

One rarely meets Justice in this weary world, and Fairness, Justice's humble sidekick, is not easy to find, either. Jeff Lemire, writer of Justice League United, has plenty of reason to know this sad fact. Lemire has authored two of the best-received books of the New 52, Animal Man and Green Arrow. Those two titles consistently show up on lists of the best-written books since the 2011 reboot of the DC universe. Unfortunately, their sales never matched their quality, a state of affairs that anyone who has been around comics, or art in general, for any length of time will find sadly familiar. Lemire's current projects, The New 52: Futures End and Justice League United, have at least partially redressed the sales problem, but unfortunately neither has maintained the high standards of the author's previous work. Justice League United, in particular, has been frustrating to read, a project in which everyone is trying so very hard and coming so very close, but never quite reaching the prize of quality wed to popular success. Before turning to Lemire's script, however, it's profitable to examine the art, which clearly shows the tone and effect the creative team is aiming for. Neil Edwards lays out his pencils using rapidly shifting patterns of panels of varying sizes and shapes. He arranges the pages in such a way that the eye can rarely move in regular reading motions, but must pause, reverse, ascend and descend, and loop in partial spirals. The suggestion is of swift, almost uncontrollably motion. He, along with inkers Jay Leisten and Keith Champagne, create characters with clear, clean lines but slightly block proportions, giving the effect of an extremely well-drawn cartoon. This active, vibrant world truly begins to live under the hand of colorist Jeromy Cox. Cox, who has won widespread praise for his work in DC's new project, Grayson, brings his well-regarded bright, clear colors to bear, combining them with the clean lines and strategic layouts to create a sense of immense energy of all types: kinetic, technological, mental, and emotional. What a shame, then, that Lemire's script, instead of embracing this energy and embodying it in a powerful, channeled narrative flow, allows it to dissipate in all directions, taking what might have been a river-like storyline and letting it bog down in confusing incidents and tangled tangents. To catch everyone up, Justice League United formed in the wake of the Forever Evil event and the breakdown of the A.R.G.U.S.-sponsored Justice League of America. Consisting of Martian Manhunter, Stargirl, Supergirl, Green Arrow, Hawkman, a new hero called Eclipse, and Adam and Alanna Strange, the new team found itself entangled in the affairs of the planet Rann, a peaceful, high-tech world in a bustling and war-torn sector of space also occupied by such planets as Thanagar and Tamaran. The people of Rann, in an attempt to promote peace, launched a project to create a living symbol of unity, a child crafted from the DNA of all the species of the galaxy. The child, a blue, rapidly maturing alien called Ultra, was seized by the villain Byth, who hoped use the child's powers for nefarious ends. Much of the story to this point has consisted of getting Ultra back. Just as the League managed this, trouble arrived in the form of the Legion of Super Heroes. It appears that in the Legion's future time Byth has become the world-devouring villain Infinitus, who looks and acts rather like a turbo-charged, very bad-tempered Galactus. One suspects the cross-corporate nod was deliberate. Although the homage to Marvel works, little else does. The team has spent the last several issues split into small groups transporting to worlds, moons, and spaceships with accelerating rapidity. This has served to prevent the relationships within the team from really developing, with the exception of that between Adam and Alanna Strange and a very promising friendship forming between Animal Man and Green Arrow. Unfortunately, to this point the friendship between Buddy and Ollie mostly consists of bantering insults, and Adam and Alanna have spent much of the storyline constantly switching places due to a bizarre teleportation glitch. The addition of the Legion, its auxiliary Legion Lost, and a set of mercenaries called the Cadre who are working for

Byth only magnifies the confusion. At the end of this installment, Ultra has been taken into a cosmic anomaly inhabited by his god-like future self. However, trying to figure out exactly how the story reached that point would be an exercise in drawing knots. The post Justice League United #7 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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