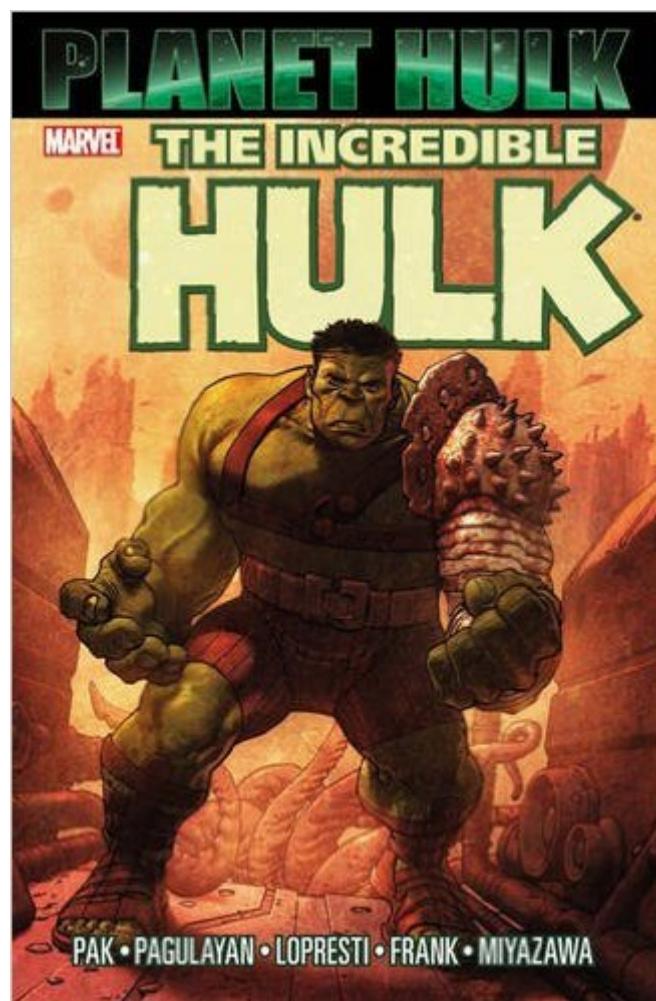


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Incredible Hulk: Planet Hulk



Synopsis

Savage alien planet. Oppressed barbarian tribes. Corrupt emperor. Deadly woman warrior. Gladiators and slaves. Battle axes and hand blasters. Monsters and heroes - and the Incredible Hulk! Let the smashing commence!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Need a primer for this summer's big "World War Hulk" crossover event? You can't do better than this huge, 400+ page leviathan of a hardcover. Collecting INCREDIBLE HULK vol. 2 #92-105, plus stories from AMAZING FANTASY vol. 2 #15, GIANT-SIZE HULK vol. 2 #1, and the PLANET HULK GLADIATOR GUIDEBOOK, this book chronicles the life of the Hulk over the last year since his exile from Earth at the hands of the Illuminati, members of the superhero elite who thought they were doing the "right thing" for humanity. I've been a Hulk fan for more than 20 years (with a collection--including INCREDIBLE HULK vol. 1 #1--to match), so trust me when I say this is one crackling good yarn that filmmaker/writer Greg Pak and his compatriots have spun here. By introducing a savage new world and an intriguing cast of monstrous characters, they've made the Hulk matter again, for the first time since the departure of Peter David. By deemphasizing Bruce Banner, the Hulk's alter ego, the development of the Hulk is assured herein. Don't get me wrong: when Banner does appear, it's at crucial moments that really enhance the story. I don't want to spoil the details, but this storyline gives the Hulk everything he's ever dreamed of, and then some. Of course, you know what they say about being careful what one wishes for. I read the monthly HULK book during this storyline, but still bought the hardcover edition. It's a superlative product, a great

showcase of a great storyline. I recommend it highly, especially to Hulk fans, but also to those who are fans of grandiose storytelling, and superheroics in general. Buy this, then follow it up with a healthy helping of "World War Hulk," wherein the Hulk returns to Earth to wreak vengeance on those who sent him away. Five stars.

The Hulk is one of my favorite superhero characters around and this collection is probably one of the best stories he's seen in many years, probably the finest since the epic Pantheon saga that Peter David did in the early 90's. First off the package is just very well done-- high paper quality, sharp colors, and overall attention to detail make this worth the somewhat high price. This is the most visually satisfying way to read a comicbook story, and I think all of Marvel's finest work should be published in collections of this type. Secondly, the Hulk's characterization is spot on, echoing the original vision of the character as a thugish brute who makes his own rules. It's thrilling to see a Hulk who's not a victim, but a proactive force all his own. Finally, the overall story arc is very satisfying, blending together the epic qualities of Ridley Scott's Gladiator film and the alien qualities of Star Wars' Tatooine. It combines to create a fnatastic science fantasy saga that should please not only fans of superhero comics, but fans of epic science fiction like John Carter of Mars or Star Wars.

I never read the Hulk growing up. I didn't even read the hulk when I started to get into comics in my early 20s. I did start to read the hulk when Planet Hulk came out, and I have to say it's one of the best comic book stories I've ever read. So many comics these days are stereotypical, with the same old themes of the same old villains and monsters escaping and going on rampages while super-heroes go through the same old soap-opera issues. Haven't you ever wished for a grand epic tale where one of our heroes get caught up in a struggle to save a planet and emerges the hero? True, that's an old plot-line, but somehow people keep finding ways to make it fresh. Like here for instance... When the Hulk finishes a mission to save the world once again, he is betrayed by his best friends, and launched into space, to a peaceful empty planet where he can never hurt anyone again. But of course, the plan goes horribly awry and instead the hulk is shot through a portal to a nightmare world more like the planet from the old game Out of This World, where giant monsters of every shape and size endanger everyone, an evil king oppresses his people like the worst of the Roman Emperors, and strength is prized above all else. On first arriving, Hulk is surprised by how weak he is, and is quickly captured. The inhabitants of the planet are impressed by his strength, but of course they don't know what we and the Hulk know, that the more you beat up the Hulk, the stronger he gets. And he is pretty much IMPOSSIBLE to kill. What this amounts to early on is a

series of crazy fights like something straight out of Saturday morning cartoon, as lots of gruesome monsters are pitted against the Hulk, and every time it looks like he's done-for, he gets mad and smashes them into goo. Unfortunately he makes some enemies in the process when he ticks off the king by trying to kill him, thus getting Hulk thrown into a place of even more fearsome monsters (Hulk never did know when to back down and play nice). Naturally Hulk can't be killed by the monsters there either, but he DOES gain some friends (despite his very angry attitude) simply because he's so dang strong everyone knows they stand a better chance of living with him, and he ends up saving everyone's life over and over. And when the survivors of a brutal gladiatorial "training" all team up with Hulk as the leader, things just get better and better as they survive round after round of brutal attacks in various arenas, Hulk fights his old friend the Silver Surfer who has also been captured, and finally everyone escapes and starts a rebellion against the Red King and his armies. Once again, stories like this have been told before, many times. But not like this. This series is a complete world with its own races, ecology, social and political system, and species' hatred and rivalry. What would be a nightmare for any other hero instead ends up more like a rollicking good time for the Hulk, as he finally gets to bust loose without worrying about hurting anyone. Because no matter how much death and destruction he causes, on this planet he's so much nicer than everyone else he DEFINITELY looks like a hero. I don't know how great writers manage to produce balance, but Greg Pak definitely does here. What could be ridiculous or overly dark is instead constantly kept at the Saturday cartoon level, but with a strong maturity and depth of feeling you wouldn't expect. The first time I read Planet Hulk I laughed out loud many times, and especially at some of the things that the insect Miek would say. There are so many things in the story that are a great parody of superhero stories and they add greatly to the entertainment (from Hulk getting slugged in the middle of a signature line to the Brood putting on a puppet show for children), but still somehow increase the humanity of the story. The artwork in Planet Hulk is also consistently excellent, with lots of color and vibrancy, strongly drawn characters with a slightly cartoony style, and a marvelous flow and sense of movement in the action sequences (and this book is mostly action). So many times in comics monsters are killed right and left and no one sheds a tear for their suffering, but the writer here takes the more enlightened view that "there is no such thing as an evil race". This is most obvious in the alliance forged between the different species toward the beginning, but it echoes in everything, as we seen touching moments from pretty much every player in the story (what broke my heart was when Hulk's warrior enemy held a child in her arms and soothed it...right before it disintegrated in her arms). And as everyone comes together to fight against evil and pursue peace it just draws you more and more into the story. In the end,

everyone finds it in their hearts to forgive and embrace as brothers...But remember please, this is a story of the Hulk. And his stories are always tragedies more than anything else. Along the path to victory many many die, and some of their deaths are quite tragic. What really makes the tragedy stronger than you would imagine is how the overall theme of personal and emotional strength is woven through the story. Again and again we see that on this world only the strong survive, and the Hulk is looked up to because he is strongest of all. But when characters see their entire races decimated before them and survive only because they are the strongest we have to wonder if they might wish they had not been so strong and lived to see such tragedy. In the final closing chapters is the greatest tragedy of all, as the Hulk stops all the fighting with his strength, unites everyone, starts to build a utopia, and then has it all taken away from him in a moment of mindless destruction. No matter how strong you are, you don't have the power to change destiny, and you don't have the power to protect the ones you love. That is the greatest lesson that Planet Hulk has to teach. So many times we've seen the Hulk portrayed as some kind of mindless monster, just a raging ball of fury without a brain. But what everyone keeps forgetting is that the Hulk is a HERO, he saves the world and helps the good guys. He's gotten a really bad rap, and it's largely because everyone is afraid of him. What's great about this story is that he played as the hero the entire way, despite the fact that he has long since given up on the idea. People keep thanking him, calling him their friend, despite his insistence that he isn't ANYONE'S friend. And yet, when push comes to shove he keeps putting out for everyone else, protecting them, not allowing people to be consumed by their hatred, and even using his self as a shield to prevent others from killing each other. Maybe it's because no matter what, they can't REALLY hurt him, or maybe it's because deep down he really IS a hero. The strongest hero there is.

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