


The Punisher MAX, Vol. 4: Up is Down and Black is White

Garth Ennis , Leandro Fernández (Illustrations)

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Uber-gangster Nicky Cavella is back with a vengeance - this time hitting Frank Castle where he least expects it - right in the black pit of his hardened heart. With an unspeakable act, Nicky will go right to the top of Frank's "to-do" list - and there's nowhere he'd rather be.

Collects Punisher #19-24.

The Punisher MAX, Vol. 4: Up is Down and Black is White Details


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Author : Garth Ennis , Leandro Fernández (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review The Punisher MAX, Vol. 4: Up is Down and Black is White for online ebook

Octavi says

Enorme. Necesito más!!

Nidah (SleepDreamWrite) says

Well that was dark and weird but interesting but still pretty dark. That art style though.

Iva says

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Stephen says

Definitely the darkest, bleakest and most truly fucked up narrative arc in the series thus far, but...I really liked it. Ennis does something different with this one. It delved a little more in the psychological depths of Frank.

J. says

Even discounting the amazing work of tying together previous story-lines, this is probably one of the all-time great Punisher stories just because of how artfully crafted the character work is. The Punisher doesn't have the luxury of recurring characters all that often, so that definitely is a key component of why this story works, but Ennis could have populated it with new faces and the arc would still have managed to sing. It is dirty, disgusting, spits on taboos and exemplifies the nature of the genre in all the right ways.

M says

Gangster Nicky Cavella chooses a unique way to try and unite the NYC mob under his rule - by digging up the remains of Frank Castle's family and using them to ignite a war against a common foe. Cavella's unorthodox tactic gets results - but not the ones he expects. Finally, someone figures out how to put the screws to Frank by using his deceased family - where was this before?

Steven Guitink says

In the Beginning

Kitchen Irish

Mother Russia

Nicky Cavella is back in town and he's got a plan. A way to get at the Punisher. To make him hurt. To make him scream. And when he drop's his guard, he'll die. Except Frank isn't playing by Nicky's rules. He's gonna go on the warpath....

So for me, this was a return to form after the minor goofiness of Mother Russia. It's Frank back in his natural element, except this time we have an old foe returning for some revenge. So lets go over some old stuff. Fernandez is back on board as artist and like before his work is good. Good colouring, good use of lighting and shadow with distinct looking characters all around. Some of the old characters return and they actually look better in this art style, particularly Roth and Rawlins. The one part I'd say where the art falls down is the depiction of Cavella. In 'In the Beginning' Cavella was drawn to look like Andy Garcia around 40 years old. But here, he's looks like he's in his twenties with slicked back hair and a spindly little body. The first time I read this arc, I was legitimately confused about who I was looking at.

The plotline is pretty decent with the bulk of the arc being something of a character study of both Frank and Cavella as we read on to an eventual showdown. We given moments from each of their lives that help define who they are, where they're going and their major flaws and probably downfalls. The style of definition is also distinct, with many of Frank's internal monologues referencing his deepest fears, flaws and even a dream sequence which is actually quite terrifying to behold. Meanwhile Cavella's backstory is fleshed out through flashback daydreams and overall they're told quite well and equally as terrifying and horrible to behold, although in a different way.

Since the characters are the focus of the story this time, Ennis does a good job of digging into the psyches of both Frank and Cavella and we come away with some very terrifying ideas. A lesser writer would look at a character like Cavella and try to limpwrast a tragic backstory to him, try and humanize him in a way to make him come across as sympathetic. But Ennis has little time for that shit. Cavella is a horrible scumbag and while one event in his youth was a horrible thing to happen TO him, the rest of his life demonstrates that he is nothing but a degenerate cowardly monster.

Frank meanwhile is given a lot of characterization about his violent streak and what defines him and it's quotes like this that make me shit my pants:

There's a dream I have from time to time and in the dream, I don't stop. I kill the soldiers and the hitmen, the extortionists and racketeers, the dark old fucks who send them out to fight. I hold the trigger down until they're all gone — but I don't stop. The innocents are watching, just like always; the slack-jawed thousands,

gazing at the beast. My family lay red and shredded in the grass. I face the crowd and bring the weapon to my shoulder. "If my world ends," I tell them, "so does yours." The recoil starts and I wake up. It's just a dream, I always tell myself. "It's just a dream. It's just a dream.

The rest of the characters are decently written with some of the returning characters getting a lot more screentime and a lot more depth. Rawlins was just a CIA operative in Mother Russia, but here we realize what an absolute snake he is and what he's capable of. It also helps that he's been drawn a lot more distinctly this time around. Kathryn O'Brien also makes a return performance and here we see her true colours. She's a lot more than a piece of eye candy and gives some of the more introspective moments in the arc. She's aware of the shitty fucked-up life she lives, she's aware that it isn't the way people live but she lives it anyway. Up is down, Black is White indeed.

Overall, Up is Down, Black is White is a solid story, with good well fleshed-out characters and some truly nasty setpieces that do a good job of characterizing and even humanizing some of the characters, even if its just in small ways.

Up next, we have the darkest of the series, The Slavers.

Stephen says

These just get better and better. What kind of deal with the devil did Ennis make in order to write so well??

Kris Kaleta says

Absolutely, brutally brilliant. What a comics!

Frank is, by far, my favourite comic character of all time. He is the most tragic one as well. Seeking revenge he'll never have, trying to find his piece in punishment. He can't though, which is shown in #22. He tries to close his eyes but the only thing he sees is burnin', murderin' and slayin', blood all over the world and his family sayin' 'We are still dead, Frank'.

'That's what I get for resting my eyes' he says.

Nothing summarize The Punisher better.

Phenomenal series. Just re-read it after 10 or so years and I'm just amazed with everything: the plot, characters, drawing. One of the best Punisher's out there, folks!

Luke Sims-Jenkins says

Know whats rare in a Punisher comic? Not just recurring characters, but recurring bad guys! Nicky Cavella from the first volume is back and he's dug up Frank's family and pissed on all the bones.

What follows is a dark rampage as the Punisher just goes fricken mental. It's gruesome shit, you kinda wanna root for Frank, but Ennis makes it hard and thats good writing.

Some other characters come back, Roth and O'Brien from volume 1 and Rawlins from Mother Russia. Feels really cool to have long form storytelling in a series where that's really hard to pull off. Ennis also creates men so vile, you want them dead and we learn a lot about Nicky Cavella. More than I'd ever want to. I'd say this is the best volume of Max Punisher yet, but the book gets better.

Leandro Fernandez from Kitchen Irish is back on art duties! I love his Punisher and I like his version of some of the recurring characters better than Mr LaRosa. Leandro just fits right in, everything is gritty and dark, but not too dark. The art is clear and crisp and I loved it. Recommended.

Sam Quixote says

A mobster who thinks he can take down the Punisher does the unthinkable - digs up Frank Castle's wife and kids and urinates on them while being filmed. The footage is aired on TV and the rampage begins...

Garth Ennis does a good job of telling the story of this mobster and his sleazy and blood-soaked rise. I was interested throughout with the number of psychotic individuals in this criminal underworld and liked that Ennis focuses on building up character in the bad guys giving them more dimensions than simply being cast as "baddie" and have Castle kill them. Castle's bloody rampage is also well done, Leandro Fernandez does amazing work pencilling each panel beautifully.

The only thing that I questioned was why would a news channel feature footage of dug-up skeletons and a mobster urinating on them? And why wouldn't any police arrest the mobster for this?

Anyway, it's a gripping read as Castle kills his way to the wise guy and punishes him. Pure grisly action fun, it's another brilliant book in Ennis' Punisher series.

Michael says

It was a decent title... I just felt it lacked the effect of the previous titles, CAUSE Frank whipped out a majority of the old school mafioso's in the first story. It's a story about a kid who takes on something he's not prepared for, AND is punished for it.

Steven Montano says

Nick Cavella is back.

One of the most psychotic mobsters The Punisher ever faced has returned for revenge, and in the process he manages to worm his way into Frank Castle's head better than anyone's ever done before.

"Up Is Down & Black Is White", quite frankly, is a bit of a mixed bag. On the one hand, this is where we start to see more of Ennis' Punisher universe taking shape, as events and characters from a combination of different storylines (specifically both villains and supporting cast from "In The Beginning" and "Mother Russia") begin to influence the overarching story arc, and the way in which Frank interacts with and/or

eliminates those characters is extremely entertaining.

We also get an even clearer understanding of Frank's drive and madness. Suffice it to say the man isn't well. As Micro insinuated in "In The Beginning", Frank has likely always been this way, and the combination of his time in Vietnam and losing his family were all that was needed to unleash the murderous beast that had been hidden inside of him.

That being said, the plot for this storyline tends to waver, and often seems unsure of where it's going. After a terrific set-up events seem to happen "just because", and the wrap-up, while satisfying on a visceral level, felt like an overly quick way to conclude what started as a fairly nuanced and complicated story. But, as I said in my review of "Kitchen Irish", even a "bad" Ennis Punisher story is still a good one. 3 1/2 stars (rounded to 4 for Goodreads purposes).

CJ Louis says

This is amazingly written and drawn, the story is well thought out and put together. I really respect that the story follows a timeline and does not change to allow things in. Once I picked the first issue up I could not put it back down, I had to keep reading. This was time well spent and I recommend this series to all comic book fans and non fans.

Tyler says

What makes this such a fine example of the Punisher is how personal it is. When a mob boss digs up Pun's family and pisses on their corpses, this sets Castle off on a murderous rampage that is a little unlike some of his other rampages because he's not totally thinking clearly. This actually puts him in some danger, and while I love watching Pun just wreck everything, it's nice once in a while to see him not be so efficient (he's still pretty efficient as a whole though).
