is to read these omnibus editions. If you're trying to read Starman now, for the first time, this is the only way that you'll get everything. And nearly everything becomes important here, at the end.

Kemper says

As a long time comics reader, I really should have figured this out before now, but I'm not always the brightest bulb in the lamp. Also, it's such an obvious thing that it eluded me until recently. But what I've finally realized is that comics are much more satisfying when you get an ending.

"Well, duh!" you say. "What kind of fool would want to read a story without an end?"

A superhero comic book fan, like me, is precisely that kind of fool. Because while there may be story arcs and even 'major events' that destroy their timelines and reboot the characters, there is always Superman and Batman and Spider-Man and Iron Man and Captain America out there in a recognizable form. Sure, some things may change. Some of them may even die or a while and have someone else take over their hero personas, but you be assured at some point in the not too distant future that a version of your favorite hero pretty close to the version that existed decades ago will soon be fighting villains and saving innocent people once again.

That's both the strength and the weakness of the comic book. No matter how good or ground breaking the story, if it uses one of the iconic hero characters, there's far too much money and tradition involved to ever really change anything in the dynamic of the story for too long. And with no real chance for change and growth in the characters, you pretty much have already read every story possible for them.

But where comics can really shine anymore is when someone does something that has an arc. A beginning, middle and ending that can't be changed when the next creative team is brought in or the next crossover event is done. I think that's part of the reason that comics like *Watchmen*, *Sandman*, *Preacher*, *Y: The Last Man* and *Ex Machina* work so well. (Even *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: Year One* work in this sense because while they were Batman stories, they were Batman stories with firm conclusions.) You got a story when you read them. Full and complete. Nobody coming out the grave or rebooting continuity years later. It's been told. It was great. It's done. Game over.

So now I can add *Starman* to that list of comics that works because it ended.

Jack Knight returns from space only to find that his beloved Opal City is being threatened. With a handful of fellow heroes, Jack leads the battle to save Opal, but the cost is high and when the dust settles, nothing will be the same for the survivors.

James Robinson did a tremendous job of taking decades of long forgotten stories about different versions of relatively minor characters and turning it into one large epic. We got to see Jack turn from a rebellious, snarky young man who found his father's time as a superhero kind of embarrassing into someone who grew into a new kind of hero. *Starman* let Robinson tell every kind of story imaginable with sci-fi, horror, westerns, magic and superheroes being part of the history of Opal City.

But the thing that really makes this work is that it's over. The deaths and sacrifices of characters are real and permanent. You aren't wondering how they'll bring them back in ten or twenty issues. And the final goodbyes at the end are genuinely moving for the same reason.

Jack Knight's story had a beginning and an end, and almost everything in between was enormously entertaining. I'm sad to see him go, but it wouldn't have mattered to me nearly as much if he would have been brought back in a redesigned costume a couple of years later. I'd like to see more comics embrace this attitude.

Matt says

****This is a long review, but hey, this book is the culmination of 8 years' worth of books.****

Let's talk about endings. Specifically, let's talk about endings in superhero comics.

They're pretty rare, to put it lightly. With apologies to Benjamin Franklin, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes. And a new issue of Batman." Superhero periodicals are a business of repeat purchase, so the constant production of new material for audience consumption is the rule. As Superman and Batman stare down issue 900 and Spider-man turns fifty in 2012, the thought of a successful superhero series that maintained healthy sales and a strong critical response just up and ending sounds like a gag.

Yet that's exactly what happened to James Robinson's *Starman* with 2001's issue 80. With his publisher's blessing, Robinson wrapped up his various plots, saw his cast off to their various untold futures, put up the chairs, turned off the lights, locked the door behind him and walked away from a definitive run.

And his ending is stunning. In the aptly titled "Grand Guignol" storyarc, Robinson gathers the book's entire cast to Opal City for a spectacle of villainy and heroism. It's a story rich in the giddy darkness characteristic of the early-20th century French theatre of its namesake as well as in moving acts of heroism and sacrifice, providing a stark black-and-white duality in a book known for the grey-toned complexity in its superheroics. I don't want to spoil a thing in Robinson's endgame, so I'll just leave it by saying "Grand Guignol" sticks the landing in a thoroughly satisfying hat trick of theme, plot and character. Its final two installments had me in tears during my reread last month as much as in my first a decade previous. Daring work.

With his final six issues, Robinson goes about the business of putting the series' various nagging mysteries

to bed in a series of adventures that cleanse the palette nicely with a bouncy, tender contrast to the harsh theatre on display in “Grand Guignol.” Finally, in a quiet and loving coda, Starman 80 sees the creator and his creation look back on the eight years previous with a bittersweet recollection of the struggle, adventure, loss, joy and pride at having accomplished what they set out to do. Both men look to the future with a hopeful and tearful eye. It’s as graceful an exit as you’re likely to find in this medium for some time to come.

Looking at artist Peter Snejberg’s work in this volume, I’m impressed with the Herculean task presented with co-creator Tony Harris’s departure. After finding his artistic voice within the previous volume, the issues collected here show Snejberg seizing the series as his own with thrilling layouts and stark contrast in “Grand Guignol,” providing as much of the thematic punch with his blacker-than-black villains and shining heroes. Similarly partnering with Robinson in the series’ closing issues, Snejberg pulls the camera in to allow us the feeling that, as these characters say goodbye to each other, we might reach out and give a farewell embrace ourselves.

STARMAN was a series that treated the superhero genre as a family affair. Closing the final volume of DC Comics’ beautiful presentation of the series in its entirety felt, to this reader at least, like leaving a gathering of loved ones after a long night of drinking and laughter, looking back fondly on times past and looking ahead to the future.

Trey says

Still not as thrilled about the art as I was when Tony Harris was on the book, but I can't deny that there is something fulfilling about a comic book writer being on the series for 80+ issues with multiple tie-ins and text pieces and getting to end the series on his own terms, using ideas and threads started from the very first issue. (While I am very glad Robinson remained for the entire run, I wonder what would have happened to the series if he had quit. Would he have told the incoming writer his vision for the end game? Would that writer have done a take on that idea, or would he have preferred to do his own thing and messed things up? Probably the latter.)

I highly recommended reading the whole set of omnibuses; well worth the time and possibly even the money if you can't get copies at the library.

Marty Twelves says

A fantastic conclusion to a fantastic series. Easily one of my favorite superhero series.

Michael says

The final volume of the best comic / graphic novel I've ever read.

Michael says

For a series that started out strong and stayed strong the ending was no surprise. It was a strong ending. The Fifth collection I wasn't as big a fan as the first two. The Last collection, this collection is amazing. It brings Jack back to where he's suppose to be. Yet he's grown over the last few collections. He no longer that guy who is reluctant to fight the good fight. He's the HERO! The first part of the trade throws Jack in to the biggest fight of his career. No even having time to see Sadie after his long trip to space. He must fight the Shade and the Mist!

The second half of the Omnibus deals more with his decision to end his career. It's a hard decision, but not one he makes lightly or without help. The return of David Knight as he does every year is upon us. Then to finish up the book the mystery of the Starman of 1952 is finally revealed. A mystery that might not have been so important in the beginning, but with all the other Starmen's mysteries solved this one need to be finished. A great twist to an amazing book.

If you love good comics, this is the comic for you. Just read the first five volumes before this one. It's completely worth it.

Shannon Appelcline says

The Grand Guignol (61-73). This is Starman back up to its past glory. Perhaps it drags a bit with its length (particularly in Culp's two issues, which explain too much, with too much dialogue), but it's nonetheless a beautiful coming-together of so much of what made the series great -- not just the characters, but also the plots and the themes. There are so many nice bits of closure here, but it's Ted's story which is the most devastating and wonderful. [8.5/10]

Times Past: 1899 (74). A good finale to the story of Scalphunter that links nicely to the end of the Grand Guignol. [7.5/10]

Sons & Fathers (75). One of Starman's best issues, because it's an intimate conversation between two characters, something that Robinson excelled at. The fact that it's a conversation between Jack and Superman about life and death and heroism and fathers just makes it all the more powerful [10/10].

Talking with David and Ted (76). This final Talking is OK, though its mostly a clips show [6/10].

At this point, you can really see how carefully Robinson is managing the structure of his story, perhaps to its deficit, explaining everything precisely, tying up his loose ends, etc. But it's OK because it results in some great stories.

1951 (77-79). Though this was probably amazing on a first read, the first issues are a bit slow now if you know the answer to the mysteries in advance. The last issue is phenomenal though, with its cathartic discussions between David and Jack and with Ted's return to the red and green. It really shows how much the whole comic was about family [8/10].

Goodbye (80). Though we've been getting endings since issue #73, this is still a good and strong finale to the book, and kudos to DC for letting Robinson actually end his story; it's part of what gives these stories the

heft that some other random run on a superhero comic would not [8/10].

Blackest Night (81). A fine return to Opal years later, mainly because it lets us revisit old characters [7/10].

Overall, this is probably the best of the Starman volumes, which is great to see after the center of the saga was slightly weaker. It's thus a great ending to a story that well-deserved this 6-volume prestige treatment.

Matt Sadorf says

The end of a comic book can often be bitter sweet, especially when the creators are faced with a cancelled book before they are able to tell the stories they wish to. Fortunately for me and anyone else that has read and loved Starman, this was not the case for this book and these creators.

James Robinson was allowed to tell the tale he wished to, and he was accompanied by some very adept artists as he did. The ending of this volume, and the book itself is one that is fulfilling, and does not feel like it was rushed together, or utilized merely to tie up loose ends.

No, Jack Knight is able to decide what and how he wants to deal with the Starman legacy, and he has some big adventures before he does. I can remember how I felt when Zero Hour was the event of 1994, and I first picked up this comic. The art grabbed me, and the words kept me turning pages. It was like nothing I had seen to that point, and I quickly fell in love. Unfortunately for me, the grocery store where I purchased my comics, only got the first four issues, the first story line of the book.

Even though I had only ever read that first story line, the characters, the writing, and the art had always stuck with me, and that is why I was so happy to see these omnibus editions being printed. I know why I fell so hard for this book, and now I have been able to fully experience it.

Lalith says

A superb finish to the series, and I finally see why it was so highly rated at the time.

Dan Schwent says

Jack Knight returns from his space voyage to find most of his friends missing, all clues pointing toward the Shade. A shadowy dome locks Opal City in perpetual darkness and Starman's rogues gallery is ready to destroy Opal. Can Jack stop them and save his friends?

First off, this is my third trip through the Starman saga and it's just as powerful as it was the first time. One of the comics contained within is the only comic that ever jerked a tear out of me. As I say every time I talk about Starman, this isn't your average superhero comic. It's about the Starman legacy, stepping into your father's shoes and doing your best to fill them, and about giving your parents their respect. This volume is chock full of touching moments, between Jack and his father, the O'Dares, and others. It's really emotional

considering superhero comics usually just feature guys in spandex punching each other.

Robinson dragged back nearly every villain and supporting cast member for this outing, even adding some new ones in the process. The O'Dares, Bobo Benetti, Sadie, Mikaal, the Black Pirate, the original Mist, the current Mist, they're all in, as well as Elongated Man and his wife, Adam Strange, Hamilton Drew, Black Condor, Phantom Lady, Superman, and most of the Justice Society. What can I say? The end of the Starman saga reads like James Robinson thought it might be his last hurrah as well and he pulled out all the stops.

There's not a hell of a lot I can say about the story except that most of the loose ends get tied up, even Jack's tryst with the Mist and the much heralded tale of the Starman of 1951. Characters die, others change irrevocably. When the dust settles, you know it's the end, and quite a satisfying end at that.

Before I wrap this up, I'll go into what this book contains that wasn't in the original trades. There are Times Past issues that didn't make the cut, as well as The Blackest Night issue of Starman published last year, which can easily be ignored.

I'd better wrap this up so I can read the afterword again before I shelf the Starman saga for now. For my money, Starman was THE superhero comic to read in the 1990's and the series of six omnibuses is the best way to enjoy it. I can't recommend the series enough.

Tony Laplume says

The famous *Starman* series from James Robinson became a defining DC event for the second half of the 90s, a sort of ongoing *Watchmen* that explored deeply the idea of the heroic legacy and its impact. This is the conclusion, and it gets pretty talky.

In fact, it's a lot like a Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*) comic, lot of decompression. In fact, of the twenty issues in the collection, most of them leisurely explore Jack Knight's final defense of Opal City from The Mist. There are many things to explain about how it's Mist who is at the center of this conflict, and many issues explain in a deliberate prose manner just how that is, how all the pieces come together. The reader is left with more of that than the actual conflict.

I get that. That's how I write, too, but...maybe seeing it reflected by Robinson, by *Starman* is a way to confront what it is that I'm doing, or how it reads as a comic book, one featuring superheroes. One thing is certain, at least, and that only Jack Knight and James Robinson and *Starman* could have pulled it off.

Famously, Robinson's reputation among fans has gone all over the place. The one point where everyone loved him (except, y'know, vast amounts of readers) was when he was doing *Starman* (and to a lesser extent *Leave It to Chance*; he'd more or less introduced himself with the breakthrough Justice Society graphic novel *The Golden Age*). He adopted a very particular style for it, much as I've already described it. And I say only the character of Jack Knight could have pulled it off because Jack was and remains a truly singular comic book superhero character.

Jack is the son of Ted Knight, the original Starman, but he's also the brother of David, who in the opening story of the whole saga is quickly killed off. They continue to converse in yearly chats that became one of the hallmarks of the series, and certainly one of the most obvious prosaic elements. Jack's whole identity was tied up in this dynamic. David was the one who wanted to follow in their father's footsteps. Jack wanted to

do his own thing, and so even when he accepted the cosmic rod and the name, he still did. He never wore the costume. He wore a leather jacket. He was the embodiment of all the '90s rebellion in comics, regardless of publisher.

And around him, Robinson explored everything. He explored every Starman to ever appear in a DC comic, and he explored everything there was to say about being a superhero, and it never really mattered that it was ironic because Jack himself never really wanted to be one. He ended up being relatable despite his many quirks. Comic book writers are constantly trying to make superheroes relatable. In the beginning it was Robin, and then Marvel sparked an entire age where every single hero had their flaws that made them more human, not because of weaknesses in their powers but their own fallibility. Well, Jack was the culmination of that. His is the rare story that ends in a voluntary retirement.

That's how it ends. Right after Jack defeats the Mist for the final time, he's whisked away to the past, 1951, where he interacts with David one final time. But David is alive, stolen a moment before his death in order to help Jack get their father back in action, get the ball rolling again. Robinson says this was a story that was intended to be inserted earlier in the saga, but as one last adventure, it's the perfect ending for everything he did with the mythology.

It's subtle, human work. It's talky, yes, and maybe you don't want to barrel through it like I did. This is one you'll want to savor. You won't read many comics like it.

Starman was never my favorite comic, and it still isn't, though maybe it'll be the most rewarding, most lasting one. It ages well. Robinson wrote one last adventure during the *Blackest Night* event, and that's the last issue in the collection, and though I read it at the time of its original release, it resonated better the second time. I also enjoyed the Shade mini-series that concluded earlier this year. I was puzzled that few readers, even the diehards, didn't seem all that interested in it. The truth is, *The Shade* reads differently than *Starman*. It has a different voice. This is not a bad thing. But then, few comics are like *Starman*.

Sentimental isn't what I'd call it. Maybe this particular collection can feel like that sometimes, but resonant, that's another word you could use to describe it. The TV series *Heroes*, all four seasons, was very much like it, even *Lost*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (both of the latter ended on similarly extended notes). If any comic book could be translated to the small screen the way George R.R. Martin's books have become *Game of Thrones*, that would be *Starman*. I know *The Walking Dead* is more or less doing that right now, but pointedly the show's creators have deviated considerably from the Robert Kirkman template. This would not be a problem with Jack Knight.

Either way, the legacy continues. I didn't realize until I read the Geoff Johns introduction just how much Johns himself was influenced by Robinson's saga. In a lot of ways, that was what he was doing with Green Lantern for a decade. And like I said, that's what Bendis has been doing for years, too. This is another one where once you've read it, it'll stick with you.

Scott says

This 80-some issue series chronicles the adventures of Jack Knight, reluctant inheritor of the mantle of his father, the original Starman. I've rated this volume slightly higher than the previous ones because this is where the story all comes together. Every subplot, every smaller arc, every seemingly offhand reference that has gone before plays a part in this grand finale, and it is beautiful to see. Very few serial-style comic books

can legitimately be called graphic novels (a term subject to frequent misuse) but, like Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, this is one of them. *Starman* was one of a handful of titles that showed that not all superhero comics from the 90s were rubbish, and having overlooked it the first time I am glad I finally got to read it.

Michael says

And I'm done. Found it amusing, in each afterword, Robinson kept reminiscing about what a mess his life was at the time, and always promises that the next afterword won't be such a downer. And each new afterword is more down than the last!

No more side-stories, just *Starman* 71-81 here. Grand Guignol is terrific, bouncing between past and present, unfolding stories in exciting fashion. *Starman* '51 is a solid arc: co-plotted by Goyer, but Robinson says in the afterword that the arc was originally planned to follow the space storyline, but they later thought it made a strong coda to the series and moved it back. By the time it saw print, Robinson and Goyer were no longer talking, but Goyer still got co-plot credit for all the ideas he contributed to it.

Still get a lump in my throat when Ted dies. Still feel bad for poor, mixed-up Nash when she dies. Still love Jack's conversation with Superman (why couldn't Robinson write Superman that well during New Krypton?!), how all the threads of Grand Guignol weave together, and Jack's drive into comic book limbo.

The *Blackest Night* tie-in, solid enough, nice to see those characters again - Shade and the surviving O'Dares. No Bobo in that one, alas. I could've lived without the issue's inclusion here though.

All told, it's a long run to read consecutively, but it's worth revisiting. Terrific series, lots of heart and depth, and definitely one of the best superhero books you'll ever read.

Christopher says

In all, a very satisfying conclusion to the series. Almost all of the multitude of characters in the *Starman* universe receive a final look, both in their connection to Jack Knight, and in their own lives. I was struck how in the end *Starman* delivered the climactic, apocalyptic battle that is the norm in superhero comics but kept it connected to each individual, zeroing in on every hero and villain, major and minor, and their personal values in what seem like the end of all for their city. Then we are given the final parting issues, a graceful illustration of the series arcing themes: the growth and mending of familial relationships, the ebb and flow between past and present, and the bright eyed but also clear eyed in the end, remembrance in the past of DC's made up cities and costumed personages.
