

HEAT WAVE

The hottest books set to make a splash on your summer reading list

By Josh Wigler

If the summer isn't hot enough for you yet, don't sweat your pants! From Marvel and DC all the way to the indies, *Wizard's* got the rundown on the comic books you'll want to bring poolside in the coming months.

GREEN LANTERN

DC COMICS

The Green Lantern motto gets put to the test when the "Blackest Night" descends upon the DC Universe courtesy of fan-favorite writer Geoff Johns, and *Wizard* looks to shed some light on this long-anticipated event that paints the skies black beginning in July.

Hinted and teased at since Johns first took flight with Green Lantern in 2005's highly acclaimed *Rebirth* miniseries, "Blackest Night" features dead characters from the DC Universe returning as Black Lanterns, an event that stems from the machinations of the Guardian of the Universe dubbed Scar—named so for the disfigurement of her face at the hands of the Anti-Monitor during 2007's "Sinestro Corps War"—and the formation of multiple new Lantern Corps, including the rage-filled Red Lanterns, the love-driven Star Sapphires, the healing Blue Lantern prophets and the recently discovered Orange Lanterns of avarice.

More exact details on the event remain under better guard than the ScienCells on Oa, but certain information managed to break out.

DC has already revealed two Black Lanterns: the Earth-2 Superman, who died at the hands of Superboy Prime during the Johns-penned *Infinite Crisis* miniseries, and who's return was originally hinted at in *Justice Society of America* issue #1, also written by Johns; and Martian Manhunter, who met his match more recently during *Final Crisis*, when the villain Libra impaled the hero with a flaming spear.

As a massive, company-wide crossover event, practically every DC title will feel the metaphorical bite of the returning dead, as fallen heroes in the DCU reach numbers higher than the national debt. The main story, however, begins with a *Blackest Night* #0 prelude released on Free Comic Book Day and continues in both *Green Lantern*—with artist Doug Mahnke on pencils—and a *Blackest Night* miniseries with art by regular *Lantern* penciler Ivan Reis. • KEVIN MAHADEO





AGENTS OF ATLAS

Luckily, he'll catch a break in May when guest writer Keith Giffen gives you a red scare resurgence to match your sunburn, as he takes Booster back to the Cold War!

CAPTAIN BRITAIN AND MI3

MARVEL COMICS
When Pete Wisdom unleashed an evil magical horde to defeat the Skrulls, he had no idea that Dracula would eventually lead those villains to take over the United Kingdom. This summer, we'll find out if Captain Britain can save England, or if his country will go to the bloodsuckers.



BOOSTER GOLD

ECHO

ABSTRACT STUDIOS
When it comes to writing empowered women, there's no better game in comic book town than Terry Moore. *Echo*, his latest Abstract Studios effort that just hit the one-year mark, follows a young photographer named Julie who accidentally bonds with a techno-organic battle suit. Now *that's* what we call empowerment.

GHOST RIDER

MARVEL COMICS
Jason Aaron's critically acclaimed run on *Ghost Rider* comes to a conclusion in August, and you won't want to miss the fiery finish line. Will Danny Ketch be redeemed? Can Johnny Blaze stop armageddon? Will hot tears burn our cheeks when Aaron leaves the book? Count on that last one, at least, coming true.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

MARVEL COMICS
All's fair in intergalactic war, and the Guardians are caught right in the middle! Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning's space opera continues its glorious romp through the galaxy as the titular heroes find themselves in the midst of Blackbolt and Vulcan's "War of Kings"!

AGENTS OF ATLAS

MARVEL COMICS

Straight out of the '50s and into your dome piece, Jeff Parker's *Agents of Atlas* is one of the best books currently in stores. The Golden Age superheroes are back in action thanks to "Dark Reign," and we'll see Gorilla-Man and the rest battling the New Avengers in the coming summer months.

BOOSTER GOLD

DC COMICS

Booster Gold is worth the admission price if only for Dan Jurgens' double duty as series writer and illustrator.

THOR

MARVEL COMICS

After the climactic events of *Thor* #600, in which series scribe J. Michael Straczynski pitted the God of Thunder in a battle to the death against his grandfather thanks to Loki's meddling, dark times are ahead for the hammer-slinger, as he's been deposed and exiled from Asgard.

"Now Doom—Doctor Doom!—opens his kingdom to the Asgardians, and a great migration begins...under Balder and Loki's leadership," *Thor* Editor Warren Simons explains. With Loki now aligned with Norman Osborn's Cabal of powerful villains, an alliance with fellow Dark Illuminati member Doom doesn't bode well for Marvel's Norse gods. "What is Doom's ultimate plan?" Simons posits. "Has Loki's final hour or victory arrived? And amid the power struggle, will Asgard collapse?" • **THE WIZARD STAFF**



THE FLASH: REBIRTH

DC COMICS

Leaving speeding bullets and death in his dust, DC's Silver Age Flash returned from the great beyond in the pages of *Final Crisis*. And with *The Flash: Rebirth*, writer Geoff Johns and artist Ethan Van Sciver look to rocket speedster Barry Allen right into the modern era.

Johns and Van Sciver teamed previously for another *Rebirth* in 2005—that of Green Lantern Hal Jordan. Unlike *Green Lantern: Rebirth*, which returned Hal Jordan to his former shining glory after the whole “Parallax destroying the Green Lantern Corps and almost all of reality” incident, *The Flash: Rebirth* plans on reminding readers of the importance of Barry Allen, who died heroically over 20 years ago during *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. With Barry back, expect every hero and villain in the DC Universe to feel the winds of change left in the speedster's wake.

Johns also plans on exploring the meaning of the Speed Force with the title, focusing mostly on Barry and his recently revived nephew Bart Allen (aka Kid Flash), while still featuring every other Flash from Jay Garrick to Wally West to Johnny Quick. Van Sciver has also teased giving each DC speedster a distinctive speed signature, similar to how he and Johns distinguished the ring slinging styles of each Green Lantern during *Green Lantern: Rebirth*.

Although Allen managed to outrun death, death caught up with the Flashes when both Savitar and a mysterious black-clad speedster came to dead stops in *The Flash: Rebirth* #1. Now Allen finds himself a man out of time, but simultaneously back in the life he once knew as a police scientist searching for the answer to this murder mystery—before more of his friends are stopped dead in their tracks. • KM



INCREDIBLE HERCULES

INCREDIBLE HERCULES

MARVEL COMICS

If it takes practice to get to Carnegie Hall, then it takes dying to go to hell. That's exactly what the Prince of Power and his

sidekick Amadeus Cho are doing this summer in *Incredible Hercules*, and what they find in the depths of Hades promises to shock the Marvel Universe to the core.

KILLER OF DEMONS

IMAGE COMICS

What happens when you combine “Office Space” with a celestial battle royal? You wind up with Christopher Yost's *Killer of Demons*, a miniseries about the literal and figurative

demons in the workplace. The series ends in May, but the ways to dismember demonic coworkers will remain everlasting throughout the Wizard offices.

LUCHA LIBRE

IMAGE COMICS

The quarterly-released *Lucha Libre* ships its seventh issue in May and, as expected, trouble awaits the Luchadores 5. The upcoming installment of the Humanoids series, reprinted in the U.S. by Image, sees the arrival of a Cyclops, an array of sultry Sirens and plenty of other surprises for our constantly masked heroes.

MYSTERIUS: THE UNFATHOMABLE

DC COMICS/WILDSTORM

Jeff Parker's *Mysterious: The Unfathomable* certainly lives up to its title, but the fact that it's an awesome book is hardly a secret. The WildStorm minis ships its final two issues this summer, so hurry up before it disappears forever—or until it returns as a trade paperback!

NORTHLANDERS

DC/VERTIGO

Brian Wood's Viking saga

ratchets up all new arcs this summer beginning with two one-shots in May and June. The bloodletting continues when fan-favorite warrior Sven returns in July for “Sven the Immortal.” The only downside is it looks like our fan-fic third arc, “Sven the Disabled Grandpa,” is now erroneous!

MYSTERIUS: THE UNFATHOMABLE



KNOW THE JOES

G.I. Joe is staring down its biggest threat yet—the retcon. When IDW Publishing acquired the rights to the G.I. Joe comic book franchise back in 2008, it wiped the slate clean, throwing “World War III” out the window and nixing Snake-Eyes and Scarlett’s silent love affair. But, let’s make sure you know the other half of the battle.

“You’ll definitely see different takes on older characters, especially as some of them have just lost their resonance with today’s world,” says Andy Schmidt, IDW’s senior editor and overlord of all things Joe. “But don’t worry—it’s definitely still G.I. Joe!”

Still in its infancy, IDW’s Joe is different from the Larry Hama days of yore, but even the fan-favorite creator has put his stamp on the new franchise: Hama is writing the ongoing *G.I. Joe Origins*, a series about the earlier days of the American heroes featured in Chuck Dixon’s *G.I. Joe* monthly.

“Seeing these characters come together in a story that just has never been told before, it seemed like a no-brainer to ask Larry Hama to tell it,” says Schmidt of *Origins*.

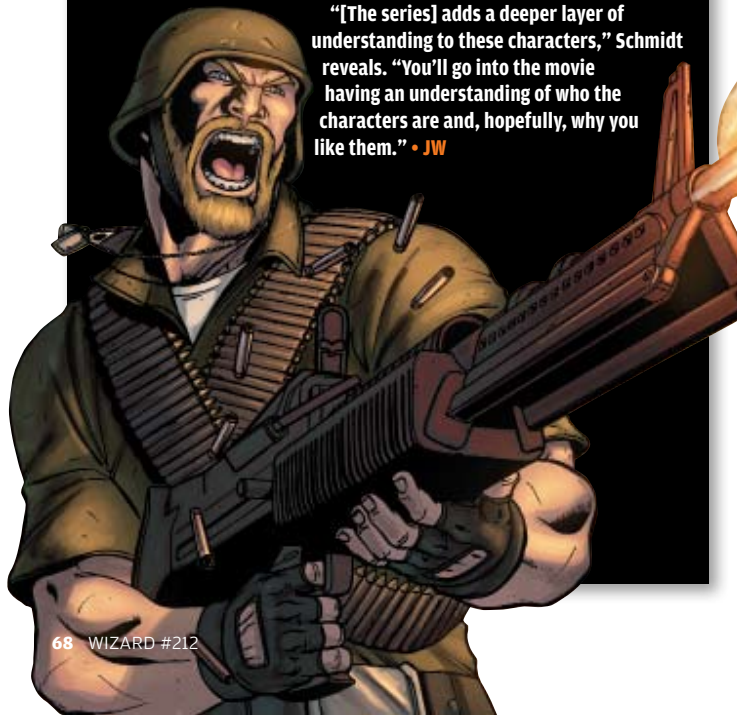
In another corner of the Joe-niverse is *G.I. Joe: Cobra*, a miniseries from writers Christos Gage and Mike Costa. In *Cobra*, Joe espionage specialist Chuckles goes undercover within the mysterious terrorist organization to find out what these snakes are all about.

“There is just a whole big heap of evil in this book,” Schmidt describes. “It is the most intense G.I. Joe book ever published. Hands down.”

“We built all of the books to function completely independently of the other two,” continues Schmidt. “But you’ll see characters [in *Cobra*] that will factor into the G.I. Joe universe later on.”

Lastly, IDW’s offering of the *G.I. Joe Movie Prequel* series, written by Dixon, for fans awaiting “G.I. Joe: Rise of Cobra” (in theaters Aug. 7). Described as “done-in-one stories,” the miniseries is designed to enhance this summer’s moviegoing experience.

“[The series] adds a deeper layer of understanding to these characters,” Schmidt reveals. “You’ll go into the movie having an understanding of who the characters are and, hopefully, why you like them.” • JW



THE OUTSIDERS

DC COMICS

Peter Tomasi’s *Outsiders* is this summer’s deepest book—literally. The team is heading straight to the center of the Earth to combat a secretive group called the Insiders. If that wordplay isn’t enough to entice you, how about a mysterious character called “The Outkast”? Talk about the love below!

PROOF

IMAGE COMICS

With a lead character like John Prufrock—a well-dressed and culturally savvy sasquatch whose supernatural exploits rival those of Hellboy—*Proof* proves that having two investigative hulking monsters in the comic book industry is better than none. Forget the pudding, you’ll want to keep *Proof* by your beach towel.

RAPTURE

DARK HORSE

How can you pass on a book written and illustrated by Michael Avon Oeming? Easy—you can’t! His newest series *Rapture* focuses on two separated lovers trapped in a world where every superpowered individual has vanished. It’s one part *Powers*, one part *Y: The Last Man* and five bazillion parts awesome!



R.E.B.E.L.S.

DC COMICS

When your main character is described as “the universe’s most benevolent jerk,” you can bet your bottom dollar that writer Tony Bedard’s *R.E.B.E.L.S.* is a book worth buying—or, in the rebellious spirit of leading man Vrill Dox (son of Brainiac), worth downloading illegally.

SCALPED

DC/VERTIGO

If you thought Jason Aaron’s Native American crime thriller reached its peak in issue #25, think again. *Scalped* kicks off an all-new arc called “The Gnawing” this summer, a storyline that Aaron has described as the most important in the series thus far, with fatal consequences for certain cast members.

ULTIMATE BOOKS

MARVEL COMICS

As Jeph Loeb and David Finch’s destructive *Ultimatum* wraps with May’s issue #5, death gives way to new life. The newborn Ultimate Comics line launches in August with Brian Michael Bendis and David LaFuente’s *Ultimate Spider-Man* and Mark Millar and Carlos Pacheco’s *Ultimate Comics Avengers*. Stated simply, if it’s got Ultimate in the title, it’s a book that needs to be on your pull list.





WAR MACHINE

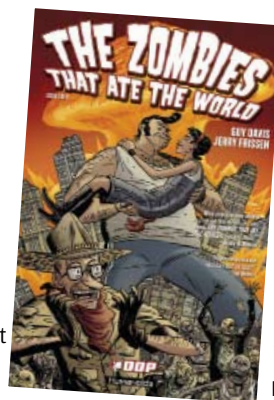
THE UNKNOWN
BOOM! STUDIOS

This summer sees writer Mark Waid and artist Minck Oosterveer's all-new miniseries *The Unknown*, about a world famous detective with an unsolved mystery. This latest offering from BOOM! Studios chief Waid promises page-turning adventure through the eyes of the gifted and beautiful investigator, Catherine Allingham.

WAR MACHINE

MARVEL COMICS

In May, Jim Rhodes takes his war to a controversial target—none other than American Eagle, Marvel's premier Native American superhero! And if you



THE ZOMBIES THAT ATE THE WORLD
DEVIL'S DUE PUBLISHING

think that battle is going to be epic, just wait until you see Rhodey's greatest nemesis of all—his mother! Heck of a way to ruin summer vacation!

There's nothing better than a good old-fashioned zombie—nothing, of course, save for *future* zombies. DDP introduces *The Zombies That Ate the World*, a series created by Jerry Frissen and Guy Davis. Originally published overseas by Humanoids, this zombie epic ponders the question of what happens to civilization once the undead claim victory over the living.

JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

DC COMICS

Despite their massive membership, the old timers and young turks behind DC's greatest generational team of superheroes plan on another member drive this summer.

New writers Matt Sturges (*Jack of Fables*) and Bill Willingham (*Fables*) step into leadership roles on *Justice Society of America* with July's issue #29, and they'll be bringing some new blood with them. "There are two new characters that both play a big role in the first story, and who will both be continuing characters in the series," Sturges promises. "One of them is Bill's brainchild, and one of them is mine. This is partly our way of putting our own individual stamp on the series, and partly a way to open up new avenues for character development."

Of course, a team with the pedigree of the JSA deserves a wide-shining spotlight, and the pair plan on playing to the strength of the large cast the same way they do with Vertigo's *Fables* franchise. "We're working pretty hard to make sure that everyone gets some screen time, which is obviously a big challenge considering how huge the team is. But both Bill and I have our pet characters that we fight to get into as many panels as possible. So you'll see that some characters definitely get a bit more attention than others," says Sturges, who has a particular eye for the women of the JSA. "Power Girl is a fascinating character because the essence of her is this internal conflict—an uncertainty about herself and her place in the world—contrasted with her external persona that's a brassy, take-no-prisoners, beautiful woman in a skimpy costume. Plus, her entire universe is gone, which is something most people don't have to deal with. She's going to be facing some interesting new challenges in *JSA* going forward, so it'll be fun to see how she reacts to them."

Sturges also promises an expanded role for the Marine version of Magog who will remain on the team, as well as some much called for solo development for Liberty Belle and Hourman. But overall, he and Willingham will tackle the role the group plays in the DCU as well as the dynamic between its heroes. "Jay Garrick's idea of the JSA might be similar to Cyclone's, but nothing like Damage's. Just like every reader of the book and every writer of the book has their own conception of what something like the Justice Society is and ought to be, so does each individual character." • KIEL PHEGLEY

