



The Spirit, Vol. 1

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Written by Darwyn Cooke and Jeph Loeb Art by Darwyn Cooke & J. Bone Cover by Darwyn Cooke The first volume of the award-winning series is collected in trade paperback, featuring BATMAN/THE SPIRIT and THE SPIRIT #1-6.

The Spirit, Vol. 1 Details

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From Reader Review *The Spirit*, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Joseph says

I love Darwyn Cooke, and his adaptation of *The Spirit* does not disappoint. It's humorous without being silly and stylish without descending into self-parody. Unfortunately, my only prior knowledge of the character comes from the trailers for the absolutely terrible-looking movie that just came out, so I can't say if Cooke's done the character any favors.

Here, he comes off as sort of a low-rent, low-tech, light-hearted version of Batman, which makes his pairing with Batman at the end of the book a stroke of genius. The Joker's line about the fact that Batman never laughs is a perfect grace note, even if I'm not sure about the reasoning behind the strategy adopted by Batman and *The Spirit* at that point.

My only real quibble about the book may not even be fair, but it's always been my understanding that Eisner's version of the character was a watershed moment in comics history, creating and exploding a variety of comic book techniques (like a comic book version of Eisenstein, Welles, or Altman), but Cooke demonstrates no ambition beyond the desire to create a classic and classy crime-fighting caper. I suppose I'd have to read some of Eisner's work to decide whether or not it's fair to deride Cooke for not pushing his boundaries a little.

Blindzider says

I'll start by saying that I had no idea who the Spirit is, other than Eisner basically wrote the book on comics and visual storytelling. But the character? Nada, so I had no idea what to expect other than Cooke's artwork and that is truly wonderful, especially some of the single and two page spreads that are the title cards for the issues.

There's no intro, in the story or on a summary page of who the Spirit is. The first two issues show him on two separate cases, but there are no captions and no thought balloons and the reader just follows along as he works on a case. You gather that he's a private detective/vigilante with no powers. These first two stories have the most noir feel to them and I felt the art was the best.

Issue 3 is the first with captions and it actually introduces the supporting cast and a little of the Spirit as well. You get the sense that his dad was the Spirit as well, and this is his son filling in for him, although in modern times (yet he still wears a hat/trench coat and eye-mask.)

Issues 4-6 are more to introduce the rogues gallery, but again you really just follow along with the Spirit. He's only mildly proactive and sometimes you don't see him for a few pages. In the end, you never really latch onto him. The stories are a little basic, with some slight twists and a little brutal and have a "golden age" feel to them, but are fairly simplistic for the modern age.

Issue 7 is a team-up between Batman and the Spirit and a coming together of both rogues galleries. It's fairly well done, making a little bit of fun of the cliché first time meeting between two heroes. Cooke also shows some of the similarities between the two crimefighters.

The big appeal for me is the art. The stories are an average read.

Benjamin says

I've never read Eisner's original Spirit comics--in fact, I've never read any Eisner, which is a big hole in my comic book education--but my local library happened to have Darwyn Cooke's recent run. I've read Cooke's previous adaptations, Richard Stark's Parker #1: The Hunter and Parker: The Outfit, and I enjoyed the art, so what would Cooke do with Eisner's characters, especially since Eisner is noted for his experimental and artistic layouts.

The Spirit started in 1940 and exists now in some hybridized time of fedoras and cellphones, femme fatales and 24-hour news networks. Other works might make a hash of this, but here it feels more like whimsy, where old-fashioned and new-fashioned rub elbows. (We can thank god that the Spirit's African American sidekick and driver, Ebony White, looks more like a little black kid than like a blackface caricature, even if Eisner was playing with stereotypes consciously.)

The stories themselves are pretty standard superheroic sorts; for instance, in one story, the Spirit has to rescue a journalist who cares more about her story than her life, which if you change around some names, is probably a story that has been done with every superhero ever. What's really on display here is the Spirit's/Cooke's visual inventiveness; I especially like the title pages where "The Spirit" is displayed in some diegetic form--cactus-cast shadows spell "The Spirit," rain spells it out, a big display ad gets wrecked and the falling letters spell out "The Spirit," etc.

There's an overarching story across these two volumes, a story having to do with the Spirit's past; and I also want to give attention to Cooke's different styles for different time periods, and his handling of multiple POVs.

Michael says

Very good. It's like a good cover of a great song - different enough from the original to be worthwhile, but still keeping the positive qualities of the original. I still prefer the Eisner originals, but Cooke did a great job with these. Even Loeb's issue - not good enough to be a Best Single Issue or whatever award it won - was mostly well done, a huge surprise given Loeb's severe hackiness in recent years. The one thing that Cooke improved on, compared to Eisner, is Ebony. I love Cooke's Ebony White.

Chris says

For me, the draw here was Darwyn Cooke and J. Bone rather than Will Eisner's streetwise superhero. I've never been a huge fan of The Spirit, in that most of the stories I've read featuring the guy barely feature him--he's a supporting character in his own comic.

The individual issues here give a good taste of the character and his world and I really enjoyed a lot of the stuff here. Cooke's artwork is amazing; I've been a fan since I scooped Baman: Ego out of a quarter bin back in high school and he's only gotten better since then. The Spirit still doesn't seem to be a special character to

me; I didn't grow up with him and I don't have the affection for him that others do... but Cooke's work on this book is great.

This collection also includes a team-up between The Spirit and Batman written by Jeph Loeb and I thought that was pretty nice as well. I just wish I had more interest in the character beyond the creators working on him.

Gavin says

I really enjoyed the artwork here, and the entire spirit (lol) of the book. It makes me think this is what good comics would have been like in the 50s. There are bad guys with schemes, and people die, but still, it harkens back to a more innocent age, but still retains relevance. The Spirit is a fun hero, one who died, only to be reborn (he was really just in stasis for a few weeks, and like he wisely points out...good thing he was in a crypt and not buried or cremated!). He's got a colourful cast of friends, and is the kind of fun you feel good about reading.

The only thing keeping this from 4 stars is that a few of the stories are just ridiculous cartoony. Like a guy who talks to his vulture and LOVES her...like physically. There's also one about a dude who's turned blue as a Smurf by rain and a meteor...but he doesn't gain anything but remain an asshole.

The last story is a fun team up of The Spirit and Batman (Jeph Loeb pens the Batman parts) and just winks knowingly at the reader a little.

Fun read, worth a look.

Derek Davis says

This is a lump-all review of "The Spirit" in general, the most delightful comic strip (well, maybe "Pogo") ever to run in the papers. There are so many collections of "The Spirit" out these days that I've lost all track of them. Originally, it had a unique format: an eight-page supplement to the Sunday comix section of the 1940s that told a complete adventure by, or as often, surrounding the masked crime fighter hero/anti-hero of Central City.

It was unlike anything else to run in the papers. Humor was as often the highlight as drama, and The Spirit himself, in some of the best stories, was a minor background character. You had ghosts, talking bulls, guns that shot by themselves and, most memorably, a guy who learned how to fly. For a continuing cast there was Commissioner Dolan, his daughter (and The Spirit's love interest) Ellen, informal assistant Ebony (a black kid who'd never be let into print these days), arch femme fatales P'Gell and Sand Serif. And, of course, the enigmatic and superbly nasty Octopus, whose true face is never seen.

I read these when they came out from the age of about 7 on, and remembered some of the plots for the many years until I could find the reprints (most, sadly, in black and white). Now my daughter sends me reprints as Christmas presents. Yes, they mean that much to me.

Alex Ham says

*Note: This is a general review for Darwyn Cooke's run on the book, Volumes 1 and 2.

If someone, anyone, was going to revisit Will Eisner's classic *The Spirit*, it had to be Darwyn Cooke. No one else in comics was better suited to handle both the narrative and artistic tone of the character, and I think Cooke nails it. I don't know any of the stories of *The Spirit* before reading this book; I just knew that a lot of the characters had horrible puns for names (Sand Saref? Silken Floss?). And coming in cold didn't effect my enjoyment reading these books. Prior knowledge isn't required; Cooke brings you into the world in a way that's accessible to any reader.

After reading these books, I went back and read some of Eisner's *Spirit* comics, and it may be blasphemy to say, but I feel like Cooke's *The Spirit* out-Spirits Eisner's original. And it's totally possible that my opinion was swayed by the modern updates to the story (existence and use of cell phones and the Internet, lack of overt racism in the characterization of Ebony White, despite still being named "Ebony White," etc.). But even with the modern touches, the story still feels of the era, and that's due to Cooke's outstanding artwork. People often compare Cooke's artwork to Bruce Timm's (which is a totally valid comparison in my book), especially Timm's work on *Batman: The Animated Series* (aka the greatest animated TV show of all time), and with *The Spirit*, that comparison hits hard. Clothes, buildings, vehicles all look like they're from the 40's/50's, but with random touches of modern technology mixed in here and there. The end result is a unique visual style that feels old and new at the same time. I think it's a great way for a new generation to experience a classic character.

Comics Alternative says

<http://comicsalternative.com/episode-...>

Brian says

Edit: I have since read three volumes of Will Eisner's *Spirit Archives* and it really does improve this series. Having come across P'Gell, the Octopus and Mister Carrion and Julia before, I can appreciate how Cooke brings them into the modern day. I also can appreciate more of the slightly light-hearted tone of the series, at least in how it mostly comes down to *The Spirit* punching someone, heh. Also, it's a HUGE plus to see Ebony rendered as an actual human being (the definite low point of reading the original series is the very offensive black caricature design for Ebony) as well as a nice update to Ellen's relationship to the Spirit (and less awkward patriarchal sexism). So I will say that it's much better if you have read the original *Spirit*, or at least are familiar with the characters. It's good without, but so much better to see how much care Cooke gives these characters.

The only reason this didn't get a 4 star rating is simply because I have not yet had the chance to read the original *Spirit* books by Will Eisner. As such, I know I'm not in a place to really appreciate what Cooke is doing with his revival of the classic character from the early days of comic books here in the US. I can say that I immediately get why DC Comics picked Cooke to write and illustrate the *Before Watchmen: Minutemen* series. Even though he has the Spirit existing in modern times, you can feel the old school Dick Tracy kind of feel in the dialogue and art and it works really well.

Each issue is more or less its own separate plot with an ongoing thread about Alvarro (misspelled Elvarro in one issue) and some organization/person known as the Octopus. Given how most police officers, news reporters and significant others are often unaware and even antagonistic to the hero, it's nice to see that those in the Spirit's close circle know and like him both with and without the mask. Though why he's fighting crime is a bit questionable when he doesn't have any powers, or even training like Batman.

That's more realistic, but it also means that most of his opponents can't really stack up against rogue's gallery of the likes of Batman (interestingly this volume ends with a Spirit/Batman crossover featuring both police commissioners being targeted by their combined foes, definitely a highlight). In the end, the art is great and I enjoyed the stories, but without the proper grounding in the original canon, it's hard for me to care as much about the Spirit. Though as a noir light style comic, it's pretty great.

Loyd says

Darwyn Cooke is the only writer/artist I've seen in thirty years that actually captures the spirit of... well, **The Spirit**. Alan Moore has written some fine **Spirit** stories, but since Moore doesn't draw, the art always suffered. Cooke totally "gets" the character and atmosphere, and the ghost of Will Eisner proudly haunts these stories. Not only are "problem" characters (such as the "comically" stereotyped 1940's cab driver Ebony) updated in convincing ways, but the new original characters, such as Ginger Coffee—who speaks in a kind of on-air TV lingo—exudes the essence of what makes Eisner's **Spirit** fun and exciting. A great job all around.

Skip Frank Miller's bombastic film, and pick up Cooke's version right away.

Reyel2107 says

as good as will eisner !!!

Derek Royal says

Darwyn Cooke is one of the best writers/artists of The Spirit outside of Eisner himself.

Anne says

Nope. Not feeling this one.

Which is a shame, 'cause I really loved DC: The New Frontier, Vol. 1.

This thing just felt sort of awkward. Like maybe it was trying to be a sort of parodyish spoof of an old-timey comic...or something.

The whole thing was a collection of one-shot issues that tied together (kind of) loosely at the end.

The last issue, which was a Spirit/Batman team-up, was *cute*, but not worth slogging through the rest of the stories.

Everything had a sexist/racist undertone to it that made flipping through the pages feel a bit slimy and tainted.

And I can be fairly insensitive and offensive, so it's hard to make me feel slimy.

I'm going to assume Cooke was trying to make some sort of statement about the way comics were written in the past.

But if that's what he was going for, it didn't work for me.

The art was interesting and cool, but I wouldn't go out of my way to recommend this to anyone.

John Yelverton says

This homage to Will Eisner is absolutely amazing and I think everyone who reads this will love it.
