



Batgirl: The Greatest Stories Ever Told

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Batgirl takes center stage in this collection, which includes her 1967 debut and various stories through the 1990s. "The Million Dollar Debut of Batgirl" - Detective Comics #359 "The Orchid-Crusher" - Detective Comics #396 "A Burial for Batgirl" - Detective Comics #400 "The Unmasking of Batgirl" - Detective Comics #422 "Candidate for Danger" - Detective Comics #423 "Batgirl's Last Case" - Detective Comics #424 "The Invader from Hell" - Batman Family #1 "Startling Secret of the Devilish Daughters" - Batman Family #9 "Folie a Deux Part One" - Legends of the DC Universe #10 "Folie a Deux Part Two" - Legends of the DC Universe #10 "Photo Finish" - Batman Chronicles #9

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From Reader Review **Batgirl: The Greatest Stories Ever Told** for online ebook

Mervi says

A collection of Batgirl stories from her very first story in 1967 to the 1990s.

I confess: I don't really know much about Batgirl. She was in some of the Batman cartoons but that's about it. I'm far more familiar with Barbara Gordon as the wheel-chair bound Oracle. I think these stories are set in another continuity than the one I'm most familiar with. They're all new to me.

While the collection starts with wacky and fun stories, the last two aren't so good.

The collection starts, appropriately enough with Batgirl's debut in "The Million Dollar Debut of Batgirl": Detective Comics #359 in 1967. Barbara is the head librarian of Gotham library, wearing Princess Leia hairdo. ? She's going to the policemen's ball and has made a Batgirl costume for that. However, on the way she sees none other than Bruce Wayne attacked by Killer Moth and his Moth men. Barbara goes for the rescue and finds that she likes being a superhero, so she continues. She kind of helps Batman and Robin to capture the Killer Moth who is blackmailing millionaires.

She doesn't have a tragic origin and I think that's very appropriate for her. With nothing more than her Judo training and enthusiasm she's just as capable of catching bad guys as Batman and Robin. Well, except that the males keep telling her to stop.

"The Orchid-Crusher" - Detective Comics #396 and "The Hollow Man" - Detective Comics #396 in 1970 is a two-part story where

Barbara hunts down a serial killer who kills young, redheaded girls.

This is pretty straight-forward story where we're introduced to Jason Bard, a man who wants to be Babs' boyfriend.

"The Unmasking of Batgirl" - Detective Comics #422, "Candidate for Danger" - Detective Comics #423, and "Batgirl's Last Case" - Detective Comics #424 1972

Now this goes deep into the wacky country. In the first story, the "dominoed daredoll" encounters an ex-con who cons her again. At the same time, her dad is reluctantly running for congress. Babs becomes so disillusioned about her work as Batgirl that she decides to run for Congress instead of her dad, so that she can really make a difference. She also tells him that she's Batgirl. The next two stories center around her campaign.

"The Invader from Hell" - Batman Family #1 1975

Barbara was elected into Congress and Dick comes to meet her there, just in time, too, because none other than Benedict Arnold seems to have come back from the dead.

"Startling Secret of the Devilish Daughters" - Batman Family #9 1977

Batgirl and Robin versus the daughters of Scarecrow, Joker, the Riddler, and the Penguin!

"Photo Finish" - Batman Chronicles #9 1997: This story jumps to a different continuity. Batgirl meets

Batman and Robin for the first time (again). While Batman is, er, busy with Catwoman (and yeah, the sexuality is almost dripping from the page, ew) he sends Robin to find evidence of her burglary. Batgirl tags along. They find the real burglar and managed to first get into each other's way but finally bring him down.

"Folie a Deux Part One" - Legends of the DC Universe #10 "Folie a Deux Part Two" - Legends of the DC Universe #10 1998: The last story in the collection has gorgeous art by Terry Dodson, but the story is... not good. It again returns to the roots of Batgirl being a hero. This story reboots her as Commissioner Gordon's niece whose parents died young and the Commissioner then raised her. Babs is an angry rebel teenager who convinces Batman to help her train. Gordon spies on her and finds out that she's the Batgirl.

Interestingly enough, while Dick and Barbara have long been an off-again on-again couple, they're not together in these stories. In fact, in Photo Finish, Dick (as Robin) is drawn quite a bit younger than Babs. In "Invader from Hell" Dick is still trying to persuade Batgirl to stop being a hero and they don't know each other's secret identities. But in the next story "Startling Secret of the Devilish Daughters", they work together comfortably and know each other's secret identities. But Dick has a girlfriend.

The problem here is that, especially in comparison to Batman, Batgirl doesn't get to shine on her own. She doesn't have a rogue's gallery. She's intelligent and skilled but battles ordinary criminals. This isn't the Babs I know from Birds of Prey and I find it hard to believe these are really her best stories.

Jordan says

So if not for the awesome of Barbara Gordon, this book would have gotten two stars. I'm not really a fan of older comics, I know they're classic, but most of them are just so incredibly hokey. And the majority of this book is older Batgirl stories. So tons of bad jokes and even worse villains. Seriously bad. In one story Satan resurrects Benedict Arnold in order to defeat Batgirl and Robin and thereby crush the American spirit but they win the day by hiding in a church. What did I just read? In a later story, Two-Face's daughter dresses up as other supervillains' daughters and creates chaos in order to get Robin's attention so she can join the Teen Titans. Because committing crimes and creating chaos is a great application for joining an elite crime fighting group. Uh, but on the positive side, I learned that Barbara Gordon became a congresswoman at one point.

Also, Batman is a major asshole the first time Batgirl meets Batman and Robin.

Jo Bennie says

Batgirl's greatest adventures collected together in one volume. Barbara Gordon is a demure librarian at Gotham City Library. She decides to surprise her father by dressing up as a female version of Batman for the Policeman's Masquerade Ball, but on her way there she interrupts an attack by Killer Moth on the playboy Bruce Wayne and decides to take the villains on. Wayne takes the opportunity to escape, change into his Batman alter ego and assist the overwhelmed Batgirl. It is the beginning of a great partnership, in which Batgirl defies Batman and her father and teams up with Robin to fight crime.

11 stories, moving from Gardner Fox's debut of Batgirl in DC comics in 1967, all bright colours and slapstick punching, kicking and bad puns, think Adam West and Burt Ward, to three darker late 1990s

stories. Photo Finish features the strange angles and beautifully fluid style of Duncan Fegredo (Enigma). The two part disturbing Folie a Deux ('shared psychosis') written by Kelley Puckett follows the trend of the 90s in exploring the darker sides and twisted psychologies of Gotham legends and villains.

An excellent collection and introduction to one of the lesser known but most endearing comic legends. The only addition I would have liked to have seen is reference to Barbara Gordon's career as Oracle after being critically injured by the Joker and having to rebuild her life (The Killing Joke)

Adam Graham says

This is an odd book in DC's 21st century "Greatest Stories Ever Told" books. It stands at 160 pages which is 32 pages less than the other books in the series. The book also lacks an introduction. While Batgirl is a wonderful hero, the way the book is published wreaks of an affirmative action decision after only one of the books published between 2004-08 featured a female hero rather than someone DC believes actually merited a book. And to be fair, Batgirl is not on the same level as the previous characters featured.

The book features exclusively Barbara Gordon as Batgirl though others have held the name. It begins with her mid-Silver Age origin in, "The Million Dollar Debut of Batgirl" with Batman which is decent origin story, though it does seem to demean most of her heroic acts as either unnecessary or counterproductive.

Next up are five of her 8-9 page solo stories from Detectives in the 1970s. The first two tell the tale of Batgirl on the hunt for a serial killer. This is a decent story, typical of the series. I could think of some I liked better, but they're fair enough picks.

Then there's the final three stories which tell of Barbara Gordon deciding to run for Congress and leaving Gotham City once she wins. It's an essential story for the pre-Crisis Batgirl, and again solidly written even if it's a bit dated.

The big reason to pick up the book though are the reprints of two Batgirl and Robin stories from the Batman Family comics. These comics haven't been reprinted and are very expensive. The story in Batman Family #1, "The Invader from Hell," has the new dynamic duo battling the powerful ghost of Benedict Arnold and the Devil himself in a story with a good patriotic message prior to America's bicentennial. The story from Batman Family #9 is a little more disappointing. While it's a good story, the book is really more of a Robin/Teen Titans story and as this book is about Batgirl she should have featured more prominently.

We're then offered three post-Crisis Batgirl stories, all of these were post Barbara Gordon being crippled in, "The Killing Joke" so were basically flashback stories thought not told that way. "Photo Finish" is a cute 1997 story about a precocious Batgirl and Robin meeting up. Again, it's cute, but the greatest?

The book concluded with a 40-page story that appeared in two issues of Legends of the DC Universe in 1998. The story isn't bad, but it is really padded. There's really twenty pages of story padded to two issues with a lot of half page columns. And once you come down to it, the story is more okay rather than all that great.

Overall, the book isn't bad particularly if you like Batgirl. The problem is that the term, "Greatest Stories ever told" leaves us expecting something grand and epic. This book doesn't deliver with the exception of, "The Invader from Hell." Had this book been called, "The Best of Batgirl Volume 1" or something like that,

I'd have been okay with it. However, it just doesn't live up to its name. We have some good stories and no real horrible stories, but we have a book that's 32 pages shorter than predecessor volumes with no introduction. This book just doesn't measure up.

Ryan says

Part of my ongoing attempt to understand why people get so nostalgic for DC's Silver Age.

My only non-Oracle exposure to Babs prior to this was Yvonne Craig in the Batman TV show, so I don't have much frame of reference as to whether or not these represent the 'best' Batgirl stories. They do seem pretty bland, on the whole, though, so I hope they're not?

Batgirl's origin, as told here, is almost childishly simple - she was going to a party, and made a Batgirl costume for herself. Then she sees Bruce Wayne being attacked by a villain, and decides to try to save him. Finding it fun, she keeps being a vigilante. That's it. That's the entire motivation for the character.

The character shows a little more depth later on, but the stories are pure American cheese. Barbara becomes a Congresswoman, fighting for the ERA (apparently no one notices that Batgirl moves from Gotham to DC at the same time as Barbara Gordon does) and fighting the likes of Benedict Arnold and Two-Face's daughter.

Reading new (Stephanie Brown) Batgirl issues, I can tell that they're going for a similar feel with the character now, but it's much better told that anything in this volume.

AwayFromAllofReality says

??? 1/2

Craig says

The title of this collection is really misleading, but I suppose they didn't want to call it "Some Random Pre-Oracle Batgirl Stories." None of the stories are especially good, and the framework would have really benefitted from having an essay or introduction explaining the historical context. It starts with the origin story of Barbara Gordon-as-Batgirl (there was an earlier version of the character, introduced as a female-of-interest for Robin to help offset the homo-erotic subtext that crazy Dr. Wertham discussed), and includes nine other tales, all but two from the '70s. The stories haven't aged well and despite some cool bits and pieces (such as Barbara was a congresswoman for a while; I didn't remember that), it's really not worthwhile. Considering the names of the writers and artists, including Gardner Fox, Carmine Infantino, Don Heck, Gil Kane, Eliot S! Maggin, Mike Grell, etc., I expected something really memorable. In one especially silly story, for example, Satan sends back Benedict Arnold to face off against Robin and Batgirl. The art is generally superior to the narratives; it's also fun to look at the old styles and fashions.

Seth says

I'm giving this two stars because the last two stories were pretty good and the million dollar debut was ok albeit extremely cheesy. But the Joker's daughter story where she masquerades as the daughter of other criminals just to be unmasked as the joker's daughter each time was pretty awful and let's not forget the Babs runs for representative story which was also not good. But the best of the worst was Batgirl and Robin Vs Benedict Arnold! This is why it took me so long to start reading DC Comics, because that is just terrible horrible no good very bad storytelling.

Jessie says

So I can't say this was a good collection, but it was good to read some key issues in Batgirl's history that I'm unlikely to own for many years yet. That said, it's really tough to read comics from the "great scot, Batman" era, especially when they clearly call women inferior. Batgirl is fascinating in that she was created in the comics at the request of the Adam West TV show. To have her be so smart, educated, and athletic are all awesome achievements for the era. The later issues were a little confusing. The art wasn't bad, but it was very difficult to know where they fell in the general timeline.

Stephanie says

I definitely enjoyed the comics from the 60s-70s considerably more than the ones from the 90s which were included. In the 60s/70s, Barbara "Babs" Gordon, daughter of Commissioner Gordon, and aka Batgirl, was very empowered, skilled in a martial art, and able to hold her own against bad guys - both intellectually and physically - without any help from Batman or Robin. She was even elected to Congress! But in the 90s, she was a rebellious 18-year-old with little/no training, and made a deal with Batman that if he trained her, she wouldn't fight crime on her own until *he* said she was ready. It felt like a completely backwards few steps from who she was in the 60s/70s. This book would have gotten 4 stars if not for those 90s stories.

Ivy says

Enjoyed more stories about Batgirl.

Tracey says

The problem with this collection of stories about Batgirl that it represents both the best and worse of the DC treatment of this character.

You start with what is perhaps the best known origin story of Batgirl as Barbara Gordon. This was created in the late 60s, is representative of its time but there is hope for Batgirl as character. I mean I did not mind that Barbara Gordon becomes a crime fighter because she likes the excitement and thrill of getting into a scrape with some baddies. From these humble beginnings you could see the possibility of a really interesting character arc in the making. However, that slowly unravels as you read through the decades. It was great that

Barbara, runs for Congress but the motive was appalling. The further you travel through the decades the more Batgirl becomes tepid and almost ineffective as a crime fighter. The Batgirl and Robin adventures provided some redemption to this collection.

This collection teases you with how wonderful Batgirl could have been. Yet, the character is never fully developed in this collection and you see what could have been.

I understand that Batgirl was rebooted in the last couple of years and I have not read those. It will be interesting to see where Batgirl is now.

Carly O'Connell says

As I ease my way into the world of comics, I think this is my favorite that I've read so far. It was cool to get a 3-decade glance at the highlights of the evolution of a character; it felt like both a history lesson and a fun read at the same time. These are the comics that lead to the blockbuster superhero industry we know today, the comics of my father's childhood. I think that in order to better appreciate the superhero stories of today, it is very helpful to read comics from the past. Plus, being a visual medium, you get to see all the fashion of the era when it was written. Seeing Barbara Gordon in those 1970's mini-dresses and tall boots, surrounded by others dressed as hippies or in groovy kaleidoscopic colors definitely made me giggle.

Lenny says

Starting with her very first story, "The Million-Dollar Debut of Batgirl," *The Greatest Batgirl Stories Ever Told* showcases how Batgirl's resourcefulness, courage and determination make her one of DC's best. Even though she's a stereotypical librarian by day, Princess Leia hairdo and all.

These comics were before my time. I can't compare the stories they chose against the larger whole, but the collection as a whole is extremely disappointing. The stories are lackluster and forgettable; either Babs goes up against common criminals, or laughable villains like a female Joker, Benedict Arnold, Killer Moth and...Satan? *Really*, DC?

And most of the time Babs shares the spotlight with Batman and Robin, instead of highlighting those stories from her own title. I don't understand why an issue from Batgirl: Year One was left out.

In fact, I don't understand why DC shortchanges a heroine with not only a small but loyal fanbase, but also a hero who's been shortchanged in the biggest way possible (you can thank Alan Moore for that). As usual, Batman and Superman get the star treatment in anthologies, but heroines like Wonder Woman, Batgirl and Supergirl get either one good volume, or one crappy volume, or nothing at all.

But Batgirl is still different: unlike every other superhero who's recovered from major injuries (even death), she's never been freed from her wheelchair. Batgirl has a finite number of stories to choose from, yet DC won't give her the time of day. And they have done multiple volumes for heroes in the "Greatest Stories" series, but I doubt Batgirl will get another shot; if anything, it'll be an Oracle collection.

Okay, done with the rant.

(and honestly, those two stars are for the first issue, and just the fact that it's Babs.)

see the review on my blog!

Kelli says

Like the 70's stuff better than the 90's
