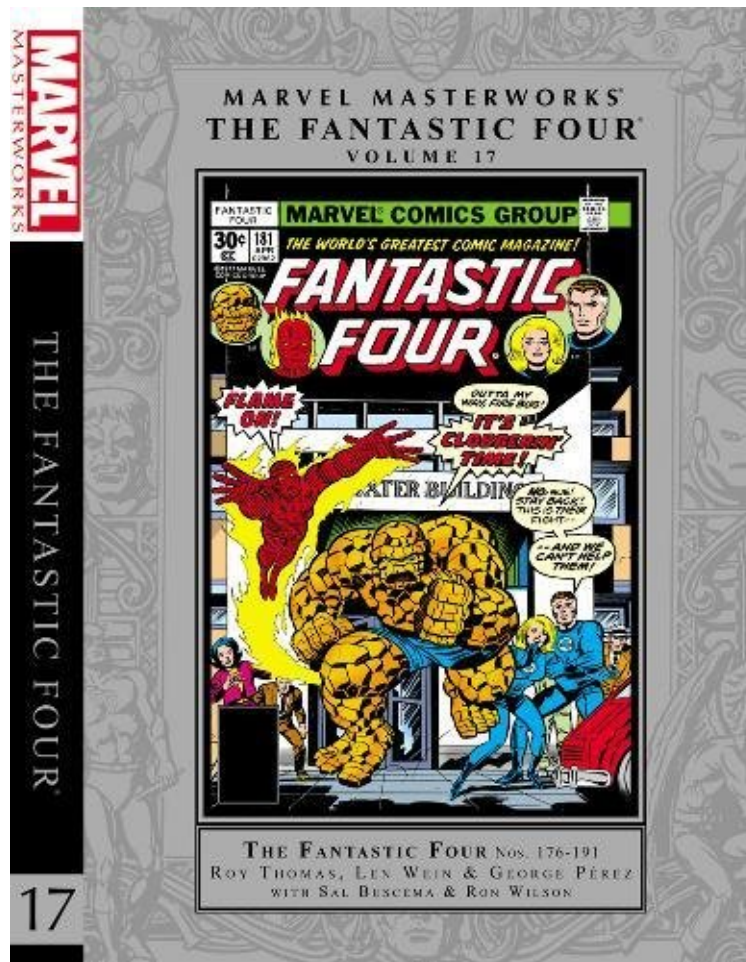


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Marvel Comics : 176-191: Marvel Masterworks: The Fantastic Four Volume 17 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 176-191: Marvel Masterworks: The Fantastic Four Volume 17:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Morgan Painter This Fantastic Four Archive saves me both money and time in not searching for the expensive originals. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Guest-stars and Villains Galore By Dan Pace (feral atom) Collects Fantastic Four 176-191. #180 and #190 were reprints. The covers are included but not the reprinted stories (#180 is originally from FF #101. #190 is from FF Annual #4: Johnny Storm vs the Original Torch and introducing the machine called quasi-mod0). Extras include two introductions, one by Roy Thomas and one by Len Wein. The collection also includes the Baxter Building Bulletins where Roy Thomas explains the reintroduction of the Impossible Man featuring Marvel's Bullpen as well as the Nova issue that that was also slated to have the Bullpen appear in it. On penciller duties, George Perez draws 176-178, 184-

188 and 191. Sal Buscema draws 182, 183, and 190. Ron Wilson draws a fantastic 179 and 181. Joe Sinnott provides artistic continuity in all the issues he inks (all by 178 and 190). Dave Hunt ably fills in for issue 178 on inks and Tony DeZuniga finishes the art for 190. This one is a marked departure from the rest of the collection, from an art perspective. Kirby has five covers in this collection. For writing, Roy Thomas scripts 176-179, 181, Len Wein does 182, 184-188, 191, Mike Friedrich helps out on 178, Gerry Conway assists on 179, Bill Mantlo helps out on 182, 183, Jim Shooter and Archie Goodwin are also credited on 182. Marv Wolfman writes 190. Overall, this is another strong period for the FF. I have a bit of a bias because the contents of Masterworks 16 and 17 contain the first continuous run of FF that I collected, up until #191 which concludes this volume. The art and writing is great, considering all the talent involved in this run. Some spoilers in reviewing the issues. If you don't want the stories spoiled, exit the review here with a hearty "Recommended!" and, to paraphrase Ben Grimm "Just get this furshluggin' collection already!"=====#176 was one of my early FF favorites because of how zany Impossible Man was and seeing the Marvel Bullpen in four-color was an added bonus. Impy seemed like he could do anything, but trapped in such a naive mind, he came across as funny but potentially destructive in a child-like way. I loved seeing him imitate Cap's shield, Iron Man's gauntlet, Cyclops' visor, Black Bolt's wings (or Namor's blue bodysuit), Wasp's wings, Thor's hammer, and Surfer's board x3. Kirby had a brilliant idea to have him imitating Marvel's heroes on the cover. Having three of the Frightful Four appear on the last page breaks up the light-hearted mood of the issue. These guys look like they mean business.#177 has another terrific Kirby cover with the menacing fourth member of the new Frightful Four appearing in Kirby Krackle and silhouetted in the door. This issue ends up being a fun romp through Frightful Four tryouts as they audition for a new member in the Baxter Building while holding the FF hostage. Texas Twister, Thundra, Captain Ultra and Tigra all audition for the team, but their newest member is revealed to be the powerful Brute, alter ego of Reed Richards from Earth Two, knocked on the head and turned evil!!#178 continues the Battle Royale and starts a run with Impy, Thundra, and Tigra guest-starring with the FF. In the end, one Reed is in the Negative Zone and the other is in the Baxter Building, but which is which?? The real Reed has lost his ability to stretch.#179 Ben has lady trouble! He loves Alicia but is constantly thinking he doesn't deserve her. Thundra believes he is the only man for her and she is the perfect match for Ben. Now Tigra starts to think Ben is cute. Sheesh! When it rains, it pours! Also, Negative Zone castaway Reed chows down on Bat-Creature meat while a burning android robs a bank. Only Tigra and Ben can stop it. After Reed's tasty bat-meal, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Annihilus!#181 Agatha Harkness kidnaps little Franklin. Ben, Tigra and Thundra take on the Army, Frankie Raye tells off Johnny, Negative Zone Reed and Annihilus team up to take on a cosmic-powered Android from the Mad Thinker.#182 Agatha is imprisoned by a mysterious circle of mystics. Johnny and Ben try to rescue Reed and now all are trapped in the Negative Zone to battle the cosmic Android. Sue is now alone to face the Brute!#183 wraps up the Brute, Mad Thinker, cosmic Android and Annihilus stories in one hearty climax!#184 Enter the Eliminator! When I first read this story in my youth, I thought it was quite good. Now, I don't think it holds up as well. Talk about a Rube Goldberg machine!#185 has the FF confront the Witches of New Salem and their leader, the potent Nicholas Scratch.#186 after the Witches have rather easily beaten the FF using powerful magic, to execute Agatha and her allies, they transform into the newest super-group, Salem's Seven. I must confess, I thought they were quite awesome in my younger years (except for Gazelle; I never thought she was interesting...) Sadly, they don't stand the test of time. Most of their super-powers are much more limiting than their witchcraft from the preceding issue. It's still a fun issue, if you put that thought aside. Back at the Baxter Building a mysterious figure easily dispatches Impy. Salem's Seven will be back in the next Masterworks Volume.#187 Klaw and Molecule Man team up to take on the FF. This is a great issue and both are shown to be powerful foes for the FF.#188 Reed is now possessed by the Molecule Man. The Watcher pays a visit but is even more quiet than usual. Can Impy help the FF overcome Reed-Molecule Man? It might mean the end of the FF as we know them.#190 Ben reminisces about the hardest times the team has had to face, including the times they almost broke up or did go their separate ways for a period of time. It's a cool summary of their hardships, especially for those readers unfamiliar with the full history of the team, but the art is a big step down from the last twenty issues or more.#191 George Perez and Joe Sinnott are back! Reed sells off his technology to SHIELD, but things aren't what they seem. The FF get back together for the rest of the ish, but they still leave this one bound for Splittsville. This run of the FF proves that tension in the ranks and guest-stars drove this title as much as the family factor or cosmic adventures. This was a great set of stories that are gearing up for the big #200 bash in the next Masterworks Volume and the return of their #1 foe.3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Rough Times for Reed or More Great George Perez ArtBy Stephen Vincent KemptonThis collection contains Fantastic Four #176 to #191. Cover dated November 1976 to February 1978. If you do your math you would think you are getting Sixteen issues. But sadly you only get Fourteen full issues because two of them are total reprints with only the new covers included in this collection. Story wise the first half of the book was mostly Roy Thomas while the back half was mostly Len Wein. But since both of them seemed to be having trouble making deadlines we had many other writers helping out. The penciling features Nine stories by George Perez, Three by Sal Buscema and Two from Ron Wilson. Inking was Joe Sinnott for twelve issues with Dave Hunt and Tony DeZungia each inking one issue a piece.This is the first time (I believe) Marvel has gone with the split introductions. Roy Thomas talks about his involvement with the first half of the book then hands it off to

Len Wein. But instead of following suite Len just tells a story of discovering FF #1 on the newsstands as a boy. Roy kicks off things in a big way with FF #176 which was the re-introduction of Impossible Man. This was a wacky fun ride with the FF meeting the Marvel Bullpen. Featured in the Bullpen is Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Roy Thomas, George Perez, Joe Sinnott, John Verpooten, Marv Wolfman, Gerry Conway, Marie Severin and Archie Goodwin. Jack Kirby penciled this cover (one of four in this collection) and probably deserves a plotting assist credit. Jack drew the Impossible Man with his two hands looking like Iron-Man and Thor, when Roy and George saw this they changed the story to include this scene. The Impossible Man was created way back in FF #11, at the time of his appearance he was dismissed by fans who hated this cartoony green alien. Stan had forbidden his return. But Roy not only brought him back but he made him a regular character of the FF's supporting cast. Fortunately for Roy fandom had changed over the years and they now loved the little green imp. Fantastic Four #177 was an equally fun and zanny romp. The Frightful Four (currently three) were holding try-outs for their fourth member. Not since The Legion Of Substitute Superheroes have we seen such wacky doings. Now here is a mystery and an error I discovered and hope to set straight. If you look at the writers credits in the front of the book you will see Mike Friedrich listed as a writer for FF #178. Wow I couldn't find anything to back this up. After burning up the internet and not finding anything, I decided to unbag my original copy of FF #178. There on the letters page was my answer. Mike Friedrich had nothing to do with FF #178, but he in fact co-plotted FF #177 with Roy. And in fact Mike Friedrich created the best of the try-out heroes, Captain Ultra and The Texas Twister according to an acknowledgement from Roy. This fact is not mentioned by Roy in the introduction, but he did write thousands of pages of comics, so I am sure he can not recollect every detail. His memory is still much better than Stan's. FF #177 also introduces Tigra and the returning Thundra as regular supporting characters along side The Impossible Man. At least until Len Wein comes on board. Both of these girls experience unrequited love for Ben Grimm, a funny change of pace. FF #178 is where things starting go bad for Reed, he previously lost his stretching ability. Now the Reed Richards from counter earth (he is also a purple monster called the Brute) takes his place on the team and the original is tossed into the Negative Zone. In the continuation of this story in FF #179 Gerry Conway comes on board to plot the story and script the first three pages for Roy. Ron Wilson also comes on board to illustrate two issues. As inked by Joe Sinnott the art still looks pretty good. Issue #180 is a reprint of Bedlam At The Baxter Building from FF #101. Here is where things get wonky. The cover for #180 was clearly meant for FF #179 since it depicts events from that issue. My guess is that since it was a Jack Kirby piece it didn't come in from the west coast in time for FF #179, so they had Al Milgrom whip a different version. But in the meantime what to do with cover John Romita had done for the reprint issue. Well they used it for FF #181 which would sadly be the last we would see of Roy for awhile. Clearly he was having deadline problems and his commitment to Conan and Savage Sword Of Conan won out. Reed is still stuck in the Negative Zone but now he must team up with Annihilus. Sal Buscema does the art for the next two issues FF #182 and #183, which finishes up the counter earth Reed Vs. Reed in the Negative Zone saga. The first part is cobbled together by committee. Len Wein, Jim Shooter and Archie Goodwin plot it with Bill Mantlo scripting it. Mantlo gets solo credit for the second part. In Fantastic Four #184 Len Wein starts his run with the missing George Perez he hasn't done the book for five months. This is the start of a good three part story FF #184 through FF #186 dealing with Witches and New Salem. It starts when Nanny, Agatha Harkness disappears with young Franklin Richards in tow. First we meet the Eliminator, then Agatha's power mad son Nicholas Scratch finally an entire team of witchcraft powered superheroes called Salem's Seven. FF #187 and FF #188 is a good two parter with two classic villains teaming up. Klaw and The Molecule Man. Of course as is the theme of this volume things go badly for Reed as he is transformed into The Molecule Man. The Watcher and the returning Impossible Man guest star. At the end of this story a depressed Reed announces he is leaving the team. Sue follows him. Well during the introduction Len admits he was currently writing Spider-Man, The Hulk and Thor at the time this was assigned to him and a week behind on all of them. So I imagine the deadline got to him for FF #189 was yet another reprint issue, the 2nd in 9 Months. Apparently that wasn't enough time for Len and George because FF #190 appears to be a quickie fill in issue. The only really good thing about this issue is the Jack Kirby cover. The story is by Marv Wolfman with very rushed looking art from Sal Buscema and Tony DeZungia. I got the feeling this whole thing was put together in under a week. It is now revealed the whole team is breaking up. We see Ben with Alicia Masters reminiscing about a dozen random past battles. This is low point for the volume. We end on a better story in FF #191. Wein and Perez reunite for the final story of the team breaking up. The Plunderer pops up towards the end just so the FF can get together and fight someone. The extras are very slim this volume with only the editorial page from FF #176 reprinted. In Summation despite the lack of consistency from the creators I found this volume to be, with one exception, a lot of fun and the art of Perez and Sinnott is simply fantastic. My Highest Recommendation.

The Fantastic Four continue their explorations into the impossible - when they confront none other than the Impossible Man! From a tale that rampages through the Marvel Bullpen and features the return of the Frightful Four, Impy will both torment and team-up in an attempt to make our heroes a Fantastic Five! Then, Reed Richards is replaced by his evil Counter-Earth counterpart. It's a saga so epic in scope that Thundra, Tigra, the Mad Thinker and Annihilus are pulled into it...as Reed battles for his life in the heart of the Negative Zone! COLLECTING: Fantastic Four (1961) 176-

