

Annuals serve a very important function in the comic book world. Any given story will have elements such as characterizations or back storylines or subplots that could strengthen the tale if properly presented. A yearly double-sized issue sometimes provides the perfect venue for such explorations. Earth 2 #30 is not an annual. Rather, it is a regular issue of a monthly series that has been captured by its weekly companion, Earth 2: World's End. The original title has become an addendum to the weekly. In effect, the issues of Earth 2 are monthly annuals (a contradiction in terms, but functionally correct) for the World's End storyline. This presents problems for a number of reasons. First of all, those who have been following the Earth 2 title for going on three years rightly resent that the arcs and developments that captured their interest have receded into a morass of supporting material aimed at another book. From a structural and strategic standpoint, it makes little sense of Earth 2 to still constitute a separate title. Anyone reading the monthly but not the weekly, a practice that should be possible considering they are two separate books, would fall into confusion very quickly. Earth 2 #30 provides a fine, or perhaps dreary, example of the problem. This issue chronicles the background of three avatars, beings imbued with elemental energy that serve to defend Earth 2 from danger. At the moment, the avatars figure prominently in the Earth 2: World's End story, but their inclusion here connects to nothing in the previous issue. Rather, one has to reach back to issue #28, which gave the backgrounds of the Apokaliptan furies that the avatars are currently battling. Perhaps rather than calling Earth 2 a set of monthly annuals, it would be better (and more linguistically correct) to call the books a set of reference materials dealing with special topics of relevance to the weekly series. The stories themselves are only mediocre. The chronicle of Sam Zhou, avatar of the White (the atmosphere) plays out as a companion piece to the story of his lover, Alan Scott, the avatar of the Green (life force), otherwise known as the Earth 2 Green Lantern. Yolanda Montez, the avatar of the Red (animal power, whose distinction from the Green is not clear) is a character introduced abruptly in the weekly, and whose backstory might have greatly expanded that book except that it is not linked to the weekly storyline in any direct way. Finally, the background of Azathoth, the Lovecraftian avatar of the Blue (water) is a cursory and puzzling story that might have unfolded well had it been told in the form and tone of a legend, but which in semi-documentary presentation is just extraordinarily odd. The artwork for these stories tends toward the bright but busy, with multiple panels crammed by detail that only gives rise to clutter. The strongest visual elements are Peter Pantazis' vibrant and engaging colors, which are more interesting than the stories with which they are connected. The post Earth 2 #30 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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