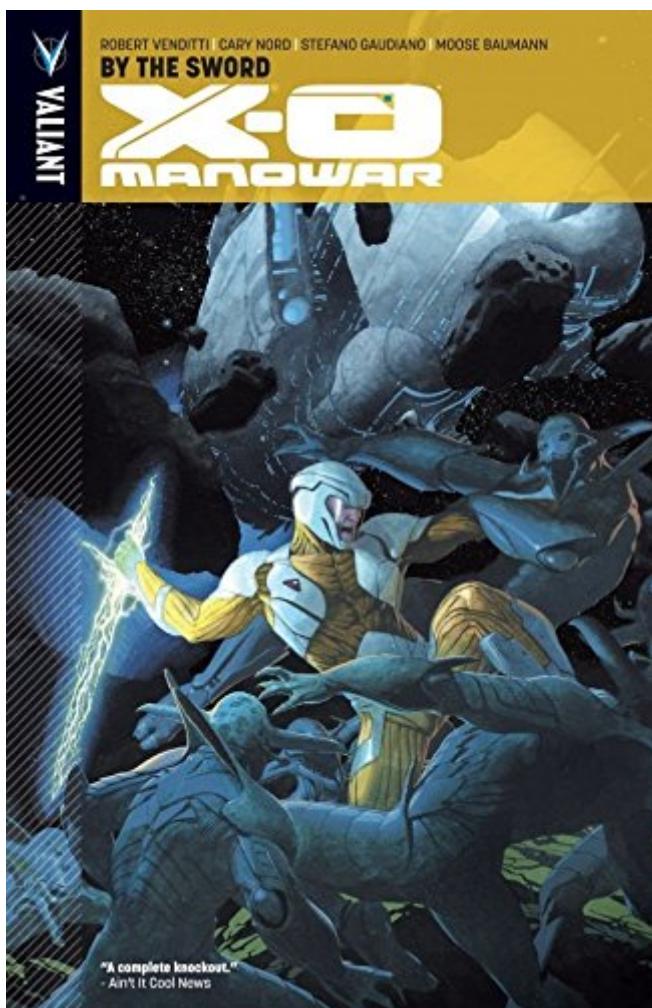


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# X-O Manowar Vol. 1: By The Sword (X-O Manowar (2012- ))



## **Synopsis**

The beginning of the all-new Valiant Universe starts here! Aric of Dacia is a brash warrior and heir to the throne of the Visigoth people. He has lived his life under the heel of the Roman Empire, but now a far more terrible enemy has come to subjugate him. Taken from his home and family, Aric is enslaved aboard a starship belonging to a brutal race of alien colonizers known as The Vine. If he is to have any hope of escaping and returning to Earth, he will have to steal the Vine's most powerful weapon - a sentient suit of indestructible armor - and become X-O Manowar! This volume collects the first four issues of the acclaimed, breakout series by New York Times best-selling author Robert Venditti (The Surrogates, The Homeland Directive) and Eisner Award-winning artist Cary Nord (Conan)!

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Valiant Entertainment, the company chose X-O Manowar as the first title to bring back. Valiant's first collected volume of the new era is X-O Manowar Vol. 1: By the Sword TPB (112 pgs.), which reprints the first four issues of the series. Written by New York Times best-selling author Robert Venditti (The Surrogates), with visuals by Eisner Award-winning artist Cary Nord (Conan), X-O

Manowar Vol. 1 The book chronicles the adventures of warrior Aric of Dacia, who steals a sentient suit of indestructible armor from a brutal race of alien colonizers known as The Vine. With an introductory price of \$9.99, this book is a steal!

I had already read the first issue which I picked up from a comic shop where it was a \$1 debut. I was intrigued at the idea of another publisher doing a shared universe of characters the way dc and marvel do. The name sounds like a bit of a mouthful but X-O Manowar is actually a pretty good read for the reader wanting to explore other universes full of heroes. I personally was a bit disappointed that it ended so fast, but that just has me wanting to get the next volume to continue the story now. Also I'm sure they keep the trades around 4-5 issues so they can keep the prices at \$10 and below. Recommended for any fan of sci-fi adventure and whoever might be getting a little tired of whatever marvel and dc pump out.

First rearing his mighty head back in the early 90s, X-O Manowar became recognized as being on the most important, if not the flagship character, of the Valiant titles. The premise was simple: A Visigoth Warrior kidnapped by aliens and forced to toil for them, he escapes confinement and is able to steal their most powerful weapon- A sentient suit of battle armor. He escapes with it and returns to Earth, only to find that time has advanced significantly, and he is now in the current era. X-O Manowar relaunched in 2012 as the first of the Summer of Valiant books. Valiant has enjoyed success in keeping with the common themes in their new books that made the original runs so endearing. This first volume of X-O Manowar, By the Sword, does an amazing job of reintroducing the world to Aric of Dacia. Thankfully, more time is spent on Aric's plight at the hands of the aliens, making them much more three dimensional as foes, and truly worthy of Aric's wrath. Robert Venditti weaves an excellent introductory tale, and Cary Nord's pencils have defined the look followed by all other artists who have worked on the title. Trust me; this is just the first part in what has become a long and epic story. Looking back, I am amazed at how far things have gone, and the threats Aric has had to endure. Give this a read, and I think you'll want to find out exactly what I'm talking about.

The Short Version: Under the guidance of a solid creative team and strong editorial direction, X-O Manowar Volume 1: By The Sword emerges as a great story-driven tale propelled by a strong lead character, good writing, and the solid, expressive linework of Cary Nord. If this is an example of the

level of quality we can expect from the "new" Valiant Comics, we have great things to look forward to.

**The Review:** The comic book industry has long been dominated by DC and Marvel, with a multitude of companies appearing over the years to try and challenge the crown of "The Big Two." Some, like Dark Horse and IDW, have carved out their own niche in the industry, Others have come and gone...and a few even then come again. Valiant Comics is one of those companies. Founded in 1989 by former Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter (after he and a group of investors unsuccessfully tried to buy Marvel), Valiant was known for roping a number of young, fiercely creative talents from Marvel and producing a line of comics that were fresh and innovative at the time. Valiant was a titan, selling over 50 million copies and leaving the industry with some "new classics" all its own. Its momentum was lost not creatively but from the business side when the company was sold to a video game company, more interested in producing console games with the characters than comic books.

Flash forward to 2012; after a number of false starts Valiant Comics lives again under a spirited editorial team and a group of solid comic book creators. Their first offering, *X-O Manowar: By The Sword*, which collects the first four issues of the rebooted title, brings back Aric the "barbarian" who is kidnapped by an alien race, only to escape them wearing a suit of armor that is also the most powerful weapon in the universe. It is an expected choice; the title was among Valiant's most popular (and recognized) when the company first launched, and a superhero in armor attracts more interest than it used to thanks to the Iron Man and Avengers movies. It also turns out to be an excellent choice; the character, as re-conceived by writer Robert Vendetti, Aric is a Visigoth whose village was sacked by Rome and who now seeks revenge upon those who have enslaved and slaughtered his people. Vendetti writes a brash and impulsive Aric, a man of bold (and sometimes foolish) action whose motives are understandable and whose plight even evokes sympathy in the reader. When the Visigoths are faced with overwhelming opposition in the first issue, the Visigoth leaders call a retreat, but Aric rallies them to a charge that ends in the slaughter of a number of the Visigoth soldiers (including Aric's own father). Later, Aric must make another attempt to engage the Romans, as they were able to get close enough to the Visigoth camp to seize a number of the women and children, including Aric's own wife. Mention is not made of the fact that, had Aric likely not led the earlier charge, the Romans would not have been able to get close enough to kidnap anyone. As the story continues Aric and a band of his men are captured by an alien race called the Vine, who are shown "seeding" humans with Vine babies (essentially replacing human babies with ones imprinted with human DNA). Events happen quickly from there, as Aric and his fellow captives plot their escape, which results in Aric being bonded with the Manowar armor, which - longtime readers know - is the most powerful weapon in the universe. I will leave the reader to

discover the rich story points that lead the reader to the conclusion of the tale. I've enjoyed the Valiant material in the past, and as much as I love DC (and like a lot of Marvel) I'm always looking for fresh alternatives to those well-known and traveled universes, so I was well-read on what to expect (or at least what the editors and creators at Valiant wanted me to expect) and I found that X-O Manowar fit my expectations perfectly: it is a story-driven comic with solid writing and art that at least matches (and even exceeds) a number of the B-level books being produced at DC and Marvel. Vendetti's style is straightforward; his dialogue is realistic and doesn't ever sink to cliche. These Valiant books are focused on being more "story-driven" than "character-driven" so none of the supporting characters really emerge in three dimensions, such as in the work of Scott Snyder or Jeff Lemire or Ed Brubaker, but Aric is a well-rendered character of driven purpose. Though he is from another time and of another, more violent, attitude, the reader still will enjoy following him and sympathize with his plight. Supporting the writing is Cary Nord, whose pencils remind me of Aaron Lopresti, are usually detailed with good compositions and well-defined figures - a must when handling action scenes. Unfortunately the inks by Stefano Gaudiano are sketchy at times, which muddies and even clashes with Nord's clean lines. The color work and lettering are of the same excellent quality as can be found at a much larger comic company. All-in-all, X-O Manowar is a strong reinterpretation of a modern classic and sets a high bar for the Valiant books to come. There is much to admire in Valiant's story-driven approach; X-O Manowar feels like a comic in which the creative team was left alone to do strong work with minimal editorial interference (unlike a number of the DC New 52 books or the Marvel NOW! books), and we all benefit from it. at a \$9.99 introductory price point, this is a definite must buy for fans of strong, story-driven superhero comics.

When the original "X-O Manowar" came out, I was really young and not reading comics at the time, so I never knew about this comic or any of the Valiant lines, outside of minor mentions from friends who have read comics longer than myself. So when the new Valiant reboot, I nearly miss out on this again. However, based on the good word of mouth I had been hearing on this and the other Valiant books, I decided to check this out. What a cool idea for a comic, to have a man out of time story, with a Visigoth warrior from the 402 AD to obtaining high tech alien armor. This first trade really sinks its hooks into you. It may only be the first 4 issues, but after reading it, I'm ready for the next trade. You don't have to worry about reading the old comics, to understand what is going on. Fantastic read for both new and old comic fans, and at \$10, it's a great deal.

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