

After something of a light breather last month, Spider-Man and the X-Men heads to space to hold off a Shi'ar/Brood/Symbiote invasion. If that sounds like the sort of thing that some child of the 90s dreamed up after a bountiful trip to the toy store, you've already grasped the essential purpose of this series. SMatXM has always had a problem with flat jokes, intentional or otherwise, and they return this month, though certainly not to the degree that they were present at the series' inception. Indeed this comedy isn't looking for big belly laughs, save perhaps from your wacky uncle, instead opting to keep a string of little funnies rolling throughout the issue. Kalan obviously understands the value of repetition to comedy and uses it respectfully, crafting running jokes and related gags without beating the reader over the head. He even manages to work most of them into his plot. With only one issue of the series left it's actually quite impressive how effective the structure of the story has been thus far. Admittedly the identity of the mole is somewhat obvious in how unobvious it is, but it all makes a strange sort of sense. I also have to say that the book suffers a little for how unimportant it feels in the grander scheme. I think the nebulous quality of 'importance' is highly overrated, but, in this case, the sense that this story will be quickly forgotten and the need to wrap the adventure up within twenty pages means that we never quite build the sense of danger it feels like Kalan is looking for. The series also continues its trends of crucial attention to the young mutants in Peter's care and awesome moments of victory. Kalan combines some classic "X-Treme"-era Spider-Man with the modern complexities of the X-Men to great effect. He's obviously having a ball finding weird and interesting ways to get chocolate in that peanut butter. His take on the symbiotes is a little odd, with the nasty little buggers draining their hosts in record times and all sporting Venom's identifiers, but it doesn't interfere with the story and won't likely irk any but the most ravenous of Marvel Zombies. The kids feel rather real for comic book teens, ribbing each other naturally and with the sting of truth. I don't know if this will ever be looked back on as an essential part of the young mutants' lives the way Generation X or Academy X have, but I think they all come out of the series with a higher profile and a little bit of added character. Kalan is primarily concerned with telling a funny, self-contained story, but he obviously wanted to leave his mark on these characters at least a little bit. I also have to say, as I believe that I've neglected it in previous reviews, that the recap pages for this book are especially strong. There are a surprising number of jokes scattered about the page, especially considering that each issue's recaps layer on top of the preceding issues', limiting the number of space available. Nonetheless Kalan does a solid job of communicating the major event of the prior issues through 'found' items and manages to work all the other relevant information left off of this page into his story with impressive clarity. The art is once again the work of Marco Failla. There are definitely some weaknesses this month, but, for the most part this is the same solid work that Failla has always provided the series. The first image of our protagonist looks kind of like a Spider-Baby and Professor Grey isn't really pulling off the noseless look, but the symbiotes look great, the compositions are compelling in form and content, and the storytelling around Glob's subplot is rock solid and plenty funny. Overall there's a little stiffness in Failla's work, but the highs are especially high. The post Spider-Man and the X-Men #5 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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