

Birds of Prey

The Complete Series

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Black Canary/Oracle: Birds of Prey (Volume 1)

ISBN: 156389484X

By Chuck Dixon and Jordan Gorfinkley

Art by Various artists

DC Comics 1999

What about the women? Well, two of the hottest female superheroes in DC's universe Black Canary and Oracle together form Birds of Prey. Black Canary is sassy, deadly, and fully capable of wiping the floor with the bad guys. Oracle, once Batgirl until the Joker's violent trick confined her to a wheelchair, is Black Canary's lightning fast link to all information via the Internet. She's also often Black Canary's conscience and more often than she'd like, her mother hen. Together, they're a force even the Dark Knight himself is impressed by.

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Birds of Prey: Old Friends, New Enemies (Volume 2)

ISBN: 1563899396

by Chuck Dixon and Jordan Gorfinkel

Art by Dick Giordano, Greg Land, Drew Geraci

DC Comics 2003

Birds of Prey: Of Like Minds (Volume 3)

ISBN: 140120192X

by Gail Simone

Art by Ed Benes

DC Comics 2004

Sigh. I like **Birds of Prey**. I like the female-centric story lines and the DC Universe's women coming together to make a formidable crime solving/fighting team. It's just that I find it hard to believe that women who are as smart and as kick-ass as Black Canary and Huntress really think that the most practical things to run around and fight crime in involve fishnets and leather bikinis. The series is written by a woman and supposedly appeals to a women due to its content, but the art remains drawn for a distinctly male audience.

At their fiercest and grittiest Black Canary, Huntress and Oracle retain an overwhelming doe-eyed sexuality. These are not women who live or fight realistically, and that is not something that is likely to appeal to a female audience, at least not until Batman and Nightwing are stripping down to their skivvies and draping themselves across beds in order to fight the bad guy. Now that's a book I'd read.

Leaving aside my qualms about the sexualization of the female superhero (more so here than in previous volumes of **Birds of Prey**) this was a pretty good story. It deals nicely with the ongoing trust issues between Oracle and Black Canary. It brings up elements from Black Canary's past and makes her face her feelings of helplessness as a result of having lost her sonic cry, and because she is a woman. I felt a little like DC was pulling their punches with this volume, but that I think is a function of age appropriateness and not lack of understanding of topic matter on their part. I'm curious to see where the series is going with their look at what it means to be a woman and to be a superhero and how images of helplessness and strength are conflicting in that situation.

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Birds of Prey: Student & Sensei (Volume 4)

ISBN 1401204341

By Gail Simone

Art by Ed Benes, Alex Lei, Michael Golden, Joe Bennett, Cliff Richards

DC Comics 2005

This volume made precisely no sense whatsoever. Black Canary and Lady Shiva are running around Hong Kong promising not to kill each other while they try to avenge the death of their beloved master. Meanwhile, Oracle is back in Gotham having her computer system hacked before getting kidnapped by some fake government spooks, and finally getting saved by Huntress. There's nothing inherent in those two plot lines to occasion the sheer amount of confusion I experienced reading this volume, but somehow Sensei & Student managed to have me frowning in bewilderment and muttering things like . . . "Black Canary got her sonic cry back when? They're where? And why? And how did they get there? And they did what? And, why?"

I want to like Birds of Prey, and I want to recommend buying Birds of Prey because I really feel that there isn't enough representation of strong capable women in superhero comics. However, between utter confusion that was this plotline and the issues I had with the last volume, I'm not sure that I can push Birds of Prey in good conscience anymore. That is not to say that I won't be reading the next volume, but I'll be going into it with trepidation.

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