

Uncanny X-Men, it seems, goes in cycles. The brilliant post-“BotA” issues led into the disappointing finale of the war with S.H.I.E.L.D., followed by a compelling introduction to “The Last Will and Testament of Charles Xavier”, which quickly began to lose energy. Now there’s a small shot in the arm of the lengthy storyline, in the form of Uncanny X-Men #29. While this feels like the softest reset of the books quality, something that has as much to do with the problems in this issue as the strength of its predecessor, Bendis pulls off another character driven issue by using time and circumstance to really force the characters against each other. The core of the issue is a confrontation between Cyclops and Magneto. Brief as it actually is, the showdown benefits from the inherent tension that Bendis has written between the two since All-New X-Men #1 and has been looming even before that. It’s interesting to see Magnus side against Cyclops without abandoning his hardline position. Both men are far too proud to talk constructively and it’s great to see them playing chess around the world’s most powerful mutant, pitting Magneto’s immunity to telepathy against Scott’s established relationship with Matthew. It also bears mentioning that, in this scene, Bendis writes a brilliant Cyclops. Not necessarily in the sense of his writing being brilliant, though I found it quite strong, but in the sense that Scott really earns the position of smartest guy in the room (read: freakish rock formation). Meanwhile, two time-traveling mutants aren’t satisfied to let Scott have his way on the issue. Luckily, I’d argue that Illyana Rasputin and Eva Bell are two of Bendis’ favorite characters, and it shows. Whether it biases me towards or against Bendis’ interpretation, I’ve always disliked Magik. She’s often seemed unlikable, self-involved, and likely to pull the X-Men into some unimpressive magical subplot. Regardless, all of that is reversed here. Yes, Illyana is a little quick to call on Stephen Strange, with some embarrassing repercussions, but it’s pretty fun and it does add to the intrigue of the story in a natural way. She’s also got a surprisingly believable voice for a girl who grew up in Limbo. I’m not sure I’d call Bendis’ run character defining for any of the X-Men, but Magik is getting dangerously close for me. Eva’s scenes are undeniably weaker. They reiterate and linger on points that don’t need that kind of attention and, while there are a some funny moments, the dialogue doesn’t make up for that. I also admit that having Eva’s recent trauma teased in front of the other students and then immediately dropped feels particularly unnecessary now that we know what happened to her. Nonetheless, the ideas in play are great and seeing how they play out in future issues seems promising, even if the Cuckoos let Tempus just walk away despite hearing, in their words, “the worst idea one of us X-Men has ever had.” An interesting but far too brief check in at the Jean Grey School rounds out this issue. The scattered scenes clearly mark this as a reentry point to the story and, for the most part it’s rather successful. It would be nice to have an issue you put down and think ‘a lot happened in that one’, but that’s not really Bendis’ style and, considering his track record, the micro-advancements of this issue are a pretty good step towards that goal. He’s enough on his game that the classic Bendis back-and-forths will keep you engaged throughout, and the story, somehow, continues to expand, with encouraging results. But while Bendis does an admirable job of reenergizing the numerous threads of the issue, Chris Bachalo is the one who stands out this month. Some of you, no doubt, will think that this is for the worse, but Bachalo implements a number of very different styles than what we’ve seen of late. Though the sheer visual splendor of his lush, jagged artwork is missed, this issue Bachalo pulls back and provides a much more conventional look that demonstrates his range and storytelling skill. I expect that many out there don’t appreciate the inconsistency in this issue’s look, but while I wish there could have been more uniformity, it didn’t bother me too much. Bachalo and his inkers pick smart places to switch, though its unclear how much of the change is the inkers’ doing and how much is

conscious change. Regardless, each of the scenes in this issue looks lovely. The colorists, in particular, do a wonderful job setting the scene in Magik's visit to the Sanctum Sanctorium and Stephen and Illyana look great together on the page. I'd probably say that the showdown between Scott and Magnus is the weakest section of the book visually, though Bachalo's Magneto is thoroughly imposing. Even so, Matthew and Scott look kind of odd around the mouth, an especially nagging problem for Scott. The scene back at the New Xavier Institute is far more cartoony than what we've seen from Bachalo, but it really suits the younger students and amplifies their emotions. The clean colors are bright and airy and make for a welcome visual breather while supporting the overall aesthetic. The switch between the NXI and the JGS may be the most jarring of the issue, but I suppose there's no better way to cover an abrupt change than with a close-up of Doop. The thin lines and striking colors are very pretty and really favor the women of the X-Men. A gorgeous panel of Magik looks like it could have come out of one of Bruce Timm's notebooks. We're dealing with a lot of different art styles here, but they're all attractive in their way. Some fudge anatomy or play up angles or lighting for drama, but they all communicate at least as well as Bachalo's usual work and look great doing it. The post Uncanny X-Men #29 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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