This deluxe hardcover collects Ultimate X-Men Volume 9-11, plus a hefty helping of DVD-style extras! In The Tempest, the death of one of their own leaves the remaining X-Men struggling to deal with the loss. And even before a moment of silence can pass, the mysterious Mr. Sinister arrives, intent on giving the X-Men a lot more to mourn! In Cry Wolf, Gambit's back, but where has he been - and what does he want? The Fenris twins threaten to expose the Ragin Cajuns past sins - and they are legion - unless he obeys them. But with Rogue on the other side, to whom will Remy finally lend his loyalty? And what decision does Rogue make that will affect her budding relationship with Bobby Drake, Iceman? And in The Most Dangerous Game, mutants convicted of capital crimes are being released on an island where contestants hunt them down. Longshot has survived longest, and the X-Men are sent to rescue him - until they become part of the game themselves! With one of their teammates a captive on the island of Krakoa, the malevolent media mogul called Mojo demands the X-Men return Longshot to his headquarters or Angel will soon have a harp to go with his wings! Collects Ultimate X-Men 46-57.

My Personal Review:
I've posted reviews for hardcovers 1-3 in this series. Reviews that trashed the bloated, stupid mess that Mark Millar made of the first three years of Ultimate X-Men. In the issues contained in this volume, Brian Vaughn pulls off a work of genius: he manages to work with everything he's been given, and make it real, personal, exciting, fun, and actually resets the book on the path it should have been on all along: presenting the X-men as teenagers, who behave like teenagers, with all of their problems and flaws, plus the problems of learning about their mutant powers and roles. He makes the characters lovable. He writes plotlines that are taught and tense. He writes dialog that provides a particular voice to each character, and is frequently laugh-out-loud funny.
The artwork is exceptional throughout the whole book, with Brandon Peterson's typically serviceable pencils jacked up to ultimate levels by the incredible inking and coloring, and Stuart Immonen's typically genius work perfectly fitting the "teen" feel of the book.

Let's get specific. The first arc features a gleeful gutting of the Mr Sinister concept from the original series. This is a trademark of Vaughn's UXM -- take a familiar character or storyline, and recast it in a way that gives a wink and a nod to the old, but reinvents the concept in an unexpected way. Who cares if you loved the original Sinister? You can see him back in action in recent X-Men titles like Messiah Complex, ok? He's scary AND ridiculous here, and it works.

The second arc once again ties some "legacy" concepts in new knots: Gambit is introduced, as well as the villains Fenris. The Gambit character works well here-- amazingly, Vaughn sets up the relationship between him and Rouge so well. Gambit's powers are used very effectively, as well-- the fight between him and the X-Men, including an awesome throw-down with Wolverine, is perfectly choreographed!

The third arc is another genius reinterpretation of a classic: Longshot/Spiral/Mojo!! It is brilliantly plotted with a kicker twist. The character of Longshot is very well done, including his powers, which are used in some really clever ways.

Throughout each of these arcs, there is an excellent balance of character development and action. The fight scenes are are very well worked-out, with the character's powers feeling real, and playing off of each other in surprising ways. This is another monster improvement over Millar's UXM. In the earlier issues, the characters' powers were jacked up through the roof and they were always used in the bluntest manner possible. Vaughn takes the hard road and shows the X-Men regularly getting their butts kicked by resourceful villains. When they win battles, they win by working together and letting their powers play off of each other, or by digging in to reserves of powers or using their powers in new ways. (And NOT new ways like Pheonix cutting out a piece of the Earth's crust and sending it into outer space, ahem, Mark Millar, that was just STUPID.)

But the real focus of these stories is putting the characters on new footing-- grounding their personalities, personal stories, and relationships with each other in utterly credible ways. Each character gets space and BV establishes motivations for them that will carry through the next two years of the book. Incredibly, he manages to work with all the plot and character elements that have been preestablished, and in many cases, he makes those prior events more believable and meaningful in retrospect than they ever were in their original forms, due to Millar's hack jobs. For example, Storm's relationship with Beast was always completely contrived. It never felt REAL, just invented for a plot device. But Vaughn uses it to establish motivation for Storm. He uses it to show her character, to give her
motivation. He makes their relationship poignant in retrospect and gives it power and weight.

Professor X is, thank god, toned way down from the inexplicable maniac that Millar portrayed him as in issues 1-36. He's still icy cold and calculating, but hardly the stupid, deluded jackass prone to speechifying and pontificating he was. He's generally just less of an ever-present nuisance. His character takes a backseat so the kids can drive.

Jean Grey and Cyclops's relationship gets a much deeper treatment from Vauhngr as well. He's frightened of her powers, jealous of her mental intimacy with Xavier. Vaughn subtly introduces the idea that Cyclops is terribly scared to lose Jean-- to her powers, or to an identity as a world-class telepath--it is clear he is starting to cling. You finally feel the love--at least from Scott! All so ominous...It is all done with subtlety.

Wolverine and Storm work brilliantly together. Vaughn seems to have been inspired by the deep and conflicted relationship that Claremont established in the original series. The character's play off each other to reveal each other's personalities and inner turmoil. Previously, these characters were shown to be moody and conflicted, but in a vacuum--they always lacked motivation. Here, by putting them together in dramatic situations and deep conversations, we actually see what makes them tic.

Other character's seem to have their own natural pairings that allow their personalities and personal stories to bounce off of each other: Dazzler/Angel, Colossus/Nightcrawler, Iceman/Kitty Pride, this gang of six junior leaguers also get their due, with deep relationships and stories of their own. They also provide tons of comic relief. Vaughn's gift for humorous dialog shines when writing these characters. I was constantly laughing at the way they relentlessly crack on each other.

Back a few issues, I was pretty skeptical when Dazzler was introduced as a pissed-off (and utterly fake and cheesy) punk rock singer. But BKV does the character right-- she's hilarious and believable. In a lesser writer's hands, she'd be a caricature of teen angst with a loud mouth. In this gifted writer's hands, she's intelligent, disaffected, funny, and, unbeknownst to herself, completely lost and crazy.

Similarly, when Millar suggested Colossus was gay, I took it as yet another ploy to add "cool", "edgy", and "contemporary" elements to the book (another Millarism that ruined the first 3 years). But Vaughn makes him real. He's twisted up inside and feels like a mutant among mutants.

I could go on, but by now you get the picture: it is all here. Fantastic art, great characters, inventive plots and battles...this is the Ultimate X-Men we've been waiting for, and a worthy companion book to Ultimate Spider-Man, or Ultimate Fantastic Four. This is a work of super-hero genius, and luckily, it's just the first of two years with BKV at the helm!
For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Ultimate X-Men, Vol. 5 (v. 5) by Stuart Immonen - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!