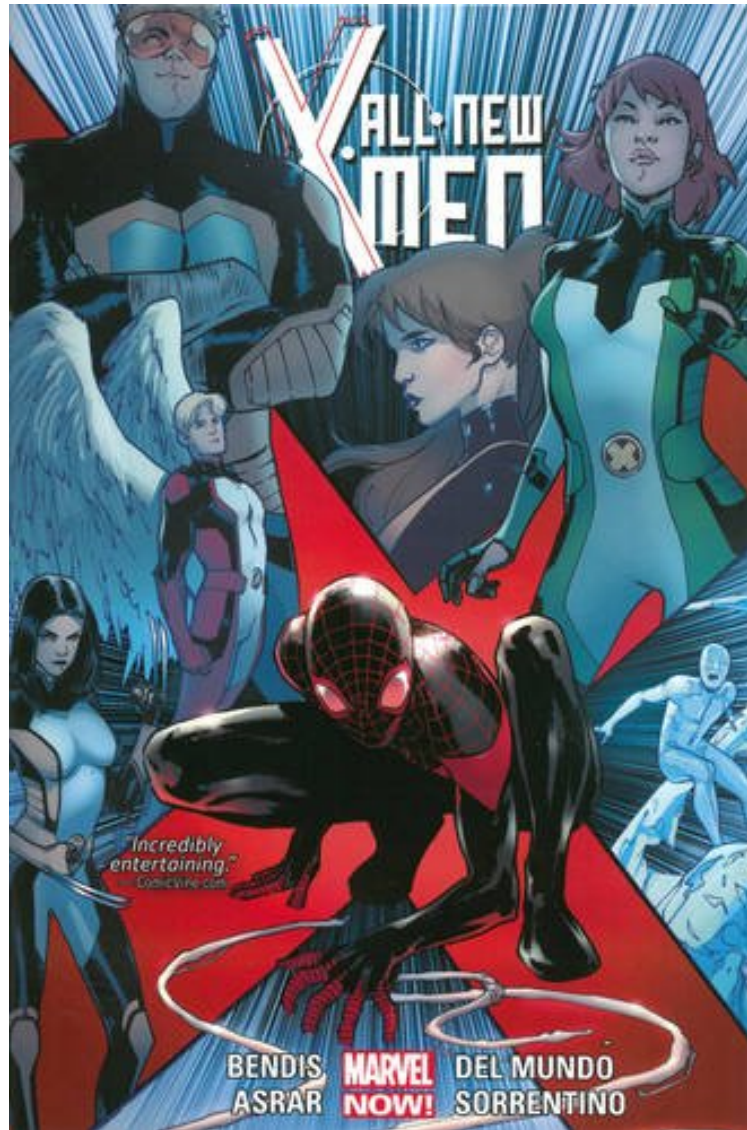


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## All-New X-Men Vol. 4

Brian Michael Bendis

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**Brian Michael Bendis : All-New X-Men Vol. 4** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised All-New X-Men Vol. 4:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great individual moments but unsatisfying as a whole By truster38\* This review covers the entire Bendis Uncanny X-Men run as well as its companion book, All-New X-Men, while touching on the content of this specific volume as well. Both series should be read in tandem. A similar review has also been posted for the last volume of Uncanny X-Men Uncanny X-Men Vol. 2 \*I'm a longtime X-Men fan like most

of you and have had mixed feelings about the direction of Marvel's Merry Mutants since their peak in the 90's. Besides the Whedon and Morrison runs, as well as (some) of the Fraction run, Remender's fantastic Uncanny X-Force run, and Mike Carey's spectacular X-Men Legacy run, there's been a lot of unfortunately canonical junk running throughout the X-books for a long time. Too many books, too many characters, too many storylines that don't go anywhere, crazy convoluted arcs, and an abundance of parallel universes have led the X-Men to just about collapse under their own weight. Not to mention, Marvel Studios can't actually make the X-Men films, so the House of Mouse has been trying to kill the X-Men. As in literally, because it was Bendis' own House of M in 2005 that set the stage for this entire "mutant extinction" thing that has played out in the X-books for the last decade. Running concurrently after the events of Schism and Avengers vs. X-Men, Bendis' Uncanny X-Men and All-New X-Men are his grand thesis on these characters, and should be considered two different prisms of the same mirror. They are, essentially, one series, with Uncanny X-Men focusing on the former Phoenix, former boy scout turned new Magneto, killer of Charles Xavier, Cyclops, and All-New X-Men focusing on the original five X-Men (O5) that have been pulled into the present by Beast in order to punish Cyclops by holding a literal mirror in front of him: the young, idealistic people they used to be, including the younger and still alive version of Jean Grey, who is probably like 17 or 18. More on that later. All-New X-Men centers on the O5, who can't go home and can't believe that they turn out the way they do in their future and our present. The present, and fractured, X-Men basically spend the entire book trying to court the O5 to joining their respective "sides," while the O5 seeks to differentiate themselves from counterparts. Beast, the blue one, is probably the major supporting character in this, he with the genius complex and constant meddling in things he should probably just leave alone, though the book also has more familiar faces than Uncanny X-Men overall. Kitty Pryde also becomes the group's defacto mentor, though she kinda ditches everyone for Starlord and the Guardians of the Galaxy, who are the major guest stars in the second half of the run. All-New X-Men has a lot of interesting dynamics between characters, including some surprising romances between members of the O5 and present characters, and does a great job of establishing that Cyclops, Beast, Iceman, Angel, and Jean view themselves as their own people whose fates are still up to them. Bendis crafts quite a few clever moments, referencing years of X-Men stories. Given its premise, All-New X-Men works better and makes more sense than it probably had any right to. Uncanny X-Men is kind of a fever dream. The team Cyclops has assembled includes Emma Frost, Magik, and Magneto (kinda - he disappears to star in his own overdue miniseries a lot), as well as the Stepford Cuckoos introduced by Morrison and a bunch of new recruits: Hijack, who can control anything mechanical or electronic, Triage, who is a healer, the pretty forgettable mimicker Deeds, the great Eva Bell/Tempus, and Goldballs, who is just amazing. Bendis' ability to sell ludicrous setups and characters is second to none. Dazzler, Havok, X-23, Mystique, and Maria Hill from SHIELD (who might as well be Abigail Brand from SWORD in the Whedon run) also factor heavily in the series. After Cyclops basically declared a mutant revolution after becoming the Dark Phoenix in Avengers vs X-Men and killed Charles Xavier, he takes his team and goes on the run, trying to recruit new mutants to his cause and generally play up being a revolutionary character, all the while his powers, as well as Emma's and Magneto's, are on the fritz. He tussles with Wolverine's X-Men, who hate him for killing their father figure, and spends the entire book trying to figure out what this revolution of his is supposed to look like. Oh, and halfway through these books, the O5 basically split up and go their different ways. You'll need to read both books and one miniseries to keep track of them all, but you should be doing that anyway. Bendis' tandem of X-books really demonstrate his love for these characters and their extensive publication history. It's really one 70+ issue volume that tries to put a bow on the state of the X-Men up to this point (before the Inhumans completely wipe out who's left of them), exploring where they've been, where they are now, and if "Chuck" Xavier's dream is farther away than ever. I think there are a lot of great things about Bendis' writing. He's basically a less-talented Joss Whedon who never made it to Hollywood and only does comics. He knows how to script interesting plots and funny, clever moments. There are a lot of problems, though. First of all, if you are a longtime X-fan, the entire state of the X-Men is sad beyond belief. The fact that Bendis' own House of M changed their entire story from one about acceptance and prejudice to one solely about being an isolated and endangered species is a direction I will never forgive Marvel editorial for approving because it does nothing to show the X-Men in a light that makes them more interesting or dynamic. We've gotten a decade of militant Cyclops and Wolverine doing his best (crappy) Xavier impression and trying to be a "good" person and you see in these two companion series what that has ultimately wrought: the realization that the X-Men never accomplished anything. The dream. The mission. It's all gone now. Secondly, for every cool plot Bendis can script, and every funny moment or clever revelation he can come up with, I find his characterization of the cast in these books wildly inconsistent. I honestly could not hear any of their voices. It just seemed like they all said what Bendis wanted them to say to advance his plot. All-New X-Men did not do a great job of actually giving the O5 their own unique voices. I often felt, especially in the (many) scenes in which they ruminate on their past and future and what they're going to do, that many of their lines could have been swapped with each other with no consequence. Well, except Jean. Here it comes. Bendis' handling of a teenage/underage Jean Grey is a complete travesty. I honestly cannot believe Marvel let him get away with this, as Jean Grey joins Uncle Ben as probably the only two sacred cows in comics that you cannot mishandle. She is annoying, self-centered, self-involved, intrusive, uses her powers with absolutely no regard for anyone's privacy nearly every issue just to advance

the plot, and is absolutely nothing like the Jean Grey I know. It's more than the fact that she's the altered "past" Jean Grey operating under revelations of her future that she's not supposed to be privy to. She is simply not Jean Grey. This is made even worse by the fact that nearly every man in the book is in love with her when she is clearly extremely young. It is lurid, creepy, and weird. The characterizations are a little better in *Uncanny X-Men* simply because of the cast are people you don't have preconceived notions about, but that book in particular highlights my third problem. When the art is good, it's good, but when it's bad, it makes it nearly impossible to tell who is who because there's alternate versions of half the cast, and when you couple that with Bendis' aforementioned inability to actually craft lines that sound unique and true to each character, it gets extremely confusing. *All-New X-Men* has uniformly better art, the O5's new and distinct costumes (courtesy of Magik) help with that, but the art in *Uncanny X-Men* can get extremely confusing because you literally cannot tell Emma, Magik, and the blonde Stepford Sister Mindee apart! They are all blonde in black costumes who have similar lines and it is just not a fun read sometimes. Mind you, it's not like you can't tell, but sometimes it takes more effort than it should. Eva Bell and Maria Hill look extremely similar too, and add Dazzler to the blonde party while you're at it (at least until later on - you'll see why). Even X-23 and Kitty Pryde look similar sometimes, which should never happen. In fact, through the course of these books, I don't think I came across a single rendition of any of these iconic characters that I felt would stick with me and stay in my mind for visual reference. We're not talking Greg Land egregious here - it's just an unfortunate clash of art style and writing. Probably the best art to come out of these books are the O5's costumes, the gorgeous splash pages that depict telepathy, with the psychics in the center and the memories surrounding them, and Kitty Pryde (when she doesn't look like X-23 or is in the same panel as her). Like I said, great individual moments abound in these books. Xavier's shadow looms heavily over the proceedings here, Magneto and Cyclops have an interesting dynamic as reluctant allies, Iceman and Iceman is fun, Kitty Pryde is finally given something to do by someone who isn't Joss Whedon, Goldballs and Eva Bell are worthy additions to the X-cast, and there is even a Nate Grey reference, which tickled my inner Cerebra. Ultimately, though, Bendis' inability to make characters sound different makes it an experience you want to sometimes blaze through instead of pore over. Not only that, but I think the most disappointing thing about two books that had such fantastic premises and produced many great individual moments is that, taken as a whole, Bendis' final word on the X-Men doesn't really answer any question it teases you with. The idea of the O5 being a mirror to the dire state of the X-Universe is great, but it basically ends with Bendis blaming it all on Beast and that's it. Not to mention, Cyclops' entire mutant revolution is basically explained away in the most unsatisfying way possible. I don't know how having the original five X-Men come to the present and having Cyclops team up with Magneto and going rogue could end with the sense that absolutely nothing really changed, but that's exactly what happens by the conclusion of these two series. I can't blame everything on Bendis though. I know this is editorial (and Mickey's) fault as well, but these two books suffer from the same X-problems that plague all but the best X-writers. Storm is, again, a bland mother figure like always, even though she's back to her edgy mohawk look, it's still all about Jean, dead, young, Ultimate, or otherwise, we get even more revelations about Xavier being a controlling jerk who played God even though we already have Onslaught and Danger and his secret crush on Jean and suppression of her telekinesis, and even though the guy is dead already for Christ sakes, we still get characters who think that adamantium claws are a mutant power when they are not, even the wielders of those claws themselves, Mystique is still a jerk but gets away with it somehow, and we are still using time travel, telepathy, and alternate versions of characters as plot devices because apparently only mutants have access to those abilities, and finally, we are still dealing with the fact that everything from *House of M* to *Avengers vs X-Men* was supposed to be about Hope Summers being the mutant messiah, and now she's tucked away in Cable's *X-Force* series. Also, for the love of God, can we please ban X-writers from using the "To me, my X-Men!" line? About this concluding volume of *All-New X-Men* specifically, it has a pretty cool crossover with Miles Morales and the Ultimate universe, a lot of fan-pleasing references to the X-Men's infinite alternate dimensions courtesy of a new character, a resolution to a love triangle that you probably won't care that much about, a revelation about Iceman that is very well done, and a few issues at the end that will make absolutely no sense unless you also pick up *Guardians of the Galaxy X-Men: The Black Vortex*. Also, you know how these two series ran concurrently? Well, the final issue of this entire saga is *Uncanny X-Men #600*, which is only found in *Uncanny X-Men Vol. 2*. Basically, this volume doesn't have an actual conclusion on its own, though you really should have been reading both anyway. I should also note that *Guardians of the Galaxy/All-New X-Men: The Trial of Jean Grey (Marvel Now)* should be read if you want the whole story, as well as *X-Men: Battle of the Atom*. They are not included in any of these volumes.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By MAC  
*All-New X-Men* is a good read

Dimension-hopping and intergalactic adventure are mutant rites of passage, and it's high time the *All-New X-Men* took the plunge! First they're off to a world like their own, but oddly different. Welcome to the Ultimate Universe, gang, hope you experience the survival! If they make it through their encounter with Miles Morales, the Ultimate Spider-Man -and their own counterparts -they'll get caught up in a cosmic caper over an object of great power.

COLLECTING: ALL-NEW X-MEN 31-41