



# The Punisher MAX, Vol. 1: In the Beginning

*Garth Ennis , Lewis LaRosa (Illustrations)*

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Prepare to be punished! For the first time ever, Marvel's one-man-army takes center stage in a no-holds-barred Mature Readers series! Writer Garth Ennis and artist Lewis LaRosa take Punisher to the MAX - literally - as the hunter becomes the hunted! Frank Castle's old associate Micro is back, and he's after Frank. But first, he's got an offer for Frank that he'd better not refuse. Get ready for blazing bullets, bloodbaths, and bold beginnings! Collects Punisher MAX #1-6.

## The Punisher MAX, Vol. 1: In the Beginning Details

Date : Published November 1st 2006 by Marvel (first published January 1st 2005)

ISBN : 9780785113911

Author : Garth Ennis , Lewis LaRosa (Illustrations)

Format : Paperback 144 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Marvel, Comic Book

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# From Reader Review The Punisher MAX, Vol. 1: In the Beginning for online ebook

## Joe Young says

Garth Ennis - writer  
Lewis Larosa - artist

4.5/5 stars

The great Garth Ennis writes stories that are dark, violent, gripping and oftentimes funny as hell. He would seem to be the perfect scribe to write for Marvel's darkest knight, and Ennis' work on The Punisher Max series is quite good indeed. However, the stories do seem to be a bit ... strained(?) at times. The Punisher, as imagined by Ennis, is simply not a fun or funny character. More than that, he is a character almost incapable of humor, joy or any emotion besides seething, raw anger. Ennis' is a more realistic version of the character than what we've seen in the past, after all who is the Punisher but a revenge-fixated, brooding, violent psychopath? So in "In The Beginning" we are presented with the story of a psychotically driven man's unending quest to murder as many "evil-doers" as possible. Not exactly light, bedtime reading.

That said, I really liked this book ... just don't be expecting the same kind of humor that Ennis was able to bring to "The Boys" or "Hellblazer."

The story opens with a flashback to the misbegotten mob slaying that led to the death of Frank Castle's family and the beginning of his one-man war on crime. Frank continues his war by killing and terrorizing modern day mobsters in a series of vicious attacks. The Punisher is so effective that no mob capos are left living in his wake, and into the newly created power vacuum steps a once-banished mobster long shunned by New York city criminal society for his vicious and indiscriminate tactics. This criminal prodigal son sets his sights on the Punisher as his first order of business, but that isn't the only surprise in store for Frank! His old associate Microchip has resurfaced, years after abandoning their shared war, and has mysterious designs on his old partner. The action heats up as all the players converge on The Punisher; everyone has plans for Frank but nobody, not even his old partner Microchip, is prepared for the bloody whirlwind they are sowing.

The art could have been clearer and more dynamic (apologies to Mr. LaRosa) and at times it feels like Mr. Ennis is a bit constrained, but all told this is a very enjoyable (and very adult) addition to the Punisher oeuvre.

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## Mike says

Dead f'ing serious. This is the concrete-hard world of the Punisher that we'd dreamed about all these years. And for Ennis (who usually goofs around with some crazy people and scenarios) to play this story and characters razor-straight is a sight to behold.

Frank is the picture of conviction, and the enemies arrayed around him are just as serious, almost as psychopathic. The tension is so thick it's hard to breathe. When the action finally explodes it's sharp, brutal and shocking - just like we want from a Punisher story. Can't say I like the art - it isn't exactly sloppy but it doesn't look right (nor can I say it looks particularly stylish).

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## Amber Hetchler (???????) says

The website I use to read manga was down so I went to a comics website instead and ended up reading The Punisher. \*shrug\*

Maybe I'll continue. The movie's good.

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## Andy 117 says

Out of all the superpowered government agents, interdimensional overlords, walking atomic bombs, animal-human hybrids, and *actual Gods* that inhabit the Marvel universe, the most out-of-place is undoubtedly The Punisher. In a New York in which teenagers swing around on spider webs, billionaires build invincible flying exoskeletons, and the smartest man on the planet has a body like a super-nubile Stretch Armstrong, Frank Castle just has no feasibility. Much like Casey Jones in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, there's no chance at all that Punisher has in a world ruled by superhumans and mega-geniuses. No matter how adept you are with guns, it means very little when people exist who are literally bulletproof.

So Punisher MAX is a fantastic proposition. You take the one-man-army that is Frank Castle, and put him into a situation where *he* is overpowered. The tables are turned, and now the Punisher can finally earn his notoriety. And, coupled with Garth Ennis' typical anarchic flair and the unrated nature of the MAX line, Punisher can be properly, fully unleashed. The first issue in this volume cements that wonderfully, in a scene so over-the-top, I still don't know if it had its tongue in its cheek or not. It reminded me of that one Simpsons scene where McBain broke out of the ice sculpture and just mowed down *everyone*, only, this wasn't played for a sly genre parody. This was happenin' for *reals*.

So, there's something gleefully immature about Punisher MAX. The gun violence is certainly intensely bloody, but, save for key moments, it's not especially gory, at least as far as comic book violence is concerned. It's a step above the usual Marvel fare, perhaps, but DC's been running this kind of body horror with Batman and Hellblazer books for a long time, and compared to the likes of Image and Dark Horse, it pales absolutely in comparison. What *is* particularly extreme about MAX, though, is the cursing. Oh, my good lord, what fantastic swearing there is in this volume! The word of the day is "fuck," of course - always a classic - but there's some pretty ingenious strings of "prick," "cock," "cocksucker," plus a few decidedly homophobic slurs thrown in for good measure (which I'm not happy with, but it makes sense in context, so what're ya gonna do). Then you add in characters whose primary traits are "wants to suck Punisher's dick" (with dialog like "I am so wet right now," natch), and "says 'fuck' a lot" (with dialog like "fuckity fuck-fuck fuck fuck," also natch)... it's ridiculous. It's like Ennis had a freakin' breakdown at the keyboard. It all comes to head when you get to the full-page spread of the man clutching his bleeding crotch, and holding his freshly removed testicles aloft in a plastic up. *I am so happy I got to type that sentence.*

Bizarrely, and perhaps encouragingly, Ennis and artist Lewis LaRosa have nonetheless crafted a pretty solid noir plot around the decidedly silly MAX-standard immaturity. Jumping quite late into Frank Castle's life, he has made a name for himself as the vigilante, the Punisher, and, after a *huge* massacre at his hands, in which he manages to murder most of the city's Mafia thugs and family members, a conspiracy begins to unwind with him in its sights. His old associate, Micro, is gunning for him. The government is gunning for Micro. The Mafia wants revenge. With Punisher painted as a self-righteous gun nut with a dark past and no mercy,

and everyone else painted in several shades of irredeemable evil, it's as noir as you can get - everyone is shit, albeit some more shit than others, and anyone who *isn't* a total asshole is either killed or sidelined pretty quickly. There's of course the typical "good guy on the bad team" trope, there's the conflicting, equally vile factions at war, and there's a lot of focus on the minutiae of people's lives, tactics, weapons, thoughts, and so on. LaRosa's art manages to pull it all together in a package that feels much more adult than the actual script would reasonably allow (although, for a 50-year-old man, Frank is decidedly Hulkish - but I love how weary LaRosa renders his face; you really buy that this cunning, capable tank of a man is nonetheless deeply scarred and very, very tired). It's hyperactive in many ways, but it has the dark, refined edge that cements the inanity and brings it down to earth.

It works exactly as it should - an extreme, violent, inappropriate slice of New York's seedy underbelly and the USA's corrupt National Security infrastructure for the depraved masses to gaze upon with awe. But at the end of the day, Punisher MAX is one of those comics that will appeal to genre fans, and pretty much nobody else. There's no wide appeal for a title like this. There's nothing here to suck in people who just want to learn about this infamous and prominent Marvel B-character, there's just buckets of blood, bullets and f-bombs. It is a masterful example, though, of an artful, if audacious, approach to making a noir action story. It does what it says on the tin, and in doing so, it makes The Punisher feel relevant in his own city for what could be the first time in a long time. So, yeah, I'd recommend it; it's just not my usual style of recommendation where I'd say everyone and their grandma needs to pick this up. If you like gritty, R-rated crime drama, strings of powerful expletives, and shotguns tearing mobster's body parts asunder... and you somehow *haven't* found your way to reading this? Do so.

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## **Brent says**

Garth Ennis leads a particularly fine bunch of creators in the gun-ugly stories of Frank Castle, The Punisher. Lewis DeRosa admirably captures mooks in his pencils, but this is stellar inking work by the always on-target ink artist Tom Palmer. Palmer does not overwhelm the pencils but interprets them, and in this young artist's work, he adds experience and heft in his use of line and shadow.

warning: this is The Punisher: it's derivative; it's violent +; and, in the wicked hands of Garth Ennis, it's perversely fascinating, even funny.

The supporting character Microchip appears here as a pawn of the principal players, seeking out his former boss. It's better than it sounds, thanks to the always high level of craft from scripter Ennis.

Recommended, in the words of the late Don Thompson: "For those of you who like this sort of thing, here it is." In comics, I think this works better than film, video, or (shudder) theater.

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## **Sonic says**

Brilliant and brutal! Since these Ennis-era Punisher books all have great cover art by Tim Bradstreet, I can never tell them apart or know which ones I have read already, but if I see one at Half-Price-Books I will sometimes pick one up knowing that I MAY have already read it.

I HAD already read this one, this I realized soon enough, but I also realized that I didn't care,

this is good writing!

And my memory is fuzzy enough that it was a mostly fresh read.

Ennis's characters, the set-up, the plot twists, and the character development are all first rate!

This book is awesome!

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## **Mark Desrosiers says**

This series gets gruesome right from the start -- a graphic full-page featuring Frank Castle's massive hand covered with his son's brains -- more sinews and tendons and other gory atrocities flooded my retinas throughout. Illustrator Lewis Larosa leaves nothing to the imagination (as far as exploding skulls are concerned), while writer Garth Ennis conjures a cool Mafia-based revenge plot populated with hilarious characters and nutzoid violence.

But the thing about the Punisher is: he's just a massive, humorless hunk of revenge. As an anti-hero, he's straight-up boring, which I think is why Garth gave us all these wacky crime figures and wimpy CIA dweebs (one of whom ends up with his balls in a paper cup) to keep the story flying. And fly it does, after the testicles come off the one twitchy guy, things get positively exhilarating! Highly recommended for thrill-seekers and lovers of snarky crime dialogue.

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## **Ill D says**

As I read through: In the Beginning, I couldn't help but reminisce on Voltaire's quip, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." However, I disagree with the first word. If you replace religion with God, I think Frank Castle would agree with me too. Why? Because: God is Patriarch. God is Eye. God is superstructure. Yet, it's everything else that builds from this premise that is important -- and that's religion. The ritual, the symbolism, the scripture(s) and most crucially a fabrication of morals and ethics are of essential essentiality from this subconscious rooting point.

And why would Frank agree with me? Because the alternative is Law of the Jungle. Social Darwinism. Or most concisely -- Might Makes Right. And that's exactly the world the Punisher inhabits.

Despite a feel of Nihilism at first glance, the world of modern era New York is hardly a meaningless wasteland. The forged god of money is clearly worshiped. As is the god of greed imbued too. In fact, the ever-totalizing god of War rules over all -- permeating each and every interstice of each and every panel within. Just as religion must be created for the human animal to be anything more than what he is -- so too has man forged his own meanings that spring first from intrinsic biology and froth over into the realm of social-constructionism second.

In the face of this crushingly harsh world that is extended from the essential biological characteristics of the Human Race -- Frank Castle forges his own sense of morality within this concrete jungle. However, he creates meaning with decidedly uncharacteristically existentialist devices -- firearms, explosives, and fisticuffs. Not merely content to thumb his nose at the gods -- The Punisher blasts each and everything in his path to ultimately achieve the ends of his own uncompromisingly moralistic project.

Ennis' writing phenomenally well compliments the brutality within. Far from a meathead, our anti-hero (who actually feels more and more like a protagonist) has well-reasoned out his means and methods. And when words are overtaken by bloody brutality, the violence perfectly matches the crushing nastiness of the urban landscape. And best of all, instead of acting toward the detriment of the story, the narrative becomes aggrandized and increasingly well-greased as the battles unfold.

In fact, even with my most critical of faculties – I found basically no faults with this offering. Unless you fear the abyss – you feel awe-struck by each and every moment of this. Instead, join me – stare back into the abyss, and glare knives into it with me and Frank Castle.

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## Will says

Disclaimer: Garth Ennis is one of my favorite comic writers, so I am decidedly a little biased.

When I found out that the writer of Preacher also did a run on Punisher I had to give it a go. Now Punisher, specifically the MAX version of the character, is exactly what the character exists for: Testosterone fueled fantasy fulfillment.

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## Murat S. Dural says

İlk çizildiği, filmlere aktarıldığı yıllardan beri takip ettiğim, korkutucu, kendi cezasını kendi uygulayan yargıç rolü, kaotik suçlar, saf ıddeti ile, kanla yılmaya çalınan Frank Castle severek takip ettiğim bir karakter. Punisher Böylesi bir karakterin abidevili, yarı bir çizgi roman serisi. Marmara Çizgi tarafından basılmaya başlanan, editörlüğünü (o eserin diline, doğasına uygun) çevirilerini beğendiğim Egemen Görçek'in, çevirisini Emre Yavuz'un yaptığı eserden çok keyif aldım. Kaç saatte mi bitirdim? Ciddi misiniz? Sanıyorum 50 dakika filan sürmüştür! Evet o kadar karanlık ve o karanlıkta raşmen bir o kadar akıcı. İlk cilt "Başlangıç"ın ardından hemen ikinci cilt, "İrlanda Mutfağı"na geçecek.

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## Lono says

I **HATE** writing reviews for books that I love. I feel like I can't do them a bit of justice. That said, **In the Beginning** set the standard for any and all Punisher stories that followed. This is Ennis at his absolute best. Garth recreated the Punisher in his own dark and violent corner of the Marvel Universe. This shit is grim. As are all of Ennis's Punisher Max stories. No rubber bullets, light-hearted superhero stuff, or happy endings. So if hardcore noir is not your bag, best look elsewhere.

The first thing I noticed about this volume was how absolutely stoked Garth was to have free reign to write the Punisher story he always wanted to without any rules. It must have been like losing his virginity to a

supermodel. You can just tell how God-damn excited he is. Here was a character that catered to his love of violence, insanity, foul language, and war stories all at the same time. It was kismet.

Frank's an old man now. Still the Vietnam vet he was originally and his age is starting to show. He's a lot like Eastwood in *Unforgiven* in this one. Frank has aged in real time. This added to the character for me. Probably because I'm an old man. Garth also includes a nod to the prior comic history by including Micro in the story. Clearly Ennis was inspired by the books that came before. And Frank's mission hasn't changed. If you're guilty, you're dead. No fuckin' around.

I loved the characters that were introduced in this one (both the ones that survived and the ones that didn't). The CIA, mobsters, pimps, and psychos all showed up for the party at one point or another. Kathryn O'Brien was probably my favorite. She is the epitome of a man trapped in a woman's body. The shit that comes out of her mouth is ridiculous. Another character named Pittsy says "fuck" about 400 times throughout the book. I know this may not be everyone's cuppa. The language borders on ludicrous at times. I gotta say though, from my experience in my line of work, this really isn't too far from reality in some social circles folks. Crude remarks galore. And Pittsy's no joke. He's like a meth addicted pit bull on steroids. One angry son of a bitch.

Lewis LaRosa's vision of Frank and his world set the perfect tone. His artwork is as harsh, rough, and bleak as a story like this deserves. He nailed it with Frank's eyes. Lewis certainly didn't back off from the gore either. Ideal for a story of this nature.

This book is proof that Garth Ennis was destined to write the Punisher and while a few have come close (Jason Aaron for example), none will ever take his place as the man that truly defined the character. This was a great start to the series and it gets even better. I would recommend this one to anyone interested the Punisher, violently savage and uncompromising noir, Bronson's *Deathwish*, or any of Ennis's other work. If you fit into any of those categories, look it up.

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## **Javier Muñoz says**

Después de nacimiento y la celda, comienza *The Punisher MAX* en *Marvel Saga*. En este tomo Castle acaba con gran parte de los líderes de la Maggia, lo que provoca que los supervivientes busquen ayuda para librarse



de él, por otro lado su viejo aliado, Micro, se asocia con la CIA e intenta capturarlo para hacerle una oferta irrechazable.

Este arco completo cuenta con el dibujo de Lewis Larosa, un poco irregular, pero da bastante el pego, el color de Dean White lo mejora bastante, altas dosis de acción y violencia en una historia de serie negra en la que nadie sale ganando.

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### **Celil Celil says**

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### **Alba says**

So much bloodshed ...so brutal

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### **Jesse A says**

Decent introduction to The Punisher. Seemed a bit forced in some places.

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### **Gayle Francis Moffet says**

Well, that was more gore than I was expecting. Which is a weird statement to say because I've read *Preacher* and *The Boys* multiple times, and you think I'd be desensitized to the gore of Ennis by now, but here we are.

A very strong first arc, well plotted and interesting the whole way through. Felt a couple of the secondary characters fell a little flat, which is rare for the Ennis I've read, but if you're a fan of his work, it's well worth a read. If there's one Marvel character Ennis was born to write, it's gun-toting, headshotting, super-sweary Frank Castle. In its own way, it's a delight.

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### **Steven Montano says**

Dark, atmospheric, violent and exciting. Frank Castle, aka "The Punisher", has been a vigilante for years, but he may be facing one of his biggest challenges when psychotic Boston gangster Nick Cavella and his dangerous henchmen Pittsy and Ink are called in to take Castle out. At the same time, a group of shady Government agents working with "Micro" (Frank's old partner from his early days of waging war on crime) have their own plans for Castle...

Grisly, darkly funny and filled with atmospheric artwork, this first volume of the very mature "Punisher" series is a must-have for fans of edgy comics and revenge thrillers. Warning: not even remotely for the faint of heart.

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### **Camilo Guerra says**

El Castigador de Ennis esta al borde ( ¿o fuera? ) del Universo Marvel, paso por Vietnam, tiene mas de 50 años, es una bestia llena de heridas, es una pared que solo busca estallar cabezas criminales, y como lo disfrute. Acá en 6 números, Castle se encontrara con la mafia Italiana y se los cepillara de cuanta manera pueda, al tiempo que se mete la CIA , unos mafiosos exiliados y un antiguo aliado de Frank. Pasa mucho,y muy bien contado por Ennis, que se pone macarra, se pone asesino y se pone gore por tandas y como se disfruta,mientras el arte de Lewis Larosa es muy bueno,mas allá de ser solo cumplidor y un lápiz furioso y con tintas del experimentado Tom Palmer, nos regalan un Frank que parece un oso enojado, demasiado Clint Eastwood en algunas escenas pero eso no viene al caso, mientras el color de Dean White es...raro, es un colorista que le he visto otras cosas que parecen pinturas acá se ve distinto, pero muy cumplidor.

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### **Xavi Reixach says**

Boníssim!

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### **Todd says**

This will always be the Punisher that I love. Ennis is at his goriest but also this isn't as ridiculous as The Boys or Preacher. Intense adult action.

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