

DC receives a lot of unfair criticism in comic-book fandom for its perceived timidity. DC Entertainment can be justly faulted for many things, but that particular charge falls flat for at least two reasons. First of all, it ignores the economic realities that have shaped and constrained the comics industry for two decades. But more than that, such a criticism ignores the many risky decisions DC has made with their line over the years, risky decisions often not rewarded by financial success. One gamble that has worked for DC in terms of critical and fan acclaim along with decent sales is the new direction for Dick Grayson embodied in the eponymous Grayson title. Still, that is a recent enough development that spinning another book off Grayson is a bold maneuver, particularly when that book features the Midnighter. This character was once a pillar of the Wildstorm universe, a dark vigilante created as a deliberate parody of Batman. He is super-powered with enhanced strength, speed, healing, and a battle computer integrated into his brain that gives him, effectively, a form of precognition. He glories in leather, kills without remorse, and is unambiguously homosexual, with one of his boyfriends (in some continuities his husband) being a Superman analog. Not the character one would expect a timid DC, or a defensive Batman Editorial Group, to embrace. Writer Steve Orlando doubles down on the daring by fully embracing all of these qualities. This is meant to be a book about a gay alpha male and leans forward into Midnighter's sexuality with as much gusto as the Grayson writers display in exploring their hero's charms. Midnighter still excels at spectacular and creative violence, indeed finds joy in it. And the plot Orlando teases in these few pages, evidently an invasion of body-snatching aliens who cover up their true nature by pretending to be demons, certainly has the flavor of Midnighter's traditional adventures. There is even a sly nod to the Dark Knight itself, as we discover Midnighter favors underwear imprinted with the Batman logo. ACO's art fits works well to meld the tones of Midnighter and the DCU. His smooth lines, dynamic poses, and subtle inking suggests fluid movement. He also makes use of the trail of afterimages Mikel Janin often deploys in Grayson to suggest complicated acrobatic maneuvers. But it is in his mastery of time that he truly shows his skill. ACO has assembled crowded layouts of panels that vary dramatically in size and shape as the eye proceeds. The result is to hurl the narrative rapidly forward through several moments only to pause briefly on some especially dramatic moment, then speed along again. It is just the kind of breathless pacing the story requires. Romulo Fajardo, Jr.'s, colors are clear but slightly subdued, making the action legible without calling attention to themselves. His repeated use of blues and reds emphasize both Midnighter's cool control, and the explosive violence that is the tool of that control. The post SNEAK PEEK: Midnighter appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

Read more: <http://weeklycomicbookreview.com/2015/05/09/sneak-peek-midnighter/>