



Astro City, Vol. 9: Through Open Doors

Kurt Busiek , Brent Anderson (Illustrations)

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The long awaited return of the award-winning series ASTRO CITY finally arrives!

Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson launch their next epic in the world of Astro City when a mysterious door appears, heralding the arrival of the Ambassador. But when an ordinary man is caught in a cosmic conflict, it is up to favorites like Samaritan and Honor Guard, as well as new heroes, to rise to the occasion and save the world!

Astro City #1-6

Astro City, Vol. 9: Through Open Doors Details

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From Reader Review Astro City, Vol. 9: Through Open Doors for online ebook

Sesana says

I'm used to Astro City being, essentially, a group of loosely linked short stories. This isn't exactly that. It also isn't exactly like The Dark Age, a single, large-scale story concentrating on a relatively small cast of characters. This is something in between, sort of short stories, but definitely linked, and definitely leading up to... something. I don't know where this is going yet, but I'm intrigued. I want to know what, exactly, is going on with The Broken Man (who looks sort of Bowie to me). The individual stories (more like chapters, I suppose) still work on their own merits. Best, for me: the two issues about a young lady working at a superhero call center, and how she reacts when she makes a mistake.

Brent says

Just amazing: and, you really do not need previous exposure to Astro City to enjoy these stories.
Recommended!

Joe says

What a good set of stories.
People I want to see more.

Cale says

The rebirth of Astro City under the Vertigo heading has done nothing to dampen the imagination and heart of this series. In fact, some of the stories in here are some of the best I've read of Astro City - the story of an emergency services hotline operator was very touching to me, well played and even though it hit the three act structure a little obviously, worked perfectly in its case. And the story of the Sideliners, people with powers who aren't up to being heroes or villains, was another perfect slice of people you don't usually see in Super hero comics. The wraparound story, of the Broken Man, seems to be channeling a lot of Grant Morrison, but didn't go very far in this collection. In spite of that, I would have given this five stars just for Sideliners and Humano Global (and American Chibi's brief presence, which I found very funny). Unfortunately, the printing of the book (at least the copy I saw) was off - the upper frames on several pages were cut off, to the point that some dialog was missing. This content deserves better presentation than that.

Trike says

Busiek often does slow burn set-ups which pay off years (sometimes a decade) later, and the framing story of this book with the mysterious Broken Man feels like that sort of thing. Astro City has also often had

background characters suddenly leap to the fore in later volumes, and I suspect some of the minor things we've seen here, such as Mr. Cakewalk or the Blasphemy Boys, are going to loam large in the future story of Astro City's past, and possibly of The Broken Man.

I'm generally not a fan of breaking the fourth wall, but here it's used infrequently enough that it wasn't terrible, and Astro City has delivered in the past so I'm willing to cut them some slack on this Broken Man guy.

That said, we get to see more world-building as we focus on ordinary people working unusual jobs in this extraordinary world. That's one of the things Busiek and Anderson have always excelled at, making this world feel much larger and richer than most superhero universes.

The story of Marella who takes a job at the call center for the Honor Guard (Astro City's version of The Avengers or Justice League) is the real stand-out here. It's one of those things you don't think about in superhero books: how do they find out where trouble is brewing? In this world, the Honor Guard have a hotline where people can call in tips. And because this is a superhero world full of Super Science and High Magicks, the call center is everywhere and nowhere, shielded from the outside but with access portals all over the place.

"On The Sidelines" is the other feature of note for me, as we see people who have smaller, less showy powers making their way in the world. They've decided to opt out of the superhero game for one reason or another (the main character can't deal with the stress) and they get ordinary jobs. One utilizes his super strength as a construction worker, another is a technomancer who has become an auto mechanic, while the main character uses her small telekinesis ability to assist in movie and TV production. This story was a very slow burn that started off as a background piece which ended up as quite the slam-bam action story.

The rest of the stuff is also really good, and we have great diversity of characters here. Young, old, black, white, male, female, human, alien, it runs the gamut. You don't see that much in comics these days, where everyone looks like a supermodel or bodybuilder.

Emily says

It's been a while since I've read Astro City, but it wasn't hard to get back into the swing of things. I liked the smaller stories in this volume, and I'm intrigued by the larger ones introduced that will take more books to tell.

I love that many of these superhero stories are told from the point of view of characters who would traditionally play a minor role, if any. It makes me smile when I come across a big spread of heroes and villains duking it out, and it's all background stuff in the story. Not always—there are still herocentric stories—but I like it when they turn that structure on its head.

Good fun. I'm back on the Astro City train!

Tom says

I love Astro City. Far too people, even among comic book readers, are aware of the series, and that's a shame. But imagine, if you will, a comic that harks back to the best parts of the Gold and Silver Ages of

comics but is written for grown-ups. If that makes it sound like I'm over-promising, trust me, I'm not.

This is the 9th Astro City collection and the first one on DC's Vertigo imprint, but not much has changed. The 'dream team' of Busiek, Anderson and Ross remains intact. Like most other AS collections, this is a series of stories focusing on various members of Astro City, some super-powered but many not. The Big Event of the series is the appearance of a colossal door along the banks of the river. When it finally opens, a giant being emerges who claims he is a friendly ambassador from another world. Many of the stories revolve around interactions with either the Door or the Ambassador.

My personal favorite, however, involves neither. The world of Astro City has a JLA/Avengers equivalent super-group called Honor Guard. How, you might wonder, does such a group interact with and respond to the thousands of people in crisis around the world every day? Simple: they have a call center. The resulting story about the Honor Guard call center's newest hire turns out to be pretty thrilling and was a highlight for me.

Unlike other AS collections, these stories are threaded together by a mysterious, paranoid figure known as the Broken Man, who often addresses the reader directly (even encouraging them, at one point, to skip a page). The Broken Man is convinced that all these stories are somehow connected, not just those in this volume, but going all the way back to the beginning. Is he telling the truth? Or is he simply a madman?

I don't know! Because this volume is apparently just the beginning of a multi-part saga. For that reason it's difficult to award it a full five stars as it feels a bit unfinished. The first volume of The Dark Age saga had a similar problem, but the second resolved it splendidly, so I have hopes that Busiek will do the same thing here.

Even so, I enjoyed my stay in Astro City as always. The stories are inventive and intelligent, the superheroes are bold and vivid, and the art is top notch as always.

If you haven't journeyed to Astro City before, this is as good a place as any to start, or you could journey back to Vol. 1 (Life in the Big City) or Vol. 2 (Local Heroes), also excellent entry points. Generally speaking, Astro City is welcoming to newcomers and once they arrive they almost always decide to stay.

Jerry says

It's somewhat ironic that this series has ended up at Vertigo, because it's pretty much the anti-Vertigo title. Neither ironic nor gritty nor nihilist, Astro City is the kind of place we imagined the future would be at our most optimistic, and filled with the kind of superheroes that the people who would build such a city deserve. Endings aren't always *happy*, but they are fulfilling, and sacrifices within them serve a high purpose.

This collection focuses mainly on the people you don't always see in comic book superheroes or even real-life superstars: the support staff who handle fans and who filter calls; the super powered people who don't see super-heroing as their calling, and use their powers for (somewhat) normal jobs.

And there's an inmate who talks to the reader. But that story doesn't wrap up in these issues.

Josh says

Another great Astro City book. I particularly Marella Cowper's story. She's a wonderful character. I continue to marvel at how fleshed out the entire world feels.

Kevin says

Comic book superheroes come in a variety of flavors. Over the years, I've been a fan of Marvel, then DC Comics, and then back to Marvel. But through the years, the Astro City series by Kurt Busiek and Brent Eric Anderson has been the closest thing to perfection I have ever seen.

The new Astro City hardcover, "Through Open Doors," is a wonderful reminder why I have loved this series for nearly 20 years.

This hardcover includes issues #1-6 of the the third volume of the series, new to DC's Vertigo imprint. And right from the start Busiek and Anderson (with beautiful covers by Alex Ross) bring the wonder, the normalcy, and the heroes of Astro City to life in a new way.

In issue #1 ("Through Open Doors, Part One") readers are introduced to The Broken Man, whose mad ramblings guide the reader to interact with the story and help uncover the truth behind a strange door that has appeared on the river. When an alien called the Ambassador emerges from this door, he chooses an ordinary man to be his liaison to Earth. No super-powered heroes. No government representatives. Just a normal man named Ben Pullam, who was introduced to readers back in issue #1 of the original series.

The ground-level viewpoint is what makes Astro City different from other comics. While heroes and villains fill these pages, it is the regular people who matter the most. In issues 2 and 3 ("Welcome to Humanoglobal" and "Mistakes"), the story is told from the point of view of Marella Cowper, a new employee working for the Honor Guard hotline. In issue 4 ("On the Sidelines"), it's Martha "Sully" Sullivan, a woman with super powers who years ago chose a different path, becoming neither a hero nor a villain.

Issue 5 ("Thumtacks & Yarn") is patchwork of stories that suggest connections between heroes and villains, often blurring the distinction. While there isn't really a civilian point-of-view, this unique story introduces some big concepts that are intriguing.

And in issue 6 ("Through Open Doors, Part Two") readers are introduced to Thatch Jerome, whose encounter with the Ambassador may be opening new doors to him if he's willing to walk through.

I don't read / collect single issues anymore. Normally, I don't even seek out trade paperbacks unless they're something special to me. But I have been waiting to read Astro City's reintroduction since I first heard people raving about Busiek and Anderson's return to the series last year.

The best thing about Astro City is also the worst thing. It encapsulates a huge world, and each issue is only a glimpse at the larger universe. I could spend the rest of my life reading stories just about the characters I've already met, but Busiek isn't happy to put out a thousand issues of The Samaritan or Winged Victory. Every issue takes readers around another corner in the city (and sometimes beyond), always showcasing something new and wonderful.

This hardcover is a wonderful addition to my Astro City collection, and I look forward to adding more in the future.

Yunis Esa says

I wish there few more chapters for the story to get to the point

Fizzgig76 says

Reprints Astro City (2) #1-6 (August 2013-January 2014). Astro City is the town where the heroes (and villains) never sleep. The appearance of strange giant doors and the arrival of Telseth mark a new beginning for the city and once again not only the heroes but the everyday citizens of Astro City find themselves effected. Be it a monitor at the Honor Guard's crisis line or a D-Level hero that used her powers for entertainment, Astro City is always an exciting place...but who is the Broken Man and what does he know?

Written by Kurt Busiek, Astro City: Through Open Doors is the first collection of the second ongoing series of Astro City. Following Astro City: Shining Stars, the series features art by Brent Anderson and cover art by Alex Ross.

Astro City has been one of my favorite comic for years, but also a comic that I often neglect. I don't keep up with it and other than the first series of Astro City, I have never bought Astro City individual comics regularly. After years of being behind, a chance encounter of this volume for a discount had me back in Astro City...and it is always good.

Astro City has always been a great anthology series, and I almost like the individual stories more than the story arcs, but it is hard to sell individual stories today. This volume succeeds in creating an individual issue, but also starting out a bit of a story arc for the second volume of the series. With both the mystery of the gate and the Broken Man, the series continues to introduce characters that may or may not find a resolution...but that's ok in Astro City.

The best parts of Astro City are the standalone issues. The series however has been going a long time and sometimes some of the back-up storylines feel a bit repetitive of earlier issues. This isn't too big of a problem at this point, but I hope Busiek can keep it fresh, new, and exciting with a regular comic book and a regular schedule.

The art is solid. You are lured in by Alex Ross's covers which always seem inventive, but Brent Eric Anderson keeps the energy going with his interior art. I don't think you'd ever accuse Anderson of being the best artist ever (though he's good), but he is what works for this series...the fun of the series involves looking at all the details that Anderson slips into the story in the backgrounds, etc.

Astro City continues to be a strong comic and with a continuing series, the new comic could go new direction starting with a throwback to the very first issue of the original series. I hope Busiek can keep up the quality and keep up the schedule...it is the challenge of writing a regular series, but since it is his creation, I hope it makes it easier. Astro City: Through Open Doors is followed by Astro City: Victory.

William Thomas says

The return of Astro City was one of the greatest moments of the NuDCU. Initial rumors from the company about incorporating it into the main DCU had me a bit worried, as then the inept editorial staff could have mandated and scripted the book into oblivion, instead of allowing Busiek the creative powers he needs to make the book a success. So when it turned out that it was indeed going to be separate but equal under the almost defunct Vertigo banner, my spirits lifted.

Because, I mean, just look what DC has done to its new Vertigo acquisitions like John Constantine. Handing down mandates from on-high and leaving the book in a sort of limbo with a writer who obviously has his hands tied, but who also doesn't understand the character in any context. John doesn't use spells and potions, he uses his wits. I mean, seriously, he walked up to a ghost and told it to bugger off. And it did. There was no exorcism, no sigils. Most of what he does is talk and scheme. He's a con man of the highest order. So to see him like this is a shame. Either the editors are telling them what to do, or the writer is using gimmicks because he isn't talented enough to characterize John properly. So what the hell would have happened to Astro City? Could you have imagined dwindling sales numbers forcing an immediate guest appearance of Superman to take on Samaritan? Or Batman to make one of the city's heroes part of his Incorporated? Jesus.

And now that we've dodged that potentially life-threatening bullet, we can enjoy a pleasant return to form with Busiek going full force all by his lonesome. What Open Doors brings may be more of the same, but it's more of exactly what we loved about the first 8 volumes. So if you're in the mood for great art in the classical vein, the retro style of writing, the humanized stories he popularized initially in "Marvels" and all throughout the "Astro City" books, then you're going to love this one. Because it delivers in every regard. It may not be the best place for new readers to start, and for that, I'd say it's flawed, but at the same time, it's not the most confusing volume either if you haven't read previous ones.

DC making some of the right moves? A definite fluke, but one in thankful for.

Writing: A
Art: B

Cathy says

It was good, just not as satisfying as previous volumes.

Graeme Dunlop says

Interesting. "Through Open Doors" begins with a fourth-wall breaking framing device, which continues -- off and on -- throughout the volume. Someone called the Broken Man needs our help!

We then cycle through seemingly unconnected stories, and yet the Broken Man is interested in them all.

There are some lovely gems here. There's a two-parter about someone who works for the Honor Guard call

centre -- yes, they have a call centre! As high-tech and complex as you might imagine. Excellent story.

But my favourite is one called "On the Sidelines", about people with abilities who choose not to be either heroes or villains, but use their abilities in their everyday life and work. It's wonderful, heartfelt and -- as is often the case with Astro City -- there's a very human component about what you choose to do with your life and abilities. Had me grinning from ear to ear. And the villain in this story is priceless!
