

Batman Eternal has served many overlapping purposes over the past year. It has provided the primary locus for celebration of Batman's 75th anniversary. It has been a venue for the introduction of new characters and the resurrection of old ones. It has allowed for the testing of new storylines. And it is the tool the Batman Office has used to lay the foundations for the Batman Universe to come in the wake of the upcoming Convergence break. It seems that this world will be a very interesting one. Under the guidance of group editor Mark Doyle, the Batman Office appears to be evolving into a system of sub-families, each emphasizing a different tone and approach to the world of the Bat Family. Three of these sub-families have become clear in outline, two of which are glimpsed in Batman Eternal #43. The first is a set of books emphasizing the young, hip, technologically savvy members of the Bat World. The new Batgirl has blazed the way for this, and in this issue the circle of Red Robin, Bluebird, Cullen Row, and Spoiler provide a much expanded cast for this sub-family. Tim Drake is the veteran, full of combat experience but awkward and ignorant about people. Harper Row is eager and determined and sharp in mind and wit. Stephanie Brown nurses dark secrets inside a bright persona. Cullen Row is the gentle healer that holds them all together. And Batgirl is the unspoken, unseen presence, the power circling in the background. This group provides the cast for at least two, and possibly three or four books, especially if Gotham Academy is folded into the sub-family. The art in this book as well as the writing provides a foundation for a unified group of comics. The figures and colors here are somewhat in the nature of exaggerated cartoons. In this, they are not identical to Babs Tarr's work on Batgirl, but they have resonance with it, and with Karl Kersch's work on Gotham Academy. It is too much to say that a family look has become apparent, but the suggestion of one is there, certainly enough to work with should the Batman Office decide to go specifically in such a direction. The other group of books becoming clearly apparent in this issue is that emphasizing espionage and intrigue and adventure with heavy erotic overtones. The two titles currently representing this sub-family are Grayson and Catwoman. Selina Kyle in her new role of Queen of Crime in Gotham gives Stephanie Brown a lesson in the rules of this kind of story as she reminds Spoiler that Gotham is a complicated place filled with competing power centers, including not just Batman and the mob and the villains but the police and the CIA and the FBI and ARGUS. One expects, based on recent interviews, that Spyril will shortly be joining this mix. Someone who wants to play on this level, that is to say in this sub-family, has to negotiate a thicket of shifting alliances, intricate relationships, explosive violence, and intense relationships. But style is of the essence, and sexiness is a professional asset. In other words, no children need apply, and amateurs better learn fast lest they die or worse. The third sub-family is magic and horror, currently represented by Gotham by Midnight. The Arkham arc of Batman Eternal featuring Batwing has laid the foundation for this, and perhaps Luke Fox has a future in this group of books. The future will reveal where the rest of the Batman Universe fits into this emerging system. Julia Pennyworth, for instance, seems a natural member of the intrigue and espionage sub-family. But what about Jason Todd? Or the resurrected Damian? And how will Batman himself interact with these new groups of books? It will be fascinating to watch the new world take shape. The post Batman Eternal #43 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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