

As soon she appeared in All-New X-Men, it was clear to me that Eva Bell was going to be an interesting addition to the X-Men mythos. Her time in Uncanny X-Men supported this theory and by the time she reappeared during Uncanny X-Men #17, I was dying to know more about her, particularly where she had disappeared to. After ten long months, Brian Michael Bendis has finally deigned to fill us in on those crucial minutes when the time twisting mutant was unaccounted for. Rather than freeze her attackers as she's done in the past, it seems that Eva's powers have thrown her on a whirlwind jaunt through time, complete with some cameos from some lesser known Marvel heroes. Indeed, one character even classifies Tempus as being "nearly Omega-level". Time travel is, inherently a tricky business. We all tend to have fond memories of at least one time travel story, but doing it right isn't easy. For Bendis, this isn't so much an opportunity to explore otherwise impossible settings as a chance to give one character more time to shine, in more than one way. It's kind of cool to see Eva encounter Killraven or the Rawhide Kid, but these sequences, especially the much hyped Killraven encounter, fail to live up to their potential. It really seems like Bendis is just dedicating thirteen pages of story to answering complaints of Eva's powers taking her to exactly the right place and, somewhat frustratingly, does so by having her powers send her to exactly the right place. Unless these turn out to be poorly integrated points in a larger mystery, I'm not sure that we needed any of it. Of course, need and want are two different things and I'll admit that Eva's wild west encounter gives Bendis the chance to bounce her unique appearance off of the Rawhide Kid's pragmatic personality to some effect. I'm not sure that I buy the complete preoccupation with her hair, but there's some solid fish out of water time travel in this scene. The problem is that Bendis doesn't seem to care much about it. Instead, almost all of his attention is turned on another familiar era, where the bulk of Eva's story will take place. Those unfamiliar with the twenty year-old series might be a little confused, but there really isn't that much that can't be deduced from context clues as long as you're willing to keep reading. The story revels in its mixing of mutation and magic as Eva comes face to face with a universal Sorcerer Supreme. Bendis takes evident glee in giving Andrea Sorrentino strange and wonderful things to draw, but, even here, there are problems. Obviously this is going to be a big part of Bendis' story going forward and it needs to play a its part in the grander scheme, but the earlier sections of this issue were seemingly sidelined for this and, frankly, it doesn't measure up. Bendis tries to play up the feeling of Eva belonging to two worlds, but utterly fails to create any emotional connection between the reader and the Eva of this future. What makes it so disappointing is that Bendis must have known he was shortchanging us. Much as I've had problems with some of his writing, Bendis has proven time and again that he is a very talented writer and understands story structure. To literally skip over the entire point of your issue is such poor form that part of me is still trying to make excuses for him. Perhaps, in time, we'll see the method to his madness but, in the present, it's just madness. Listless as the story can be, Andrea Sorrentino's art is a sight to behold. Visually speaking, this is a bold comic. The overall effect is stunning and, particularly in panels of powers or explosions, this comic is more than capable of giving you a swift kick in the gut. While Sorrentino's peaks reach dizzying heights, he seems to be an artist who's only as good as he is inspired. Simple reaction shots and talking heads frequently look very awkward and Eva's features shuffle around her face more than once. Occasionally, even when the anatomy is solid, the expressions just look kind of dopey. It has to be said that Sorrentino's work benefits monumentally from Marcelo Maiolo's colors. While Sorrentino is obviously essential, many of the best moments are absolutely made by Maiolo's choice of palette. Each setting has its own striking set of colors that all look great. I will admit that, while I love the idea, the sepia tone look

of the old west sequence didn't really do it for me and undercut the idea of her dyed hair seeming foreign. Nonetheless, this is really the kind of issue that gets a colorist noticed, and Maiolo, not to mention the story, took full advantage of that. I also can't deny that the scenes in the former Strange mansion are particularly beautiful. Combining intense lighting and color with amusingly mind-bending content and a certain stained glass aesthetic, these pages bring out the best in Sorrentino. I won't spoil anything, but there's one massive, two-page panel that's positively gorgeous. Eva's powers also receive some clever layouts and narrative tricks that make them feel exceedingly natural. I'm glad that Sorrentino isn't afraid to use nontraditional layouts, because they really do compliment his style. A Thought: I usually don't like the "Annual" banner that Marvel has been using the past few years but it really works with the variant cover Dustin Nguyen drew for this issue. Then again, I'm biased towards Tempus' design, fuchsia and cyan combinations, and Dustin Nguyen so I never really had a chance. The post Uncanny X-Men Annual #1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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