



## Astro City, Vol. 8: Shining Stars

*Kurt Busiek , Brent Anderson (Illustrator)*

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**Astro City, Vol. 8: Shining Stars** Kurt Busiek , Brent Anderson (Illustrator)

A new hardcover starring Astro City's most popular heroes, featuring cover art by Alex Ross.

Astra Furst, the third-generation Super Hero of Astro City, is graduating from college. It's a time of friends and family, new opportunities, changing relationships – and danger! Featuring the First Family, the creatures of Monstro City, a new hero team and more on a graduation night nobody's ever going to forget!

Also in this volume: at last, the full story of the Silver Agent's fateful journey through time is revealed – including his origin, his greatest battles and his ultimate fate. It's all right here in a tale spanning the late 1950s to the far future.

## Astro City, Vol. 8: Shining Stars Details

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# From Reader Review Astro City, Vol. 8: Shining Stars for online ebook

## Blindzider says

This is the only volume of Astro City that I hadn't read yet and it's a good one. There's an emotional story with Astra and the long awaited origin of Silver Agent, along with a couple other stories.

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## William Thomas says

I feel that Kurt Busiek began this series back in 1996 to show what comics once were and what they could be again. He was writing it in the dark ages of comic books- a time when big guns and big muscles and blood-splattered pages ruled supreme. Funny that it was being published under Image imprints, which were the largest transgressors of the big-guns-bigger-tits phase of comics. The best part of Busiek's Astro City was that he succeeded. He did show new readers what wonders Golden Age books held, and showed writers what comics could be- how they could tell their stories without the gimmicks, although some would say his book itself was little more than a gimmick.

That could be true. He's basically writing stories of the Fantastic Four and Superman and Captain America and Batman and Daredevil under the guises of Jack-in-the-Box and the Confessor and Samaritan and so on. But it isn't about that. It's about the execution. And that is exactly pitch-perfect in every way.

My only problem is that as the series wears on, reading largely expository arcs becomes a bit tedious. But other than that, this book is a winner in every way. Every single one.

Writing: B+

Art: B+

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## Guilherme Smee says

Um dos melhores volumes de Astro City que já li até agora. Claro que o trio Busiek, Ross e Anderson nunca faz feio e até agora, dentro dessa série nunca me decepcionou. Aqui eles exploram ao máximo alguns personagens icônicos do universo de Astro City de uma forma que não foi feita antes na série: focando no herói. Explico: Astro City não é uma série de super-heróis. É uma série de pessoas comuns que, por acaso, vivem numa cidade infestada de super-heróis e super-vilões. Esse é o foco da série: trazer o mundano em frente ao fantástico e sobrenatural. Por isso essa série é demais. No especial do Samaritano, vemos o desenrolar incomum de uma relação entre super-herói e super-vilão. No especial de Beautie - a melhor história do especial - vemos uma boneca-humana indo atrás do seu criador. No especial de Astra vemos como a adolescente poderosa mais famosa do mundo lida com o fato de ser celebridade e possuir poderes fenomenais. Por fim, no especial do Agente de Prata ficamos sabendo como o primeiro herói de Astro City influenciou o passado e o futuro da maior cidade de heróis do mundo. Sensacional, amigos! Sensacional!

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## Mike says

Can mortal enemies co-exist?

What troubles the mind of the woman with no emotions?

What does the future hold for the world's most famous high school hero?

What price victory?

Shining Stars is the eighth Astro City trade and collects the Astro City specials Samaritan, Beautie, Astra issues #1&2 and Silver Agent issues #1&2. The stories are icon and stand alone, so this could be read without prior Astro City knowledge. It does add depth to be familiar with the characters though, and the Silver agent story is the culmination of hints and mysteries woven throughout all the other trades, so for that story at least I wouldn't advise it.

Shining Stars continues Busiek's wonderful exploration and celebration of superhero archetypes and echoes with real, relatable concerns and emotions. This is a great batch of stories easily on par with the high quality expected at this point of Astro City.

My favorites are the stand alone tales The Eagle and the Mountain (Samaritan) and Her Dark Plastic Roots (Beautie). Infidel is an incredible character and his cordial evening with his greatest enemy a subtle masterpiece. Beautie's interactions with the world and investigation of a mystery that tugs at the edge of her thoughts is wonderfully unique and gives a lot of depth to a character that didn't seem to have much.

Astra's story is probably the weakest, but only by comparison. It is still extremely good and feels genuine to the "normal" problems and decisions a teen hero would face. The Silver Agent story has been a very long time coming, and while it starts slow and doesn't necessarily live up to all the build it has some very nice twists, is fitting for the character and answers all the questions it meant to address. A worthy tale to finally explain all the mysteries surrounding the Agent.

The art is amazing as usual. My general thoughts it on from previous reviews: "As always with Astro City, Alex Ross provides his usual astounding work for the covers, and the interiors are all Brent Anderson. Anderson's art has a unique style and can take some getting used to. It's not quite as crisp as the typical comic art, but it suits the stories extremely well and his habit of leaving some details a little obscured pays off beautifully when the scene requires more detail (which he provides in amazing fashion - emotion comes across strongly from his characters). Personally I love it, but it's worth mentioning that it's not everyone's cup of tea."

Overall really fantastic stuff all focused on character motivations, development and histories. The Eagle and the Mountain in particular is one of my favorite comic stories ever.

Highly recommended.

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## Ryan says

When I think back to the "grim and gritty" comics of my youth, I can't help but think that Astro City is what they grew up to become. There is a certain degree of cynicism to them, but they are still courageously hopeful stories that focus on the better angels of our being, and how truly awe-inspiring the vastness of the

universe can be.

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## Eric says

4 1/2 stars

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## Shannon Appelcline says

A set of terrific stories that really highlight Busiek's strength in writing short, character-based stories. Every one of them knocks it out of the park.

**Samaritan.** I've read several of Busiek's *Superman* volumes, and they were entirely "meh". Which is surprising because Samaritan is one of his most human and intriguing superheroes in *Astro City*. I love how this story reveals his humanity, sets up his arch-villain, and intricately ties together with everything that's been written about him before. I could sit down and read it again! [10/10]

**Beauty.** Another story that's positively ... beatific. Busiek does an amazing job of detailing the point of view of someone who seems truly alien in a way that the Vision never was while simultaneously presenting a quest that's heartbreaking. If it's not quite as good as the Samaritan short, it's only because it doesn't have the same depth that Samaritan attained through a few major stories over the years. [10/10].

**Astra.** It's fun to see Astra all grown up, suggesting that *Astro City* is moving in real-time. The story itself is a heart-breaking little bit that shows once more how the heroes are human [7+/10].

**Silver Agent.** I thought we didn't need to see more of his story after *The Dark Age*, but Busiek fills in the gaps here, both with the Agent's origin and his time in the future and what comes in-between, and it's again a fascinating and touching story ... with a great ending! [8/10]

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## Dan Schwent says

Astro City: Shining Stars contains four tales featuring the heroes of Astro City.

**The Eagle and the Mountain:** Once a year, The Samaritan shares a meal with his arch-nemesis, The Infidel.

Most authors use super heroes to tell super hero stories. Kurt Busiek uses super heroes to tell human stories and this one is a prime example. In a very sensible turn, The Samaritan and The Infidel share an uneasy truce, each bent on bending the other to his point of view. The story is told from The Infidel's point of view and it's very interesting to see the history of their relationship unfold. It's a logical conclusion to the never-ending battle between a hero and his arch-enemy and it's very well done.

**Her Dark Plastic Roots:** Beautie is a life-sized robot doll, not unlike Barbie, who longs to understand her

place in the world.

This tale was a sad one. Beautie is an outsider, even among the Honor Guard, who wonders who created her and why. It's a tale of loneliness and isolation, normally heavy stuff for a super hero book but par for the course in Astro City.

**Graduation Day + The Gordian Knot:** Third generation super hero Astra Furst has graduated from college and is contemplating her next move. But what about Matt, her ordinary boyfriend?

This was both a coming of age tale and a tale of the perils of celebrity. Astra Furst has been in the public eye her whole life and just wants to be normal. Her boyfriend Matt wonders if her future plans include him. It's hard not to feel for Astra. Also, it was nice catching up with the First Family. Astra's tale also shows what the Fantastic Four could be like if they'd been allowed to progress a bit instead of being largely static since Franklin Richards' birth.

**To Serve and Protect + Home to the Hill:** The Silver Agent has been fighting the iGod in the future for years, snatched away from his prison cell just before his execution. Now, he's returning to his own time to face the music. Will things be different?

This is a tale of not being able to escape the past. It wasn't the Silver Agent tale I wanted to read, how he came to be on death row for murder, but it was still very good, the tale of a man with a second chance to say goodbye.

Shining Stars is another great collection of tales from Astro City. If you're tired of the endless resets and reboots in super hero comics, give it shot. 4 out of 5 stars.

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## **Rosa says**

I still love Astro City now just as much as I loved the first one. I was really excited to see that this volume focused on a couple of female characters in addition to Samaritan and Silver Agent (I'm not saying that typically they don't or that they are normally chauvenist or anything like that, I'm just saying I was psyched to see two female characters that had never gotten their own story before **\*\*end disclaimer\*\***)

I thought that watching Beautie try to find her origins was very interesting. Even though she was a robot and had funny ways of handling things and occasionally said the wrong thing she still felt very human a lot of the time. Everyone wants to know where they come from.

Astra's graduation tale and her dealings with a jerk boyfriend also felt very human and could honestly be related to by any woman on any continent. Her struggles to figure out exactly what to do with her life also felt very familiar. Everyone feels overwhelmed by choice sometimes (although maybe not in the current economy) and everyone wants to feel like they are making the right decision, but mostly it's just a leap of faith that you are finding the right place for yourself.

The Silver Agent story was definitely kind of gut wrenching. I don't remember ever reading about exactly how he ended up being accused of murder so I'm hoping we get a chance to find out.

Infidel's story was way more interesting then I thought it would be. Yes he is a horrible villain bent on world

destruction, however in his way he is just trying to get his home back. This story definitely makes him a very human person while still managing to make me feel like he is this unapproachable towering villain.

Astro City always manages to take the superheroes and make them feel like everyman while still leaving them on their lofty perch, which I think is extremely impressive. I love that we follow the city and get the opportunity to learn about so many different characters. There is a lot going on in this series and it all deserves attention. I especially loved the note at the end reminding us that every character even minor ones need lots of attention b/c you never know when someone will become a major character for a book.

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## **Simon Chadwick says**

If you've not come across Astro City before then you're missing a genuine treat. When you first discover them, superhero comics offer an exciting alternative existence full of wonder, impossibilities and potential, but the more you gorge on it the more you become acclimatised to the codes and conventions of the genre. This leaves you with a pretty good idea as to where a story is going to take you, who'll prevail, and what will happen to the latest egomaniacal villain. It's reached a point where I read very few now as it often feels a case of been-there-done-that, but that doesn't mean that there aren't creators out there pushing the boundaries, such as Bendis and Oeming on Powers.

With Astro City, though, you get something altogether different. Although it's a world constructed for any reader to enjoy, it probably offers the most to anyone who has enjoyed the work of Marvel and DC for some time as it cleverly builds its stories around the familiar to take superhero comics in a completely different direction. Astro City stories are about people living in a world of powers, be they ordinary or gifted, and those stories aren't about saving the world or battling foes - the things that separate us from those wearing capes - but are instead about their fears, their worries, their inner-conflicts, their hopes and their dreams. By sharing what we share with them the stories become more personal, deeper, and involve us at a level that most superhero comics can't achieve.

In Shining Stars we have four tales centred around four very different heroes. Samaritan (Astro City's version of Superman) takes on a green-bearded immortal who has harnessed the energies of life itself, and although the story charts their long history of conflict, what it revolves around is where such a lengthy battle between two immensely-powered beings arrives at - a kind-of respectful stalemate, although somewhat guarded, in which the two meet to dine together.

The second tale involves a human-sized robot, built to look like a Barbie-esque doll, who struggles to fit in and understand her origins. It's a tragic tale about why she'll never receive the answer she yearns for.

Astro City has a Fantastic Four analogue too in the shape of the First Family, and the third tale follows their daughter, Astra, as she graduates from college and plans her next move in life. Her story is one of coping with celebratory and finding a path to call her own. It's a story of trying to do the right thing, not taking your gifts for granted, and not losing perspective - something that is perhaps never going to be possible for her.

Finally we have a continuation of the story of The Silver Agent (this one sharing much in common with Captain America) already told in previous volumes, charting what became of him, what he sacrificed and what was lost. It's an epic story on a personal scale.

I would not recommend you start with Shining Stars if you've not read any before, not because you wouldn't

follow it but because I'm sure you'd get more benefit from exploring it from the beginning. It's a remarkable series and demonstrates not only the skill of its creators but the wider possibilities of the genre.

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### **Cathy says**

The creators returned to short stories/episodes after the long story featured in the two-volume arc of The Dark Age. It was interesting to see this focus on the private lives of several of the heroes, their intimate lives that would be unknown to most people in this world. This series is great about making all of the people in these stories feel grounded in reality and featuring intimate portraits of some of the heroes reminds us that they're really just people (mostly humans) with complex lives outside of the public eye. I liked all four stories, but finally getting the true story about the Silver Agent was of course the most satisfying.

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### **Aaron says**

A fairly hit-and-miss (though mostly hit) collection. The previous hero-focused Astro City volumes (1 and 3) have been my least favorite, though this one was definitely inventive enough to stand out from amongst those. The true magic of Astro City lies in the stories told from the points of view of normal people, though, and this one has none of that.

This volume consists of 4 different stories: 2 one-shots and 2 two-issue arcs. The first one-shot examining the patient, mostly mental battle between the Samaritan and his archnemesis, Infidel, is the standout in this collection. Perfectly told and epic in scope, while playing out entirely over a brief dinner, really knocked it out of the park. Busiek felt like he was showing off just how great his storytelling can be with this one.

My second-favorite story in the bunch was the final reveal of just what happened to the Silver Agent. We saw lots of hints and outside observations of his impact on the world throughout The Dark Age (even a little as far back as Local Heroes), but now we finally get the full tale. And it WORKS. It's such a great story, and even though I knew the final outcome going in, I still kept turning the pages in anticipation of what would happen next. This was also by far the most human story in the bunch, even though it plays out over millennia via a time travel plot device. I felt genuinely sad as I read it, and think it did a lot of justice to the great Silver Agent story we've become familiar with over the various Astro City entries.

The other two stories were less impressive. We get one about Beautie, a Barbie-doll knockoff brought to life and turned into a superhero. This one had a lot of thematic overlap with the Loony Leo story from Family Album, which was also one of my least favorite Astro City issues. Dealing with the emotions of a living doll just feels very silly and far-fetched in a series as personal and emotional as Astro City can be. And the story about Astra Furst, who we also met in Family Album a while back, felt just as been-there-done-that as the original Astra story.

So, while this book could've definitely used some improvement in a couple of stories, the other two are so good that I have to still keep this at 4 stars. It's a great read for Astro City fans, though I'd recommend becoming one before delving in, as I don't think it really stands on its own.

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## **Mary Catelli says**

Collection of the comic book. Stand-alones or two issue stories. Of variable quality.

This was less good than some of them, but the origin of Beautie -- a superhero based on a doll -- was very good. The story of Samaritan and Infidel, their rivalry and their careful armistice is odd but good.

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## **Sesana says**

After the much more ambitious scope of The Dark Age, it was probably a bit of a relief for Busiek to return to the shorter stories that Astro City started with. Personally, I like the shorter stories, and I really liked this collection. The first story is about Infidel, Samaritan's nemesis. It's a great story, and Infidel is a fascinating character. And it might be the most beautifully illustrated story in the collection. The second story is the one I've been waiting for: the origin of Beautie, the superhero who's a living Barbie doll. This story will probably fall flat for other readers, with less natural interest in dolls. For me, it was a blast just seeing a vintage Barbie in action. I didn't love Astra's story quite so much. It can basically be summed up as "paparazzi=bad", which is neither a new nor a terribly interesting insight. That said, there are some gorgeous images, and it's written fairly well. The last story was kind of a let down. I think it's meant to fully close the book on the Silver Agent, explain exactly where he'd been and what he'd done. And although it gives some decent insight into who he was and why he would have willingly gone back to his prison cell, it feels rushed. Like it had to be gotten out of the way once and for all. As a collection, I did really like it. But it isn't uniformly great, and the first story is by far the best.

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## **Donny says**

Saw a clutch of the Astro City trade paperbacks while visiting Kinokuniya in Sydney\*, and I simply couldn't resist. Since Dark Age I've been starved of Astro City, and when I saw that Busiek, Anderson and Ross are relaunching Astro City in Vertigo, I knew I must get my hands on them.

So I completed my collection with Volumes 8 through 10, and boy was it worth it.

So firstly, this one. A collection of shorts, each allowing a more intimate peek at the various heroes that populate the place. A piece on Samaritan having an annual meeting with his nemesis, a newly graduated Astra from the famed First Family and her path onward to adulthood and what that may entail, a story on Beauty, the life-sized Barbie doll crime-fighting android and her search for her life's meaning, and finally a story told from Silver Agent's perspective before his fateful journey into oblivion.

Astro City stories are not strictly superhero stories. I could spin the spiel about what makes Astro City different, but you can read that for yourself. I like them because they go beyond the action, and delves a little deeper into the human component. No necessarily all about the heroes, but the people around them, and the people who live in Astro City. The repercussions as a result of the superhero activities and how they impact lives. I like that the stories seem to stay in memory longer than most stories do.

I finished this in one sitting. A long awaited return to a well loved place.

I will say something about Brent Anderson, though. There were various panels where I thought the art was poor. I don't say this because I've enjoyed Astro City for many many years, and art is a department I don't complain about (I do about the lack of stories about several characters I like, but hey). There were panels that I thought was rendered as though a character was dreaming, but honest to goodness it wasn't, and it really was bad art. The fingers look arthritic, faces seemed squished, etc. Don't know what happened there.

\* I can confirm that the Kino in Sydney is the best bookstore I've ever been to. I love my KLCC Kino, but I love me some Orchard Road Kino too. And now superceded by this one. I've gone to most of the indie and chain bookstores in Sydney now, so I'd like to think I saw enough before I settled on Kino Sydney. The selection is huge and varied. I could spend days here.

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