

Uncanny X-Men #28 is undoubtedly a Bendis comic. Starting abruptly at the exact moment issue #27 ended, and with fourteen of its twenty pages dedicated to a single conversation, this issue is a lot more about the how than the what or the where. Cyclops and Magik have absconded with Matthew Malloy, in the hopes of recruiting him to the new mutant revolution. As of yet, Matthew remains more of a thought experiment than a character. Fearful and dangerous, Matthew is a crucible for the X-Men, one half of the time-honored question: what happens when the unstoppable force meets the immovable object. The rarely acknowledged answer to this question is, usually, collateral damage, and it appears that Scott Summers is willing to have some collateral damage. There are six pages preceding Scott and Matthew's sit down, but they're somewhat light on content. Scott convinces Matthew to come with him, Maria Hill remains ineffectual, and Beast reaches a breaking point, though it fails to change very much. No, the real meat of this issue is the fourteen pages between two of the earth's most dangerous mutants. Matthew doesn't have a lot to contribute to the conversation, though that's fairly understandable, but, boy, do we get a lot of Cyclops this issue. As early as All-New X-Men #1, many, myself included, have referred to Scott's revolutionaries as the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Cyclops' revolution has been notoriously vague ever since it began, but it's starting to come together in more ways than one. Indeed, while this represents Scott's biggest step towards open rebellion, it may be even more important for the opportunity to hear Cyclops' philosophy first hand. I expect that this will be a somewhat divisive issue among hard-core X-fans. We've been piecing together the clues to Scott's philosophy for so long that it's only natural that having it finally and forcefully laid out like this could clash with what some have theorized. I'm also starting to suspect that part of the reason that Matthew Malloy remains so distant is not only the sheer weight on his mind, but his ability to serve as an audience surrogate. In a very real way, Matthew allows Scott to make his case directly to the reader. The crux of Scott's character, and his success, in this issue is his honesty. While Bendis doesn't harp on it, it's rare to see Cyclops so unguarded, a fact that only increases the weight of what he's saying. Of course, Cyke can only be as honest with Matthew, with us, as he is with himself and that's where the issue both gets most interesting and perhaps falls down the most. The issue oscillates between revealing just how far across the line Scott has gone and forcefully justifying him. While I know that many are sick of Beast, the qualities that endeared him to me in Bendis' past issues didn't show up for work this month and he feels particularly like a straw man. Likewise, at times Matthew's weak protests undermine Scott's argument by not asking the important questions that need to be answered if his philosophy is to be taken seriously. That said, Magik is once again a show stealer, appearing in a brief but essential supporting role. Cyclops may be a rich vein of dramatic options right now, but I'm so grateful that Bendis included Magik to help break up all the ManFeels. Your opinion of this issue will likely be highly dependent on how convincing you find Scott's reasoning or, barring that, how close to The Fall you feel he is. The one thing that I did find unassailably strong about this issue was its emphasis on compassion and education. While the X-Men have always been students, it's been a long time since their education didn't begin at 'life or death simulation in the Danger Room' and end with punching other mutants in the face. We have seen some specialized training sessions over the years, but they've often tended to be somewhat tenuous in their reasoning. So to see Scott really dredge up his own experiences with the Xavier Institute and do the hard work of teaching a mutant who hates and fears himself how to deal with his powers is really something special. Bendis really sells the pathos of Scott's childhood and his connection to Professor Xavier without invalidating his present rejection of that ideal. Kris Anka is the rare

superhero artist who really comes alive when he's drawing the mundane. Not that this issue wants for the weird and the costumed, but between Matthew's plain clothes look and the emphasis on simple reaction shots, you can clearly feel Anka's strengths shining through. Matthew's breakdowns and Magik's concern are brimming with honesty and restraint, and even Scott's strained mask of stoicism cracks and twitches with a realistic edge. It's not just the expressions that bring the characters to life, either. Anka demonstrates a powerful understanding of momentum and blocking in this issue. You can feel the pace of the issue and the movements of the characters and, in such a talky issue, that's a godsend. It also gives scenes of Matthew's powers a huge zap of energy. Of course, Anka's other strong suit is costuming and this issue is all too happy to oblige his passion. However brief, it's fun to see Anka's takes on some of the most memorable X-Men line ups of years past, as well as a number of classic moments. Unfortunately, these scenes seem particularly prone to one of Anka's repeated problems in this issue: massive torsos. For some reason a number of men in this issue are sporting huge shoulders and/or tiny heads. It's an odd problem for an artist with such a demonstrated knowledge of proportions, but, while it's only an occasional issue, it tends to pop up in important panels, including a number of key flashbacks and the final page. The post Uncanny X-Men #28 – Review appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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