

I have to admit something. Rarely have I ever approached a comicbook with such dread; I actually feared what I was going to experience in this issue. What would be revealed about the heroes? Is the pacing finally ramping to finality, and if so, how would that play out? But also-- would it be more of the same, which is a different kind of dread, the one that borders on disappointment because you are really tired of hoping for something new but always experiencing the same thing for the past two-plus years. If the approach to this Avengers epic was to create an existential horror, then this book succeeds even before I open to the first page! And this feeling pervades the book as you start reading and never relents. It's an extremely effective use of tone by way of art and pacing. It's the signature style of this author and artist, of course, but here it's one of the best examples of such. Deodato's heavy lines and powerfully rendered figures contributes to this pondering tone, for sure. Notice the use of heavy blacks where appropriate, and elsewhere of cross hatching to create a realistic, more old-school rendering. It's a regal, old-fashioned feel that matches this epic. The staging of the figures are often quite small, visually reinforcing the hopeless odds of our heroes by placing them in a small corners of the scene or by juxtaposing them on a field of stars. This background is brilliant in the colors and textures, actually, making even blank areas of space exciting to look at. The coloring is notably effective in the appearance of the rift into the "Beyond"-- a scar-like fissure of intensely bright white in contrast to the overwhelming darkness. Interestingly, both areas are essentially negative space, devoid of color (just black and white) for this half-page panel, so we get the visual and narrative competition of two areas with our small figures somewhere at their mercy. In fact, the color/texture of the backgrounds are so impressive that it's a bit hard to take the dialogue seriously. Nightmask says that the "stars are collapsing, suns are dying" in a richly vibrant blue and gold star field. Likewise, the character designs of the Beyonders' manifestations are a bit standard, in contrast to the alien-ness they are supposed to, uhm, embody. One looks like a Transformer robot and the other like something Emily Blunt fought in Edge of Tomorrow. Perhaps something more weirdly... organic? Thus, the final panels could just as easily read as the Beyonders throwing their recycling at our heroes. Ultimately, while the tone and art certainly raise the stakes emotionally, it's how the Hyperion and Thor fall victim to it all that really hits you. They share some poignant moments, and it's rare to see such an emotional partnership between lead characters. Thor's final rally in the face of certain death will become a flagship moment for the character. Unfortunately, the majority of the character moments come from the remainder of the cast, none of whom resonate in the same way. Perhaps Thor's moment works because of the long history and familiarity we have with the character, and relative newcomers like, well, everyone else just won't be met with the same interest. We can certainly *understand* Nightmask's stakes and sacrifice, but as he was more or less a plot device to help our heroes learn key exposition points, there's no impact. Likewise Starbrand, whose origin and development had more attempt at pathos, but essentially he was made for one arbitrary purpose (to be an embodied White Event) and he dies for an arbitrary purpose (his power can take out a Beyonder) but with no other Starbrands or need for White Events, why should we care about this character or his fate? Instead of the "Oh, snap!" reaction of a character dying, we merely go "Oh. Well, guess he's gone then." and keep reading. The post New Avengers #32 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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