

DDP's Ten Best

{tab=Intro}DDP's Ten Best Favorite moments, stories and ideas from seven years of Devil's Due Publishing's G.I. Joe

After several years, Hasbro's license to publish and create G.I. Joe comics was granted to a new company, replacing Devil's Due Publishing. But after seven years of continuing the stories begun in Marvel's series 27 years ago, Devil's Due's run can hardly be considered a failure. The new series brought us new characters, ambitious storylines and a number of mini-series that explored new corners of the G.I. Joe world and revealed unknown origins. The following is this site's list of the top ten contributions Devil's Due made to the G.I. Joe story (in no particular order). Once you've read the list, you can head over to the G.I. Joe Comics Forum and voice your own opinions there.

Thanks to members of the Forum for comments and suggestions for this list!

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1. Cobra Commander vs Serpentor G.I. JOE #25 - January, 2004

Some fans weren't thrilled with the idea of Serpentor's return. Some like the character, others hate him. But one thing we never got in the Marvel series was a real confrontation between the Cobra Emperor and Cobra Commander. Serpentor was barely around for five issues before Cobra Commander was lost and presumed dead, and was then killed before the Commander returned. DDP's "The Last Stand" story arc (issues #22-25) saw the resurrection of Serpentor.

The battle that followed on Cobra Island included two Cobra factions and G.I. Joe. High atop a launch pad overlooking a waterfall, Serpentor and the Commander fought. Easily the physical superior, Serpentor forces his rival to surrender and remove his helmet. But when the weaselly Commander tosses the familiar mirrored helmet to Serpentor, it explodes in his hands. Cobra Commander then taunts the bloodied and dazed Serpentor: "You were engineered with such potential, Serpentor. But you lack the most important DNA of all... Mine," then kicks him off the launchpad into the water below. Why fight fair if you're going to lose?

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2. G.I. Joe: Master & Apprentice Mini-series - May to September, 2004

It made sense that when the first new G.I. Joe mini-series was released, it focused on fan favorite Snake-Eyes, but Master & Apprentice was more than just a ninja action story. While some stories from DDP gave us glimpses of what went on during the gap between the series from Marvel and Devil's Due, no story had yet explored Duke's past in black ops, the ending of Snake-Eyes and Scarlett's engagement or what Cobra agents were up to then. This series not only did that, but it even showed us what led up to key events in DDP's later stories. Built around the origin story of Kamakura, the new series' first original character, who appeared way back in the first scene of the entire series. Here, Kamakura is brilliantly tied into the Marvel series when he is revealed to be Sean Collins, the son of Wade Collins, last seen in Marvel's final issue contemplating enlisting. In M&A he's been a soldier for years and goes on a dangerous mission involving Snake-Eyes, Duke, Firefly and others. After Sean suffers a great loss, he and Snake-Eyes bond as the ninja makes Sean his ninja apprentice. The complex story that follows involves a number of Joes, former Cobras and new villains, and helps set up the story of Serpentor's return (a story actually continued in previous issues of the regular series). The story easily connects to G.I. Joe history past and present. It also introduced fans to the artwork of Stefano Caselli, whose popularity led him to be the first artist assigned to America's Elite.

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3. "Union of the Snake" G.I. JOE #36-41 - November 2004 to April 2005

One of the final story arcs from DDP's first G.I. Joe series, "Union of the Snake" gave big changes, shocking events and lots of bad news for the Joes. The G.I. Joe team reigned in by the government, with many Joes arrested or on the run. A new, smaller team led by a mysterious commander. A traitor to both his family and his country joins Cobra. The Baroness and Wraith seemingly killed before Destro's eyes. And that's just some of the story. Like many of DDP's stories, this arc gives us a Cobra Commander in control and more cold and ruthless than ever. The Joes are ordered to nuke Cobra Island once and for all, but the Commander is warned and makes his escape, leaving behind a large group of troops who once sided with the revived Serpentor. Cobra Commander, first pretending to welcome them back to Cobra, announces that they are about to pay for their betrayal, just as the bomb hits, and the Joes silently watch the mushroom cloud rise. But he's not done yet. The Commander readies to unleash the terrible satellite weapon called the Tempest. His scheme is nearly complete, but he is betrayed by Dr. Mindbender. After being shot and left for dead by the Commander, the good Doctor uses his last breath to doom the project and lead to Cobra's defeat.

The story's end also introduced a new threat, the Red Shadows. It all adds up to one of the most eventful and exciting storylines in all of the Devil's Due series.

{tab=#4}4. The Original G.I. Joe G.I. Joe: America's Elite

The character that represented the original G.I. Joe toy was introduced in Marvel's G.I. Joe #86 in honor of the toy's 25th

anniversary, only referred to as "Joe" and reappeared once or twice. He was even referred to as being part of the Adventure Team -- the later non-military line of figures. In 1994, Hasbro gave the character a new action figure, along with a new name and history. Larry Hama complimented that with a story of Joe Colton fighting in Vietnam and being chosen for a new special forces team named G.I. Joe. He appeared a few more times in the DDP series, but it wasn't until America's Elite that he became a central character to the franchise.

At first reluctant to take over the new team, Joe agreed when a new threat to the world emerged. No nonsense, gruff and looking older and rougher than any other Joe, the bearded General Colton took over the spot vacated by Hawk. Colton was willing to challenge any orders he believed to be immoral or unethical. His appearance in the series gave the team an experienced and dignified leader, and helped bridge the classic, original action figure to the later series it eventually spawned. If Hawk wasn't available, who better to step into his shoes than the original G.I. Joe himself?

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5. Declassifying the past Snake-Eyes Declassified - August 2005 to January 2006

G.I. JOE Declassified - June to October 2006

Scarlett Declassified - September 2006

Dreadnoks Declassified - November 2006 to May 2006

With a new series well under way, Devil's Due took the opportunity to shed light on the past of the G.I. Joe team and its members in a way that the original series never had. While details of Joe's past came in the form of hints and flashbacks, these new stories gave us full stories, showing us how things began. The obvious place to start was with Snake-Eyes Declassified, which not only showed us how the soldier joined the Army, and expanded upon and gave us greater details of the famed events glimpsed in some classic comics. The series went so far as to play homage to the original panels and art work. For a look at some of that click [here](#), for this site's special feature comparing the old scenes with the new. Besides piecing together the old scenes, the story also uncovered events we never knew about.

G.I. Joe Declassified showed us how many of the original 13 team members were recruited, and was written by Larry Hama himself. Hama's story fit perfectly with his own stories, even incorporating bits and pieces from DDP's newer series, and revealed a secret member of the team we never knew. In the comics dedicated to Scarlett and Zartan and his Dreadnoks, other writers and artists continued the history lesson.

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Wingfield, Sharif, Ibrihim, Rashid

6. Obscure character revival

When the new G.I. Joe series started, DDP not only gave us many classic, iconic characters, but many lesser known and forgotten characters from years past. Sean Collins and Joe Colton, as mentioned above, were both the most obvious part of this trend. We also got Tyler Wingfield, the son of the Joe's nemesis from one issue in 1982: Vance Wingfield. Years later, we met the old man himself, long believed dead. Other original but shortlived characters from the old series were seen again, including dictator Colonel Sharif, Israeli soldier Ibrihim and freedom fighter turned computer whiz Rashid. One of the last characters ever introduced in the Marvel series, Cobra's Dr. Knox, finally reappeared as a replacement for Dr. Mindbender. Other characters were turned into new variations of established action figures. The infamous SAW Viper who killed a number of Joes in the Marvel days became the twisted cyborg Over Kill, while a traitorous soldier name Mikhail Derenko (from Master & Apprentice) became Overlord.

Claymore, Sparks, Mercer, Ramirez Some Joes who were barely glimpsed back in the 1980s were given new life in the new series. Claymore, first an action figure cobbled together from existing figures, made his first appearances in a few comics, while former a Cobra Viper, Mercer, known mostly as a character from 1987's G.I. Joe: The Movie, joined the team. And the character of Sparks, a communications specialist who appeared in only two or three episodes of the 80s cartoon and never even had an action figure, gained a back story and became integral to the team. Larry Hama even included Sparks in his tale of the team's founding. One last character from the cartoon series, the news reporter/Geraldo stand-in Hector Ramirez returned, only to be killed many issues later. (Oh well, no one asked for him, anyway.)

In addition to these characters, a group that started out with no connection to G.I. Joe, the Red Shadows, made their presence known at the end of DDP's first series. The Shadows organization began its life as the action figure archenemy of Action Force, Britain's variation on the G.I. Joe topline. The topline later became integrated with Hasbro's G.I. Joe figures, and the Red Shadows were replaced by Cobra. DDP's Red Shadows was a rival group, out to destroy both the Joes and Cobra. The characters were new, but their very existence was a welcome nod to those old tales. Characters from Action Force even made a cameo appearance in DDP's World War III story arc.

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Shipwreck, Spirit, Mindbender, Jinx 7. New character designs

When the Joes returned, Devil's Due decided to turn down the campiness level for at least some classic characters. The old "Village People" jokes came to an end when Shipwreck traded in his stereotypical sailor outfit for a black watch cap and sweater more befitting a commando, while Spirit maintained a Native American feel but abandoned the cartoony cliches of his old uniform. Both designs were used for updated action figures. Doctor Mindbender adopted a more traditional mad scientist style, no longer resembling a professional wrestler.

The ninjas got a makeover, too, with Jinx swapping her not-so-stealthy bright red outfit for something black. She even eventually got rid of her mask. Storm Shadow went through three costume changes, starting with a new Cobra-aligned outfit, then new camo after rejoining the Joes. Finally, a third outfit appeared in his short lived solo series.

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8. The Phoenix GuardG.I. Joe: America's Elite #13-18 - July to December 2006DDP's relaunch of G.I. Joe -- America's Elite -- went a dozen issues before the return of Cobra Commander, revealing his greatest deception ever, replacing the U.S. president's Chief of Staff, Garrett Freedlowe. Using technology stolen from Zartan, the Commander became one of the president's closest advisors.

He first used this position to convince the president the G.I. Joe team had gone rogue and needed to be dealt with. He created a team of commandos led by General Rey called Phoenix Guard. In reality the commandos were all infamous Cobra agents in disguise: Zarana, Firefly, Scrap-Iron, Wild Weasel and Copperhead. Though some readers guessed who these people really were, DDP went all-out to confuse us, even creating detailed data desk profiles of each member of the team. The truth was revealed during an assault on the Joe's HQ, The Rock. Though the Commander's identity was learned, he escaped the White House now armed with more top secret intelligence about the U.S. and the world than he ever had before, and he planned to make use of it.

The intense battle also allowed for the Baroness to escape after a fight with Zarana, which leads us to #9...

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9. Sins of the MotherG.I. Joe: America's Elite #21-24 - March to June 2007A story that could have been called "Baroness Unleashed", "Sins of the Mother" was intended as a new direction for America's Elite, introducing new writer Mark Powers and artist Mike Bear to the series.

The story follows up on the Baroness' escape from The Rock, sending the villainess on a mission of vengeance to find her baby, kidnapped months ago by Cobra Commander. During the story we see flashbacks, finally learned what happened to her between the previous series and America's Elite. On her way to find the Commander she makes her way through various countries acting without remorse. She tortures Cobra medic Scalpel to get information and kills Wraith, stealing his stealth armor. She recruits Major Bludd to help, in a scene that recalls their relationship from the early Marvel issues. The Joes remain hot on her trail, but barely catch up when she threatens the Commander's life only to be stopped by Destro.

In order to save his baby son, Destro offers the Commander his weapons company, MARS, in exchange. This act plays right into the Commander's hands -- he wanted MARS all along. With the information he gained as Garrett Freedlowe and the technology and resources of MARS at his disposal the Commander prepares his plan to start a new world war...

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10. World War IIIG.I. Joe: America's Elite #25-36 - July 2007 to June 2008The last story Devil's Due gave us was the most ambitious G.I. Joe story to date. It's title can be taken literally as Cobra Commander truly touches off "World War III", using his knowledge of the United States' greatest secrets thanks to his infiltration of the White House months earlier and his acquisition of the technology and resources of MARS. The 25th issue starts the story, with a wraparound cover featuring every member of the Joe team, ever.

Cobra's forces sow conflict throughout the world and force the U.S. to activate every living reserve member of the Joe team, in addition to the series' newly expanded roster of regular members. All members of Cobra join the fight, too, either on- or off-panel, and the battles rage for 12 issues. Though the story arguably suffers from a rush to the end, with some storylines quickly wrapped up due to the Joe license's transfer to IDW -- decided during the story arc -- it attempts to wrap up the entire Marvel/DDP continuity while still leaving some room for it to continue. We are even given more glimpses at the earliest beginnings of Cobra. The story also opened up the Joe universe more than ever, showing so many members all over the globe, with appearances by the October Guard, the Red Shadows, and even giving a brief cameo to the characters of Action Force. "World War III" will remain a memorable contribution to the G.I. Joe mythology.

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