



## The Punisher MAX, Vol. 5: The Slavers

*Garth Ennis , Leandro Fernández (Illustrations)*

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On a pitch-black Brooklyn night, in a dead-end alley, Frank Castle brutally dispatches a crew of Albanian thugs menacing a young woman. Her name is Viorica, she's from Moldavia, and when she tells Frank her story, that's when the real killing starts!

Collects Punisher #25-30.

## The Punisher MAX, Vol. 5: The Slavers Details

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## **From Reader Review The Punisher MAX, Vol. 5: The Slavers for online ebook**

### **Ingenue says**

Oh man, I enjoyed this far more than such a bleak and heartbreaking subject warrants, even for a comic book. But if there is anything more cathartic than the Punisher methodically hunting down and slaughtering a ring of sex traffickers, it is probably illegal. I don't think I've ever been so thrilled by a solid gory wave of KILL 'EM ALL.

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### **Dave Antoine says**

Holy...friggin'...crap! If there's any evidence that Marvel markets exclusively to kids, anyone who pushes that belief is an idiot. Marvel's MAX imprint removes the kid-friendly vibe of its library to make a hardcore, violent take with their characters. What better vehicle than none other than the Man Without Mercy himself: Frank Castle, aka The Punisher. This super dark, super violent and super well told story has him destroying a sex slave ring in NYC run by an Eastern European mob. Frank rightfully destroys the bad guys in ways that will make people cringe. It's unreal but it's a damn solid read that will eradicate any perception that Marvel is just for kids.

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### **Steven Montano says**

If I could give this 6 stars, I would.

Frank Castle, aka "The Punisher", rescues a girl from a band of Eastern European mobsters after she irrationally attacks them with a pistol. Turns out she's pining for revenge, because the girl was a sex slave for a ruthless human trafficking outfit. The more Frank learns, the more he knows he needs to destroy the outfit, but it won't be easy: far more than common thugs, these men are former Serbian mercenaries turned organized criminals, conducting their business in a ruthlessly efficient manner that all but leaves local law enforcement helpless.

Thankfully, the Punisher can be pretty ruthless and efficient himself.

This story disturbed me, on multiple levels, and it's not often a comic book does that. Human trafficking has always been a trigger point for me, and Garth Ennis clearly did his research on the subject. The cost to the victims is high for this crime and this story, and Castle makes it clear from the start that taking down one operation is going to do little to impact the greater problem. (This is the case with being a vigilante in the first place, of course, but the sheer inhumanity, brutality and despicable nature of sex slave trafficking really drives the point home here.) There's an air of tragedy to this story that isn't as present in the other Punisher storylines, a sense of hopelessness, an acknowledgment of the futility of the fight.

That being said, Frank is the kind of guy who's going to do what he can, and there's a certain guilty pleasure to be taken in witnessing the extremes he's forced to go to in order to take out the slavers.

This is grim stuff. Entertaining, exciting, at times even moving...but grim. The Punisher isn't the sort of character whose stories end with high-fives and hurrahs in the first place, but the somber atmosphere is thick in "The Slavers", and it makes for a poignant reading experience.

This may one of the best comic book story lines ever written. It's not for everyone, surely, but if you enjoy dark, gritty and violent tales that take on real-world issues, then I can't think of anything I'd recommend more.

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### **Manos Vasileiou Aronis says**

Το σκηνικ? που στ?νει ο Garth Ennis ε?ναι ιδανικ? για να δοκιμαστο?ν και να νομιμοποιηθο?ν κοινωνικ? οι αμφιλεγ?μενες μ?θοδοι που χρησιμοποιε? ο Punisher. Σ?γουρα καν?νας δεν θα κλ?ψει για τους αιμοσταγε?ς δουλ?μπορους και αυτ? δ?νει το πλεον?κτημα στον Punisher να χρησιμοποι?σει κ?θε μ?σο, ?σο β?ρβαρο κι αν ε?ναι, προκειμ?νου να εξοντ?σει την συμμορ?α τους και να προστατ?ψει τα θ?ματ? τους. Ο Garth Ennis χειρ?ζεται εξαιρετικ? την ιστορ?α του, βυθ?ζοντ?ς μας στον σκοτειν? κ?σμο της εγκληματικ?τητας, της διαπλοκ?ς της αστυνομ?ας, αλλ? και στην αιματηρ? πορε?α εκδ?κησης του Frank Castle. Ο Ennis, ο οπο?ος ?χει μακρ? θητε?α στα comics με εν?λικη και κοινωνικ? θεματολογ?α, μας διηγε?ται μια σκληρ? ιστορ?α, βυθισμ?νη στο σκοτ?δι των πιο β?ρβαρων ενστ?κτων της ανθρωπ?τητας, η οπο?α μ?λιστα ε?ναι απ' τις κλασσικ?τερες ιστορ?ες του Punisher.

Β?βαια, αξ?ζει ?νας περαιτ?ρω προβληματισμ?ς στο συγκεκριμ?νο comic. Αν προσπαθ?σουμε να εκλογικε?σουμε τον ηθικ? κ?δικα του Punisher και να τον εντ?ξουμε στις συνθ?κες της πραγματικ?ς ζω?ς, θ?τοντας τον προβληματισμ? για τα ?ρια των αντεγκληματικ?ν μεθ?δων (εν προκειμ?νω για τα ?ρια της δρ?σης των superheroes), μ?λλον θα πρ?πει να συμφων?σουμε περισσ?τερο με τον Batman (? τον Captain America) και ?χι με τον Punisher. Ο Frank Castle, θυμ?ζει με τη δρ?ση του δι?φορους ?λλους αυταρχικο?ς χαρακτ?ρες, οι οπο?οι υπηρετο?ν συν?θως ολοκληρωτικ? καθεστ?τα, ?πως ε?ναι ο Judge Dredd ? ο Superman του Injustice.

Κριτικ? στο Smassing Culture

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### **Heather says**

The Punisher MAX titles are always a bloody, horrific, and violent experience, but this is the first time that I have been cheering for the awful death scenes. Ennis takes the story away from the usual drug dealer/Mafia field and throws the Punisher against a human trafficking ring and it is a wonderful change of pace. Even Castle knows this is a special vengeance as he says, "It has been a long time since he hated anyone that much".

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### **Steven Guitink says**

In the Beginning  
Kitchen Irish  
Mother Russia

Up is Down, Black is White

**WARNING: The contents of this arc of the Punisher MAX series are dark and includes content which may be distressing to those of a softer disposition. This is not a trigger warning. This is not an attempt to police what you read. This is one grown adult speaking to you, the reader. If you cannot handle some of the minor spoilers contained in this review, turn around and move on to another arc, or another comic altogether. You'll get no judgement from me.**

*"Later on, she told me the whole story. About the day she left her village. About the old man, about Cristu and Vera. About the thing her father said. About the thing her father said. About her baby. When she was done, I knew a lot of men would have to die."*

I don't think this arc of Punisher MAX needs much introduction. It's considered amongst the darkest stories in the Punisher mythos as well as one of the darkest stories Marvel has ever put out. I would actually consider it partially akin to a horror story given how horrifying the content contained inside is. And yet, I would also place it as one of the best stories ever put out there in the Punisher MAX line.

The art is some of Fernandez's finest. The use of lighting and shadow combined with vibrant colours makes some of the setpieces truly nasty in a aesthetically beautiful way. The character designs are all unique and interesting to look at with the three main villains running the gamut of ugly as fuck to attractive in an frigid ice queen way. Some of the most shocking scenes are contained in this book and they are handled in both a horrible but also respectful manner. This isn't a story that shows off some of its nastiest bits for shock value alone. This is a story that wants you to FEEL something.

And on that note....

It is a rare author who can actually make me feel something when I read. Enjoyment when I read is something that I'm used to. It's my hobby after all. But if an author can make me feel sadness at sad moments, laughter at funny moments or anger at horrible moments, then that for me puts them above a lot of other writers.

To this date, only Chuck Palahniuk has made me feel anger. Not because of bad writing but because of what the characters in one of his stories (Speaking Bitterness) have done. And now I can add Garth Ennis to that list. To put some of my personal views on the table, if I had to pigeonhole myself, I'd say I'm a humanist at least. I'm also not a violent person, although I understand the ugly necessity for it sometimes. However the first time I read The Slavers, I came away an anger so cool and focused that I had to put the book down for a second. I have never hated characters like Cristu, Vera and Tiberiu before. And the fact that Ennis drew a lot of what happens in this story from real life incidents makes me all the more angry. The writing is crisp and brutal with the horror combined with some very tender/sad moments that make the horror all the more shocking. Normally I'd also discuss here the intrusiveness of Ennis personal politics, but quite frankly, if you're the type who's going to complain about politics in comics and you want to argue for a nuanced objective analysis from both sides on the notion of human trafficking, then you can fuck right off.

Anyway getting back on track, the other characters in the story are a good mix of people who's lives are all affected by the slave racket. The two cops whom Frank encounters at the start of the arc are dragged into a smear campaign against him. Westin, a corrupt cop on the Slaver's payroll is a slimy little turd that twists the system to his benefit, knowing that his cop buddies will have his back. And the three of them make for a good judgement for how the system was fucked from the start. Jen Cooke is a social worker who deals with the victims of the slave trade and you can see that her life is often one disappointment after another. She provides a lot of the commentary on what slavers do, including raping the poor women until they break. And

bear in mind, again, THIS SHIT HAPPENS IN REAL LIFE. Cooke is one of those characters you have to feel a lot of sympathy for. She's fighting a losing battle and you wish she could have one victory. And Viorica.....oh my fucking god. If there was ever a time, when I wished I could reach through the pages and give someone a hug, it would be here. Her story and what happens to her baby.....

For a story like *The Slavers*, there is no happy ending. The ending shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone but the aftermath is something that will haunt you for a time after. Frank finishes what he started, but the slave trade continues on. The people who were affected by it are no better off, some are even worse off and some give up altogether. The final image of the arc pretty much says it all and while I won't spoil it, it serves as a perfect capstone to an arc that is one of the best stories in the Punisher MAX line.

And now, we move on to *Barracuda*.

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## Julie says

*Whatever he was jabbering, it wasn't English. Pavla was Albanian--maybe he was too.  
But I'd know the Lord's Prayer in any language.  
Gave him a moment. To just before the line about forgiveness.*

Originally read 5/25/16, reread today to refresh my memory for an actual review.

My first exposure to the Punisher was via the Netflix series and I ended up with a totally predictable Situation™ about Frank Castle as a result, so I sought out the books that are popularly regarded as his best. And lo, this one is great. I find him an especially fascinating character when he's like this: Frank as a big, quiet, protective man, standing up for those who can't fight for themselves, tearing his way through the bad guys because he's fuelled by anger and revenge for the underdog. I might continue with the MAX run in general, since it's well-regarded.

*The Slavers* strikes this nice balance of violence but also serious content. It's dark and grotesque; so much so that, thanks to the visual medium, I created an 'ultraviolence' shelf to warn people (I have a strong stomach! and some of the images really turned mine over!). But it's cathartic in that you *really* want to see these fuckers pay and are rooting for Frank throughout, and Ennis' writing and dialogue is good: *It was in that moment that I realized something. A dull, blurred feeling that I'd had since this whole mess began, all of a sudden crystal clear. It had been a long, long time since I hated anyone the way I hated them.*

Human slavery and sex trafficking is awful, a vicious cycle that can't be stopped, entire corrupt economies built on the backs of this suffering. *The Slavers* touches on that futility, and Frank knows it, but he'll still do his little part to make it a little bit better for the victims. Like a boy with his finger in the dam. The side characters are also good: ordinary citizens trying their best to do what they can, even if it's just two good-hearted cops taking a stand against corruption & homophobia & racism. (What great diversity here, too, with LGBT characters and women and people of colour backing up Frank's cast.)

Leandro Fernandez' art is great: moody and dark and realistic, and pairs well with Tim Bradstreet's covers (which are like... my favourite thing in comicdom). I'm an old fan of Garth Ennis' batshit nuts turns on *Hellblazer*, so I had a bit of an idea of what to expect here, and dipping into the Punisher series via his writing was a great way for me to begin. 4.5 stars.

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## Sam Quixote says

The sad tale of women-trafficking (women! They're taken as children!) and these women being raped, beaten, and sold into a life of prostitution is told here with sympathetic characters. Why these tragedies can be tolerated in a mainstream comic book is because of the presence of Frank Castle - we know the horrors will be avenged and the monsters will be killed. It's cathartic in a way you wouldn't get from real life as there isn't anyone like the Punisher out there though most of us wish there was.

What makes Garth Ennis' stories work is the focus on the characters, not Frank Castle, not painting the baddies as 2-dimensional psychos, but telling a compelling, detailed, and well written story with believable characters. The story clicks along at a fast pace and the action is as sick as any of Punisher's best stuff. The artwork is tremendous as has been consistent throughout this series, full credit to Leo Fernandez for knocking it out of the park in every issue.

Another high point in this underrated character's series and another notch in Garth Ennis' belt for a tremendous ride of a book. Great stuff, highly recommended though very dark.

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## Iva says

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## Octavi says

Que burrada más cojonuda. Necesito más!!!!

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## Louis says

Really dark. Like how the punisher knows taking down one outfit won't make a difference and the little epilogue at the end shows the cost on the victims even after they are rescued. But dark with the interrogation scene. Transitions from one issue to another are also great. Not plot cliffhangers but character ones. Eg: "I knew when she was done that a lot of people had to die"

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## Kenny says

Garth Ennis and Fernandez delivers a classic punisher story that will haunt the reader forever.

Just like Steig Larsson did with the Girl With the Dragon Tattoo.

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### **Pierre says**

Nobody does The Punisher better than Garth Ennis.

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### **Sonic says**

Re-read this for probably the third time,  
and this is a gritty,  
dark  
and solid story  
with superb art and writing!

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### **47Time says**

This arc was the most emotional so far and tackled an issue that is hidden well, but growing more advanced with time: human trafficking. Even victories in this field are short-lived as the men who organize these things never stop.

Frank rescues a young woman, Viorica, from a bunch of mobsters he takes out. He then escapes from two cops with the girl in tow. The police captain, at lieutenant Westin's recommendation, wants to start a media campaign against the Punisher based on those two cops while Frank targets the people who killed Viorica's baby.

(view spoiler)

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