

"Book Three" of our event series continues, in which we return to artist Adam Kubert, and perhaps not so coincidentally, the banner of "AXISAXISAXIS," although it's just for our first page. In fact, the art really enhances the drama of the fight scenes, which is good because there sure are a lot of them here. In particular, the final showdown between Deadpool and Apocalypse is brutal and violent, enhanced by the use of close-ups for a full page, then a page of jumbled, angular panels with vibrant red color. Unfortunately, this is sandwiched between two relatively duller panels-- one that was used for comedic effect (it *is* Deadpool, after all) but is simply bland as Apocalypse holds Deadpool against an area of negative space. The other panel, our last page splash, is a straight-ahead landscape made dramatic by the decapitation (it *is* Deadpool, after all) but otherwise generic posing against a generic background. Similarly, when the panels fracture the page during the Scarlet Witch's battle, it matches the "chaos" she is ranting about. Scratchy, angular, rough-cut lines can be perfect for such "edgy" battles. However, if you're not one of the key players that warrants an extended battle sequence, then you're largely relegated to background action, the visual equivalent of listing "oh, yeah, and Absorbing Man fights Colossus!" in a long string of bulletin board messages. And often the art doesn't push itself into embracing its uniqueness. Apocalypse alternates from being imposing and blocky to being cartoonish and bulbous. Characters are caught between a realistic Neal Adams-style and a more dark, starkly graphic indy house style, and the result is more often simply bland. Maybe that can also extend to the scripting, which seems to be caught between finding humor in the situation and trying to raise the severity. Deadpool becomes our character in focus here, which at first I thought came out of nowhere but then I realized he was a player in issue #3 a few months ago. As an example of an inverted villain, he works well both narratively and visually (in a white costume), but not tonally. He's supposed to work off of Spider-Man and/or Apocalypse, but in a team book, he should serve as a chorus-type figure rather than the lead. As I've said before, AXIS lacks a single point of view character that could help be a touchstone through the flow of the story, and this issue continues to fail in this manner to contextualize what's going on. Now, if you're going to divide your series into thirds, you're going to invite discussion about your plot structure. This seems to be going for a three-act structure, which means this issue should be the Second Turning Point, perhaps setting up the climax, but that would mean we would have needed a First Turning Point. Was that supposed to be the inversion spell the first time? What, exactly, would be the midpoint? Of course, not every story needs such specific beats, and it would probably be quite formulaic if it did. I'm using these terms as a way to frame my discussion, and how I see the narrative is one that drives forward on sheer momentum but without any thematic coherence. There are some intriguing bits with Magneto and Scarlet Witch/Quicksilver, but maybe I should have used the word confusing rather than intriguing. On one hand, it could be some soap opera-like twist that attempts to draw water from a oft-visited well-- Magneto's heritage. Why not? Let's run with themes of "legacy of evil" and "nature versus nurture." On the other hand, the conspiracy theorists are likely to point out that this is the Marvel's-Cinematic-Universe-tail wagging the comics-dog, as it can jettison Scarlet Witch/Quicksilver from the "mutant corner" that they've been occupying since 1964. Seriously, though. One line of dialogue to wipe away two decades of continuity, and it's relegated to a panel that's one-sixteenth of a page that can't even fit the dialogue balloon inside it. What's more intriguing, perhaps, is the question of how our "heroes" will be getting out of this one. To have the X-Men backing Apocalypse who's holding the severed head of a popular character is pretty damn complicit in such a murder. Sure, it's healing-factored-up Deadpool, but still. Either the heroes are in their right mind and just, you

know, "inverted," or they are in effect mind-controlled and should be accountable for their actions. Will this lead into new and verdant character growth, or will all the heroes wake up with a bad hangover and just look around, wince and say "ooh, sorry."? The post Avengers & X-Men – Axis #7 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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