



## Batman and the Monster Men

*Matt Wagner*

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## **Batman and the Monster Men** Matt Wagner

Matt Wagner takes the Dark Knight through his sophomore season in this new trade paperback collecting the 6-issue miniseries!

Batman has spent his first year fighting organized crime — but nothing thus far in his early career as the Caped Crusader has prepared him for the new menace facing Gotham: super-powered villains!

## **Batman and the Monster Men Details**

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Author : Matt Wagner

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## From Reader Review Batman and the Monster Men for online ebook

### StoryTellerShannon says

**MINI REVIEW:** it has been one year since the appearance of the Batman the local crime has learned to fear him but this is one of the early tales in which he deals with the supernatural. Batman's cleverness is well displayed in this tale. The batmobile is introduced. We meet one of Wayne's early lovers, see Dr. Hugo Strange in action and the early relationship between Gordon and the Bats. Artwork did a nice job playing on the shadowy elements in contrast to vivid lightings.

**OVERALL GRADE: B plus.**

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### Gavin says

Solid Batman versus some monsters story, from the same writer as Batman and the Mad Monk (Vampire story). This is set early in the Batman timeline, with love interest Julie Madison, as well as mobster Sal Maroni, and also features prominently Hugo Strange. Entertaining, but nothing essential.

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### Lono says

Batman and the Monster Men is another tale by Matt Wagner that is set in the early years of Bruce's war on crime. This book is really part one of a two part story continued in Batman and the Mad Monk. While these were collected separately, the books are really one story. Wagner does a great job of giving this Batman tale an old school, gangster noir kind of feel. Some of the set pieces seem to be lifted right out of a Chandler novel mixed with a dash of Universal Monster flick. Matt's bridging the gap between Batman's early battles with mobster types and the freakish creatures he would eventually encounter. I like that Bats is starting to have to put aside the rational and explainable and accept that there are some things even his brilliant mind can't wrap itself around. I couldn't help but think about Batman: The Animated Series while reading this one too. This book has similar qualities to classic episodes like "On Leather Wings" or "Moon of the Wolf".

Wagner's love of Miller and Mazzucchelli's Batman: Year One is obvious here. Bats is still honing his skills as a fledgling crime fighter. Rookie Bats is cool. He's also learning how to balance being Batman with being Bruce Wayne. Bruce is still flirting with the idea of having a life without Bats at some point. Batman's relationship with Gordon continues to evolve in this one as well. They are just starting to build trust in each other. Wagner also gives a lot of artistic nods to Year One. A couple of images are clearly meant to be a tribute to Mazzucchelli's masterpiece. Matt's art is simple by today's standards, but it's for that reason his stuff has always appealed to me. Here's a couple of bits from both books.

You get the idea.

This book also acts as something of an origin story for Hugo Strange. He is more of the “Dr. Frankenstein” type instead of the diabolical psychiatrist in this one. Personally, I like the twist. I never really bought into the demented Sigmund Freud persona. Not that I don’t think most shrinks are crooks, just not “scary” crooks. Other notable appearances include Sal Maroni, the original Batmobile, and a cameo by the Red Hood. This one’s loaded with fun little tidbits.

Matt is great at telling uncomplicated stories with a “classic” feel to them. He squeezes in just enough action and violence to keep my attention. I recognize that my love for most of Matt’s catalogue of work probably prevents me from giving an unbiased review, but fuck it. And while it’s not what I would label “required reading” for the average comic fan, I would certainly recommend a look-see if you’re a fan of any of Wagner’s other stuff, enjoyed Batman: Year One, or Batman: The Animated Series. The average Bat-fan will probably find a little something to appreciate in this one. And if you like it, make sure to check out Batman and the Mad Monk.

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### **Paul says**

A six-issue mini-series made as a sequel to year one and is supposedly Batman's first mission.

This mini-series deals with Batman facing Dr. Hugo Strange who is conducting genetic experiments on people he encounters that he dislikes and mental patients from Arkham Asylum. He borrows money from gangsters to fund his experiments. He experiments in order to reverse deficiencies from birth, but all his test subjects become monster men, gigantic cannibalistic beasts. He uses them to steal money to pay back his loans and Batman eventually fights them and Strange begins to believe Batman is the perfect man.

Bruce Wayne is seeing Julie Madison at this time and it is shown that her father is doing business with Salvatore Maroni, the same man funding Strange's experiments. Strange eventually uses the Monster Men to kill the gangsters under Maroni and this catches his attention and has him on alert. Maroni relocates and Strange eventually tracks him down and sends his monster men after him. While at the estate he's been moved to, Julie's father comes to visit Maroni to pay him back the money he borrowed. A lot of gangsters are killed and Batman gets involved in the fight and tries to stop them, in the end Maroni survives, Batman saves Julie's father, and the monster men and all proof linking Hugo Strange to the crime is destroyed, so he lives with no punishment for his crimes. Julie's father however, is afraid because he believes Batman will come after him because of his dealings with Maroni and becomes mentally unstable.

There is a sequel called Batman and the Mad Monk.

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## **Sr3yas says**

### **Batman : Monster Men (2006)**

Modern Batman #3

While I was reading this story, which is set in early crime fighting days of Batman, I couldn't shake the the feeling that Hugo strange and his faithful 'exotic-poisonous-dart-shooting' man servant Sanjay were in fact 70's Bond Villains!

If we are following the linear time line, this story marks the appearance of Hugo Strange as one of the first Batman's long term adversaries. Oh, also Batmobile debuts in this storyline!

Not a disappointing story, but not a great one either.

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## **mark monday says**

poor Hugo Strange! according to one of my closest friends, Wikipedia, the now sadly left behind Mr. Strange was one of Batman's earliest antagonists: he debuted prior to such luminaries as Joker and Catwoman, was sharp enough to deduce Batman's secret identity, and apparently created a whole bunch of, shall we say, "Monster Men". and yet time has not been kind to him, and his infamy has faded. all we are is dust in the wind! unless there is a big screen version of us, I guess.

this title seeks to redress that sad state of affairs, with poor result. set a year after Batman became active, the book tries very hard to capture a sort of retro appeal. unfortunately Matt Wagner - usually an intriguing writer - is surprisingly stale here, resorting to overly familiar characterization that does little to breathe new life into his cast. he does a particularly poor job with the annoying female lead. his art is also decidedly on the mundane side of things with an over-reliance on square jaws, even on his women - rather than looking atypical, the unfortunate Miss Madison ends up looking like Bruce Wayne in drag.

Wagner does try though. he juggles multiple first-person perspectives, to no great interest, but at least he tried to juggle. and despite the mainly unattractive line work, there is the occasional panel here and there with imagery that is bold and compelling. the MVP of Batman and the Monster Men is actually inker Dave Stewart, who shades Wagner's drawings in pleasing tones of gray and mud-brown (plus the occasional mold-green) that create a noirish retro atmosphere sorely lacking elsewhere.

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## **JB says**

The story takes places shortly after Batman Year One as we continue to follow a young an still unexperienced Batman.

This story involves one of my favorite villains, Hugo Strange. I have a love-hate relationship with him. I hate him so much that I love him as a villain. Hugo Strange tries to outsmart the mob by paying them back a loan with their own money he had stolen at a poker game.

He is trying to create super men but instead creates monster men.

If you are like me and love to dig into the older stories before you start with the New 52 stories or if you're following the New 52 and want to start reading some older Batman stories, put this one on your list!

It has great art, I love the brownish tones and the speech bubbles especially the narrative ones. Catwoman makes an appearance, Batman even makes a reference to their first encounter in *Batman Year One*.

Pick this one up, it's a great read and if you like this one, pick up its sequel *Batman and the Mad Monk*!

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### **elizabeth • paper ghosts says**

While not necessarily a bad story, it is a bit of a disappointment after the stellar *Batman: Year One*. Even though it was recommended on a few places I checked to read next for chronological order, I really think I could've done without it entirely and been perfectly happy.

This takes place pretty soon after *Year One* and is one of Batman's first encounters with a more unusual (and what will become the norm) super-powered villain. Hugo Strange is a scientist obsessed with making perfect humans. As per usual, this never works, and he's left with completely mad, giant, cannibalistic, ugly, hairy...creatures. There's also some romance going on with Julie Madison and Bruce Wayne that also feels a little...unimportant? Or perhaps more realistically, uninteresting. (But that might be my own bias showing.)

This is a quick read, and leads right into the next story arc of *Batman and the Mad Monk*. The dialogue does leave something to be desired after reading Frank Miller, and the art definitely suffers without Mazzucchelli's beautiful work. (Especially the women - poor things. They all kind of end up looking quite masculine and unattractive.) Stewart does try with the colors, but he doesn't have the quality of art to work with that Lewis did in *Year One*.

Overall, not terrible, but not one I would recommend as a must-read.

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### **Jesse says**

This was pure Bat-goodness, hands down. Matt Wagner managed to pick up the stride of the Batman world immediately after "Batman Year One" without really making it feel out of place in the normal narrative timeline.

This is a very interesting Batman/Bruce Wayne to read about, as he is still finding his way. He has some experience under his belt, but he is still fairly new at being Gotham's Dark Knight. I think Matt Wagner

does a very good job of writing this aspect of the character.

I also found the added twist of an early genetic manipulation foe, fore shadowing the eventual arrival of Man-Bat, very interesting. Professor Strange is very real, and at times I almost sympathise with him.

I would like to also say I found it very entertaining that Matt Wagner (a man in my mind, famour for among other things giving us the very magical/mythical world of "Mage: Hero Discovered" ..et all) put what are essentially Ogres (or trolls depending on how you define them) into a non-magical Batman story. Good work sir!

I wish I could find something bad to say about this book, but even the art was great. I liked the way it maintained the Matt Wagner "Mage" feel. I am only sad that perhaps the character of Professor Strange will die with this storyline. I hope not. I hope we see a return to the Professor Strange, with even more unusual mutations in the future.

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### **Roxanne says**

This is a pretty good one and it sees quite a chilled batman dealing with maroni and hugo strange, this is just a cake walk for batsy, you almost feel bad for the guy like you've got a storm coming bruce. He smiles at one point, he's flirting terribly with his girlfriend (those law student jokes got so old, so fast) so it was kinda cool to see a different, less brooding batman and more of a focus on him than the villains.

I've got to mention Alfred, who is just amazing in this, his level of sass is off the charts i mean look at this: it's worth reading just for Alfred alone!

It's more of a mellow batman read but it's still interesting enough that it's worth picking up!

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### **Sam Quixote says**

Set in the early days of Batman's career, Monster Men follows the epic Year One storyline with a less than stellar volume that shares none of the preceding book's quality. Monster Men has more in common with other early-Batman books that suck like Year Two, The Long Halloween, and Prey, the latter of which this book is a prequel to. It's also a remake of a classic Batman story from 1940, so in theory, this book should be fun – except it's not.

Matt Wagner tells the story no-one wanted to read of how Dr Hugo Strange became so obsessed with Batman in Prey. In this book – and in line with the campy b-movie horror tone of the book's title and original story – Strange is a mad scientist trying to cure genetic defects inherited at birth, in order to create perfect humans. Except his experiments go horribly wrong and wind up giant, brain-dead cannibals. Because he's broke and being hounded by creditors, Strange decides to harness these Monster Men's strength to kill the gangsters he's borrowed money from to get them off his back – enter Batman.

Monster Men could be a fun story – could – but this one isn't because Wagner's treatment of the story is so very unimaginative. The familiar gangsters – Maroni, Falcone, etc. – are still stereotypes, "talkin' like dat, bawss – hey it's da bat!", toothpicks or cigars sticking out of their mouths, flipping coins, while Strange feels like he stepped out of a Hammer horror movie, making long mad-scientist-y speeches from his first

appearance and even having a be-turbaned assistant called Rajan! I know this latter point is intentional as this book is supposed to echo cheesy horror movies and the 1940 Batman story, but it just doesn't work here as the tone is far too serious. The Monster Men are exactly what you'd expect – caveman types with large, irregular teeth, low brows, and frequently near-naked to showcase their hairiness. How wrong can you go when trying to create a perfect human? Strange is the worst geneticist ever!

There's a pointless attempt at a romance story between Bruce and Julie Madison, possibly the least memorable of Bruce's girlfriends, which ties into the boring gangster storyline, and Bruce gets his first Batmobile. This book isn't amazingly written or drawn especially well but neither are terrible - they're just kinda average. I did like that Wagner referenced that panel in Year One where Bruce kicks a tree while training and Wagner replicates that movement exactly when Bruce is fighting the Monster Men. Also like a lot of other early Batman books, this one shows the decline of traditional crime figures like gangsters and the rise of the new criminals, the colourful villains like Strange, alongside the rise of the costumed vigilante. But inspired moments are unfortunately few in this book.

Strange sees Batman beating up his Monster Men and realises Batman is the perfect human specimen, instantly becoming obsessed with him leading in to the events of Prey –an awful and contrived reason, especially as the whole geneticist thing isn't touched on in Prey where Strange has somehow reinvented himself instead as a prominent psychologist and master hypnotist!

Monster Men isn't as awful as Prey but it's still not good. Hugo Strange remains a crappy character whose presence in a book is a clear sign that what's about to follow will be garbage. Wagner's not a bad artist/writer but Monster Men is definitely not one of his better efforts. Books like Monster Men show why Batman's best foes aren't physically powerful, because guys who just hit things really hard tend not to produce imaginative stories while guys like Joker and Riddler become icons. Conceptually this is a good story, but the finished book is very poor.

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### **Christopher (Donut) says**

As a 'year two' thing, it kind of works. It is essentially a horror comic, and the art is more underground than mainstream.

Bronze age kids remember the monster men from Batman (1940-2011) #1:

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### **Anne says**

I thought Matt Wagner did a great job with this! It's a look at a newbie Batman having his first run-in with Hugo Strange. Freaky monster mutations and a peek at the first Batmobile...who could ask for anything more?

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## **Doctorjimmy says**

[οι ηλιθιοι γιγαντες (hide spoiler)]

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## **Matt Thomas says**

Simple but sophisticated artwork, this title tells the story of Bat-man fighting Maroni, romancing Julie Madison, and meeting Professor Hugo Strange. Fun.

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