



Grayson, Volume 1: Agents of Spyral

Tom King (Writer) , Tim Seeley (Writer) , Jeremy Cox (Colourist) , Mikel Janín (Artist) , Stephen Mooney (Artist) , Guillermo Ortego (Inker) , Juan Castro (Inker) , Jonathan Glapion (Inker) , more... Carlos M. Mangual (Letterer) , Andrew Robinson (Cover Artist) ...less

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Dick Grayson. Former Sidekick. Former Superhero. Former dead man. Agent of Spyral?!

A thrilling new chapter of Dick Grayson's life begins here. A super-spy espionage thriller that will shock you and prove one thing: you think you know Nightwing--but you don't know Dick.

Collecting: *Grayson* 1-4, Futures End, materiel from *Secret Origins* 8

Grayson, Volume 1: Agents of Spyral Details

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From Reader Review Grayson, Volume 1: Agents of Spyral for online ebook

Joy says

*"A **Hadrian's Woman** is like a crossbow. She is drawn and locked, fitted with a quarrel. She is ready and armed...*

...before a target ever walks into her line of sight.

*Her power is in the tautness of her **core**. In the tension in her **arms**. Her power is in her **curves**."*

As a HUGE Dick Grayson fan, I have to say I loved this volume.

Basically, this is post- Nightwing unmasked by the Crime Syndicate and then "killed." Since Dick was outed, he knew he had to lay low and keep letting the world believe he was dead for the sake of his loved ones. So now he begins a new part of his life, not as Nightwing, but as Dick Grayson, Agent 37 of Spyral.

Though I'm not entirely sold on the whole Spyral storyline, I still enjoyed learning about the spy agency. I'm kinda confused about what Spyral's purpose is and what Mr. Minos wants, but I'm assuming that'll get all cleared up in later issues. Another part that I don't really understand (which may be due to my own comic book ignorance) is the character Midnightr and what he has to do with all this.

But on another note, I absolutely love Mikel Janin's art. It's beautiful and flawless, down to every little detail. The way he portrays the characters, especially Dick, in every panel makes them feel so realistic. I love how he draws Dick's facial expressions and the lines of his body as he twists and turns through all his acrobatics. He got me literally drooling all over the e-pages.

I recommend *Grayson* to all lovers of Dick Grayson (obviously)!

Chelsea says

Is it weird that I've developed a crush on a comic character?

I was first introduced to Dick Grayson in Robin Year One. (Okay, that's not true; it was actually Chris O'Donnell in 1997's Batman & Robin but we don't speak of that film. Plus, we don't ever call him Robin). He was this adorable kid with a penchant for terrible puns. Then he became Nightwing and became more of a leader. Now, he looks after the Batfam and he's extremely attractive!

Mikel Janin is probably my favorite artist for Dick now. He gives so many details and so much life to Dick's expressions. He's coy, cocky, charming, challenging and even combative. The panel where he tells Mr. Minos that Agent 37 is not his name was freaking gorgeous.

I normally never spend this much time on art but it was that good!

Now the plot: I'll admit I didn't know what to expect from this. I picked it up for Dick and got Helena as an

unexpected bonus. Essentially, Dick was unmasked and "murdered" on TV. So, he can't be Nightwing anymore but he still wants to be a hero in some form. So, he and Batman come up with the plan to work with Spyral and spy on them at the same time.

Dick is terrible at taking orders. He disobeys every time they tell him to kill someone because it's been ingrained in him that murder is wrong. He'll do anything he can to avoid doing that and it was heartbreaking to see him work so hard to save Tanner and see him shot down in front of his son. Yet another case of the art breaking my heart.

The point is Dick can work with just about anyone but he'll always be Dick. He'll never lose his values or his drive to help people. He gets a bad rap for the lame jokes ("Now make like James Brown and get down" I cried laughing) and being "boring" but Dick Grayson truly is one of my favorite comic book characters.

Anyway, a surprisingly fun part was the college girls trying to chase him a round campus because Dick had so much fun getting to lead the chase. Helena didn't really get any character development.

There's a weird Russia flash forward in which they're suddenly doing the do and I was confused. Did I miss that? Also, she slaps him for not wanting to execute someone and that was not cool with me. That issue starts in the future and goes backwards the entire issue. It was a little confusing but heartbreaking to see the Grayson's die again.

Anyway, if you love Nightwing, you'll probably enjoy this. If you're looking for more of a team book, this may not be your cup of tea. But it's a recommend for me.

Sidekicks Wanted says

I'm not terribly well-versed in DC history, so I have no idea what happened to lead into this book. By far, my favorite panels are the sequence where he plays chase with the private school girls. Wait. That sounds wrong. Uh, Dick Grayson is a hottass. You should read this.

Sesana says

This did not work out the way I wanted it to. Sadly. I had read the first issue and liked it. A little tongue in cheek spy action seemed like a fine thing to add to the mainstream DCU. But it just didn't come together.

Largely, that's because there's essentially no forward momentum in what is meant to be the main story. What is Spyral, exactly, and what, exactly, are their end goals? Do they even have end goals? I don't know, most of the characters don't seem to know, and I'm not entirely convinced Seeley knows, either. They seem to be putting together dossiers on heroes, but why? What are they going to do with them? I'm no closer to an answer than I was in issue one, because Seeley is spending too much time on increasingly underwhelming one-off plots. No, I don't expect all the answers to be handed to me right off, but I do expect to feel like there are answers. And I simply don't. It might have helped if those one-off stories were actually good, but they seemed to get worse with each issue. Issue one is the best, and it all goes down from there.

There were two things that made me shift from bored annoyance to outright dislike. I will never be cool with

fridging a female character to give a male character angst that he'll mostly get over by the first page of the next issue. So done with that crap. But the straw that broke the camel's back came in the last "real" issue. (We are not counting Future's End stuff, because why should we?) Dick has displeased his boss, so he's going to have to pose as (are you ready for this?) a French (*giggle* accents are silly! *giggle) gymnast. Who is (and here's the punchline!) gay. Because wouldn't that be *terrible*, for a red-blooded male like Dick to have to pretend to be gay? It was so funny on Three's Company! Yeah, no, I'm done here.

Sam Quixote says

If you haven't read Forever Evil (lucky devil!) and don't want to be spoiled, skip ahead a paragraph.

So in Forever Evil Nightwing was unmasked to everyone in the world to be Dick Grayson. But Geoff Johns wasn't done with his punching bag yet because Dick got a bomb wired to his heart and was "killed". Except of course he wasn't and only he and Batman (and several other DC characters) know it.

Now Dick Grayson is a "dead man" who's decided to help Batman infiltrate Kathy Kane's secret spy organisation, imaginatively called Spyral, to discover the identity of Mr Minos (so-called because his face can't be remembered as it's labyrinthine AND a literal spiral – spiral/Spyral, geddit? Groan) and what they're up to. Dick Grayson is Agent 37 aka Boring Bland, I mean, Boring Bond, I mean, gosh, this comic sucked!

Dick has undergone many transformations through the years: he was the original Robin, then he was Nightwing, and he even moonlights as Batman when Bruce needs him to. Now he's a secret agent – and it's his worst role yet. He's simply not cut out to be a ruthless secret agent. Spyral use guns to kill people – Dick reluctantly uses guns to not blow his cover but he doesn't kill. Which makes me wonder: why didn't Minos ask Dick to kill someone to prove he was one of them, in the same way he made another character? I guess the writers didn't know how to get around that so glossed over it, hoping nobody would notice!

This might be unfair because Ed Brubaker is so much more talented than the Grayson writing duo, but I'm going to use his series Velvet to highlight the problems in this book. Grayson and Velvet are also both recent spy thrillers but at polar opposites in terms of quality.

In Velvet, the action is never gratuitous. An action scene is part of the plot with every scene informing the next and progressing the story, ie. the perfect way to tell a story. Velvet needs to find information in dangerous places and has to use her skills to get it – often breaking into heavily guarded areas, fighting highly-skilled agents, etc. to continue her mission. She's also an older woman, weaker and slower than younger male agents so there's an element of uncertainty over her fate in each encounter.

In Grayson, the action is completely gratuitous and entirely separate from the wafer-thin "plot". Dick is covertly working for Batman, finding out what Spyral is up to and who Minos is. This is actually a background "plot" because the bulk of the book is taken up with missions that have nothing to do with anything. Dick has to rescue (or something, it's never made clear) a Russian human bomb; Dick has to fight a guy whose eyes are in his gun barrels (seriously!); Dick has to bring in a Flash-like cannibal. Of course he accomplishes his missions every time – which means no tension - but they're totally inconsequential to the overall story – which means no stakes. If you accept the idea that every scene should be driving the story onwards, Grayson's "story" is almost entirely static.

Helena Bertinelli aka Huntress is in this though she doesn't wear the purple outfit or call herself Huntress; instead her codename is "Matron" - yuck! Midnigher is also in this for absolutely no reason. I guess besides Batman, the writers wanted gay Batman to make an appearance to re-emphasise the Batman background of the character? Are we supposed to like any of these characters? Because I hated this version of Huntress and Grayson himself comes off as a male model play-acting at secret agent – little more than a one-dimensional dimwit. It's just so unconvincing that a serious organisation like Spyral would take on someone as light and fluffy as Grayson especially given the way he acts here.

There are some nods to Grant Morrison's awesome DC comics in Grayson: Spyral is based at St Hadrian's Finishing School in England which is where Stephanie Brown (aka Robin #4 - though not in New 52 continuity) went; Dick calls Batman "Mr Malone", a reference to Bruce's character "Matches" Malone; and the first page of the first issue is a direct callback to the first page of All-Star Superman #1 (Mikel Janin's art even faintly resembles Frank Quitely's, though it's not nearly as accomplished). All they did though was make me wish I was reading those comics instead of this one!

Continuing DC's recent approach of courting female readers, Dick is shirtless, showing off his insanely sculpted body (abs and bum EVERYWHERE!), for most of the book. It's like they're trying to make up for decades of gratuitous gawping at the exaggerated female form (Power Girl) by displaying tons of man-candy. Even a group of horny teen schoolgirls spy shirtless Dick (oh the humour of names!) in his window and stage a "man-ty raid"!

That said, DC once more can't help shooting themselves in the foot. In one issue, a blonde woman is introduced purely to fuck Dick (literally!) and then later get a bullet in the head for her troubles. It's the return of that heinous cliché of a female character dying to act as motivation/character development for the male lead. I don't see many readers, male or female, being impressed with that nonsense.

The tone of the book is strange. I appreciate that DC are going for a less dark 'n' gritty tone that seems to be their house style but Grayson is so uneven. It swings from deadly serious with characters getting shot in the head to bizarrely comedic with near-naked Dick barrelling around the school grounds, drooling schoolgirls in tow. Fun romance – dark and tragic. It's all over the place and none of this is well-written. Besides the introduction to Dick Grayson at the start (useful, I suppose, for totally green readers), there is nothing but bad exposition throughout which becomes tediously repetitive to read.

If New 52 Nightwing made me realise how ambivalent I was towards the character, Grayson hammers home the banality that is Dick Grayson in a solo series. Tim Seeley and Tom King write bad Bond/Bourne fanfic with dribbles from the Batman universe, the result being an utterly boring "spy" "thriller". Boredom as a book = Grayson! Read Brubaker's Velvet instead to see a spy thriller comic done right.

Sandra says

I love Dick.. Grayson. :)

I am soooooo sorry. I just to throw one out there. Haha.

Yes! I love this. After reading The Court of Owls and City of Owls, I've grown quite fond of Dick... Grayson. He's the type of character you can't help but like. He's good at what he does and has this certain charisma about him. He could get a bit cocky at times which, I think, is part of his appeal.

THINGS THAT I LIKED:

- **I really liked Dick... Grayson.** Seriously. I like Grayson. Haha. He's quite hot. Sorry. I just had to say it.
- The fact that **I didn't have to read any previous book to understand how he ended up in Spyral was great.** I had this issue when I read The Flash: Rebirth, where I did not understand what was going on. It seems that you have to read another series to understand that one, which was a shame.
- I really liked **Batman and Grayson's relationship.** You really see the high respect they have for each other. He really became like a father or brother to Grayson and I really liked that dynamic to their relationship.
- **Dick jokes.** Haha. It was funny.
- The **illustrations were so well done** and just so good to look at. The colors were very vibrant, but not too much that it would hurt the eyes.
- There was a map... and the map and what they did with the map was so awesome. Haha. It was very creative. Two thumbs up.
- I've always been a sucker for romance. Hehe. And there is one here, which I completely buy. **I really liked Helena.**
- Can I just say it again, **Dick... Grayson is hot.** Look at those abs man!
- The dialogues were not sappy, cheesy. They were really done well.
- The last issue in this volume is the best. **I really liked how the story was reversely told.** You get to see the end, then the story moves back to how it began. It was great. A bit heartbreaking though.

THE THINGS I DIDN'T LIKE

- I know I said I liked that I didn't have to read a previous comic book to understand what happened to Grayson, but **the way they did it here, was too in your face.**
- I really liked the concept of Spyral, but there are some times that I feel like **I don't know what they're real purpose is.** I'm not sure if I missed anything, but I really don't get why this faceless man wants those organs. I really don't.

I think that basically summed up my thoughts and feelings about Grayson. I'm definitely curious to see more from this, since it ended in quite a bit of a cliffie.

Crazy for Books (Stephanie) says

ARC provided by publisher through NetGalley for an honest review.

Dick Grayson, former Robin, former Nightwing, presumed dead, goes to work for the spy organization Spyral as Agent 37. We discover things aren't exactly what they seem to me. Dick must decide who he is, who he can trust at the same time trying to keep who he was.

The drawings and coloring was spectacular and the action depicted was really cool. But the story itself lacked any real direction. Everything was inferred and even then the transitions were clunky. Thought it was okay, but wouldn't continue with the series if I had the opportunity.

Eli says

3.5 stars, to be fair.

I was expecting this to be about Dick as Nightwing, but this takes place after Forever Evil. To avoid spoilers for that volume, I'll just say that this is Dick working for a secret agency named Spyril. He's a secret agent in this, alongside Helena Bertinelli (the Huntress).

The writing here was good and the artwork was pretty good. The plot felt a little dry to me at times (because I'm not big on the whole secret agent thing), but there were some aspects thrown in that made it intriguing as a first volume. At the end, they include an issue about Future's End. I don't know much about this event, but that Grayson issue has me wondering what all that's about. It definitely hooked me for future Grayson volumes.

I feel like this is a must-read for Dick Grayson fans. This was my first solo-Grayson experience and, while he's nowhere near being a favorite character, I think he's a good character to read.

Lono says

A D-List character buddy read with my Shallow Comic Reading pals!

Ok, I'm really gonna try and not go wall to wall with "Dick" jokes in this one. I promise.

FUUUNNN STUFF! With so many mixed reviews for this book, I had no clue where I would land on this one. Well I like Dick....Grayson....Nightwing.....Agent 37....Whatever. Following Forever Evil, Nightwing takes on a new role as Batman's spy in the clandestine organization known as **Spyral**. I won't get into how this all comes to pass, just in case you missed it, but it made some sense. I'm not really up to date on *all* the New 52 stuff (including the New 52 Nightwing series) and it really didn't matter. The beginning of this volume brings you up to speed from the gate.

This volume's a pretty short and sweet "lay the foundation" kinda book. It introduces the key characters with a cool guest appearance by the Midnigher. Helena Bertinelli (previously the Huntress) takes on a new role in this series as well. So far I'm cool with it. Minimal Batman in this one if that's a problem for you. Not for me. I prefer my Dick solo. Figuratively speaking. Saw some gripes about the fact that Grayson is using a gun and is a secret agent that doesn't kill. I totally get it, but it really didn't bother me. Got the impression they might be working that into the story a little later.

I thought Tim Seeley and Tom King have Grayson's "voice" down pretty good. He's a playa and puts that acrobat's body to good use almost right from the start. Ladies love Dick. The writers kept it lite for the most part with a couple of darker moments. True to form, Grayson bounced back from the grim stuff pretty quick. Loved the "Man-ty Raid" and the resulting cover that Minos (he's Spyral's Dr.Evil) comes up with for Grayson as a result. Minos is peaking my interest so far as well. Some potential there. I wasn't as crazy about the Future's End issue included at the ass end of this one, but it didn't suck.

Mikel Janin's art simply rocks. Love it. Clean lines that I thought were similar to Frank Cho's with less cheesecake. This one actually seems to be geared a little more towards the ladies with Grayson's abs oozing out all over the place. The sexy bastard. The other artists that contributed were ok. Nothing special.

I liked this new take on Dick and would recommend it to anybody that isn't stuck on Grayson as Nightwing or enjoys a more light-hearted kinda hero book. If you're not into new interpretations of old characters or prefer your spies be more of the "Bond" variety, you might wanna skip it. It's a completely different direction for the character that I'm on board with for now.

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Mike says

Gotta say, I was pretty jazzed about Nightwing turning super-spy - charming, physical and graceful, he's a dreamy guy anyway, and in-the-shadows agent? C'mon, why you gotta threaten my solid heterosexuality like that?

Intro is mighty decent - for all that exposition and catch-up, at least it wasn't talking heads on a TV screen, or a protagonist talking to themselves. I don't quite understand the assassination moment (did Matron know or not?), but let's skip ahead to the action shall we?

The first mission is fun, slick and full of quips - perfect morsel to keep us enthused about our boy Dick in his new adventures. The post-mission exposition is a little too forceful with the named details, which I was hoping Seeley would tone down (and he - or King? - did).

Fun story as it progresses - unclear who's good or bad, lots of mysterious parties involved in an evolving race to acquire weird biomech tech. For me, not knowing who all these people or organizations are is actually part of the fun of reading this book, since I have no real idea who's about to conquer who.

Weird thing: Helena Bertinelli is part of Spyral. How she got mixed up with them keeps distracting me - isn't her usual backstory a mafia princess who finally revenges the father? I know her Earth 2 persona is Huntress (and Power Girl's best friend), so Earth 1's got a different origin - but has this ever been mentioned before in

New 52?

And there are some weird moments that I'm not tracking...paddling? "Chase me"?

Sadly there's a Future's End tie-in, and (a) all New 52 events fall flat for me, and (2) I haven't even read the event yet you dummies. Still and all, the story itself is pretty good - told in reverse, many little storytelling reveals throughout, and some interesting character reflections. I'll vote Tom King a worthy writer if he has this talent elsewhere.

I'm liking the time and tension of this book so far, and I'd like to see more of how Dick manages to walk the tightrope of double agent, spy and hero all without taking a life until the end. (As if - there's no way DC will me able to keep it in their pants long enough to have to bother keeping any Future's End moments "in continuity" - we'll be lucky if they don't scrap the New 52 in the next year.)

I wish this book was a bit longer, or that I'd have waited to read this until the run was over (like I did with the preceding Nightwing). Now I'll have to pretend I remember any of this when I pick up volume 2 in a year (pfft, might as well try to remember the name of that girl I fell for on the bus that time).

(view spoiler)

Anne says

You might think you know Nightwing...you don't know Dick.

slow clap

So, yeah, that's a pretty cute tagline for DC's new **Grayson** title.

So, you know how...ok wait. **If you don't know what happened to Dick in Forever Evil, then this might be a spoiler for you.** Everyone else, feel free to keep reading.

taps foot...waits

So, you know how Nightwing gets captured, unmasked publicly, and then is killedish?

Well, Batman and Grayson have a big pointless fight scene in Nightwing: Setting Son, and Batman ~~orders~~ asks Dick to *stay dead* and infiltrate an organization that he wants to keep an eye on.

Love takes many forms...

Alrighty. *This* is all about Grayson's adventure in becoming a double agent. And it's all very Bondesque. The lies, the gadgets, and, of course...the ladies.

They even manage to throw in a few more *Dick* jokes.

So was this *faboo*?

Yes *and* no.

I loved the lighter tone of this one. The humor, and the lack of a gritty/grim feel to everything was so refreshing. I mean, just *unbelievably* refreshing.

Thank you, DC! More of this, please!

But the actual **plot** is a bit confusing.

WhatTheFuck is Spyral?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Kathy Kane started this group to keep an eye on superheroes. But beyond *that* teeny little explanation, I have no idea what these guys are about. Are they *good*? Are they *evil*? Are they something else? What?!

From what happened in the opening sequence, I assumed they were straight-up bad guys bent on world domination, but by the end of this, I thought maybe some of them *thought* they were the Good Guys. And then I changed my mind. And then I changed it back. The whole thing left me confused.

And maybe that was the point, but I didn't like it.

stomps foot

However, the good outweighed the bad. *For me, at least.*

I'm on board with this one, and hoping that they work out the kinks in the next volume, because I can see **Grayson** turning into something that could be one of my favorites.

Thank you to NetGalley and the publishers for giving me a digital copy to review.

Get this review and more at:

Carmen says

[No, he's been planted there by Batman. (hide spoiler)]

Gavin says

Firstly, thanks to NetGalley for an ARC in return for my honest unbiased opinion. Secondly, thanks to DC publishing, who are usually very stingy when it comes to granting NetGalley requests for Canadian readers...but I'm very glad that I got approved this time.

Grayson, of course, is a book about the original Boy Wonder, Dick Grayson. Without a doubt the best Robin ever, the only Nightwing ever, and the best Batman not named Bruce Wayne (it's a short list, but when Bruce was MIA in time and thought dead, Dick kept Batman alive and well, and invigorated).

If you recall, Forever Evil, the story event where the Crime Syndicate came to Earth from Earth 3, the Justice League was pretty much wiped out, and Nightwing was captured, unmasked, and appeared to die on TV screens across the planet. However, if you also recall, one of the most emotionally moving moments in the New 52, Batman put everything else aside for once, and saved Dick, his former protege, and arguably, best

friend. However, Dick no longer had the secret identity to continue on, and with the majority of the world thinking him dead, (including many superheroes, and even the rest of the Bat Family (even Alfred!)) he joined up with Spyral, a superpowered spy agency.

Spyral feels like the agency from the old UK show the Prisoner, with everyone having a number, the Spiral being a common motif, as well as the unknown nature of who to trust and if this is good or bad. I personally like the idea, but only became familiar with Spyral during Batman Inc., when the original Batwoman, Kathy Kane, appeared in the Batcave and told Batman to end his war against Leviathan and his forces. I think Dick might also have been there...

Anyhow, Dick is partnered with Helena Bertinelli, the former Huntress, also thought dead by the world...(the Huntress who appears in New 52 is actually Helena Wayne, from Earth 2, borrowing Bertinelli's identity. I really loved seeing the 2 paired together, they work quite well as a team. Her cover is that of "Matron" who runs a girls finishing school for assassins and spies. Dick is later forced to act as a gay gymnastic teacher at the school after his presence is discovered by the girls, who crush on him big time. it's nice to see the humour returned to Dick, who quips that he loves being chased by college girls.

We get to see a few missions that Dick (Agent 37) goes on with Helena, and it makes perfect sense that his acrobatic training, his work alongside Batman, and his desire to fight evil would be a perfect way to have him recruited by the spy agency. We don't know at first, but later discover that Dick is in contact with someone named "Mr. Malone" who all good Bat readers will know....wink wink. I liked that touch, because it didn't spell it out for you, but you pretty well knew if you've read enough Batman. A cool moment for sure, and the contact between Mr. Malone and Dick is some of the best stuff in this book, and gave me a case of the feels, and even a laugh.

Spyral itself is confusing, because they know who Batman really is, as well as a couple of other Supes (Cyborg, Flash, Aquaman) and they plan to know more so they can have that power over them. The agency is so secretive that Dick doesn't even know the identity of his boss, because they use nanobots to obscure his face even in person, in a Spiral pattern no less...the missions are interesting enough, and we see that Dick's unwillingness to kill ends up costing lives of other people, and I look forward to seeing how the follow that up.

One of the biggest highlights for me was the arrival of another character, who I love, and who actually began as a Batman parody...the Midnighter! Turns out, he's been keeping an eye on what Spyral is up to, and it has him cross paths with Dick, and they end up in a obvious fight...duh, but that being said, it was very cool that Midnighter is given a secondary role here, trying to stop Spyral, which leads Dick to question the agency's purposes and motives even more than before. We even see Apollo come and try to get Midnighter to come back to Stormwatch, and leave things alone...

In conclusion, for a new series from DC New 52, I had high hopes, but also know that the track record hasn't been great. That being said, most of the Bat Family titles have been the successful parts of the experiment, and Grayson follows that trend. Dick is easily the most well known Bat Family member other than the Bats himself, and there's no way DC would have let us suffer too long without him, and I also feel like if Dick had actually died, so soon after Damian, that Would have been too much. Happily, we get a brand new Dick series, and with it, freedom to expand and explore the core of who the character is, and what changes he will undergo. Add to that a pairing with Helena Bertinelli, who is a very good partner for Dick, and you've got the makings of a fun, enjoyable, series with just enough humour to avoid the plague of "gritty" that infects too many DC titles.

I look forward to following this series closely, and will jump on Volume 2 as soon as it shows up. Hopefully the new Convergence event won't kill this series...

Thanks again to NetGalley for the ARC.

RationalLogic says

When it comes to comics, often times the most ridiculous premises produce the best works. In Agents of Spyral, Dick Grayson, the former wisecracking sidekick of Batman who became the charismatic superhero leader Nightwing, infiltrates the aptly named spy organization in an attempt to find out what they know about superhero identities. Those who are familiar with Dick Grayson's previous adventures would imagine that the happy-go-lucky hero makes a rather poor fit in a world of subterfuge. Fortunately, no one understands that concept more than *Grayson* writers Tim Seeley and Tom King. For those unfamiliar with the character, Seeley and King waste little time crafting and re-establishing Grayson as a fun and relatable character whose staunch idealism often comes into conflict with Spyral's more pragmatic methods.

In the hands of less competent writers, this premise could end in disaster. However, Seeley and King appear to have a firm grasp on the narrative structure of a comic. They don't decompress a single story into multiple chapters, nor do they insult the reader's intelligence with obnoxious, heavy-handed narration boxes. Each of the stories collected in Agents of Spyral is self-contained, but leaves threads open for a bigger picture. *Grayson*, at its heart, is a swashbuckling, globetrotting adventure, and delivers plenty of humor, even poking fun at comic book and spy genre tropes. Seeley and King are smart when it comes to dialogue. They know when it's appropriate to provide the reader with exposition, and they know when to pull away and simply let the art tell the story.

And speaking of art, the team of Mikel Janin (on pencils and ink) and Jeremy Cox (on colors) is a revelation. Janin's art has a clean yet expressive style to it. The people he draws appear sexy and empowered at the same time, and they feel real. And more importantly, Janin captures their facial expressions and body language in the moment, giving these characters an added dimension that many comic book artists fail to do. As a result, these characters feel more like actors in a film rather than models posing for art. Cox provides a vivid spectrum of colors to underscore the "fun" tone of the book, effectively distancing it from the grim and dark moods that DC is often associated with.

Included in this book is a short prologue that covers Dick's background from Spyral's point of view, four self-contained chapters that chart Dick's growth as a spy and the subtle development of his friendship with his partner Helena Bertinelli, and a darker alternate future story to finish. The alternate future story is an interesting egg, as it's told in reverse order, starting with a shocking moment, subsequently with each following page outlining a key moment in Dick's life that ultimately culminates in said moment, as well as paint it in a different light. It's one of the most cleverly plotted stories to come out of either of the big 2 publishers in recent years, next to certain chapters of Matt Fraction's *Hawkeye*

When all is said and done, *Grayson* delivers a very promising start to a series that could have been disastrous. Instead, Agents of Spyral, thanks to Seeley and King, delivers a strong character-driven introduction to what may very well be DC's best ongoing series.

Chris says

2018 Re-review

Like many Nightwing fans, I was concerned about his potential fate following DC's Forever Evil event. His unmasking at the hands of the Crime Syndicate prompted speculation that he'd meet his demise, but then the news broke that he was set to become...an undercover spy? When Batman learns that Spyral may have discovered his secret identity, he sends the presumed-dead Dick Grayson to infiltrate their ranks and learn the truth about the mysterious organisation.

The tone of the series certainly divided opinion, ~~leaning towards~~ diving headfirst into a story of quirky espionage. Refreshingly, Agents of Spyral begins with a short story from Secret Origins, which works wonders as a primer for the uninitiated. DC should do this more often, as it would make their trades far more accessible.

Grayson and his agent partner Helena Bertinelli are assigned missions by Spyral's leader, the amusing and enigmatic Mr. Minos. The main arc has an episodic feel, our leading duo tasked with retrieving body parts from the late super-powered being, Paragon. All the while, Minos is simultaneously uncovering the true identities of the heroes of the DC universe.

Although he's now known for books such as Batman and Mister Miracle, this was Tom King's break into mainstream comics. The issues he writes (#3 and the Futures End one-shot) are quite notably his style, whereas Seeley handles the stranger stuff. To their credit, they both play to their strengths and also clearly enjoy writing Dick Grayson, accentuating his sense of humour, likability and good looks.

Despite Grayson's colourful and often-sexy approach to storytelling, King adds weight with a more serious story that challenges Dick's reluctance to use guns. Granted, that issue also includes the greatest 'Dick' joke in the character's history, but there's a dramatic tonal shift by the end, one aided by the art team's rare use of desaturation and visual simplicity.

Mikel Janin provides art for the regular issues and i'll be honest, i'm biased because he's one of my favourites. His expressive characters are some of the best in comics today, and his clean lines leave room for Jeromy Cox's bold colours to shine. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for back-up artist Stephen Mooney. His Dick Grayson looks like a random, generic guy (whereas Janin's absolutely looks the part) and although he draws the opening story fairly well, his poor facial expressions and lack of polish in the Futures End one-shot undermine his earlier efforts. It's not a dealbreaker, but his art is average at best.

Speaking of the Futures End story that closes the volume, it warrants a special mention. King tells the 'what if?' tale in reverse, with each page denoting what happened earlier. To understand the full story, the issue needs to be read 'forwards' and then backwards in chronological order. The details, jokes and metaphors that

are scattered throughout then reward further re-readings. It's a brilliant narrative idea and I haven't read an issue like it, either prior or since. I hate to sound like a comic book hipster, but I knew Tom King was a great writer *before it was cool*. ***Puts on shades***

Overall, Agents Of Spyral is a pretty strong start for Grayson, one that took myself and many of the Nightwing fanbase from apprehension to enjoyment. Could it be considered too frivolous for some? Sure, but ultimately all that's missing from Dick's time as Nightwing is the name and the costume. If you're a Dick Grayson fan, you owe it to yourself to check this one out and hey, it's fun and accessible even if you're not. Recommended.
