



Claims Department

Today, we look at the Hugos, and tyhough I've been away these many months, from from the reading or the viewing, I'm not unaware of what's what... OK, I am, but today we're going to look at the Media Offerings on the Ballot, so just Best Dram Pres- Short, Best Dram Pres - Long, and Best Graphic Story. Join me, won't you, as we look at two categories in this first of probably four issues!



Best Dramatic Presentation The Short Form

This is an interesting set of nominations, as is always the case with BDPSF. There's good stuff, and there's stuff I didn't love, but the biggest deal is, as is often the case, the lack of short films. Last year was a great year for short films, absolutely incredible, and there are enough to easily fill up an entire roster.

Examples? *Daisy Chain*, an anti-bullying short that is magical in nature and narrated by Kate Winslet. *Instapocalypse*, a wonderfully hilarious zombie comedy. The three very similarly named *Monster*, *Monster*, and *Monsters*, all of which are phenomenal. That doesn't even get into the animated shorts. I get it, tv is what people wanna give awards to, but if that's the case, call it best television episode.

As for TV, I don't really know what else we could have put up. Pretty much any *Black Mirror*, I guess.

One I want to highlight, and I feel dirty for doing so because I hate TED talks, is A SciFi version of love from a 318-year-old hologram by Monica Byrne. You can watch it [here](#) and it is an amazingly deep, beautiful, and more than a little optimistic about a dark and strange future. I loved this piece in all its glory.



Black Mirror: "San Junipero", written by Charlie Brooker, directed by Owen Harris (House of Tomorrow)

Emotionally draining and magnificent. Those are my thoughts on this masterpiece of science fiction television. This is what The Twilight Zone would be doing if it were still on the air. It was a piece designed to take full advantage of the Black Mirror formula, while also giving us a deeper love story. So much good. So many feels. SO MUCH WINNING!!!!

"San Junipero" made me full-on ugly cry, right there on my couch. While a Belinda Carlisle song was playing. I'm still stunned by that.

Scott Wampler

San Junipero all the way. That final scene still gives me chills.

Erica Satifka

From now until forever, I will scream at the top of my lungs that "San Junipero" is the best love story I've ever seen, and it came from a dystopian future horror television anthology.

BJ Colangelo

Doctor Who: “The Return of Doctor Mysterio”, written by Steven Moffat, directed by Ed Bazalgette (BBC Cymru Wales)

I’ll be honest – I’m not as into Capaldi as I should be. Why? I love him in so many things, but I guess he carries all that as baggage. This episode was good, but a far cry from the level we were seeing when Who dominated this award.

It’s a superhero episode that rather smartly takes the British idea of a superhero, the bored immortal as it were, and pushes it up against the American Superman concept, showing the flaws of the latter and the odd permanence of the former. It’s a good episode.

What I hadn’t expected, though I absolutely should have, is that even though there are aliens and superheroes, Steven Moffat’s seventh Christmas special is at its heart a rom-com. It’s all about a dork who gets superpowers, and acts like the heroes he reads about in comics, but can’t muster the courage to tell someone he’s in love with that he’s in love with them. It gives the Doctor the great position to kind of be the unqualified giver of love advice, resulting in a very funny line where Capaldi thanks the universe there’s someone worse at romance than he.

Kyle Anderson on The Nerdist

In a year of big budget superhero movies filled with long action scenes and brooding heroes, it was refreshing to see a light-hearted story about a full-time nanny and part-time superhero pining for his employer while saving the people of NYC, a long range baby monitor hooked to his suit.

Mel Perez on BlackGirlNerds



The Expanse: “Leviathan Wakes”, written by Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby, directed by Terry McDonough (SyFy)

Good? Yes. Smart? Yes. Worthy of a Hugo win? Maybe.

The big thing about The Expanse is the fact that it never feels as if it’s a series that will go so far into the realm of Hard SF without at least pretending to be for a mass audience. That sounds like a knock, I know, and it’s a popular series, but really, it’s for the nuts-and-volts crowd.

I think this would have a better shot in a year without two GoT episodes that will help to define the entire series, frankly.

“I’d like to see The Expanse: “Leviathan Wakes” take the rocket. It’s so rare to see televised SF adhere to hard SF standards.”

Doug Berry

There was enough humor in this finale to counterbalance some of the horror, which was nice. Between Amos’ one-liners and Miller’s copious vomiting/punching/stumbling, the tension stayed high but my hopes did, too. Without the humor, I might’ve had nightmares... the space zombie/radiation shelter scenes were really disturbing.

Unicorn on the cob on FanFare

The Expanse ended its first season with a two part finale event, that, when paired with episode eight, made for a strong end to the season that easily out-weighed the first seven episodes combined.

Kellie Sheridan



Game of Thrones: “Battle of the Bastards”, written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, directed by Miguel Sapochnik (HBO)

I’m not a GoT fan in general, but this one’s the most obviously fan favorite episode of the year.

This may very well be the most cathartic episode Game of Thrones has ever aired. The most harrowing battle the show has ever had and we got to see Jon and Sansa return the Starks to Winterfell. And Ramsay died in a more just way than I think any Game of Thrones fan could have reasonably hoped for. And we got the nicely juxtaposed battle and unity with Daenerys, Theon and Yara.

Michael Graff

That is what makes this show so excellent at its best. There are these moments of extreme violence that are hard to stomach, but the action is driven by these fully developed characters who we know so well. We get to relish in their victories just as we are devastated by their defeats. When Sansa smiles, as the song goes, the whole world smiles with her, not only because Ramsay is dead, but because our favorite show is alive once again.

Brian Moylan

All in all, “Battle of the Bastards” was a thrilling, unnerving, and ultimately rewarding episode, but it took quite a bit of gruesome time before we were able to hang the Stark banners. This episode marked the first time we saw a fully-planned medieval pitch battle on screen, and it’s one we certainly won’t forget soon.

Joe Brosnan



Game of Thrones: “The Door”, written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, directed by Jack Bender (HBO)

Oh my ghod. Even as a non-fan, this one hit me. It just slams ya, and it is over-powering. The building up of Hodor was perfect, and the reveal was amazingly well done. Winner? Probably.

Five minutes into season 6’s “The Door,” my preconceived expectations were gone, coffee mugs were put away, and the edge of the seat was leaned upon with nary a break during the 60 minutes that were to come.

David Crow

In Game of Thrones, one of the huge themes is that there are no true innocents; everyone is guilty of cruelty, murder, deceit, or just plain old awfulness to at least some extent, even the good characters. Jon Snow killed a boy. Dany claims to seek revenge against the Baratheons for being usurpers, then conquers cities herself in Essos. Like Godfather 2, everyone is part of the same hypocrisy. But not Hodor. Hodor was the good one. Hodor was innocent. Hodor was fat, which makes anyone roughly 67x more likeable. Everyone loved him, and we find out he made dual sacrifices not just in his death, but also in his life as an incompetent. Literally his entire mental well-being for years was all done in the service so Bran could live, and it all would’ve been avoided if Bran didn’t break the cardinal rule of fiction, disobeying the wise old man who tells the young curious whippersnapper to STAY AWAY FROM THE _____. I don’t know if I can ever fully forgive him for that.

Charlie from Postgame of Thrones

Splendor & Misery [album], by Clipping (Daveed Diggs, William Hutson, Jonathan Snipes)

Oh sweet Mary Mother of May, this is the greatest thing in the history of my vision of greatest things ever. The concept album is something that has long been missing from the ballot, and while there are about a half-dozen albums that should have been nominated over the years by the likes of Janelle Monae, The Aquabats, and Parliament-Funkadelic, this is an excellent example of what we should be looking at for nominations. The rhymes don’t exactly flow sweet, but the lyrics hit, and the tracks are as experimental as they come. I’m 100% behind this ohne, and if I could vote, this would be my number 1.

The fact is, as a story, it’s so thorough. It’s a love story, and a story of what could happen if we fail to learn from our past and run headlong into our future. It’s so smart in the way it’s presented, laid-out, and most interestingly, where it picks its spots. I can not gush enough.

Very good album. I’m very pleased it made the ballot.

Michael Lee

This Afrofuturist narrative, as rapped by Daveed Diggs, is matched by a dissonant yet sympathetic soundscape from producers William Hutson and Jonathan Snipes—one that evokes the isolation and complicated passion of the premise.

Jason Heller

Fuck. I can’t even think of how much I love this shit. It’s heavyweight, man. Heavyweight.

Ton Liang

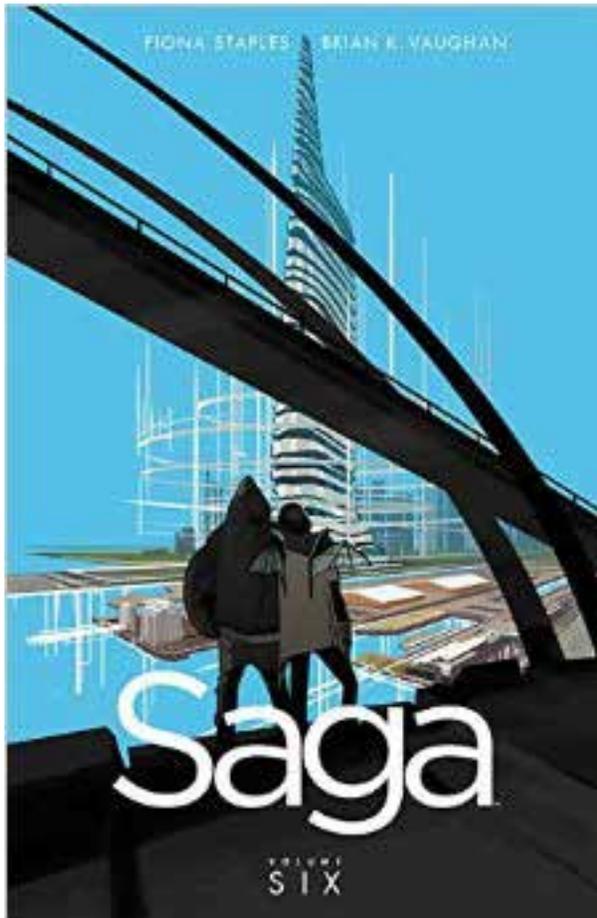
The Hugo for Best Graphic Story by Chuck Serface

During an interview at the most recent Marvel Retailer Summit, David Gabriel, Vice-President of Sales for that company, blamed declining sales on people who were “turning their nose up against” diversity in Marvel’s titles. This, of course, inspired a storm of online articles by commentators disagreeing with Samuels, most of whom cited instead Marvel’s glut of crossover and special events that hindered readers’ focus and thus interest. Scant days later, Samuels’s specious claim took a further hit when the nominees for the 2017 Hugo Awards were announced, and those receiving nods for Best Graphic Story shared obvious trait: diversity.

Granted, I have not been following the Hugo Awards for many years, but I’m amazed by the wonderful, deep diversity not only in story content, but among writers and artists. A friend once opined that the Hugos are “cape phobic,” that nominees usually stem from science-fiction, horror, or fantasy. I can tell my friend now, “Not so much in 2017, a year marked with fresh, dynamic stories that display healthy, realistic diversity, and, yes, three of the titles nominated come from Marvel.” Commentators vindicated; so much for Mr. Gabriel.

My celebration stalls out, however, when I realize that I must rank these entries. Are you kidding me? Differences in quality don’t register on any meaningful scale here. Each is so wonderfully fresh, so magnificently rendered, and so heartbreakingly dead on with moral intent. These heirs to Moore and Gaiman provide continuing evidence for comics as art. I make my choices knowing that I’ll feel no disappointment on award night when this category is announced, so consolation achieved, and on with my decisions.





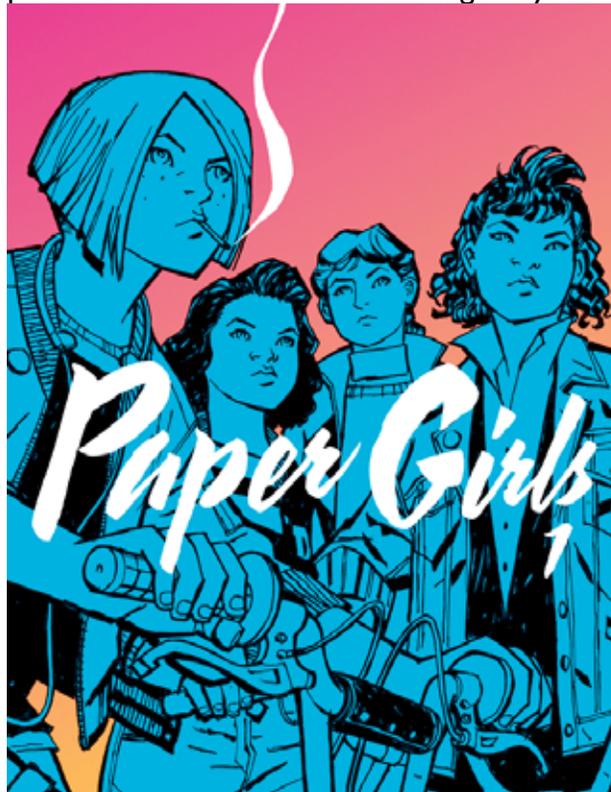
Sixth Place - *Saga: Volume 6*

Writer: Brian K. Vaughn
 Illustrator: Fiona Staples
 Letterer: Fonographiks
 Publisher: Image Comics

I'm among the few fans happy that the narrative that begins with *Firefly* ends with *Serenity*. Of course Fox canceled Whedon's masterpiece far too soon, but *Serenity* addresses this admirably. I revisit the series and film regularly, and still after all these years I experience new sensations and discover new aspects, much like when I re-read *Moby-Dick* or any of Shake-

spere's plays. As I write this paragraph, I can hear the voices shouting, "Apostasy!" but I own my feelings. More would dilute the power of what we have. Leave it be.

Years ago, Brian K. Vaughn admitted that he knew how *Saga* would end, "right down to the very last page." However, he clarified that this could take a very long time. Not too long, I hope. I highly regard Vaughn and Staple's opus magnum, and I want to continue doing so. This nominated volume introduced new story direction and the most awesome transgender character since Lord Fanny from Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles*, but nonetheless energy has been lost. *The Sandman* went out on a high. Please, Mr. Vaughn, guide *Saga* toward doing the same. I promise I'll re-read and re-read religiously.



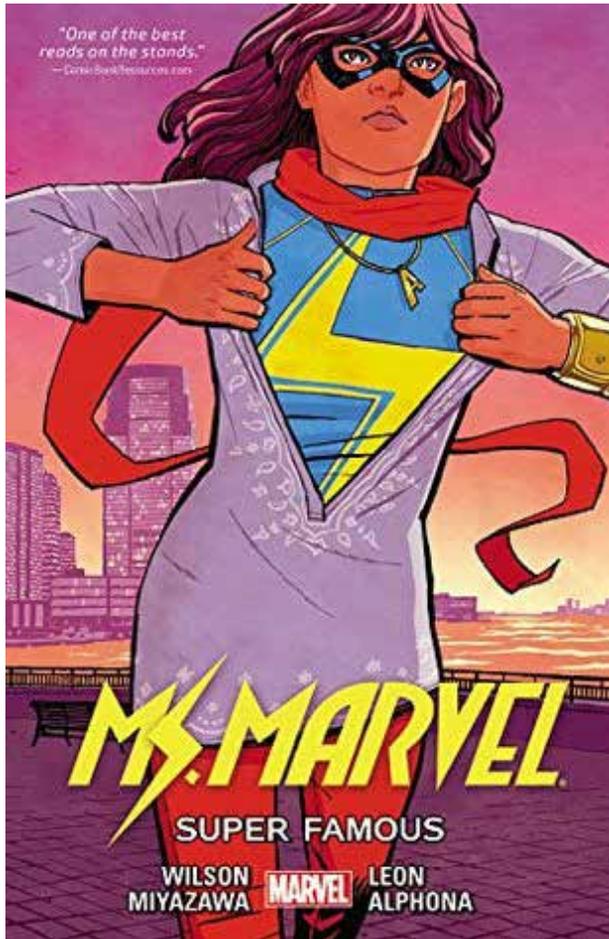
Fifth Place - *Paper Girls: Volume 1*

Writer: Brian K. Vaughn
 Illustrator: Clifford Chiang
 Colorist: Matthew Wilson
 Letterer: Jared Fletcher
 Publisher: Image Comics

Already *Paper Girls* has netted two Eisner Awards, one for Best New Series and the other for Best Penciller/Inker. And that's two Hugo nominations in the same category for Brian K. Vaughn. Here the writer joins with artist Clifford Chiang to tell about a group of newspaper delivery girls from a Cleveland suburb who on Halloween 1988 encounter an alien invasion. We have delivery girls, not boys, pedaling their bikes up and down streets, tossing those papers with laser accuracy on to front porches. Today, trucks or two-door coupes flip papers on to the edge of driveways, but only for the few who haven't transitioned to Internet news only.

Paper Girls nostalgic effect immediately calls to mind *Stranger Things* and *Ready Player One*, but without the cavalcade of 1980s science-fiction references. These are girls coming of age in a profession largely ascribed to boys, however, and ably facing challenges both extraterrestrial and mundanely suburban. Vaughn shows that the concerns of boy-packs – *the Goonies*, the pals from *Stand by Me*, and even the *Stranger Things* gang – apply just as well to girls. This is not *Pretty Little Liars*.

Thank Goddess.



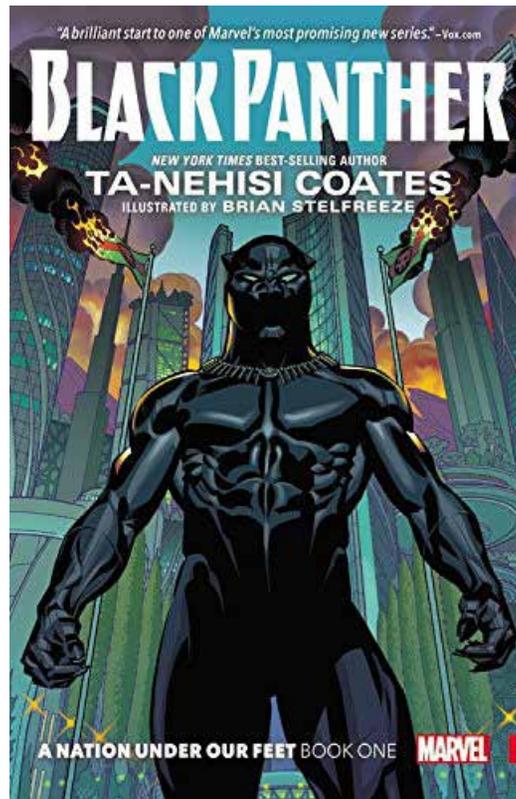
Fourth Place - Ms. Marvel, Volume 5: Super Famous

Writer: G. Willow Wilson
 Illustrator: Takeshi Miyazawa
 Publisher: Marvel Comics

Ms. Marvel isn't the first Muslim character from Marvel Comics. Earlier Muslim characters include the three incarnations of the Arabian Knight and the mutant Dust, but these two-dimensional characters have nothing on Kamala Khan, the first Muslim character to receive

her own title. She possesses depth, facing not only challenges related to new powers (which calls to mind the early Spider-Man), but with being a Pakistani-American and a teenager to boot. School, religious duties, and super-villains – oh, my!

Novelist G. Willow Wilson who had earned outstanding critical feedback for *Alif the Unseen* did so again with *Ms. Marvel*, the strongest debut Marvel enjoyed for quite some time. In fairness, David Gabriel has nothing per se against Marvel's line of diversity heroes. Instead, he doesn't seem to think we do. How soon he's forgotten about how fans reacted, and continue to react, to Kamala Khan.



Third Place - Black Panther, Volume 1: A Nation Under Our Feet

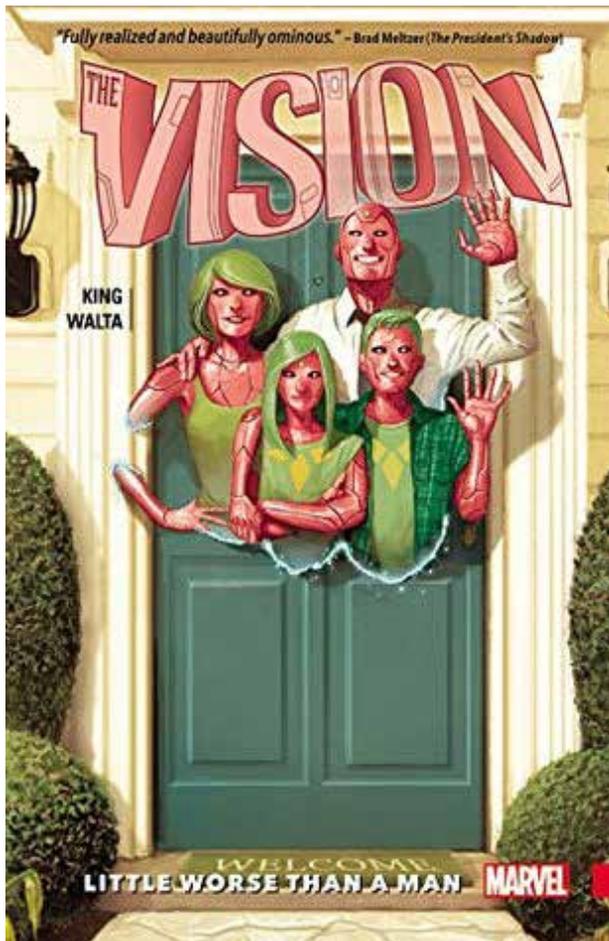
Writer: Ta-Nehisi Coates
 Illustrator: Brian Stelfreeze
 Publisher: Marvel Comics

T'Challa, King of the Wakandas, first appeared in *Fantastic Four #52* (1966), when I was one-year old. I grew up with the Black Panther, and I still follow him, because he's grown up with me. The first black superhero to appear in mainstream comics, the Black Panther moves into the current zeitgeist ably guided by writer and social critic Ta-Nehisi Coates.

How exciting that Marvel has started signing writers not originally from the comic-book world. Novelists such as Harlan Ellison have penned stories here and there, but now G. Willow Wilson and Coates are bringing crisp new perspectives to the superhero genre. Coates brings us to a Wakanda devastated after the recent Civil War and his sister's death. Dissidents challenge his right to rule, as does T'Challa's not too sure how he feels about that himself. Coates blends cultural depth and myth with political philosophy and narrative complexity -- and then strong female figures who question patriarchy join in. Marvel's first black superhero now has a black writer who understands these subjects, much as Wilson understands hers.

"I don't think *Black Panther* is the best comic, but there's a power to T'Challa that hits every note, which makes Black Panther the best character going today.

Chris Garcia



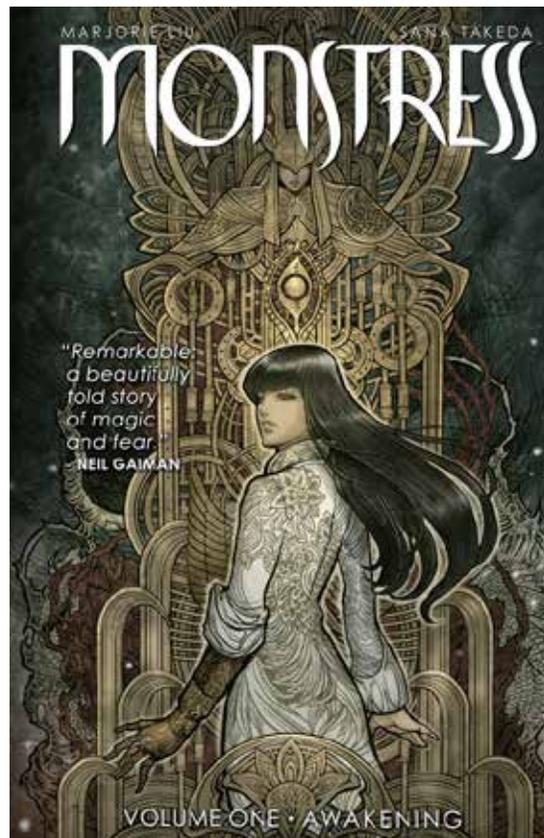
Second Place - The Vision, Volume 1: Little Worse Than a Man

Writer: Tom King
 Illustrator: Gabriel Hernandez Walta
 Publisher: Marvel Comics

Another old-school Marvel mainstay receives a major facelift, this time by Tom King and Gabriel Hernandez Walta. Since his first appearance in *The Avengers* #57 (1968), the Vision, like many artificial life forms, has provided a means for exploring the meaning of humanity. What is

“soul?” How are we alive? What else counts other than passing the Turing Test? King and Walta push these questions to extremes.

The Vision always has wanted to interact seamlessly with humanity, to assimilate. To meet this goal, he creates a wife, a daughter, and a son using Ultron’s lab. Ultron created him, and through those methods the Vision crafts his family. Then the entire bunch moves to a WASPish suburb. Diversity and related issues around assimilation, sure, but add to this the uncanny valley and a touch of horror. Many fans struggled with this series, I posit mostly due to King not presenting their Vision. My advice: relax and let the themes do the talking.



My Winner - Monstress, Volume 1: Awakening

Writer: Marjorie Liu
 Illustrator: Sana Takeda
 Publisher: Image Comics

In a word, wow. Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda present Maika Halfwolf, an Arcanic seeking revenge for her mother’s death. Shape-shifters, Arcanics sometimes can pass as humans, but constantly brutalized by the Cumea, magic-users who feed on them to rebuild mystical energies.

I can’t classify this comic, which amplifies my affection for it. Horror, fantasy, and an alternate-Asian setting symbolically overlay a polemic about racism and war. Honestly, I didn’t fully understand *Monstress* at first but felt compelled to re-read it immediately. Image Comics nurtures creators yearning to take comics to new places. *Saga*, *Manhattan Projects*, *East of West*, *Lazarus*, *Velvet*, and now *Monstress* are staring down DC and Marvel’s titles, many of those with writers and artists who work for Image as well. Diversity is natural. These nominees proffer a collective example, Mr. Gabriel and Marvel Comics, and for you too, DC. Are you listening? Go there always.

Chris Notes - *The Vision* is a masterwork of modern comic book writing. Easily my number one, because there’s a certain Blue Velvet meets *The Incredibles* element...

