



## Planetary, Volume 2: The Fourth Man

*Warren Ellis (Writer) , John Cassaday (Artist)*

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## Planetary, Volume 2: The Fourth Man Warren Ellis (Writer) , John Cassaday (Artist)

Warren Ellis improves on his already outstanding stories and characters in the second collection of Planetary: The Fourth Man. While scraping their way through their investigations, the three archaeologists of mystery, enigmatic themselves, deal with their own past and learn more about the creepy metahumans lurking behind practically every oddity on the planet. Ellis seems to take pleasure in turning superheroic icons inside out. Fans will find references and deconstructions from the Golden Age to the post-postmodern comics world. John Cassaday's penciling adapts itself well to the stories, giving intimate barroom chats and epic battles against giant ants equal credibility. While reading Planetary, one gets the sense that superhero comics really do have somewhere to go after being so thoroughly demolished in the '80s and '90s--and that we'd do well to keep reading. --Rob Lightner

**Collecting:** *Planetary* 7-12

## Planetary, Volume 2: The Fourth Man Details

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Author : Warren Ellis (Writer) , John Cassaday (Artist)

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Comics

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# From Reader Review Planetary, Volume 2: The Fourth Man for online ebook

## Octavi says

Muy bueno. Y con giros potentes de gui3n.

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## Mike says

What Ellis and Cassaday are doing here is questioning fiction, heroes, villains itself. Not doing it in the turgid, cold academic way of Alan Moore, but through a plot filled with action, mystery and layers of deceit and revelation. That is, they're telling a damned good story and having fun with everything they've observed and criticised about comicdom.

Ellis must have a pretty thick notebook filled with little throwaway ideas of new heroes, interesting scenarios - to be littering these books with them rather than develop the into bigger stories. It's great that they can fully flesh out new worlds so quickly and completely, but boy it's amazing.

I totally love the Hellblazer ripoff - super-cool with a super-ridiculous villain (Garth Ennis style).

The end of this book kicks major ass - after a slow buildup this really got me very excited to keep up with the series!

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## Vít Kotařka says

Planetary je hodně zajímavý komiks a je velká škoda, že *BB art* ukončil jeho vydávání přesně v půlce (tj. po dvou dílech). I když jejich ekonomické rozhodnutí chápu - všechno to, co se mi na téhle sérii líbí, jde proti komerčnímu úspěchu.

Co se mi na tom tak líbí? Jestliže jsem u prvního dílu byl trochu bezradný z *epizodívnosti*, tak po druhém díle musím říct, že jde o *mozaikovitost*, která slouží budování proudu příběhu. Dmyslného příběhu. Teprve teď se to začíná zvolna skládat dohromady a musel jsem si párkrát vzít k ruce první díl, aby mi některé věci doklapy - velmi dobře, to se mi moc často nestává.

Marnotratný gejzír fantazie. Víím, něco podobného jsem říkal u Ságy. Tady to platí také, jen to není říznutý obskurností a (kapitálními) nechutnostmi. Prostě stará dobrá fantazie pocházející z imaginace (pleonasmus?).

A postavy. *Jakita Wagner*: sexy mrcha (cold bitch), leader a badass. *Elijah Snow*: tajemství samo, amnézie a když na to půjde, nepříjemný a hustý týpek. A *Bubeník*: geek, který nasává informace z prostoru, jak *Neo* z *Matrixu*. Taková hodně netypická trojka. S netypickým způsobem práce. Palec nahoru!

Mluvit o grafice je nošením sov do Athén - profesionální americká klasika. Bezchybná.

Zbytek série asi do?tu v angli?tin? na Kindlu.

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Recenze Planetary 1 ★★★

Recenze Planetary 3 ★★★

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## Julian says

This is a review of the full four-volume saga, consisting of *Planetary, Volume 1: All Over the World and Other Stories*, *Planetary, Volume 2: The Fourth Man*, *Planetary, Volume 3: Leaving the 20th Century* and *Planetary, Volume 4: Spacetime Archaeology*. I will review the companion volume *Planetary: Crossing Worlds* elsewhere. I'm doing this because the four books simply don't work independently. Most of book 2 is completely incomprehensible until you read book 3, at which point all the apparently random unconnected adventures in book 1 become part of a single enormous unfolding narrative about a great game whose stakes are no less than the survival of the universe.

So, where to start? At the outset we appear to have a simple story of a somewhat more exciting version of *The X Files*, where our team is taken by a mysterious 'fourth man' to go around and investigate anomalous events in order to discover the secret history of the twentieth century. We still have a nerd and a sexy woman, only this time the nerd is a borderline psychotic who can interface with the internet without needing boring things like computers to do it, the sexy woman is very definitely in charge, and has a taste for ultraviolence. Oh yes, and there's a third person: a grumpy old man. In the course of the narrative we learn a fair bit about these individuals, but, rather wonderfully, it's part of a greater narrative which assumes things that Ellis doesn't bother to explain to us - after, all the characters know what a 'millenium baby' is, so why would they bother to explain it to one another? And another nice example of the subtlety of approach is that it's only very gradually during book 1 that we discover that Jakita (the sexy woman) is superhuman in more than being, well, a very sexy woman. Just how superhuman she is only fully emerges in book 3, and likewise Drums (the nerd) only reveals his full awesome powers gradually.

Volume 1, then, it made up of a series of *apparently* disconnected stories in which the team go and investigate something. And we learn fun stuff, like the existence of a black Moon Programme which made its first launch in 1961. That's right. And it's all amusing, but seems a bit light, until near the end of volume 2 where you realise that it's been one story all along. So I'm not going to say any more about the plot, save that multiverses are involved, and Ellis makes really neat of ideas from holographic cosmology. Let's just say that volume 2, in isolation, would seem really incoherent, dotting around in time and space (with a wonderful rip-off of the whole Superman origin story, which comes to a premature end when a US soldier empties a rifle into the boy 'just to be sure') with no clear plan. Until you get the big revelation and, with that, are ready for the massive struggle that makes up books 3 and 4 (though even they play merry hell with time, place and location).

Another nice feature is that we see at work the way that apparently nice people can be seduced into doing terrible things. And I don't just mean the bad guys. Jakita, despite her affection for hitting things really hard, is clearly a very moral person, and is repelled when her mysterious boss reveals that he's been torturing people. But by a gradual wearing-down, she reaches the point where she's willing to indulge in extra-judicial killing and so on and so forth, because she's been convinced it's for the greater good. This aspect of human behaviour is, I think, one of the most mysterious of all: how good, decent people can become, if not

monsters, then monstrous, and all from the purest of motives. Nobody really understands it, but it happens, and it's good to see Ellis admitting to it (the sheer uprightness of Mulder & Scully was always one of the sillier aspects of *The X Files*).

Is there anything bad to say? Well, at first you'll wonder what you're getting into. But that's meant to happen, because you're then put on a footing with the principles, who don't have a clue either. So plough on. On a minor point, Jakita starts out as a strong character, but by book 3 she's faded a bit, and by book 4 she's in danger of becoming 'sexy woman in black neoprene who hits things' version 94. She doesn't, but she does feel a little underwritten in the latter stages of the narrative.

So, don't be put off, and make sure you have all four volumes available for cross-referencing.

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### **Nick says**

The Fourth Man follows the same trajectory of the first volume but there's a different current underneath. A few seemingly unconnected stories and then the exposition kicks in, trying to piece together a story that ties it all together. What's different in this volume is the underlying sadness to the different stories. There was individual tragedy before but it still amounted to pulpy fun. The stakes here turn greater, deeper, and all too real.

There's one argument, put forth by Grant Morrison among others, that we love and keep coming back to superhero stories, even as adults, because they represent an idealized version of ourselves, fairy tales for our highly imperfect world, one that we've done our best to industrialize every last bit of magic and wonder from. Another way to phrase this argument is that we love superheroes because they're not real. There's nothing at stake in dreaming of a world where altruistic deliverance can come at the hands of a demi-god whose goodwill comes at no cost to anyone. Nothing real that threatens anything or anyone already entrenched in power.

Thatcher and her cronies are ostensibly gone but they still live on like ghouls that haunt the spirit of everyone who lived through her Britain and its after-effects. The first story here, about a John Constantine figure who was a bullwark against the ravages of the 80s, is explicit about who the real enemies are. The secret histories that the Planetary team investigates are not really that secret, not when you look at who the true uncouneted victims are. And this is why a real, genuine superhero would never be welcome on Earth; they'd never be allowed to show their face in the first place. Another story here retells the origins of Superman, the Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman, all ending in their discovery and destruction. A world with superheroes is a dream, one where there are histories that aren't necessarily written by the victors alone.

This elegy gives way to a revelation of some of the mysteries we've been looking for by the end. Still not completely satisfying but they do finally give things a clear direction. It takes a little time but it feels like we're finally at the story Ellis is ready to tell.

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### **Shaun says**

A just wrote a fairly long review about volume one, so I'll keep this one brief. Or brief-ish.

Basically, I gobbled this volume up a day and half after finishing the first volume. Talk about a second course, this one continues to build on the greatness that the first volume had already established. I could talk about how much I love the concept, the characters, Ellis's butcher's blade-sharp dialogue, his wonderful tributes to all things comics, old and new (we're even treated to some of my favorite 80's titles, and even some of Ellis's own works), or I could go on and on about John Cassaday's wicked pencils, where again I found myself taking long pauses just to stare at the details in worlds and in characters, looking over panels and pages a few times before finally moving on.

But mostly all I say is this, I love surprises in books, or movies, or what have you. And who doesn't? A nice twist of plot, or shocking (but not just for the sake of shock) reveal from a character's past, or something to those ends. And believe me, Planetary's got it, very much so now since we begin to explore Elijah Snow's past, as well as earlier incarnations of the team in this volume. So yes, surprises galore. But to me, even more rewarding is when I can guess some of those twists and turns ahead of time. And not because something is predictable, because that would be no good. No, I mean that Ellis rewards you for paying attention, and again even more so if you know a thing or two about comics and pulp fiction history. The whole book is about discovering something, and I felt like a bit of a detective, or perhaps an archaeologist on a character's truths and motives, and who is behind certain events, or organizations. I feel like I'm putting the pieces together myself, or alongside the characters, and when I took a guess at what I felt was coming together, and then turned out to be right, it just felt great. A rewarding experience. Colonel Mustard in the kitchen with the rope. This book can make you work for it, but when you put it down, you can't help but smile. I feel like this one is going to stay with me for quite some time.

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### **Antonio Ceté says**

Aquí baja un poquito la cosa, como unos milímetros, nada, para coger velocidad.

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### **Lloyd says**

Wow.

What Ellis began in the first book of "Planetary", he digs us in deeper in this one.

The concept of paying tribute to all kinds of things from 100 years of pop culture and wrapping it in a mysterious plot with enigmatic characters, really... It's just amazing.

This volume shows tributes to John Constantine and all of Vertigo, 1950's films, Allison Hayes (born right down the road in Charleston, WV), Superman, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, Nick Fury, and Sherlock Holmes, among other things.

The scope, originality and just the pure vision of this book is something to behold. There are issues contained in this volume (as well as the first) which are just master strokes.

I won't go too far into detail, as I wouldn't want to spoil one panel of this series for you, but wow... Truly a one of a kind series...

\*-Note: The cover shown here does not match the cover of the book I read, but the book's description matches, so I went with that version.

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### **Travis Duke says**

I still like planetary, even its scope is pretty wide. Ellis likes to weave a big old story and intro lots of characters over the course of 75 years. Some of the issues are stand alone or minor puzzle pieces that fit later and to me they are slightly boring. Snow is a central character and it's clear his story is important as time goes on and by mid way the book picks up and gets better pushing the main plot along. Snow has memory problems and he is starting to fill in the gaps with his team. I already started vol.3 so i'm into it.

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### **Sam Quixote says**

"Was that Spider Jerusalem?" was my thought when I saw the ending to the first story. And then the riffs on Hellblazer, Superman, Wonder Woman and Green Lantern... but I'm jumping around. But then that's what Ellis and Cassaday do with this strange series, Planetary, they leap from one story to another, each one seemingly unconnected, with odd glimpses into sci-fi storylines that seem faintly familiar and intriguing.

Readers who made it through the first book hoping for more clarity in the second will be surprised to see that no, unlike most series where explanations occur some ways into it, Planetary eschews this model to continue baffling the reader. This is my second time reading this series and I'm still not sure why the mystery of the fourth man is so important or who these characters are and what they're doing, but it's building to something, sometime, somehow.

In this second volume there are world famous superspies who fake their deaths to kill superheroes, giant desert ants and ghosts of Cold War experiments gone wrong, mad scientists, aliens, eye lasers, and literary allusions aplenty including alternate takes on the Superman, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman mythol.

I find that so long as you're looking for a traditional narrative and go along with the ride that the books are more enjoyable to read. Trust in Warren Ellis and John Cassaday, they probably know what they're doing. Some of the stories are interesting, some not so, but hang in there because I know Book 3 makes the first two books make a bit more sense and a larger picture of the storyline emerges in it. Meanwhile, enjoy some whacky and abstract short comics in "The Fourth Man" and give yourself an entertaining headache.

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### **arjuna says**

Everyone keeps telling me how wonderful Planetary is... and I'm sure it *is* wonderful when you have the contextual knowledge to get *everything* that Ellis is playing around with. My comic-universe knowledge so far is sporadic, so my enjoyment of the series (and of course rating) has to reflect that. It's very clear that it's all about the fanlove when you get right down to it. Which is, I think, good: the cleverness and jokes one *doesn't* get *do* prompt one to read widely and figure stuff out from primary material - it can be inspiring as well as frustrating, and where Ellis is concerned, usually the former. But there's still an aspect of the latter for me. I'm going to go with Sam Quixote on this one - I agree that lack of clarity isn't a barrier to enjoyment, particularly when Ellis is at the helm (I trust him to throw us the key sooner or later). But the most notable

feature of the series so far is the sense of pleasant bemusement one feels upon the end of each substory. Looking forward to what comes next (with my key detector glasses firmly in place).

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## **David Dalton says**

It seems as if Planetary is growing on me. The last part of Vol 2 has gotten me real interested in this series. Thank goodness my digital library has the next two volumes. Not normal superheroes, more along the lines of Indiana Jones and X-Files merged together.

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## **Terry says**

This volume of Planetary explores, and ultimately reveals, the secret of the mysterious Fourth Man of Planetary and also exposes the breathtaking scope and breadth of the crimes perpetrated by the Four upon the world in the name of their great game.

Issue 7 – “To be in England, in the Summertime”: Planetary attends the funeral of Jack Carter, the man everyone in the occult underworld was afraid of and owed favours to. Cute issue with plenty of nods to Alan Moore and the ‘dark and gritty’ world of magic and debased superheroes that the Vertigo line of comics, and esp. one of its hallmark titles “Hellblazer”, was known for. If you know the references you’ll get a chuckle, but otherwise a fairly unremarkable issue.

Issue 8 – “The Day the Earth Turned Slower”: Remember all of those crazy sci-fi B-movies from the olden days? Movies like “Them!”, “The Attack of the 50 ft. Woman”, and “The Incredible Shrinking Man”? What if they weren’t based on fiction? What if the government, or more accurately the Powers-that-Be, really did perform strange atomic experiments on animals and the wretched refuse of humanity that they deemed to be ‘unfit’ to live amongst right-thinking people? What if they created “Science Cities” in remote locations where these unfortunates could be put to ‘good use’, not in the name of building an army of super-soldiers or forwarding any grand plan, but simply because they could, merely to throw some science against the wall and see what sticks? Planetary's about to find out.

Issue 9 – “Planet Fiction”: This one is a flashback story where Ellis goes down a pretty weird rabbit hole. If comics look to fiction for many of their ideas for super-science why not blend fiction itself with scientific experimentation, really break the fourth wall? Why not create a "pretend" fictional world within your "real" fictional world of the comic book and then have an evil genius send a team of "fictionauts" inside it? What do you do if something comes back with them? This issue also deepens the mystery of the Fourth Man and introduces us to Ambrose Chase, the Third Man of the Planetary field team prior to the recruitment of Elijah Snow. He's a badass operator with a reality distortion field that allows him to speed up or slow down time and generally alter the physical laws in his close proximity. Think Neo from the Matrix with a brain.

Issue 10 – “Magic & Loss”: Planetary have set up a ‘dig’ in the laboratory of the Four that they found in issue 6. Their findings are not encouraging in what it reveals about the agenda and methodology of the Four. In going through some of the artefacts that are stored there we begin to glimpse the extent to which the Four have been able to control what has occurred on the planet and their utter ruthlessness in doing so. Think of the impact that three of the greatest heroes in the pantheon of comics: Superman, Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman have had on their fictional worlds. They are three whose power and outlook might have



allowed them to save the world. What happens if the Four find them first?

Issue 11 – “Cold World”: Elijah’s suspicions about the actions and motivations of his colleagues grow, as does his concern with his spotty memory, so he decides to pay a call on an old friend for some advice and information. John Stone, agent of S.T.O.R.M., is the world’s greatest secret agent and if anyone can help Snow figure out who he is and what secret agenda the Four may have it’s got to be him. Memories are shaken loose and suspicions confirmed as Elijah tries to untangle the truth from the lies in the strange world he is uncovering.

Issue 12 – “Memory Cloud”: Snow confronts his Planetary colleagues with the results of his personal investigations and as his cloudy memory slowly comes back to him he reveals some of the secrets of his long life that others had wished would remain hidden. The Fourth man is revealed and a challenge is finally issued to the apparently unassailable Four in the names of all of their many victims.

All in all this was a very good volume in the continuing story of Planetary. Some of the one-off adventures were a bit weak, but the overall story arc shaped up very nicely as secrets and revelations about both Planetary and the Four are brought forward and the glimpses of the wider universe Ellis has created are tantalizing and a heck of a lot of fun. The gauntlet has been thrown and now things promise to gain momentum with every step. Lots of fun!

Also posted at Shelf Inflicted

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### **TJ Shelby says**

Wow. After being thoroughly underwhelmed by Book One and wondering if people were just being trendy and kissing Warren Ellis' ass...well, that was until I read this book.

Warren Ellis proves he is a healthy dose of Kerouac mixed with Palahniuk. Planetary is a group, "Archaeologists of the Impossible," which reads like a Superheroes X-Files meets The Watchmen. Excellent storytelling by Ellis keeps you on the edge of your seat and, of course, ends on a perfect cliffhanger to leave you eagerly anticipating how and where the next book will take you.

Great interweaving story line with not-so-subtle reference to Green Lantern, Wonder Woman and Superman. Darkly hilarious. Dark...

This was amazing and now I'm off to begin book 3.

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### **Alejandro says**

This second tpb of Planetary gives more clues behind the secret history of Planetary, also it has amazing stories combining science fiction and urban legends in a spectacular way. Great scenes, good dialogues, powerful images. Great episodes where you can see how super heroes myths could faced with deadly outcomes. As in the first tpb, it helps a little if you read some of The Authority, here, it helps a bit if you read some of StormWatch. It's not that you had to do it but it doesn't hurt to give you a better scope of the

background of the events.

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