



JLA Classified, Vol. 3: New Maps of Hell

Warren Ellis , Jackson Butch Guice (Illustrator)

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Collecting the 6-part story from JLA CLASSIFIED #10-15, by Warren Ellis and Butch Guice! The various members of the JLA are drawn into a deadly web of illusions, each visiting a very personal vision of Hell. Manipulating them is a mysterious being known only as Z, and if he succeeds, the World's Greatest Super-Heroes are doomed!

JLA Classified, Vol. 3: New Maps of Hell Details

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Author : Warren Ellis , Jackson Butch Guice (Illustrator)

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Robert says

Generic "superheroes save the world" story - big bad seems unstoppable, good guys win in the end. Fun but not a must-read..

Ashley says

This is my first encounter with "JLA: Classified" as well as Kyle Rayner as Green Lantern and Wally as Flash.

Warren Ellis' writing was pretty good. He had some snappy dialogue and overall seemed to be true to each of the characters. This plot as been done before but at least he told it well. The story language seemed over-complicated at times, lots of science jargon but that seems to be the norm for a few years and I've learned to take it in stride.

Jackson Guice's artwork isn't the best but it is detailed and that I like. His backgrounds actually have something to them and his faces aren't half bad. This has the look of a comic that is much older than 2005 but I have seen worse, much recently.

There were a few spots where I was lost for a second, mainly the whole Wally as a kid, talking to Barry. Took me a minute to realize that it was a dream/flashback and that Wally was being woke up. Perhaps it was because it took places on two pages, front to back and not side by side.

Truth be told, I bought this because it was less than \$5 and it had Martian Manhunter on the cover. It was worth it.

Mario says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Shared Universe Reviews.

JLA Classified collects issues # 10-15, is written by Warren Ellis and drawn by Butch Guice (or perhaps not, my trade paperback credits the art to Jackson Guice; is it the same person?). There isn't a whole lot worth mentioning about New Maps of Hell. At its most basic, it is a story of the JLA encountering an evil force and after some fighting, defeats the evil. Instead of concentrating all the parts of the comic I'll stick to the more interesting and successful (well, not always) aspects of the story.

Ellis sets the tone of his version of the DCU in the first four pages. A man wishes to jump off a building to commit suicide. He says he wants to be one of the suicide jumpers Superman doesn't catch. In the next page he jumps and falls. In the third page he falls on top of a car. The fourth page we jump to Superman who says: "Dammit." To which Lois Lane replies "You can't catch them all, Smallville." It's important to mention that the man jumped at night and when we see Superman on the fourth page it is daytime. I interpreted this as a second suicide jumper or another event in which someone gets injured or killed and Superman wasn't able to help. This is not a Metropolis where Superman can or will save everyone. Because of his super senses he is forced to witness all the crimes in Metropolis.

That's ok though because Superman isn't Batman. Something like that would drive Batman insane but only Batman, Superman doesn't have a war on Crime. He simply helps out. He helps wherever he goes but he doesn't lose his mind trying to solve all of the world's problems. It reminds me somewhat of Grant Morrison's take on Superman where he acts as an example for humanity to save themselves. He won't solve all the world's problems himself for fear of taking away humanity's individuality and freedom and end up being something like a dictator (find another word for dictator). Ellis doesn't seem to want to go so far with his take on Superman. He seems to want to acknowledge that Superman logistically can't be everywhere despite his superpowers. Superman does have to learn to live with that undeniable truth, though.

Ellis adds other revisionist twists, most specifically with the powers of the members of the Justice League. Ellis doesn't provide realist updates of all of the members; he chooses instead to concentrate on a few of them, notably on the Flash.

Batman has scars but so does the Flash. His body is not riddled with them such as it is with Batman but he has at least one large scar which serves as a reminder of how he got his powers. It's as if back when he was just a regular human he was able to be scared. Now that he's a superhuman the only scars he has are those that were present before his transformation. That would explain why people like Wonder Woman, Superman, and J'onn J'onzz who have been thrown through countless walls and windows bear/bare no scars. They're superhuman and that serves as a good enough explanation. It's not the case for Batman. He's very much human and his scars have been shown in many comics by many different artists. It brings us to Green Lantern. His ring shields him. I'm sure when he gets hit and thrown towards a mountain his will is clearly telling his ring to protect him, much like a regular person would lift up their arms to protect themselves from a physical blow. He's got no scars because his super weapon protects him. In short it's a neat little update for Flash that doesn't drastically change his character but redefines in an interesting and effective way.

Ellis allows concentrates a lot on Flash's super powers. He has to be conscious of the effects of his superspeed on the people and things around him. He demonstrates this in the use of caption boxes: "Four steps and I need to slow down now, or else the bow wave from a dead stop will explode Linda's internal organs when I pause to -".

I imagine Superman and other super strong characters have to constantly keep their strength in check while interacting with people and objects around them but Flash has to do that as well. For a character such as Wally West you get a sense that he has a lot of restraint when it comes to the use of his powers and it sheds new light on him as a hero. He has to be conscious of the effects his presence has on his surroundings at the cost of being the cause of more destruction as opposed to the help he is there to offer.

Jackson (or Butch) Guice draws Lois like a super model. That's not a problem in itself but he also dresses her like a model from a magazine advertisement. For crying out loud, her blouse doesn't even cover her midsection! Does the Daily Planet even have a dress code?

In opposition to Lois, Guice draws Wonder Woman in a relaxed version of her iconic swimsuit costume. She looks more comfortable wearing her off-duty clothes. It seems like a good choice of clothing for her while on Themyscira due to what can only be near tropical weather. Where is Themyscira anyway? In the middle of the Greek Islands?

As a complete package, JLA Classified: New Maps of Hell is peppered with sharp dialogue courtesy of Warren Ellis. Guice's artwork does a good show of showing off Ellis's interesting realist updates on old characters effectively. Unfortunately his inspired idea for Wonder Woman's costume is opposed by Lois showing off extra skin while at work. I'm not entirely sure if Guice was inspired by another artist for Diana's off duty look but he pulls it off very well here. It's not at all an essential Justice League story, if anything its quite disposable, but it's a disposable story but two professional comics creators and it makes for an enjoyable read, if somewhat lacking in substance beyond a few interesting ideas not directly related to the story being told.

Artemy says

A pretty cool JLA adventure by one of my favourite writers. It reminded me a bit of Ellis's other series *The Authority* in structure and some of the twists, although I enjoyed this book better because I actually know and like the members of the Justice League, and I can't really say the same thing about The Authority. The dialogue is very Warren Ellis, which was a bit jarring when it came to Superman cracking pretty uncharacteristic jokes, but other than that, *New Maps of Hell* is a lot of fun.

Mark says

Ellis does a superb job with the dialog, especially between Clark Kent and Lois Lane. But the truth behind the big bad and the way the heroes defeat it seems like a comic book cliché. Still, it's an enjoyable read based mostly on the witty banter.

Sam Quixote says

There are basically two Justice League storylines: 1) fighting some giant monster/threat or 2) fighting each other/evil versions of themselves, both of which are usually unreadable sleeping pills in book form! In *New Maps of Hell*, it's 1) - but it's not terrible??

Warren Ellis doesn't waste the reader's time with tons of exposition. He knows the Justice League is bullshit and writes just enough for you to understand the story, then gets on with it. Some pages have no dialogue - it's a good balance between words and art, and the pacing is pleasingly snappy as a result too.

The biggest flaw is also what makes the book work: the villain is completely amorphous. At first they think the Big Bad is literally Satan, summoned to Earth through ancient cursed texts, and then it turns out to be this other thing with constantly shifting power sets, physically, then emotionally, then mentally challenging the team. The final reveal is uninspired and pretty much ensures this as yet another unmemorable Justice League book.

But the villain also needs to be this fluid to actually be formidable enough for the team. Because this is the problem with the Justice League: they're a horribly unbalanced team! Superman is overpowered enough to defeat the villain alone but (at least in this iteration) the League has a total of FOUR god-like characters: Martian Manhunter, Wonder Woman and Green Lantern. What could convincingly threaten this lot really? And so Ellis has to come up with a baddie with vague enough powers to keep the story engaging.

Or at least semi-engaging as I wasn't that taken with it. I never felt any tension in the narrative, the stakes are cliched and the ending is as predictable as ever. Still, I liked that they worked together as a team to defeat the villain in a way that utilised their various abilities. I like the idea that Flash's costume melts onto him as he bursts through the stages of the Speed Force as opposed to it flying out of his ring and him physically putting it on, which always seemed goofy.

Jackson Guice's art isn't bad but didn't look especially great either - the inked lines looked a bit too scratchy for my liking. And I wonder why he later changed his name to Butch Guice, which is how I know him from his Marvel work - unless he's Jackson when at DC and Butch when at Marvel?

Anyways, considering almost no good Justice League books exist out there, you could definitely do much worse than JLA Classified (what exactly is "classified" about this?!): New Maps of Hell, which is a half-decent outing for this otherwise terrible team.

(Hat tip to Artemy for the rec)

Amber Ditullio says

When people connected to LexCorp start committing suicide, it intrigues Lois Lane and Clark Kent enough to do some research. What they find out leads them to something that can only be handled by the JLA - and a lot more deaths to come. Because the JLA is going to be tested by a being that is brought here through a code map. And none of the outcomes are good.

This was a fairly quick read for me, finishing it in about an hour. While not one of the better JLA stories I've read, it's still a solid book. I enjoyed seeing the various pieces of the puzzle come together, as well as, for once, Luthor being involved but not being at the bottom of it. It was an interesting dynamic for me.

M says

Warren Ellis brings his unique storytelling to this third volume of the JLA: Classified comic series. A series of LexCorp suicides draws the attention of Clark Kent and Lois Lane. As they dig into the deaths, a secret project into the deciphering of alien coding is unearthed. While the JLA begin to uncover the meaning in these killer messages, the foreign entity begins to make its physical presence known on Earth. The initial attempt to halt the invasion leads to the entire team's abduction by a creature calling itself Z. The being separates the League and forces them to battle their fears, such as an unstoppable monster for Superman and a loss of speed for the Flash. Having faced down bigger and badder enemies in their time, the League confronts Z about being an obsolete relic. Dispatching the creature for good, the JLA returns home to deal

with more pressing concerns. Usually known for his mind-bending plots, Warren Ellis is unable to duplicate his earlier Justice League magic; flat characterization and comic-relief one-liners pepper the book. The art by Jackson Guice does little to help matters. His tendency to pour on wrinkles ages the male members of the cast prematurely, while his odd choice for the Green Lantern costume design sticks out on every panel. While the JLA may face New Maps of Hell, the book feels more like a bike path of purgatory.

Rick Hunter says

Jackson Guice's art isn't the best in the world. Average would be the best description for it. There are almost as many artists out there worse than he is as there are artists that are better. The art is detailed, but it just isn't up to par with the top notch artists out there like Jim Lee, Todd McFarlane, The Kuberts, Michael Turner, and numerous others. Michael Stribling's cover art thrown in at the end of the volume is better than Guice's. I'm not the biggest fan of the painted cover art style as a whole although there are people out there that I like their work better than Stribling's. Stribling's covers remind me of CGI generated cartoons. Overall, the art gets 2 1/2 stars.

Warren Ellis' writing in this isn't up to par with some of his other work. It's not bad. It just isn't up to Warren's usually high standard. I don't personally like the choice of Kyle Raynor as Green Lantern. Hal Jordan is my favorite DC hero and would much rather have seen him in this volume, but I know this was written during the time frame that DC had really messed up the Green Lantern franchise as a whole. I also wasn't thrilled with Wally being the Flash. To me, he'll always be Kid Flash. Writing gets 3 1/2 stars.

This volume gets 3 stars as a whole. I'm glad I borrowed it instead of buying it. I'm glad I got to read it, but I'll probably never re-read it. This isn't a must read by any means. There is much better stuff out there in the DC Universe to read.

Kirsten says

You know, I'm not even a really big superhero comic fan, but I adore the way Ellis handles the members of the Justice League in this comic. The dialog crackles, everything seems true to character, and it's just an all-around really enjoyable comic.
