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COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine

INSIDE LAUNCH ISSUE

The Last Word... Read Pat Mills exclusive monthly column
And featuring... 2000AD, Doctor Who, Roy of the Rovers, Dan Dare, The Beano, Deadline, Shiver & Shake, Valiant, Lion, Thunderbirds, Rok of the Reds, news & more



ComicScene UK Issue 0

August 2018

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COMIC SCENE
THE UK Comic Magazine

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Welcome to the launch issue



THE EDITOR SPEAKS

What encouraged this madness? Vinyl sales up again in 2017. That's what inspired this magazine.

50% research and 50% gut reaction that people wanted a comic about comics.

Whenever I bought a record it was about carrying that purchase home, taking it out of the sleeve for the first time, checking the needle was clean and wouldn't scratch the vinyl, reading the sleeve notes and lyrics while the LP was played again…and again…and again.

Then I'd go searching for the influences that helped inspire that record. There's plenty of choice for the artform – films, documentaries, books and magazines from Q to Mojo to Classic Pop and Rolling Stone.

But if you have an interest in comics, where do you go? Where is your voice?

There's none, really. Except on the internet. Blogs, vlogs, podcasts and websites. Hundreds of them. All of reasonable quality but slightly ironic, when you think about it. Why should one of the most progressive printed mediums - that spurns some of the most lucrative film, merchandise and gaming industries - find itself without it's own printed magazine in the UK? So you can find out more. Learn more. Debate more. Explore more of the rich tapestry of comic books that exist today and in years gone by?

Our gut reaction is you've had a gaping hole in your heart that you didn't even know you needed filling – so here it is. ComicScene UK. We hope you will come away from each issue wondering what on earth you did without it for all these years. We also hope you will feel inclusive. That you will contribute your thoughts on what you've read. That it will take us off on a tangent together and you will inform future content by being part of a two way conversation about what you would like to see covered and learn more about.

More importantly we hope you value us so much you'll continue to subscribe. And convince a friend to subscribe. Without that we are nothing. Working together we succeed. And if we get enough subscriptions we will invest in providing comic workshops for young people. Creating a spark in a future comic book writer or artist. Creating history together. Creating the next set of sleeve notes together. Creating that next vinyl record. To play again…and again…and again…

In the coming issues we hope you will welcome revisiting old friends, through classic reprints of long forgotton comics or reconsider some colourful characters you were perhaps too long in the tooth to appreciate. We want to help lift the veil on aspects of comicdom that you are too young to remember or too old to quite understand. We want to light the fire of uncurling that front cover as carefully as possible and reading a brand new story that will entertain you for many years to come – or encourage you to boot up that tablet and see if you get why people go on about that particular character, writer, artist or want to revisit that story over and over again. If you want a selfie as a Stormtrooper or skip off home with a sketch from your favourite artist this magazine will have something for you.

Is putting this together madness, particularly in an increasing 'digital' age? Yes, probably. When I started putting the magazine together I remember one of the first books I ever read. Around the World in 80 Days, by Jules Verne. I read it before I even read my first comic book. I've never read it since. But I've watched (some of) the movies. I've read (some of) the comic book adaptations. There is now even an addictive and interactive visual novel / game where you become part of the 19th century setting trying to get around the world in '80 days'. A new adventure, even if you don't succeed the first time around. I loved that (coverless, I recall) book. And I'd love for someone to guide me through what that book went on to influence, giving me a new perspective, a new point of view.

That's what ComicScene UK is for. I hope it doesn't sound like a mad mission. I hope we are around a little more than 80 days. I hope you will be part of the adventure.

Finally a big thank you to everyone who encouraged us on the way thus far. To those who thought it was a good idea and kept us going. To those who promoted what we were doing. To everyone who wrote for us. To everyone who subscribed so far in advance. And to everyone who is reading this now. We hope you enjoy it.

Kind regards,

Tony.

FEEDBACK

Got something to say on the content of the magazine.? We want to hear from you - our regular letters page starts next issue.

Email comicsceneuk@gmail.com

You can also give us your thoughts on twitter using the **#hashtag #comicscene** and **#tlw** for Pat Mills 'The Last Word'

We are always interested in what your current comic recommendations are - use the **#hashtag #comicscene** and we'll include them in future issues too.

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NUTS AND BOLTS

RAVINGS FROM INSIDE THE COMICS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

How often do you see those outside the comics industry looking in declaring comics are dead, and our chosen medium is "on the ropes"? Too often, I suspect, but skimming various social media, you often find the detractors are focused entirely on the "Big Two" US publishers, DC and Marvel, and certainly near obsessive about American superhero comics.

Comics has always been a wider medium than men wearing pants outside their longjohns, and while the US comics industry might be staggering a little, and, of course, comics here in the UK no longer sell in their millions as they did in the 1950s and 60s, there's still plenty to be positive about.

Back in February, industry organisation ABC released the latest set of consumer magazine sales figures which, as usual, made for sobering reading for some. Key markets such as women's magazines, always considered an indicator of market health, for example, again took a sales hit. But despite some casualties - Doctor Who Adventures, for one - comics and children's magazine publishers remained bullish and upbeat about their titles, a sector where the news stand still sees a lot of launches. (Ben 10 and DC Superhero Girls, for two)

DC Thomson, publishers of Beano, had good reason to crow, the weekly humour title benefiting no doubt not only from the success of the Dennis and Gnasher TV show but also from careful nurturing of the brand online, where many younger comic readers are likely to find comics first, and at retail level, where, I'd argue, the publisher's resistance to "bagging" the comic with a free gift has paid off. The policy helps encourage content sampling that you simply can't do with so many comic / magazine titles in the sector - and I'm sure that's why titles like Egmont's TOXIC are paying the price, albeit also because they face competition from rival boys titles EPIC and MEGA.

(Egmont's new DC Superhero Girls recently launched unbagged, although later issues were wrapped in plastic; it'll be interesting to see its ABC figures next time around).

I don't want to be accused of viewing our comics news stand through rose-tinted glasses, because the ABC figures don't afford a full picture of market health. The cost of reporting means some publishers, don't bother filing figures. (They simply don't need to promote sales figures as they - don't rely on them to attract advertisers, a title's cover price covering editorial costs rather than ad revenue, which most consumer magazines are dependent on). This means we don't know how many copies of 2000AD sell each week and only Panini's Ultimate Spider-Man, hovering at the 25,000 average sale, affords any indication of how well Titan Comics and Panini's superhero licensed titles are doing.

But there's still enough to suggest comics on the UK news stand are far from "dead" - although they're a very different type of title to those older readers of ComicScene will remember with much fondness, with their cover to cover strips rather than, mainly, today's mix of cheaper to produce features and shorter strips. (2000AD, Beano, Commando and The Phoenix being exceptions to the norm).



DC Thomson's The Beano

Comics as a medium isn't dying, there's more variety and access to good comics than ever before. (I've not even touched on the thriving variety of the independent press here, either). Of course, that also means you have to wade through a lot of garbage, sometimes, to find the pearls.

The problem, as ever, is making money from the medium and it's good, I think, to see a number of publishers not taking the route of creating an IP simply in the hope that it will be optioned for film an TV and therefore recoup your investment cost.

DC Thomson's success with Beano, for me, both on the news stand and digital arena, has re-established the title among its core young audience, and as more than just the print comic. (Although I'm still mystified why they don't give Beano comic greater prominence on the official web site). That careful investment is now seeing an uplift in sales, helped by the success of its core characters on TV.

I'm seeing kids actively looking for the title over others in sales outlet, which is definitely a good thing. Comics publishers are employing various strategies to keep their titles alive, their brands in the public eye. There's still much more to do, and no-one is complacent about the challenges. But the game is far from over.

And far from dying.



Egmont's totally gross out TOXIC

Marvel Superheroes storm Madame Tussauds Blackpool

Madame Tussauds Blackpool launched its epic new Marvel Superheroes addition at a VIP-filled launch at the end of March.

The million pound Marvel exhibit – currently starring Nick Fury, Groot, Hulk, Spider-Man and Thor – is an integral part of the whole attraction in the Lancashire resort, not and "added extra".

On hand to promote this latest addition to Madame Tussauds were Love Island contestants Amber Davies and Scott Thomas, along with Coronation Street star Samia Longchambon, an unusual mix of soap and reality stars which successfully caught the attention of the national press and local press and helped the new exhibition grab some headlines.

The previously undeveloped space adds 5501 square feet to the existing public footprint within the attraction that already includes a host of film, TV and variety stars, from Benny Hill and Ken Dodd to the Queen and Lady Gaga. From the Rovers Return of Coronation Street (where you can sit with Deidre or pretend to be chatting to Street veteran Ken) to a Best of British section, there's plenty to see, and the new Marvel Superheoes exhibit simply adds even more fun to a visit.

The "waxworks" offer plenty of interactive opportunities for kids of all ages to enjoy. Incorporating four distinct zones, the new Marvel area includes a number of new figures as well as interactive experiences to truly excite and delight visitors.

The attraction takes inspiration from the original comics as well as the blockbuster films that continue be a huge hit at the box office and it really does offer Marvel fans the chance to get up close and personal to their favourite characters from the big screen.

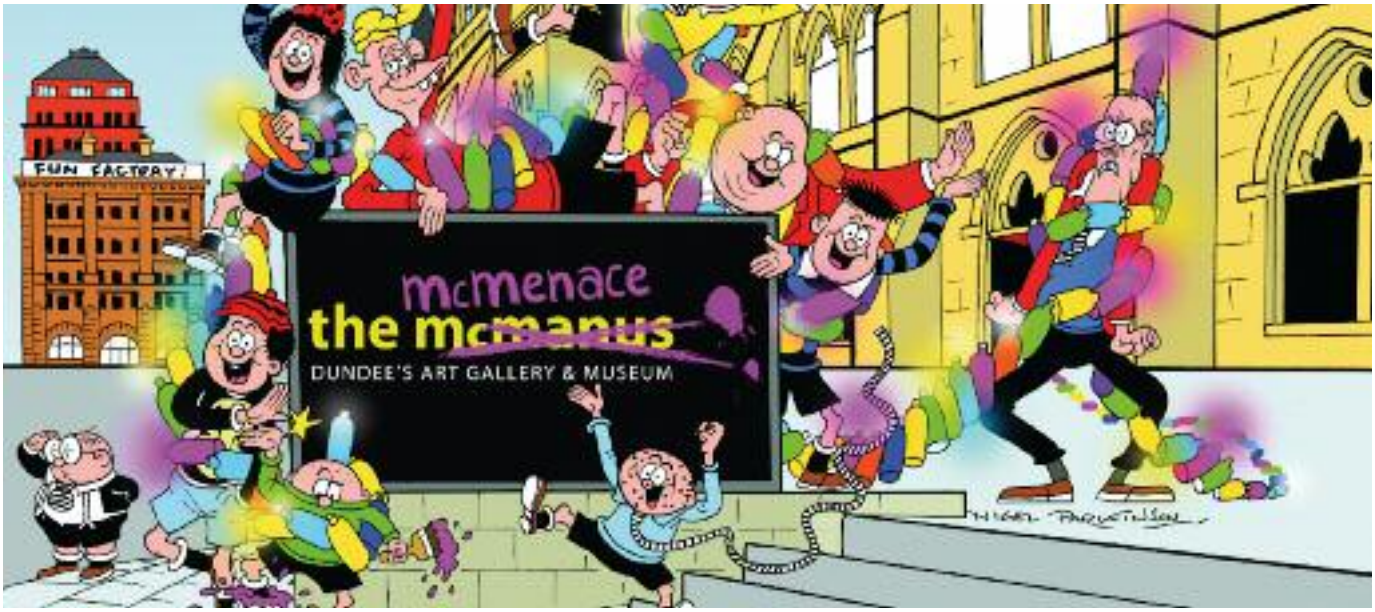
Talking to the team behind this new exhibit, we're told there are plans to add new characters and they also hope to run some comic-inspired events during the year, too.

- Marvel Super Heroes is part of the main Madame Tussauds Blackpool attraction and is included in the ticket price, starting from £13.50 for children and £16.50 for adults (additional 20% discount available when tickets are booked online).
  For more information or book your ticket today visit: www.madametussauds.com/blackpool/en





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John is currently editing Doctor Who



Comic Scene Issue One News

Beano's 80th Anniversary Plans Shape Up

There will celebrations aplenty in July when the Beano marks 80 years of publication, with plenty of events planned and a lot of tie-in merchandise in the works, announced last year.

One major tie in is a bespoke exhibition dedicated to the beloved Beano characters and comic, which will be hosted by The McManus, Dundee's art gallery and museum.

In Beano's 80th year, the special collaboration will see The McManus revise their name to 'The McMenace', for the duration of the exhibit from the 2nd June – 21st October 2018.

To commemorate the collaboration, Beano comic illustrator Nigel Parkinson has created an original comic strip, which sees The Bash Street Kids larking about and designing the new sign for The McMenace. The illustration shows The Bash Street Kids tangled in the 'Waldella, Dundee' by artist David Batchelor, one of the museum's most popular exhibits.

The unique exhibition will have a large focus on The Bash Street Kids, whose conception was inspired by pupils from Dundee High School, just a stone's throw from DC Thomson Media's Headquarters at Meadowside in the city.

The showcase will explore the birth of the Beano comic and its development throughout the decades, looking at some of its best loved characters including: Dennis and Gnasher, Rodger the Dodger, Minnie the Minx and, of course, The Bash Street Kids.

Representation of the golden age of comics can be seen in the form of The Dandy and The Hotspur, which entertained the nation's children on a weekly basis by writers and artists from DC Thomson Media.

"We think that the Beano's 80th is an outstanding achievement, its influence shows the test of time as it is still so incredibly popular with children today, says Sinclair Aitken, Chair of Leisure & Culture Dundee. "We can't wait to celebrate the birthday of this comic in its hometown. They have created so many iconic characters through the years from Dennis and Gnasher, Minnie the Minx to the fantastic Bash Street Kids.

"This exhibition is a very special collaboration between ourselves and Beano Studios and we look forward to welcoming visitors of all generations from near and far, when the exhibit opens in early June."

"Dundee is the hometown of The Dandy and Beano, and so for us, there is no better partner than The McManus to celebrate our 80th milestone with," says Mike Stirling, Head of Beano Studios Scotland.

"The exhibit will offer fans a glimpse into the history of the comics, and showcase the rebellious and fun characters of the comics throughout the ages and display how they still connect with children today."

- The free exhibition opens at The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum on 2nd June 2018 and runs until Sunday 21 October 2018
  Web: www.mcmanus.co.uk

London's Cartoon Museum is On the Move!

London's Cartoon Museum has announced it has secured a new, permanent home in the centre of the capital.

The new Cartoon Museum will be based on Wells Street, just north of Oxford Street in NOHO, ten minutes walk from the current location, and near Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road tube stations.

The plans were revealed to the public at the opening of 50 Glorious Years! in March for the first time, and the Museum team are keen to hear supporters and visitors ideas and suggestions for developing the new venue.

The space is a blank canvas, measuring 4,200 square feet, about the same size as the current museum, and in the large basement of a new building developed by Great Portland Estates. It has a separate street level entrance, and is serviced by a lift and stairs, and has decent height ceilings.

The Museum has signed up for a 25 year lease, at a peppercorn rent - which is a major boon for the Museum whose current building costs have often proved a major focus for fund raising.

"Wells Street is in a very vibrant area near the cross section with Mortimer Street, populated by young professionals and students from Westminster University," notes Cartoon Museum chairman and cartoonist Oliver Preston. "It's close to the BBC in an area that used to be home to the rag trade.

"Since inception we have thrived as a metropolitan museum, attracting visitors from all over the world, but we do have especially strong local support from volunteers, Museum Friends and visitors in London – and, of course, tourists."

The Museum's Board of Trustees have chosen a young up and coming architect to design the new space, in a style they feel will convey the excitement and vision of the whole team behind the project.

This is very exciting news and a great new development for a popular Museum devoted to cartoons and comics, which will open in 2019.

In the meantime, do get along to the Museum's current location and check out 50 Glorious Shows! which celebrates what the Cartoon Museum has achieved in its first twelve years.

The exhibition features items from, or relating to, all the previous exhibitions and also showcases many of the wonderful artworks which the museum has acquired since 2006.

Celebrating the world of British cartoons and comics in its many forms, the exhibition features works by past masters of the British tradition of cartooning such as Hogarth, Gillray, Tenniel, Heath Robinson, Pont, H .M. Bateman, E. H. Shepard and Ronald Searle. Top comic artists and graphic novelists such as Dudley D. Watkins, John McCrea and Garth Ennis, Hunt Emerson, David Lloyd, Posy Simmonds and Bryan Talbot have featured in several exhibitions, and are now part of the collection. For those who love a laugh there are treats by Sally Artz, Larry, Frank Dickens, Mike Williams, Michael Heath, Kipper Williams, Peattie and Taylor, and many great joke cartoonists both past and present.

Britain has a great tradition of political satire, and the show will include selections from our Spitting Image, €urobollocks! Bell Èpoque, Maggie! Maggie! Maggie!, Punch, Private Eye and Steadman@77 exhibitions, as well as some recent donations by the rising generation of political cartoonists.

At the heart of political and social satire is great caricature, and the exhibition includes brilliant exponents of the art such as Max Beerbohm, Mark Boxer, Robert Sherriffs and Trog.

Other exhibitions have looked at how cartoons and comics have reflected social, cultural and political changes, including two world wars, the changing face of marriage, the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and our relationship with the demon drink. One of the most vibrant areas of cartooning and comics is the world of graphic novels, which is represented by a selection of work produced by British graphic novelists over the last twenty-five years.

- 50 Glorious Shows! runs from 28th March until 2nd September 2018 at the Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, London, WC1A 2HH, Tel: 0207 580 8155 www.cartoonmuseum.org Facebook & Twitter

Convention Corner

A quick guide to upcoming comics oriented events in the UK & Ireland

June

Cardiff Independent Comic Expo:
2nd June 2018
ciceevents.wordpress.com

Glenrothes Comic Con:
9th June 2018
www.facebook.com/glenrothescomiccon

Moniaive Festival:
10th -11th June 2017
www.moniaivefestivalvillage.org.uk

East London Comic Art Festival (ELCAF):
22nd - 24th June 2018
www.elcaf.co.uk

MACC-POW! (Macclesfield):
23rd June 2018
www.maccpow.co.uk

Glasgow Comic Con:
30th June 2018
www.glasgowcomiccon.com

July

MCM Comic Con Manchester Central:
28th – 29th July 2018
www.mcmcomiccon.com/manchester

London Film and Comic Con 2018:
27th – 29th July
www.londonfilmandcomiccon.com

October

Lakes International Comics Art Festival:
12th - 14th October 2018
www.comicartfestival.com

Little Heroes Comics

Little Heroes Comics is a UK based charity that creates and distributes comic making kits to children through hospitals and healthcare organisations across the UK.

The charity started in March 2017 when its founder Aaron Rackley wanted to give back to the hospital that helped him during his own time battling cancer in late 2013. He set up a JustGiving account and set a target of £1000 with a plan to create 100 comic making kits.

The support and the feedback from not just the medical field but also the comic book community was so great that Aaron decided to form the charity officially and set out to find funding to create more.

Little Heroes has been alive for over a year now and has so far raised over £10,000 which has enabled them to send over 700 kits out. Fundraising for Little Heroes is a combination of generous donations form individuals and grants from the government, however Little Heroes has just released its own Anthology. The First Anthology 'Strength' is a selection of stories all based around the title's theme. The pages are filled with stories from various creators who have donated their work for free to enable the Anthology to come to life. It was recently successfully funded via Kickstarter and is now available to purchase from the Little Heroes online store.

Little Heroes is now working on their second Anthology and continuing to send out comic making kits to children.

If you would like to help support Little Heroes and the work they do, you can find them at the following urls.

www.littleheroescomics.co.uk
www.littleheroes.bigcartel.com
www.twitter.com/littleheroeskit
www.facebook.com/littleheroescomics



RAVINGS FROM INSIDE THE COMICS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY



The Many Faces of DAN DARE

by Richard Sheaf

SINCE Dan Dare burst onto the scene in Eagle magazine issue 1 (dated 14th April 1950) many artists have illustrated him and his stories, what I just want to present here is a whistle-stop guide to those many artists and what their interpretation of Dare looked like.

1). FRANK HAMPSON

It's hard to know where to start with Frank Hampson and his contribution to Dan Dare, or to pick a single defining image. The version of Dare, the colonel in the Interplanet Space Fleet, that people are familiar was not Hampson's initial idea. Originally he'd envisaged a tough street-fighting man of the cloth in the East end of London, this idea then evolved into Chaplain Dan Dare of the Inter-planet Patrol, before eventually becoming the heroic figure we recognise today. In his introduction to 'Dan Dare's spacebook' (1953) Hampson recalled that it was while serving in WW2 in Antwerp in 1944 that he witnessed the birth of space travel by seeing the rockets used by the Nazis in their desperate attempts to prevent the Allied advance. Dan was the man Hampson always wanted to be, Digby the man he felt he was. The RAF in space, a world ruled by a single government, races working together in the defence of Earth, a boundless optimism for the future and a solar system teeming with alien life – the worlds that Hampson envisaged feel further away today than ever before.

What we have to remember him, and his ideals, by is one of the most beautiful, most detailed comic strips ever created in this country. These are the reasons that Dan Dare endures, thanks Frank.

2). HAROLD JOHNS & GRETA TOMLINSON



Marooned on Mercury was the 3rd Dan Dare adventure (running from mid-1952 to early 1953) and, while the opening episodes were drawn by Frank Hampson, the artistic duties were quickly handed over to Harold Johns & Greta Tomlinson. Mercury was their most significant contribution to the Dare saga – with Greta even going so far as to design the 'sing-song' language that the Mercurians use. The artistic style is distinctive, with art that is thicker and darker than a Frank Hampson page but with a colour palette that can be particularly lurid (even within the same frame!). The story follows Dan and the gang as they find themselves on Mercury where they, and the indigenous inhabitants, battle against the mighty Mekon. (above, a rare example of a page signed by Harold Johns)

3). DESMOND WALDUCK



Desmond Walduck was the artist predominantly responsible for the 5th Dan Dare adventure Prisoners of Space (which ran for nearly a year in Eagle, 28/05/54-06/05/55). This was Walduck's largest contribution to the Dare canon and is based around a game of cat and mouse between Dan and the Mekon on a space station. The limited environment (running around on a space station is quite different from the previous stories where there's been a whole new planet to explore), the use of child characters Steve Valiant and 'Flamer' Spry and Walduck's rather 'stiff' art mean that Prisoners is not a particularly well regarded story. Of course, plenty of artists fail to live up to the amazing dynamism of Frank Hampson's art but Walduck pales in comparison to the Dare artists that preceded, and succeeded, him.

4). FRANK BELLAMY

When Hampson was removed from the Dare strip in late 1959 Frank Bellamy was parachuted in to draw it – he shared art duties with Don Harley with a typical issue of Eagle having one Bellamy page and one Harley page. Their very different art styles jar and it's a big step away from the continuity that the strip had previously gloried in. Bellamy joined the story partway through Terra Nova and then worked on Trip to Trouble and Project Nimbus stories but from the outset he was reluctant to take the strip on and, in the end, only agreed to work on it for a year. His year spanned August 1959-July 1960; he then moved on to illustrate the Fraser of Africa, Montgomery of Alamein and Heros the Spartan in Eagle.

Bellamy's Dare is older, more grizzled and definitely has a furrowed brow at all times. The contrast with Don Harley's youthful, botox-using Dare (often on the very next page) could not be greater.

5). DON HARLEY & BRUCE CORNWELL

Don had worked with Frank Hampson on the strip's highwater mark (the Man from Nowhere trilogy and Safari Space / Terra Nova). After sharing art duties with Frank Bellamy in Bellamy's year on the strip, Don worked with Bruce Cornwell on a run of 4 stories (Mission of the Earthman, The Solid Space Mystery, The Platinum Planet, The Earth Stealers) over a couple of years from mid-1960 to early 1962. Cornwell handles the technical side of the strip while Harley provided



his trademark plain and simple version of Dare – this is not to underplay Harley's role in Dare, he just has a distinctive style. Hampson acknowledged Harley as the second best Dare artist. Harley continues to produce Dare work for Spaceship Away magazine http://spaceshipaway.org.

6). KEITH WATSON

Keith Watson holds a special place in Dan Dare fans hearts for many reasons. Firstly, he was a Dan Dare fan who got to live every fan's dream and work on the strip itself and secondly, he almost single-handedly wrestled the strip back onto the front cover of Eagle in the 1960s when he produced some truly astonishing covers. He also worked on the Dare revamps for new Eagle and, latterly, for Spaceship Away magazine – his early death robbed British comics of a unique talent. Watson's distinctive thick black lines combined with a use of colour that would be impressive for any artists is rendered doubly so when you realise that Keith Watson was colour blind. He illustrated the strip single-handed for 5 years, from 1962-7.

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How Comic Books help us to relive our Childhood

By Benoit Peeters
Writer, novelist, & comics studies scholar

Traditionally, comic books have been aimed primarily at children – to such a degree that they are often identified with them. Regardless of the recent evolution of the genre, particularly given the growing popularity of more adult graphic novels, to me the link between comics and childhood continues to be very profound.

There are certain regressive aspects to our love of comics and "bandes dessinées" (or BD) – as they are known in French, my native language. For example, collectors often pay incredible prices for figurines and old editions. They also have a remarkable desire to keep alive mythical characters after the death of their creator: from Batman and Astroboy to Spirou and Blake and Mortimer, characters continue to be resuscitated, with varying degrees of success. It's as if the readers who were comforted in their childhood by these heroes can't bear to see them disappear.

This seems to be something particular to the medium of the comic book. Of course, we remember the novels that we loved during our childhood, but we don't read and return to them as often as our favourite comics.

A thirst for innocence

It's also possible to admire great works of literature, philosophy and art without the need to return to them compulsively or to spend thousands on first editions. But there is a kind of archaic drive behind our relationship with comics, an inconsolable nostalgia mixed with an irresistible desire to not completely grow up. We dismiss this phenomenon by talking about childishness. But it's more about a thirst for innocence or permanence that we keep carrying around inside us, and which comics allow us to satisfy easily.

But of course, this direct link with childhood is only one aspect of graphic fiction. Comics have also been evolving.

In many modern comics since the 1970s, for example, the heroes are no longer invincible – they are affected by age or their own fragility. Comic book characters increasingly are caught in linear time, which affects and transforms them, just like it does every one of us. Links with others are made and remade, injuries cause real suffering, people, including the heroes themselves, die. They have abandoned the mythic to enter the romantic.

This new relationship with time is at the heart of many celebrated graphic novels, particularly the two volumes of the Pulitzer prize-winning Maus, which reimagines the Holocaust, casting mice as the Jews and cats as the Nazis. But Art Spiegelman's masterpiece doesn't just deal with the Holocaust and its survivors. It is concerned with a lot of other issues: the relationship between fa-

ther and son, the difficulties of communication and of forgiveness. With the death of Vladek, the narrator's father, in the middle of the story, memory changes function and gives a new sense to the work: mourning and history are inseparable.

In another way, Japanese manga such as My Father's Journal or A Distant Neighborhood by Jirô Taniguchi pose similar questions. So too do the extraordinary biographical works accomplished by Emmanuel Guibert in The Photographer and Alan's War. Mixing personal and universal elements, those stories are subtle and complex as the best novels.

A particularly striking example is proposed by Lint, one of the recent books produced by Chris Ware which describes the life of an ordinary man, from his birth to his last breath in 70 pages. The graphic and narrative style is codified to the extreme, far removed from any apparent realism. Ware's designs are on the edge of a diagrammatic style. And yet, when we read this book – in which each of the years of Lint's life is reduced to a single page – we are plunged into a story that deeply moves us.

This book moves us, not just because we identify with a character, as we might when watching a film, but because we identify with the medium itself. The pages of Chris Ware's book evoke a mixture of emotions, primitive and childlike and sophisticated and adult at the same time, that appeal to a whole spectrum of experiences.

This highly sophisticated graphic novel can help us to understand how comic book art is connected with childhood, even in its most subtle and modern evolutions.

Drawing donkeys

The simplicity of comic books is another key feature. Around 1840, Rodolphe Töpffer, inventor and first theorist of the comic book, had already started questioning the manner in which a child recognises a donkey illustrated in a linear drawing. When a donkey is represented in a picture in the middle of the countryside accompanied by a play of light and shadow, a young child can't always immediately identify it. But if the donkey is suggested only by a few lines, the child doesn't hesitate to recognise it. Even if a tree trunk is placed in front of the donkey in this simple linear drawing, so that only a few fragments of it are left, the child still sees it for what it is.

This tells us something about the specific way we perceive caricatures, such as those in comic books. When it's a light touch design, a caricature fixes an image in our minds which cannot be erased, as if it has unveiled somebody's true character. Through this we can see another essential quality of the comic book: its ability to stick in our memory.

In the midst of the flux of images and art surrounding us, comic books have a special and unforgettable place. They have a remarkable capacity to prolong the life of images well beyond the time of reading. The most remarkable sequences of images continue to live with us, accompanying us for years.

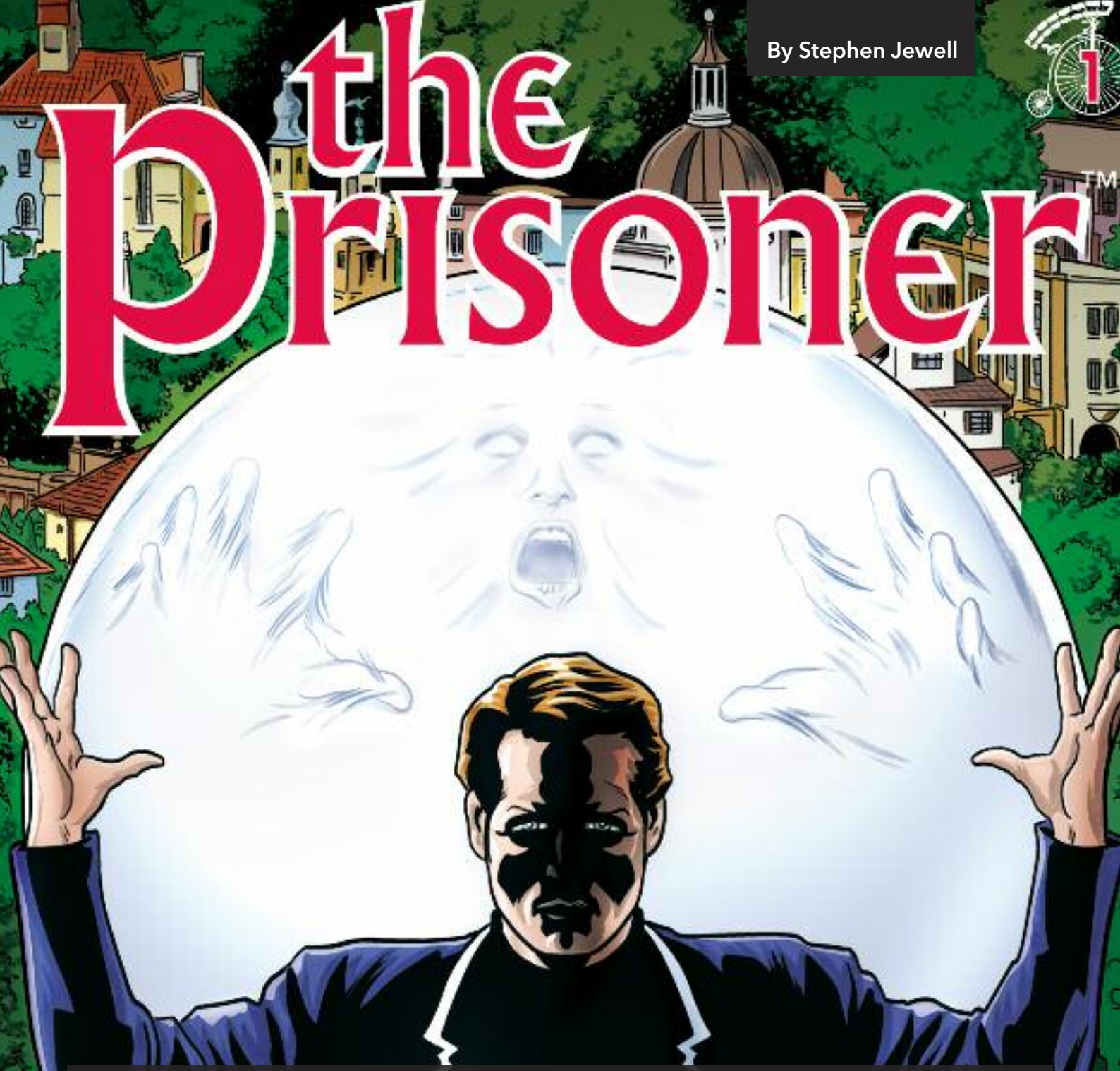
In this regard, the nearest thing to the comic book is perhaps the song. I don't think there is any song that we fall in love with immediately: we have to listen to it again and again – sometimes obsessively – until it has infiltrated us and accompanies us in our daily life. To me, comics are similar to this: they live where we dream to live. There is something unique and profound here, comic books are a privileged way of renewing the buried emotions of our childhood.



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By Stephen Jewell

the Prisoner™



Renowned for its notoriously ambiguous ending, The Prisoner is one of the most popular cult science fiction television shows ever despite only running for a meagre seventeen episodes from September 1967 to February 1968. Now just in time for its fiftieth anniversary, the ITC Entertainment series – which starred Patrick McGoohan as the incarcerated Number Six and Leo McKern as his captor, Number Two - is set to enjoy a renewed lease of life in a new Titan Comics mini-series.

"I really liked a lot of it," recalls writer Peter Milligan, who is teaming up with Canadian artist Colin Lorimer (Image's The Hunt, Harvest) on the four-parter. "Firstly, I liked how bloody different it was from anything else I'd seen. I enjoyed the surreal quality and this sense that somewhere beyond this Kafkaesque tale of identity and mindfuck, there was another story – a spy story – that had somehow been hijacked by this more surreal one. I wanted to explore some of that in my own take on The Prisoner. The idea of a certain kind of tale, a kind of genre, that's knocked off course."

"I've always loved the show," adds Lorimer. "For me, it has to be that really iconic title sequence, it's wonderfully shot and so succinct in its storytelling and set-up. Also, Rover the killer balloon certainly left a lasting impression!"

Fresh off Titan's recent Dan Dare revival, Milligan was paired with Lorimer on The Prisoner by Titan editor David Leach, who evidently made the seasoned scribe

an offer he couldn't refuse. "We discussed it over lunch and things progressed from there," says Milligan, who was tempted by the propitious timing of the project. "We'll have to see if bringing it out now turns out to be auspicious. But I hope it is, as it certainly lends the whole thing a pleasing frisson."

Known for his mind-bending work on series such as Vertigo '90s trailblazer Shade the Changing Man and the more recent Kid Lobotomy for former Vertigo editor Shelly Bond's new IDW imprint Black Crown, The Prisoner appears to share many of Milligan's favourite themes. "That's one of the things that appealed to me," says Milligan. "Clearly, the people who created The Prisoner had been exposed to Franz Kafka, and I'm a huge fan of the existential Czech."

While the conflict between Number Six and Number Two is still at the heart of the story, Milligan reveals that there will be a brand new Prisoner in the proverbial hot seat. "While we are in no way trying to retell an old classic that existed in the context of its own time, I want there to be feeling that we are in the same world as the original show," he explains. "But it's about more than just the relationship between Number Six and Number Two, as this story is really about the relationship between Number Six and the world, which for a while might be represented by The Village. However, there's still very much a power dynamic between the different numbers and we'll see that in this story."

Titled 'The Uncertainty Machine,' the latest Prisoner is a British agent called Breen - who for reasons that will eventually become clear - finds himself trapped in The Village. "In our world of doubt and scepticism, how do we know what is true and what is false?" questions Milligan. "And are there even such things as true and false anymore? Our hero seems to personify this uncertainty as he is drawn into the strange world and machinations of The Village."

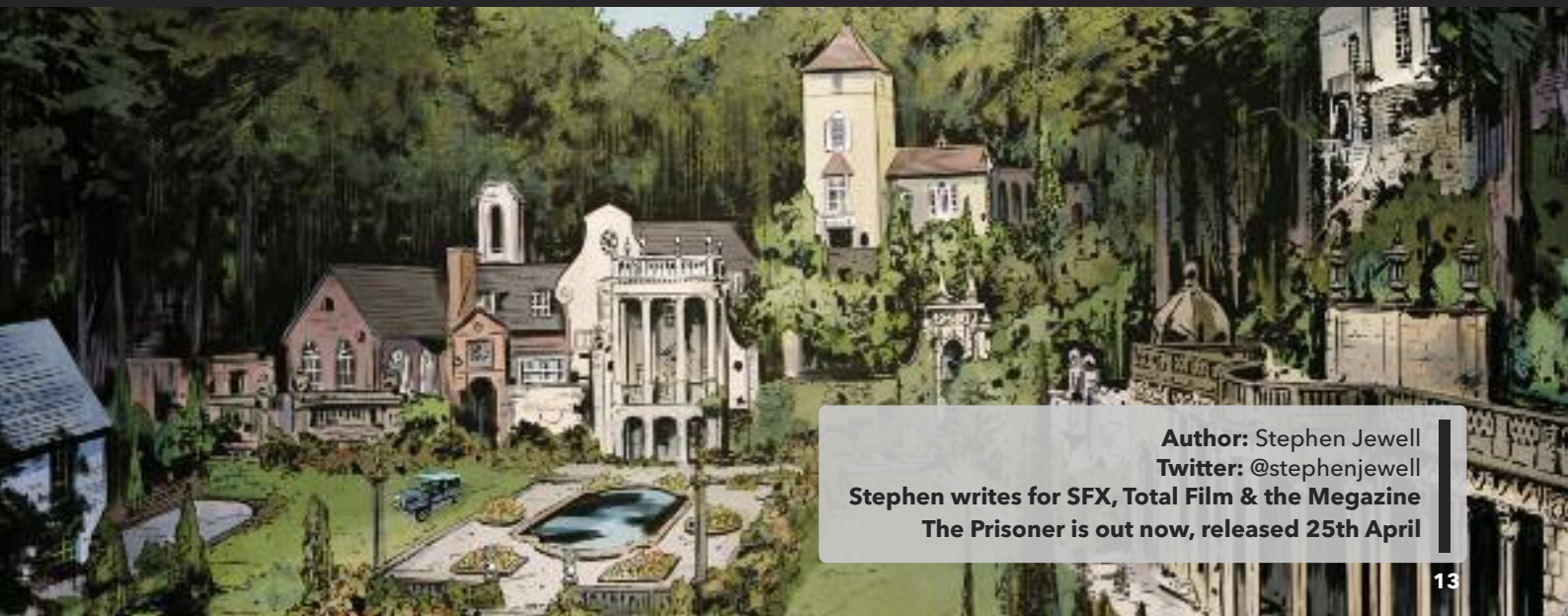
Famously filmed in the North Wales village of Portmerion, The Village itself was very much like a character itself in the television series, an intriguing aspect of the original story that Milligan intends to emulate. "The Village plays a central role in this story," he teases. "Not just the Village as a place but also as an idea, a kind of movement."

Having admitted that part of the appeal of The Prisoner was "the opportunity to draw those blazers," Lorimer has closely studied not just its distinctive clobber but also its striking architecture and other memorable visual elements. "The television series has been on a constant loop while I've been working, and it's the main influence to my approach," he says. "Of course, as this comic book series is set in the modern day, the clothing reflects that. But once we're in the Village, we're keeping it pretty close to the fashion of the sixties, as I think we all want to give the fans of the show something recognizable. And Joana Lafuente's colour approach also helps add an old school aesthetic to the surroundings."

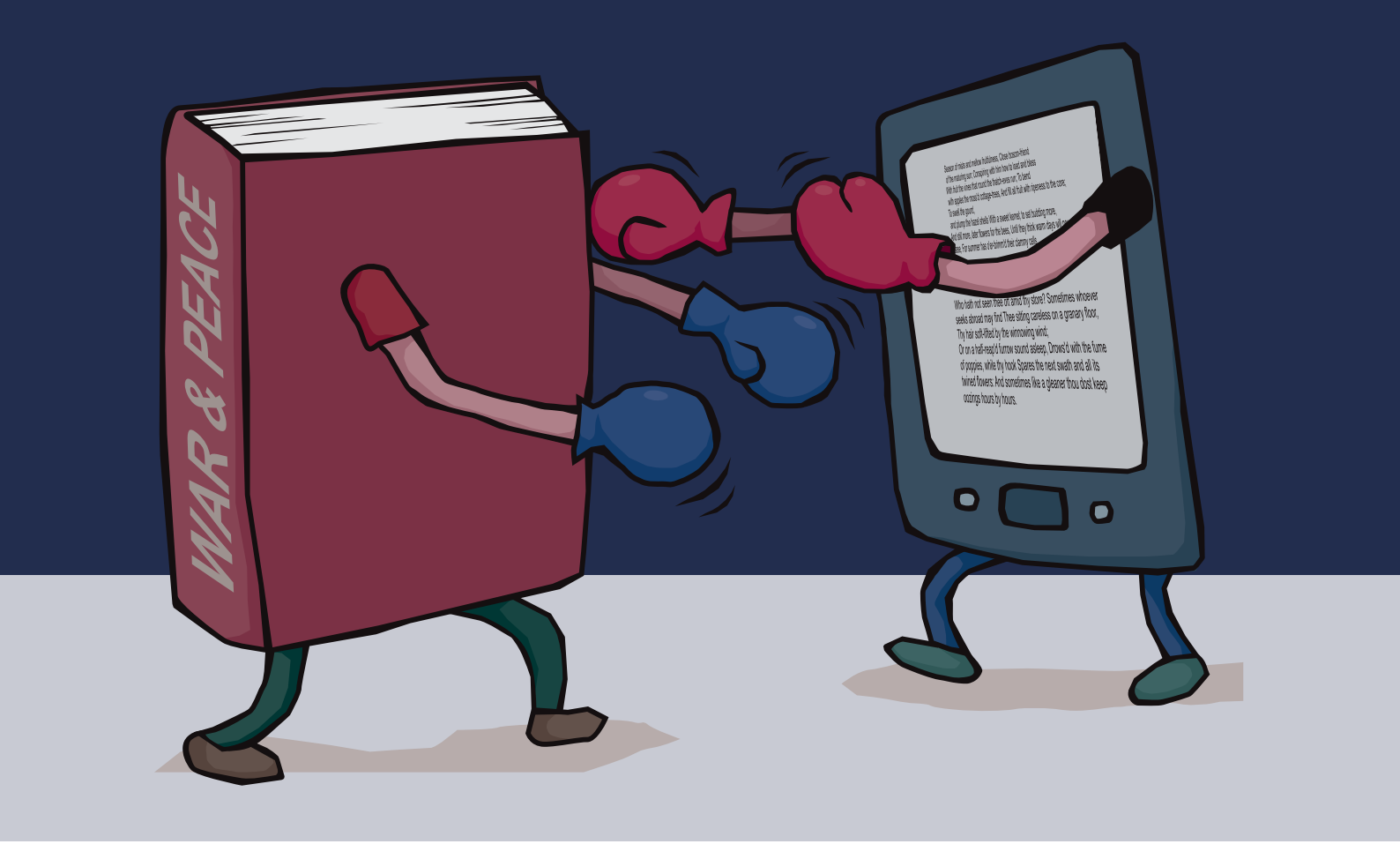
While it featured on the cover of City Magazines weekly TV Tornado within weeks of its original transmission, The Prisoner was scheduled to make its comic book debut two years later in a Marvel mini-series in 1969. Written by Steve Englehart and originally drawn by Gil Kane before Jack Kirby assumed penciling reins, the first issue was an adaptation of opening episode 'Arrival.' But although Kirby completed work on the first issue and Mike Royer inked and lettered around six pages, it never saw the light of day, At least that was the case until this July when Titan will publish a special hardcover volume, The Prisoner: Original Art Edition.

With Marvel eventually losing the comics rights, it would be another two decades before The Prisoner finally hit the comic shelves with the release of Dean Motter and Mark Askwith's four-issue, prestige format DC mini-series, The Prisoner: Shattered Visage in 1988. But while Milligan and Lorimer admit to being "familiar" with the work that Englehart, Kane and Kirby did, they both maintain that they haven't taken any particular leads from any of The Prisoner's past comic book incarnations. "I remember checking out Shattered Visage many years ago, and I loved the graphic novel cover with the bike on the beach," recalls Lorimer. "But I can't say that I've been influenced by any of the previous comics, as my influence has solely come from the television programme."

With Lorimer declaring "if Peter was to keep writing, I'd certainly keep drawing," hopefully it won't be another twenty years before The Prisoner once again graces a comic book page. "There's definitely scope for a sequel," says Milligan. "But we'll have to see how things develop…"



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The Prisoner is out now, released 25th April



I'm in a well paid job, not raking it in, but comfortable. A lot (some would say disproportionate but they are crazy) of my money goes on comics and magazines. I hoard everything (except my Private Eyes oddly), and still have a stack of computer magazines from the 1980s (Zzap 64s if you must know). I clearly have a very tolerant wife.

'Course, with the wonders of modern technology we're spared all that agony of storage and unsightly stacks of periodicals, paper cuts and inky fingers. We now have "iPads", tablets, high definition wide screen monitors, laptops screens, and mobile 'phones (if you squint hard enough or use the zoom function) to consume our reading material. We're well into the digital age, my entire comic collection (complete runs of 2000AD, Judge Dredd the Megazine and associated titled, plus a few thousand assorted British newsstand (remember them?) and American comics) could fit on my laptop. Or, why restrict to local digital storage. Were I to be extra clever, they could be kept remotely in the "cloud". Convenient or what?

> **"I'm in my mid 40s and I don't adapt well. Willingly nor easily."**

The thing is; I'm in my mid 40s and I don't adapt well. Willingly nor easily.

We've all read some digital publications. I belong to far too many Facebook groups, and I can see that many of the members subscribe to digital comics and magazines. I've read and heard people extolling the virtues of digital publishing – how many magazines, books and comics you can store, easily downloadable or readable online (assuming you have a connection). You can store thousands of publications on a tiny piece of hardware.

But isn't having the object in your hand, the actual publication be it book, magazine or comic, that admittedly was probably once a grand spruce, pine, or birch (other trees are available) part of the attraction? The medium isn't as important as the content, but for me it certainly adds to the value.

I consider myself a luddite. A reasonably modern luddite. I'm not that committed really, a bit half arsed. But I don't see a need for further progression. Technology for me stops at around 2004, hardly back to 8 track cartridge or the gramophone, but the cloud leaves me cold. What's the point of having something that is so ethereal? Something that you can't touch?

I'm a big fan of music. I will listen to MP3s, but basically, I would prefer not to. I'd much prefer to have the CD or vinyl, even tape. I spend some of my time hoarding old cassette players to make sure I still have the means to play my collection of Luke curated C90 compilations.

Comics and magazines are the same. My routine at 13 was to get up on a Saturday, wait for the paper to arrive, with my shot of thrills slipped inside the daily black and white (I am old) misery report. There was a period when I used to walk a 5 mile round trip to get my weekly fix. These days, my magazines and comics arrive through the letter box

OK COMPUTER

DEAD TREE vs. BINARY
DIGITAL vs. PRINT

(I still visit my local comic shop to get my American stuff), hopping out of bed (careful to wear dressing gown not to scare the kids), back to bed with coffee, and wifey snoring peacefully next to me; and importantly: not disturbing me (love you darling).

'Course it also means that I'm like a Klegg with toothache when I don't get it.

This isn't meant to be a balanced argument weighing up the pros and cons of print over digital. I'll be clear, I am completely in favour of the continued sacrifice of thousands of our arboreal friends to satisfy my reading demands (though obviously recycling is the way to go). To me deforestation is a fair price to pay for not having to rely on a hunk of plastic, metal and glass, probably assembled by a malnourished 14 year old Chinese girl, pulling 27 hour shifts, paid in rat droppings and who has already lost a few body parts to the production process.

I prefer my reading matter in a form that I can touch, smell, fold, carry without needing an electricity supply (although I will admit some form of lighting is necessary occasionally), which unfortunately somewhere along the line has meant the processing of vast swathes of forestry and counting the days for your kids to move out so you can turn their bedrooms into homes for your ever growing perilous pillars of periodicals.

Yes, okay, I have all my comics in the attic, their weight causing structural damage to my house. In a corner of the marital boudoir are my motorcycle magazines, copies of Retro Gamer under the bed with music magazines and recent comics.

Yes, they are probably a fire hazard. A potential conflagration on a grand scale, the flames would light up the town, confuse low flying aircraft and the devastation would lower property values.

Granted, they take up quite a bit of space, but isn't that part of the fun? Where is the fun in taking a tablet around with you? Where are the stacks of comics and old magazines at the bottom of the wardrobe? Why do you need batteries or a power supply to read? (Lighting is given). What about the hours, nay, days, of sorting them, losing yourself in back issues that you forgot about? It's a chore, but it's not really. Can you do that with an iPad? Hell no.

I don't think you can savour a digital publication in the same way. I treat material that exists purely as 0s and 1s differently from physical product. Best example outside of reading matter is music. Unless I have the physical CD / Vinyl or whatever, I won't play or use it as often as I would if I did. Comic wise, Brian K Vaughan and Marcos Martin created a really cool web comic a few years ago called Private Eye. I began following it, but lost track and in the end I waited for the physical collection. It's a lovely package that looks great on the shelf, gathering dust along with the other books I may never read again. It's the medium, the print, paper, staples / glue, the smell (which is a tad weird I know) and the feel that for me contributes to the value, it's the medium and the content.

I don't want an e-mail notifying me that my comic or magazine is ready to be downloaded. I want mine dropping though my letter box, wrapped in a plastic bag in quarantine, segregated from the thrill sucking bills and junk mail, ready to be unleashed, or walking into a shop to pick my titles. Such a heady thrill

I flick through a comics news websites, scanning for specific articles. I read stuff, but I don't really absorb. They are handy for bits of gossip, but for a proper article, you can't beat dead tree journalism. I've read digital magazines (which to me sounds like an oxymoron). I still rue the day that I threw out all my Comics International and Comic World (I had to sacrifice something when I moved into my now wife and step kid's home – and it wasn't going to be the comics). They are like a snap shot, a paper time capsule of the news and events that were occurring in the world of comics. All the articles from the nineties about the unbridled (and short lived) expansion at Marvel UK, Kevin Eastman & Tundra throwing money around like there was no tomorrow, the interviews with creators, the rise of Image and the reviews of long forgotten titles and runs. I can't imagine you'd get that kind of history with an ephemeral digital edition. This is why I'm looking forward to the publication of ComicScene UK, it's another opportunity to have a print magazine that discusses comics and has creator interviews, that has that permanency, and that acts as a record for a period of time in comics history.

I know that I am probably in a minority, and I'm going to go the way of Old One Eye and all the other dinosaurs, but for as long as I am about, I want inky fingers when I read, not a smudged tablet screen.

ComicScene UK is also available digitally at www.issuu.com/comicsflix

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21ST CENTURY FLASHBACK

Thunderbirds – 'Talons of the Eagle'

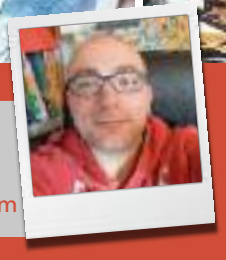
The idea of Thunderbirds' adventures in the TV21 comic being in continuity with the television series is something that continues to delight, enrage and befuddle fans since their respective debuts over half a century ago. Issues of story-placement aside, it's impossible to deny one aspect that surely made TV21 such a popular read – its insatiable attitude to develop themes and ideas found in the television shows of Century 21. The Stingray strip gave great focus to Aquatraz, the underwater prison often mentioned but never seen in the TV show. Likewise, Captain Scarlet's ongoing strip grew the Mysterons' mythology by introducing the Mysteron Controller. In the case of **'Talons of the Eagle'**, writer Alan Fennell put the daring rescues that defines Thunderbirds to one side and placed his focus on expanding the espionage personality of International Rescue.

During May 1966, Thunderbirds had only recently blasted off in the pages of TV21, with 'Talons of the Eagle' being its third outing (published in seven instalments between the 23rd of April and the 4th of June), and yet it's clear there's a desire to evolve beyond standard rescue motifs. 'Talons of the Eagle' is built around asking the question of what would happen if International Rescue were in danger of having their secrets exposed. The Imposter toyed with that question, but 'Talons of the Eagle' takes the opportunity to paint a darker picture of International Rescue, that supposedly pacifist outfit. Picking up from the previous strip's rescue mission, Jungle Adventure, Thunderbirds 1 and 2 are set to dock at Tracy Island after a job well done, until the United States Air Force craft, the Eagle, blasts through the skies and proceeds to hunt down Thunderbird 2. One of Frank Bellamy's most wondrous mecha visualisations, its appearance out of nowhere, undetected by I.R.'s technology, forces the Tracy family to conjure up a life-threatening plan to disable the Eagle's sophisticated jamming equipment in order to maintain their secrecy.

The strip's grim, hardnosed theme stands at odds with the otherwise optimistic nature found in the TV show, but 'Talons of the Eagle' is a muscular, confident affair. The first act sees Thunderbird 2 forced into floating in outer space to avoid detection from the Eagle, providing the strip with the handsome ability to showcase all five Thunderbird craft in action. Despite TV21's action-orientated nature, 'Talons of the Eagle' boasts a welcome ebb and blow to its pacing as the second act sees the Tracy family set their plan in motion to capture and shoot down the Eagle, leading into the electrifying third act. Fennell flexes his story-telling muscles by injecting some palpable danger into the strip's later half as I.R.'s plan goes awry in attempting to disable the Eagle without harming the crew.

The strip comes to a tidy conclusion with I.R.'s secrets intact, but what drags the strip down is the rather two-dimensional approach to the Eagle's crew. Such is the sudden arrival of the Eagle that we're forbidden from delving into how or why the United States Air Force are snooping around I.R.'s vicinity. The pilots of the craft, who remain nameless throughout, are equally robbed of any sense of identity, particularly as they spend the entirety of the strip with their facial expressions hidden behind their flight gear. However, this perhaps wouldn't have been a great concern for younger readers. The notion of I.R. having their secrets in jeopardy is a welcome opportunity to deliver an intriguing, action-packed Thunderbirds story, and 'Talons of the Eagle' fits the bill superbly.

'Talons of the Eagle' may lack any genuine rescuing as such, but its detraction from routine Thunderbirds fare makes it all the more intriguing, whilst its breakneck but well-balanced execution all the more readable.



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HEY THRILL SEEKERS!

This early Judge Dredd opening splash page from Prog 96, 20th January 1979 by Mick McMahon!

The page originally featured a huge half page splash of Judge Cal in full froth venting his bile at the populance of Mega City One.

Probably on editorial direction, the first panel was redrawn to show the exterior of the Hall of Justice, with Cal's rant blasting through load speakers, so the viewer can take in the shock of the ordinary citizen, under the watchful gaze of Cal's henchmen, the dreaded SJS.

The art was cut out and glued directly over the original splash art of Judge Cal, and with a bit of patience and luck, I managed to seperate them and reveal the art... unseen for 40 years!

So enjoy once again Judge Cal in all his manic glory! All hail Judge Fish!!!!

From the Gallery of
Cadet Judge Dayglo



SHIVER & Shake...

The comic that went bump in the Newsagents

Fabulous First Issue



The 10th of March 1973 was a big moment for me. You see, even at the tender age of nine, I knew I was what was to be later termed as a Monster Kid of the 70's. That is to say all things spooky and creepy were deeply ingrained in my very DNA. Whether it was on film, a cartoon, or in a book or comic, if it creaked in the night, I had to have it.

So 10th of March became my introduction to IPC's new comic Shiver and Shake!

Its theme showed a lot of promise; it was two comics in one, much like IPC's popular Whizzer and Chips, with the two main characters names being the titular title of the comic itself. Shiver was a jovial rotund ghost, sort of an adult Casper, and he could be found inside adorning the strip The Duke's Spook. This was a typical comedy strip where we found Shiver at constant loggerheads with the butler Grimes who kept the manor house spotless.

Shake was, of all things, an elephant. With a name like that, the last thing that springs to mind is a portly pachyderm. The comic was split in two, with Shiver's half full of haunted hilarity strips, whereas Shake was more of the knockabout buffoonery you'd find in comics of the time.

Shiver had strips like The Hand a giant disembodied mitt that caused mischief while most of the time trying to do a good deed. Then there was Ghouldilocks, a ghost of a girl with the heart of gold. Let us not forget Webster, a slapstick spider with a lot of cheek.

The standout strip for me in the Shiver half of the comic was Scream Inn, drawn with lots of spooky cross hatching by Brian Walker, which featured a haunted hotel where the reward of a million pounds was offered to any living soul who could last the night. By the way, no one ever did. But this strip was turned into a board game as well, so it was double fun for a kid like me, for not only could I read about it but I could play like I was in it as well!

The most popular spooky strip was Frankie Stein, a creation of the dynamic Ken Reid that had its origins in Wham back in the 60's. Years later Frankie found a home here, only this time drawn by Robert Nixon, whose pencils were the equal of Reid's, though the scripts were a little more refined. Frankie Stein was a stumble foot, a good natured though accident prone monster with more than a striking resemblance to Boris Karloff in the old Universal Monster series of films from the 1930's.

And we'd better not leave out Sweeny Toddler, Leo Baxendale's nefarious nipper in a nappy who was always up to no good. Evil plans were hatched only to be foiled at the end of the one page strip, and most often with his mum being none the wiser as to what the demon in a diaper had been up to. I don't know about you, but I

always wanted Sweeny to win for once. It's good to root for the bad guy once in a while.

There was Grimly Fiendish too, another bad egg who first started out in the pages of Wham! He was the arch nemesis of Eagle Eye, Junior Spy, though unlike Sweeny, Grimly was a character I genuinely found creepy.

Shake's half was more of what we were used to, with titles like Moana Lisa, a bad tempered little girl whose constant griping would more often than not make matters much worse for her. I secretly thought when I was a kid that she was only happy when she had something to whinge about anyway.

Desert Fox was another favourite of mine. The title of this one tells it all, as we find our cunning little chap among the sand dunes during WWII, always foraging for the next meal. His interfering often helped the Allies and hindered the Hun.

Then there was Charlie Williams, a strip based on a real life stand-up comedian, focussing more on his northern accent than Charlie's skin colour. While Marvel Comics in the US were breaking down barriers regarding ethnicity, with characters like the Black Panther and Luke Cage, Hero for Hire, so we over this side of the pond were doing it with a little moresubtlety!

There was Tough Nutt and Softy Centre which was always an odd one for me. It was your run of the mill bully constantly picking on his weaker, simpering target. This strip was on occasion different, wherein we'd find Softy to be equally as ruthless, if not more so than Tough Nutt.

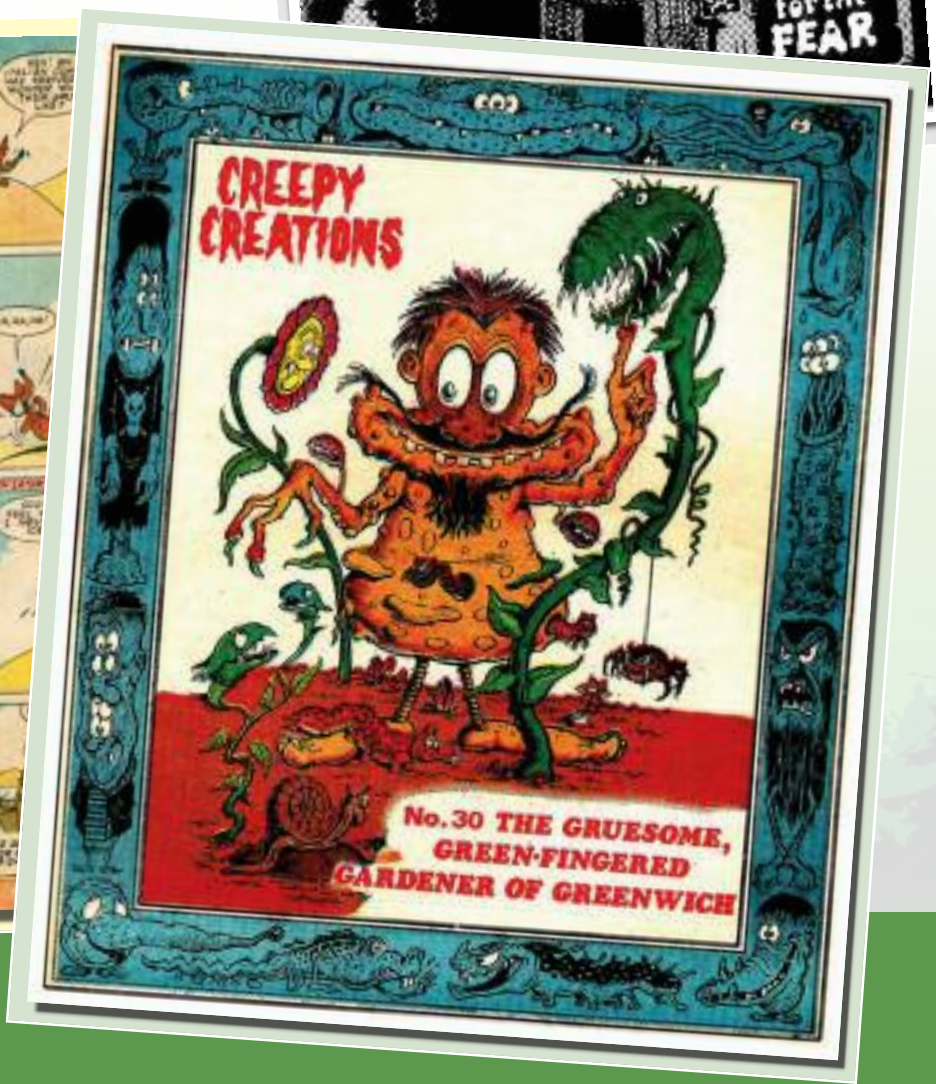
Strips like the Fixer and Lolly Pop rounded out Shake's half, along with his own strip. And what rounded the comic out for me was the back page where you'd find a poster created and drawn by the twisted mind of Ken Reid. Creepy Creations would bring us a slavering, many tentacled ooze dripping monstrosity every week. I need not add that these adorned the walls of my bedroom, ruining the anaglyptic wallpaper and getting me a telling off from mum. What was worse was it ruined my comics as they fell apart. Oh the folly of youth.

Shiver and Shake ran for a little over 80 issues, finishing in 1974. Some strips went on to other titles such as Monster Fun, while others fell into obscurity. I recently found some old back issues on eBay, and they fetch a few pennies these days and rightly so, for Shiver and Shake is now recognised as a British classic. And if you can find an issue with any of the jokes, such as the fake plastic choccy biccy, or the joke spoon with the hole in it…well snap them up because it's like discovering the Ark of the Covenant!

And flicking through the musty old pages, I find myself thinking back to the carefree days of childhood. I think it's a time a lot of us would like to return to. So tell me…who's coming with me?







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HATCH, MATCH AND DISPATCH:

Valiant and Lion

Cover date: 25 May 1974

By David Moloney

What a mighty handshake! Swarthy flesh grasps gleaming metal. Surely this coming together of beefcake soldier boys Captain Hurricane, representing the mighty Valiant, and The Steel Commando, representing the thundersome Lion, marked the opening of a powerful new chapter for British comics.

In fact, it represents a dying of the light – the beginning of the end of a long-standing, bountiful age of muscular and fantastical boys' adventure comics from IPC/Fleetway.

For the previous couple of decades, Lion (since 1952) and Valiant (1962) had offered a rich if unsophisticated mix of larger-than-life heroes and villains in exaggerated action tales and humour strips. Stablemates Tiger (1954) and Buster (1960) had not dissimilar content, and the boys' market also carried broad-stroke adventure titles such as The Hotspur, Hornet, The Victor and The Wizard from DC Thomson, and the Odhams Press 'Power Comics' line that included Wham!, Smash! and Pow!

But times were changing. By 1974, a trend had started for British comic titles to become more genre-specific. Tiger had been re-cast as a sports-only paper, and Buster shed the majority of its adventure serials on the path to becoming a humour only comic.

DC Thomson would introduce Warlord, a war themed title, in September, and secret plans for a rival were being hatched behind closed doors at IPC (by a team largely comprising staffers and freelancers who had been working in the girls' comics department). The number of titles on the IPC roster was rationalised in 1974, quite brutally even by this publisher's standards. In that single year, as well as Valiant and Lion, Scorcher was merged into Tiger, Cor!! into Buster, Shiver and Shake into Whoopee! and June into Tammy.

And, perhaps most significantly for old guard titles such as Lion and Valiant, new voices were starting to be heard in British comics. Heroes were becoming more textured, dialogue less public school and story resolutions less happily-ever-after. This new wave had started in the girls' comics department, with Tammy, launched in 1971 under the editorship of Gerry Finley-Day, offering storylines and lead characters more realistic and relatable to its readers than the likes of June and School Friend, Princess or Girl had been publishing in the previous couple of decades. Jinty, in a similar style to Tammy, was launched in May 1974, just a fortnight before the merger of Valiant and Lion. The streetwise Lindy ran in the summer of 1975, and the gothic, often disturbing supernatural mystery paper Misty ran from 1978 to early 1980. The second half of the 1970s saw the profile of IPC boys' list transformed by new comics with a grittier, punkier style: Battle Picture Weekly (1975), Action (1976), 2000AD (1977) and Starlord (1978). Even the humour titles list found a more irreverent, some would say anarchic, voice through Monster Fun (1975), Krazy (1976) and Cheeky (1977).

'Everything seemed dandy to my untutored eye,' says Steve MacManus, who had only just joined IPC in 1973 as assistant to Valiant editor Stewart Wales. 'However, to those who had been at Fleetway for a good long time, and especially in the boys' department, the merger of Lion into Valiant must have engendered the sense of an ending – especially as the torch to launch new titles had been handed elsewhere.'

Steve's counterpart on Lion was Chris Lowder. Having worked on the title since 1968 (apart from nine unhappy months on Buster), Chris had a sense that its time was up. 'Such was the atmosphere in IPC at that time that neither Geoff [Kemp, Lion editor] nor I were hugely surprised. Circulations were plummeting all through the juveniles department – and across the board in IPC generally. You felt as though you were living on a fault-line in the middle of the Ring of Fire in the Pacific!'

The order to merge the two titles would have passed down from Jack Le Grand, managing editor of the boys' division,

and Sid Bicknell, assistant managing editor. Steve reckons that Sid would have lobbied for Lion to be merged into Valiant, despite being the older of the two titles. Chris, however, believes the decision would have come from higher up. 'At the time of the merger Lion was doing better than Valiant, circulation-wise,' he remembers. 'Thus Valiant should have been merged into Lion, and not t'other way round. However the guy who'd dreamed up Valiant was Jack Le Grand. He was certainly not going to let his brainchild go down the Swannee, so Lion had to go. I recall a lunch with him in the old Red Lion, off Fleet Street, when Geoff and I were trying to persuade him to see sense. Jack banged his fist down on the table and said, "Well, you'll just have to facking put up with it!" So we did.'

[Note: since interviewing Chris and Steve, I found a useful discussion of the merger on the Comics UK forum (www.comicsuk.co.uk/forum; thread: 'Thunder's merge with Lion') which suggests, with the backing of ABC sales figures, that Valiant may in fact have had a higher circulation than Lion at the time.]

For whatever reason, Valiant took the spoils. Lion remained a part of the comic's title for ten further months, after which its cover banner reverted to just Valiant. John Wagner took over as the comic's editor during 1975, tasked with re-imagining it for the expectations of the fast-changing marketplace – which to a great extent he did, bringing in tougher stories such as One-Eyed Jack, Soldier Sharp, Death Wish and Wee Red, but it was not enough to save Valiant being merged into Battle in October 1976.

In May 1974, much of the content of the newly merged Valiant and Lion was completely new stories. Eric Bradbury was the artist on two new adventure serials, Danny Doom and Valley of the Giants (the latter having a competition element in which readers had to identify creatures that appeared each week, for a prize of 'one of the FIFTY POUND NOTES we are offering' – that's 50 x £1 notes rather than £50 notes, I was disappointed to realise after a double-take). The Lincoln Green Mob told the adventures of a Robin Hood-style modern-day gang of lads, and Trail to Nowhere was a Western serial drawn by Mike, er, Western. Mike would also draw virtually every cover of Valiant and Lion; following the Hurricane/Commando cover on this launch issue, he started an educational cover series called The Rivals, replacing the Who Is It? series he had drawn for a number of years for the front of Valiant. One further new strip was Challenge Charlie!, in which readers sent in their dares to the brave, if gullible, title character whose attempts to rise to them were drawn by Frank McDiarmid.

Carried over from Lion were the near-immortal time-travelling adventurer Adam Eterno, drawn by Solano Lopez, Zip Nolan, drawn by Joe Colquhoun, and Reg Parlett's cartoon adventures of castle cat Mowser. As heralded on the cover, Lion's Steel Commando was teamed up with Valiant's Captain Hurricane: 'a pathetic pairing that tarnished the good Captain's reputation and changed his strip from being faintly ridiculous to just plain silly,' according to Steve in his The Mighty One memoir. In the final panel, Hurricane raged: 'A signal from H.Q.! They're so delighted with the result of this mission that they've decided to post the Steel Commando to this unit [… and then, conditionally:] for at least the next few weeks!' Steel Commando was out ('Sent to join a new unit in the Far East!') before the end of June. The only other Valiant strips to survive the merger were Kid Pharaoh, drawn by Julio Schiaffino, Billy Bunter, drawn by Reg Parlett, and Angel Nadal's The Nutts. Dick Emery's Airfix Modellers Club page continued, having featured previously in both titles (and Buster).

A few old favourites from both Valiant (Yellowknife of the Yard, Janus Stark, Raven on the Wing, The Wild Wonders) and Lion (Robot Archie, The Spellbinder) would make brief reappearances in the merged comic during the following year, but others were gone for good. The previous issue of Valiant saw the final instalments of Leo Baxendale's The Swots and the Blots, Kelly's Eye and School for Spies, and, in Lion, Marty Wayne, The Team Terry Kept in a Box, Masters of Menace, Sark the Sleeper, The Last of the Harkers and The 10,000 Disasters of Dort.

But while many of the stories changed, the Valiant staff (Stewart and Steve, plus art editor Janet Shepheard and her assistant Alan Wardley) kept their jobs on the new title. Steve would progress the following year to Battle, then to the editorship of 2000AD for many stellar years before launching a more mature range of titles including Crisis for Fleetway in the late 1980s.

The Lion team (including Geoff, Chris and art assistant Johnny Burns, nephew of artist John Burns) were given other work within the company. 'For starters,' recalls Chris, 'I had to finish putting together an annual I'd dreamed up and got commissioned: The Lion Book of Mystery and Magic. I filled it full of all kinds of stuff I was interested in, reprints of The Spellbinder, plus a brand new full colour story featuring a writer called H. C. Likecraft (by me, with the wonderful Geoff Campion painting it), plus ghost stories and strips, and magic stuff. Of course, The Lion Book of Mystery and Magic ended up as The Valiant Book of Mystery and Magic. Such is life ...'

He and Geoff also put together World of Wonder for IPC, and Headlines magazine ('a rip-off "true crime" mag with sensational stuff like the crash of the Hindenberg, the General Strike, Jack the Ripper, and that kind of thing') and pitched ideas for new titles such as a full-colour sword and sorcery monthly, for which – sadly – the costs were prohibitive. As a writer, Chris has had a prolific career, writing (among many other comics and books) Blackjack and Hell's Highway for Action, Dan Dare and Judge Dredd for 2000AD, Ro-Busters for Starlord, often under pseudonyms including Jack Adrian.

He holds Lion in high regard though. 'I was delighted to have been placed on the Lion staff since I enjoyed the paper as a boy (from number one), and always thought it was superior in many ways to Eagle [its original rival]. Dan Dare was Establishment in a big way, whereas Lion's Captain Condor was a rebel with all the forces of the Dictator of Earth after him. I think that sums up the crucial difference. Eagle was thumpingly middle class; Lion wasn't.'

Steve has similarly fond memories of Valiant, also the comic he had read as a boy. 'Even though it was a weekly, the wait for the next issue seemed interminable. The Steel Claw was dark and thrilling, while the more comical strips like The Wild Wonders always entertained. I don't think Valiant carried a single bad strip in its long and varied history.'

With thanks to Chris Lowder, Steve MacManus, Stephen Jewell and David MacDonald.

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The Growth of

Cosplay is the amalgamation of the words costume and play. It is something that has been around for hundreds of years, but with the popularity of conventions and the current superhero bubble, the amount of people that cosplay has exploded in recent years. Cosplaying is still seen as an unusual niche area by the media and general public, but at big conventions like MCM London, over 50% of attendees will be in costume on at least one of the days.

Cosplayers portray characters from many different fandoms, ranging from sci-fi and comics, through to video games and anime. The surge in popularity of 'geek culture' has seen the rise and fall of many conventions, but it has also meant that cosplaying has become more accessible to many people, and is more acceptable in society. No longer is dressing up as your favourite character seen as a once a year occurrence. Cosplaying is no longer seen as something people have to feel ashamed of, as even the celebrities that people flock to conventions to see such as Daniel Radcliffe, Nathan Fillion and Jamie Lee Curtis have been spotted wandering around in cosplay.

Most conventions people go to will now have cosplay guests and a cosplay competition for people to show off their amazing outfits. Whilst traditional conventions have always been known for 'booth babes', those with a cosplay section and competitions focus on those that have spent many a night slaving away on their own costumes. There are now entire conventions that solely focus on cosplaying, just like back in the day when people would attend conventions just for their love of Sci-Fi.

As cosplaying has grown, more materials and sources have become available that were not around ten or more years ago. As well as using household bits and pieces and giant foam mats, more expensive items such as worbla and other thermoplastics are easily accessible from online stores. Cosplayers have their own blogs and YouTube channels where tutorials are readily available, so it is much easier to get started in the cosplay world than ever before

Cosplaying in Asia has always been popular as it coincides with the massive anime culture, but it did not really pick up over in the west until conventions like San Diego Comic Con started. Sci-Fi and comic book fanatics have always enjoyed dressing up as their favourite characters, but the media sensation over cosplay really took hold when cosplayers such Jessica Nigri got noticed at to San Diego Comic Con for their sexier takes on characters. When Nigri's popularity exploded, many girls aspired to be like her.

Yaya Han and Kamui cosplay are two of the other biggest names in the cosplay world that have also really helped grow the scene. Although they have both been cosplaying for a lot longer than Nigri, it wasn't until the rise of cosplay in the media that they really became known. Both Yaya and Kamui started out by making costumes of characters from their respective fandoms, and now they both run successful businesses within the cosplay world.

Yaya is known for her amazing seamstress skills, and even has her own fabric range and patterns that cosplayers can use. Kamui Cosplay is one of the best armour makers in



Cosplay



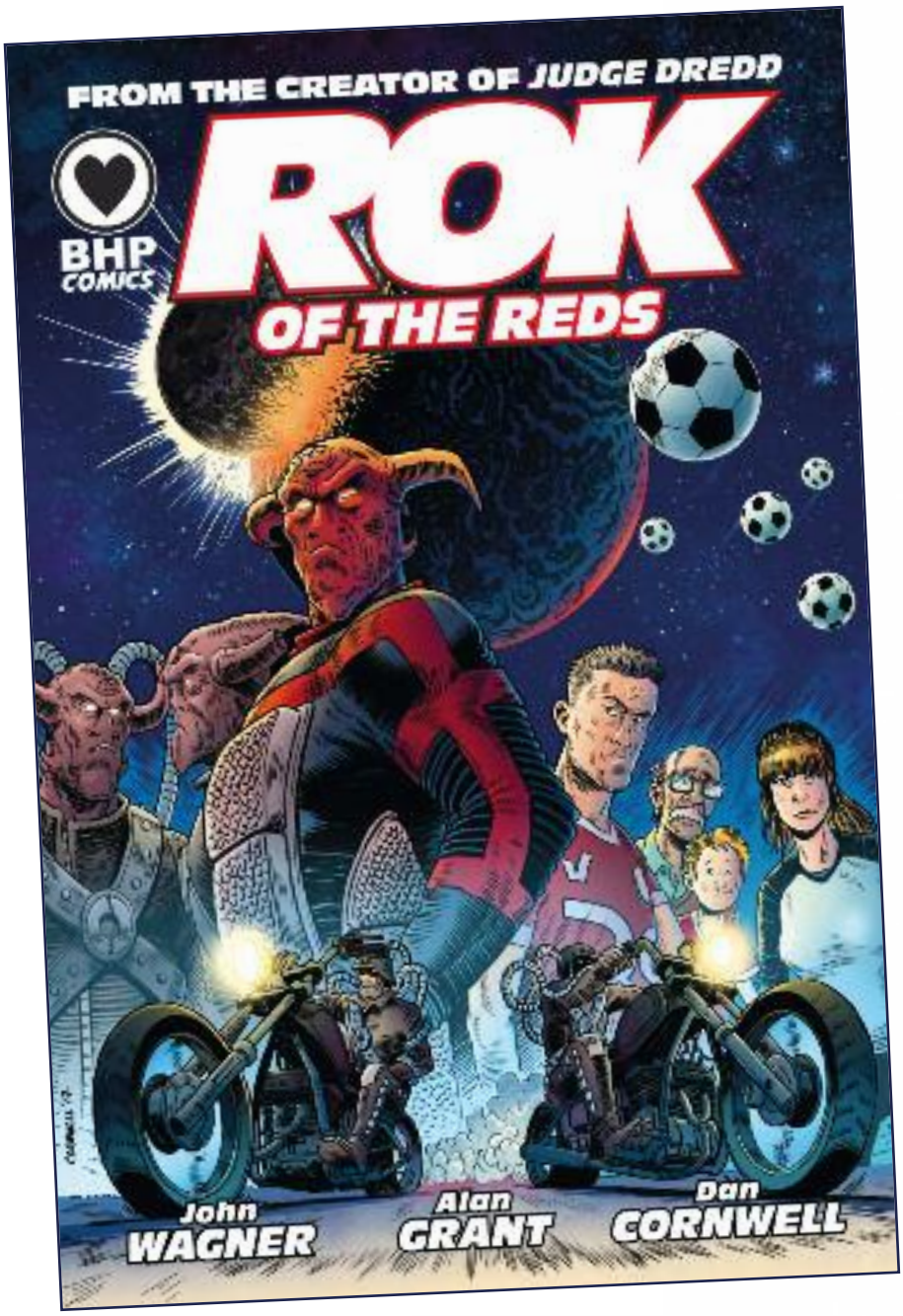
the world, and she has published multiple books on the various techniques she uses to make her outfits. Both Yaya and Kamui will always help and answer questions from aspiring cosplayers and have hosted many panels and tutorials to share their expertise. There is an endless list of impressive male cosplayers too, such as Hoku Props and Harley's Joker, but male cosplayers often suffer from the fact the media would rather see a pretty female in a skin-tight costume than a talented male cosplayer.

The cosplay scene has changed a lot over the past few years. When cosplayers such as Yaya and Kamui Cosplay started, there was no information available and it was all about the crafting side of things and transforming into a character that you loved. Now, it has been overtaken by the 'sexy cosplay' trend, and models that were not interested in the geek culture before now dress as people's favourite characters to join in on the current bandwagon.

The word 'cos-famous' is used by people that want to use cosplay as a quick way to fame rather than doing it for the love of a character. Like X-Factor and other reality shows back when they first started, being 'cos-famous' is seen as a quick way to get noticed. This has garnered even more media attention, but newspapers and websites are constantly publishing negative articles focussed on the sexy side rather than portraying the positive side of cosplaying. The need to be famous has also created a darker side to the community, but this is all soon forgotten on the convention floor or at the many costumed convention after parties as we're all just one big group of geeks dressed in costumes.

Trying to get started in the cosplay world in a daunting prospect, but it really is something for everyone. It can be a hobby, or you can do it on more of a professional level, but there is a massive community both at conventions and online that supports cosplayers no matter what stage of the cosplay journey they are on. Putting on a costume of our favourite character can give people an inner confidence that they never knew they had, and has changed the lives of many people.

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How we created...

ROK OF THE REDS

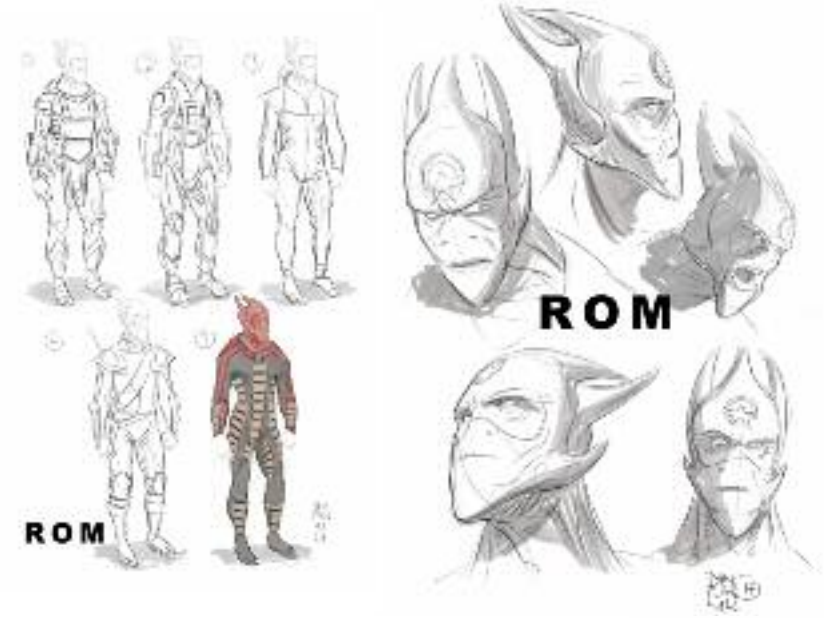
By John Wagner

I say we because I've never created a complete comic story on my own. Some professionals are lucky enough to be able to draw as well as write, but I'm not in that category. For me they're all team efforts and I'm glad that's the case. It means I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of very talented artists (and other writers) who have brought their own skill and insight to the final product.

The inspiration for a story can come from anywhere. It can be the product of a lifetime of observation, it can be a riff on another idea or concept, it can spring from something as simple as an overheard remark. The birth of Rok, though, is a bit more unusual and convoluted than most.

Let's go back 25 years or so. Co-writer Alan Grant and I live close enough to each other that we can handle our normal workload during the day and get together on other projects in the evening. It's how we wrote Judgment on Gotham, the first Dredd/Batman team up, The Bogie Man and many others. The project we're working on now is a big one, a new anthology comic comprising 7-8 stories. One of those stories, in the old British comic tradition, would be about football. But what? So many had been written, so many angles covered, it would be close to impossible to find something new, new and exciting, something that had never been done before.

I can't remember which of us hit on the idea – aliens. What about the world's first alien footballer?



Orignal Rok of the Reds Rom concept drawings.

We were off and running. We talked around the idea for a few nights, building a bank of ideas, working out direction and key developments. We'd created other stories about aliens on Earth in the past, and the work we'd done and themes we'd explored were drawn in to the mix. Finally we wrote the first script. It was only a few pages long, but I can remember us laughing like drains. Oh that Dixon, what a rat! Nobody deserves his comeuppance more than him. We loved that script, we knew the readers would too, and then…

And then we stuck it away in a file for a quarter of a century.

We'd analysed the entire project and come to the conclusion that if we went ahead it would probably bankrupt us. Better to stick to things that actually earned money. We eventually used some of the stories, or parts of them, but Rok languished unused in my filing cabinet. Who was buying football stories these days, even weird ones?



Three or so years ago, considering retirement, tired of the work I'd been doing, I decided to try some new projects. To the 'ideas' file in my trusty cabinet I went, and drew out…Randy Truckers in Space. This was another creation of my partnership with Alan Grant, another story that had ended up abandoned – a space porn comedy intended for Penthouse until Penthouse closed their title down. I read it and it was indeed funny – think of it as "Carry On Spaceman".

I liked it, decided to work it up into a full script, intending to self-publish. While up in Glasgow for a convention Sha Nazir, who heads Black Hearted Press, suggested I let them publish it, and fearful of dealing with printers, marketing, all the other things I know little about, I agreed.

As luck would have it I couldn't get an artist to draw the bloody thing. It had to be someone good, someone whose work I knew would fit the story, but after my two first choices initially agreed, then pulled out, I'd had enough of trying. Fate was telling me I shouldn't be writing a porn story.

So back to the file I went and pulled out… Rom of the Rovers. It was our original spoof title for the story. Rovers was scrapped first, that was never intended to survive, followed by Rom after news came out about the (very litigious) Mattel picking up Rom Space Knight.

Fine. Rok was a much better name anyway. Rok of the Reds. It had a ring to it.

I expanded our first episode and worked out a rough outline for a 6 issue, US-style mini-series. Now all I had to do was find our artist. It couldn't be a pro. It had to be someone who could work for the kind of poverty rates I could afford to pay. I went straight to Dave Evans's two 2000AD-related fanzines, Zarjaz and Dogbreath. Dave has been nurturing new talent in them for years and has many talented contributors who would be snowed under with work if the UK comic industry had not shrunk to near vanishing point.

One artist that particularly stood out was Dan Cornwell. I liked his line, his attention to detail, the level of character he put into his people and his stylish execution. If I remember correctly I sent him an email… Have you any interest in football?

I'm pleased to say that he did. His first task was to create our twin heroes, Rok and Kyle Dixon. I hadn't up to this point given much thought to what Rok actually looked like – that's the sort of detail I rely on my talented artists for!

Once Dan had Rok down to our mutual satisfaction we were off and running again – a mere quarter century since we were first off and running.

Owing to other work commitments Dan couldn't handle the colouring. Matt Smith at 2000AD was kind enough to send me samples of colourists they used, and Dan and I both picked out Abby Bulmer as the one we wanted for Rok. A good choice. Her colours have been just right, quite stunning at times.

That only left the lettering. I've always regarded good lettering as a vital piece of the jigsaw, so we were very pleased to welcome Jim Campbell aboard. He handles a lot of the mechanics of putting the comic together and his sound effects are superb.

And that is how we created Rok of the Reds. That's only part of it, of course, there was still a lot of hard work to do on the part of BHP – bringing the comic together, printing it, publicising, marketing, selling.

But that's a whole other story.

Author: John Wagner
Twitter: Rok of the Reds published by @BHP_Comics
Website: http://www.bhpcomics.com/
Rok of the Reds Graphic Novel available now

THE CARTMEL FACTOR



There has been a Doctor Who comic strip for almost as long as there has been a Doctor Who television programme. Ever since William Hartnell's First Doctor took off in the TARDIS with his grandchildren John and Gillian in TV Comic in 1964, the Doctor's adventures have been as entertaining on the printed page as they have on TV. When the UK arm of Marvel Comics began their Doctor Who Weekly in 1979, the Doctor's comic strip adventures entered a new era of sophistication. The Weekly metamorphosed into the monthly Doctor Who Magazine (DWM) and Doctors Four, Five and Six all enjoyed a run of memorable adventures. Then, in 1987, Sylvester McCoy became the Doctor on television and a new era of classic Doctor Who comic strips began in earnest.

1987 was a new beginning for Doctor Who in more ways than one. Although the programme's long-serving producer John Nathan-Turner continued to oversee the show, he was to be joined by a new script editor - Canadian-raised Andrew Cartmel. Cartmel had been working for a computer company in Cambridge when the opportunity arose for him to work on the programme. He had previously attended workshops at the BBC Script Unit and had sent scripts to an agent who had agreed to take him on. This lead to a meeting with Nathan-Turner and Cartmel being offered the chance to join the Doctor Who team.

Cartmel was unashamedly a reader of comics. As he told the We Are Cult website in 2017, one of his biggest influences was unquestionably Alan Moore: 'I was a big fan of comics when I was working on the show. Or, more accurately, a big fan of Alan Moore's Swamp Thing and V for Vendetta. There were a few other creators whose work I read at the time… Frank Miller, Love & Rockets by the Hernandez Brothers and Howard Chaykin's American Flagg… but really, compared to Alan Moore they hardly existed.'

It is true Andrew Cartmel's Doctor Who episodes felt very much like a televisual comic strip. Many of the characters were larger than life, such as the villainous Chief Caretaker (Richard Briers) in Stephen Wyatt's Paradise Towers (1987) or the Thatcher-like Helen A (Sheila Hancock) in Graeme Curry's The Happiness Patrol (1988). Some of the Colin Baker television stories had been a little conservative in their approach, prompting many to comment that the programme was beginning to feel tired. But under Cartmel, the show became more experimental, displaying the imagination and innovation of the comic writers which Cartmel so admired.

After an unsteady first series for McCoy (the scripts having largely been written before the writers had a clear idea of what sort of character the Seventh Doctor would be) the programme's 25th anniversary season in 1988 saw Cartmel and his writing team really hit their stride. Stories such as Remembrance of the Daleks and Silver Nemesis hinted

> ***"Evening's Empire' was my most ambitious work and the one of which I was (& am) most proud"***

that the Doctor may in fact have been much older than previous episodes had suggested and that he may have been a contemporary of the legendary Gallifreyan figures, Rassilon and Omega. This attempt to make the character more mysterious has become known as the Cartmel Masterplan. Alas, the Masterplan was to be cut short when the BBC axed the programme in 1989.

But all was not lost because the Seventh Doctor was already as well established in the comic strip medium as he had been on television…

The first DWM Seventh Doctor comic strip, A Cold Day in Hell, written by Simon Furman and drawn by John Ridgway (November 1987 to February 1988), saw the return of the classic 1960s monsters, the Ice Warriors. It was a suitably traditional story with which to begin the new era and Ridgway (a veteran of the Sixth Doctor strips) faced the challenge of drawing the new Doctor before he had been properly seen on television.

Interviewed in the comics fanzine Eagle Flies Again in 2003, Ridgway recalled the process of depicting real life actors in comic strip form: 'I found that copying faces from photographs was difficult at first, but having drawn a face a few times it started to become easier. The problem with trying to draw a comic around a known actor is that there are rarely photographs with the right expression, angle or writing… I can't honestly remember if I was short of references for Sylvester's face, but Sylvester has a face that is easily caricatured!'

The task of drawing the Doctor would become slightly easier from 1988 onwards due to the initiative of incoming DWM editor John Freeman who would oversee a huge chunk of the Seventh Doctor's comic strip adventures. Visiting recording of Doctor Who on location, Freeman asked Sylvester McCoy to pose for reference photos for the comic artists - during shooting of The Greatest Show in the Galaxy in 1988 and again during a recording break in the sweltering heat of summer 1989 during the making of the final televised story of Doctor Who's classic run, Survival.

The McCoy strips quickly established themselves as an important part of DWM. And there was no shortage of top drawer contributors willing to participate, with writers such as Grant Morrison, Dan Abnett and Alan Grant and artists such as Geoff Senior and Kev Hopgood all working on the stories.

Some of the early Seventh Doctor strips were quite light in tone, reflecting the more humorous Season 24 persona of the Doctor. As the TV show became darker and more multi-layered, the comic strips followed suit. On TV, the Doctor had become Time's Champion, a master manipulator of cosmic events playing chess on an intergalactic scale, and this began to feed through to the strip.

A particular highlight came in the form of Nemesis of the Daleks (September to December 1989), an excellent story written by Steve Alan, featuring the return of the popular Abslom Daak character from the early Doctor Who Weekly. This was a very dark and moody story with some strong links to established television continuity and superb visual depictions of the Daleks by artist Lee Sullivan who had been a fan of the classic 'TV21' Dalek strips.

As noted above, the Doctor Who TV show came off the air in 1989. But the Seventh Doctor's future on the printed page was already assured. In much the way that comics had influenced the direction in which Cartmel steered the programme, the increased sophistication of the television episodes began to feed back into the strips.





The comic strip continued to follow the TV series' lead, further developing the Seventh Doctor's darker nature and the relationship between the Doctor and his companion Ace, and Cartmel himself joined the team of writers contributing to the strip. He was to be particularly pleased with his work on the story Evening's Empire, the first episode of which was published in DWM and the rest in a one-off edition of its sister publication Doctor Who Classic Comics in 1993. Beautifully illustrated by Richard Piers Rayner, this was a classic story as Cartmel told We Are Cult: Evening's Empire was my most ambitious work and the one of which I was (and am) most proud. It was like a Seventh Doctor TV story but with an unlimited budget — and also slightly darker, more abstract and more adult.' He was also satisfied with The Good Soldier (pencils by Mike Collins and inks by Steve Pini, published July to October 1991), 'A Cyberman story I wrote, which I think was very good and made imaginative use of the possibilities of the Cybermen in a way which I still don't think has been explored or achieved by the show.'

Other established writers such as Paul Cornell and Marc Platt (writer of Ghost Light – the final Cartmel-edited Doctor Who TV story to be made) would also contribute to the strip. It was a classic era for Doctor Who in the comic strip medium.

The absence of new Doctor Who on television meant that Sylvester McCoy enjoyed a much longer run as the 'incumbent' comic strip Doctor than he might overwise have done. He bowed out in the story Ground Zero in 1996. With the arrival of the Doctor Who TV movie starring Paul McGann, there was a new, Eighth Doctor to take up the baton.

In early 2018 came the news that an exciting new era for the Seventh Doctor comic strips was about to begin. Back in the editor's chair, John Freeman was to oversee a new mini-series of Seventh Doctor adventures published by Titan Comics, utilising characters created for the TV series by Ben Aaronovitch, written by Andrew Cartmel, with artwork provided by Christopher Jones. This new story, Operation Volcano, sees the Doctor and Ace once again meet up with Group Captain Ian Gilmore and other characters from Aaronovitch's classic 1988 television story Remembrance of the Daleks. With four superb variant covers for the first issue and a back-up-strip written by Richard Dinnick and drawn by Jessica Martin, it's clear that fans of the Seventh Doctor have a lot to look forward to.

ComicScene UK catches up with John Freeman who, as editor of Doctor Who Magazine from 1988 to 1992, oversaw many of the Seventh Doctor comic strips...

How did the Andrew Cartmel script-edited TV episodes influence the direction of the comic strip?

I'm a lifelong fan of comics and Doctor Who and was determined the strip should remain an element of the Magazine, even though its production gobbled up a high proportion - nearly 50 per cent! - of the title's then (roughly) £2000 budget per issue. At that time, it was probably the only part of the title that could potentially be re-purposed in collections, something else I hoped we could achieve.

Every editor of the comic strip has their own approach to the strip and Richard Starkings, who was editing the strip before me, was genuinely inventive during his run, employing a huge range of creators, both writers and artists, including me. When I took over, I liked the variety of creators involved but I did feel though that we needed strips that in some ways brought the strip closer to the TV show in terms of styling (albeit with no effects budget limitations!) in an effort to have it resonate more with readers, which was the feedback I was getting from them, and from creators champing at the bit for a break, like Paul Cornell and Scott Gray.

When I met Andrew Cartmel at a Christmas party in Shepherd's Bush and he volunteered he'd like to write a strip, I almost bit his arm off. Having someone who was so integral to the show writing the strip gave it a legitimacy we'd never had before, and the Doctor Who strip had never had.

This is, I need to stress, by no means to dismiss the incredible work of anyone writing past strips - I love the Pertwee stories in Countdown and the strips such as 'The Iron Legion' which made Doctor Who Weekly a must buy when it launched in 1979, and Steve Parkhouse's scripts for the Fifth and Sixth Doctor, complemented by John Ridgway's art on the latter.

But from the point of view of publishing a title that was fighting for survival when I became editor, we needed to re-sell the Magazine to 'lost readers', so being able to sell the strip in to Diamond (who then solely distributed the title in the US as well as UK comic shops, and only used the strip to sell the title in, really) with a TV name attached certainly wouldn't hurt advance orders. Plus, from a creative point of view I really liked what the Seventh Doctor became in Seasons 25 and 26, and wanted more of the same for the strip. Who better to write some stories and give us a steer on how to 'direct' the character than one of the Seventh Doctor's principal architects?

How do you think the McCoy strips differed from the Colin Baker ones?

There were a lot more shorter stories, initially, with good reason I think. We genuinely feared for a while the title would be cancelled. No-one wanted a story half-finished if that had happened, so epics were out. That said, and you'd have to ask Richard Starkings for confirmation, some of the creators he com-

missioned were huge comic talents and writing Who was one small part of their work for Marvel UK in some cases. They simply didn't have time to write or draw the long form sprawling, wonderful epics Steve Parkhouse did.

There was also an element for Richard, I believe, of creators getting to 'do Who' as part and parcel of getting them on board Marvel UK, an element of his wider publishing strategy of trying to make the company as exciting and inspiring to work for as working on rival titles for IPC, 2000AD in particular. Richard had achieved some success persuading MD Robert Sutherland to give the green light to MUK's own non-licensed characters such as Dragon's Claws, and commissioning Who strips, alongside commissioning Ghostbusters, Transformers etc was all part of that master plan.

Why do you think the character of the Seventh Doctor is so suited to the comic strip medium?

Doctor Who in general is made for the comics medium, never mind the Seventh Doctor. I don't think any Doctor commands a special place in the comics pantheon and the work very different publishers have released across over 50 years confirms that.

Did you change the direction of the comic strip when the TV show ended?

Not really. There was a very real sense that the Magazine was along with the New Adventures novels, a guardian of Who mythos until the TV show returned, if it was ever going to. So I took the approach that we were continuing the Doctor's adventures as they might have run on TV, albeit in comic form, which meant having TV writers Andrew and Marc Platt on board, as well as a host of other creators I felt 'got' the Seventh Doctor, was really important.

That said, I did feel not every Who story pitched at me (and there were loads, including stories by Ben Aaronovitch and actor Nabil Shaban, who played Sil opposite Colin Baker's Doctor) weren't what I, personally was looking for.

Despite the TV show being off air, I hope I got more assured in my commissioning as I progressed as editor, and averting the title's cancellation meant we could run some longer stories as well as short one-off tales.

I think, looking back, that the fact that we could never get a straight answer out of the BBC about the show's future helped keep the Seventh Doctor in the strip far longer than he might have done had they been more open. If there had been a point where the BBC had firmly stated the show is over, we'd perhaps have started doing 'past doctor' stories sooner and more often, which is what Gary Russell (John's successor as DWM editor – I.W.) rightly started to do.

What do you think is the lasting legacy of the McCoy comic strips?

I think that perhaps lies with who wrote and drew some of the strips rather than the Seventh Doctor's legacy. I gave Paul Cornell his first professional comics commission and Scott Gray too, who've both brought so much to Doctor Who since. It was a pleasure to work with and foster new talent as well as established talents, such as Lee Sullivan and John Ridgway. Along with the text stories I introduced to the title, many creators got a chance to write a Doctor Who story and it's fantastic that they weren't put off by my editing and stuck to their chosen path!

What are your hopes for your new Seventh Doctor comic?

That we reignite the Seventh Doctor as a comics character, just as Titan Comics has done with other incarnations, that sales will be strong and it will give the company confidence to consider doing a First or Second Doctor series. But I'll settle for a cracking yarn from Andrew Cartmel and Christopher Jones, because that's what they're determined to give us!



CARTMEL on CARTMEL...

Which comics, comic writers or comic characters influenced the type of stories you commissioned for Doctor Who?

The writing of Alan Moore, who is the greatest writer ever to work in comics. Notably, although not exclusively, his work on Swamp Thing, Watchmen and Halo Jones. For Doctor Who specifically, Halo Jones was the most relevant and perhaps the most influential.

What were you able to do in your Doctor Who comic strips that you wouldn't have been able to do on television?

Great aliens, alien planets and space ships. Also, more hard-hitting and adult material.

Do you think a great comic writer necessarily makes a great television writer and vice versa?

Of course not. They are very different forms. When I was script editing Doctor Who I tried hard to get Alan Moore to write for the show – and he was interested and definitely keen, but just too busy to do anything for us. And I was both disappointed and relieved – relieved because what if it had gone horribly wrong?

Was there really a 'Cartmel Masterplan'?

I often say the masterplan was to get the scripts in on time. But actually, it was to restore the Doctor's mystery, power, autonomy and stature. It was never called that at the time, and it was never a formal thing – but it was an explicit and well-defined intention. And, by golly, we succeeded.

With thanks to John Freeman and Andrew Cartmel.

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2000AD FREE COMIC BOOK DAY



Every year, the first Saturday in May ushers forth the wonders of Free Comic Book Day. Whether you're visiting your local comic store in London or Los Angeles, you'll see displays of specially made comics just for FCBD; all free, all to be given away in a huge celebration of comic making.

2000AD have been making FCBD comics since 2011, and I'd go as far as saying it's their most important day of the entire comic year. Because although 2000AD is huge here in the UK, they've never really managed to make too many inroads into the USA. Everything is against them when you think about it; the weird size, the anthology format, the weekly frequency, and the distributors decision to offer the comic as a 4-Prog monthly pack to retailers. But on one day every year, a single issue of 2000AD goodness gets into the hands of US comic readers.

This is possibly one big reason why, over the last eight years, we've gone from something reprint heavy, to 2018's all-new, exclusive to FCBD 2000AD REGENED. If it wasn't free, we'd be describing it as a must buy! So join me as we take a little look through the best of the eight years of 2000AD's FCBD delights.

With a huge wealth of material to choose from, it's no surprise to find some very familiar names across the FCBD 2000ADs. When it comes to reprints, being able to list classic strips from Gerry Finlay-Day & Dave Gibbons (Rogue Trooper - 2011), Alan Moore & Steve Dillon (Ro-Busters - 2012), and Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neill (Nemesis -2015), to name but a few is a pretty great thing. But there's also a diverse array of more recent strips, often reprinting first episodes as hooks for readers and definitely giving a feel for the variety in today's 2000AD. But to my mind, the absolute highlights of 2000AD's FCBD comics have to be the willingness to include the more off-beat and out-there stuff.

Take the opener of 2011's FCBD, Kevin O'Neill doing his usual beautifully grotesque best on Tharg and the Intruder. Everyone's favourite alien editor takes a young fan of those other comics and who dares doubt the thrill-powered-ness of 2000AD for a terror filled tour. Then there's Chris Weston's wonderfully tongue in cheek Future Shock. Whatever happened to the Green Pedestrian Palm (2012). Or for peak weird, there's the welcome regular appearance (it's featured in 2011, 2012, and 2013) of Al Ewing and Henry Flint's Zombo. And whilst mentioning Henry Flint on Zombo, I have to point out that he's responsible for the three best FCBD covers; from 2013, 2014 and 2015.

And of course, seeing as this is 2000AD, there's always a good showing for a certain stony faced Judge. There's always been at least one original Dredd strip in each FCBD comic, but I'm particularly fond of 2015's In Through the Out Door, and it's all because of two bits of coffee-spluttering comedy dialogue from writer Matt Smith. As the residents of Bertrand Russell Block instigate a new social exclusion policy of one door for the exclusive residents and one for the plebs, tensions mount and boil over, all leading to this glorious moment and the beautifully tongue firmly in cheek line:

Finally, I couldn't leave without mentioning my two absolute favourites from the years of 2000AD's impressive FCBD comics. Both of which really deserve to be continued, but sadly, never have been, and both from 2015.







Death Rock by Ben Willsher and Barry Krishna is a gloriously tantalising thing, beautifully revisiting a classic, as frontiersman Ajax Bloodthirsty investigates planet LV-42666's potential for colonisation but finds there's already a familiar face there. Hmmmm... Mysterious rock, danger, mystery, throwback time, yes, it's a sequel to the classic Harry Twenty on the High Rock by Gerry Finlay-Day and Alan Davis.

Dr Sin: Don't Call It A Comeback by Rob Williams and Luca Pizzari is all about bringing old skool horror to new skool hip hop. A rap star, the weird old geezer following him, the painting growing out of the chief whip's office in Westminster, and demonic events all over town, it's got so much potential! Williams did tell me that there had been brief talks to bring the strip back for a series, but nothing concrete as yet. A shame.

All of which brings us up to date, with 2018's new FCBD offering, the finest thus far. 2000AD REGENED is all-new, but more importantly, the editorial droids have taken the decision to reimagine 2000AD as an all-ages title. It's a perfect idea, and it absolutely works, with fabulous design, very modern stylised art and colours that scream of the now. There's even time for a few quiz and puzzle pages.

The fun begins with Matt Smith and Neil Googe giving us the adventures of Cadet Dredd, dealing with a raucous crowd at the Aeroball finals. Oh, and velociraptors. There's young Johnny Alpha on his trial mission in Strontium Dog: Trial Run by Alec Worley and Ben Willsher. Another cracking strip, with Willsher's art subtly changed to really pop as a kid's style strip, Ben10 rather than 2000AD. There's even a chance for a Future Shock, where Ned Hartley and Tanya Roberts give us Humancraft, a very Minecraft-y thing, asking "Are you a gamer or part of the game?"

And finally, magnificently, we have the return of those galactic teenage delinquents in DR & Quinch Hijack Free Comic Book Day from Owen Michael Johnson and Indio. The gags come thick and fast, the art is playful and the storyline is a fine bit of metafictional time-travelling weirdness, the one tale in here that definitely has a knowing nod to older 2000AD readers, whilst cleverly keeping it all very all-ages.

So, that's eight years of excellent 2000AD FCBD comics. What can we expect from next year? No clue yet, but I'm pretty sure they'll be looking to top 2018 over at Tharg's place. I imagine the script and art droids are being whipped into shape for that already.



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BATMAN

MASK OF THE PHANTASM AT TWENTY FIVE

The agonies of Warner Bros. executives trying to bring a live-action Batman to the big screen in a version that pleases at least some of the people some of the time deserve a little sympathy, but down the corridor in the offices of Warner Bros. Home Entertainment the picture is a bit different.

May 2018 brings the arrival of Batman Ninja, no less than the eighteenth in a sequence of animated Batman movies that kicked off in 2010, films which have rolled off the production line headed for the home viewing market at a healthy clip of two or three every year. Add in nearly as many animated Justice League movies over the same period—plus a few Lego Batman fandangos—and the character's presence in feature-length animation has sailed on unperturbed as a successful long-term project, even while the flesh-and-blood version has bounced stressfully from Christopher Nolan to Zack Snyder and currently out into limbo.

Batman Ninja is a full-scale anime, taking the character to medieval Japan and featuring designs by Takashi Okazaki, but the animated films have always embraced variety. Recent releases feature a version of the Elseworlds one-shot Gotham By Gaslight; two films adopting the visible-eyes costuming of the 1966 TV show with the voice of Adam West; and an adaptation of The Killing Joke in which writer Brian Azzarello expanded the arc of Batgirl in the story and incurred the vocal unhappiness of some fans of the character.

The original root of this thriving tree was the DC Animated Universe, a fourteen-year cycle of TV series, animated movies and spin-offs inaugurated in 1992 by Batman The Animated Series, all bearing the fingerprints of animator Bruce Timm, producer Eric Radomski, and writer Paul Dini. It was the DCAU that birthed the first full-length Batman animated movie, a film deemed worthy of a big-screen release once the studio saw what it had on its hands, and which celebrates its own 25th anniversary this year: Mask of the Phantasm.

The story goes that Phantasm was promoted from an intended destination on the small screen thanks to the strength of the title sequence alone. The opening is still an effective scene-setter: a sombre computer-assisted swoop around and through the Gotham City skyline, which might look vintage to modern CGI-jaded eyes but none the less takes the film noir atmosphere of the animated series and spices it with looming Art Deco mystery. The titles also foreground the contribution of composer Shirley Walker, just as much of a performer in Phantasm as any of the voice actors, who opens the film with a dark operatic hymn. Walker had already designed a distinctive musical identity for the animated series by borrowing Danny Elfman's themes from two Tim Burton films, but for Phantasm the score is grander, mythic and melodramatic—and partly performed by Hans Zimmer. The end credits reveal the presence of Zimmer on synthesizers, more than a decade before his own booming musical style was hardwired into Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight films.

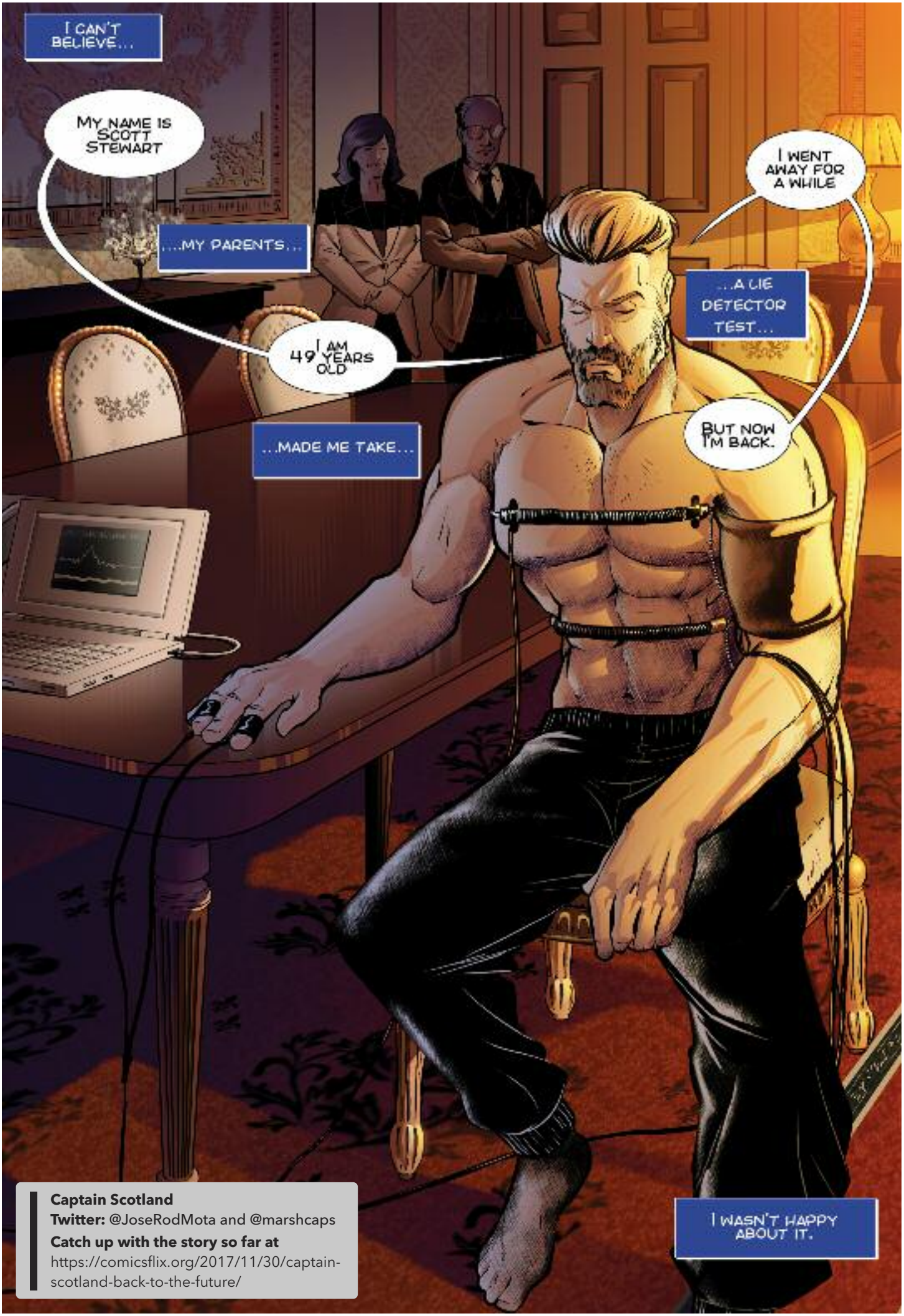
Phantasm's story is relatively modest. The animated TV show was still in its early stages after all, with some of its grander flights of baroque fancy still to come in later seasons. But Phantasm's deceptively narrow narrative focuses on Bruce Wayne rather more than his alter ego, and elegantly skirts around the restriction imposed on writers of The Animated Series that they should steer clear of Batman's origin. Phantasm bends this rule, to accommodate flashbacks of Wayne's first nighttime misadventures in balaclava and combat trousers, and to insert a past romance with a woman named Andrea Beaumont. The Joker is involved, but kept on the sidelines until the halfway point in favour of the Phantasm, a fresh villain with a vendetta against Gotham's mob bosses. Wayne, smitten with Beaumont, is tempted to renounce his secret life, but forced back to it—or rescued from giving it up—by the sins and sacrifices of others. All this ground is covered in 76 minutes of brisk 2D cartoon storytelling.

Not that this made it a hit. Box-office takings of $5.6 million failed to cover the $6 million the film cost to make, and fingers were pointed at the marketing department, given the studio's relative unfamiliarity with animated movies at the time. The animation has some rough edges too, thanks to a finite budget and available technology. Even that opening sequence, responsible for a big-screen release in the first place, makes an uncomfortable jag straight through a ceiling, the virtual camera breaking its own rules.

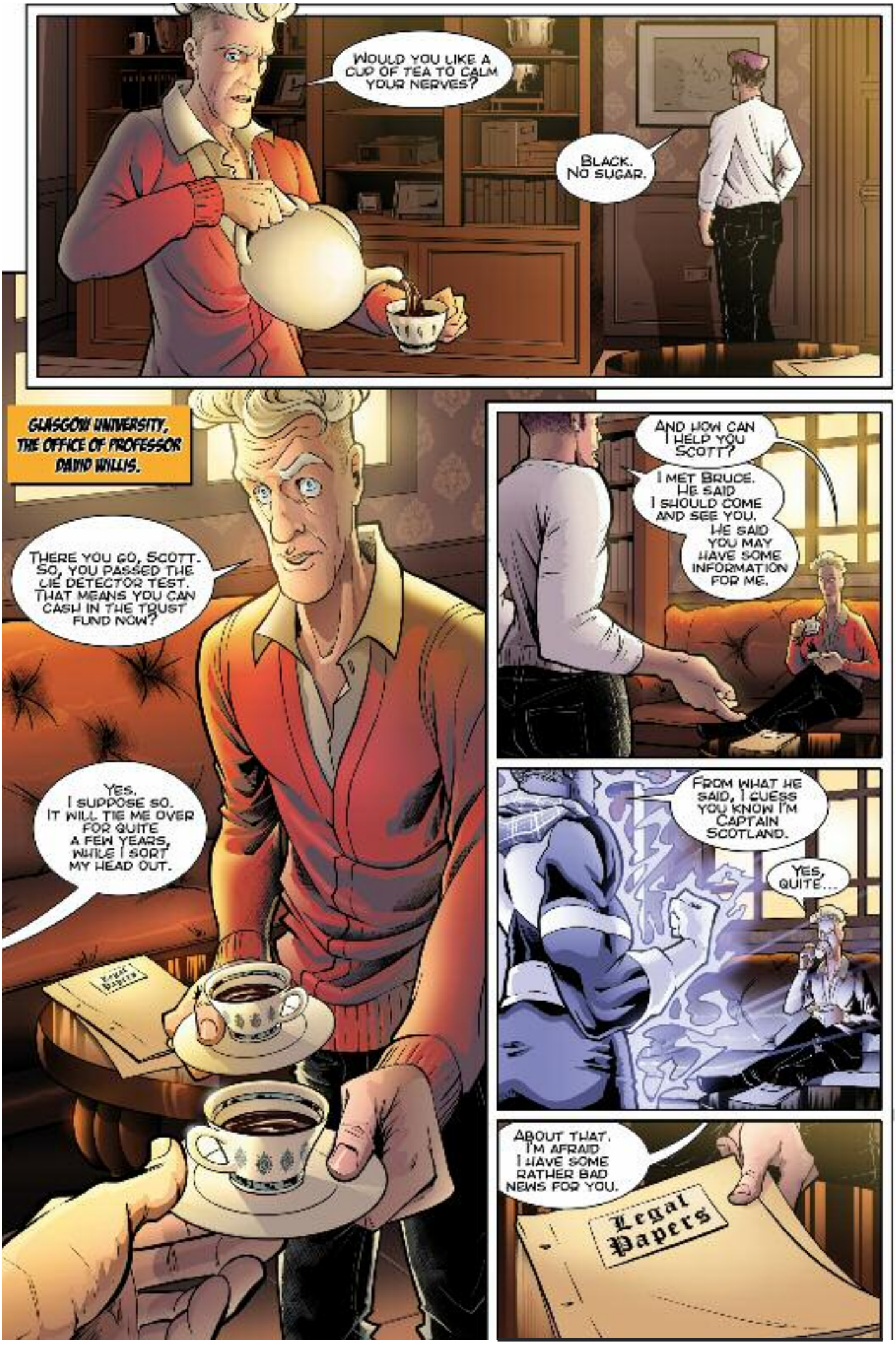
Its flaws don't matter. Mask of the Phantasm flies on its leather wings, as lean as any classic Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams comic, and like them it understands the place of melodrama in a Batman story. The gothic mood crests at the point an adult Bruce Wayne convulses tearfully at his parents' graveside, agonised at the thought he might be content enough with life to leave Batman behind, while Walker's score seethes with dire religiosity, fate peering over Bruce's shoulders. It's strong stuff, deeply understanding of the character's roots in male powerlessness, and as poignant as anything a live-action Batman film has yet made of the younger Bruce entering his personal purgatory while wandering down Crime Alley.

Mask of the Phantasm is a period piece now, a quarter-century out of step with current animation styles, as well as with today's habitual splicing of different genres and compulsory irony. But it understands Batman very well, and knows his place in his own city. It knows that when Andrea Beaumont cautiously turns on a table lamp in her pitch black nighttime apartment, the animated frame will snap from black to white and Batman will be revealed where he has been all along, closer than a flesh and blood actor could hide without giving an audience the giggles, roughly six inches from her face. Right where he should be.

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Captain Scotland
Twitter: @JoseRodMota and @marshcaps
Catch up with the story so far at
https://comicsflix.org/2017/11/30/captain-scotland-back-to-the-future/


WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA TO CALM YOUR NERVES?
BLACK. NO SUGAR.
GLASGOW UNIVERSITY, THE OFFICE OF PROFESSOR DAVID WILLIS.
THERE YOU GO, SCOTT. SO, YOU PASSED THE LIE DETECTOR TEST. THAT MEANS YOU CAN CASH IN THE TRUST FUND NOW?
YES. I SUPPOSE SO. IT WILL TIE ME OVER FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS, WHILE I SORT MY HEAD OUT.
AND HOW CAN I HELP YOU SCOTT?
I MET BRUCE. HE SAID I SHOULD COME AND SEE YOU. HE SAID YOU MAY HAVE SOME INFORMATION FOR ME.
FROM WHAT HE SAID, I GUESS YOU KNOW I'M CAPTAIN SCOTLAND.
YES, QUITE...
ABOUT THAT. I'M AFRAID I HAVE SOME RATHER BAD NEWS FOR YOU.
Legal Papers


THESE ARE LEGAL PAPERS REQUESTING YOU TO CEASE AND DESIST USING THE NAME OR APPEARING AS CAPTAIN SCOTLAND, WITH A FURTHER NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT ABOUT NOT DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH ANYONE ELSE.
WHAT...I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND..
...I...I...DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
THIS ISN'T WHAT I EXPECTED. WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
WE WILL, OF COURSE, DIRECT YOUR TALENTS ELSEWHERE - FOR WHICH YOU WILL BE HANDSOMELY COMPENSATED.
I WILL NEED YOU TO SIGN THESE, IN BLUE INK. I HAVE A PEN.
YOU MAY RECALL THERE WERE A NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH YOU ON ARTHUR'S SEAT WHEN YOU DEVELOPED YOUR POWERS.
AS YOU KNOW THOSE POWERS CHANNELLED THROUGH YOU FROM THE EARTHS CORE.
THE LIGHTNING WAS FOR, AH, DRAMATIC EFFECT.
THOSE WITH YOU, PARTAKING IN THE MAY DAY HONOURED TRADITIONS, WERE SIMILARLY AFFECTED.
BUT NOT IN THE DIRECT WAY YOU WERE. MORE TEA?
NO. I, NO, I'M FINE.
THEIR CHILDREN, YOU SEE. THEIR CHILDREN DEVELOPED POWERS. NOT ALL AS WELL ROUNDED AS YOUR OWN, BUT POWERS ALL THE SAME.
I'VE BEEN RESEARCHING THIS FOR A WHILE. THE BODILY INCUBATION OF THE HOST PARENTS WAS ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS. THOSE WHO HAD CHILDREN IN THEIR MID THIRTIES.
WELL, ALL OF THEM HAVE CHILDREN WITH POWERS THAT DEVELOPED IN THEIR TEENS.
I'VE BEEN NURTURING THEM, BUT ALL ARE EAGER AND READY TO LEARN FROM YOU SCOTT.
HOWEVER, ONE OF THEM DEVELOPED MORE THAN EXPECTED.
WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WOULD BE COMING BACK SCOTT AND, WELL... THERE WAS A VACANCY.
THEY WERE VERY ADAMANT ON CONTRACTS REGARDING HER IMAGE FOR MERCHANDISING.
I'M SO SORRY TO BREAK THE NEWS TO YOU, BUT IT'S ALREADY BEEN DECIDED...


PLEASE MEET THE NEW CAPTAIN SCOTLAND...
ALRIGHT, OLD MAN...

CAPTAIN SCOTLAND



DEJA WHO ? BY JIM WILKINS



Through the Looking Glass

Exploring **Scotland's influence on comic books**, where the weather is perfect for writing and drawing indoors!



Toxic! The Secret History Part One

It was all Margaret Thatcher's fault... No really, it was!

How did so many of 2000AD's stalwarts get together to be part of a rival publication? And why, ultimately, in spite of the incredible talent on board, did it not succeed?

In 1986 Margaret Thatcher was at the end of a second term as the first female PM in UK history. In Leicester, convinced that the UK was ripe for young entrepreneurs to make" loadsa money" very quickly, Geoff Fry set up Neptune Distribution to challenge Titan's virtual monopoly of US comics distribution in the UK. (I once asked the Monopolies Commission about them, but they weren't interested. As my friend said at the time, "The problem with the Monopolies Commission is that there's only one of them.")

The shop that I co-owned with Pete Root and Bob Napier, aka books and comics [ee cummings has no monopoly on lower case], had quickly grown to become the largest in Glasgow, but Titan's performance was not always first rate, although we did like the folks who worked there. Pete Root's main love was American back issues and so it was that we would attend the occasional comic mart in England. Pete and I were at the Manchester Comic Mart one day and Geoff sought us out there and told us about his plans and we said that, of course, we would listen to him. Geoff had been speaking to as many independent dealers as he could to build up business. But even at this first meeting he seemed to have some special plans for us.

We started by giving him a little of our comics order, but when Forbidden Planet – owned by the Titan people – suddenly opened in Glasgow, without the common courtesy of informing us, we decided to give Geoff most of our business. Loads of other comic shops followed and Geoff's turnover went from tens of thousands to, he said,

a seven figure sum. Pretty impressive in such a short time.

It is, however, always worth placing in a prominent part of your office a sign with these wise words: Turnover is vanity, Profit is sanity. Geoff then decided that, like Titan, he could become a publisher. He bought Fantasy Advertiser, at the time the leading UK comics magazine, and employed its editor, the always pleasant Martin Skidmore, to continue to edit the magazine and work on a new comics anthology which would eventually be called Trident. (Titan, Neptune, Trident. I wonder if Geoff knew enough about Classical Literature to realise that hubris is always followed by nemesis?)

Martin was a real comics enthusiast. We knew him from the famous Westminster Comic Marts and the compulsory drinks in the Westminster Arms after the mart. We all used to meet there with Kev O'Neill, Mick McMahon, Dave Gibbons, Alan Moore and the like and compare that day's purchases and catch up on news. It was these meetings in the Westminster Arms which ensured that aka got so many brilliant signing sessions. Martin and I were certainly well connected.

Probably no surprise, then, that leading on from a discussion in a London bar near where UKCAC was being held, I was working on publishing The Bogie Man. My friend George Jackson, co-founder of the band Ossian had just returned from a successful tour in Europe and America and had set up Iona Records, a fabulous alternative shop in Glasgow. George thought we should be publishing something and in the bar that day with Robin Smith, John Wagner, and Alan Grant we all agreed to do just that. A few months later, in 1989, The Bogie Man #1 hit the shelves in WH Smith, John Menzies, and comics shops throughout the UK. It sold very well at first but for various reasons (we had to sue the Mirror Group, owned at the time by the lovely Robert Maxwell, who also owned, eh, 2000AD!) our publishing company Fat Man Press ran into difficulties.



'Controversial' St Swithin's Day.

One day, Geoff phoned me at aka to ask me to hire a venue in Glasgow and invite as many Scottish creators as I could. My friend Alan owned Blackfriars Bar and he gave me the downstairs space. Along came Grant Morrison, Mark Millar and others and Geoff told them about his plans for a new comics publishing company called Trident. Would I fly down to Leicester to talk to him and Martin? Why not?

Geoff wanted to install me as "Publisher" of Trident and to work with Martin. I didn't like (or use in public) the term "Publisher" – it was Martin's baby as far as I was concerned, but we did put out some fabulous comics. Mark Millar was particularly enthusiastic and soon produced the scripts for Saviour (art by Danny Vallely and then Nigel Kitching) with Jonathan Ross as the title character years before Mark's suggestion that Samuel L. Jackson should be the new Nick Fury and The Shadowmen (art by Andy Hope). Grant Morrison wrote St Swithin's Day and it appeared in Trident #1 with wonderful art by Paul Grist. Man Elf (by Michael Moorcock – no less! – Guy Lawley and Richard Weston), Burglar Bill (Paul Grist again), Lucifer (Eddie Campbell and Phil Elliot)...

Then there was a colour reprint of the whole St Swithin's Day. We made sure one of Margaret Thatcher's loyal sycophants, Teddy Taylor, who was representing Cathcart in Glasgow, got to know about it and he was outraged! He ranted in the Daily Mail (now, there's a surprise) about the insult to our beloved PM. Of course, with such free publicity, we sold out in two or three days and I think we immediately went to reprint. No use paying for an advert when coverage like that costs nothing.

But Geoff actually wanted me attached to his company for another reason. Martin and I had put together these great wee comics and our experiment with full colour had been a sell-out. But Geoff, like John Paul Getty in the recent film, wanted more.

(Part 2 next issue).

The Second Coming - Savior.



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That Whooshing Noise: 30 Years of Deadline



Thirty years ago, at the peak of the Second Summer of Love, Acid House was everywhere, and in the febrile atmosphere where anything seemed possible two comic artists set out an audacious plan.

Established 2000 AD regulars Brett Ewins and Steve Dillon were becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of creator rights at the British sci-fi comic and so laid out a vision to publish their own comics anthology. "Deadline was the mass market pop comic that we wanted," Ewins recounted on the BBC's Comics Britannia in 2007, "as well as a cross between journalism and comics."

The pair initially took their Deadline proposal to Titan and had an offer to finance it for the direct sales market (comic shops) as a quarterly. "Titan already had their own idea of a fully formed magazine with Brett and Steve as editors—who had a business plan of their own on the back of a fag packet," remembered Tom Astor, the magazine's ultimate publisher. "But they came to me in a bid to maintain more independence…and I was assured that it would all be self-financing very quickly [laughs]." Brett had been friends with record producer Astor (Nancy's grandson) for years, and the merging of music and comics felt like a perfect fit.

In their hunt for contributors Ewins was invited down to Worthing Art College where his fellow Goldsmiths graduate Julie Westbury was lecturing. Studying there were Jamie Hewlett, Philip Bond and Alan Martin, who'd self-published two issues of their own fanzine, Atomtan.

"I always liken myself to the Bez of the outfit," joked Tank Girl's co-creator and writer Martin, "Keeping the vibe going, rolling whatever needed to rolled, making the tea and throwing ideas into the pot, but I didn't have the comic drawing chops to do what Jamie and Phil were doing. On Atomtan #2 I did a lot more, but on #1 I did a couple of pages and helped collage the original Tank Girl page. I spent time selling it to people in college, sneaking in to get it photocopied, etc. When Brett turned up Jamie and Philip mobbed him—if two people can mob one person—and he was bowled over by their artwork."

The creative roster grew to include Shaky Kane (the love child of Savage Pencil and Jack Kirby) and Steve's younger brother Glyn. "I also loved the weird shit you'd find elsewhere throughout the mag," said another contributor, Nick Abadzis. "The more offbeat stuff like Rachael Ball, D'Israeli, Glenn Dakin, Carol Swain, and weird, goofy essays by people Brett happened to encounter and commission. As founders of Deadline, [Brett and Steve] gave a lot of room and support to people who might not otherwise have had such an ideal launch pad."

"It all felt it had come from the same place," explained Martin. "The same gang and vibe was behind it…the stories had the same spirit. That feeling of 'coming home' and 'finding your people' 'Ah, these are the guys do what I like and understand me!'"

The magazine was launched at the UK Comic Art Convention (UKCAC) in September. Journalist and broadcaster Andrew Collins remembered, "Deadline arriving in 1988 was like 2000 AD arriving in 1977. It arrived bang in the middle of a new musical and cultural era."

"The first flowering of Deadline was extraordinary because it was so completely unexpected," recounted former Deadline editor Frank Wynne. "There wasn't a single strip in there which made you go, 'I've seen something like this before.'"

"It think too often people are quick to point to Jamie & Alan's Tank Girl, but I think Philip Bond's Wired World played a massive part. It was a double-punch with those two strips. These two girls, the relationship they had, the life they led, going to the laundry, etc. That aspect was probably more influential than Tank Girl in a way, which was the immediate hit," said Dave Eliot, who took over editing the magazine.

"One day [Tom Astor] reached out to me and said that Brett and Steve were juggling too much and would I come in and help." So I went into the office and Steve and Brett were like a couple of soldiers who'd seen too much battle! Clearly neither of them wanted to let go, but both were working on Skreemer [with writer Peter Milligan for DC Comics] at the time and it was just too much." Dillon confirmed this in a 2011 interview with Tripwire, "Doing Deadline was just exhausting. Neither me nor Brett were experienced editors. We got people in to help design-wise [including Ra Khan and DC Comics' current Art Director Steve Cook], and to help with advertising, but you still ended up doing a lot yourself. I'd end up marking up pages on the Tube on the way to the printers."

So Elliot took over the editorship around 1990. "At that stage it was



Deadline Gang

only selling 12,000-14,000 copies an issue, so first priority was to get sales up. At the time the only advertisers were Betty Boo and the like that were either given away or traded and they were only really making money on the small adverts that cost around £100. So I suggested broadening the content out a bit and brought in Evan Dorkin's Milk & Cheese and Bob Burden's Flaming Carrot strips. Bob told me in the period that the strip was in Deadline, UK sales of his comic more than tripled, and for a year he was selling more T-shirts in the UK than he was in the whole of the North America."

Music was intertwined from the very start with the magazine. "Deadline did do a lot of stuff that has since been credited with happening elsewhere first, perhaps because it really did have a pop culture sensibility that was very of-the-moment, very self-aware but also sort of transitory," said Eisner Award winner Abadzis. "It gave readers the same kind of hit they'd get from a pop song. Great pop stays with you, but it's also momentary. It feels like it means something, and the memories of those intense kinds of emotions stay with you."

"A lot of bands were into comics and a lot of comic creators were into bands and that was expressed best through Deadline," revealed Cud bassist and artist, William Potter. "In the early days, after leaving art college, I was split wondering if Cud were going to go anywhere or whether I was going to be a comic artist, which was my dream. It turned out that being involved with comics benefitted Cud and vice versa. Because I met Phil and Jamie at a signing in a Leeds comic shop and they confessed to being Cud fans, so I got in with the Deadline crew. So we were invited to play at Deadline's first birthday party. As a result I managed to show my work to Brett Ewins who was very helpful…So Cud got me in the door with my first strip in Deadline."

The magazine had Martin and Hewlett do one of the very first interviews with Blur in 1992, which would lead to a lifelong friendship and collaborative partnership. Bands like The Senseless Things and The Inspiral Carpets were featured on the covers. "We did a range of T-shirts of bands on the cover of the magazine, " Astor recalled. "I think the first was Carter USM [Oct '91 #34 drawn by Bond] and it was something like the No.1 selling T-shirt in HMV that week so we thought we were onto something and so did a series of them, with the bands thinking it was cool they were drawn as cartoon characters."

Ironically, deadlines became an issue with creators as Dillon remembered in Tripwire, "I loved the lads but they did have a habit of bringing it in on print day, right up to the wire."

"We were always late, and any other editor would've given us hell, but they used to laugh, shrug and take

us down the pub," Martin confirmed. "So we'd turn up at 10am at the Deadline offices having caught the milk train from Worthing with a pile of Tank Girl artwork under our arms just in time to catch the printers, so there was no time for Brett and Steve to read the strip let alone edit it, and by lunchtime we'd all be down the pub. And we did it every time! Jamie knew he could turn it around. He had much more stamina than me and could stay up all night and I would flake out at 4am, fall asleep in Jamie's bed, wake up three hours later and he'd still be there going 'we need script in this panel!'"

And things didn't get any better under Elliot's tenure: "In the last weekend of the month, before the deadline, I started going down to Worthing and I'd crash at Jamie's house and the night before I'd have return to London everyone would draw all night to finish the work so I could bring it back with me for that issue. I was really a lot of fun. There'd be a massive piss-up drinking all weekend, having a laugh and picnics, and then on the last night we'd get down to work. There were a few Tank Girl strips I was inking backgrounds for. It was a real fun time. Nick Abadzis would come down and finish Hugo Tate when we were down there. On Monday morning heading back to London with a hangover, but knowing that I had the issue completed in my portfolio."

Things had improved a little under Wynne's regime, "The Worthing crew always worked to the last minute. I tried to get them to work on time but we never had to bus someone down there to collect the work."

Hugo Tate creator Nick Abadzis believes the magazine's success was down to the fact that "It captured the zeitgeist. It made individuals famous, but it became better known in a short time than such a small mag had any right to be. The cultural impact was huge and vital, and that was its collective achievement. That you could open Deadline's pages and it seemed relevant to NOW, and was made with a lot of ambition, love, snot and youthful zeal and energy."

"Culturally there was no magazine as influential at that period, including Face and iD." Said Wynne.

"We stood for something…Creator rights and creative freedom, and considering the rates were only about £50 a page the rights were justly owned by the creators," said Elliot, who handed the reigns over to writer/editor Si Spencer.

> Martin & Hewlett did one of the very first interviews with Blur, which would lead to a lifelong friendship & collaborative partnership.

Twice nominated for the International Man Booker Prize, translator and editor Frank Wynne then took over from Spencer, "If the original Deadline under Brett and Steve was a small child with ADHD making poop jokes and racing around, causing havoc, then Deadline under Si Spencer was the boozy, druggy middle years of gigs and sex. Under me, Deadline was an experiment to see what happens if it does some things that are a little more serious than that."

Beset by perennial cash flow issues, and a Tank Girl film that ironically tanked, Deadline finally called last orders in October 1995, after seven years and 71 issues. "It was difficult for me carrying all these hopes and aspirations," Astor revealed. "And I carried on thinking that maybe the Tank Girl film and magazine would be a massive success and when they weren't that's when Deadline stopped when it did."

Sadly Brett Ewins passed away in 2015 and Steve Dillon died the following year—both tragically in their 50s— but not before going on to produce cult comics like Ewins' The Dark Gate and Dillon's Hellblazer and Preacher with Garth Ennis. And their vision and legacy continue to mould popular culture today.

"What Brett and Steve did has fed into culture in an understated way. Deadline was a cultural phenomenon and those ripples are everywhere," said Martin. "And there are small echoes of it." Those echoes can be seen in the many successful careers it helped launch, including Glyn Dillon creating the award-winning graphic novel The Nao of Brown and becoming a key visualiser for the Star Wars film franchises. Jamie Hewlett teamed up with Blur's Damon Albarn to create Gorillaz. Philip Bond continues having a successful career in US comics with Black Crown. Even members of Deadline's Ad sales team went on to head up Ridley Scott's production company and another, Jason Iley, is now the CEO and Chairman of Sony Music UK.

And those ripples through culture continue right up to today. A new magazine, Missed Deadline, is due to launch in August 2018 featuring the same mix of music, articles and comics. While "hugely influenced" by the original magazine this new quarterly is carving its own path, led by Publisher Jessica Kemp, but with some familiar crew members on board, including Deadline's former editor Dave Elliot. As Nick Abadzis saliently put it, "The time is always right for a new revolutionary magazine."

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A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO TANK GIRL

ANARCHY UNLEASHED



With the end of the 80s, independent comic publishers were emerging that nurtured new talent and challenged the popularity of the established names. Britain had its wealth of creators on 2000AD, but many more were emerging with energy and anarchy, avoiding both conventional stories and creating characters who were raw and unpredictable.

Tank Girl has long been one of comic's most iconic creations. Created by Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin and published in Deadline magazine, the cult classic title about a girl and her tank surviving in a punk, post-apocalyptic world was first published in 1988 and is still going strong 30 years later.

Martin and Hewlett were art college students who had worked on comic fanzines at school. Their passion for mass-media publications gave birth to one of Deadline's most memorable characters. Tank Girl was a new breed of savvy punk anti-heroines full of attitude, beer and a mouth full of expletives.

The creators seemed to spark off each other, feeding their own unique tastes and passions, reflecting their film and TV viewing habits, their tastes in music and their shared upbringing as kids of the 70's. When I opened Tank Girl for the first time it was if I had been invited to step through a distorted looking glass and found talking Kangaroos instead of Cheshire Cats.

Tank Girl's world is one of booze, breasts and massive explosions all blended together and scattered across the pages. The obsession with war films introduced the tank element, the distinctive skinhead hairstyle came from cinematic greats like Love and Rockets. Having the action centred in Australia from cult classics such as Crocodile Dundee and Mad Max. As I explored the world of Tank Girl, I found a wealth of cultural references taken from TV, film or song lyrics. There's acknowledgements to their own personal heroes and villains scribbled on walls or at times below the panels as footnotes.

Tank Girl is a heady cocktail of blended pop culture passions with a sharp edge of cynical street-smart dialogue and graffiti-style art and all presented with in your face humour. Here's a run-down of the Tank girl collected comics that should interest the beginner to the series

Tank Girl – Vol #1 and Vol #2

Titan comics have collected the initial strips from the early Deadline days in chronological order in these accessible volumes. Volume #1 features the early black and white stories, packed with anarchic irreverence. These are generally stand-alone stories, self-contained and growing in confidence.

Her first solo story introduces us to our antiheroine and establishes exactly what kind of world she lives in. In this

story, Tank Girl is chasing a bounty on a biker gang of sentient mutant kangaroos. She literally crashes her tank into a part that the gang had metaphorically crashed earlier, killing not only the gang members but the party goers as well. The leader makes a run for it with Tank Girl in pursuit, the two collapse exhausted near a high rock formation and proceed to have sex.

That's the kind of initial story which makes an impression. The whole strip is written in the style of a comedy adventure in a classic kids comic. Only it's about reckless violence and inter species fucking and the chaotic intensity increases through the first volume with various narratives asking Tank Girl to deliver a colostomy bag to the president and delivering religious missionaries to a Christmas party where she encounters the second coming of the baby Jesus and wishes she could get him drunk. It's all glorious in the laugh out loud nature, I found myself turning pages hooked on never being able to anticipate where the story is going to go next.

As this magazine goes to print it's been confirmed by Titan that they are going to release the first volume in full colour under the banner of Tank Girl: Full Colour Classics – due to be released at the 18th of April. These have been coloured by Tracy Bailey and Sofie Dodgson and bring a new vibrancy to the world of Tank Girl. These new colours are a fantastic way to celebrate 30 years of Tank Girl and I will certainly be ordering them once released!

Volume two finds the action moving away from Australia and to Britain, the journeys become more surreal and fantastical. The strips explode into dazzling colour and it takes on a psychedelic character. There's a greater sense of experimentation with the strips presentation as well, there's disjointed panels which break down any narrative conventions. There's an injection of rambling thoughts into the narrative which almost seem to abandon any notion of a coherent story.

This volume has less of an emphasis on big explosions, it's shaped more by an obsession with sex, drugs and personal experience which culminates in the Summer Love Sensation storyline. There's the homages to pop 70's culture with appearances by Jimi Hendrix, Starsky and Hutch (which is lampooned in a strip called 'Askey and Hunch) and even the creators make an appearance – almost blurring their world with the world of their creation Tank Girl herself.

Serious Issues

Aside from the sheer fun that underlies Tank Girl's antics, there are running themes which are subtly woven through the seemingly disjointed narrative which Hewlett and Martin deliver so expertly in these early issues. There's the obvious punk rebelliousness which hits you in the face, also the nature of sexual agency and exploitation which are explored in particularly subversive ways.

One narrative deals with an army officer who has been sent to assassinate Tank Girl, but he is having vivid nightmares about being killed by her breasts. He visualises them turning into massive missiles. This arc deals with patriarchal institutions and breast obsession with female heroes in comic book. It's brilliant and subversive and features one of the many aspects that Tank Girl revolves around.

There's a great number of moments in Tank Girl's myriad of narratives which female nudity is featured in a manner which is neither sexual or sexy. Tank Girl counters the argument that when we see a naked female in comics that we immediately must find her sexually attractive. Tank Girl's visual aesthetic features her as often dirty, sweaty and bald. She isn't the traditionally attractive female protagonist. She is generally portrayed as a sexy character, but it's a real, raw kind of sexiness, not an idealised male portrayal of female sexuality.

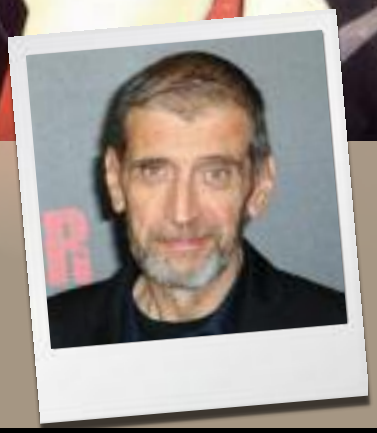
This dynamic continues through the series, with the present-day incarnations of Tank Girl and her friends, unashamedly embracing their sexuality and their bodies. Tank Girl's romantic interest in her boyfriend Booga – a talking mutant Kangaroo is often used to represent the struggles of interracial couples in the western world. Booga often is portrayed as a metaphor for Aboriginal Australian or African immigrants in the U.K. This enduring relationship serves to normalise real-life interracial and intercultural relationships.

Over the years, Tank Girl has expanded into a fantastically deep and complex title. There's a mixture of the absurd and the subtle sublime political statements which pepper the dialogue and artwork. Tank Girl has remained a strong and unique title due to its chaotic exuberance which the protagonists character fully embraces. It is a cult title, but it's one with a lasting influence, characters ranging from Harley Quinn to Furiosa often seem to have at least some subtle nods to Tank Girl.



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Remembering Steve Dillon

Steve Dillon was a British comic artist whose career spanned a number of decades. He worked for 2000AD, ran the influential UK music and comics magazine Deadline, which featured Tank Girl, with Bret Ewins and was the co-creator of Vertigo's Preacher with Garth Ennis.

He died suddenly in October 2016 at the age of 54 in New York.

Dillon began his career drawing for Hulk Weekly for Marvel UK 40 years ago.

Comics was in his blood from a very young age. He told me in an interview I did with him back in 2011 how he made comics when he was still in school:

"Me and a friend decided to get together and do some comics, because his dad happened to have a photocopier in his office and they were quite rare things in those days. So we just sold them to our school pals for 10p a shot. I did things like Planet of The Apes adaptions from the novels and then we tried to do some original science fiction stories. And that's how I started off really."

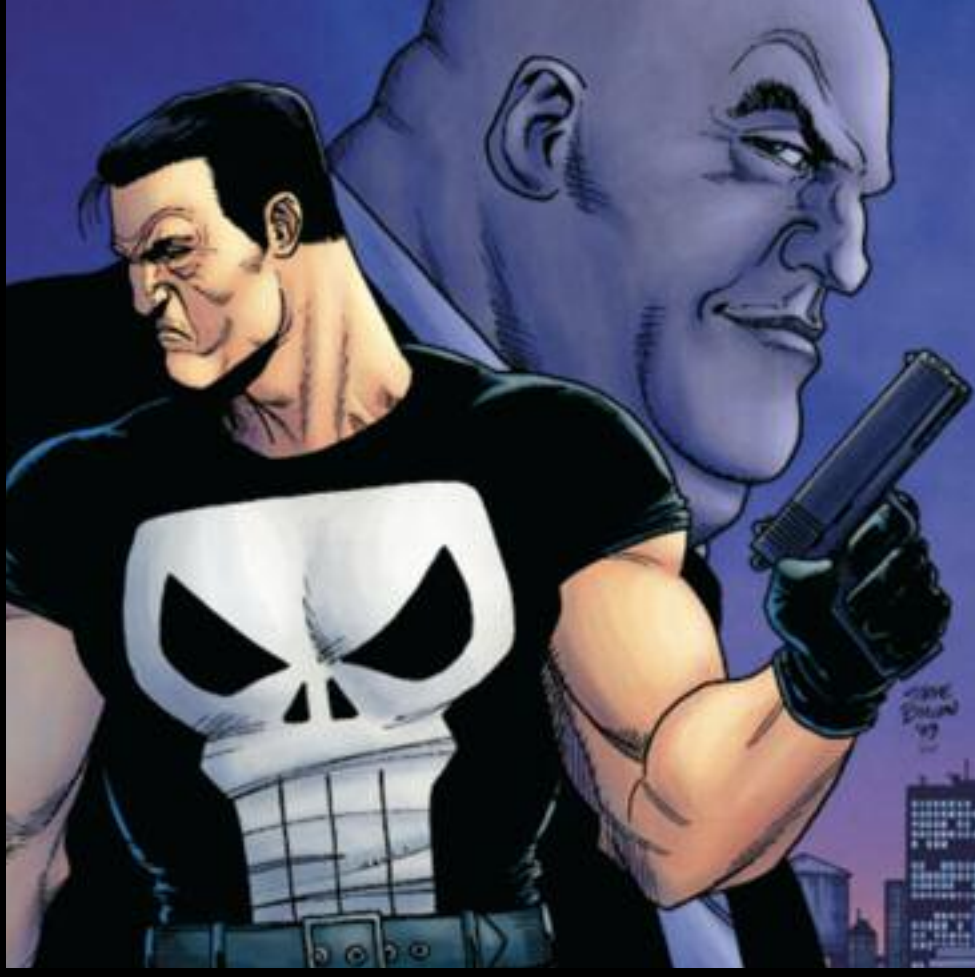
He recalled how he got his first professional work in the same chat we had:

"My first proper comic job was a three-page strip for Hulk Weekly. It was a whole strip, a tryout job. Dez [Skinn] liked it and offered me the job. It was written by Steve Parkhouse if my memory serves. It had nine panels a page. Dez's idea was to do the American Marvel characters in a British style to make it look more like British comics."

He met Ewins just from being located in London, he remembered: "I met Bret Ewins when I was living in London. Comics shops like Dark They Were and the first Forbidden Planet had opened and you had places to gather. There was also the Westminster Comic Mart. That's where I met people like Dave Gibbons, Brian Bolland, Mick McMahon. I probably bumped into people like Bret and Brendan [McCarthy] there as well. So it was just through mutual friends that you ended up meeting people."

Deadline was a major part of his career and it was a high watermark for him in comics even though towards the end, he wasn't as involved as he was from the start: "Jamie Hewlett was doing lovely work, as was Phil Bond. I'm also really proud of Nick Abadzis's Hugo Tate. There was lots of good stuff in Deadline and it's great to see that a lot of these guys

went on from there and made decent careers. I wasn't at the helm for the last bit of it because I had to go to Dublin, where I was a consultant. I was still a director of the company. I saw stuff on fax and all that sort of thing. But in the end Brett was there on his own really with a couple of staff. It got a bit much for him as well. Tom Astor, the guy who financed it, stayed involved but we got people like Si Spencer and Dave Elliott in for a bit to edit."



It is arguably Preacher where he got noticed by US fans even though he spent a number of years on Vertigo's Hellblazer. The genesis of that was fairly smooth, Dillon informed me: "It was in the early days of Vertigo so you felt like you still needed some sort of fantasy element to any series you created for them. Vertigo, as it turned out, moved on from that. But at the time, we thought 'Okay it needs to have angels and demons. Vampires.' It still worked out perfectly and I don't think we'd have changed it even if we didn't have to put the fantasy in it. Garth lived in Belfast at the time and I lived in Dublin so we used to meet up occasionally. I'd go up there or he'd come down to see me in Dublin. We'd have a few beers and stay over at each other's places, talk nonsense and ideas came out of that."

He felt that he did have a bit of a charmed career, he told me in that conversation back in 2011:

"When I was a teenager, I didn't think I'd be alive at this age let alone still be drawing comics. Life leads you down certain paths. When I was at school and I chose what I was going to do for my O Levels, it was with the plan of going to university to do physics. And it was only when I was doing my O Levels that I decided: 'I'd much rather draw. And I'd much rather draw than do Physics'. As much as I love Physics…And then you meet your missus, and you have kids. Your priorities change and you want regular work. I couldn't do experiments like Deadline now. Admittedly, I did it when I had kids but I had the attitude that, if it succeeded, I could get a regular wage and have evenings and weekends off. I thought I'd be able to do it in a normal office job and then do a few hours freelancing into the evening. I now know better really. When you've got three kids, you need regular work."

But his legacy lives on. This year will see the third season of Preacher on AMC and it is now an established part of the TV schedule. Also, Luton, the place he made his home for many years, has named two streets in honour of him: Preacher Close and Cassidy Close. Last year, Michael Molcher and Tim Pilcher put together a tribute sketchbook too which was sold at New York Comic Con and MCM London with a stellar line-up of artists including Bill Sienkiewicz, Chris Weston, Rafael Albuquerque and Sean Phillips.

Dillon was one of the finest UK comic artists of his generation and he may be gone but he certainly isn't forgotten. Let's raise a pint of Guinness to this true original.



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"I wasn't surprised by the book's success," says Alan Grant of Judgement on Gotham, the original Batman / Judge Dredd team-up from 1991. A huge commercial hit, it was arguably the most successful appearance the future lawman ever made in America in his purest form, the watered-down film versions notwithstanding.

Batman and Dredd are both idols with their respective fans, and I figured both sets of readers would pick up on the team-up," continues Grant, "and the fact the artwork was by Simon Bisley just made that more likely. I'd point out that after a first issue, sales would generally fall quite far and quite fast. When Simon did the first Lobo mini-series (with Grant and writer Keith Giffen for DC), sales actually went up by around 50,000 for issue two. That was an unheard of state of affairs, which just emphasised his popularity with the readers."

At the time, everything was lined up perfectly. Grant was one of the key writers on DC's Batman titles, his long-time 2000AD writing partner (and Dredd's co-creator) John Wagner had the reins on Dredd, and Simon Bisley's just-finished run of visceral painted art on Slaine: The Horned God had turned him into the hottest and most influential British comic artist of the '90s. Yet easy synchronicity like this glosses over the fact it had taken a couple of false starts for the story to come to fruition.

"As far as I recall, it was the powers-that-be at (then-2000AD publisher) Fleetway who actually made the suggestion (of putting Dredd and Batman together)," says Grant. "It made a lot of sense, so Fleetway spoke directly to DC and everybody agreed." In fact, Grant has said that the suggestion was originally made some years before Tim Burton's 1989 Batman film gave the Caped Crusader a huge shot of publicity, and DC desperately agreed in the hope that any gimmick would boost Batman's flagging sales.

The first idea, apparently, was to give the project to Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, but despite Bolland's reputa-



tion as one of the classic Dredd artists, Wagner and Grant – then Dredd's well-entrenched writing partnership – made it known they weren't happy with their character being passed to another writer. Instead, Moore and Bolland created Batman: The Killing Joke, which was released in 1988 and became a huge and enduring success.

Next, artists Alan Davis and Paul Neary were approached, but the money on offer wasn't enough for them to turn down becoming the artists on Marvel's new British-set X-book Excalibur; although Davis did illustrate a kind of trial run for a Batman/Dredd team-up, when Wagner wrote the visually similar Dredd one-off 'Bat Mugger' for him in 1988's 2000AD prog 585, the artist's last work for 2000AD.

In the end, the final shape of Judgement on Gotham was partly down to Wagner eventually agreeing to do it when he did. No fan of superheroes, he had originally been cold on the idea, but his definitive take on Dredd and Grant's deep understanding of Batman (and Judge Anderson, the Mega-City Psi-Judge who played mediator to the two men of violence) created a perfect balance.

The story also set the trio up against Dredd's principal Rogue's Gallery members, the other-dimensional mass-killer Judge Death and the dim-witted but hyper-violent cyborg Mean Machine Angel, with Batman's enemy Scarecrow drafted in as a fearsome foil for Death. As Grant told Peter Sanderson for Comics Alliance at the time, the treatment which he and Wagner originally had accepted was a serious and straightforward horror idea; but when they came to write it, they junked their first plan with the new brief, "let's see if we can come up with something that makes us happy while we're writing it, that gives us a laugh."

Bisley's painted work was a revelation, marrying a clear understanding of the characters looks and personalities with a taste for punkish, heavy metal violence and an irreverent cartoon humour. "I can't remember who first suggested Simon, but both John and I were one hundred percent behind him," says Grant now. "Since I first saw his work I was a fan - he brought an energy to comics that was sorely needed at the time. I thought he did a brilliant job, I don't believe there was any other artist who could have pulled it off so successfully."

Grant told Sanderson that "the bond that (Dredd and Batman) form is a bond of intense mutual hatred," and many readers were surprised that the relationship between the pair manifested itself in Dredd's clear physical superiority, with more emphasis placed on Batman's sense of determination. "There was little debate about the dynamic between the characters," says Grant. "Both may be crime fighters, but it was happening in Dredd's city and as a vigilante Batman was, by definition, a perp. This meant that Batman was unlikely to be listened to, because it was Dredd's POV which was more important."



Judgement on Gotham was such a definitive success that it inspired three further Wagner and Grant-written sequels; Vendetta in Gotham (1993, with art by Cam Kennedy), The Ultimate Riddle (1995, by Carl Critchlow and Dermot Power) and Die Laughing (1998, by Glenn Fabry and Jim Murray). The first two books in the series are being released jointly this spring as the first of current 2000AD publisher Rebellion's new 'digest' series, with a smaller size and price, because, says editor Oliver Ball, "they're both fast-paced self-contained stories, making a great 'stand-alone' read as well as a good entry-point for newer readers. We wanted to launch the series with a well-known classic that has been out of print for some time and is often requested by fans."

"No publisher would ever turn down the likelihood of a nice profit, so I understand perfectly why (Fleetway and DC) wanted the sequels," says Grant. "We chose subsequent artists on the strength of how much we liked their work. Bisley set them a massive success to live up to, and I thought they all pulled it off well."

Within this new collection two very different tones stand alongside one another, from Bisley's bold painting to Kennedy's technically brilliant draughtsmanship. "I remember I wasn't keen on the first one, because it had all the faces bursting open and the blood," says the latter artist now. "But boys will be boys, eh? It was a fun job... anything that involved Dredd was fun, and I also got to do the dark Batman I'd always wanted to. They were two counterweights, and it was a great wee idea putting them together."

A Look at the Creator of the WOLF





2016 saw the release of Rachael Ball's critically acclaimed graphic novel The Inflatable Woman. A semi autobiographical story of Rachael's own triumph over cancer it was alternatively tragic, funny, insightful and hugely moving. As is self evident by the books and comics filling our shelves these heady days discovering a new way to tackle a subject isn't easy. Rachael has invested heavily in the WOLF motif in her new book but certainly not in a way that you will expect. Nature is a looming and sinister cloud as it stares back at us with feral eyes through the leaves of a bush or standing proud looks down onto us from atop a vast tree stump. This book works like those frightening fairy tales of our childhood did with strong visuals and a warmth of iconic characters.

WOLF is the story of those frightening moments in childhood and through this we explore the life of a young boy and the relationships he forms. This is done in gothic charcoal styled pencils and inks. Like the etchings in a Victorian newspaper suddenly made flesh in a timeless story book. If you enjoy a look at our own true lives through the shock and awe and sadness and pains of growing as seen in the eyes of a young man you will love this story.

I got to speak to Rachael recently about the new book and she explained that it is a story about loss and grief and the death of a parent. Near to the beginning of this graphic novel a boy is playing in the woods when he sees the titular wolf and Rachael explains that this sight of the creature warns him that something bad is coming. Upon the death of the boy's father he refuses to accept what has happened and instead becomes obsessed with a neighbour who he believes is a wolf man.

She goes on to describe that there is a warning in the book about the oncoming 'something' that is on the horizon and there are lots of references to nature and what what we should be learning from the past as we push forwards in our lives. Running parallel to this are the characters learning to cope with loss and death. Once again we get a little of the autobiographical but she mixes it with her love of the Gothic Fairytale genre and making use of that style in this graphic novel.

The art in WOLF has a similar artistic style to The Inflatable Woman in her own idiosyncratic style. It also makes use of experimental sequences and plays with adding dance and the appearance of music into scenes. Rachael is really inspired by a long interest in dance as an art form since a course at College and can't wait to see what people think. It's kind of a 'Werewolf version of West Side Story'. We may also get a 'Buzby Berkeley sequence with Go-Karts!' He explains. Sadly Rachel and the publishers have put aside the idea to give the book a cover made of fake fur. Turns out it was a little too expensive. 'Maybe for that big oversized collection later on?' I asked. 'Maybe, and one that makes noises' Rachael joked.

Since her days on Deadline Magazine in the nineties Rachael Ball has always produced original and highly affecting stories that never cease to surprise and move the reader. This new venture is getting a launch in the Autumn from Self Made Hero. We were lucky enough to get a peek at some of the upcoming pages that we can share here with you here in Comicscene. I highly recommend anything by this creator and at 296 pages it won't be a short read!

You can find more about it and other books from the Self made Hero stables at www.selfmadehero.com or follow them on Twitter **@SelfMadeHero**

Rachael Ball is a cartoonist and writer artist living in South London. You can read the first chapter of WOLF over at Rachael's blog at **www.rachaelball.tumblr.com** or follow her on Twitter **@rachaelcartoons**

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Flintlock

Stuck in the 18th Century



There were a few things that brought Flintlock together, and these first started to form at a London convention back in early 2015. I'd started Time Bomb Comics in 2007, primarily to get my own work out there which I think is what 99% of us digging away at the small/indie press coalfaces do it for. However over the years I'd started publishing other creators work, all stuff which I thought was great and was delighted to invest in, but I think that meant that everyone had really forgotten that I created comics as well as publishing them – including me.

So I was at this show and writer Jasper Bark took me to task a bit for not writing comics myself anymore. It was a bit of banter, sure, but then I realised that the last thing I'd published with my name on it as a writer was back in 2010 (Dick Turpin and the Crimson Plague) so Jasper kind of had a point. And you should always listen to your old Uncle Jasp.

But what to do?

Well, as I'm an ancient I remember weekly comics of the seventies and eighties. At the time I never read the girls comics of course but they routinely featured strong female characters that the readers could identify with, or at the least enjoy reading about. There's a lack of adventure characters in general these days, realistic female characters even more so. So all these different things started bubbling away in my head – writing comics again, adventure stories, how women are portrayed in comics – all of that led to Flintlock.

Which then allowed me to scratch another personal itch.

I've always enjoyed comics with a historical setting but the 18th Century holds a particular fascination for me. As a setting it's overlooked, not just in comics but in general, which is why you can find lots of stories set in the middle ages or Victorian times but far less in between. It's strange as the era of highwaymen, pirates, thief-takers and all the rest seem a shoe-in for creative inspiration!

As part of the initial concept process I came up with some outlines for some character ideas, at the time it was very much trying to identify one that could sustain a series. Very quickly it looked to me that more than one of these ideas had legs, so suddenly there were a dozen character concepts in front of me. Of course, do I then rush off and announce I'd be releasing twelve first issues over the next year that each had variant covers? No, of course not, for that way lies madness. Instead it was the realisation that I had the bare bones of an anthology book, and developed it from there.

It was then a relatively short leap to the notion of all the stories taking place in a shared timeline, so the different characters are existing in different decades through the Century when we first see them. What became apparent early on as well was the type of characters that were forming – yes, there were the female takes on the traditional highwayman and pirate figures, but there were a half dozen others as well, none of which were the stereotypical comics lead character. That really wasn't intentional but it seemed to be a very interesting USP for Flintlock to have, and since the series launched it's something that people have taken notice of and positively commented about.

I've ended up with 6 characters who are the backbone of the Flintlock timeline and we'll be introducing these characters over Books One through Six. Lady Flintlock, Shanti the Pirate Queen and the Clockwork Cavalier were the first introduced and Onna, Molly and The Trickster Thief arrive in Book Three. The reaction to those first three have been terrific – each one seems to be somebody's favourite – so for me it's going to be interesting to see how thew newcomers are received. In as much the way the Clockwork Cavalier seems to have captured the interest of the Steampunk community the concept behind Molly and The Trickster Thief will hopefully appeal to another specific community, yet still be entertaining to everyone else who enjoys Flintlock.

The major historical events of the century will be happening in the background for the most part; to me it's the impact of these events in the wider world that's rich for exploration. There's a few things that are perhaps lesser known generally – the earthquake that flattened Lisbon in 1755, or the Battle of Karnal in 1739 where the Indian city of Delhi was ransacked – that offer more interesting story ideas I think.

I think it's the same with known historical figures – they'll be few and far between and only introduced in the right context. I mean it makes sense for John and Henry Fielding to pop up in connection with the Clockwork Cavalier as they were in charge of the Bow Street Runners, but it doesn't make sense for Shanti to encounter Blackbeard or Lady Flintlock to meet King George II because that just seems a bit silly.

Some characters will encounter one another in some form (although I can say with some certainty that they won't be all coming together and forming some kind of 18th Century superteam - that way also lies madness) but there will be butterfly effects through the timeline. The actions of one character in, say, 1720 can impact on another in 1796 – that kind of thing.

Beyond that? Well, I have a hundred years and a whole planet to play with – that's almost limitless potential I think! I'd love to carry it forward, but it's really down to if there is a viable and sustainable readership out there for this stuff. I've been heartened by the reaction to Flintlock so far, and that it's also independently being developed as a tabletop roleplaying game is hugely exciting I think, but the law of diminishing returns is a cruel one, and it's how Book Five and Six are received that will really determine Flintlock's fate.

Whatever happens, I have this assortment of characters now that I feel are pretty unique, and I know that whatever happens to the core Flintlock title in the future I'll be returning to those characters in some fashion in the years to come, although perhaps in some unexpected ways!

In the August issue of ComicScene UK we look at female comic creators and characters. Don't miss Comic Scene Issue 1 - our first monthly issue.

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UNICORN
The first Colour Cover on a U.K. Comics Fanzine

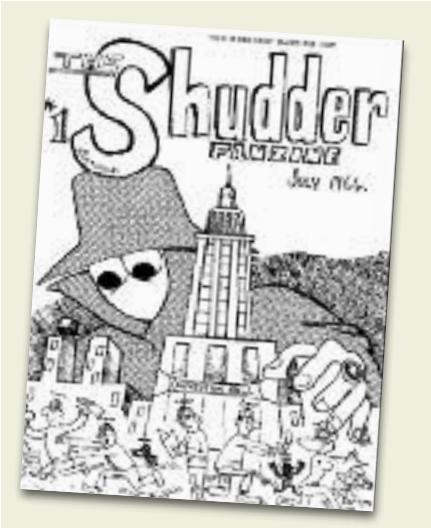
UNICORN #5
Front Cover by Mike Higgs, 1972

After having created three issues of the very first U.K. based general fanzine; KA-POW, co-editors Steve Moore and Phil Clarke went their separate ways. They remained close friends, but each branched out into producing their own fanzines; Steve went on to publish Aspect and Orpheus, and Phil to publish Unicorn, with Mike Higgs.

Phil Clarke became heavily involved in dealing comics (eventually opening Nostalgia & Comics in Birmingham in 1977), and Unicorn began life as a free sales / Trade / News adzine, distributed to anyone asking to be added to the mailing list. At first, the zine just carried Phil's own lists, but later accepted 'want' lists, and adverts for other fanzines and fannish events. Most of the issue was Electrostencil printed, though the covers by Mike Higgs were all offset litho.

Mike Higgs had been contributing covers and interior illustrations to SF zines since the early 1960s. This included his own zine, Shudder which although SF in nature, also included a strip and an article on American comics. Shudder was of course a pastiche of The Shadow, which in turn became The Cloak, when the character was published in Odham Press's POW! Comic.

THE SHUDDER FANZINE #1
Front Cover by Mike Higgs, 1964



With issue 2, and the print run rising to 250, Mike and Phil expanded the editorial content to include a few comics strips; Bent Feather by Jan Sitek, Kraggor by KA-POW stalwarts Steve Moore and Ken Simpson, and The Barbarian by Steve Moore and Mike Higgs. The zine also reprinted some Batman newspaper strips from 1943.

Issue 3 has so far eluded my grasp, but thanks to Comic dealer and historian Ewan Brownlow, I do have a copy of the cover by Higgs; which features a lovely image of Rupert the Bear riding a Unicorn.

UNICORN Covers 1–4
Mike Higgs (& various) 1970-1972

By issue 4, the sales lists had been hived off from the main zine and were still available for free on request. Unicorn itself now cost 25p an issue, but could also be obtained freely for a contribution for the zine, a letter of comment, or as a zine swap.

Both the Kraggor and The Barbarian strips concluded with this issue.

After a break of nine months between issues 4 and 5, Unicorn returned, and really started to hit its stride, but as so often was the case in those days, it did so with what turned out to be its final issue.

In their editorial for this issue, Mike and Phil review the first four, and state their intent for future issues, which would feature "…comic strips, experimental, traditional and reprints in any field that will interest you and us. Articles will be about fantasy, comics, cartoonists, comic premiums, pulps and anything in the related field that you care to write about…"

Most fanzines tended to come to an end either due to the editors moving on to 'bigger and better' things, or to a general lack of contributors from the readers. Editorials decrying apathy during this period are legion, and all through its



run, Mike and Phil express a certain amount of despair at the lack of involvement from people in fandom, and issue specific pleas for contributions to the zine.

Having said that, this issue does have some reader involvement in the form of a letter column; including missives from such fan luminaries as Mike Cruden and Alan Hunter (who also supplies five, two page episodes of his wonderful Alon Alone strip).

Alan Hunter really is one of the superstars of fandom, who furnished both SF and Comics fandom with a seemingly never ending supply of instantly recognisable, high quality artwork.

The cover image of issue 3 that Ewan has kindly supplied me with was taken from the copy once belonging to Alan, who kept his zines in lovely condition. I'd love to own a copy of this, and if anyone fancies selling theirs, or even just scanning it for my fanzine archive, then please do get in touch with me.



UNICORN #5
ALON ALONE
strip by Alan Hunter

Other original strips in issue 5 include Tarzipan, written and illustrated by Jan Sitek, and Mouse by Mike Higgs.

Art wise we're also treated to a very early Jack Kirby / Captain America / Bucky Barnes illustration by Kevin O'Neill.

The reprinted strips also included in this issue are Zor the Mighty by E G. Letkeman from the 1940s, Captain Marvel and The Friendly Horrors from Whiz Comics, and Wally Wood's ever-so-slightly risqué Far-Out Fables.

The articles come in the form of Rod Jackson talking about the British Edgar Rice Burroughs Editions, a look at 50's Space Heroes by Andrew Dorlington, and Marvel vs National by future Comic Media News editor, Richard Burton.

All in all, this is a lovely, if all too short, run of fanzines, but one which punches far above its weight in fanzine history, by dint of the full colour, hand separated colour cover; the first on any U.K. Comics Zine.

Next issue, I'll take a look at some of the other (perhaps less than successful) attempts at introducing colour onto fanzine covers, over the years, and at a few of the other professional comic artists who produced fanzine covers in the early years.



UNICORN #5
Illustration by Kevin O'Neill 1972

Afterword

Mike & Phil have worked together on other comic related projects since of course the days of Unicorn of course. These later, more professionally produced publications, show a direct link back to those early interests displayed in the fanzine nearly 40 years earlier.

NOSTALGIA ABOUT COMICS by Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs. Assisted by Sue Williams 1991. A collection of comic strips and covers from the 1940s onwards, reprinted from Phil's own collection.

GREAT BRITISH FANTASY COMIC BOOK HEROES by Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs 2009. A larger Archive Collection of original strips from the Pages of Britain's "independent" Comic Books of the 1940's and 1950's, containing 464 black and white pages of originated British hero strips. A limited edition of 100, priced at £75.00.

You can read 4 of these issues of Unicorn (as well as other fanzines mentioned in this article, and many others) at my Archive site, which can be found at:
https://davidprice5.wixsite.com/classicukcomicszines



Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs taken at the British International Comics Show 2010
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Author: David Hathaway Price
Twitter: @David_HPrice
Website: https://davidprice5.wixsite.com/classicukcomicszines

FITCH BAKER COLLINS

APOLLO

With 2019 marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo landing, it will unbelievably be half a century since Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins first stepped on the moon. Now Selfmadehero are set to commemorate that auspicious anniversary almost twelve months early with the publication of Apollo, a graphic novel by writers Matt Finch and Chris Baker and artist Mike Collins.

Having previously co-founded micro-publisher Dead Canary Comics and teamed up with Hookjaw artist Conor Boyle on their 2016 debut graphic novel Reddin, Finch and Baker hadn't expected Collins to accept their offer when they approached him at the 2015 London Supercon. "We had this huge 150-page script that we knew we couldn't possibly produce ourselves so we reached out to Mike on a wing and a prayer," recalls Finch. "We liked his art style and thought it would be great for Apollo, but we didn't really think he'd give us the time of day. Then about three hours after sending the email into the digital abyss, Mike responded telling us that he loved it and he is actually a space fanatic, so it's a subject that's close to his heart."

"Once Mike was on board, we managed to cajole Emma Hayley into reading the script and before long we had a deal," adds Baker, referring to Selfmadehero's publishing director. "You could say that it was a match made in the stars."

An in-demand artist whose art has graced everything from 2000 AD stalwarts Judge Dredd and Slaine to Spider-Man and Doctor Who over the past three decades, Collins was fortuitously able to fit it into his usually hectic schedule. "When they told me what it was about, my interest was piqued," he admits. "They then sent me the script and I was hooked. Some of the pages in the book are actually a couple of years old as I was doing promo pages way ahead of us getting the project underway. I've been pleased and impressed that we've kept our enthusiasm going through this long period!"



Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine before the 50th anniversary of the Apollo landings

As a child of the '80s, Finch grew up during the era of the Space Shuttle, and inherited his interest in the exploits of the early astronauts from his father. "My Dad was a huge fan and armchair scholar of the space race, so he instilled that in me," he recalls. "A lot of the early research for Apollo was from books borrowed from him."

"I was always fascinated by the moon landing but mainly because I was one of those fools who had doubts we ever actually made the trip!" laughs Baker. "It wasn't until I sat down with an endless spread of evidence in front of me that I felt fully schooled."

In contrast, Collins was born the very same day - May 5th, 1961 - that Alan Shepard auspiciously became the first American to travel into space. He also shares his name with Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins, who remained behind in orbit while his now more famous colleagues, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, took the lunar capsule down to the surface of the moon. "Watching the launch of Apollo 11 in primary school and hearing my name was one of those moments you never forget," he says. "Funnily enough, when I made a crack to Chris and Matt about me being the inevitable artist for the book, they said that it had ever occurred to them!"

Contrasting scenes of Apollo 11's landmark voyage with flashbacks that gradually build up to the big day, Finch and Baker place those momentous events within a wider historical context, which also incorporate other famous figures including Presidents Kennedy and Nixon. "Our original intention was to tell the story of the three guys in the spaceship with flashbacks to the events that got them there," explains Finch. "We wanted to make it very simple, and very factual. But as we went further and further down the writing rabbit hole, we realised that this wasn't just a story about three guys, it was a story about a whole country – America."

But while they don't sensationally reveal that the moon is actually made of green cheese, there are also plenty of intriguing cultural references including nods to David Bowie's classic song, 'A Space Oddity,' and most bizarrely Marvel's Ego the Living Planet. "'Space Oddity' came out the same month as the landing, and there's also a nod to Stanley Kubrick's film, 2001: A Space Odyssey, which was also released in 1969," says Baker. "Although I must admit that my only experience of Ego is from Guardians of the Galaxy 2!"

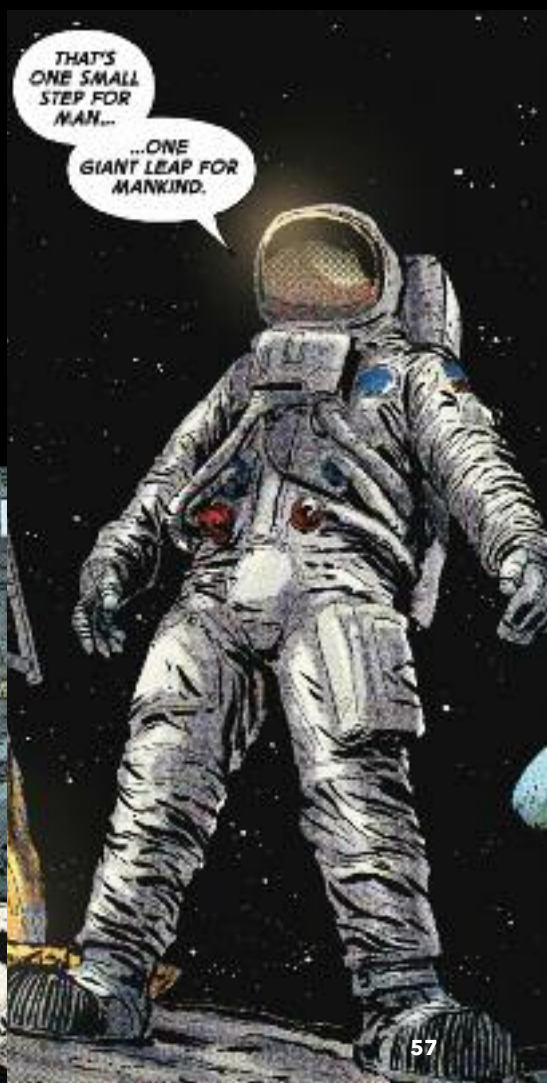
"Chris and Matt were going for Georges Melies in the script," continues Collins, referring to the director of the 1902 French film, A Trip to the Moon. "So making it Ego was mostly down to me and my love of Jack Kirby."

Having not only illustrated numerous Doctor Who comics including 2010 graphic novel The Only Good Dalek but also recently worked as a storyboarder for the BBC television series, Collins has plenty of experience drawing fictional tales of time and space. However, he insists that there is "surprisingly little" difference when it comes to more factual-based stories like Apollo. "One of my rules of thumb with doing fantastical strips is that they should always feel real," he reasons. "So alien cities should have a starting point in reality, and I have a library of books of things like '50s motels, modern Japanese architecture and conceptual buildings, so that I'm not just creating stuff on the fly."

While he has done "a whole stack of research," Collins has also tried not to be too slavish when it came to capturing the specific likenesses of the main characters. "I've tried to keep the Columbia crew as consistent as possible, but that involved creating my own version of them otherwise every shot would just be a traced photograph and that doesn't work for lively storytelling," says Collins, who acknowledges the important contributions of letterer Ian Sharman and colourists Kris Carter and Jason Cardy. "We've known each other for years and have worked on several projects together, so we make up a kind of loose virtual studio."

"Without doing a disservice to Mike's work, it's when the pages were coloured that they really came to life," adds Finch. "Some of the decisions we made with Ian during the lettering stage had major effects on the storytelling. Comics is a collaborative medium, and Apollo was a real team effort."

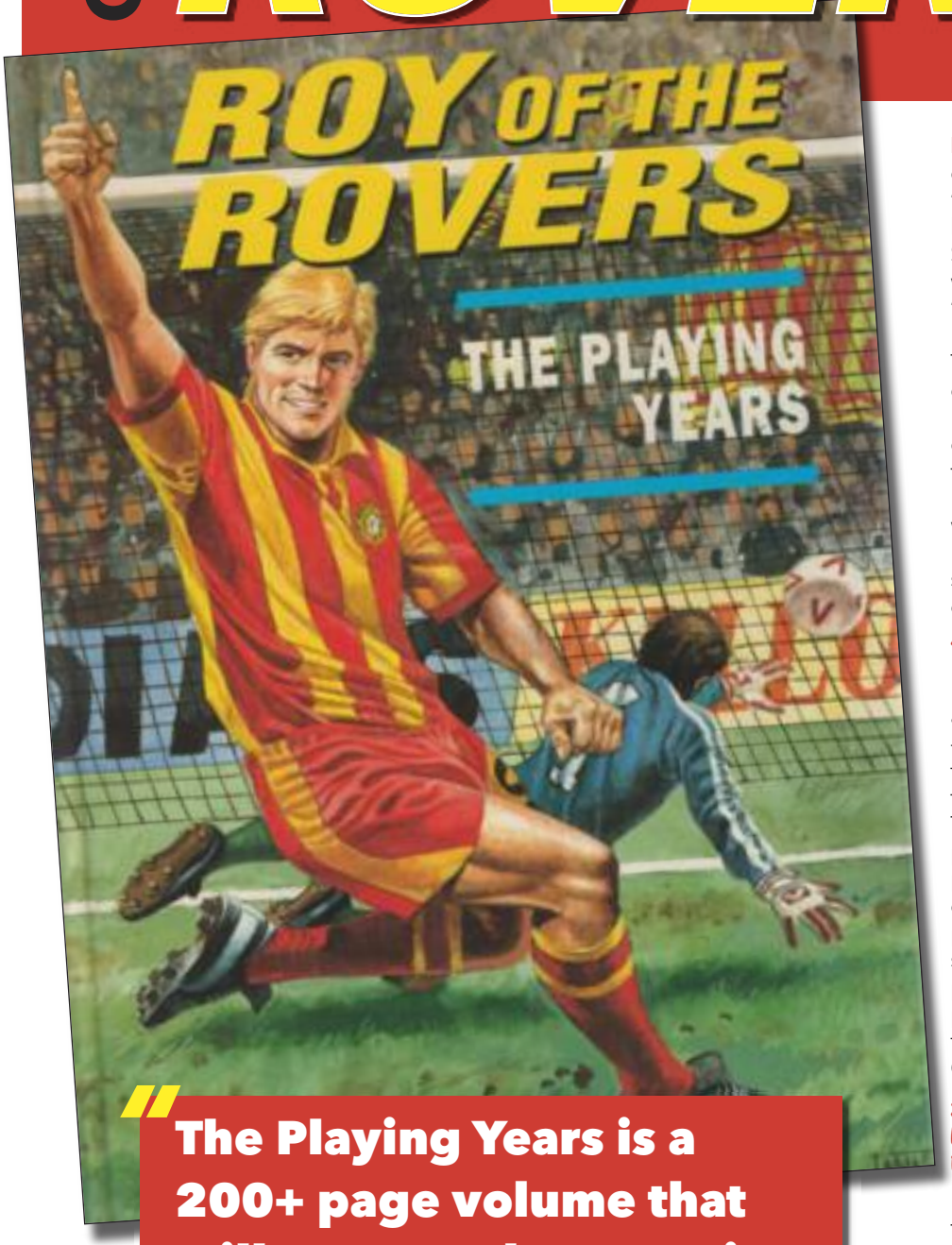




Collecting

ROY OF THE ROVERS

by Richard Sheaf



"The Playing Years is a 200+ page volume that still commands a premium amongst collectors"

Roy of the Rovers first appeared in Tiger comic way back in 1954 and is due to be "re-launched" by Rebellion publishing later this year with brand new material. So this feels like a great time to look at what material is out there relating to 'classic' Roy that you could be collecting. Roy graced the cover of the inaugural Tiger annual (for 1957) but after that he only appeared on the covers for the 1974 and 1977 annuals, but that's because he'd been given his own annual from 1958 – this ran continuously until 1994 (and was briefly revived in 2000) with Roy on most of the annual covers. However, I want to look at the more obscure books that were produced... so in date order we have...

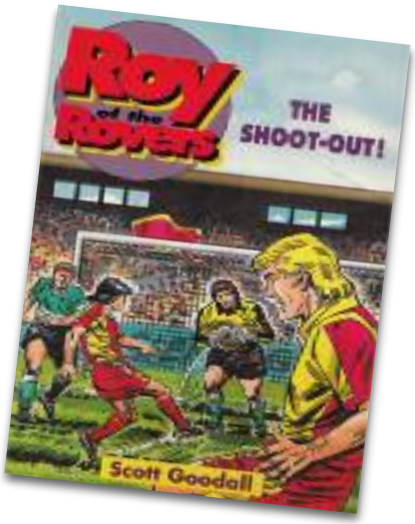
1). Roy of the Rovers – The novel

In 1977 New English Library brought out a 4 issue 'series' of comic novelisations – an eclectic selection, the series featured Dan Dare, D-Day Dawson, No tears for Molly and Roy of the Rovers. These slim volumes (they were all 128 pages long) cost the princely sum of 60 pence and in this case featured the story of how Rovers quest to win the European Cup Winner's Cup gets off to a shaky start when 2 of the Melchester players are injured in a charity friendly played on motorbikes. Really. The book features great Joe 'Charley's War' Colquhoun illustrations throughout.

2). Roy of the Rovers football quiz book (undated, 1978) & Roy of the Rovers football quizbook 1979-80

In his book Comic book Hero Barrie Tomlinson confesses that this book (and it's 1979-80 successor) didn't have the biggest budget in history (and that shows!) but that they looked ok, and in both cases Barrie's skills were able to procure a couple of famous names to pen the introductions. Material from

Tiger and Roy of the Rovers is reprinted throughout the books. A couple of small paperbacks to gladden the heart of any Roy fan.



3). Roy of the Rovers short story collections – Come on, you reds! & The shoot-out!

Tom Tully and (Marcus) Scott Goodall were two extremely prolific scriptwriters and it's perhaps not a surprise to see their talents put to good use in these 2 short story collections. Each volume contains ten stories and for £1.99 you get to "...follow the ups and downs of Roy's red and yellow army, who make up the finest team in European football history. Stars such as 'Rapper' Hardisty, 'Hard Man' Dexter, the Bresden Bull and Rocky junior combine to make exciting reading – and the heart-stopping football characterised by Racey's Rocket".



4). Roy of the Rovers – Eastern Promise & Melchester Magic

In the early 1990s Ravette Books published a series of reprint volumes featuring a selection of material from titles such as Thunderbirds (6 volumes), Stingray (2 volumes), Captain Scarlet (2 volumes), Sonic the comic (4 volumes) and, of course, Roy.

Eastern Promise is a single story which feature an East-West clash of cultures as a 4-way tournament between England (represented by Melchester Rovers), the USA, Japan and Korea, they all come together for a world youth cup (as Japan have just failed to qualify for Italia 90). Robot strikers (!), dodgy pitches, spies and some rather mature looking 'youth' players are not enough to stop the Melchester next generation from eventually lifting the trophy. Melchester Magic, on the other hand, is a selection of 6 stories and gives a selection of artists (good and bad!) from amongst the many to have illustrated Roy's adventures.

5). Roy of the Rovers – The playing years

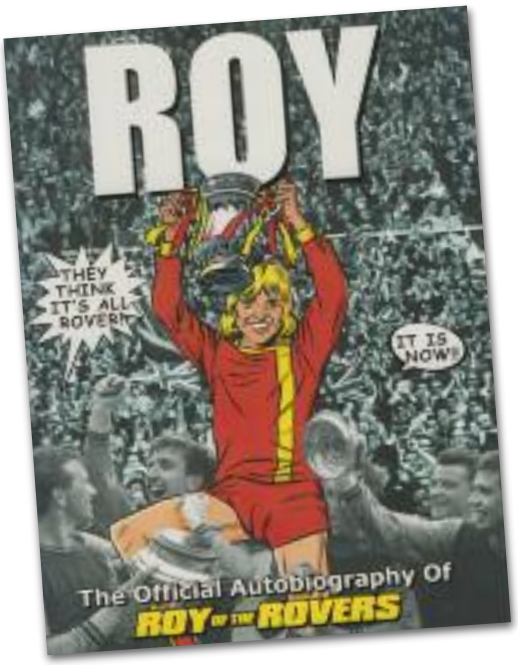
This large hardback volume published in 1994 is a 200+ page volume that, due to its high quality contents still commands a premium amongst collectors. The format of the book is a season-by-season review of Roy's exploits. You get a one page recap of the season with details of how Rovers had performed in the key matches that had defined the season (i.e. had featured in the pages of the comic).

So, not only is it a great work of reference (if you want to know how Rovers got on in every cup competition from the '50s to the '90s this is definitely the book for you), but you also get a few pages of art for each of those years.

6). Roy – The (auto)biographical years

With no new Roy material being published, publishers Aurum turned instead to the burgeoning nostalgia market for the next volume associated with Roy. Journalist Mick Collins is drafted in to talk to the editors, illustrators and creatives who brought Roy to life. The blurb promises to reveal how Roy's life was influenced by both the looks of Cliff Richard and the assassination of JR Ewing – and how did Sir Alf Ramsey come to manage Melchester Rovers? All these questions and more are answered inside this book which neatly combines a chronological history of Roys's exploits with behind the scenes chat. A good combination all in all.

That's more than can be said, sadly, for Roy's official autobiography. Ghosted by Eddie Grant this is Roy's autobiography 'told' by the great man himself. I found



this to be quite a dull, self-indulgent read with little to recommend it. But what do I know, eh? The reviews that found their way onto the paperback version are, unsurprisingly, slightly more positive. A mixed bag then.

This is the cover for the hardback version of Roy's autobiography. The eulogies on the back page are from some high profile writers making big claims (Nick Hornby says "...something that PG Wodehouse would have been happy to put his name to", Robert Harris "...a masterpiece of comic writing in the tradition of Molesworth, Diary of a nobody and 1066 and all that") that don't chime at all with my memory of this book. Interestingly this version of the book is credited as "...with Giles Smith" whereas in the hardback version credit goes to Eddie Grant.

So there you have it people an introduction to the world of Roy of the Rovers volumes that should be sitting on your shelves right now.



Author: Richard Sheaf
Twitter: @richandsheaf
Website: boysadventurecomics.blogspot.co.uk/

MILLSVERSE BOOKS

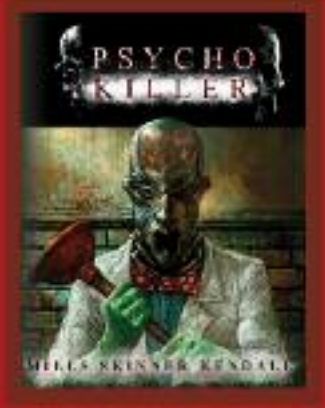
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The Last Word

with Pat Mills



"... What happens to characters like Slaine?..."

SHOULD COMIC CHARACTERS DIE WITH THEIR CREATORS?

When I brought back Frank Hampson's Dan Dare in 2000AD it turned out to be the right decision commercially. The story, whatever its faults, was very popular with readers. But I realised later that, ethically, I was wrong. This is a subject I pursue in my novel Goodnight, John-Boy, where my three central editorial characters – basically three shards of my own personality - argue bitterly about bringing back a similar series: Dan Darwin and the Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle. SF purist Joy says it's morally wrong to revive Dan, but Dave and Greg are tempted by its huge potential appeal that could make all the difference to their new 1977 comic Space Warp.

So this opens up the subject of whether comic characters like Dan Dare should end when their creators part company with them. It obviously doesn't apply to 'house characters', like the Judge Dredd universe with its myriad writers and artists where I assume everyone is happy enough with the current arrangements. But what happens to non-house characters like Slaine, ABC Warriors and more when we creators re-tire/move on to new projects/ fall under a bus/go ga ga? This must be on fans' minds and perhaps editors, too.

In France, it's simple enough. Creators will sometimes hand on the reins to their approved successors, knowing that on every subsequent story, written and drawn by a new creative team, they will receive a fair percentage in royalties. There's also the example of Asterix. Artist-creator and latter-day writer Uderzo recently sold the rights to publishers Hachette who commissioned a new writer and artist to produce new Asterix books with eye watering sales figures.



Asterix, of course, is in a stratospheric league of its own. But our British industry shows no sign of paying the creators when others take over their characters. Instead, they seem happy enough to let the stories die. Hence Halo Jones ended when Alan Moore stopped writing it. Indeed, it would be a foolhardy writer and artist who would attempt to continue Halo Jones without Alan and artist Ian Gibson. Slaine, ABC Warriors and Ro-Busters have equally distinctive creative signatures, so it's reasonable to assume they, too, will be allowed to end when I stop writing them.

Not least because fans know just how strongly we feel about our creations. It's no longer a legal issue of who signed away their rights to a publisher; it's now widely seen as a moral issue. It's clearly immoral not to remunerate a creator for his story in whatever subsequent form it takes. End of.

So today it would be a very bullish editor who would commission some hungry hack to cross that fan picket line and revive the ABC Warriors or Slaine. And today's older, more sophisticated audience won't readily accept 'reimagined', 'homage', 'reboot' , 'special anniversary tribute', spin-off series or any other questionable excuses for getting around a creator's express wishes that their story died with them. I think that goes for American fans, too, where whatever extra bucks DC picked up from Watchmen 'spin-offs' by other writers and artists it must have been negated by their loss of street cred.

Of course it's sad when a character you love dies. And there are, albeit rarely, writers who can successfully reboot the original. Frank Miller on Dark Knight and Alan Moore on Swamp Thing. But, for the most part, it's best to leave well alone. Putting films to one side, (a whole other ball game), Conan after Howard, Bond after Fleming and Sherlock Holmes after Doyle don't really cut it. The same applies equally to comics. Rogue Trooper and VCs after Finley-Day are just not in the same league. Or imagine Faceache written and drawn by anyone other than Ken Reid? Ken also created the even darker Frankie Stein cartoon strip. I was the main writer on Frankie, when it was subsequently drawn by Bob Nixon, and I actually volunteered to sack myself so Ken could get his character back. This was because his original, rarely-seen Frankie Stein (probably owned by Times Warner now) surpasses Monty Python for insane black comedy and we could not come close to it. My editor said no. Maverick Ken 'needed controlling, needed watching', he told me. The fact it was Ken's creation mattered zilch. This inspired the account in my Serial Killer of the sad story of cartoonist Ken Royce. As in Rolls Royce.

There are other examples where new writers and artists taking over a strip is a mistake. Three years ago, I certainly didn't like the sound of a proposed Slaine-light for the Phoenix aimed at Waitrose readers and, thankfully, neither did they in the end. Ditto when IDW were thinking about ABC Warriors as a back-up strip with no reference to the writer or artists involved. I like to think that didn't fly because Rebellion didn't think it was worth compromising the integrity of the characters just to make a few bucks.

And when writers have taken over my stories, it's always been a disaster. Thus there was a follow up to my Visible Man which Scott Goodall wrote. Rejected by Tharg. There was a follow up to my Flesh scripted by Dennis Hooper. Rejected by Tharg. There was Charley's War in WW2 by Scott Goodall. It stiffed at the box office in record time and killed the entire series. Although I think I was outfoxed there. I believe my managing editor, Gil Page, who was not stupid, guessed it wouldn't be a success, but wanted an excuse to kill the series (this was his second attempt), either to cut me down to size and/or because he disliked its anti-authority message and had his own serpentine way of dealing with it. Editors and publishers sometimes think like that.

But this is why, unless there's an unlikely seismic shift whereby creators are properly remunerated for their work, it is far better that our characters die with us. So readers remember them not with acrimony or disappointment, but with affection. Like the beautiful new edition of Charley's War just out from Rebellion which I'm delighted to say has a white poppy of peace on the front cover.

Don't assume my perspective is a lone one. As I describe in my Secret History of 2000AD and Judge Dredd, 'Be Pure…' my predecessors were actually more militant than any of us. Each generation that followed them has become noticeably and increasingly subservient on the issue of rights. Few creators go public with their criticisms as I have. They often agree in private but decline to be quoted. But, back in the day, Don Lawrence of Trigan Empire fame left to work for Holland where he got a fairer deal. Leo Baxendale, creator of so many fantastic Beano characters, took on the might of D. C. Thomson in open court battle and won. And Frank Hampson had more courage than any of us who followed him. Let me leave you with his fighting words.

When presented by a publisher with a Mekon statue for his Dan Dare he told him, 'I swore I'd get this Mekon by hook or by crook. And I got it. From a crook.'

Shining examples to us all.

#tlw



Goodnight, John-Boy
Read 'em and Weep
A novel by Pat Mills

Author: Pat Mills
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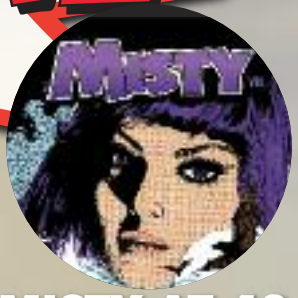
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ISSUE 1

COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine



MISTY AT 40



MINNIE THE MINX



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COMIC SCENE
THE UK Comic Magazine

Laydeez do comics. Our celebration of women in comics, female comic characters and girls comics. A snapshot, indeed. There is so much material and different perspectives we could have filled several issues of ComicScene UK.

We've had people challenging us on using the term laydeez on the cover. It's not our term, it's the name of a group. Laydeez do Comics is a female-led but not female-only unique graphic novel forum that meets monthly in London. They host guests to speak about their work with a focus on comic works based on life narrative, and the everyday. Some of their members are featured in this issue. I'm pleased to say we will hear more from them in future issues.

Putting this magazine together has raised lots of questions with no easy answers, but with a backdrop of magazines like 2000AD having an all female creative line up and the #metoo movement front page news it seemed timely and worth exploring. We also have more female writers but I can assure you they were chosen for good writing about a subject we thought our readers would be interested in and not their gender.

This is our first monthly issue and we are pleased to be here after a successful launch and great feedback on issue 0. This is like the difficult second album, not because of a lack of ideas but having to decide what content to take out for another day. I hope you'll stick with us and continue to enjoy and learn from the magazine, perhaps picking up a few comics you might not have tried along the way.

We wanted to pat ourselves on the back even more with a couple of pages of your comments and letters. New content and a good read for you came first, so letters will have to wait for a future issue! There is so much we've added another 16 pages this month!

Thanks to everyone who supported the launch issue, writers, designers, printers, those who promoted it, shops who stocked it, people who sold it at comic cons for us and the hundreds of wonderful comments we have received. You are all stars. It's not easy launching a magazine and we need you to keep sharing the good word for our future survival. We will endeavour to keep the quality as high as can and not let you down.

Highlights this issue include 40 years of Misty, 25 years of Vertigo and an interview with Karen Berger, an exclusive chapter from Pat Mills' new book about 'Slaine' focussing on co-creator Angie Kincaid and a title you are not likely to see on a Doctor Who article ever again. Which we think is a good thing, and about time! More about new Who and 80 years of the Beano next issue, out 1st September.

Yours aye,

Tony Foster, Publisher
ComicScene UK



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ComicScene UK Issue 1

October 2018

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WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE BRING BACK BAGLE?



While there are a lot of comic-style titles on the British news stand, the number of cover to cover comic titles, featuring newly commissioned material, is very small today compared with how many such titles were published up until the early 1990s.

Today, titles such as 2000AD, Beano and Commando rub shoulders with a lot more reprint titles, including Panini UK's and Titan's superhero comics, and, by far, most titles are licensed properties, primarily aimed at younger readers and very much a "parent buy".

Needless to say, this doesn't stop many comic fans from clamouring for the return of more comics like 2000AD and Beano on social media, some thinking it's some kind of conspiracy against comics that no-one has done it. While I'd be among the first to support such titles if they arrived in WHSmith, I hope this column explains a little of why the odds are stacked against it happening without being desperately dull - and offers a little optimism, too.

First and foremost, comic fans often forget in their welcome passion for the medium that comics publishing is a business, and a business has to make money to be a success. It's no good simply being a fan of British comics as they used to be published (and there were plenty to choose from, boys and girls titles alike). You can't revive a format like that, despite past success, without some kind of plan, the money behind you to back it up and the logistics in place to support regular publication. All three are integral to success.

Also vital is support from the distributor taking your title on - if they take your title on, because distributors are of necessity cautious about what they'll take on, and that's even before WHSmith have the chance to consider it. Not only do you, the aspiring publisher, have to cost out

your editorial content, printing and marketing costs - you also have to pay a distributor to take on your title and pay WHSmith to stock it... and those costs quickly add up.

Markosia, a leading UK based independent comics publisher, looked at launching their own news stand anthology title a few years back, partly repurposing material it had already published in US comic and graphic novel format. The company's owner, Harry Markos told fans at a Birmingham convention they'd been advised it might cost anything up to £72,000 to have full news stand exposure in the UK marketplace, covering the two separate WHSmith distribution chains and major independent newsagents, too. That's £72,000 on top of paying your writers, artists, editor, designers, promotional team, production staff, and your printer.

(Yes, you have to employ all those people in some way, too, and if you don't have an existing team with experience of publishing comics, you have to recruit them... which is a major investment cost major publishers like TimeUK, now owned by private equity company Epris, the current owners of many a classic British comic character such as Robot Archie, are simply not going to countenance in today's difficult market place for publishers).

That £72,000 launch cost is a pretty staggering sum, which I assume included consumer-focused advertising of the planned new title. As I discovered while editing the ill-fated STRIP Magazine, your distribution costs can be significantly less if you target a smaller number of retailers. Launching that title into WHSmith and other selected newsagents cost around £18 - 20,000. Unfortunately, that also means your "visibility" to potential buyers is also much less, and even with Electronic Point of Sale data, used today by publishers to quickly assess where their titles are selling best, it takes around three issues to get accurate information and react accordingly.

(STRIP never got that far on the news stand, despite reasonable success in comic shops for its first volume, but the reasons why are, perhaps, a story for another day. It still hurts.).

If you think I'm sound overly pessimistic, well, I haven't even touched on what might count against you getting your title past the WHSmith buyers, up against the many other aspiring titles wanting shelf space.

But even though some nine out of ten magazines fail, that doesn't stop publishers trying, and despite the prospective pitfalls, success comes to those who work for it. Overall, there were some 130 magazine launches in 2016, despite the downturn in overall magazine sales. and the outlook is especially positive for specialist products – and that includes children's titles, which saw double-digit circulation growth in 2017.

There are canny publishers out there, too, who are making the most of existing titles and they've built on their audiences, reversing downward trends through a lot of hard work and enthusiasm. Beano Studios has been at the forefront of making their flagship weekly humour title a success, without the need for bagging the comic and sticking a plastic gift on every issue. The Phoenix has quietly built outwards from its subscriber base and is now on sale in more high street newsagents than ever before.

While those may seem small victories, I'm seeing publishers that are a lot more confident about their titles, many benefitting from growing subscriber revenues as they finally get to grips with how to put the web to good use in terms of marketing to potential readers. Digital sales are growing – although they could always grow faster! – which offers another way to make money and keep the lights on.

It's the opportunities reaching readers direct that have been enough to empower Pete Nash, creator of the football strip Striker, to give a comic based on his characters another try, also utilising a strong following, like Phoenix and successfully raising £32,000 for a 12-week initial run of the title, which will include at least three comic strips when it launches later this year.

I'm under no illusion everything is rosy in magazine publishing and I still don't think there's much chance of Eagle or Misty returning anytime soon. But there are some interesting developments in the wind, all of which help publishers make a go of publishing new comic titles a lot more easily and with a lot more confidence than things might have looked five years ago.

• InPublishing is a great resource for general magazine and consumer publishing news
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Marie Duval

Simon Grebban, Roger Sabin and Julian Waite



If Judy magazine is remembered at all today it's likely to be at the home of Ally Sloper, FOM (that's Friend of Man, by the way) But is even Ally Sloper remembered these days? Noted comics historian Denis Gifford thought he was noteworthy enough to name his (short-lived) 1976-7 comic after him, and in more recent times Ally was spotted at the "Comics Unmasked" exhibition at the British Library back in 2014. So, you'd be a brave publisher to take on the task of printing a book not about Ally, not even about Judy but about the forgotten artist who drew hundreds of pages for Judy. That artist is Marie Duval and it is her, and her art that this books seeks to rescue from the historical wilderness.

The website http://www.marieduval.org/ tells us that "...Marie was born Isabelle Émilie de Tessier (London, 1847 – 1890) and was an actress, cartoonist and illustrator who worked under the pseudonyms 'Marie Duval', 'Noir', 'S.A. The Princess Hesse Schwartzbourg', and 'Ambrose Clarke'. Her work first appeared in a variety of the cheap British penny papers and comics of the 1860s – 1880s. An actress as well as a cartoonist, she lived and worked in a London environment of music halls and unlicensed theatres, sensational plays, serials, novels and comic journals. Her drawing style was theatrical, untutored and introduced many techniques that only became common in much later cartooning. Between March 1869 and July 1885, Duval drew hundreds of comic strip pages and vignettes for the magazine Judy or the London serio-comic journal and spin-off compilations, focusing on the humour, attitudes, urbanity and poverty of the types of people she knew. Her masterstroke was the development of the character Ally Sloper, a ne'er-do-well London 'everyman', resulting in dozens of strips that were collected into books. Under her influence, Sloper was to become the comedy icon of his age".

So, Marie was a pioneering woman cartoonist who helped develop Ally Sloper, the most popular character of Victorian comics – how then did she come to disappear so completely from view? These are hard questions to answer and the paper trail that Marie managed to leave behind (before her death at the age of 43 – a young age to use but this was at a time when female life expectancy was only 48) is insufficient to build up enough of a full picture of her life. In fact, there is not even an image of Marie that is known.

So, while the book is light on biographical details it is full of examples of her art (the book is nearly 150 pages long). Hundreds of examples of her art can also be found on http://www.marieduval.org/ and it's comic art that is very different, eve alien, to modern comic audiences. Unlike her artistic contemporaries Marie (as a result of the pre-

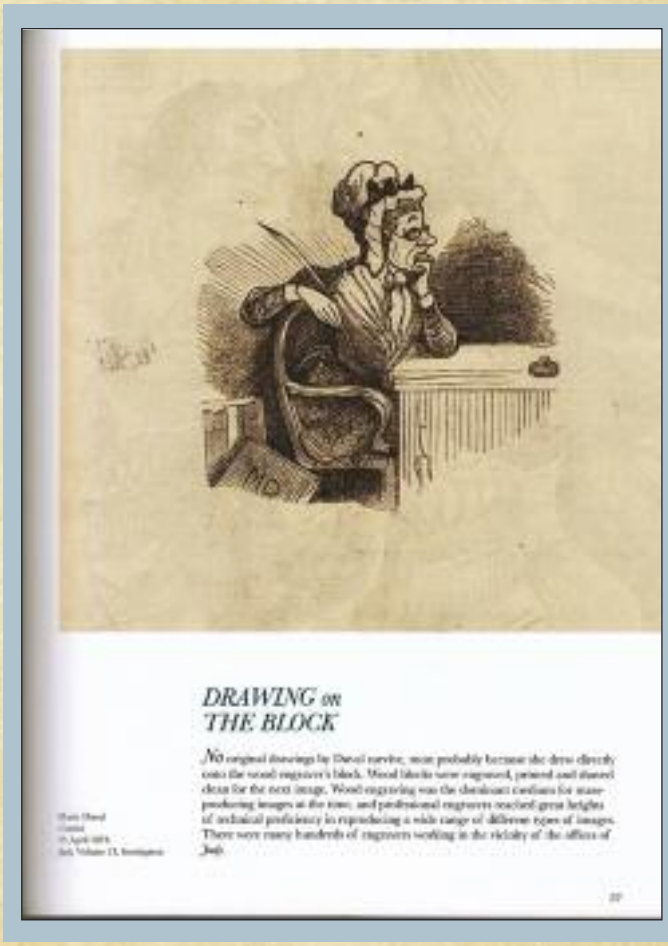
vailing social conditions of the day) was untrained and a result her art can be even more strange and esoteric than might be expected. Her characters are often grotesque figures who occupy a world based around the working class, music-hall world she, and they, inhabited.

This book helps us to look back at Victorian comics in a way that hasn't been possible since Denis Gifford's 1976 book 'Victorian Comics'. The difference between the two books is that while Gifford's focussed on material published in the late Victorian (c. 1890-1901) era, he showed comic strips that recognisably look like, well, comic strips, featuring as they do stories told in sequential comic panels with realistic representations of characters inhabiting that world. Marie Duval, on the other hand, was operating in the mid-to-late Victorian era when the 'comic', as we (and indeed Duval's turn of the century contemporaries) would understand as something aimed at children was not yet in place; instead Judy was aimed at adults. Judy is filled with a combination of Duval's spot illustrations (sometime ingeniously initialled, like in the image below) and pages which show the, perhaps moralising, tale moving from one numbered picture to another within the same page. As the 'story' is not aimed at children there is no need, no attempt even, to simplify, to use verse, to use 'normal' depictions of characters unless required. These were all techniques that would start to become adopted only once the move to more child-friendly comics began.

The book provides a representative selection of Duval's art across a number of thematic areas such as "theatre and music hall", "at the art galleries", "sporting life" and "ong continong". While this last title sounds particularly mystifying it in fact represents the vernacular English pronunciation of the French words en continent or 'on the mainland' (of Europe). It's scholarly moments like this that help to bring the book to life, without them it's just a lot of slightly strange sepia-toned images and their associated accompanying dense Victorian text. It's not a book that, excuse the pun, draws you in – the art, for me, wasn't engaging enough, I could appreciate its strangeness, its uniqueness, and it was probably more appealing than most books on Duval's contemporaries would be to me, but we're just so very far away from being the sort of readers of Judy that were so used to consuming this sort of material. That said, it's great to see such a pioneering (and unjustly) forgotten creator of British comics getting this long overdue recognition. The back of the book highlights the academic institutions who have come together to publish a book like this (that most mainstream publishers would run a mile from) because without such commitment the comics world would be a lot worse off.

So here's to comic scholars Grebban, Sabin and Waite who have helped, not only, to restore Marie Duval to her well-deserved place at the top table of British comics pioneers; ensured that her work lives on for many years to come; and also that she is recognised for the work in the creation of Ally Sloper – the comics titan of his age.





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PROFESSOR JOCELYN MABEL PEABODY

MAYBE it was all Fay Wray's fault. The screaming blonde bombshell who needs saving was (is?) a pervasive sci-fi archetype. So, the presence of just such a character in the Dan Dare strip might have been expected. But it was not to be. Professor Jocelyn Mable Peabody, along with Hank Hogan and Pierre Lafayette, makes her first appearance in issue 5 of Eagle (dated 12/05/50) as Dan readies a crew of six to make the dangerous journey to Venus in search of food for the starving masses on Earth. "Professor Peabody? Who's he?"says Pierre, "We don't know" says Dan "some old greybeard I suppose – the cabinet are sending him to check the possibilities of growing food on Venus" and then Professor Peabody enters the room to a wail of incredulity "...***Gosh! Jumpin'jets! Sufferin' cats! A woman"*** Sir Hubert Guest immediately gets on the 'phone to the top, top brass who tell him that it's a direct order from the cabinet and she has to go on the expedition, he storms out on the room with the parting shot "Women! Pah!"

Just one episode later she's proving her worth to Sir Hubert by piloting their pocket rocket ship and a dozen issues later Sir Hubert is forced to admit "...you're a very brave woman, Miss Peabody". And so the scene is set for the internationalist and egalitarian view of the future that permeated Frank Hampson's worldview.

According to Dan Dare's spacebook (1953) Professor Jocelyn Mabel Peabody is an expert on nutrition, agriculture and botany. Attached to Venus



From Dan Dare's spacebook (1953)

Miss Peabody ruthlessly uses the power of science to put down an uprising

Jocelyn explains the basis for understanding the Mercurian language

Jocelyn debuts in Eagle #5 (12 May 1950)

expedition in search [for] food in 1996 and since appointed permanent special adviser to Fleet exploration and research department with honorary rank of pilot/captain. Born in Moreton, Gloucestershire, hobbies: skiing, riding, netball.

The extremely rare Wallis Rigby of Dan Dare spaceship gives a more detailed (albeit slightly different in some respects) picture of her background...A brilliant Research Biologist who was born in Southport in 1971. She was seconded to the Research and Exploration branch of the Interplanet Space Fleet in 1993, and holds the Honorary rank of Pilot-Major. She is the author of many books on Interplanetary Flora and Fauna, and was largely responsible for planning the import of Venusian foodstuff to the Earth. When 'off duty', Jocelyn Peabody's greatest delight is to spend as much as time as possible at the great new Interplanetary Zoo on the Isle of Wight. Even the most savage Venusian reptiles behave like affectionate pets under her inspired care. This Zoo, which is one of the wonders of the Universe, was the culmination of a long term zoological plan which had obsessed the Professor since her student days. She accompanied Colonel Dare on the first dangerous freight transport expedition to bring back some of the larger animals from Venus [see Eagle annual 4], and was also responsible for their housing and the wonderful system of airlocks and pressure chambers which enabled the animals to live as comfortably on Earth as they did in their native habitat. One of her most important contributions to this and other Interplanetary Zoos, was a system of artificial gravitation which simulated the varying gravitational conditions on all Planets, so that the muscles of the animals were attuned to their new habitat immediately on capture. Subsequently, her great talents were of inestimable service on other Planets. Her hobbies include skiing, riding, netball.

In order to achieve greater authenticity Frank Hampson famously used to photograph members of his artistic studio posing as members of the strip. Professor Peabody was modelled on studio member Greta Tomlinson (and named after another studio member, Jocelyn Thomas). Professor Peabody is very much the brains of the outfit compared to the alpha males that inhabit the rest of the Interplanet Space Fleet. She uses her brainpower (rather than her lungpower) to most notable effect in two strips. In The Red Moon mystery (the 2nd Dan Dare adventure) it's Peabody who realises how the murderous moon is travelling through space, why's it attacking planets and that "all" that needs to be done to deflect the moon is by, as she says, "...trailing another, tastier planet in front of it" – of course, this is easier said than done, but the resulting destruction of the Red Moon sends our heroes into their next adventure. In Marooned on Mercury (the 3rd Dan Dare adventure) she learns the Mercurian language and uses this skill to befriend the natives and, ultimately, overthrow the Mekon.

These early adventures represented the high-water mark of Professor Peabody's involvement in the series. She continues to appear in stories like Operation Saturn and Prisoners of Space but is absent for the first 2/3rds of the 'Man from Nowhere' trilogy of strips that represent the Dan Dare strip at its pinnacle. In her place we got Commander Lex O'Malley (with his submarine – and new ways to have adventures) and children (a few of them in Prisoners of Space with Flamer Spry becoming a more permanent addition to the team – plus, presumably, a boost to the link that readers felt to the strip with a young lad joining in all the fun).

From the very start of the strip she is portrayed far differently to many sci-fi scientists – she's female, she's definitely not 'some old greybeard' that Dan had anticipated, instead she process herself to be brave, resourceful, intelligent and proud to take her place in a (space)man's world. Like the rest of the figures in the strip she shows her emotional side but this is used to make her character more real, more believable.

The current drive to get more women to study the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects shows just how much we need the modern Professor Peabody's to be developed and to take their place alongside their male counterparts. Only with these initiatives are we ever likely to see not just a lone woman in space, as she was, but women in space – that should be her legacy to all of us.

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The Rise of Female Comic Book Fans



UNHIDDEN GENDERS

Back in the eighties, when it was the only comic convention taking place in the British Isles, the United Kingdom Comic Art Convention (UKCAC for short) was the must attend event for comics fans. A memorable feature of the show was the annual booklet that not only showcased some fine exclusive artwork from some of the greatest names in British comics but also featured a roll-call of attendees, or at least those who had secured a ticket before the booklet was sent to print. Looking at those attendee lists today is a fascinating snapshot into the past, with names of well known fans of the time (some who are sadly no longer with us) and fans who are now popular creators themselves. Tellingly though, if you look past the nostalgia there's something else that jumps out: the fans attending UKCAC were almost all male.

In recent years there's been much media time given to the disparity between men and women in entertainment, politics, the workplace and life in general. Regardless of your own personal thoughts on the issue there seems to be one aspect of our modern society where the gender imbalance is being addressed, and in such a subtle way that it doesn't seem to have been widely noticed or commented upon - the world of British indie comics, and the people that create and enjoy them.

Unless you're an insular sort you couldn't have failed to notice that over the last decade or so there's been an explosion of comic conventions and similar fan-themed events taking place across the country. Considering the days of UKCAC we've gone from famine to feast, although it could be said some are more gorging themselves on endless copycat bargain buckets than discerningly fine dining! But the plethora of comic cons (putting opinions of what a real comic con is to one side) has had one hugely positive impact – there are now more female fans and creators than ever before attending events as readers and creators.

Don't believe me? Then head to the annual Thought Bubble in Leeds or the sizeable Comic Villages that are now a key part of every multimedia MCM Comic Con event, and you'll find (quite literally) row after row of female creators behind the tables, and enthusiastic fans of all genders in front of them. Smaller independent comic centric shows in Nottingham, Cardiff, Oldham and Leamington Spa are also fine examples of how the sun has very definitely set on the days of the comic convention being very much a boy's club.

This positive shift in demographics seems at odds with the general perception that British comics are a struggling Limp-Along Leslie, no longer as readily available and accessible as they were once considered to be. But it's the rise of the multi-media "Comic Con" that sideline comics content in favour of celebrity photos and fan made props that are in part helping to create a gen-





> There are now more female fans and creators than ever before attending events as readers and creators

uinely diverse comics community by providing an inclusive environment where attendees can discover something new, even if ironically that discovery is the very comics that were what a comic conventions were traditionally all about in the first place.

Comics fan Samantha Reader readily admits that she started going to comic cons purely to pick up merchandise relating to the films and TV shows she was watching, but also reveals that led to her own epiphany. "I walked around the artist alley and realised that there was a whole world that I was missing and started to get interested in comics. Now, after going to cons, I know there's a whole wonderful world out there of independent publishers."

Sam recognises too that there's still a way to go to fully overcome the notion that comics are a male dominated genre, but that change is being driven at the grass-roots level. "I think there are a lot of independent publishers that are giving females a chance to create comics and that is forcing the larger publishers to be more open minded," Sam says, "and I think it's finally being accepted that women can read comics and create them too!"

One such creator is Katie Whittle of Frisson Comics, who also cites the internet and social media as being a key driver in bringing a broader gender audience to comics. "I think the rise in comic cons and internet has given women a safe space to explore the medium," she suggests.

"I got into comics as a teenager because I'd always wanted to write and draw stories. It was after I attended Thought Bubble for the first time in 2010 that I really decided I wanted to create comics myself as I'd only really seen female creators and enthusiasts online until then." Katie now regularly attends conventions as a creator herself, and her presence behind a table is in turn inspiring the next generation of female creators. This can only be a good thing.

Certainly as both a fan and creator myself, I'm heartened by the abundance of female talent that is coming through and more importantly now filtering through into titles released by the traditional comic publishing big guns. Gender should be irrelevant in comics (as it should be everywhere else) but the first step to true irrelevancy is always equality. In that regard the number of women visibly engaged with the medium of comics continues to trend upwards, leaving other mediums in its wake.

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VERTIGO AT 25

BERGER'S BRITISH INVASION



Artwork by Charlie Gillespie

It's 25 years since the birth of "Vertigo", an imprint that developed from a little enclave in a corner of DC publishing that was shepherded by DC editor Karen Berger.

Berger's career at DC began as an assistant to Paul Levitz, then an editor at DC. Berger had no interest in superhero comics, but she had been given "House of Mystery", "Legion of Superheroes" (which arguably was more science fiction than superhero) and "Amethyst". Moore was already well established on "Swamp Thing" when Berger took over the editorial reins. Toward the end of Moore's run the book gained a "suggested for Mature Readers" tag, which was the focus of much criticism from Moore and Frank Miller. Nonetheless, the success of the approach of Moore's "Swamp Thing" meant that there was scope for an expansion and to replicate that approach with other titles within the DC line.

Moore had been spotted by DC editorial staff on a talent search to the UK. It stood to reason that there was more to come from over the pond. Regular visits to the UK from DC editorial staff, including Berger and her assistants Art Young and Tom Peyer yielded a British Bullpen of writers with, if not a similar sensibility to Moore, a different approach from most writers working in US comics. The UK titles "2000AD" & "Warrior" acted as shop windows for the DC recruitment drive.

The resultant books were character and story orientated, less action focussed. The "Mature readers" tag and painted covers became an unofficial unifying trade dress for the "Berger Books".

First to launch was "Hellblazer" starring Swamp Thing supporting cast member John Constantine. Written by Jamie Delano, "Captain Britain" scribe and associate of Alan Moore and drawn by the great John Ridgway. Delano fleshed out his character making him more complex than the east end chancer that had introduced Alec Holland to his true place in the world.

Early issues of "Hellblazer" are classic horror. Ridgway's art is genuinely disturbing and it's a far cry from the version of the character that DC is pedalling now. Ending at issue 300 "Hellblazer" became the longest running "Vertigo" title, and is a who's who of top writers. It was here that Garth Ennis made his US debut before he went on to bigger things within Vertigo with "Preacher". Other UK Alumni include Mike Carey, Paul Jenkins and Peter Milligan.

"Hellblazer" is the exception to the rule for the rest of the proto Vertigo titles. Berger took the approach of inviting writers to submit proposals for existing DC properties, this led to a number of revivals of characters and concepts that had lain fallow for many years.

Berger and co' hired then unknown writer Neil Gaiman and aspiring comic artist Dave McKean to revive the obscure "Black Orchid", a three issue prestige format series was a kind of a tour of the plant based end of the DC universe, special appearances by Poison Ivy, Jason Woodrue and Swamp Thing:

In the "Books of Magic" Gaiman with John Bolton, Scott Hampton, Charles Vess (and ghost artist John Ridgway) and Paul Johnson, tell a four issue tale introducing a young Tim Hunter, destined to be the most powerful mage in the world, to the supernatural corners and fringes of the DC Universe.

Gaiman's greatest success was the "Sandman" edited by Berger from beginning to end. Gaiman took the name from a 1930s DC vigilante and later used by Jack Kirby in the 70s and set a tale all in dreams with allusions to classic mythology and literature and created a new world for the embodiment of dream Morpheus.

"Sandman" was the first DC series to end once its writer had finished his tale, all 75 issues of it, but not before creating a number of properties that in some cases had become almost as popular as the main character, including his sister "Death" who looked more like a 21 year old Goth fan than the Grim Reaper. Such was the success that Gaiman returned to the character in a prequel mini series, and a series of Sandman associated books are scheduled to launch this year.

Grant Morrison chose an obscure hero created in the 60s "Buddy Baker: Animal Man". Eschewing the dark and gritty approach favoured at the time, he took the route of making Buddy an average joe, with a wife, two kids and two careers : a stuntman and a struggling superhero. Morrison used the 26 issue run to comment on animal rights and the creative process. Chas Truog's unsophisticated art belied the complex issues found within the series, and this was before Morrison got really weird.

Berger made the occasional foray deep into the DC universe. The most prominent example would be the Morrison and McKean creation "Arkham Asylum : A Serious House On A Serious Earth" a groundbreaking Batman graphic novel, heavy on the symbolism it suggests that Batman is the one person missing from the asylum. Not your traditional batman tale.

Morrison then took on "Doom Patrol". Outgoing writer Paul Kupperberg butchered his cast, leaving Morrison with a clean sheet to rebuild and reconfigure the team and the book's cast initially edited by Mark Waid, the book soon became the responsibility of Berger protégé Art Young. Morrison ramped up the weirdness and surrealism, peppering the strip with references to philosophical and art movements, but he also dealt with issues of gender, identity and mental illness. Morrison went onto revive "Kid Eternity" with Duncan Fegredo and the groundbreaking series "The Invisibles", and helped revamp "Swamp Thing" with Mark Millar after the series lost its way.

Shade The Changing Man" sprung from Steve Ditko's imagination during his short stint at DC in the 70s. Rescued from limbo by Peter Milligan, Shade is an alien that arrived on Earth and inhabited the body of murderer Troy Grenzer. Milligan used Shade and supporting cast, acid tongued Lenny and love interest Kathy, to comment on gender identity, themes that he later returned to in the classic "Enigma" drawn by Duncan Fegredo. Milligan would go onto work on a Vertigo relaunch of "The Human Target".

Berger's stable of books had proven to be cult if not huge sellers, but they were clearly successful enough for DC to allow her to draw some of these quite disparate books under one imprint, their cursory connection to the wider DC universe had by now been completely ignored. Although "mature readers" comics were not a new concept, Vertigo's sensibilities and the British writers that Berger recruited laid the foundations for the work that the revamped Image, IDW's Black Crown, and the new imprint at Dark Horse "Berger Books", look to capitalise on.



Artwork by Charlie Gillespie



Author: Luke Williams
Twitter: @lukeyspooksss
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The Karen Berger Interview



Beginning her career at DC working with Joe Orlando, Karen Berger made her name founding DC's mature readers imprint Vertigo in 1993. Leaving there in 2012, most recently she has returned to editing comics, heading up Berger Books at Dark Horse since last year. Here she talks to Joel Meadows about her legacy at Vertigo plus what else we can expect to see from Berger Books over the next few months…

Q: What was the genesis of Berger Books?

KB: I'd been looking to get back into comics after leaving Vertigo at the end of 2012/ early 2013 and I had done some consulting editing. But I really missed comics. I had gone back doing Surgeon X at Image, which was dipping my toes in again. It was honestly after the election in the country I realised I needed to focus my energies mostly in a more creative place. So I had talked earlier on when I had left Vertigo about setting up an imprint with several book publishers. But ultimately although people were interested, it was not really the best fit for me. So when looking at the comics landscape and publishers out there, Dark Horse to me just rose above the crowd in terms of their history, publishing amazing creator-owned material and the quality of their production values particularly in terms of their collections. They're also a company of great integrity, great innovation, progressive thinkers. So I basically contacted Mike Richardson who I really only knew in passing before and we had a really nice conversation and we worked out a deal. Mike has been terrific. He's been exceptionally supportive with me doing essentially whatever I want to do and the people at Dark Horse are a top notch company so I'm really really happy to be here.

Q: How much carte blanche do you have with Berger Books?

KB: I have the freedom to work with whoever I want to and do whatever I want to. Clearly Mike is a publisher, like he doesn't have any say in it (laughs) but he's been very happy with what I've brought in and the direction that the line is going in and that's basically it. I'm not on staff, I don't work in the office. I'm set up very much as a separate imprint the same way that happens in book publishing, when people have their separate imprints.

Q: You were in charge at Vertigo a long time. What were the highlights for you at that imprint?

KB: I founded Vertigo so I guess that was a highlight. Founding the imprint and putting it together with the creators and coming up with a publishing plan and a direction for the line as I saw it to be which was always a line where creators could have a home to tell their original stories and have an ownership stake and more of a financial stake in their work. This wasn't something that was happening in the comicbook industry at the time. Epic under Archie Goodwin had an arrangement like that which was wonderful but Epic was not around for very long and in mainstream comics it was just basically Marvel and DC.

Q: What has been Vertigo's greatest legacy?

KB: I don't think there's just one thing, I think there's a couple of things but I guess creatively is the fact that Vertigo changed the game in comic storytelling. It is the writers and the artists who helped me start the line like Jamie Delano, Neil Gaiman, Peter Milligan, Grant Morrison. Garth Ennis followed a few years later, as did Brian K Vaughan, Brian Azzarello. It's a very very long list. Mark Millar is even in there. It also changed the game in terms of the importance of the writer in comics.

Q: Berger Books has been around since last year now and so has your vision for it crystallised or evolved now you have a number of books out on the stands?

KB: If you work in the creative industry, you are working on a number of different series, and the line is not about me. It may have my name on it but it's about the writers and artists and their work and the stories that they're telling. Obviously I am attracted to certain types of stories and I think people can see that by the kind of work that I've edited over the years and the kind of work I am editing at Berger Books. I like to work on stories that go against the grain of what even today one would expect to read in comics. I wasn't a comic fan growing up and I still consider myself to be an outsider which I think is a great thing. It keeps you fresh, it keeps you honest and that has been a good thing for me.



Berger has edited many series which have been groundbreaking over the years and here are just 10 projects she has put her mark on over the years

Swamp Thing (DC)



Introducing Alan Moore to the world of US comics, Berger made her name editing classic Swamp Thing stories by Moore, Bissette and Toteleben like The Anatomy Lesson, Growth Patterns and The End



Hellblazer (DC)

Spinning out of Swamp Thing, Berger worked with another British writer Jamie Delano, who fleshed out Moore's magic spiv, turning John Constantine into so much more than what we saw when he was first introduced in Swamp Thing 37.

Shade The Changing Man (DC)



Peter Milligan took Steve Ditko's oddball character and made him his own and editor Berger gave him the flexibility to do this.

The Sandman (DC/ Vertigo)



The series that launched the career of future fantasy superstar Neil Gaiman, Berger was part of the reason that this book became a mainstay in the bestseller charts for many years.

Invisibles (Vertigo)



Just like with Gaiman, Delano and Moore, Berger brought Scottish visionary Grant Morrison to people's attention.

Surgeon X (Image Comics)



After Vertigo, Berger shepherded this miniseries from Image, acting as a consulting editor on what sadly would be artist John Watkiss' final project.

Hungry Ghosts (Berger Books/ Dark Horse)



Anthony Bourdain and Joel Rose's horror anthology was an impressive addition to Berger Books, assisted by some talented artists like Alberto Ponticelli, Mateus Santolouco and Leonardo Manco, returning in a way to the horror anthologies she cut her teeth on DC back in the early 1980s.

Author: Joel Meadows
Twitter: @joelmeadows1
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I've wanted to write this story for as long as I've been a writer, so this series is very special to me in that way," says Emma Beeby, "but I hope the story and this telling also has something to say about now, the parallels with the #MeToo movement in particular feel timely." She's talking about Mata Hari, her five-issue mini-series which debuted earlier this year from Vertigo founder Karen Berger's Berger Books imprint at Dark Horse, which tells the real-life tale of the title character, a young exotic dancer who was executed as a spy during the First World War.

With artist Ariela Kristantina and colourist Pat Masioni, Edinburgh-based Beeby – a 2000AD regular who made headlines when she became the first woman to write Judge Dredd – has brought a labour of love to life. "She was an ordinary Dutch girl who a century ago became famous as one of the world's first 'exotic' nude dancers," she explains of her story's character. "She was adored as a star by the rich and powerful across Europe, but she's best known for becoming a spy in World War One and being executed by the French as a double agent allegedly responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths.

"There's another, less well-known story beneath that about grief and survival," Beeby continues, "which casts a different light on the supposed femme fatale. This book is trying to show both sides, letting the reader decide how to judge her. The thing about Mata Hari's story is how much it brings out people's judgemental tendencies. She goes through these awful things, but often it seems hard to sympathise with her, because of the kind of life she lived. I think it makes us confront a few uncomfortable truths in how we still see and judge women even now, one hundred years on from her death.

Kristantina is originally from Indonesia, where she became well-established as a comic artist, before moving to America to study her MFA at Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA, and picking up work for Marvel and Boom! Studios. By coincidence, her home country is also the country which Mata Hari (born Margaretha Zelle in 1876) claimed royal descent from.

"Emma's done extensive research on the character," says the artist. "Her story is about surviving in that century as a human being in general and as a woman, in particular. It's also interesting to see that women in this century are still fighting some of the issues Mata Hari was fighting in the 1900s; the story is special to me personally because it highlights her struggles as a woman and how hard she fought for herself. She's been presented mostly as this one dimensional character, so I see this project as an opportunity to bring light to different aspects of her life.

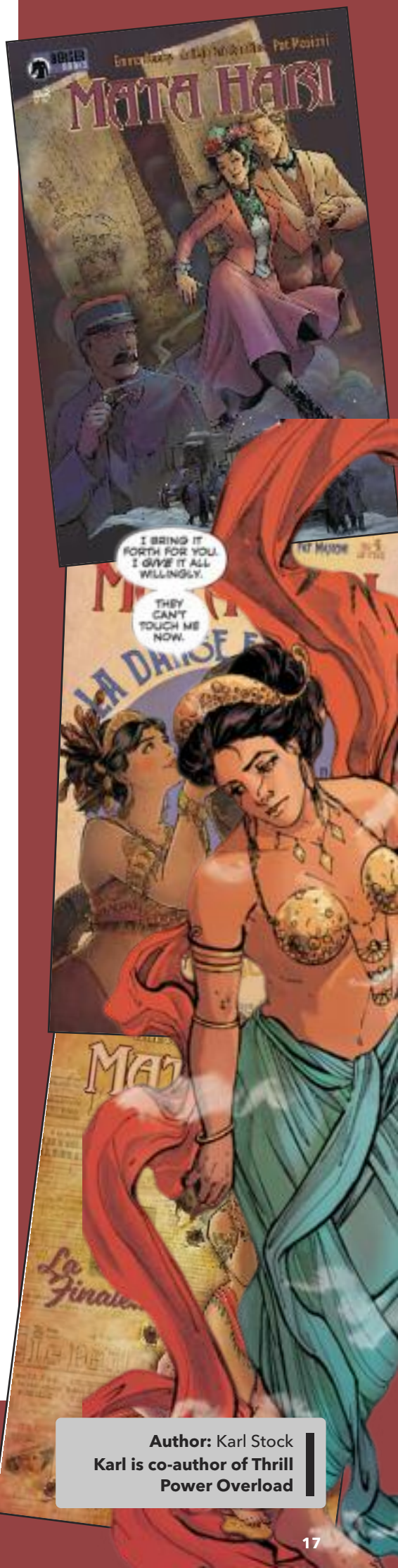
Both creators are well aware of the significance of Berger being their editor. "Vertigo was my gateway drug into comics, since I first read Sandman, so Karen loomed large for me," says Beeby. "To get an email from her asking if I wanted to pitch for her new imprint was pretty incredible. I'd been thinking about Mata Hari for years, and never pitched it as I couldn't see an obvious home for it, but I'm glad I waited as it's ended up in the best possible place. I love working with Karen, she's a legend for good reason.

The depth of research which has gone into the tale is also one of the selling points, with Beeby consuming biographies, news articles and huge amounts of photo reference as she was writing. "I loved doing the research, especially looking for photos and films, and I've tried to get a handle on the time," she says. "The Great War, Indonesia under colonial rule, Belle Epoque Paris, fashions and social attitudes. I have to understand all this well enough to feel like I'm doing the story justice. I've tried where possible to use the real words spoken and show real places, but of course I took some liberties for simplicity's sake – one example is in #3 where we see her perform at a circus as Lady Godiva, naked on horseback, which didn't really happen then. She did it at a private garden party for a group of lesbian artists and writers, which we still see later, but instead Mata Hari goes as an Amazon, looking very Wonder Woman… I think she'd have enjoyed that just as much."

Kristantina emphasises this drive for accuracy which the whole team bought into. "As an artist, you need to draw an era-specific object from a certain angle and you may not always find enough information, because images aren't available or you can only find blurry or low-res photos, and that's a big challenge. For example, when you're drawing a luxury hotel room in the year 1901 - it's often not enough to only find ONE luxury hotel room photo reference, because it may not have all that you need. I still have to find detailed photos of chairs, doors, cabinets, bed frames, mirror frames and everything else, so I can have the accuracy that I need to tell the story. A period comic relies heavily on the settings and backgrounds, because the artist needs to 'bring' the readers to said that era simply by looking at the panels.

When the five issues of the original run are complete, the intention is to collect them later this year alongside additional making-of content and some of the reference images which were used. "Mata Hari has been very different to anything else I've ever written," says Beeby in the meantime. "It's been fun and challenging to write something which isn't an action spectacular, and it's let me do unusual things with the visuals and structure. As a writer that's very liberating, and it's also been a project which has made me think a lot, and explore myown attitudes.

Mata Hari will be collected later this year by Berger Books/Dark Horse.



Author: Karl Stock
Karl is co-author of Thrill Power Overload



WING TO WING, INTO THE SCENE

A DARING TEAM OF GIRL FLYERS BELONGING TO A TOP SECRET MYSTERY ORGANISATION

When discussing the Supermarionation works of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, it's all too easy to clump the programmes together, as if they aren't individual shows but separate seasons of an ongoing television series. As such, it's just as easy to forget that each TV show was a mass media empire in its own right, and Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons was no exception, sporting an armada of spin-off material, which included numerous comics. Captain Scarlet's earliest mention in the everlasting TV21 came on June the 10th when #125 ran a headline reporting of Captain Black's expedition. However, readers had already been introduced to a key element of Captain Scarlet prior to this in TV21's sister title Lady Penelope – The Angels.

In January 1967, the annual shakeup of Anderson-themed comics saw the then regular adventures of Stingray girl Marina ending and a new strip come roaring into life with #53 of Lady Penelope, now rebranded as The New Lady Penelope (a move that would only last 10 issues before reverting back to its original title). This new story featured the ongoing adventures of a group of female pilots brought together by a mystery leader, communicating solely through radio. This unseen guide gives the group fancy jets, assigns the group several missions with the idea of training them to become the fighter jet team of a forthcoming, secret security organisation. Such is the secrecy surrounding who exactly the Angels are obeying, that the readers themselves were unaware that this new strip was acting not just as an enthralling addition to Lady Penelope, but as a prequel to the next big thing from A.P. Films, soon to be rechristened Century 21. As with a lot of Gerry Anderson comics, who wrote the strips is something of a mystery, though its possible scriptwriting duties might have fallen to the comic's editor, Gillian Allan, wife of TV21 scribe Angus Allan. Unlike the revolving door of artists who worked on TV21, The Angels was brought to life visually solely through artist Jon Davies, who gave the strip a sharp, robust flavour.

Across twelve stories spread throughout 67 issues, The Angels is a finely tuned balance of mystery, action and suspense. At least, its first half is. The strip can be split into two distinct eras – pre-Spectrum and post-Spectrum. The pre-Spectrum era, lasting from issues #53 to #88, is the better of the bunch, mastering a deftly



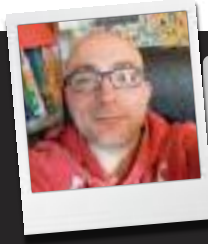
'A FINELY TUNED BALANCE OF MYSTERY, ACTION & SUSPENSE'

crafted balance of mystery and adventure whilst maintain a hooky, full-throttle tone thanks to the one-page instalments. Stories involving outside sources such as the United States Air Force and rogue salvage crew attempting to track down the Angels helped establish a status quo, but the first half peaked between #67-#77, which featured an epic ten-part story featuring the villainous Masterfile commanding his agent Medusa, a kind of anti-Angel, to gain the secrets of their fighter jets. Despite the strips one-page instalments restricting any sense of character development or complex plots, the strip's serialised nature keeps you reading, as the Angels continually, and gleefully, accept their exciting missions whilst still concerned about who the mystery voice could be.

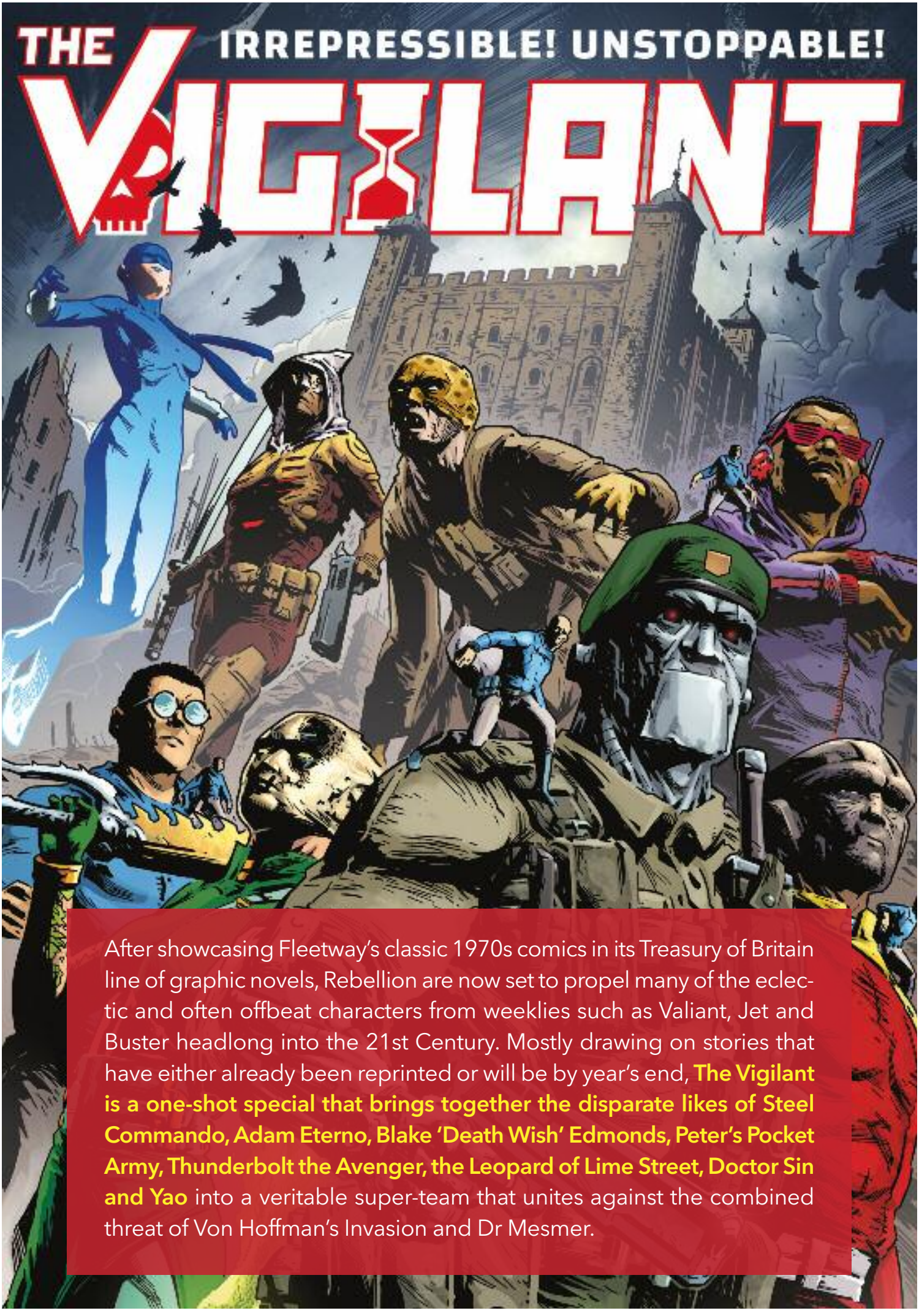
#84 gave both the characters, and the readers, the resolution they were hoping for, as the mystery leader finally reveals himself to be Spectrum's very own Colonel White. However, rather than end the story here, the strip continued, its heroines and readers now fully aware that the high-flying team form part of Spectrum. It's here that the strip would falter in the writing department though, as strips would crumble into an offbeat mixture of mediocrity and oddness.

Stories involving Rhapsody sneaking a kitten on-board Cloudbase, who then proceeds to cause more havoc than any Mysteron agent, is a far cry from the slick spy-fi of earlier adventures. This second half still bore something of a running theme, as other strips featured various family members of the Angels becoming entangled in Mysteron-driven affairs. The strip would still benefit from a facelift, now expanding to two pages. Curiously, the discovery of Colonel White in #84 was published on the same day as #137 of TV21, the first of several issues to run numerous headlines hinting at Spectrum's arrival.

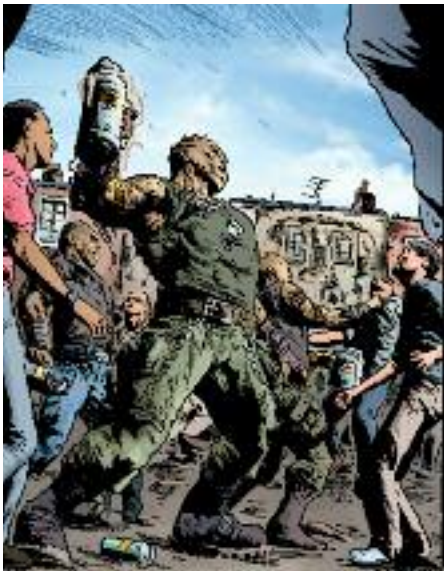
As a strip alone, The Angels is a fascinating artefact of how promotion for Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons was executed, but it's all the more delightful to discover than it's a fun and sometimes thrilling read. Even the later stories, despite their weaknesses, carry an offbeat charm to them. A show as dark as Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons makes the lighter fare of The Angels all the more welcome.



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After showcasing Fleetway's classic 1970s comics in its Treasury of Britain line of graphic novels, Rebellion are now set to propel many of the eclectic and often offbeat characters from weeklies such as Valiant, Jet and Buster headlong into the 21st Century. Mostly drawing on stories that have either already been reprinted or will be by year's end, **The Vigilant is a one-shot special that brings together the disparate likes of Steel Commando, Adam Eterno, Blake 'Death Wish' Edmonds, Peter's Pocket Army, Thunderbolt the Avenger, the Leopard of Lime Street, Doctor Sin and Yao** into a veritable super-team that unites against the combined threat of Von Hoffman's Invasion and Dr Mesmer.





Illustrated by Simon Coleby, it is written by veteran scribe Simon Furman, who actually started out in comics as an assistant editor on Scream! in 1984. "I was very familiar with the original comics, as I was the right age in and around 1970s, to the point where I still had a stash of Lion, Smash, Jet and Valiant comics in storage," recalls Furman, whose work on various Marvel UK titles including Transformers, Death's Head and Dragon's Claws made him a perfect choice for The Vigilant.

"Treasury of Britain editor Keith Richardson wanted some of that visceral OTT action that characterised what I did on books like Dragon's Claws," continues Furman. "He also knew I'd written for Scream! – characters from which are in the overall Vigilant mix – so it was a bonus that I also knew the source material so well."

Along with penning a couple of fill-in arcs of The Dracula File, Furman infamously wrapped up The Terror of the Cats after it was abruptly cancelled by IPC management due to fears that its tale of telepathically controlled felines could have dire consequences for real life moggies. "You never know," he laughs, alluding to the strip's possible return. "But a streak of Scream! influence runs through The Vigilant."

In fact, The Vigilant spins out of Keith 'Feek' Richardson and Henry Flint's Death Man: The Gathering six-pager from last year's Scream and Misty Special in addition to some stories from 2000 AD Free Comic Book Day issues from previous years. "It all lays the groundwork for The Vigilant, which then feeds into the first full Vigilant comic," explains Furman. "It's not essential to have read them to enjoy The Vigilant, but there are seeds of things in those stories that will be picked up on in the future. What the Scream and Misty story does set up is this initial coming together of heroes, to combat a threat greater than any single one of them can handle. So by the time we get to The Vigilant, the team is a functional – and maybe dysfunctional – entity already."

Ranging from immortal time traveller Adam Eterno to racing car driver-turned-daredevil stuntman Blake Edmonds, some of the members couldn't be further apart in terms of character. "Half the fun is that they don't necessarily gel," says Furman. "There's an abrasive edge to both the individual characters and the way they interact. This is not your standard super-team."

With characters like Thunderbolt the Avenger first appearing in Buster in 1965, Adam Eterno and The Steel Commando both making their bow in Thunder in 1970 and Von Hoffman's Invasion beginning in Jet in 1971 before concluding in the pages of Buster the following year - making Death Wish the relative newcomer, having debuted in Speed in 1980 - some subtle updates have been necessary to make the characters more relevant in the present day.

"We've balanced out the team so that it's not all male and all Caucasian, which in some cases meant changing the gender or ethnicity of a character, or introducing a whole new character in case of Yao," says Furman. "But even when a character has changed radically - as with Dr. Sin or Thunderbolt – there's still a link to the original."

Promoted as the foundation of a wider Rebellion-verse, The Vigilant have been described as 'homegrown superheroes,' although they are definitely far less conventional than their better-known American counterparts. "They're certainly all a part of our UK comics heritage and they're also a really oddball bunch that don't easily fit the standard US superhero classification," reasons Furman. "They're uniquely British in that there's very little straightforward or clear cut about the characters. They have that uniquely British stamp."

While it could also be interpreted as a nod to The Valiant, the team's name simply sums up who they are. "They are The Vigilant and they are vigilant," says Furman. "Alert for the big, world-shaking kind of crisis that one hero alone cannot handle. But neither does it hurt that it has echoes of the title of a famous British comic we draw on."

Although a prior knowledge of the original comics will come in handy, Furman insists that any newcomers will also be in for a rewarding read. "There's very definitely two ways to read and enjoy The Vigilant," he suggests. "If you know the source material, then you'll probably get more out of it – simply because you'll recognise the minutiae of what we're referencing. But if you haven't, it won't matter. It's a very self-sufficient comic, which can be enjoyed simply as the first issue in a new superhero universe. To me, one of the main selling points is the sheer Britishness of it, even if The Vigilant's remit is global, and I feel that it will go down well on both sides of the pond."

The Vigilant marks the first time that Furman has collaborated with artist Simon Coleby in almost three decades. "We worked together on a few of the UK black and white Transformers stories around 1989/ 90 such as Aspects of Evil, The Hunting Party and Way of the Warrior," he recalls. "In the meantime, his art has evolved from being simply great to mind-blowing, so he's going to make me look very good!"

Furman also hopes that this isn't the last we see of The Vigilant. "I already have a host of ideas for more stories, utilising other characters from the Fleetway archive," he reveals. "The team is a fluid entity, so the roll-call won't always be the same. It sort of adapts to face the particular threat, so we can always be freshening the cast pot."

Copyright Rebellion.

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Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film, the Megazine and 2000 AD: Ultimate Collection

THE BEAST FROM THE EAST

AS THE COLD WAR FLARES BACK INTO LIFE, SEND FOR THE HEROINE WHO HAS MADE PUNCHING PUTIN A HABIT.

In superhero circles there are outlandish exploits, and then there's Octobriana. Born in the vicinity of Denmark several thousand years ago, granted her powers by radiation, and prone to cycles of sexual aggression and murderous violence so severe that she retires back into a live volcano for a spot of purging and rebirth, Octobriana once took part in the Battle of Stalingrad wearing only a helmet, an approach which might have damaged Wonder Woman's diplomatic credentials.

Or so the story goes. And with this character, the story is flexible. Created by an underground collective of writers and artists in 1960s Kiev, Octobriana was designed to represent the true character of the Russian people chaffing under the rule of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, a tempestuous free spirit with no time for totalitarian control or sexual restraint. Strikingly underdressed, busty, monobrowed, and with the red star of communism tattooed upon her forehead, Octobriana's first published adventures include her fighting a giant mutant walrus, kidnapping Chairman Mao, and masturbating with a large yak horn—a pattern of unlikely encounters, political engagement and strenuous self-pleasure she has pursued enthusiastically ever since. Those stories appeared via a Czech writer named Petr Sadecký, who smuggled fragments of Octobriana strips into the West in the early 1970s and wrote a book called Octobriana And The Russian Revolution. The heroine is intended to be "all passion and emotion" says the author, while hinting at the licentious lifestyle of the radical group that created her and into which Sadecký fell, among them his alluring comrade Lydia who knows 23 different ways to delicately deflower a virgin.

But that's not it either. Sadecký's story started to unravel as soon as it appeared, when Czechoslovakian artists recognised versions of their work in the Octobriana strips, and it emerged that Sadecký had taken their art to a Western publisher without consent, modifying the drawings and removing their names from the work. Firm facts are hard to come by, with Sadecký's motives and intentions impossible to be sure of, the extent of his profit unclear. But by accident or design, he had pushed Octobriana out into the public domain while muddying her creators' rights beyond recovery, her copyright as unrestrained as the character's own urges. From then on, Octobriana was loose.

As mapped out by John Short, author of Octobriana: The Underground History, the character's path has roamed far and wide since then, her appearance and behaviour modified to suit an author's needs. Bryan Talbot was first out of the gate, using Octobriana as a supporting character in The Adventures of Luther Arkwright in 1978, where she asks Luther for sex soon after saying hello. She made another high-profile appearance in 2000AD, inserted into a 1998 Nikolai Dante story by Robbie Morrison and Andy Clark as an erotic dancer-cum-spy, her physiognomy smoothed into something more conventionally fetching. There's a tattoo of her on Billy Idol's left arm, flaunted on the cover of Sweet Sixteen, and you can't get much more mainstream than a song hitting number 17 with a bullet.

But the mainstream is the wrong place for Octobriana, a character born of communist suppression and capitalist enterprise, an avatar of hedonist rebellion not to mention self-reinvention. In fact, she made a beeline for the underground and the California coast as soon as Bryan Talbot was finished with her. In 1992, shortly after Luther Arkwright concluded, underground cartoonist Larry Welz introduced Octobriana to Cherry, the busty star of Welz's own erotic comic, and sent the pair up against the corrupt owners of a nuclear power plant—this just as opposition to the real-life storage of nuclear waste in California surged. Rolling up in a rickety Trabant, Octobriana leads Cherry and her follow environmental protesters against the evil Mutant Bolsheviks From Chernobyl who have infiltrated the Golden State's electricity infrastructure, and eventually replaces the nuclear plant with a geothermal geyser. She then joins her allies in a hardcore victory orgy so physically demanding that she's the only one left standing. Bold, populist, anti-nuclear and omni-sexual; this you feel is the kind of thing Octobriana was born for. "Was most excellent good fun having sex with the group of you," she says. "Now I must be leaving."

Writer John Short has played a large role in Octobriana's recent tales, as one of the creators behind a series of stories published by Revolution Comics, and author of another couple appearing recently from Kult Creations and drawn by Gabrielle Noble. And it's in these that Short pits Octobriana against the current incarnations of those repressive political forces she first emerged to combat in the 1970s. The Birth & Rebirth Of Octobriana, as well as playfully tying several of the wildly incompatible threads of the character's previous adventures into a single timeline, has her face off against a killer robot with a hammer and sickle on its forehead. "Remote controlled by some impotent little squirt," she divines. "Watch your mouth," says the voice of Vladimir Putin, for it is he doing the controlling. Octobriana destroys the robot in a crushing bear hug.

Putin and Octobriana meet in hand-to-hand combat in The New Amazons, with the President of the Russian Federation having bestowed super-strength upon himself with a secret serum—realising too late that it was made from Octobriana's own blood, as female physical characteristics manifest themselves in this most avowedly masculine of politicians. Octobriana shoos him away, emasculated, and then frees the prisoners languishing in Putin's cells: Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, the two members of Pussy Riot who were in prison when the comic was published. Short and Noble's breezy comedy and lithe bodies are a long way from the spotted blacks and scratchy figures of the original stories, but tying Octobriana explicitly to Pussy Riot returns the character to her original role—or the one history provided, after her involuntary birth. It's been a long strange trip back and forth to that volcano, but whenever she's punching Vladimir Putin it seems as if Octobriana has come home.







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THE MINX KNOWN AS MINNIE



Ok, so it's time to own up...

Who else thought that Minnie the Minx was Dennis the Menace's sister?

Anybody?

Well I certainly did. And when I first started reading about the female fury at the tender age of six, it certainly seemed that way to me. After all, there was such a striking similarity between the two of them. I have to admit that I even thought that they might be twins. (This may be because being a twin myself, and knowing the enmity between me and my sibling, it was the obvious thing to think.)

They even dressed the same, with their customary red and black stripy jumper, and with Minnie's trademark black beret covering her fiery red hair, it gave the impression she had a head of bushy black hair just like Dennis. Minnie's cat Chester and Dennis' dog Gnasher are the same colour, so you can forgive me for making the assumption at such a tender age. But where Gnasher would aid and abet Dennis, Chester the cat would simply observe from the side-lines. But their character traits, like their pets were quite different. Whereas Dennis would, forgive me, menace the target in his latest instalment, Minnie was more conniving, a trickster of sorts, and was always up to mischief, though she wasn't scared of rolling up her sleeves in favour of a good scrap when the need called for it. Armed only with her trusty catapult there wasn't anyone that Minnie was scared of taking on.

Minnie was created in 1953 by Leo Baxendale at the suggestion of Beano editor George Moonie after stating that they needed a female Dennis the girl readers could get behind. D.C.Thompson the company that printed the Beano provided the scripts, but Baxendale soon made Minnie his own, imbuing the strip with his own brand of humour. Minnie was introduced to the world as something of a wild child. Baxendale has in the past likened her to an Amazonian warrior, which explains a lot! In her premier strip we find Minnie's mum at her wits end, unable to tame her daughter's wild ways. Trying to find a way to direct Minnie's energies in a more creative direction, she gives her a scrapbook in which she can write and draw.

Minnie being Minnie takes the name "scrapbook" quite literally

and proceeds to wreak holy havoc on her classmates, later thanking and boasting to her mum in the last panel that with the aid of the book as a weapon, she won nine scraps that day!

And with that her character as a Minx was forever sealed.

Starting off as a six panel strip, it wasn't long before her runaway popularity garnered her very own full page strip each week, in full colour to boot. She even crossed over into the hallowed pages of Dennis, with their very first appearance together landing Dennis in hot water while Minnie and her minxing ways got off Scott free. Thus their love/hate relationship was cast.

Hailing from Beanotown it's a foregone conclusion that Minnie would attend the Bash Street School, and having an on/off affiliation to The Bash Street Kids gang, only really getting on with Toots, the only girl in the group. For much of the time, Minnie is something of a loner…not that she needed anyone to aid her in her missions of mischief making!

When Baxendale left D.C. Thompson nine years later in 1962, young artist Jim Petrie took up the mantle of the Minx wrangler, and drew her exclusively until his retirement in 2001, racking up an amazing 40 year run on the same character by drawing some two thousand strips in that period. Only The Bash Street Kids strip, drawn by David Sutherland can boast a longer run of a single artist on one strip.

Tom Paterson and Ken Harrison carried the torch from then until present day, and other than a slight reinterpretation in appearance and supporting character design aside, Minnie the Minx is the same old loveable troublemaker of old, though maybe a little more politically correct in this touchy feely 21st century.

For instance, the usual target for her minxing was a lad known simply as Fatty Fudge… and for obvious reasons once you clap eyes on him. Not very P.C. you must agree. Totally motivated by junk food, Minnie would often use this Achilles heel to take advantage of the large lad, and also use his weakness as a way of making him an accomplice in some of her nefarious deeds. And though just a supporting character, Fatty would go on to star in his own strip for a while. I need not add that his strip was always food related.

Other enemies Minnie has made along the way comprise mainly of her neighbours, as well as Soppy Susan, and let's face it, with a name like that she's bound to end up on Minnie's hit-list. There's also P.C. Thyme who Minnie was often running afoul of.





The loveable troublemaker's statue in Dundee

The popularity of Minnie would see her image translated to other media in her sixty plus year's reign of terror in the Beano. She's popped up as collectible figurines, also appeared in videos; DVD's, plastered on the front of Tee shirts, and even appeared in the computer game Beanotown Racing as a playable character rocketing around on her jet propelled skateboard.

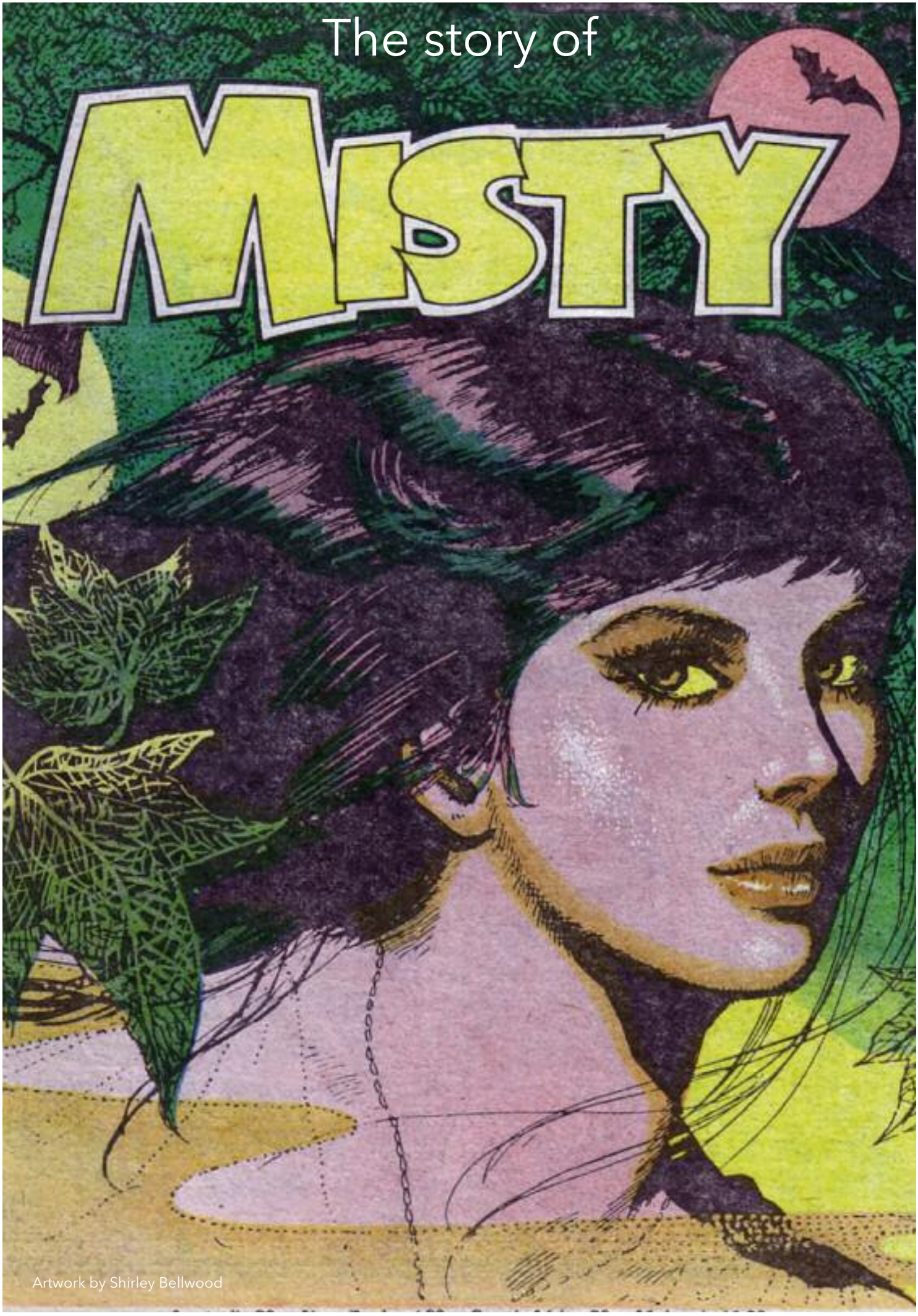
But most famously of all, a statue was erected in 2001 in the city of Dundee, alongside another of Desperate Dan from the Dandy comic. Sculpted by Dundee artists Susie and Tony Morrow, commemorating the characters' association with the city, they were unveiled to the public by local schoolkids, as was only right, and they've been strong tourist attractions ever since.

You don't get much better than that, and it only goes to prove the strength and popularity of characters like Minnie, who you would think in this technologically advanced 21st century of ours, such characters would have long become redundant.

It just goes to prove that everyone loves a bad girl…

Author: Martin Dallard
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Images: ©DC Thomson & Co. Ltd

The story of



Artwork by Shirley Bellwood

A Magical Misty Tour

From creation to revival

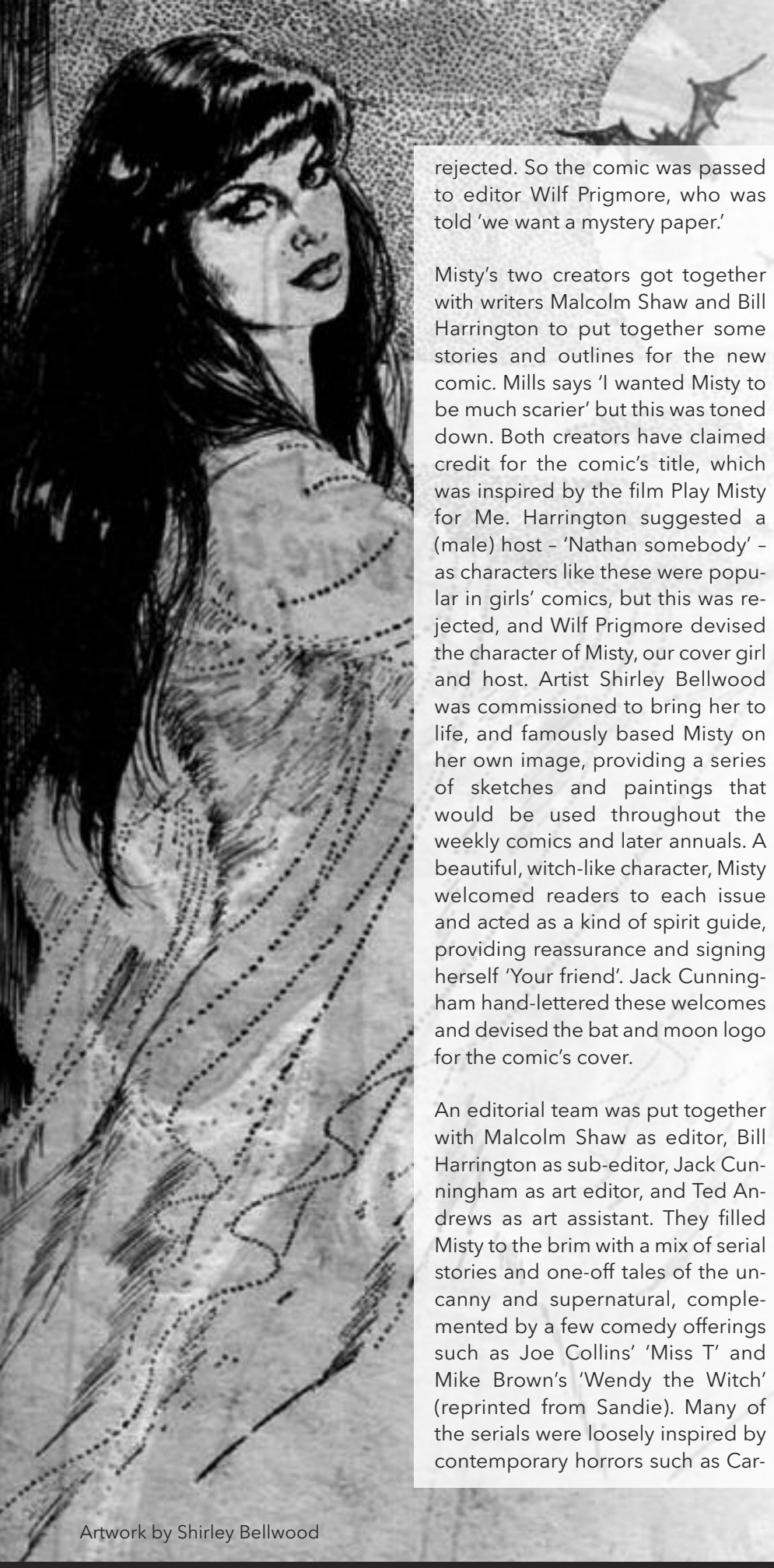
Ghostly possessions, horrific transformations, alien abductions, mysterious cults, dramatic kidnappings, attempted murders, and malevolent traps… Misty had it all. IPC's 'All new mystery comic for girls' burst onto the scene in 1978 and, despite a relatively short run of only 101 issues, is still fondly – and fearfully – remembered today. The story of its creation, demise, and current revival is a winding one through an often neglected period and forgotten demographic of British comics.

Comics for girls had been popular in Britain since after the Second World War, when Amalgamated Press (later renamed as Fleetway and then IPC) revived their text-story paper School Friend as a picture-story comic (1950-65). School Friend and other early titles told rousing stories of adventure and friendship, often within school settings or following career girl protagonists. A 'second wave' of girls' comics appeared in 1958 when DC Thomson launched Bunty (1958-2001): distinct from its sisters with a cheap and cheerful look, outsider protagonists, and appeal to a more working class audience. Bunty was an exceptional comic that would run for over 40 years. It was followed by many imitators and competitors in the late 1950s and 1960s (Judy, Diana, Mandy, Sally), alongside a new wave of romance comics (Marilyn, Valentine, Romeo, Jackie). The back-and-forth between the publishers continued into the 1970s when IPC took the girls' titles to the next level with Tammy (1971-84) and Jinty (1974-81). This 'dark wave' of girls' comics saw some of the most memorable stories of the genre, from writers such as Pat Mills, John Wagner and Gerry Finley-Day, and artists like Mario Capaldi and John Armstrong alongside a wealth of Spanish talent.

In 1976 DC Thomson published Spellbound, packed full of witches, mummies, ghosts and mysteries, alongside lead science fiction feature 'Supercats', revived from the pages of Diana (1963-76). Although popular, Spellbound folded after 69 issues, ending just weeks before IPC launched Misty on 4 February 1978. Work on this comic had begun in 1977 when writer Pat Mills, fresh from success with Tammy, Jinty, Battle, Action and 2000AD, met with execs to pitch his idea for a new girls' comic: 'big visuals and longer, more sophisticated stories with the emphasis on the supernatural and horror.' The idea was approved but Mills wanted a cut of the profits and refused an editorial role when this was



Artwork by Isidre Monés



Artwork by Shirley Bellwood

rejected. So the comic was passed to editor Wilf Prigmore, who was told 'we want a mystery paper.'

Misty's two creators got together with writers Malcolm Shaw and Bill Harrington to put together some stories and outlines for the new comic. Mills says 'I wanted Misty to be much scarier' but this was toned down. Both creators have claimed credit for the comic's title, which was inspired by the film Play Misty for Me. Harrington suggested a (male) host – 'Nathan somebody' – as characters like these were popular in girls' comics, but this was rejected, and Wilf Prigmore devised the character of Misty, our cover girl and host. Artist Shirley Bellwood was commissioned to bring her to life, and famously based Misty on her own image, providing a series of sketches and paintings that would be used throughout the weekly comics and later annuals. A beautiful, witch-like character, Misty welcomed readers to each issue and acted as a kind of spirit guide, providing reassurance and signing herself 'Your friend'. Jack Cunningham hand-lettered these welcomes and devised the bat and moon logo for the comic's cover.

An editorial team was put together with Malcolm Shaw as editor, Bill Harrington as sub-editor, Jack Cunningham as art editor, and Ted Andrews as art assistant. They filled Misty to the brim with a mix of serial stories and one-off tales of the uncanny and supernatural, complemented by a few comedy offerings such as Joe Collins' 'Miss T' and Mike Brown's 'Wendy the Witch' (reprinted from Sandie). Many of the serials were loosely inspired by contemporary horrors such as Carrie, Audrey Rose, Death Line, It Happened Here and The Sentinel, which became 'Moonchild', 'Hush, Hush, Sweet Rachel', 'End of the Line' and 'The Sentinels'. They often revolved around a heroine struggling to accept some aspect of herself (telekinetic powers, unwanted possession) or dealing with the discovery of a dangerous magical item or place (secret underground lairs, a parallel universe). Misty's single stories were perhaps even more memorable: terrifying cautionary tales where wayward protagonists met horrifying ends, often with a heavy dose of poetic justice. For example, clothes-thief Ann is turned into a fashion dummy ('When the Lights go Out!', #18); mugger Cath causes an old lady to be hit by a bus but is then run over herself ('Dead End', #34); Sue steals a creepy mask to win a Halloween competition but cannot remove it ('Mask of Fear', #39); Lisa steals a clock but discovers she will have to wind it forever ('Slave of Time', #55) – these and many more sins are met with an ironic fate (see juliaround.com/misty for a searchable database of stories and creators).

These terrifying events were depicted in dynamic and dramatic art. Each story or installment in Misty was 4 pages rather than the usual 3, allowing for large panels and varied layouts to create drama and pacing. Art came from British and Spanish artists such as Mario Capaldi, Brian Delaney, Jaime 'Homero' Rumeu, Eduardo Feito, and María Barrera. Some were also drawing horror comics for American publishers Warren at the same time, and they did not tone down their style much. Reflecting on his work today, artist

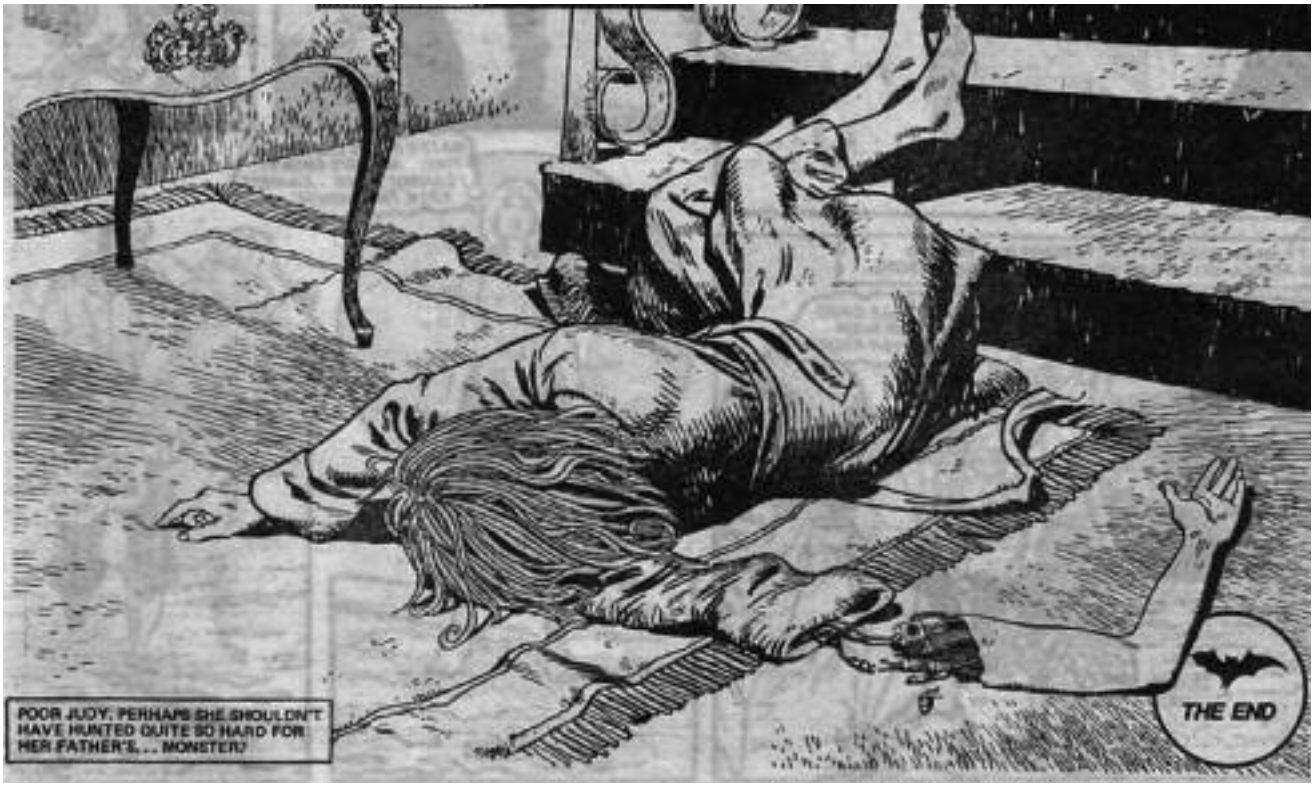
Isidre Monés exclaims 'It is horrifying! How can you make those cartoons for girls!' Their detailed and emotive drawing was enhanced by the Misty editorial team: Jack Cunningham remembers how when the pages came in he would 'break it all up, bit by bit […] I designed what the opening page and the end page should look like, and then here and there indicate where it would be better to leave a frame open'.

Misty was wildly popular and received vast numbers of letters from fans every week. Regardless, after 101 issues the title merged with Tammy and its identity was quickly lost. Reprints and annuals continued into the 1980s and fan sites picked up the reins in the early 2000s, culminating in the release of two 'Best of' collections from Egmont, followed by further reprints when Rebellion purchased the rights. Since 2016 Rebellion have released two Misty collections and a Scream! and Misty Hallowe'en special of new material. Things may have been quiet in the Cavern of Dreams for a while, but the spirits are stirring again and who knows what the future will bring.

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Artwork by María Barrera



Artwork by Isidre Monés

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VALDA



THE ANTI HERO WE DESERVE

What is it about British comics fans that makes us so susceptible to antiheroes? From Judge Dredd to Dennis, who has only recently dropped his moniker of 'the Menace', our comics are filled with rogues that we can't help but root for. We all love an antihero, but we aren't talking about one of the greatest antiheroes in British Comics history: the Amazing Valda. Drawn by Dudley Wynne, she was first introduced in Mandy #56 (10 February, 1968), and would go onto appear in eleven separate adventures in the pages of Mandy until 1984, with many of her stories enjoying multiple reprints. Valda has several Grade A superpowers; super-strength, immortality, healing, mind control, the ability to talk to animals and to jump incredible distances. As long as she has access to the Crystal of Life, which re-stores her strength, she is essentially unstoppable, and she uses these powers to answer The Call, which gener-ally directs her to assist stranded swim teams, cursed British school girls, royal babies and the like. If you had only read her later adventures, or if this article is your in-troduction to Valda, she seems a clear-cut goody-goody. And yet Valda has benefitted from one of the greatest PR campaigns in British comics history, as all her adven-tures post 1968 have aimed to make you forget that, in her debut story, 'The Truth about Valda', she is one of the most morally ambiguous characters in girls' comics, and all within a story which is nominally about ice-skating!

Yes, ice-skating! That most treacherous of sports, at least according to 'The Truth about Valda'. At its core, Valda's first adventure is a fairly standard sports story, where a girl must prove herself at various levels, navigating the murky waters of underhanded competitors and sports

bureaucracy until she triumphs in the final event, with a dash of supernaturalism and superheroics thrown in for good measure. And yet over the course of this nineteen week story, instead of our protagonist being the can-do everygirl or weepy victim type that was so popular in girls' comics, we are introduced to a rebel who dishes out slaps, is accused of taking drugs, kidnaps old ladies and inadvertently murders a teenager; a far cry indeed from the boarding school japes of the Four Marys. Although minor crooks will attempt to rob ice rinks or discover her secret identity on a weekly basis, there is no major antagonist in the comic, leading one to suspect that the true villain of the piece is none other than Valda herself, as she systematically takes out the competition in order to prove herself the greatest skater.

How systematically? You ask. Incredibly systematically. Valda has a chest filled with the portraits of all of the greatest female ice-skaters, and challenges them one by one to a skating contest, which isn't really fair when you take into consideration that Valda is immortal and has superpowers and so has had hundreds of years to hone her craft and actual superpowers to help her achieve her goal. Superman or the Flash would graciously forgo using their superpowers when competing with regular humans in the interests of 'being fair' but Valda has no such qualms. She is in it to win it, to the extent that Valda tracks down Anna Brandt, the only skater to ever best her, and challenges her to a rematch, even though fifty years have passed and Anna is now a feeble old lady. Age is immaterial to Valda though, who simply kidnaps Anna as she sleeps, brings her to Valda's secret cave, and makes her young again. The catch to this is that Anna will return to her original age and die after a few hours have passed, but by the time that has happened Valda has got a skating official (also kidnapped) to declare Valda the better of the two skaters. Once Anna dies, all that's left is for Valda to return Anna's body so that everyone will assume she died in her sleep and drug the skating official so he can't reveal the shady antics that are going on in Alpine ice-skating. This all seems like the work of a megalomaniacal supervillain, and yet we're supposed to root for Valda. Even when she recruits two young girls to be her skating successors and tests them by slapping them and lobbing ice-skates at their heads. If superheroes are supposed to be gods, Valda is one of the vengeful, petty ones.

Valda is not always the instigator of the carnage that accompanies her around the ice rink, but even so you can't help but suspect she gets a kick out of chaos. When skating champion Irma Schweck challenges Valda, Valda refuses so brusquely that the incensed Irma kidnaps Valda and forces her to a skate-off at gun point. During the skate-off, Irma has a heart attack and dies on the ice, and Valda reveals it was this heart condition that she had sensed and which had made her unwilling to compete. But rather than simply explain this, Valda antagonised Irma, because, you suspect, Valda loves drama.

Now, girls' comics were no strangers to death, destruction or even antiheroes (Carol Anne of Bunty's 'Down with St. Desmond's!' springs to mind), but Valda stands out because her actions are blatantly unacceptable, and yet there is never any criticism of her within the text. Officials try to argue with her, but it is all for naught; it is either Valda's way or the highway. Valda continues to be haughty and dismissive of authority in her later stories, where she is more clearly written as a hero, but nothing ever quite parallels the madness and the messiness of 'The Truth about Valda'. In a world where nice superheroes will be pitted against other nice superheroes in an attempt at conflict and the Big Bad is just that - big, and bad, and with all the complexity of cardboard, Valda is the antihero we deserve.

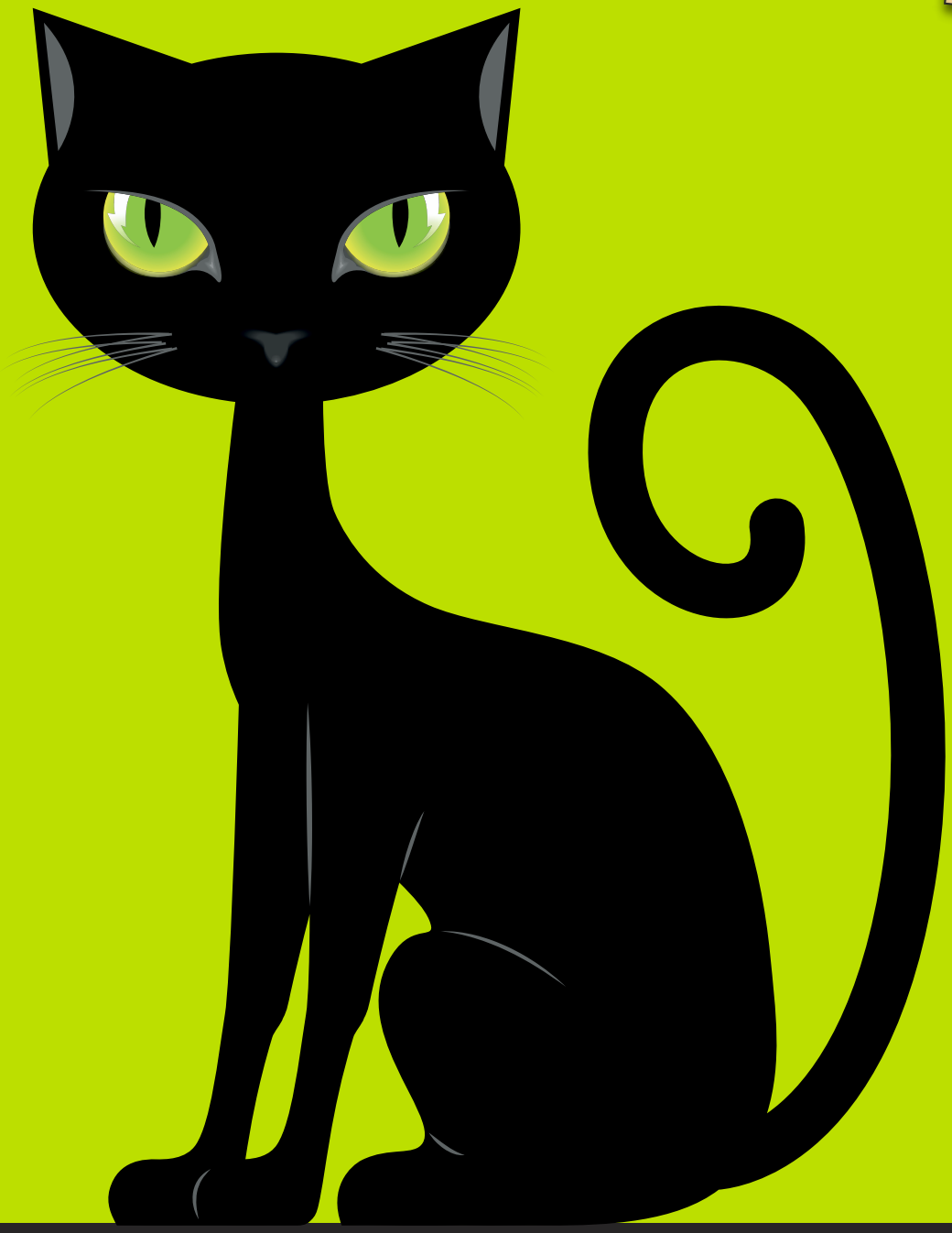


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Images: ©DC Thomson & Co. Ltd

CAT GIRL

Sally Comic's **Super Heroine**





When talented artist Giorgio Giorgetti moved from Italy to live here in the UK in 1950, he set up his art studio in the seaside town of Margate. By the time 1951rolled around Giorgetti was working in collaboration with IPC comics. During his tenure there he worked on many strips in comics such as Valiant, Eagle, and Look and Learn to name a few. But it's his work on Sally comic, and later, Tammy, that some of his best work is known.

More specifically there is one strip in particular which was created by him, a character that young girl readers could daydream they could emulate. That character was The Cat Girl! Appearing in the very first issue of the new Sally comic, Cat Girl was an instant hit with readers, so much so that when Sally merged into Tammy comic, this was one of the strips that survived the transition.

As with all good superhero alter egos such as Peter Parker or Clark Kent, the alliteratively named Cathy Carter was the daughter of a successful yet bumbling and forgetful private detective, who was always getting himself into one scrape or another. One evening, while trying to keep an eye on her dad without him knowing, Cathy stumbles across and inadvertently opens a mystery box given to her father by an African witch doctor for solving a case sometime before. Not being able to open it, Mr Carter stowed it away in the attic and forgot about it.

Once the lock is sprung by Cathy, she finds a sleek fitting cat costume hidden inside. Cathy, full of curiosity slips the

suit on and instantly discovers that she's now developed cat-like powers as long as she wears it. This bore more than a striking similarity to a 1940's strip called Miss Fury, who also gained cat powers while donning a feline costume, though Cat Girl's adventures were more lighthearted and fluffy. Cathy wastes no time questioning the magical power of the suit, but puts its abilities to good use, in effect becoming her clumsy father's "guardian angel" helping him behind the scenes as he travels the world as a globetrotting private eye.

During his various assignments, Mr Carter seems to keep running afoul of a master criminal known only as The Eagle. But thanks to the Cat Girl working in the shadows she was always able to keep her dad safe from the Eagle's clutching claws, usually without Carter being any the wiser, but taking the credit for the cases being mysteriously solved. The Eagle's usual downfall could also be attributed to a combination of overconfidence in his own intellect, and letting a certain Black Cat cross his path!

But the question has to be asked regarding Mr Carter's competence as a detective. How did he ever solve a case before Cat Girl came along? He's hardly Sherlock Holmes…

Cathy Carter or ordinary Cathy as she referred to herself in the strip was a very different take

on the super hero genre, wherein when she donned the suit, she didn't pounce into action with fists flying. Cat Girl was more, well…sneaky.

Very rarely did she get into any fisticuffs of any kind, though she was more than capable of taking care of herself. There was one time when she took on a full grown leopard and lived to tell the tale! Instead she used her wits and feline cunning to trip the criminals up.

As well as the powers and abilities of a cat, (though whether this was a common or garden house moggy or a panther, seeing as how the suit came from Africa is one for conjecture,) I also wondered if the magic of the suit gave Cathy certain bad luck powers too…as in the old superstition; Never let a black cat cross your path! It may have been just me but there always seemed to be mishaps happening to the bad guys whenever Cathy was wearing the suit. Was it coincidence or clever writing? If anyone knows, answers on a postcard please…

It was my sister who read Sally, then Tammy when Cat Girl transitioned into that comic, but I used to take a sneak peek from time to time when my sister's back was turned in order to see what trouble Cathy was getting into. It's safe to say I was a closet Cat Girl fan. Giorgetti's quirky pencils and consistent writing kept me returning to the strip, but it wouldn't have done much for my street cred if my mates had found out I was reading Sally/Tammy!

It used to make my sister madder than hell if she found out I'd been reading Cat Girl. As far as she was concerned, that was her very own super hero. I never understood what she meant at the time. When I mentioned to her that I'd be writing this article for the mag, I reminded her how she used to get mad at me. Well it turns out that she thought it unfair that I had so many super hero strips I could read in Mighty World of Marvel and Spider-Man Comics Weekly. I had no right reading a strip that was essentially written with girls in mind.

Kids!

She didn't know about Wonder Woman and the like, and anyway, American Comics were hard to come by if you lived out in the sticks like we did. But having the Cat Girl nestled in among all the other girly strips of Sally/Tammy made that all hers. She also loved the fact that Cathy spoke to her audience, and that made Big Sis feel like she was in on the secret.

She liked the idea that Cat Girl needed no-one's help, and she was just as capable as the rest of the costumed supermen out there. We were used to the ladies being the damsels in distress, and as light and sometimes comedic as the Cat Girl strip was, you always got the feeling that ordinary Cathy was more than capable of taking care of business. So if this strip aimed solely at the young ladies could leave such a lasting impression on me, then how about others actually working in the comic industry itself?

Seven years after Cat Girl's first appearance, a new action/adventure strip popped up in the pages of Buster. Young Billy Farmer and his costumed alter ego The Leopard from Lime Street, penned by writer extraordinaire Tom Tully skulked across the rooftops of the fictional town of Selbridge, fighting crime in his own feline manner.

Heavily influenced by Marvel Comics Amazing Spider-man, one has to wonder if Tully

also drew inspiration from Giorgetti's creation too. They say that mimicry is the sincerest form of flattery.

In this instance it's very much the case.

The Cat Girl strip was eventually dropped, but Cathy was to return years later in the pages of 2000AD, in the Zenith strip, eventually meeting her demise at the hands of Mr Why, along with other popular comic strip characters of the seventies.

Her nine lives may have run out, but time has shown us that Ordinary Cathy was anything but…



Author: Martin Dallard
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WHACKOMAN! BY MARC JACKSON



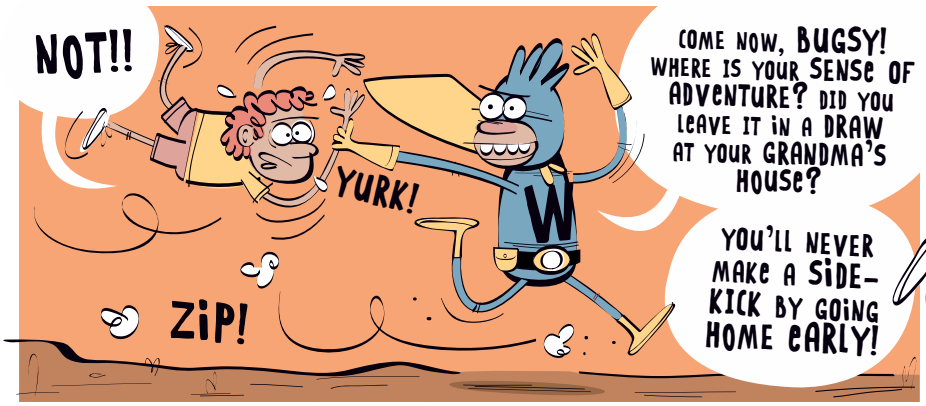


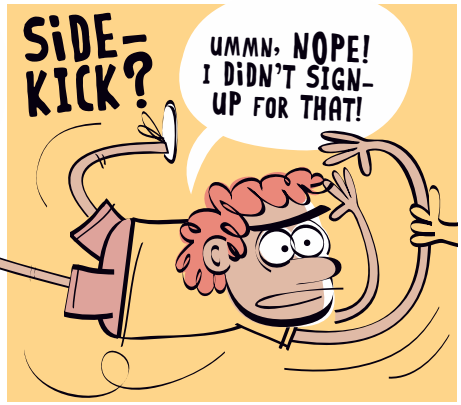


















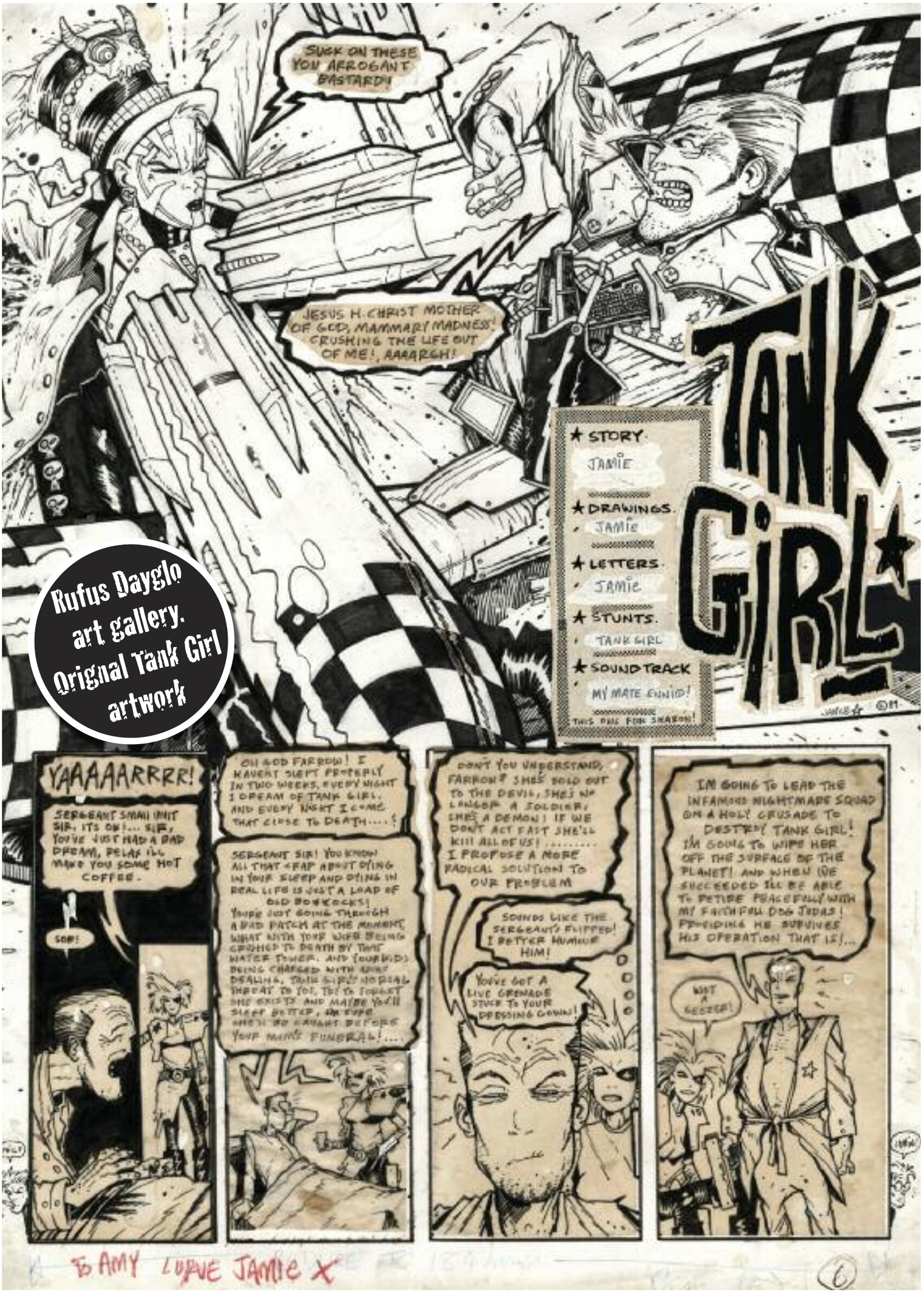
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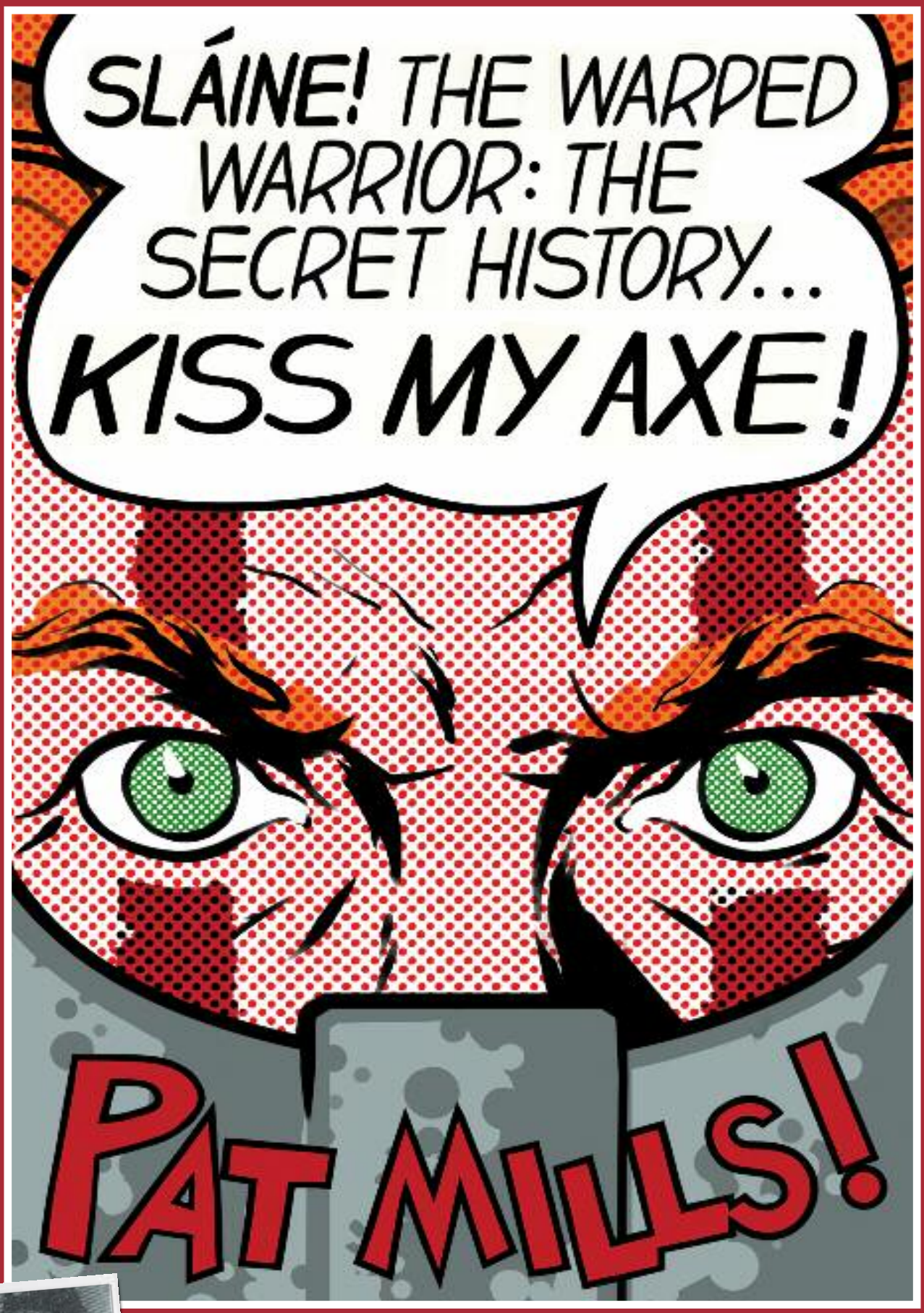


CAPTAIN SCOTLAND

Interlude: Kitchen Sink drama

Artwork by Valentina Mozzo
Writer Tom J Fraser


SUCK ON THESE YOU ARROGANT BASTARD!
JESUS H. CHRIST MOTHER OF GOD, MAMMARY MADNESS! CRUSHING THE LIFE OUT OF ME!, AAAARGH!
TANK GIRL
★ STORY
JAMIE
★ DRAWINGS
JAMIE
★ LETTERS
JAMIE
★ STUNTS
TANK GIRL
★ SOUNDTRACK
MY MATE ENNID!
THIS ONE FOR SHARON!
©89
Rufus Dayglo art gallery. Original Tank Girl artwork
YAAAAARRRR!
SERGEANT SMALL UNIT SIR, ITS OK!... SIR, YOU'VE JUST HAD A BAD DREAM, RELAX I'LL MAKE YOU SOME HOT COFFEE.
SOB!
OH GOD FARROW! I HAVENT SLEPT PROPERLY IN TWO WEEKS, EVERY NIGHT I DREAM OF TANK GIRL, AND EVERY NIGHT I COME THAT CLOSE TO DEATH....!
SERGEANT SIR! YOU KNOW ALL THAT CRAP ABOUT DYING IN YOUR SLEEP AND DYING IN REAL LIFE IS JUST A LOAD OF OLD BOLLOCKS! YOURE JUST GOING THROUGH A BAD PATCH AT THE MOMENT WHAT WITH YOUR WIFE BEING CRUSHED TO DEATH BY THAT WATER TOWER, AND YOUR KIDS BEING CHARGED WITH ARMS DEALING, TANK GIRL NO REAL THREAT TO YOU, TRY TO FORGET SHE EXISTS AND MAYBE YOU'LL SLEEP BETTER, OR ELSE SHE'LL BE CAUGHT BEFORE YOUR MANS FUNERAL!....
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, FARROW? SHES SOLD OUT TO THE DEVIL, SHES NO LONGER A SOLDIER, SHES A DEMON! IF WE DON'T ACT FAST SHE'LL KILL ALL OF US!..... I PROPOSE A MORE RADICAL SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEM
SOUNDS LIKE THE SERGEANT'S FLIPPED! I BETTER HUMOUR HIM!
YOU'VE GOT A LIVE GRENADE STUCK TO YOUR DRESSING GOWN!
I'M GOING TO LEAD THE INFAMOUS NIGHTMARE SQUAD ON A HOLY CRUSADE TO DESTROY TANK GIRL! I'M GOING TO WIPE HER OFF THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET! AND WHEN I'VE SUCCEEDED I'LL BE ABLE TO RETIRE PEACEFULLY WITH MY FAITHFUL DOG JUDAS! PROVIDING HE SURVIVES HIS OPERATION THAT IS!...
WHAT A GEEZER!
TO AMY LOVE JAMIE X
6





Excerpt from: Kiss My Axe! Sláine the Warped Warrior: The Secret History by Pat Mills.

The opening chapters of the book tell the story of how Pat and his then wife, Angela, created Sláine. Angela designed the Celtic hero and his companion Ukko. She visualized Sláine's world and made crucial decisions on his character. After several months researching and developing the story, she drew episode one – the very first comic strip she had ever drawn.

It was now time to receive the reader's verdict on their creation.

Please note artwork enclosed in this supplement is exclusive to ComicScene UK and does not appear in the book.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE

CHAPTER 6

Angela's episode one of Sláine appeared in 2000 AD in Prog 330, on 20 August 1983. It went straight to number one in the readers' vote charts – the first time since the rise of Judge Dredd that any story had ever beaten the Mega-City lawman.

As no 2000 AD professional, then or now, has ever congratulated her on her achievement, or has ever beaten the drum for her work, you'll forgive me if I do so. It was truly incredible that an unknown artist – an absolute beginner – who had never drawn a comic story before, should have a number one hit story in the Galaxy's Greatest Comic.

She had achieved what all her highly competitive artist peers had been unable to do then and have been unable to do in all the decades since: create a serial to beat Judge Dredd.

It was a real 'Chariots of Fire' moment. The underdog, the outsider, ignoring the formidable forces ranged against her and their prejudices, had persevered and come through to win. All the heartache, the agonizing, the laughter and the tears we'd shed had been worthwhile.

Was I surprised? I'm not going to pretend I was. I was delighted and relieved by the good news, especially for Angela, but I was not surprised. I always knew she had the talent and the potential. My job was to bring it out. And I knew she had succeeded because she had followed the rules of appealing to ordinary readers.

Her debut episode's astonishing popularity cannot be dismissed as a 'fluke', or due to my story alone, much as I know her critics would dearly like to do, even to this day. The readers loved Angela's art as much as they loved my story. Actually, more so, because Massimo Belardinelli's subsequent art on Sláine was also popular, but immediately dropped to number two in the charts.

And Mike McMahon's later version, whilst being critically acclaimed, I'm sad to say did not work for the majority of the readers, as I will describe in a later chapter.

Glenn Fabry and David Pugh's work was hugely popular, but only Simon Bisley's The Horned God had a comparable impact on the readers. 2000 AD's circulation actually went up when The Horned God appeared in the comic.

For those who may still try to spin it otherwise, here's what some of the readers have to say today:

Steve Viner. 'Loved that first Angie Mills artwork … Shame she didn't do more episodes. That particular episode started a life long love of the character.'

Dave Heeley: 'Angie's work on Sláine was incredible. In more enlightened times she would definitely have become a mainstay of 2000 AD.'

Jules Boyle. 'Until Glenn Fabry came along, Angie was my favourite 2000 AD artist on the strength of that one episode alone. Her art didn't look like anyone else's in comics. I'd have loved to see her continue on it or come back to it. The city looked really interesting and dangerous, it was a shame not to see more of it.'

Chris Wright. 'I was about twelve when Sláine appeared in the Prog. I just accepted Angela's art as being as good as my then faves. I had no idea she was a newcomer to comics. I was also surprised to learn later that her art had proved unpopular with certain elements of the nerve centre.'

Alan Holloway. 'I always liked Angie's Sláine and it was a shame she never carried on. I'm glad, though, that it gave her the co-creator credit she deserved.

Stewart Moore. 'She did a terrific job. Particularly surprising since she hadn't drawn comics before.'

Her story appeared at a time when those famous vote charts were still an accurate assessment, a precise barometer, of the readers' opinions.

They could not be conveniently dismissed, as they regularly were later with the self-serving view that the readers votes didn't really count and that they were holding us all back, and it's the fans' opinion that matters. The unspoken subtext of this was, 'Those readers are just kids. It's the older, cooler comic fans we hang out with in comic shops and conventions who really matter.'

Well, it's those readers that have always mattered to me. So thank you all, guys. Your support, both back then and today, means a great deal to me.

Despite Angela producing a number one story, Tharg McManus never tried to persuade her to return to her creation.

If we had beaten Dredd once, it's reasonable to assume we would have built on our success and done so again.

And again.

If Steve had made the effort, I know he could have got her to come back, because, like all artists, what Angela was really looking for was positive feedback and encouragement, rather than the negativity I've described. Now all the long and painstaking



Artwork by Charlie Gillespie





Artwork by Charlie Gillespie

process of creating characters was behind her, she would have speeded up, especially with the readers' vote of confidence in her work.

Instead, McManus just told me the news, in passing, over the phone. I was so relieved, I didn't do what I should have done and said, 'Well why don't you have the courtesy to phone her and tell her the news yourself?' My bad.

It's also standard procedure when a comic has a hit story with a hit artist, for the editor to capitalize on it and do everything in his power to ensure the same winning team continues.

If a publisher knew, you would be ordered to. (I had just such an experience when I started Battle with John Wagner.) And rightly so.

It never happened with Slaine.

Possibly, Steve and Robin thought Mike – whom, as I've shown, they saw as the true Slaine artist – would somehow take Slaine onto even greater heights of popularity. So Angela was surplus to requirements.

Or, in the very Dreddcentric world of 2000 AD, creating a serious rival to the Judge was not a priority, and may even have been seen as a threat.

Or, despite the clear evidence of the readers' votes to the contrary, Steve still shared the negative views of his art editor and my peers about Angela's work.

Or perhaps he was embarrassed by her success.

Take your pick.

Whatever his reason, Angela was driven out in a typical, bloodless, no fuss, 'Very 2000AD coup'.

(I say 'typical' because there were others and this was how it was usually done.)

But the cold-shouldering was not over. It continued with Angela and Belardinelli's work not being albumised by Titan Books. I was told by Titan, in no uncertain terms, that neither of them had 'fan appeal'. It would be two decades before they were both finally reprinted by Rebellion.

In all this, you may be wondering what were Angela's feelings about these shenanigans. After all, she was already a successful, professional artist who, like myself, had never encountered such horrible and unprofessional behaviour elsewhere. This happened to her only on 2000AD. She certainly had a low opinion of them; but I would be betraying confidences if I said more.

Her departure was a huge loss to the story. If we'd worked on Sláine together, it would have been pretty much like Joe Colquhoun and myself working on Charley's War. A potential golden era. Because she understood exactly what I was looking for in a story, not just because we were husband and wife, but because it was her co-creation, her vision as well as mine. And she wasn't trying to go off on a tangent, like so many Slaine artists do.

Consequently, Slaine would have been a more balanced, sharper, authentic, emotional, funnier, better story if Angela had continued to draw it, developing and improving her style, challenging and improving my ideas and contributing her own on what she would like to see happening to her characters. The evidence for this is all there in her Episode One.

That loss to Sláine is incalculable.

But I know she would genuinely appreciate all the great feedback about her work today. On her behalf, I thank you all for your kind and encouraging words about her creation of Sláine, her fantastic Celtic hero.

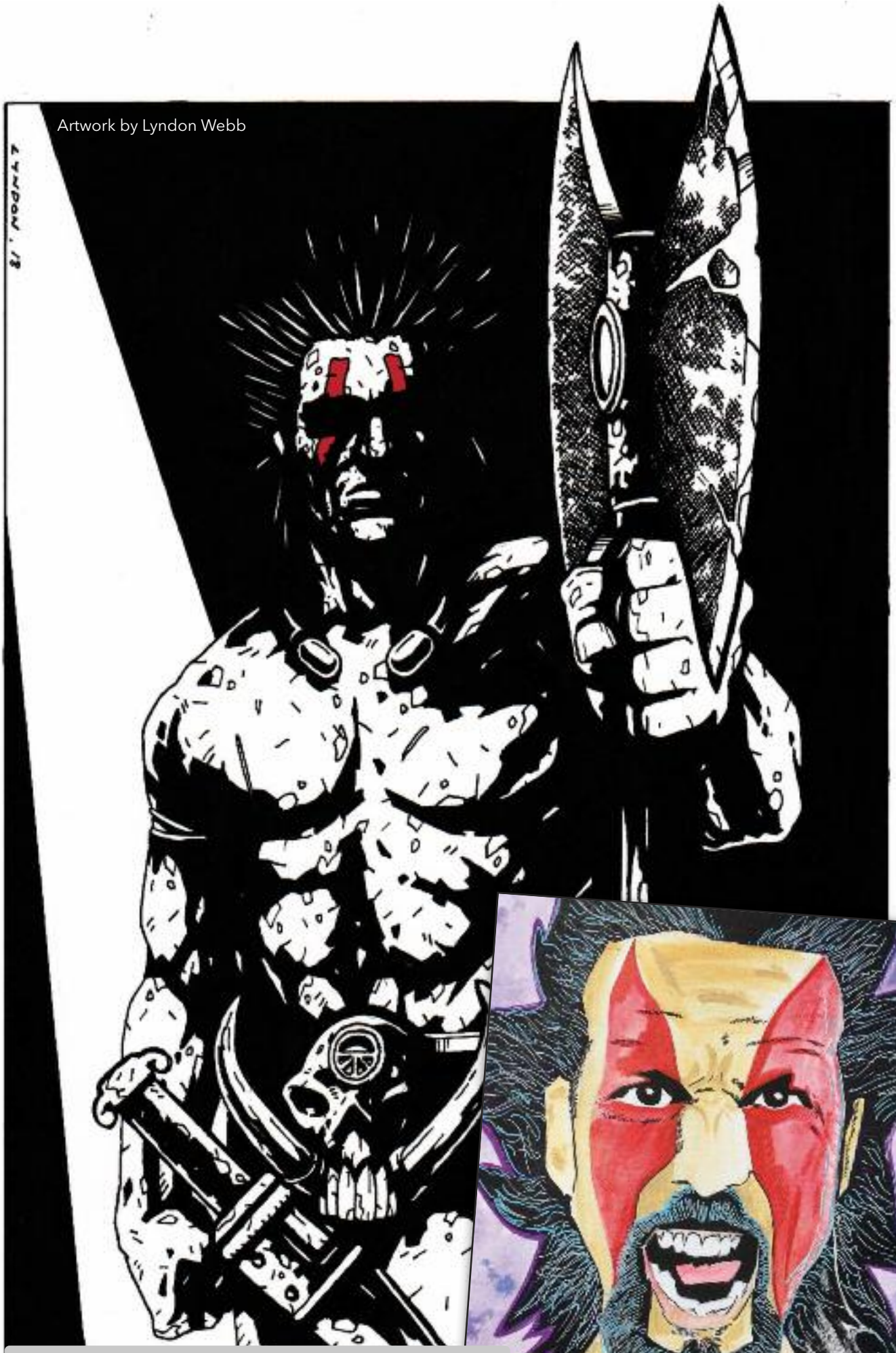
And ultimately, I blame myself for what happened. I had greatly underestimated the strength of the opposition against us. So, rather than being a creative debut, Sláine became a creative debacle.

A few years later, Angela briefly returned to comics when I desperately needed an artist on Third World War for Crisis, and she drew an episode just to help me out. Once again, I have positive recollections of her work and so do many readers. Once again, she was invisible to her artist peers.

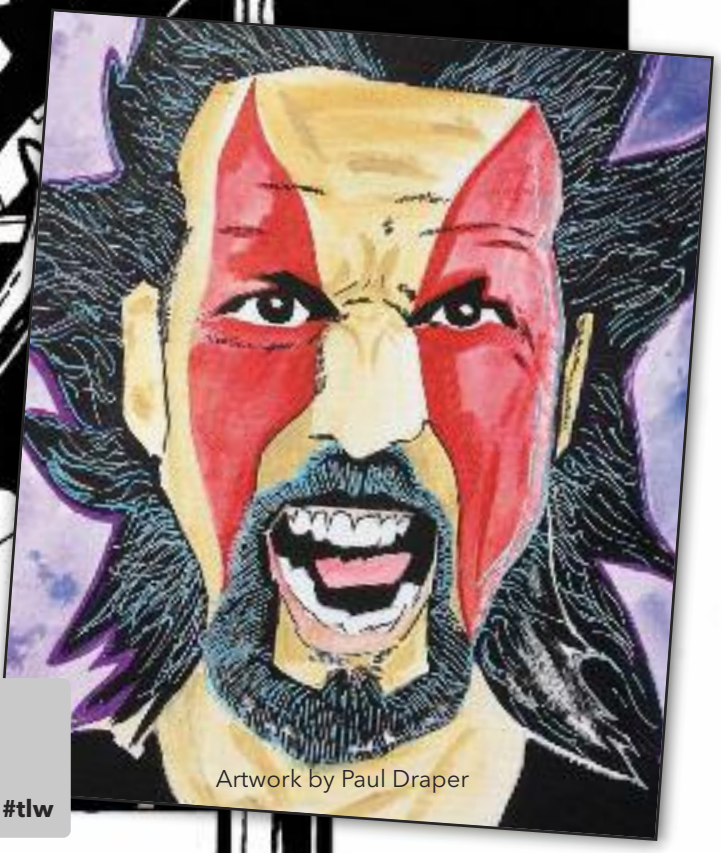
Then, on Finn – the principle character in Third World War – my co-writer Tony and I needed a 'techno-pagan' helmet for the character's development. 'It's based on a gas mask but the tubes are like rams' horns', we told her. She duly came up with what has since become an

'I am not the little wifey, John. You know the difference my colour work made to your work. You owe me that money.'





Artwork by Lyndon Webb



Artwork by Paul Draper

Author: Pat Mills
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Website: millsverse.com
Tweet us your thoughts @comicsflixukus #comicscene #tlw

iconic design. It was subsequently used in all the versions of Finn, as drawn by Liam Sharpe, Jim Elston and Paul Staples.

Angela finally had that helmet design approved!

Later, we created The Butterfly Children together: a successful series for young children with books, calendars, figurines, and a musical show that started at Wimbledon theatre and went on tour throughout the UK. Shortly after, we went our separate ways and built new lives. Angela is now married to Eric Kincaid, an internationally acclaimed children's book illustrator.

Like many creators, Angela has distanced herself from her creation and I totally understand why. She's far from being alone in this. Steve Ditko, artist-creator of Spiderman, has similarly kept his distance from his character. Gerry Finley-Day, the writer-creator of Rogue Trooper, never gives interviews about the many fantastic stories he produced for 2000 AD.

They've all sensibly moved on. And under the current appalling 'creator rights' system, or rather lack of rights, there is little financial reward for Angela on Sláine. So why open those old wounds? If she's lucky, she'll receive maybe a derisory ten quid every time they reprint her episode one, the foundation stone on which an iconic character was built.

But the debt that I, our character, and the current publishers – Rebellion – owe her, is huge.

Was sexism also a factor in the negative response to Angela by 2000AD and my peers? Like the passive-aggression we encountered, sexism can be hard, if not impossible, to prove. It's so easy to deny. Certainly she fought her corner whenever she encountered it. Memorably, she did some acclaimed and unique watercolouring on John Hicklenton's Third World War episodes. He delayed paying her share of the foreign royalties after their work was published in three European countries. Rightly or wrongly, she felt this was because she was 'just Pat's wife' and therefore her unique contribution didn't count and she was being ignored. Again. She rang Johnny up and forcefully explained her point of view.



Artwork by Jon Mitchell

I recall her words well: 'I am not the little wifey, John. You know the difference my colour work made to your work. You owe me that money.'

She received a cheque from him within days.

Much of the subsequent sexism on the comic falls outside this story of Sláine.

But I know (presumably making up for lost time) there's the all-female creator 2000 AD Summer Special 2018.

And, earlier this year, 2000 AD proudly announced: 'Next week's 2000 AD Prog 2074 is a landmark issue as artist Emily Zeinner becomes only the second woman to draw a cover for the Galaxy's Greatest Comic - out 28th March.'

Angela, of course, being the first one, back in 1983.

Personally, I would have cringed with embarrassment. Only two 2000 AD covers have been drawn by women in … forty-one years?

I rest my case...

Pat is giving away Sláine The Wanderer; Part One of his new book, Kiss My Axe! Sláine The Warped Warrior: The Secret History, FREE with every purchase (past or present) of his new black comedy novel about comics: Goodnight, John-boy.

In Sláine The Wanderer, Pat describes in detail the inspiration behind Sláine and how he created the character; the painstaking design work with Angela Kincaid; and the legendary Bellardinelli and Mike McMahon stories, including The Wickerman and Sky Chariots!

See www.millsverse.com for details on how to claim your free Part One!

Please note artwork enclosed in this supplement is exclusive to ComicScene UK and does not appear in the book. Copyright Rebellion Comics.

KISS MY AXE!

Get Part One of Kiss My Axe! Sláine The Warped Warrior: The Secret History

FREE WITH EVERY PURCHASE OF GOODNIGHT, JOHN-BOY

We're giving away the first 10 chapters of Pat's explosive new behind-the-scenes story of one of 2000 AD's most popular and enduring characters, covering the Kincaid, McMahon & Belardinelli years. With illustrations.



IN PART ONE:

- The key Celtic sources of myths & legends and where the warp-spasm comes from;
- How Pat based the plot of Sláine on himself;
- The secrets of Zarjaz and the failed artist coup d'etat;
- The secret story of Mike McMahon's incredible Sky Chariots and the special edition we all want to see;
- With illustrations of key scenes such as the original helmeted version of Sláine!

- **Kiss My Axe! won't be out until the end of the year, but we're giving away Part One now with every purchase – past or present – of Goodnight, John-boy.**
- **Send your proof of purchase to pat@millsverse.com and we'll send you a link to download your free Part One of Kiss My Axe!**

GOODNIGHT, JOHN-BOY

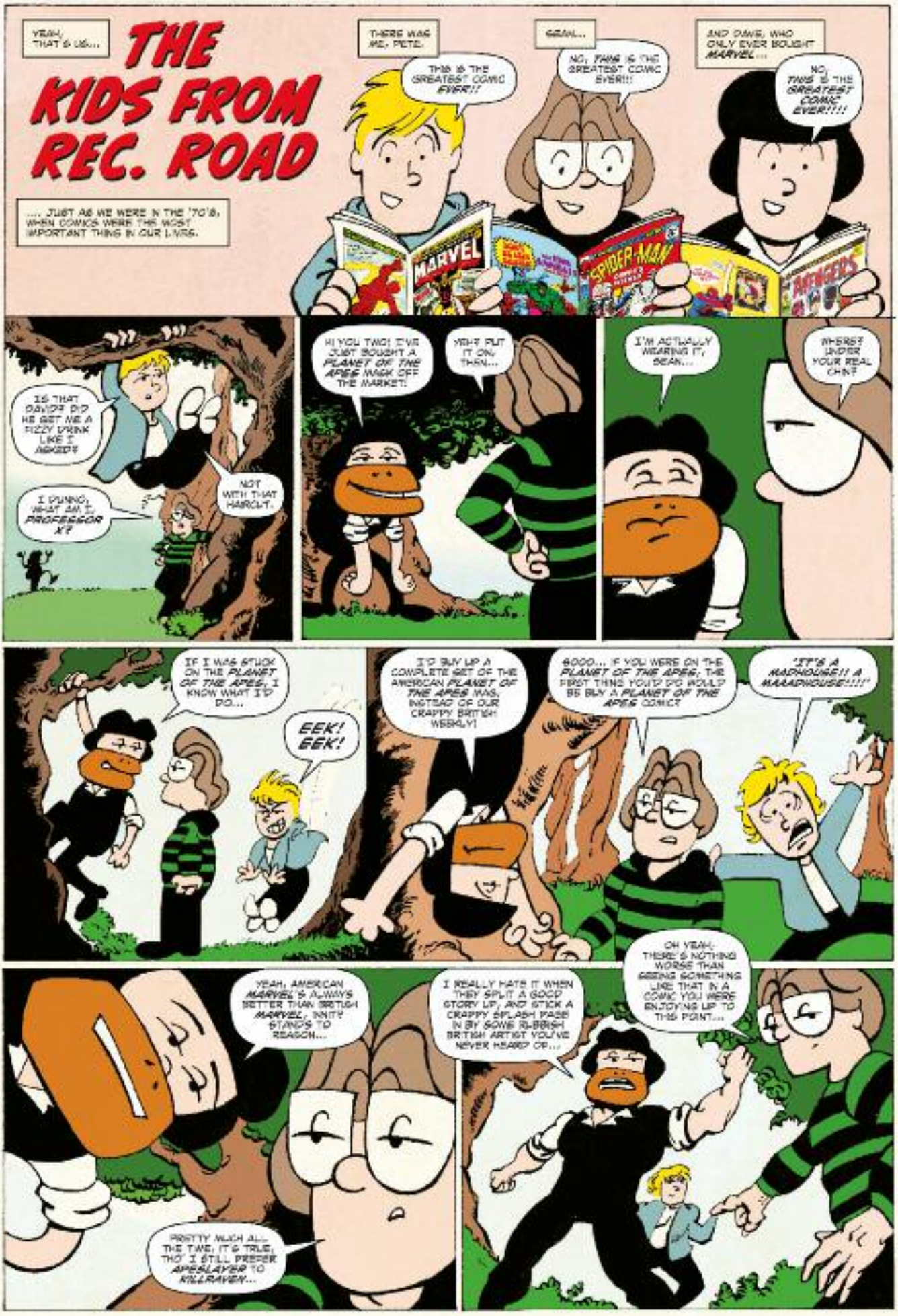
Read Em And Weep 2

The comedy thriller series based on Pat's experiences in comics.
Includes the hilarious story of how the comic Aaagh! was torn up on live TV ... and how its editor hit back.



Available in paperback or ebook from Amazon

www.millsverse.com


YEAH, THAT'S US...
THE KIDS FROM REC. ROAD
.... JUST AS WE WERE IN THE '70'S, WHEN COMICS WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN OUR LIVES.
THERE WAS ME, PETE.
THIS IS THE GREATEST COMIC EVER!!!
SEAN...
NO, THIS IS THE GREATEST COMIC EVER!!!
AND DAVE, WHO ONLY EVER BOUGHT MARVEL...
NO, THIS IS THE GREATEST COMIC EVER!!!!
MARVEL
SPIDER-MAN
AVENGERS
IS THAT DAVID? DID HE GET ME A FIZZY DRINK LIKE I ASKED?
I DUNNO, WHAT AM I, PROFESSOR X?
NOT WITH THAT HAIRCUT.
HI YOU TWO! I'VE JUST BOUGHT A PLANET OF THE APES MASK OFF THE MARKET!
YEAH? PUT IT ON, THEN...
I'M ACTUALLY WEARING IT, SEAN...
WHERE'S UNDER YOUR REAL CHIN?
IF I WAS STUCK ON THE PLANET OF THE APES, I KNOW WHAT I'D DO...
EEK! EEK!
I'D BUY UP A COMPLETE SET OF THE AMERICAN PLANET OF THE APES MAG, INSTEAD OF OUR CRAPPY BRITISH WEEKLY!
GOOD... IF YOU WERE ON THE PLANET OF THE APES, THE FIRST THING YOU'D DO WOULD BE BUY A PLANET OF THE APES COMIC?
"IT'S A MADHOUSE!! A MADHOUSE!!!!"
YEAH, AMERICAN MARVEL'S ALWAYS BETTER THAN BRITISH MARVEL, INNIT? STANDS TO REASON...
PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME, IT'S TRUE, THO' I STILL PREFER APESLAYER TO KILLRAVEN...
I REALLY HATE IT WHEN THEY SPLIT A GOOD STORY UP, AND STICK A CRAPPY SPLASH PAGE IN BY SOME RUBBISH BRITISH ARTIST YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF...
OH YEAH, THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN SEEING SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN A COMIC YOU WERE ENJOYING UP TO THIS POINT...


HEY PETE, I GOT YOUR DRINKHHOOAA!!!
'YOU MANIAC, YOU BLEW IT UP. GOOD DAMN YOU. DAMN YOU ALL TO HELL.'
WHOOPS WELL... ER; I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE, TIME TO SEE IF THE NEW VALIANT IS OUT...
'DON'T LOOK FOR IT, TAYLOR, YOU MAY NOT LIKE WHAT YOU FIND...' ...JESUS BLASCO ISN'T DRAWING STEEL CLAW THIS WEEK.
THAT'S ACTUALLY GETTING REALLY IRRITATING. CAN YOU STOP QUOTING FROM PLANET OF THE APES?
'TAKE YOUR STINKING PAWS OFF ME, YOU DAMN DIRTY APE.'
BASH
POW
PEOPLE&BROTHER&COMRADES; HAS THE MESSAGE OF PLANET OF THE APES COMPLETELY PASSED YOU BY?! APE DOES NOT KILL APE!!!
WE HAVE TO LEARN TO GET ALONG! TO RECONCILE OUR DIFFERENCES: MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN, PC FANS! ALL OF US TOGETHER!
I SEE A WORLD, MY FRIENDS, WHERE EVERYONE WILL BE COMIC FANS! WHERE PEOPLE WILL NO LONGER LAUGH AT US FOR READING COMICS! WHERE... WHERE THERE'LL BE FILMS OF ALL OUR FAVOURITE CHARACTERS, AND EVERYONE WILL FLOCK TO SEE THEM!!!!
RIGHT; LIKE THERE'LL BE AN AVENGERS FILM EVER.
OR A BAREFEVR TV SERIES. I THINK HE'S FINALLY LOST IT...
I GO! TO SPREAD THE WORD! TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL, TO WIBBLE WIBBLE....
WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'LL FIND OUT THERE, DR. ZAUIER?
HIS DESTINY.
OR LAST WEEK'S VALIANT
THE KIDS FROM REC. ROAD © 2018 PETE PORRETT, GEAN PHILLIPS AND DAVID HOLMAN

HERE COME THE SUPERCATS



The Supercats are perhaps the most infamous British girls' comics property. A science fiction superhero team, that can best be described as The Fantastic Four meets Sex and the City, the Supercats were the stars of the little-remembered and short-lived DC Thomson comic Spellbound. The Supercats are somewhat notorious in British comics circles, due to their steamy and delectable artwork, courtesy of Jorge B. Galvez and Enrique Badía Romero. The art is consistently well-rendered and ravishing, and the pin-up poses and pouting lips of the Supercats have come to define them as characters. And yet, if you were to only focus on the Supercats as cheesecake art that somehow found itself into the pages of a girls' mystery comic, you would miss much of the comic's charm.

The Supercats initially appeared in the Diana annuals, under the name of 'The Fabulous Four' and wearing an inverted version of their distinctive red and yellow jumpsuits. However, all the characters and their personalities were there; Helen Millar, token Earth girl, superbrain and Captain; Hercula, the super strong blonde with a brash and impetuous personality; Fauna, who can change her body colour (and sometimes appearance), and is quiet, demure and sensitive; and finally, Electra, who can shoot electricity from her fingers, and is a practical joker.

After successful appearances in the 1974, '75, '76 and '77 Diana annuals, the team became the cover stars of Spellbound. The comics' club was named after the Supercats, the Supercats were the fictional writers of the letters page, and the comics' horoscope, the Zodicat, was also Supercat-themed. The Supercats dominated Spellbound, which is strange because their adventures were slightly incongruous with the rest of the magazine, which was de-

voted to mystery, gothic and the supernatural (Spellbound inspired Fleetway to put out the cult classic horror comic Misty). Some editorial trifling was necessary to explain the space sirens' appearance in Spellbound, and their first Spellbound adventures attempted to brand the Supercats as, thrillingly, 'intergalactic trouble-shooters' who were sent to the furthest reaches of space to solve mysteries. In reality, though, little changed, and the comic continued to focus on the girls' adventures and romances (it felt like a different hunk would appear almost every week). However, the other editorial revision that accompanied the girls' transfer to Spellbound was far more permanent: Helen's super-intelligence was revoked. Despite her now completely average abilities, Helen remained the captain, probably because, even though she now only had slightly higher than average intelligence, that still put her head and shoulders above the rest of the team, who were at times staggeringly incompetent.

To read all the Supercats' adventures in Spellbound and Debbie (which continued to carry the Supercats' stories for a short time after it subsumed the failing Spellbound), is to really read the story of Helen. She struggles to keep the team together as they are constantly pulled apart either by their own personalities, various beefcakes, and occasionally universe-threatening villains. If it is going to be left up to one Supercat to save all the others, it is most likely going to be Helen, and if any tough decisions are going to be made, it is going to be Helen who steps up to the plate.

It is also worth noting, that, unlike American superheroes, the Supercats have absolutely no qualms about killing. The comic is unlikely to be heralded as a feminist masterpiece anytime soon, but the writers were very careful to foreground the girls' friendship, and to its credit, the comic rarely depicts the girls falling out over a boy. Sometimes Fauna needs to be talked out of marrying an alien, but due to the episodic nature of the comic, by the next issue of Spellbound everything has returned to the status quo and everyone has forgotten about Fauna's ex-fiancé.

Of course, any superhero is only as good as their villains, and Supercats boast two of the most fascinating rogues in British girls' comics; although, frustratingly, both Emperor Skorn and Roxana appear only once. Emperor Skorn is a gloriously 1970s super-powerful male chauvinist, who forces all the women in his domain to act as slaves for the benefit of the men. There were quite a few flirtations with Women Liberation in 1970s comics but these normally cast the feminists as the villains (such as the Supergirl story 'All Men are but Slaves!' and the Legion of Superheroes story 'The Triumph of the Superheroines'); however 'No Place for Trespassers!' is a delightful pastiche of male chauvinism and its sympathies are firmly with the Supercats, even if, disappointingly, they somehow still lose the battle with Skorn (this is what I mean when I say the comic wasn't going to win any Pulitzer Prizes for feminism).



Roxana, who seems to merely be an updated version of Morgana, a pirate queen who troubled the Supercats back in the 1977 Diana annual, is a witch (yes, they have magic in space), who has sworn to destroy the Supercats after they testified against her. She exacts her revenge on the Supercats by crashing their party in the guise of a hot dude and making them fight over her until they are all sent to bed early as punishment by their supervisors. After that, Roxana steals a spaceship, but as the Supercats catch her before she makes her escape, we will never know what Roxana's plan was once she had that ship. Despite her ineffectualness, Roxana is actually a very fun villain, because she knows exactly what the Supercats' weakness is; cute men who are only going to be relevant for a single issue.

There's something iconic about the Supercats, and it's not just their skin-tight catsuits (although these catsuits took on a life of their own, as heroines debuted in both the 1979 and the 1980 Diana annuals wearing the same costume). The team is well-balanced, their personalities are fun, and their adventures are that heady mix of nonsense that you only really got in 1970s British girls comics.



Author: Olivia Hicks
Twitter: @missoliviahicks
Images: ©DC Thomson & Co. Ltd

JENNY McDADE JOHN ARMSTRONG



From the pages of

Tammy and June





Bella at the Bar







BOOK ONE

July saw the release from The Treasury of British Comics of Bella at the Bar. This was a collection of stories that first appeared on Tammy weekly from 1974 to 1975. It features a young orphan who dreams of becoming a world class gymnast. She works hard at this goal and has obvious talent, but her ambitions are continually thwarted by her cruel Uncle Jed and Aunt Gert who use her for their own financial gains. She encounters an encouraging teacher who wishes her to enrol in an exclusive school with an amazing gymnastics program. She now finds herself fighting against class prejudice and her guardians in order to achieve her dreams.

Drawn by John Armstrong and written by such luminaries of the comic book profession such as John Wagner, Jenny McDade and Primrose Cumming. This was an imaginative take on the trials and tribulations of a young girls life. It was part of the wave of the 'comic book revolution' which sought to bring better characterisation and narrative to the medium. The context of the story was accessible to the target audience of young women and helped make the character immediately identifiable.

Bella quickly became Tammy's most popular character and rode on the wave of gymnastic furore in the wake of the successes of Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci. There were other precursors to the gymnastic adventures of Bella notably - Amanda Must Not be Expelled. But with gynastic fever gripping the hearts and minds of young ladies across the country, girls comics quickly capitalised on this new, favourite sport. Bunty even crafted it's own gymnastic hero - Josie the Gymnast. But for Tammy readers it was Bella that captured the young girls hearts. Bella's genesis was influenced by Olga Korbut, but John Armstrong based her appearnce on his niece. Reading through Bella for the first time, it occurs to me that it's a form of Cinderella story. Bella's evil Uncle and Aunt force her to do all the housework and also help with Uncle Jed's window cleaning business. Jed and Aunt Gert are lazy, selfish and squander money, they treat Bella in an exceedingly cruel fashion. In one story, they even imprison her after she attempts to run away. They are the archetypes of the wicked Stepmother and Stepsisters in the Cinderella tale. As such they make a fantastic enemy that readers can hate and cheer Bella's achievements even harder. At the end of the first series of stories we find Bella triumphant as she saves the life of the Soviet ambassador who rewards her with a scholarship at a top Soviet academy for gymnasts.



However, as soon as the strip had finished, the fans demanded her return. The next instalment of her saga would shift to a darker tone. She is framed in the Russian Academy by a rival gymnast - Natalia and expelled. This adds further to her woes as she now not only has to contend with her wicked Aunt and Uncle but also the backlash of public opinion. However, you can't keep a good heroine down and despite her disgrace, she is selected to compete for the British team at the championship held at Warsaw. It is here that she meets her rival Natalia again and has a chance at redemption and to clear her name.

Her adventures continued in a mature narrative which take her to the trials for the Olympic games and in between all of this, her adventures through France, Denmark, Poland and Canada captured the imagination and free spirit of many young women who read Tammy faithfully. Her later adventures were a far cry from her beginnings as a child slave and showed a tremendously complicated character arc and that satisfying stories were exactly what the target audience wanted.

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Behind Every Great Man...

The Doctor's Female Companions in Comics



Autumn 2018 will see the television debut of the first ever female Doctor Who – Jodie Whittaker. And we'll be providing plenty of coverage of her comic strip adventures in due course. Until then, let's take a look back at the many female companions who have accompanied the famous Time Lord for over fifty years of exciting stories on the printed page.

Artwork by Simon Myers

On television, the First Doctor (William Hartnell) began his travels with three companions – his granddaughter Susan (Carole Ann Ford) and two of her school teachers, Ian Chesterton (William Russell) and Barbara Wright (Jacqueline Hill). But in the comics, these characters were no-where to be seen. From 1964 to 1966 in the pages of TV Comic, the First Doctor was accompanied by his other grandchildren, John and Gillian, licensing restrictions meaning that Polystyle Publications were unable to utilise their TV counterparts. Whilst the depictions of the Doctor, John and Gillian by artists such as Neville Main and Bill Mevin were visually appealing, using such young children as companions greatly limited the appeal of the comic strip. Small wonder that John and Gillian's adventures would later be explained away in Doctor Who Magazine as a bizarre dream experienced by the Eighth Doctor!

John and Gillian would continue their adventures with the Second Doctor (Patrick Troughton) before being replaced by Jamie, the burly highlander played by Frazer Hines on TV. It was not until the era of the Third Doctor, however, that the Time Lord would get back-up from his female television companions in comic strip form. Liz Shaw as played by Caroline John (accompanied by the Brigadier and UNIT) would join the Pertwee Doctor in the pages of TV Comic from 1970, with Sarah Jane Smith featuring in holiday specials from 1974, displaying much of the feistiness that the TV version of the character was renowned for.

Sarah would also appear with Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor in TV Comic but it would be with the arrival of Marvel UK's Doctor Who Weekly in 1979, and the introduction of the character of Sharon, that the Doctor's female companions would really get the comic strip depiction that they deserved. The first person of colour to appear as a Doctor Who companion in any medium, Sharon hailed from the steel mill town of Blackcastle and represented a radical departure for both the comics and the Doctor Who universe as a whole.

Pat Mills created the character of Sharon and introduced her in his story Doctor Who and The Star Beast (February to April 1980). Looking back now, does he feel that the character worked well?

'I think Sharon worked very well when she was a black Grange Hill-style school girl,' recalls Pat. 'That was my plan and I was pleased with the result. Great character. But I was horrified when - after I'd left the series - she was turned into a super heroine. She looked awful. What is this love that comic professionals have for comic super heroes? It certainly ain't shared by the readers, no matter how much spin is put on it. And super heroines in Doctor Who? No thank you.'

Doctor Who Weekly morphed into Doctor Who Monthly. The Fifth Doctor (Peter Davison) enjoyed a relatively short run of comic strips (February 1982 to April 1984) with rights issues meaning that the Doctor travelled on his own for much of the time. The Colin Baker era, however, saw the crossover of popular companion Peri Brown (Nicola Bryant) from the TV show to the comic strips and Peri therefore became the first television companion to be used regularly in the DWM strip. Debuting in September 1985, Peri would appear until the summer of 1987.

Artist John Ridgway was responsible for all of Peri's DWM appearances. Did drawing the character pose any particular challenges? 'The only real difficulty I had (apart from getting something near a likeness) was due to the fact that I was drawing in black and white and using quite fine lines to capture shading. Lines can tend to make a face look hairy and also age a character. This isn't as important when drawing men or creatures, but, with someone as attractive as Nicola Bryant, it can lead to a load of



messy corrections. Fortunately, the board I was using (Oram and Robinson's Academy Line Board) allowed me to scratch out anything necessary using an old-fashioned razor-blade. These problems don't arise when working in colour as the linework tends to be minimised and the colour is usually someone else's problem.'

(NB: As the focus of this article is the female companions, this unfortunately means that we won't be talking about the other very famous companion that John drew – a shape-changing penguin called Frobisher. Fear not, I have a feeling that we will be returning to him in a future issue…!)

The Seventh Doctor, as played by Sylvester McCoy, debuted in the DWM comic strip in the Autumn of 1987 (see ComicScene issue 0 for a more detailed overview of the Seventh Doctor strips). McCoy's Doctor was accompanied for





much of his time on television by his companion Ace, played by Sophie Aldred. Ace was to prove to be very popular with Doctor Who fans and marked a departure from the so called 'screamers' of previous eras. Streetwise, independent and fiercely loyal to the Doctor, Ace abhorred racism and inequality and was very much a companion for the late 1980s. Despite this popularity, it took a surprisingly long time for Ace to appear alongside the Doctor in the comic strip. The strip was always the most expensive part of the Magazine to produce and as actors had to be paid a fee in order for their respective characters to appear in the stories, it was more cost-effective for the Doctor to appear alone. Ace finally appeared in 1990, after her tenure on television had ended, and remained with the Seventh Doctor until he bowed out from the strip in 1996. This final story, Ground Zero, also featured former companions in the form of Susan, Sarah Jane and Peri.

When Paul McGann became the incumbent Doctor for the Doctor Who TV Movie in 1996, the Radio Times granted the Time Lord the honour of a weekly, half page colour comic strip. Stacy Townsend, a human from the 23rd century, accompanied the Doctor in these stories. Unfortunately, any long-term plans for the character had to be abandoned when Radio Times had a change of policy and writer Gary Russell was forced to curtail the strip. As Russell told the New Zealand-based Doctor Who fanzine TSV: 'I had hoped that BBC Books would use Stacy in the novels but Terrance (Dicks) created Sam Jones and so they went with her.' Stacy did get her own very special happy ending though. She married the Eighth Doctor's other travelling companion - an Ice Warrior called Ssard!

The Eighth Doctor also had adventures in Doctor Who Magazine of course. Grace Holloway, the Doctor's companion from the TV movie, put in an appearance but the Doctor's assistant for much of the time was Izzy. Very contemporary both in appearance and attitude, Izzy was a science-fiction fan and amateur paranormal investigator who met the Doctor when she was 17. In a very original storyline, Izzy was forced to swap bodies with a fish-like being called Destrii (in the 2001 story Ophidius by Scott Gray) and feared that she would be stuck in her new form forever more. Needless to say, the Doctor was able to put things right in the end.

Christopher Eccleston famously played the role of the Doctor for only one series meaning that his tenure in the comic strip was also short – just four stories from April 2005 to January 2006. Despite the short run, at least the popular TV character Rose Tyler (Billie Piper) was present in all of these stories. The first assistant of the re-launched series, Rose made a huge impact and arguably remains the most popular companion of the modern age. With experienced writers on board scripting her comic strip adventures, such as Robert Shearman who penned the Ninth Doctor TV adventure Dalek, the character of Rose remained absolutely true to her television counterpart.

The Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Doctor's eras on television have seen a run of popular female companions. Following Rose, Martha Jones (Freeman Agyeman), Amy Pond (Karen Gillan), Clara Oswald (Jenna Coleman) and Bill Potts (Pearl Mackie) have all been a huge hit with television audiences. All five of these characters have been faithfully depicted on the printed page, their sassy attitudes and contemporary dialogue reflecting and developing the TV depictions of their characters.

In recent years, the Doctor Who comic strip universe has expanded way beyond the excellent stories provided by the publishers of Doctor Who Magazine. New adventures for the Doctor and his companions have appeared in Titan Comics, IDW, Battles in Time, Doctor Who Adventures and the BBC Doctor Who annuals. We hope to explore many of these worlds of Doctor Who in ComicScene in the months ahead.

One thing worth noting is that despite the presence of so many strong female companions in the Doctor Who comic strips over the decades, for many years the writers and artists producing these stories were almost exclusively male! But that's changed over the last ten years or so. Writers like Jacqueline Rayner, Claire Lister and Leah Moore and artists like Elena Casagrande, Eleonora Carlini, Georgia Sposito and Jessica Martin (who herself appeared in an acting role in Doctor Who) are creating critically-acclaimed adventures for an appreciative modern day audience.

Interviewed by the website PreviewsWorld in 2015, Titan artist Elena Casagrande was asked how the comic



book industry had evolved in terms of gender. 'Like any other job, it's an industry that's continuing to evolve and change', said Elena. 'As for gender, I think there have always been great female artists, time just lets us have more opportunity and the chance to show how many we are and how good we are.'

Elena and her colleagues are spearheading a new classic age of Doctor Who comic strips. And there's so much more to come. The female companions have been out in force this year with Forbidden Planet providing a superb 'Girl Power' cover variant of Titan Comics' Free Comic Book Day Doctor Who title, which featured all the modern day female Doctor Who companions, beautifully illustrated by Simon Myers. And we can look forward to comic strip adventures for the Thirteenth Doctor from both Panini and Titan, with Titan's output being overseen by an all-female team.

Keep reading!

The Female Perspective

We asked two prominent female Doctor Who fans for their views on the female companions. Karen Davies is a former Coordinator of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society and Christine Grit is a regular contributor to Doctor Who fanzines who lives in the Netherlands.

Who is your favourite female Doctor Who companion?

Karen: Sarah Jane of course!

Christine: My favourite female companion is Sarah Jane Smith (but just plain Sarah at the time). She was the one I grew up with. She really was a kind of role model for me growing up. She confirmed what my mother always said: be independent. Of course, sometimes she appeared less capable than some (and with Tom Baker as the Doctor it was sometimes difficult to shine) but generally she was pretty independent.

Which female companion do you enjoy reading about in the Doctor Who comic strips?

Karen: I don't think any of them come across well. As a 50 odd year old, I generally find the comic strips uninteresting and don't read them.

Christine: The comic strips are a different beast. I tend to favour Ace and Destrii. I particularly liked the latter because she wasn't really a nice person at first and stuck to some of her unkind characteristics. But her heart was in the right place (eventually). Ace obviously is just Ace: likeable but rebellious. Not inferior to the Doctor, just a young person who was learning all the time. I loved the teacher/pupil dynamic between them.

Do you tend to empathise more with female characters than with male characters?

Karen: I empathise with well-written, rounded characterisations rather than male or female just for the sake of it. I hope I'm intelligent enough to form a connection with a character for who they are rather than what they are.

Christine: Not necessarily. I tend to empathise with underdogs, be they male, female or something less clear-cut gender-wise. I can even empathise with a villain/villainess if they are well-written. Of course, if a female character is written a bit like me, as I am female, I'll empathise more easily. But that's normal I think, and quite separate from any wider gender issues!

Do you think that female writers are better at writing female characters than male writers and vice versa?

Karen: A good writer is a good writer and should be able to create believable characters regardless of the character's age, gender, religion etc.

Christine: Another not necessarily. I just loved Cinder in George Mann's Engines of War (not a comic, but the principle is the same), whilst on the other hand, some female writers write awful female characters. A good writer certainly can do both. It's more the type of story that's limiting than the sex of the author. Adventure stories can sometimes have cardboard characters... both male and female!

Thanks to Pat Mills, John Ridgway, Karen Davies and Christine Grit. Copyright Titan Comics. Panini UK Limited

Author: Ian Wheeler
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Through the Looking Glass



Exploring Scotland's influence on comic books, where the weather is perfect for writing and drawing indoors!

Events in the world of British comics were moving fast. Bogie Man # 1 appeared in September 1989; Trident the previous month; and by March 1991 Toxic! was due to hit the newsagents.

Geoff Fry had had a great success with Trident and Neptune Distributors and now asked me to replicate my success in getting the Scottish creators to work for Trident; now he wanted the Big Guys. He would offer them shares in a new company, their own copyright on any work, a say in everything. I envisioned – and Geoff at the time backed me on this – a British Metal Hurlant, a magazine founded by some brilliant French comics creators; a glossy A4 mag with the best printing available.

I phoned loads of people. Alan Moore was pretty busy by this time (whatever happened to him?). Alan Davis was too and felt that if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. But I persuaded Pat Mills, John Wagner, Alan Grant, Kev O'Neill, and Mick McMahon to at least come to a meeting to be held in Pat's house in Colchester. At the time, I thought we were just there to listen, but Geoff had other plans.

The creators and I all agreed that for something like this to work, we needed an editor. Various names were put forward, but we agreed to talk to Margaret Clark, who had worked at both Epic and DC, and meet her at the next UKCAC in London. Then Pat and Kev thought that maybe they could get back the publishing rights to Marshal Law which would have the advantage of our new magazine starting with an established character. Great!

What I have learned recently from Glenn Miller who worked with Neptune at the time was that the distributor had difficulty getting 2000AD, which meant that Geoff could not have 100% of the comics which shops wanted. His solution?

The Secret History of Toxic! Part Two

Suddenly, during the meeting at Pat's, the spreadsheets came out. I've always been suspicious about spreadsheets, particularly for a new company – what real figures do you have to go on? But I'm not an economist and, as was frequently pointed out to me, Geoff had a turnover of a million (More?) in only two years. His idea was that, instead of a monthly which would make us all yay much, we should publish weekly and make an absolute fortune. I pointed out that, unlike DC Thomson and to a certain extent 2000AD with its Future Shocks, we did not have an inventory. This would lead to the Dreaded Deadline Doom sooner rather than later, I predicted.

But, think of all the money we could all make with a weekly!!!

I confess I turned off at that point. Geoff had managed to get my pals involved and wouldn't need me any longer. My Metal Hurlant Bis was clearly not to be.

At the next UKCAC we did indeed meet up with Margaret Clark and she was initially interested. But she didn't want to move to Leicester and editing a weekly (!) from the USA was going to be rather problematic. We then approached Dan Chichester, but by then my direct involvement was just above zero. To get the mag out, Pat took over as interim editor and Kev and he arranged for Kingdom of the Blind, a Marshal Law book, to be the first special from the new co-owned publishing company Apocalypse (not the most positive name for a company, I thought).

And did Pat Mills manage to put out a good comic? Of course he did. He was the brains behind Action and 2000AD, for goodness sake! One reader referred to it as "Action for the 90s"; what Pat and Kev added to the mix was an atmosphere like the American Underground comix. The banner on the cover said "The Comic Throws Up!" Almost anything went if they could get it into a newsagents. I loved it!

Marshall Law was there and a continuation of The Bogie Man. Accident Man was an instant hit (pun intended). Bisley was there with Once Upon a Time in The West – Sergio Leone with a twist. Muto Maniac by Mick McMahon. Makabre by Grant and Alcatena. One issue's cover banner said "Going Over The Top!" and the cover obligingly proved that by featuring Sex Warrior.

Then there was The Driver – what a find! Not everyone liked it but it became the first thing I read every issue. Spain Rodriguez on speed. And we were just into issue #2.

By issue 10, Toxic! was really into its stride. Wagner, Grant, and Arthur Ranson produced the excellent one-off The Vampires New Year; this was not merely hilarious and superbly illustrated but it was a political comment on one of Thatcher's most hated policies.

What would comics of the 90s have done without the seemingly invincible Iron Lady? Even the Snowman's creator had got into the act and Raymond Brigg's graphic novel The Tin-Pot General and the Old Iron Woman upset the Tories and was commented on in Parliament.

Dan Abnett – better known recently for his excellent contributions to the new Guardians of the Galaxy – took over as editor, but that dreaded deadline doom just could not be avoided. Episodes of stories were missed, some series remained unfinished.

Work had begun on Toxic in October 1990. Then, on 28th November 1990, Margaret Thatcher resigned as PM. Too many of her former backers had turned on her. Her own hubris had led to her downfall.

Geoff was a child of Thatcherism and felt he could set up all these companies in double quick time and be the most important man on the UK comics scene. Having fingers in too many pies takes its toll and Geoff's personal problems were bound to affect the companies he owned.

Toxic! the weekly appeared in March 1991. By 1992, all of Geoff's companies were bankrupt although he did limp on for a short while producing some books for another distributor. Nemesis had, somewhat inevitably, followed hubris.



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2000AD

SCI-FI SPECIAL





This year's Sci-Fi Special is destined to go down in 2000AD history as a massively important moment; the first issue to feature an entirely female creative team.

For a comic that's featured a who's who of British talent alongside incredibly progressive and diverse female characters, 2000AD has had shockingly few female creators over its 40-year plus history.

Angela Kincaid co-created Slaine with Pat Mills (1983), letterers Annie Parkhouse and Ellie De Ville have been mainstays since 1989 and 1992 respectively, and colourist Abigail Bulmer a regular since 2009. Others include colourist Sally Hurst (2000s), Fay Dalton (art - American Reaper, from 2011), Maya Gavin (art - R.A.M. Raiders and Dredd, 1996), and Myra Hancock (writer - Tao de Moto 1991-'93).

Recent years saw three writers breaking through in impressive fashion, all of whom have strips in the Sci-Fi Special. Since 2012, Leah Moore's credits include Black Shuck, Tales from the Black Museum, and Storm Warning. Emma Beeby was, famously, the first woman to write Dredd in 2013, co-created Survival Geeks, and has written recent Anderson tales. Finally, Alex De Campi was co-writer on the excellent movieverse Dredd.

But, for 40 years plus of incredible comics, it's not too good in terms of gender representation. The 2000AD Sci-Fi Special stands as a sign of change, with Editor Matt Smith saying this on its announcement: "I'm especially excited to welcome a group of new creators to 2000AD... This year's historic Sci-Fi Special is going to be packed with unique voices and amazing talent."

Those unique voices include Emma Beeby and Babs Tarr (Judge Dredd), Laura Bailey and Dani (DeMarco P.I.), Maura McHugh and Emma Vieceli (Psi-Judge Anderson), Leah Moore and Xulia Vicente (Judge Death), Alex De Campi and Sam Beck (Rogue Trooper), Olivia Hicks and

Author: Richard Bruton
Twitter: @richardbruton
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Abigail Bulmer (Terror Tale), Katy Rex and Liana Kangas (Tyranny Rex), and Tillie Walden (Future Shock). With that much talent, the Sci-Fi Special was always going to be a very impressive and very special Special indeed.

With covers by Tula Lotay and Emily Zeinner and including a spectacular Anderson centrespread by Marguerite Sauvage, the Sci-Fi Special hit shelves in June 2018 to rave reviews.

Since the announcement, there's been plenty of discussion about the virtues of an all-female Sci-Fi Special. The worst of it was, sadly, predictably, misogynist trolling, but there's a general sense of the Special being an important step forward, summarised perfectly by Alex De Campi on Twitter(1):

"...I normally am not thrilled about special all female issues as it's a form of othering, but knowing the people at 2000AD, they are making a real effort to bring more women on as regular contributors."

De Campi's contribution, with artist Sam Beck, was the return of fan favourite Rogue Trooper. She told us that she's "working with original, Gerry Finley-Day Rogue, with Helm, Bagman and Gunnar, and it's based a little on some of the Hurtgen Forest history in WWII and the Michelin Plantation fighting in Vietnam".

On the Sci-Fi Special in general, De Campi told us this: "I love that 2000AD is making a really strong effort to make female creators feel welcome — and they've attracted such great talent for this summer special."

De Campi's enthusiasm for the Sci-Fi Special is shared by all of the creators we talked to, all mentioning the Sci-Fi Special as an important step for getting new voices into 2000AD and acting as encouragement to female talent to pitch.

Leah Moore had this to say: "It's a statement of intent, because women are the fastest growing comics market, and publishers need to put out stuff that will appeal to those women, and that represents them. It's my hope that the Special shows that 2000AD understands that and will bring more women on board."

Moore and artist Xulia Vicente's version of Judge Death was another highlight of the Sci-Fi Special, harking back to the classic Judgement on Gotham. Moore says: "I wanted to let my metalhead flag fly, and have fun with the idea that he could be evoked by accident. In my story a girl metal band find a bootleg of that fateful concert and it all goes downhill from there!"

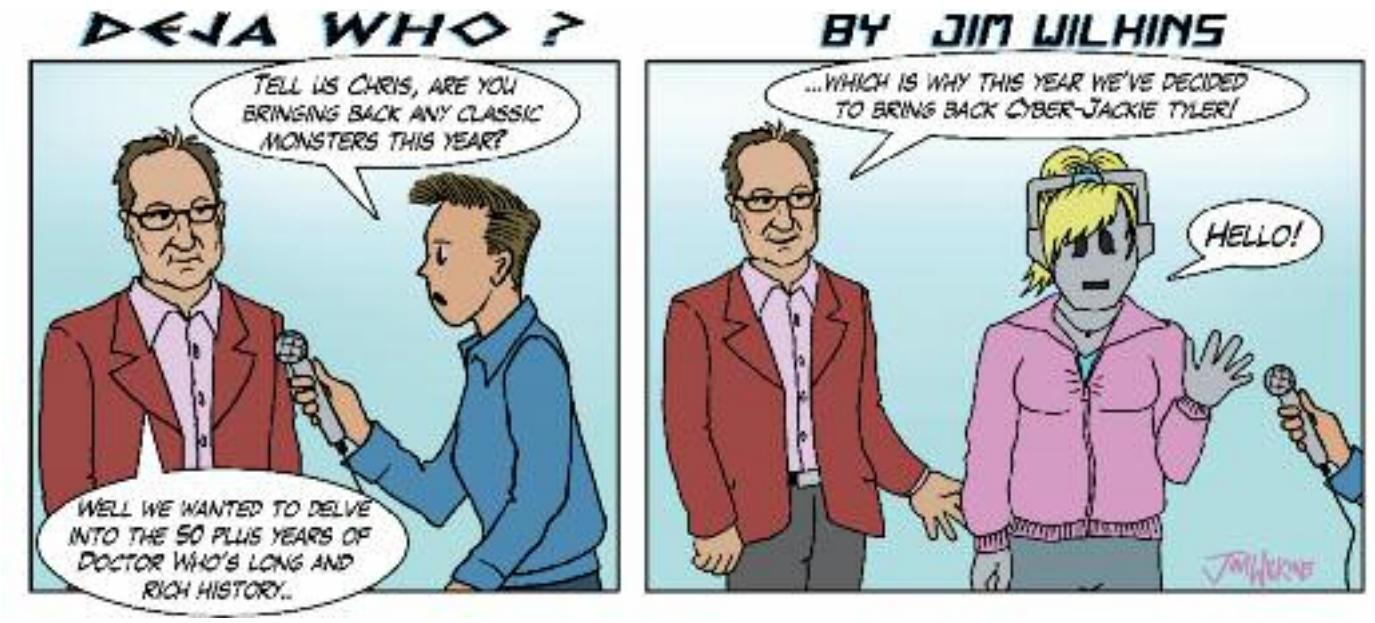
The Sci-Fi Special also gave a voice to newcomers, such as Liana Kangas who said this: "I like that 2000 AD is trying out a different perspective. I'm excited to be surrounded by a power house line up of badass women!"

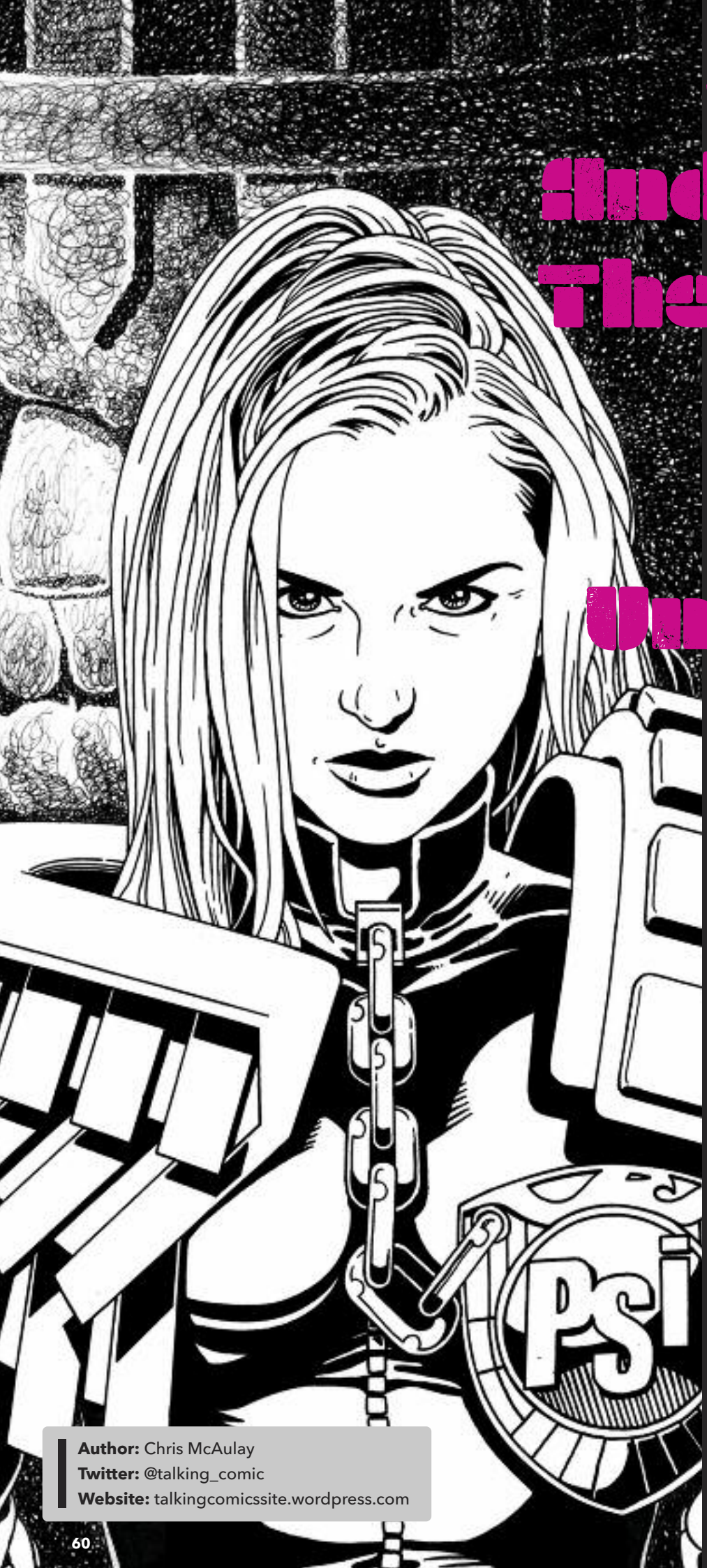
Laura Bailey, winner of the 2000AD Thought Bubble 2017 script contest, resulting in her first Future Shock, writes her dream character; Galen DeMarco. Bailey describes MC-1's premier P.I. as "...the most relatable character, not because we share the same job - it's because she's flawed in a way most people are". As for the Special, Bailey says: "I think it's a step in the right direction and hopefully not a conclusion if you see what I mean."

Newcomer Olvia Hicks wrote the Tharg's Terror Tale; 'Hockey Sticks of Hell' with art from long-time 2000AD colourist Abigail Bulmer. Hicks tells us that the strip drew on her love of old British girls' comics; "I love the old girls' comics; I love the edgy stuff like you find in Misty, but I also love the school drama of The Four Marys. Girls' comics could be pretty dark, but they didn't have the irreverence of 2000AD, and if there's one thing I love its unnecessary gore and humour, so that's what I'm trying to channel".

Another 2000AD newcomer, Maura McHugh, writes Psi-Judge Anderson with art from Emma Vieceli, and says that the Special as "a welcome signal from 2000 AD that it's a comic book that welcomes women's creative input".

Over all, despite criticism in some comic circles as just a publicity stunt, I genuinely don't see it that way, and nor do the incredibly talented group of creatives filling the pages of the Special. 2018's 2000AD Sci-Fi Special could well prove to be one of the most important issues in the continuing history of one of Britain's greatest comics.





Judge Anderson The Heart of the Dredd Universe

I first encountered Judge Anderson when I pulled down the much anticipated cross-over event between Batman and Judge Dredd - Judgement on Gotham from the newsagents shelf. I didn't know much about the Dredd universe then, it was 1995 and I was at school, captivated by the hype regarding the Dredd film starring Stallone. As I read through the pages on that rainy Tuesday afternoon - I caught a glimpse of this enticing female Judge who answered the phone before it rang. This was a fantastic method to introduce a character with psychic abilities.

Simon Bisley's cover artwork had prompted me to open this crossover event which promised a title fight between Batman and Dredd. However it was the supporting character of Anderson who proved to be the lynchpin of the narrative. Her presence throughout some of the most grotesque and madcap of panels, brought levity and congruity within the narrative. She became the bridge between the worlds of DC and 2000AD, making sure a narrative which could have been easily fractured by so many characters being injected into a convoluted storyline remained consistent in tone.

Years later, as I began to collect 2000AD issues and annuals, I quickly found that it was her adventures who captured an alternative tale of the Mega City Judge.

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Instead of the taciturn, stoic Judge readers were used to with Dredd, with Anderson, we were presented with an emotionally responsive and compassionate character. For me, she became the heart of the Dredd universe, with powerful characterisation and a controversial story arc. Judge Anderson is one of the most exciting characters to grace the pages of 2000AD.

Human Qualities

Judge Anderson is a writers dream. She's a dynamo of powerful emotions, fuelled by personal and professional conflicts and a set of unique abilities in the Justice Department which isolates her from her fellow Judges. Anderson has been effectively used by writers such as John Wagner and Alan Grant to highlight Judge Dredd's best qualities as a character in their shared adventures. Dredd relies on the presence of other characters to bring out the best in him. In Mega City One, every Judge dresses like him, trained like him and shares the same motivations. Dredd needs the supporting characters, to show how cynical he is, how jaded he is with the society which he policies. For Dredd to work, we need to see just how terrifying he is, just how far he will go to 'uphold the law'. In order to do this we need to see him through the perspective of others. Anderson is used perfectly in this capacity.

While Dredd is a monolithic embodiment of justice, it's impossible to relate to him - the average reader could not feel any emotional connection to the character in most of his appearances. Anderson however has an altruistic motive which manifests in her career path, she is driven to protect the city and it's populace. She seems to want to redeem the city and prove that good can triumph over evil. She isn't driven by the abstract notion of The Law but rather because she understands that it's the moral thing to do. She's a character whose emotional reactions can be understood by the reader in the context of the struggles she faces in her life. She has an incredible about of turmoil which bubbles below the surface and she uses that in her greatest moments to fuel her battles against some of the worst that the city can throw at her.

Perhaps more importantly, she is our cipher or avatar into the universe of Judge Dredd, showing us the sprawling madness of Mega-City One. Through her we view the horrors and at times wonders that exist there. Dredd can show us the city but Anderson can make us feel it.

Special Abilities

Anderson is a Psi Judge, she's a psychic, she can tune into the thoughts of those around her and hear what they think. In the initial Anderson centric stories, this ability was explored in the context of the psychos and the criminals and the everyday citizens of Mega City One. At times during these stories, we, the reader, are shown the avalanche of pain which torrents through her mind and soul in some of the moments. The best utilisation of her talents in narrative come from how it manifests around her friends and trusted colleagues. Their admiration and at times fear of her abilities and distrust of her stability as a Judge. It is because of these abilities that she feels distant from many of the Justice Department ideals - which fuels later character arcs.

Anderson carries such weight as a character, someone who truly sees the ugliness of the world around her and yet still believes in the innate goodness of her fellow human. It is this factor that sets her apart and makes her a true hero of the Justice Department - unlike Dredd who is a fascist, jaded, anti-hero. Her abilities also enable writers and artists to create fantastical situations - from the Dark Judges to even Satan who appears outside the gates of MegaCity One. Her narratives can be concluded in far more interesting ways than just a shoot out and I always enjoy how her procedural detective work is so very different to the street Judges due to her psychic abilities.

She's a Powerful Female Character

Anderson's characterisation is unabashedly sexy, artists and writers don't shy away from her femininity in the way that is generally observed in other female Judges, such as Hershey. This sexiness is not used at the expense of her other characteristics, it's carefully balanced with her ability to kick ass. She's an accomplished street judge who has survived over two decades in the lethal environment of Mega City One. She's gone toe to toe with Judge Dredd's arch nemesis Judge Death and in her 'off-duty' time, she can often be found kicking the crap out of hapless criminals stupid enough to break the law in front of an off duty Judge.

There are an incredible amount of emotively driven storylines, because of this, we can often forget that she can also be ruthless in the execution of her duties. She volunteered into Dredd's commando unit sent to wipe out East Meg One during the Apocalypse War, she also gave Dredd the codes to blow the city sky high! She possesses far more warrior courage than third rate female heroes such as Wonder Woman when she faces a demonic horde with a knife and being supported by a crutch in The Possessed storyline.

Judge Cassandra Anderson has become as much a part of the Dredd saga as Dredd himself. Her continued appearance in comics - she has had a solo run courtesy of IDW. Her appearance in the 2012 Dredd movie and her appearance at various cosplay events testify to Anderson's continued - if not increased - popularity. I submit that she is the heart of the Dredd universe and one of the greatest female heroes in British comics.

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Artwork by Paul Williams.





FALSE FLAG

ART: FAY DALTON

WRITTEN: PAT MILLS

LETTERING: ANNIE PARKHOUSE



THE SENSATIONAL FAY DALTON

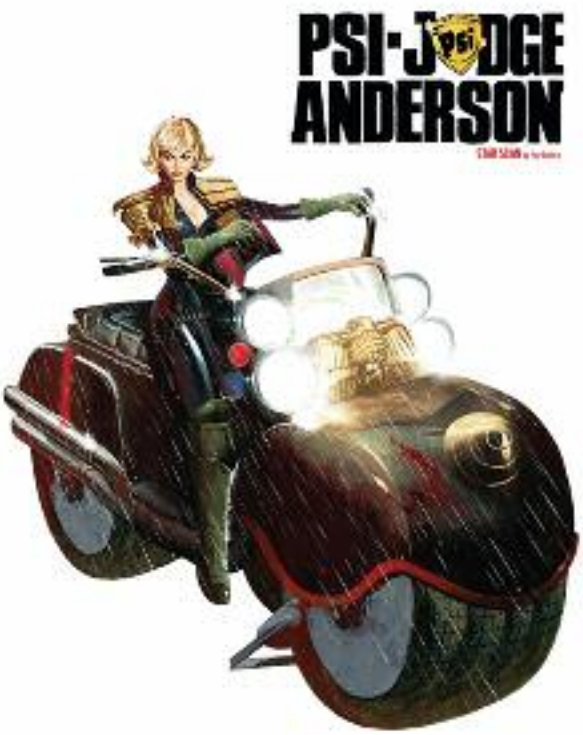
I first encountered Fay Dalton's work when I picked up the excellent Casino Royale, an illustrated adaptation of one of the greatest and most iconic works of British fiction. I am a self-confessed Bond fan, I have the collectors editions of the most of the films and even have played the various video games in the franchise. I had not, however, ever owned or read a novel based on 007's original adventures. Lifting the fairly heavy tome in my hand, I immediately appreciated the artwork presented on the cover and having flicked through the pages, decided that - yes, this would be coming home with me.

Fay Dalton has a genius talent for taking popular characters and crafting them into a stylish 'vintage look' reminiscent of the resplendent art that pervaded in the 1950's and 60's. It was a talent which again caught my attention when I saw her work in the Judge Dredd Megazine. This time she was illustrating a series of stories from the American Reaper universe. Crafted from the mind of comic book legend Pat Mills, these tales see elderly criminals seeking a new lease of life by possessing the bodies of teenagers. These naughty oldsters are eventually tracked down and apprehended by a detective division called 'The Reapers'. The back story of the talented artists involvement in this project is a unique one. A competition was held by Charlie Bowden at Pickled Ink to find a new comic book talent. Fay's panache became evident and she was introduced into the British comic book scene.

The stylish detail and almost nostalgic quality breathes a new lease of life into the comic book medium. It's great to see another talented artist join the ranks of such luminaries as Clint Langely and Glenn Fabry. Truly showing the comic book and literary world that when it comes to dedicated talent, the UK is the nation to beat! Earlier in this issue, I had written an article regarding Judge Anderson. I was surprised to learn that Fay had also re-imagined this character for a Megazine pin-up.

It's a beautifully moody and textually suggestive piece. There's a real sense of the materials of character and the motorcycle bleeding through. From the worn tread of the beefy tyres to the heavy golden eagles on the characters shoulders. I would love to see what Fay could do with Anderson in a comic strip story, how she would make the character her own and how she would further the personal narrative of the character through her artistic interpretation.

I really look forward to what comes next from Fay, she has an ability to create iconic scenes and dynamic imagery with original characters and also the proven talent to reinterpret the familiar.



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Wonder Woman

From Grant Morrison's radical reboot for his Earth One graphic novel to James Robinson's recent run on the regular title, many British creators have left their mark on Wonder Woman over the past eight decades. But few have made the impact on the Amazon princess that Liam Sharp has. One third of DC's much-vaunted Trinity alongside Batman and Superman, Diana Prince's adventures have never sold as prolifically as that of her male counterparts.

But after the Derby-born artist was partnered with writer Greg Rucka - alternating with Australian Nicola Scott who illustrated a special Year One storyline - Wonder Woman was proclaimed as one of the most popular launches of DC's 2016 relaunch, which reintroduced a lot of classic elements to the DC Universe that had been swept under the counter as part of 2011's divisive New 52 revamp. And the huge success of 2017's Wonder Woman movie can't have helped either.

For Sharp, it had simply been a case of being in the right place at the right time. Looking to return to full time drawing after spending the previous five years concentrating on his duties at revolutionary digital comics company Madefire, Sharp – who now lives in San Francisco - was at a Thanksgiving party when he heard from a friend with influential connections in the industry that DC were looking for a new Wonder Woman artist. "It's funny how things happen because it was really just a matter of circumstances," he recalls. "There's no way that I ever could have predicted what has happened in the past couple of years. It's just been remarkable."

When he got home that night, Sharp pulled out an illustration of Red Sonya that he'd done for Dynamite a few years earlier. "It was a piece I did for myself but they liked it so much they ran it as a cover," he says. "It's got a very Barry Windsor Smith quality to it with lots of detail and a bit of a symbolic feel to it. It suggests that there's a story behind it. I liked it, and thought that you could do Wonder Woman like that. You could do it really heavily detailed so that it was almost like taking a pre-Raphaelite approach to the story, which I thought would be interesting."

Having spent the night "with that in my head," Sharp sent the picture the next day to his old friend, DC Co-publisher Jim Lee with a note saying 'Hey Jim, you could do Wonder Woman like this!' Lee was duly impressed and after doing some test pages, Sharp was eventually given the assignment, becoming the first member of the incoming Wonder Woman DC Rebirth team.

"I was actually ended up being on the book before Greg or Nicola came in as I'd had a couple of false starts and there were a couple of other writers that they had initially thought about," he says. "Strangely even though it turned out that Greg and I had previously been at a couple of events at the same time, we'd never actually met. Obviously, I did some research before talking to him and I realised that he was a really big deal. So I don't know how we missed each other, but we weren't on each other's radar. Greg had very strong views about how Wonder Woman should be done as a story, and he needed to know that the artist was going to be on the same page as well. But a call was set up, and we were both biting our nails. After much pacing around, we jumped on the phone and –as my wife has said – within a minute she could tell that it was going to be fine."

Originally created in 1940 by notorious psychologist and inventor-turned-comic book author William Moulton Marston and artist Harry G. Peter, Wonder Woman has been brought to life by many leading artists over the years. Most recently, George Perez helmed his own fan-favourite relaunch in 1987, which was arguably the last time Wonder Woman scaled the popular heights that it did under Rucka and Sharp.

"I was aware of the George Perez purely because I had a friend at the time who loved it," recalls Sharp. "I had a couple of friends who were big comic readers, and I used to share a studio in Islington with Andy Lanning and he was into lots of different comics. I also had a friend called Colin, who just loved George Perez and his Wonder Woman run. At the time though, I was heading in a different direction as I was looking to Europe. I also discovered Barry Windsor Smith and was thinking about what Frank Miller had done with The Dark Knight Returns, which at the time seemed like such a progressive and alternative take on what a comic could be, and that was what appealed to me. So I didn't really look at the George Perez stuff in the same light that I have since, as he had more of a classical, old school approach to comics. Ironically, I think my approach is pretty old school. I loved the Wonder Woman covers that Brian Bolland did in the '80s and I picked those issues up for him alone, and I also loved Adam Hughes's Wonder Woman covers. He gave her such majesty and power, and just made her feel really beautiful."

While Rucka and Sharp both departed Wonder Woman itself in 2017, Sharp has since returned to Diana in this year's The Brave and the Bold mini-series, which he has both written and drawn. Taking its title from DC's long-running team-up book, the six-parter sees her joining forces with Batman on a mysterious case that also allows Sharp to explore his interest in the mythic lore of his homeland.

"That was at the heart of the whole proposal really," says Sharp. "I've wanted to tell an epic story featuring Irish and Celtic gods and heroes for as long as I have been working in the industry, which is now 32 years and counting! I studied Greek and Roman culture and mythology at school,

and read Jim Fitzpatrick's The Silver Arm in my teens, becoming enamoured by those stories and his art. I thought 'how come we don't hear as much about Celtic mythology as we do everything else?' It's the mythology of our own islands, our own heritage. After that, I read Alan Lee's beautifully illustrated Mabinogion, which is about Welsh Celtic myths, and I read Lady Gregory's interpretation of The Tain, and Gods and Fighting Men, which is all classic Irish myths, and many other books on the subject."

After Wonder Woman concluded, DC editor Mark Doyle asked Sharp to 'pitch your dream project and let's go from there…' "This was that dream project!" laughs Sharp. "It's also dedicated to my late father-in-law Danny McCormack, who shared my love of Irish mythology, what with him being a Limerick man!"



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JOSE ROD MOTA!



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Next issue of Comic Scene UK out 1st September, includes 80 years of the Beano.



August 30th 2018 is a mile stone in UK comics history... The 50th anniversary of the very first comic convention in the UK; Comicon '68.

That first comic convention, which took place August 30th to September 2nd 1968, might have only had 70 attendees, but its impact cannot be underestimated. And it's all thanks to the organising team of Phil Clarke, the late Steve Moore, and Phil's then girlfriend (later wife), Kay Hawkins.

Phil Clarke's life in comics is full of major firsts; not only was he the organiser of that first comic convention, but he was also, again with Steve Moore, the creator of the first UK comic fanzine, KA-POW, in 1967, and later on, in 1976, opened one of the UK's very first comic shops, Birmingham's Nostalgia & Comics.

It's now 50 years on from that first UK Comic Convention, and frankly, it's about time we gave one of the UK's comics pioneers the credit he deserves. I sat down with Phil recently to talk of his comic life, and in particular, Comicon '68.

Phil Clarke began his comics' life as a fan, pure and simple. "In the 50s and

60s, my schoolboy days, we had to make do with reading or physical exertions. I choose reading. We were helped onto the comics trail by a wealth of good quality weekly comics and even more exciting fare in the black and white reprints of American comics."

But it was discovering US comics in the 60s that really set him on the path to a career in comics. "The arrival of American comic books with shiny covers and full colour interiors gave you something you did not just cast aside after reading. Once the comics bug got you, the quest for back issues began."

One problem of comic collecting at the time, Phil says, was that "it was a lonely hobby and there didn't seem to be many likeminded people around". Phil recalls the first discussions of getting comic fans together for a convention came at the 1964 World Science Fiction Convention in London: "At this meeting in the Mount Royal Hotel were Steve Moore, Derek 'Bram' Stokes, Mike Higgs, myself and, I think, Jim Baikie and possibly a couple of others."

"From 1965 through to 1968 much of my spare time was taken up in putting together the fanzine KA-POW". But things were slowly coming together for what would become Comicon '68. At this point, Phil tells us, "Steve Moore was starting his rise in the comics industry, his first steps being the office junior at Odhams Press Power Comics publications. It was because of Steve that we had so many mentions in their letters sections and the 'News From The Floor Of 64' page".

"The next year, 1968, we had that long-awaited first British Comic Convention. I chose the 4-star Midland Hotel in Birmingham. A classy choice, the rooms were 3 guineas a night! The two main function rooms cost us 150 guineas for the three days."

Part of paying for convention costs came from publications for the event; "Two issues of our magazine, 'The Comic Fan', produced by Steve Moore on his spirit duplicator. They were information magazines, including comics for sale, all to help pay for the convention."

However, with just days to go before the big event, things still had chance to go wrong! As Phil explains; "The programme of events for the con was to be produced with Dave McCulloch and his duplicator. The stencils were sent to Dave but somehow were lost in the post. This meant a hurried dash to Stockport to produce a substitute! All thanks to Dave, it turned out really well and was ready to be given out on the Friday". This all meant that the actual convention programme was all put together just a couple of hours prior to the event, complete with a new cover to replace the planned one by Jim Baikie.

And inside that programme, recorded for posterity, are the names of the 47 registered attendees, including artists Mike Higgs, Jim Baikie, and Paul Neary, and future Forbidden Planet bosses Nick Landau and Mike Lake. Also on the list, one Ellen Kendall, very probably the UK's first named female comic fan, whom Phil remembers thus: "Thinking back on it, I'm reminded that the few female attendees were girlfriends, except for one girl comic fan from Wales who attended with her friend for company". There were also five 'registered non-attending members', paying for the convention materials, including a certain 14-year-old by the name of Alan Moore. Phil mentions two dealers attending in his programme introduction; 'The Con Man Speaks': "Eager Igor will probably have his table ready for the selling of his gear early in the afternoon and Frank Dobson will be following suit in the early evening". Igor was Derek 'Bram' Stokes, later to open the very first UK comic shop, Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed.

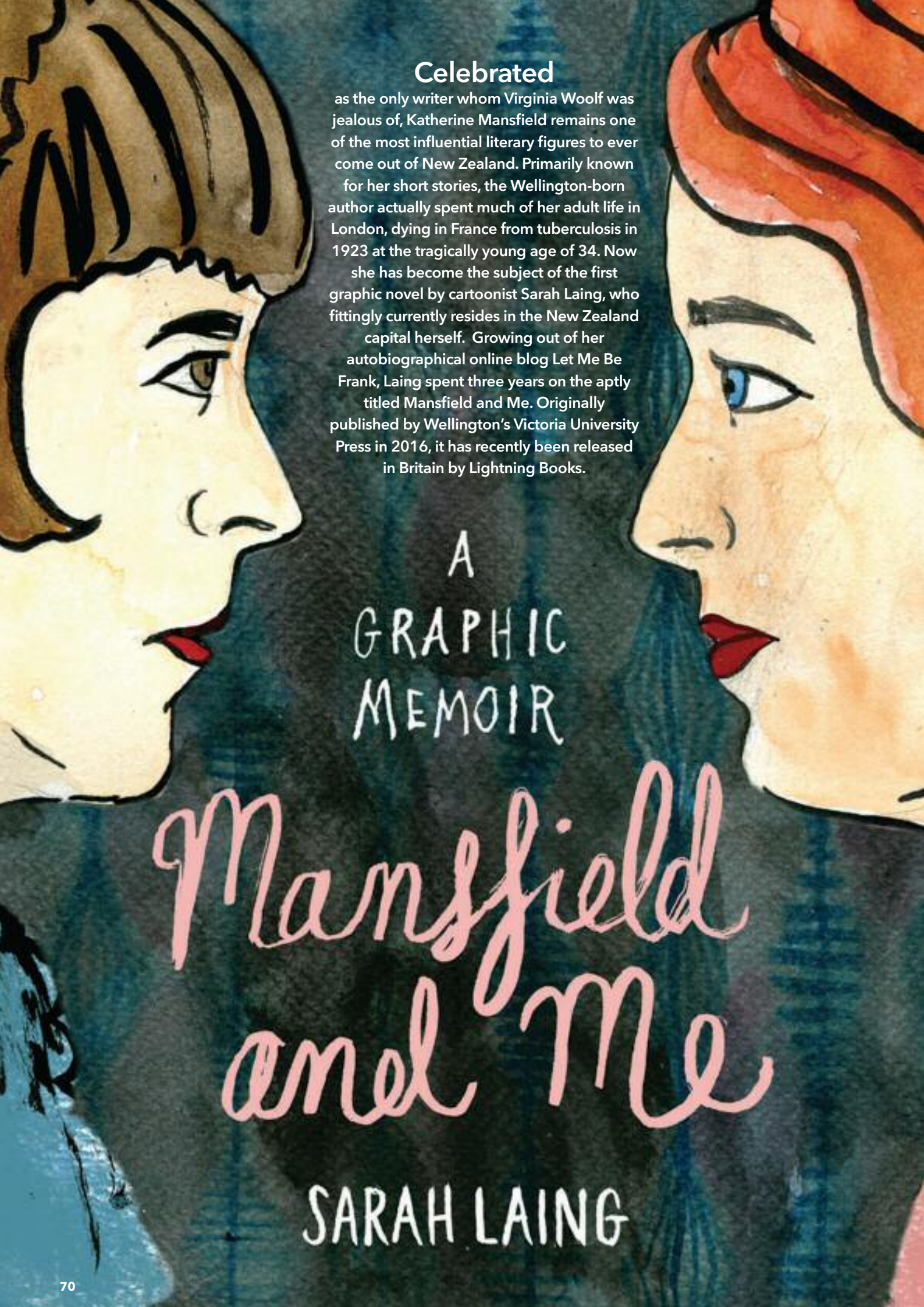
In the end, as Phil remembers; "the final count for attendees was 70" who were treated to a three-day convention full of auctions, screenings of old films and serials, art exhibitions, and panel discussions, including 'Can you beat the experts?', 'Old comics are better than new', and 'The men behind the superheroes'. Saturday included the Edgar Rice-Burroughs themed 'Midnight dum-dum' get together, and a fancy dress contest – featuring Nick Landau as Captain Cold and a young Phil as Captain Marvel.

Following this very first UK Comic Convention, Phil continued in a successful career in comics, eventually leading to the opening of Nostalgia & Comics in 1976. He sold the store to Forbidden Planet International in 1997 but is still active in UK comics, and you can still see him at several conventions through the year.

Hopefully, I'll be covering more from this UK comics pioneer in the future, including his retailing years, but right now, with the 50th anniversary of the first UK Comic Convention on August 30th , it's time to raise a glass to the organisers; Phil Clarke, Steve Moore, and Kay Hawkins and pay particular thanks to Phil Clarke, a trailblazer of the UK comics scene and a genuine hero of British comics.



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Celebrated

as the only writer whom Virginia Woolf was jealous of, Katherine Mansfield remains one of the most influential literary figures to ever come out of New Zealand. Primarily known for her short stories, the Wellington-born author actually spent much of her adult life in London, dying in France from tuberculosis in 1923 at the tragically young age of 34. Now she has become the subject of the first graphic novel by cartoonist Sarah Laing, who fittingly currently resides in the New Zealand capital herself. Growing out of her autobiographical online blog Let Me Be Frank, Laing spent three years on the aptly titled Mansfield and Me. Originally published by Wellington's Victoria University Press in 2016, it has recently been released in Britain by Lightning Books.





ALL ABOUT SARAH LAING

"Blogs are always ravenous for content, and Katherine Mansfield kept on photo bombing the panels," she laughs. "She was either adding pathos or glamour, or just reminding me that she was the real deal and that I had a long way to go if I wanted to be a writer like her."

Hailing from Palmerston North – around two hours drive north of Wellington - Laing grew up on Mansfield's oeuvre, studying her 1922 short story 'The Doll's House' in primary school before going on to tackle much of her other work in high school. "It culminated in a pilgrimage to Wellington to see her birthplace and the scene of her childhood holidays," she recalls. "My grandmother also lay claim to her, as she was a fellow Wellingtonian, and her parents had moved in similar circles to the Beauchamps, Mansfield's family. They both lived in Karori, which was where families escaped the open sewers and rats of inner city 19th Century Wellington. I think Wellingtonians in particular have an obsession with Mansfield, perhaps because of all the parks, street signs and monuments that bear her name."

Rather than a straightforward historical account, Laing has interspersed scenes of Mansfield and her friends with autobiographical sequences from her own childhood and adult life, as she sets out to also become a successful writer. "I could easily have written a conventional biography but I felt that had been done to death, albeit in prose form, and I also admired the biographies of Janet Malcolm, who always included tantalising details of her own life, and followed threads thematically rather than adhering to chronology," explains Laing, referring to the American author whose books include The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.

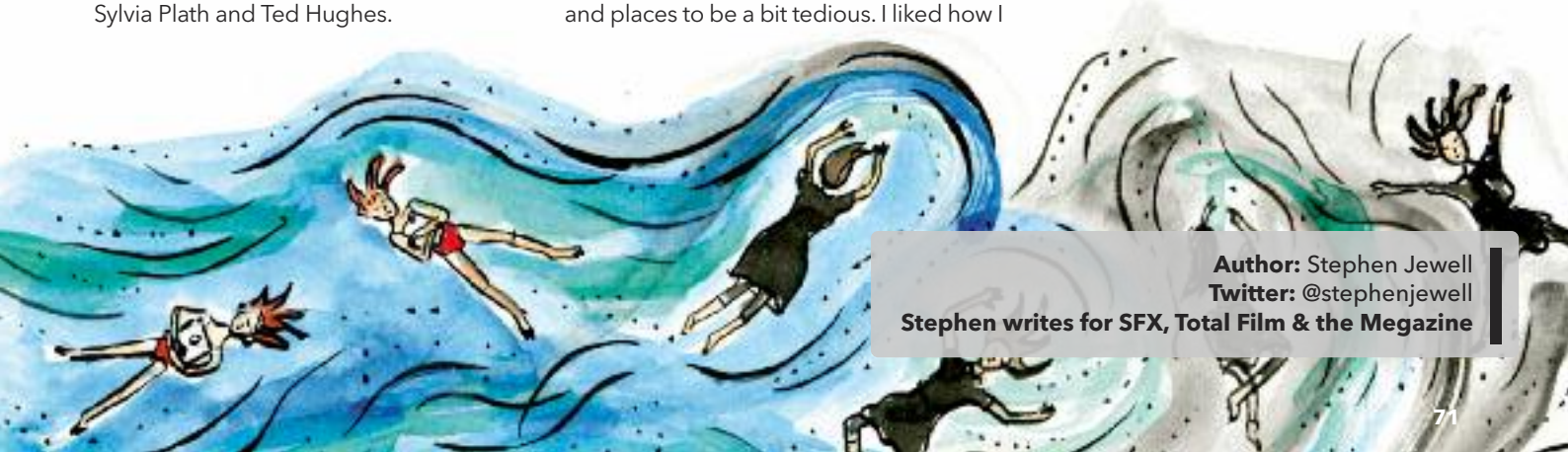
"I also liked the idea of identification – how in reading about other people's lives, you recognise bits of your own, and how when a person tells you a story, you are often compelled to tell an overlapping story in exchange," she continues. "I felt like having a conversation with one of my foremothers of literature, rather than just fangirling her. Also I'd been engaged in a long project of documenting my own life in the form of diary comics, but mine was an ordinary life without encounters with the greats of modernism or spells in communes or an early death from TB, so I thought Katherine cold provide the drama that my own life was lacking."

With Mansfield counting DH Lawrence and Lytton Strachey amongst her friends and having participated in notorious English mage Aleister Crowley's occult gatherings, Laing was surprised by how many famous figures she has woven into her narrative. "I grew up reading music magazines and watching Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous and it seemed like Mansfield was there in the thick of modernism," she says. "Modigliani threw her friend Beatrice Hastings out of a window in a drunken argument, and her husband Murry commissioned Picasso to draw pictures for his magazine. This seemed exciting to me because in New Zealand we feel so far from the action, and yet here was someone originally from here who was now in the thick of it, no longer living at the edge of the world."

While she has previously published a couple of prose novels, Laing felt that comics was the ideal format for Mansfield and Me. "I really like how concise you have to be in comics," she says. "In general, I'm not a big biography reader, and I find lists of dates and places to be a bit tedious. I liked how I had to really distill what I wanted to say about her life before I began. She left lots of vivid, cinematic descriptions in her letters and journals, and the addresses cited in the biographies proved useful, as I could Google the locations and recreate them from Streetview. Mansfield painted with words too, daubing colours into her stories and adopting the fragmentary vivid style she observed in the impressionists' paintings, so comics seemed like a medium that she might like herself."

While the historical sequences are rendered in black and white, Laing has produced the contemporary, autobiographical sections in full colour. "I wanted to make clear to the reader which part of the story they were in," she explains. "Although I toyed with the idea that Mansfield deserved the colour more than me, I remembered my own memories in vivid Technicolor, and all the photos of Mansfield were in black and white. But sometimes colour seeps into her narrative – generally when there is something fanciful, imagined or remembered."

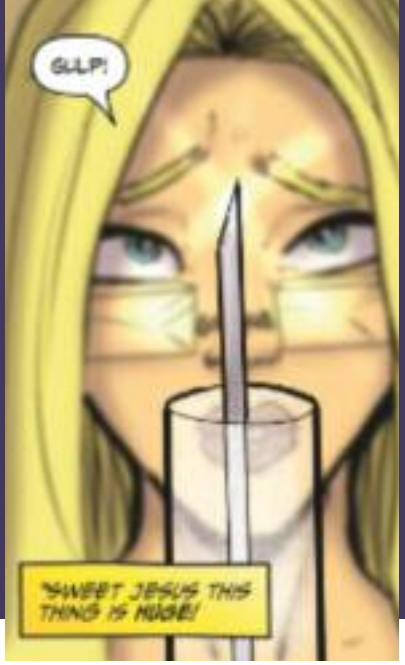
Weighing in at a hefty 336 pages, Laing has thankfully broken her story down into more manageable bite-sized sections. "I did that because I wanted to mirror the short story form that Mansfield was most famous for, and actually many of the chapters take their titles from her stories," she says. "It was also an insurance plan because if anything went terribly wrong, I could publish them as mini-comics and sell them at the local zinefest."



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REASONS FOR CREATING

An Interview with Susie Gander





People in the small press create comics for all different reasons. I've got to meet to a lot of people over the years and talk about why they do what they do. Not least of all is Susie Gander. A UK based creator who came to comics quite recently.

I love chatting to comics creator Susie Gander, she is sarcastically and hilariously honest without being too earnest and has a great comics style but she never comes over as cocksure or pompous. This is credit to her professional standing as over the last year she has become quite sought after in the Small Press comics and Zine field.

I got to sit down, get punched on the arm more than once for being cheeky, and chatted to her about upcoming projects and why she creates in this beloved medium.

Susie's profile grew remarkably after the highly successful Kickstarter and launch of her comic Perrywinkle. A powerful retelling of her own fight against Hodgkin lymphoma but done with a mixing in of fantasy and super heroical elements. The comic takes place in the home and hospital of a woman suffering from cancer. She is visited by the bald and attractive 'Perry Winkle who is described in the narrative as '…your own personal strong, fearless, cancer killing superhero… and let's face it, not too bad on the eyes either.' It's a story that is both heart-breaking and at moments enlightening, educational, brave and funny. I came away from the comic feeling more than a little broken but also full of admiration for this creator.

The creation of Perrywinkle has its own secret origin. Susie had to spend hours in treatment and was determined not to sit about doing nothing so she decided to draw what was happening to her both physically and emotionally. She considered the straightforward autobiography comic but decided that 'a diary comic was just too depressing'. So, she created 'Perry' who she describes as 'my own

Jiminy Cricket.' Her comic started as biro sketches as that was all she could take into the sterile ward and slowly it became part of her routine and linked to mending the illness.

Susie had a two-day window after the chemo treatment to get her work down on paper and before the drugs would kick in. Along with her husband Chris they would make the most of those couple of days by thinking about and then drawing the story and then the pair feeding the ducks in the park to unwind 'there are loads of ducks in my house and that's why' she joked.

'I admit that I'm a little OCD' said the perfectionist that is Ms Gander. After initially posting the story as a web-comic she decided to redraw it again for the print version. You can see the growth in art style and storytelling on every page. You can also see how the use of colour signifies the battle with the illness. With letters by Rob Jones this is the complete package.

The book also pokes fun at the illness. Every surprise fart or strange coloured wee appears to lighten the mood and allows the moments of sadness to become much more impactful on the reader. You really feel what both Susie and her husband are going through but are also at moments educated at what this illness does to people. I asked Susie if she had considered a sequel to Perry winkle. She told me that she 'doesn't want to bring her back' and hinted that this particular super hero's job is now done and that moving on is for the best.

The physical copies of the comic got launched at Nottingham Comic Con in October 2016 and since then Susie has taken up some other interesting projects. 'I'm currently working on a story for Little Heroes issue two' she told me 'a comic anthology for kids who find themselves in hospital'. She's also got another three or four stories on the go and is collaborating with writers in the UK Small Press and Indie fields. It can't be too long before a bigger company come knocking for this creator, so watch this space.

Susie has also dipped her toe into the Comic Convention circuit and can next be found at the True Believers Summer Event in Cheltenham in August and then the Nottingham Comic Con in October.

The comic itself also did a lot to raise the profile and hard cold cash for Bloodwise a cancer research charity. To donate to Bloodwise head over to https://bloodwise.org.uk/ The back matter in the comic explains what this wonderful charity does.

You can find out more about Susie Gander and her art at https://www.perrywinkle-comic.com/ or by following her on Twitter @SusieGander

Many thanks for reading.

'THE USE OF COLOUR SIGNIFIES THE BATTLE WITH THE ILLNESS'





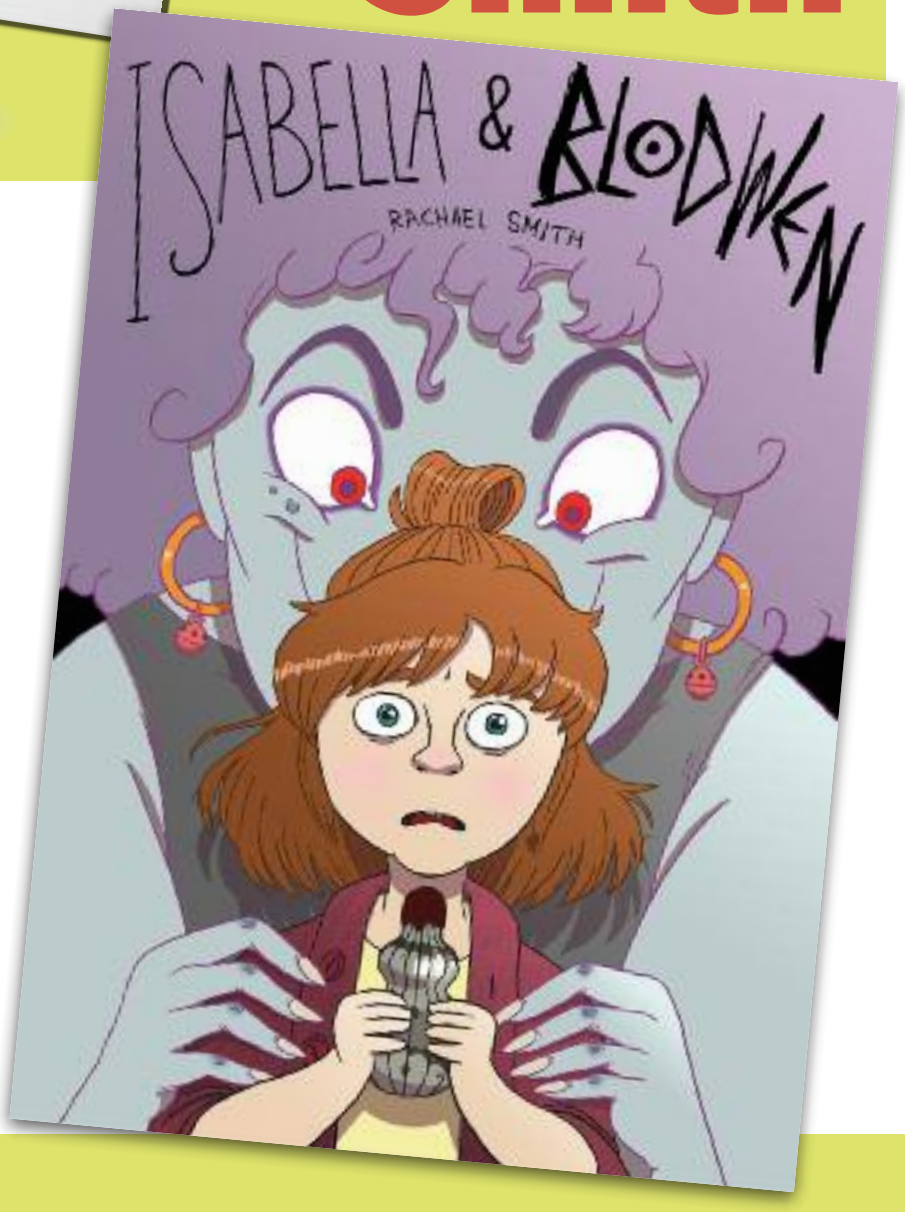




Author: Tony Esmond
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An Interview with Rachael Smith



Rachael Smith

is a young comic maker with comics, collaborations, and four graphic novels under her belt. Immensely talented, we're proud to feature her in this issue as one of the finest young British comic makers.

Her first foray into comics came in 2011, age 26. "I was suffering from a horrible bout of depression and to think more positively I started to draw one good thing that either happened to me, or that I saw, each day". This simple idea, created between Smith and her therapist, led to the webcomic One Good Thing. A comic career was born!

Her first, self-published comic, The Way We Write, featured members of the band, Her Name Is Calla. "I was dating one of the band members and hung out with them quite a bit. They were funny and friendly, so I made the comic to make them laugh...it ended up being 28 pages long so I asked if it would be OK if I made it into a mini comic and they said yes!"



At the same time, Smith was busy with her webcomics, One Good Thing and Ask Flimsy, where Smith illustrated reader's questions addressed to Flimsy, a blue, wine-loving kitty. Her third webcomic, Bess, began in 2015. As of 2017, Smith's webcomic work ended, allowing her to concentrate on comic making. "I do want to go back to Bess, but I want to work out a whole story and do it as a book. I don't think the webcomic game is for me right now."

It was with her second comic, 2013's I Am Fire that her voice really came through properly, full of hilarious comedy and a lot of swears! "Even if I'm writing something with sad or dark bits in it, there will always be jokes. I've always wanted to make joyful things, rather than sad or scary things."

After early success, Smith set about her first graphic novel, House Party, published in 2014 from Adam Cadwell and Marc Ellerby's Great Beast. "Having them support me and advise me on putting together my first 'proper' book was invaluable to me."House Party' wouldn't be half as good as it is if I'd not had those two in my corner."

After that first trio of comics, all focused on youthful idiocy, Smith's second graphic novel was something very different. 2015's The Rabbit, published by Avery Hill, is a more mature affair, still with comedy elements, but the set-up; two sisters escaping a horrible (although never revealed) home life, has a real emotional punch. The addition of the fantasy element, with giant rabbit, Craig transformed into a manipulative, abusive element merely adds to the heartbreak.

"The Rabbit came from a silly drawing I made of a girl walking in the woods in front of this gigantic, ridiculous rabbit wearing a feather boa. I wanted to know more about these characters and about where they were going...so it just sort of happened from there! I didn't really feel like I was switching gears at all...I was just listening to my characters. They just told me different things."

2016's Artificial Flowers from Avery Hill was a slight return to the comedic tone. Featuring older versions of House Party's Siobhan and I Am Fire's pyromaniac Chris, it became the first 'Smith-verse' crossover. "I did Fine Art at Uni, and then went on to an MA in Art Museum and Gallery Studies. I love art, but the 'art world' struck me as so elitist and impenetrable that I spent a few very frustrating years in London feeling like I couldn't get into it. I suppose a few things in Siobhan's life are taken from my past, but Siobhan is made of much sterner stuff than I. She deals with her problems in ways that I wouldn't...or didn't."

Finally, bringing us up to date with Smith's published works; we have Wired Up Wrong, funded through a Kickstarter campaign. An intensely personal project, it addresses Smith's struggles with anxiety, self-esteem, and depression, yet does so with a delightful comedic touch. "Sometimes it naturally comes through the telling. Crying at a leaf, for example, might seem justified at the time, but I can see how it might look comical. I didn't want it to be a completely bleak book. I often worried that my Mum would worry when she read them, but I wanted to be honest. I owed that to my readers, and to fellow sufferers."

Smith's latest work, announced in April 2018, is the graphic novel, Isabella and Blodwen, currently funding through Unbound. And we'll talk more of that next issue!

As for her approaches to publishing, Smith's open to them all; "I think self-publishing is always a good start as you get a sense of the work involved, and publishers are more likely to pick you up if they see you're passionate enough to self-publish. Avery Hill have been amazing, taking care of all the marketing, promotion and distribution so I had more time to make the books! Kickstarter is great because you feel like you're in collaboration with people who love your work, but it can be stressful with the promotion and order fulfilment aspects. And so far Unbound have been great!"

Smith also finds time to get involved in other things. She's been involved with Lumberjanes variant cover work and art for the site Empathize This, whose readers submit anonymous stories on a variety of complex, emotive subjects. She's also had covers and strips in Titan Comics' Doctor Who series. "I'd never seen it! When I was offered the gig I used to binge watch it in preparation for the job!"

Rachael Smith is definitely someone who will be around comics for a long time. Looking back over her work so far, it's incredible to see how far she's come. As for where she's going? Well, right now she says "I'm really very excited to make Isabella and Blodwen – it's so nice to finally be able to talk about it!"

Part 2 next issue.



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YVONNE HUTTON AND ROY OF THE ROVERS



"It was under her artistic stewardship Roy first wore Melchester's iconic red with yellow stripe kit."

Quiz question...how many female artists can you name that have illustrated high-profile British comics stories over the last , what, 50 years? Give yourself 70 years if you want to include the female artists who worked on the original Dan Dare strip (I'm thinking of Greta Tomlinson's work on the Marooned on Mercury strip highlighted in Comic Scene #0). Can you think of many others? Any others? Off the top of my head Angie Kincaid co-creating Slaine for 2000ad is the only example I can think of (and even that answer is cheating a bit, she wasn't illustrating the story week in, week out for years at a time).If there are loads more and I've forgotten all, my apologies, tweet me at the address below and let me know who I've forgotten. Anyway...

The recently published The Inking Woman, taking its name from the terrific exhibition hosted by London's Cartoon Museum in 2017, shines a very welcome spotlight on women cartoonists over the last 250 years. A number of these women were gag cartoonists but not many were strip cartoonists and not very many of them worked for the big comics publishers. While it's great to see these creators highlighted it's also functions as a stark reminder of how few women artists have actually graced the pages of mainstream British comics, hence my teaser above. If you read the Phoenix comic you might have a couple of artists in mind (Patrice Aggs, Kate Brown, Laura Ellen Anderson) but if you're not quite the right demographic for the Phoenix then I reckon you might struggle.

One person who exemplifies this problem is Yvonne Jeanne Hutton (née Mullans; born October 31, 1941, died March 1992 – note that her maiden name is often quoted as Mullins but it's Mullans; and her middle name is often listed as Jean but that's wrong too). You won't be alone in



saying "who?" Incredibly, Yvonne worked as the artist on Roy of the Rovers in Tiger from 1967–75, and again in 1976–78 (by which point Roy had already established his own, separate comic), as well as a number of back-up strips in Roy of the Rovers weekly, including "Durrell's Palace" (1981–85), the follow-on strip "Wayne's Wolves" (1985–86) "Kevin's Chance" (1986–87) "City" (1987–88), and "Terrible Twins" (1988–89). She also drew the Roy of the Rovers daily strip in the Daily Star (this is not to be confused, of courses, with the Roy of the Rovers newspaper strip that Kim Raymond drew in the Today newspaper). When I say "incredibly" it's not incredible that a woman worked as the lead artist on one of the most high-profile boys stories but it's incredible that she's not more well-known. Some of this, I'm sure, stems from artists not being able to sign their work at the time and also a certain snobbery about a woman drawing this strip. Her early death, at the age of 51, meant that she has been unable to benefit from the greater recognition which we accord to comic writers and artists nowadays.

Fellow Roy Race artist David Sque, speaking to the fustar website in 2006, said "...basically I was introduced to that world [illustration], funnily enough, by Yvonne Hutton. Her name was actually Yvonne Mullans (at the time) and I used to go to Poole Art College with her. She was in the year above me, Yvonne. And she mentioned this guy Colin Page, and they were doing comic illustrations for children's newspapers, or whatever you want to call them. So I said that's interesting, and she said why don't you come out and meet him, so I went and met him and basically in the final year - in the summer holidays before the final term - I worked with him, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was really brilliant.

Yvonne's editor Barrie Tomlinson recalls "...when Yvonne Hutton first started working for us, she was part of the Colin Page Studio, along with Roy and Scorer artist David Sque. They both worked via that studio until they decided to work with us directly. When I launched Roy of the Rovers as a separate comic, I asked Yvonne to draw the Roy strip in Tiger, while David Sque drew Roy's adventures in the new title. This system worked well and Yvonne did a brilliant job and her work was very popular. She also did other stories to the same high standard. I particularly remember her brilliant art on Durrell's Palace. Her timekeeping was always first class and I never had to worry about delivery dates".

When Yvonne began illustrating Roy she was following in the foot(ball boot)steps of the great Joe Colquhoun and it's always his artwork that I can see whenever I look at Yvonne's artwork. That's a complement, not a criticism! I could look at Joe's stuff all day long – but if the artistic 'scaffolding' is Joe's the excitement and dynamism that she brings to the page are very much her own. Entrusted with the art for the front page of Tiger many times she delivered many fine covers that really use all the tricks in the book to show a fantastic combination of the excitement on and off the pitch. Those crowded, crowded crowd scenes with people crammed into the terraces are matched by on the pitches images that show the speed and athleticism of the way Melchester Rovers play – no mean feat in two dimensions! It's a skill probably best exemplified by another Roy artist Paul Trevillion, the self-styled master of movement. Attractive covers that move the story along are a great boon to publishers who are always keen to draw in the casual reader – these days it's attractive cover-mounted gifts that count more than the cover itself, but that's a whole different issue.

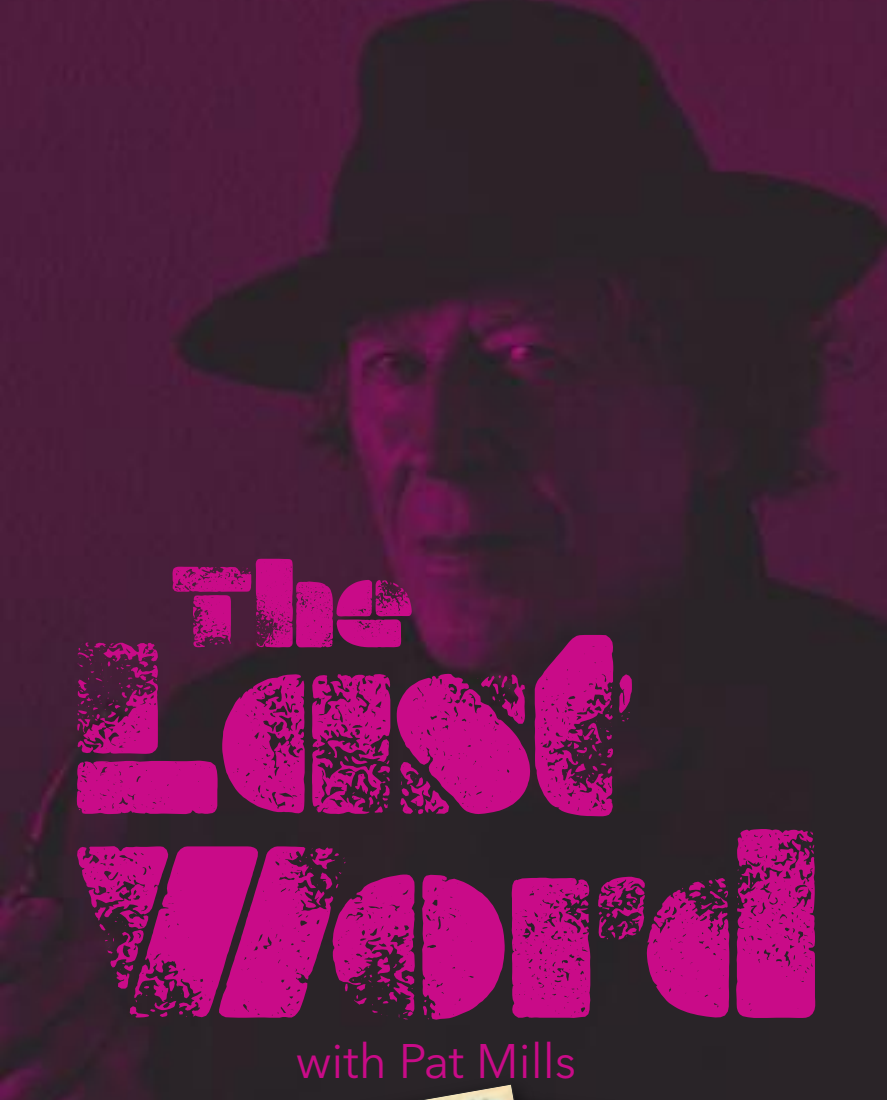
It was under her artistic stewardship Roy first wore Melchester's iconic red-with-yellow-stripe kit.

Asked to recall her, her former editor Barrie Tomlinson recalled "...Yes, I did work with her. She did a lot of stories for Tiger, including Roy of the Rovers, when Roy's own comic started...she was a very talented artist. Her last job was drawing Roy of the Rovers for the Daily Star. Her regular strip wasn't delivered and I received a call to say she had been injured in a car crash. At very short notice, Mike Western took over the story in the newspaper. Yvonne's work is still fondly remembered by former readers and editorial staff. She always did a good job, no matter what the subject."

David Sque was also suitably moved by Yvonne's death to say "...it was a tragedy. She was a lovely girl. A lovely, lovely girl".

Gone but not forgotten Yvonne, the work you did with this character helped to establish him, along with Dan Dare and Judge Dredd, as one of the few comic characters that the public actually recognise. That's quite a legacy.

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The Last Word

with Pat Mills

Death of the Pink Plastic Princess?

I followed with interest a thread on Mumsnet about mums wanting the return of girls comics. 'My daughter isn't into pink princessy types of things'… 'Maybe we could send a message to the publishers putting the current drivel on the shelves – pop this, princess that'…'Calling all publishers, I see a gap in the market, please fill it before my daughter is too old.'

Their overriding requirement was a desire for Story, as in Misty, Jinty, Tammy, Bunty and more. There is other evidence that a revival of these mainstream girls comics is long overdue. Italian Disney's beautiful and stylish W.I.T.C.H has sold in over 65 countries on the newsstands in mega-quantities, although no publisher in the UK was remotely interested when it first appeared. The Best of Jackie sold 89,000 copies retailing at £13 – £17. How many UK sales of any male graphic novel could match those figures? And in a 2011 survey of primary school children's reading habits (by the Bring Back Bunty blog), with over 169 completed questionnaires, 89 were from boys and 80 from girls, the response to more comics was almost identical from both sexes: 'Yes, please!'

And now it's finally happening with Rebellion's impressive range of reprints from Misty, Tammy and Jinty, plus many more stories in the works. So why has it taken so long to revive them? The reasons are down to sexism, snobbery, and elitist comic fans deciding the direction of UK comic publishing. As a result, the fan-based male comic genre has usurped mainstream comics and many intend to keep it that way. How else to explain why commercial realities have been ignored for so long? Far better for elitist editors to publish, say,

1,500 copies of a critically acclaimed Vertigo-style graphic novel than 89,000 copies of – ugh! – Jackie. In fairness, they don't seem to care about the money, only the 'prestige', but they don't care about ordinary readers either and that's a great pity. It used to be that girls' comics were, rightfully, the senior partner in the UK comic industry – women read more than men, after all – with Tammy once selling 250,000 copies a week compared to 2000AD's then 200,000 copies a week.

So why did girls' comics die? It was largely down to indifference, fuelled by snobbery, and a certain bewilderment, too. A lot of people in the comics industry, as they've admitted to me, were baffled as to why some girls' stories worked and others bombed. It is a demanding art form, with very precise and exacting rules that must seem quite arcane to outsiders. And female comic editors and journalists, with their eyes on a future career on the glossies, often felt such 'bog-paper' comics were simply beneath them. This is why there were so many male writers and editors. But then the key girls comic personnel at IPC Magazines – myself, John Wagner and Gerry Finley-Day – were sent in to rescue boys comics that were in big trouble. The three of us succeeded in reviving them, but meanwhile girl's comics had lost their direction, not least because two of their top writers – Pat Davidson and her partner – asked for a credit on their stories. These writers were the girls' comic equivalent of Alan Moore; they had a great writing style, and their stories were phenomenally popular. When their request was refused, they left UK comics forever. 'We can't have freelance writers telling editors what to do,' the managing editor indignantly explained to me. 'Who knows where it could end?' Well, with girls' comics on the scrap heap and you out of a job, mate.

I despaired of ever seeing them return. A competition I was involved in – with a £1K prize - to find a new girls' comic artist, attracted just three entries. Luckily, one of them was the brilliant Fay Dalton, of whom more elsewhere in this issue. Then a major publisher told me none of his staff – nearly half of whom were female editors – were interested in working on the return of Misty, so they had to reluctantly turn it down. The reprint problem was also connected with the physical size of girls' comics and, to my horror, there were serious discussions about publishing them in reduced digest format 'so that they might fit in women's handbags'. As Anita O'Brien of the Cartoon Museum dryly said to me, 'Have they seen the size of women's handbags these days?'

So Rebellion's revival is exciting news. And they now have so many girls' titles in the works that they're unlikely to go away again. What's even more impressive is Rebellion's choice of material. Not just the art-orientated, relatively sophisticated Misty, which purists have easily accepted, but reprints of Jinty's science fiction comic strips, where Story is king – not the art.

In girls' comics, the art has to be good, but no one expects a Dave Gibbons, a Bisley or a Bolland, although I submit that John Armstrong on Bella (Tammy) and Moonchild (Misty) and several other fine girls comic artists are in the same league. But it's Story that matters most, and which is why I always preferred writing for girls comics because I could just concentrate on my craft.

In the forthcoming reprint of my Jinty story, Land of No Tears, the heroine – Life on Mars style – is transported from the operating table to a frightening, emotionless future world where she finds her humble council house has been turned into a museum. In the tradition of The Hunger Games, she has to fight back and defeat the elitist oppressors of this cruel world. It will be published in June alongside Malcolm Shaw's excellent and passionate anti-vivisection saga The Human Zoo, where girls are abducted by aliens. I re-read them both the other day and found them compelling and exciting and I noticed how both are dominated by Story, rather than the art. Thus, they have lots of balloons on each picture, numerous pictures on the page and are told with a great emphasis on Story complexity and emotions. So there's no space for the artist to 'strut his stuff' as on 2000AD. They are what the French call 'classic' in style and some fan boys would call 'old fashioned'. I enjoyed them and I believe so will a new generation of readers. After all, it's Story that should draw us in, and which we've sometimes lost sight of in obeisance to the art. I believe there are important lessons to be learnt from studying such 'classic' stories.

So Rebellion's game-changer has finally and irrevocably taken comics out of the exclusive hands of fan-orientated publishers and brought them back to where they rightly belong: with the mainstream and with kids. They are to be congratulated on this seismic shift in our industry. Over time it will have profound implications for future publications. With so many excellent stories from Misty, Jinty and Tammy as role models, it must eventually lead to origination, perhaps ultimately to female comics once more becoming the senior partner, or, at the very least, providing a Story-based alternative to those empty pink plastic princess publications.

The new Jinty Collection from Rebellion is out now.

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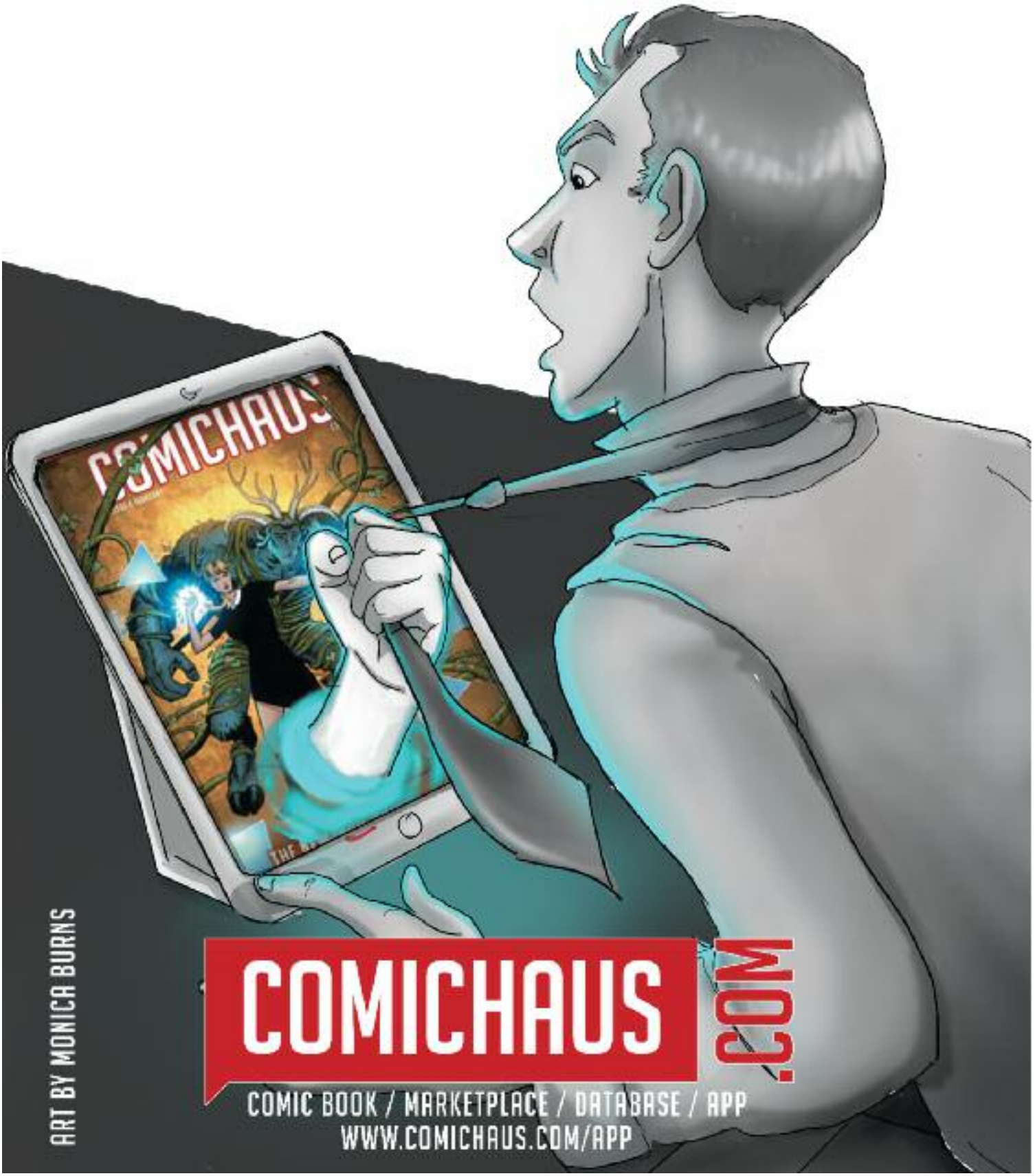
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THE HUMOUR ISSUE

Top Ten Brit
COMEDY COMICS

Alan Moore
BOJEFFRIES SAGA

PAT MILLS

LEO BAXENDALE

KEN REID



Cheeky Weekly



Whizzer & Chips



The Phoenix

OINK, ASTERIX, THE BROONS, NICOLA STREETEN, GRANT MORRISON
BIG DAVE, EMILY MCGORMAN-BRUCE, TIM QUINN, DICKY HOWETT,
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COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine



WELCOME TO THE HUMOUR ISSUE OF COMICSCENE UK

We had a hoot putting it all together and we hope that enjoyment can be felt in our 64 fun packed pages.

This month I will be spreading the good word about ComicScene UK at the MagFest conference in Edinburgh and we have started dipping the water into media sponsoring events such as Coventry ComicCon and the Comic Art Festival in the Lakes.

We started the magazine as a gentle walk, not a sprint, but the response has been fantastic. More comic shops are taking the magazine, and selling out, and I'm pleased to say a couple of distributors have taken an active interest in what we are doing. You may yet see ComicScene UK in more comic shops and on your local newsstands. All the while promoting comics as best we can.

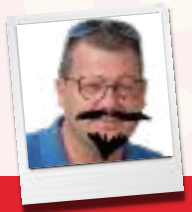
For many of us comics grew up a long time ago, as well as providing entertainment for all ages. However with the Man Booker Prize nominating their first graphic novel 'Sabrina' by Nick Drnaso it seems everyone is starting to catch up with us! If that great news has introduced you to the power of comics and brought you to ComicScene UK for more enlightenment then you are most welcome. Oh, and Sabrina is a great book and you should give it a whirl.

We don't tend to pack our pages with several pages of pictures, news and reviews but try and maintain a healthy spread of articles for your enjoyment. If news and reviews are your thing then in between issues why not keep your eye on our publishers web site comicsflix.org to keep you informed.

Next issue we focus on war comics, a taster of which can be found in this issue with Sniper Elite. Meantime lets be a Menace, a little bit Cheeky and enjoy our Whizzer and Chips.

Yours aye,
Tony

Tony Foster,
Publisher
ComicScene UK



ComicScene UK Issue 2

November 2018

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HA! HA! HA!

GAME FOR A LAUGH?

This summer has seen a huge amount of activity around the 80th anniversary of Beano, with events, exhibitions, a special birthday issue edited by comedian David Walliams, a stunning box set of Beano collectibles, and the relaunch of the Beano fan club, as the Dennis and Gnasher Fan Club.

It's quite clear the weekly humour comic has a special place in the fabric of British culture, held in esteem by artists such as Horace Panter, who has homaged Dennis and company in new Pop Art work; by sportsmen, film and TV stars.

Which begs the question – why has the Beano survived the slow decline of the humour comics market, when so many other comics – Buster, Cor!, The Dandy, Oink, Sparky and Whizzer and Chips to name but a few – fell by the way side, victims of shutdowns and mergers?

One word: investment.

By that, I don't mean Beano Studios and DC Thomson have simply spent a lot of money on Beano to keep it going while , others fell by the way side. If you keep an eye on the trade press and you're lucky enough to catch the occasional TV feature on the title, it's quite clear that a lot of money has been spent on the title, particularly over the last few years, on developing the web site (which continues

to downplay its comic origins, for some obscure reason) to ongoing market research, keeping track of what's popular with a generally young and often quite fickle target audience.

By investment, I'm talking more about the creators who the title seems to have nurtured – albeit keeping some on their toes by rotating commissions and not committing to long runs from many contributors (writer Nigel Auchterlounie and artist Nigel Parkinson perhaps the most obvious exceptions). It might not go down well with creators who've been enjoying working on a particular character, but it helps keep the Beano fresh, its contents a surprise. The investment is clearly about never being complacent and always looking to new ways to raise awareness of the comic, in an age where competition for eyeballs is ever increasing.

It's because of these operational costs – something I touched on last issue – that, perhaps, no other publisher appears to be considering the launch of a new humour comic in the UK marketplace. Rebellion, publishers of 2000AD and Judge Dredd Megazine, own a huge number of fondly-remembered humour characters, including Buster (originally the son of the Mirror newspaper's Andy Capp). But with the continued success of their adventure titles and the astonishing excitement about their Roy of the Rovers revival, I simply don't think that at present, the Oxford-based company has the capacity to consider a The Vigilant-format comedy special to test the water for a new humour comic – although I'd be happy to be proved wrong.

(Back in the 1990s, Marvel UK never seemed to "get" humour comics, either, for similar reasons, despite the undoubted success of The Real Ghostbusters. Its attempts attempts at new humour comics, such as Wicked, and the best efforts of editors such as Tim Quinn and David Leach to mix things up a bit sadly didn't last).

VIZ is still out there and still punching of course, and there are plenty of humour strips in Phoenix comic, with that title also investing in new staff writers such as the hugely-talented James Turner, whose work I've been following since his "Beaver and Steve" days way back in 2004. It's also good to see that humour strips continue in TOXIC and EPIC – and of course the independent comics sector and digital world is awash with great talent. (Bastard Galaxia, anyone?) But part of me can't help but hanker for another Sparky or Beezer, albeit with a modern flavour.

Happy anniversary then, to Beano – the last cover to cover humour weekly on the news stand aimed at kids (of all ages). Long may it continue... but let's not have the rest of the British humour comic rich history consigned to collections and Specials. Let's have a few more laughs.

We need them!



Author: John Freeman
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Website: downthetubes.net
John is currently editing Doctor Who





TOP 10 BEST BRITISH COMEDY COMICS...

A personal selection

Britain has the most fabulously funny comics, and we wanted to get the debate started on what the very funniest are. So here's my ***top 10 Brit comedy comics****, some old, some up to date, some incredibly well known, some that might be new to you. All I can say is that every single one makes me giggle, guffaw, chuckle, and howl with laughter.*

So, in a rough date order... except for numbers 1 and 10... because I'm allowed to bend the rules on my own list!



1. D.R. & QUINCH

Alan Moore and Alan Davis, 1983-1985

The 2000AD tales of two out of control teens with a penchant for thermonuclear weapons had just six proper episodes, but each one is pure comedy gold.

Criminal mastermind Waldo "D.R." (diminished responsibility) Dobbs, and his large purple skinned pal, Ernest Errol Quinch, create havoc wherever they go, with the hilarious chaos peaking with "DR and Quinch go to Hollywood". The delinquents head to Hollywood, complete with stolen (near) incomprehensible script, to bamboozle the movie types, including a hilarious, near unintelligible take on Brando. Everything builds to its absurd finale, Moore and Davis absolutely piling on the laughs. "Mind the oranges, Marlon!" Genius, pure and simple.



2. BASH STREET KIDS

Leo Baxendale - 1954-1961

You simply can't do a top 10 without the genius of Baxendale. Any of his wonderful creations could have been in here; Grimly Feendish, Willy The Kid, Minnie The Minx. But, for me there's a beauty to the anarchy of Beano's Bash Street Kids that's pure Baxendale comedic creativity. His menagerie of off the wall kids, totally different from the normal clean-cut, public school kids of the time were defiantly working class, rebellious, ridiculous, and hilarious.



3. FACEACHE

Ken Reid - 1971-1987

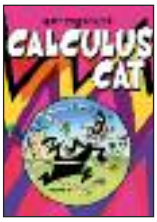
A mainstay of Buster comic, it's a delight to see the first few years of Ken Reid's incredible Faceache strips in one beautiful collection, The First 100 Scrunges (1971-73). Watching young Ricky Rubberneck use his grotesque abilities to scrunge into all many of monstrosities at will was perfection all thanks to Reid's amazing art, matched only by his comedic ability.

4. FUNGUS THE BOGEYMAN

Raymond Briggs - 1977

Raymond Briggs may be better known for The Snowman, but Fungus The Bogeyman has never been matched in superbly dense hilarity. The grotesque fills ever page, unending green goo, snot and wonderfully imaginative details everywhere. It's an amazingly dense work, full of text, but Briggs never stops giving us all laughs throughout.





5. CALCULUS CAT
Hunt Emerson, Began 1978 (collected 2014)

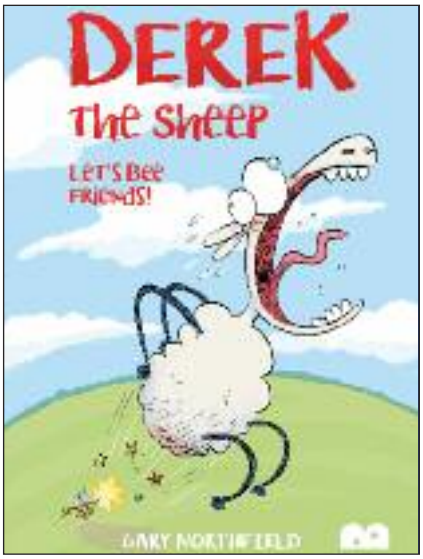
Emerson is a modern day Baxendale, perhaps best known for his adult creations. His riotous imagination, his magnificently over the top artwork, all fast moving energy on the page, is at its best with Calculus Cat.

Pursued home every night by a brick slinging mob, Calculus' life is equal parts hilarious slapstick and clever social commentary. His new TV turns from saviour in this hideously cruel world to nemesis, teasing Calculus with quality entertainment, yet delivering a mind-numbing torrent of ad jingles, we're screaming "Death to TV" alongside poor Calculus.



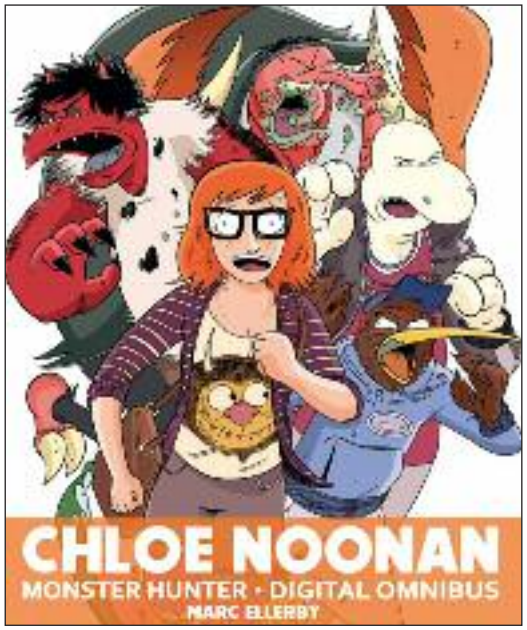
6. SLEAZE CASTLE
Terry Wiley and Dave McKinnon - 1987

This one you possibly won't know, but this epic tale of perpetual student Jocasta Dribble and her chums was a wonderful sitcom of a comic. This everyday student adventure takes a huge and hilarious detour via the best of Douglas Adams, when Jocasta's foreign student pal is revealed as Lady Panda Quartile, ruler from another dimension.



7. DEREK THE SHEEP
Gary Northfield, 2004-present

Grumpy always plays well in comedy, and here we have the farmyard Tony Hancock in Derek The Sheep, all he wants is that lovely next bit of perfect green grass, but he's never going to get it. Instead, Northfield puts poor Derek through increasingly ridiculous, and hilarious situations, just for the pleasure of seeing the grumpiest sheep in the world get even grumpier. Northfield might have created many great comedy strips, but this shines above them all. The Beano's first creator owned strip, subsequently collected through Bloomsbury, is now published through Northfield's own Bog-Eyed Books.



8. CHLOE NOONAN
Marc Ellerby, 2009

The monster hunting, whinging ginger ninja might be an obvious play on Buffy via Scott Pilgrim, but as Ellerby himself says, "it's less about hunting monsters and more about getting the bus." This powerless monster hunter frankly can't be all that arsed with saving the world, especially as running around gives her stitch. Silly, brilliant, and with Ellerby's fresh turn of phrase and light cartooning making it as funny as anything.



9. BUNNY VERSUS MONKEY
2011

Jamie Smart had to be here, as he's consistently one of the funniest UK comic makers around today. And Bunny Versus Monkey, his two-page strip that's run in every issue of The Phoenix Comic, is always laugh worthy. Imagine Winnie et al rampaging around the 100-acre woods after munching on those strange mushrooms that make them feel all funny in the tummy and you're somewhere in the right area. Bunny just wants to live a quiet, peaceful life, but that's never going to happen, and watching the comedy unfold is a joy.



10. THE BOJEFFRIES SAGA
Alan Moore & Steve Parkhouse, 1983-1991

I'd intended to stick to just one work from any creator on this list, but when it came to it, I simply had to cheat.

Think Addams Family with Alan Bennett's northern tones, complete with liberal dashes of Baxendale and the Goons, mixed in with classic horror and sci-fi. It's a kitchen sink soap opera comedy family to remember, all factory fortnights, work dos, Christmas in front of the TV and turkey, and in the best tale of all, the rent collector coming by. Poor Trevor Inchmale, bicycle riding council rent collector is here to investigate a century worth of unpaid rent by the Bojeffries. He really doesn't know what he's letting himself in for.

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The Trouble with Dave

2000 AD's Big Dave

Although known mainly as a science fiction title, 2000AD has had its share of humour strips. "Captain Klep", "Bonjo From Beyond The Stars", "Abelard Snazz : the Man with the Two Storey Brain", "DR & Quinch", "Sooner or Later" and probably the most infamous, "Big Dave", Manchester's Hardest Man.

It's hard to believe that it has been 25 years since Big Dave first appeared in the Galaxy's Greatest and harder to believe that such a short lived strip courted such controversy. A true marmite creation, it came and went within a year and has never be seen again, and it's highly unlikely to be reprinted or collected.

"Dave" was one of the new strips introduced as part of the 1993 "summer offensive", an experiment in shaking things up at what was seen as staid and stagnant 2000AD. Then editors Richard Burton and Alan McKenzie took, depending on your point of view, the brave (or foolhardy) step of handing over the editorial and creative reigns to droids Grant Morrison, Mark Millar and John Smith.

In "Thrillpower Overload" the official history of 2000AD, David Bishop quotes John Smith on the subject "We felt that 2000AD had lost its way..... the same old boring characters were being endlessly reinvented and recycled". With this in mind, the trio set about with their grand plan of revitalisation, to make 2000AD edgy and exciting again. None of the creators were known as being especially reverential to the prog's, Morrison was the enfant terrible of comics, and he had been disparaging of the 2000AD old guard in the comic press. Fellow Scot Millar had said he had never really been a fan of 2000AD but ironically, considering John Smith's comment, Millar was working on the revival of "Robo Hunter" and Smith himself had completed a short but acclaimed run on "Rogue Trooper" a few years earlier.

Author: Luke Williams
Twitter: @lukeyspooksss
Website: 2000AD.wordpress.com

Between them, the three writers and their 4 artists created 4 new strips, the only remaining familiar face was Judge Dredd, Morrison writing the "Inferno" storyline. Millar and Steve Yeowell created "Maniac 5" a war strip starring the titular robot controlled by a human brain , Morrison & Rian Hughes produced "Really and Truly", a whimsica "e" spiced road trip tale of two drug runners "speeding" their way to a party, John Smith and Paul Peart's "Slaughterbowl" : dinosaur riding murderers fight for their freedom in a gladiatorial death match.

And then there was "Big Dave".

Co-written by Morrison and Millar, with art by superb caricaturist Steve Parkhouse, Dave was described as Manchester's hardest man, drawing inspiration from "The Sun", "Loaded", and even "Viz". A shell suit wearing, football supporting, Capri driving, lager swilling, pitbull owning, force of nature, the epitome of the 90s phenomena of the "Essex Man". Dave's stay in the prog' was short, but controversial and reader reaction was extreme. The four, four episode story arc, stories were violent, crass and topical. The run opens with the British government enlisting Dave, proclaiming "peace is for puffs" and with help from Special Envoy for the Archbishop of Canterbury "Big" Terry Waite, to tackle the fiendish Saddam Hussein and his alien allies with their phallic love gun. Saddam's aim is to transform the earth in to a "love colony" and turn HM armed forces to "pansies".

Regicide and treason were the subjects of "Monarchy In The UK". Those gold digging "Merry Wives Of Windsor" Sarah Ferguson and Diana, Princess of Wales, commoners free with their affections and intent on replacing the House of Windsor with robot doubles. Bawdy jokes and potentially libellous insinuations abound.

Parkhouse takes a pew for the 3rd , fill in artist Anthony Williams flies Dave off to Tenerife to face his Geordie nemesis, Ballser in "Costa Del Chaos". Sun, sea, sex and scrapping. Co starring fugitive Newspaper tycoon Robert Maxwell, who has faked his own death to escape the authorities.

The one off "origin story" (of sorts) in the 1994 yearbook is oddly poignant. Dave is a child of the 70s neglected by his mother and beaten by his father. Young Dave struggles in school. He is held back by his parents, his father in particular and a school system that favours the privileged, but excels in PE. His opportunity to shine is taken from him by his arch enemy, Pansy, the upper class school swot.

After the Williams drawn break, Parkhouse comes off the bench for the final weekly prog' strip. England have failed to qualify for the World Cup. Dave, mates in tow, and with unexpected assistance from South African President and Voodoo Priest Nelson Mandela, travel to the US to interrupt a Nazi plot to cheat their way to winning the competition, and restore England's reputation as a footballing nation and example of freedom and democracy, to the rest of the world.

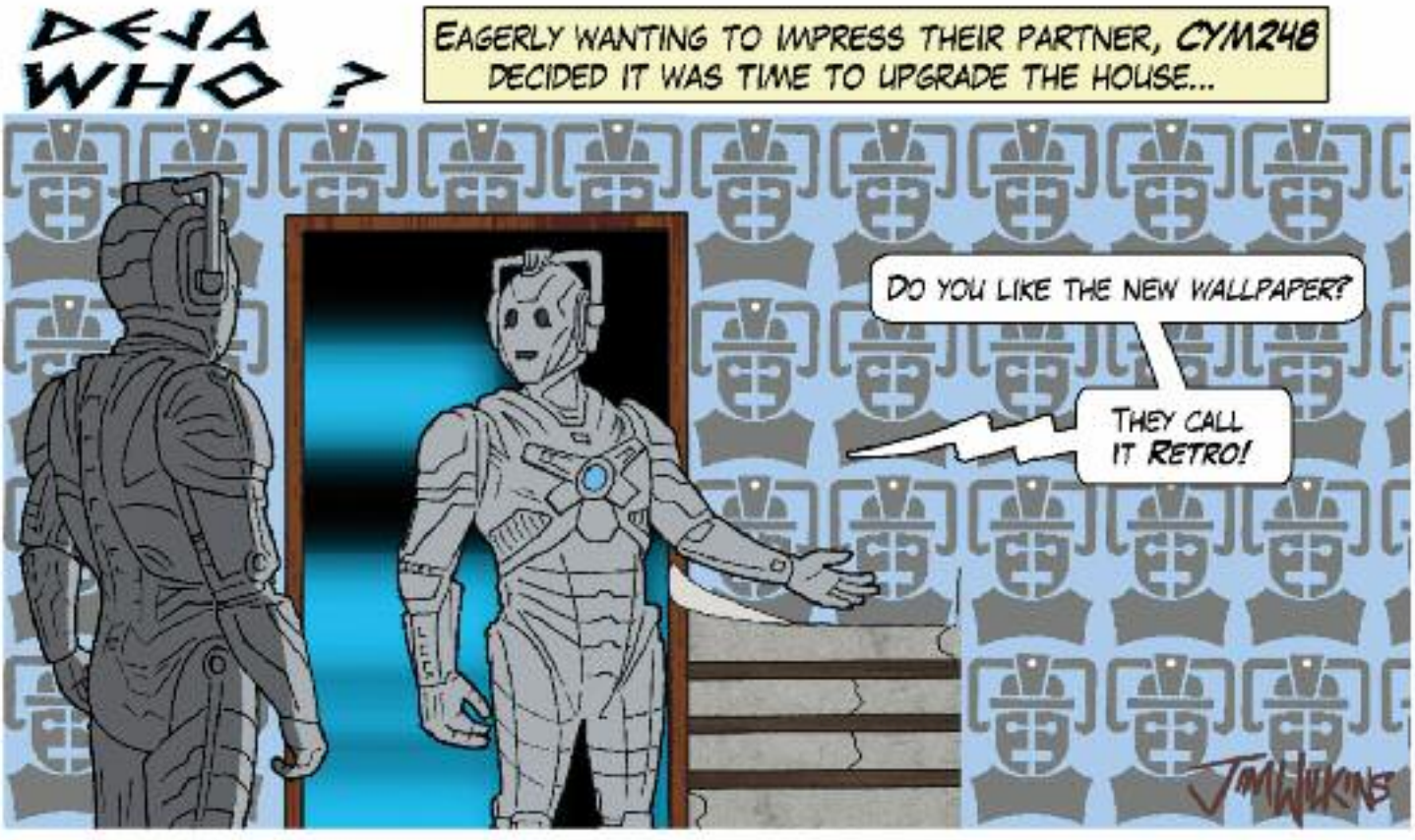
There is no doubt that it's a polarising strip. You can take it as a savage and occasionally heavy handed satire. A send up of the new laddism, the "Loaded" generation, jingoism, the sensationalist gutter press, homophobia, sexism etc and all that was sacred in Britain at the time (Royal Family, the Gulf war).

Or....

it can be seen as snobbish, patronising, elitist, deliberately and unashamedly PC baiting, racist and homophobic, glamourising a lecherous, violent and misogynistic "hero".

The creators said they were attacking the establishment by making a story that was, on the surface, anti gay, deeply racist, sexist and generally offensive and mocking those opinions. But that's not a view some readers shared.

It was a strip of its time. Its themes and topics are still relevant, perhaps even more so with the country's political and social climate, even if some of the public figures it takes shots at have faded into obscurity, or met rather violent and tragic fates. Occasionally, some of the stories fall flat. What is essentially a four part extended joke ends without a punchline, scripts attempt to bait but don't actually satirise and from time to time the strip thinks that it is cleverer than it is. Dave isn't a candidate for a revival, but if Rebellion has the courage, a reprint would be welcome. Solid.



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Covcon

Meet Anno Dracula Author, Kim Newman
Plus: Creators Behind The Anno Dracula Comic





Artist,
Paul McCaffrey
(Doctor Who, Penny Dreadful)



Inker,
Bambos Georgiou
(Aces Weekly, Marvel UK)



Editor,
David Manley-Leach
(Psycho Gran, The Prisoner)

Plus Comic Book Guests



Simon Myers
(Doctor Who)



Steve Tanner
(Time Bomb Comics)

Rufus Dayglo
(Tank Girl, Gorillaz)



Jake
(Star Wars)



Emily McGorman-Bruce
(The Beano)



Rachael Smith
(Doctor Who)

Rufus Dayglo art gallery

Bluebottle & Basher

A lovely Leo Baxendale page from Valiant, 2nd May 1970 of Bluebottle and Basher. This has all the hallmarks of Leo's amazing humour, using word balloons, physical humour, and terrible puns, to create wonderfully absurd situations. Alongside Ken Reid, he was undoubtably Britain's top humour comic strip artist. This page also masterfully demonstrates his use of silhouettes, both to convey action (the falling balloon) to and absurdist humour (Bluebottle leaping about as 'The Masked Phantom').



THE BEANO at 80



By Professor Chris Murray

When *The Beano* burst onto the British comics scene in July 1938, just a year after its DC Thomson stable mate, *The Dandy*, there wasn't much else like it on the newsstands. That situation is echoed today, with *The Beano* being the last survivor of what many consider to be the Golden Age of British comics. *The Beano* has also now taken on the distinction of being the world's longest running weekly comic. While much has changed over the years, *The Beano* still features the same brand of anarchic fun that has delighted generations of readers for 80 years.

When *The Beano* first appeared British comics were dominated by London-based Amalgamated Press, and their upstart Scottish rival DC Thomson mainly produced boys story papers (alongside successful newspapers and magazines such as *The People's Friend*). The comics that Amalgamated Press produced were characterised by large blocks of text under each panel. This was a style common throughout Europe at the time, and one which had held sway for decades, but this contrasted to the more visual styles of storytelling that had emerged in American newspaper strips and comics. These were available to British readers in the form of the Funnies, the supplements from American newspapers, which were repackaged and distributed in Britain in the early 1930s. Then there were the comics produced in America by Will Eisner's studio for the British market, *Wags* and *Okay Comics Weekly*, which were published by T.V. Boardman. *Wags* appeared in Britain in January 1937, running until November 1938, whereas *Okay Comics Weekly* appeared in October 1937 and ended in February 1938. But the most notable British comic of this period that exhibited an American style and influence was *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, which appeared



The very first edition of the Beano, 1938

in February 1936, running until 1957, and featuring a mixture of reprinted American material and home-grown Disney comics in the American style.

Mickey Mouse Weekly, published by London publisher Odhams Press, was colourful and brash, and made the Amalgamated Press comics look drab by comparison. It was a huge success. *The Dandy* and *The Beano* aimed to take some of that readership, with colourful characters and a visual style that mimicked the vibrant American style, with the humour communicated through the visuals, and word balloons and sound effects rather than blocks of text. This was the tactic employed for the humour strips specifically, and showcased on the covers of DC Thomson's new humour titles. However, despite these innovations, the interiors of both *The Dandy* and *The Beano* featured a mix of old-fashioned text stories and the adventure strips largely remained in the old Amalgamated Press style. Then there were the oddities, such as a strip called "Tin Can Tommy, The Clockwork Boy", in which a scientist creates a robot child to replace his dead son. This was provided by the Torelli Brothers agency from a studio in Italy, and looks quite unlike anything else in the comic. The Managing Editor of Children's Publications, R.D. Low, and *Beano* editor George Mooney clearly wanted to hedge their bets, but DC Thomson's challenge to Amalgamated Press and Odhams was a success.

Under the direction of Low, who was also a prominent writer for DC Thomson, and co-creator of *The Broons* and Oor Wullie, both *The Dandy* and *The Beano* became hugely popular, partly because the characters and tone of the stories appealed to children, and especially working class children. Their cheeky humour and the wiff of glamour brought by the imitation of the colourful American style reworked with a British sensibility, meant that these were the comics that children would choose for themselves, rather than the type of comics that parents would pick for them. This came directly from Low, who well understood that the way to appeal to children was to ridicule all the forms of authority that they were subject to. Ironically, then, an early favourite was Lord Snooty, created by Dudley D. Watkins, the Manchester born comics genius who provided much of the fuel for the success of DC Thomson's comics. However, for all his airs and graces the appeal of Snooty was that he ran wild with his gang, in strips that were brilliantly realised by Watkins. Other key artists in the early years of *The Beano* included Reg Carter, who had worked on *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, and drew *The Beano's* first cover star, Big Eggo; the prolific Allan Morley, who drew Big Fat Joe; and the extremely versatile Hugh McNeill, artist on Pansy Potter the Strongman's Daughter, which showed some influence from Popeye, as did *The Dandy's* Desperate Dan. At a time well before television and computer games comics were still the cornerstone of children's entertainment, and sales soared.

When the war came it brought a paper ration, but *The Beano* did its bit, featuring humour and adventure stories that functioned as propaganda, mocking the enemy. Lord Snooty and Pansy Potter, and even Big Eggo contributed to the war effort, and artist Sam Fair mocked the Italian dictator in the strip Musso the Wop, which appeared in December 1940. Despite being slimmed down due to paper shortages (from 24 pages in 1939



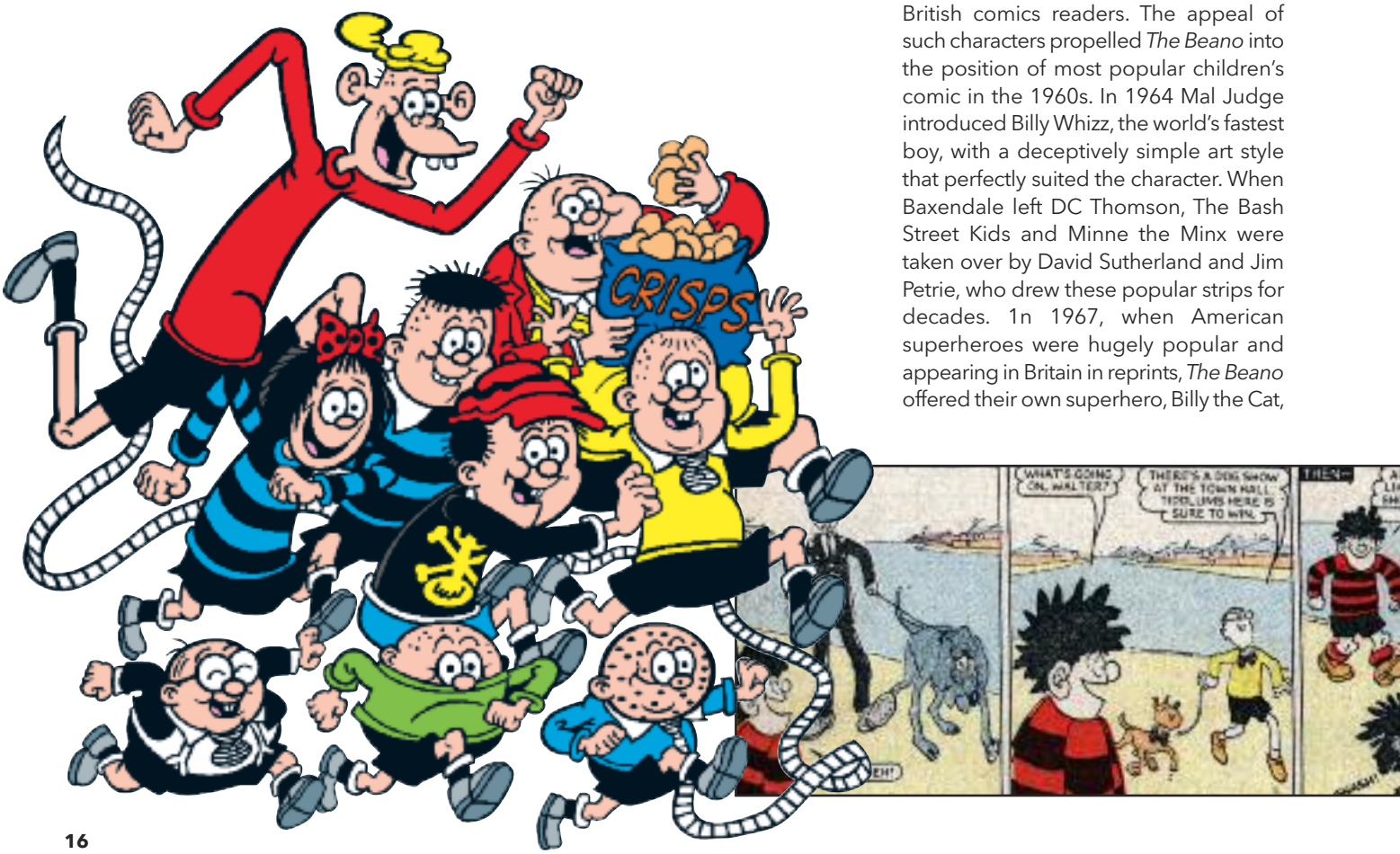
Author: Professor Christopher Murray
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The first Dennis the Menace,1953.

to just 10 pages in 1947), *The Beano* flourished during the 1940s, despite, or perhaps because of the pressures of the conflict, but it was in the post-war years that DC Thomson's comics really thrived. Selling two million copies a week each to the baby boom generation, and passing through many more hands than that (as each copy was likely shared with several more readers), *The Dandy* and *The Beano* became synonymous with British comics in the 1950s.

The next step in the evolution of *The Beano* came in the early 1950s, Davey Law (a DCT staff artist), Ken Reid and Leo Baxendale (who were freelancers), brought a fresh new energy to the comic with their brand of lively, and sometimes subversive humour, extending the ethos of undermining authority that Low had established over a decade before. The biggest hit was Ian Chisholm and Davey Law's Dennis the Menace, who appeared in 1951, and brought out a rebellious, anarchic spirit which was evident in Law's inventive, dynamic compositions and the nervous energy of his line work. Dennis really was a menace in his early years, and was an unabashed bully to his nemesis, Walter the Softy, who appeared in 1953. Stories routinely ended with Dennis receiving the attentions of his father's slipper, in displays of corporal punishment that would be phased out in later years. Reid, now widely acknowledged as one of the true geniuses of British humour comics, created the cheeky layabout Roger the Dodger, who put more effort into dodging work that it would take to actually do it, and Jonah, the hapless sailor, who sank every ship he served aboard, testing his creators' abilities to conjure new ways of bringing the vessels to grief in each story. Baxendale, the youngest of the three, was inspired to contact the editor of *The Beano* when he saw Dennis the Menace in his younger brother's copy of the comic. The rest is history, albeit, a tumultuous one. Baxendale, with his detailed style and manic imagination became one of the most important creators in British comics, creating Little Plum and Minnie the Minx in 1953, and the Bash Street Kids in 1954 (originally appearing as "When the Bell Rings" before changing to its now famous title in 1956). But Baxendale really embodied the anarchic spirit of *The Beano*, so much so that he rankled against the rigid confines of DC Thomson, eventually suing the company over the copyright to his characters before leaving to work for Thomson's rivals. His great legacy at DCT was The Bash Street Kids, which, with the riotous antics of the class, ranged against the exasperated Teacher, became beloved of British comics readers. The appeal of such characters propelled *The Beano* into the position of most popular children's comic in the 1960s. In 1964 Mal Judge introduced Billy Whizz, the world's fastest boy, with a deceptively simple art style that perfectly suited the character. When Baxendale left DC Thomson, The Bash Street Kids and Minne the Minx were taken over by David Sutherland and Jim Petrie, who drew these popular strips for decades. 1n 1967, when American superheroes were hugely popular and appearing in Britain in reprints, *The Beano* offered their own superhero, Billy the Cat,



although by this point nearly all the strips in the comic were humour stories. When Law retired in 1970 Dennis, the undisputed superstar of the comic, was taken over by David Sutherland.

As British comics started to struggle in the 1970s *The Beano*, like *The Dandy*, held firm. Many British comics started to merge with other titles, or fold outright. *The Beano*, rather than withdrawing, diversified, with characters appearing in advertising campaigns for Nestle's Smarties, and then breaking out into the 68 page pocket-sized *Beano Comic Libraries*, which appeared in 1982. These were rebranded as *Fun Size Beano* in 1998, which ended in 2010. By the late 1980s the *Beano* merchandizing boom was…. well, booming, and continued to do so well into the 1990s. By now sales were a long way down from the heyday of the 1950s and 60s. The market had changed considerably, and the once rich field of British humour comics had been all but wiped out, but *The Beano* and *The Dandy* persisted. The year 2000 saw the opening of Beanoland in Surrey. Further expansion came with a new monthly title, *BeanoMax*, in 2007, which ran till 2013. This was aimed at a slightly older readership, and featured interviews with celebrities, who would often be lampooned in the stories, continuing that tradition from *The Beano*. Jim Petrie, who had taken over on Minnie the Minx from Baxendale in the 1960s retired in 2001, but David Sutherland still works for the comic, which also now boasts contributions from renowned British humour comics creators Lew Stringer, who started working for *The Beano* in 2007, and Hunt Emerson, who has been producing strips for the comic since 2002.

A further slump in sales brought *The Dandy* to a close in 2012, but *The Beano* marched on, and has acquired the popular Bananaman strip from *The Dandy*. *The Beano* was reinvigorated in 2016 with the launch of Beano Studios, which aimed to take the Beano brand into new territories, with ambitions to expand into television, film, games, and digital media, reaching new audiences. This was accompanied by a rebranding of *The Beano* itself, and resulted in one of the strangest episodes in The Beano's recent history. In the issues that led up to the rebranding Dennis becomes aware that his world is being changed. Clearly someone at The Beano had been reading Grant Morrison's late 1980s and early 90s works, such as *Animal Man, Doom Patrol* and *Flex Mentallo*. In a bizarre metafictional twist Walter the Softy and his father, the mayor, take over the various strips in the comic, infiltrating them and rendering them boring, with new toned-down characters. On one page Dennis points to one such new character, grasps his head and says "I'm pretty sure her royal mildness didn't exist before the mayor took over! But I can't be sure… I think my memory is changing too!". On the next page Minnie the Minx alters reality by drawing in a copy of *The Beano*, observing that "what happens in *The Beano* happens here!", drawing a door in a panel, which promptly appears in front of her, Dennis and Roger the Dodger. Realising that they are about to be replaced, the classic Beano characters storm the "top secret evil lair" of the mayor to find a machine sucking the "Beanoness" out of old back issues of *The Beano*, which is why, Dennis concludes, his memory is being altered. Utilising condensed "Beanoness", and with the help of a *Beano* cartoonist, Dennis, Minnie, Roger, and Gnasher, save the day, spreading Beanoness throughout Beanotown. This was one of the weirdest and most self-referential stories in a long history of weird and self-referential stories to appear in *The Beano*.

Another recent highlight came when Mike Stirling, Head of Beano Studios, issued a recent cease and desist letter to Conservative politician Jacob Rees-Mogg, asserting that he was copying Walter the Softy. This demonstrates that the cheeky disrespect for authority that was the crucial element of R.D. Low's recipe for *The Beano's* success in the 1930s is still very much in evidence today. Whereas most of the humour comics on the British newsstands these days feature licenced properties, and come in poly bags stuffed with cheap gifts, *The Beano's* primary appeal is still the anarchic humour and playful parody that have always filled its pages. Then, in June 2018, the 80th anniversary of *The Beano* was marked by Dundee's McManus art gallery and museum being temporarily rebranded as The McMenace, with an exhibition telling the story of the comic. This runs until late October 2018. DC Thomson also published *Beano: 80 Years of Fun*, a 100 page magazine that celebrates the history of the comic through a selection of eight issues that illustrate the comic's cultural impact, and with an emphasis on the editors and the key artists. This is essential reading if your trip down memory lane regularly takes you near the vicinity of Beanotown.



An early *Beano* favourite was Lord Snooty

EMILY MCGORMAN-BRUCE



interview

Although Cowgirl Em sounds like it's one of Beano's latest creations it's actually the nom de guerre of comics creator Emily McGorman-Bruce, who after spending several years writing and drawing her own indie comic DNA became one of the long-running weekly's regular artists.

McGorman-Bruce's move to Beanotown seemed both refreshing and unusual, given many British comics creators still look to the US comics industry the be the prime outlet for their work. It was certainly a good excuse for me put some questions to her to find out more!

Steve Tanner: The obvious question – what's your comic history how did you end up working for Beano?

Emily McGorman-Bruce: The Beano was a HUGE part of my childhood and I admired the artwork so much. Back in 2013 I sent some samples of my work over to DC Thomson but sadly, there wasn't any work at that time. Flash forward to June 2017 and on one unsuspecting Friday I got an email titled "Hello from Beano!" asking if I would be interested in working on a half-page strip entitled "Rubi's Screwtop Science", a strip about a young wheelchair user named Rubi who has a passion for inventing which doesn't always go to plan - Naturally I jumped at the chance and ended up taking on 2 brand new additional strips; "Pie Face" and "Paul the Potato." These days, Rubi takes up a whole page and often has a feature page too – it's great that she's become such a popular character!

ST: **Outside of The Beano you've spend some time producing some creator –owned comics – what's the biggest thing you learnt from doing that and has it helped with your Beano work?**

EMB: My biggest lesson from creating my own comics is pacing. When I look back on my first (cringeworthy) comics, I didn't really think about the pacing. I just told a story in as much space as I had. Determined to master the art, I started thinking about what I wanted to reader to find when they turned the page, what panels needed more space and the impact that would have.

Another valuable lesson is the time each page takes to create! I can spend anywhere up to 7 hours on one page! Knowing that it will take someone 2 minutes to read that is sometimes painful, but I don't want to compromise the artwork I'm producing – I'm my own worst enemy I guess!

ST: **Traditional UK comics are notoriously male dominated – why do you think that is and how do you see it changing?**

EMB: That does seem to be the case, although I've never really considered it a factor when sending my work out there! A lot of the female artists I know tend to prefer to work on one off illustrations – things of beauty I might add – where as I like to tell a story with a good giggle in it! However, I think that you've only got to look around a convention or two to see the many ladies now in the comic circuit. At the end of the day, as long as you enjoy making comics then I don't think gender should be a factor.

ST: **Within a few months of starting on Beano you had a cover on The Times Literary Supplement – that's quite a leap! How did that come about?**

EMB: Yes, that one came as a bit of a surprise to me too! It was something of a last minute request from the head of Beano Studios. TLS were doing a feature on comics and Beano is an obvious choice - it is celebrating its 80th this year after all! It was a huge honour to be asked to draw the front cover, and it was Minnie the Minx! Who doesn't love Minnie?

ST: **Beano is a comic that everyone in Britain knows even if they don't read it – what do you see your role as a Beano artist in maintaining the legacy of the comic and its characters?**

EMB: I'm super proud of the fact I'm on Team Beano, and this is something that I channel into my work! I've had glowing feedback for the strips I've worked on too which is awesome! The strip I'm currently working on, Rubi's Screwtop Science, has quickly become a fan favourite and she's also the first wheelchair user to have their own strip in Beano, so who knows – maybe we're creating new legacies already!

ST: **How much input do you have into your Beano stories – do you actively collaborate with your writers or do you just get sent scripts with deadlines?**

EMB: In terms of process, I just get sent scripts and deadlines, but I interact with a lot of the writers across social media. It's honestly like a big family and we're all so excited to be working on it. For a lot of us, it's a childhood dream come true and we don't take it for granted for a second!

ST: **What's the biggest challenge you've had drawing for Beano?**

EMB: Towards the end of last year, I'd booked my first holiday in 4 years (!) and rather than take holiday cover, I figured I'd be able to do the work in advance… I then got 8 pages of Annual scripts in addition to the three regular strips I was working on at the time – which were all due in advance. I drank a lot of coffee during that time!!

CS: **Finally, if you had to make a choice: Creator owned or Beano – what would you choose and why?**

EMB: Oh wow, what a question! Whilst I love creating my own stories and adventures I'd probably have to go with Beano. I'm so proud to have started working for them, I have to pinch myself on a regular basis (I'm starting to bruise!) and working with different writers who come up with amazing stories on a regular basis is really rewarding.

Thanks to Emily McGorman-Bruce for taking time out of her busy Beano schedule to talk to me. You can find her work in Beano every week!



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THE BROONS & OOR WULLIE

On the 8th March 1936, tucked into the Sunday Post, families across Scotland found a roguish, dungaree-clad laddie with unruly hair looking truly fed up on the front of their Fun Section. Inside the supplement, they met a larger-than-life family of ten (which would later grow to eleven) for the first time. Oor Wullie and The Broons have since graced the pages of the Sunday Post newspaper every week. They've seen a great deal of change in the world in their eighty-two years: they've survived a world war, have witnessed the Scottish landscape change, observed turbulent culture and politics, particularly around Scottish identity – yet a charming familiarity remains within these cartoon pages of the Sunday Post. There's something truly special about these characters, almost a time-capsule, capturing and preserving the best parts of Scottish community from throughout the decades.

Oor Wullie and The Broons were originally created by comics editor and writer, R. D. Low, and artist, Dudley D. Watkins. For the uninitiated, Oor Wullie follows the adventures of a mischievous young boy (Wullie) with a heart of gold. The literal embodiment of the reckless, youthful joy, he parades around his hometown of Auchenshoogle with his best pals, Soapy Soutar, Wee Eck, Boab, and his pet mouse, Jeemie, much to the chagrin of local police officer, PC Murdoch. The Broons are a powerhouse family of eleven, led by the house-proud matriarch, Maw Broon, and penny-pinching father, Paw Broon. With their eight children –The Bairn, The Twins (lovingly known as Ae and Ither), Horace, Hen, Maggie, Joe, and Daphne – their home, number 10 Glebe Street, is always full, but their door always open. They were created with traditional values in mind, and each week they would champion themes such as the tight-knit family unit, playing outdoors, and a sense of community, all with a hearty dose of humour on top.

Dudley D. Watkins's cartooning style gifted these characters with wonderfully distinct personalities. Even from their initial appearances, readers had a great grasp of who each of these characters were – a remarkable feat in two almost silent strips. The design of these characters has gone near untouched over the past eight decades, perhaps adding to their longevity: to readers, these characters are still the same "people" they have grown up with and cherish. Wullie still has a mess of scruffy spikes as hair, his well-worn dungarees showing that he's game for fun and mischief. Maw Broon still dons her apron whenever she is indoors, her hair pulled back in a tight – sometimes severe – bun. Hen Broon still wears his pinstriped zoot suit, his lanky limbs and moustache his defining features. In fact, the only character to have undergone major changes over the years is Maggie Broon. The fashion-forward daughter of the Broon family, each artist who has undertaken the challenge of recreating Watkins's iconic characters has been able to inject a new, modern perspective through Maggie's design.

Whilst the iconic tone and style of Oor Wullie and The Broons has undoubtedly helped the characters remain firmly embedded in the heart of Scottish culture, it's proved a challenge for DC Thomson to find artists capable of meeting the bar set firmly in place by Dudley D. Watkins. Fortunately, for the past twenty-five years, these strips have been expertly drawn each week by Peter Davidson, a freelance commercial artist based in the beautiful, remote Scottish countryside. Peter began his career at the age of sixteen, with his first illustration published in Golf Monthly. "I had a long association with that magazine, ending around 1989," Davidson recalls. But Peter's interest in making art his career began much earlier in his life. He admits that he was a keen drawer, and that he wanted to be an artist working for print at a very young age. It was perhaps a passion spurred on by the encouragement of a friend's father: "I met Dudley D. Watkins in 1951. I was friends with his son, Roger. I visited his studio – a little box room upstairs – many times with Roger. He was very encouraging and allowed me to use his pens. The nibs I remember to this day … very similar to the ones I use while drawing The Broons and Oor Wullie. I also remember the smell of the Indian Ink. In those days, the ink had shellac in it – very different from the inks we use today. It gummed up pen nibs very quickly!"

Many of DC Thomson's most celebrated artists worked in the company's acclaimed art department. The beginning of Peter Davidson's longstanding career at DC Thomson was no different, joining the company as a staff artist in the art department right before his 20th birthday: "[It was] the best apprenticeship any commercial artist could have. That's where I learned how to handle deadlines, so important if you want to survive in this business! Sadly, that type of studio no longer exists." Considering DC Thomson's impressive print portfolio and vast number of original characters, the art department was kept busy, and tales of last minute drawings being demanded, the impressive archive of reference images to rummage through, and the interchanging of projects and skills are fond stories recounted by almost everyone who had the pleasure of experiencing the art department during this era. It was this ability to adapt to



whatever was needed by the editor that first pulled Davidson into 10 Glebe Street: "The editor of The Broons and Oor Wullie, Roy Paterson, who I had worked with on Cracker comic, asked me to take over from Tom Lavery who had been drawing them for three years (I think). I drew … mostly The Broons … for 5 years from 1979 to 1984." It was at this time that Davidson moved to London to pursue his art career in the heart of the creative capital of the time, and would embark on his freelance career soon after: "This will be my fiftieth year as a freelance artist. Gulp!"

Peter Davidson is a highly skilled artist, so it's no surprise he needed nine years away from cartooning to flex his creative muscles. He's certainly not limited by skill: "I work with pens, ink, and water colours … acrylics sometimes, depending on the commission." His influences include the likes of Sports Illustrated illustrator, Robert Riger; scraper board artist, Anthony Ravielli; newspaper strip artists Mel Keefer and John Prentice, who drew Sandy MacDivot and Rip Kirby respectively; Milton Caniff; Norman Rockwell, "so many really, but these are just a few from a golden era of illustrators." With such a variety of talent to draw inspiration from, it's no wonder Peter has ended up with a huge, impressively varied portfolio of work. Yet, in 1993, after nearly a decade away from DC Thomson, Davidson was reunited with The Broons and Oor Wullie, mentioning "I've been drawing them pretty much every week since then. Frightening really!"

Having now spent a total of thirty years with these iconic figures – just shy of the thirty-three years that Watkins inked them – Davidson arguably knows them better than anyone. So, in his opinion, what is behind the longevity of these characters? "I think it is part of the Scottish DNA. It's hard to imagine them not being around now." The Broons and Oor Wullie are certainly embedded in all aspects of our culture. It's rare to hear of a Scottish family who don't exchange the infamous Broons and Oor Wullie annuals at Christmas. Maw Broon has her own line of baked goods, sweet treats, and cooking supplies. Oor Wullie was the star of a charity Bucket Trail in 2016, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for a children's charity, and the scamp also helps teach Scots language in Scottish schools, with a programme created alongside the National Scottish Library being part of the official learning curriculum. For the comics fans, Scotland's own Frank Quitely was so heavily inspired by Dudley D. Watkins and these iconic characters that a parody titled The Greens kickstarted his career, and hints and homages to the characters can be found in his popular work, including in Batman and Robin, as demonstrated at his hit exhibition at Kelvingrove's Art Gallery and Museum in 2017. (In fact, Quitely was gifted his very own special strip, brilliantly drawn by Peter Davidson, just last year). The Broons and Oor Wullie really are everywhere in our culture without our even realising it, so much so that it would certainly be noticed if they were to disappear or change.

Speaking of change, Davidson warns of the dangers of changing the characters too much for a modern audience: "I think they have adapted, but it has to be handled carefully. [The Broons and Oor Wullie] are both newspaper strips, there is a subtle difference from, say, a Beano comic strip." Indeed, the humour in The Broons and Oor Wullie plays heavily on the idea of family and community – embarrassing events often befalling someone who is acting out or being greedy, or an innocent misunderstanding. The humour is delicately shown in the artwork, with a cheeky wink or a small detail you might miss if not looking closely enough, rather than the brassy, bold tomato slaps or face plants one might find in a traditional humour comic. Peter describes the humour as being "uniquely Scottish. Couthie would be the word." And he's correct. There's a considered gentleness to these strips. They celebrate the positives in life, and the importance of standing by each other. It's unusual for one of these strips not to be met with a huge grin or genuine laughter, and so much of that is down to the care Davidson puts into ensuring the true feeling of the heart is captured on the page.

In this day and age of reboots and reimaginings, it's unusual to think that something could survive for over eight decades without being tinkered with, be it the humour, the style, or the values. But The Broons and Oor Wullie have defied the norm and firmly embedded themselves into Scottish culture, so much so that an attempt to colour the strips lead to an outcry from the readers, demanding they remain in black and white. And while attempts have been made to modernise the strips to relate to younger readers – such as seeing the young characters play video games, or the older Broons texting on their mobile phones – the core of the strips remain the same. Perhaps this is the power behind their relevance and longevity. In a world where technology's taking over and we're becoming more insular, there's comfort in visiting our trusty old friends in the pages of the Sunday Post each week as they skin their knees playing outside, and build lasting friendships with their neighbours. It's unlikely that the door to Glebe Street will be closing anytime soon.



Author: Kirsten Murray
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This Summer saw the launch of a new online comic called **GOOF!** It embraces everything that I love about comics and loved about comics when I was growing up. It captures the feeling of receiving your weekly or monthly comic through the letterbox with the Saturday newspaper. That feeling when you eagerly wait for the paper boy to arrive and then frantically flip through the pages of the paper to find the comic nestled inside. I can still remember that feeling, I can still remember the feeling when the newsagent accidentally forgot to put it in and literally feeling like the world was about to end. With **GOOF!** there is none of the latter!

On the first Saturday of every month (Saturday the greatest day to receive a new comic) subscribers will receive an email, kind of like an electronic paper boy delivery, with a link to read the new issue. Within seconds you can be enjoying comics from a feast of comic artists from around the world. Each one coming together to create a 30 page fun-filled comic that showcases legendary creators and up and coming talent, creating new characters especially for this project.

Creators from around the world like Lew Stringer, Ken Niimura (I Kill Giants) Hilary Barta, Emmelline Pidgen, Observer comics winner Tor Freeman, Mari Ahokoivu from Finland, Joe Matthews, Rick Eades, Jim Boswell, Andreas Schuster, Andrea Bell, Dick Vincent, Fulton Beal, Jess Smart Smiley, Jessica on Paper, Phil Oliveira and Clara Soriano have all come together to create something unique in comics.

My initial blueprint was a BEANO version of Aces Weekly, but with more of a leaning to comics like OiNK and more edgy and crazy comics from the U.S. hence some of the creators involved. Taking the fun element of all-ages comics, but presenting them in a dynamic online way, something that Aces has been doing incredibly well for close to 6 six years. Like Aces, GOOF! is a subscription based comic, each issue just costs £1 and a year costs £12. You can buy a single issue, but for that price, you'd be crazy not to snap up the lot. You will not be disappointed!!

Due to all the creators involved, the comic has taken many a different and surprising turn for me, as they put their own mark on what an all-ages comic can be. This is a comic for everyone. It's a fun comic. It's a crazy comic. It's a surprising comic!

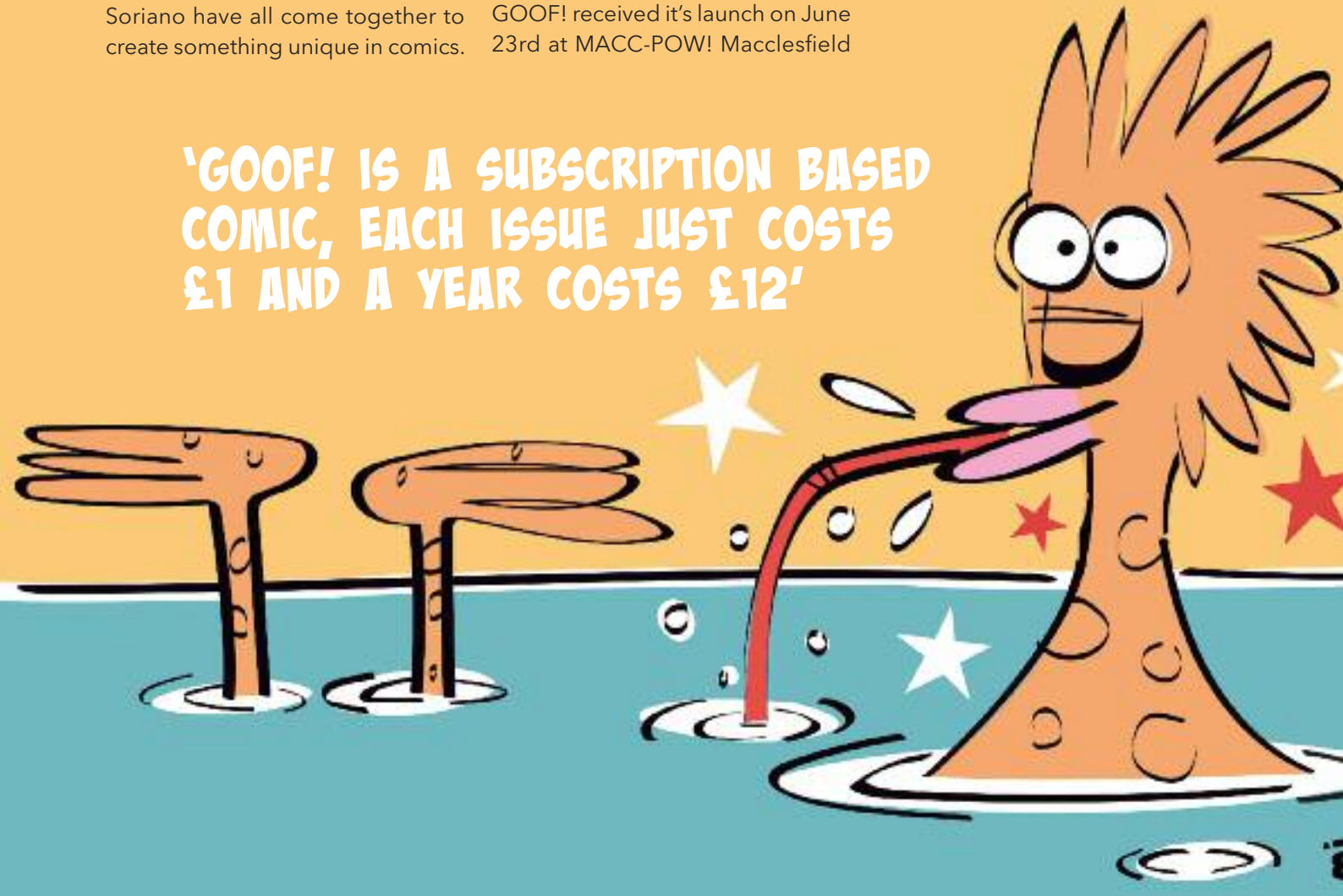
GOOF! received it's launch on June 23rd at MACC-POW! Macclesfield in Cheshire's day of comic-art, where visitors could subscribe on the day and check out the comics right there and then if they have a device of any kind with them. The unique element to the day, is that more than half of the creators were there in person, Including Lorenzo Montatore and Genie Espinosa from Barcelona, allowing those who have read their comics to actually engage with them instantly, maybe even get a signed drawing of their new favourite characters! That's a first for comics right there!

GOOF! has the potential to take comics on an adventure of GOOF-like proportions over the next year, harking back to the old days of comics, all wrapped up in a throughly modern manner!

See you in the funny pages!!

Marc Jackson

'GOOF! IS A SUBSCRIPTION BASED COMIC, EACH ISSUE JUST COSTS £1 AND A YEAR COSTS £12'




AN ENNISKILLEN COMICSFEST SPECIAL EDITION
A GRUMPY COMIC
SPLANK!
No. 1
12th MAY 2018
EVERY SPRING
7p
WALTER WONDER
HIS LIFE'S A BLUNDER!
BY MARC JACKSON
ROLLLLLLLL-UP! ROLLL-UP!
MARVEL AT MY LATEST INVENTION!
CONT
CAN'T
NOR
SUCH AS?

SPLANK! STARTED LIFE AS A JOKE, A BLOG POST ON APRIL 1ST 2016 ABOUT A FORGOTTEN IRISH COMIC. ACCORDING TO THE POST SPLANK! WAS AN ALTERNATIVE VERSION OF THE ODHAMS POWER COMICS TITLE, POW! CREATED TO AVOID CONTROVERSY IN IRELAND OVER THE USE OF A POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE COVER.

Peter Duncan, owner of the Splank! blog, has now published his own version of the title in a 44 page magazine size first issue. Harking back to the anthology comics of his youth, Peter has produced a comic mixing adventure with humour and a huge range of artistic styles.

"The inspiration for the project came from Mike Higgs", Peter said. "He drew a strip that ran in POW! and SMASH! called "The Cloak". A manic Spy-Spoof, filled with tiny visual jokes and huge energy. It was the first thing that the seven, eight year old me read when I got my copy of POW! on a Sunday morning and I never forgot it".

"When Mike agreed to draw a strip featuring The Cloak facing me in my alter ego of the Grumpy Penguin, I knew I had to do something special with it. It wasn't enough to just have it on my wall. The whole Splank! project came from that beginning".

Splank!, behind a cover story by ComicScene artist Marc Jackson contains two stories drawn by Mike Higgs. As well as "The Cloak v the Grumpy Penguin", editor Peter Duncan has plotted "The Origin of Ninja Monkey" which he claims is an almost true story of his friend 'Seedy Bob'.

The POW! motif is continued with Nigel Parkinson's, "Dresden Q. Otherside, Defective Detective". Nigel, the current artist on Dennis the Menace, has captured the anarchic spirit of the 'Power Comics' humour stories perfectly and with colourist Nika Nartova has taken great care to recreate the unique colour palette of those old comics.

Other established artists include the talented freelancer Dave Windett and children's book illustrator Alan Nolan.

Former Oink artist Davy Francis has supplied an origin story for The Grumpy Penguin and Mal Coney, better known as a writer, displays his artistic skills on "Coppernicus Magilacuddy".

Among the lesser known names, Cat Byrne's Ethyl Death and the twin adventures strips featuring Greenbeard the Pirate by Matchett and Twells and Jonny in the Stacks by Sinclair and Brinksman stand out, with John Farrelly's 'funny animal' strip "Beans and Tucker" being something a little bit special.

Splank! number one shows just how much talent there is among cartoonists in this country. A labour of love Peter is hard at work on the next issue already.

"I had to leave some amazing material out of this issue and I've had offers from some very special creators for issue 2". Peter said. "I have to say a huge thanks to all involved in this issue and those who have given me material for the next".

Splank! can be purchased for £7, postage paid, from **https://www.boxofrainmag.co.uk/splank/**







Peter Duncan is also editor of Sector 13, the 2000 AD fanzine and is working with Andrew Pawley on a "Cthulhu Kids" Kickstarter to be launched this summer. His Blog, which has taken a bit of a back seat to other projects in recent months, is **https://splankblog.blogspot.co.uk/**



the PHOENIX

With us since 2011, and well over the 300-issue mark now, The Phoenix Comic is a magnificent comic for children (and grown-ups!). It's full of a an impressively wide variety of material, but with this issue of Comicscene focusing on fabulously funny stuff, Richard Bruton sat down to chat with four of the creators bringing the hilarity, the absurd, the slapstick, and the laughter to The Phoenix; Jess Bradley, Robin Etherington, Dave Shelton, and Jamie Smart.

The Phoenix Comic is the brainchild of childrens' book publisher David Fickling, who previously launched the very similar DFC in 2008 with backing from Random House. Although The DFC folded in 2009, with Random House citing poor sales and the credit crunch, Fickling was undeterred, and with lessons learned The Phoenix launched as an independently produced comic in 2011. The idea was simple; make a quality comic, subscription only at first,





no ads, no free cover tat, and fill it with the best of creative talent. It's grown steadily over the last six years to much acclaim from children up and down the land.

Jess Bradley's surreal strip Squid Bits first appeared in 2014. Describing it as something that "doesn't take itself at all seriously and invites the reader not to either", she tells us that it can feature "everything from dinosaurs, red pandas, cheese and horseshoe crabs to obscure film references".

Robin Etherington is the writing half of the Etherington Brothers. With brother Lorenzo, Robin has been responsible for Long Gone Don, The Dangerous Adventures of Von Doogan, and the How To Think When You Draw tutorial series . Describing their work as "comedy action adventures" he tells us that "If you like silly stories with a big cast of colourful characters navigating a perilous life, then

"The idea was simple; make a quality comic"

[Long Gone] Don's tall tale is for you!"

Dave Shelton's Good Dog, Bad Dog strip has featured in both The DFC and The Phoenix. Describing this comedy detective tale as "canine slapstick comedy noir" he readily cites more than a little influence from another classic comedic pair: "The main characters are pretty close to being Laurel and Hardy, only it's the small one who's very often angry and the big one who makes the dumb mistakes!"

Jamie Smart's Bunny Vs Monkey strip has been in The Phoenix from issue zero. He describes the strip as "about a monkey who crashlands in the woods, teams up with some unsavoury animals, and then every week tries to destroy the innocent Bunny and his friends in some new, dastardly way. It's great being able to write wide open stories involving parallel universes, time travel, and genetic engineering, all through the prism of these cute animals hitting each other." In addition to BVM, Smart also spends a few months of every year on Looshkin for The Phoenix.

As you'd expect from a group of Brit creators making comedy strips, there were many familiar childhood influence. Dave Shelton remembers "Beano, Dandy, Buster, Whoopee, Whizzer and Chips; then from about the mid '70s war comics came into the mix with Warlord, Battle, and Commando". Jess Bradley similarly recalls classic Brit newsagent comedy titles, "I was a huge fan of Whizzer and Chips, Buster, The Beano and The Dandy". The Etheringtons also loved a bit of Beano and Dandy, but cite Asterix and Dan Dare as influences, something very visible in their strips. Similarly, when Jamie Smart talks early comics, you can see just why his work is the way it is: "Oink! In particular was a fave of mine, it had no rules, no boundaries. I loved Whizzer And Chips, Beano etc, but they had a way of doing things. Oink! was just a mess thrown at a wall, and as a kid I loved that anarchy".

When it comes to the health of children's comics, there's agreement that there's still the desire for comics. Etherington thinks that the "interest and passion for the material has never really changed, they just can't get their hands on it." He goes on to add, "We've performed hundreds and hundreds of shows and sold a lot of books and the one constant we've witnessed is that children love comics, but most of them don't know what's available or where to find it". Dave Shelton agrees, saying "Kids still love comics when they're exposed to them, [but] there are too few suitable titles. This means the habit of comic reading is less likely to be instilled early in potential future readers / customers / creators".

As for reasons why children read fewer comics, the creators have differing views. Etherington blames too much choice: "There are lots of things to occupy their time and attention, and parents only have so much money to go around". Smart disagrees to some extent: "I don't buy the 'too many distractions' theory. Sure, kids have more TV and Internet, but that meant comics publishers needed to adapt to the new mediums, and they didn't". He argues that it's more a case of parental failure: "I think parents forgot to introduce their own kids to the art form. Children's comics are viewed as a niche distraction, not the fundamental part of everyone's childhood they perhaps used to be". However, Smart's still positive about things moving forward: "It's changing though, definitely, and to do that it needed publishers with faith in the medium".

And, of course, one of those publishers is The Phoenix. When asked what he initially thought of the comic, Smart perfectly summarised just what makes it so good and forward thinking; "Selling a new comic direct into stores from the off is so insanely difficult, subscription seemed the perfect model. And it's exciting too, when a kid receives their comic through the post every week, that's really something to look forward to".

The Phoenix Comic is published weekly and you should definitely look at subscribing online through their website. Whether it's for yourself, your children, your family, or your local school, we should all be supporting this fine champion of fabulously funny childrens' comics!



Author: Richard Bruton
Twitter: @richardbruton
Website: forbiddenplanet.co.uk/blog

WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

LAST TIME... WHACKOMAN DECIDED BUGSY SHOULD BE HIS SIDE-KICK SO THEY COULD DISCOVER THE MYSTERY OF THE RADIOACTIVE PARROT!...









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The Funny Side of the Doctor



As well as its 'serious' comic strip, Doctor Who Magazine has a longstanding tradition of featuring a regular, newspaper-style 'funny' strip, usually positioned on its contents or letters page. Perhaps the most famous of these was 'Doctor Who?', written by Tim Quinn and drawn by Dicky Howett, which ran for over a decade in the 80s and 90s.

Image courtesy Stephen Griffiths
Doctor Who Magazine images courtesy of Panini UK Ltd



Tim Quinn
with Jenna Coleman

Quinn and Howett

are, by any standards, a comics phenomenon. Between them, they have worked for Marvel UK, IPC and DC Thomson. What were their early influences? 'Stan Lee, Dudley Watkins and Leo Baxendale', recalls Tim. 'They got me even before I could read and have remained an influence across the years.' With Dicky it was 'Eagle, Dan Dare and the peerless Frank Hampson. I tried to be like Frank, a real comic artist. As you can tell, I fully succeeded.'

Both men have lead eclectic lives to say the least. Dicky worked at the BBC in the sixties and got to see some of the William Hartnell episodes being recorded. Tim, on the other hand, joined the circus and became a clown. Does he ever wish he'd stuck with that career? 'You must be f***ing joking! After one season at Blackpool Tower Circus I realised I didn't have whatever the heck it is that makes a clown tick. I was no Coco, Chaplin, Laurel or Cairoli… geniuses all.'

Tim hails from that most creative of cities, Liverpool. Why does he think the city is such a hotbed of talent? 'A great question that has no answer 'cos nobody knows. The Arts have always been big down the Pool. That's part of it; everything from music, drama, illustration, dance, and Uncle Tom Cobbley an' all. Something in the water. I can only compare it to New York for the buzz.'

I asked the two men what their 'big break' was in the comics industry. Tim first: 'Probably drawing a comic strip on my bedroom wall with a stick of charcoal when I was two and three quarters. Five pictures and they told a story that was recognisable as a story. It's been downhill ever since.' And Dicky? 'Dear old Bob 'we've got to be careful' Paynter (Group Editor of IPC humour comics). Bob plucked me from the 'singles' cartoon market - magazines and newspapers - and propelled me onto a totally unfamiliar path. It was thus, downhill all the way.'

In their 'Doctor Who?' strip, Tim and Dicky had to tell a story within two or three frames. Looking back, what do they think were the key ingredients of a really classic strip? 'The key ingredient is the deadline,' says Tim. 'And our love of Doctor Who. I think that shines through in even the silliest strips.' Dicky lists three ingredients: 'One: Doctor Who. Two: Two or three frames. Three: Funny. Oh, and the writing - I think Tim would agree!'

Why do they think Doctor Who continues to be such a popular TV show so many years after it started? Tim is philosophical: 'Tis as



Dicky Howett

coolio a concept as you can cook up. Who doesn't want to escape into everything and everywhere. Totally timeless.'

'The show manages to overcome the budget and the BBC,' offers Dicky. 'Two plus points I think…'

Tim and Dicky both remain busy today. Dicky's company Golden Age Television Recreations leases antique film and video cameras to film and television productions. He worked on An Adventure in Space and Time, the 2013 drama about the origins of Doctor Who. 'Mark Gatiss wrote the drama - he's a fan of our 'Doctor Who?' strip. My company installed all the 'TV studio' equipment and I appeared in several scenes manning one of my cameras. It was a golden week at Wimbledon Studios in South London, and I met two of the original cast - Carol Ann Ford and William Russell. I worked last year with the mighty Tom Baker. I filmed a few scenes with him and K9 for insertion in the Shada DVD reissue.'

Tim continues to be involved in the comics industry and often visits schools, doing sterling work getting youngsters involved in the genre. What advice can he offer to budding writers and artists? 'Don't listen to anyone giving advice. Be original. Find your own voice and style. Enjoy.'

> 'Looking back, what do they think were the key ingredients of a really classic strip?'

Tim and Dicky are not the only ones who have kept Doctor Who fans laughing over the years. Jamie Lenman (drawing under the name 'Baxter') contributed the 'Whoah' strip from 2006 to 2014. Did he always want to be an artist? 'I was always drawing cartoons, yes,' he recalls. 'I read cartoon strips rather than comics, so Peanuts and Garfield were huge favourites when I was younger and then later The Far Side and Calvin & Hobbes. It was in the 90s that I started reading Doctor Who Magazine and found what I thought was in impossible combination - comic strips about my favourite TV show! Leighton Noyes' strip 'Doctor Oho' was a massive influence on me, as well as the fabulous work of Tim Quinn and Dicky Howett.'

What had stimulated his interest in Doctor Who? 'Oddly enough it wasn't any particular episode, it was the Who exhibition at the sadly missed Museum of the Moving Image that really got me into the programme, three years after it had come off the telly. I had dim memories of watching a few bits of Sylvester's final series but I'd never paid it much attention, when suddenly at this exhibition I fell hopelessly in love. Something just clicked about the character, and I was hooked.'

Jamie recalls how he went about getting his work published in Doctor Who Magazine: 'I badgered then-editor Clayton Hickman until



Jamie Lenman

he gave in. I'd recently had another strip dropped from a different magazine and was trying to hawk it round various publishers when my Dad said 'No one wants an old strip - do a new one about something else', and the only thing that I was passionate about was Doctor Who. I loved it enough to be able to take the mick out of it. I looked in Doctor Who Magazine and saw that they didn't have a strip anymore, so I drew a few and sent them off. They were very out of step with where the mag was at that time, monochrome and full of hoary old continuity references, and Clayton quite rightly told me that with a new series coming soon they didn't want anything that smacked so much of 'The Wilderness Years'. What he meant was 'try again' but I took it as a flat 'no' and gave up. It was only after the show had been back for a good year when I thought up a few gags and sent some more along, in colour this time, and he was far more receptive. It still wasn't a yes though - he kept asking for more and more examples with adjustments each time until one day I poked my nose into a newsagent and saw he'd printed one!'



Jamie's cartoons were arguably more surreal than the work of Quinn and Howett. 'I think that my strip was a fairly equal blending of both their work and Leighton Noyes'. It looks all weird and ugly like Leighton's, but some of the humour is a bit 'Carry On' like Tim and Dicky's stuff. I always tried to approach it with a 'fuzzy mind', as if you could screw your brain up in the same way you screw your eyes up so things get a bit blurry up there. That's why people had haircuts in the shape of kettles or cars for hands etc. Any fleeting, delirious thought that would come to me, such as 'Sea Devil guns resemble teacups', would be grabbed onto and followed through all the way, without any explanation for the baffled readers.'

When he watches new episodes of Doctor Who now, does he find himself subconsciously thinking up new cartoons for DWM? 'No, not at all. I used to have to try quite hard to get into a silly frame of mind when watching the programme if I knew it was to be fodder for a gag. Every now and then a funny idea might pop up though, and I think about doing it just for fun.'

Jamie also works in animation and is a musician. Does he think it's sensible for artists to diversify in order to make a living? 'It's certainly sensible,' he advises. 'If you're working freelance like I do, you have to cast as many nets as possible so as to catch enough fish.'

What does the future hold for him? 'Over the last year or so the balance of my work has tipped back towards music a bit, with putting out records and making videos and touring the country playing shows etc. So I expect there'll be more of that, although I would like to beef up the illustration side of things - a couple of children's books would suit me right down to the ground.'

Both the 'Doctor Who?' and 'Whoah' strips have been reprinted in book form by Miwk Publishing who have also published Tim and Dicky's autobiographies. We caught up with Matt West of Miwk to find out how these books came about: 'Peter Ware (of Doctor Who Magazine) contacted us and said Jamie was looking for a publisher for a collection of his DWM cartoons. Jamie worked on the mag during a time when my fandom had taken a nosedive and I didn't get

'If you're working freelance like I do, you have to cast as many nets as possible so as to catch enough fish.'

DWM, but I was familiar with his work. So when he sent the whole book through I got to assess it as just that, a whole book rather than a collection of cartoons already seen. I absolutely adored it. As we were finalising 'Whoah!' I asked if DWM would have any objection to us producing a similar collection of Tim Quinn and Dicky Howett's work. They were terribly enthusiastic and once we had Tim and Dicky along for the ride it was a joy.

'Tim and Dicky won't mind me saying, in fact I think they'd take pride in being 'old school'. That's not to say they're stuck in the past or a product of their time, it's more that they're incredibly practical, professional craftsmen. If you drop them a line and say 'I need this sort of strip in a week' you'll get it. They are a natural pairing. Put them together and they get sillier and sillier, working off each other and slowly beating good taste out of a joke. It's enviable to witness.'

Matt has equal admiration for Jamie: 'What I love most about Jamie's cartoons is that they are utterly illustrative of Jamie himself. He is completely unique. His mind works unusually, and for the better, making his opinion on things and his own quirks memorable like an ink stain on the brain. If you've ever had to make him a cup of tea you'll know exactly how he wants it and you'll never dare to forget. Similarly, if you arrange to meet him 'next Saturday' you'll soon learn his rules for what 'next Saturday' means in Lenman-world.

'This could all sound annoying, but it's not. It's a collection of idiosynchracies, kinks and foibles which make up an endearing and lovely guy who I'm so pleased to have met through his book. And those peculiarities are reflected in his cartoons. Some of them make me a little tearful. There's one where the Third Doctor is given a Christmas present from Jo who's knitted him a question mark pullover. I adore it. The idea that this bizarre clothing choice of a later incarnation is entirely due to a gift from a past companion is wonderful. Now, in my head, that's canon.'

Were there any problems sourcing the original artwork for the books? 'With 'Whoah!' there were no problems at all,' Matt recalls. 'Jamie had kept all his line art, but works digitally so had original hi res files of all his artwork. In fact, he



Lew Stringer

designed and typeset his own book. Tim and Dicky's book was a different kettle of fish. Dicky had sold off most of his original art at conventions. That said, we managed to trace a heck of a lot of it. Designer Rob Hammond worked from hi res scans, in some cases recolouring from scratch based on the original DWM pallete (since Dicky didn't always work in colour, but DWM coloured the strip for print). It was a labour of love. But when you're dealing with a body of work like that, the last thing you do is half-arse it. It's insulting to the artists and it's insulting to the customer. You have to make it the very best you possibly can. We did that and I'm very proud of it, and I know that Tim and Dicky were happy too which meant the world to us.'

Does Matt have any plans to reprint any other Doctor Who comic strips? 'We really wanted to reprint the TV Countdown and Dalek strips. I still do. Rob put a lot of work into cleaning them up by way of a demo. Similarly, we wanted to reproduce the Look-In art for series like Sapphire and Steel, The Tomorrow People and Robin of Sherwood. Then there's the Marvel Blake's 7 material.'

'But it all takes time and money, Matt concludes. 'And more often than not, it's more time and money than we can afford in order to break even or make a small profit on. It's frustrating, but it really is still a niche market'.

Finally, let's catch up with the man who's currently making Doctor Who Magazine readers chuckle – Lew Stringer who writes and draws the 'Daft Dimension' strip. Lew needs no introduction and is the man behind such classics as Combat Colin and Beano characters such as the modern incarnation of Big Eggo. Was he a big fan of Doctor Who when he was growing up?

'Like most kids in the 1960s,' recalls Lew, 'I was more a fan of the Daleks than the Doctor. I watched Doctor Who right from the early days so I must have seen the first Dalek story. I was caught up in the whole Dalekmania wave so for me the attraction was the Dalek merchandise. I still have my battery-operated Dalek, Dalek badge from Woolworths, and Dalek Rolykins.'

Lew was an avid reader of TV21 – did the early Dalek comic strips influence his desire to be an artist at all? 'The Daleks definitely inspired me!' he declares. 'My early drawings at infant school usually had a Dalek somewhere in the picture. TV21 was a big influence, as were the Odhams comics Wham!, Smash!, and Pow! (Leo Baxendale used to put little clockwork Daleks in the backgrounds of his Tiddlers strip for Wham!). Mike Higgs' The Cloak strip in Pow! was a big influence and inspired the direction of my Combat Colin strips years later.'

How different is the comics industry now to when Lew started? 'Very different,' he says. 'There are less mainstream British comics these days, so less opportunities for new creators to earn a living. The comics that are around tend to be based on a toy or movie licence, so there's less scope for originated strips. I was lucky that when I started out, the Marvel UK comics and IPC's OINK! comic were happy to accept originated characters and allowed me creative freedom, within reason.

'These days I enjoy working on established characters for The Beano but I miss the freedom of creating my own characters and taking them in the direction I want them to go. That said, there are more opportunities than ever for



new creators to publish their own comics, and digital printing is so slick and relatively affordable. That means there's a wider variety of British comics out there now, sold at the many comic cons around the country, but whether their creators can make a living out of it is another matter. Then there are digital comics too, and I'm currently reviving my old Derek the Troll character for a new digital anthology called GOOF!'

How did he end up contributing a regular strip to DWM? 'They needed a new strip to replace the one by the departing artist and Panini's Brady Webb suggested me to editor Tom Spilsbury. I've been around so long now that I work for editors who grew up on my old strips, so they were familiar with my work.'

Is Lew free to feature elements from the whole of Doctor Who's history or do the DWM team prefer him to focus on the current series? 'It tends to be that they prefer strips based on the current series while it's on air, but between seasons I can do more classic-themed gags. As there's been such a long gap between seasons this time, it's meant I've focused more on classic-era Who this year.'

When he watches Doctor Who, is Lew consciously looking for scenarios that might make a good cartoon? 'Yes, although sometimes ideas just come randomly, and they're often the ones that work better.'

Why does Lew think Doctor Who continues to be such a popular programme? 'It's unique, it can deal with an unlimited range of subjects and settings, and it can be equal parts funny or dark. I personally like it because of the Doctor's independence and good intentions. It's a character who's pretty much a lone spirit, not affiliated to a 'federation' or, God forbid, a military operation. Plus, it has Daleks. You can never have too many Dalek stories in my opinion!'

For more details of Tim, Dicky and Jamie's books, go to www.miwkpublishing.com.

Lew Stringer's blog is at lewstringer.blogspot.com.


Dicky in the Tardis

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HATCH, MATCH & DISPATCH:

Buster with Whizzer and Chips (3 November 1990)



In comparison to the 'Great News for all Readers!' pronouncements that heralded the cancellation – sorry, I mean 'joining of forces' – of one great IPC comic to the advantage of another in the 1970s and early 1980s, there is something rather sad about the announcement in Whizzer and Chips that it was about to be merged into Buster.

Whizzer and Chips' final issue (dated 27 October 1990) makes no mention at all of its own immediate demise except on its inside back cover. There, a lovely, but

heart-wrenching image by Jimmy Hansen portrays a handful of Whizz-kid and Chip-ites speeding away from twenty-one years of history in a souped-up roadster. Sid and Slippy from Sid's Snake are there. So are Fuss Pot, Joker, Odd Ball, Sweeny Toddler and the Bumpkin Billionaires. More than a few old favourites seem to be absent, however. Let's try not to image a second image, of Shiner walking into an empty office the following morning. 'Chums? C'mon pals, stop hiding – this isn't funny anymore!'

Over in Buster, there was a similar lack of fanfare. There was a full-page advertisement for the following week's merger issue, but it made far more of the exciting free gifts that would be attached (stickers promoting St Ivel's Fiendish Feet yoghurts) than the news that two of Britain's greatest humour comics – the last of IPC's renowned humour range – were to be combined into one.

Allen Cummings had been editor of Buster since the comic's twenty-first birthday year of 1981, and would remain at the helm after the merge until Buster's final issue was published at the

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very end of 1999 (with a cover dated 4 January 2000). He remembers receiving news of the merger in 1990, passed down from senior management. 'The writing had been on the wall for some time. It was left to me to inform the contributors at that time which strips would be remaining and which would unfortunately be lost. Not a pleasant task.'

'As I recall, at the time Buster and Whizzer were selling roughly at the same rate. But because Buster was the older and probably better known title, it was decided that it should be the "senior" partner in the inevitable merge. Consequently Buster commanded the greater number of "home" strips to be retained.' It's worth noting that Buster was also the more expensive of the two comics – 40p compared to Whizzer and Chips' 35p – although it was also eight pages longer, so more expensive to produce.

Although the early 1990s are often remembered as something of a boom time for comics in the British market, publishers seemed to be targeting new titles at a young adult audience rather than younger readers. 'By the 1980s the massive readership base of the previous decade was beginning to decline,' says Allen. 'Children's interests were being pulled in different directions – driven largely by new technology. Sales of all comic titles were dropping alarmingly. Profit margins were being squeezed. Budgets were trimmed heavily and reprinting of old strips was becoming common place. Titles were merged in an attempt to consolidate readerships and circulations. That was the case with Buster.'

Lew Stringer was an established artist on Buster by this stage. His strips Tom Thug and The Vampire Brats were both retained for the newly-merged Buster with Whizzer and Chips. 'Tom remained very popular in Buster [after joining the comic after Buster's merger with Oink! in 1988], and was always in the top few stories according to the reader's choices,' recalls Lew. 'The industry must have felt fairly secure to me in 1990 as it was the year I put a deposit down on a house! It was a shame the old Fleetway titles were falling though, but other companies seemed to be doing ok. I imagine Whizzer and Chips was selling relatively poorly as it had even merged into itself (losing Chips as a pull out) and was nearly all-reprint. Allen and I used to chat on the phone quite often so [news of the merger] would have been mentioned then. I think we knew it was inevitable unfortunately.'

To me, a collector and fan, the downbeat tone of this milestone merger seems a shame – especially as Whizzer and Chips was the first comic I received weekly as a child. But I suppose not many of the comic's readers in 1990 would have had the same sense of its great history. It had lasted too long to have kept the same young readers who would have started out with the first issue in October 1969, but not quite long enough to be a comic that 1990's kids' mums and dads would have read.

The publishing environment in which Buster and Whizzer and Chips were produced had changed quite significantly since the IPC funny comics' more buoyant years under Humour Group Editor Bob Paynter. There could be as many as five humour comics (not to mention the company's Disney-licensed range) co-existing on the list at any one time. Mergers seemed to be announced fairly regularly – usually with great fanfare, the centre pages or a comic's front cover given over to original artwork depicting characters from each title greeting each other with excited grins and earnest handshakes.

In 1987, IPC had sold its Youth Group comics range to Robert Maxwell. Under Maxwell, and re-branded Fleetway Publications, the humour range was swiftly reduced to just the big two of Buster and Whizzer and Chips. Buster swallowed up Nipper and Oink! within a year of the Maxwell takeover, while Scouse Mouse lasted only six issues in 1989 before being merged quietly into Whizzer and Chips. When two became one in late 1990, it could be argued that the lack of fanfare was more respectful than the spirit of 'hatch, match and dispatching' from IPC's heyday. I know, from comments on my blog and on Twitter, just how betrayed some young readers felt by the razzmatazz and 'You've never had it so good!' editorialising that accompanied the final issue of their favourite title before it was taken over by rival comic – rather like a victory parade at a wake. But at least the passing of their comic heroes was significantly marked. In 1990, Whizzer and Chips passed with barely a marked grave.

Under Maxwell, working practices changed quite dramatically. John Smith, who had been editor of Whizzer and Chips prior to the merger, set up his own company called Keeley Enterprises and was given charge of a package of titles, to be produced by freelancers administered by John from his home.

Allen remembers: 'I worked directly with John and continued to produce Buster and Buster Monthly, creating my own office at home and working closely with all the contributors. I travelled to London one day a week to meet up with an artist who would do any necessary illustration corrections or word balloon corrections I required, before supplying the complete issue package to the printers. Proofs came back directly to my home for passing prior to eventual publication. It was a very slick and economically efficient operation which allowed the titles to continue beyond what they would have done had they been left with the crippling overheads of central London.'

Lew continued to contribute to Buster, the changes seeming less acute to him and, presumably, other creators who were already freelance. The popular Tom Thug ran until 1996, but increasing numbers of other pages started to fill up with reprint material. 'I think we had our hopes raised that Maxwell was going to re-invigorate the comics line, but that didn't go as planned. Then [in 1992] Egmont bought the company, mainly for the Disney license, and things gradually began to wind down.'

I asked Lew for his thoughts on the enduring legacies of these two great titles. 'I thought Buster was a much stronger comic in the 1960s when it had a nice balance of adventure and humour strips. I felt it lost its identity a bit when it went all-humour, and the various mergers made it seem even more generic. That said, I think it still had its own tone, different to its rivals at DC Thomson. I loved working for it, and Allen Cummings was a good editor.

'As for Whizzer and Chips, I thought that was a brilliant, inspired idea when it debuted in 1969. Dandy and Beano both had 16 pages for 4d each then, so Whizzer and Chips being two 16-page comics for 6d did feel like a bargain. I'm sure most of knew it was really one comic, but it was a nice concept and clearly became a hit.'

With thanks to Allen Cummings, Lew Stringer and Matt Bowen.





CHEEKY WEEKLY

Funny how some comics stick in your memory. I vividly recall dragging my friends all over our town in October 1977, trying desperately to find a newsagents that had a copy of the premiere issue of Cheeky Weekly.



My gang were all ready to give up after the first couple of washouts, but me, I was determined to get that first issue. It's a first issue! It's a collector's item! I have no idea why I want it, I just do, ok!? Let's try the shop on the market...

Luckily, Cheeky Weekly didn't disappoint.

Cheeky (the character) had been a standout in the earlier Krazy, and soon graduated to his own mag, which is probably another reason I was so all fired up on getting the first issue. That continuity bug is hard to shake.

In a clever set-up, the mag's stories are interspersed with us following Cheeky around throughout his week, doing his paper round on Monday, babysitting on Wednesday and so on, although he never gets much done, always running into one of his massive supporting cast and swapping puntastic gags with characters like Herman The Traffic Warden, Jogging Jeremy or Walter Wurx, the boy always desperate for a pee.

Then there's Lili Pop, the sexy but strangely inappropriate lollipop lady.

Lord knows what that was all about. Cheeky was obviously too old to need help crossing the road, but equally he was probably too young to feel strange stirrings about older women. Or am I overthinking it? Answers on a thesis, please.

In a real piece of meta / fourth wall breaking, each 'day' also leads into an intro for the next feature, my favourites being what we used to call the 'serious' strips.

Fangs Of Fear, for example, featuring supernatural investigator James Bold (cough) and his glamorous assistant Angel O' Mercy (double cough), is actually the scary book Cheeky reads at bedtime.

Because it's the '70's however, there's always a power cut whenever he gets to a good bit and we (and he) have to wait till next week to find out what happens.

There's also Space Family Robinson, where a normal family are spacenapped by giant aliens. That takes the form of a movie serial Cheeky and his chums watch every Saturday at the local fleapit, preceded by reprinted Wile E. Coyote strips as the 'cartoon feature' and guarded over by Arthur Mullard's sister, the fearsome Ursula The Usherette.

OK, both strips practically write themselves, but you do get Massimo Belardinelli, Cesar Lopez Vera & John Richardson on art duties.

As for the funny strips, there's interfering do-gooders The Skateboard Squad and robot septuagenarion The Six Million Dollar Gran. The legendary Leo Baxendale is here too, with Creepy Sleepy Tales, a succession of bonkers fables Cheeky tells while babysitting the badly behaved Baby Burpo.

And as if all that wasn't enough, there's also a really odd segment for Tuesdays, where Cheeky climbs up in the attic to find his dad's old comic collection, and shows us a real comic strip from the early '40's. As a kid I always skipped past that bit, but now I'm wondering if famed comics historian Denis Gifford didn't have something to do with Cheeky. It's the kind of thing his short lived Ally Sloper was full of.

All good strips, but somehow for me, it's the interlinking 'Cheeky's week' segments that win out. Firstly they're drawn brilliantly by Frank McDiarmid, and secondly they're crammed with jokes and sight gags in just about every available part of the page, like some kind of British version of Will Elder's 'chicken fat' approach to the early MAD's.

Even Cheeky's pet snail (?) has his own ongoing comedy routine, even it quite often feels like the giggling gastropod is starring in a whole other comic, so random and disconnected is some of his dialogue.

Actually, there's a whole load of randomness in Cheeky Weekly.

Take for instance the Friday strip in which Cheeky is usually to be found lurking in a shop doorway with a couple of his chums, whispering furtively about how they're going to get a copy of 'That comic we can never find in any of the shops'

You'd be forgiven for thinking Cheeky and co. were trying to score some undergrounds, or a particularly explicit edition of Heavy Metal at the very least, but no, they're actually after the unnamed comic that features the next strip, Mustapha Million (a middle eastern Richie Rich).

Maybe they were worried about Harvey's lawyers, I dunno.

For an alleged grown-up, Cheeky Weekly is quite an odd read at times. As well as the aforementioned uncomfortable sexism (for the Xmas issue, dolly bird Lili Pop adorns the cover in the kind of outfit normally to be found in Titbits), there's also a fair bit of casual racism. Check out this routine between Cheeky & Herman The Traffic Warden: 'Last week he saw a dog yelping at two rows of chinese waiters outside the football stadium... and he charged the dog with barking at a double yellow line!'

But hey, it was the '70's, and anyway, if you don't like that gag, don't worry, Cheeky's moving too fast to care, plus there'll be another seven in the next panel, and the next, and the next...

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No sooner had the preview issue of Oink! fallen into the hands of its young readers back in April 1986, aghast parents began bombarding publisher IPC's switchboard with irate phone calls. "Oink! had been given away with Whizzer and Chips, Buster and other IPC comics and there was a flood of complaints," recalls regular contributor Tony Husband. "They said they should have been warned about it, that it ought to be on the top shelf. We knew right then that it was going to have a huge impact."

And so it did. Oink! was launched on 3 May 1986 and it was like no other children's comic that had been published before. If there was a rule book, then it had preceded to tear it to shreds, drawing influence from Chris Donald's rebelliously vulgar comic Viz and the American humour magazine Mad thanks to a swill of satire and toilet humour. "We had the plops and Uncle Pig and all of these anarchic characters challenging people," Husband continues. "It was always our intention to just push the boundaries."

He was by no means alone in his vision. Oink! was edited by Patrick Gallagher, aided by Husband and Mark Rodgers. The trio had gelled over drinks in a Manchester pub and their idea was to break the set pattern of traditional comics and their strips. "As a cartoonist, you couldn't just go off on your own with comics such as The Beano, Dandy, Whizzer and Chips and Buster and we wanted greater freedom," Husband explains. "We were tired and we felt that something needed to change."

Blackpool-born Husband was already an established cartoonist. As a self-taught artist, he'd set himself up as a freelance in the mid-1970s and he was regularly working for Private Eye and Punch. Gallagher used to go to him for advice with his own drawings and the pair became firm friends. "We'd go for drinks together and talk about comics," Husband says. "We both wrote for Whizzer and Chips and Buster among others but one day Patrick said he'd met another local artist called Mark."

Gallagher used to work in Manchester Library and Rogers had approached him to discuss his work and their shared passion for comics. When Husband was invited to meet too, something clicked. "We had creative minds and we just



"Sow" subversive

connected," he explains. "The chemistry was immediate and we had the energy to work on our ideas." With the support of Bob Paynter, the group editor of IPC's humour comics at Kings Reach Tower on London's South Bank, the trio were given the go-ahead to create their own comic. "We had enough money for a dummy and we looked to see what we could come up," Husband adds.

Gallagher, Rogers and Husband were also big music fans and they were fully immersed in the alternative rock and acid house culture that had developed around that time in Manchester. The infamous Haçienda nightclub had opened in 1982 and it was on the verge of becoming a dance venue. Bands such as The Happy Mondays, the Inspiral Carpets and the Stone Roses were emerging and the movement, due in part to its links with drugs, became known as Madchester.

"There was a real punk feel to the city and so much was happening," Husband says. "We ended up getting an office in Manchester and it was the same building as Factory, the Happy Mondays management. The Haçienda DJ Dave Haslam was next door and and Marc Riley who was in The Fall was working as a record plugger upstairs. There was this eclectic bunch of people all working around the clock and there was a lot of energy in the building. It was like being in a rock band."

Such an environment proved to be influential. Not only did Marc Riley end up contributing to the comic (appearing in many photo strips and vocalising The Oink Song), but other musicians got involved, not least Chris Sievey, aka Frank Sidebottom who penned his own strips with his felt tip pens. "We also got to know John Peel and he played both tracks of the flexidisc that we gave away with issue one on his radio show," Husband says. Peel – dubbed John Potatopeel – ended up contributing a piece to the the music-themed issue 16 and he presented Steve Wright with Oink!'s Most Irritating DJ in the World Award.

"I also interviewed Ian Astbury from The Cult who was a big fan of the comic," Husband adds. "At the end, he said, 'before you go, mate, I ordered two t-shirts and two Oink! Mugs and I only got one of each. Can you look into it?'. We even ran a competition asking kids to send in photos of their messy bedrooms with the prize being a band playing in their room. But IPC got letters of complaint from parents saying their kids were destroying their rooms to try and win. In the end, we chose a bedroom from Manchester so we wouldn't have to travel far."

It was this level of humour that ensured most things were fair game. Oink! drew on the talents of people who were not known for their work in comics including David Haldane and Jeremy Banks who were also working on Private Eye. Haldane drew Billy's Brain, Hugo the Hungry Hippo and Rubbishman, while Jeremy Banks worked on Burp The Smelly Alien. David Leach contributed Psycho Gran and Husband created Horace "Ugly Face" Watkins. "Having lots of creative input ensured we would be different," Husband says.

The team was bolstered by Lew Stringer who was brought on board by Bob Paynter. "He was an established, steady cartoonist, the typical Whizzer and Chips guy, but we needed that to go against the weirder stuff," says Husband. "We allowed Lew to express himself and he created the brilliant Tom Thug. It was important to have short one-off strips, too, as well as little "madverts" – one of mine said, 'don't be the only kid on your block not to have a BMX bicycle. Buy one of our sledgehammers and smash everyone else's. We got taken to task over that on breakfast television."

Other notable contributors included a 15-year-old Charlie Brooker. "He said he loved cartoons and humour and asked if his strips were any good," Husband recalls. "We wrote back and send we'd buy them from him. He was getting cheques and proudly showing them off to his schoolmates."

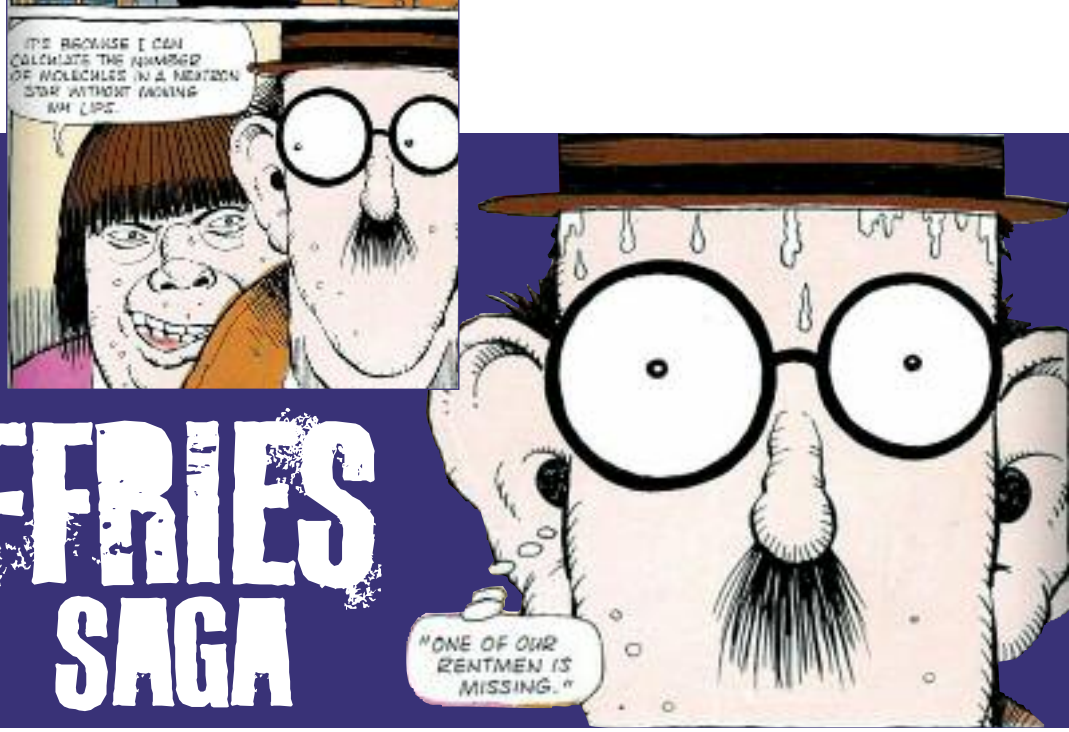
Unfortunately, the good times eventually came to an end after 68 issues. "Robert Maxwell took over the comics from IPC and the new guys didn't know what to do with Oink!. They put it with Private Eye and Viz and moved it from fortnightly to weekly which was a lot of pressure. But we felt it was like punk rock: better to burn out than fade away. When it ended, it had run its course."

Even so, it went down in history as a legendary title. "Pat had given the comic its great look and the themes for each issue worked really well, ensuring that we could keep things fresh," Husband says. "Kids also loved the toilet humour and the sick, dark undercurrent that ran through the comic. Parents would be like, 'you can't do that' but kids would giggle like they do when someone trumps and parents tut. But that's what Oink! was. It was a trump."



How the Madchester era influenced Oink!, one of Britain's most anarchic humour comics

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THE BOJEFFRIES SAGA

A NEW COMIC EXPERIENCE

I opened the Bojeffries Saga not knowing what to expect. I had become familiar with Alan Moore's seminal work through Watchmen and V for Vendetta but had never heard of this series. Thirty five years ago, Alan Moore and Steve Parkhouse's satirical deconstruction of the contemporary British family made it's debut in the British comic anthology magazine Warrior. This was a magazine that was very familiar with Moore's works having been home to his Marvelman (which would later be re-titled Miracleman in it's U.S. reprinting) and had been the birthplace of the aforementioned V for Vendetta in serialised form. Warrior was an extremely important publication and featured the works of such luminaries of the U.K. comic scene such as Steve Moore, Brian Bolland, John Bolton and Grant Morrison. It was the breeding ground for the British Invasion which was about to storm the U.S. scene and rejuvenate the comic market like never seen before.

NO ORDINARY FAMILY

Jobremus Jeffries is like any other father, he's trying to keep peace in a house stuffed with two kids (Ginda and Reth), uncles Raoul and Festus, a baby and old Grandpa Podslasp. But this is no ordinary family, one uncle is a vampire, the other a werewolf never mind the fact that Grandpa is in the last stages of organic matter and that the baby puts out enough thermonuclear energy to power England and Wale

The wolfish Raoul is prone to eat dogs, mostly poodles (in fact the collection features an interesting recipe for German Shepard's pie!) and Festus resembles a Bela Lugosi cosplayer! Daughter Ginda believes that her ability, genuine or not, to calculate the number of molecules in a neutron star makes her sexually appealing to men despite having an unattractive appearance. Podlasp is a hideous, amorphous blob with tentacles (imagine one of Lovecraft's Old Ones, but with even slimier) who lives in the families greenhouse and can alter another person's genetic structure, oh yes and he's a bit senile.

As with most of these forms of horror sit-coms (think The Addams family blended with Coronation Street), most of the humour comes from the Bojeffries attempting to fit in with normal society. The stand out character for me was Glinda, a stocky, pimpled bulldog of a woman who is all-powerful and never tires of explaining that to people she assumes will be intimidated by her omnipresence. Her solo strip has her venture out on a date night, kidnapping and abusing a "wing woman" and literally carrying a man in a leg cast home with her for sex: "During climax, I may release millions of eggs." It's hilarious stuff until, in just a half page, it reaches a kind of odd poignancy, demonstrating the sad loneliness of monster-hood and wilful social incompetence.

STAND OUT MOMENTS

This volume is packed full of imaginative scenarios and narrative situations which will stay with the reader long since after they close the covers on this collection. The first few stories are packed with a comedic bang as they focus on Inchmale, a humble and unassuming rent collector who runs afoul of the Bojeffries while

attempting to close the books on 90 years' worth of unpaid rent. His boring existence, which he tries to liven up by constantly thinking of names for his never-to-be-written autobiography, gets a welcome dose of excitement as he investigates the family and the possible crimes against civilised society they may have committed. His insistence on seeing the clan repay their debts leads to a very polite invasion of their home where he gets to know various family members up close and too personal for a supposedly normal man to endure. These stories were originally printed in black and white in their original run in Warrior, then reprinted in colour in the magazine Flesh and Bones in 1986.

'Raoul's Night Out' is another highlight, starring the shape-shifting foreigner/werewolf who joins his factory workmates for a party that descends into a racial rant and a cheap shot at the police. Other pieces involve a Romanian vampire who dies repeatedly, a beach day told in narration, and a very odd group singalong.

I'm glad I picked this collection up, it has given me more of an insight to Alan Moore's creative genius, especially of that as a gifted satirist as well as a powerful political commentator. The Bojeffries Saga is quintessentially British in it's tone, it's subversive and one of the valuable treasures of the UK's contribution to the industry.

"Think The Addams Family blended with Coronation Street, most of the humour comes from the Bojeffries attempting to fit in with normal society"

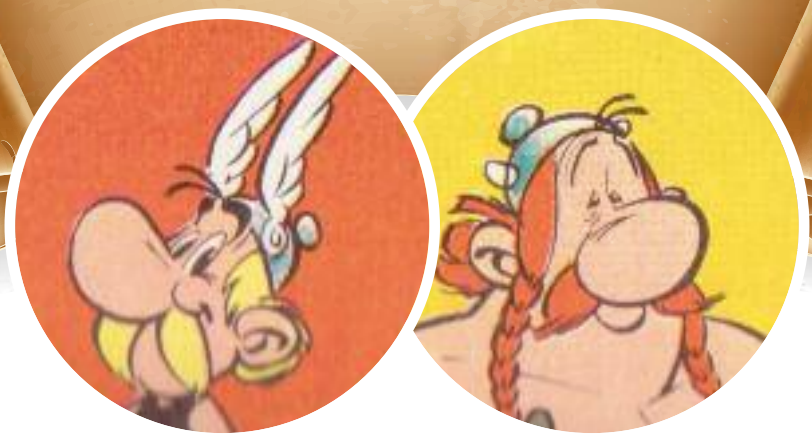




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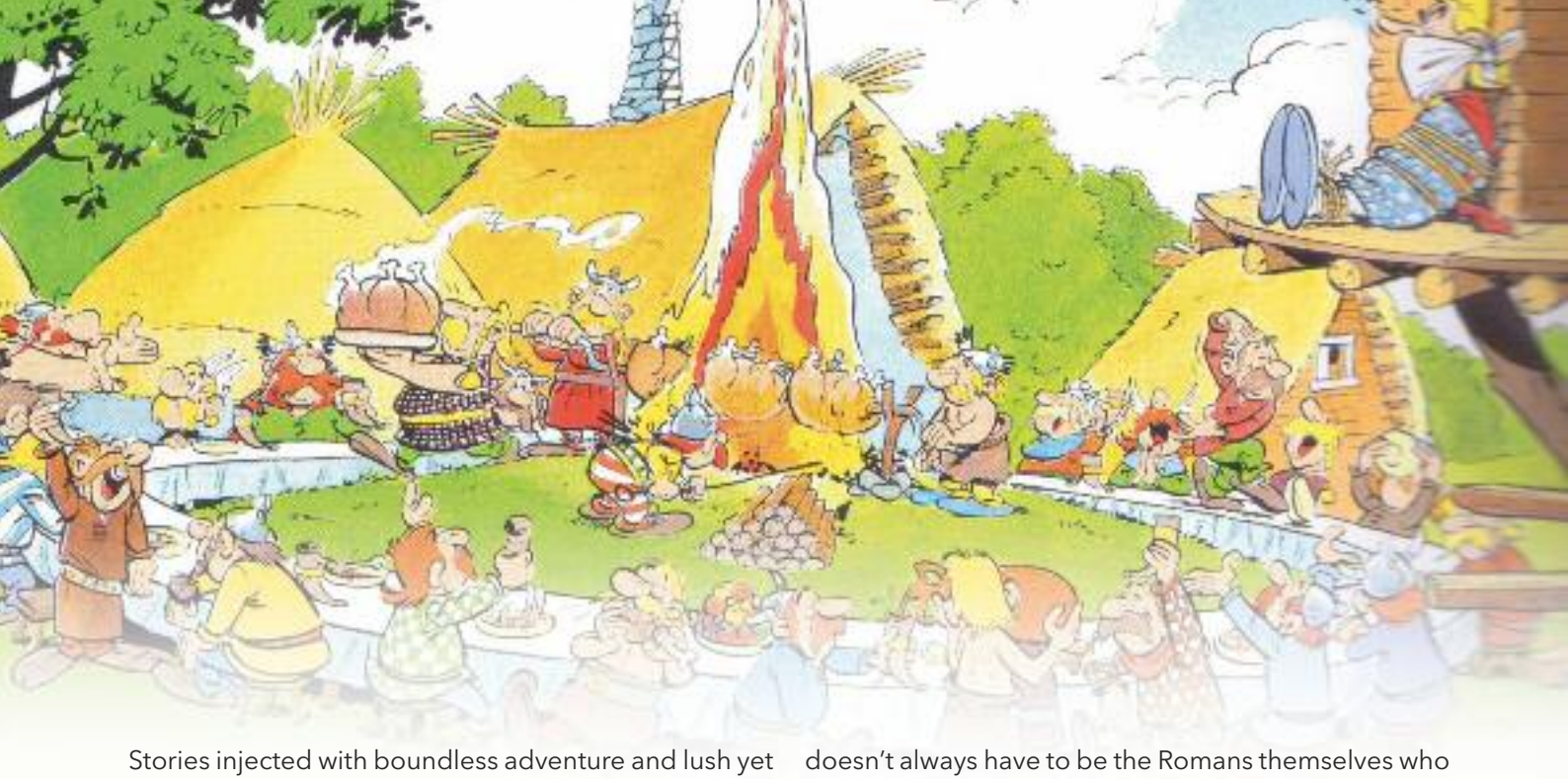
Astérix®

AN INDOMITABLE LEGACY



HAS there ever been a history lesson as infinite in its slapstick, vibrant in its globe-trotting and stocked up with its pun-believable names as the adventures of Asterix? Staring life as a serialised strip in the pages of Pilote magazine in October 1959, not even the deaths of its artist, Albert Uderzo, and writer, Rene Goscinny, has stopped new volumes of the classic adventure series being produced to this day. What is it then that makes the plucky gang of Gauls such an endearing publication?

The idea of a small group of Gauls defending their village from Roman occupation reflects an immediately natural underdog motif, something that any audience can empathise. The added touch of magic potion however giving its villagers super-human strength unlocks a level of Looney Tunes-esque slapstick whose vibrancy spreads to all ages. Asterix shows an irreverent nature for the Romans, placing their conquering nature above all their other achievements, resulting in a clear-cut good versus evil mentality. Where Asterix, Obelix, Dogmatix, Getafix, Chief Vitalstatistix and the rest of the Gaulish villagers live in a tranquil democracy, the four neighbouring Roman camps that keep a stern if weary vigil have their militant nature on full display. For the young reader, it wouldn't be a hard choice to choose which side you'd side with, galvanised by the never-ending banquets the Gauls feast upon at the end of every adventure!



Stories injected with boundless adventure and lush yet caricatured visuals gives the comic the immediate charm that points to its longevity, but it's also a thoroughly uncomplicated affair. Asterix and Obelix boast a simple yet forthright sense of right and wrong in defending their village from Roman rule, and even then, where it might be expected for it to fall to the Roman to act as the naturally evil foil to the Gauls, that wouldn't quite be the case. As the series progresses, conquers from other lands, including Goths and Normans, and outside parties such as soothsayers, Gallo-Romans and nefarious, high-ranking Roman officials, dare to cross paths. Such devious characters are often intent on upsetting the equilibrium between the ever-winning Gauls and exasperated local Romans. Such characters gives the comic a larger scope, motivating such strips as Asterix and the Soothsayer or Asterix and the Roman Agent to propel their plots in more unprecedented directions than the more standard yet enjoyable fair as earlier volumes, such as Asterix The Gladiator or Asterix The Gaul. Adding to that worldly view the comic holds are the various volumes in which Asterix, Obelix and Dogmatic traverse the globe, be it acquiring an international array of food in Asterix and the Banquet or trekking to Africa in search of fellow Gaul Tragicomix in Asterix the Legionary.

What perhaps speaks to the younger readers Asterix has always been targeted at is the colourful, nonviolent violence, along with all of the above elements peppered with a surging yet light-hearted humour. No Asterix comic is complete without someone getting a dose of magic potion-induced punch-ups. Adding to that idea of democracy that the Gauls adhere to, it doesn't always have to be the Romans themselves who get beaten up, various titles in the series were content to feature the Gauls engage in fisticuffs themselves. That comic sense of violence balances against the swirling adventures that Asterix projects. The gleeful irreverence Asterix presents to the historic factors from which its story and characters are built on only serves to make the comic all the more endearing. Such milestones as Obelix's unintentional demolition of the Sphinx's nose in Asterix and Cleopatra or Asterix casually introducing tea to the British by using it as an ingredient in the magic potion in Asterix in Britain emphasis the buoyant absurdity of the comic, it exist in its own unique world, founded on reality and yet simultaneously detached from it.

57 years after Asterix the Gaul was published in its complete form, a new exhibition in London, Asterix in Britain: The Life and Work of Rene Goscinny, displays the longevity of the comic as well as illuminating one of the men behind the loveable Gaul. In addition to that, a new CGI feature film is eyeing an August release date in the UK next year too, entitled Asterix: The Secret of the Magic Potion. It serves as a follow-up to the 2014 adaptation of The Mansions of the Gods, with directorial duo Alexandre Astier ad Louis Clichy returning. All of this alongside the most recent entry in the series, Asterix and the Chariot Race, less than a year old at the time of this article, published back in October 2017. It would seem then that Asterix has yet to settle into its definitive 'legacy' phase, whereby fans pour over past glories of the franchise. Clearly, Asterix's heart-warmingly slapstick adventures are as indomitable as the character himself.



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An Interview with Rachael Smith

PART 2





In issue 1 of Comicscene we presented an interview with Rachael Smith, one of the finest young comic makers in the UK. Here, we wanted to give you more of a taste of her work, including a look at her forthcoming graphic novel, Isabella and Blodwen.

Looking over Smith's published works, two things become apparent; she's extremely prolific, and she can switch genres with surprising ease, with straight up comedy romps, humorous explorations of finding your place in life, a grim fantasy featuring a 'Harvey'-esque giant rabbit set against a backdrop of some unspoken real-life horror causing two children to flee their lives, and then deeply personal autobiography exploring your own mental health issues. In this I'd compare her with Tillie Walden, although Smith is reluctant to agree; "Tillie is a LOT more prolific than me! Honestly I don't know how she does it – she's incredible. But yeah, I guess I never start writing a story thinking 'this will be fantasy' or 'this will be educational'...I always just start with the characters and build the world around them – what they want, what they need, their likes and dislikes...I usually finish a first draft of a script and then give it to my editor to tell me what it actually is!"

We can tell you that what it is, in our opinion, is some of the best comic work coming out of the UK at the moment. Smith's an incredibly talented writer and artist, with a real range and depth to her comics. You can find more about Rachael's work at her website, and we'd encourage you to check it out. Here's just a little sample of what she's made thus far, together with a preview of her forthcoming graphic novel, Isabella and Blodwen, currently funding at Unbound.



THE WAY WE WRITE 2012
SELF PUBLISHED -

Available to read in full at Smith's website.

A Scooby Doo-esque adventure thing, of hi-jinks and japery and jinkys with the band, Her Name Is Calla, heading out to stay for hols in a haunted house. Funny stuff from a very young, new talent, which screamed youthful ambition and perfect comedy timing.



I AM FIRE 2013
SELF PUBLISHED

The moment Smith truly found her voice. And it's a very wonderfully sweary voice indeed. The incredibly potty-mouthed Jenny is coasting her way through work experience in a posh, stuffy department store craft section. Seriously, teenager

Jenny is a delight, and Smith absolutely nails the voice of today's youth in it. The line; "It's all pom-poms and wool and shit" is possibly my favourite line in any comic, ever. Add in young pyromaniac Chris doing his work experience week in a fire safety consultancy firm and you get a comic packed with laughs, as Smith layers ridiculousness upon ridiculousness upon magnificently caricatured examples of the yoof of today.



HOUSE PARTY 2014 GREAT BEAST

Smith's debut graphic novel, showing a more thoughtful side to her writing, as she deals with the drifting lives of ennui of three 20-something university superstars now trying to cut it in the real world. Fabulous characterisation, on-point dialogue, fresh looking artwork and more than a few swears makes a tale of attempting to recapture the lost glories of youth a profound, and profoundly funny read.



THE RABBIT 2015 AVERY HILL

After flexing her dramatic artistic muscles in House Party, Smith really goes for in with The Rabbit. A heartbreaking coming of age fantasy tale of two emotionally damaged sisters, it's by turns funny and disturbing... with a very big, rather nasty, imaginary rabbit. The darkness and menace that Smith layers into the narrative of The Rabbit is superb, Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully crafted.



ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS 2016 AVERY HILL

More young people in real life trouble in Artificial Flowers, following on the themes from House Party of that post Uni drift. Siobhan is a struggling artist in London, financially propped up by her parents, she's playing at the artist's life without the need to actually sell anything. Smith not only gives us a hugely witty caper graphic novel, but an exploration of the struggle to express not just our creative sides, but our true selves.



WIRED UP WRONG 2017 SELF PUBLISHED VIA KICKSTARTER

A brutally honest portrayal of living with depression, anxiety, and self-doubt. Yet Smith's autobiographical memoir manages to deliver these incredibly personal subjects with a huge amount of humour and fun. It's both a testament to her abilities as a cartoonist and a source of inspiration, encouragement, and solace to those of us who've ever seen our own black dog.

Her portrayal of her depression is particularly striking. As many others have done, she refers to it as her black dog, but goes further, giving it a name, Barky, and two very different manifestations. Smith's reasoning for her dual Barkys is simple, yet so true; "I think it's because sometimes it's nice and cathartic to wallow in your depression – and the cuddly Barky is great for that, but it's very easy to wallow for too long and for that to start feeling like the norm. At least when depression comes as nasty Barky, sharply and painfully, it's easier to stand up to it."





ISABELLA AND BLODWEN 2018? CURRENTLY FUNDING THROUGH UNBOUND

Smith based her new graphic novel on a real silver stoppered bottle; "...you can see it at Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. It was donated in 1915 by a woman who was scared of it as she was convinced there was a witch inside. My story is about what happens when the bottle is opened."

In Isabella and Blodwen, Smith tell a story of 16-year old girl, Isabella. "Even though she's only 16, has been selected to attend Oxford University. She's academically gifted but not so great at getting on with people, and thinks all her fellow students are idiots. Isabella is the person who opens the bottle and lets out Blodwen, a fun-loving, malevolent witch, who turns Isabella's world upside down." **unbound.com/books/isabella-and-blodwen/**



Author: Richard Bruton
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A reflection on "the funnies"

by Dr Nicola Streeten

Who has not felt the powerful aphrodisiac of laughing with someone attractive? Laughter is good for us and this feel-good glow is magnified when we laugh with others. The power of laughter is discernible in other situations too. We have only to think of the banter in Parliamentary debate to see the importance of humour in conversation between the most powerful people in the country, or world. A "good sense of humour" then, is a leadership quality; a measure of power. To think about how this relates to comics and cartoons and how is it relevant to women in comics, I will begin with a comment I regularly come across. The reason, I am assured, for the low number of women political cartoonists in Britain is that women's cartoons are not funny. Having co-edited the recently published The Inking Woman (2018 Myriad Editions) documenting 250 years of cartooning by women in Britain, I have evidence to show this is untrue. There has been a wealth of funny cartoons by women through the decades and many are "political". But this raises questions around what we mean by "funny" and what we understand as "political". Interrogating our accepted notions of these words can highlight how and why assumptions are enabled and reinforced over time.

If we think of "political" cartoons it is probably caricatures that first come to mind. In 1748 the word caricature was used in England, from the Italian 'Caricare' - to overload, exaggerate. Ridicule via pictorial means was developed in 16th century Bologna, Italy by the brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci who began drawing ritrattini carichi as a pastime. Their drawings were informal humorous portraits of people on street. By the 18th century, caricatures had become an international visual language developed in England as a form of graphic satire. It is men who have been most widely documented and celebrated as leading British political satirists of their time and predecessors of modern day political cartoonists. William Hogarth (1697-1764) addressed subjects such as industry and idleness, presenting moral messages; Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827) satirised public figures; James Gillray (1756-1815) created often-venomous representations of politicians; and George Cruikshank (1792-1878) was a party-political satirist (Gaunt, 2015). But the first published book in Britain on caricature drawing, A Book of Caricaturas [sic] (1762) was written and illustrated by a woman, Mary Darly (fl. 1756-1779) who ran a popular London print shop (fl. 1741-1778). She had begun by publishing illustrated political satire, but shifted the focus to wry visual commentaries on fashion and social manners which afforded a lucrative business. This emphasis on the domestic and the everyday rather than morality or party politics perhaps explains why Mary Darly is less well known as an important forerunner of political cartoonists.

Caricatures ridiculing politicians and world leaders are not realistic portraits but suggest an essence of a character in a mocking light. The caricature of Trump as an orange baby in nappies has been dominating social media in Britain recently. And we laugh. As Umberto Eco showed in The Name of the Rose (1994), when the commoners reversed the direction of their laughter towards their rulers, they had "a compelling weapon that could overturn the class system… the high will be lowered by comedy". When we see Trump reduced visually to an incontinent helpless baby we enjoy Hobbes' "sudden glory" in recognising our sense of superiority over a world leader in the joke.

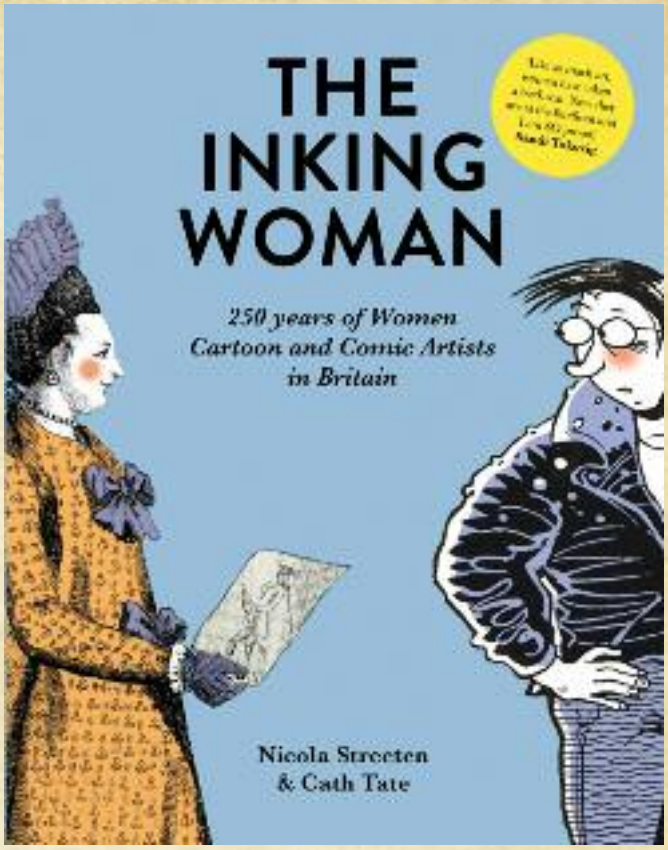
But the joy experienced through feelings of superiority over others was not understood in terms of the powerless laughing at the powerful when originally theorised by Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes. For example, in Aristotle's Poetics (350 bce) the comedy of Part Two was referred to as base, with protagonists as the common people, or lower classes.

The situations portrayed were those of everyday life. It was the hardship and pain of their narratives which was the source of amusement for an audience from the higher classes. The malicious and aggressive laughter produced was at the expense of those less powerful.

This proves that humour is culturally and historically determined. A "sense of humour" it is not something we are born with but something we learn. A Trump supporter is unlikely to find the orange baby funny, but this does not mean they have no sense of humour. If we agree a sense of humour is not innate, it follows that identifying as female does not determine you as humourless. This begs the question as to how and why the stereotype of women as humourless has been so persistent.

Visual stereotype developed from caricature, introducing a shorthand in cartooning to help the joke. Stereotype is a popular device which can be understood as functioning to maintain social order by reinforcing a dominant group's political and social power. But a stereotype can become offensive and harmful towards a group of people. In cartooning, visual stereotypes of women surrounded the campaign for women's suffrage from the 1800s. Women's struggle for the right to vote and to stand for government office in Britain began in the mid-eighteenth century. The suffragists adopted a peaceful approach with the National Union of Women's Suffrage societies (NUWSS) forming in 1897 led by Millicent Fawcett. The more militant approach was adopted by what became known as the suffragettes. Adopting direct action tactics, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst with branches around Britain. The combined forces of women's suffrage were a hugely disruptive political threat to social order in Britain. It is hard for us today to imagine what an unthinkable notion it was for women to be considered as equal to men, and it was women as well as men who were against the demands. The cartoons addressed this unpopularity head on. With cartooning a masculine endeavour there was little sympathy for women's suffrage reflected in the humour.

An online image search for "cartoons of women's suffrage" brings up a plethora of anti-suffrage cartoons from the USA and Britain. Anti-suffrage humour was based on the portrayal of the suffragettes as women who turned to political campaigning because they were too ugly to get married. In this way marriage, relying partly on attractiveness, was presented as the primary aspiration for women, irrespective of intellectual qualities and political demands. Significantly, and returning to my opening sentence on the aphrodisiac qualities of laughter, the ugliness of the suffragette is visualised as a woman with turned-down mouth and frowning expression; in other words, ugliness is conflated with being humourless. This early depiction of political women as humourless produced a stereotype firmly cemented by masculine laughter from



the dominant group through ridicule of the powerless. Such an aggressive and hostile attack on feminism in cartoon form has been sustained to the present day. The consequence is a successful reinforcement of a patriarchal social order.

But as discussed, jokes and cartoons can reject or transmogrify stereotypes and the power of laughter through a reversal of the superiority theory and a redirection of the laughter. The suffragettes, as powerless, applied this reversal strategy, theoretically destabilising the power dynamics through humour to support a campaign for political power. Image and text were combined with satirical humour on posters and postcards, produced by two British organisations, the Suffrage Atelier (1909-1914) and the Artists' Suffrage League (1907-c.1918) to support the suffrage campaigns. But such visual activity did not change the dominant idea at the time of what was "funny" and the mainstream platforms for cartoons and humour were male-led and male dominated.

An example of such a platform was Punch Magazine launched in 1841. Pioneering the term "satirical cartoon" it popularised satire as a form of humour over caricature. Satire is a technique that exposes the social absurdities in the context presented. Although it relies on criticising or victimising someone or something, it inserts an incongruity to a situation. This has the potential to change or influence beliefs and provoke action. Punch was considered sophisticated and inoffensive whilst still anti-establishment, and politically motivated. Aimed at a core middle-class

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readership most issues carried cartoons, mainly drawn by men. Many of the cartoons satirised women and, much later, excessively ridiculed the suffragettes, reinforcing through humorous cartoons that women's natural role was in the domestic sphere with children, their legal equals. This new form of satirical humour established as a norm that ridicule of women and feminism was a source of entertainment for the growing middle classes.

When feminist activity was reignited in Britain during the 1970s through the formation of the Women's Liberation Movement as part of what we refer to as second wave feminism, an association with feminism and humourlessness was also reignited in popular culture in Britain. Cartooning, still a masculine preserve, portrayed new feminist demands for power with ridicule in mainstream comedy and jokes. A direct line to women's suffrage can be traced, where jokes located women who were feminists as political only because they were too ugly to get married. As with anti-suffrage humour, unattractiveness was equated with being humourless. The reinvigorated stereotype diminished and trivialised political demands for equality through the "weapon" of humour. By popularising the idea of the humourless feminist, this denied feminists the "weapon" of humour. This placed feminism in an unarmed position in a battle for gender equality.

As with the pictorial activism of the suffragettes, humorous cartoons appeared as an integral part of feminist campaigning from the 1970s. The use of satire in feminist cartoons was relied on often combined with incongruity. The satire diminishes the aggression in the humour, yet the message is powerfully conveyed. Critical platforms for feminist debate and news appeared in the form of magazines produced by collectives. Most carried funny feminist cartoons. For example, Spare Rib included cartoons by women in every issue from its launch in 1972. They were "political" in line with "The personal is political" the phrase from Carol Hanisch's 1969 essay which became the slogan for second wave feminism. This referenced the attention given to women's lived experiences as relevant political issues pertaining to the everyday, such as the isolation of childcare and housework, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

But if, as I am claiming, the feminist cartoons by women were so funny and political, the question remains as to why they were not appearing in greater quantity in the mainstream publications. Historically, mainstream platforms have been a masculine domain, not only in politics and business but in such areas as media, science and the arts. By this I mean that people in positions of power and decision-makers have been male historically. More accurately, they have seen the world through a male lens, predominantly also one of white, heterosexual privilege. In Britain for example, political cartoons have appeared traditionally in newspapers, controlled and edited by men. The "political" cartoon archives and publications have been built around the newspaper publication tradition, resulting in a nearly all-male collection. Even in cases where the powerful support gender equality, they may not have the knowledge of or access to female cartoonists. If, as I discovered in my research, a wealth of women's work has been produced within women-led platforms, the humour and style may not be recognisable to an editor looking for a reflection of their own lived experience; or as a continuation of "tradition" where this is coded as male. My own initial approach to Comics Scene UK was to express disappointment in a nearly all-male contribution list and a male-only editorial panel. I was reassured that there was "a women's issue" planned. But why can't we have "a men's issue" instead? Or better still, all issues representing a 50% gender balance of contributors and practitioners. The consequence of a narrow lens is content for a limited audience. To me this seems myopic as well as financial suicide.

"As with the pictorial activism of the suffragettes, humorous cartoons appeared as an integral part of feminist campaigning from the 1970s"

To conclude, my aim here has been to show how an assumption that women are not funny emerged historically. The incentive for sustaining this view is justification of a gender imbalance within an industry, in turn reinforcing a wider social order based on inequalities. My emphasis here has been on cartooning, but similar patterns can be identified within other fields. You may be asking why this is of importance and why gender imbalance in any area should be actively addressed. Simply, the population is half female and the society we live in should reflect this in everything. My focus on gender here may appear reductive and I hasten to emphasise that peoples' experiences are not determined by their genitals, but by a multitude of identity elements interweaving with their gender identification. These include sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, age and mobility. Society should aim for everyone to see their own experience of life reflected in social, political and economic activity. This is relevant to comics and cartoons as part of popular culture -a valuable stage for power dynamics to take place. The importance of working towards this is to make the world a fair, kind and inclusive place.

Electric Soup

An interview Frank Quitely



JOEL MEADOWS: **What triggered off your initial interest in comics?**

FRANK QUITELY: When I was wee I loved comics, I've been good at drawing for as long as I can remember and I always loved looking at the artwork. When you're young enough, all comic artwork and book illustrations look brilliant. I used to make up my own comics with my own characters, but I never ever finished a story because it took so long. I've still got some of them in my mum's house.

JM: **When you were growing up, what sort of comics did you like to read?**

FQ: I used to get one comic a week. It was the Beezer and the Beano when I was really young, and the Bullet when I was a little older but I used to read my pals' comics, like Hotspur, Tiger & Scorcher, Warlord, that sort of thing. I loved Johnny Cougar and I was in the Fireball fanclub. I would have worn the pendant but it had a cheap, crappy nylon string so I didn't. My two big sisters got The Mandy and The Bunty and I read them too. My faves were The Four Marys and Fay Fearless. I also remember a story called The Cat or something like that. It was set in Nazi Germany and everyone thought it was a guy, but it was really a young girl who wore a black suit and helmet and did really daring things. I loved that as well.

This guy, Sean Wilkie, who lived across the road used to let me read his Marvel comics. He had the X-Men and lots of others. Daredevil and Conan were two of my favourites. In Millport there's a wee shop called the Camel Café but we called it Ferdi's cause that was the guy's name, and I used to buy Creepy Worlds, Tales of Suspense, Sinister Tales and all that sort of stuff every time we went there (about 3 or 4 times a year). But the only comic I read regularly throughout my teens was Mad. It was brilliant. They used to use a lot of old-fashioned looking artists that were great and of course they had Sergio Aragones and Jack Davis but my favourite was always Mort Drucker. The other thing I always read was The Broons and Oor Willie. Dudley D Watkins was another of my heroes.

JM: **How did you come up with the name Frank Quitely?**

FQ: It's a Spoonerism of Quite Frankly.

JM: **Your style is very European. Do you like a lot of European comic artists?**

FQ: I do now. When I started out drawing comics I hadn't heard of anyone, never mind anyone European. Moebius is my favourite European artist.

JM: **You started out drawing for Electric Soup, a Scottish humour comic. Would you rather draw humour or action/ adventure like Missionary Man or Shimura and please give your reasons.**

FQ: The thing I liked about working on Electric Soup was that we were self-published when we started out and none of us had drawn for a comic before so it was a bit like being wee again and just doing anything you wanted – that's something that's really good about small press. I love doing the action/ adventure stuff too, and I've done some documentary style material for Andy Helfer for his Big Books. Ideally I'd like to do a bit of everything: horror, sci fi, humour, action, violent, romantic, weird. Anything at all. And superheroes of course.

NEXT ISSUE: ROY OF THE ROVERS IS BACK AND CHARLEY'S WAR. DUE OUT 3 OCTOBER.

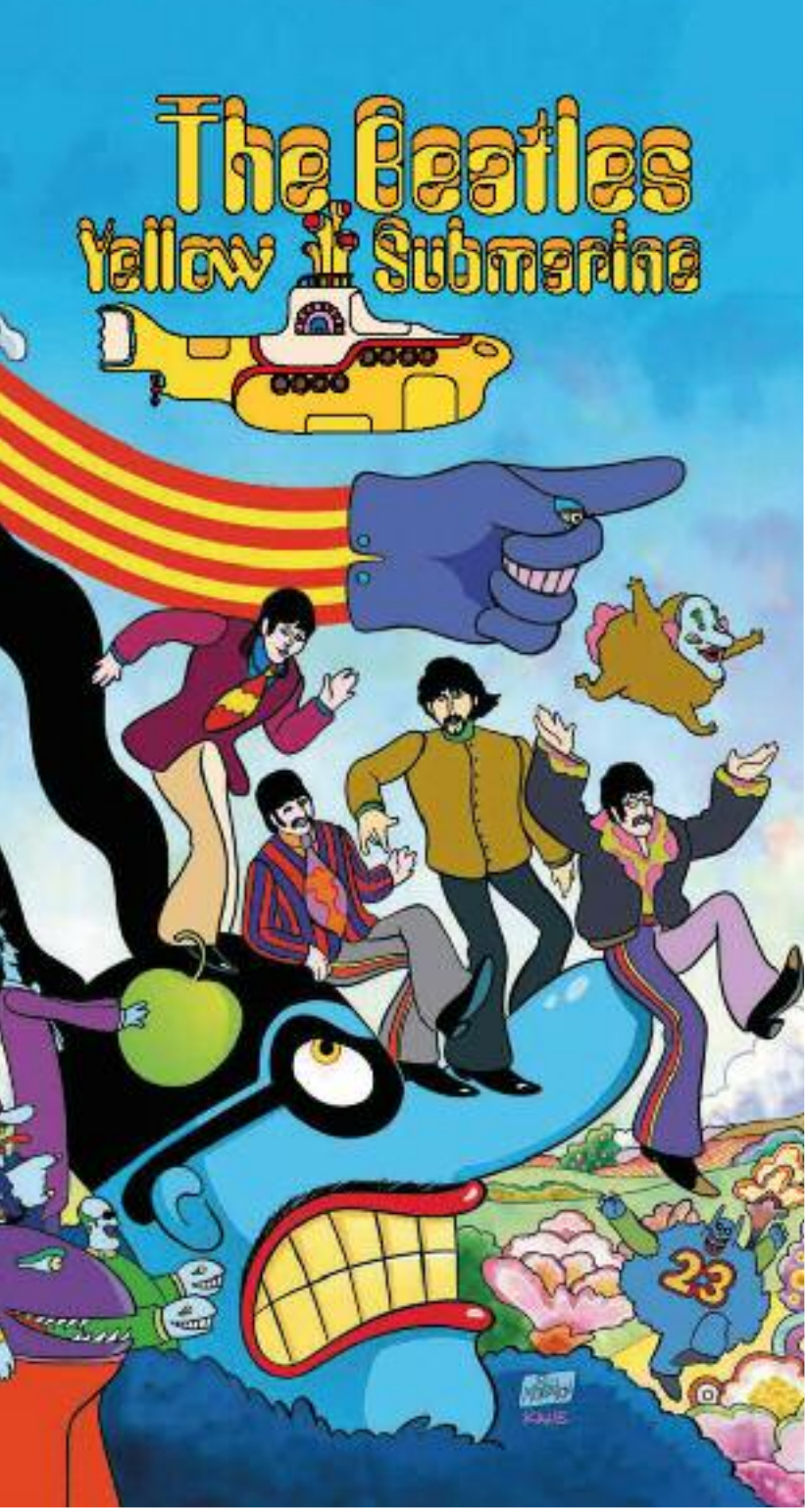


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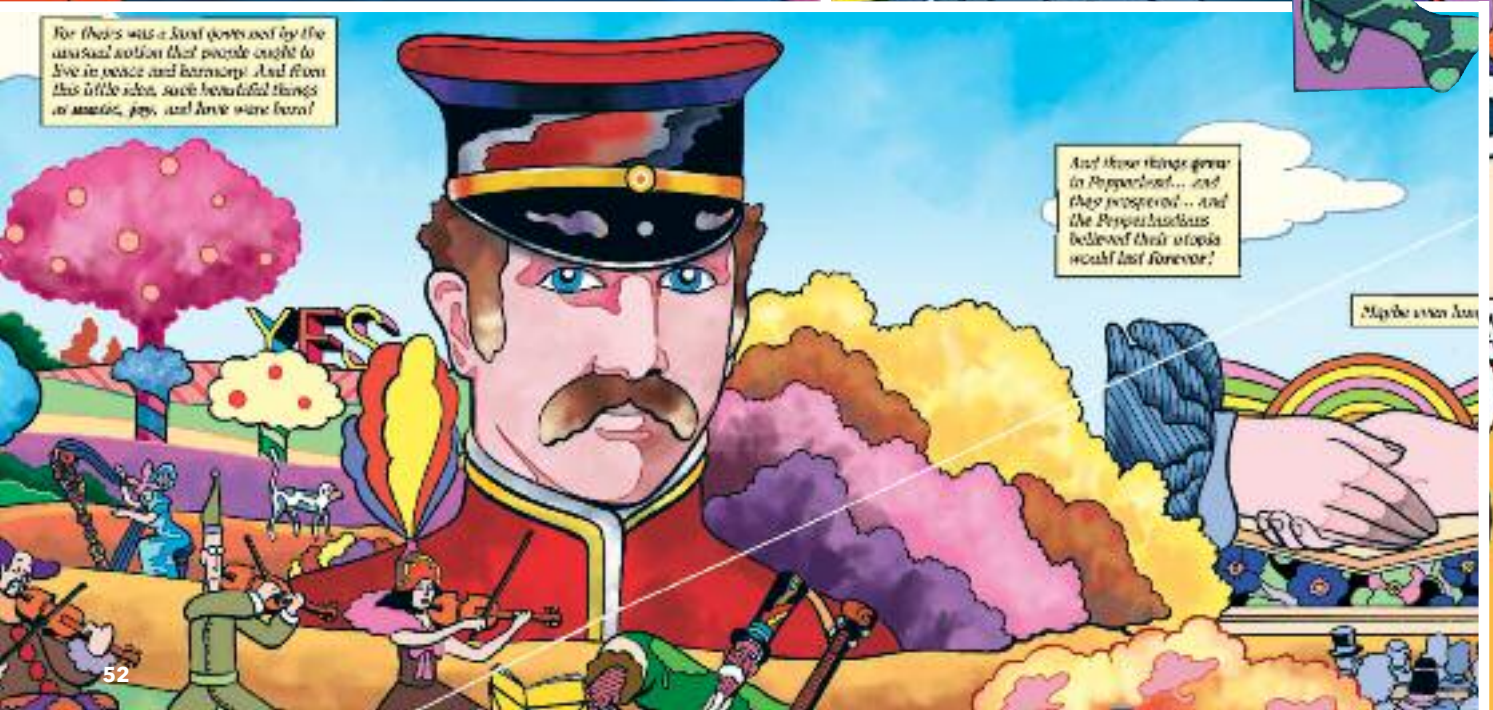
COMIC CONS – Check out the Time Bomb Comics table, Tripwire Table table, Comichaus table, GetMyComics or Maximised table if in attendance. Also available at getmycomics.com and their kiosks and Forbidden Planet online store.



With its Pop Art inspired visual style and eccentric, pulp-inspired plot, Yellow Submarine could be described as not too far away from comics. Now fifty years after its release in July 1968, the Beatles's classic animated film is set to make the leap from the cinema screen to the comic book page in a new graphic novel from Titan Comics by MAD Magazine editor Bill Morrison.

"The Yellow Submarine 50th anniversary is a huge deal, so it's a huge honour to be a part of that," says editor Martin Hand, who first worked with Morrison when he was in charge of Bongo Comics, which he co-founded with Simpsons creator Matt Groening. "We've known Bill for a long time, through publishing the UK version of The Simpsons comics. We were aware of Bill's unfinished Yellow Submarine graphic novel, and projects like that are what we're interested in at Titan. It's why we do what we do. We love to work on fascinating products like this and to bring them to an excited audience."

Originally intended to coincide with its thirtieth anniversary, Morrison was first asked to turn Yellow Submarine into a graphic novel by Dark Horse Comics in 1998. But after completing the cover and penciling around 25 pages, he was forced to abandon work on the 48-page book after a problem arose with the rights. But after reaching an agreement last year with Apple Corp – which





is run by the two remaining Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr and the estates of the late John Lennon and Paul McCartney – Titan asked Morrison if he would like to finish what he had first started twenty years ago.

"He's made some tweaks to all of those original pages for our version," says Hand, noting that a couple of inkers have also been employed in Andrew Pepoy and Tone Rodriquez. Meanwhile, colourist Nathan Kane – who has also worked at Bongo – has added watercolours that evoke the film's backgrounds that Morrison told The New York Times, "have brought a level of art to the pages that aren't really in the pencils and inks."

Hailing from Michigan, Morrison's first exposure to the Beatles was ironically through another cartoon, first hearing Alvin and the Chipmunks's 1964 album The Chipmunks Sing the Beatles when he was only five-years-old. He then became a massive fan of the Beatles themselves after watching their historic appearance in the same year on The Ed Sullivan Show. "We all went nuts, as we knew it was a big deal," told Morrison Previews magazine. "I remember, growing up, having Beatles music on in the house all the time. Between my brother and my two older sisters, we had to whole catalogue. It was probably in the '70s that I saw Yellow Submarine on television for the first time."

A fan of the American psychedelic artist Peter Max, the young Morrison was immediately attracted to Yellow Submarine's similar visual appeal, noting that "I was really taken in by its look, and by the way it flowed and the design of everything."

While determined to remain faithful to the distinctive approach of director George Dunning and its art director Heinz Edelman, Morrison also wanted to take advantage of the comic book medium's unique qualities. "The graphic novel has definitely stuck to the movie's style," says Hand. "Bill wanted to take the scenes and almost create mini-posters for each moment."

"I asked myself 'what do comic books and print have that they can't really do in a film?'" adds Morrison. "I hit on the idea of really making each page look like the psychedelic blacklight posters that I used to have all over my walls in the '70s. I thought I could make these pages graphically stimulating. So I started designing the pages with that in mind – with that graphic poster sensibility – and I got really excited about it. People who have seen the pages – fans of the original movie – have really liked it and thought 'he's doing something different with it.'"

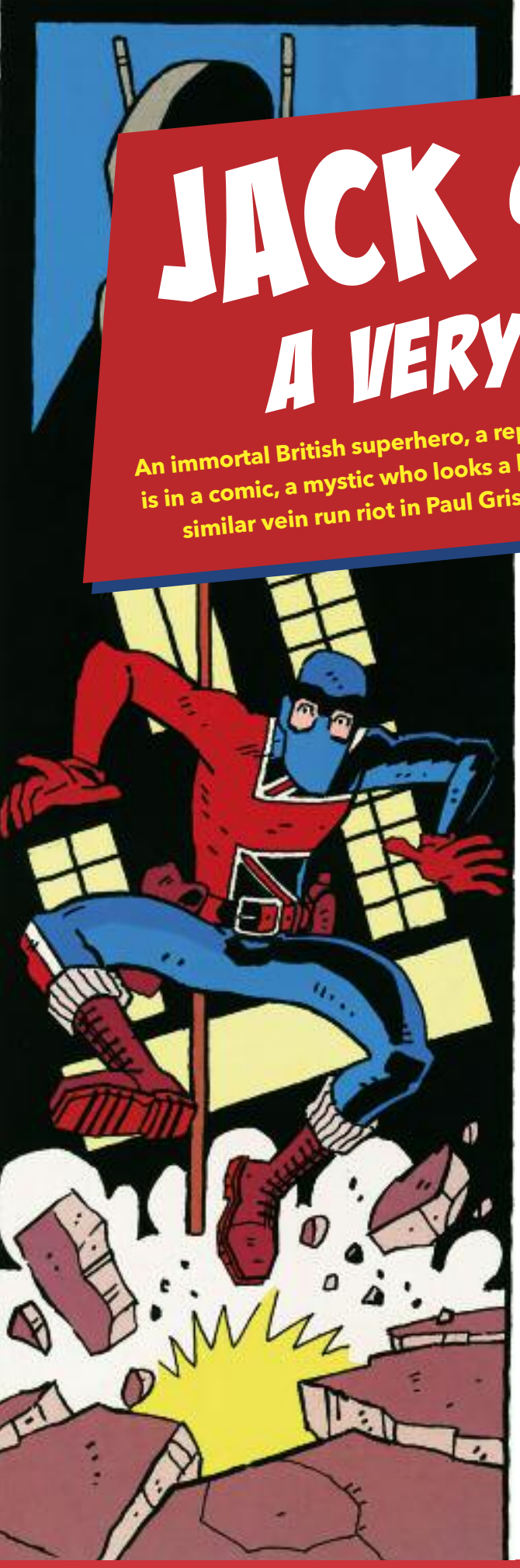
While according to Hand "Bill used the movie as his main source material and we had full cooperation and approval from Apple who were always there to help," Morrison very much modeled the likenesses of the Fab Four themselves and characters like the Yellow Submarine's commander Captain 'Old' Fred and their nefarious adversaries, the music-hating Blue Meanies on the film itself. "It's all based on the movie," says Hand. "We're not aiming to create something that deviates from that."

However, Morrison was faced with some crucial restrictions, as he was not able to draw on the album, which apart from the title track also includes Only a Northern Song, All Together Now, Hey Bulldog and All You Need is Love. Meaning that readers have to use their imaginations to make their soundtracks for the Beatles' voyage through Pepperland. "We weren't permitted to use the actual lyrics, so Bill came up with his own clever ways to get around that," says Hand. "It's fun and it works!"

With its predominance of intricately detailed, poster-esque splash pages and deep dives into vibrant phantasmagorical imagery, Yellow Submarine looks good enough to frame and take pride of place on your wall. "It gets pretty crazy in places," laughs Hand, while it has now been announced that Titan will be releasing a limited edition box set of only 1968 copies in October featuring the graphic novel, a Yellow Submarine figurine, lobby cards, four posters, a replica Yellow Submarine movie premiere ticket and other paraphernalia. "Bill suggested doing special psychedelic editions of the graphic novel, but that would be very expensive to produce!"



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JACK STAFF
A VERY BRITISH CREW

An immortal British superhero, a reporter who is also a vampire, a druid who knows he is in a comic, a mystic who looks a lot like Alan Moore, and a dozen other characters in similar vein run riot in Paul Grist's splice of British action and humour weeklies.

Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier arrive on page seven of Jack Staff issue one, with Arnold Ridley, Ian Lavender and James Beck alongside by page eight. The appearance of the Dad's Army gang, seen during flashbacks to a 1940 bombing raid on the series' fictitious English setting of Castletown, looks all set to tie Paul Grist's 2000 superhero series into the same tradition of British humour strips that brought the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard into the early-1970s pages of TV Comic and its successors. But this impression soon needs adjusting, once the team pull some very dead bodies from the rubble, and dear old Private Godfrey begins to suspect that some kind of vampire might be at work in the beleaguered town.

The creator of their dilemma is Jack Staff's writer/artist, Paul Grist. A first port of call for a lesson in why readers respond to simplified art and non-realistic drawings in comic strips is still Understanding Comics, in which Scott McCloud digs into the matter and ends up on his knees worshipping the power of cartoons; but alternatively you can just read Paul Grist comics. Since the 1980s Grist has produced a sequence of inventive and deceptively low-key British comics, combining expressive cartoon figure work, energetic layouts, and dense plotting into a striking personal style.

"I wear my cartoonist badge with pride," Grist told me in 2012. "I've never really understood why cartoony is used as a derogatory term by some comic readers. Are there people out there who think that the only thing that stopped Bill Watterson being successful was that he didn't draw a realistic tiger? I just try to generate a readability, an immediacy, something that can be recognized and identified with."

Anglo-Saxon readers of Jack Staff recognised immediately that Grist was formatting his story in the style of old British action weeklies, and seasoning it with business from the UK's collective television memory. After the Home Guard has left the stage, a pair of vampire hunters modelled very closely on Wilfrid Brambell and Harry H. Corbett from Steptoe and Son arrive, complete with tin bath, while the shouty Detective Inspector Maveryk has clearly watched a lot of The Sweeney. Later, psychic investigators working for an organisation named after a late letter of the alphabet–Q rather than X-Files in this case–include the enigmatic and possibly dead Helen Morgan, observing the world through three mystic windows that look very familiar to viewers of Play



School. Helen Morgan doesn't quite resemble Helen Mirren, until you remember that Mirren played Morgana in Excalibur, and then things compute.

The real touchstone, though, is the wide world of British comics. As well as the immortal British superhero Jack Staff, the series' supporting cast includes recognisable Grist analogues of Lion's Robot Archie, Valiant's The Steel Claw and Kelly's Eye, Janus Stark from the pages of Smash, and multiple others. One individual, The Druid, is fully aware that he exists in a British comic and engages in a struggle to prevent the reader turning the page, a suitably zany spin on some of the same deep questions that occupied Scott McCloud. British creators even turn up themselves, notably the bearded and bejewelled Morlan The Mystic ("You can call me Al."). Most of these extravagant individuals acquire individual typographic logos to accompany them through the comic, and the storylines switch back and forth in the style of a British anthology weekly—although in this case one where the brake cables seem to have been cut.

Grist's grand design is to mix the humorous and the sombre in confined spaces: "Serious funny books; or funny serious books," he explained. "Jack Staff is all about cause and effect, rather than nostalgia, but it's also about ageing and death. Jack Staff himself is a British superhero who is alive forever; Becky Burdock, a girl reporter who becomes a vampire, is dead forever. And together they face the End of Everything. But that doesn't have to be a bad thing. You can still have a bit of fun along the road."

The Americans at Image Comics got the message and picked up the previously self-published book as a continuing series in 2003, bringing not only greater visibility for the strip but also a transition from black-and-white into colour. As it turned out, colour transforms the effect of the strip. The black-and-white Jack Staff is a contemplative, moody animal, even introspective; the Image version is a full-colour fantasia in which anything goes, the layouts fizz, and the next figure around the corner may be demon, ghoul or giant talking goldfish. The colour series became a funny, trippy hangover, an underground comic from a more interesting Britain where Dream Of The Rarebit Fiend had somehow wound up in the back pages of Eagle.

When Jack Staff started, Grist was also self-publishing Kane, a US-set police story engaged in a similar blending exercise but with American comic and cultural elements, especially Frank Miller and Hill Street Blues. Although Kane remained in noir-ish black and white throughout, Grist's artistic style binds the two works together, and they make a complementary pair. When madness bubbled up in Kane's city of New Eden it was the madness of the urban nightmare, the skin-crawling unpleasantness of rotten tenements and rats in babies' cradles, however cartoonishly rendered. In Jack Staff, chaos reigns because the universe is out of whack and the designer seems to have finally noticed.

Above all Kane was a story about adults making bad decisions, while Jack Staff is about conspicuously younger people trying to make good ones, a moral framework that is the strip's most explicit echo of the old British comics landscape. If Kane was Sin City policed by Hill Street's Frank Furillo, then Jack Staff is Hellzapoppin' rebooted by Galton and Simpson. It might be the most British comic of all.



Author: Tim Hayes
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Based on the popular third-person tactical shooter video game that Rebellion first released in 2005, Sniper Elite is now crossing over from the screen to the comic book page this month in a new mini-series. Written by Treasury of Britain editor Keith Richardson and drawn by Savage's Patrick Goddard, Sniper Elite: Resistance boasts extra significance for fans of the plentiful Fleetway archive of 1970s comics. For the three-parter is being published under the newly established Battle imprint, harking back to long-running Battle Picture Weekly, which spawned such favourites as Charley's War, Darkie's Mob and Fighting Mann.

"The most obvious reason for doing that is that we now own the legendary war anthology comic, Battle, and Sniper Elite: Resistance is a war story," explains Richardson. "You have the backdrop of World War Two for starters, which is such fertile ground for action-packed, visual stories about heroism and daring-do, featuring the very definition of evil antagonists – the Nazis!"

Aiming Resistance equally at comic book aficionados and video gamers, Richardson hopes that it will lead to some of them sampling Treasury of Britain's Battle collections, which so far encompasses the three-volume Charley's War and September's El Mestizo by Alan Hebden and Carlos Ezquerra. "Tonally, this series is very similar to some of the Battle strips of old and there's a very good reason for including the Battle logo on the cover, a solid link that I can't announce here," he



SNIPER ELITE
RESISTANCE



says, perhaps alluding to the appearance of Alan Hebden and Carlos Ezquerra's Rat Pack later in the series. "All will be revealed to Battle fans once they dive into the issues!"

Like August's The Vigilant, Sniper Elite is being packaged in the more compact US-style format. "The Sniper games have a broad international audience so we went with a spec that most comic book readers in Europe and America are familiar with," says Richardson. "Just as importantly, it's a spec that is retailer-friendly."

Set in 1941, it centres around Allied Special Operations Executive agent Karl Fairburne, who is the main character in the video game. "He's sent on a mission to Angouleme in a bid to stop the shipment of a new German anti-aircraft weapon from reaching Paris by rail," teases Richardson. "I guess that sounds pretty straight forward, but no chance as this story has more twists that a Chubby Checker seven-inch! There's also a nod to another popular war game, toilet horror, a deadly pensioner and lots of bloody and brutal combat! Everything that you should be able to find in a war comic that's worth its weight in 9 millimetre ammo."

While Richardson states that, "fans of the game will be more than familiar with Karl and his kill shots which are scattered throughout the three issues," the mini-series emulates the high-octane thrills of the video game. "It starts with some crazy sniping action and snowballs from there," he continues. "I also think that Patrick's art has perfectly captured the feel of the games."

Having previously drawn a 12-page mini-comic for 2014's African-set Sniper Elite III: Desert Ghost, Goddard was familiar with the game, although he doesn't avidly play it himself. "I wish I had to time to do that but being freelance, I couldn't afford to get sucked into hours and hours of gameplay," he laughs. "But I've been sent lots of reference by Keith, not only from the game but specifically for some of the locations we use in the strip, which has been an enormous help. Other than Karl Fairburne, there are no specific characters from the game, but there is a nice nod to a previous Sniper Elite game, which we were able to add. Although I was surprised I didn't have to draw anyone getting their balls shot off, as I hear that's the thing to do in the game!"

Having previously illustrated the likes of Judge Dredd, Armitage, Sinister Dexter and Wardog for 2000 AD and the Megazine, Sniper Elite isn't too far away in tone from Goddard's current assignment for the Galaxy's Greatest Comic, collaborating with Pat Mills on Invasion prequel Savage. "I suppose I have quite a traditional style of drawing, similar to the old Battle comics, which maybe suits Sniper Elite," he reasons. "There's not a huge difference between drawing Savage and Sniper Elite, as they both need a lot of reference and have a sort of real world feel to them. I tend not to break panel borders in Savage and keep the black gutters, which is similar to when Charlie Adlard drew it, so it's been nice to open up a few pages here and there."

Goddard is also enjoying the challenge of working with colourist Quinton Winter. "The big difference between Savage and Sniper Elite for me is that it's being coloured, which makes you approach a page slightly differently than when it's just black and white," he continues. "That means that I might not render things so much or add as many complex backgrounds, plus blood always looks gloriously very red!"

If Resistance proves successful, Goddard would be happy to return for another series. "I suppose Sniper Elite can work on any number of missions in a variety of environments, so there's plenty of possibilities, and it could easily sit in a Battle-style anthology comic alongside Strange Brigade, for example," he says, alluding to Rebellion's just-released Indiana-Jones-esque, 1930s third-person shooter, which has recently been adapted by Gordon Rennie and Tiernen Trevallion into a two-part comic series in the Judge Dredd Megazine.

"My first comics growing up were Battle Action Force and Star Wars Weekly, so it's great for me to be able to scratch that Battle itch, which I never thought would happen, although thankfully without the ten/ eleven-panel pages!" he adds with a laugh. "Having dug out my old issues, there's potential for new stories of some classic characters such as Johnny Red, Major Eazy and The Rat Pack. I always thought the D-Day Dawson concept worked well for some heroic tales, and I enjoyed some of the German-sided strips like Hellman of Hammer Force as well. It would be interesting to see how modern day writers and artists – and audiences – would tackle these characters in this day and age."



Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine

David Robertson's

WOW! RETRACTED



I publish through the name Fred Egg Comics. My latest, Wow! Retracted, is in a format that has been called a 'one-man anthology'. A collection of different stories (forty in this collection) ranging in length from one to twenty-four pages. The longest is Intersectionality, which was created during 24 Hour Comic Day. Next is Nando, which deals with the last survivors of a plane crash in the Andes. Ink Drive features an interdimensional trip. A worker gets even in Revenge on the Orbiting Space Pod. Romance is not dead in Endless Love. The subtitles don't quite match in News for the Deaf. A prankster runs amok in a virtual reality environment. Two literary giants do battle in George vs Herbert. And there's more!

Although I wrote most of the stories, there are a couple of exceptions. A joy in this book has been my drawing stories that my sons came up with. That's been great and I'll keep it up for as long as they want to do it. And then there is Patriotism, which is an illustrated version of poetry by Sir Walter Scott.

I also have guest artists drawing one page stories. They are Eileen Budd, Marc Casilli, Zu Dominiak, Damon Herd, Olivia Hicks, Rebecca Horner, Paddy Johnston, Tim Kelly, Neil Paterson, Ludi Price, and Pam Wye.

The model I have in mind with my comics is more akin to a music act putting out albums. In this way, each story is like a song on the album. These will be worked on over the course of a year, and then arranged in sequence to make a pleasing order to the finished book. Stretching the analogy further, I guess the artists that draw one page stories I've written are like guest singers. I enjoy having different people draw my stories, as they often surprise me with how they tackle them. And their individual styles add variety to the finished book.

This comic follows on from Berserkotron, Dump, and Zero Sum Bubblegum. The first was a true mini-comic series; two issues photocopied and stapled together. I later collected Berserkotron into a single edition. Dump followed. This title had a dual meaning. It is a three issue series, with a continuing eponymous story (I enjoyed writing David Robertson's Dump on the covers), and I also began using my comics to collect together the various stories I was doing outwith my larger tales. So it was a "dump" for my other comics. When the main Dump story concluded, I thought about making Dump #4, as the collection of stories idea still held true, even if the main story was done. In the end, a fresh start seemed a better idea. I looked to Robert Crumb here, with his collection of comics over the decades with different titles. So came Zero Sum Bubblegum, then Wow! Retracted.

I am now working on my next comic to be released later this year. It's called Break the Cake.

David Robertson. www.fredeggcomics.com





'A one-man anthology'



THE POWER OF KEN REID

KEN REID (1919–1987), the legendary British cartoonist, is well-remembered for his Fudge the Elf stories in Manchester Evening News (also published in a series of collected editions), Jonah and a few other strips in The Beano and The Dandy, as well as Faceache, World-Wide Weirdies and a string of other features in the comics published by IPC in the 70s and the 80s, but it is his work in WHAM!, SMASH! and POW! – the three titles from the POWER COMICS stable published by Odhams Press Ltd in the 60s, that many consider to be the ultimate manifestation of his untamed artistic genius.

Ken was lured over from the safe but occasionally tedious harbour of DC Thomson by his old mate Leo Baxendale. The new publisher offered Ken the freedom to draw what he liked, a very handsome pay rate and the privilege of signing his work. The Power Comics continued for a mere 5 years before taking 'the final plunge into the engulfing Fleetway maw' (Ken's words), but the five series that Ken drew for WHAM!, SMASH! and POW! were true masterpieces that stuck in the minds of those who read them back in the day, and intrigued many younger fans who didn't have that luxury.

Frankie Stein in WHAM! was the first one. Frankie Stein was the lab-manufactured creation of Professor Cube who hoped to build a little pal for his son Micky, but the scientific procedure went radically wrong and resulted in the birth of a creature so fiendish and ghastly that Prof. Cube fled in panic, renouncing all responsibility for it. Frankie turned out to be a dumb-but-lovable monster with a tiny brain and a huge muscular body, who didn't know his own strength. He was kind-hearted and always in a jolly enthusiastic mood, albeit naïve and blissfully unaware of his own hideousness. Prof. Cube never stopped regretting the creation of Frankie and was a nervous wreck because, in addition to being a general embarrassment to his maker, Frankie ate him out of house and home, and cost a fortune in repair bills and damages…

This bright humorous series continued for three years, until problems in Ken's personal life and consequently his failure to meet the publisher's deadlines finally forced the editor to cancel the feature. IPC revived the friendly monster in the 70s in Shiver and Shake and Whoopee! comics where the strip continued for many years, drawn for the most part by Robert Nixon. Many fans remember this second incarnation, but it is Ken's original version that remains the definitive one.

The Disney-inspired Dickensian miser Jasper the Grasper was Ken's second character created for WHAM! Jasper McGrabb was a tight-fisted old skinflint who could smell (and hear) money a mile away and liked to spend his leisure time continually counting his farthings. The feature which Ken wrote and illustrated all by himself, only lasted for 6 weeks, but obviously had too much potential to be abandoned, so IPC revived it in COR!! in the 70s, with Trevor Metcalfe as illustrator.

When Odhams Press began making plans to launch SMASH! in 1965, Ken

'QUEENIE WAS A DINGY LITTLE STEAMSHIP OWNED BY THE POMPOUS CAPTAIN ENOCH DRIP'

Author: Irmantas Povilaika
Website: kazoop.blogspot.co.uk



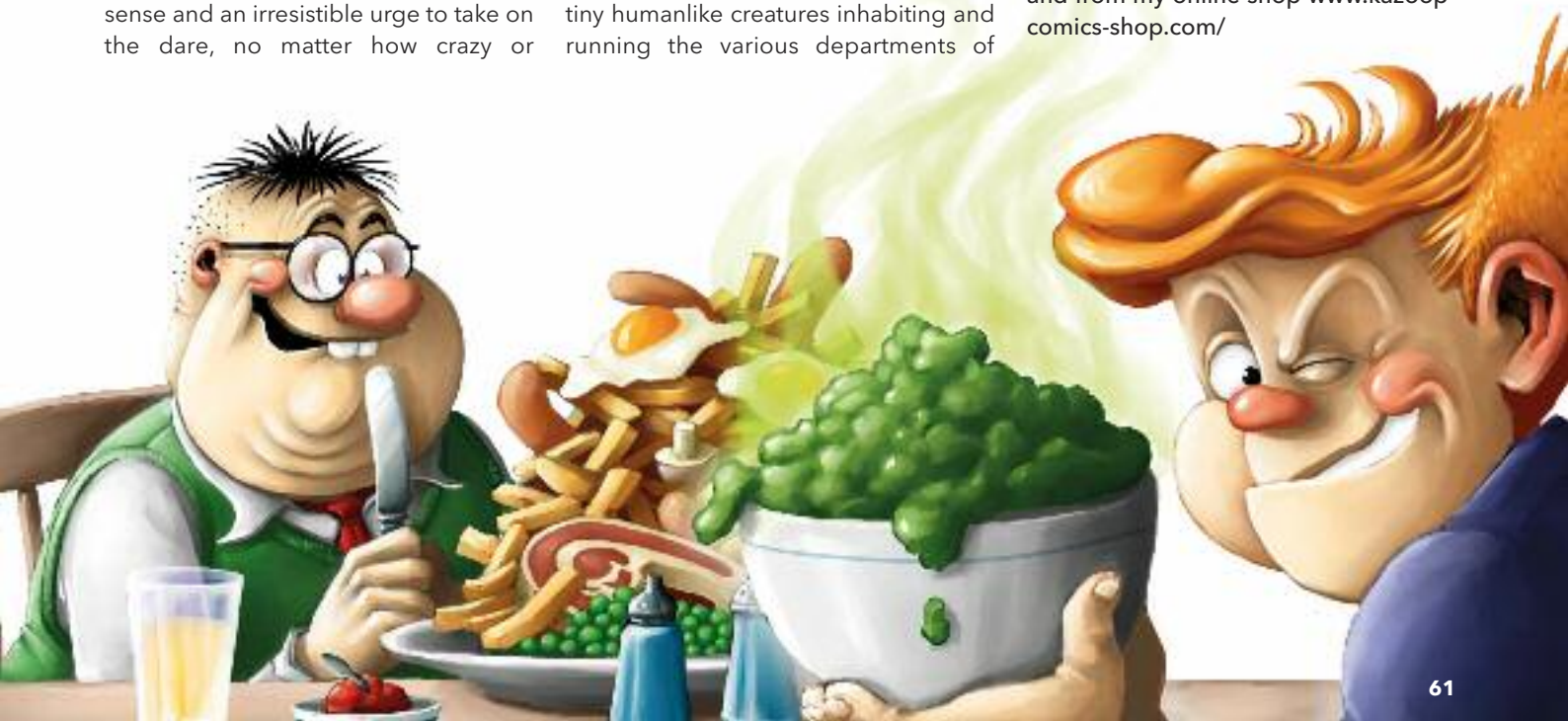
came up with a few strip ideas and hit the jackpot by suggesting Queen of the Seas – a powerful mix of his long-standing love for nautical antics, his unorthodox sense of humour and several external influences. Queenie was a dingy little steamship owned by the pompous captain Enoch Drip who, with his one-man-crew Bertram Bloop, ran her, with spectacular incompetence, as a ship of all trades. Unusually for British humour comics, Queen of the Seas was presented as a serial which broke down into nine short stories. It ran out of steam after 40 episodes but has surely gone down as a classic in the history of British comics and is another remarkable example of Ken's eccentric sense of humour and exquisite penmanship.

Dare-A-Day Davy was Ken's only strip in POW! It featured a boy who couldn't resist a dare. Each episode started with Davy being torn between common sense and an irresistible urge to take on the dare, no matter how crazy or dangerous it was. Later on Ken introduced two regular characters who represented Davy's dual conscience – the fluffy Willy-Power (the voice of reason) and the devilish Dave Hyde (Davy's bad self). Both creatures resided in Davy's brain and fought a constant battle to direct Davy along the path of virtue or vice – with Willy-Power usually succumbing to the wicked Dave Hyde. The feature included some fun bits that were uncommon in British comics, such as the odd caricature of Odhams Press' editorial staff and even one of Ken himself. Odhams Press was a liberal-minded publisher, but even they decided not to print one episode that involved Davy kissing the skeleton of a corpse he'd dug up…

The fifth series was The Nervs. It depicted various madcap goings-on inside the body of a gluttonous and obese boy named Fatty. The Nervs were tiny humanlike creatures inhabiting and running the various departments of Fatty's system – the throat shaft, the ever-suffering tum department, mouth-, hand-, foot-, etc. control stations, brain department and so on. This concept was right up Ken's street, offering him the freedom to draw loads of quirky characters every week. Ken assumed illustrator's duties from the strip's regular artist Graham Allen in 1968 and continued to draw it for SMASH! right until the time when Odhams Press was absorbed by Fleetway and the Power Comics were no more.

The five series are a proud landmark of Ken's legacy and have a very special place in British comics history. As a fan and a collector of British comics, I was always puzzled about the fact that they were not celebrated in the form of a collected edition. Early in 2018 I negotiated a license from TI Media Ltd and launched an IndieGoGo crowdfunding campaign to reprint the strips. Thanks to the success of the campaign and the support of numerous fans from across the World, THE POWER PACK OF KEN REID is now available in the form of two handsome hard-cover volumes, featuring every page drawn by Ken Reid, with entertaining introductions by The Beano artist Nigel Parkinson, the British comics historian Steve Holland and Ken's son Antony J. Reid. Moreover, they include some previously unseen sketches, illustrations and manuscripts from Ken's archive as well as a detailed biography of the artist covering the years when he worked for Odhams. I am grateful to Ken's son Antony who gave me access to his dad's archive – my ultimate resource when researching and writing the biography.

The books are now available on eBay and from my online shop www.kazoop-comics-shop.com/





with Pat Mills

The Last Word

PERCY PUFFER REALLY BLOWS YOUR MIND!

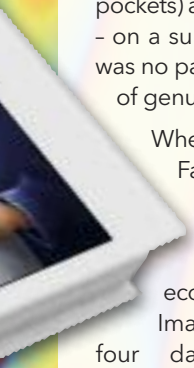
John Wagner and myself wrote a whole issue of Cor!!, entirely on spec, and that was our punch-card entry into the Fleetway 'Fun' Factory, God help us. Nearly all of those strips were accepted by the editor, Bob Paynter, even though we had to 'fake it to make it' because our hearts were not really into them. Instead, we were huge fans of D.C. Thomson's humour comics, especially Sparky with hugely 'indulgent' strips like The Sparky People and Puss 'n' Boots. They were a class act, only rivaled in the Factory by the genius work of Ken Reid and Leo Baxendale. Otherwise, everything ran to a relentless, pseudo-humorous formula, that rarely had any kind of edge, any kind of naughtiness, any kind of subversion, any kind of laugh-out-loud comedy.

That was really the problem with most Fleetway comics, best summed up by writer and editor Gerry Finley-Day who said about the numerous dreary, listless, limp, yet thoroughly professional scripts that crossed his desk, they 'had the symptoms but not the disease'. Often such flat scripts were propped up by cool artwork; but sometimes the artist was banging it out, too, and the result was soul-destroying empty strips that certainly scarred me for life; I can't imagine what it did to you, the readers.

The Fun Factory, in particular, operated a system which actively encouraged, if not ordered, artists to copy other artists' styles, so a brilliant artist's work would be shamelessly and faithfully replicated, or even traced over, by a parasitic, also-ran artist. This is what can happen when a publisher buys all rights. Whenever I met other freelance writers and artists, the conversation was always about making money, a kind of creators' 'revenge' for being treated like a factory worker. How many pages you could 'knock out' in a week.

But the system worked! Those assembly lines kept on rolling. For a while, anyway. I think this was the only real occasion that

Doug Church (Fleetway art supremo and visual designer of 2000AD) and I ever disagreed. Doug saw Bob as a true genius and was in absolute awe of his Factory. It was certainly true that Bob understood the rules of reader identification far, far better than his Scottish rivals. Hence stories like Jack Pott (a kid who plays fruit machines), Why Dad Why? (a truly annoying kid who endlessly seeks enlightenment from his father), Pete's Pockets (a kid with magical pockets) and so on. They genuinely worked – on a superficial level, at least. But there was no paying for, and no encouragement of genuine creativity from the heart.



When John and I learnt the appalling Factory page rate, maybe £4.20 or less in the early 70s, John told me we had to think up a funny story every thirty minutes for it to be economically viable for the two of us. Imagine how I felt when it took me four days to come up with a decent Gus Gorilla!

In my view, the fun comics died like most Fleetway comics because of their factory thinking, no one-cared enough; it was just about 'hatching, matching and dispatching' comics. I'm told the Fleetway board deliberately hatched, matched and dispatched the fun comics so Bob never had enough titles to be promoted and qualify for a managing editor's salary. Horrible, mean-spirited thinking. Whereas the Beano has survived because at D.C.Thomson's they still, amazingly and impressively, care about comics.

John and I wrote our range of 'okay', 'assembly line' strips for Cor!!, but when it came to Percy Puffer – a kid who magically inflates anything he puts his lips to – we could not fake it anymore. We looked at each other and glumly shook our heads. So we had Percy blowing vapour trails in the sky which read: 'Percy Puffer really blows your mind.' That was how we felt about young Percy. Bob rightly rejected it with the pithy comment, 'Hippy angle not wanted.'

I feel a bit churlish deriding the whole of the Fun Factory, especially as I know many of you have happy memories of Whizzer and Chips, Shiver and Shake, Cor!! and more, but … what the heck! It's true! After all, I was the lead writer on many of the top strips – such as Frankie Stein, Kid Kong and Bumpkins Billionaires, as well as creating X Ray Specs, so I say all this with considerable conviction. And I did do my damndest to put some soul into them. And offered to sack myself if Ken Reid came back to his creation Frankie Stein, but Bob said 'no'. He told me Ken and Leo both 'needed watching' and any overly 'indulgent' touches in their art would be spotted and carefully whitened out. Bob specifically mentioned to me Ken drawing turds in the background of appropriate scenes. 'Safe' artists were always preferred by Bob. Check out the 'safe' artists and compare with Ken and Leo.

For Bob, John and I created a successful and equally 'indulgent' pilot Mad Magazine style strip called Boo! Peter, that cruelly took the piss out of Blue Peter, but Bob or the board of directors killed it prior to publication, and with it any interest we had in staying in the Factory long term. All such humour fell by the wayside, which was why cartoonist Steve Bell, for example, stopped working for the Factory. I've written about Ken Reid's brilliant mutant nuclear survivor strip in both my comedy thriller novel Serial Killer (Read 'em and Weep series) and in Be Pure! Be Vigilant! Behave! The Secret History of 2000AD and Judge Dredd. Every week the hideous mutant tries to kill himself and every week the mutation on his back saves him. Regarded by Jack Le Grand, the managing editor, as 'absolutely disgusting', I naturally wanted to run it in the first issue of 2000 AD, but the strip mysteriously 'disappeared'.

But the good news is that Rebellion are reprinting Ken's work such as Face Ache; and there's a crowdfunder to reprint his original Frankie Stein, much of which was set in a lunatic asylum with other freaks. And include his other strips that Jack Le Grand also thought were 'really revolting' and killed when Fleetway took over Odhams. That just leaves his immortal Jonah to be reproduced. Ken and Leo's work not only needs reprinting, but also some special commemoration for its important cultural significance. Because they were creating black comedy long before Monty Python and proved that satirical humor does not have to be the exclusive product of the Cambridge Footlights. Jonah, in particular, is clever, dark, satirical and very working class. And it usually tells half a novel in one single page! Leo's work is equally amazing and subversive. Leo told me how he had his Bash Street Kids hijack a tank and attack a police station in its first story. Imagine that today!

But I hope if Rebellion ever open the gates of the Fun Factory again, and originate fun comics, they'll be subversive rather than politically correct, and copy-cat writers and artists (Or 'bloodsuckers' as one artist referred to them) will be discouraged. I hope they hire talents who have the creator disease and not just the symptoms; and who will be worthy followers of Ken Reid and Leo Baxendale, our country's greatest cartoonists.

PS – In an exciting development, I've just heard the crowdfunder for Ken Reid has made its target! Great news! And the editor and driving force on the project, Irmantas Povilaika, has just written to me to tell more about the mutation story. Here's what he has to say:

The series that you mentioned would have been a really interesting one... Ken pitched it to Fleetway/IPC in the end of 1969 when he was looking for work after the demise of Odhams. It was called The Mutation. It didn't involve nuclear war though. The main character was Algenon B.Fotheringay, a former Ministry official, who, through some sort of slip-up involving a radioactive substance, had mutated into something atrocious and horrifically comical to such a degree that his only ambition in life was to commit suicide. However, every Algenon's suicide attempt was sabotaged by his alter-ego, representing the human instinct of self-preservation. It's no wonder that the publisher rejected the idea, and it surprises me that Ken suggested it to them in the first place - it shows that he completely missed the direction the children's comics were taking at that stage. On the other hand, it would have been very suitable for 2000AD...

I have seen Ken's drawings, a detailed description of the idea and a sample script of The Mutation. We are now working on Ken's detailed biography, and all details will be revealed there... :) The Mutation is not covered in the Odhams period biography (written by me) that will go into my reprint books because it falls outside of the Odhams period.



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Tweet us your thoughts @comicsflixukus #comicscene #tlw

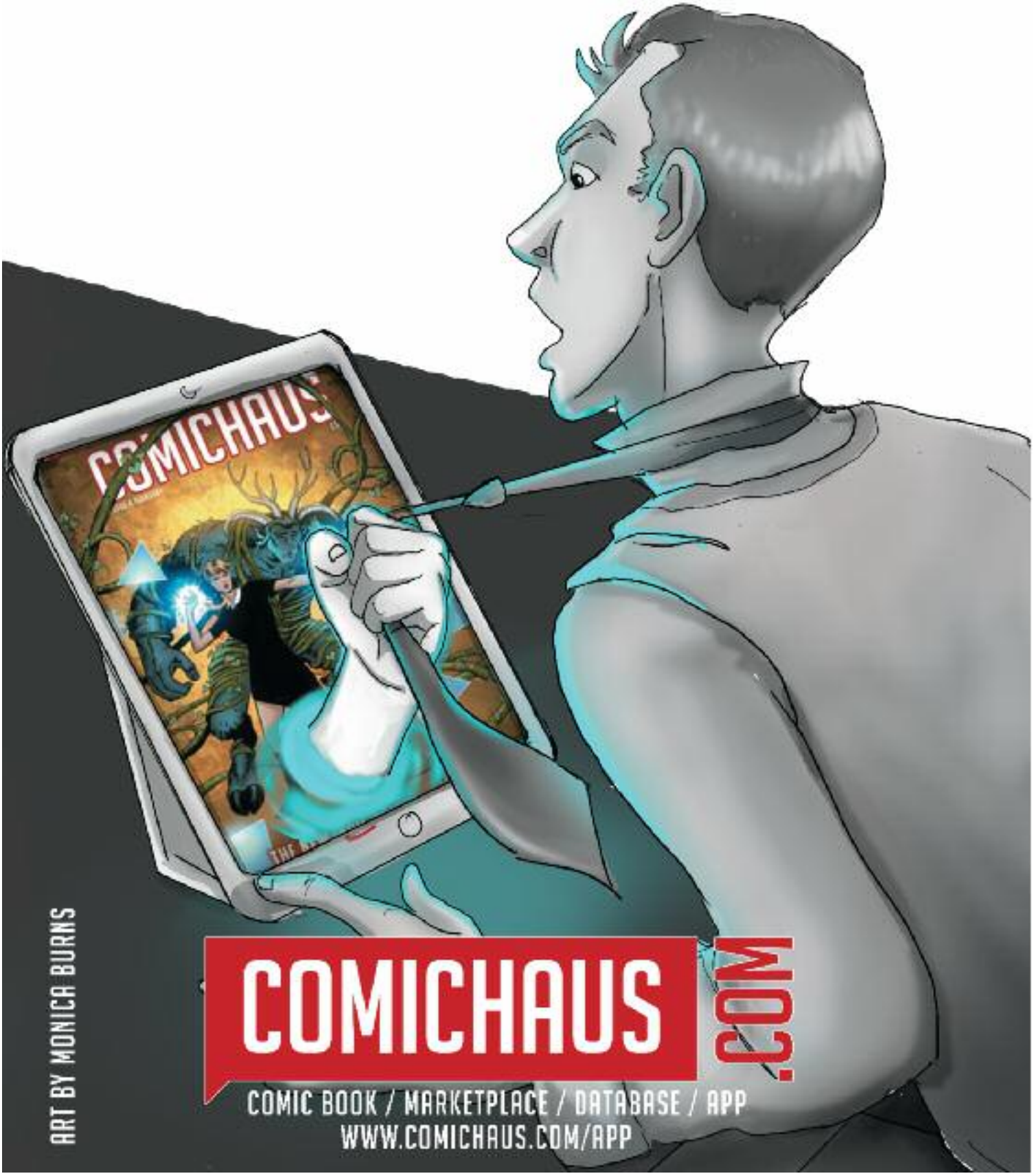
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COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine



THE WAR ISSUE

When two tribes go to war!

There is a mix of footy and war comics in this issue of ComicScene UK magazine. Plus 8 pages on Stan Lee's last comic conventions in UK and Europe and another article on probably one of the youngest comic publishers in the UK today. Alongside all that is our new eight page supplement on small press, indie comics and self publishing from the team at Pipedream Comics and The Pull List. This is just one of the new developments you will see in the magazine as we evolve. There's also a great offer from DC Thomson for Commando comic fans!

It's great to hear we can now be ordered through Diamond Distribution into most comic shops in the UK and Europe. Hopefully by the end of the year we may be also in your favourite newsagent. Generally we like to look after you personally and a subscription is the way to go for that at www.comicscene.tictail.com

This month we also announced that we don't just write about comics - we produce them too! The 300 page perfect bound 'Great Big ComicScene UK Christmas Annual 2019' is available to pre order on www.comicscene.tictail.com too and will be winging its way to your door by the beginning of December and the big day itself. An 'event' book there are several strips from top and upcoming creators as well as comic strip favourites that have appeared in this magazine, so you won't want to miss it.

Issue 4, our magic and horror issue, comes out in mid November and Issue 5, the Christmas issue, features 80 years of Superman, 40 years of Superman the Movie, 40 years of Starlord, 40 years of Star Wars Weekly and we take a look at Starblazer comic too! You can pre order all those issues at **www.comicscene.tictail.com**

Adverts over.

Your support of all these titles ensures a bright future for ComicScene UK and we thank each and every one of you for it.

Enjoy this issue.

Yours aye,
Tony

Tony Foster,
Publisher ComicScene UK



Last issue we incorrectly said Asterix Artist Albert Underzo was deceased but happy to report he is very much alive. Our apologies.

ComicScene UK Issue 3
December 2018

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HOW TO SPOT A FAKE COMIC...



Author: Colin Noble
Website: nothingbutafan.wordpress.com

Not The Staples Again or How To Spot A Fake Comic Without Really Trying

Before anyone asks, this guide will only work on British comics, but some of the tricks might work on some non-British titles.

We collect comics. We collect a lot of comics. In fact, between Karen and I, we reckon we have about 15,000 comics. Some are almost full runs of the comic whereas with others we might only have one example of that comic.

As a result of this, you begin to see patterns in how a comic was produced and how some wrong 'uns will stand out a country mile. A good example of this are the Fleetway Picture Libraries of the 1970s and 1980s and just by the feel of the cover, I can tell if the comic was produced in the UK or in South Africa. The paper used for the South African covers were a higher grade of paper with a high gsm but it is still quite rough to the touch. Whereas the paper used for the UK covers were of magazine quality and as a result of that, they have glossy covers and are smooth to the touch. Straightaway that gives you the clue that if you find any British published Fleetway Picture Libraries that are allegedly from the 1960s and the covers feel like your average newspaper page, then someone is trying to scam you.

While I am on the subject of Fleetway Picture Libraries, there is always one good guide that you have an original Fleetway comic (previously Amalgamated Press) and that is those bloody staples! For many Fleetway collectors, the staples used in the comics from the 1950s to the 1980s can be best described as a trial. For those that are not fans of the Fleetway comics and don't have a clue what I am gibbering about, then pull up a sandbag.

If you read the brilliant set of articles by Roger Perry which were published by Down The Tubes, then you will know that all kinds of sharp practices were being used by the senior staff. Now due to a little bit of speculation, a little bit of research and some evidence, several of us collectors believe that a bit of sharp practice went into the sourcing of the staples as the supply up to the 1950s had been perfectly adequate. However, after the 1950s, we now find the rusting mess that were the staples used in the Picture Libraries and many of the weeklies from then on. Even in the rare comics that you find in near mint condition, by finding those red spots of rust, it confirms that you have a genuine Fleetway comic.

On the other side of the border, D C Thomson only used staples for the Summer Specials and for the weekly comics only from the late 1980s and early 1990s when they moved from newsprint to the glossy magazine standard paper. So, if you should find any staples in the weeklies prior to that, people are guilty of heresy rather than scamming.

The next way of spotting a fake comic is a little more esoteric and it involves a bit of maths. Any weekly comic was always published with a page count that is a factor of 4 unless there was a serious mix up by one of the subs and those I think I can count on the thumbs of one hand. Therefore 99% of comics should have a total number of pages that is divisible by 4. If not, there is something dodgy going on.

Our next scam is usually used to replace parts of a comic, but it can also be done to replace the entire comic. Most comics were published on a cheap paper that is quite grainy, but here is the important part, it is also very uniform. This is where looking at a comic in detail helps as you will easily spot if there is a part of a page or a full page that is of a different texture and quality to the rest.

The next piece of advice is to look for things that you expect to find in a comic of its' time and the things that people would never think to fake. One of those things is spine roll. When people try to sell a comic, they want it to appear to be in as pristine a condition as possible, so adding spine roll is not something they would ever think to add, but it is something that most collectors spot on a subconscious level and it confirms to you as a buyer that you have found the genuine article.

One last piece of advice when buying older British comics is to know your cultural references. Sometimes, something as simple as knowing when Lenny Henry appeared on New Faces (this was the 1960s to 1980s version of Britain's Got Talent) can help you spot that a comic is fake as Lenny did not make his first appearance on TV until 1975 so a comic alleging to have an earlier appearance than this of Lenny is liable to be a pile of complete rubbish.

I will sign off by reminding you that comics printed before 1970 should have their prices in shillings and pence so 1/3 or 1/- (6 or 5 new pence respectively) is the price you should see for most picture libraries and 6d or 5d (2½ or 2 new pence respectively) will cover the cost of your weeklies, however your annuals could be as expensive as 7/6 (That's 37 pence to you lot!). So any comic printed prior to 1970 and doesn't feature a pre-decimal price is definitely suspect!

I will mention the two things that you should never see in one of those comics. One is a bar code and the other is a web address! And before any of you mention dinosaurs, these comics were printed on paper and not chiselled out of rock!

"So, if you should find any staples in the weeklies prior to that, people are guilty of heresy rather than scamming"

FURY COMIC was launched by Marvel Comics in March 1977. Edited by (not yet a Pet Shop Boy) Neil Tennant it lasted just 25 issues before merging into the Mighty World of Marvel. Named after one of the lead strips, Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos!, the contents were all reprinted from the vast Marvel archive – in fact the first issue contained material copyrighted 1963, 1967 and 1972. So you'd think there was nothing new in Fury at all, but you'd be wrong. As someone who isn't a fan of Sgt. Fury (or even Capt. Savage and his leatherneck raiders) the only thing that attracted me to it was the dynamic covers.

The cover to issue 1 was by Dave Gibbons with his vision of Sgt. Nick Fury – a vision that in fact looks remarkably like his version of Dan Dare, which he would be drawing just 6 months later for 2000AD. This, though, was his only cover for Fury as the cover duties for the next 24 issues would be handled by Carlos Ezquerra.

Carlos's work would already have been familiar to UK comics' readers as the illustrator of Rat Pack (in Battle), Major Eazy (also in Battle) and El Mestizo (another Battle strip – to be reprinted (finally!) this November). His name is now synonymous with 2000AD and his work on Fury represented a rare moment working for the House of Ideas.

I'm never in favour of a cover artist not also being featured on the interior art as it always feels as though I've been suckered into buying the comic. I still think that Carlos's work on Fury is absolutely the best thing about it as a title so I'm going to pick out my favourite 5 covers just as an introduction to the series...



ISSUE 5

An early classic here from 'King' Carlos as this almost-3D cover could grace any newsagent's stand – now or in 1977. The figure is, I think, meant to be advancing through a chorus of enemy fire and shouts of Banzai! (rather than being a Japanese suicide fighter screaming at the enemy). The lithe and athletic figure is in sharp contrast to Carlos's work on Judge Dredd who is often portrayed as a stocky and immobile figure. This is a grenade you just want to catch, the very definition of an action cover.

ISSUE 8

Two weeks later and the dynamism is replicated here with a dramatic representation of this week's Sgt Fury adventure. Great use of colour (which people wouldn't have been able to see in Carlos's weekly work on Rat Pack or Major Eazy); you can really feel the heat and strength radiating off the rocket base. Anyone turning the pages to read all about Sgt. Fury will, I fear, be disappointed with the amount of rocket destroying that goes on (2 frames) compared to sword fighting (2 pages of sword fighting against Baron Strucker, German's greatest weapons master).

ISSUE 12

If I had a criticism of this picture it would be that the GI appears to be wearing a woolly hat rather that the standard issue M1 helmet that GI's would have been wearing at this time. Looked at objectively you'd probably have to concede that the proportions of the figure are all wrong (unless he's a failed basketball player) with his thighs appearing to be about three feet long, his neck like a turtle and his left arm being rather a lump. For all its fault though, again, it's the dynamism of the figure that appeals, and which should have caught the eye of many a young purchaser hovering nervously at the newsagent's counter. Light, shading, movement – this picture has it all.

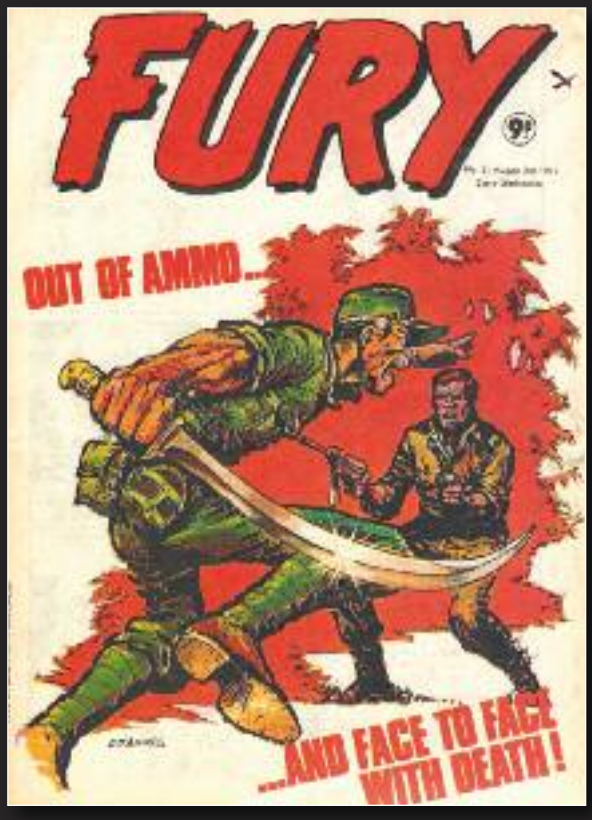
ISSUE 20

The best cover yet in my opinion, and in fact I think the best cover that Carlos drew for Fury. This cover has it all in my opinion – fabulous 3D effect, colour, shading, tight sinews, a straight right-hook applied to a Nazi infantryman. I've read this whole issue and this is by far and away the best thing about it – the story of Rudyard Kipling contained within is never going to be able to compete with this I'm afraid Neil Tennant.

ISSUE 21

Not quite the last issue of Fury but there were only a few more issues after this. Here we have a Japanese soldier facing up to a marine – cold steel in the hand of his enemy and Capt. Savage is out of ammo, how will he get out of this? The, perhaps, rather surprising answer is that the Japanese soldier is about to be shot in the back by an arrow. Of course. In fact the 'leatherneck' who has shot him appears to be marauding around the battlefield with just his bow and arrow to keep him and his fellow soldiers safe. I'm not mad on the illustration of Savage but the Japanese soldier is fantastic, he's all long limbs and blind fury, charging in to face his implacable foe with just his samurai sword (glinting evilly!) for company. Marvellous.

So there we have it, a whistle-stop introduction to Marvel's attempt to enter the war comics boom of the 1970s (by, weirdly, using war comics of the 1960s). What they got absolutely right with Fury was to employ one of the best artists of the time to provide a gallery of covers that have stood the test of time. Many comics have lasted less than 6 months; around the 20 issue mark is often when the axe falls, or more typically it's a 'great news for all readers' moment, as you discover that your favourite title will now be merging with that other comic that you wouldn't have been seen dead reading previously. So it was no disgrace to merge with the mothership of Marvel comics, Mighty World of Marvel, to which all Marvel titles (it felt like at the time), must merge eventually.







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Rufus Dayglo Art Gallery

Battle Picture Library # 31, October 1961 by Allesandro Biffignandi

The Italian and Spanish illustrators transformed British comics in the 1960s with their dynamism and dramatic use of colour, daring compositions and psychological Impact. British illustrators had been extremely traditional, and innovators like Biffignandi brought a Hollywood dynamism into our comics. This gorgeous cover has a wonderful jagged zigzag behind the soldier, emphasing the stress, and the impending danger. Biffignandi was an absolute powerhouse producing literally thousands of covers in his career for publications all of Europe. Some of his best were for the war comics so eagerly consumed by British school kids!

It's all coming back to Commando



Some of you reading this article will know me from my articles on Down The Tubes or on my blog www.nothingbutafan.wordpress.com (other comic blogs are available) and you will notice that one thing shines out about my articles is that they are all unremittingly positive about British comics and British fandom. And that is how it should be, but it means that I do not blog about some of the things that annoy me about British comic fandom. One of those things is how many people do not realise that British comic history is one of the richest in the world.

This year sees people lining up to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Superman and 80 years is a great run for any character, but how many are going to be lining up in August to also celebrate the first appearance of the Abyssinian Wire-Haired Tripe Hound when he turns 50? Very few I suspect, and this is part of what winds me up.

The reason that much of this winds me up is that there is a really good blog out there called Everything Comes Back to 2000AD and to a certain extent they are right, but they are also so very wrong as everything really comes back to Commando. Now before anyone asks, I am not employed by D C Thomson nor have I been paid in kind otherwise I would have a full Commando run right now of mint issues from issue 1 up to the 5100s that we are up to now! However, if the current Mr Thomson was kind enough to donate a full run, he would find that I am not averse to accepting such a gift!

> "First off, it was the springboard for one of the best artists of the last 50 years getting his first break."

Author: Colin Noble
Website: nothingbutafan.wordpress.com
Images: All featured material
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Let's start with the reasons that I think that it all comes back to Commando. First off, it was the springboard for one of the best artists of the last 50 years getting his first break. Swanning around Normandy in the 1960s, painting, smoking Gitanes and drinking red wine, he ran out of money and phoned home to the Gorbals for a sub (For those not familiar with Scottish vernacular, a sub is what you would ask of a fellow family member when you were down on your luck. This has been replaced by payday loans at obscene rates of interest.) However, someone asked him if he had heard of this picture library that was published in Dundee that was looking for artists. Our mystery artist said that he had not heard of them and duly sent off a couple of samples in 1968. 6 years and 28 issues later, he had produced some of the most stunning art of any British artist to be published in Commando. On the back of this art, he ended up illustrating Fighting Mann for Battle, The VCs, Judge Dredd and Rogue Trooper and provided the visuals and part of the inspiration for Kenny Who? in 2000AD. He then went on to illustrate several Star Wars graphic novels, Batman and The Light and Darkness War. I am sure that I have missed a large part of his bibliography, but by now, you will know that I am talking of Cam Kennedy and can fill in the gaps.

On a personal note, only one thing annoys me about Cam and that was finding out in the early 1970s he lived in Forfar. So, there is a very good chance that as a child, I was walking past one of my heroes and never realised it!

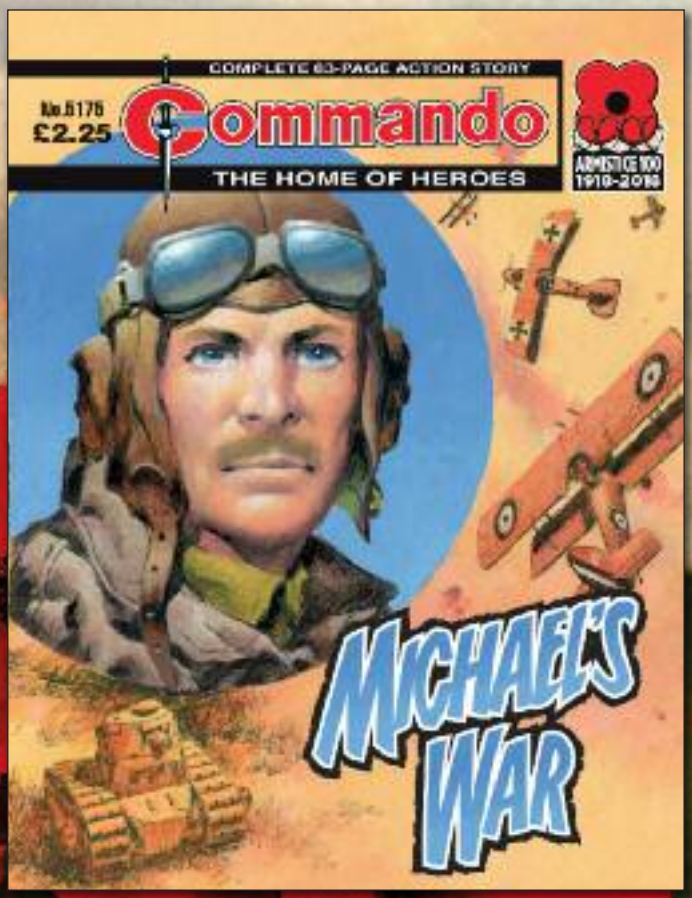
The second reason that it all comes back to Commando is Ken Barr. Ken drew 175 Commando covers and drew the first 14 covers of the run. He had contributed 171 covers to the body of work that is Commando by the end of January 1974. What makes this more intriguing is that from 1967, Ken had emigrated to the USA and was making a name for himself with DC by producing work for GI Combat, Our Army at War and Our Fighting Forces, with magazines such as Eerie and Vampirella, with Marvel for his work on Doc Savage, The Rampaging Hulk and Planet of the Apes. In 1974, he broke into the lucrative pulp cover and SF market. A result of this was that we would not see another original contribution of his to Commando until 1996 when he did the cover and story art for two issues.

What stuns me is that Ken has been a huge inspiration for a large number of artists be it his work for D C Thomson or his work for any of the American comic companies and still he seems to be an undiscovered treasure. After all, when Alex Ross recommends his art, can you really argue?

The third reason that it all comes back to Commando is due to a certain writer and here my research has failed you good reader as I have not been able to figure out if this person was actually working as a staffer for D C Thomson or as a free-lancer before he had written his scripts for Commando. However, when he wrote the scripts, he was a free-lancer and submitted four scripts. By February 1971 he was the Editor for the newly released Tammy, so the jury is still out on this particular fact until it can be confirmed by the doyens of our hobby, the creators themselves!

However, it is important in comic history terms as without those scripts being approved, there is a small chance that the writer might not have been taken seriously. As a result, characters and storylines such as The VCs, Fiends of The Eastern Front and a certain Rogue Trooper may never have emerged in 2000AD. Not to mention that Tammy may have folded a lot earlier than it did and would not have been able to support those stories coming across from Misty when it folded in 1980. For the reader of this article screaming at me asking who this is, then I am more than happy to reveal that it is none other than Gerry Finley-Day. But quite a few of you would have guessed that already, so I am doing my best to help those who are learning by writing this article.

For those that do not know half of this stuff I am gibbering about, then well done to you for loving your hobby well enough that you are willing to increase your knowledge by reading articles by old farts





like me in the hope of finding a few diamonds amongst the chaff.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, another reason that it all comes back to Commando is another Scottish artist and that is Sandy James. Sandy was born and bred in Edinburgh and we lost him all too soon in 2014. But what he did create for British comics is some stunning work.

From my records, I have Sandy as creating 4 covers and the internal art for 2 of the Commando and all of those were in the first 10 years of Commando. He also helped out when Rafael Auraleon could not complete the art for issue 366 Sky Trap and Sandy stepped in to provide the last 15 or so pages.

Where Sandy is best known is his work for Fleetway/IPC/the opposition. For me, the best example of Sandy's work is his work illustrating a certain Indian wrestler in Tiger. Before anyone whinges, that's Johnny Cougar. He also did a fair amount of work on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles weekly and Sonic The Comic in the mid 1980s.

I will admit that I am putting creators in almost at random, but I find that I suddenly remember different creators which is why they are getting added in at different stages during this article.

However, my next shout out is for a certain master writer. In the shake-up of the boys' papers that came after the release of Warlord in 1974, war comics became a lot more realistic and I think that Commando benefitted from that when we look at some of the stories we got. One writer began to contribute to Battle and Commando and his first Commando was issue 970 Rescue Mission. He has gone on to contribute another 285 scripts with his latest being issue 5123 titled Wolf Warriors. However, between those issues, he has managed to cram scripts in for Mind Wars and Holocaust for Starlord, a certain Major Eazy, Rat Pack, El Mestizo, Fighting Mann, The General Dies at Dawn and god knows what else for Battle, the stand out Meltdown Man for 2000AD (if you have not read it, fix this right now!) and The Tower King, The Fifth Horseman and The Amstor Computer for Eagle version 2. He also contributed to other DC Thomson comics and while I know what his first accepted script was, I am sworn to secrecy before I can put it on any public article! All I can say is that the artist of the series was Ted Rawlings who is better known for his work on Chell Puddock.

And for those wondering who this writer is, I am more than happy to let you all know that it is Alan Hebden. Alan might not thank me for this, but he does hold a unique distinction in that he is one of the few contributors that is a second-generation comic contributor.

But more crucially for this article Alan's father provided a wealth of scripts for Commando and from issue 3 with his first contribution to his final contribution of issue 1032, Eric provided 131 scripts to Commando over a 15 year period.

Eric started producing scripts for comics in the late 1950s / early 1960s & also contributed to Lion, Battle and Battle Picture Library that we know of so far. It is likely the he contributed more war stories to many other comics but it is unlikely that we will find out what they were now.

My next reason for saying that it all comes back to Commando is another top-class artist and he is a personal favourite and that is Jim Watson. The earliest piece of his work that I have found is a western cover on a Wizard issue from 1963. The next examples of his work that I have found is his work for the likes of TV21 where he illustrated Zero X and Captain Scarlet between 1968 and 1969. From then on, Jim split his work fairly equally between D C Thomson and Fleetway with work in Hotspur, Victor, Warlord, Wizard, 2000AD and Battle. In this article, I am concentrating on Jim's work for Commando and Jim contributed the art for 7 Commandos (yes, you have read that right) and this is a big deal as we have discovered another Commando that he contributed to since he passed away. In my defence, I don't own a copy of issue 105 and it was on yet another trawl through the credits to double check everything matched that highlighted I had another issue to credit check. As I don't own a copy, this could have been a serious issue, but this is where you find out what friends are for and I contacted my mate Doug Brain as he has a full run to dig out the issue in question and to send me some pictures. And once I was able to do a style check I was delighted to find that this was another story that had the art done by Jim Watson.

Jim did the cover for 990 Rogue Sub and the other six issues he drew the internal art for was over a 12 month period and they were 912, 930, 945, 957, 976 and 1006.

I have not even come close to scratching the surface of the linkages between Commando and the rest of the comic world, but that will have to wait for another time. I hope that you dear reader has enjoyed this dip into the world of Commando and that you will be back for more.



"And for those wondering who this writer is, I am more than happy to let you all know that it is Alan Hebden."

Remembering the Fallen:

Commando Comics Commemorate Armistice Anniversary



To commemorate the centenary of the Armistice of 11 November 1918, Commando, Britain's longest running war comic, is releasing a special five-part Armistice series. Each issue features a cover designed and painted by British comics legend Ian Kennedy, and centres on a different sibling from the fictional Weekes' family in the last few months of the First World War.

The Armistice Series is the brainchild of then acting Content Editor, Claire Bartlett, and prolific Commando writer Iain McLaughlin. Taking the reins of Commando's new issues, Bartlett decided to commission a five book series for Commando's November releases to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War by taking a look at Armistice from one family's point of view. Having worked with McLaughlin for twenty years on other titles, there was no one Bartlett trusted more for the series.

Already considering a comic involving a family's experiences in World War II, McLaughlin was more than happy to adjust the setting and devote an issue to each character. He was also keen that each of the siblings should serve in different branches of the Armed Forces, drawing from his own family's experiences:

"The war was fought by all of the forces, so I was sure that every one of those forces should be represented. The series also represents my father and his brothers. Dad was an RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] in the army, his older brother was in the Royal Navy and the youngest brother was in the Royal Air Force."

Hence, issue one, 'Danny's War', centres on a captain in the British Army who travels deep behind enemy lines to capture a convoy of German generals, hoping to push them into surrender. Issue two, 'Michael's War', follows a pilot in the newly-formed Royal Air Force during the Saint-Mihiel offensive. In issue three, 'Billy's War', we leave France for the Atlantic on a British Destroyer, as the youngest sibling, Billy, thirsts for the adventure of war, which he feels he has missed. Issue four, 'Harriet's

War', focuses on the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry and the somewhat overlooked struggles of nurses on the front lines. Then, in the final issue, 'Tommy's War', the family is brought together as we follow a rescue attempt over enemy lines, and reveal the final fate of the Weekes family.

The family dynamic is also taken from McLaughlin's personal life, who based the ages and positions within the family of the characters on his own cousins, which he commented "gave a bit of a real-life dynamic to the family and made them a lot more real to me."

For Commando, keen to continue releasing female-focused war stories, and following the success of their 2018 International Women's Day releases, 'Flak Run!' and 'The Land Army Marches' (also penned by McLaughlin), it made sense that one of the Weekes children would be female. This aided the overall arc of the series, as McLaughlin realised that having the third sibling, Harriet, as a driver in the FANYs, would be a device in which she could interact with different members of the family. Bartlett also instigated the inclusion of the mother, Grace, into some of the issues, as a reminder of the link to home. This also serves to highlight the isolated spheres of the domestic and the front line during the war – a key theme in the series as each member of the family is separated from the others.

Once scripted, the interior art for each issue was produced by various artists from Creaciones Editoriales, a comic and illustration agency founded in 1945. Among Commando's regular artists and war comic enthusiasts, Morhain and Defeo, the series also includes work by Klacik, and first-time Commando artist Khato. The original character designs were created by Morhain and Defeo, which were then circulated to the other artists for reference for the interiors of each issue. This helped to create a uniformity which ties the series together, cementing a familiarity to the siblings' appearances and characteristics, while also adding to their individuality though the artists' varying styles.

The final aspect of tying the series together lay in the covers. In 2014, a similar series was released to commemorate the centenary of the beginning of the First World War, for which veteran Commando artist Ian Kennedy also provided the cover art. In accordance to this, the Commando Team felt that the new series marking the anniversary of the end of the war should have similar covers to bookend such an occasion.

After meeting with the Editor, Kennedy designed bespoke paintings for the Armistice Series covers, each done using watered-down acrylic paint over black ink for the finer detail. The new covers kept the 2014 series' style of the lone soldier highlighted with a white outline against an abstract background showing various aspects of battle in the issue, but tweaked the idea by centring on the faces of the siblings. These "portraits" of the characters, based on Morhain and Defeo's original sketches, as defined by Kennedy, are done in semi-circles, and switch the sepia tone of the earlier series for brighter colours to contrast against the background and reflect the different forces focused on in each issue. For Kennedy, choosing some colours was easier than others as "the naval and RAF chaps dictated the colours for the other issues, as they had to be blue to match the sky and sea."

When drawing the characters' faces for the portraits, Kennedy strove to create a family resemblance, and, wanting to focus on a shared feature, decided that the eyes are the most interesting. As such, each of the Weekes' sibling have the same startling blue eyes on the covers, making the family tie and series link unmistakable.

As well as the Armistice Series, Commando are commemorating the anniversary by reprinting classic issues about the First World War throughout November. This includes the never before reprinted issues 'Stolen Glory' and 'Front-Line Fear'. **Commando's Armistice Series: 'The Weekes' War' is out from the 1st of November!**



Website: www.commandocomics.com
Images: All featured material
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Despite being one of the classic 2000AD characters, the Galaxy's greatest's blue skinned genetic infantryman's story is more than a bit confusing. Rogue's continuity has become overly convoluted, rivalling the complexity of those pesky "X" characters, or the avian chap with the mace and attitude from the Justice Leage of America.

ROGUE TROOPER





TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING.

A 2000AD readers poll revealed that Squaxx wanted a strip about "Future War". The prog's previous stab at future war was the popular "VCs", written by Gerry Finley Day (GFD) and drawn by Mike McMahon, Cam Kennedy, Garry Leach, and John Richardson. Tharg of this era, Steve McManus commissioned creators GFD and Dave Gibbons to meet reader demand.

McManus, Day and Gibbons worked through a number of different concepts for their future war story. One idea that was mooted was of a soldier made up of organs and limbs from different European countries, before the concept of the lone, cloned, genetic infantryman, or "trooper tube" as he was known came about. The name "Rogue Trooper" was cribbed from a book McManus was reading at the time.

Day thought that this "Rogue Trooper" should interact with others, perhaps with the ghosts of his dead buddies, rather than depending on inner monologue. A solution was found from the pages of Judge Dredd, McManus stole the concept of bio chips from a storyline in the "Judge Child" saga, where the personalities of old people were burned onto microchips for them to be implanted into new bodies to live on again. GIs personalities were burned onto a biochip at death, these would then be implanted into new bodies,without having to spare the time and expense of training new soldiers.

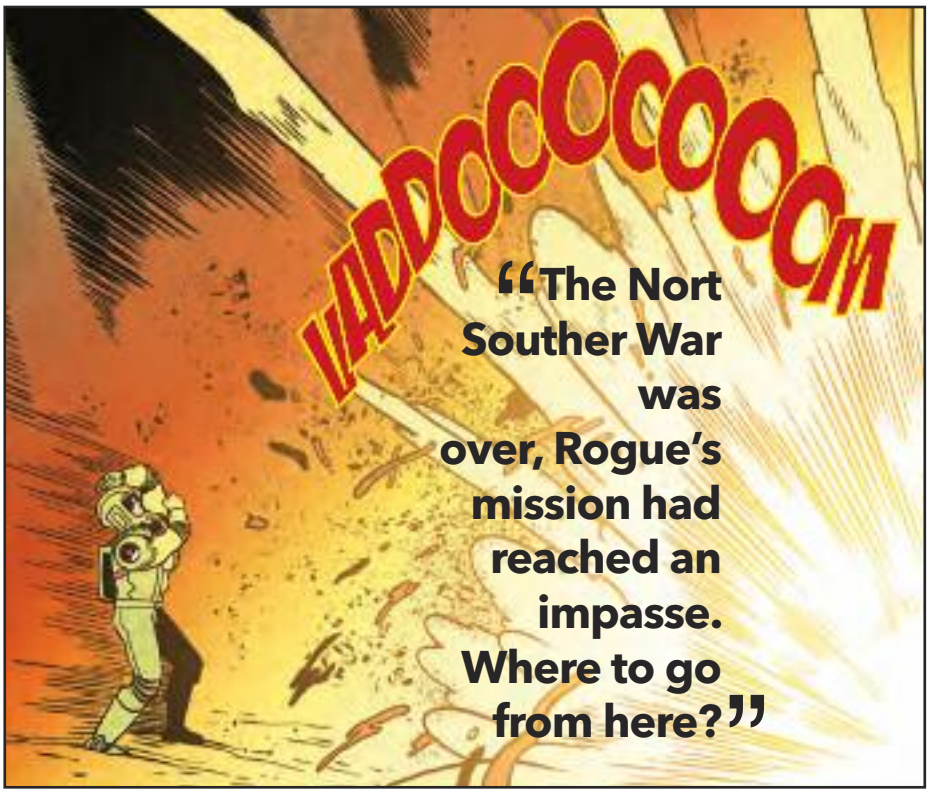
Debuting in Prog 228, the Genetic Infantrymen were bred by the Southers to give them an advantage, on the chemical strewn battlefields of Nu Earth, over their chemsuit wearing comrades and their Nort enemies. Betrayed by a traitor in high command, the GIs are ambushed, overwhelmed and massacred, Rogue is the sole survivor. Rogue recovers the bio chips of his 3 comrades, Helm, Bagman and Gunnar, which are kept in energised slots in his helmet, backpack and gun respectively. Rogue deserts and heads off to find out who sold out the GIs.

After laying the groundwork for the strip, Gibbons left, unhappy with the direction the strip had taken, but Rogue had a who's who of comic talent to draw on to compensate. The Kiwi Moebius Colin Wilson stepped into the breach, Mike Dorey brought charcoal drenched atmosphere, Cam Kennedy brought grittiness and his experience in war strips, and Brett Ewins polish, gadgets and pop culture references.

Rogue Mark 1 ranged from grit ("The Marauders"), romance ("All Hell on DIX 1", "From Hell To Eternity"), to high camp (usually anything featuring the looters Bland and Brass), and the bizarre and whimsical ("Fort Neuro").

Rogue's quest could only go on for so long. He catches up wth the Traitor General and returns to Milli Com, Souther headquarters. Comrades regened and tried as deserter. Souther command gives Rogue a new Mission, just as his comrades are once again reduced to biochips by a virus. The cure for the virus can be found on the planet Horst. Once again Rogue deserts with Helm, Gunnar and Bagman back in his now updated equipment, and heads to the planet Horst, drawn by Jose Ortiz. Mission complete, (though not necessarily successful) he returns to Milli Com.

The Nort / Souther War was over, Rogue's mission had reached an impasse. Where to go from here?



Editors Simon Geller and Steve MacManus took over writing chores and Steve Dillon came in on art duties and the strip took a new direction. Aliens wanting to end the war which was engulfing the galaxy, wanted to assassinate important and influential officers within the Nort and Souther High Commands. They recruited Rogue to do their dirty work, as an intergalactic hitman, the warrior to end all wars.

The Hit came to an abrupt and early conclusion, screeching to a halt in a 2000AD Winter Special scripted by Steve Dillon and drawn by a young Chris Weston. Gunnar, Helm & Bagman are regened and Rogue goes to meet his destiny with his alien masters.

Tharg commissioned Script droid John Smith and art droids Steve Dillon and Kevin Walker to create a swansong flash back story set before "Fort Neuro"."Cinnibar" was laden with Smith's favourite tropes; sex, violence and body horror,revitalising a now moribund strip, just before it was rebooted. Mature, thoughtful and horrific in equal measure.

This first incarnation of the blue skinned soldier had reached a dead end. But editorial thought that the concept was sound. War! What is it good for? Well, sales apparently.

That Friday Feeling

Co creator Dave Gibbons was commissioned to reboot Rogue, both writing and drawing initially, but time pressures meant that Will Simpson drew the debut strip.

Debuting in Prog 650 Gibbons's take was subtlely different from the original. Blue skinned "Friday" was the last surviving member of a regiment of Genetic Infantrymen sent to take and hold a seemingly valueless hill on a small war-ravaged planet called Earth. Friday witnesses the deaths of his friends, Lucky, Top and Eightball. Friday seeks revenge on his creators, the Clavell Corporation. Gone are the occasionally camp and whimsical storylines, the new version had a very different tone, far grittier, more militaristic, darker & bloodier, and no bio chips. The opening storyline is hampered by the large gaps in the storyline, diluting its impact. Gibbons & Simpson jumpship after the opening storyline and editorial brought in american writer Michael Flesicher, who had





had acclaimed runs on DC's "Jonah Hex" and "The Spectre".

Around this time, 2000AD was becoming more "sophisticated". Editorial felt that they were lacking in the more action orientated strips. Fleischer's take was to be less moody and more easily accessible. Ron Smith and Simon Coleby were to alternate in drawing the war ravaged battlefields of Friday's Earth. Fleischer used Friday's rambling internal monologue to establish Friday's nobility and his inner conflict, Ron Smith's bright primary colours and clean lines were an ill fit for a war strip, Coleby's art was more appropriate, chunky craggy art, but coloured by Gina Hart who followed Smith's use of pinks and bright blues and greens. Friday was being pushed heavily by editorial and even got his own annual, only the 3rd 2000AD star to do so.

The reception to Fleischer's take on the character was lukewarm at best, his swansong's was co written by editor Alan McKenzie,and beautifully drawn by Chris Weston & Mike Hadley. The "Scavenger of Souls" storyline turned the very dead Top, Lucky and Eightball into Friday's bio chip buddies, seemingly to sate reader demand.

Steve White, a writer, editor and militaria enthusiast took the script reins, with art by Henry Flint. The pace of the strip stepped up, the stories were action packed, short and to the point without the meandering of the Fleischer era.

> "Blue skinned Friday was the last surviving member of a regiment of Genetic Infantrymen sent to take & hold a seemingly valueless hill on a small war ravaged planet called Earth"

There was a brief break for this team as Friday crossed over with Judge Dredd in Prog 900, centering on the fact that they were both clones, writen by John Wagner and drawn by John Higgins. Then in 901 Mark Millar and Weston began a 3 parter, before things began to get really confusing with the return of Steve White.





Readers had been wondering what had happened to the original Rogue. No link had been established between Friday and Rogue, other than the obvious similarities, but that was going to change. Steve White began the onerous task of linking the previously separate continuities. Old characters are resurrected, Venus Bluegenes, Norts and Southers all re appear, Gunnar, Bagman and Helm are all regened.

With assistance from Dan Abnett, White attempted to explain how the two GIs relate to each other. The now slimline continuity brought casualties, namely Rogue, Helm, Bagman and Eightball. Sadly the story collapses under its own weight, and Friday's adventures draw to a close not long afterward.

Ignoring the Friday reboot, Gordon Rennie revived the original Rogue with stories set before he found the traitor general. Drawn by Mike Collins & David Roach, PJ Holden, Staz Johnson and Dylan Teague, these were largely successful, but where can you go with a character that is dead? And after a while, these too drew to a close.

A revival is teased occasionally. Recently there was an excellent James Robinson / Leonardo Manco one off in the Prog' and Rogue is a regular in the resurrected 2000AD Sci fi specials. In 2014 IDW launched an ongoing series curtailed to 4 issues, by comics debutante Brian Ruckley and Alberto Ponticelli. This added a few wrinkles to the original Rogue Trooper, a slightly different interpretation, but still one of the best versions of the blue skinned GI you can come across.

There have also been spin offs within the RogueTrooper universe, notably the "86 ers", a tale starring a female GI in a Souther star fighter squadron and "Jaegir" a war story told from the "bad guy" perspective, in the grand tradition of "Panzer G Man" and "Kampfgruppe Falken" and tie in medical story "Mercy Heights" and its spin off "Tor Cyan".

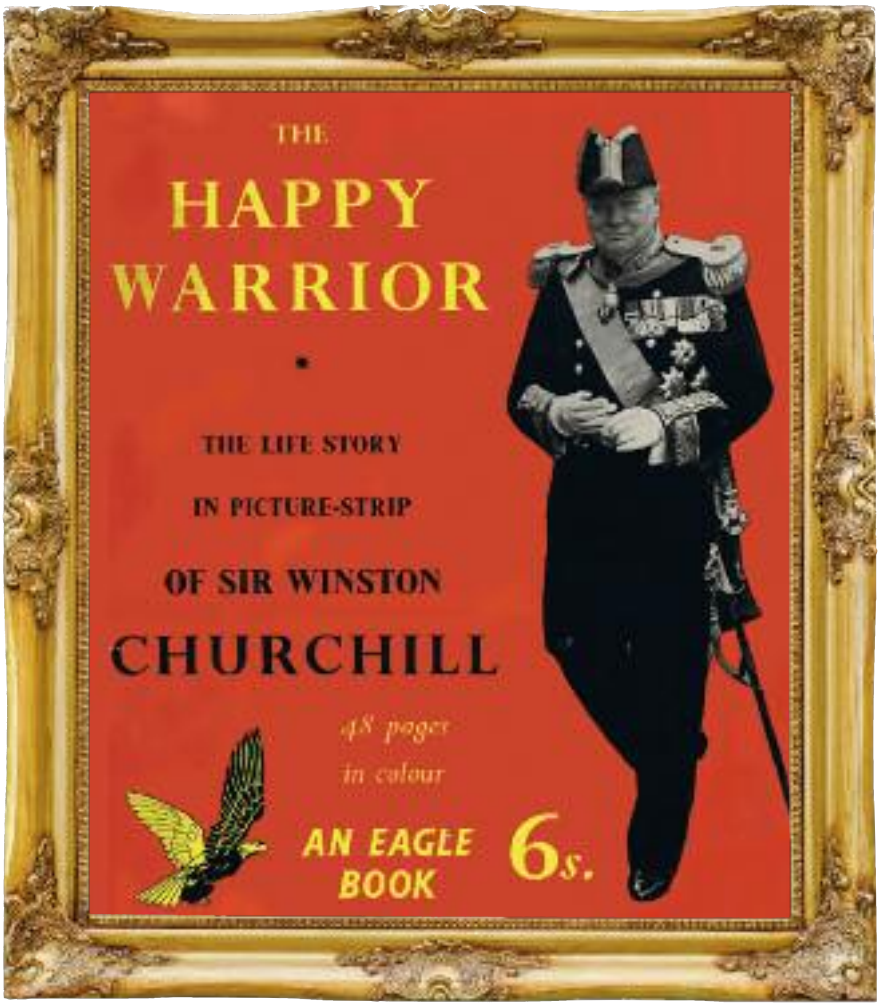
It seems that Rogue has run his course, relegated to specials and one offs. The end of the traitor general storyline was the end of the strip. Revamps and reboots caused confusion, but that shouldn't take anything away from some classic British comics.



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The Happy Warrior





If you talk to anyone who read Eagle there are several topics they always come back to: Dan Dare (on the front page), the cutaway drawings (on the centre pages) and the real life adventure strip (on the back page). These then were the keystones on which the rest of Eagle was built. The back-page strips often featured heroes (never heroines – they were in Eagle's sister paper Girl) who exemplified the 'muscular Christianity' that Marcus Morris had envisaged as an antidote to the American horror comics of the 1950s. However, it wasn't all saints and missionaries; although Frank Hampson's Road of Courage strip of the life of Christ will surely stand the test of time as his masterpiece, in fact on two occasions contemporary figures featured as the star of the strip. The Happy Warrior was the first of these and took as its subject the life of Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill; the title deriving from William Wordsworth's poem (written in 1806, published 1807) - 'Character of the Happy Warrior'.

As all previous back-page stories had featured heroes who were dead, it gave an amount of artistic and literary carte blanche for the creative team to enjoy. Now however they were faced with the prospect of telling the story of the Greatest Living Englishman, who, only two years before, had been Prime Minister! The strip ran in Eagle from 4th October 1957 until 6th September 1958 (49 episodes in total) and was written by Clifford Makins and illustrated by Frank Bellamy. The pair had collaborated previously (a King Arthur strip and two Robin Hood stories for Swift – the companion title to Eagle albeit aimed at younger boys) and would do so again in the future (The Shepherd King [the life of King David] & Montgomery of Alamein). So, an experienced pair, but this strip was a step up in terms of its length, complexity and the fact that it could, now it was in Eagle, be in full colour.

The Happy Warrior was one of the longest strips to feature on the back-page of Eagle, but perhaps with a life as full and as extraordinary as Churchill's this shouldn't be a surprise! The strip though is not a biography, rather it is a war story with much focus on Winston's combat in Cuba (Winston is at war, aged 21, by page 2 of the strip!), the North-West frontier in India (occupying 3 pages), the Sudan (4 pages), the Boer War (7 pages), the first world war (4 pages) and, finally, the second world war (26 pages). Anyone looking for nuances around Churchill's work on, for instance, the Irish Treaty of 1922 is advised to look elsewhere – in fact the whole inter-war period is covered in just over a page!

What then of the strip itself? Frank Bellamy's work would arguably reach its zenith on the Thunderbirds strip he would illustrate a decade later in TV21, where the jagged panels and imaginative graphics were aligned perfectly with the dangers that the Tracy brothers faced on behalf of International Rescue. For Swift his work on King Arthur and on Robin Hood had shown

tremendous draughtsmanship but little sign of the graphic explosions that would become Bellamy's hallmark. This strip (which was, initially at least, sent to Churchill for his approval) started in quite a muted way, with regular blocks of 2-3 illustrations per line and 4 lines to a page, so 10-12 pictures per page, occasionally broken up with large blocks of text as we move through Churchill's life. Only as Bellamy begins to become more confident in the strip do we start to see glimpses of his famously dynamic page layouts.

The artwork throughout is a joy, with creases in uniforms lovingly rendered, stippling used to powerful effect and the palette of colours used in accordance with where the story is being told – compare for instance the light blues and yellows used to depict Churchill's exploits in the sun-drenched Sudan, India and South Africa and the, in all senses, dark and sombre colours used to show the evacuation of Dunkirk – the page is virtually black.

Throughout the strip the likenesses are very good, with Churchill's aging shown particularly effectively.

I leave you with the last lines of Wordsworth's 'Character of the Happy Warrior' which over its 85 lines lays out the character of the happy warrior and concludes that

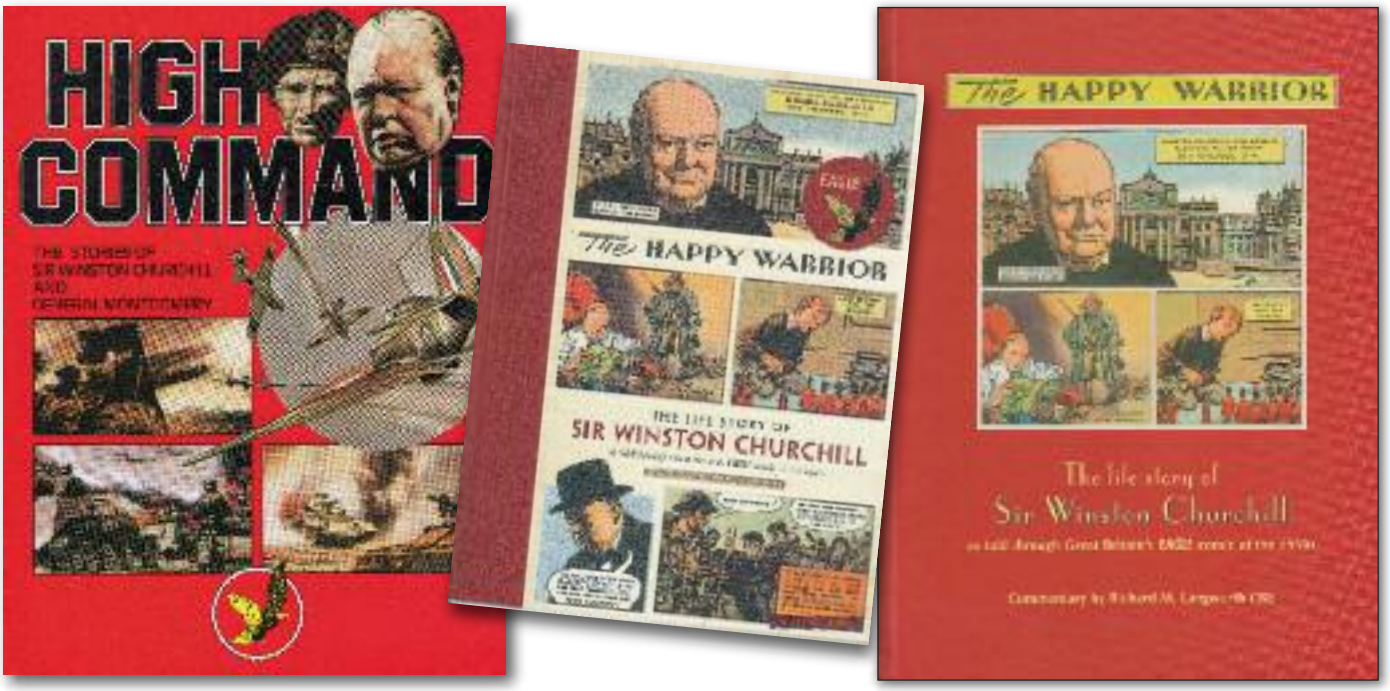
"...And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws

His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:

This is the happy Warrior; this is He

That every Man in arms should wish to be"

I think we can all be certain of Heaven's applause when Churchill arrived.



A guide to collecting The Happy Warrior

The first collected edition of The Happy Warrior came out in 1958 in an oversized hardback edition; still widely and easily available this has proved to be much more robust than The Baden-Powell story which had been produced in 1957 but as a softback and is now a rare title due, presumably, to its flimsier nature.

For those of you with the deepest of pockets there were 3 leatherbound special editions printed – one each for Frank Bellamy, Clifford Makins and Winston Churchill. The volume that Churchill owned sold for £3,750 (hammer price with buyer's premium). High Command was published by Dragon's Dream in 1981 as a compilation of The Happy Warrior and Montgomery of Alamein (not a back-page strip, instead a double page colour spread that ran for 18 weeks in 1962). Softback and hardback (much rarer) versions are available. As is a version in Dutch (also just called High Command).

2008 saw the whole of The Happy Warrior reprinted (in hardback) by the Levenger Press (in the USA) complete with introductory essay on Eagle, on Churchill and a reprint of Wordsworth's poem.

This volume was then reprinted (in softback) by the Uniform Press in 2014 here in the UK, priced at £14.99.

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GILES'S WAR

Carl Giles was a legendary British cartooning genius. And it was a legend forged in World War II, both as a cartoonist on the home front and, later, as a war cartoonist, travelling with the Allies all the way into Germany. Never an overtly political cartoonist as we might know them now, Giles' beautifully detailed single page cartoons, with their meticulous and skilled draughtsmanship, none the less gloriously captured of the day. And never better than his work during the Second World War.



My introduction to Giles' cartoons came through my father's Christmas Day tradition of settling down with the Giles annual whilst mother cooked dinner. Post turkey, it was my turn, and whilst I didn't always understand the news references, I loved the comedy and the staggeringly good cartooning. Not just that, but I discovered, as with any great political cartoonist, Giles' work served as a more vital and educational history lesson than any I received at school.

Born 1916, Giles' path to becoming a cartoonist included work as a Brighton pavement artist, junior animator in London, and work at Alexander Korda's studio where he was part of the animation team on The Fox-Hunt, the first British animation with sound.

His cartooning career began in 1937 at the left-wing Reynolds News, but he would spend the majority of his career at the very right-leaning Express Newspaper Group. Lord Beaverbrook, owner of the Express, recognised not just Giles' remarkable skills and incredible draughtsmanship, but also saw something important for the war effort; that unfailing ability to laugh in the face of terrible times. Despite disagreeing with the paper's politics, Giles succumbed to sustained persuasion and joined the paper, with his first cartoon for his new employers appearing in the 3 October 1943 edition of the Sunday Express.

Working for the Express was certainly financially rewarding; by 1955 he reportedly earned £8,060 for three cartoons a week (roughly £120,000+ today). Additionally, Beaverbrook was fond of lavishing his favourite cartoonist with both praise and presents, including one famous gift of a Bentley Continental.

In September 1944, with Allied troops pushing into Europe, Giles became the Express' war cartoonist, filing cartoons from the front. His journey took him to the nightmare of the newly liberated Bergen-Belson concentration camp. Prolific throughout the war, Giles found himself so affected by the horror that he was simply unable to commit anything to paper, and the memories of the camp are said to have haunted the cartoonist for the rest of his life.



As Beaverbrook recognised, Giles' innate ability to see life through the eyes of the common man made his cartoons incredibly popular. Not just at home, but with the troops as well. So many of his wartime cartoons deal with the inevitable tensions in the ranks between the regular Tommy and their commanding officers, all perfectly caricatured; moustachioed of face, stiff of upper lip, and ridiculously posh. Giles' natural penchant for ridiculing authority struck exactly the right chord.

When we look back at Giles' cartoons now, especially his wartime work, they might seem lacking in the immediate laughs we expect from gag strips, or the venom of modern political cartooning. Instead, you find yourself marvelling at the craft on display, the restraint shown in the humour, the jokes that spoke so strongly to men and women in terrible conditions. And yes, at times, his imagery may seem bombastic, with the ugly, cruel, thuggish Germanic faces (to say nothing of his uncomfortably racist stereotypes of the Japanese), but it's important to see them in terms of their intended effect. These are things to bring hope to a battered nation, a smile to troops far from home, and Giles successfully turned his eye every week to find the comedic, the ridiculous, and the hopeful. In his magnificent caricatures of Hitler, Mussolini, Goering, and Goebbels he succeeded in ridiculing them and stripping them of their power to instil fear across Europe, a propaganda coup in itself.

Giles rarely addressed the absolute horrors of the war, his experiences of Belsen showed him that was not something that really fitted into his cartoons. But, on the rare occasion he touched upon it, the cartoons are shockingly powerful. Take for example the cartoon of 3 Feb 1944, where Hitler sits in front of a truck bearing a swastika and the signage 'Gas Exterminator', obviously a mobile gas chamber. The newspaper he holds bears the headline 'New list of Jap atrocities". Sat about him are four Neanderthal Nazi soldiers, and chillingly, when you look closer, they're all sitting on human skulls. The caption? "These damn Japs are showing us all up - we shall have to think up a few new ones".

The war made Giles' name, gave him fame and fortune, and set him on a hugely successful career that would continue until the 1990s. And, it can be said, Giles' wartime cartoons also gave rise to his most famous creations, The Giles Family. First appearing on 5 August 1945, they were created when Giles realised he was lacking the regular stimulus for cartoons that the characters of the war had given him. And once created, the Giles family became a mainstay of his work, with the cartoonist once more able to wield his pen against authority, something he began in wartime and continued to do throughout his life and career.

Giles died in 1995, passing just eight months after his wife Joan. One of his last public appearances was in 1993, for the unveiling of a statue of Granma from the Giles Family in Ipswich, outside the newspaper offices where he had created his beloved body of work.

Giles' work was of the moment, and today it can serve as a fascinating and entertaining view into the recent past. But, more than anything, every single page of Carl Giles' work is a monument to a cartoon genius.

Carl Giles 1916-1995, much missed. By my dad, by me, and by countless fans around the world.





"Giles rarely addressed the absolute horrors of the war, his experiences of Belsen showed him that was not something that really fitted into his cartoons"

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JACQUES TARDI

THE DISASTERS OF WAR

World War I is at the heart of the French comic master's work, even when it isn't shown on the page.

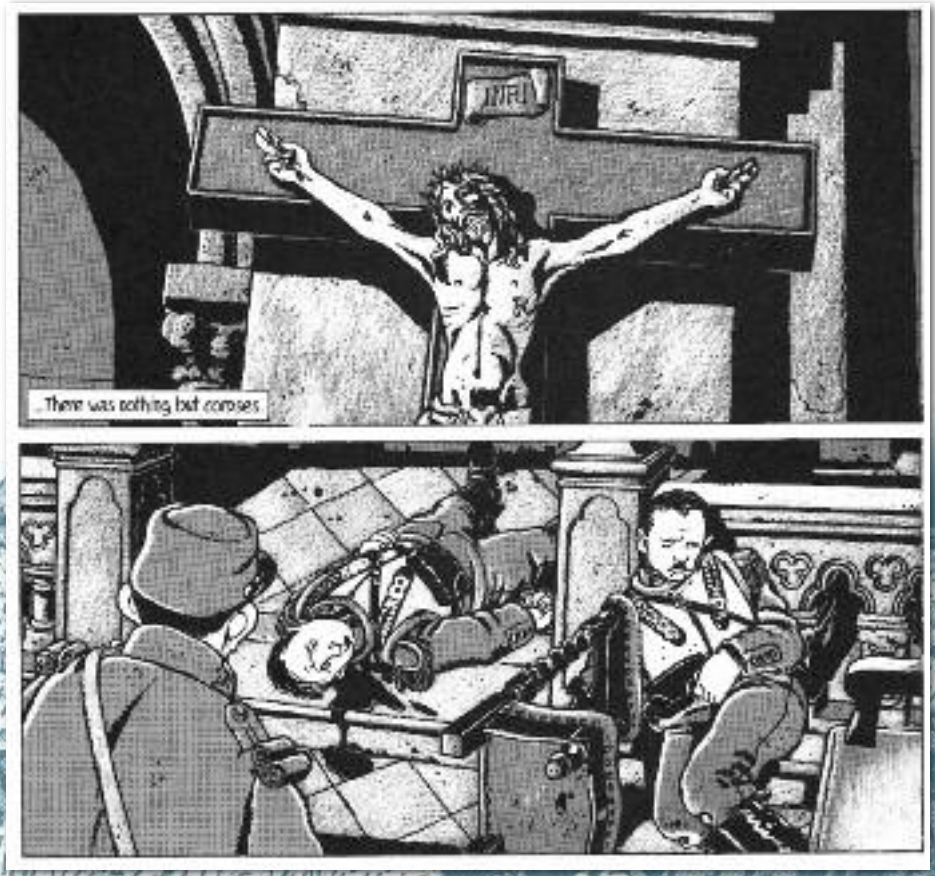
War is noise and violence and madness, and then stillness and stench and madness of a different kind. Pat Mills and Joe Colquhoun caught the din of mechanised conflict as effectively as any comics creators ever have in Charley's War, shunting their World War I story from incident to incident at the frantic pace of a boys adventure weekly. Even the strip's more eye-catching incidents—such as the arrival of Lance Corporal Adolf Hitler in the opposite trenches—have the bitter irony of real life, where coincidences can be alarming but also just about sane.

Jacques Tardi's It Was The War Of The Trenches is a soldier's eye view of the conflict too, and yet a different beast entirely. In progress for a decade before completion in 1993, this vision of WWI seems to have bypassed cause and effect altogether. Fragments of sense materialise in the multiple tales of French infantry soldiers which Tardi builds into a mosaic of hellish war stories, but then they drain away again, sinking back into the mud. Charley's War, although bitterly angry, can conceive that war may one day end, even if that day might be long past the life span of its characters; but Tardi's conflict is eternal. "The only thing that interests me is man and his suffering," said the artist, echoing the thoughts of Francisco Goya. "And it fills me with rage."

The first section of Trenches uses jagged layouts and curving panels to leave its characters off balance, although for the bulk of the book Tardi sticks to an unbreakable rhythm of three horizontal panels per page. It's the sombre drumbeat of an execution, or possibly a parody of the French Tricolour. Chronology jumps back and forth, from 1917 to 1914 to 1916, since this is not a history lesson but a tone poem, and in the final pages Tardi peers into the future from a position of certainty about conflicts still to come.

Strange and Goya-esque sights appear, drawn in Tardi's detailed black and white line, with added Letraset grey tones casting a queasy pall over the landscape. The corpse of a horse hangs limply in a tree; a slumped soldier holds his helmet in front of his belly and reveals that his innards have spilled into it; acts of kindness lead to violent death. Bursts of realism sit next to nightmares of ghostly women and children, of living soldiers with eyes so sunken they could be zombies themselves. Near the end, a sudden transition reveals the girlfriend of a solider, back home and unaware of what we already know, a lurch out of the trenches that casts the whole of France into the same dire confusion as the soldiers.

"WWI really does explain and to some extent construct the world in which we live today," Tardi told The Comics Journal, and the conflict has remained the major project of his career, examined in fine detail from different angles to fathom the point at which the continent of Europe tipped into some long-term abyss.



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Adèle Blanc-Sec and the Unquiet Dead

The Great War certainly hangs over Tardi's most high-profile work, The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec, despite it not being set during the conflict. Superficially an adventure story with elements of steampunk science fantasy, plus the kind of strong female character that would eventually attract the interest of filmmaker and bandes dessinées aficionado Luc Besson, the Adèle books embrace the spirit of a 19th Century feuilleton, a tumble of unlikely and fantastical events with a hint of romance layered over the top.

Set in the last days of the Belle Époque, Adèle's first adventures are complex knotty narratives—Tardi doesn't even identify his heroine for the initial 20 pages of the first one, and when he does her heroism is balanced by waspish intolerance and a dash of misandry. The art is lush and colourful, all crowded panels and wordy speech balloons, complex pages to match the complex narratives of the stories and a long way from the static cruelties of Trenches.

Adèle herself, though, was not as far away as she seemed. The four Adèle volumes that Tardi completed before embarking on Trenches were a wild ride, starting with a prehistoric pterodactyl miraculously reborn, and moving on to a conspiracy among the great and the good of Paris to release a plague upon the city. Later, another resurrected animal arrives, this time an ape man, a creature whose dignity and destiny Adèle tries to protect. And in the fourth story, after the Egyptian mummy that Adèle keeps in her apartment comes to life, yet another political conspiracy attempts to murder her, first through a succession of unlikely accidents and then by trying to trick her into taking a cruise on the Titanic.

This fourth volume ends with a burst of what Tardi himself labelled "extreme confusion," as characters from an entirely separate Tardi serial, The Arctic Marauder, suddenly charge onstage unannounced. In the ensuing melee, Adèle Blanc-Sec is stabbed to death, right there on-panel in her own story. She ends up placed in deep freeze, pending resuscitation and eventually further adventures; but at the time Tardi made it clear she was not coming back. The story's calendar had reached August 1914, and Tardi himself had reached It Was The War Of The Trenches. He had no intention of letting his heroine be lumbered with a role as rote as a wartime nurse or Mata Hari, dragged into the mud of WWI along with the rest of her nation.

Adèle's Belle Époque looks gilded, but seeping in through the cracks are madness, the misuse of power, wayward science and the wickedness of men. The clouds are gathering, the dead are unquiet, and Tardi took steps to keep Adèle Blanc-Sec out of Europe's slaughterhouse, by sentencing his creation to a shockingly random death that presages a few million others. It was an act of mercy.









JAMES



While he was yet to become the master spy that we know and love, the Second World War played an important role in the development of James Bond. As writer Jeff Parker (Agents of Atlas, Batman 66) and artist Bob Q (The Green Hornet) chronicle in Dynamite Entertainment's new James Bond Origin series, the young 007-to-be was nearing the end of his days at Edinburgh's Fettes College in 1941 when the German bombardment of Britain was at its height.

"The Second World War is the defining moment in almost everyone's life at that time, certainly anyone around Europe, so it was the most natural catalyst to propel James into what his life will become," explains Parker. "Especially once we factored the Clydebank Blitz into it, as with the Bond of Ian Fleming's novels being Scottish, it made a perfect point for him to leave school and go to war."

However, Parker insists that the series won't consist of a whistle-stop tour of the Second World War's most famous battles and other significant moments. "This won't be one of those works where you find out that 'Bond made D-Day happen' or helped invade Hitler's bunker, but we do reference many historical events," he continues. "The war is the ultimate proving ground that prepares Bond for the life of being 007 later, because he learns the harshest realities and skills for survival, and simply coming through the many conflicts alive is a tremendous accomplishment."

Licensed from Ian Fleming Publications, Dynamite Entertainment launched their Bond line with Warren Ellis and Jason Masters's 12-part VARGR/ Eidolon in 2015, which was then followed for further mini-series and one-offs by creators like Benjamin Percy, Andy Diggle, Ales Kot, James Robinson, Declan Shalvey and Kieron Gillen. Released in conjunction with November's new James Bond monthly by Greg Pak and Marc Laming, James Bond Origin represents a change of direction for Dynamite, which is focusing on ongoing James Bond titles for the first time.

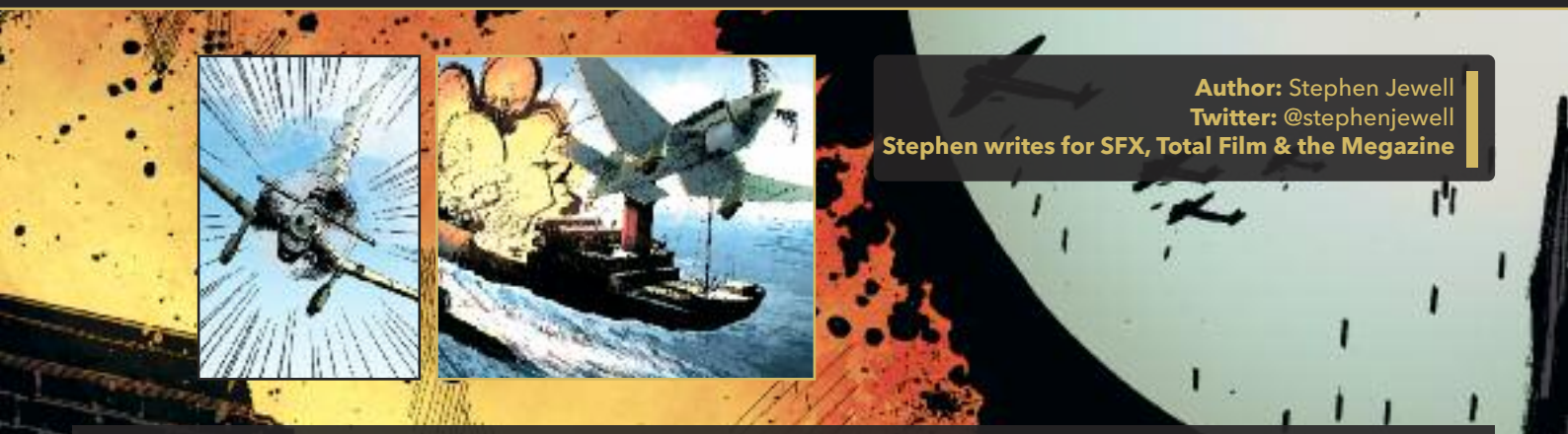
Praising Bob Q as "an excellent artist" whose work is "full of life and intensity," Parker maintains that there are aspects of telling a Bond story in comic book form that you wouldn't enjoy in other mediums. "We can collapse time more often than the Bond movies usually do because our storytelling isn't so established," he reasons. "We can also drop in an abundance of information similar to what a novel can, since you're reading it and it isn't flying by in front of you. The novels and films all have their place, we just play to the strength of comics, which give intriguing visuals like film, but as prose does, it also involve the reader more with the imagining of the story."

Drawing on the continuity established in Ian Fleming's numerous novels and short stories as opposed to 007's filmic canon, Parker hasn't delved into Charlie Higson and Steve Cole's Young Bond novels, which were set during James's teenage years in the 1930s. "There's no Young Bond reference, at least not intentionally," he



ORIGIN

BOND



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Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine

says. "The details Fleming gave about James's early life is though, and that's the basic roadmap that we use to navigate."

Having worked for Naval Intelligence during World War Two, Fleming's own war exploits play an important part in Origin. "We've incorporated a lot of Fleming's life into James," continues Parker. "And if you look close, starting with the second issue, you'll notice that Fleming himself is actually a recurring character in the series."

Opening with him bravely helping evacuate his school as it is devastated by German bombers, September's first issue sees the seventeen-year-old James becoming embroiled in a sinister espionage plot. "At this point, he's never given a thought to spycraft," says Parker. "He's fairly focused on giving judo lessons at Fettes and learning more about his mother from a teacher who knew her. But he's clever and has a strong sense of justice."

While many of the familiar Bond trappings including his 00 status, the larger than life villains and snappy catchphrases are conspicuous by their absence, concentrating on his formative days gave the writer and artist a liberating sense of freedom. "You'd think that would be a huge problem, but it forced us to explore who James is without all of that," admits Parker. "To me, his defining characteristic is relentlessness, as he will doggedly stay on course until he reaches his objective and use anything in his surroundings to do so."

"The overall feeling of threat to James really appealed to me," adds Bob Q. "He's a kid growing up in World War Two and the odds are so insurmountable. James Bond the spy goes up against some hairy stuff, but ultimately he's trained for those situations. This is James trying to figure it out and learning as he goes, which means that there's also so much room for growth. In the books and films, James is relentless, strong and confident, but as a kid, he wasn't necessarily that person yet."

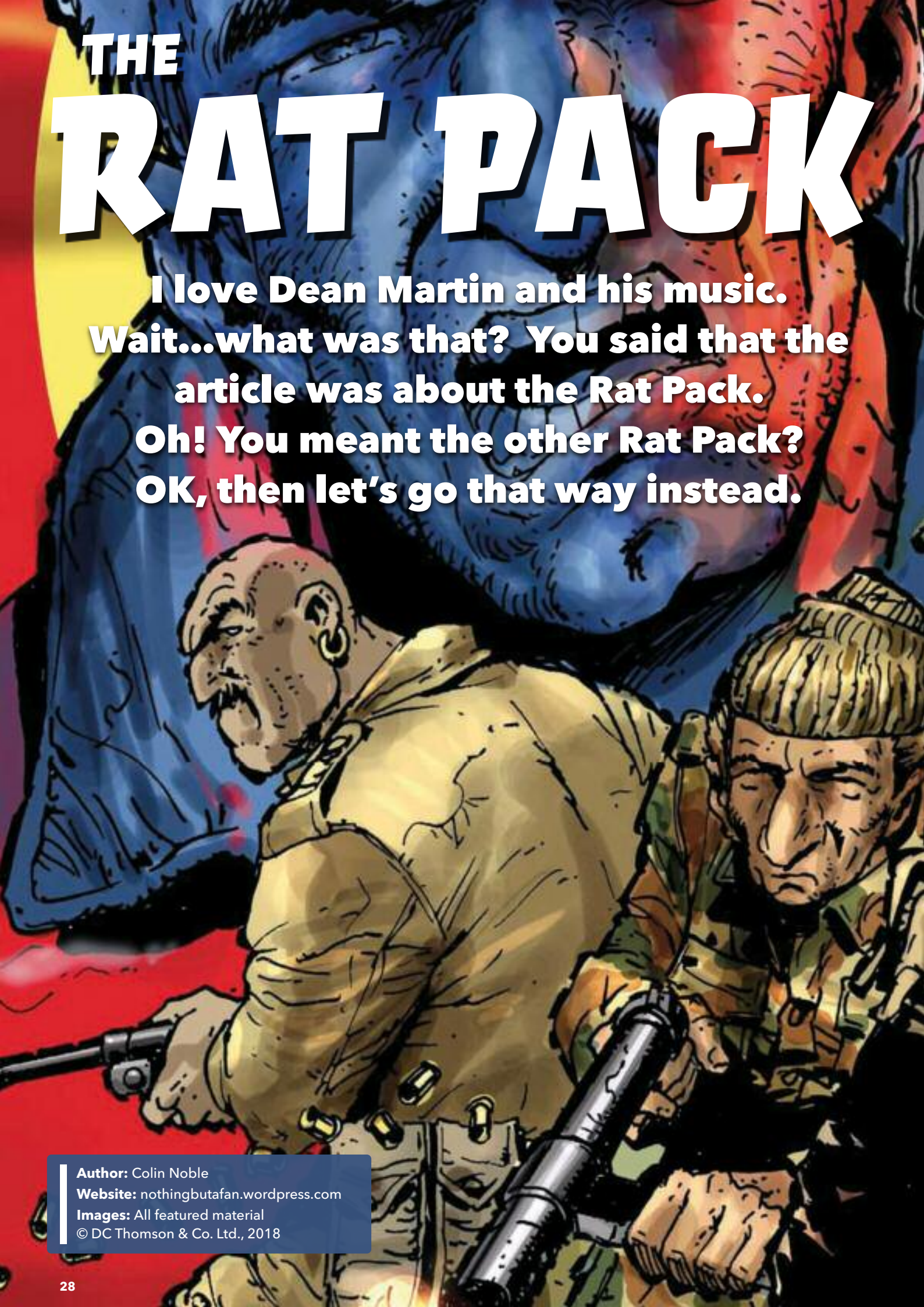
Rather than any of the big screen Bonds, Bob Q based his depiction of the young James on American actor and jazz singer Hoagy Carmichael, who was Fleming's original physical model for the character. "I tried to slim his face down and make that guy look like a kid," says Bob Q, who has done his homework to ensure that the architecture and clothing of the era are presented correctly.

"I loved the setting and the research was a huge part of the job," he continues. "From fun outfits that the folks in the story wear to some extremely specific information regarding usage of German bombers. The second page of the first issue actually required me to contact some old friends in Europe who had knowledge regarding how JU-88 bombardiers would have to lie down in the cockpit to do their bomb sighting. It just got deeper and deeper from there, and as for future issues, you can expect to see my new favourite thing to draw – submarines!"



STORY

THE RAT PACK



Author: Colin Noble
Website: nothingbutafan.wordpress.com
Images: All featured material
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I grew up in the 1970s in D C Thomson country and as a result we had at least one D C Thomson publication every day, but one beautiful summer day in 1975, I found this ragged comic that some of my brothers had hidden from our Mum for at least 4 months. I read one story and I was hooked! I didn't know the name of the artist but I recognised his style as he had done some work in the Wizard. A few years later, I would find out that C Ezquerra was King Carlos. I didn't have a clue who the writer was as writing for a living was (and still is) my idea of heaven, but I eventually found out that it was Gerry Finley-Day.

The comic was Battle issue 1 and the story was Rat Pack. This was mind-blowing for the time. First, it was a war story and you could not go anywhere in the 1970s without finding some reminder of WW2. Second, it was based on a movie, The Dirty Dozen, that was inaccessible to us under 12 as it was released as an A certificate which became the modern 12 certificate. Third, it featured anti-heroes that were not only anti-hero but anti-authoritarian as the one binding element of the story was that the Rat Pack hated Major Taggart as much as they hated the enemy.

The core of the story always was that these were convicts who had been released as they were not only expendable, but also had special talents that were very useful during any mission. So, let's go through the skill sets.

First up we had Kabul "The Turk" Hasan who was a man of immense strength. He was guaranteed to throw something obscenely heavy at the enemy as soon as he could. Then we had Ronald Weasel the cowardly cat burglar who could pick any lock and unlock any safe. Next up we have Ian "Scarface" Rogan, the ace athlete who just did not want to be in the Army and loathed it with a passion. Our last convict is Matthew Dancer, an expert with any knife and a jackdaw's eye for anything shiny.

The final member of the team was Major Taggart, the man who not only broke them out of jail, but was also responsible for keeping them in line. Taggart was probably the most complex character as he had to look after his team during their time in the battlespace, but also to protect them from their own failings when back in areas of relative safety. Not the easiest job for him to do when they all hated him more than they hated the Germans.

Let's look at the publishing history of Rat Pack.

Series 1 ran from issue 1 (8 March 1975) to issue 44 (3 January 1976)

Series 2 from issue 57 (3 April 1976) to issue 75 (7 August 1976)

Series 3 from issue 100 (29 January 1977) to issue 112 (23 April 1977)

This series was a little different from the rest as Major Taggart had been injured and the Rat Pack have deserted, leaving him to his fate of either death or capture by the German forces. Unfortunately for the Rat Pack, they meet the one Major that is so cool, he goes to war in a classic Bentley sports car. Not only is this Major cool, he's also the one man able to ride herd on the Rat Pack and herds them back into the enemy lines to rescue Taggart.

Once Taggart is rescued, the Convict Commandos are horrified to find out that their temporary boss is not going to give them an 'eazy' ride as the only one who gets to take things 'eazy' is Major Eazy, one of the other highly popular characters of Battle and it was an inspired team-up as this was not Rat Pack but Major Eazy versus Rat Pack.

For myself, this was pretty revolutionary stuff as this was the first cross-over I had experienced. It blew me away as it was not a concept that 8 year-old me had experienced before.

Series 3 also marked a turning point in the use of Rat Pack as it went from self-contained single episodes to a mix of multi-part arcs and single episodes. It allowed for some character development but it would also keep you hooked as you waited eagerly for next week's episode.

Series 4 from issue 113 (30 April 1977) to issue 120 (18 June 1978)

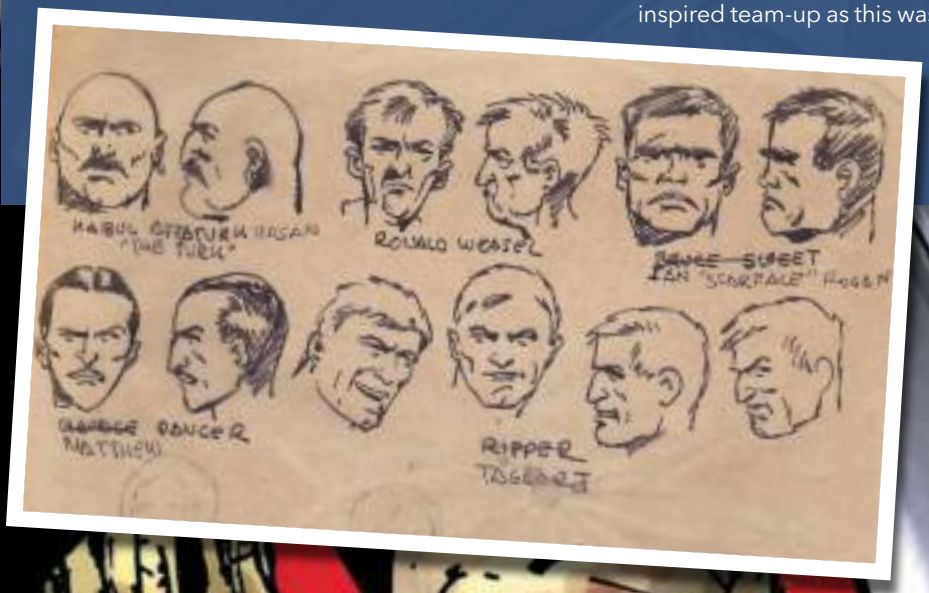
Series 5 from issue 172 (17 June 1978) to issue 175 (8 July 1978)

Series 6 from issue 263 (19 April 1980) to issue 270 (5 July 1980)

After the final part was published in issue 270, the stories would appear as filler in the weekly to keep costs down and in the annuals in no particular order, but the Rats would live on in spirit as one writer felt they were still stories to tell and so the Convict Commandos were born and they continue to entertain in the last remaining picture library. However, that's another article entirely.

The first 22 episodes were reprinted by Titan in a 2012 beautiful hardback format entitled Rat Pack: Guns, Guts and Glory which can still be found out there.

However, there is still a great deal of love for the Rat Pack at Rebellion HQ as they are making a welcome guest appearance in their second cross-over in issue 3 of the Sniper Elite: Resistance comic which is released on 24th October 2018. Sniper Elite is a comic based on Rebellion's popular third person shooter and is a clever use of Rebellion's presence in the gaming industry and the comic industry. And if we are lucky, perhaps Rat Pack may even get their own comic if sales are good enough.

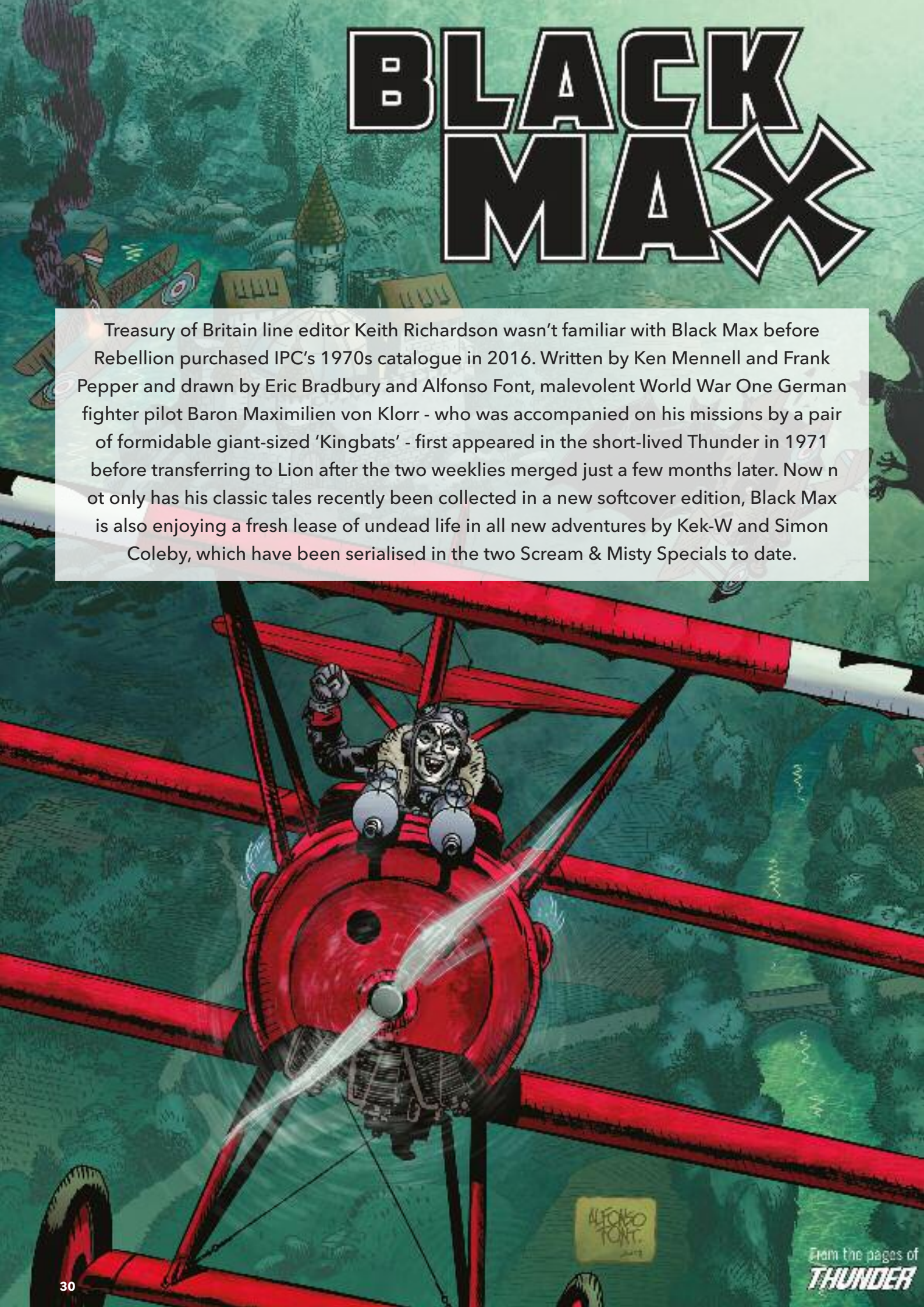


Rat Pack orignal drawings

All imagery of Rat Pack © 2018 Rebellion Publishing IP Ltd.

BLACK MAX

Treasury of Britain line editor Keith Richardson wasn't familiar with Black Max before Rebellion purchased IPC's 1970s catalogue in 2016. Written by Ken Mennell and Frank Pepper and drawn by Eric Bradbury and Alfonso Font, malevolent World War One German fighter pilot Baron Maximilien von Klorr - who was accompanied on his missions by a pair of formidable giant-sized 'Kingbats' - first appeared in the short-lived Thunder in 1971 before transferring to Lion after the two weeklies merged just a few months later. Now n ot only has his classic tales recently been collected in a new softcover edition, Black Max is also enjoying a fresh lease of undead life in all new adventures by Kek-W and Simon Coleby, which have been serialised in the two Scream & Misty Specials to date.



From the pages of THUNDER



"When we took stock of the archive, I gravitated towards Black Max straight away," says Richardson. "The art was amazing and the concept was bonkers. He's such a cool villain and I thought that in another life he could have easily found a home within the pages of Scream!"

As his work with John M. Burns on 2000 AD's The Order demonstrates, Kek-W admits that, "I love playing with old school/retro-tropes and I have a passion for British Silver Age strips," although he was probably too old to enjoy Black Max the first time around. "To be honest, I was deep into my Bronze Age Marvels by the time Thunder came out," he laughs. "I presumably saw or read the occasional Black Max at the time, but my memory of things I may have seen or read once almost 50 years ago is pretty vague and sketchy. So I don't have any specific memories of Black Max, though the whole sheer, utter bonkers idea of it has obviously stuck with me down through the years. Strangely though, I have a clearer memory of reading Lion in the '60s, which had a great line-up with Zip Nolan, Robot Archie and The Spider, which is one of my all-time favourite strips."

Joining Thunder's under-rated roster of stories that also included Adam Eterno, Steel Commando and The Spooks of St Lukes, Black Max was originally created by Ken Mennell and Eric Bradbury before they passed it onto Frank Pepper and Alfonso Font. "The series was really developed by Frank Pepper and Alfonso Font, who provided us with a new cover for the collection," says Richardson. "Alfonso seems to be very proud and protective of Black Max and he has fond memories of working on it. It certainly appears to have been the one of most successful strip that ran in Thunder, and although he was possibly not as popular as Adam Eterno, I felt that Black Max is more robust and has more appeal to modern readers."

For his part, it was the late Eric Bradbury's art that made the biggest impression on Kek-W, even if he wasn't initially aware of the artist's actual identity. "British artists weren't generally credited back in the pre-2000 AD era," he recalls. "But even when I was a young kid, certain illustrators stuck out and you started to recognise their style, in the same way you learned to recognise the work of Americans like Jack Kirby or Wally Wood – 'Oh, that's the artist I like!' Eric Bradbury was one of those guys and although I didn't learn his name until years later – probably when he worked for 2000 AD – he had a dark, shadow-heavy, inky style that made him perfect for thrillers or spooky supernatural strips like (Smash!'s) Cursitor Doom. He was also great at action and militaria, so he was a perfect fit for Black Max."

With Pat Mills examining the First World War in more serious depth in Battle's all-time comic book classic Charley's War nearly a decade later in 1979 and while its supernatural war scenario and Russian location were emulated the following year in the pages of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic by Fiends of the Eastern Front and its German main protagonist predated Action's Hellman of Hammer Force in 1976, it could be argued that Black Max laid the groundwork for several influential stories. "It was quite an odd strip, which was slightly ahead of its time in some ways with its darker tone and supernatural sensibility," reasons Kek-W. "But it was also clinging to a slightly older, more stereotypical pantomime villain 'Drat! Curses, foiled again!'-type sensibility.

Along with DC's Enemy Ace and Snoopy and the Red Baron, Kek-W believes that Black Max was partly inspired by similarly-titled 1966 war film The Blue Max, which also centred around a German air fighter, while its horror elements were drawn by Hammer films like Dracula, which were at the height of their popularity in the late '60s and early '70s. "I have no hard evidence to back that up, but if we return to the idea of editors mining different popular trends for material then it's vaguely plausible," he says. "It's certainly a unique and, err, batty pairing of genres!"

While Black Max battled British fighter pilot Tim Wilson in Thunder, Return of Black Max sees him pitted against a more unpredictable protagonist in awkward teenager Maxine, although there might be more to her than meets the eye. "Tim Wilson and the Wilson family don't feature in the new Black Max," teases Kek-W. "Thought they might, if we get the chance to do more of these stories and expand this particular corner of the Rebellionverse. Maxine is a descendant of a slightly more obscure pilot character from the original strip: Rick Newland. In the first tale, Von Klorr hints that she might be somehow linked to the 'Bat People' bloodline, and in the latest, we expand on that a little more. There's a far wider world of characters and strange family ties sitting beneath these two new Black Max tales – her school friends potentially have roles to play and possible links to the past, and the school itself (St Lukes Academy) is significant in UK comic strip history. We're also bringing another classic British Silver Age character into the mix, but you'll have to read the darn thing to find out who!"

Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine



INVASION

One genre of comic stories has always fascinated me and that's the **UK Invasion** genre. While there are examples of this genre going back to 1897, I am going to concentrate on the **post-WW2 examples** and only the serials which feature fighting against earthly foes otherwise I will be off discussing **Camelot 3000!**

I am going to look at the seven that have turned up in the picture papers and these are as follows:

Story title	Comic	Artist	Writer
Return of the Stormtroopers	Champion Lion	**Eric Bradbury Bill Lacey after merge with Lion**	Unknown
The Black Sapper	Hotspur	**Terry Patrick**	Uknown (potentially a rewrite the Yellow Sword written by Gilbert Lawford Dalton)
Will o' the Whistle	Victor	**Ted Kearon**	Gilbert Lawford Dalton
Frontline UK	Bullet	**Ian Kennedy Clemente Rezzonico**	William Corderoy
Invasion	2000AD	**Mike Dorey, Carlos Pino Collado Coch, Ian Kennedy Eric Bradbury, Sarompas Jesus Blasco, Pat Wright**	Pat Mills, Gerry Finley-Day Chris Lowder, Nick Allen Nick Flynn
Holocaust Squadron	Warlord	**Terry Patrick**	Unknown
The Rule Of Rogat	Victor (1116)	**Alcatena**	Unknown

Hotspur



Victor



2000AD





The first thing to note about these stories is that they are all drawn by first class artists, so I am going to assume that this was a popular genre otherwise editors would assign these stories to artists with a more pedestrian style.

The second thing to note is the variations in theme from the complete lack of organised resistance (Return Of The Stormtroopers and The Rule of Rogat) to a full on military campaign (The Black Sapper and Holocaust Squadron).

The next thing I noticed is that only one of these stories looked back at the previous war with the spectre of Nazism rising again as the backdrop. The majority of these stories show their roots in trying to interpret the Cold War in terms that the readers could understand. In fact, if we are honest, Holocaust Squadron was a rendition of how the invasion of Europe would work out according to NATO doctrine.

Breaking this point down even further, only two of these stories features a Soviet styled enemy (Invasion and Holocaust Squadron). Three of the stories (all from the D C Thomson stable and they were Will o' the Whistle, The Black Sapper and Frontline UK) featured an Asian enemy which must have been guaranteed to elicit sneers of angers from the dads and uncles who still would not even buy Japanese cars in the 1970s, let alone the 1960s. Only one story features an unknown invader (The Rule Of Rogat) where their nationality remains a mystery.

The unusual point of all these stories is that none of them featured the use of nuclear weapons. This even includes the use of tactical nuclear warheads of low yields of up to 200 kilotons. Why do I say it is unusual? Well the stories here were originally published between 1957 and 1982 when the Cold War and the threat of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) was writ large in the culture of the time.

Now that I have examined all the suspects, it might be worth going into a little depth for the earliest two examples.

Sticking with publication order, Return Of The Stormtroopers was printed in Champion issue 1 in 1966 and was continued in Lion when they merged a mere 15 issues later. The Stormtroopers were a cryogenically frozen Waffen SS Division who swore to continue the fight for the Third Reich when they were reawakened from their slumber under the English Channel. And they did. In 2066. When Britain and France were drilling out what was to become the Chunnel… This is another brilliantly nutty plot that could only be printed in a British weekly comic.

Did I mention that the world had given up war by this point so that there were no standing armies to oppose the marching legion of Nazis? Oh well, I have now. All that was left to oppose them were plucky British schoolboys and the weaponry that they could salvage from museums around the country. Bradbury's darkly atmospheric art sets the scene beautifully for the run of this story in Champion with Bill Lacey seamlessly taking over the art duties when it moved over to the Lion.

Moving on in chronological order, our next story is The Black Sapper which was beautifully illustrated by Terry Patrick way back in 1971 and featured the UK being invaded by the Khansu as they needed our industrial capability for themselves. From the clues around the internet, this looks to be a potential reworking of The Yellow Sword which was published in the Wizard in 1955. Unfortunately, I have a huge gap in my collection between 1954 and 1957 so I can't check that out.

This was a mix of an organised resistance by the remnants of the Armed Forces, a resistance made up of uncannily brave men and a superhero. Yes, you read that right, a superhero. The Black Sapper started off as a supervillain way back in 1929 and gradually was rehabilitated until he was a superhero. Before anyone starts yelling about how he can't be a superhero, I suggest you wait for another of my articles before we get into the weeds of that discussion.

The story ran from issue 602 to 623 and features some of the best examples of Terry Patrick's art to be found anywhere. This story can also be found in issue 20 of Red Dagger and is certainly worth seriously considering as a purchase.

I could go into more depth on each story and there is one story that I know a few people would love me to cover in depth *cough* Volgs. *cough* However, that will have to wait until another day. In the meantime, I hope that my article has shed a little light on some of the serials that some of you may not have heard of before now.



Champion



Bullet





Author: Colin Noble
Website: nothingbutafan.wordpress.com

CODE NAME WARLORD



Back **in the '70's**, me and my gang looked at **war comics** as the bottom of the reading totem pole, only **just above football comics**, and we occasionally **picked one up** only if we'd got through every single **superhero book** that month & still **needed a comic fix**.

But, just as I'd get a copy of Tiger every once in a while for Johnny Cougar and Hot-Shot Hamish, I'd also buy Warlord, mainly for it's title strip, Code Name: Warlord.

To wartime Britain, Lord Peter Flint is a despised conscientious objector, a 'damn conshie', who proudly bears his white feather for cowardice, and who spends most of his time squandering the family fortune and making servant girls pregnant rather than fighting for his country.

Of course, that's all a cover and Flint is actually Britain's greatest secret agent, skilled in just about every way there is in how to kill a man or blow something up.

So he's basically Roger Moore as a wartime Bond, with a splash of The Scarlet Pimpernel, and the nearest thing to a superhero the war comics had.

Although. as he was also the head of his own fan club and ran the letters pages ('especially for you chaps'), extorting boys to join up as Warlord Agents, how he also found time to attend all those society soirees is beyond me.

And strangely, even though it's only Kingpin, his Churchillian government contact, who's supposed to know about Flint's double life, it's surprising just how many Nazi's know exactly who Warlord is, and have extensive files on him. Maybe they should rethink that cover story.

Code Name: Warlord, like Dredger, like MACH 1, like all the best British comic heroes, is far too busy cramming as much action into every episode to bother with nancy stuff like characterization or nuance. Each script is pared to the bone and the very definition of 'all-action', and once that week's mission is set up, Flint rarely goes more than a couple of panels without jumping through a plate glass window or garrotting a Nazi storm trooper. Which is, of course, exactly what you paid for when you picked up a boys' paper called Warlord.

However, unlike most of his action brethren, it's fun to note that Flint is one of the few upper class British comic heroes around, certainly back then.

In the '70's, and generally really, we preferred our heroes from the wrong end of the tracks, and Code Name: Warlord stands out, if only by dint of him being a stiff upper lipped toff.

Dredger, for instance, would've obviously been shown the tradesman's entrance at Flint towers, if he'd been allowed on the grounds at all.

Flint is also a bit smug and pleased with himself, in that boys' own Biggles kind of way, and seems to have as many pals scattered around the world eager to help him out on missions as Garth always did. But that's subtext seen through adult eyes, and this is a strip with no sub, and barely any text.

Warlord also has a couple of great arch enemies: Firstly there's Adolph Gruber, the gestapo agent who blames Flint for his obligatory Nazi limp, and who is as persistent a loser as Wile E. Coyote.

Then there's Karl Schaft, Flint's opposite number and an example of that old cliché I never tire of, the noble enemy. As honourable as each other, the two always seemed to look at the war as a series of gentlemanly duels, and Schaft never really minded losing fairly, whereas Gruber always lost because he was a utter cad and everything he did just wasn't cricket.

Because it's really James Bond in WWII we're reading, there's a never-ending smorgasbord of cunning plans, secret lairs and sneeringly polite villains. As well as Schaft & Gruber (who at one point actually does hide out in a volcano), there's Count Kaminsky, the eye-patched, wheelchair bound spymaster whose fortress lies above the Swiss Alps. And let's not forget Flint's trip to Venice, where he nearly gets to take out both Hitler and Mussolini.

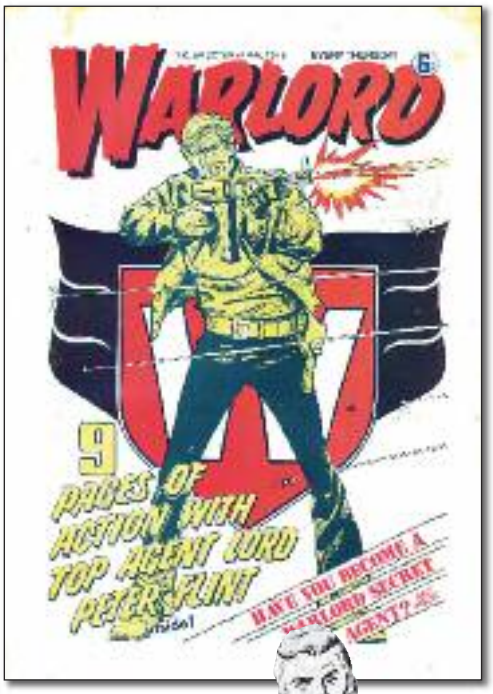
Mind you, his gondolier disguise fools no one, especially the ubiquitous Gruber. In fact, as British comics sort of answer to DC's Unknown Soldier, Flint's disguise skills generally consist of knocking out the nearest officer, stealing his uniform, and hoping his aristocratic bearing will get him through. Well, you wouldn't expect a Lord to masquerade as a commoner, would you?

Flint and Warlord itself went on to last a respectable 627 issues, though as he also ran equally great strips like Union Jack Jackson, Kampfgruppe Falken and Slaves Of Blood Island perhaps that's not so much of a surprise.

Though unfortunately, like most British comic heroes, Flint never got himself a regular artist, UK greats like Brian Lewis, Ron Smith & Jim Watson do appear early on, as well as a bunch of fantastic unknown Spanish artists who come in later.

Flint happily survived the war, later teaming up with his nephew 'Fireball' in sister paper Bullet, and he even made a recent reappearance in the digital version of The Dandy, as the commander of a team of superheroes.

But even though his adventures were set in the 1940's, Warlord will always live in the '70's for me. And though it would've been nice if he'd got his own movie like everybody else, it would've had to have actually been made back then, with the young Roger Moore playing Flint. Or Michael York at the very least. And when it inevitably turned up regularly on BBC2 on Sunday afternoons, we'd all go " Jolly Good show, wot? Code Name: Warlord's on again! "





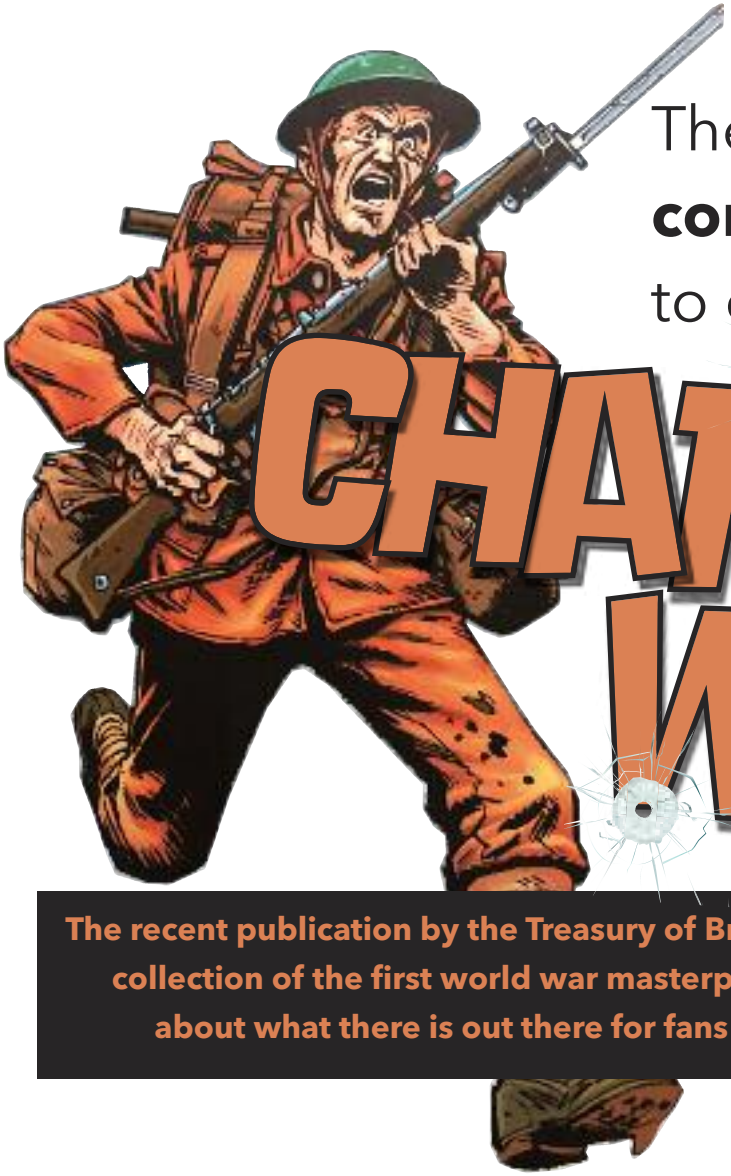
'There's that Cad Flynt...

Ya! Coward!'





Author: Pete Doree
Twitter: @PeteDoree
Website: bronzeageofblogs.blogspot.com
kidsfromrecroad.blogspot.com



The long and **complicated guide** to collecting CHARLEY'S WAR

The recent publication by the Treasury of British Comics imprint of their 3 volume collection of the first world war masterpiece Charley's War got me thinking about what there is out there for fans of this amazing series to collect.

The first world war series (I'm glossing over the second world war series here) originally ran for 292 episodes in Battle from 6th Jan 1979 [issue 200] - 26th Jan 1985 (that's a total of 316 weeks so not many weeks missed) and charted the hellish story of world war one from the perspective, not of an officer and a gentleman, but rather from the viewpoint of an underage working class lad who joined up to 'do his bit' for King and country. The story is rightly regarded as both an anti-war classic and a high-water mark in British comics.

Let's start with the most recent reprints and go backwards from there...

- *Treasury of British comics imprint (published 2018)Charley's War the definitive collection volume 1 – The Boy Soldier*
- *Charley's War the definitive collection volume 2 – Brothers in arms*
- *Charley's War the definitive collection volume 3 – Remembrance*

Note that for each of these volumes there is also a limited edition 'bookplate' edition (of 150 copies) which contains a bookplate signed by Pat Mills.

Before this Titan Books published a series of hardback volumes collating Charley's adventures...

- *1. Charley's War – volume 1 (published November 2004); episodes 1-29*
- *2. Charley's War – 1 August 2016 – 17 October 1916; volume 2 (October 2005); episodes 30-59*
- *3. Charley's War – 17 October 1916 – 21 February 1917; volume 3 (October 2006); episodes 60-83*
- *4. Charley's War – Blue's story; volume 4 (October 2007); episodes 84-109*
- *5. Charley's War – Return to the front; volume 5 (October 2008); episodes 110-136*
- *6. Charley's War – Underground and over the top; volume 6 (October 2009); episodes 137-165*

- *7. Charley's War – The great mutiny; volume 7 (October 2010); episodes 166-194*
- *8. Charley's War – Hitler's youth; volume 8 (October 2011); episodes 195-224*
- *9. Charley's War – Death from above; volume 9 (October 2012); episodes 225-259*
- *10. Charley's War – The end; volume 10 (October 2013); episodes 260-292*

In addition two slipcased commemorative volumes (Charley's War 1914-2014) were announced but never published.

And (in August 2014) one softback volume – A boy soldier in the great war – which reprinted episodes 1-86 of the series.

The Best of Battle (softback, Titan Books, October 2009) gives you nearly 300 pages of Battle strips including the first 4 episodes of Charley's War.

Charley also had a run of reprints in the Judge Dredd Megazine, specifically

- *issue 211 (cover dated 21 October 2003) – issue 228 (cover dated 02 May 2006) reprinted episodes 1-76;*
- *issues 234 (cover dated 26 July 2005) – 236 (cover dated 20 September 2005) reprinted episodes 77-88;*
- *and then issues 238 (cover dated 15 November 2005) – 244 (cover dated 02 May 2006) reprinted episodes 89-109.*

So, all in all that's twenty-eight issues of the Megazine reprinting the first four volumes of material reprinted by Titan Books and I'd have to say the reproduction quality in the Megazine is better than in the Titan Books.

Meanwhile back over in Battle...After the World War One story had been completed (26/01/85) the story moved immediately (02/02/85) onto the World War Two story – this was completed on 04/10/86. Battle then moved into reprints of the World War One episodes and over the next 67 weeks (so up to 23/01/88) got the story up to episode 68. Week commencing 30/01/88 saw Battle merge with new Eagle and the reprints continued in new Eagle up until 21/01/90 –so a further 117 issues (episodes 69-84, 86-175, 178-184 & 272-275). After a break of about a year new Eagle then began reprinting Charley's war AGAIN (from the issue dated 23/2/91 running all the way until the end of new Eagle, January 1994) – episodes 1-84 and 86-120 in total. So you may have noticed that episode 85 was not reprinted by new Eagle for a second time – this is an episode where you get a burning German falling from a zeppelin and Crimean war veteran Blind Bob run over by a lorry (and a zeppelin commander's funeral is disrupted by a mob throwing eggs), and it was clearly deemed too much for new Eagle readers.

Before all these reprints there were the original 1980s reprints from Titan Books. The first of these slim volumes appeared in March 1983 and the cover shows a forlorn Charley looking at the graves he has dug for his fallen comrades. The first volume reprints the first 16 episodes of the saga. The second (and final) reprint volume wasn't published until June 1986 but published a further 24 episodes in a volume with a particularly haunting cover.

The cover for volume two was adapted from the opening frame of episode 25; whereas the cover for volume one seems more likely to have come from the harrowing start to episode 42 where Charley has literally scraped the remains of his best mate, Ginger, into a bag and is off to bury him.

The final item that any Charley's War collector should look out for is Lew Stringer's (now rare and expensive) old fanzine, Fantasy Express, in particular issue 4 (Summer 1982) as this features the only interview Joe Colquhoun ever gave fandom. He also provides a Charley's War cover. Fantasy Express is A5 sized and this issue is only 36 pages long (including covers) and the interview and associated features take up 13 pages in total (you also get an interview with Pat Mills and an interview with Kev O'Neill – it's quite some issue). The wide ranging interview covers many facets of Joe's life and career, but a couple of Charley moments stand out...

"...when I was first asked to take on Charley's War after Johnny Red I said to the editor [Dave Hunt] "God Almighty, how are you going to make any subject matter out of such a static subject as trench warfare?" and he said "We've got a damn good author!"..." well Dave Hunt was certainly right about that.

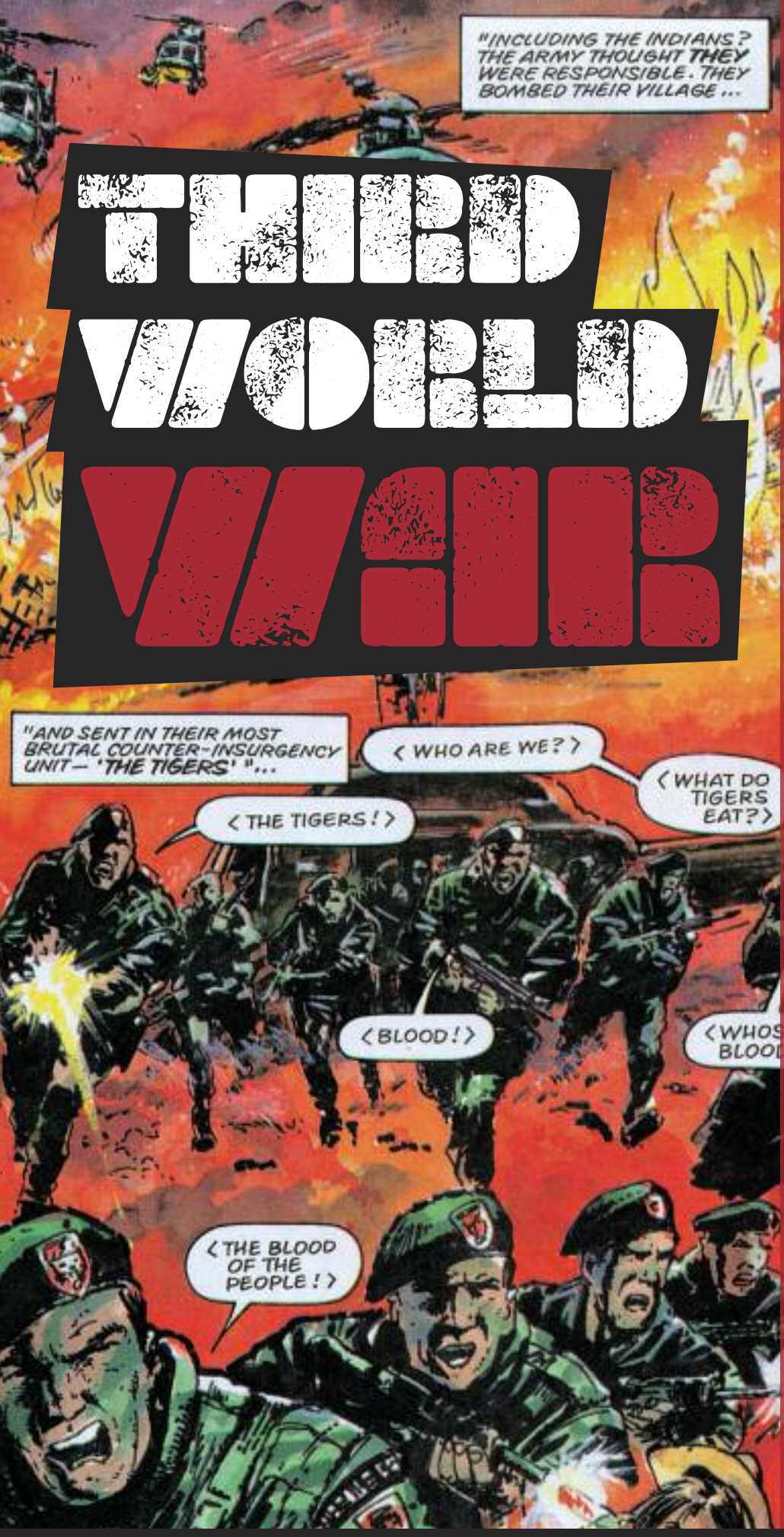
Joe also remarks, with a large degree of under-statement, that "...I've tried very hard to bring out the realism in the trenches...that might lead to a certain amount of authenticity which is possibly lacking in the more blood and thunder, action-packed World War 2 stories [scripted, not by Pat Mills, but by M Scott Goodall].

So there you have it, the complete guide to Charley's War reprints, here's hoping that there's something still for you to collect, and if not, long may you read about Charley Bourne.



'THE UNDERAGE WORKING CLASS LAD WHO JOINED UP TO 'DO HIS BIT' FOR KING AND COUNTRY'

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"Third World War", the controversial brainchild of Pat Mills, the distillation of many of his ideas and political views, was the lead story in "Crisis" launched in 1988. "Crisis" was seen as a means of retaining the readers of "2000AD" who felt they needed to move on to more sophisticated reading material and exploiting the media buzz over the new "maturity" of comics and graphic novels. "2000AD" had grown up with its readership. Then publishers Fleetway thought they could cash in on this by creating "Crisis", its hipper sister comic "Revolver" and "Judge Dredd The Megazine". They all formed part of a "2000AD" comics group headed up by Tharg, Steve McManus.

Initially "Crisis" was made up of two strips, "Third World War" by Pat Mills and Carlos Ezquerra (after original artist Ian Gibson dropped out over plot) and the "Watchmen" pastiche "New Statesmen" by John Smith & Jim Baikie. McManus's concept for the comic was that each strip would be repackaged as a series for the American market, but this was abandoned after the opening storylines.

Set in 2000AD, "Third World War" described the world in the near future where multinational corporations' influence is all pervading, running national governments, setting policy and exploiting the third, or developing world. 18 year old Eve Collins is studying A level humanities subjects, deemed to be less useful than sciences by the powers that be, and is conscripted into Freeaid, The "Free World Agency For International Development". Freeaid is an organisation made up of the "developed world's" military to control the subversive elements in the third world and help protect the western government and corporations' interests, in particular an insidious multinational corporation called "Multi Foods".

In Book One, Eve is posted to a unit known as "Market Force" stationed in an unnamed South American country. Their mission is to win the hearts and minds of the locals as their lands are forcibly taken from them and their

culture and livelihoods are irrevocably altered or destroyed. Eve's comrades are Gary, a typical lad just out for drinking and shagging, Trisha, a Christian ex pat' South African, Paul, a pagan with a shady past, and Ivan, a military school boy kicking against his privileged background.

In Book Two, the action shifts to the UK. After the Saigon-like evacuation of Freeaid at the climax of book 1, Eve is on leave, and we get a flavour of what the 21st Century UK is like. Orwellian, a country of no go zones, private police stations, rationing and surveillance. The focus of the series shifts to racism against the background of collusion between multinationals and the state. Eve goes on the run with her conscription dodging boyfriend Rohan, becoming "woke" to race issues and the focus of attention of Inspector Ryan, a police officer straight from Eugene Terreblanche's school of white power. Carlos leaves the series as regular artist and the late Alan Mitchell comes on board as co-writer. Eve seeks refuge in New Azania, the name for the no go area formerly known as Brixton, and with it BADS – the Black African Defence Squad and her class and race consciousness grows. We are introduced to the "Black Scarlet Pimpernel", Liat, the leader of BADS and thorn in the side of the British establishment. Mills and Mitchell explore the topics of black militancy, matriarchy and collectivism.

In Book 3 the "Green Army" and their battle for the planet take centre stage. Mills and Mitchell develop the theme of ecoterrorism to save the planet that Mills had already alluded to in "Slaine". Paul's origin is explored along with his ties to BADS. Eve takes a more active role as a member of BADS, plot threads that will see resolution in "2000AD" are spun and we see the exploitation of illegally trafficked immigrants and Britain becoming just another "Third World" nation.

Book 4 is largely unheralded, but it resolves dangling plot threads with Ivan, Inspector Ryan and Liat. The run ends 53 in issue by killing off some supporting cast leaving the reader wondering where the strip was to go now. The answer was to move elements of it to "2000AD" as the strip "Finn". Not long after that, "Crisis" itself, perhaps fittingly, underwent a change of direction and lost its identity, and was cancelled with issue 63.

Mills's capacity for research has always been impressive. Along with his writing collaborators on the strip, in the main Alan Mitchell from Book 2 and Mal' Coney in the brief commentary on the troubles in NI, they impart an incredible amount of information. Earlier episodes were always prefaced with a timeline and list of facts, giving the following story context and for readers like me an education and possibly shaping lots of still to be formed political opinions, I had personal experience of a family member describing the strip as subversive. Mills quotes social writers such as Susan George and political bands like the Dead Kennedys and Chumbawamba, it's information overload, we're drowning in facts. This is full on Mills. If you were unsure of Pat's political persuasion, read this, you won't be afterward. Despite being written around 30 years ago Mills and co's prescience can't be criticised. Although they predicted foresaw the rise of more "conventional" businesses rather than the internet based ones that we are familiar with, they did identify the power that such large multinational companies can have directly over governments and nations, and more insidiously over individuals along with the political spin that has become commonplace in the second decade of the 21st Century.

The cast are varied, but some are quite stereotypical examples of some of Pat's favourite targets , whilst others seemingly exist purely as mouthpieces to disseminate that fortnight's topic. Trisha is particularly shallow as the reactionary right wing conservative Christian and used as the foil for Eve's ongoing commentary on the state of the nation. Eve, the reader identification figure, at least for the first half of the series, is preachy and patronising, it is hard to like her but she is oddly relatable. Naively hypocritical, she may consider herself "right on" but it doesn't stop her from compromising her principles, selling Multi Foods's products or playing the state's game to get ahead in life. For all that, Eve is a strong and positive female character, largely non existent in comics in the late eighties and early nineties. Ivan is probably the most likeable, and has the most balance, the self aware troubled rebel with a conscience. Paul, the character we later come to know as Finn, initially portrayed as the mysterious radical hippy, pontificates as much as Eve and Trisha. Largely, our villains of the piece are one dimensional, inherently and unforgivably evil, with no redeeming features. The obsessive, imperialist & racist Inspector Ryan is a villain in the style of the "Nemesis The Warlock's" Torquemada, but without the humour, their actions maybe evil, but they will have a human side (however small) which would help to define their "bad" side.

Consequently, certain episodes can read as lengthy political diatribes, the narrative swamped by the message. The polemic is front and centre and dialogue can be laboured, slowing down the pace of the story. Occasionally, particularly in the earlier episodes, it reads as a manifesto in strip form although the balance improved as the series went on. Plot and character development were subsumed by political tract. The message that the series was conveying was important, but it needed more moments of levity to break the bleakness.

The art is stunning and fails only occasionally. Pre digital Carlos delivers the goods for almost all of book one, dropping out about half way through book two. Replacing him on much of book 2 is a young Sean Phillips on an extended run. We also see the debut of D'Israeli, and there are contributions from Angie Mills, Steve Pugh, Rob Blackwell, Glyn Dillon, John Hicklenton off the leash an inspired choice on the Inspector Ryan sequences, Richard Piers Rayner and Duncan Fegredo.

It was a brave attempt at creating a political strip, ground breaking, but too on the nose to enjoy. It tried to say and do too much. Mills had more success conveying similar messages with allegory. It is unfortunate that the strip was not concluded properly, even its "sequel" "Finn" stopped without a denouement. For all its faults, it's invaluable as a piece of British comic history, and something that is unlikely to be attempted again by a mainstream publisher.

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Artwork John Ross, ©Doctor Who Magazine/Panini.

'A forgotten incarnation of our favourite Time Lord'

The Doctor Goes to War

In 2013, Doctor Who showrunner Steven Moffat introduced a brilliant new character to the programme – the War Doctor! A forgotten incarnation of our favourite Time Lord, the War Doctor was a battle-hardened warrior who had fought in the universe-changing event known as the Time War. Brilliantly portrayed by veteran British actor John Hurt, the War Doctor represented the life that the subsequent Doctors wanted to forget. He was the one that had made the ultimate decision to restore peace and sanity in the universe – the seemingly final destruction of both the Daleks and Time Lords!

After appearing in the 50th anniversary special The Day of the Doctor (preceded by a brief cameo appearance in the Series 7 finale The Name of the Doctor), Hurt went on to play the War Doctor in a number of highly acclaimed audio stories for Big Finish. And then sadly, in 2017, John Hurt died, bringing to an end an illustrious career that had lasted over fifty years.

But the War Doctor was not dead. The character lives on in the medium which is perhaps most suited to depicting his adventures – comics!

So, let's talk to some of the talented individuals responsible for bringing the War Doctor to life on the printed page.

Let's meet our panel:

Cavan Scott and George Mann have written for Big Finish, BBC Books and Titan. Between them, they wrote Titan's Supremacy of the Cybermen which featured the War Doctor and other incarnations of the Time Lord.

Scott Gray was Doctor Who Magazine's regular comic strip writer from 1998 to 2004. Earlier this year, his critically-acclaimed DWM story The Clockwise War depicted a younger version of the War Doctor from the early stages of the Time War.

John Ross has drawn for Doctor Who Magazine, the Doctor Who Annual, Battles in Time and Doctor Who Adventures and was the artist of The Clockwise War.

Richard Dinnick has written for Big Finish, BBC Books and Titan and is 'very honoured and happy' to have written for the War Doctor in The 13th Doctor Volume #0: The Many Lives of Doctor Who.

What do you think John Hurt brought to the role of the War Doctor on TV?

Cavan: Instant history. You felt as though you knew him back to front even though you've only just met him. He inhabited the role from his very first appearance.

George: Gravitas, world-weariness and a tone we hadn't seen before in Doctor Who. Every actor to play the Doctor brings their own interpretation to the role, of course, but Hurt managed so much in such a brief appearance.

Scott: There was a great sense of gravitas to his portrayal – he really looked like a man who had been fighting for centuries.

John: I've been a fan of John Hurt for a long time, and never found him anything less than mesmerising on screen. His War Doctor was no different – a fantastic, human performance.

Richard: I think he was absolutely stunning. I can only think of one other actor who has captured the essence of the Doctor so perfectly in so short a time and that was Paul McGann in the TV Movie. But I think Sir John had an even tougher ask. He wasn't the new Doctor, recently regenerated, so we got to know him as he got to know himself. His 'War Doctor' had to arrive fully-formed: world and war weary but with still the burning sense of hope. He is such an amazing actor that, of course, he did it. And he did it in spades. I used to spot Sir John on the train down to London from Norfolk and when we were both announced for the Gallifrey one convention in LA, I finally approached him, and he was the nicest

man. That's probably why he brought the character off the page with such charm and ease and grace.

The War Doctor's supposed to be the one who did some bad things, the incarnation the Doctor would rather forget. How do you depict the darkness of the character whilst still keeping him a hero that the readers can root for?

Cavan: You show regret. If he commits atrocities without caring then all is lost, but if you show how conflicted he is, how he thinks that there's no other way, then redemption is still possible.

George: I think for me the key was to remember that he's still the Doctor. To everyone else in the universe, the War Doctor is still the Doctor – he's the only one who won't admit it. So while he's doing the difficult things, making those tough decisions and acting against his nature – which is clearly tearing him apart – his underlying nature is still the same. His hearts are still in the right place. He doesn't want to be out there fighting – he's doing it because he has to. I think that central conflict is core to his character. You can't go against your own nature for too long without it having a serious detrimental impact on your wellbeing as a person. The War Doctor is fighting that internal battle every day.

Richard: It is a balance. The one thing he cannot be is The Doctor, really. Cav always said he thought that Chris Ecclestone's Doctor was trying to remember how to be the Doctor. For me, the War Doctor is the man who forgot how to be the Doctor, or more accurately what the Doctor wouldn't do. So in my story he is doing something very spy/commando: infiltrating a weapons facility to prevent it falling into Dalek, um, hands! But, he comes up with a very Doctor-ish way of doing it. That's the key, I'm sure: he still thinks like the Doctor, even if he doesn't act like him.

Is the fact that the War Doctor had relatively little screen time a help or a hindrance when it comes to creating comic strip adventures for him?

Cavan: Absolutely a help. It means there are so many more stories to tell. Even when we see him in the brilliant Big Finish audios his body is already starting to wear thin. There's a lifetime to explore before then.

George: Well, I've only written him very briefly in comics – my major dalliance with the War Doctor was the novel, Engines of War. I think it's both a help and a hindrance, in different ways. Obviously, in trying to capture Hurt's performance, the more screen time you have the better. But at the same time, Day of the Doctor only really has time to hint at what's gone before, leaving plenty of room for you to nip in and tell new stories without having to navigate too much in the way of established continuity, and that can be very freeing.

Scott: Definitely a help – the less you see of a character, the more space there is to fill in the gaps. Steven Moffat gave us his blessing to use the War Doctor and Ohila (of the Sisterhood of Karn) and didn't make any demands on us. Thank you, Mr Moffat!

John: It's definitely a disadvantage. I've been working on Doctor Who comic strips virtually non-stop for twelve years (nine years solid on Doctor Who Adventures, all the Annuals since 2006 and various DWM arcs since 2002, as well as some Battles in Time) and have gone through the approvals process several times with new Doctors and companions – invariably, the more you know about how a character looks and acts the easier the job is. There isn't any room for me to add anything, I do what I'm told and I'm happy to do so.

I also draw in the style that a particular job requires and this changed a few times in the nine years I worked on Doctor Who Adventures – although the editorial brief was to keep it simple in terms of storytelling and rendering, the levels changed and I ended up doing a sort of manga version of the characters which the editors asked for. What you see in The Clockwise War is closer to my original style. Takes a lot more time though!

Richard: In a way, we don't see much of him actually in the Time War. The TV episode is topped and tailed with him having to make the decision that is very War Doctor, but in the middle he's having a bit of a romp with his future selves. There's almost a kind of joie de vivre in him discovering that he actually has a future, despite the Moment telling him that this is his punishment. So what his character is in the thick of battle is left for us to imagine and write! But, the fact that we only have limited screen time is no hindrance to writing his character because of Sir John's amazing portrayal and Steven Moffat's amazing writing.

We know that the War Doctor lived a relatively long time - would you like to write/draw an ongoing series of his adventures?

Cavan: I think everyone is going to answer that with a resounding 'yes!'. And I'm no different! Yes please.

George: Of course! But also, I think the War Doctor works particularly well when you dip in and tell a 'special' or 'event' story with him. Something epic. The last thing you want is for the War Doctor to become mundane, to have just the same sort of adventures as any other Doctor. His stories should have a different texture, I think. I'd love to return to the character and do something different and new, though – I think there are lots of great stories still to be told about the Time War.

Scott: Yes! I'm a huge fan of the war comics from the 50s and 60s – in particular the Harvey Kurtzman EC titles, and the DC comics by Robert Kanigher, Joe Kubert, Ric Estrada, Alex Toth and Jerry Grandenetti. I would love to do a comic with that kind of emotional power but set on a cosmic scale. I'd want to create a cast of characters that the



Artwork John Ross, ©Doctor Who Magazine/Panini.



Artwork Neil Edwards, ©Titan Comics.

readers could grow attached to, never knowing who'd survive and who wouldn't!

John: Yes, I'd love to do more War Doctor. There's a massive amount that's still unknown about the character and it'd be great to explore that.

Richard: I would love to! One of the first things I said to Andrew James at Titan when were talking about other projects beyond my writing on the 12th Doctor ongoing, was: can we do the young War Doctor straight after his regeneration. What does he do first? He's made this huge decision. What's his first move. Gallifrey? A Dalek fleet? Something more personal? Maybe he saves Cass in a similar way to how he saved Clara. Maybe saving Cass that way gave him the idea of saving Clara. I'd like to think he went headlong into battle, in a blind rage. Did some pretty bad stuff by the Doctor's standards and then pulled back and realised he had to have a plan. Of course, this doesn't work. He's fighting his own war of attrition now. It will take a long time for him to realise that the only way to stop the bloodshed is a double genocide. I think that's important. For him to fight and fight and fight and for his victories to be Pyrrhic. He is worn down by the war – as many soldiers are. Yes, as an ex-soldier myself, I'd love to tell that story.

Is there a major Who baddie you'd like to put the War Doctor up against?

Cavan: Well, I've written him (briefly) against the Giant Vampires, so that's one of the tick list. Other than that, we know the Nestene's planet was destroyed in the Time War. I'd love to team the War Doctor up with the Autons and see how it happened.

George: I'd love to write a story featuring him and the Master during the Time War. Or maybe the Autons, and their legions of plastic soldiers...

Richard: I'd love to see him and what Big Finish refer to as the 'War Master' in a kind of 'deal with the devil' scenario. The two of them, working together to the same ends but highlighting that although the outcome might be violent or a victory in the Time War, their methods for achieving that victory are very different. With Sir John now sadly gone, we could only really achieve this in the comics. I feel an email coming on! Dear Titan…

Turning to the artwork specifically: John, you capture the young Hurt brilliantly - were there particular photos or archive footage that you looked at to base your drawings on?

John: Scott e-mailed me literally dozens of pictures and screen grabs from loads of films and TV series Hurt appeared in throughout his career. Scott wanted a specific look from one of the TV shows (I believe it was Crime and Punishment) but with longer hair. So I did a mish mash of a few different looks. There were quite a few 'practice' attempts before we settled on the one that appears in The Clockwise War.

Did you have strong views on how you wanted to make the younger War Doctor different to the jaded figure we see in The Day of the Doctor?

John: I didn't have any strong views on how the younger War Doctor should be but I, of course, loved how he was portrayed. Scott had the whole thing totally mapped out and my job was to visualise the character and give

expression and body language to show exactly the type of personality he was. But any credit should go to Scott, he had everything intricately planned.

Chris Thompson, Brand Manager at Titan Comics, on the War Doctor:

'Despite various rumours as to how and why the War Doctor originally came to be, I feel as though the character's inclusion (especially in the guise of John Hurt) really added something to the Doctor Who mythos. Looking back in hindsight at the beginnings of 'new Who', it adds so many more layers to Christopher Eccleston's performance and the overall character of the Ninth Doctor. If nothing else, his brief appearance gave us that.

Beyond that, I was so pleased to see how that fertile ground allowed Big Finish to further flesh out and explore the personality of the War Doctor - giving us more wonderful performances from John Hurt while he was still with us. His affection for the character came through in his vocal performance, and made room for further expansions like Derek Jacobi's excellent War Master. Seeing the Doctor's saga expand in that way is always exciting, especially when you think that all these stories are actually in-canon.

I love re-watching the series to see how the comics we've done have retroactively informed the actors' performances. Obviously they didn't - because that would be a little too timey-wimey - but everything has been written in such a way that it perfectly fits and adds new depth when you understand where they fit. We haven't done a lot with the War Doctor yet (although he has a great arc in the Eleventh Doctor which affects both), but I look forward to exploring the character further in future.'

Scott Gray: Writing The Clockwise War

One thing that distinguishes the War Doctor from the other incarnations is that he tends to face no-win situations. In Clockwise War, for example, he is unable to save Fey. We're used to the Doctor winning but sometimes the War Doctor just can't do that…

Yes, I think it's fair to say that the War Doctor's inability to truly defeat his enemies is one thing that separates him from his other selves. The Doctor is used to being the most important factor in any fight, but in something as vast as the Time War, that just isn't so – he's only one tiny element in this gigantic conflict, and he slowly becomes aware of that.

Despite this, though, the trademark humour is still there. How do you go about balancing the humour and the tragedy of the character?

'We're used to the Doctor winning but sometimes the War Doctor just can't'

The Clockwise War shows the War Doctor at a very early stage. He hasn't genuinely accepted the reality of his situation yet, so he's still quite 'Doctorish'. He's got a human companion, he's flying around the universe in his TARDIS, making jokes, and winning his fights – it's all very familiar territory for him. He's probably thinking that he'll come up with some brilliant plan and finish the whole war quite quickly. The battle we show in The Clockwise War is the first time that things go seriously wrong for him – he fails in spectacular fashion, and he's never quite the same after that. That's when the humour fades away, and he stops being 'The Doctor'.

You've been writing for the younger War Doctor - did you draw on any of John Hurt's earlier work to flesh out the character?

I had a look at some early John Hurt TV and movie appearances – he's always looked pretty mature, even in his twenties. He had such a rich voice, and I always had that in my head. The main reference John Ross and I used was the TV adaptation of Crime and Punishment, which is where they got the image of the Young War Doctor in The Night of the Doctor webisode. John gave him better hair, though.

Some fans were surprised by the depiction of the Time War in Day of the Doctor – it was depicted as a fairly conventional war. Did you enjoy showing the more surreal and abstract side of the Time War?

Yeah, very much! Whenever the Time War got mentioned on TV, it always sounded to me like a Steve Ditko comic – references like 'the jaws of the Nightmare Child' – so I always imagined something pretty surreal. Comic strip is obviously the best medium for that kind of thing. John Ross and (colourist) James Offredi did an astounding job depicting that fight. It was basically HP Lovecraft meets Steve Ditko!

Thanks to Chris Thompson at Titan Comics, Marcus Hearn at Panini UK Ltd and all our contributors.



Artwork Neil Edwards, ©Titan Comics.

Author: Ian Wheeler
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El Mestizo



The **Short** Controversial **Life** of a **Character**

He was born a slave in Alabama. He became a bandit in Mexico. He returned to become the scourge of the American Civil War. . .

He was the legendary El Mestizo.

In 1977 Battle Picture Weekly readers were treated to an exciting and controversial new series - a badass gunslinger with his own moral code who was armed and ready to shake up British comics, but he barely got the chance.

Alan Hebden and Carlos Ezquerra had previously created the successful character Major Eazy for Battle. They reunited to bring readers the half-black, half-Mexican mercenary who for 16 short weeks would fight on just one side American Civil War – El Mestizo's side. Carlos Ezquerra remembers it well "it was fun to do. I always loved this kind of anti-hero, it's the same style as Major Eazy, they are products of the Seventies."

Ezquerra came to the hard-edged series fresh from creating Judge Dredd (with John Wagner) at 2000AD. Despite a distinctive look that was definitely a winner - mixing one part Clint Eastwood's Man with No Name attitude and two parts Jimi Hendrix cool - El Mestizo wasn't a huge hit with Battle readers. Carlos puts its lack of popularity down to the nature of the strip "we knew it was controversial to have a black character at that time, as well as a western in a WW2 magazine."

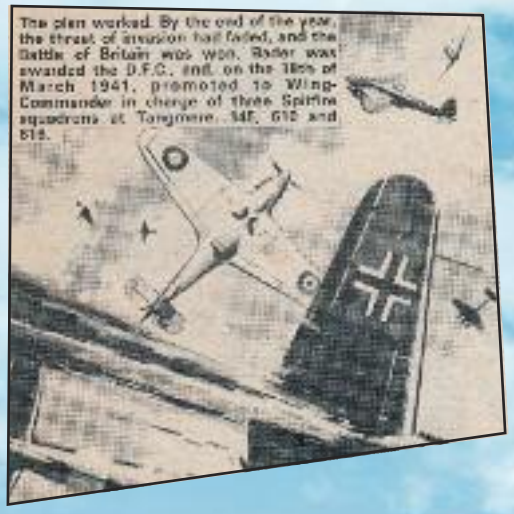
Alan Hebden's intelligent and action packed scripts perfectly suited Carlos' expressive page designs and characters. Hebden recalls that he wanted to do something different to the normal war strips in Battle "Sergio Leone's 'Dollars' trilogy came to mind, especially the final film . . . because of its Civil War setting. I didn't want to write a Western as such, the background was too limited." Although appearing in a 1970s British boys comic, Hebden's writing showed a subtlety outside the norm, capturing the grey morality of the mercenary and highlighting issues of racism for the young readership.

In many ways El Mestizo was ahead of its time and a victim of its own originality. Carlos Ezquerra is convinced that the controversial nature of the strip hampered its success "I think that it was not exactly a favorite character in Battle, even if the editor Dave Hunt, Alan Hebden and myself we loved it" and Alan Hebden believes that "in the eyes of many readers it wasn't really a war story as they understood it." Whatever lead to its untimely demise it still stands as a noble experiment and a bloody great read.

The Treasury of British Comics will be collecting the complete El Mestizo series for the first time in Autumn 2018 and fans of Hebden and Ezquerra's work will finally get the chance to read this lost classic in one action packed volume.

By Julius Howe
(with thanks to Carlos Ezquerra and Alan Hebden)

TRUE WAR



True War was a short-lived (and at only three issues long it was really short-lived) comic that IPC published monthly in the summer of 1978. As it was so short-lived it has passed many comics fans by, despite containing some lovely artwork by the likes of Ian Kennedy and Jim Watson. So, what's in it, what worked and what didn't work?

First up, the size of the thing; it's smaller than your traditional British comic of the time (say, 2000AD) and in fact is only just a bit wider than the standard US sized comic. It's 40 pages long (including covers) and has black and white artwork throughout, apart from the colour centrespread cutaway drawing (reminiscent of the original Eagle comic). It is priced at 30p – sounds pretty cheap (now) but at the time 2000AD was only 9p (!). Battle Action was also only 9p – so it's quite a lot more for quite a lot less comic action. Then again, it doesn't really look like a comic; someone picking this up at the newsagent is not going to get to get this instead of Battle. Instead it looks more like a part work style magazine that's aimed at the 'serious armchair historian' brigade who were likely to be of an older demographic, and therefore have more disposable income to spend on magazines. So that's what it looks like – does it deliver on that promise?

First up, those lovely full colour covers are black and white images that have been hand-coloured, sometimes reasonably well but sometimes really badly (the back page of issue 3 is particularly awful). Issue 1 has two main features (El Alamein and Douglas Bader). All the features use an intriguing mixture of photos (from the Imperial War Museum) and comic art combined together, albeit more comic art than photographs. I've not seen this technique used before (or since!) so I can only guess that the editorial side of this 'collage' was too tricky to organise and the idea was quietly dropped never to be seen again. So you get 20 pages on the whole of the Battle of El Alamein, cutaway drawings of the Hawker Hurricane and the Messerschmitt BF109E and then onto the life of Douglas Bader. This particular feature is illustrated by that British comics' veteran Ian Kennedy. The advantage of having Ian Kennedy as the artist is his total mastery of airplanes, and Bader's life story gives him an opportunity to draw page after page of Battle of Britain dogfight action, so much so that it's a positive shame when Bader is shot down and the story comes back down to earth.

Issue 2 uses the same format as issue 1 (two main comic strips divided by a pair of cutaway drawings). This time the focus is on the battle of the Atlantic and the story of Orde Wingate and his chindit fighters in Burma. So a couple of good meaty topics to get stuck into there. (We'll gloss over the colouring in of the Wingate photo on the cover – it looks like it's been done by a five year old with some particularly thick crayons).

Jim Watson provides some typically 'tough' action moments in the illustrations that accompany 'The battle of the Atlantic' with most of the characters faces set in a permanent snarl that says 'these are tough decisions that someone has to take and, by God, that person is me'. While the battle of the Atlantic is epic in scope, with a cast of tens of thousands and vital in its strategic efforts to protect Allied supply lines, the efforts of Orde Wingate can do nothing but feel small in comparison. His story though contains more derring-do than it ought to be possible to contain in one person's life. Briefly, Wingate joined the army in 1921 and served in Africa and later the Middle east and it was here (in Palestine) that he pioneered his use of small squads of men – in this case 'Special Night Squads' – to carry out operations against the enemy. Although the story of this hard-living individualist ("...he lived rough, rarely bathing, preferring to massage his body with a stiff brush and living mainly on onion and grapes") is briefly told, his heroism is clear (mentioned in despatches and won a DSO and two bars) and his guerrilla force, the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade, the Chindits, were able to enter Burma in 1943 to begin the fight back in the Far East.

The third, and final issue of True War chooses for its focus the Battle for Sicily (the first powerful strike at the Axis' homeland) and Guy Gibson (RAF master bomber and leader of the Dam[buster]s raid). Jim Watson's dark artwork and snarling, growling men take us through the month-long operation to re-capture Sicily in July-August 1943 – as True War notes "...the invasion had been successful though many parts of it were a shambles. Yet valuable lessons were learned...to prove invaluable when the invasion of Normandy was launched [10 months later]...the provision of Mulberry harbours for the easy landing of tanks".

Ian Kennedy provides the dramatic art for the story of Guy Gibson (VC, DSO and bar, DFC and bar – all before his 26th birthday) who, for those not in the know, was the first commanding officer of the RAF's 617 squadron and led the 'Dambusters' raid in 1943 which resulted in the destruction of two large dams in the Ruhr valley. The three dams targeted stood at the head of the valley and Barnes 'bouncing bomb' Wallis aimed to destroy all three dams in an effort to send millions of tonnes of water flooding down the most heavily industrialised area of Germany and thus bring production of war materials to a halt.

And so after three action-packed issues True War vanished from newsagent's shelves, never to be seen again. It's not clear why it failed but I suspect that the price charged meant that it was aimed at adults (rather than children) who then baulked at reading what they probably perceived, due to the high illustrated content, as a comic. Thus pleasing no one.



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FEBRUARY 25TH & 26TH, 2012

BIGGER THAN LIFE



Stan Lee at the 2012 London Super Comic Con and 2014 London Film and Comic Con

By Robert Menzies

Over the weekend of February 25-26, 2012, **Stan Lee headlined** the inaugural London Super Comic Con, far and away the biggest comic convention ever organised in the UK up to that date. It was quite the coup as Stan's appearances in Europe were by that point quite rare. A regular, almost annual, visitor to the UK in the 1970s, he appeared here only very irregularly after that and only once more after LSCC. The announcement of his impending arrival caused a level of anticipation that was quite unprecedented.



A lucky fan's signed Amazing Spider-Man



The excitement Stan engendered is all the more amazing when you think on it. Let's face it, there were actually a lot of reasons NOT to go see Stan. The crowds promised to be horrendous. London is expensive, noisy, crowded and frantic. After nearly five decades, what can he add that hasn't already been said in Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee (2002), Stan Lee's Amazing Marvel Universe (2006) and a list of other books, interviews, magazine articles, YouTube interviews, Facebook postings and publicity announcements more numerous than the gadgets of Reed Richards? Moreover, we all know his memory is awful and that his accounts of past events have changed over hundreds of retellings.

Of course, that kind of logical reasoning never came into it. Nor should it have. This was Stan Lee, the greatest living pop culture figure. At the con, despite the array of comic royalty, everyone I spoke to was there to meet him. Everyone. There were fans from Spain, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Croatia, even Australia and the United States. A fellow Glaswegian flew down from Scotland between shifts at work just to have his photo taken with Stan. There were many similar far-fetched stories from other conventioneers.

Stan had a brutal two-day schedule. Saturday's alone sounds daunting: signing session, photo session, signing session, one-man panel and then the evening Meet and Greet. His enthusiasm and sense of humour never flagged and he kept us enthralled throughout. During the Saturday panel he spoke about the movies he enjoyed as a child: "I love things that are bigger than life."

Standing in line for the first Saturday signing session, the sense of community was palpable. Everyone in the line – even Galactus - was friendly, affable and chatty. Then Stan came out from behind a wall partition and we saw the great man for the first time. A huge cheer went up. To our surprise, he smiled broadly and waved but continued on and disappeared into the main building through a door near the entrance. A giggle rippled along the line. Had we just cheered Stan for going to the toilet?

After a pause, the buzz of chatter restarted. The most popular topic of conversation? "What are you going to ask Stan to sign?" It had clearly been deliberated over with the same seriousness given to marriage plans or naming children.

Not long afterwards Stan reappeared to an even louder cheer. He spoke to us, then sat down to start signing. An eerie hush settled over us in that moment, as if we had all seen a unicorn and doubted our senses. Through necessity, the line moved swiftly. When I handed over my treasured No-Prize (see The Amazing Spider-Man #427 and accompanying photo!), Stan was taken aback for a moment and looked up. I leaned forward and said, "You gave that to me, Stan!" Stan laughed, shook his head and said, "Sonuvagun!" as he signed with a flourish. Then I was out, holding my signed No-Prize like it was more delicate than an ancient parchment. People were staggering around, almost in a dazed state, showing off the precious signatures to each other for some confirmation they were awake and, yes, that really was Stan Lee they just met.

We then made our way to the next Stan queue. I said hello to the legend that is George Perez on the way but I didn't stop. My next priority was a photo with The Man. (This is not something I did lightly: I suffer from light-activated migraines and have to be careful around flash photography and artificial lighting.) The queues for the photos were even longer than those for the signature, for obvious reasons. Anyone with some disposable income can pick up Stan's autograph off eBay or some other site. Meeting Stan and having a permanent memento of those brief few seconds with The Man is a different proposition.

The queue was processed efficiently and speedily and I had my two photos with Stan without any hiccups. I have to admit it was rather rushed and for the first photo I had thought they had captured the side of my head. Later, when picking up my photo, I discovered that I had indeed turned round in time. However, at the collection table I saw one photo of a fan with both eyes shut. The regret I felt for that unfortunate fan has not abated and I still think about him every so often. Poor guy.

That evening I attended the Saturday Meet and Greet in a hotel lounge close



Afternoon **Q&A with Stan**

to the convention centre. As I had received my No-Prize years earlier for asking a question about Gwen Stacy, it seemed appropriate to ask another about her: "Did you base Gwen Stacy on a real person or character in a film or book?" Stan, with his wonderful inconsistency, said that his characters were not based on real people and he had had no one in mind for Gwen. Stan was keen to make the evening as much fun as possible, listening intently to questions and answering in as much detail as he could. It was a wonderful evening and the highlight of not only that weekend but features high on my all-time list.

Did I learn anything new about the history of Marvel or the characters? A little. What it did teach me is that Stan Lee, quite frankly, is more amazing than his creations. Witty, perceptive, charismatic, fun, he was incredibly enthusiastic and welcomed each fan like a long lost friend. After the best part of forty years of anticipation, he should have been a disappointment and yet he exceeded my expectations.

It was only after I returned home that I was able to properly contextualise the weekend. This was not just a gathering of fans at a convention. The only experience I have that compares at all was when I was in Jerusalem in 2007. The Christians at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or Jews at the Western Wall had the same expressions and spoke in the same way. Basically, the masses of people who attended the convention were on a pilgrimage. No other comparison is valid when you consider the sense of wonder, awe and fulfilment that Stan's presence stirred.

Which makes my choice of often-complimented T-shirt even more appropriate than I had realised. It reads, "Stan Lee is my God". Maybe in future, when writing about Stan, we should start capitalising personal pronouns?

The last word (or words, to be exact) should go to Stan, with a comment that sums up his energy, enthusiasm and basic attitude to life. When his all-too-brief pre-con TV interview on the BBC's The One Show on Friday, 24 February 2012 was cut short, he said, "That's it?!? I'm just getting started!"

The bio provided in the convention booklet claimed that LSCC 2012 was Stan's "first official appearance at a U.K. convention since 1973". This is at best misleading, although it will take a little unpacking.

Stan's connections to the British Isles do, of course, run deep. His wife Joan Lee, who sadly passed away in 2017, was born in Newcastle in 1922. Stan first visited her homeland in December 1962 as he enjoyed an eight-day stay that was reported in Newcastle's local paper the Evening Chronicle on December 24. The article made clear that this was Joan's first time home in eighteen years. Interestingly, the article concentrates on Joan, a model, and makes only passing mention to Stan, mistakenly calling him a "publisher and newspaperman". At no point are the Fantastic Four, Hulk or Spider-Man referred to.

Both Stan and Joan have said they made frequent visits to Britain, but we only

have records of Stan's business trips after the '62 trip. The first is an appearance by Stan at a comic art exhibition in London on January 4, 1971. Then, when Marvel started launching the weeklies he often came over to spearhead the publicity: The Mighty World of Marvel in autumn 1972; The Avengers in 1973 (he recorded a voice-over for a TV ad); in March and October 1974 for The Super-Heroes, Savage Sword of Conan, Planet of the Apes and Dracula Lives; October 1975 for The Titans and twelve months later for Captain Britain; lastly, Hulk Comic in '78. How often Joan accompanied him can only be speculated, although the publicity tour for Captain Britain in '76, and a later trip here in 1991, both passed through Newcastle. Coincidence? Probably not.

With the exception of the 14 October 1976 signing for Captain Britain #1 in Words and Music Bookshop on Charing Cross Road, there were no public appearances or signings connected to the launches. However, there was one notable exception, the preeminent Marvel fan event of the 1970s, and possibly ever. That was Stan and Herb Trimpe's appearance in front of a large crowd at London's Roundhouse Theatre on 20 October 1975. Trimpe, famous Hulk artist and the first to draw Captain Britain's weekly adventures, was living in Cornwall at the time, which explains his presence. Stan combined the trip with an appearance at a Marvel art exhibition, where he was photographed with Marc Bolan of T-Rex fame, and Roy Wood, best remembered now for Wizzard's "Oh I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day!".

This listing, to summarise, is a long winded way of saying that while Stan made regular trips to the UK, I am not aware of any 1970s con appearances, let alone one in 1973. The closest to that description is the Roundhouse. And that was two years later. In 1981 Stan left New York to settle in Los Angeles. During that decade he concentrated on Marvel's film and TV projects and had little to do with operations in the New York offices. If he visited Britain during the 1980s, at least as a representative of Marvel, I'm unaware of it.

As for con appearances, Stan attended the 1992 and 1995 United Kingdom Comic Art Convention. At neither event did he attend the entire weekend, and only the latter was an official appearance , a full twenty-two years after the LSCC 2012 booklet claim.

I contacted the LSCC organisers and they told me this information came from Stan. This would seem to be another piece of evidence, if ever we needed it, that Stan, for all the compliments you could pay him, will never be accused of having a good memory. He's forgotten about the UKCAC cons and has, probably, misremembered the Roundhouse as a convention.

At least, that's my theory. Anyone else has a better one, I'd love to hear it.

WITH A GREAT MAN COMES GREAT CROWDS

Stan Lee's Final European Convention Appearance LFCC 2014

There was a definite hint of scepticism among fans when, in their announcement that Stan Lee would be attending London Film and Comic Con (LFCC) 2014, the organisers added that it was to be his final European con appearance. The Man had been a guest at the inaugural London Super Comic Con (LSCC) only two years previously, after all. He'll be back, the guy loves coming to Britain, his wife is English, someone will throw big bucks at him and he'll change his mind, the online commentators confidently assured everyone. Wishful thinking did the rest and many believed a return was probable.



Yet the doubters were wrong. LFCC 2014, in the now demolished Earls Court Convention Centre in Kensington, was indeed Stan's swan song. In truth, the signs were there. Since headlining LSCC in 2012, Stan had undergone surgery to fit a pacemaker and while he still defied Father Time (an in-joke to the hardcore fans; look it up if you don't get it) even he's not immortal. We were probably very fortunate he made it in 2014, never mind another trip. A fortnight after LFCC he had to cancel his planned appearance at San Diego Comic-Con, and other cancellations followed before Stan decided he'd restrict himself to the west coast.

So, at the risk of sounding like I'm patting myself on the back, my prolonged efforts – eight months of emails to Stan's reps – to gain access to Stan at the con were well-judged. Comic Book Creator, edited by Jon B. Cooke, had jumped on the chance to publish my piece on the con – which he did in CBC #8 (Spring 2015). While there were numerous media representatives from as far afield as Brazil at Stan's 20-minute press conference on the Friday, they dispersed afterwards leaving professional photographer Chris Gaskin and I as the only press granted permission to shadow Stan on the final day of his final European convention.



'STAN MADE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE OF SUNDAY AT THE MORNING SIGNING SESSION'

The Last Day of the Last Con: Sunday, 13 July, 2014

Stan made his first appearance of Sunday at the morning signing session. Flanked by his security guard, John, and Showmasters staff assisting him, Stan took a seat behind a long row of tables. I was ensconced behind Stan, while Chris hovered around as invisibly as he could. As you can clearly see from the photo showing part of the queue, thousands turned out. It was like this for the whole three days and despite the additional signing session on Friday and two extra photo shoot sessions, there were still, unfortunately, disappointed fans. Photo tickets started at £35, then went up to £45 and finally £65. In the days leading up to LFCC, despite thousands being sold, tickets went for over £200 on eBay.

The variety of items Stan signed included comics, prints, photographs, canvasses, props, replica weapons, toys, statues, musical instruments, even body parts. One of the latter belonged to Dennis O'Shea, who has aspirations to be a comicbook writer. Like Stan, he's left-handed, so he asked Stan to sign his writing arm. He had it tattooed back in his native Liverpool the following morning. Now, says Dennis, any time he writes any stories, he'll see the signature and it will inspire him. (There was a rumour going about on the Sunday that the local tattoo parlours were queued out that weekend. An instant urban myth, probably, but certainly they must have seen a boost in business.)

Other items signed included an exclusive LFCC Funko Pop! Stan Lee vinyl bobble-head with variant Union flag T-shirt and a copy of Wolverine: Max #5 (May 2013). I thought that an interesting addition to the pool of images as at the Sunday panel Stan admitted that the character he most wished he'd created was Wolverine.

(While I'm on the subject of signings, there's one grumble I've spotted a few times that needs to be addressed [because it's brainless and I'm fed up seeing it]. Online you'll sometimes see negative comments about Stan signing comics he didn't write or comics starring characters he had no involvement in creating. Sometimes the items are as close to Marvel as Pluto is to the sun. Criticisms like "Stan isn't a musician, why is he signing a guitar?!!" are especially silly. Obviously, and I can't believe I'm having to clarify this, Stan doesn't decide what fans bring along. What is he supposed to do when someone presents him with, say, a Batman comic? Say no to autographing that item, disappoint the fan [who has probably waited in line for hours] and then the fan has to go and get a refund from the organisers? It's just not realistic; the whole system would collapse. If anyone should be criticised for what is signed, it's the fan, although I submit that giving them a hard time for their personal choice is petty and severe. Okay, rant over, I can return Stan's soapbox to him now.)

After the signing session, a two-hour photo shoot was timetabled. The partitioned-off photo area was a buzz of anticipation, twitchy fans shuffling along in line before being hurriedly shown to Stan's side. There wasn't time for more than snatched interactions – "I love you, Stan!", "I love me, too!" – although the line did slow whenever children were involved, and Stan took time to listen to each one. One complicated family photo shoot with a baby was proving tricky until Stan's bodyguard literally took matters into his own hands. Catching the baby's gaze with a star he held it up and then walked in the direction of the photographer and click!, job done. And the line quickly moved on again. It was a seemingly endless line of colourful humanity and the only pauses, such that they were, were when Max Anderson, Stan's right hand man at cons, would step forward with water or a Smoothie.

There was a lengthy break before Stan reappeared for the day's panel, and the



pit stop to refuel and recharge did Stan the world of good. The tired body language of the last half hour of the photo shoot was gone and Stan returned reinvigorated. Located in a different part of the convention space, the panel was chaired by a well-known face to British comicdom: Mike Conroy. Mike has been involved in the British comic scene for decades and at that time organised all the Showmasters Comic Zones with his daughter, Cassandra. Stan sat down and opened with: "What am I doing here? And what do I have to do to not get in trouble?"

While many of Stan's replies have been polished over many years, he is mentally extremely agile and has an innate ability to connect with people. Stan's humour also has a broad streak of self-deprecation.

Why do Marvel have so few teenage sidekicks?

"I hate teenage side-kicks. At the very least, people will talk!"

What did you hope would come of writing comics?

"I hoped I could keep my job and pay the rent!"

If your wife had a super power, what would it be?

"Putting up with me!"

After he felt he may be repeating himself, he advised: "If you've heard this story before, you're free to read a comicbook while I talk."

After about thirty-five minutes of a masterclass in making an audience fall in love with you, Stan stood to triumphantly punch the air as he delivered the obligatory "Excelsior!" to the orgasmic mob.

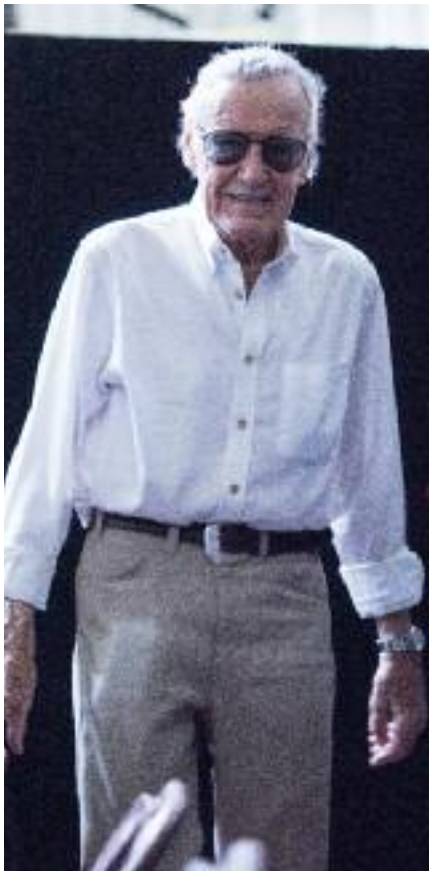
The final instalment of Stan was at the second of the day's photo shoots, another draining few hours perched on a stool, smiling. The photo shoot area was again a mini factory. The attendant staff numbered 14, mostly Showmasters staff who dealt with the lines, bags and dispensed the precious 9 x 6 photographs being spat out of the over-worked printers. The official photos only tell part of what was happening in the photo area, however, and it seemed that every person, and all ages except the elderly were represented, who came up for a photograph had a story to share.

Terrie Lochwood was present with her baby daughter, Amber. Terrie chose a female version of Captain America's film costume because Stan's first published story was a Captain America text story and "I want [Amber and my son, Rowan] to grow up admiring the values of the heroes of comic book reality."

Another example: Londoner Kane Francis Gordon, 6, handed Stan a Ditkoesque drawing of a face, with one side Iron Patriot, the other Stan. He also wrote a note: "Dear Stan. I am your biggest fan. I like a lot of your superheroes." Kane is a con regular; he's

Kane and Rachael Gordon. **Stan's 'Biggest fan'**





been attending them since the age of 3! The official photo with Stan now sits beside Kane's bed. This gift-giving from kids was a common occurrence: by the close of the photo session, Stan had a small stack of drawings and letters from children that he took with him when he left.

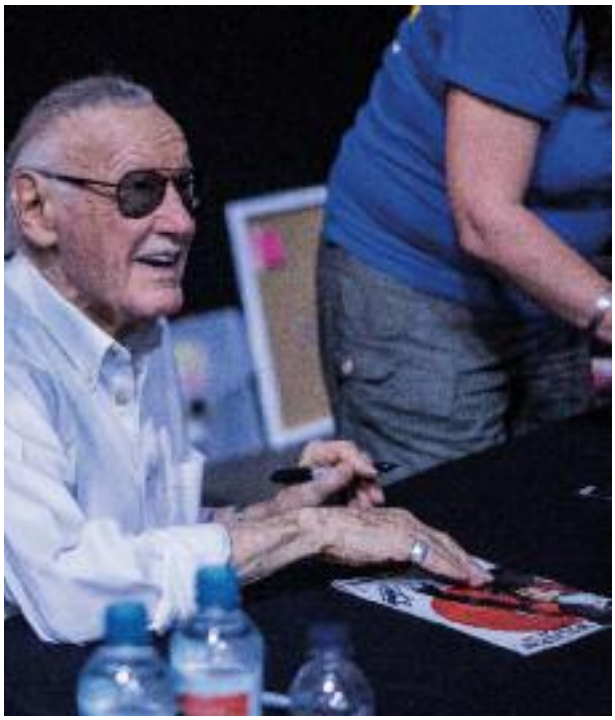
The previous day, to Stan's bemusement and then amusement, one young man used his photo shoot as an opportunity to propose to his girlfriend. On Sunday it was Stan's turn. Holly Owen (Holly Redfox on Facebook) blurted out "Marry me!", causing Stan to laugh. Chris caught the moment on camera. (That reaction was the main image from the con used by Comic Book Creator. Alas, space meant that there was no room to show Holly or explain what Stan was reacting to, so now the world finally knows!)

Some attendees were inspirational themselves. Charity fund-raiser Tim Boxall met Stan while cosplaying as, in my opinion, the convention's best Wolverine by a mile. Despite his own difficulties (you can see a supporting arm on his left), Englishman Tim attends many cons in costume, raising invaluable money to help others facing incredible challenges.

The final European fan photograph was with 17-year-old Elisabeth Bertels, from Holland, who was swapped from second-last to last place in line. As Max explained, "Stan always ends with a girl". (For those of you reading this who may be thinking that's kinda creepy, look where his hand is – her shoulder. Stan is a gentleman.) A comic fan since 10, and cosplaying Black Widow, Elisabeth explained that "I came to see Stan because I really look up to him. He's definitely an inspiration for me."

Apart from a couple of shots taken after a grinning Elisabeth departed – one with myself, Chris, Stan and Max – the day was over for Stan. Chris and I watched Stan leave and then looked at each other in silence, a sense of disbelief paralysing us. As Charles, Stan's official photographer, efficiently packed up his kit, we spoke briefly, and he estimated that he took 6500 photos over the three days, with 2500 that day alone. Despite the speed and smoothness of the operation, the official website still had a number of complaints from fans who missed out. The convention needed at least two Stans to cope with demand.

The halls at Earls Court emptied quickly and, with the absence of the fans' energy, made the place unwelcoming and somehow larger. Outside, Chris and I hugged. We didn't know each other before Stan was announced for LFCC and we had only met in person the day before and yet we parted brothers. We still communicate and shake our heads that we were there as sole documenters of the end of an era.





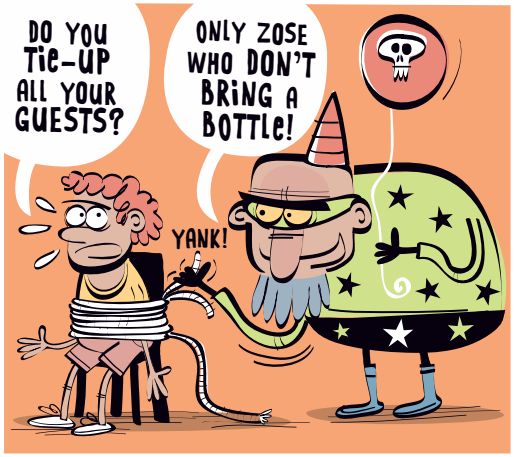
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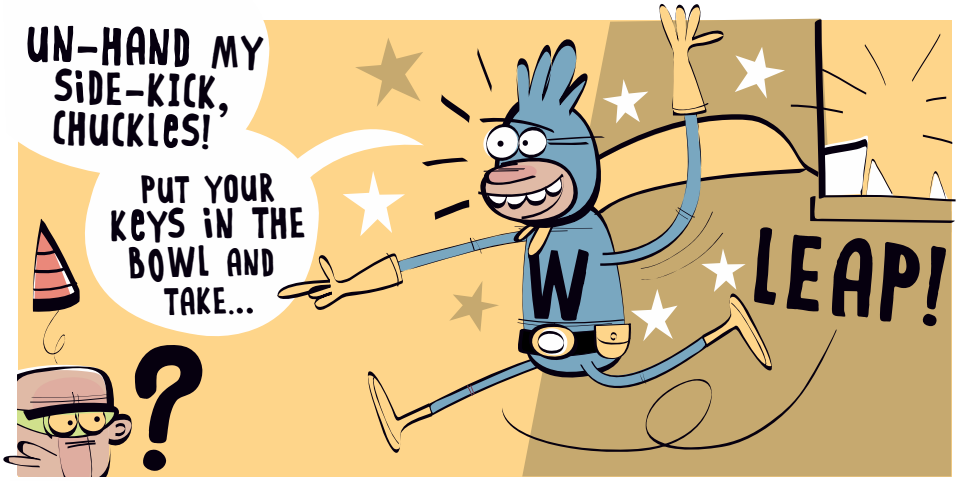
BY MARC JACKSON

LAST TIME... WHACKOMAN THREW BUGSY THROUGH A WINDOW TO DISCOVER THE MYSTERY OF THE GLOWING PARROT...





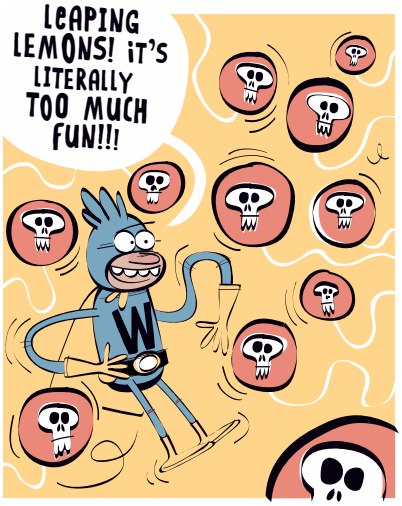
















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FINDING ALBERT

Illustrating a family story by Cole Henley



The first job I remember wanting was a comic artist. I recall my sister telling my parents about my aspirations hoping to get me in trouble but instead I got an acknowledging and supportive 'do what makes you happy.'

By eighteen I had seen the comic scene evolve - I was now digesting British artists who were producing graphic novels and new titles like Crisis and Toxic. But I was starting to think I should do something 'serious' with my life. I went to university to study archaeology but was still forever doodling in the margins of my notebooks. After ten years of study and now a father I shifted to a career in making websites. I still read comics but the childhood pursuit of being a comic artist was now a distant memory, replaced with the all-so-grown-up life of mortgages, school runs and running a small digital business.

December 2016. I was visiting my uncle, Michel, in his flat in Camden. He had been unwell and things weren't looking great. He was the crazy uncle that got you drunk on Drambuie at family weddings and for the last few years a close friend. That evening I sat down to talk about Albert. Albert was my great-grandfather and had been a communist in early twentieth century Germany. When Albert was dying in 1979 my uncle was flown out to see him. On that visit Albert tasked Michel with writing the story of his life. In this flat in 2016 Michel was passing the baton on. That night he was rushed into hospital and the next day he died whilst I was by his side. That dying wish remained planted firmly in my mind.

Faced with this undertaking I didn't want to write a book. I never felt especially gifted at writing narratives and knew there wouldn't be much in the way of dialogue. But I knew that I could draw and decided to tap into my childhood dreams and produce a graphic novel of Albert's life. However the main obstacle was the research; archive material on Albert existed in Berlin and Stuttgart but it was all in German and I would need to fund a trip to visit the archives.

Having backed a number of comic projects on Kickstarter I thought crowdfunding would be a good place to start. I made a short video and within a month had raised twice my target with enough money to finance a trip to Germany and to self-publish the book.

This May I spent a week visiting Stuttgart and Berlin. In the Bundesarchiv in Berlin - the former archives of the DDR - they had 155 files on Albert. I was fortunate to have a family friend come with me to help translate the material and the following months have been spent piecing it all together: dates, receipts, letters and telegrams from concentration camps, visas to flee Europe, newspapers, military cards and personal correspondence.

Albert's was a life that spanned the two World Wars. He was injured at the Western Front and led a military coup in 1918. He moved to Berlin to attempt revolution a year later. He became involved in paramilitary marches against the Nazis before fleeing to France in 1933 and then fighting fascism in the Spanish Civil War. His life was defined by war. He was not a military man but he was a political man and his politics forced war on him.

So back to the graphic novel. The work is just starting but for me this is a unique medium for telling this fascinating personal story of a man that sacrificed so much for his values, and to whom I owe a great deal. At a time when society and politics seem defined by a populism that champions the individual and personal gain - whilst demonising 'the other' - it is a story we still have much to learn from.

Albert will be released as a Graphic Novel later in 2018. You can pre-order a copy at albertcomic.uk/ and learn more about the kickstarter project at http://bit.ly/findingalbert. Cole is on twitter and instagram as @cole007

ROY OF THE ROVERS™

From increasingly lucrative television deals to online streaming and pop star-style players like David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo, the world of football is a very different place since the last issue of Roy of the Rovers' weekly title arrived in early 1993.



Breaking away from the rest of the Football League to form the Premier League, the inaugural season of the reconfigured English top flight had ironically kicked off just six months beforehand in August 1992. After that point, Roy Race and his teammates at Melchester Rovers were restricted to a few sporadic, substitute appearances as his exploits on the fictional football field were serialised first in Shoot in 1993 and then Match of the Day magazine in 1997, while then-rights owner Egmont also reprinted some of his classic stories in 2009.

But as with his comic strips colleagues at the likes of Battle, Action and Buster, Roy's fortunes finally seem to improve when Rebellion purchased IPC's 1970s back catalogue in 2016, establishing the Treasury of Britain line to release both graphic novel collections of vintage material and also releasing all-new stories including the recent The Vigilant one-off and the two Scream & Misty specials to date. Now Roy himself is set to make a comeback, first in October's young adult novel Scouted by Tom Palmer, and then next month's graphic novel Kick-Off by Rob Williams and Ben Willsher.

"Football has radically changed and the money involved in the sport now is just mindboggling," says Treasury of Britain editor Keith Richardson. "But those big mega-star earners exist in the top tier. I'm sure that many Championship players earn a good wage as well, but the lower leagues – where Melchester start out in the reboot – don't have a lot of cash. And Roy isn't motivated by money anyway. For him, it's all about his love of the game, his devotion to Melchester Rovers and his determination to play for them. From that perspective, he very much evokes the attitude of the original."

"In one sense, we had to make sure that it resonates with modern football fans, so that the kids see it as being of the current football world," adds Williams. "But there's something timeless about Roy of the Rovers. It invokes the thrill of the last minute winner, which is the purest aspect of football, where money and agents and sponsorship deals don't matter. So you kind of have to serve two masters."

With Richardson pointing out that he would be "a pensioner with a missing left foot" if the story picked up where the previous series left off in 1993, Rebellion are going for a complete reboot, depicting Roy as a teenager who is just at the beginning of what promises to be a glittering footballing career. "This is a younger Roy for a younger generation, although there is more than enough here to entertain fans of the original," explains Richardson. "Remember, Roy of the Rovers is a soap with football as a backdrop. There is far more drama and fun in telling the story about the rise and stumble and rise again of a team and an individual, than just starting the book with them at the top."

"It makes Roy, and Melchester, the underdog," continues Williams. "This is a Rocky or a Creed. A kid from the working class streets trying to make his way through the cash-rich world of modern football."

However, the new Roy is essentially not much different from the Roy of old. "This younger Roy is fundamentally the same as the original," says Richardson. "The main change to him and to Melchester Rovers in general is that the story is set today. But people familiar with Roy of the Rovers will see some very recognisable names on the Melchester team sheet."

Languishing in League One, Melchester Rovers have also been living off past glories after falling on hard times. "We decided they would be this fallen giant," says Williams. "A bit like Nottingham Forest but one more division down. They did win the big European trophies, but now they're in the lower leagues, and their ground is overgrown with holes in the fences, etc. And their local rivals Tynecaster are a Manchester City-like oil-rich super-club, so it's immediately a David vs. Goliath situation, and Roy has a hero's journey to go on."

With many football fans and readers citing Rovers as their second favourite team, the exact geographical location of Melchester is never explicitly stated. "It's one of those cities that has the ground hidden amongst the terraced streets, which is true of a lot of old stadia," says Williams, who is an Arsenal supporter. "I have fond memories of going to Highbury and walking down those streets, coming round the corner and the stadium was just there, amidst people's everyday lives. It was in the middle of a community, and we wanted to capture that feeling for Roy and for the readers."

Describing Roy of the Rovers as "a bit of a dream job for me," Williams has written regularly for both 2000 AD and the Judge Dredd Megazine over the past two decades in addition to helming series like Daken for Marvel and currently Suicide Squad for DC. "I've worked for Rebellion for a good few years now on Judge Dredd," recalls Williams, who has also other series such as The Ten-Seconders and The Grievous Journey of Ichabod Crane. "The guys in the office knew I was a football fan, which is relatively rare for a comics writer, so I was really excited to be asked."

Apart from Roy Race himself, older readers can expect to see some other familiar faces from the original Roy of the Rovers, which first debuted in the pages of Tiger in 1954 before being spun off into its own title in 1976. "There are other characters from the old strip who turn up," reveals Richardson. "There are also some great new characters who I think readers are going to really respond to such as the owner of Melchester Rovers – You'll love to hate him!"

"The characters are a mix of new and old, and new versions of old characters in some cases," adds Williams. "I think long-time Roy of the Rovers fans will get a kick out of it but new readers will be able to come in fresh and hit the ground running."

As for whether Rebellion has plans for any of IPC's other football strips such as Tiger's Billy's Boots or Action's controversial Look Out for Lefty, Richardson cryptically hints that "maybe some characters from other strips are already scheduled to show up in Roy of the Rovers…"

As a reflection not just of today's football world but also society in general, Roy and his supporting cast will be much more "diverse and believable," and Williams was also determined to acknowledge the growing strength and appeal of the women's game. "There will be several important female characters," teases Richardson. "You'll just have to read the books to find out more!"

Illustrations by Lisa Henke – who also drew the Roy of the Rovers strip that ran in Match of the Day magazine over the summer – Kick-Off will be proceeded by Scouted, which will chronicle the young footballer's life leading up to his signing for Melchester Rovers. "It's about the battles he faces in just getting himself seen by scouts from the club," says Roy of the Rovers brand manager Rob Power. "Tom Palmer has crafted a fantastic novel that follows Roy as he plays in the Under-18s – two years above his age group – and starts to become a player to watch. Scouted takes us right up to the first panel of Kick-Off, where Rob Williams picks up the story."

With Rovers now a pale imitation of their former mighty selves, Kick-Off sees the young Roy making the most of the club's problems to make a name for himself. "When we join Melchester, they're in some financial difficulties, and that means they have to sell the bulk of the first team," explains Williams. "So, suddenly the kids are going to get a chance. For Roy, it's a case of can he get onto the team? And if he does, how can he survive in a physical man's league?"

Having previously drawn near future-set strips like Judge Dredd and Sinister Dexter for 2000 AD, Roy of the Rovers' more realistic milieu represents a change of pace for Ben Willsher, who has evidently risen to the challenge. "It's been fantastic working with Ben," says Power. "His artwork sizzles with energy, and he's brought a fresh look to Roy of the Rovers that both respects its legacy and brings something completely new to the table. It's no small thing, asking an artist to redesign a character as iconic as Roy Race, but Ben took it in his stride and has given both Roy and the whole Melchester squad a really striking update. We're hopeful that fans old and new will respond really well to the direction we've gone in, and we're very proud of the way Kick-Off has turned out."



"…the owner of Melchester Rovers – You'll love to hate him!"

Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine

GOLD LION COMICS





Author: Drew Marr
Website: goldlioncomics.com

As the founder of Gold Lion Comics, I feel very lucky and grateful to take part in The Lakes International Comic Art Festival to introduce everyone to the comics that I have been working on for the last two years, The Rehabilitation of Doctor Eye and a comic strip, Drunk Genie.



I launched both titles at DeeCon in April 2018, a local comic art and anime cosplay festival held at The Student Union at the University of Dundee and since then I have been fortunate enough to have local retailers stock my work. I am very lucky to live in Dundee as the comic scene is really busy. Dundee is famous for comics like The Beano and The Dandy, which I also enjoy. But living very close to the Duncan of Jordanstone Art College at the University of Dundee has meant that I have gone to the degree shows since I was at nursery school and had the chance to meet the artists who graduated in Graphic Novels and Animation.

I was 4 years old when I started attending DeeCon, and it was there when I was invited to attend the free workshops at the Dundee Comic Creative Space. It was also there that I met Sha Nazir of BHP Comics and John Ferguson of Saltire. I have always enjoyed drawing but meeting other people who enjoyed comic art inspired me to draw my own characters. After a couple of years, I got better at finishing my stories and I wanted to create a series of complete comics.

I thought it was a good idea to make them more professional by creating a brand. The likes of Stan Lee at Marvel is someone I really look up to, so I started branding my work under Gold Lion Comics. The style of the books came out of convenience and accident really. I don't like colouring each picture in a comic as it takes up a lot of time, so I would have all of these black and white drawing. However, I do enjoy



experimenting with watercolour painting and my local paint shop introduced me to masking fluid. I would watch videos on YouTube on how to use the masking fluid and then began to create abstract colour backgrounds. The result is a can create picture of various sizes, blue tac them on the watercolour, and scan them into the computer one page at a time.

When it comes to the stories I want to tell in my comics, I have been very inspired by actions films and certain TV shows. I have watch Indiana Jones and Mission Impossible films many times and TV Shows like Grimm and Once Upon A time. I also enjoy films that are set in the past, like The Untouchables. Characters like the CIA agent, Agent Harrison, have been inspired by the heroes in these stories, like Lieutenant Nick Bernhardt and Elliot Ness.

In the future, I imagine Gold Lion Comics will continue to make comics about revenge, conspiracies, and justice. The format of the Doctor Eye series gives me a lot of creative freedom because each issue has a story from when Doctor Eye is the evil mastermind, leading the underground organisation P.A.T.C.H and a story where he is a force for good set 12 years in the future. Since the series consists of ten books (20 issues) I hope to have the final book released in 4 years. I would also love the comic strip character Drunk Genie to get a regular spot in a monthly magazine and develop my own satire mini-magazine for children.



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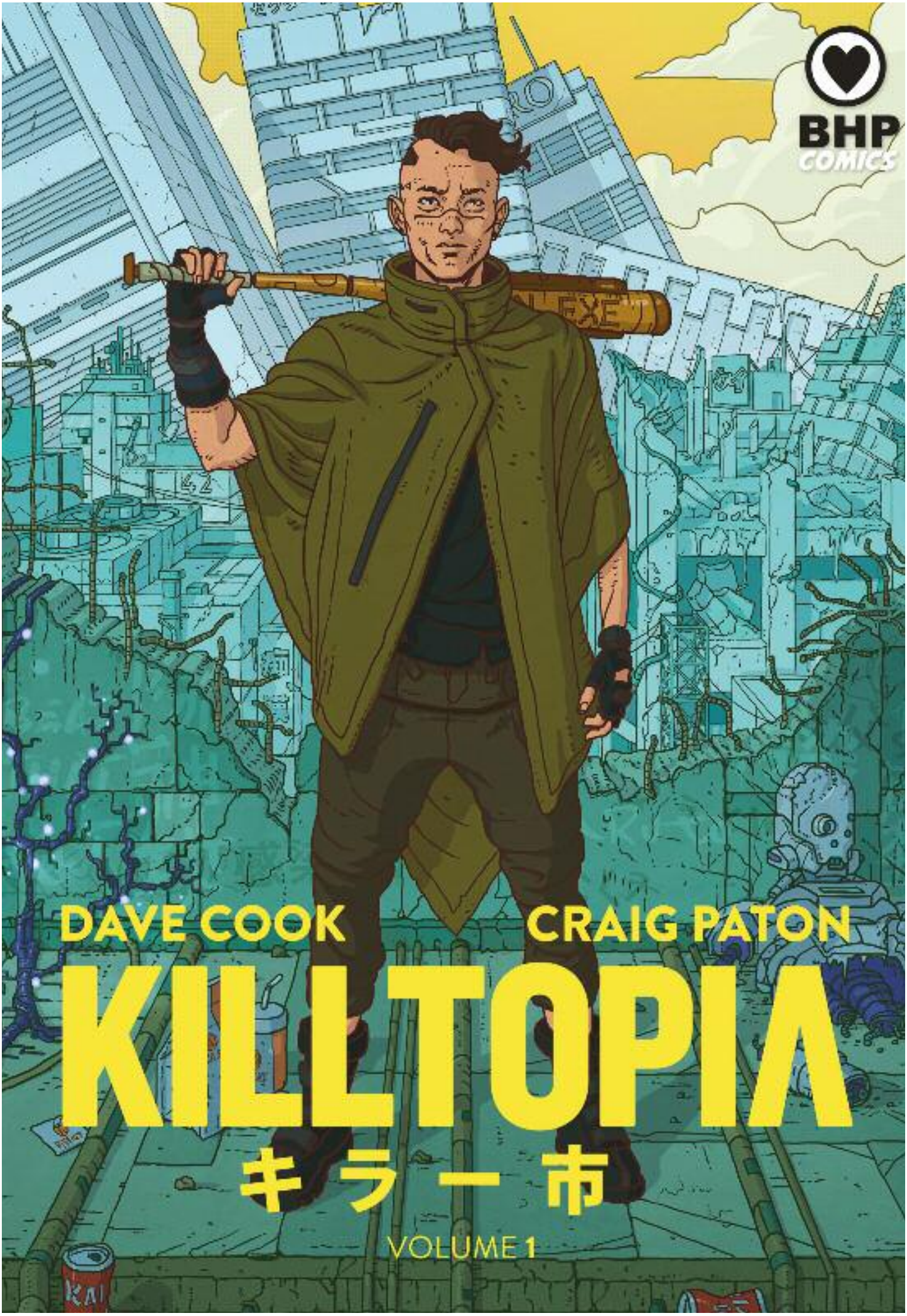
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FROM KICKSTARTER TO **KILLTOPIA**

An **interview** with Dave Cook by John McShane

"Kickstarter is a full time job – on top of your normal full time job," admits Dave Cook. But he is very good at it. How did he learn to master it? "I was a video-game journalist reviewing games for a number of publications and I now work in digital marketing. I used to interview a lot of game developers who funded their games on Kickstarter. A lot of them failed but a smaller percentage succeeded. Through interviewing these developers about what works and what doesn't I got a good feel for the platform and how best to conduct a campaign. It isn't as scary as it sounds. I felt that if I just followed their examples and learned from what they told me, it should be alright."

Each of his comic titles has been crowdfunded. "The first time we made just over a grand – we hit our target on the last day by the skin of our teeth. But, on looking back on it, I thought the campaigning wasn't that good, the video not that great. We didn't say enough about the story on the campaign page. But I thought we could do better next time."

And he did do better. "I've used it six times now and every time we've raised more money. You get a lot of repeat custom on Kickstarter – the same names come up in the market reports. I work in marketing 9-5, so I'm getting a lot better at it. You build your fanbase over time, but you need that first successful Kickstarter to do that. That's the hard part."

Dave sees value for money as key. "One of the biggest problems I see is people setting targets that are too high for what they actually need to realize the project. I've seen so many comics on Kickstarter where the video has persuaded me to back the project. Then I look at the price: a 22 page comic and people are seriously trying to sell that for £20! Plus postage! They're doing that to try to get to their target quicker, but I'm not going to pay £20 for 22 pages. If you are honest and realistic with people and don't try to exploit them to reach your goal, I think you'll go a lot further.

"You know how hard it is to stand out in any creative industry. Kickstarter gives you a direct line to the actual people backing your comic. I like to show them the process of actually making the comic, stuff you rarely get to see from the big companies. Be transparent with people and they'll support you time and time again. By seeing the process they can trust that it will actually get made. A lot of projects do not get made, so we like to give people assurances and that gets us their support.

"The campaign for Killtopia raised £16K! but we only really needed £4K. We haven't spent it all, so our plan is, once we have launched issue 1 at Thought Bubble, Craig Paton [the artist] and I are going to commission promotional pieces for issue 2 – using the excess money to get started again. When I was at Uni doing a journalism course, I read Transmetropolitan, a comic about a journalist. I thought it was great, so really it was Darick Robertson and Warren Ellis who got me into comics. So, I asked Darick to do a print, fully expecting him to say No. I have a bit of fear of celebrity… But he agreed! We've also commissioned prints from Gary Erskine, who also worked with Warren, from Caspar Wijngaard co-creator of Image's Limbo, and from Tom Foster from 2000AD."

Why is Dave now so committed to comics? "I used to work for a Breaking News website where stories die as fast as you write them. I could have been working on a feature for months, worked hard to get an interview with an elusive games developer, then the article would go viral for a few days and then it's gone – lost to time. So, I wanted to make something that was a bit more creative, something that would stand the test of time, like a comic. So, I started working up a few ideas. I asked a few people in the video game community and on our forums if any of our readers were artists. That's how I teamed up with Chris O'Toole for Bust, our first comic. We sold boatloads of it at Glasgow Comicon 2015. Then our readers asked when the next comic was due, so we decided to go for it."

You're no doubt wondering by now what we can expect from Killtopia. "Killtopia is a fashion beast. It's all my favourite things in one comic: Japanese video game culture, brash over-the-top action. Craig Paton has been my cover artist for the other comics and by trade he is a graphic designer so he has helped me out with fonts, logos, etc. I just knew I wanted to work with him on a major project. However, I didn't realise until we started discussing it that his brother Gary actually lives in Tokyo, so he has become our cultural consultant. He has sent us videos from a street corner in Tokyo with people walking by, with all the lights on the buildings, so that was a great help in getting the correct feel. Gary has also helped out with the Japanese lettering; it's all accurate and translates perfectly."

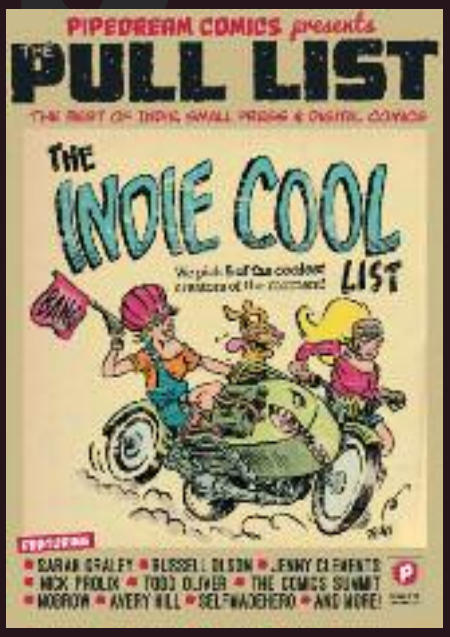
The finished comic was a long time in the making. "We decided to act as if this comic was going straight to a big publisher. We've actually had comments that it looks like something that Image would publish. It blows my mind when people say that to us. It's been a long time in the making, about a year and a half before the Kickstarter. I had the whole story in my head, I always know where the full arc is going, not the minutiae of it but how it's going to end and the major points leading up to that. But then you've got to get it on paper. I scrapped issue 1 multiple times. Craig's as bad as me when it comes to never being happy with the work. We're very fussy. The first draft of issue 1 is unrecognizable from how it turned out. But now, the other issues will follow a bit more naturally because it's a good starting point. Issue 2 is all written now. It's a much longer issue – 65 pages – because that's where the real meat of the story starts to kick in."

Dave does not believe in writing the whole series before starting on the first issue. " I'm going to start writing issue 3 next week. We're planning 5 books, but it could be 4. I like to wait a bit to write because I might be a different person in a year's time. Mentally, you are always a different person when you get to the next issue. I like to write in the moment."

And as if Killtopia's not enough… "I need to finish off my other series as well. They've been languishing, taking a back seat while we worked on this one. Killtopia just grew arms and legs. So, Vessels issue 3 is the next one and we'll start that Kickstarter in October. That will be issue 3 of 10. I need to finish Bust as well, but there's only 2 issues to go with that one. I have a few more irons in the fire, but I can't say too much about them yet."

Dave and Craig have produced a real gem in Killtopia. The story is a page turner and the art is just wonderful. I would not be surprised if Craig Paton becomes the next Frank Quitely. Meanwhile head to your comic shop, or Amazon, or Kindle, or buy direct from BHP and get yourselves one of the best comics of the year.

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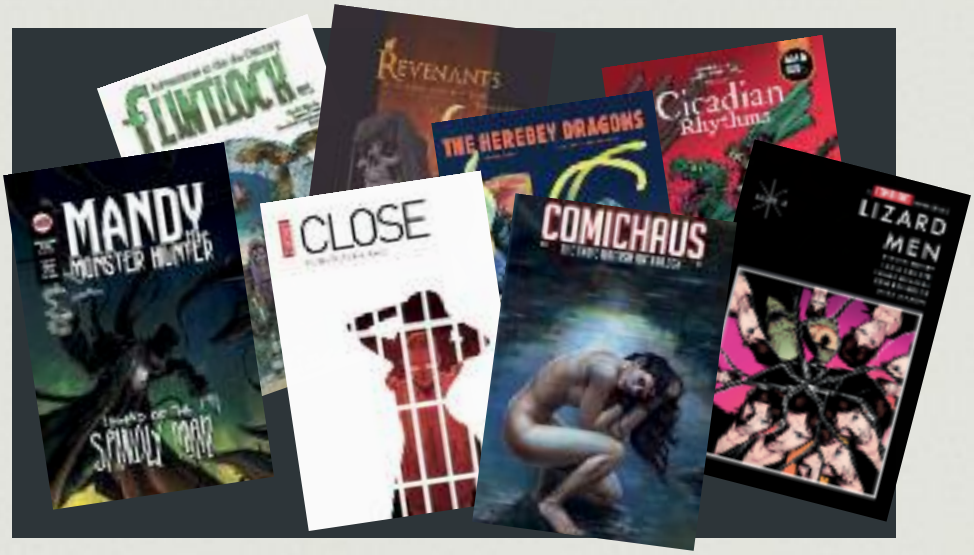
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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"What's the big deal about indie comics anyway?"

Alex Thomas on why comics are about more than the mainstream



Welcome to The State Of Independents, a new section here in ComicScene dedicated to the world of independent and small press comics. But why should you care about independent and small press comics anyway?

The simple answer is that the independent scene is currently the beating heart of UK comics. At a time when comics on the news-stand are at an all time low and your average fan is more interested in seeing their favourite heroes in the multiplex than in the pages of a comic book, it has never been more important to have an alternative, and that is what the indies are all about.

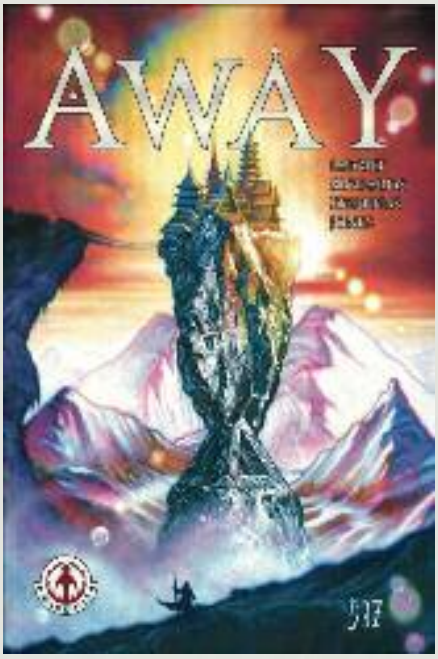
Over the past 10 years there has been a boom in independent comics here in the UK. Powered by crowd funding platforms like Kickstarter, creators can now finance their books without relying on publishers taking a gamble on them and so can take control of their own destiny, marketing the book via social media and selling it at conventions or via an online web stores. Along with this boom in self publishing, there has also been a boom in quality, as creators are no longer beholden to the comics gatekeepers and they can create the books they want to, when and how they want. With the majority of comic creators now working digitally, their artwork can be published online in an instant, or sent to a contributor on the other side of the world at the click of a button. And all of this make for a golden age of independent and small press comics.

As well as writing this column for ComicScene, I also run the website Pipedream Comics (www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk) and indie comics fanzine The Pull List in which we showcase the best that the world of indie and small press has to offer. And I want to share some of those amazing titles with you here. We'll have interviews with some of the up and coming independent writers and artists, as well as reviews of the most interesting and diverse titles currently doing the rounds. And hopefully all this will explain to you, why, you need to care about the indies!

"Imagine having amazing skills and abilities, but are forbidden to use them in case it causes armageddon!"

Writer **Jon Laight** on balancing heroism and home in **Away**

Having made his name with titles like Brethren Born and Late Knights, Jon Laight has taken a step up to the indie big time with his new book Away, published by Markosia. We caught up with Jon to find out how he brought his personal experiences as a fire-fighter to bear in this sci-fi epic.





Away sees Jon team up with artist Grant Richards to create a sumptuous sci-fi epic.

The premise of Away is a really interesting one – how would you sum it up for new readers?
Jon Laight: I've always liked a good alternate reality/multi-verse story so wanted to try and an original spin on that premise. Away shares the incredible experiences of a normal man given an extraordinary task... not just save the world...but the entire universe he lives in.

The idea of being away from your family doing important things only to return and have to pick things up is a really strong central concept?
JL: With my job as a fire-fighter, there's always a chance you can be away from home for a while and ever since I started my family, being apart from them gets more and more difficult. I wanted to explore this further in Away and push it to the extremes in relation to the time away from your loved ones and the things you do to cope with the mental anguish of it all in otherworldly locations with impossible characters. Imagine having amazing skills and abilities that could make a difference to the world but forbidden to use or divulge them in case it caused the Armageddon you were meant to be preventing!

What made you choose to set the adventures in different locations?
JL: My real focus was on character and story so I wanted to be able to place 'Jason' into different scenarios to see how he would react and grow as completely different people/creatures but still be the same man within. With the multi-verse theme, there's infinite worlds and stories to place Jason in but they must have relevance to his mission...he must learn new skills in order for him to be the saviour of everything he holds dear....as well as a few million galaxies or so. I have so many concepts in mind for him but must choose carefully.

As for which I enjoyed the most... probably the Barbarian style general but I do have some sci-fi stories lined up for Book 2.

Away is out now from Markosia

Follow Me In

Publisher: Avery Hill Publishing
Writer: Katriona Chapman
Artist: Katriona Chapman
Price: £18.99 from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

Follow Me In chronicles Katriona's travels around Mexico and with it her crumbling relationship. This mix of travelogue and slice of life gives the book a very poignant and personal mix and makes Follow Me In into a truly wonderful read.

Even without this personal dimension, Follow Me In would have been a thing of real beauty. Chapman's artwork has a pencil sketch quality to it that is just sublime. Her graduation of tone is exquisite and by including sketches from her travels you can see how much her work has developed. The use of colour is also wonderful and gives the book a lush richness, like a vintage postcard. This is further augmented by information pages and panels which give info about local history or flora and fauna and are perhaps the star of the book.

Kat's subtle and relatively uncomplicated style allows her to revel in quiet moments and also take time with her story telling, making it really feel like you are on those long bus journeys or enjoying the sunset and makes for a very understated and thoughtful read as a result.





32 Kills

Publisher: Comichaus
Writer: Mike Garley
Artist: Andy W Clift, Mike Stock
Price: £5 from Comichaus.com

Captain Cosmic's Andy W. Clift has teamed up with his old Samurai Slasher buddies Mike Garley and Mike Stock, plus the fine folk at Comichaus to bring you a book that is at the opposite end of the comics spectrum to his family friendly silver age space romp. Instead, 32 Kills is an ultra violent revenge thriller that packs more action into every page than any other comic you'll read this year. Guaranteed.

Although saying this is the most action packed book of the year may sound like hyperbole, there is reason behind this (and that is more than just wanting to offer up a handy pull quote!). Clift and Garley tell their story with a sixteen panel grid throughout, which sees Clift cram violent act after violent act into every inch of every panel giving it the relentless action flow of a movie like The Raid. Add to this the crime noir grit of an Ed Brubaker comic and stylish, cartoonish art style of Darwyn Cooke or Bruce Timm comic (plus a cover from Darrick Robertson) and you get an explosive, relentless, thrill ride of a book!

It's a fascinating exercise in story telling and almost gives the book an avant garde sensibility to it - but with more gut punches and head-shots. It won't be a book for everyone, as it forgoes in-depth story telling for all out action, but that's fine in our book.

We are used to seeing the darker side of Garley's world with books like Samurai Slasher and The Kill Screen and he continues that excellent form here. But after seeing his more adult work in the recent Red Rocket Comet, it is exciting to see Clift's work get darker still and he once again shows how far he has developed as an artist in 2018. But perhaps the real star here is the long standing relationship between Clift and Garley (and also letterer Mike Stock) which sees all three push each other and with that the boundaries of action comics.

The Needle Man

Publisher: Soaring Penguin Press
Writer/Artist: Martin Simpson
Price: TBC from soaring penguinpress.com



Bringing together the first story of Martin Simpson's dystopian art deco investigator that were previously published in SPP's Meanwhile anthology, this is a book which had us hooked from the minute we saw the iconic cover and didn't disappoint from start to finish.

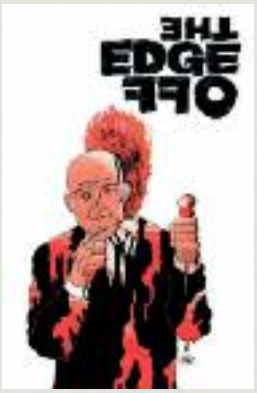
Set in a neo-futurist world which has echoes of Bladerunner with it's sprawling mega cities, but also the German Expressionist landscapes of Fritz Lang's Metropolis, The Needle Man sees one of the titular investigators reporting into a senior, after discovering something so extraordinary that he felt the need to bypass the normal chain of command. And that is as much as we want to tell you, as the journey to this point is every bit as thrilling as the world it is presented in.

While the story is perhaps not the most original, it is the world building and design of the location which is what makes The Needle Man so compelling. There are shades of everything from modern science fiction like 2000 AD and Philip K Dick, to classic crime noir and dystopian fiction like Orwell and Huxley, but all rendered in this exquisite visual style which uses a yellow glow throughout to make certain elements shine in the shadows.

This is our first time seeing Martin's work and we cannot wait to see more.

The Edge Off

Publisher: Cabal Comics
Writer: Fraser Campbell
Artist: Iain Laurie, David B Cooper (Colours), Colin Bell (Lettering)
Price: £4 from cabalcomics.bigcartel.com



Readers of Fraser Campbell's previous psychedelic adventures may think they know what's in store with his new book, but – the reality is – nothing can prepare us for the trip that awaits…

We open with Lee, a mob enforcer, struggling with retirement, and awakening to find his daughter kidnapped and his system swimming with a synthetic psychotropic drug called Rapture. Simple. With no time to wait until he recovers from being doped, he grabs his weapon of choice and races to get his daughter back from her captors before it's too late.

There is plenty of masterful work on display here. The surrealist elements in the writing and artwork toy with both the perception of Lee and the observer – with Lee flailing wildly for control panel by panel, and us, the reader, gently corralled and directed through nudges of ever-escalating insanity and growing violence as the tale spirals towards the final confrontation.

Iain Laurie's artwork has a compelling, often haunting quality that cranks up the emotion and exaggerates the violence, while deepening the sense of unreality. A deeply interesting comic, full of images that are sure to stay you.

Killtopia

Publisher: BHP Comics
Writer: Dave Cook
Artist: Craig Paton
Price: £8.99 from bhpcomics.tictail.com

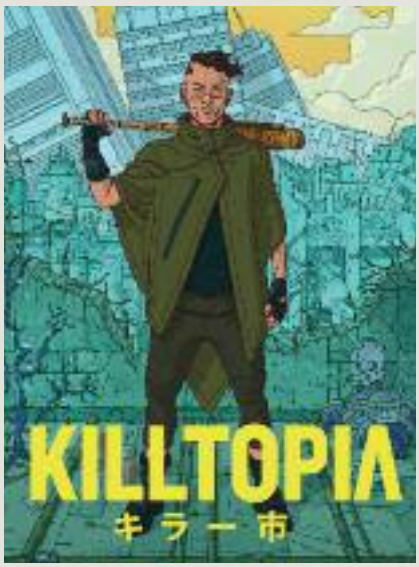
Set in your archetypal near future dystopia, Killtopia sees vigilantes known as Wreckers hunt down malfunctioning mechs before turning on each other. Entering the world of Killtopia is struggling rookie wrecker Shinji, who encounters a mech who is more than the usual tin can, this one can talk, and think.

Killtopia wears its cyberpunk and anime influences on its sleeves like a badge of honour as it melds every dystopian sci-fi cliche into one glorious technicolour package.

It's helped in no small part by the outstanding art skills of Craig Paton, whose intricate designs and detailed line work reminded us All Star Superman's Frank Quietly. But rather than wallow in dystopian bleakness it also has this neon hyper colour palette of pinks and blues and yellow

It is also underpinned with a very British sense of humour throughout, and is packed full of little visual tricks and jokes that stop it from being too sombre or heavy going.

So if you like your sci-fi darkly funny, ultra violent and packed to the rafters with monster mechs and crazy hyper colour villains then Killtopia is definitely the book for you!



“I wanted to explore how you can be from two places and not quite belong in either”

Kristyna Baczynski on being an alien in **Retrograde Orbit**

Set on a mining colony in the depths of space Kristyna Baczynski’s Retrograde Orbit is a complex and poignant tale of a young alien girl trying to fit into a world that is different to her own. With it’s subtle look at immigration and identity, we caught up with it’s creator to find out more about what it is like to be an alien in both senses of the word.





Retrograde Orbit is one of three books being released by Avery Hill this September

Can you tell us a bit about the inspiration for Flint’s story?
Kristyna Baczynski: The sci-fi setting was decided early on, after conversations with Ricky, my editor at Avery Hill. I pitched several ideas – my personal preference being the sci-fi story – and Ricky was most interested in sci-fi too. So we rolled with that.

It has a very personal feel to it, does it include any elements of your own experiences growing up in it?
KB: Yes, the story incorporates a lot of my personal experiences. I think, as an adult, you’re able to look back at your childhood and unpack it in a way that you can’t at the time, or even near the time. I wanted to better understand and define those things that felt strange.

Flint’s relationship with her home world is really interesting. It feels like she is an immigrant who has fled to safety. Is this based on the real world?
KB: My family are from Ukraine and came to the UK after surviving the Second World War, so I’m a second generation immigrant. I hadn’t really understood completely what that meant while I was growing up, so this was an opportunity to get to know that aspect of myself. I also grew up in a single-parent, working class family and the Chernobyl disaster happened the year I was born. All of this plays into the comic.

Which of the alien species was your favourite to draw and create?
KB: I loved drawing the background characters in the crowd scenes at school or in the refinery. I hid a lot of goofy aliens in this comic, in part to keep myself entertained while drawing it, but also for readers to have a fun spotting them.
The characters you draw once always feel more exciting that the ones you draw hundreds of times, so I’m biased about favourites. I’ll let readers pick their own.

Purchase Retrograde Orbit from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

The Water Spirit (Gamayun Tales Book 2)

Publisher: Nobrow Press
Writer/Artist: Alexander Utkin
Price: £12.99 from Nobrow.net

This follow up to last year's the King of Birds, sees Alexander Utkin continue to adapt Russian folk tales into the kind of sumptuous graphic novels you can only get from Nobrow Press.

Even if you haven't read the previous volume you can dive head long into the world of The Water Spirit as it has that classic folk tale vibe to it, mixing morality tale and folklore into a perfect package. Utkin's writing has a real lyrical quality to it and the artwork is truly sublime throughout, mixing a soft Studio Ghibli style with the lush painted colours of a bande desinée.

With it being a folk tale based story, it feels a little bit light in content, but when the artwork is as good as this, then you don't mind feeling a little short changed in terms of a dense and complex plot. It just means you have an excuse to read it again and again and soak up every drop of aquatic brilliance on each page!





Red Rocket Comet

Publisher: Labrat Comics
Writer: Matt Garvey
Artist: Andy W. Clift, Grayham Puttock, Michael Rea
Price: £5 from mattgarvey.bigcartel.com



Jerry is a retired superhero who is visited in the night by his old nemesis Lloyd (aka Dark Skull). Both are old men, down on their luck and looking for some kind of validation about their place in the world. During this night-time visit they look back on a key moment in their relationship and how it has affected their life and why it has brought them to this situation.

And that's all we are going to tell you for now…

Garvey has created a story that ebbs and flows to perfection, revealing key moments one at a time, keeping the reader on the edge of their seat right up until the final panel. His writing has a confidence, with the kind of leanness and lack of superfluous info that the best Mark Millar books have.

Garvey's use of dual time-lines is made more meaningful by having different artists for each period. The present-day pages features art from Circusside's Grayham Puttock, whose sophisticated line-work and almost photo-realistic approach makes for a gritty and awe-inspiring style. This is counterbalanced by sublime work from Andy Clift for the flashback scenes which continues his amazing Silver-Age-infused artwork from Captain Cosmic and is ideal for the old-school scenes.

With Red Rocket Comet Garvey has delivered one of his best titles to date thanks to a really smart concept that makes the most of some exceptional artwork from Puttock and Clift.

SMALL PRESS SPOTLIGHT

We pick the best small press titles from Thought Bubble 2018

Pour your self a stiff cup of coffee and get ready for the hyper-caffeinated antics of investigative reporter Chips McFitz. Mat Greaves has the visuals of SpongeBob Squarepants but the attitude of Fritz The Cat and creates a surreal and hyper active mix of comedy and crime noir. This second story from the world of Chip see our hero blamed for a murder he is trying to solve. It's delightfully daft and looks incredible so fire up your espresso maker and enjoy!



You can purchase Chip McFitz from www.matgreaves.com

Set in his native South America, Gustavo Varga's L1MA is a gritty sci-fi crime drama set in a near future Peru, where gangs in Incan make up roam the streets and kill each other while technicolour animals are used as couriers for drugs and information. When a group of young kids recover a satchel with a mysterious squid in, they are drawn into this terrifying underbelly of brutal crime gangs. Gustavo is not one to shy away from extreme violence, sometimes featuring his young heroes, and as a result creates a book which is both incredibly stylish, but also uncomfortably graphic at times too. **Purchase L1MA from gustaffovargas.bigcartel.com**





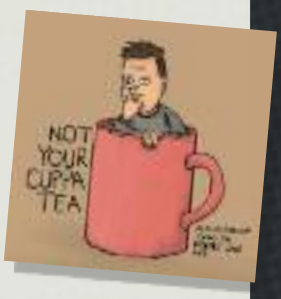
Headlined by a man with a carp's head, and featuring an under-card which has a human gravy boat and a poetry writing bearded villain, Josh Hicks' Glorious Wrestling Apocalypse manages to perfectly capture some of the more ludicrous elements of professional wrestling, but without turning it into a total joke. This is the third volume of his excellent GWA series and continues the quirky adventures of the eclectic cast of the GWA. In this latest issue they have to attempt to rescue the company from going bankrupt at the hands of it's struggling owner.

You can purchase Glorious Wrestling Apocalypse from joshhicks.bigcartel.com

Madius Comics are best known for quirky horror titles like Horrere and Papercuts and Inkstains and so when writer Mike Sambrook revealed his new title The Incredible Bun was going to be about a giant bunny it came as something of a surprise. Especially when you see the opening pages from artist Rosie Packwood which see adorably cute bunnies in their burrows. But worry not, Madius fans, there is still plenty of the trademark Madius mayhem as Bun is no ordinary rabbit, he is a giant bunny who goes to the big city in order to find himself and ends up being roped into an animal fighting group. It's a strange mix of Watership Down and Blood Sport and makes for a fantastic and bizarre read.



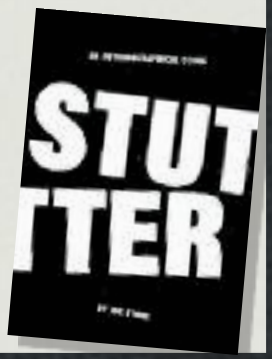
Purchase Bun #1 from madius.bigcartel.com



Not Your Cuppa Tea is a new collection of short comics from Boxes creator Todd Oliver. Packed full of the same kind of strange and surreal strips that we know and love, Todd's work is very funny and very weird and also a little bit rude. With the anarchic spirit of Oink or Beavis and Butthead and the surreal visuals of Terry Gilliam, it is a superbly funny book and if you love this then you should also check out his new book Smedley about the adventures of a man shaped like a worm!

Purchase Not Your Cuppa Tea from toddoliver.bigcartel.com

Small press comics have a fine track record of looking at mental health issues and Stutter from Joe Stone is one of the best examples of how to do it well. It examines life with a speech impediment and Joe tells poignant stories of how his life has been affected from childhood to the present day. He uses smart visual tricks like broken speech bubbles to really get his point across and this makes for a really interesting and informative look at an often overlooked condition. **Purchase Stutter from www.joe-stone.co.uk/shop/**





with
Pat Mills

THE LAST WORD UNDER THE WIRE

Charley's War, beautifully illustrated by Joe Colquhoun, is back in print, a superb new three volume collection from Rebellion. When it first appeared in Battle comic in 1979, despite its fiercely anti war tone, it was rarely challenged or censored. This was because it was widely accepted, at that time, that World War One was mass-murder, knowingly carried out by generals and politicians under a false flag of patriotism. Charley was hugely popular with its young readers; the number one story in the comic almost for its entire run. It deeply affected them and thus many kids from military family backgrounds chose not to join the armed forces after reading it. I can't tell you how that thrills me, especially today when PTSD and veteran suicides have reached epidemic levels.

"In a sinister act of revisionism, the truth of the 1914 – 1918 conflict began to be quietly swept away"

And, having shown that anti-war stories can appeal to a mass audience, I really thought other comic writers would follow in my footsteps. They would analyse what I had done, and apply the same story and character principles to other wars such as Vietnam or the Falklands or even World War Two.

To my disappointment, this never happened. No anti-war story like Charley's War has ever been attempted by anyone else in mainstream comics. Yes, there have been plenty of 'War is Hell' stories, or even 'War is Cool' stories, but they are not anti-war. Rather, they are in the same genre as the 'War is Hell' films Apocalypse Now and Full Metal Jacket. These two movies were shown to American troops to psyche them up for battle the night before they began their first invasion of Iraq.

But, I told myself, there are plenty of books and films out there which have an anti-war theme. So it hardly mattered what happened in the world of comics. However, as the centenary of the Great War approached, this was to change. In a sinister act of revisionism, the truth of the 1914 – 1918 conflict began to be quietly swept away. It was replaced instead with a simple patriotic story that Germany was the evil empire responsible, as in World War Two, and the horrendous disasters of the Somme and Ypres were actually 'victories'. This was something no-one had actually realised before.

To aid Big Brother in this Orwellian fantasy, any film, comedy (like Black Adder Goes Forth) or drama that maintained a critical view was rarely shown on television. No more books like Butchers and Bunglers of World War by John Laffin appeared. Instead there was a surprising flood of biographies extolling the hitherto unknown virtues of supreme Butcher and Bungler General Haig with titles like Haig, Architect of Victory and The Good Soldier: Douglas Haig.

But why this need to change our past? Because, as George Orwell said, 'Who controls the past controls the future.' The British publishers (a handful of conglomerates) helped by acting as gate-keepers, blocking authors who dared to tell the truth about the war and General Haig.

Charley's War, too, fell foul of the gatekeepers. There had been two proposed radio documentaries, a tv education programme, a Radio 4 drama pitch plus it was optioned by a major film production company for a tv series to be shown during the anniversary years. All, mysteriously, came to nothing.

It was somewhat different in France. There, the French edition of Charley was the subject of a major exhibition of Joe's art at the Meaux Museum of the Great War – the French equivalent of the Imperial War Museum. There were specially selected pages of Joe's art on display at the entrance to each section of the museum. Leading members of the French media were invited to the opening and I showed them round, talking about Joe's art. There were similar important events featuring Charley's War at French museums on the Western Front and in Holland. The series drew special mention at Angouleme Comics Festival.

Meanwhile, in Britain, there was still … nothing.

Our Imperial War Museum were not interested. Charley's War was also shamefully missing from Comics Unmasked, Art and Anarchy in the UK , the biggest comic book exhibition May – August 2014, at the British Library, even though my other stories were very much on display. That same British Library who, when I checked their bookshop at the time, did not have one book on pacifists or conscientious objectors.

The revisionists have done a truly impressive job in carrying out their deception. Even the damning anti-war words of the last Great War Tommy, Harry Patch, who, embarrassingly for the state, was a pacifist, have been suppressed.

To End All Wars by Adam Hochschild is the only current anti-war mainstream book I'm aware of that somehow got past the gatekeepers. This may be because he showed a sympathetic side to Milner and other establishment figures, which, arguably, gave the book a kind of 'balance'. Maybe that made it easier to slip the book under the wire. If so, it's an excellent example of subversion. I've made a note.

But Milner who you may ask? Alfred Milner was the greatest British war criminal of all. This virtually unknown, eminence grise was the real leader of the British state. Milner and co. planned and started the Great War using the same techniques Blair employed to start the Iraq War. I imagine that's where Blair got the idea from.

Check out E.D. Morel's Truth and the War (PDF on line) for the evidence available during the war. Or now: Prolonging the Agony by Macgregor and Docherty. Or consider the poet Sassoon, a member of the establishment, who admitted, 'I believe that this War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.' So they put him in an asylum until he came to his senses.

Gary Sheffield, the leading revisionist, told me Morel was sadly mistaken. Morel, the journalist who exposed the truth about the Belgian Congo atrocities, was feared by the British state, because he was exposing their war crimes, so they imprisoned him and broke his health. No mistake about that, Gary.

It's a great pity that Big Brother has won and the mass-murderers of our forefathers have got away with their crimes; and, today, no one else seems interested in producing anti-war comics. I guess the lure of the leotard is just too strong. But there is one notable exception that I'm in awe of. One comic creator out there that I regard as a kindred spirit.

Thirty five year old Darren Cullen (not the graffiti artist with the same name), www.spellingmistakescostlives.com, whose artwork has the ballsy, cutting edge that comics used to have. His poster 'What did you do in the Great War Daddy?' shows a man hideously scarred and maimed. His anti-army recruiting comic is superb. Likewise his mockingly funny films Action Man: Battlefield Casualties presented by Veterans for Peace (on youtube). This 'drew attention to to the way the Ministry of Defence targets children as young as five with its official toy range, 'HM Armed Forces', which includes an RAF Drone Playset.' His films, naturally, infuriated the Mail and the Sun. If you like them, do forward them to others.

For a mainstream audience, though, Charley's War is still the only anti-war comic book to have slipped under the wire. So, today, it is more important than ever and I really wish it wasn't.

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COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine

MAGIC & HORROR

ISSUE



Welcome to ComicScene UK. **We'd like to dedicate this Issue to all the great comic creators we lost this year.** We've been sent some personal recollections of **John Armstrong** by Pat Mills and **Carlos Ezquerra** by Colin Noble.

See you next Issue.

Yours aye
Tony.

Carlos Ezquerra - A Tribute

Most of you who know me know of my love for D C Thomson comics. And some of that love is reserved for Carlos as I remember some of his earliest work in those comics before he was poached by the opposition. You will have seen other articles that have listed his bibliography in detail so I am going to concentrate on my few interactions with King Carlos.

In 2013, I found out that Carlos is going to be at Glasgow Comic Con. I was excited beyond words as this is a rarity for me to find out about a convention before it has happened, that is close enough for me to get to and has guests that I want to meet!

I missed out on getting a sketch in the morning session as Carlos started at 10:00 am and did not finish until well after 1:00 pm. Carlos apologised to those of us in the queue as he wanted to have his lunch and a cigarette before he did anything else. While many of us were mildly disappointed, we could happily wait, so I mooched around for a little bit more and then decided that I really had nothing more important to do than wait for Carlos as the panel he was involved in was a full house. I settled in as being first in line for the next Carlos session and amused myself for the next 40 minutes or so reading comics. Carlos once again returned and was a bit shocked to see some people queuing already. He said that he wanted another cigarette and as an ex-smoker, I could easily sympathise with his need for another smoke. In fact, if I had not given up, I would have been joining him! I told him to go for his smoke as we would still be there when he got back.

Refreshed Carlos came back and thanked me for my patience. I demurred to him as I easily remembered what it was like to want a smoke and then he asked me a very important question. What did I want? My brain went into meltdown. I could have asked for Questor but I doubted that he would remember that. There was Judge Dredd or Johnny Alpha but I had seen everyone walking around the con with that one and some of those Carlos had gone through them very quickly as he could see the queue was getting longer all the time. I thought about Eve from Third World War, but then was I being too pretentious? Then it hit me, what was the one character that I went back to time after time? How about

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Major Eazy, I asked. Carlos almost does a double take and asks me am I old enough to remember him? If I had not loved him before then, I did with that comment. Carlos appears to be lost in thought for some time before he says Major Eazy? Yes I remember him. And that's it, Carlos is off.

The time passes and I am lost in watching Carlos creating something new. I got my sketch, I rambled on with my thanks and walked off in a bit of a daze. It was only when I checked my phone, I realised that I had monopolised his time for almost half an hour!

That was the only time I met Carlos, but after the con, I tentatively sent out a friend request on Facebook and was ecstatic when he accepted. A year or so passes and I pick up a batch of Wizards in a deal. So, I am flicking through them and I am stunned to find that I had forgotten almost all this early work of his. I sent a Private Message to Carlos asking him if he can recall his first work as I had ended up reading a story set during the Zulu Wars and this was published in 1973. Thinking this has to be one of his earliest, I write to him to ask about it and you can imagine how chuffed I am when he comes back to me to say that this was his first. So I created the post He Was Only A Private Soldier on my blog and Carlos is kind enough to advertise it. Chatting with Alan Hebden since Carlos passed and it looks like Alan's father Eric Hebden was the author. We are checking on this and hope to get back to you all once we can confirm this.

He was due to return to the UK to an event that I could travel to in 2016 and I asked him about this a month or so before the event as I hoped to meet him again and confuse people by being in a queue for him with a pile of D C Thomson comics for him to sign. He had found the thought of it quite funny too to think that all these people would be lined up with 2000AD, Starlord, Just A Pilgrim and I would be there with a pile of Wizards for him to sign. However, due to the travel arrangements put in place by the organiser, he had told them of his disapproval and ended up not coming to that event. I missed out on meeting him and it is a regret I will have to the end of my days that I never got the pleasure of meeting Carlos again.

But we chatted off and on over the years. I won't flatter myself and say that I was a close friend of Carlos' but I was able to bask in the reflected glory of being a social media friend of his. His last cover came out in October and it is the variant cover of Snipe Elite: Resistance. However, I have to sign off with a final gift from Carlos. Carlos confirmed that this is his first piece ever published in British comics and this is either from Mirabelle or Valentine and he ended up with the gig when the script was sent to him by mistake. Mistakes like this we can live with. RIP Carlos, you will be missed.

Colin Noble.

John Armstrong – A Tribute

I was so sad to hear of John's recent passing. Many readers of girls comics will know of his legendary work on Bella at the Bar, the story of a working class gymnast for Tammy, and Moonchild, a Carrie-stye story published in Misty. Both serials were phenomenally popular. Bella, created by Jenny McDade, was so successful it even led to a series of Bella annuals.

He truly was the greatest girls comic artist of all time. He was the equivalent in importance of Brian Bolland and Simon Bisley in boys comics.

His work flourished in an era where girls comics were quite rightly outselling boys comics by two to one, because, after all, women have always read more than men. But then they were neglected. Sadly comics became an exclusive male sand-pit and girls comics died. And I guess John's importance and significance died with them.

His stories were always number one because he had a skill that is valued highly by girls and, hopefully, by a male audience, too. Namely he was a master of facial expression. Because he had astonishing insights into the female psyche. This is a genius talent that is barely recognized today but I have always valued and so did John's readers. Whereas on a typical male comic, the characters might have a range of -say - 10 facial expressions for happy, sad, angry and determined, John would have 50! So his heroines could show a spectrum of feelings ranging from mild irritation to extreme anguish. The same range and complexity you would expect from a real life actor. So looking at his art is actually like watching tv. Only Joe Colquhoun on boys comics had a similar wide range. To me, conveying feelings is far more important and more meaningful than drawing big guns, amazing spaceships and peculiar men in tights. They are an exploration of inner space; of the soul itself.

I was truly privileged to work with John on Moonchild and also Grange Hill for the Beeb. He was also a smashing guy. I interviewed him at length some years ago and he told me some extraordinary stories about his life. For example,he was a Day Day plus One veteran. And he then served in the Far East after the Japanese surrender.

Like all really top professionals - he was 'low maintenance'. I would describe what I wanted in my scripts and he would get it instantly and just get on with it. I do miss those happy days when we worked together and I miss him, too, greatly.



So I'm delighted that Rebellion have reprinted his work on Bella and Moonchild and I hear he was thrilled to have his stories finally and rightly collected for posterity.

He needs to be remembered alongside all the other comic great artists and writers.

And it bears repeating: John Armstrong was the ultimate girls comic artist.

Pat Mills.



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The 13th Doctor

With Jodie Whittaker and her new friends having now made their small screen bow, it's all change not just on board the TARDIS but for Titan's Doctor Who comic book range as well with the debut this month of The Thirteenth Doctor's highly anticipated new monthly title. Written by Los Angeles-based scribe Jody Houser, some continuity will be provided by erstwhile Twelfth Doctor artist Rachael Stott.

"It was just a case of finding the perfect team for the book, and I'm so delighted that it all came together," says Titan's Doctor Who line editor Andrew James. "We've obviously worked with Rachael extensively across the Doctor Who range, and if I'm honest, I was half-expecting that she'd have blasted off to titles new when I approached her about drawing this series. But I think Rachael must have Doctor Who metaphorically tattooed on the inside of every cell of her body, and it shows with every cover and page she delivers. She let me know that she was definitely up for coming back for Jodie's Doctor, and she's having a blast, taking the show - and the book - into a brand new era. There are very few series in comics where everything refreshes so completely, while the core remains the same, so drawing The Twelfth Doctor Year Two is a very different proposition to drawing The Thirteenth Doctor #1."

Having made her name on Valiant's off-beat superhero book Faith, Houser has since left her mark at virtually all the major American comic book companies, penning Amazing Spider-Man: Renew

Your Vows at Marvel and DC's Batman spin-off Mother Panic in addition to Dark Horse's just-released Stranger Things mini-series.

"I've been a fan of Jody's writing, and had been looking for a project that she could possibly fit, for a long time, although you'll know from her many other titles at the moment that she can turn her hand to anything," says James. "We'd chatted a bit about the prospect of Doctor Who at last year's Thought Bubble in Leeds, and then many moons later, when it came to actually signing up the team, thankfully everything lined up. But of all the books Jody writes, Doctor Who is the one she was actually born for, and the fact that she'd been doing a live-play tabletop Doctor Who roleplaying game for years was just the icing on the cake. Of course, the fact that Jody had long wanted to work with Rachael, and vice versa, was an even better example of destiny in action."

With Comicraft's Sarah Jacobs in charge of lettering, Enrica Eren Angolini's colours further enhance Stott's impressive pen and ink work. "I've had the pleasure of working with Enrica on twelve issues of Titan's Warhammer 40,000 comic, where she conjured and rendered consistently amazing palettes over Tazio Bettini's art, and I'd also been able to see her developing her considerable talents on our just-released Shades of Magic: The Steel Prince mini-series," says James, referring to Titan's comic book spin-off of VE Schwab's fantasy novels, which are profiled elsewhere in this very issue of Comics Scene. "She and Tazio had helped out with a few Doctor Who pages here and there in the past, and I thought Enrica's colours would be the perfect fit for Rachael's clean lines."

With the new series receiving rave reviews on top of the highest viewing figures since Christopher Eccleston's inaugural appearance as the Ninth Doctor in 2005, it was important to ensure that the comic also lived up to the impressive example set by the new television show. "Titles like these are always a heady responsibility," admits James. "But then the same is equally true of any new #1, and particularly any new launch involving a brand new Doctor, as you never get a second chance to make a first impression. But with Jodie's casting, and also that of her new friends, coupled with the brand new production team, and not to mention the brilliant bench of TV writers and directors, it all adds up to an incredibly fresh, exciting and reinvented feeling, which must be unique to Doctor Who amongst all the other long-running TV shows."

Consequently, all involved are determined to bring their A-game to The Thirteenth Doctor. "In this case, it's less the pressure, which is always there, and more a feeling of wanting to do the new era the justice it deserves," reasons James. "So as well as calling on some phenomenal creative talents, we've also gone out of our way to make the comics line as open and accessible as possible to fans both old and new."

But with new showrunner Chris Chibnall releasing little advance information about The Thirteenth Doctor and her new friends Yasmin Khan (Mandip Gill), Ryan Sinclair (Tosin Cole) and Graham O'Brien (Bradley Walsh), Houser and Stott didn't exactly have a huge amount of background material to draw on ahead of the first episode's transmission in early October. "It's been tricky on occasion as the secrecy on this new series has been phenomenal," says James, wryly. "I can only applaud that, as I can't believe that we headed into the new series with so much unspoiled, as that is such a rare thrill in this era of television. But for us, each and every new public-facing tidbit has been a help, because we got to see both how the characters have been presented internally within the BBC and in the documents that have been shared with us, but also how they had been presented to and then received by the viewers."

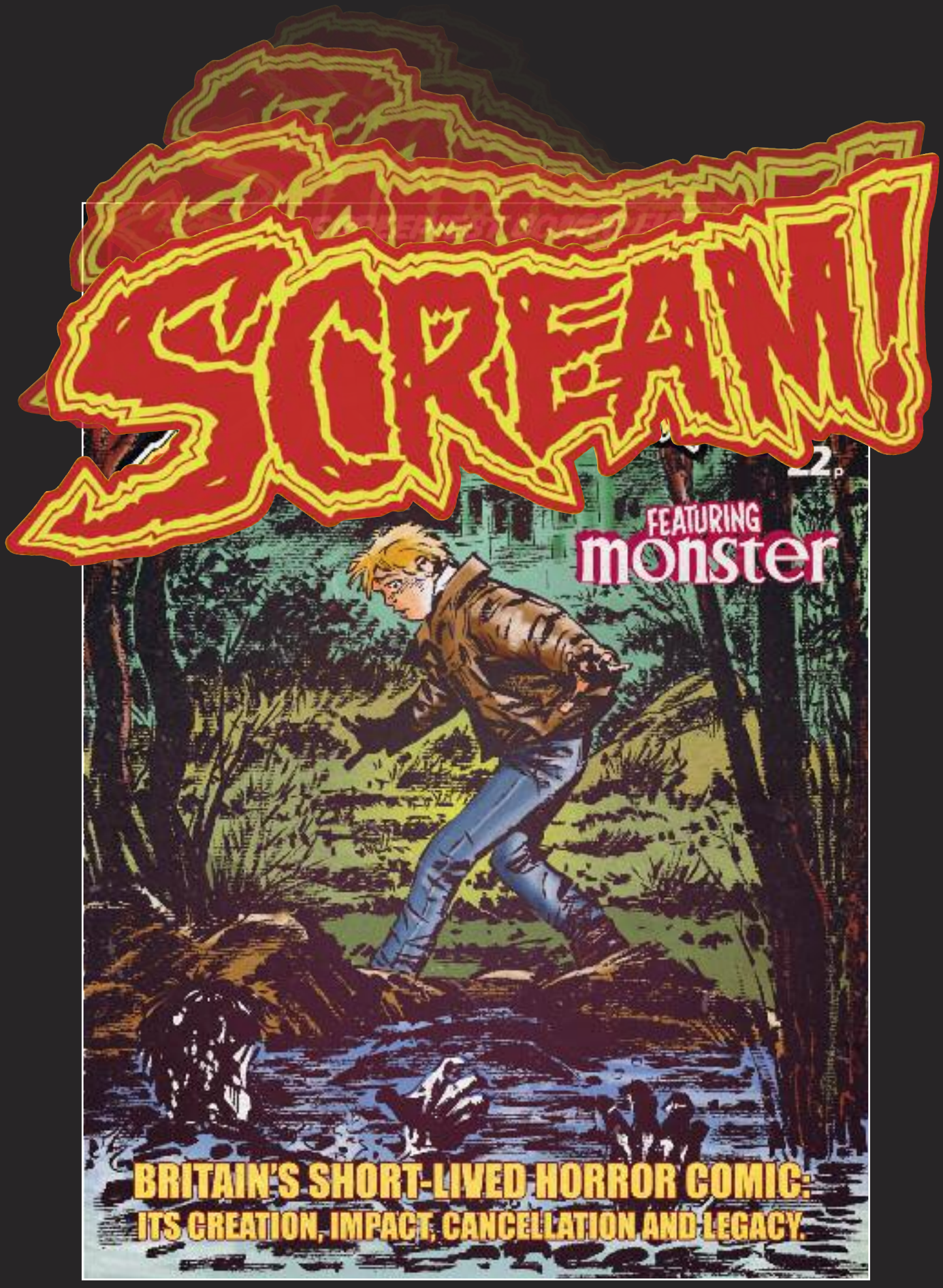
Noting that, "one of the best steers we've had is that this is still very much Doctor Who!" The BBC has given Titan plenty of guidance at every stage of the comic's production. "The core of the show – and the thrust of its stories – are just as they have always been up until now," explains James. "The Doctor Who storytelling engine is so strong, and so flexible, and the character of the Doctor themselves so universal and yet so specific at the same time, that it turns out that you can swap out pretty much all of its parts and it still runs like a dream. So picture an amazing episode of Doctor Who with this new cast at the helm, and that's what we're making in the comics."

Appearing in the recent Road to the Thirteenth Doctor three-parter, Houser and Stott also wrote and drew a trio of short stories, featuring the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors, that offered tantalising hints of what to expect from the new series. "The mysterious, time-trapped character that's was a part of all of the back-ups plays a major role in the first arc of the ongoing comic, so you won't have to wait long for that to be resolved," promises James. "Who they are, why they have been haunting the Doctor, and 'what if saving them is only the first part of the larger mystery?' are all at the core of Jody, Rachael and Enrica's first story. That said, if you're a new reader coming fresh to the first issue, we'll make sure that you're not lost. You'll get everything you need between those covers, so The Thirteenth Doctor #1 is a great place for any new, lapsed or curious readers to start picking up the comics."

Written by Richard Dinnick and illustrated by a host of different artists, the new series was preceded by a special zero issue, The Many Lives of Doctor Who, which saw Thirteen poignantly reliving all of her numerous past incarnations. "It has a couple of strong links into the ongoing series as it represents the regeneration scene as show on screen, but with a new context," teases James. "It also has Rachael and Enrica's first piece of Thirteenth Doctor interior art together, which is quite something. And each of the short stories also demonstrates some aspect of the Doctor's personality or toolset, whether it's the TARDIS, the sonic screwdriver, the Doctor's many friends from Earth, or their non-guns-blazing, heartfelt approach to problem solving. It's like a taster book for the whole Titan comics range, as much as it's a wonderful guide to the Whoniverse."

But with their Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Doctor monthlies having concluded for now, Titan will be concentrating on The Thirteenth Doctor for the foreseeable future. "The Thirteenth Doctor ongoing series is day zero for the next phase of the Doctor Who comics line, so we're going to keep the focus tight on that series through to the end of the year, and probably the start of 2019, too," says James. "We're committed to that core book, and also to not overwhelming the retailers and readers with too many spin-offs, as we get underway with this new phase of the Doctor's adventures. But as we all know, there's so much amazing stuff in the grand future history of Doctor Who that's worth exploring, so hopefully you'll see some new announcements early next year!"

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IF YOU WANT TO GO FASTER!

If there was a UK version of the Comics Code Authority at the time, Scream would have never have passed first base. The first issue even featured a story by future American Comics Code baiter Alan Moore! You have to remember, this was a children's comic. This was a comic that got away with murder, for a short time anyway!



Horror comics in the UK were quite rare. In girl's comics we had great titles such as Spellbound and Misty. There was nothing really for male horror fans, except for Dez Skinn's The House of Hammer in the 1970's. So, when IPC management decided to launch a boy's horror comic in 1984, it was seen as a big risk. Video nasties were big news in the UK at the time, and IPC were still wary of getting bad press, after the Action comic banning in 1976.

The task of bringing this comic to fruition was given to Group Editor, Barrie Tomlinson, who then passed the dummy version of Scream! to new editor, Ian Rimmer. The Assistant Editor on the title was Simon Furman. I conducted an interview with Simon, who is better known these days as the co-creator of Marvel's Death's Head and the definitive writer on Transformers comics…

He says, "At the time,1984, I was working for IPC Magazines in their Competitions Department, writing copy for a host of different titles, so moving onto Scream was a step sideways, and came with no long-term guarantees, but being a comics fan, I couldn't resist the chance to work on a weekly comic, especially one in the vein (no pun intended) of 2000 AD, which was very much the punk rock of comics."

The team decided to go for a fictional editor, Ghastly McNasty (the name apparently coming from a band in Liverpool, who were called Filthy McNasty!). These fictional editors were a staple of British comics, which featured editors such as Tharg, Starlord, Misty and The Big E, who was actually Dave Gibbons in disguise. This fictional host harks back to EC Comics 'Tales from the Crypt's' The Crypt Keeper. In fact, the comic had a few similarities with its US predecessor, featuring an anthology format, and a sprinkling of 'one and done' stories, with a sting in the tale. So, in Scream, McNasty (not Scottish as far as I can ascertain!) was this mysterious hooded figure, who launched each issue 'from the depths' of IPC's Kings Reach Tower, in London. There was even a competition to draw what lay beneath his cowl!

Let's focus on the most popular strips over the comics initial run. Scream! was famous for the use of 2000 AD stalwarts such as John Wagner, Alan Grant, Cam Kennedy and, in the first episode of Monster, Alan Moore. The first episode is a master-class in building mystery and suspense, and deftly introduces the main characters, except for the titular Monster character.

To say this first episode is dark is an understatement! It features mental and physical abuse, extreme violence and, ultimately, murder and the disposal of a body! The climax to the first episode is such a good cliffhanger, that readers would not be able to help themselves coming back for more in the next issue… if you pardon the pun! However, Moore, and the artist Heinzl, would not return in the next issue. Due to other work commitments (so the official story goes), Alan Moore left the strip, after setting up the premise in the first issue. 'Rick Clark' picked up the script-writing duties, yet another pen name for John Wagner and Alan Grant, of Judge Dredd fame. Moore had allegedly written a treatment for the whole story, which was at odds with the direction that the IPC





board wanted. The strip, once the Monster was revealed, (in reality, Kenny Corman's badly disfigured Uncle Terry.) became a 'Fugitive' style horror/thriller; it even featured a police pursuer, in the guise of Inspector Halley. Wagner and Grant were seen as a safe pair of hands, but the strip would not be without controversy. There was the problem of Uncle Terry 'accidently' killing people along the way! In fact, he seemed to make a habit of this! Kenny and Terry left a trail of bodies in their wake over the initial run of issues!

There was also a problem with some of the physical violence depicted in the strip. An original page recently became available to buy on EBay. If you compare the page to the final printed version, you can see that the art has been changed quite significantly, to crudely erase the hand which is choking Kenny. This 'bodge' job is quite rough, as we can see by the quality of the face in the final printed version. Also note the 'Next Week' panel has been changed from 'Double-barrelled trouble' to 'Monster Minder'. The board were obviously nervous.

Simon Furman recalls, "I quickly had to develop a whole different skill set and get used to weekly deadlines and constant revisions. IPC management were watching us like hawks, never really comfortable with the idea of a 'horror' comic for kids, even though I assume it was their idea in the first place. We had to continually self-censor the content, and even then, there were constant 'requests' for changes, to both story and art." Furman continues, "Two good things came out of that. One, I got to work with editor, Ian Rimmer, who taught me a lot and bore the brunt of the management stuff. That taught me patience, tolerance and how to work within constraints. We're still friends to this day. Two, the constant deadline pressure, made worse by the last-minute changes, meant I got my first script work, doing last minute, often overnight fill-ins on Terror of the Cats and The Dracula File."

The Dracula File was a weird hybrid of hammer horror and espionage, set in the U.K. The script is unlike any other Dracula adaptation. It has a tone and eccentricity that can only be found in British comics. It was one of the more popular strips in Scream, with stunning black and white gothic artwork by Eric Bradbury. The Thirteenth Floor was a high concept story featuring a computer, Max, who utilises virtual reality for revenge against people who have wronged his tenants. The



punishment always fitted the crime! This strip written by Wagner and Grant again, under the guise of Ian Holland, was beautifully realised by Spanish artist Ortiz, who drew every episode and never missed a beat!

This strip featured many grisly deaths and the body count was high!

Unfortunately, Max had a habit of accidentally going too far and scaring the villains to death! Death by a Skeletal Grim Reapers, Spiders, Sharks and most bizarrely of all, psychotic Debt Collectors! Max would then have to hypnotise his human helper, Jerry, to help him cover up the murders... all this taking place in a kid's comic! And we are just scratching the surface. The first fifteen issues packed in vampires, zombies, gothic horror, body

horror, dark humour and killer cats!!!

The cancellation was not signposted. Usually, we got a 'Big News Inside for All Readers!' slogan on the cover, to signify an imminent merger into another comic, but this time, nothing. No new issue was forthcoming after number 15... we waited... and waited. Simon Furman picks up the story... "Scream only lasted 15 issues, the casualty of an NUJ (National Union of Journalists) strike – though in truth, management just grabbed the opportunity to shut us down without it looking like it was a management decision. But in that time, it taught me all my editorial skills and set me on the road to becoming a full-time freelance scriptwriter. I owe it, and Ian, a lot. Especially as Ian went to work for Marvel UK afterwards and kind of took me along with him."

Sadly, Scream was no more, but a merger did eventually happen, after a break, with the 1st of September issue of the Eagle. Strangely, only two stories carried over from Scream, Monster and The Thirteenth Floor. The Dracula File and the other continuing strips, were never completed.

The Dracula File's artist, Eric Bradbury did transfer over to the Eagle, and became the artist on Doomlord, another Wagner and Grant creation. The New Eagle and Scream! hybrid continued until the 30th of March 1985, with Monster completing its story arc in issue 158 and Uncle Terry settling in Australia, a happy ending of sorts!

The Thirteenth Floor moved away from its horror roots and Max was eventually moved into a department store where he starts working for MI5, as you do! Of course, his Thirteenth Floor still existed, in a changing room! The stories are still fun but do stretch credibility a bit! As if admitting a wrong turn, the writers eventually returned Max to Maxwell Tower, where he continued his reign of terror against any downbeat that terrorised his precious tenants.

A brief return to form follows, until the strip is finally put to bed in 1987, when the tower burns down and Max is shipped out. In a frankly bizarre turn of events, Max is installed as the new editor of the Eagle comic! Obviously, a homicidal computer is the ideal candidate to run a kid's comic! Again, Max is added to the roster of British Comics fictional editors, although this one has blood on his hands!!! Max held onto the Editors role, until another new look sent Max to the great junkyard in the sky. Max did eventually get un-boxed last year in Rebellion's Scream and Misty Special, with more special issues planned.



Back to Scream, and the stories seemed to have lived on in British comics readers collective memory. With the recent acquisition of the old Fleetway characters by Rebellion, we are seeing collections of some of these fondly remembered stories, such as trades of Monster, The Dracula File and a new Thirteenth Floor collection.

To conclude, Scream pushed the boundaries of what is acceptable in children's comics in the 1980's. Much of the horror and violent content went under the radar of parents and the press. In many ways the comic dodged the bullet but was eventually a victim of bad timing. Had the NUJ strike not happened, could Scream have survived, like its stable mate, 2000 AD?

We shall never know. But for a short while, Scream delivered stories which were indeed 'Not for the Nervous!'. Well, 'Not for the IPC board' anyway!

The last word goes to Simon Furman, "I look back on Scream with great affection, and don't wince too much when I re-read my stuff from back then. It was a steep learning curve but everything that followed rolled out of that time.

As a great writer once wrote, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom."

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HORROR in British Girls' Comics



From Old Nancy to the Crypt Keeper, host characters have been popular in the horror genre across media for the past 87 years. In American comics, EC's Ghoulunatics are perhaps the most famous examples. The Crypt Keeper, Vault Keeper and Old Witch were introduced in the 1950s; protecting readers from the horrifying stories they told with well-timed puns and irreverent greetings to their 'boils and ghouls'. They were followed by many others, including Warren Publishing's Uncle Creepy, Cousin Eerie, and Vampirella, and DC Comics' Cain and Abel in the 1960s, hosts of their House of Mystery and House of Secrets anthologies.

A less well-known fact is that many host characters also appear in British girls' comics between the 1950s and the 1990s. These spooky storytellers often curate a dedicated section of the comic telling horror or supernatural tales. Perhaps they were inspired by the American characters; but they also seem to grow naturally out of the older British comics stories, which often began with a narrated paragraph of background, or an introduction from one of the characters.

The first and most famous British host is the Storyteller, introduced in the launch issue of the newly merged June and School Friend (30 January 1965). An older gent with a bow tie and pipe, he hosts 'The STRANGEST Stories Ever Told'. In his opening tale, 'The Haunted Bank' (artist Mike Hubbard), penniless Eric is tempted to steal from his job, but thinks better of it after some strange supernatural happenings. The Storyteller's main role is to introduce the stories and wrap them up with an explanation or a moral, although he occasionally also ends on a question, such as asking 'WAS it a dream?'

The next host is Diana's Man in Black, who debuts in 'Star of Doom' (Diana #197, 26 November 1966), a one-page 'tale[s] of mystery and horror'. Often drawn by David Cuzik Matysiak, he is a Dracula-esque character with black hair and Victorian outfit, who addresses the reader directly, inviting us to 'come a little closer' to hear his tale. Like the Storyteller he appears only in bookending panels and his comments are mostly explanatory: wrapping up the tales rather than raising questions.

Other girls' comics also have older male characters as hosts. Spellbound (DC Thomson, 1976-78) was the home of Damian Darke: a tall, older man in period dress (high collar, ruffled shirt front) and with a raven on his shoulder. He appears weekly from the first issue, where he introduces 'Spectre from the Flame', in which a ghostly judge saves protagonist Jane from an intruder. His epilogues are mixed: sometimes summarising, or sometimes raising questions by asking, for example, 'Well, what do you think?'

These patriarchal guides are followed by some more diverse hosts. 'Gipsy Rosa Remembers' appears in Diana for a time, and the Judy annuals occasionally feature 'She of the Shadows': a glamorous veiled lady in long black dress and gold jewellery. As she introduces herself in the 1976 annual: 'I am She of the Shadows. I know many things and have strange stories to tell. Come closer and listen to one of them.' Like Damian Darke, she combines explanations with questions, offering closure that is tinged with ambivalence by inviting the reader to question the story outcomes.

HOSTS



Judy's most famous host character is Bones, a skeleton who presents 'Tales from Skeleton Corner'. This 'nerve tingling new series' launches with 'Flower Power' (#1632, 20 April 1991), in which Carly uses a homemade flower lotion on her face but is horrified when later her skin withers like dead flowers. Unlike the other male hosts, Bones is more EC Comics than paternal storyteller, and often matches his jokes and appearance to the tale. Skeleton Corner survives the merger of Judy and Mandy (forming M&J, 1991-97) and Bones continues to appear in intermittent runs between 1991-1995.

Gypsy Rose first appears in Jinty and Lindy in 1977 in 'The Ring of Death' (29 January 1977), becoming the host of 'Gypsy Rose's Tales of Mystery and Magic'. She breaks with the previous dominant type of host by being young and female, and also by participating in her own tales (although later stories reduce her to a bookending role), where she helps characters with hauntings, magical items, or other mysteries. For example, in her first appearance she helps Gina discover poison hidden in a family heirloom.

When Misty was launched in 1978, a male storyteller ('Nathan somebody') was initially proposed by sub-editor Bill Harrington, but was rejected as 'too creepy'. Instead its first editor Wilf Prigmore devised Misty: a seductive, ethereal host character (drawn by Shirley Bellwood), who also acted as cover girl and fictional editor of the entire comic. Misty welcomed readers to each issue, answered letters, and occasionally bookended stories in the annuals and holiday specials, where she often cast doubt on the story's outcome.

As well as this type of liminal host (situated outside the storyworld), many serials had their own dedicated hosts: confined to one setting, but introducing a new tale or adventure each week. One of the first is Jackie Flynn, the narrator of 'Bridget at War', who first appears in Diana #146 (4 December 1965) and bookends all ten episodes of this serial. Other later examples in the 1970s and 1980s include 'Madame Marlova Remembers' in which Madame instructs her pupils with inspirational stories of famous ballerinas (Debbie), Miss Hatherleigh the caretaker of 'Cremond Castle' (Spellbound, Nikki), Megan Dolwyn who tells customers the histories of her dolls in 'Dolwyn's Dolls' (Bunty), Tamsin Treco's grandmother in 'A Tale from the Toy Museum' (Bunty), Beverley Jackson who knows the story behind every button in 'The Button Box' (Tammy), and Jade Jenkins' bring-and-buy stall which is made up of objects that all have stories to tell (M&J).

As recurring characters, the girls' comics' hosts helped to shape the distinct identity of each publication. Their roles varied and they might explain, question, console, amuse or intrigue. Nonetheless, they were well loved and are remembered to this day.

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The Gothic Art of Eric Bradbury



Eric Bradbury (1921 - 2001) was one of the unsung heroes of British adventure comics. My first encounter with his art was in IPC's Scream! in 1984, where he worked on The Dracula File, written by Gerry-Finlay-Day and latterly Simon Furman. As a result of the Eagle/Scream! Merger, Eric ended up as the artist on fan favourite Doomlord, where his dark and inky art style was a perfect match for the slightly bonkers direction Alan Grant took the strip. More on this later.

Bradbury studied at Beckenham art school, before going on to work for the Gaumont-British Animation company. Around 1949 he started working for Amalgamated Press which became Fleetway and eventually IPC. One of his fondly remembered strips was Mytek the Mighty, for Valiant. The strip, which was written by regular collaborator, Tom Tully told the rather odd story of a giant robotic ape!

The art is distinctively Bradbury, with great use of black and white in the page compositions, and even the human characters have an 'ugly' feel about them. Another Valiant strip closely associated with Bradbury was The House of Dolmann.

A truly bonkers creation (Valiant seemed to have a monopoly on these high concept strips at the time!) this story featured the titular character's puppet army of mechanical warriors, which he used to fight crime! Again, Eric's ability to draw anything made him the perfect choice of artist on this strip.

In 1969, Bradbury moved onto Smash, where he became one of the artists on Cursitor Doom, which was written by British comics stalwart, Scott Goodall. This strip tapped into Eric's ease with horror and the supernatural. Every panel of this seeps of rich detail, and no shortcuts were taken in this depiction of a paranormal investigator! Some other notable strips that he worked on are Danny Doom for Valiant/Lion (1974), the story of the world's greatest magician (beat that Dynamo!) and Screaming Skulls/The Terror in the Fog for The Valiant Book of Mystery and Magic (1976), a one-off annual which unusually credited the writers and artists, preceding 2000AD's credit cards by a number of years.

In 1978, Eric moved over to Battle Picture Weekly, working on strips such as Joe Two Beans (written by John Wagner) and Death Squad (written by Alan Hebden), just to prove there was nothing this artist could not turn his hand to! Around 1981, he started to occasionally contribute to 2000AD, mostly Future Shocks (including one written by Alan Moore, "The Big Clock!" in 2000 AD Prog 315) and various Tharg The Mighty one-offs, where he would often depict many of his writing collaborators as droids and drew many a Thrill-Sucker over the years!

This takes us up to 1984, when he started work on The Dracula File. This rather bizarre cold war take on Dracula was again a perfect opportunity for Bradbury to flex his gothic skills! The script is to commended for trying to do something new with the Dracula franchise, but it is the artwork which really makes this strip so popular. Unfortunately, the strip was never completed, a victim of the sudden cancellation of Scream! due to strike action at IPC. When Scream! reared its horrific head again, it was shunted into the New Eagle, issue 128. Rather oddly, considering its popularity, The Dracula File did not make the cut. Instead, in a rather ingenious move, Eric Bradbury took over Doomlord from Heinzl (in reality Alberto Giolotti's studio).

Eric's art was a breath of fresh air for the strip, he quickly established himself and went on to work on this for the next 5 years! An impressive feat! During this time, he illustrated a sequel (of sorts) to the first Doomlord photo story, featuring the return of evil Servitor Zyn, and perhaps the greatest Alan Grant invention on the strip, illustrated the story of Enok, Doomlord Vek's wayward son! The Enok plot ran for years, with him starting out as evil, but being 'reborn' as the saviour of mankind!

During this run, you can see the neo-gothic architectural influence apparent in the design work of environments, such as Doomlord's Isolarium on the dark side of the moon. Grant would play up to Bradbury's strengths, and the stories became darker and darker. A notable entry into the canon, is a sideways diversion into a parallel universe, where an unchecked Enok has enslaved the world! Great stuff!

However, all good things come to an end. Vek is turned into a villain, and it is up to Enok to save the day. The strip really starts to push the boundaries on what you could depict in a children's comic at this time. However, Eric's commitment to the strip remained un-wavered, and the latter days of the strip feature some of his best work, with some stunning composition and creative page layouts. The scripts, latterly became obsessed with death and rebirth, and when the plug was pulled, it came about very swiftly. The conclusion to the story was very rushed, and ultimately wound up with a very ambiguous and bizarre open-ending. Alan Grant told me recently he would have kept writing Doomlord forever if he could! Time for a revamp perhaps?

Eric Bradbury went onto illustrate Loner for the merged Eagle/Wildcat era, and did some other strips, including a story called Beast! with Tom Tully, but these stories never achieved the popularity of his run on Doomlord. He sadly passed away in 2001. His legacy lives on, and this prolific artist can be appreciated by a whole new generation of comics fans in reprints of his work, such as The Dracula File and Von Hoffman's Invasion both published by Treasury of British Comics/Rebellion. Now, if only we could get a reprint of Bradbury's Doomlord run…

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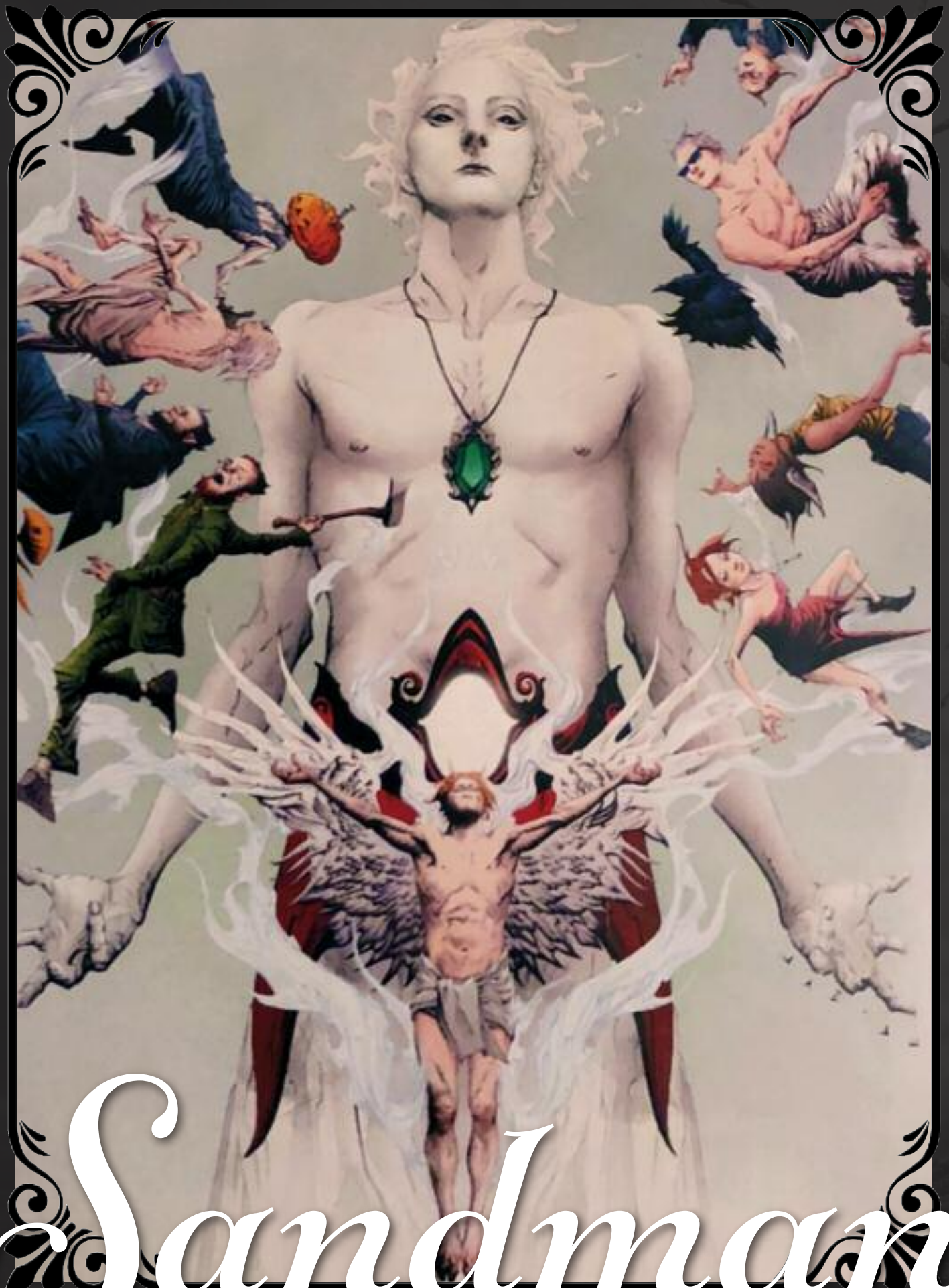








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Sandman

Simon Spurrier

Like many other comic book creators before and after him, Simon Spurrier's first formative comic book experience in the early 1990s arrived when he discovered Neil Gaiman's Sandman. Now the Kent-based scribe is one of four writers who are helming the quartet of titles that make up Vertigo's new Sandman Universe line.

"I don't know any comics writer, certainly in British comics, who wasn't a massive fan of Sandman," he reflects. "Speaking for myself, I didn't really pick up anything that you might think of as a comic until I was about sixteen/ seventeen, and when I did it was exclusively Vertigo fare for the first couple of years of my comics reading, so Sandman meant a great deal to me."

After Spurrier was initially approached by then-Vertigo executive editor Shelly Bond about Sandman Universe a couple of years ago, he took the opportunity to re-read the 75-issue series, which ran from January 1989 to March 1996. "I realised how much I'd missed and how much of it had kind of cruised past me in this – no pun intended – dream of tone and atmosphere rather than plot," he continues. "There was actually a huge amount of plot in there, which I hadn't necessarily clung onto, so I got a lot more out of it the second time around, and it was more than enough to make me wildly excited about picking up and playing with some of these toys."

While Dan Watters is penning Lucifer for artists Max and Sebastian Fiumara, Kat Howard and Tom Fowler are teaming up on Tim Hunter's adventures in The Books of Magic and Nalo Hopkinson and Dominike Stanton are collaborating on House of Whispers, Spurrier and former Wonder Woman artist Bilquis Evely are taking charge of what is arguably the Sandman Universe's core title in The Dreaming. Spinning out of August's one-off Sandman Universe #1, it finds Daniel – who took over from Morpheus as the Lord of the Dreaming at the conclusion of the original series – is missing in action, leaving a gaping hole in the otherworldly dimension.

"The big takeaway from the special is that whereas Dream, the Lord of the Dreaming, has gone AWOL before and nobody has batted an eyelid when he'd gone on one of his little jaunts, this time it appears that he's not coming back," explains Spurrier "Not because he's been captured in the same way that Sandman started but because he doesn't want to come back. That has ramifications for all the characters in all four of the books."

With Spurrier describing his role on the special as "coming up with the connective tissue that allowed us to jump around the world or worlds in order to meet each of these characters," the reader's entry point into Sandman's mythical kingdom is Matthew the Raven, who is, of course, the reincarnated form of Matthew Cable, the first husband of Swamp Thing's wife Abby Holland, who had originally met a grisly end of her malevolent father Anton Arcane before being resurrected by Dream.

"The simplistic way to look at the special is that it's Matthew flying around looking for Dream while crisscrossing the stories of these other interesting characters as he goes, which serve as an introduction to them," says Spurrier. "It was a way of showing off all the different artists who are involved as well as introducing various worlds and bringing to the readers' attention characters old and new, who will be featuring in all of these stories. Most of all, it's a way of saying 'here is our starting point and everything's gone horribly wrong, so let's see what happens next…'

However, Spurrier isn't sure whether Daniel being taken off the board – at least for now - has made his task on The Dreaming easier or harder. "Its kind of half and half, as it's not the case that we're ruling out using Dream as a character but his conspicuous absence is the driving force of my book," he reasons. "It's also not that we're ignoring him, it's more 'let's go find this guy' or 'why is he not here?' and 'what should we do because he's not here?' That said, if I had gone straight into it with him as the main character or even one of the characters, it would have been extremely daunting. If you tell a story about a place like this, it's always going to end up being an ensemble piece but if that place is manifested in one character then it becomes quite difficult to introduce concepts and very personal stakes for these characters, as Dream can just snap his fingers and nothing changes as everything is set. So it made sense as a starting point to focus on his creations rather than the creator himself and that's something that I get very excited about."

Having started out on 2000 AD in the early 2000s scripting series like Bec and Kawl, Lobster Random, The Simping Detective and Judge Dredd, Spurrier has since balanced stints on work-for-hire titles like X-Men: Legacy with creator-owned series like Image's Gutsville, Cry Havoc and Angelic. Potentially the best of both worlds, The Dreaming explores similar subject matter as some of his previous work.

"There's some weird stuff going on as at the same as doing The Dreaming, I've been working on Labyrinth: Coronation," he says, referring to Boom! Studio/ Archaia's prequel to the Jim Henson-directed 1986 musical fantasy, which starred David Bowie as the Goblin King, Jareth. "It's not that they're connected in any tonal way to any extent, but they're both about realms of the subconscious, and I find that the same sorts of strange things are hitting me thematically about halfway through writing them. There's also a lot of character-led stuff about the responsibility of the creator for their creation, and religious themes and iconographies, and the idea of ideas and the story of stories. All those things that I've spent years and years building books around, and suddenly it's all here, and I'm getting to the bedrock. You can't dig much deeper than setting a story in a literal shared mass mind of the human race, so it's a kind of a distillation of an awful lot of stuff that I've been fascinated with for years."

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THE BOOKS OF MAGIC:

A Tour of the SUPERNATURAL CORNERS of the DC Universe





Published in 1990, "The Books Of Magic" was a proto Vertigo DC prestige format (heavy stock perfect bound) 4 issue mini series, introducing the 12 year old Timothy Hunter destined to be a great sorcerer and either save the world, or enslave it.

Bespectacled, skate boarding, magically talented, pre-pubescents have had a high profile over the last 20 years. However, Neil Gaiman's Master Hunter was published a full 7 years before JK Rowling's Master Potter and don't mention 2000ADs "Luke Kirby".

Tim is approached by the "Trenchcoat Brigade" of four of the DC Universe's magical characters, The Phantom Stranger, Dr. Occult, John Constantine and Mr. E and they take it in turns to escort him around the DC universe's, past present and future, consider it the DC universe's "A Christmas Carol". Chasing skateboarding Tim around London, they corner the most pubescent 12 year old ever, and convince him to explore his heritage.

In Book 1, beautifully drawn by John Bolton, the Phantom Stranger is the DC Universe's go to character for explaining portentous, supernatural and biblical events, showing up whenever there is a significant supernatural event. The Stranger takes Tim back to the birth of creation, through the great civilisations, with cameos by historical and mythical characters, both from the real universe and its DC counterpart to the characters created in the first years of what became the DC Universe.

Returning Tim to the present day, the Stranger passes Tim to John Constantine for the Scott Hampton drawn tour of the (then) present day DC universe of Book 2. Riding the "synchronicity highway" Tim witnesses the supernatural and magical forces that co exist with normal people and the superhero brigade, Baron Winter, Zatanna, Madame Xanadu and the Spectre, with the ever present threat of the forces of evil to dispatch or turn him to their cause, but always under the under the ever watchful eye of a body hopping Deadman, Boston Brand.

For the third leg drawn by Charles Vess, (with some help from John Ridgway) Dr. Occult (created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster) takes Tim on a tour of Faerie, or at least Gaiman's interpretation of Faerie. Dr. Occult and his female counterpart show Tim the wonders and terrors of Faerie, and Gaiman gets to throw in some mythical, fairytale and anthropomorphic characters, including some quite dark humour. Dr. Occult's duty ends with a whistle stop tour of DC fantasy worlds, including tours of Skartaris, Gemworld and Hell, and of course almost inevitably, the Dreaming.

In the finale, painted by Paul Johnson (whatever happened to him?), Tim is taken on a journey through to the far future by the blind and fanatical "Mr. E" (ahem). On the way, Tim sees one of his possible futures, presented to him as a lesson by E. Tim and Mr. E travel on, meeting the future selves of Earth's magical heroes, New Gods, to a time where science and magic become indistinguishable and finally to the end of the universe, where the time travellers meet two very familiar and familial beings there to "shut up shop" and E takes steps to prevent what he sees as the inevitable consequence of Tim taking the first steps into the world of magic.

Gaiman was already firmly ensconced within the spooky end of the pre Vertigo DC universe when "The Books of Magic" was released, "Black Orchid" had been published and "The Sandman" hadn't long begun, it's of the same ilk as the latter and there are close ties to the world of the Dreaming. Although "The Books of Magic" was ostensibly a young adult fiction story about a child magician, it was also a tour of the supernatural and fantasy corners of the DC universe, a magical A-Z of the DC universe at the beginning of the nineties. It's impressive how Gaiman and co cram in hundreds of DC characters and references to the events in the DC universe. Some may only be clear to the most ardent DC fan, whilst some characters are strangers to the DCU, notably a fancily dressed bear from Nutwood.

Though collected under the Vertigo banner, there is nothing particularly "mature", there is no bad language, extreme violence or nudity. The interactions between Tim and Constantine are particularly endearing and it's a shame that Gaiman had few stories printed involving the "Hellblazer" star. Gaiman successfully brings a sense of wonder and the artists are ideally suited to the subject matter. Bolton's atmospheric magnificence in the early years of the DCU , Vess's ethereal rendering of Faerie, Tim and Constantine's grubby, smokey US odyssey courtesy of Scott Hampton and finally Johnson's jagged and clinical lines depicting the far future, even if Tim occasionally looks more 16 than 12.

Following the launch of Vertigo in 1993, Tim was an obvious candidate to star in an ongoing series. Consequently a number of series under the "Books of Magic" title, variations, or simply entitled "Hunter" were published throughout the nineties and early noughties, with varying levels of success and with another relaunch on the horizon. Tim has certainly not replicated the impact that Master Potter had on the world. Perhaps it's because in the original series Tim was basically the plot device and reader identification figure for what was essentially a guided tour of the magical and fantasy corners of the DC Universe.

That's not to negate what is a classic series, well scripted and warrants re reading to linger over the stunning art and spotting the hidden references and cameos and, however it fits into the current version, a beautiful primer to the spooky end of the DCU.





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SHADES OF MAGIC







One of Titan Books's bestselling series, Victoria 'VE' Schwab's Shades of Magic has now made the transition to comics in a new mini-series written by the author herself and drawn by Andrea Olimpieri. Published between 2015 and 2017, the original trilogy of Shades of Magic, A Gathering of Shadows and A Conjuring of Light take place between various different parallel Londons, which each have their own particular attitude towards magic, ranging from vibrant Red London where the arcane arts are embraced in all their colourful glory to the dreaded Black London, where no one dare speak its name. Set thirty years before the start of the first novel, the four-part Shades of Magic: The Steel Prince explores the younger years of one of Red London's most controversial figures, the now-King Maxim Maresh.

"With every series, there are stories that get prioritised, and invariably a few that get left behind, or only hinted at, in the interests of keeping the focus and momentum, and Maxim's backstory was one of those," says Schwab. "I have Threads of Power, the new novel series coming up in 2020, which will continue to move forward in this world. But when Titan offered me the chance to write a comic, I knew I wanted to dive into Maxim's past, and to look back at when he first made his name as the Steel Prince."

Exiled by his father to some war-ravaged far-flung lands in order to cut his military teeth, The Steel Prince occurs at a time when the youthful Crown Prince is still finding his way in life. "I wanted to look at who Maxim was as a young man, as well as the people and events that informed and defined him when he was Prince Rhy's age," continues Schwab, referring to Maxim's own son and heir apparent to the throne of Arnes, the capital of Red London. "In the books, he's a character who seems very set in his ways, and he's judged for that. But we're all a product of our youth, and our development, and I wanted to dive deeper into his younger years. I also wanted an excuse to take the readers to Verose, which is nicknamed the Blood Coast, which is a place with its fair share of secrets."

Those familiar with the books can also expect to encounter a few if not many familiar faces. "Readers will get a glimpse of Tieren, but most of the characters in this series are new," explains Schwab, alluding to the head priest of Red London's Sanctuary. "Perhaps the most important, and one only briefly mentioned in A Conjuring of Light is Isra, Maxim's de facto partner-in-crime during this time."

Hailing from Nashville but now based in Edinburgh, Schwab is an enthusiastic reader of comics, ranging from "mainstream Marvel and DC" to Image series like Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie's The Wicked + the Divine and Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda's Monstress. "Shades of Magic was influenced most of all by Harry Potter and (manga series) Avatar: The Last Airbender and Full Metal Alchemist," she says. "And I'm constantly looking to fill the creative well with new work."

Beginning with Ben Aaronovitch popular Rivers of London – which has now spawned six successful mini-series including 2015's inaugural Body Work and this year's Water Weed – Shades of Magic is the latest Titan Books property to make the jump from prose to the comic book page. Last year, Kim Newman teamed up with artist Paul McCaffrey Anno Dracula: 1895 – Six Days of Mayhem, while the first issue of George Mann and Dan Boultwood's Newbury &







Hobbes was published only a month before The Steel Prince's debut issue.

As a newcomer to at least working in the comic book medium, Schwab has relished the opportunity to bring her fantastical world - and the equally colourful characters that inhabit it - to glorious full-colour life. "That can also be a potential disadvantage I suppose, since giving things an actual shape influences the extent to which people are able to imagine for themselves," she reasons. "Comics certainly become a more collaborative process a lot sooner as whereas writing the first draft of a novel is a solitary experience, writing a comic involves a pretty constant stream of communication. I also love that I am getting to know my artists better and better with each issue, and can really lean into their strengths."

Noting that, "my work is in such good hands," Schwab has enjoyed working with Italian artist Andrea Olimpieri (Titan Comics' Dishonoured) and colourist Enrica Angiolini. "It's been amazing," she says. "I've mentioned the dangers of articulating what a fictional world likes, but I will say that the version Andrea and Enrica have brought to life is the closest to my vision as possible. They've done an incredible job."

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"Millar took a very
he created the wo

Mark Millar is one of modern comics' most successful writers. After a number of years spent working for 2000AD, Marvel and DC, for a number of years now, he has been writing his own creator-owned material. Millar has seen many of his co-creations like Kick-Ass and Kingsman turned into successful films. This year saw him sell many of his comic properties to Netflix and **The Magic Order** is just the first series to spring from this deal. Joel Meadows took a look at the genesis of this comic…

Mark Millar is a writer who has written a lot of different genres and in an interview back in May this year with CBR, he explained what The Magic Order is.

"I love jumping around genres. Civil War and Kick - Ass are super heroes. Kingsman is spies. Chrononauts is sci-fi. Reborn fantasy. This is my magic project. I hesitate to say horror because it's not got that sudden fright or gore tropes in the comic or our eventual show. It's more like for the kids who enjoyed something like Harry Potter or that kind of genre growing up now having something that appeals to their adult sensibilities.

Tonally, it's actually closer to The Sopranos in that it's about a patriarch in an underworld family and his concerns about his children. King Lear is the basic structure, if that doesn't sound too pompous, but with magic wands. And it's dirty. It opens with a shagging scene, so you immediately know this isn't Hogwarts."

Last year, the writer went into a little extra detail about his mindset about the series in an interview he did with EW:

"I'm a great fan of grounding big concepts so everybody gets them. My hero Richard Donner does this so brilliantly, giving us huge things like the Book of Revelation or Superman, but setting them in a world that looks like the one outside our window. My other hero Stan Lee is amazing at this too. He takes characters as weird as Spider-Man or Thor and comes in through the human angle, making these things about teen angst or two brothers who don't get on. Something a mainstream audience can really connect with. Fantasy I think can be off-putting for people because it's often missing a human angle, a realistic hook that makes it open to anyone. So my idea with The Magic Order was to take something that's essentially about a secret order of good wizards who got rid of all the bad things hundreds of years ago, but live quietly among us now with blue-collar jobs and ordinary domestic lives. It's all about accessibility, and the big idea here is that these are the guys who keep the world as rational and normal as it feels to us now."

Millar took a very particular approach when he created the world of the Magic Order, he explained in the same chat he did with CBR online:

"Traditionally, there's a Neo or a Luke Skywalker when you're having a new world explained to you, someone you identify with and whose journey you can relate to. This is a little different because it starts when we're already deep into it. The idea is that all those myths and monsters we heard about as kids were real, but they were pushed back into the darkness a thousand years ago. Now we've cemented over all the madness with cities and we live these lovely peaceful lives where nobody's ever really seen a ghost, and these guys are the reason why. They do day jobs just like we do, but when there's a problem they're called together to take care of it. We've got three leads, the three children of the man who runs the Magic Order, and the one we identify most with I guess is the guy who's turned his back on it and become a complete norm. He and his wife are just living a regular life for a very big reason we find out about in the first issue."

The deal with Netflix gives him a lot of latitude as a creator. He chatted with SyFyWire this summer about how it all works.

"Because I'm now on staff at Netflix as an executive, so what happens is, I create seven projects a year for them; that's my deal. Three or four of them each year I'm going to turn into comics. And that's just because I love comics. The Netflix people actually see the value in the comics as well. A lot of them love comic books and they told me, "Hey, it would be really cool if you did some of these projects as comics." So the process is, I create everything I'm doing at Netflix as a movie or television show, but we will also do comics for maybe half of them. I just like having something on my shelf. I'm a comic guy above everything. The idea of not doing comics for even a year would be horrible to me.

So this is the best of both worlds. And Netflix has given me the budget to get anyone from Marvel and DC that I want, which is great. Another benefit to this deal is through Netflix, I have new ways of promoting comics. That has basically been the same my entire life. Comic stores have always been there, the industry has the same distributors, nothing's really changed. The first time I walked into a comics store was when I was 12 years old, and I'm now in my 40s, and it's still basically the same. Things haven't changed at all. But Netflix, they have lots of clever people there and they have great ideas. The Magic Order is the first bet, and they're trying out new things in terms of producing comics and promoting them," he explained.

2018 has marked a new stage in Millar's career but he certainly doesn't seem to be resting on his laurels. The Magic Order is the first but it certainly won't be the last new Millar comic creation readers can expect to see over the next few years.

Issue #5 of The Magic Order came out in October

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THE NIGHTSHIFT









If horror comics have to chill the blood to qualify for the label, then Dan Brereton's Nocturnals stories might not count. They do have reanimated corpses, vengeful wraiths, monstrous cephalopods from the ocean depths, apocalyptic warnings of doom, and sorcerous old crones trying to cook young girls in cauldrons on Halloween. But they also have outcasts finding peace, orphans finding their parents, and old Mafiosi finding the better angels of their nature. They have heart. And they have a singular artistic style, the vividly colourful painting technique that Brereton has been honing since the Nocturnals crew first arrived in comics more than twenty years ago.

That was in Black Planet, a 1995 mini-series from Malibu's creator-owned Bravura imprint which in good Shakespearean style keeps the saga's eventual protagonists off-stage for a while. It starts instead with a confrontation in the sewers, between a sympathetic reptile-man named Komodo and the gun-toting enforcers of the Narn K organisation, which is apparently busy creating monsters. No one involved is remotely human, but the sewer setting is on loan from The Third Man, the bad guys wear the coats and hats of 1940s heavies with flinty dialogue to match, and Brereton's plan to splice characters from supernatural horror into the settings of film noir is in place already.

Human beings do turn up later, as the story spreads out across its Northern California setting of Pacific City, where crime families with Italianate names manoeuvre for power and rumpled police detectives wonder what they just glimpsed in the shadows. But Brereton's focus is on the monsters, particularly a group who are more authentically humane than most of the mortals, and led by the man known as Dr Nicodemus Horror.

Neither horrific nor technically a man, Doc Horror tends a band of outcasts with the paternal compassion of an early Professor X—if Charles Xavier had arrived from another dimension, escaping persecution from vicious squid-like monsters now intent on pursuing him across our world too. His nocturnal companions include Polychrome the wraith, Starfish the amphibian, and Gunwitch, a silent hulking enforcer wearing a hat from a Sergio Leone zombie western, who shoots first and never utters a word later. But the heart of all the stories, and the key to Brereton's intentions, is Horror's precocious, endearing and equally alien young daughter Eve. Horror was once employed as muscle for the Pacific City mob himself, although that was when he thought Eve had been lost in their trip across dimensions. Unexpectedly reunited with his only child, the alien man of violence rediscovers his humanity and changes his ways.

Similar arcs of compassion have played out across Brereton's Nocturnals tales ever since. In 2001 The Dark Forever allowed Starfish to discover more about her aquatic lineage, and Brereton to deal explicitly with sea monsters and ancient races in the vein of HP Lovecraft; but also forced Eve to face her own insecurities, when another young girl-creature inserted herself into Doc Horror's affections. Most recently The Sinister Path, a 2017 crowd-funded one-shot, introduced two new creatures, an angry brother and sister from another sundered family with their own grudge against one of Horror's old friends. Eve, now more mature than she was in 1995 but still youthful and sharp as a tack, ultimately reunites an embittered parent with a lost child just as she was once reunited with her own father.

A loving universe

The effect of Brereton's comics comes from these humane—even romantic—stories, told with monsters, in art of vivid colour and muscular cartooning. Black Planet arrived on the heels of Alex Ross and Marvels, when Ross's crisp lines and Norman Rockwell figures seemed to be the path which painted mainstream comics would happily follow, but Brereton promptly went another way. The vivid pigments and visible brush strokes and soft fluid skies tie his painting back into century-old modernist traditions, while at the same time the 1970s comics art of Gene Colan and Tom Palmer is a constant presence is every shadowy room.

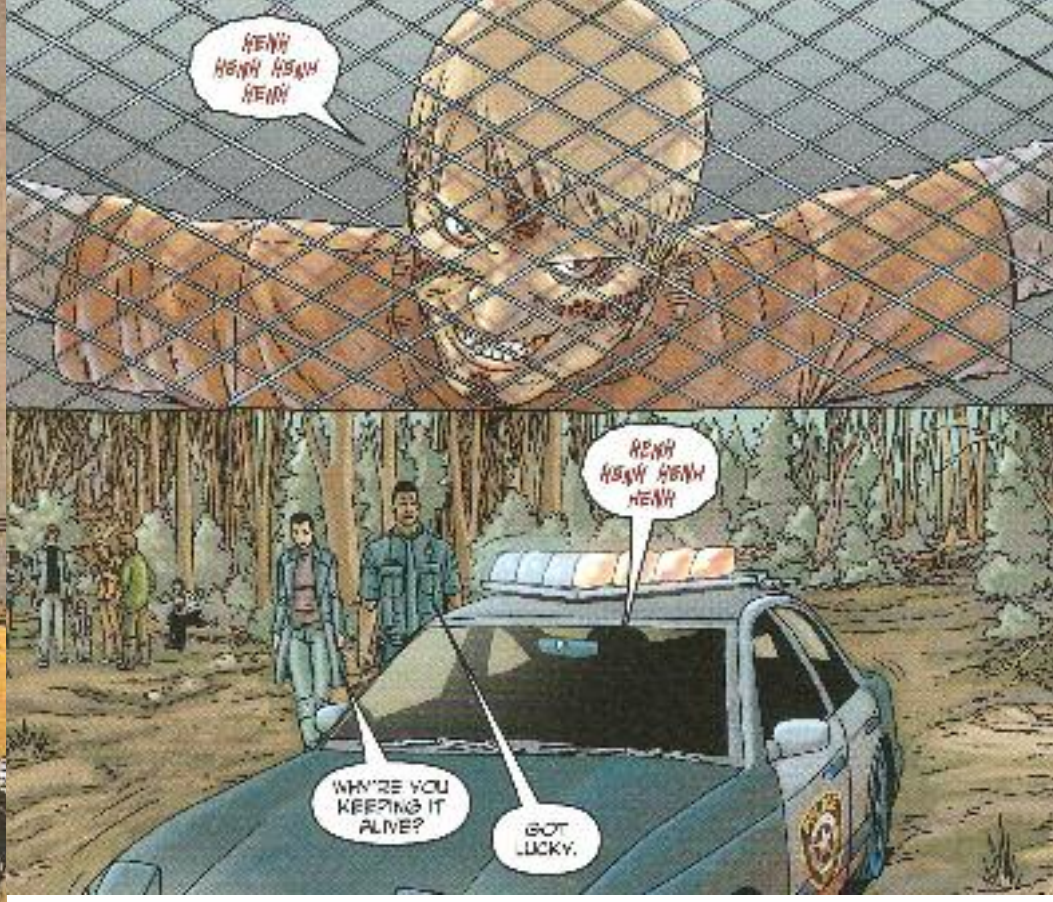
Brereton's series of portfolio art books shows what happens when he applies this style to other people's creations: Iron Man becomes a menacing golem against a thunderous sky, a ton of implacable matt statuary, the colours in his armour looking like seams in rock. Another piece has a naked spacegirl astronaut relaxing on an alien world, a respectful Wally Wood homage that takes Wood's symbols and sets them in motion at a higher temperature. There's even some Kirby Krackle in the sky.

Works like that also make Brereton's technique seem inherently American, most clearly so in the modest 1997 Nocturnals Halloween story Witching Hour that appeared in Dark Horse Presents. Eve and Gunwitch venture beyond the edge of town and encounter a clan of sarcastic pumpkin creatures in the woods, goblins who promptly mistake Eve's Halloween bucket for a dead relative. It's an interlude between the heavier stories, with Brereton's art modified to match, emphasising open panels, negative space, and a constant wash of pale moonlight; but at the same time a strip not a million miles from Charles Addams.

Brereton has lately started using Kickstarter to publish new Nocturnals stories and companion art books, which is as good a route as any for keeping both his art and Doc Horror's crew out in the wild where they belong. A comics landscape with these particular horrors in it can always look to them for a little empathy and human kindness. Misunderstood monsters can be persecuted and alien squids may pull the strings, but in Nocturnals the cosmos naturally bends towards optimism and compassion eventually, towards family and love. Even in the dark.

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Ten Years of Gratuitous Horror?

CROSS

The past 15 years or so has seen a surge in popularity of the zombie, witness the cultural juggernaut "The Walking Dead", and the stores that have followed in its wake. Avatar Press, who have quietly built a reputation for an uncompromising vision, unrestricted creative freedom and rights (an anything goes editorial policy) certainly agree. This usually translates into gratuitous violence, graphic sex and a distinct lack of subtlety. But not all the time.

Many creators found this freedom immensely appealing, that, coupled with the greater creator rights, encouraged a number of famous writers to sign up and create books for the indie publisher. Warren Ellis was the first big name to make the jump to Avatar with titles such as "Strange Kiss", "Scars", "No Hero" and the survival horror title "Black Gas". Ellis was quickly followed by Alan Moore and his books based on the works of HP Lovecraft and of course, Garth Ennis, who created the controversial and frankly brutal, zombie analogue "Crossed" to the table.

"Crossed" tells the story of a mysterious worldwide epidemic where the victims become released from their inhibitions, becoming sexually and violently rapacious. The infected are distinguished by the cross-like rash that runs across their eyes and from forehead to chin. Transmission of the virus is via bodily fluids and the disease takes hold within minutes, there is no cure. The infected are manically depraved, hysterical and insatiable, killing, eating and fornicating with anything that moves. But their former awareness, intelligence and memory remain – they know the purpose of tools, objects, vehicles etc. They take

pleasure from causing grievous harm, not just to the uninfected, but to each other and themselves. Injury merely sends them into an ecstatic and sexual frenzy. Against this backdrop the "Crossed" story arcs tell tales of communities trying to fight against the tide of the infected, whilst dealing with trying to maintain their humanity.

"Crossed" starts with a 10 issue series (0-9), written by Ennis with art by Jacen Burrows. No explanation is given for the origin of the plague, a seemingly normal man walks in to a diner in some small American town, and attacks the owner, things move quickly, like dominos passers-by fall as the infection spreads and the infected overcome the townsfolk. We follow Stan as he and other survivors head for the hills and seek sanctuary in Alaska. Our band are travelling across the US on their way to Alaska, foraging and competing for supplies with other bands of uninfected, picking up other survivors on the way, abandoning the crippled or ill to their fate, all the while being pursued by a band of the Crossed. Pragmatic and occasionally ruthless, the band leave behind parts of their humanity to survive, performing deplorable acts that would in normal circumstances be unthinkable.



Ennis and Burrows don't pull any punches, Avatar were known as being uncompromising, but Ennis set the template of the series by seeing how far he could set the bar of acceptability, and then leap over it. Ennis has a reputation for using a sledgehammer rather than a scalpel and neither shy away from the graphic violence starting from the opening episode. Don't read these books whilst eating your food, and don't leave them lying around for your kids to read them. I can't help but think that Ennis's well known opinions of religion have influenced his method of indicating the infected.

There is no subtlety here, nothing is inferred. The violence is explicit, harrowing and disturbing. "Crossed" sets new standards for imagination in graphic violence, but Ennis's ear for dialogue and characterisation raises what could otherwise be an extended gore fest. Ennis's usual character tropes are all present, the self reliant stoic and taciturn leader, the idealistic narrator / reader identification figure, the quiet one with the dark secret, the naive and doomed member. But it is these characterisations and the interactions between the cast, and the disturbing events that they suffer that make the series so compelling.

The success of the books led to a number of sequels and spin offs, including David Lapham's "Family Values" and "Psychopath" which with its serial killer "hero" put an interesting wrinkle on the run, and the fortnightly series "Crossed :Badlands" with rotating creative teams. This started strong, with some high profile writers attached notably Jamie Delano, Lapham, Ennis, Christos Gage and David Hine. Each writer brought their own spin on the "Crossed". However, gradually the series starts to suffer from the law of diminishing returns with creative teams trying to out do what went before, and the whole run begins to suffer with a kind of "horror fatigue". There are only so many times you can see sex crazed cannibals eating someone alive, and gradually the reader becomes desensitised (okay, this one did anyway). Although incredibly graphic, the strength in Ennis and Burrows's original series was the relationships between the survivors, and it was that element that these books needed to maintain interest.

Leave it to Alan Moore and Simon Spurrier to make the series interesting again. In "Crossed +100" Moore took the series a hundred years into the future to see how this world developed and how the infected and uninfected coexist. Moore developed a new dialect for the series and is initially cautiously optimistic about how humanity has changed to account for the new status quo, scavenging, redeploying old technology, and how society has changed and become more tolerant in some aspects and less in others. But, as the uninfected have developed, so have the Crossed, and the world soon turns darker. Equally, Simon Spurrier weaves a fascinating tale in a webcomic called "Crossed :Wish you Were Here", a group of survivors head to remote Scottish islands to escape the plague and the infected. This seems like the perfect sanctuary until a ship load of uninfected arrive and disrupt the peace.

"Crossed", like other survival horror tales works best where you see how the relationships between the survivors are set against the horror of their predicament. Horror works best where it is a looming, shadowy and ever present threat. The tension is created in the choices the uninfected have to make to survive and evade the Crossed, all the while their humanity is gradually being chipped away. "Crossed" has suffered from over exposure, less is definitely more. But, ultimately the original series and Ennis's other tales, the Moore run on Crossed +100, Lapham and Spurriers all have much to recommend them, they are great examples of the survival horror genre and worth checking out.



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FIENDS of the EASTERN FRONT



Set in the recent past rather than the distant future, Fiends of the Eastern Front seemed like a bit of an anomaly when it debuted in 2000 AD in February 1980's Prog #152. But Gerry Finley-Day and Carlos Ezquerra's chilling ten-parter about a band of vampiric soldiers proved to be something of a sleeper hit, spawning a sequel Stalingrad by artist Colin MacNeil and writer David Bishop, who also penned several spin-off novels, which ran in the pages of the Judge Dredd Megazine in 2006. Now after Hannah Berry and Dani's one-off Fodder from the 2016 Free Comic Book Day issue, the Undead Reds are returning to the Galaxy's Greatest Comic with Ian Edginton and Dave Taylor's 1812, which begins its six-issue run in Prog #1200.

"I read Fiends of the Eastern Front first time around and it's a story that stuck with me to this day," recalls Edginton. "It was such a simple but really strong idea. Vampires hiding in plain sight during the war was a natural fit."

Opening with an ominous present-day prologue before harking back to 1941 as German infantryman Hans Schmidt first encounters with the mysterious Captain Constanta and his sinister troupe of Romanian – or Rumanian as the story has it - Fiends of the Eastern Front was reminiscent of Finley-Day and Ezquerra's work together and individually on then-fellow IPC weekly Battle Picture Weekly on classic strips like Rat Pack, Major Eazy and D-Day Dawson. "With their background on Battle, Gerry and Carlos brought a flavour of the British war comics that I used to read as a kid," continues Edginton. "There's a nostalgic familiarity about it but then it's spiked with the twist of adding not only the vampires but also making you emphasise with the enemy, with Hans Schmidt as he contends with Constanta and his men."

For his part, although he has read 2000 AD since 1977's Prog #1, Taylor didn't initially remember reading Fiends of the Eastern Front when it was first published. "I knew I'd read it, but with my shoddy memory, I was having difficulty until I found some of Carlos's art on the net," he admits. "An image of Carlos's Constanta brought it all back for me. As a young lad, I was typical in that I was fascinated with war, soldiers and all that shit, so Gerry's story was a joy. There's something totally logical about vampires involved with war, and to see Gerry and Carlos seemingly having so much fun grabbed my attention."

As it's title indicates, 1812 takes place just over a century before Finley-Day and Ezquerra's original tale, keeping the same geographic location but swapping the Second World War for the Napoleonic Wars. "It was a perfect fit for the story, especially the chaotic retreat of Napoleon's Grand Armee," says Edington. "Instead of the mud, blood and barbed wire of the two previous series, we have the snow and the biting cold as the Emperor's starving and demoralised army staggers home. Their beleaguered retreat is



With its grim conditions, constant skirmishes and bloody death toll, war makes a convenient backdrop for the Fiends's nefarious activities. "No one's going to pay mind to a few more dead bodies on the battlefield, and also vampires would make a handy secret weapon," reasons Edginton. "In this story, Constanta and his men are genuinely fighting for their country as well. The Romanians had been oppressed by the Russians for years, so it was natural that they'd ally themselves with the French."

While the first Fiends was told from the backdrop as they're preyed upon by supernatural forces."

While Fiends was apparently self-contained, Finley-Day actually posits the possibility of further stories in episode nine when the vampires' human helper, Corporal Cringu boasts that Constanta had 'fought for Rumania for centuries!' - battling the Tartars and the Turks and now the Germans. "I've always wanted to know more about Constanta, and his background," says Edginton. "Why was he so eager to cover their tracks? Was he, in fact, hiding from someone or something? There's a rich vein of material that's waiting to be explored."

"We see it as a totally open and unrestrained story," adds Taylor. "Constanta as a character could easily be a regular feature for 2000 AD. If an intellectual property has a solid and successful history, tried and tested, there's no reason it couldn't be made into a contemporary success."



Hans Schmidt's perspective, Edginton and Taylor introduce a new human protagonist in the form of French officer Major D'Hubert. "Constanta seems to be fighting for his country, but he also has other motives, while D'Hubert is a decent, honest soldier, an honourable man who finds himself in circumstances that test his sanity and ultimately change his life," teases Edington. "There is also a third player but I'm not going to say much as I don't want to give the game away."

"D'Hubert is a general, a brave and wise leader of men who fights this war because he has no choice," adds Taylor. "He's a good man falling into Hell."

While Edginton insists that he didn't want to burden Taylor with too much homework, the long time Judge Dredd artist admits that he couldn't help sometimes getting bogged down in historical detail. "The second page, featuring a grande battle between the numerous regiments on both sides, demanded I bury myself in days of research," he laughs. "I'd not been overly familiar with this particular period, apart from owning an amazing album of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, so it took me a while to get my head around just how many variations there were in the damn uniforms, and why. Our hero, outside of Constanta, belongs to a particular regiment, but he's surrounded by Napoleon's Grande Army, bedecked in a mind-boggling array of ridiculously detailed costumes, so it's been an education!"

With Edginton and Taylor's inaugural six-parter ending on an intriguing cliffhanger with Prog #2105, Fiends of the Eastern Front will return in December's Prog #2111. And while Edginton reveals that, "Dave and I are talking about working on a couple of things including more Fiends," both writer and artist would be interested in returning for another prequel if not a sequel. "I'm also working with Tiernen Trevallion on another Fiends story that's set in a different time period," he says. "But I can't say much about that right now!"

"There's a very good chance we'll be seeing Constanta again," adds Taylor. "I've certainly had a lot of fun doing 1812, and Vietnam – that's all I'm saying!"

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MISTY & SCREAM!

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After the success of last year's Scream! & Misty Special – or Misty & Scream! depending on what cover you purchased - it was surely inevitable that Rebellion's one-off revival of IPC's late '70/ early '80s horror weeklies would return for a second serving of scary stories. Stating that, "it turned out quite well, albeit with plenty of room for improvement," Treasury of Britain editor Keith Richardson believes that this year's edition is a big step up on last Halloween's debut volume, especially as he isn't sure than the two titles are necessarily compatible despite their shared spooky themes.

"I wouldn't say that they were natural bedfellows," he says. "But times change, lines blur and things evolve, and Rebellions versions of Scream! and Misty blend quite well together."

With The Thirteenth Floor and Black Max the only continuing stories, there's a newfound emphasis on standalone tales. With Richardson noting that, "Misty was mostly one-and-done strips, so it seems quite apt," the much loved girls' horror comic is represented more by its unique spirit than in previously published characters due to the absence of the Hannah Berry-written The Return of The Sentinels due to artist Ben Willsher's unavailability. But at least Misty herself is depicted strikingly in Czech artist Lenka Simickova's sumptuous alternate cover while American artist Kyle Hotz supplies the main cover. "I became aware of Lenka's work just after we published the first Scream! and Misty," he says. "She's an amazing talent with a beautifully dark and disturbing imagination, so I was over the moon when she agreed to do a cover for us. And I chose to Kyle Hotz onboard because he is an awesome horror artist – one of the best in the business, so he was on the shortlist to approach. Serendipity then came into play, because around the same time I was planning to approach him, he had been emailing Matt Smith at 2000 AD."

With Richardson revealing that The Thirteenth Floor and Black Max were written with longer storylines in mind, both were obvious choices to return for second installments by the same creative teams. "Getting to write The Thirteenth Floor was pure good fortune on my part," says Guy Adams, who once again teams up with artists John Stokes and Fraser Irving. "It was the one strip I would have genuinely committed murder for, as I loved it

as a kid, both in Scream! and later Eagle."

Indeed The Thirteenth Floor enjoyed a long run in The New Eagle, which lasted considerably longer than Scream!'s mere four-month existence, and crazed computer Max even became Eagle's fictional editor after the comic was relaunched in 1990. "I've tried to have my cake and eat it," laughs Adams. "It clearly works as a sequel to the original strip, as I even cover the fact that Maxwell Tower is supposed to have burned down, but it also stands alone as a new piece. The concept of The Thirteenth Floor is such a cast-iron idea: A computer who, in its urge to protect, ends up becoming a killer. Or was it always that? And my version brings a child accomplice onboard that seasons things a touch more."

Max also turned up in The Vigilant – Rebellion's recent special uniting various classic superhero-esque IPC characters - although Richardson insists that things aren't as straight forward as they might appear. "Max is so cool that we just had to include him in The Vigilant," he claims. "All the best super-teams have cool bases, and The Thirteenth Floor is up there with the best of them! The synergy is there in the background, although the Max in Scream! might not necessarily be the same Max who appears in The Vigilant, who are a team composed of members from a variety of different realities."

After scripting the self-contained Misty-style Fate of the Fairy Hunter last time around, Alex Worley has teamed up with artist Dani once again, although on this occasion the pair are reviving a character that was actually featured in the 1988 Scream Holiday Special, although its roots date back much earlier than that. "For the second special, I begged Keith to let me pitch him a Black Beth story," explains Worley. "She just dominated the whole special, and I remember wondering as a kid why there was a sword and sorcery strip in a horror comic, but I loved it all the same. In doing research for the pitch, I ended up contacting several of the original editors to try and piece together how the original strip had come about. The name of Beth's original writer has since been lost in the mists of time but I spoke to Dez Skinn, Barrie Tomlinson and the original artist Blas Gallago, who is now in his seventies and who was delighted to hear his work was so fondly remembered."

By extraordinary coincidence, Black Beth had originally been conceived in the mid-seventies as part of an aborted IPC comic, which was also called Scream. "The pages lay in a drawer for over ten years before being exhumed for the Holiday Special," continues Worley. "In writing the new version, I wanted to dare to be uncool and avoid any kind of hip, sixty-quips per minute Whedonspeak. I didn't have room to bathe in this world, but I wanted to play it totally straight- just like in an original Scream!/ Misty – not for laughs or irony but to get that heartfelt swashbuckling flavor you get from a vintage Savage Sword of Conan comic, or an old issue of Creepy or Eerie."

Describing it "a great zombie/ Grindhouse/ comedy mashup," Richardson suggests that Rich McAuliffe and Steve Mannion's Decomposition Jones would feel more at home in a vintage US horror anthology like Creepy or Eerie than Misty or Scream! "Rich wrote a very funny story for Zarjaz, titled Judge Pigg and I wanted to have more humour in this year's offering," he says. "Steve Mannion is one of my fave artists in the business today, and I thought Decomposition Jones would appeal to him, which it did."

Having also featured in 2000 AD fanzine Zarjaz, Lizzie Boyle was assigned to the Best Friends Forever, due to her more ability to mix horror with laughs. "The editorial team were looking for someone with a penchant for finding the humour in gristle and gore," she says. "A copy of indie comic Sentient Zombie Space Pigs found its way to them, and they obvious found me suitably disturbing. "

Partnered with artist Yishan Li, Boyle immersed herself in Misty's back catalogue in order to evoke the beloved comic's distinctive atmosphere. "There's a naivety about some of the original characters, an acceptance that this is the way of the world and that monsters are a part of it," she says. "There's also a devilishness, a sense of mischief, particularly from the girls, which I wanted to explore."

Along with the second Scream! and Misty Special, Rebellion has also just published its third Misty reprint collection, which features the fifteen-part Wolf Girl, which spanned #65 to #80 from May to August 1979, as it's principle story. "I primarily chose Wolf Girl because I was so blown away by the story," says Richardson. "That shaped the rest of the book, which is now werewolf/ lupine themed, as it also features some great back-up strips including some fantastic art by the great Badia Romero."



STALKING THE SHADOWS

Dracula at Marvel UK



A dark shadow was cast over the UK comic landscape in 1974.

It was 1897 when Bram Stoker first told of the ship that spawned the monster, beached one stormy night at Whitby. Over seventy years after it first stalked the shores of Britain that same monster returned, aided now by yet more macabre creatures of the night. Yet this new onslaught now emanated from High Holborn, London and Marvel Comic's continued 1970's UK expansion with its new weekly comic Dracula Lives.

Following the October 1972 launch of flagship title The Mighty World Of Marvel (MWOM) Marvel UK had wasted little time establishing a line of titles competing with IPC and DC Thompson for the pocket money of a nations youth, with both Spiderman Comics Weekly (February 1973) and The Avengers (September 1973) showcasing a plethora of top-tier Marvel super-heroics. If seen by some as merely inferior reprints, for many younger readers unaware of the imported Marvel US colour titles (or the earlier UK Odhams line of 'Power' comics) these titles offered up weekly bursts of pure adrenaline-rush, with early, unseen chapters of Marvels top-tier characters.

Mirroring moves already underway at Marvel US, the UK line then began sailing into the uncharted seas of horror and fantasy with two brand new weeklies introduced the same week in October 1974. Both Planet of the Apes and Dracula Lives sought to cash in upon then current trends; the former basking in the glow of the CBS television series



currently making waves on British television, with the latter a direct result of the relaxation of Comics Code rules in the early '70's when, after years of prohibition, vampires, werewolves and other monstrosities suddenly became fair game. Borrowing the same title sans exclamation mark of the US Marvel magazine launched in June 1973, for eight new pence (or the price of your very soul) the UK Dracula Lives would showcase the company's most high profile chillers. Launching the week ending October 26th (in time for halloween) an introductory message from Stan Lee sought to reassure the predominantly young audience that this new comic was produced by the same people behind Spiderman and the Fantastic Four and therefore everything would be fine - we know vampires and the living dead don't really exist - "or do we?" With the question still hanging in the air, we're immediately launched into a line up from Marvel that couldn't have been stronger, adding Werewolf by Night and Monster of Frankenstein reprints to the mix alongside the lead Tomb of Dracula strip. Marvel had sent in the big guns, and doing so ensured that the artistic side of the endeavour, for that early run of issues at least, would be dominated by just two men; Gene Colan and Mike Ploog.

Colan's penciling was made for black and white reproduction. From the opening splash of a rainswept Castle Dracula, his dark shadows and moody magnificence dominate every page, compensating for the at-times clunkiness of Gerry Conway's script. Colan's heavy pencils and shading only benefits from losing its original American colour and when inker Tom Palmer came on board in latter issues, imbuing the pencils in even more sinister shades and somehow complimenting Colan's work in a way no other inker ever quite could, the strip would look better still.

Ploog's artwork is the other highlight of these early issues. Lending an air of gothic mid - european detail to the moonlit back alleys of downtown Los Angeles for the Werewolf strip was never going to be an easy ask, but here, in some of his earliest work for Marvel, he manages it with aplomb. The savage ferocity of the main protagonist is never in doubt, yet he's also lent an almost debonair grace in posture and movement. Ploog's dark figures silhouetted against the moon lose none of their impact in black and white either, while the occasional cartoonish look of the supporting characters facial features (an early trait of his work) actually works well here, adding an otherworldliness to a strip that actually premiered in the US first, beating Tomb… by a couple of months. Yet as good as Ploog is here, his later work on Monster of Frankenstein, the third reprinted strip, easily outshines it. Both a blistering arctic opening and a 19th century gothic European flashback are rendered impeccably, capturing the raging arctic elements, windswept moonlight moor and howling rain.

Here was a title that seemed to fit perfectly into the then current Marvel UK weekly format. The shift from the earlier duotone pages (with occasional colour) of the weeklies to purely black and white interiors sometimes saw strips initially suffering from heavy print or overbearing shading. Here such an occurrence only enhanced the gothic, spooky feel of a title which quickly settled down with its three quality ongoing strips and complimented by a 'Cryptic Correspondence' letters page.

However a reliance on purely reprint material sees quality entirely dependant on the quality of the source strips themselves, and certainly as the weeks went by Werewolf by Night would suffer fatal wounds once Ploog left the strip. Yet a huge ace up the sleeve for this particular weekly lay with the lead title. After a mixed start with various scribes writer Marv Wolfman took up the mantle, destined, along with the settled artistic team of Colan and Palmer, to take Tomb Of Dracula on a quality, if insular and maverick run throughout the remainder of the decade. Here was a book that remained outside the Marvel superhero mainstream, with a slightly more mature ongoing narrative and a stellar supporting cast that included Wolfman's own 1973 creation Blade, vampire killer and hunter.

Yet even consistent quality couldn't hold at bay an inherent problem with the Marvel UK line. With an appetite as insatiable as the Lord of the Vampires own blood lust, weekly publication meant eating up the original monthly US inventory, the clock continually ticking to some not-to-distant future where the material left to reprint would simply run out. Solutions were sought long term but in the short term the very nature of the beast saw a rapid changeover in strips across the weekly line. Frankenstein was the first casualty, replaced in No.42 by The Living Mummy, three-thousand year old survivor of ancient Egypt, ironically not destined to live very long here. Perhaps a portent of things to come, the comic's title itself changed to Dracula Lives featuring the Legion of Monsters with No.60, prior to muck monster Man-Thing reprints beginning in No.62.

The stormy seas of the 1970's UK comics landscape were to prove more hazardous than the voyage of that ship beached at Whitby. Ghost Rider made an appearance in No.79, finally replacing a now-devoured Werewolf strip, leaving the good Count himself sole survivor from the original line up. The comic itself effectively ended with No.87, merging in true British

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comic style with another, yet if Planet Of the Apes and Dracula Lives would see the title live on in name for a while yet, in what proved to be a stake through the heart for all true vampire fans the Counts own strip only managed to hang around for a few issues thereafter. Gerber's Man -Thing had become the last vestige of a once mighty macabre weekly, with a Dracula Lives Special produced by World Distributors in 1976 doing little to ease the yearning of many lost souls.

Yet as any good vampire would tell you, there is a life after death, of sorts. With a June 1977 UK Bullpen Bulletins page proclaiming 'the return of everybody's favourite fear-feature,' the Count made a grand return to the UK scene as The Mighty World of Marvel staring the Incredible Hulk and Dracula Lives hit the stands with MWOM No.247. Wolfman's narrative somehow demanded the unusual step of providing an opening double page character synopsis, re-introducing the Lord of Vampires and his reoccurring cast of Rachel Van Helsing, Frank Blake, Harold H Harold, Quincy Harker and Blade to the UK readership. If much heralded, the return was to unfortunately prove a false dawn with No.257 the last to feature a Dracula Lives masthead as the main title merged with failed war comic Fury the next week. In what was to prove his last appearance in the UK line for a while, Dracula actually made the cut for the first merged issue, ironically the same week a letter in the 'Mighty Marvel Mailbag' page appeared praising the strips recent return, if bemoaning unexplained jumps in continuity. Summing up the haphazard, slapdash (if somewhat endearing) nature of Marvel UK at the time, the editorial reply explained that some of these 'missing' stories had indeed been reprinted, in the Doctor Strange strip of sister comic Spiderman!

Worse was to come. January 1979 saw the UK 'Marvel Revolution' with major changes undertaken to the entire line that sought to address long standing issues and failing sales. An undoubtedly positive aspect of these changes saw a move towards more original (and some truly high quality) strips from UK creators such as Steve Dillon, David Lloyd, John Stokes and Dave Gibbons, showcased in titles such as Hulk Comic and Doctor Who Weekly. Yet the impact on the longstanding reprint strips was initially disastrous. In an attempt to reproduce the look of homegrown UK weekly anthology titles, the revamped Marvel Comic and Spiderman Comic saw the number of strips in each title almost double, but with the reduced page count the strips themselves were cut up with more panels squeezed onto a single page, dramatically shrinking the original artwork down in size. With the Spiderman title taking the lions share of superheroes, the once mighty flagship MWOM now served up an even more infantile dish of 'secret agents, dinosaurs, vampires and pirates.' Whilst the changes weren't necessarily to the detriment of some of the more mainstream strips (and the return of Dracula reprints to the pages of Marvel UK most certainly a welcome one) the feature seemed completely at odds in its new surroundings, with some of the creative teams best work being chopped up, shrunken down and squeezed into a couple of pages somewhere between Godzilla and Skull the Slayer. The end, when it did come, seemed almost merciful, even if many followers of the Counts nefarious schemes were again left feeling shortchanged. 'The Dark Lord will return next week' ran the legend at the end of No.349, yet in No.350 there was no sign, not even one solitary vampire bat gliding away through an open window onto the gentle air current of a still night.



Yet it's hard keeping the undead down and once again Vlad Dracula rose from the grave, this time as part of a line up of 'pocket books' launched in 1980. Chiller Pocket Book began in March that year and if the smaller format saw the original artwork shrunk down in size again, at least (as Dez Skinn's editorial proclaims) the strip was now being seen in feature length episodes for the very first time in the UK. Admirable back-up this time around was provided by the likes of Satana, Ghost Rider and (again) Man Thing and it was also pleasing to see the Wolfman/ Colan/ Palmer opus kicking on from exactly where it left off, even if the page count was shrunk on occasion by Gerber's albeit worthy muck-monster. Chiller would survive until July 1982, with a Dracula Summer Special that same year ultimately proving to be the (ahem) final nail in the coffin.

Marvel's take on Bram Stoker's most famous creation was as apart from the original source material as it was the rest of the Marvel Universe. The entire run of issues at times read like instalments of a novel, with the ongoing, more mature narrative benefiting from a complete reading, something that just didn't seem possible to replicate in the hectic, haphazard world of Marvel UK in the 1970's. However if not necessarily something a Lord of Darkness would appreciate, it's fair to say that Marvel UK gave the good Count his fair share of time in the limelight. Deservedly so.

WHACKOMAN!

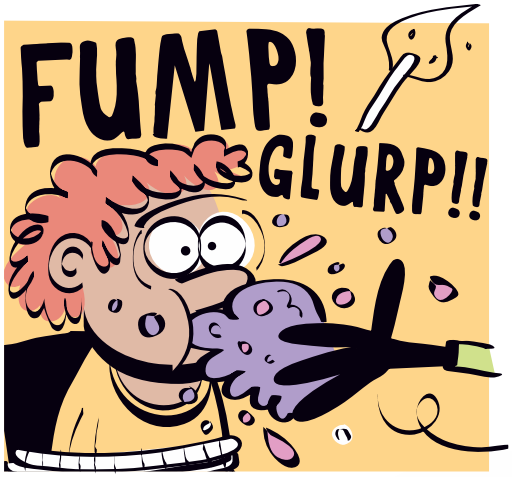


BY MARC JACKSON

LAST TIME... BUGSY GOT CAPTURED BY THE PARTY KING AND WHACKOMAN, GOT PARTIED TO DEATH!...

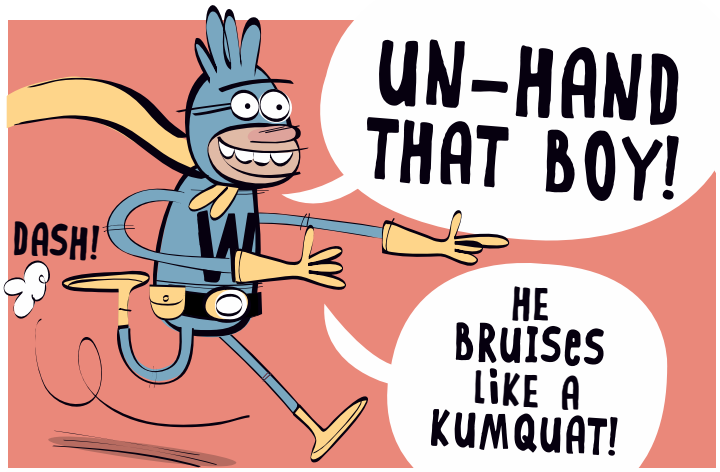




















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Horrors Yet to Come
Moore and Campbell's

FROM HELL

Ten years in the making, the retelling of the horrific Whitechapel Murders remains a high water mark of the comic medium



They even do guided tours now. Well over a hundred years later, with murder mere myth, crowds still flock to the site of gruesome, grizzly death. They map out routes through a warren of old streets and dare to enter the same dark alleyway where a victim took her last few remaining steps. They seek sustenance in the very pub where Polly Nicholls allegedly drank away her 'doss' money shortly before her mutilated body was found in the early hours of that last day of summer. Once nourished they step outside, faced with the looming pomposity of Christ Church, Spitalfields, shrouding the nooks and cranny's of Whitechapel in dark shadow just as it did a poor and destitute populace with a killer in their midst.

The Whitechapel Murders of 1888 still retain their hold on our collective consciousness to this day, with 'Jack the Ripper' a name long entered into that infamous hall of fame reserved for the very worst of nightmares. A slew of books, films, articles, television dramas and documentaries have all attempted to recreate, judge, lay claim to the truth. They seek to make sense of the horror, account for the madness, finally solve the puzzle. Many are noteworthy although more are borne of opportunist or charlatan. Due to the combined efforts of two of the UK's finest creators, comics are one medium at least that has treated those awful events with a gravitas and respect they deserve. Yet From Hell by Northampton's Alan Moore and Glasgow's Eddie Campbell always had loftier ambitions than that.

By 1988 Alan Moore was already sailing away from a recently conquered comics mainstream. With his relationship with DC Comics fatally soured over rights issues surrounding the acclaimed Watchmen and refusing outright to even consider working for Marvel, bridges had been irreparably burnt. Yet where some might rue lost opportunity Moore saw only freedom, retaining his strong belief in comics as a form that had yet to realise its full literary potential. The setting up of Mad Love as a

"Campbell's scratchy, naturalistic style was about as far away from the mainstream as you could get"



new independent publishing outlet for his own and others work and its initial success with one-off anthology AARGH (Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia) proved what possibilities lay beyond a corporate mainstream obsessed with superheroes.

One area of focus for a possible future work lay at an extreme edge of the spectrum of human experience. How does an occurrence such as murder actually come about? Who would be inclined to carry out such an act? Why? Having settled on the subject, Moore had initially rejected the idea of using the infamous 'Ripper' crimes as a basis for any possible piece, reasonably believing that so much had been said and written on the subject there was precious little to add. Yet in 1988 with the attendant publicity surrounding the centenary of the killings he became intrigued, in particular by Stephen Knight's book Jack The Ripper: The Final Solution. Originally published twelve years earlier, with many of its theories already discredited by other so called 'experts', Knight's book nevertheless proved to be a turning point for Moore. Whitechapel 1888 and its surrounding myth had everything he needed.

At least five women (some accounts put the figure higher), all living and working as prostitutes in the economically deprived Whitechapel area of London's East End, were brutally murdered during the Autumn of 1888, all within the same small radius and all, it's commonly accepted, by the same person. If we add the details of the coroners reports concerning nature of death and injuries sustained then we have what are the accepted facts of the case. Moore knew that through comics he could paint as accurate and truthful a portrayal of all this as possible, capable of depicting the reality of the victims poverty-stricken lives and without shrinking from the unimaginable horror of their deaths. Yes there would be conjecture (Knight's own assertions of masonic intrigue, royal indiscretion, illegitimate children, attempted blackmail and establishment cover up would all be brought to the fore) but through all this Moore could shine a light on hidden truths behind the Victorian facade; the deep social divisions, the violent misogyny and what he perceived to be sinister occult undertones. He wanted to map the ripples that flowed through the years following the explosive impact of these horrific events and the (even contemporary) collective madness surrounding them (fake ripper claims, mass hysteria of the press) all within the context of the general turbulence of the period. Here was the real beginning of the twentieth century, a harbinger of horrors yet to come.

Unconcerned with any potential mass audience, Moore hooked up with former collaborator and fellow discontent Steve Bissette. The former Swamp Thing artist also coveted his freedom and independence now, forming his own Spiderbaby Graphix company from which sprang Taboo, an anthology horror title depicting his own and others personal brands of undiluted horror. Upon first speaking to Moore on the subject of From Hell, Bissette was astounded to find himself given an outline of the complete concept from beginning to end, with all 16 chapters, prologue and epilogue already mapped out in the author's mind.

It was through Bissette that Glasgow born artist Eddie Campbell was brought on board. Campbell's scratchy, naturalistic style was about as far away from the mainstream as you could get and Moore had been an early convert, praising Campbell's self-produced work in a fanzine review written for Marvel UK's Daredevils magazine in 1983. If in awe of Campbell's art, Moore thought the writing better still, believing Campbell even then to be '…one of the most interesting talents, amateur or professional, working in comics.'

With Campbell on board, both Bissette and Moore saw exciting avenues opening up. The natural realism and sharp observation of the art would ensure the 'horror' aspect of the series could speak for itself, a world away from some fake cliche-riddled Hollywood re-telling of leading lady, fog shrouded London street and shadowy pursuer in top hat. Rather, From Hell would deposit you deep into the heart of Whitechapel 1888 where the squalor and deprivation was all too visible and where the sound you could hear was of a blade being sharpened.

An eight page prologue appeared in Issue 124 of Dave Sim's Cerebus the Aardvark (July 1989), its opening shot of a dead, rotting seagull carcass surrounded by flies immediately giving notice to any diehard fans of Moore's superhero work that this was not another Tales of the Green Lantern Corps. With Chapter One following in the second issue of Taboo that September, the strip quickly settles on its structure of a nine panel grid (even if many pages never pass without panel expansion for emphasis) and dispensing with thought balloons and third person narrated captions. With Campbell adapting his art to look as he believed it would have if rendered in 1888 itself, and with Moore utilising his ear for naturalistic dialogue to the full, this was not an immediate easy read for many. Yet here was a brutally honest work, immediately labelling itself as melodrama even when going to painstaking lengths to use as much established fact as was possible. The patient reader becomes immersed in a weaving narrative connecting the poor destitute streets of Whitechapel, and victim Marie Kelly in particular, through to the very head of Crown and Empire and Queen Victoria herself (the depiction of whom was an apparent area of contention between the two creators). The horror and sense of foreboding seems real, griping the reader from the onset whilst making no pretence at ever being some parlour-game 'whodunnit' ; the 'Rippers' identity, the same as in Knight's book, being pretty much revealed in Chapter Two long before the first murder. Moore's plot evolves naturally, each chapter unfolding at its own length and pace. If the idea originally sold to Campbell was one of sixteen chapters of eight pages each, a sobering reality soon became apparent. After the prologue, the first chapter came in at twelve pages and the second at thirty-two, with a later instalment clocking in at fifty-eight. Speaking to the Comics Journal in

"This is a horror that is all too real. It actually happened. They do guided tours now"



1991, Moore acknowledged the extra burdens placed on an artist in such circumstances, but heated debates about Queen Victoria aside, the collaboration seemed to be remaining on a sound enough footing as "…the beauty of working with Eddie is that you can ask an awful lot of him and he'll come through."

If the creative side of things remained sound, the situation behind the scenes at Taboo seemed the opposite. Bissette spoke to the comics press about complaints with the books contents, with what he described as the 'natural lovemaking' depicted in Moore and Campbell's opening chapter being one of the reasons Issue 2 had to be presented to nine different binders before finally one company agreed to put the issue together. Subsequent issues also appeared slowly; Issue 3 in March 1990 with Issue 4 not appearing until February 1991. Kevin Eastman's Tundra helped ease the apparent financial burdens of producing that issue before striking a deal that saw them taking over completely with Issue 5, which finally showed up in November that year.

The snails pace of publication certainly wasn't to the detriment of the work; Moore and Campbell seem to revel in a freedom away from editorial constraints. How else to explain the remarkable Chapter Four appearing that November? On the surface this latest instalment to their 'horror' story consists of 38 pages of two men chatting on a sightseeing horse and carriage tour of London. Yet it's the most sinister chapter so far. As carriage wheels wobble over cobbled streets from early morning through to evening, our main protagonist (the Ripper himself) spells out for his servile coachman and accomplice the true nature of the capitals great landmarks surrounding them. As dusk approaches it dawns on his employee, and us, that London, cradle to the Great British Empire, seems but a sinister age-old character in itself; the turrets and spires and churches (such as those designed by architect Nicholas Hawksmoor) now seen for the first time through a masonic, occult, violent misogyny. We take new meaning from the marble and granite, the cold hold these buildings have over a populace dwarfed by them. We feel an intense sense of foreboding as Hawksmoor's Christ Church, Spitalfields looms ahead, knowing a brutal killer, fortified by forces inherent in his very surroundings, is but surveying the lay of the land, plotting his route, planning his imminent return. Campbell's artwork reaches new heights here; panels are stretched and widened to fully convey the sinister architectural splendour. Defying all storytelling logic it's a chapter that shouldn't work but the sheer depth of the writing and precision of the art make each page come alive. That final full page panel of London at dusk with the dome of St Paul's and other church spires dominating the skyline over a darkness now enveloping the populace below serves up a palpable sense of dread; we know this story, we know what's about to come. The sheer weight of the hostile forces and negative energy about to extinguish the lives of five women seem overwhelming and insurmountable, reinforced and 'engraved in stone' all around them, already having kept them in check for the entirety of their so very short lives. What possible hope did they ever really have?

Groundbreaking work can have profound effects, and so it proved even for Alan Moore himself. It was during the writing of this chapter that his main character utters lines pertaining to gods existing for real if only in ones own mind. Moore would reflect on the implications of this, finding it to be a piece of logic he just couldn't ignore. His research of fractal mathematics for the aborted Big Numbers book fused with his research on ritual and the occult for From Hell, with Moore making a connection between the two of language, or rather language with the power to change events. Conversations with close friend and UK comics writer Steve Moore (himself long a student of the occult and practitioner of magic ritual) led to further research himself, all first steps on a road

that would lead him, on the day of his fortieth birthday, to declare to family and friends that he was now a practicing magician. Serious and open on the subject in interviews from the very beginning, even when seemingly sending himself up, Moore was happy to counter what he saw as "too much dark on what is a lucid and fluorescent subject," one which has unarguably informed much of his work ever since and invariably adds further depth and texture to the mix.

The life-changing work in question needed to find a new home with Kitchen Sink Press following the collapse of Taboo. After initially reprinting the already-published chapters, a new instalment eventually showed up in the eponymous From Hell issue 4 dated March 1994. With the sheer scale of the project now becoming apparent, Moore saw fit to begin writing detailed appendixes accompanying each new chapter which not only enhanced the reading experience but shed greater light on the amount of historical accuracy and detail of the strip.

This accuracy and attention to detail would only add to its overall impact. If the sinister Chapter Four had seemed merely chilling, the horror of Chapter Ten is visceral. For 34 pages the reader is locked in the tiny lodging room at 13 Millers Court with the killer and his final victim, Marie, or Mary Kelly. The futility of the victim holding up bedclothes to her face for protection and the knowledge of what is to come is gut wrenching; for her or the reader there will be no escape as Moore and Campbell bar all exits. One of the most harrowing reads ever, and fully intended to be, we get panel after panel from the killers point of view, share his icy calculating stare, his hallucinations, his visions, immersed in the madness of someone who can justifiably be described as one of the sickest bastards ever. We feel the claustrophobia in that tiny lodging room, the heat from the fire, the feelings of nausea worsened when he turns and somehow seems to face us, the reader. You picture yourself in that room, with killer and victim, both now infamous, questioning why you're there in the first place. Moore had read all the reports of the death and of Kelly's horrific injuries. This is a horror that is all too real. It actually happened.

They do guided tours now.

The momentum that has built up to this most final of horrors doesn't let up once it's over with the remaining chapters remarkably containing some of the best work. The story plays out with the actual 'solving' of the case and subsequent establishment cover up, before we witness the final fate of the killer himself. We follow his spirit, this patron saint of murder, through time and space itself, meeting Ian Brady, Myra Hindley and Peter Sutcliffe (daubed the 'Yorkshire Ripper' by a salivating gutter-press) along the way. A harrowing, bleak read, yet it's here right near the end that, just once, Moore and Campbell offer up the briefest flicker of hope and respite. Moore cryptically refuses to comment on the penultimate page of Chapter Fourteen in his otherwise forthcoming and detailed appendix, telling the reader they'll just have to figure this one out for themselves. For this reader at least it's an unexpected ray of light amid the unremitting bleakness.

That wasn't quite it. In September 1998, ten years after its initial conception, the final appendix was published. 'Dance of the Gull Catchers' remains a quite stunning coda, acting as commentary on the Ripper phenomenon and subsequent media circus of which, with no hint of irony on their part, Moore and Campbell freely admit they are now a part of. Campbell produces some remarkable work here, a final denouement that remains moving, poignant and at times hilarious. Then, finally, From Hell was no more.

The first of Alan Moore's comics work to be adapted into a film, the From Hell movie is by some accounts not bad, even if attempting to transpose Johnny Depp or Heather Graham into the world depicted on the pages of the strip seems a foolhardy endeavour. Film and other mediums have had plenty of opportunity to 'say something' about the Whitechapel Murders over the years, and unlike any film adaptation by definition, the comic was created with no agenda other than to be itself. Rightly lauded, From Hell the comic remains, if anything, underrated; the scale of its achievement becoming apparent when the complete work was finally published as a single volume (initially by Campbell himself in December 1999 before a UK edition from Knockabout in 2000). The publication of the From Hell Companion in 2013, with extracts from Moore's scripts and Campbell's own commentary, remains an invaluable read for anyone with an interest in the work, giving a unique insight into the creative process, and the publication in 2018 of From Hell: Master Edition, a ten part series with new full colourisation by Campbell has also piqued much interest (Campbell has spoken of the joy of revisiting the original pages and colouring the work from scratch, rising to the many challenges).

However you decide to immerse yourself in this groundbreaking work, just don't expect to find any answers. As unpalatable as the fact is, the Whitechapel murders will forever remain unresolved. It's perhaps most succinctly summed up in the collected edition's dedication; affording five people a heartfelt respect never forthcoming in their own short lifetimes:



'…to Polly Nichols, Anne Chapman, Liz Stride, Kate Eddows and Marie Jeanette Kelly. You and your demise: of these things alone are we certain. Goodnight, ladies.'

Author: Peter Gouldson
Twitter: @gouldp7070

As long as the Doctor exists, in comics as well as on TV, there will always be monsters for him to fight.



Artwork: Roach/Offredi/Langridge (c) Doctor Who Magazine/Panini

MONSTER MASH

In TV Comic in the 1960s, the First Doctor and his grandchildren, John and Gillian, came up against a host of nasty enemies. In the first TV Comic Doctor Who story, The Klepton Parasites (November 1964 to January 1965), the Kleptons were a humanoid race with large eyes and rubbery snouts. When their own planet moved too close to its sun, they built an underwater city on the planet of the Thaines, but were repelled by the Thaines with the help of the Doctor and his grandchildren. Later, in On The Web Planet, (March to April 1965), the time travellers encountered the ant-like Zarbi from the television story The Web Planet. In this adventure, the Zarbi were controlled by the evil Skirkons, humanoid creatures with beak-like noses, who wanted to mine the Zarbi planet, Vortis, for Galvinium X. This story began a mere week after The Web Planet had completed its run on TV. Some of the 'monsters' encountered by the Doctor, John and Gillian were very human – they came across the Pied Piper of Hamelin in 1284 (Challenge of the Piper, June to July 1965) and they also helped Santa Claus defeat a malevolent entity called the Demon Magician! (A Christmas Story, December 1965 to January 1966).

Meanwhile, in the pages of TV Century 21 from 1965 to 1967, the Daleks were strutting their stuff without the help or hindrance of the Doctor in the strip known retrospectively as The Dalek Chronicles. Over 104 one-page episodes (largely written by Doctor Who story editor David Whittaker and beautifully illustrated by comics legend Richard Jennings, Eric Eden and Ron Turner), the strip was to



Artwork: Roach/Offredi/Langridge (c) Doctor Who Magazine/Panini

prove to be a huge influence on later Doctor Who comic artists such as Lee Sullivan. The Emperor Dalek was a key character in the stories, which told of the creation of the Daleks, the expansion of the Dalek Empire and their war with the Mechanoids. We also met the infamous Dalek Zeg, a Dalek inventor who duelled with the Emperor for supremacy but sadly lost!

The Patrick Troughton years on TV are often called 'The Monster Years' by the programme's fans and the monsters were out in force in the comics as well! TV Comic continued to run the Doctor's adventures. In the second Troughton strip, The Trodos Ambush (January to February 1967), the Doctor attempted to make peace with the Trods, a robotic race first encountered by the Hartnell Doctor. Unfortunately, the Daleks, in their first appearance in the main Doctor Who comic strip, had other ideas and wanted to destroy the Trods. Thankfully, some of the Trods survived and helped the Doctor and his companions to escape.

The Cybermen had been introduced to Doctor Who on television in the First Doctor's final adventure, The Tenth Planet in 1966. But the Cybernetic lifeforms arguably became more associated with the Second Doctor and they encountered him in the comic strips on numerous occasions. The Coming of the Cybermen, which ran from September to October 1967 (and was the first colour Doctor Who strip) was followed by Cyber-appearances in Flower Power, Cyber-Mole, The Cyber Empire and Eskimo Jo. And there were more Cyber-stories in the TV Comic Holiday Special and annual as well!

The Second Doctor bowed out in the comics in The Night Walkers in November 1969.The story tied in nicely with events in the TV series and featured walking scarecrows, sent by the Time Lords, which forced the Doctor to regenerate.

The Third Doctor, played by Jon Pertwee on TV, appeared in the pages of both TV Action and Countdown. He encountered classic TV monsters such as the Daleks on the printed page but also came across creatures unique to the comic strip medium, such as huge insects created by a new insecticide (Insect, April to May 1970).

Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor also appeared in TV Comic, but most fans would agree that his most memorable strips appeared in Marvel's Doctor Who Weekly (later Doctor Who Monthly and Doctor Who Magazine) which launched in 1979. The very first Marvel Doctor Who strip, The Iron Legion (October to December 1979) is rightly remembered as a classic and was created by the dream team of writer Pat Mills, artist Dave Gibbons and editor Dez Skinn (note: the story credits both John Wagner and Pat Mills as writers as they shared the writing credit but took turns writing the scripts). The monsters in this story were an Iron Legion of Robots, led by the evil General Ironicus. The story took place in an alternative reality where the Roman Empire had conquered the galaxy. Another classic story was The Star Beast (February to April 1980) by the same creative team. The monster of this strip, a galactic criminal called Beep the Meep, was actually rather cute with his bat-like ears, but he certainly didn't act cute and enjoyed inflicting pain on others. These two classic adventures will shortly be released as Big Finish audio stories with Tom Baker playing the role of the Doctor as only he can.

The Fifth Doctor had a relatively short innings in the DWM comic strip but nonetheless enjoyed some classic adventures. Perhaps the most interesting from a monster point of view was 4 Dimensional Vistas (July to December 1983), by Steve Parkhouse, which saw the return of the reptilian Ice Warriors.

The Sixth Doctor's era in Doctor Who Magazine was drawn exclusively by artist John Ridgway, bringing a welcome element of visual continuity to the strip. The first Colin Baker strip, The Shape Shifter (May to June 1984) introduced Frobisher, a shape shifting Whifferdill. Not really a 'monster' (he adopted the form of a penguin and became the Doctor's companion!), Frobisher was nonetheless one of the most memorable alien creatures ever seen in the Doctor Who strip. The Colin Baker years also saw several appearances of the Cybermen, including in the classic story The World Shapers (August to October 1987) in which it was revealed that the rubbery Voord (a species first seen during the Hartnell era on TV) had evolved into the Cybernetic lifeforms.



Artwork: Pasquale Qualano (c)Titan Comics

John Ridgway also drew several Sylvester McCoy strips including the first Seventh Doctor strip, A Cold Day in Hell (November 1987 to February 1988), which once again saw the return of the Ice Warriors. Another popular Seventh Doctor strip was Nemesis of the Daleks (September to December 1989) written by Steve Alan with art by Lee Sullivan who relished the opportunity to depict the metal meanies from Skaro and later also drew them in Emperor of the Daleks (February to July 1993), written by Paul Cornell. Sullivan was not only able to draw a superb visual depiction of Sylvester McCoy but also had a knack for drawing Daleks that was second to none.

Despite his short run on television, the Eighth Doctor (Paul McGann) enjoyed a



Artwork: John Ridgway (c) Doctor Who Magazine/Panini

respectable run of comic strips in DWM. Children of the Revolution (December 2001 to May 2002) was a memorable story and was a sequel to the Patrick Troughton television story The Evil of the Daleks, featuring the return of the 'humanised' Daleks from that story.

Doctor Who Magazine continued to go from strength to strength in the 2000's and brought us many more classic monster encounters for the Doctor. The Ninth Doctor (Christopher Eccleston) encountered Igrix, (The Love Invasion, April to June 2005), a Kustollen who planned to destroy the moon so that humankind had no staging post to travel deep into space. The David Tennant comic strip era began with Betrothal of Sontar in February/March 2006 when Rose befriended Lerox , a Sontaran who possessed a conscience. Matt Smith's comic strip enemies included the Shasarak, a humanoid species with gravity-shock battle armour (Planet Bollywood, July 2010). More recently, from October to November 2015, Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor encountered vampires in Highgate Cemetery in 1972 in the classic story, The Highgate Horror.

In 2006, a new Doctor Who title burst on to the scene – Doctor Who Adventures. Aimed mainly at younger readers, the magazine was at first published by the Immediate Media Company, with Panini Comics taking over in 2015. The Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors all appeared during the run of the publication and they encountered a memorable run of monsters. The Tenth Doctor encountered the Disinfectodroids (The Germ War, May 2006), robots which were so obsessive about junk and germs that they cleaned up the Doctor and Rose and dumped them on a planet on the other side of the galaxy! The Eleventh Doctor came across the sinister space leeches (Attack of the Space Leeches, April 2010), green flying creatures which sucked the life out of people and threatened to over-run London until a young boy's common cold was used to overcome them. And the Twelfth Doctor was infected by pollen when he was attacked by the Plant, the entity which controlled all the fauna on the planet Eed'n (Petals, May 2016).

From 2008 to 2013, IDW published a critically acclaimed Doctor Who comic aimed principally at the American market. One of their most memorable titles proved to be a major landmark in comics history – a crossover between Doctor Who and Star Trek: The Next Generation entitled Assimilation! Readers were treated to an alliance between the Cyberman and the Borg – the ultimate monster mash-up! It didn't work out well for the Borg though – the Cybemen betrayed them!

By now, of course, Titan Comics were also on the scene and like DWM and the others, the publisher has brought us a stunning range of Doctor Who comic adventures.

The Tenth Doctor encountered The Wishing Well Witch (April to May 2016), an entity that haunted the town of Dewbury in the early 21st century. The well in question turned out to be a rupture in time and the witch was in fact the remains of seven Gallifreyan children from the Dark Times of Gallifrey.

The Eleventh Doctor got to meet an entity called ARC (Autonomous Reasoning Center) across several Titan adventures. This shape-shifting entity initially sent the personnel of the Systems Research Base into a coma but went on to travel with the Doctor and his companions Alice and Jones.

Doctor Twelve's Titan adventures have included A Confusion of Angels (December 2017 to January 2018), a rollercoaster of a story featuring the Doctor, Bill Potts, Nardole and Missy as well as the return of some classic new series monsters - the rhino-like Judoon, the Weeping Angels and the Heavenly Hosts (previously seen in the David Tennant Christmas special Voyage of the Damned). And in the brilliantly surreal festive adventure Relative Dimensions (December 2015), the Doctor and Clara encountered giant nutcrackers, snakes and other creations of the Doctor's old enemy, the Celestial Toymaker. And by the time you read this, the 13th Doctor will be encountering a new generation of nasties!

There have also been monster encounters for the Doctor in Battles from Time (a magazine published to support a range of collectable trading cards and the BBC Doctor Who annuals. The range of stories is frankly mind-boggling and the one thing we can be sure of is that the Doctor will continue to fight the monsters for many years to come!

MONSTER MAKER!

Cybermen, Ice Warriors, Draconians - John Ridgway has drawn them all! Doctor Who Magazine artist for the whole of the Colin Baker years and much of the Sylvester McCoy era, he has also worked on such classics as Transformers, Judge Dredd and Commando.

Were there any particular comics or comic artists that you admired when you were growing up?

There were many different artists at different stages of growing up. The first was probably Burne Hogarth, drawing

Tarzan (which appeared in Tarzan Adventures). I think his signed work indicated to me that there were actually people drawing comics. Mac Raboy on Captain Marvel Jnr. Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy, Sydney Jordan, Alden McWilliams, Arturo Del Castillo, Wayne Boring on Superman. There were many, many others.

You drew the whole of the Sixth Doctor's comic strip era, a rare achievement and one to be proud of. What are your thoughts about that period of your career when you look back now?

I enjoyed the whole of it. Together with Enid Blyton's Famous Five comic it allowed me to become a full-time artist. Previously I had been drawing Commando and, later, stories for Warrior magazine in my spare time while working full-time designing ventilation schemes, submarine escape suits, and hospital incinerators. The main challenge for me on Doctor Who was getting the faces to look right – and drawing Peri (Commando gave me little experience in drawing attractive females).

Frobisher is one of the most popular characters you've drawn. Did it take you a long time to get the look of the character right (in his penguin form) or was it something that developed very naturally from the script?

I started out drawing Frobisher as realistically possible, from photos of King Penguins, but real penguins have very little by way of facial expression, so Frobisher gradually morphed into a cartoonish character helped by drawing a Rupert-the-Bear type story section. Steve Parkhouse was a brilliant writer to work with.

Another brilliant character was Dr Ivan Asimoff in Polly the Glot – was that a character you particularly enjoyed drawing?

I think Asimoff was created by Dave Gibbons. I asked Steve Parkhouse for a story featuring Zyglots and he wrote the story around Asimoff fighting to save them from extermination. I enjoyed drawing Asimoff's love for Polly and his determination on the Akker's ship. There was a surprizing depth of feeling in most of the Doctor Who stories I drew.

Is there a Doctor Who monster you enjoy drawing the most? You do seem to have a particular skill at drawing both Cybermen and Ice Warriors!

I enjoyed drawing the Draconians most. They were dramatic and stylish. The Cybermen were interesting but the detail on their heads was laborious to get right.

Was it fun drawing hybrid Voord / Cybermen in The World Shapers?

Sadly, that story was drawn at a time when I was also drawing Hellblazer and being asked to catch up on the Hellblazer schedule. I could not continue to draw both Hellblazer and Doctor Who. Hearing that Sheila Cranna, the editor of Doctor Who Magazine, was fighting to keep the magazine going (Colin Baker was fighting to keep the programme on TV) and knowing that Marvel UK had sold off Starburst (its only other magazine), I made the decision to give up Doctor Who (I was not sacked as has been suggested). While I enjoyed working with my friend Tim Perkins as inker, I felt rushed and could not do my best work.

You contributed to Prisoners of Time, a mini-series from IDW to celebrate 50 years of Doctor Who. What are your thoughts about working on that?

I thoroughly enjoyed drawing the story and now know how to get out of a strait-jacket – a necessary skill for people in the comics business. It was good to draw Colin as the Doctor, Peri, and Frobisher. It also gave me a chance to draw The Master. The mini-series was also published by Panini in Germany and I got the chance to meet Colin again and make some new friends over there.

You've done a lot of science-fiction, such as Doctor Who and Dan Dare, but lots of historical stuff as well. Do you have favourite between the two genres?

I like fantasy and science fiction. Really, I regard Doctor Who as fantasy. Science fiction, for me, is difficult because I want to get the science accurate and correct. With fantasy you can let your imagination rip. Historical stuff requires a lot of research and reference materiel.

Would you like to work on Doctor Who regularly again?

Not regularly. I would love to draw another story. These days it is in full colour and I would want to do the whole job – pencils, inks and colour. That would be too time-consuming to do on a regular basis.

What are you working on at the moment?

I regard myself as semi-retired. I'm colouring old Space Ace strips by Ron Turner, which should keep me going busy for a couple of years. I've also decided to colour and complete the first story arc of Age of Heroes by Jim Hudnell and there may be a chance of getting that published. If that happens and is successful, Jim and I will probably carry on with further story arcs. If not, I want to get on with my own sci-fi series, "Frontiers", Melvin, Darrak, Alternate Earth and Helven. I'll be busy into my nineties.



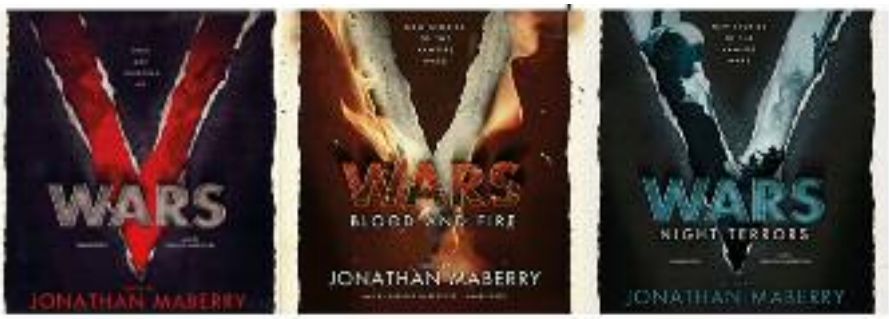
Artwork: John Ridgway (c) Doctor Who Magazine/Panini

Author: Ian Wheeler
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WAR HAS BEGUN!


Photo by
Sara Jo West

Leah Crowley talks to prolific New York Times best-selling author and comic writer, ***Jonathan Maberry***: His origins and interests, the Joe Ledger series, The Wolfman, upcoming spinoff series, Lost Roads and the forthcoming Netflix adaptation, V-Wars. She also finds out what motivates him and gets a glimpse of what's to come in the near future.





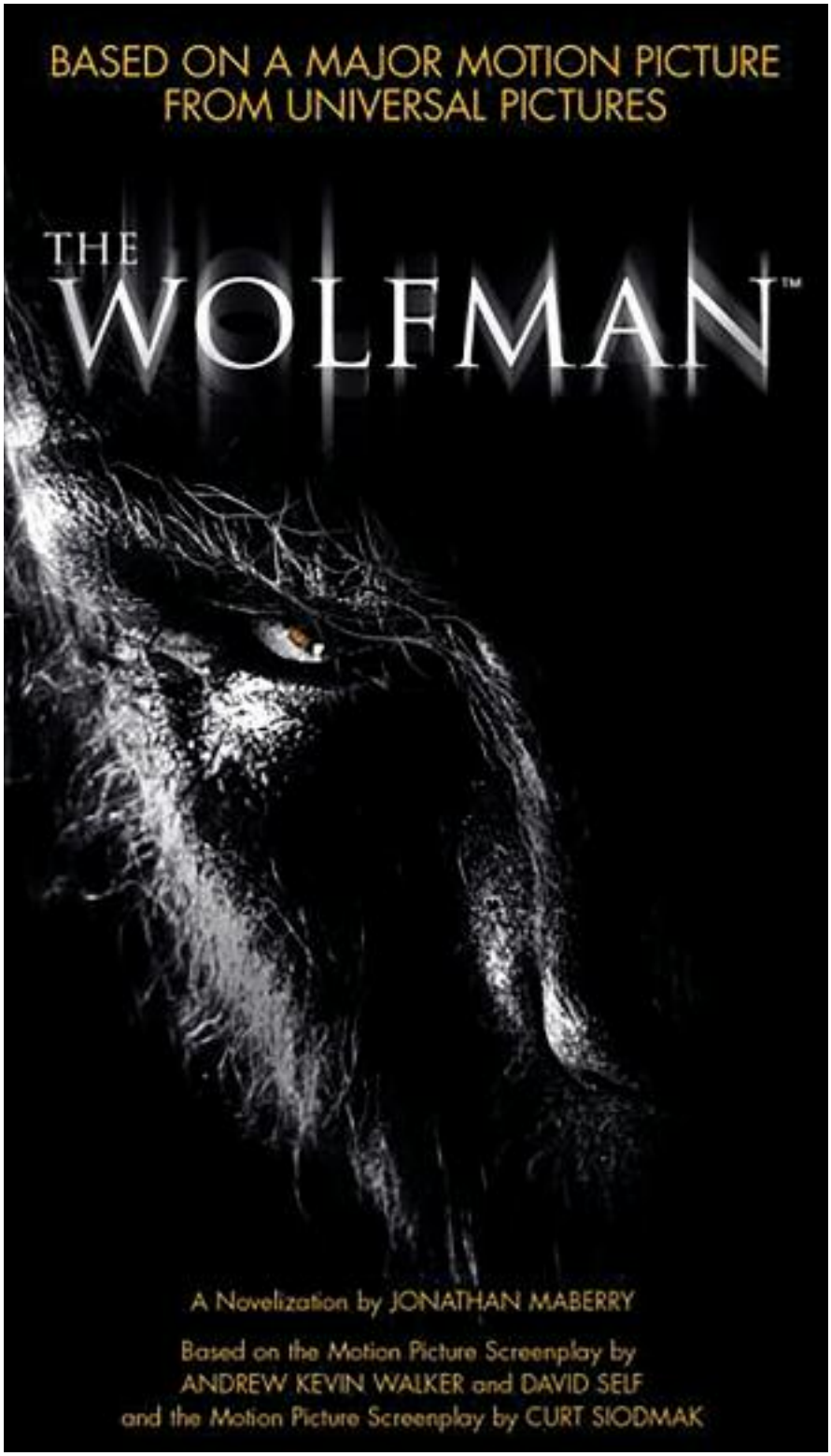


Leah Crowley: *You have quite an extensive back catalogue, ranging from comic books to best-selling novels and a forthcoming televised adaptation. You're obviously very passionate about your work and creative projects. When you're not sitting at your writing desk do you have another strong passion and interest?*

Jonathan Maberry: Even though I'm busy I'm not ankle-chained to my desk. My wife and I travel quite a lot, and I have a great deal of interest in the arts –music, dance, live theater, and film. Also, I've been a martial arts practitioner and teacher for over fifty years, and although I'm retired from actively teaching jujutsu and kenjutsu, I do solo training on the bluffs her in Southern California.

Leah Crowley: *V-Wars has been published in a series of books, graphic novels, board game and now the V-Wars legacy continues with a televised adaptation for a new Netflix series. How has this whole experience been for you so far and what was it like to meet the team and cast?*

Jonathan Maberry: V-Wars started out as a fun experiment to blend my love of science and my deep interest in the folklore of supernatural predators. I had asked by the editors at IDW Publishing to come up with an idea for an anthology and thought it would be fun to do a shared world story. The conceit is that melting permafrost (due to climate change) releases an ancient disease that triggers a dormant gene, which in turn codes for a genetic disorder approximating vampirism. It's straight science fiction with no actual supernatural elements. I created the concept and wrote an extensive framing story, then invited some of my colleagues to write 'field reports' from the 'vampire wars'. Between the volumes of the



anthology series I wrote a series of comic books, which have since been gathered into trades (graphic novel collections).

When IDW formed its Entertainment division and announced that they were going to shop V-Wars as a possible TV series I was delighted, but not really optimistic. I've had other works under option before and, in typical Hollywood fashion, there was a lot of smoke but no actual fire. And then…bang!...I get a call from my producer informing me that Netflix has bought there series and hired Ian Somerhalder (Lost, The Vampire Diaries) to star. Everything since has been somewhat surreal. Reading the scripts, meeting the actors at the table read, going to the set for the start of filming, and now watching the dailies on my computer. It's both magical and crazy.

Leah Crowley: *You're recently working on a second Rot & Ruin spin-off, entitled Lost Roads. What can readers expect from this?*

Jonathan Maberry: Lost Roads is the second of a new spinoff series that launched with Broken Lands. It's set six months after the events of Fire & Ash, and although many of the original characters are in the new books, the focus has shifted. The new main character is a fifteen-year-old bisexual Latina living in South Texas, in what had once been a relocation camp for undocumented immigrants. Gabriella 'Gutsy' Gomez is a strong-willed, deeply practical and very courageous young woman who is trying to solve the mysterious death of her mother. Each layer she peels back reveals more about her mother's death, the town in which she lives, and the nature of the zombie plague that destroyed the world. This is a classic example of when the truth does not set you free. It's a great jumping on place for new readers, though for long-time readers of my books you'll encounter more than one familiar face.

Leah Crowley: *Back in 2010 you also wrote a movie novelisation of the film, The Wolfman. The novel also achieved success as a New York Times bestseller and it also won the Scribe Award for 'Best Film Adaptation'. There have been many classic horror related films over the years but what inspired you to write, The Wolfman, in particular?*

Jonathan Maberry: I've always been a fan of classic horror books, comics, TV, and movies; and werewolves have been as important to me as vampires and zombies; however it wasn't my love of the Wolfman that connected me to the project. I was at home one night and received a call out of the blue from the vice-president of licensing for Universal Pictures. She said they were doing a remake of The Wolfman and asked if I might be interested in tackling the novelization.

I had no idea how that process worked, though I agree to give it a try. What I



learned was that the authors of movie adaptations don't actually get to see the film. They work directly from the script and maybe (if they're lucky) see a few productions stills or drawings. So, in the absence of more concrete material to use as a foundation, I did a lot of research and decided to write an actual Gothic novel. The book did rather well for me, and help reconnect me with the world of classic monsters.

Leah Crowley: *You've wrote numerous comics, starting with Marvel Entertainment and later with Dark Horse and IDW Publishing. Your works have included, Wolverine, Black Panther, The Punisher, Captain America and V-Wars. Have you ever considered working and being involved with other comic publishers, such as, DC Comics, Rebellion Publishers, etc...*

Jonathan Maberry: I am already in discussions about a possible project for DC but can't spill the beans right now. As for Rebellion, I absolutely love 2000AD, Dredd, and a number of other titles. Terrific and consistently entertaining and innovative books. However I don't actually know anyone at Rebellion had don't think I'm currently on their radar. That may change, though.

Leah Crowley: *Favourite superhero and villain? Why?*

Jonathan Maberry: My favourite super hero is T'Challa, the Black Panther. He was introduced in the pages of Fantastic Four shortly before I began reading comics, way back in the middle 1960s. The character was groundbreaking for me, because I was raised in a very poor and intensely violent home buy a father who was a criminal a member of the local chapter of the KKK. Not the most nurturing of environments. My only influences were hatred and intolerance. But then I read about the Black Panther in the comics and that started a series of conversations with friends and, more importantly, teachers and librarians. It was because of that character that I learned the truth about apartheid, diversity, Jim Crow, the Selma March, and more. Heartbreaking, but then the truth often is. Without exposure to T'Challa, I can't say for certain that I would have become the person I am. And the fact that the universe was clever enough to put me in position to then write the Black Panther comic many years later is delightful. I'm sure my father is spinning in his grave at high speed.

Favorite villain is, and will always be, Doctor Doom. But I'm talking Old School Doom, from the Lee and Kirby days of the mid-to-late 1960s. This was the doom who wasn't a raving lunatic, and he wasn't introduced to a story to get beat up just to prove how tough or resourceful the hero was. Old school Doom was brilliant, subtle, and nuanced. That was the version of Doom I used when I wrote Black Panther: DoomWar, and in Marvel Universe vs The Avengers.

Leah Crowley: *In 2009, Patient Zero was released which formed the Joe Ledger series. Since then the series has grown into further novels, short stories and a couple of collections, including, Unstoppable, an anthology of Joe Ledger stories told by some of today's top mystery writers such as, Christopher Golden, Joe Mckinney. Can you tell readers more about the character, Joe Ledger and what they can expect from this inspiring series?*

Jonathan Maberry: Joe Ledger is a former cop who gets recruited into a secret government agency tasked with going up against terrorists who use cutting edge science. Joe is a bit crazy (or, possibly, very crazy), but he is the perfect man for the job. The first story, Patient Zero, pits him against a group that has weaponized a prion disease to create an unstoppable zombie-like plague. The series is a lot of fun to write –high concepts, lots of action, and the opportunity for me to mix a lot of humor in with the thrills and chills.

Leah Crowley: *As previously mentioned, V-Wars is currently in production featuring a star-studded cast. Will there be a possibility of seeing more adaptations of your work on the small screen in the future?*

Jonathan Maberry: Several of my other works are under option, including the Joe Ledger thrillers (in development by SONY) and my standalone science fiction novel, Mars One. And, coincidentally, the day I'm doing this interview another of my projects was optioned by a Canadian TV group—but details on that are under wraps.

Leah Crowley: *Your stories are highly entertaining and visual. Can you briefly describe the comic writing process as to writing a novel?*

Jonathan Maberry: Novels are all about the writers alone in a room. It's solitary and it takes a long time. In a weird way the

writer becomes the god of the universe that is the book. Comics, on the other hand, are much more collaborative. The writer is either assigned a gig or pitches something to an editor, then there are discussions about how the story should play out. Usually an artist is picked early on, and the writer has to take into account that artist's unique visual storytelling style because it will influence how he writes. Then the writer does the script, a process that takes a few days to a week. After that it's turfed back to the editor for notes, then sent to the artist for pencil sketches. There is discussion at every step. Following the pencils are the inks, the colors and the lettering. Each step brings in another professional, so there is a lot of say on how the comic should look. And even though the writer decides on how many panels and gives detailed art direction, he's wise to listen to the artist and even the inker on modifications. So, although both novels and comics involve telling stories, they are very different. And each is fun in its own way.

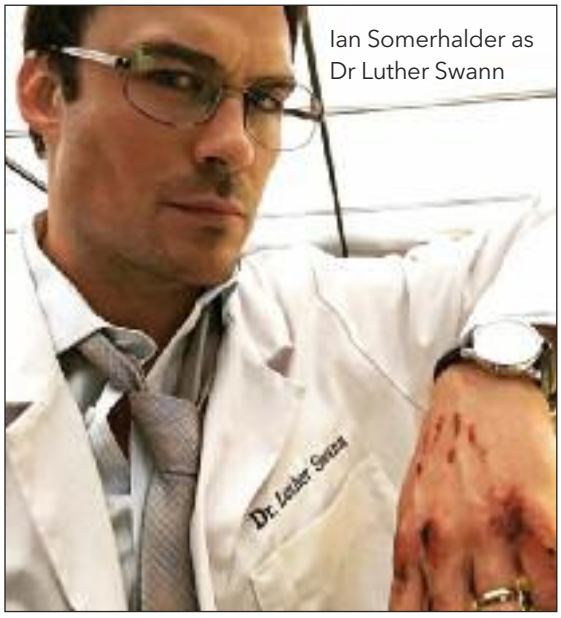
Leah Crowley: *You are also a prolific editor of many literary titles. Have you ever had a special moment from editing another writer's work and it blew you away? What do you look for in a well-written story?*

Jonathan Maberry: I am frequently blown away by the quality of writing that comes from the authors whose work I am fortunate to edit. I only work on projects where I get to hand-pick my contributors, so I already know their merits going in, but then I see their finished products. I recently got a fantastic short story from RL Stine (Goosebumps) for a middle grade anthology I'm editing -New Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark; and the Hippo stories Scott Sigler wrote for two different volumes of V-Wars are among the best horror stories I've ever read. Weston Ochse's short for Joe Ledger: Unstoppable made me cry.

Leah Crowley: *Most writers usually have a ritual, such as, music being played in the background or complete silence. Do you have a specific routine when you write?*

Jonathan Maberry: I don't have many rituals. I'm not temperamental in any way. I write eight hours each day, often broken into two four-hour blocks with an exercise break in the middle. Sometimes I have music playing, other times not. That said, I have some fun creating playlists for certain novels. And when I do listen to music, there are certain artists whose works are in heavier rotation –Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, Steely Dan, Bob Dylan and Pink Floyd, for example. And…coffee usually factors into my writing day. Quite a lot, actually.

Leah Crowley: *This October, Audible listeners will get to hear an all new original ghost story, Lullaby, narrated by Scott Brick, and will be exclusively for Audible. What can listeners expect from this Halloween Treat?*



Ian Somerhalder as Dr Luther Swann

Jonathan Maberry: With short stories it's hard to spill details without also spilling the beans. So, I'll just say this much: it's a scary little ghost story that will not be remembered as the 'feel good' story of the year.

Leah Crowley: *What is next from the mind of Jonathan Maberry?*

Jonathan Maberry: I'm currently writing Lost Roads, which I expect to finish in a month. After that I have another stand along -Ink, which is about a kind of vampire who steals tattoos tied to people's most precious memories, leaving behind only the knowledge that something vastly important has been taken. Then I write Rage, the first in a new Joe Ledger series, where he transitions from an American troubleshooter to a more global problem solver.

Leah Crowley: *Some comic writers and artists have been inspired from comics from their childhood. Did the same thing happen to you? When was the first time you've read a comic and what did it mean to you?*

Jonathan Maberry: I got into comics very early, and the first one I ever bought was Fantastic Four #66, back in 1967. I was hooked right away and became an instant 'Marvel kid'. The blend of science fiction, character development, and action suited me; and the strong sense of moral values and courage gave me life lessons I was not learning at home. Plus that series introduced the Black Panther. So critical to my formation.

Leah Crowley: *In the news recently there have been mixed views towards Ruby Rose taking on the role as Batwoman and some critics said she wasn't gay enough to perform the role. From a writer's perspective and a comic writer's perspective what are your thoughts in relation to this?*

Jonathan Maberry: It's long past time for us to treat LGBQT as if it's something new. It isn't. There should already be characters of all genders, all identities throughout pop culture, as there is in real life. As for Ruby Rose not being gay enough…that is beyond insulting. She is gay. She is openly gender fluid. Are critics saying that she has to be some kind of cliché gay in order to be acceptable? That's patently absurd. Gay comes in all shapes and sizes, just like straight does. It's called 'being who you are'. I'm a straight guy and I know this… how does anyone not know it?

Leah Crowley: *You have travelled to and appeared at numerous conventions and events over the years. Is there a destination still on your bucket list?*

Jonathan Maberry: I haven't yet been to Asia, so that's on my list. And my last trip to the UK, though wonderful, was way too short. I need to go back and to spend a whole lot more time there.

Author: Leah Crowley
Twitter: @realleahcrowley

HAMMER TIME

How it should have been... The unseen HoH #24



Somewhat messily, this title ended in August 1978, one issue short of completing volume two (when the original publishers chose to invest in home videos instead of print).

Now, on the 40th anniversary of said fateful date, we have produced a special edition to finally publish all the material that would have appeared in issue #24 (plus a couple of bits we never got around to!).

And all in that classic 1970s HoH style!

A special limited edition of the previously unpublished September 1978 issue

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The world's first-ever full colour horror film mag is back from the dead... picking up where it left off 40 years ago with brand new issues, and kicking off with the long-promised #18 – the *Double X Special*!

Plus remastered new editions of those hard to find early issues, including the never-before-seen English language edition of #2 – originally pulped by HM Customs.

Dez Skinn, who had dropped Monster Mag to create House of Hammer and all the rest, has returned to his roots to produce lavish, high quality, full size (9.5 x 13") issues of this ground-breaking title, each with a huge 3ft x 2ft poster.

Issue 20: celebrating HOUSE OF HAMMER



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featuring THREE giant posters ...each measuring almost 13" x 20"

THE OLD *AND* THE NEW – ALL IN THAT SIZZLING SEVENTIES STYLE!



Mid-1976. Dez Skinn is preparing the first issue of horror-themed publication The House of Hammer. The central element of this innovative blend of magazine feature and comic strip is intended to be a regular comics adaptation of an entire Hammer horror movie. However, Skinn is seriously handicapped by the fact of operating in an age before videos and DVDs. He has chosen Dracula (1958) as the first adaptation simply because of its providential broadcast on television. Moreover, he can capture the transmission only on an audio cassette. "And then [I got] my typewriter out," he recalls, "Pause, replay, 'What was that word?'" This inauspicious beginning, however, heralded a publication that would constitute a high-water mark in the comics medium – one that few creatives have bettered even when unafflicted by the pathetic technological exigencies of the 1970s.

After recently defecting from IPC, Skinn was the newly appointed head of the youth group at Williams Publishing. His jobs were essentially Anglicisation (the UK edition of Mad), reprinting (the licensed comics Tarzan, Korak and Laurel & Hardy) and cover approval (the saucy Funny Half Hour, packaged elsewhere). With Williams actively seeking to make his department bigger, Skinn seized the opportunity to create a product that was more personally fulfilling. "I guess a bit of it was self-indulgence," Skinn concedes. "Having been a horror fan and a comics fan, it would be lovely if I could earn a crust out of doing what I love. But I think I could justify putting both elements in."

In an era with no easy means to re-experience a motion picture, there certainly existed a market for printed retellings of movies, but Skinn disdained pre-existing models like 'film books' (stills accompanied by text) and photo strips ('fumetti'). "I just thought, 'Christopher Lee standing in an open window would not have his Dracula cape furling behind him like Superman – it will look limp. But I can get an artist to make it look far more dramatic.'" Skinn felt his mooted hybrid publication could bring in comics fans, "providing the artwork was world class. There's no point doing it on the cheap." In the costing he prepared for his bosses, Skinn deliberately ensured an unusually high 30p cover price that would enable the hiring of top talent.

No sooner had his costing and dummy secured him a green light than Skinn was hit by a brainwave that would change the title and, to a large extent, the content of what was then called Chiller. A few doors down from Williams' London Wardour Street HQ was the home of Hammer Films, a company synonymous with horror movies via a string of genre classics like The Brides of Dracula, The Curse of Frankenstein and The Devil Rides Out. Skinn's tie-in idea was blessed by serendipity when Hammer's script editor Chris Wicking turned out to be an admirer of Fantasy Advertiser, one of the numerous fanzines Skinn had previously published.

Focusing on one company's wares might sound restrictive, but Skinn says, "Their back catalogue alone could keep me afloat for decades." He adds, "I wasn't intending just to adapt existing work," pointing out the magazine's 'further adventures' of Hammer characters Captain Kronos and Father Shandor. Moreover, while Van Helsing's Terror Tales deployed the titular vampire hunter in his Hammer Peter Cushing

likeness, it was so as to introduce shock-ending short strips essentially unrelated to the film studio. In any case, Skinn by necessity ended up "producing a genre magazine, not a house magazine." He explains, "We couldn't fill 52 pages with stuff about Hammer every issue because there wasn't the product coming up."

The debut issue of the renamed The House of Hammer – indicia-dated October 1976 – got things off to a slightly shaky start. There wasn't much wrong with Paul Neary's stylish artwork on the Dracula adaptation, nor even the infrequent writer Skinn's script ("I did the adaptation of the first one simply because it was new and untested: would it fit in fifteen pages?"). The aforementioned agonisingly slow transcription method dictated by the era's technology was one problem. Skinn created another when he chose Joe Petagno as cover artist. The latter's gauche rendering of Dracula turned out to be less impressive than his album-sleeve art for the likes of The Kinks and Pink Floyd. "I was lured more by his reputation than by the quality of his work," Skinn admits.

In the future, celebrated talents like Chris Lowder, Steve Moore and Steve Parkhouse would all write strips for HoH (highly useful initials, as they can signify any of the different titles the publication would eventually have). "Most of my team, excluding artists, were from IPC," Skinn says. "The designers, the layout people, the writers, the letterers. We were the frustrated band of people who believed the medium could do more. So when I had the good fortune to get this job, I brought them all along." In terms of text features, Skinn points out that with few exceptions he employed writers who were published authors. "That gave a certain class to the magazine."

In the main, though, it was its artwork that would make HoH iconic. Skinn usually steered clear of 'clean' artists. "Joe Colquhoun worked because he's a brush artist so it's all very messy. Ditto Martin Asbury, Jim Baikie..." That notwithstanding, Skinn admits that clean-line man Brian Bolland provided a high point with his adaptation of Vampire Circus. "Different styles – that was the main thing. I loved variety." Meanwhile, Van Helsing's Terror Tales were "an opportunity to try out new contributors or give work to people who were established but had downtime."

The two artists with whom HoH became synonymous were John Bolton and Brian Lewis. Skinn: "John was new and young and maybe unsure of himself. He did lots of character sketches before he would even commit to put things down on the drawing board." Lewis, on the other hand, was a "busy man" who had been "going for decades." Skinn describes Lewis as "my go-to guy, whether it was for a comic strip or a cover." Bolton's moody, cinematic artwork on Dracula Prince of Darkness in issue six was so impressive that Hammer head Michael Carreras told Skinn it visually topped the adapted film. Meanwhile, Lewis' adroit exploitation of the colour that front covers afforded led Carreras to comment that the results were better than the relevant film posters.

Happily, audio taping off TV proved a one-off when Hammer began furnishing scripts. HoH weren't always presenting the version of films that ended up on the screen, though, because the scripts sometimes lacked the 'pink pages' that denoted last-minute changes. "We had quite a few things in our version of Vampire Circus that weren't in the film," Skinn admits, before – perhaps rather desperately – offering, "But what a thrill for those who've seen it: 'Wow, here's the bits that were never filmed.'"

Eventually Hammer started taking HoH seriously enough to let them take away film cannisters, while Warner Brothers – ultimate owners of Williams – were impressed enough to let the magazine use their screening suites. Despite said rooms' useful pause-and-replay facilities, science hadn't yet proffered pens with lights. "I remember distinctly artists sitting there scribbling in the dark," Skinn smiles.

How it all began... DOCTOR WHO WEEKLY #0



A special printing of the original mock-up dummy presented to the BBC for the title's go-ahead in 1979.

"A rather amazing thing" ...Tom Spilsbury (DWM)

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How it all began... WARRIOR magazine #0

A special limited edition printing of the original 1982 mock-up, only seen before by potential advertisers and the newsagent distributor. 44 full size pages.

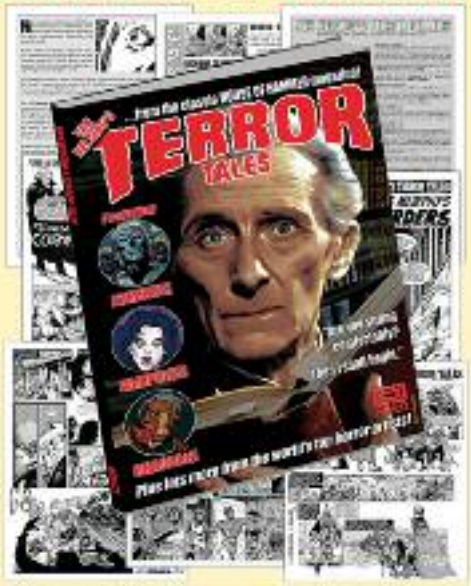


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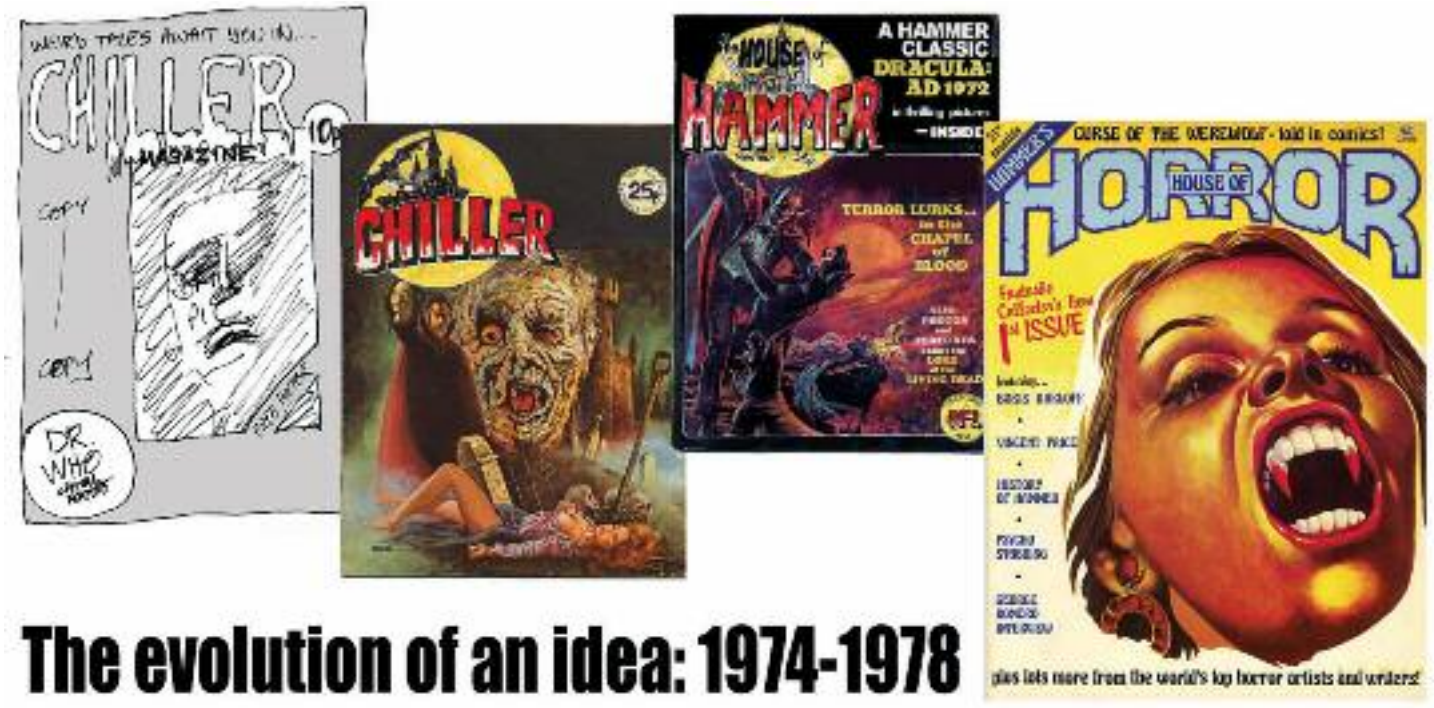
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"Dez's latest **House Of Hammer** has **outsold everything** else we do on a sales-to-print run."



The evolution of an idea: 1974-1978

The juncture at which HoH started that process of being taken seriously was issue four. The edition featured an adaptation of The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires, a 1974 picture in which Hammer shamelessly sought to hitch horror to the kung fu bandwagon. Skinn admits it to be "a serious Marmite movie." Additionally, the pessimistic sales director had just dictated that the publication's frequency be reduced from monthly to bi-monthly. However, at the regular presentation to the directors following that issue, Skinn recalls, "The sales director said, 'Well, Dez's latest House Of Hammer has outsold everything else we do on a sales-to-print run." This meant that HoH had bested not just Williams' youth-group titles but its very lucrative line of adults-only magazines. "Suddenly I was the blue-eyed boy."

On the surface, HoH's success was a mystery. Its readership, Skinn notes, "were not old enough to see the films, couldn't stay up late enough to watch them on TV." Skinn has an answer to this riddle: "Forbidden fruit … I was presenting X-certificate films to an under-18 audience."

With #9, HoH regained its monthly status. That the magazine climbed to a UK circulation of 35,000 was an endorsement of Skinn's wide interpretation of his brief. As well as expected Hammer adaptations like The Plague of the Zombies, HoH tackled sci-fi flick Moon Zero Two and dialogue-free dinosaur pic One Million Years B.C., in both cases managing to turn dubious cinematic experiences into elegant comicology.

From #19, the print run leapt by 200,000 copies after a deal was offered by an American distributor. The sole compromise required was a tweak of a title that Curtis Circulation Company thought made it sound like a DIY magazine. Hammer's House of Horror quickly gave way to another retitling, Hammer's Halls of Horror, when Jim Warren – anxious about the competition that the new import would pose to his Famous Monsters of Filmland – copyrighted the first choice. Either way, slavish fidelity to the original logo design possibly ensured that some never noticed the name change. Moreover, it was probably all for the best. It's a startling fact that the last-ever Hammer horror film appeared in the very year that HoH started. "Hammer didn't mean as much as it used to," observes Skinn.

With issue #23, however, the success juggernaut came to a shuddering halt. Having only recently acquired the Williams line, WH Allen elected to close it down. "The owners decided that they would put their money into videos." Skinn was informed of this by production director Ron Letchford. "He grabbed the rights to Mad. Nobody else wanted House of Hammer, so I bought the rights to that." Amazingly, in his spare time Skinn had launched a new science fiction magazine, Starburst, in late 1977. "I used the entire budget for Starburst 4 to buy the rights and the sales returns of House of Hammer. So suddenly I'd got the only two genre magazines in the country, but I'd got no money to do either of them."

Skinn's potential bankruptcy was averted by Stan Lee. "Stan wanted me to turn Marvel UK around, 'cos it was losing money." Skinn's bacon might have been saved, but HoH had to be sacrificed. "Am I a tart? You can only do so much."

Skinn did eventually revive Halls of Horror, continuing the numbering in 1982 under his Quality Communications imprint. The editor was now Dave Reeder, but the magazine featured much the same format and creative talent. However, it lasted just six issues. "Things had moved on," Skinn reflects. The 'forbidden fruit' aspect had somewhat diminished, HoH's shadow-draped monochrome was competing with the full-colour bloodfest of Fanogria and the 'video nasties' scandal had scared off many potential outlets. Moreover, horror involving creaky coaches and buxom wenches had shrivelled like a vampire exposed to sunlight. "It was all slasher movies."

HoH is a fond memory for the fifty-somethings who bought it in their teens. Its comics legacy, though, is not just nostalgia-based. Its high aesthetic qualities aside, the publication was responsible for more than one genre innovation. Through HoH, Skinn made the names of artists and writers famous outside industry offices. "I was possibly the first one to actually give credits in print in comic strips in this country," he proudly says.

Even more importantly, as a consequence of the sophisticated comics fare he proffered in HoH, Skinn succeeded in his ambition to cause the medium to "do more." While British comics publishers shifted a quarter-million of their biggest-selling titles every week, it was a time-limited success. "They lost them all when they got to be twelve, thirteen, fourteen," Skinn says. "My audience for House of Hammer was older than Action or Warlord. I managed to capture that audience that had evaded IPC and DC Thomson for so long: those who felt they'd grown out of comics."

Readers wanting to know more about HoH are referred to: http://dezskinn.com/warner-williams-2/

Author: Sean Egan

Images: (c) Dez Skinn/Quality Communications, 2018

Realm of the Damned

Interview



Werewolf Press's Black Metal horror graphic novel Realm Of The Damned: Tenebrios Deos came out back in summer 2016 to some acclaim. Now two years later, *writer Alec Worley and artist Pye Parr* have reteamed to create another volume in the Realm of The Damned series. *Joel Meadows* spoke to them to find out more about this second book…

Joel Meadows: How different was it writing the second Realm of The Damned compared with writing the first book?

Alec Worley: Way harder. Not only in terms of historical research, but also trying to fit something into the framework we'd already laid out in the first book. We had to go deeper on the characters too. Whereas the first one was like this Bronze Age-style monster mash-up book, this one had to go into the main character's motivations for doing the awful things she does. On the other hand, we've had a lot more freedom in terms of invention. From the get-go, we wanted to make this much more surreal in terms of horror.

JM: You are working with Pye Parr again. Now you have worked on a sizeable project together, is there more of a rapport than there was with the first book?

AW: Working with Pye on these books is the closest I've ever worked with an artist, and it only benefits the book, I think. We look over each other's work and spot each other's mistakes, which helps keep the whole thing as tight as possible in terms of words and pictures. When you're writing full script and just sending it off into the void, there's so much in terms of nuance of storytelling that can risk getting lost. But not when you've got a close creative partnership like we have here. It helps that we're both into the same kind of nonsense and both play off each other.

JM: Signum Draconis is a prequel to Tenebris Deos. What challenges did that throw up for you with this project?

AW: It was tough maintaining that crazy operatic tone that a story like this needs. We wanted the kind of exuberance you find in European rather than Western comics. It's easy to go completely off-the-wall – and we wanted to do that – but we also needed it to be grounded enough to convey Athena's story: a woman going to insane extremes for reasons even she's not fully aware.

Tripwire: How different was your approach to drawing the second Realm of The Damned compared with illustrating the first book?

Pye Parr: The main difference was technical – I forced myself to learn Clip Studio paint by throwing myself in at the deep end and inking/colouring the whole book in it, which slowed me down ridiculously at the start, but I'm glad I persevered as I find it much better than Photoshop for linework and stuff. It's almost all I use now (although Photoshop is still good for techy stuff at the end). As a result, the art style has probably changed a little from the first book, (there's still buckets of blood and lots of black!) but it's a lot more 'drawn' somehow, as opposed to big blocks of scribbly stuff – which looked quite cool – but was as much me finding a technique to hide the limitations of the brush tools (or maybe my own limitations if i'm being honest) in Photoshop as anything else!

TW: You are working with Alec Worley again. Now you have worked on a sizeable project together, is there more of a rapport than there was with the first book?

PP: The same, we've got on really well right from the start, to the point where half the time I phone him up just to talk absolute shite for an hour on the pretext of a very minor script query. I think its important for you both to have a bit of back and forth about each others work. Make it as much of a collaboration as possible.

TW: Can you give us the one line elevator pitch for Realm of The Damned Signum Draconis?

PP: It's an unhinged medieval monster bloodbath, where the only character who isn't an absolute nutjob gets squashed by a flying horse about 5 pages after he's introduced.

TW: Signum Draconis is a prequel to Tenebris Deos. What challenges did that throw up for you with this project?

PP: Haha, those are all Alec's problems. He's a methodical researcher, so i get lots of great reference work done for me. That said, I am sometime stuck with stuff I drew from the first book that I cant deviate too much from, even if I've had a better idea since. It was fun to flesh out the character of Athena though.

TW: How much visual historical research did you need to carry out for the second book?

PP: As I mentioned above, Alec is really good at that, so he did a lot of the prep work. We have a shared Pinterest folder where we spam ideas and reference for each scene or character with each other which is really useful. That way we can show each other what we're thinking of without tons of email links and crap floating about. I'm pretty sure anyone who knows what they're looking at will be absolutely screwing at the mess I've made of the armour and swords and stuff, but man, 75% of the people in the book aren't even human, so that doesn't bother me too much…

JM: Can you give us the one line elevator pitch for Realm of The Damned Signum Draconis?

AW: Medieval vampire warlord Athena Petrova must strike a dark bargain in order to save her beloved Transylvania. Blood. Blasphemy. Battles. Madness. Monsters. Metal.

Realm Of The Damned:
Signum Draconis is out now from Werewolf Press



Welcome to the first Tripwire Presents TV and Film section of Comic Scene UK. Each issue we shall be offering the best in TV and film coverage in the pages of the magazine. We kick off with a roundup of the massive New York Comic Con, which took place in October of this year...

The Empire State Strikes Back



Pictures clockwise from top: crowds descend on the Javits Center; a fan poses with a full-sized Lego Aquman at the DC booth and the *American Gods* lunch counter from the Starz show in the Starz tent at the show. Pics: Joel Meadows

We have been attending New York Comic Con since it started way back in 2006 and it has certainly evolved and changed. 2018 is its thirteenth year and the show is almost unrecognisable from when it started.

New York Comic Con runs for four days and this year it took place from 4 to 7 October. When it began all those years ago, the action only happened at the Jacob K Javits Convention Center in New York. But these days, and for the last few years, it has outgrown the Javits, so events has moved offsite. As well as the Javits, panels and events take place at the Hammerstein Ballroom at the Manhattan Center and the Hulu Theater at the iconic Madison Square Gardens.

For fans of comics as well as those who love genre TV, New York Comic Con has got everything. At this year's show in October, shows like *American Gods*, *Good Omens*, *Deadly Class, Outlander, Star Trek Discovery, Doctor Who* and movers and shakers in the







Pictures clockwise from top: The IDW booth at the show; crowds in the main area at the Javits Center; British comic creator Mike Perkins (*Green Lantern*) and cosplayers dressed as the movie Flash and Raven from the Teen Titans.
Pics: Joel Meadows

worlds of genre TV and film like Neil Gaiman (*American Gods, Good Omens*) Jodie Whittaker (*Doctor Who*), Taiki Waititi (*Thor: Ragnarok*), Oscar winner Guillermo del Toro and voice legend Phil LaMarr were all present and represented. Comics itself was also very visible with the likes of legend Frank Miller (*Dark Knight*), current *Superman* writer Brian Michael Bendis, legendary artist and illustrator Bill Sienkiewicz and *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola were all on hand at the show too sometime over the four days.

Publishers were well-represented too as ever. DC, Marvel, IDW, Boom!, Dark Horse, Image, AfterShock, Valiant and LionForge were all set up at the show as were a whole host of other exhibitors including Alex Ross Art, Funko, Abrams, Starz and many more.

"In thirteen years, New York Comic Con has gone from a young pretender to rival or possibly even exceed the sort of numbers that San Diego Comic-Con attracts."

In thirteen years, New York Comic Con has gone from a young pretender to rival or possibly even exceed (even though we can't confirm this) the sort of numbers that San Diego Comic-Con, which has been running for 49 years, attracts.

New York City has been the home of US comics for decades now and even though DC no longer has an office there, it still feels like this is the case and New York Comic-Con is a yearly celebration of this fact. TV and Film are a part of the comics industry now and have been for quite some time now so it is only correct that this show reflects that. It is still very much about comics at its core and that is a very impessive thing. Long may it continue.

New York Comic Con 2019 will be on 3 to 6 October 2019.







Happy 15th Birthday The Walking Dead



The Walking Dead was launched by Image back in 2003 and so we take a look back at this important series in its anniversary year, with two major television shows spinning out ofthe comic series…

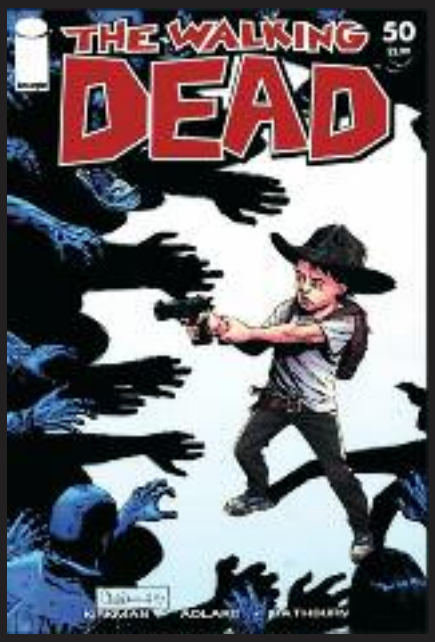
The Walking Dead launched with its first issue back in 2003. Starting with little fanfare, written by Robert Kirkman and drawn by Tony Moore, it seemed an unusual choice for the independent comic company to choose. It didn't exactly have a particularly auspicious start as Kirkman admitted in an interview with *Rolling Stone* back in 2013: "At that point, a lot of my books had failed, so I wasn't really in a position where I could say, "This comic is the zombie movie that never ends, and it'll go for years and years and years." But I had years of story lines planned when the first issue came out. I knew they were going to get to the prison. I knew they were going to have that area where they were going to be safe and they were going to start building a little civilization."

"There's never been anything like this on television. Zombies are essentially people who eat people, so it's a cannibal show. I was like, "I can't foresee there being a cannibal show on television!" -ROBERT KIRKMAN

In the same chat, he admits that he didn't think we would ever see a TV show based on *The Walking Dead*: "People would ask me, 'Wouldn't it be awesome if it was a TV show or a movie?' I would always say, 'Well, it'll never be a TV show or a movie.' There's never been anything like this on television. Zombies are essentially people who eat people, so it's a cannibal show. I was like, "I can't foresee there being a cannibal show on television!"

Kirkman's longtime artistic collaborator, British artist Charlie Adlard, came on board with issue#7 and has been there ever since. In an interview he did with *Den Of Geek* back in 2011, he boiled down how to describe the comic in one sentence: "It's a comic about a disparate bunch of people who have to cope with an extreme circumstance and the drama that comes from that sort of circumstance. The extreme circumstance is the zombie apocalypse. I try not to say it's a zombie book, because I think that puts the demographic further away from the core genre audience."

When the comic hit 150 issues back in 2016, Adlard revealed what a huge achievement it was to reach this milestone in a chat he did on Image's website: "I think I'm personally most proud of just getting to this point. It's







been one hell of a 12+ years so far, and when I hear myself say that, it's just incredible. No one in the industry at this present time has achieved the sheer amount of product (hopefully of quality too...well, at least some of it...) and I think that's something to be very proud of."

Despite Kirkman's scepticism, *The Walking Dead* came to TV way back in 2010 and started its ninth season in October. Spin-off TV show *Fear The Walking Dead* began in August 2015. Over its eight-year history, it has been one of the most talked-about and highest rated shows on TV on any channel. Its popularity has waned a little these days but it shows no sign of ending as yet.

Kirkman is still grateful for the opportunity to write *The Walking Dead* as he said in an interview for *Variety* in October of this year: "It's a gift to be still writing this comic," he said. "When I did the first comic I thought if I get to do this for years and years it would be insane. All I wanted in my career was to be able to do this.

"Now, every time I sit down to write an



issue, every minute, even when there's a struggle, I recognize what a tremendous gift this is."

Very few comics reach such a high issue number and very few TV series make it into a ninth season so it is testament that Kirkman and his artistic collaborator Adlard have obviously tapped into something that continues to connect with audiences and readers around the world. It will be interesting to see what an impact the departure of Andrew Lincoln as Rick Grimes but one thing is certain: *The Walking Dead* has left a massive legacy in comics and on TV as well. Happy 15th birthday to Rick and his crew…

JOEL MEADOWS

"It's a gift to be still writing this comic. When I did the first comic I thought if I get to do this for years and years it would be insane. All I wanted in my career was to be able to do this" –ROBERT KIRKMAN

The Walking Dead TV show season nine started in October on AMC in the US and *The Walking Dead* comic is published monthly by Image Comics.



Looking For Redemption

Daredevil season three started on Netflix in October and JOEL MEADOWS spoke to its executive producer Erik Olesen at New York Comic Con about the latest trials and tribulations for Matt Murdock and his friends...



pic: Joel Meadows

Daredevil is arguably Netflix's biggest and best-regarded Marvel show. Erik Olesen is the latest showrunner on the series and so there was some pressure on him to make sure the level of quality continued for a third season, he explained to us.

"First of all the show was awesome and I wanted to meet that bar and exceed it if I possibly could. When I walked in the door, Marvel had a number of ideas as options for me. 'Do you want to do something like this? For instance the return of Wilson Fisk.' They knew that Vincent [D'Onofrio] was interested in coming back. So I had the ability to take from some of my favourite comicbook runs as well. But when I came in the door, I wanted to treat season three as if it were my own run of the comics in the way that Miller or Bendis or Smith or any of those guys were able to come in and do their run that honoured what came before it and yet put their own stamp on the comics. I wanted to put my own stamp on the show. I also wanted to tell a story which more fully fleshed out the ensemble. I am a firm believer that nobody is really a sidekick, that everybody is the hero of their own story"

He also had a very specific tone in mind for the new run:

"But one of the early things that I told Marvel was that I wanted to aim tonally between season one of the show and _The Sopranos_. I wanted to bring that kind of storytelling model where you are telling the story from the inside, meaning from the experience of the characters so that you are experiencing the story like Matt Murdoch would or like Karen Page would. We're not watching them from outside with lots of cool stuff happening. That's not really my style. My style is more character-driven. Then you have these lightning bolt moments and you go 'Oh that's right, we're watching this awesome show that has these amazing iconic moments and action sequences and that heightened reality'. But everybody is able to be real in the scenes and as a result, I'm bonding the audience and the character hopefully in an honest way."

Olesen was keen to ground the show in the real world from the start, he is keen to point out to us and the return of Fisk was on the table from the start too:

"Marvel and Jeph Loeb had some cool





top left: Matt Murdoch (Charlie Cox) confronts Wilson Fisk (Vincent D'Onofrio) in prison; right: Murdoch as Daredevil



Matt Murdoch (Charlie Cox) meets Foggy Nelson again (Elden Henson)

ideas about it even before I walked in the door. We started talking and there was also the possibility of using another major iconic character from the comics in the show. I took a bunch of options away to my writing cave and I came up with what I thought would be a really cool story, and a story that meant something too, and then brought it back to Marvel. What I mean about meaning something, another one of my goals is not just to tell a story that's mindless entertainment and has lots of gee whiz stuff in it…I wanted the show to become a part of the conversation about the world we're living in today to make it relevant. I was a terrific admirer of JJ's season one, I liked what they were able to say and also what Mel said with *Jessica Jones* season one. Daredevil is the man without fear and yet we're all living in a world where our fears are both driving the way that we behave and we vote and our fears are also being preyed upon by villains who are using our fears to pit us against one another on their quest to rise in power. "

The plot for *Daredevil* season three does draw from some of the character's most iconic and popular comicbook runs but it isn't an adaptation.

"Season three is an original story which takes elements of Born Again, Guardian Devil and some other aspects. Again it's an original story so that people who are not familiar with the comics can watch it and enjoy it and say 'wow that was a really great crime drama, twisty turny conspiracy thriller.' That's really what we wrote and people who are fans of the comics and are familiar with the comics are going to leap out of their seats and go 'Oh my God, they used that frame from something or that scene from that other run' and my fellow geeks are going to hopefully cackle with as much delight as we did in the writer's room when we were making this up. But it is not a direct translation of any of the comic books."

Olesen explains what he meant by mentioning HBO's seminal *The Sopranos* TV show.

"What I meant by describing it as season one meets the Sopranos is the kind of deep, smart , layered, emotionally honest character storytelling with an ensemble that is fully fleshed out. Super premium television drama."

The new season has been well-received and Olesen would be happy coming back to this world but he doesn't know what Marvel's plans are for Netflix shows going forward:

"I don't know what the future is of Marvel who has us all on lockdown. Much to Marvel's chagrin, the showrunners on each of the shows actually talk to each other. I had a terrific experience and I would be eager to do it again."

Daredevil season 3 is available now to watch on Netflix



Matt Murdoch/ Daredevil (Charlie Cox) with Karen Page (Deborah Ann Woll)

Playing With Fire

Constantine: City Of Demons is the latest Warner Bros Animated Movie and JOEL MEADOWS caught up with its screenwriter JM DEMATTEIS plus its producer BUTCH LUKIC and one of its voice cast members Damian O'Hare at New York Comic Con in October...

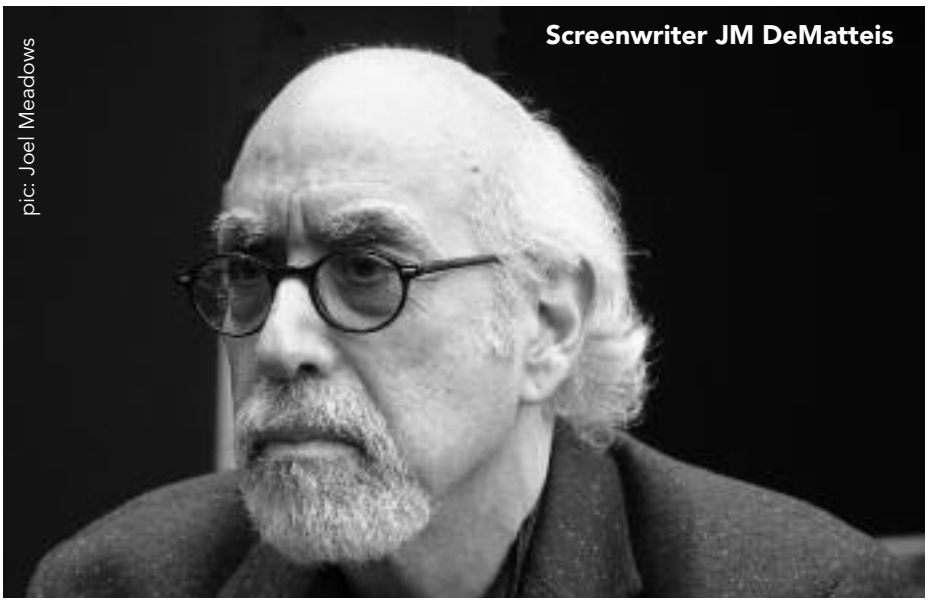


John Constantine is one of the more unlikely of DC's creations to make the move from the comics page to TV or animation. Created by Alan Moore, Steve Bissette and John Totleben in the pages of *Swamp Thing* back in the 1980s, he went on to star in his own comic series developed by fellow British writer Jamie Delano and artist John Ridgeway. The character appeared in one season of his own show *Constantine* on Fox back in 2014. But it seems you can't keep a good sorceror down. The character came back for a series of cameos in CW's *Legends of Tomorrow* and he is now a regular character in the fourth season of that show, running currently on the CW.

Constantine also featured in the Warner Bros. Animated *Justice League Dark* movie last year so it was only a matter of time before the fast-talking Scouser would have his own animated vehice. *Constantine: City of Demons* is a 90 minute animated movie which started life as a 10 episode 5 minutes an installment on CW Seed last year.

Screenwriter JM DeMatteis is a writer with decades of experience writing comics for a range of titles including *Justice League International, The Defenders, Captain America, Amazing Spider-man* and *Abazad* for publishers like Marvel, DC and CrossGen. He is no stranger to writing for animation either with a CV that includes *The Real Ghostbusters, Justice League Unlimited, Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. For him, writing is writing as he told me when I caught up with him at New York Comic Con last month.

"The main difference for me is not so much the breaking the story. Story is story. The difference is when you're writing a comicbook even if you're writing the mainstream iconic characters, there's a writer, there's an artist, there's an editor and that's about it. Once you have a reputation and you've proved yourself, you're on your own often in creating story. When you're writing for TV, when you're writing for film, it's always much more of a team process."



pic: Joel Meadows

Screenwriter JM DeMatteis

However, he did have quite a bit of latitude to tell this particular tale, he revealed:"I had a lot of freedom on this to tell the story the way I wanted to tell it which is not always the case. But at the same time, I'm in New York and I get on the phone with a bunch of people in LA and there's ten voices on the other side with notes and questions and things to say so it's always a team thing and you have to go in knowing it's not like 'This is my vision'. It doesn't work that way. And as soon as I take off my solo hat and put on my team hat, it's really fun. Because I spend a good part of my time at home alone with my imaginary friends so to work with other human beings who are smart and creative is a lot of fun. But that's the main difference. Working on creator-owned comics you're free to do everything exactly the way you like."

He has worked on quite a lot of horror titles over the years and he does seem drawn to the genre as a writer. For him, it


pic: Joel Meadows

Producer Butch Lukic

holds a particular kind of appeal, he admits.

"What's funny is I keep realizing 'I'm pretty good at this horror stuff and it's never my first choice' because I'm really into crawling through the dark but into the light. And I'm working on this *Constantine* thing and it's really dark. There's some really twisted stuff in there. And I'm really good at this. So I think horror allows us to access a certain part of our nature. As a writer, you have to be in touch with all parts of yourself. You have to be in touch with the Jesus in your soul and the devil in your soul and so it allows you to explore those dark areas of your own psyche. Also we live in a dark world sometimes, so it's a good way to deal with those issues. Also I find that the horror stories allow you to get into more metaphysical areas or spiritual areas."

Constantine: City of Demons' producer Butch Lukic has worked on a number of other Warner Bros. Animated projects like *Superman: Doomsday, Wonder Woman* and *Justice League Action* and for him, the character has a lot of fans so it made sense for DC to create a vehicle for him as part of their animated universe, he tells us.

"I think that DC and Warner Bros. together realised that they do have a character regardless of that TV show not going another season. Obviously it has a lot of fans so for them to just leave it alone just wouldn't have worked. So I think if they weren't going to do a second season, this was their other option. They can at least keep it going somehow as a standalone and if we can do animation successfully, then it's a win situation for them and us. Either way I'm hoping they do a live action season again. It would be great. If this does well, they might think about it again."

Lukic is a longtime reader of the character in the comics and the appeal of John Constantine as a protagonist is obvious for him:

"I've read it since he was introduced in *Swamp Thing* when Alan Moore wrote it and you get the character right away. You can't help it. He's loveable regardless of being a miserable sod. He's great. He may want to get into fights from time to time but he's got a certain charm about him.

Voice actor Damian O'Hare voiced John Constantine in *Justice League Action* but here he is his longsuffering mate, Chas Chandler. For him, there is unique chemistry between the pair as

"I think horror allows us to access a certain part of our nature. As a writer, you have to be in touch with all parts of yourself." -JM DEMATTEIS

characters in *City of Demons*, he explains to us in New York:

"Reading the script, there's a wonderful relationship between the two of them. So they haven't seen each other in 20 years because of this terrible incident that happened in Newcastle which no one talks about… there's a great relationship there, when you have a friend you haven't seen in years. You sit down and it's like you saw them just the day before. There's that connection again. There's a wonderful scene when they first meet and they're sitting in a diner and they're just speaking to each other. Because it's a 90 minute movie, we actually played it like a live action film."

For DeMatteis, even though Constantine seems like a cold-hearted monster, there is still something positive at his heart as a character. In fact, he saw parallels between him and another real-life famous Scouser:

"For whatever reason he tries to twist it around, he still tries to be the biggest bastard on the block, he makes a choice time and again to work on the side of the light. So that says something about what's lying underneath that character. Weirdly I am a big Beatles fan and so when I was writing this, when I kept thinking about Matt Ryan [the voice of Constantine], I kept thinking about John Lennon. Both from Liverpool, both really hard -edged, tough, they could be really nasty and underneath that, total idealists."

With John Constantine appearing in *Legends of Tomorrow* and this standalone animated film, it is likely that DC will continue to shine a light on the company's most popular anti-hero. Let's raise a pint to the necromancer with a heart.

Constantine: City Of Demons is available now on Blu ray and DVD









BOND JAMES BOND

By Stephen Jewell

While they are currently chronicling the young 007-to-be's formative days in James Bond Origin, Dynamite Entertainment hasn't forgotten about the master spy's current adventures. Following on from several mini-series by the likes of Warren Ellis, Jason Masters, Andy Diggle and Ales Kot, this month sees the arrival of a brand new monthly title by former Incredible Hulk scribe Greg Pak and British artist Marc Laming (American Century, King's Watch, Fantastic Four). But unlike its predecessors, James Bond 007 will be released on an ongoing basis.

"I've been working closely with our editor Nate Cosby for months, building an epic twelve-issue storyline that's broken down into three four-issue chapters," explains Pak. "So it's going to build and build and build over those twelve issues, with new surprises and reveals raising the stakes at every level. We then hit a huge climax with #12, but we're also setting up plenty of fun elements that can lead to the next big story if sales are great."

Officially licenced from Ian Fleming Publications, the comic draws on the late author's fourteen James Bond novels and short story collections rather than the numerous films that have exploded onto the big screen over the past six decades. "We're working within the continuity of Dynamite's other James Bond books," says Pak. "But we're not a sequel and we aren't tying into any specific story elements from those books, so if you're new to these comics, you don't have to worry about doing any homework."

As the title of the first storyline 'The Odd Job' indicates, Bond crosses paths with a new mysterious assassin who appears to be related to Odd Job, Auric Goldfinger's Korean henchman in both the Goldfinger novel and film, who was infamous for his razor-edged bowler hat. "When Nate first approached me about writing a Bond book, the very first thing I pitched him was

updating Oddjob and making him awesome and sexy, and the hero of his own story," recalls Pak, who is of Korean-American descent himself. "Years ago I was blown away by a moment in Maxine Hong Kingston's book Tripmaster Monkey in which her main character talks about Oddjob and the fact that if you put any face up on the big screen as a hero, the entire audience will fall in love with them. So it's a huge thrill to take this character that's gotten tons of notoriety as a villain and to build him up as a hero in his own right, who can be Bond's biggest rival, ally, or maybe even his deadliest enemy."

Describing the set-up as "classic and simple," Oddjob's motivations and intentions aren't immediately apparent to either Bond or indeed the reader. "Bond's been assigned to kill a Russian smuggler and secure his mysterious briefcase," teases Pak. "But he discovers that a deadly Korean assassin who wears a familiar bowler hat appears to have the same mandate. As the story progresses, Bond and our new Oddjob will tangle with each other repeatedly, with some huge twists and massively escalating stakes, both physical and emotional. So while our new Oddjob is the book's antagonist, in his mind, he's the protagonist and Bond is the antagonist."

According to Pak, Bond and the new Oddjob have more in common than what sets them apart. "I love both of these characters so much and I love the way they clash," he continues. "Every scene with them is jus a huge pleasure to write and Marc Laming is drawing the hell out of them. I see Bond as the consummate cool professional who prides himself on his ruthless skill and efficiency in completing his mission at all costs. Our new Oddjob is just as ruthless, but as we'll see, he's driven by passion instead of professionalism. Exactly what that means remains to be seen, but it provides some hugely fun reveals and sparks between Bond and our new man in every single scene."

When it came to bringing the new Oddjob to life on the page, Laming very much took his lead from Pak and Cosby. "Greg and Nate had a strong idea of what they were after so it was more of a question of realising their take on the character and fleshing him out until we were all happy with the outcome," says Laming, who kept his favourite big screen 007s in mind when it came to depicting Bond himself.

"I'm a big fan of the Connery, Lazenby and Craig takes on Bond, so all the movies have been a big influence on my approach to the book," he adds. "I want to bring the grit and adventure of their movies to the look of the book. On Her Majesty's Secret Service is my favourite Bond movie, so I'm sure some of that will find its way through to the comic. But recent action films like The Raid, The Bourne films and John Wick have also been a big influence, especially on the action sequences."

Insisting that he wants to "write a fun book for modern audiences that folks of all backgrounds can enjoy without feeling alienated," Pak will be bearing in mind changing attitudes to women and other relevant issues including race. "One little thing I've realised is that we've often got Bond and our new Oddjob as the objects of the gaze whom women in the book are eyeing rather than the other way around," he says. "The book's biggest female characters are Moneypenny, who's a voice in Bond's ear throughout the series who both helps him and tries to keep him in line, and an Asian secret agent codenamed Agent K, who is a brand new character who becomes a deadly rival to both Bond and our new Oddjob. I can't say too much about her yet for fear of spoilers, but she's absolutely critical to our story."

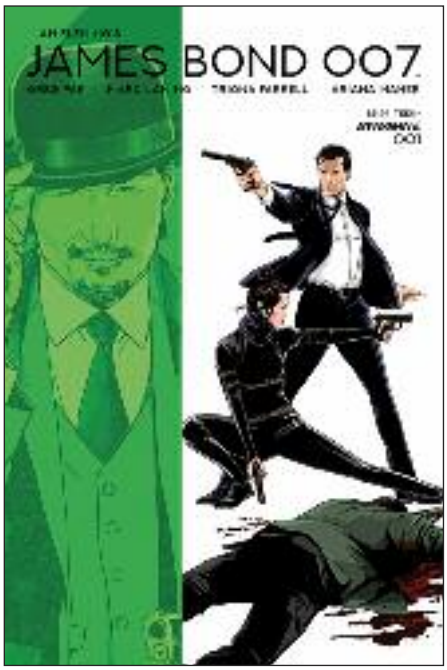
Rather than Spectre or Smersh, 'The Odd Job' introduces a new sinister terrorist network in the form of the nefarious ORU. "I love the Bond mythos for all its varied crime bosses and criminal organisations, so it's a huge amount of fun to be able to add a new group to the fold," says Pak. "ORU distinguishes itself for being a terrifyingly deadly terrorist group that has never announced its mission or philosophy. Figuring out exactly what ORU has planned and why is a huge, high stakes mystery for our heroes."

Ranging from Singapore, Indonesia, England and Australia in the first few issues, Pak and Laming will also be taking Bond to some very interesting and sometimes exotic locations. "We've been doing a lot of thinking about the places we want to visit as we build our set pieces," teases Pak. "You can also expect to see some familiar faces including Monneypenny, M and at least one character that I am not currently licenced to spoil!"

James Bond 007 #1 is published on November 7.







LICENSED TO THRILL?

Over on the other side of the pond, US comics publisher Boom! Studios recently announced its acquisition of the license to publish Buffy the Vampire Slayer comics, previously held by Dark Horse. I don't know if the deal came as a shock to Dark Horse, who have also lost the license to publish Joss Whedon's SF project Firefly to Boom and Star Wars and Conan comics to Marvel in recent years, but for me, it did provide sharp focus just how valued some licensed comics are.

Most Comic Scene readers are very used to seeing comics based on their favourite film, TV or computer game characters on the news stand and in comic shops, and there's a long tradition of TV and film stars featuring in British comics publishing, rubbing shoulders with "own brand" characters. The Funny Wonder published Charlie Chaplin strips, for example, beginning in 1915, and older comic fans will be familiar with Radio Fun and Film Fun, which led with stories based on the celebrities of the day. Truth be told, with so little documentation available, it's not totally clear whether those celebrities earned anything from their comic strip appearances, but companies producing TV western shows certainly did in the 1950s, a decade which also saw the appearance of a "P.C. 49" strip, based on the BBC radio series, in Eagle, although the fact that the radio show was created by Eagle writer Alan Stranks no doubt smoothed that deal.

Comics editors were for decades happy to simply echo popular media trends rather than license characters. Witness, for example the way Valiant star "The Steel Claw" moved from grungy anti-hero, to secret agent, to super hero and alien chaser in the 1960s. But with the staggering sales success of titles such as TV Comic, TV Century 21 and Lady Penelope couldn't be ignored, with their strips based on series such as Doctor Who and Thunderbirds. Similarly, Odhams licensing of both DC Comics and Marvel superheroes for titles such as SMASH! (no doubt noting the success of L. Miller and Sons and the Alan Class-published reprints of the 1950s and 60s) preceded the arrival of Marvel UK in 1972, launching with The Mighty World of Marvel. It was pretty clear to some the direction of travel, with the success of Marvel UK's Planet of the Apes and Star Wars Weekly in the 1970s paving the way for the dramatic rise in licensed comics such as Transformers and The Real Ghostbusters in the 1980s and Sonic the Comic in the 1990s.

Slowly but surely, combined with the rising grip of supermarkets on the UK news stand – businesses that play to the "top sellers" in all their product lines, comics included – licensed comics took hold of newsagents' shelves, and "own brand" titles faded away. Bunty, Jinty, Buster, Eagle, Valiant, Lion, Tiger, Whizzer and Chips are long gone, replaced with most titles now playing to the interests of current trends, publishers keen to spot the next Peppa Pig or snap up rights to "evergreen" licenses such as LEGO, or Doctor Who.

Of course, it's not always plain sailing when it comes to picking the right license. Not every TV, film or computer game brand blend easily into a comic, for a variety of reasons, and the cost of licensing a successful brand can cripple a publisher that finds it doesn't also commit the editorial spend on developing content that picks up on the successful elements of a license. If a film also proves a dud at the box office, the licensed comics that go with it can also crash and burn. Licensors who, in their insistence on any publishing staying firmly "on brand" (from approving likeness issues to storylines), can also prove more trouble to a publisher than the license cost, for all the quality of the final product.

(I can recall how the print run of one Marvel UK annual was pulped despite all approvals secured, which is an extreme case. Don't get me started on licensors that balked at approving plots, scripts, artwork, lettering, covers in a timely fashion I've sometimes had to deal with down the years).

Interviewed for trade magazine InPublishing recently, Peppa Pig publisher Redan Managing Director Julie Jones noted the biggest challenge comics and young people's magazines publishers face is always choosing the right property in the first place.

"No-one knows in advance what will be a hit and what won't be, so often it's down to gut feel," she commented. With the rise of so many different medium where the next trend may surface – be it a Netflix or Prime Video TV show, a computer game, toy or hit film – it's increasingly tricky to spot something that might also be a publishing success, in a sector also dependent on cover mounts to sell their wares, particularly as cover prices have risen".

(Who knows what the future of cover mounts will be as consumers justifiable concern over plastic waste grows, but that's another story).

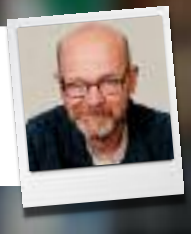
There is, of course, one obvious danger to being dependent on licensed brands for your titles – and that's the fact that when that license comes up for renewal, that license may yet be snatched from you, as Dark Horse has recently experienced, even though they published Buffy the Vampire Slayer comics for 20 years.

Despite the dangers and potential pitfalls of licensing brands, the sales success of popular titles ensures the practice will continue, with children's magazine market still one of publishing's more robust sectors. But the "original" comics that have survived – Beano and 2000AD, in particular – have, ironically, done so by playing rival licensed comics at their own game. They've continued, in part, to ape popular trends and adapting to fit the cloth of the market (Beano more so than 2000AD), to the point that they have become hugely successful brands in their own right, prompting film and TV producers to come to them for licenses.

Who isn't looking forward to the new Rogue Trooper film or the Minnie the Minx TV show? Although I'm just hoping some canny producer rifles through a copy of the Phoenix and goes hunting the rights to Robert Deas brilliant "Trailblazers". That would be terrific!

NUTS & BOLTS
RAVINGS FROM INSIDE THE COMICS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

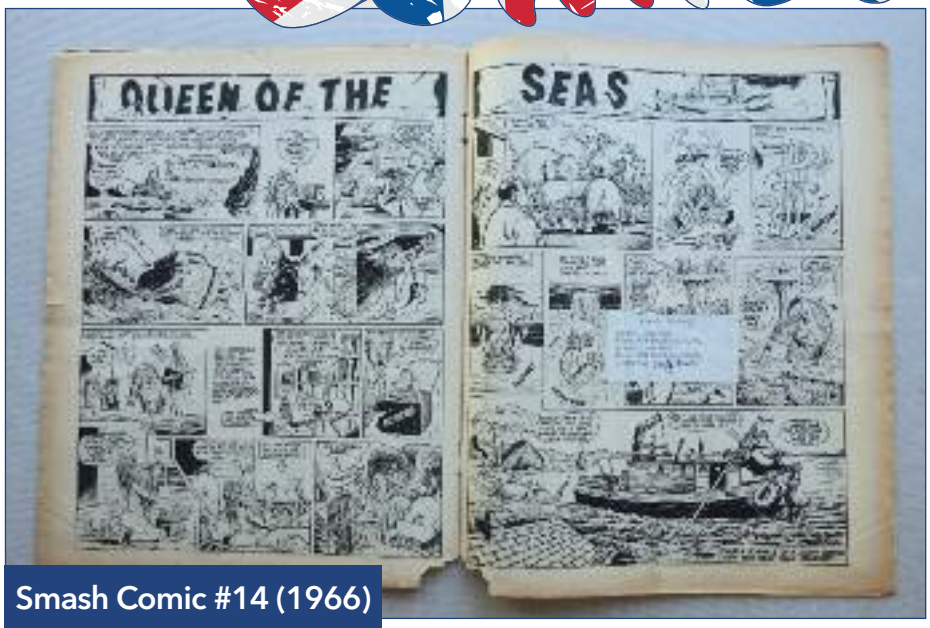
Author: John Freeman
Twitter: @johnfreeman_dtt
Website: downthetubes.net
John is currently writing Crucible



phil-comics presents...

Vintage British Comics





Smash Comic #14 (1966)

The market in vintage British comics is vibrant and has kept us merrily busy for **fifteen years, trading on eBay as phil-comics**. We imagine, if you are reading this, there is a pretty good chance that you have either still got some original comics from your childhood and / or are regularly scouring the land for old issues to add to your collection and regain those lost issues; "I came back from university to find that my Mum had thrown out my beloved comic collection" is a regular story we hear.

As an avid Beano reader in 1990, I soon developed an interest in older editions of Beano and Dandy comics and annuals. Years of collecting led to selling spares and a hobby business was born. With the advent of eBay, this hobby developed into a full time business. We now auction all vintage British comics and recently branched out into American comics.

One of the highlights of trading in, and indeed collecting, comics is the variety that each collection brings, along with unexpected 'hidden gems' which cause a flutter in the heart. The classic example is the long forgotten free gift tucked inside the comic, but we don't necessarily mean items of high value, indeed just diverse and unusual. In a collection of 1970s Beano comics we bought recently, from the original owner, came a 1974 letter from the Beano Editor Harry Cramond, type written with a vintage Beano letterhead. A joke had been sent in and the editorial team had incorporated it into the McTickles strip and rewarded the young reader with a full colour McTickles picture. We've not seen this picture before and doubt that many, if any, others still exist. Somewhere in my own collection archive is a letter sent to me from Euan Kerr, in the early 1990s as a young teen, responding to my question as to why 'slippering' had been phased out of comics in the 1970s.







Smash Comic #3 (1966)

In our early November sale we auctioned a **Smash comic #14 (1966)** which appears to have been an Odhams Press file copy. Each page provides details on who supplied the script, artwork and lettering and the fee paid in each case. Of interest to the Ken Reid fans will be the 'Queen of the Seas' page where Ken wrote the script and of course drew the incredible artwork. Ken's work is very topical at present with the recent publication of the superb 'Power Pack', by Irmantas Povilaika, reprinting all of his 1960s Odhams work. Talking of Smash, the first issue with free gift gun shot to an impressive £183, whilst the rarer free gift with **#3**, the Phantom Plane, flew to £105 in our October sale.



1963 Dandy-Beano Summer Special

As collectors ourselves we have a soft spot for Summer and Holiday Specials. We adore the stand out full colour covers and many collectors will have fond memories of reading them at Blackpool or other British holiday destinations. Their scarce yet finite nature makes them desirable to collect and some can be hotly contested. In June we were consigned an astonishing collection of approximately 900 specials, representing the vast majority of British editions from c1961/1962 (when the trend started) to the early 2000s, from every genre imaginable. Key highlights from the collection sold to date have been £282 paid for a **1963 Dandy-Beano Summer Special**, £102 for a 1982 Jinty Special, £90 for the 1968 Bunty edition, £80 for the 1966 Robin and £122 for the scarcely seen #1 Victor Special of 1967. An impressive £110 was paid for a 1980 Buster and Monster Fun Holiday Special, illustrating a bidding contest between two very eager collectors.

From the same collection came the scarcely seen 1976 Blue Peter Holiday Special, with free gift sticker, selling for £22. Whilst grading it, we spotted a double page spread inside describing Blue Peter's visit to the IPC archive of comic bound volumes. For whatever reason, this was just a one-off special, despite the TV programme itself celebrating its 60th birthday recently.



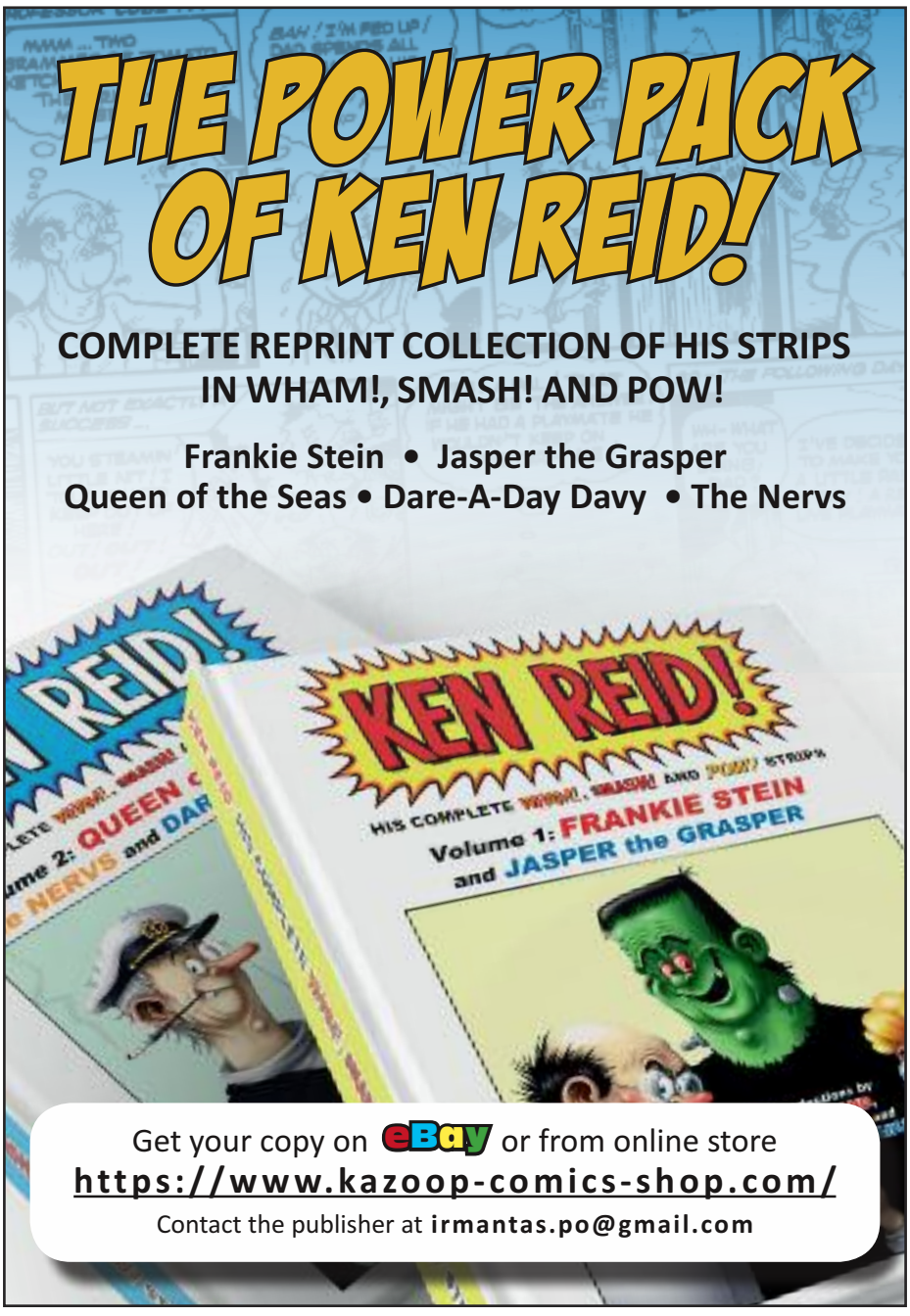
1982 Jinty Special

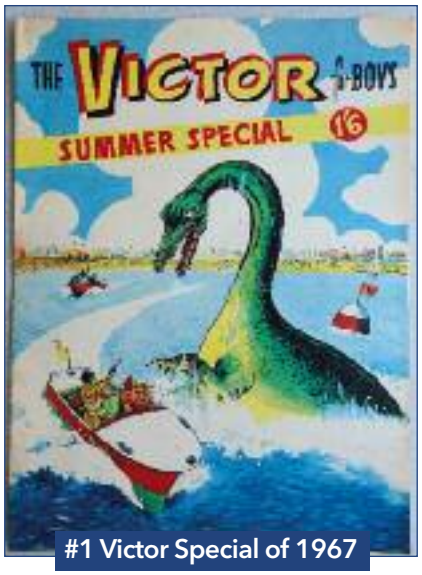
We've auctioned several hundred bound volumes in recent years and they still divide opinion. We think they're glorious and a fantastic way to present a collection of comics, but we also appreciate that many people are driven to collect by a strong feeling of nostalgia, thus preferring their comics to be individual, just as they would have read them each week as a child. We recently auctioned one of the original Fleetway archive half year bound volumes of June and School Friend, Jan-Jun 1966. After paying £127 for the volume, the buyer said he was extremely pleased as he'd spent years trying to piece together the individual issues that contain the 'Growing Up of Emma Peel' (from The Avengers) strip. He commented that "this is the ideal way to get these, it's the whole series in one whole volume, starting in January and ending in April, so to get it all complete in a bound volume is terrific." Other notable results included £282 paid for Marilyn 1-15 (1955) and bought by a female academic who is researching pop



1968 Bunty Edition

music and comics in the late 1950s, with plans to publish her work, £272 for the full year of TV Comic 1972 and £270 for Eagle Volume 4 (1953). There'll be more bound volumes appearing in our future auctions.



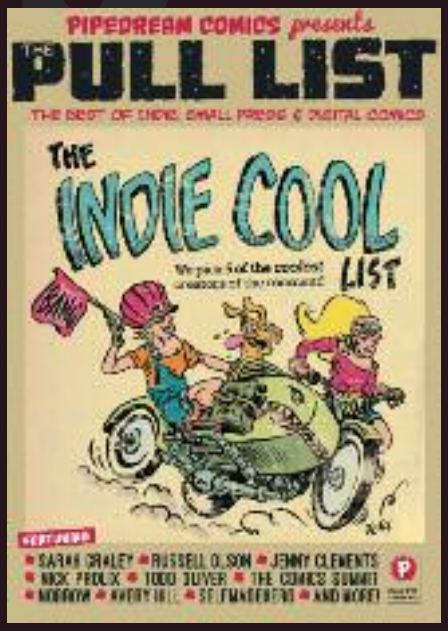


#1 Victor Special of 1967

At phil-comics we continuously seek rare single items to large collections and if you're interested in our auction prices, you can search them all on our website. We handle the sale of just about any comic item - depending on its vintage – comics, annuals, summer specials, original artwork, free gifts and reference books - and offer a vast array in our monthly eBay auctions. We make competitive offers to buy outright and can also auction the collection on your behalf, so please get in touch if you are looking to sell.

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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"Just what is a 'zine' anyway?"

Alex Thomas heads to the Bristol Comic and Zine Fair to find out

After the craziness of Thought Bubble, we headed to the Bristol Comics and Zine fair for a slice of arty small press in the south west. But what is a zine and how is it different to a small press or indie comic book?

The word zine originates from the term 'fanzine' and traditionally meant a hand made publication full of articles, reviews or even full blown comic strips written and published by amateurs. The world of comics fanzines began to take off in the late 1960s and if you want to look at a fantastic history of fanzines in the UK then be sure to check out the excellent FanScene compiled by David Hathaway-Price that can be downloaded from **davidprice5.wixsite.com/classicukcomicszines**.

However in recent years, the term 'zine' has become short hand for self published and micro-published comics that are often at the artier end of the comics spectrum. Events like the East London Comics Art Festival (ELCAF) and Bristol have become the epicentres for these kind of comics and it's a diversity of creators which makes them so exciting. While the artists alley at an MCM will be filled with incredible books that rival the Big Two in terms of production value, the world of the zine fair is more like an Art School end of year show. While there are break out creators like Hamish Steele, who went on to work for larger companies like Nobrow, or publishers like Avery Hill and Good Comics whose work manages to cross over into the indie and small press world, a zine fair is as much about discovering the next exciting creator as it is picking up a book that you'd see in a comic shop.







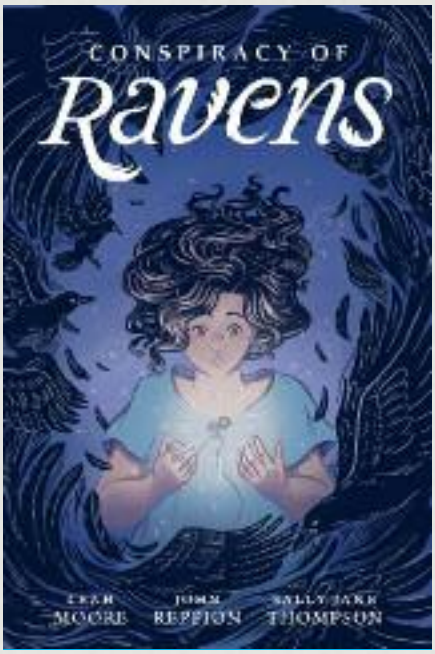
At this year's event we picked up books from the likes of: Todd Oliver, whose wacky and weird humour reminds us of classic 80s comics like Oink and Toxic; Josh Hicks, whose Glorious Wrestling Alliance books capture the craziness of professional wrestling in comic strip form; and Rozi Hathaway, whose thoughtful and poetic work uses watercolour washes to create lush stories, and her latest book is printed on newsprint paper.

Events like this are often free to get into as they join up with the local art community or university, so the next time you see one advertised in your area, why not pop in and discover what zines are all about. It might even inspire you to make your own!

"We wanted it to feel like all the best kids stories, where they go on crazy adventures, but are back in time for tea!"

Leah Moore & John Reppion talk Conspiracy of Ravens

Conspiracy Of Ravens is the first creator owned book from Leah Moore and John Reppion, with art from small press star Sally Jane Thompson. This all ages adventure features a young girl at boarding school who discovers a fantastic secret about her family history, including inheriting the mysterious Raven Hall. We caught up with Leah and John to find out more.





Leah and John began creating COR with Sally thanks to this image on Twitter.

This is your first creator owned title, so what was it that made you choose to finally go down this avenue?
Leah Moore: This book is so special to us, and the fact that it is creator owned is a huge part of that. I think with work for hire stories, you kind of steel yourself not to get to attached because you know you can't keep it, if that makes sense? With COR all that went out of the window and we have been allowed to just take our ideas and run with them.

The group of girls are the key to it all really. They have this amazing journey, and discover all kinds of magical secrets about themselves, but at the end of the day, the most compelling thing is how they cope with all that as a group of friends.

What made you make the move into all ages story-telling?
LM: I think we have always wanted to write something that younger readers would enjoy. Its hard to hear your kids asking what are you working on, and you have to say they aren't big enough to read it yet. With COR, we wanted to give a feel of all the best kids stories, where they get to go on crazy adventures, and battle scary villains but they still had to be back for tea, and do their maths homework.

Can you tell us a bit about how you came to work with Sally on this book?
John Reppion: Back in 2012 Sally ran a give-away on Twitter offering sketches to her followers. My name got picked out of the hat and Sally came up with this piece of art showing a young woman in Victorian dress opening a locket and a flock of ravens flying out of it. We had a couple of Tweets back and forth and then we realised this was actually a really good idea and started coming up with the beginnings of Conspiracy of Ravens.

Conspiracy of Ravens is available now from Dark Horse Comics.

Devil in Disguise vol.1

Publisher: LabRat Comics
Writer: Matt Garvey
Artist: Robert Ahmad
Price: £10 from mattgarvey.bigcartel.com

At first Devil in Disguise feels more like a lost Hammer Horror short, but through the first volume Matt Garvey's demonic superhero evolves into a really enjoyable mix of Moon Knight, Spawn and 1970s Marvel.

After a chance encounter on a train our hero becomes possessed by a devil and must stop another demon from destroying the world. But it's not just demonic destruction, there is plenty of sparkling banter between our hero and 'Lou' which makes it a reall fun read and is becoming a hallmark of Garvey's writing. Robert Ahmad's orange and black artwork givse the book a really fresh feel for small press, especially the colours which remind us of Franco Francavilla's work on Afterlife with Archie, but with a more Marvel style to the character design with shades of Morbius in there in places.

With a fast paced story that really zips along, this mix of horror, humour and heroes makes for a devillishly good read!





Close

Publisher: Comichaus
Writer: Chris Sides
Artist: Chris Travell
Price: £5 from Comichaus.com

Joining 32 Kills as the latest part of the Comichaus line up, Close, is a slice of contemporary crime drama that sees a stalker wrongly convicted of a crime he didn't commit.

Jared has just been released from prison for stalking a Hollywood starlet. But when he is released on bail he ends up witness to her accidental death at the hands of her boyfriend.

Close has a very cinematic or TV mini series feel to it and you could definitely see it as a concept for a gritty HBO show or low budget indie movie. Originally pitched as a series in the Comichaus anthology it has been released from that structure and although it still has that chapter structure, which definitely reinforces that mini series vibe, it benefits from being read in one chunk – a bit like binge watching a box set.

Writer Chris Sides continues his excellent work from Impossible to create a really strong central concept for the book and some very sympathetic characters. The character of Jared is your classic tragic small time crook that we've seen in a million TV dramas, and is drawn back into his old ways on release from jail. But his story is given that extra poignancy by events being taken out of his control. It's a cautionary tale for anyone with vices and also a great twist on a well worn concept.

Sides' team up with artist Chris Travell also really pays dividends, and these long time friends have produced their best work to date here. Travell's detailed pencil style reminded us of Grayham Puttock's work on Red Rocket Comet and it's realism definitely helps make this story feel much more gritty and down to earth as a result. If you're a fan of contemporaty crime books like Brubaker and Phillips' Criminal then this is the indie book for you!

Lip Hook

Publisher: SelfMadeHero
Writer: David Hine
Artist: Mark Stafford
Price: £14.99 from SelfMadeHero.com



Lip Hook starts off as a fairly traditional crime story involving two gangsters on the run, but things take a turn for the darker as they discover a village of insect factories, lesbian witches and pagan rituals.

With echoes of everything from American Werewolf in London to Psycho, The Wicker Man and more, David Hine and Mark Stafford take these familiar tropes and dial the craziness up to 11 and beyond to create a dark and unsettling horror tale that is completely one of a kind. Every minute you think you have a handle on where the story is going, there is a moment or a visual that reminds you this is not going to be what you expect and it builds and builds to a shocking and outrageously weird conclusion.

Hine and Stafford work in perfect harmony to create some bizarre and terrifying ideas. Stafford's incredible artwork is more than the match for Hine's extravagant concepts and the two create pages which are densely layered, and packed full of strange and outlandish concepts that you won't forget.

Lip Hook is definitely not a book for everyone, as it's dark themes and strange, unsettling visuals are as shocking as they are spectacular. But if you like your books to be surreal, dark, funny and highly imaginative then you will not find a better and more outlandish book this year.

Tumult

Publisher: SelfMadeHero
Writer: John Harris Dunning
Artist: Michael Kennedy
Price: £16.99 from SelfMadeHero.com



John Harris Dunning and Michael Kennedy's debut graphic novel Tumult, definitely lives up to it's title as they create a chaotic and confusing world, featuring assassins with multiple personalities, government conspiracies and doomed love.

Tumult uses the central concept of multiple personalities to create a really interesting and original read and a truly unique heroine/femme fatale. The hero, Adam is the classic troubled middle-aged man who gets lured in by the dangerous world of a glamorous, troubled woman who he attempts to rescue and protect. But it is Morgan/Leila who is the real focus of the story and makes for the most enigmatic character.

Dunning layers this story of doomed love and unhealthy obsession, with an espionage/government conspiracy sub plot which gives the story an added element of danger and keeps you guessing about where the story is heading throughout. It clearly owes a debt to Hitchcock with it's tensely building story and it's constant attempts to second guess where things are going. But it also has the coolness of a contemporary indie movie, and the sleek lines of a Sean Phillips book, thanks to some great work from Kennedy.

Kingdom

Publisher: Nobrow Press
Writer/Artist: Jon McNaught
Price: £16.99 from Nobrow.net

Kingdom centres around a young family on their way to a caravan park. It's a familiar journey for many, but McNaught makes it extraordinary by focusing his attentive eye on the minutiae of the trip and really capture the essence of that quintessential rite of passage that is a seaside holiday.

From the opening scenes in the motorway service station, to the obligatory trip to a gift shop, via the son's unlikely friendship with a local, McNaught manages to weave a sense of nostalgia and pathos into the page without really doing very much in terms of story telling. It is all about a series of moments, rather than a deeply thought out character study, and he builds what story he has using the small actions of his characters to create this deep and thoughtful look at a family on holiday.

Visually, McNaught has created a truly unique style for himself thanks to his sublime use of colour and a densely panelled page, packing upwards of 30 panels on one page at a time. But rather than it feel cluttered and over bearing, he uses this excess of panels to really capture the minutiae of the moments.



"Kids love monsters... and are more drawn to the dark and strange more than we adults are comfortable with!"

Hellbound Media talk Mandy The Monster Hunter

Although they made their names with books like Shock Value and Slaughterhouse Farm, Hellbound Media's real star is a monster hunter called Mandy who helps save kids from the beasts under their bed. With their latest series, The Legend of The Spindly Man drawing to a close very soon, we caught up with co-creator Mark Adams to find out the secret to a great scary monster.





Lyndon White is the latest artist to bring the world of Mandy the Monster Hunter to life.

What inspired you to make an all ages monster book?
Mark Adams: The nature of Mandy's world, protecting kids from creatures under the bed, meant the content of the first few short stories, were more of a dark fairy tale, and younger readers seemed drawn to it. Kids do love monsters after all, and are more drawn to the dark and strange more than we adults are comfortable with!

We love the idea that Mandy is contacted by kids sending her pictures where did that come from?
MA: Once Mandy's world began to evolve it needed a unique angle to help it stand out. The idea developed into Mandy being an urban legend for children – so when they lose a tooth they leave it for the Tooth Fairy, they write a letter to Santa, and when they have a monster they draw it and send it to Mandy.

Artist Lyndon White is a perfect fit for the Spindly Man, why is it so right?
MA: His art has really blown us away, and brought the whole world of the story to life. He can do the whimsical and cute in something like the Sock Monster, and then instantly contrast it with the dark and disturbing, but the art never conflicts, it feels part of the same world. Every time we think he'd reached a new high, he brought a new page that blew us away all over again.

What is the secret to a great monster?
MA: Aside from the visual, it's very much about what they do and evoke. The Spindly Man's name partly invokes the notion of spiders, which are a common fear. He abducts children, which is perhaps the ultimate fear. I think the terror can often come from our own negotiated disbelief. That old house at the end of the lane? We know nothing really lives there, monsters aren't real… but what if? What if just THIS once… it was real?

You can purchase issue Mandy The Monster Hunter from hellboundmedia.co.uk/comic-books

The Bog Road

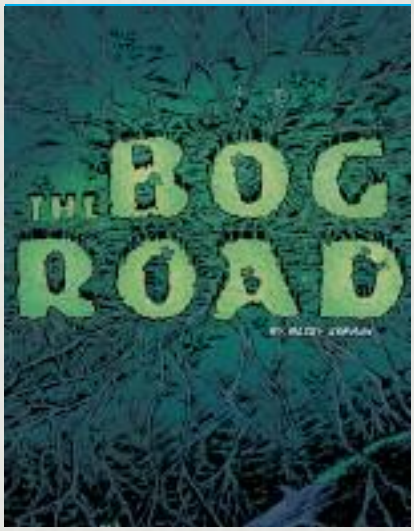
Publisher: Sub City Comics
Writer: Barry Keegan
Artist: Barry Keegan
Price: €15 from Sub City Comics

Barry Keegan's Celtic infused graphic novel is a fantastic mix of Irish mythology and superstition mixed with modern day horror movie morality.

While it starts as a fairly traditional monster book it soon evolves into something much more interesting. Starting off as a cautionary tale about mythical creatures on spooky back roads, it develops into a much broader modern folklore tale reminiscent of Neil Gaiman (especially with the mix of old world spiritual characters and modern day interfering men)

Writer Barry Keagan has created a beautiful and complex book that has a real originality and uniqueness to it. Pulling double duty, his artwork is also a big plus for the book, with a style that reminds us of a slightly less cartoony Gavin Mitchell from Trolltooth Wars and has the same green and grey colour palette throughout which makes it feel very organic and earthy.

Despite a slightly frustrating ending this is still a really interesting and highly enjoyable book and Barry is most definitely a talent we will be keeping an eye on for the future.





Fearscape

Publisher: Vault Comics
Writer: Ryan O'Sullivan
Artist: Andrea Mutti, Vladimir Popov (Colours), Andworld (Letters)
Price: £2.49 from comixology.co.uk

From the opening page which sees a succession of blank panels with the voice of a narrator rambling away over the top , you know you are in for something very different from this new book from writer Ryan O'Sullivan.

Henry Henry is a struggling author and translator for a much more successful writer, who takes advantage of his benefactor's success. But ends up being drawn into the mysterious world of the Fearscape and becomes a reluctant saviour for mankind.

O'Sullivan revels in having highly flawed and often unlikeable heroes for his stories and he writes Henry as such, packing his dialogue with flowery and verbose language. that brilliantly showcases Henry's arrogance and allows O'Sullivan to make the most of his lyrical vocabulary.



Artist Andrea Mutti's art has a beautiful angled shape and fine line to it, that makes Fearscape feels effortlessly contemporary and not just trying to be the next big thing, while the colour work from Vladimir Popov is muted and subtle but also eye popping where required.

It is difficult not to compare Fearscape to the work of Neil Gaiman, and like the Sandman scribe, Sullivan has delivered a complex and engaging story that has the scale and sophistication to be something very special indeed. We can't wait to see how long Henry can last before he is found out!

SMALL PRESS SPOTLIGHT

Aliens,demons & tentacled beasties in our horror round-up



If you like your horror tales quirky and cool then you can't go wrong with Dan White's new book Sticky Ribs. Featuring two short stories that are as stomach churningly grim as they are hilarious. Opener, Your Body has echoes of a Stephen King book, as a pair of high school kids discover an alien body. But it evolves into a David Cronenburg body horror after one of the kids comes into a bit too much contact with it. Meanwhile the second story, Jackie Goes To Hell sees a young woman journey to the afterlife in order to find her ex-boyfriend. Dan's art manages to capture the oozing quality of the alien body to perfection, as well as a sinister rogues gallery of demons in hell. All of which have a really simple monotone colour scheme. It's rounded off with an essay about Dan's love for An American Werewolf in London and makes for a fantatstic collection of super cool horror stories. **Purchase Sticky Ribs from milkthecat.wordpress.com/the-shop**

Writer Joey Oliveira has become one of the most interesting voices in small press horror thanks to spooky, psychic whodunnit Ghost Island and the nasty folk horror of Tales of The Crytoids, and he is back in the woods for his latest story, Wendigo Wood. A young couple encounter a body on the road and when they need to decide whether to go on or help, they reluctantly stop and are drawn into a mysterious woodland cult. While it may have that classic Texas Chansiaw Massacre model of weirdoes in a remote wood, Wendigo Wood is made all the more terrifying thanks to the sinister skull wearing creatures who they encounter and it makes it into a really creepy read as a result. **Purchase Wendigo Wood from www.afterlightcomics.com**



The latest offering from Samurai Slasher's Mike Garley has seen him team up with his old Dead Roots buddy Michael Lee Graham to create a slice of video nasty inspired horror. It starts with a truly shocking opener as 5 teenagers come round in a spooky house, covered in blood, in a room with demonic markings on the floor. And so begins a race to find out how and why they are there, whose blood it is and what the messages on the wall are all about.

It's a phenomenal start point for a book and the kind of story that only works in a comic as if you think too much into it, then it starts to stop making sense. However for an energetic horror thriller like this it works to perfection. Garley doesn't hold back after this opener though and the pace of the book rattles along at a hectic pace, reminiscent of the Evil Dead, and there is no time for the kids to think about what is going on, instead they are pursued from a variety of angles.



Visually, Our Final Halloween looks incredible. Michael Lee Graham's artwork has the expressive and squashy faces of John Arcudi and the angles of Michael Oeming, but it is the unconventional colour palette which really helps it to stand out from the crowd. While Graham uses a dominant red for the blood soaked opening scene he goes on to use vintage greens and purples, or dirty Autumnal oranges and yellows in the various rooms of the house to give each one a unique feel. There is even a two page infographic style spread that shows the various rooms in the houses and how the colour schemes apply which is a very smart piece of visual design. **Our Final Halloween will be available from mikegarley.com/store**

If after all this blood and guts you fancied an antidote, then be sure to check out the fantastic Cthulu Kids. Writer Peter Duncan and Galaxafreaks artist Andrew Pawley create the surreal and technicolour adventures of Lovecraft's enigmatic and tentacled beasties during their formative years. It's a bit like s the Mountain of Madness meets Muppet babies and thanks to Pawley's over the top visuals it creates a truly unique look at these horror staples. **Pick up Cthulu Kids from galaxafreaks.myshopify.com**



M A Z E

Not least sending Tharg himself on an indefinite mission to Quaxxann and replacing him with Vector 13's Men in Black, the autumn of 1996 was a time of controversial change for the **Galaxy's Greatest Comic**. Still smarting after the less than favourable response to 1995's big screen Judge Dredd, the Mega-City lawman had also been sent packing, although only to elsewhere in the Prog after occupying the coveted first story status for the majority of the past two decades.

The series that then-2000 AD editor David Bishop chose to run in its stead couldn't have been more different to Ol' Stoney Face's gritty future cop adventures. Mostly set in a labyrinthine-esque fantasyland, Alan Grant and Arthur Ranson's Mazeworld – which has just been re-published by Rebellion in a larger Collector's Edition - was actually just about as grim as Judge Dredd, as it opened with the nominal hero Adam Cadman being hanged before being inexplicably transported to a strange world of mazes, where he is mistaken for the mythical folk hero, the Hooded Man.

While Mazeworld was originally inspired by computer games, Alan Grant admits that he had never actually played any himself, even though he penned the New Eagle's Computer Warrior - which featured characters playing real life computer games – for a decade. "It changed quite rapidly once Arthur and I had discussed the whole idea," recalls Grant. "He wanted to illustrate a proper fantasy story, so that's the direction I took the writing, which then made it a story that 2000 AD would consider."

Describing it as "a true collaboration," Grant sent Ranson a few pages of notes before driving down to meet with the artist at his Surrey home. "He'd already done dozens of sketches, including the double-page spread from the first episode," he says. "Arthur's only real caveat was that the didn't want to illustrate a humour story, though I have to say, I didn't see much room for humour in what we came up with."

"I was really taken by the idea of a maze-based world, and curious to know what that would look like, I drew, for my own benefit, an aerial view of such a world," continues Ransom. "Alan later said that seeing that drawing influenced the way he constructed the story."

Proclaiming him to be a "first class illustrator and a master storyteller," Grant had previously collaborated with Ranson on several Judge Anderson series, most notably on the mind-bending Shamballa, which spanned Progs 700 to 711 from October to December 1990, and the seven-part Satan which ran in the Judge Dredd Megazine in 1995. "Arthur and I share an interest in the more surreal sides of life," says Grant. "Shamballa, Satan and Mazeworld all spring from that interest."

However, Ranson denies that there was any conscious link between Judge Anderson and Mazeworld. "Having spent a great deal of time sharing the adventures of Psi Judge Cassandra Anderson, I would be surprised if there



was no connection whatsoever but part of the attraction of drawing Mazeworld was the possibility of doing something different," he reasons. "Having worked on Button Man, I wouldn't exactly say that I was typecast, but there was an itch to say 'look, I can also do other kinds of stuff.'"

Indeed the noir-flavoured adventures of hired killer Harry Exton couldn't be more different to Mazeworld's fantastical scenario, although as former writing partners, Alan Grant and John Wagner's working methods were unsurprisingly similar. "They both share an economy in writing, an exactness, where no words are wasted and there's no lengthy descriptions or instructions about presentation, and they're also both willing to listen to suggestions and allowed me some license when it came to framing and pacing," says Ranson. "The major difference lay in the kind of material they were interested in writing about. The plots I drew for John were of a concrete real stuff-type, as Button Man was all grit and spit and even the few Judge Dredd stories I did with John were about the tangible – a kidnap, a robot lavatory, fire and computer hacking. Alan, on the other hand, was happy to supply me with the otherworldly, the supernatural and the spooky. These I liked, not just for the content, but for the potential they gave me to play with techniques and layouts. In either case, what I would be worrying about was how to make any world, this one or some other, look convincing."

Admitting that he is not much of a fantasy fan and that the last such book he read was Michael Moorcock's Elric series 45 years ago, Grant drew on his interest in ancient history for Mazeworld. "I'm very interested in Neolithic Man and his structures and have visited many throughout the UK," he says. "I've had some interesting and unusual experiences meditating in places like Maes Howe in Orkney and the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire. Southwest Scotland, where I live, is replete with old and often unmarked-on-a-map structures. Within ten miles or so of my house, there's an ancient Celtic encampment, the remains of 12 Century fortresses and villages and a stone circle, as well as the second largest Celtic burial tomb in all Europe. I'm currently trying to persuade my grandkids to write a guide book to these places!"

Noting that, "both were, like Mazeworld, not technologically advanced so buildings were constructed with muscle rather than machines," Ranson modeled on the look of Mazeworld itself on the ancient Egyptian and Aztec civilisations. "They were both religiously based and authoritarian, as Mazeworld is designed to be, so that was also a consideration," he says. "The beliefs of those societies are reflected in their architecture, which is monolithic and top-down. Additionally, the pyramid as one of the basic forms of their architecture lent itself to the construction of a maze, whether constructed on its surface or contained inside it. At the centre of the aerial view I drew in the first episode, I included a large, basically circular area that was based on what is the traditional form for a labyrinth. Outlying districts I imagined as poorer and more primitive, so that was there in the street plans with mazes formed around the wooden dwellings."

Admitting that, "when I first started, I had no idea what he looked like," Ranson drew Adam Cadman wearing his hood for the vast majority of Mazeworld's trilogy of series, only revealing what he looked like in Prog #1160's conclusion of third installment, 'The Hell Maze.' It was for that reason that we don't see his face even before he's hooded," he recalls. "It was not until we get to the end and Adam's final unveiling that I had a picture of him. The face that it turned out he had was not the one I would have used when beginning to draw the series, as he was harder and meaner looking than I would have supposed at the start. But when it did appear, I did think it was kind of right for him, as he was more Tom Hardy than Leonardo DiCaprio."



Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine



Cindy and Biscuit

"Being a kid isn't actually all fun, and fear, uncertainty, and sadness are present in these little lives. And it was possible to craft a strip that was both an action-packed genre romp, whilst also addressing the quiet darkness of childhood."

That's Dan White describing his delightful and disturbing all-ages comic, Cindy & Biscuit, featuring the continuing adventures of a butt-kicking girl and her loyal canine companion, fighting to defend their woods from all manner of monstrous creatures. It's a wonderful comic adventure, but, with the genuinely disturbing elements that White weaves into it, it's also the perfect kids' horror comic.

White's control of emotion and expression gives the reader incredible insight into his characters with so few lines, but also explodes into horror with both the monsters in the woods and the more subtle terrors of daily life. For Cindy, school is hateful, with overly-critical teachers and cruel classmates, and, sadly, her home life is little better, with mom by turns angry, uncaring, preoccupied or even neglectful. It's painfully obvious that the bravest thing Cindy does is to stave off the despair of her normal life to go out and save the world once more.

White delights in playing with expectations, encouraging readers to glean multiple meanings from events, wonder where the borders of reality and imagination are, and never afraid to show the bittersweet, even brutal, emotional journey of this young girl. The perfect example of that comes when her Granddad's tells her, from his hospital bed... "Cindy... look after your mom... and watch out for the woods." You delight in Cindy's shocked realisation that she and Biscuit are not alone in their mission but you despair, knowing that joy will turn to despair with her Granddad's death. So cruel, yet so beautifully done.

But, for truly dark, there's 'Cindy's Dream', a few short pages shot through with absolute, existential joy and total, shocking horror. Cindy's dreaming she's on the moon; "I dream I have a rock. I'd throw it so hard it would turn into a meteor and blow up the world". In that moment, the positively beatific expression on Cindy's face is heartbreaking, her moment of profound joy coming from embracing oblivion. It's an incredibly powerful and genuinely shocking moment.

White argues that Cindy & Biscuit is a kids comic, but one deliberately designed to unnerve, even to scare, something he's pleased to see children both enjoy and understand, "They seem to love it and that is, honestly, the best feeling. I think they enjoy having a flawed protagonist and they love that she's such an ass-kicker. But they definitely pick up nuances too which is gratifying. Kids are smart. I think kids should be a bit scared. It's addictive. You just need to know how far you want to push things and I've never made C&B explicit or unpleasant. It's a gateway horror experience."

With his new comic, Sticky Ribs, White is returning to adult horror, in anthology form, "I wanted to do something directly with my



love of horror, and an anthology of short strips allows me to get formally playful and address all the different types of horror that I love. Each issue will be a double-feature and will go all over the map. I've got a lifetime of stuff bottled up, ready to explode on the page. It's less kid-friendly than C&B but I still see it as a good gateway horror experience. If I can get some kid to watch Cronenberg's 'Rabid' through reading Sticky Ribs, then mission accomplished!"

White's love of comics, and horror, developed early, "Comics has been lifelong really but it was 2000AD that really lit my flame". Describing himself as "a deeply anxious kid", White reveals that he was "endlessly drawn to stuff that scared me, like a moth bouncing off a lightbulb. I realised horror was a multi-faceted experience; I loved cheesy old rubber monster movies, found them almost comforting, but when confronted by the shifting existential terror of an M.R. James story I was left sleepless and terrorised".

Following 2000AD, White's next comics epiphany came through Ted McKeever and Junji Ito, "McKeever's singular, expressionistic Metropol hit me like a train - such a palpable atmosphere. [But], it wasn't until the comics of Junji Ito (Tomie, Uzumaki, Gyo) that I found a truly scary reading experience".

Reading turned into making, and through self-publishing he found his 'voice', "Realising I could self-publish was a breakthrough as it freed up my style and let me tell the stories I wanted to." But, no matter what style of work he makes, there's a common theme - "Horror crept in quite naturally. I can't keep it out of my work, it seems". This began with Terminus (2008-2010), a single-panel comic that deliberately subverted the comedic expectations of the form. "I wanted to create glimpses into whole other worlds. And not necessarily worlds in which you'd want to hang out too long. By paring down the words and having a single image, I could imply infinite horrors and leave lingering dread in the mind of the reader without ever being explicit". Following Terminus, White continued the exploration of single-panel comics and adult horror with Insomnia (2010), "It was an attempt to take the single panel comic into even more abstract territory. Something intangible, perverse and unsettling, great fun but a lot of work".

Since starting Cindy & Biscuit in 2011, White's produced four Cindy & Biscuit collections; Cindy & Biscuit Volume 1: We Love Trouble (2014), The Bad Girl Parts 1 & 2 (2015/16), and Sundays (2017). The comic conclusively proves that all-ages comics have a power, not just to delight and thrill, but to unsettle, to unnerve, to disturb. And this wonderful tale, of a girl and her dog, armed with a big stick ("good soldier"), does that is spades.

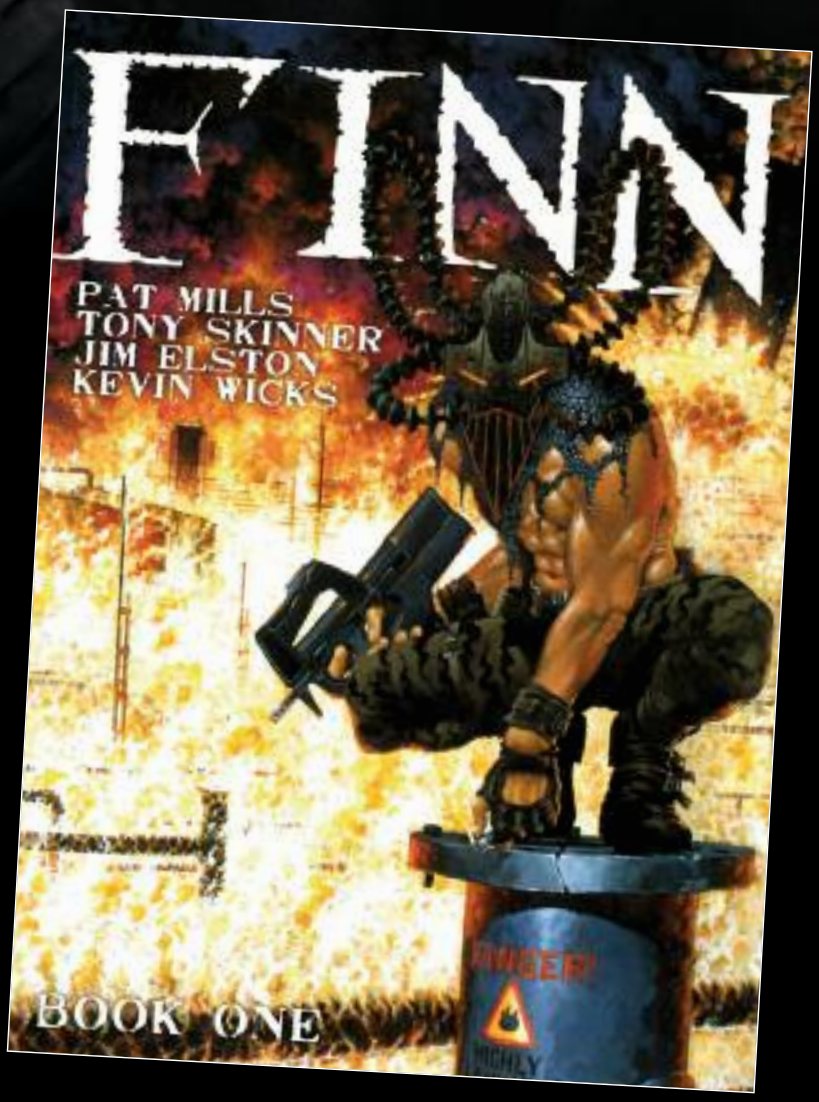
You can find Dan White's work, including Terminus, Insomnia, and his new comic, Sticky Ribs, online at The Mindless Ones (mindlessones.com), Milk The Cat Comics (milkthecat.wordpress.com), and at Deadlight Comics (deadlightcomics.com)

Author: Richard Bruton
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Website: forbiddenplanet.co.uk/blog

THE LAST WORD

with **Pat Mills**

Tales of Wonder



When I came to write Slaine and created its magical Celtic mythos I could have saved myself a great deal of time if I had known about Lord Dunsany and his various fantasy classics such as The Gods of Pegāna (1905), Tales of Wonder (1916) and The King of Elfland's Daughter (1924). Because he was a major influence on every fantasy writer who followed him – H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Arthur C. Clarke, Ursula K. Le Guin, Tolkien, Michael Moorcock, Neil Gaiman; the list is endless. Dunsany truly was a Master of Magic.

Here's a brief excerpt from his The Bride of the Man-Horse and you'll see just how influential he was.

In the morning of his two hundred and fiftieth year Shepperalk the centaur went to the golden coffer, wherein the treasure of the centaurs was, and taking from it the hoarded amulet that his father, Jyshak, in the years of his prime, had hammered from mountain gold and set with opals bartered from the gnomes, he put it upon his wrist, and said no word, but walked from his mother's cavern.

Sound familiar? There's plenty more where that came from. Similarly, The Gods of Pegāna describes Elder Gods such as Kib, the Sender of Life in all the Worlds. The god of beasts and men. Sish, the Destroyer of Hours. The god of time. Mung, Lord of all Deaths between Pegāna and the Rim. The god of death. Hoodrazai, the Eye in the Waste. The mirthless god who knows the secret of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

So that's where Lovecraft – as he himself acknowledges – drew some of his inspiration. Dammit! Why couldn't the muse that drives me have pointed me in Dunsany's direction like every one else? No, my muse, my inner demons, soul, call it what you will, made it bloody difficult for me by insisting I use real-life magic and real-life entities. So instead, my primary source on Slaine was The Dark Gods by Anthony Roberts and

Geoff Gilbertson (1980), a truly chilling guide to the occult, followed by the works of various magicians such as Crowley and Kenneth Grant.

I like to think the result in Slaine – the Cyth (from Cythraul, the Celtic word for Hell) was worth it, not least because these demons were beautifully visualized by Glenn Fabry: a dark pantheon of monsters – the ultraterrestrials – 'pray they don't exist!'

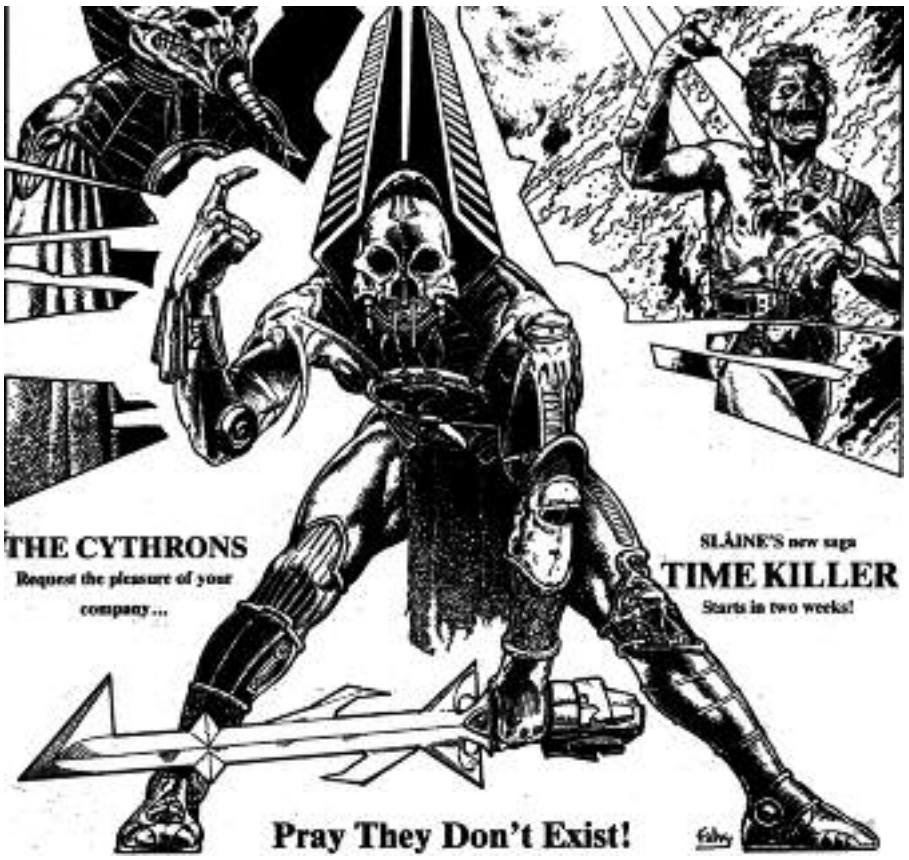
But that was when I became of the magical rule: if you take an interest in the occult, it will take an interest in you. And, sure enough, along came a witch and member of a real life coven, Tony Skinner, who introduced himself to me: 'Enjoyed your Slaine stories about the Cythrons. In my pagan tradition we call them the Newts or the Shining Ones. They're heavy dudes. I'll tell you more about them if you like.'

So we ended up writing Finn together – the story of a modern day witch and eco-vigilante who battles with the Newts, entities who have been interfering in the affairs of humans since biblical times. As Finn/Tony puts it, 'Look at what's wrong in a man and you'll see the webbed footprint of a Newt.'

And I even got to see something of the Cyth/Newts themselves, courtesy of a reader who mysteriously presented me with a thousand page meister work on the Shining Ones and explained that he was told by the ultraterrestrials to get in touch with me. I describe my resulting close encounter of the second kind (thankfully) in 2000AD and Judge Dredd; The Secret History.

But it is not an easy road writing about real life magic. As I relate in The Secret History, Steve McManus, the editor of 2000AD protested, 'I can't have a witch writing for 2000AD!' Magicians were acceptable to Steve, it seems (Alan Moore and Grant Morrison), but witches – no. Apparently there's a class system even in the world of the occult. We don't burn witches anymore, but we do try to ensure that their voices are silenced.

And Finn, despite its huge success (it was more popular than Slaine) and endless requests from readers has yet to be reprinted by Rebellion. I gather it may finally be penciled in for publication 2020.



If only I'd read Lord Dunsany and marinated myself in the genius of his brilliant words like other fantasy writers, I could have saved myself all that hard work, research and passive aggression towards my co-author. But then I would never have had true Tales of Wonder to write about. Tales that, perhaps, provide an alternative for readers who are looking for something other than escapist fantasy.

The truth is, my muse would never have permitted it. It doesn't seem to have the remotest interest in the usual sources of fantasy. Perhaps because it seeks authenticity or perhaps because it doesn't care for the character of writers like Lord Dunsany. After all, this is a man who orders his chauffeur to drive him to Dublin to help suppress the Easter Rising of Irish freedom fighters in 1916. A man who knowingly wrote propaganda (lies) that it is now acknowledged helped prolong the Great War by several years at the cost of millions of lives.

His equally distinguished writer colleagues (e.g. A.A. Milne) and fellow-propaganda officers, who clearly knew him very well, wrote a short story about his lordship that may not surprise you if you're familiar with the personality of writers.

After one of his stories is rejected by his publisher, Dunsany dies of shock and floats up through the Milky Way, swearing as the stars burn him. Stopping for a nectar in a celestial bar, he looks doubtfully around him at the clearly inferior dead writers who must now keep him company for all eternity. He asks one of them suspiciously, 'Isn't there some mistake?... Is this Heaven?'

Just then God came in and I introduced Dunsany. 'Glad to meet you,' said God. 'Have a cigar?' Then, after a moment's thought, 'Who and what were you?' said he. Then Dunsany knew for certain that he was in Hell.

"So we ended up **writing Finn together** – the story of a modern day witch and eco-vigilante who battles with the Newts, entities who have been interfering in the affairs of humans since biblical times"

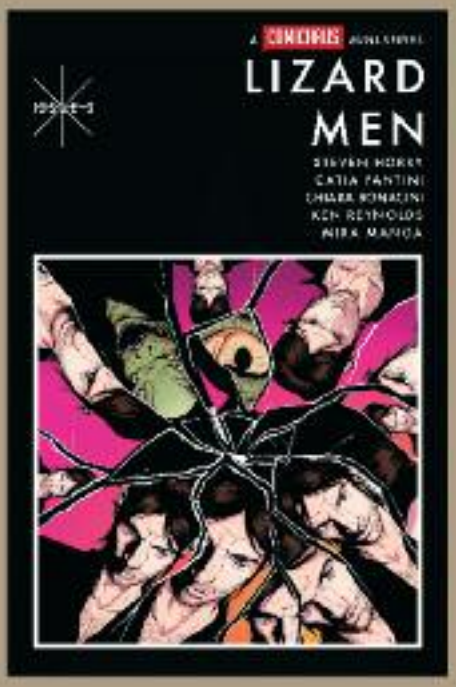
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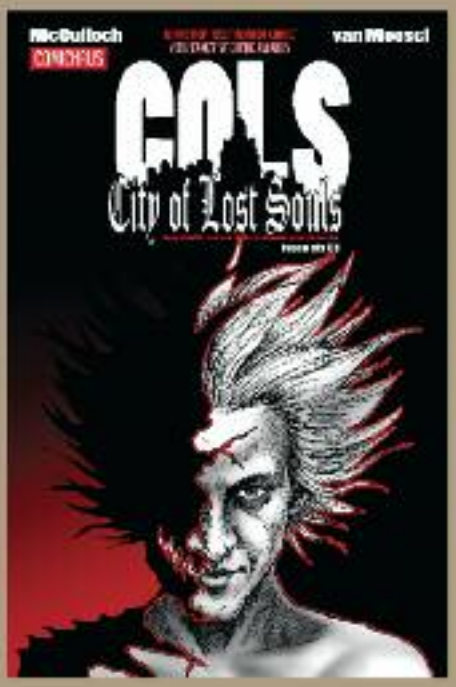
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COMIC SCENE

Your Complete Guide to Comics

NEW

Welcome to a fresh start for **ComicScene UK!** If you are a first time reader it's because you've picked us up from one of 800 newsagents now stocking the magazine. To welcome you we have relaunched, with this issue 0 available for two months and then back to a monthly schedule from mid February with Issue 1.

Prior to this issue we produced five 'Volume One' issues that were made available either by subscription online or in comic shops. You can still get some of those issues in print or digital by ordering them at www.comicscene.tictail.com - they will be very rare and collectable in years to come!

You can also pick up our 300 page 'Great Big ComicScene UK Annual 2019' with some of the best and classic picture strips from small press comics over the last forty years and also order a collection of comic journalism from a magazine called 'Crikey', which predated ComicScene UK over ten years ago, that we've reprinted and repackaged for your comic fan delight!

Meanwhile...back to this issue.

ComicScene UK Volume 2, Issue 0.

Celebrating classic and new comics, comic culture and the best in indie and small press comics.

Comics are enjoying a cool renaissance, delighting people young and old, and we hope to be your regular guide to what's happening on the scene and go indepth behind your favourite comics in the UK and across the world, comic inspired TV and film shows, fifty years of fandom and events celebrating the comic medium.

We will also signpost you to some great material on the internet, including our own news site comicsflix.org, and get some of the best writers and artists to encourage you to try not only familiar material to you but perhaps something new.

We've got a great issue lined up celebrating **40 years of Starblazer, 40 years of Star Lord, 40 years of Star Wars Weekly** and 40 years of Superman the Movie with an **exclusive chat with director Richard Donner**.

We also have a chin wag **with top Superman artists Dave Gibbons and Brian Michael Bendis** as the Man of Steel turns 80. In our film and TV section we take a look at DC hero Aquaman, in cinemas now, and we break the first rule of Fight Club and talk about it.

Each month we celebrate and highlight the exciting world of indie and small press comics and kick off with a look back at the best titles of 2018 for you to try. Who knows, someday, they may be as collectable as some of the titles featured in our comic price guide!

There is so much more but we don't want to spoil the surprise.

We feel it is fitting to dedicate this issue to Stan Lee, who sadly passed away as this magazine was being put together.

'Nuff said,

Tony



ComicScene UK Volume 2 Issue 0
February 2019

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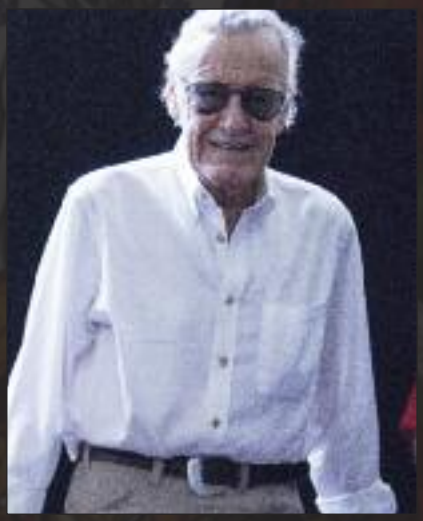
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Remembering Stan Lee

1922 – 2018



Stan Lee was probably one of the most important figures in the comic industry to have ever lived. As the co-creator of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, Iron Man and The Avengers, Lee not only transformed the world of comics in the last sixty years but has also had a huge impact on 21st century cinema. At the time of his death, aged 95 on November 12th, the two highest grossing films of 2018 were Avengers: Infinity War and Black Panther. Lee had a major role in creating both, as well as two other films in the top ten (Ant Man and the Wasp and, less directly, the Spider-Man inspired Venom). Indeed, Stan Lee had a hand in creating the basis for five of the current top twenty highest grossing films of all time.

Comics were always his first love. It was ironic then, that his period of greatest invention occurred soon after a point in 1960, when still in his thirties, Lee had come perilously close to giving up on comics forever.

By the dawn of the sixties, Lee had already been in comics for twenty years, working for Timely Publications from 1940 and sticking with it when it became Atlas Comics and then, finally, Marvel. The crisis started when he was approached to create a rival group to DC's Justice League of America. With comics at a low ebb after the McCarthy era attacks on post-war "horror" comics, Lee, who had a hankering to write a novel, was tempted to quit. He had been born Stanley Lieber to a poor Jewish Romanian family and had initially been landed a job at Timely by his uncle in 1940, continuing to work for them even through a period of war service. It was his British-born wife Joan Boocock Lee who persuaded him to stay in 1960, leading him to launch a renaissance in American comics.

Stan Lee's great innovation was to create "superheroes with problems". His first real major triumph, The Fantastic Four which started in 1961 with art by Jack Kirby, saw its heroes imbued with super powers – elasticity, invisibility, super strength and the power to generate intense heat after an accident in space. But the characters remained intensely human – Ben Grimm aka "The Thing," for example, was endlessly unhappy about his new rock solid external appearance.

Lee later described the creation of the comic in mock biblical language:

"In the beginning Marvel created the Bullpen and the Style. And the Bullpen was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the Artists. And the Spirit of Marvel said, Let there be The Fantastic Four. And there was The Fantastic Four. And Marvel saw The Fantastic Four. And it was good."

Stan Lee's biggest ever success, however, came in 1962 with The Amazing Spider-Man created with artist, Steve Ditko.

The story of teenaged Peter Parker becoming the web-slinging "friendly neighbourhood" Spider-Man after being bitten by a radioactive spider is so well known now that its easy to forget how unusual an idea it was at the time. Lee's characters dispensed with well-worn superhero clichés: they rarely wore capes none were invincible and were often deeply flawed. In a tremendously fertile and prolific period, Lee had a hand in creating the Incredible Hulk, Thor, Iron Man and the X-Men, plus many other characters and stories. Marvel was soon booming again.

The Incredible Hulk was a particular success, spawning a CBS live action series starring Bill Bixby in 1978, the only real live action adaptation of any Marvel product of any quality before the 21st century. Ironically, The X-Men, the film which effectively launched the Marvel comics film boom which continues to this day, was initially a rare flop for Lee in comic form.

Some of Lee's creations such as Ant-Man, meanwhile, were created alongside his brother Larry Lieber.

Lee ceased most of his writing responsibilities in the seventies, but despite a legal battle in 2005 in which he sued Marvel for over $10 million in unearned profits from the recent films, he remained a champion of Marvel throughout the rest of his life. Lee was inducted into the comic book industry's Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame in 1994 and the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1995. He received a National Medal of Arts in 2008.

A charismatic figure, Lee was a celebrity in his own right. He had become famed for his self-promotion and catchphrases when overseeing the letters' pages on many Marvel comics coining phrases such as "Excelsior!", "with great power comes great responsibility and "'Nuff said!" Readers were generally referred to as "true believers". Character catchphrases included "Flame on!", "Hulk smash!", "It's clobberin' time!" Stan "the man" increasingly enjoyed making cameo appearances in his later years, cropping up in everything from The Simpsons and Heroes to Big Bang Theory.

Ultimately, Lee's name would be legendary even of he had just created Spider-Man. As it is, his output and creativity have been so great that even without taking into account the many writers and artists he has doubtless inspired, it is now impossible to imagine the comic scene of the last sixty years without him.

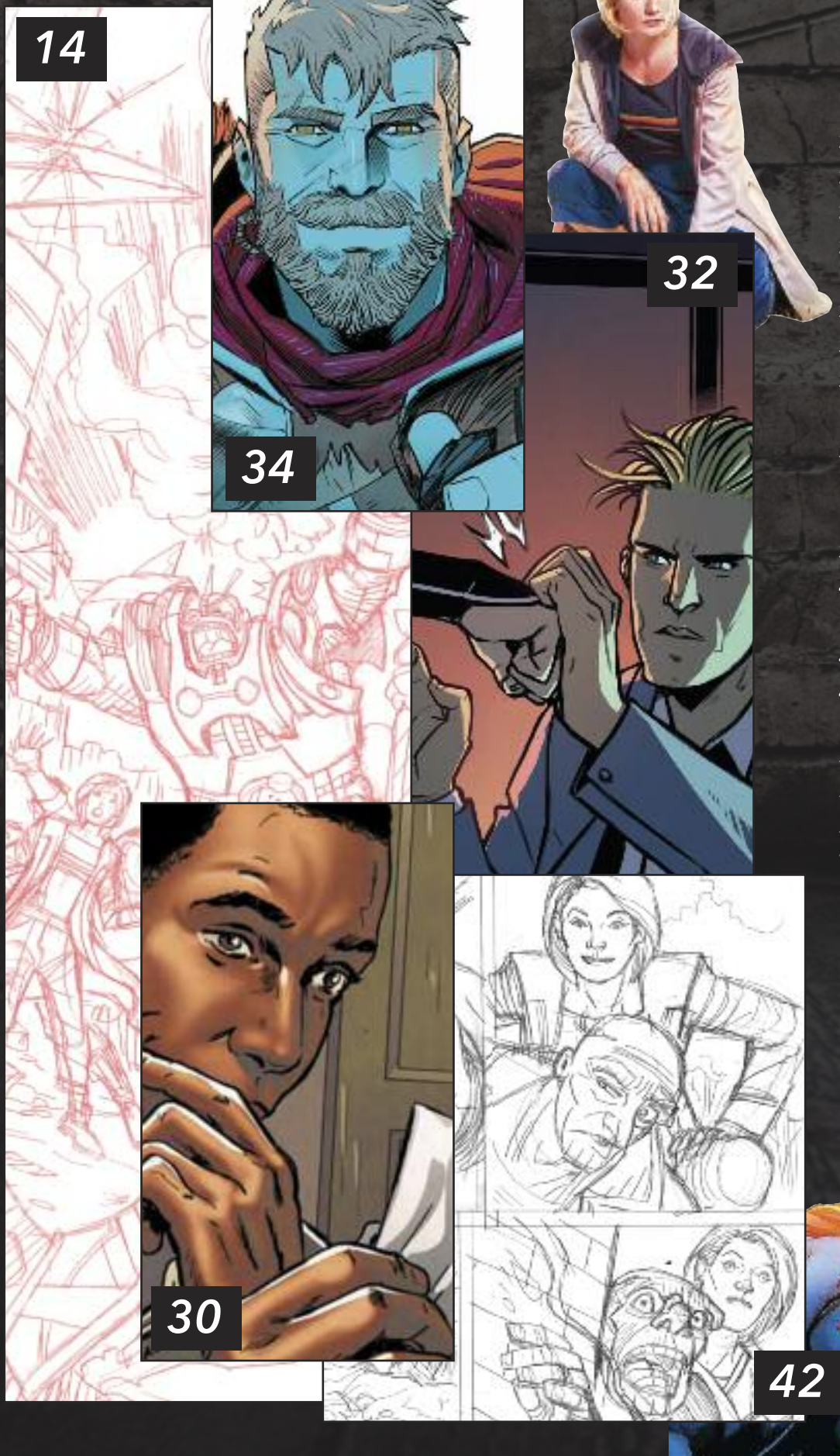
One thing is clear: Lee's legacy is sure to endure in both the world of comics for many years after his death.

Nuff said!
Chris Hallam



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Looking Forward, Looking Back...

2018 was a busy year for **British comic publishers** – but from what I'm hearing, from DC Thomson, Rebellion, Titan Comics and others, 2019 is going to be even busier, **so let's celebrate it...**

The comics industry in the UK has always been evolving, and some readers of Comic Scene, looking back at the past and much-loved titles such as *Starblazer* and *Starlord*, might bemoan the way it's changed, particularly in newsagents. After all, it's regularly pointed out, there simply aren't that many fully originated (not reprint) cover to cover comics out there, compared with the 1980s and 1990s (and earlier).

But I think that measure of the health of the industry, basing it on memories of *Buster*, *Misty, Whizzer and Chips, Victor* et al taking up the lion's share of a newsagent's shelves, ignores how many great comics are out there now through different channels – and the way reading the comics has changed, too.



For example, back when I started my comic news site downthetubes, just over 20 years ago, one reason for doing it was because of what I'd find at some of the very few events back then – the United Kingdom Comic Art Convention, the Bristol-based Comic Festival, for example. I was always a bit disappointed at the lack of British comics you'd find at them. Even though Paul Gravett and Peter Stanbury (and others) helped boost the independent small press back in the 1980s with their Fast Fiction stand at the Westminster Comic Marts, we had nothing like the enthusiastic and inventive comics community out there today, publishing a huge range of terrific comics, some employing crowdfunding to get them off the ground, others simply taking a punt and self-publishing with their own money.

There was very little evidence or coverage of what some describe as the "small press" and yet the quality of some of the work can't be disputed, and many, just like I did back in the 1980s, along with the likes of Eddie Campbell, Warren Ellis, Phil Elliott and many more, have gone on to work in the "mainstream" comics industry.

How many British publishers had a graphic novels line as part of their catalogue back in 1998, apart from Titan Books? Today, we have Cinebook, Jonathan Cape, David Fickling Books, Myriad Editions, SelfMadeHero, Titan, Rebellion – now gearing up to exploit a huge library of characters acquired from TI Media, in addition to the comics previously owned by Egmont – and Titan, just to name a few. (And that short list doesn't include bigger "indie" publishers such as Time Bomb Comics).

Then there's the explosion of comics available digitally – and before you start arguing these aren't "real" comics, well, they're still created by real people and an inventive lot they are too, so I'm simply ignoring any criticism on those lines. Back in 2002, I started looking at digital comics on mobile phones – we even worked up some samples with David Lloyd – and we could see the potential. In 2007, I worked at ROK Comics, and we developed a platform to bring comics to mobiles pre-smartphone – and it worked pretty well, but investment wasn't there to really develop it, sadly.

Today, sales on digital devices have exploded, not just through Amazon-owned Comixology, but through British platform Comichaus too, where creators are getting a good deal on revenues from sales. Platforms like Tapas are geared toward delivering to mobile; David Lloyd has published 36 volumes of his marvellous digital anthology *Aces Weekly*; and while it's just drawn to a close, SF adventure title *100% Biodegradable* ran to 22 issues purely through digital platforms – equalling the much-loved *Starlord* I mentioned above in terms of its run!

Of course, all this activity needs somewhere to let people know it's out there. Again, back in 1998, only my site downthetubes, was reporting on the British comic scene, although individual bloggers were doing their bit, too. Steve Holland stared publishing his brilliant Bear Alley blog in 2006, joined the same year by Lew Stringer with his Blimey! blog. But now – well, we have Bleeding Cool, Richard Sheaf's Boys Adventure Comics blog, Broken Frontier, Comic Scene (also available in print), the Jinty Resource and numerous terrific podcasts and vlogs. Every British comics publisher has its own web presence and the ability to reach a loyal fanbase direct with news of upcoming releases – something well-nigh impossible until recent years, although of course some of the template for all such web-based activity was laid by *Eagle*, back in the 1950s through its *Eagle club* – but it was far more expensive to reach out to readers, then.

I'll admit I'm skipping over many terrific aspects of comic fandom here in the UK as I enthuse about how diverse and vibrant the scene has become. Apologies if you feel I've missed you out – I'm not allowed to take over an entire issue! But looking back, I can see how far we've come and, I think, for the better. What's to come in 2019 – well, let's just say I think British comic fans of both classic and new characters are not going to be disappointed.

I'm looking forward to it.



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John is currently writing Crucible

CHRISTMAS COMICS

Christmas comes but once a year, so it's time to take a very **personal look at some of my favourite Christmas comics**, not your best, not a definitive best, just my all-time favourites. One word of warning though, although I have some incredibly fond memories of Christmas annuals of my youth, my memory isn't good enough, or specific enough to remember individual strips, hence the obvious lack of Beano, Dandy, Whizzer & Chips, et al! (Before the complaints come in!) **So, starting with the greatest Christmas comic ever...**



FATHER CHRISTMAS – Raymond Briggs (1973)

Blooming Christmas...

Not as well known as The Snowman, perhaps, but this is the best Christmas comic, without question. Briggs' Santa is not the jovial, magical fella of Coke adverts, gallivanting around the world with a smile and a chortle. No, it's blooming this and blooming that as Briggs' grumpy old Father Christmas moans his way round the slumbering world. The only thing to brighten his night is the plentiful supply of food and drink, particularly the drink. Artistically superb, full of wonderful details, it's simply genius work from the great of British comics.



THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT OF 1948 Will Eisner (1948)

A Christmas classic from an absolute master. Artistically, it's as beautiful as all of Eisner's work, with page compositions that no-one does better, and magnificent characters whose entire lives are laid out in just a panel or two. When Santa turns up to the jail cell of Basher Bains wanting a break, Basher, seeing his chance to escape, volunteers to step into the red & white costume. Things go awry as you'd expect, with Eisner pouring on the sentiment and doling out his very own Christmas spirit.



DEMON UNCANNY X-MEN 143 Chris Claremont, John Byrne, Terry Austin (Marvel Comics - 1981)

Bummed out about being home alone in the X-mansion at Christmas, things get frantic when she just happens to bump into a N'Garai, one of a race of demons who isn't too full of Christmas spirit. It's a wonderful and destructive dash through the X-mansion that really cemented a love of Ms Pryde in X-Men fans.



WIRED WORLD Philip Bond (Deadline – Sometime in the late 80s)

Oh, Wired World, how I loved those surreal slice of life tales of Pippa and Liz, a sublime highlight of Deadline magazine, criminally still uncollected. Sadly, my copies went missing years back and there's little online, so this is purely from a memory of a fabulous Christmas tale, a Wired World Nativity. It's Christmas Eve and virginal Pippa somehow reckons she's pregnant, meaning Liz has to get her to hospital... only to find, wouldn't you know it, that there's simply no room in the wards. Add in the appearance of three (not so wise) DJs, bearing gifts of a Porsche, Rolex, and a blank cheque, and you have the perfect alternative Christmas strip, with the girls keeping all the loot, even after Pippa realises there's no miracle Christmas baby after all.



THE BATMAN ADVENTURES - HOLIDAY SPECIAL THE HARLEY & THE IVY Bruce Timm & Ronnie Del Carmen (DC Comics - 1995)

It's "Season's Greetings, Brucie!" as poor Bruce Wayne is taken along as for a seasonal shopping spree with Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy... fabulous fun, wonderful cartooning, and one of the finest Batman smirks you'll ever see. Ho Ho and a definite Ho.



TELL ME A JOHN CONSTANTINE CHRISTMAS TALE -
Paul Jenkins & Paul Pope. (Vertigo Winter's Edge Volume 1 – DC Comics - 1997)

"Ah, yes... New bloody York. And what infernal force could possibly drag yours truly kicking and screaming into the Yuletide inferno?"

After escaping a family party, Constantine ends up, where else, in a bar where he meets a guy, drinking alone, spinning a tale of love and death, of the girl who loved him so much, the girl he left alone for her first Christmas. Yes, you can see the end coming, but that doesn't spoil this perfect 12-page tale of melancholy and loss.



PRESENT TENSE
Ty Templeton - DCU Holiday Bash II (DC Comics – 1998)

It's Santa vs Darkseid in the fight of the year. Or something like that. Every year, the same standoff happens, with the Lord of Apokalips shoring up his defences, determined to keep the jolly old bloke in the red and white out. And every year, old Saint Nick gets through for the annual present... have a wild guess what it could be?



HITMAN 22
THE SANTA CONTRACT
Garth Ennis, John McCrea & Steve Pugh (DC Comics - 1998)

"Bob Smurd would give Gotham a night to remember... A radioactive two-four of December."

Told through hysterical rhyming captions, this is Christmas Hitman style, packed full of laughs, guns, and drinking. And then some more laughs, as we follow poor Bob, turned into a living, walking, decomposing Christmas nuclear nightmare, all dressed up in a Santa suit, of course.



EDGY WINTER.
A TRANSMETROPOLITAN STORY
Warren Ellis & Darick Robertson (Vertigo Winter's Edge 2 - DC Comics - 1999)

"My name is Spider Jerusalem. And I fucking hate Christmas."

That sets the tone rather, doesn't it? Spider narrates his seasonal message to the nation, far more real and relevant than any old Queen's as he spends his days spewing venom and bile, pure and simple. But admit it, there's times we all hate Christmas, too.



ALL ALONG THE WALL
Emily Carroll (2014)

Christmas isn't just a time of jolly festivity, it's also a time of darkness, of the turning of the year, and it's long been the tradition of telling ghost stories. And there's no-one better at delivering a chill than Emily Carroll, long a master of both print and webcomics. All Along The Wall is a perfectly unsettling ghost story, with a bored child roaming the hall of an old, darkened house, far from the sparkly Christmas lights of the adult party. She meets another girl, with a tale to tell. But it's not the tale the girl should want to know, and sometimes it's not ghosts that scare the most. http://emcarroll.com/comics/wall/



"Ah, yes... New bloody York. And what infernal force could possibly drag yours truly kicking and screaming into the Yuletide inferno?"



Author: Richard Bruton
Twitter: @richardbruton
Website: forbiddenplanet.co.uk/blog

That Old Fake News

by John McShane



"Doctor Wertham quotes the case of the English teen-ager who burgled shops and pubs, tried to stab a policeman, and finally shot one. His parents described his reading of comic books as his outstanding characteristic… His mother told how he was always quiet and read these crime comic-books – 'I thought there was no harm,' she said. He collected knives, guns and air pistols like those advertised in comics. When he was finally cornered, he would not surrender and was shot dead in a battle with the police. A sten gun and a crime comic lay beside his body."

[Children's Comics A Guide for Parents and Teachers (Epworth Press 1955) by George H. Pumphrey, p 43]

George Pumphrey does not tell us where Dr Wertham got this story from – indeed he criticises Wertham for writing a book which "is far from being a calm, dry, scientific survey… repetitious … lacks an index" and then does the same himself. I have so far been unable to confirm this story and am beginning to doubt that hours spent trawling through police records would be time well spent. It does contain all the elements that suited people opposed to comics in the 1950s. A teen back then not only had a submachine gun but a collection of guns. So, these were not the Daisy guns advertised in the comics? I



have been unable to find any advert for a submachine gun in a comic of the period. After an armed battle a comic happened to be lying beside him – did it fall from a pocket? Was it placed there? And his parents knew of his collection of weapons but thought there was no harm? Did they get prosecuted for having a submachine gun in their house? Even IF the story were true it is statistically insignificant: based on the approximate number of children in the UK in 1955 the story concerns 0.0000081812% of that population. No one is entitled to draw any conclusion from such flimsy – and possibly false – evidence.

Children's Comics A Guide for Parents and Teachers is a pernicious little (7 ½ inches x 4 ¾ inches) book which contributed to a campaign against comics in the UK in the 1950s and into the 60s. It is an early example of fake news influencing the opinions of people who did not know how to read it properly.

George Pumphrey appears to have been a school teacher (Primary school?) who, by his own admission ("I got no response whatsoever from the county library; my numerous letters appealing for help were not even acknowledged." P76) was ignored when he badgered people about the issues that were dear to his heart.

So, who did he get to finally publish him? Epworth Press, whose websites appear to be currently unavailable, was a Methodist publisher. In the USA, it was the Catholic Church who campaigned against comics while over here it was the Protestants and the Communists – doesn't history throw up some strange bedfellows? In Pumphrey's book there are at least 12 references to religion or ministers (pp 13, 14, 16-19, 26, 29, 44, 54, 68, 70) which betrays his affiliation. Epworth also published The Kiddies' Magazine – "the oldest magazine for children, founded 1846" as it says on their back cover advert. A nice wholesome magazine which once depicted on its cover children (referred to as "golliwogs") having lunch on a tropical island (issue of February 1947).

As well as following Wertham's method of not bothering with an index, Pumphrey rarely quotes sources. Who is the "Superwoman" he refers to several times? Wonder Woman? And who does he mean by Superman's "young assistant"? Jimmy Olsen? Or does he actually mean Robin and simply gets the comic title wrong? Has he actually seen any of these comics? In 1940, a reporter for Das Schwaze Korps (The Black Body, the official SS newsletter) states that Superman wears "a red swim suit". Really? It seems that Nazi and Protestant propaganda involve the same level of research.

On page 40 of his little book, Pumphrey goes on about comics being a contributing cause of reading troubles. This is partly because they do not encourage "left to right eye movement"! Were Manga available over here in 1955? Then he mentions that in some comics the words are "too difficult for beginners". Does that mean you have to have a higher degree of reading ability to read these comics?

He makes the usual mistake of quoting Orwell from 1939. Orwell was not discussing comics in his essay at all since he was discussing story papers. In May 1940 Frank Richards had to pull Orwell up for a mistake he made. And Frank Richards did not have to look far for his facts – he actually wrote the stories Orwell refers to.

From p 69 we get a fairly useful account of the origin of the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955. This Act was supposed to have been withdrawn after 31st December 1965, but it is still in force. I first came across it posted on a display board on a Channel ship while I was on a school trip to the Loire and Paris. Due to the Easter Holiday in France I didn't manage to get a copy of Metal Hurlant. Would it have been seized at Customs? Were Moebius and the others publishing Art or merely material likely to corrupt?

There were no prosecutions under this Act until 1970 when there were 2. I have been unable so far to find out what these were. Neither prosecution was against Nasty Tales since that was prosecuted (unsuccessfully) under the Obscene Publications Act. I have discovered that the Attorney General refused to prosecute in 49 cases between 1955 and 1982. No offences at all have been recorded since 2004.

Fake news and propaganda are not new. Recently some newspapers reported (but did they do any research now that investigative journalism is all but dead?) that fake news is the enemy of democracy. But this is not true. A lack of education, a lack of ability to not just move your eyes from left to right when reading but to interpret what you have read – that is the enemy of any society.

So, should you seek out and read Children's Comics? Of course! Otherwise how will you know that I just didn't make it all up?

"I have been **unable to find** any advert for a submachine gun in a comic of the period"

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Art provided by Simon Furman and Geoff Senior's **To The Death** – get part one for free at **to-the-death.com**

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WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

LAST TIME... AFTER ESCAPING A BALLOON-SHAPED FATE WORSE THAN DEATH, WHACKOMAN SAVED HIS SIDEKICK BUGSY AND THE DAY!



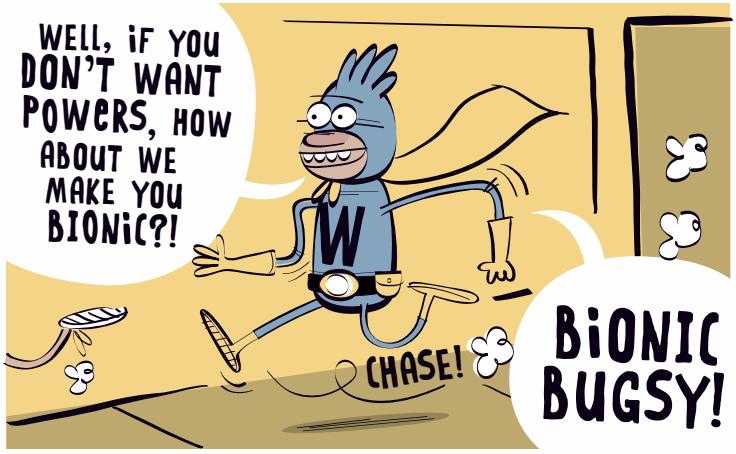


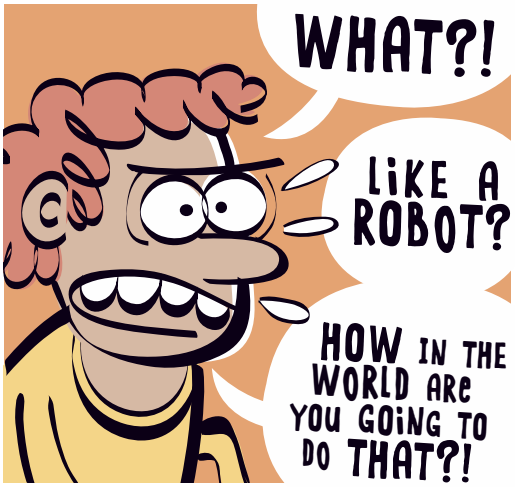
















DEDICATED TO STAN 'THE MAN' LEE, 1922-2018. NUFF SAID!

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LUCKY 13

The Thirteenth Doctor has arrived! After a spectacular debut on television, it's time for Jodie Whittaker to take the pages of Doctor Who Magazine by storm!

For many years, there had been speculation as to whether the lead role in Doctor Who could ever be played by a female actor. When Tom Baker appeared at a press conference in 1980 to announce that he was leaving the programme after seven series, he mischievously told reporters "I wish my successor, whoever he - or she - might be, the best of luck." Peter Davison was subsequently revealed to be the Fifth Doctor, but speculation about a female Doctor would continue to roll on throughout the years!



In 2017, new Doctor Who showrunner Chris Chibnall appeared lukewarm on the idea of a female Doctor saying "Nothing is ruled out but I don't want the casting to be a gimmick." In fact, this was to prove to be a brilliant piece of misdirection. Chibnall did cast a woman in the role and she was announced to the world on 17 June 2017. The Thirteenth Doctor was revealed to be Yorkshire-born Jodie Whittaker, whose previous roles had included working with Chibnall on the ITV crime drama Broadchurch. The announcement caused some division within Doctor Who fandom but many welcomed the move, with former Doctor Colin Baker tweeting: 'Change my dears and not a moment too soon. She IS the Doctor whether you like it or not!'

There were to be other changes to the Doctor Who format. In a return to the formula of the 1960s and early 1980s, the Doctor would once again be accompanied by three travelling companions, giving the show a more ensemble feel. Popular actor and presenter Bradley Walsh would be playing the role of



Graham O'Brien, with Tosin Cole as Ryan Sinclair and Mandip Gill as Yasmin Khan. There would be other tweaks to the format including a new arrangement of the famous signature tune, new opening titles and revamped TARDIS interior.

Jodie Whittaker made her TV debut as the Doctor on BBC One on Sunday 7 October 2018 with an episode entitled 'The Woman Who Fell to Earth'. Fans and critics broadly welcomed the new Doctor, with the opening episode gaining the show's best ever ratings for a new Doctor's debut story – 10.9 million viewers.

Of course, like every Doctor before her, the Thirteenth Doctor will have adventures far beyond those seen on television - in the medium of comics! We'll see her travel to new planets and encounter strange creatures unhindered by the limitations of a television budget. We've had a sneak look at her adventures in Titan Comics in ComicScene Volume 1, so let's turn our focus to the upcoming Thirteenth Doctor comic strips in Panini's Doctor Who Magazine. Doctor Who Magazine began as Doctor Who Weekly, nearly 40 years ago. Since then, the publication has given us many classic stories beginning with 'The Iron Legion' with Tom Baker way back in 1979. Now it's time to start an exciting new era in the Doctor's adventures, beginning with 'The Warmonger' which sees the Doctor and friends land in the ruined City of Radiant Stone on the planet Gatan.

The writer and artist team for this first Jodie Whittaker comic strip outing are the established duo of Scott Gray and John Ross. Scott was the lead writer of the DWM strip from 1998 to 2004 and has written and edited many other stories since. John has drawn for DWM, the Doctor Who Annual, Battles in Time and Doctor Who Adventures. Here, Scott tells us about his plans for the new Doctor, with additional comments from John. And don't worry – there are no spoilers here, sweetie!

Let's take a moment to look back at the Twelfth Doctor's tenure in the DWM comic strip. 'Epic' doesn't even begin to cover it! Now that you can look back on his comic strip era as a whole, what do you think were the highlights? And how do you think the strip has evolved in the last few years?

Scott: I loved the 'Brixton Era' of the strip (reprinted in the 'Doorway to Hell' graphic novel) that Mark Wright did with Mike Collins, Staz Johnson, John Ross and David A Roach. They stranded the Doctor on Earth in the early 1970s, but did it an entirely different way to the Jon Pertwee era. It put the Capaldi Doctor into a situation we never saw on TV (living in a normal house with a family). And the original (Roger Delgado) Master returned, so we finally got to see his last story!

I also loved 'Blood and Ice' by Jacqueline Rayner and Martin Geraghty, which had Clara meeting one of her own time splinters. Whether I'm writing or editing the strip, I'm always on the hunt for emotionally powerful stories, and that one really worked. It also happened to tie in very neatly with the final Peter Capaldi TV story!

For my own stories, I was very happy with 'The Phantom Piper' and 'The Clockwise War' in particular [see ComicScene Volume 1 issue 3 for more on 'The Clockwise War']. And also, of course, the anniversary special 'The Stockbridge Showdown' [for DWM issue 500] – I never imagined I'd get to work with Dave Gibbons on a Doctor Who strip!

I'm too close to the strip to see how it's evolved. I know I feel more confident writing it now than ever before. I've started using more narrative captions and even thought balloons, which are devices most comics creators reject – to their detriment, I think. Comics should embrace all the narrative tools at their disposal, and not just try to imitate movies. That's a blind alley we've been travelling down for far too long.

I think the artists I've mostly been working with – Martin Geraghty, John Ross and Mike Collins – are all at the height of their powers. The DWM strip feels very energised and confident now.

Did you have the opportunity to see any of Jodie Whittaker's television episodes before beginning work on her comic strips?

Scott: No, but I was given extracts from the first episode's script so I could get a sense of the new characters' speech patterns. I was also given notes on all four of the regulars: info on their backgrounds, and how they relate to one another. The best note I got came from Chris Chibnall. I'm paraphrasing, but it was something like: "Just write the Doctor. She hasn't changed." So I was quite confident jumping in and just

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writing the same kind of dialogue that I've done for all the other Doctors. I've never thought of the Doctor as a series of characters, it's always the same person with a new face. I was happy to find that, when I submitted the first script for approval, the BBC requested almost no dialogue changes for the Thirteenth Doctor.

John: No. I've been involved in strips (in Doctor Who Adventures, DWM and in Doctor Who Annuals) showing several new Doctors and companions and never once been allowed to see any episodes before their official screening.

What did you think of her debut episode?

Scott: I loved it! It was fresh and fun, everything a debut episode needs to be. I thought all of the new regulars were great, and Jodie grabbed the role straight away. She's instantly likeable. All the ingredients are there: she's funny, brilliant, unpredictable, kind and moral.

John: I thought Jodie Whittaker was great!

I remember John Ridgway saying he had to start drawing the Sixth Doctor having only seen a black and white photo of the costume in a newspaper. Did the BBC provide detailed photos of Jodie's costume for you to work from?

Scott: No, all we got was what everyone had seen in DWM and online! But really, that was enough. Jodie Whittaker and Bradley Walsh have had extensive TV careers so finding photo references for them was easy. I screen-grabbed a ton of images from Trust Me [a BBC drama starring Jodie Whittaker] and The Chase [an ITV game show presented by Bradley Walsh], and there were plenty of images of Tosin Cole and Mandip Gill floating around too.

John: Usually all I have to work from is what's in the public domain but when I drew Jodie Whittaker for the first time in the 2019 Annual, Penguin let me see some photos of the Doctor's outfit from different angles.

Is there a specific process when a new Doctor is introduced to the strip? Does the BBC have to approve the 'look' of the character?' Does the actor also have input?

Scott: DWM usually sends in a few illustrations of the new Doctor and companions to be approved by the BBC and the actors. It was a different situation this time as John had already drawn Jodie's Doctor for Penguin's Doctor Who Annual, so approval had already been given.

John: Lots of people have to give the ok, including the BBC and Jodie Whittaker and her agent.

The new Doctor has three companions - will we be seeing them all in the strip?

Scott: Yes, they're very much a team!

How do you intend to make the style and feel of the Thirteenth Doctor strips different to what has come before?

Scott: Well, the fact that we now have four regular characters instead of two is the biggest difference. It's a bit like jumping from Holmes and Watson to the Fantastic Four! They're a proper team, so the structure of the stories has to be different. It's still a bit early to tell, but I think the Fantastic Four analogy is a good one: each character will bring a different set of skills to any situation, and they will all contribute to saving the day – but ultimately there's only one genius on the team!

John: I'll do whatever Scott tells me to do!

Do you think the Thirteenth Doctor will make the strip more appealing to female readers? Or has that process already taken place with strong female companions such as Clara and Bill?

Scott: The process began in 2005 with Rose Tyler, really! Doctor Who fandom was almost entirely a boy's club before Russell T Davies [Doctor Who showrunner 2005-2010] revitalised the series. He made sure that all the companions felt very real – they had families and friends, and lives of their own – they didn't just exist to ask the Doctor convenient questions and get captured. DWM realised very early on that Doctor Who was going to have a committed female following from that point on, and our readership now is probably 50-50 male/female.

So yes, I think Jodie's Doctor can only increase interest in the comic strip from our female readership. I certainly hope that'll be the case.

John: I think everything about the new series is designed to increase the brand's appeal to a broader and younger audience and, in particular, girls who maybe haven't had much of an interest in the past.

We will be seeing long-running story arcs or more self-contained stories?

Scott: I'm not going to do any convoluted story arcs in the strip for the time being – I enjoyed plotting the last big Peter Capaldi storyline but I'm aware that it can get confusing for some readers. But there will probably be some kind of linking device between stories because that's just how my brain works. We do like to have 'season finales' in the strip!

Are we likely to see the new Doctor encountering the Daleks in the comic strip or are there rights issues on that front?

Scott: We certainly won't have the Thirteenth Doctor meet the Daleks in DWM before she does so on TV – that'd feel very wrong! We can put the Daleks in the comic strip, and I'd like to at some stage – it's been a very long time since they made an appearance. I wanted to have them in 'The Clockwise War' but there just wasn't enough space for them.







Do you tend to keep an eye on what Titan are doing with their Doctor Who strips? Do you liaise to avoid duplication?

Scott: No, I scrupulously avoid looking at all of Titan's Doctor Who comics. They're produced by some fine creators and I'm sure they're great, but I don't want to be unconsciously influenced by them. That way, any similarities will always be as a result of simple coincidence. If a Titan comic features the Doctor scrapping with Psychic Gerbils, and a month later we have the Doc fighting Psychic Squirrels, I want to be able to plead total ignorance!

With thanks to Scott Gray, John Ross, Marcus Hearn and Peter Ware. Doctor Who continues every four weeks in Doctor Who Magazine from Panini. Artwork by John Ross © Doctor Who Magazine/Panini.



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Author: Ian Wheeler
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That sometime sister publication 2000AD and its fans actually made a fuss of the 40th anniversary of Starlord earlier this year would probably have come as no greater surprise than to the team who launched it all the way back in May 1978. Established under orders from management, the resistant editorial staff of 2000AD whose job it was to spin this extra plate didn't believe that Starlord's existence should have even been considered.

Following the long-standing IPC dictum that fresh new titles be regularly launched and older comics whose lustre had gone off eventually be folded into them, it was initially planned that 2000AD be gobbled up by and integrated into Starlord. Yet even in the first year of its life, 2000AD was proving to be no ordinary comic, and the momentum of its runaway success carried on throughout the five months and twenty-two issues of Starlord's life.

In the end, it was Starlord which was swallowed up by 2000AD in October of that year's Prog 86. In many ways, the title was a footnote in the more than forty-year history of 2000AD, but for two key points; Starlord was the first home of a pair of British comics' most enduring and well-loved series, John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra's mighty mutant bounty hunter epic Strontium Dog, and Pat Mills and co-creator Kevin O'Neill's robot disaster squad satire Ro-Busters, who, following their transfer to 2000AD, morphed into the ABC Warriors.

"The two comics were very similar," says Mills, who had left his post as 2000AD's launch editor after four months of the title's existence to freelance as a writer, just before the Starlord idea was floated to his replacement, Kelvin Gosnell. "There was little difference in readership, and predictably it backfired. Comics should be different to one another - you'd think that wasn't rocket science, but people endlessly make this very obvious mistake."

"We had been working as a team, me, Mills, Kev(in O'Neill) and Jan (Shepheard, art editor), since God was a boy," says Gosnell, who was given Mills' old job from Prog 17 of 2000AD. "At the same time I was offered the editorship, I was also told to start Starlord. This was John Sanders', the publisher of all of the

"I was trying to keep Starlord going, trying to keep my hand on 2000AD"

juvenile's (titles). He said, 'Pat's leaving, and you're going to start a new comic called Starlord which will do the same sort of thing as 2000AD'. I had no choice, I could either do it or go. I felt quite stunned.

"I immediately said, 'I don't think that's the right thing to do,' because it meant falling into IPC's sausage machine production line. The pattern was to open a title, then let it grow, then six months later you start preparation for a new one, which you launch six months after that. Another six months later, when your original title is starting to fall off and the other one is still healthy, you merge them together. We all thought 2000AD was the time to break that chain, because everything about it was so good. We felt – and with the benefit of hindsight, now know – that we had something a bit special. I remember coming out of that meeting and bumping into Pat by a coffee machine, and telling him about it. He agreed with me that it was the wrong thing to do, but I had to do it, so I did."

With another 'character' editor in place much like 2000AD's Tharg – this time, the square-jawed intergalactic freedom fighter Starlord – the new title was to be launched with much the same quality of production and creative elements as 2000AD. Yet Gosnell had other ideas. "I wanted to upgrade the printing quality, because 2000AD was produced on Fleetway's good old Number 6 press, which was this ancient thing, three storeys high, down on the river somewhere in Gravesend. We wanted to go for something like web offset, where you get a much better quality of colour reproduction - everything about 2000AD was its quality, and we wanted to do everything we could to increase that. We got into deep shit from Sanders, because he thought it was going to be on Fleetway Number 6 again. The new printing cost two or three times as much."

With Starlord now his main focus, and one eye on 2000AD – which had largely been delegated to his assistant Nick Landau – Gosnell had a lot of work on his plate. "I was more or less on autopilot," he says. "I knew I had to get John and Pat on Starlord, and I knew Ro-Busters was going to be a big part of it, because Pat and Kev had been wanting to do this for ages. In fact, I think that came from Kev in large part, because he was mad keen on Gerry Anderson's Thunderbirds, and then it was Pat who came up with the idea of getting them to charge for rescues. It worked beautifully, there's a film that should have been made; I think Gerry Anderson was keen on it, but it never happened." Although O'Neill was the co-creator of the series, it was Carlos Pino and Ian Kennedy who drew the Starlord episodes.

"I knew I could just let John get on with it, so when he came up with Strontium Dog, I left it alone," continues Gosnell. "As a team, he and Carlos were an editor's dream. Otherwise I had to come up with various ideas, talk to writers and match them up to artists. Timequake was written by Chris Lowder and drawn by Ian Kennedy, and was a particular hobby horse of mine – I love time travel stories." The launch issue also featured Planet of the Damned, a series devised by Mills for 2000AD, which featured a cast of artists.

"Overall, although Starlord gave us some good stories, it wasn't something I wanted to do," says Gosnell now. "It's interesting that when it came time to close it, instead of 2000AD going into Starlord, Starlord merged into 2000AD. 2000 was different, it was stronger, the stories were better and higher quality... Nobody wanted to let it slip."

The reason 2000AD was the one to survive is down to two factors, he says; ironically, the cost of production thanks to that high-quality paper meant the company were glad to get shot of Starlord quickly; and publisher Bob Bartholemew, angered at a recent 2000AD strip on moral grounds, deciding he was going to get the title closed. "He said to me 2000AD had gone out of control, and to an extent that was true," says Gosnell. "I was trying to keep Starlord going, trying to keep my hand on 2000AD, and there was the bloody awful Tornado starting up at the same time, which I'd been charged with as well.

"This all happened virtually overnight - I decided that the only thing which might keep it going, if it was lucky, was if I went in and resigned, and said we've done a great job with 2000AD and that it should be mended, not thrown away. I got to Sanders first, basically, I was in very early the next morning to see him. It worked – I lost my job, but 2000AD kept going." Gosnell eventually went freelance as a writer himself, and eventually ended up penning the adaptation of Harry Harrison's The Stainless Steel Rat with Ezquerra for 2000AD.

"Having passed the baton over to Kelvin, I urged him to stay focussed on 2000AD and turn down a new comic, because no-one can manage two at the same time," says Mills now. "It was utterly ridiculous, but I think he was left with no choice. It was clearly a mistake and he did the very best he could - at least we got Strontium Dog and Ro-Busters out of it."



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Author: Karl Stock
Karl is co-author of Thrill Power Overload



STARBLAZER

My first exposure to Starblazer was way back in April 1979 when I was sat there reading Commando and I turned to the last page to see what other issues were out this week and I was blown away with finding the advert for a brand new picture library.

Author: Colin Noble
Website: nothingbutafan.wordpress.com

Starblazer was launched to capitalize on the popularity of Science Fiction at the time. We had seen Star Wars in 1977 and in the period 1977 to 1979 over 50 SF movies were released at British cinema so it made sense for D C Thomson to try and capture the mood of the time before it evaporated.

When the run started, there was always a picture on the rear cover of something or someone to do with spaceflight and that series ran up to issue 165. For a science geek like me at the time, I could think of nothing better. Science Fiction and science fact? It was like hold me back! This also tied in with my beloved Crunch as Crunch ran The Conquest Of Space series and probably gave Starblazer that extra cachet for me.

But despite being a big fan, I did not get my hands on a single copy until the summer of 1980 when we had to travel from deepest darkest Angus to RMNB Rosyth as my brother's ship HMS Kukri had docked at its' home base and the Royal Navy ran the equivalent of an open day for the friends and family of the ship's officers and ratings. We stopped at Coupar Angus as my dad needed some essentials like 20 Embassy and I followed him into the shop when I saw an absolute corker of a cover. Somehow, I managed to persuade Dad to part with some pennies and I sat rapt for the rest of the journey reading the issue over and over again. The issue was Starblazer 18 Abandon Earth and the cover was just stunning. I have included an example so that you all can go ooh over Ian Kennedy's work which is as fresh today as it was back then.

Unknown to me, Starblazer was not a new idea as Fleetway had tried to do something similar in the 1950s with the Rick Random stories as part of their Super Detective Library series and the Space Picture Library Holiday Specials in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Famepress had also launched a science fiction picture library with Gemini 2000 in 1966 and that managed to last a whole 10 issues. Unlike these earlier efforts, the Starblazer team managed to rack up an impressive 281 issue run with the final issue being The Enchanted Helmet.

However, there was something different about Starblazer. The editorial team of Starblazer was not content to just rely on tried and tested contributors, but was willing to allow some new talent to develop and wow, did they succeed or what? We had a certain Grant Morrison who started off wanting to be an artist but realised his talents lay in other directions. Grant is also responsible for the worst naming of characters in any comic I have ever seen. But as a fellow Scot, I also think it is one of the funniest. Another Scot who proved to be a rising star artistically was a young Colin MacNeil and Starblazer gave him that wee extra development that 2000AD fans were fortunate enough to benefit from in his series America and all those series that followed.







Colin was not the only 2000AD contributor crossover as Starblazer also benefitted from the talents of Cam Kennedy (Starblazer 105, 2000AD The VCs, Judge Dredd and Rogue Trooper), Ian Kennedy (92 Starblazer covers, 2000AD Invasion!, MACH One, Judge Dredd and Ro-busters), Grant Morrison (8 Starblazer scripts and 1 internal art credit, Venus Bluegenes, Zenith and Big Dave), Bambos Georgiou (Starblazer writer 195, 2000AD Chopper) and Carlos Pino (6 Starblazer internal art credits, 2000AD Flesh, Ro-busters, Invasion! and Disaster 1990) to name but a few.

One of the biggest influences was the use of the rising star Quique Alcatena. In 1979, Quique was relatively unknown but by the time Starblazer was consumed by the black hole of dwindling sales in 1991, Quique had already begun to work for DC on Superman. Quique illustrated an impressive 53 issues out of the 281 issue run. Quique was a very popular artist with D C Thomson editors. I have been told a number of times that it was a case of the Editors having to take turns in being able to commission work from Quique.

As Starblazer developed over the years, it gradually changed from an obvious science fiction base to a mix of science fiction and fantasy from the mid-1980s. An attempt was made to capitalise on the popularity of the Fighting Fantasy books written by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone with four issues of fighting fantasy being thrown in for good measure. These were 150 Captain's Choice, 152 Doom World, 158 Axel the Avenger and 160 The Last Days of The Earth.

Due to the erratic distribution, muggins here in Forfar, less than 15 miles from D C Thomson central did not realise that Starblazer was still going strong in 1987, so I had to re-discover almost everything from day one. From scouring the charity and second-hand book shops in Angus and Dundee for the next three years, I eventually built up a collection of the first 100 and I still didn't have a clue it was still going! During those three years, I had standing orders for Commando and Football Picture Story Monthly. If I had known that Starblazer was still out there, that would have been on the list too!

Years later, I found out that Starblazer had published its' final edition in 1991. I was gutted to find out that it was going for so long and that I could have been collecting it. The pain I felt when I found out that the last issues of the run had not only contained the stories but also the credits for every issue was almost physical. Since then, my Starblazer collecting has been aimed at those issues with the credits.

Starblazer was also the first male-orientated D C Thomson's illustrated picture library to use recurring characters. Dixon Hawke holds the distinction of being the first D C Thomson character to be a recurring character in a pocket library as far as I am aware, but as we are not discussing ace detectives, I can park that for now. Plus, I guarantee as soon as this article is published, the Editor will get about 16 emails pointing out even earlier characters!

Let's have a look at some of those recurring characters. The first I am going to look at is Sol Rynn aka Starhawk. Starhawk is probably best described as the Lone Ranger in Space with a very sarcastic robot taking the place of Tonto. To my view, it was the robot's snarky dialogue that made the character.

Starhawk appeared in the Crunch but was teleported to a number of weeklies such as Hotspur, Victor, Buddy and Spike before he was given hyperdrive passage to Starblazer. There were quite a few artists that worked on Starhawk, but to my eye, it never looked better than when it was being illustrated by Ian Kennedy.

The next character I am going to look at is Carter: Mandroid. Mike Knowles has happily admitted that he based Carter on Robocop and it's not hard to see why it's a great idea to bring to a Science Fiction and Fantasy based comic. But Mike did his version with a slight twist. In his case, it was Robocop meets the Punisher so that Carter looked human rather than a robotic version of a policeman. This was very dark in tone as the reason that Carter was feared was that his wife and daughter had been murdered by organised crime and he had been left for dead. I think I have heard that origin story before…

The fact that this got past the senior editorial team is impressive but the Carter stories were always that bit darker.

My favourite Carter story has to be 243 Death Run when he is assigned to protect an Olympic marathon runner at the 310th Olympics. The runner has no cybernetic enhancements and is determined to break the marathon record of 1 hr 5 seconds to prove to the world that you can be a winner without resorting to cybernetic doping.

The final character I am going to look at is The Robot Kid. This character featured in 3 issues 204, 232 and 273 and were illustrated by the much-missed Ricardo Garijo. These were unashamed spoofs of movies. 204 The Robot Kid was a great send up of the western genre, 232 Return of The Robot Kid sent up the karate movies and 273 The Robot Kid Strikes Back spoofed the Rambo style movies of the late 1980s.

Each story was played for laughs. I would love to go into more detail regarding Grok and Zero, the Anglerre stories or Michael R Kayn, but I am sure you get enough of where I am coming from so far. Hopefully the Editor will let me wax lyrical on Starblazer another day.

STAR WARS weekly



1978 saw Marvel Comics in a bad way. The publishing house had flirted with bankruptcy during the mid 70's, teetering on the edge of extinction until a little fancied licenced property became the first comic book since Dell's Uncle Scrooge in 1960 to top a million copies sold. That comic was issue one of Star Wars, and by 1978 the sci-fi classic which had quite literally changed the face of Hollywood, licensing, merchandising, marketing and the way summer blockbusters are handled.

The film didn't arrive in UK cinemas until December 27th 1977, but the title reached the shores in the UK in the form of a weekly comic on Wednesday February 8th 1978. Costing 10 pence, the first issue kicked off with the Howard Chaykin drawn and Roy Thomas written adaptation of the film. Written and drawn without much more than a handful of studio images and early versions of the films many locations, vehicles and creatures, the title is fondly regarded by readers of the day and looked on in bemusement by most folks born after the days of the original trilogy.

Despite the hurdles laid out in front of it, the title swiftly became the biggest selling weekly comic in the UK, outselling even the smash hit 2000AD which itself launched in 1978, the year of the Daily Star, Pot Noodles and Summer Nights. "Enter: Luke Skywalker! Will he save the galaxy or destroy it?" screamed the cover, promising us "A Valuable First Issue". Prophetic words, as the value of that first issue would arguably lead to the salvation of Marvel UK and the entire company.

I interviewed editor Dez Skinn a few years ago, and he brought up the dire state of Marvel UK at the time.

"Marvel UK was haemorrhaging money. The only thing that was making any money was Star Wars Weekly. It was doing so badly they tried to sell the company off. Nobody wanted it, nobody found it viable. The only interest they got was from IPC because Star Wars Weekly was outselling 2000AD and they only wanted Star Wars Weekly. They didn't want Spider-Man and the Hulk and The Avengers, they didn't want any of that. So that didn't work for Marvel because they were already licensing Star Wars from Lucasfilm so they wouldn't get much out of a shared sub-licence."







While a large portion of the content was shared, the UK version was significantly different from its US counterpart. It was far larger, in the classic UK comic format, had black and white pages and held fewer pages of the monthly Star Wars title, meaning one issue of US content could be spread across multiple UK weekly issues. As is the style of British weekly comics it ran a back-up strips across its run including Tales of the Watcher, Star Lord, Adam Warlock, The Micronauts, Guardians of the Galaxy and Deathlok.

The UK title also gave away free gifts, starting with the infamous X-Fighter in issue 1 and over the years bringing us free posters, transfer sets, mini model sets and more besides. Editor Dez Skinn was keen to maximise the freedom of having the Star Wars licence, and making it stand out on busy newsagents shelves.

"I looked at Star Wars Weekly and it was up to about issue 40. So the first thing I did was put photographs on the cover. I mean, how obvious is that? Let's have Luke and Leia and Darth and the Millennium Falcon, let's have them on the cover. Not drawings of them, you've got the licence! We can do the photo's! It's not rocket science."

From issue one in February '78 right through to issue 117 on 21st May 1980 the title brought the galaxy to kids across the UK and beyond every Wednesday. Reprinting the issues from their American counterparts, the 13th issue saw the story of Star Wars continued in New Planets, New Perils as the infamous green rabbit Jaxxon was introduced to the galaxy in the year we bore witness to the one and only television screening of The Star Wars Holiday Special. An admittedly rocky ride, the quality of those early pre-expanded universe stories developed, the artwork along with it as the designs and vibe of the original film were left behind and the gap to The Empire Strikes Back bridged.

The nuclear impact of Star Wars simply can't be underestimated. On TV it directly led to the greenlighting of such series as Battlestar Galactica and Mork and Mindy. Its wider influence saw the return of Star Trek on the big screen and prompted Disney to take a journey into The Black Hole, along with a procession of mixed budget films like Battle Beyond the Stars, Starcrash and Humanoid. The comics realm saw a similar influence as the Micronauts launched at Marvel and comic versions of Star Trek returned to Marvel along with Battlestar Galactica. Star Wars kicked off other franchises purely on its star power alone, and the potential of similar success.

Issue 118 saw the title switch names to The Empire Strikes Back weekly to mark the arrival of the sequel film, and over the years switches to monthly titles and by the time of Return of the Jedi a hop back to weekly releases, but to fans of a certain age and savvy modern collectors interested in products of the time Star Wars Weekly simply reeks of pure, uncluttered mainline Star Wars.

"Marvel UK was haemorrhaging money. The only thing that was making any money was Star Wars Weekly"

Author: Mark Newbold
Twitter: @prefect_timing

CHRISTMAS IS FOR ANNUALS

To celebrate the launch of the Great Big ComicScene UK Annual we asked **Barrie Tomlinson** to tell us what would feature in his **perfect Christmas Annual**



THE SPACE & SPORT ANNUAL

Created by Barrie Tomlinson

This 96-page annual combines two totally different things: space adventure and sport. But it works!

The space part of the annual originates from characters created in the pages of Wildcat, while the sports part of the annual features some of the lesser-known sporting heroes from the comics, backed up by the Daily Mirror's long-running Scorer strip and a new football strip for 2018, created by artist Simon Bennett and myself.

PAGE 1: Front Cover
Art by Ian Kennedy and Julio Schiaffino.

PAGES 2-3: Big picture across two pages: Ian Kennedy's drawing of the Wildcat spaceship, with Inset of Turbo Jones, as seen on page 222 of my book 'Comic Book Hero'.

PAGE 4: Contents Page

PAGES 5-13: Wildcat picture-story. This will be the 9 page intro to the Wildcat adventure, as printed in the Wildcat preview issue. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Ian Kennedy.

The story introduces the main Wildcat characters and the setting for the stories.

PAGES 14-15: Feature: Pics of the main Wildcat characters.

PAGES 16-20: Written story featuring Wildcat's Turbo Jones. Script: Barrie Tomlinson. Art: Ian Kennedy.

PAGE 21: Page of alien jokes.

PAGES 22-27: Kitten Magee Picture-story. Script by James Tomlinson. Art by Ortiz. This Wildcat character proved that girls could be popular in boys' adventure comics.

LOGAN'S LUCK!

Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Simon Bennett





PAGES 28-29: Feature: Monsters! Alien monster that appeared in Wildcat.

PAGES 30-36: Written story featuring what happens as the Wildcat spaceship orbits a new planet, while exploration teams visit the planet's surface. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Ian Kennedy.

PAGE 37: Feature: Space jokes.

PAGES 38-43: Loner picture-story. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Artwork by David Pugh. Loner, the guy who always works alone, exploring a new planet and meeting Fuzzballs.

PAGES 44-45: Feature: The art of Ian Kennedy in Wildcat.

PAGES 46-50: Written story featuring Joe Alien. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Massimo Belardinelli.

PAGE 51: Cover for second part of the annual. The Sports Section. A Martin's Marvellous Mini cover. Art by David Sque.

PAGES 52-57: Martin's Marvellous Mini picture-story. Script by Fred Baker. Art by David Sque. The story of two lads who owned a yellow mini called George. A relaxing start to the second part of the annual, after all the Wildcat adventures.

PAGES 58-59: Feature: Martin's Marvellous Mini in real-life motor racing.

PAGES 60-65: Written story: Hot-Shot Hamish. Script by Fred Baker. Art by Julio Schiaffino. A footballing classic that will translate nicely to a text story. Lots of fun with the big Scottish striker, his daddie and his pet sheep McMutton.

PAGES 66-70: Feature: Subbuteo and its connection with the Mike's MIni Men story.

PAGES 71-77: Death Wish picture-story. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Vanyo. Hero Blake Edmonds tackles a major sporting challenge which is high in danger. Will he survive or finally get his death wish?

PAGE 78: Feature: One page of football jokes.

PAGES 79-83: Written story: The Hard Man. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Doug Maxted. Featuring Johnny Dexter, star of Danefield United.

PAGES 84-85: Feature: The story of 'Logan's Luck', a brand new football picture-strip launched in 2018. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by Simon Bennett.

PAGES 86-89: Picture-story: Scorer. Script by Barrie Tomlinson. Art by John Gillatt or David Sque. The Daily Mirror's football strip that ran for 22 years.

PAGES 90-93: Picture-story: Tallon of the Track. Jo Tallon blazed a path for girls to appear in the world of boys' comics. Speedway star Jo was good enough to beat anyone. Script by Scott Goodall. Art by the versatile Jim Bleach.

PAGES 94-95: End papers: Two-page football game for readers to play. Hot Shot Hamish's Princes Park v. The Hard Man's Danefield United.

PAGE 96: Back Cover

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Vintage Comic Annuals

"Buying customs change; new trends and tastes supplant old ones. But the demand for children's annuals remains at a high level year after year."

This was the opening paragraph of the annuals section in the Sept 5th 1964 edition of the John Menzies News Trade Weekly magazine, when around 150 annuals had just been published.

Over the last century or so, we doubt many Christmas Days have been celebrated without a Christmas annual being unwrapped and savoured. Indeed, hundreds of titles have been published and enjoyed over many decades. Such is their popularity and steadfast nature that even after a comic title has ceased publication, an annual is often produced for several years to satisfy popular demand; the Dandy annual being a current example.

For collectors, annuals represent enticing items to collect; nostalgia inducing and finite in number making them a realistic prospect to collect them all. Some are rare, adding an edge to the collecting and there's always the challenge of upgrading to the best examples one can find.

As collectors ourselves of Beano, Dandy, Beezer, Topper and their associated spin-off annuals, we have always strived to find the best examples we can. A Very Fine annual is undeniably a joy to behold but does leave the owner with a nervous feeling of not wanting to handle it for fear of damaging it. We're not fans of battered books but admit they do have a certain charm in that you know for sure that they were once read over and over – read to death in fact, before finally being used as a dartboard, in extreme cases! So for us, a happy medium of a neatly written inscription adds character to a high grade book, showing that it was once cherished and read and stored carefully by its original owner. Alongside this, a bundle of lower grade, cheaper copies means one can sift and read their beloved annuals without detriment to their pristine examples.

In terms of values, with so many annuals published each year, spanning many decades, we've chosen a select few here that have caught our eye in our recent auction sales. We use the following grading guide: Poor (PR) – Fair (FR) – Good (GD) – Very Good (VG) – Fine (FN) – Very Fine (VFN) – Near Mint (NM).



Misty comic was short lived, running between 1978 and 1980, but eight annuals were published in all, spanning 1979 to 1986. We rarely come across these but were able to offer the full set, individually, in our October auction and they averaged £17 apiece in and around the FN grade.



The Dandy comic spawned two spin-off annuals in the 1950s; Black Bob and Desperate Dan. The over-sized 1954 Desperate Dan annual often turns up worn and so a VG/FN example fetched a noteworthy £121 in our October sale. Grade speaks volumes here as just three months earlier a VG- example fetched £32.

That said, when it comes to discussing values of annuals, or indeed comics in general, yes there are price guides and items have a generally considered "value", but there is that good old fashioned saying that something is only worth what someone's prepared to pay for it. Of course with auctions, and ours in particular, with the vast majority starting at 99p with no reserve, the price comes down to what two people are prepared to pay for it, since you need that equally important second highest bidder to dictate the final price.

Fluctuations in market price are seen throughout the year and it's no secret that values for certain annuals have dropped in recent years, with the internet an easy selling point for everyday folk finding items in their attic. One former book dealer told us a few years ago that he'd seen more copies of certain annuals in the

last five years, online, than he had in the previous thirty! The Beano and Dandy annuals are good examples of this phenomenon, most likely victims of their own success, with huge print runs satisfying enormous demand over the years. What is certain is that despite the apparent lack of scarcity for some annuals, there is still a continued desire amongst collectors to seek out high grade examples. The 1956 Topper Book has averaged £15-20 in our auctions over the last decade, in mixed grades not above FN-, but in our July sale a VFN example soared to £82.



We've always enjoyed selling the 1950s and 1960s Atlas published Superman, Superboy, Batman etc, annuals, although their scarcity means we only handle a few copies each year. In July, the 1951/1952 Superman Bumper Edition Book fetched £66 whilst the 1957/1958 edition made £54, both in VG grade.



Staying with Atlas publications, a scarce title we stumbled across in the summer was the #1 Super Summer Holiday Annual, featuring Batman, Lois Lane and Davy Crockett. With its wonderful cover, the FR/GD example realised £33 back in June.



In the last year or so we've sold a large number of comic 'albums', which seem to differ from 'annuals' in being primarily softback. Mainly from the 1950s to early 1970s, with lovely matt finished covers, some highlights and unusual titles have been the Star Streamline Comics Western Comic Album (1950s), selling for £28 in FN grade, the Marvel Comic Album #1 (1969/1970) at £38 in GD condition and £16 paid for a FN- Phantom Album #2 from 1967/1968.





In the 1965 John Menzies magazine, the introduction also stated "Television, radio and films, at one time thought to be competitors of books generally and annuals in particular, have proved their allies. Instead of a menace to the reading habit, these popular forms of entertainment have encouraged and inspired the production of new titles; and have stimulated demand." The TV themed or supermarionation inspired comic annuals are highly collectable today. The Dalek Books for 1964 (#1) and 1965 (#2) can change hands for £40-50 in FN grade whilst Fireball XL5 annuals of the same vintage sell for between £10 and £30, depending on grade.





Whilst grading vintage comics for our online auctions, we are always drawn to the adverts inside for the annuals. Here are two examples for the 1961 and 1962 Dandy Books. DC Thomson were particularly creative in their adverts for annuals, which often featured a variety of different hand drawn fonts.

Over the years we've collected a selection of promotional flyers, with our favourite one promoting the 1958 DC Thomson annuals. The aforementioned John Menzies trade supplement is a fascinating item with over 20 pages devoted to some 150 annuals available for 1965, from publishers such as Atlas, Daily Express, Fleetway, Odhams, World Distributors and DC Thomson.





Talking of Fleetway annuals, we found a flyer for their 1984 annuals last month. Before opening it, we tried to reel off a mental list of the titles we thought might be inside and got to about fifteen of the more obvious ones such as Buster, Tiger, Whizzer and Chips and so on. We were astonished to find no fewer than 49 annuals available that year. What an output and a significant increase from the 21 titles they released ~20 years earlier for 1965 in the John Menzies magazine. The 1984 flyer's tagline "There's one for everyone" couldn't have rung more true.



Whatever you collect, we hope you find an annual under the tree this year or browse through some of your treasured vintage annuals during the festive season!

Here at phil-comics we buy and commission the sale of collections of vintage comics, annuals and related items, selling all of our items through the auction website eBay. Please get in touch if you are considering selling; we're on 01763 250656 and www.phil-comics.com. If you're looking to expand your collection, please find us on eBay www.ebay.co.uk/str/phil-comics and click 'Save this Seller' to follow our auctions.



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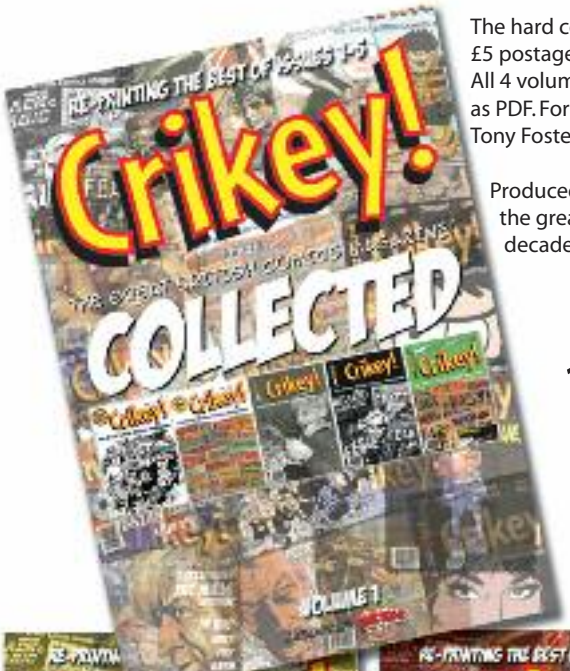
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Rivers of London



Centring around Metropolitan Police detective-turned-wizard, Ben Aaronovitch's debut novel Rivers of London became an unexpected bestseller after it was published in 2011. The first installment in what is now a seven-strong sequence of books, the south London based author also used the opportunity to launch a spin-off comic book. With the latest four-parter, Action at a Distance reaching its halfway point this month, Titan Comics have now published seven Rivers of London mini-series.

"I shamelessly leveraged the success of the books to write a comic because I'd always wanted to write comics," admits Aaronovitch with a laugh. "I said 'hey, Titan! I've got this IP. It is really good so come on, let me write a comic!' and they said yes."

But Aaronovitch was reluctant to go it alone, roping in his old friend Andrew Cartmel to co-write with him. As the script editor on Sylvester McCoy's fateful stint as the Eighth and for almost two decades final Doctor, Cartmel had previously overseen Remembrance of the Daleks and Battlefield, Aaronovitch's two stories for Doctor Who's 25th and 26th seasons. After Doctor Who was unceremoniously cancelled in December 1989, Cartmel turned his hand to comics, regularly penning Doctor Who Magazine's comic strip from 1990 onwards amongst other strips.

"Andrew had a lot more experience at writing comics than I had," explains Aaronovitch. "He also has a pretty good eye for detail as you need someone to look at the rough – to look at the plot – and say 'you've done that wrong' or 'there are too many captions in the wrong place.' I'm not very good at that, so Andrew is very complimentary to me. He's also very stubborn, which is good because they'll be moments where I'll go 'I'm sick of this. I don't ever want to see it again!' and he'll go 'no, we must do this again as it doesn't make any sense.' He's a very useful man to write comics with, or in fact to do any kind of writing with."

Having also contributed to Doctor Who Magazine from the early 1990s onwards in addition to illustrating the likes of Judge Dredd, Transformers and Robocop, Lee Sullivan was a natural choice for Rivers of London's art chores. "Lee is very good as well," continues Aaronovitch. "People often ask me if these are the likenesses of the main characters like Peter Grant that you would have gone for? But the truth is that I don't have to draw them month in month out, so we generally allow Lee to develop the likenesses as he sees them – with a few caveats – as he is the one who is going to have to draw them."

However, artist Brian Williamson (Titan's Fourth Doctor mini-series) were brought in for the World War Two-set Action at a Distance, which chronicled the secret history of Peter Grant's mentor, DI Nightingale. "The idea is that each year we'll do two four-issue series, which will be a part of the main narrative, and they will be illustrated by Lee, and then we'll do another series by a guest artist that will not be in the main narrative, which might be historical or might follow different characters," explains Aaronovitch. "We're basically doing it so that Lee doesn't die from overwork, which we don't want to happen as he's been doing such a good job!"

With their stories taking place between the various novels, the comics are designed to dovetail neatly with the books. "They're not compulsory reading although some people seem to think they are," laughs Aaronovitch. "They're meant to be fun for people who like comics. I'm not trying to make people who don't like comics buy comics, as they don't need to read them to enjoy the books. Comics can do things that books cannot, especially when you have a series like I do that is limited to a first-person perspective. It's fun to look at things from other people's points of view or follow characters that aren't Peter around and to see what they're getting up to behind his back."

According to Aaronovitch, the comics have had a small but significant impact on the novels. "But not in a serious way as I'm quite disciplined to make sure that the comics are kind of incidental," he reasons. "Nothing will happen in the comics that is vital to the books although I have come up with ideas in the comics that I have used later in the books, and you might occasionally come across a reference to things like a haunted BMW (from first series Body Work, which is mentioned in the latest novel Lies Sleeping). But you'll never have to read the comics to enjoy the books, which is something I've done deliberately, as I don't want to force people to be completist if they don't want to be. Believe it or not, some people actually don't like comics! They don't want to see pictures of the characters and prefer them to exist entirely in their own heads in the same way that some people don't like to watch film or TV versions of their favourite books."

With Action at a Distance concluding in January, eighth series The Fey and the Furious will follow hot on its heels in February. "That's basically about what it sounds like," teases Aaronovitch. "Illegal street racing and the fey!"

If Rivers of London wasn't enough, Aaronovitch and Cartmel also recently returned to their Doctor Who roots, teaming up with artist Christopher Jones on Titan's rollicking Seventh Doctor three-parter, Operation Volcano. "Andrew wrote that and I kind of executive produced it as he used my characters, which meant that he had to get my permission," says Aaronovitch, referring to Professor Rachel Jenson and Group Captain Gilmore, who previously appeared in Remembrance of the Daleks. "He basically made me read the scripts and give him suggestions, so he'd ring me up and go 'would this character do this or that?' But Andrew is a really good comic book writer, and I liked seeing what he did with those characters, giving them a more modern sensibility. We'd love to do another series in the same sort of vein but with the Battlefield characters, which would be very interesting."

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PETER CANNON: THUNDERBOLT



After making his mark at Marvel Comics penning everything from Uncanny X-Men to Young Avengers and the Loki-focused Journey Into Mystery, Kieron Gillen stepped away from superhero comics after 2015's Secret Wars spin-off, Siege: Battleworld. But now the South London-based scribe has made an unexpected return, teaming up in January with artist Caspar Wijngaard on Dynamite Entertainment's latest revival of Silver Age character, Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt.

"I'd had such fun doing the Service issue of James Bond, that (Dynamite CEO) Nick Barucci suggested I do one of their superheroes," recalls Gillen, referring to 2017's 007 one-shot with artist Antonio Fuso. "Now, I'd been away from the mainstream part of the genre for a few years, and at least part of the reason I'd stopped was because I knew I was approaching burn-out. But I'd now had a few years in my Fortress of Solitude, and this felt like a good chance to stick my toe back into the genre, & see what it felt like."

Most importantly, Gillen realised that Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt provided him with the opportunity to venture into some creative territory that he hadn't previously explored. "As a reader, I came in via those deconstructionary, smart, playful books that Vertigo put out in the mid-'90s and Wildstorm circa-2000, and I'd never actually done my own take on that," he explains. "The rework of a classic character to make them state of the art, and more so, I'd never had my own pocket set-up. This is Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt, for sure, but Caspar and I have also made our own superhero universe where we can run rampant. It's basically an event comic from the first issue onwards, with no tie-ins and nothing but the ideas on the paper. So basically, after a bit of a gap on my part, it felt like a fun thing to do it, especially with a relatively new artist as hungry and as talented as Caspar."

Created by one-time New York cop Peter Morisi, Peter Cannon made his debut in 1966's Thunderbolt #1, and was originally part of Charlton Comics's Action Heroes line, which coincidentally was curated by future DC Executive Editor Dick Giordano. One of the Charlton Comics properties that were acquired by DC in 1983, he appeared in 1986's Crisis on Infinite Earths and later enjoyed a twelve-issue maxi-series by writer/ penciller Mike Collins and inker Jose Marzan jnr. More pertinently, jus as other Charlton characters like Blue Beetle and Captain Atom gave rise to Nightowl and Dr. Manhattan respectively, Peter Cannon was the template for Ozymandias, the Machiavellian super-genius at the insidious heart of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's seminal Watchmen.

After picking up the licence from the late Pete Morisi's estate, Dynamite first



Thunderbolt series by Alex Ross, Steve Darnall and Jonathan Lau in 2012. "One interesting thing about Peter Cannon is how small the – ahem – canon is," continues Gillen. "Between the original '60s series, the DC run and Dynamite's previous book, there's only just over thirty issues with him as the star. In fact, if people know anything about Peter Cannon, it's likely the fact that he was used as the inspiration for Ozymandias. There's also another interesting twist for me, as while we all know what happened to Watchmen's rights, Peter Cannon is actually owned by the heirs of Pete Morisi."

Brought up in a Himalayan lamasery, Peter Cannon's considerable intellect would indeed rival that of Adrian Veidt's Ozymandias. "He's an outsider, and if you want to think of his mood, think of a sharper Sherlock Holmes," suggests Gillen. "He's the smartest man in the room, and he hates to be in the room with all these dolts. He saves the world, sure, but he hates the idea that it's our civilisation on the world rather than the one that raised him, so he loves people, but he hates the world we've made."

With so little backstory to draw on, Gillen has come up with a whole new supporting cast of his own. "As Peter Cannon is that much of an outsider, I wanted to have some more traditional heroes around him that in various ways could be the voice of the status quo," he explains. "They're playing with archetypal superhero ideas, but have been given a twist such as our patriotic American character Supreme Justice, which is a position that's existed since the War of Independence that is appointed by the President and magically empowered for life, so it's a very American and institutionalised take on the legacy hero. There's also Pyrophorus, who is a collision between astounding insect-obsessed sci-fi writer Adrian Tchaikovsky (author of the Arthur C. Clarke Award-winning Children of Time amongst others) and Elon Musk. The Test is a gun-armed experimental weapon who lives for two weeks before respawning and losing all of his previous experiences. Baba Yaga is our science-mystic Russian heroine, while Nebulon spends most of the time wearing a radioactive suit, so she's deadly to anyone around her."

Gillen has also resurrected Peter Cannon's formerly previously seen but trusted sidekick Tabu, who is essentially his answer to Alfred Pennyworth. "He's there for when we need a more sympathetic viewpoint," he adds. "He also looks amazing in a 'Dream Daddy was used as artistic direction at various points' way."

Having broken into the industry with his 2015 creator-owned Image series Limbo with current Lucifer writer Dan Watters before collaborating with Simon Spurrier on Angelic, Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt represents artist Caspar Wijngaard's most significant assignment to date. "I was chatting with Caspar at a London con, and when I asked him what he was doing next, he said he actually had a hole in his schedule quite shortly," says Gillen. "At that point, my writer sense tingled, and I started making off-hand remarks about this cool book I was going to do at Dynamite, casually mentioning some of the really smart, playful stuff I wanted to do before luring him in. In short, Caspar is ambitious, smart and scarily adaptable, and he wants to tear up the comic page to just amaze you!"

With Gillen also embarking on new creator-owned title Die! at Image in December just as The Wicked + The Divine – his current ongoing opus with his long time Phonogram partner Jamie McKelvie – enters the final stretch, he insists that Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt doesn't have all that much in common with his more personal work. "Any writer inevitably shares some themes between their work," he reasons. "But there's less than usual here though, as Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt is not about death, or art's influence on humans and vice versa. But it's violently formalist in approach, like WicDiv, and it's certainly obsessed with how the old destroys the future, and how the new can be entirely complicit in that."



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Klaus and the Crying Snowman

After setting his 2013 Image four-parter Happy – now a hit TV show available in the UK on Netfix – during the festive season, Grant Morrison went one better with Klaus. Having described it as "Santa Claus Year Zero," the Scottish scribe and Costa Rican artist Dan Mora chronicled Father Christmas's formative days in 2015's inaugural six-issue mini-series. With Morrison claiming that "working with Dan Mora and BOOM! Studios on these annual adventures of everyone's favourite sword-slinging immortal gift-giver is more fun than a flying sleigh ride through the Aurora Borealis!" the pair have since reunited every December for a self-contained, extra-sized one-shot, a fine tradition they are continuing with this month's **Klaus and the Crying Snowman.**



"We feel that these annual specials give readers the best of both worlds," says BOOM! Studios Senior Editor Eric Harburn. "Each one is a standalone story that anyone can pick up with no prior knowledge of the series, but there are also Easter eggs aplenty for long time readers of Klaus's adventures. That said, we're still very much interested in telling more long-form stories with Klaus, so stay tuned!"

Having compared it to Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli's seminal Batman: Year One, Morrison has described Klaus as his attempt to create an iconic character, who could be his answer to legendary figures like Superman or The Doctor. "The basic conceit was 'What if I treat Santa Claus as the world's most famous superhero?'" he recalls. "This meant applying all the classic tropes of the superhero story – the origin tale, the costume, the secret identity, the headquarters, the powers and gadgets – and I soon found that I had a fairly fresh and engaging new take on Santa Claus. It was a bit of a no-brainer once I started and I'm surprised that no one has ever done this before."

With Father Christmas's Dutch counterpart Sinterklaas dating back to pre-Christian Europe, Morrison has been keen to focus not so much on the popular, commercialised figure made famous in recent times by companies like Coca-Cola but also his more primal, pagan roots. "I've tried to incorporate all the various strands in one way or another with Klaus starting off in the first story by wearing green, as was the case historically," explains Morrison, who has also linked him to mythical phenomenon like The Wild Hunt. "And seeing as it's me, a big part of this story involves the shamanic roots of Santa and the notion that his red and white outfit is derived from the colours of the hallucinatory aminita muscaria mushroom. Siberian shamans would also drink reindeer urine after the beasts had eaten the 'shrooms in order to attain visionary states of flight, or at least that was their excuse!"

Following on from 2016's Klaus and the Witch of Winter and 2017's Klaus and the Crisis in Xmasville, Klaus and the Crying Snowman sees the Yuletide hero coming to the aid of an absentee father-turned-snowman who must make amends for past misdeeds before he all melts away. "Without spoiling the issue, the mysterious Snowman really is the heart and soul of this year's story," teases Harburn. "Grant and Dan have put a ton of emotion into this tale and journey, and we can't wait for readers to experience it."

Klaus also crosses paths with the mysterious Mos Gerila, although according to Harburn, we have encountered the ancient Romanian Santa Claus-turned-Communist-propaganda tool before, albeit only after a fashion. "Eagle-eyed readers will remember that we've actually met Mos Gerila once before in Klaus and the Witch of Winter," he says. "Even if it was actually a Mos Gerila facsimile crafted from enchanted wood by the master puppeteer Geppetto."

With Morrison joking that "it's beginning to look a lot like doomsday!" Klaus and Mos Gerila team up against an unseasonably hostile pantheon of Norse Gods and their various minions. "Klaus and his allies face the apocalyptic return of the beings who destroyed the Norse Gods!" teases Morrison. "So can Klaus, his white wolf Lili, and superhuman comrades including Mos Gerila prevent the end of days and the ultimate destruction of Christmas as a concept? What do you think?"

The Crying Snowman also continues Klaus's tradition of drawing on ancient Christmas-related fables from all across the globe. "The world of Klaus is a constant melting pot of all the stories that have and continue to resonate, not just in America and Britain but in all sorts of global cultures," says Harburn. "That is a fundamental quality of the series, and one that Grant and Dan keep at the forefront of each story."

The Crying Snowman also builds upon subplots that Morrison and Mora first planted in the Klaus mini-series. "While the first Klaus adventure How Santa Claus Began was essentially the character's origin story set in a fantastical, medieval past, the annual specials have all been set in the modern day, moving from the 1980s through to the present day," explains Harburn. "These three stories – Klaus and the Witch of Winter, Klaus and the Crisis in Xmasville and now Klaus and the Crying Snowman - are all closely connected with shared supporting characters, antagonists and monumental past events that might just be featured in new upcoming adventures."

While Morrison insists that, "Dan has rapidly established himself as one of my all-time favourite collaborators and this year has excelled himself once again," Harburn praises the contribution that Mora - who from January will also illustrate BOOM!'s new Buffy the Vampire Slayer series – has made to Klaus over the years. "When two creators work together for the first time, you never really know how the relationship will pan out," he says. "But now, four years into Klaus, I can definitely say that Grant and Dan are one of those rare creative tandems that are perfectly in sync. They each bring so much to this collaboration, and for the specials in particular, Dan has deliberately experimented with his style so that each story has its own unique look and flavour."





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A New Life for Brian

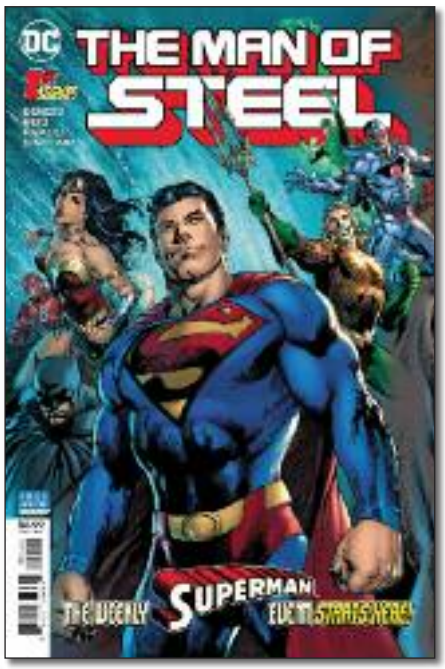


Brian Michael Bendis moved over from Marvel, where he had been safely ensconced for many years writing books like Ultimate Spider-man, Jessica Jones and Iron Man, to DC to take on writing their flagship character Superman in his two titles. Joel Meadows caught up with him to find out why the time was right to move from Marvel and DC and how in a way it was his destiny to write him...

Q: You're taking over Superman and I know you've had a huge connection with the character for years. So boiling it down, what is it about Superman for you as a writer that still connects with you?

BB: It's a character that unironically tries to do the best they can every single second of the day. That in itself makes him a completely unique literary character. Because usually with a character that's the template for something as successful as a genre like superheroes, the thing that launched it usually fades away. It eats itself, like the most famous cartoon strip characters didn't survive. Cartoons evolved with them. But Superman did and I think it's because it really did strike the perfect chord of what people really want superheroes to be. "I'm really going to try, I really am and I really believe we can do better. I'm really hopeful that today's going to be the best day ever if we all really try." I'm self aware enough to know that I've already taken a step back and thought how interesting that it is that I'm writing Superman at this stage of my life. When I was writing Spider-man at another stage of my life, when I was much more like Spider-man spiritually. I'm not a heroic person like that but the energy of the character, the nervous energy of Spider-man. I had more of that in me when I was writing it and now that I am older and I'm writing Superman I have a more centred energy.





Q: Obviously both creators came from Cleveland and you grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. Was it one of the reasons at least?

BB: If you grow up in Cleveland, you hear two things over and over again. It's not like London where you get to hear all the cool shit you guys did over the centuries. All we have is rock n roll and Superman and some really decent sandwich situations. So when you grew up there, all you hear is rock n roll and Superman. So my history with Superman would be intense. You hear about Superman and as a young Jewish man who has publicly told anyone who would listen that you're going to make comics for a living to your rabbi or anyone who knows you, say 'You know, Superman is actually a very Jewish story. It's the Moses story backdrop with a sci fi bent.' Whether you knew they were doing it or not is up for interpretation but it's fascinating. So you feel a connection to it and also when I was at college there was going to be a Superman museum and statue in downtown Cleveland. They were having a Superman convention and a Superman parade to celebrate and raise money for these endeavours. I was going to the Cleveland Institute of Art and I would go every day to look at the job board at the illustration department to see if there was any damn job I could do so I could be paid to learn how to do the job. And then one day like a miracle: wanted Superman parade artist. And if you're a comic book artist looking for gigs, that's like a dream. So I ended up of course getting the gig because I was the only person who wanted it and made it impossible for anyone else to find the job was available. I was happily doing it for what was fifty or sixty dollar Jose Luis Garcia Lopez prints. In my opinion I was making out like a bandit. So I drew all the signs on the side of the parade cars. The big deal was that Stan Lee was going to come and either Siegel or Shuster were ill. Stan was hopping in to support the parade on behalf of his peer. And it was a really big deal in Cleveland that Stan Lee was coming here to represent DC comics. So for that whole week, the town literally became Metropolis, the Cleveland Plain Dealer became the Daily Planet. So I ended up spending all night long drawing all the signs and the fact that Stan was coming at the last minute, I had spent all night drawing a sign for Stan Lee. I was up at six in the morning for the parade. I was so exhausted and this party bus of guests pulls up and Stan Lee gets out, he sees me and he holds out his hand and goes 'Brian Michael Bendis'. He hugs me and I'm so bleary eyed that I go 'You know my name?' And he whispered in my ear 'You're wearing a name tag, shmuck.' And he walked away. I swear to God it was the greatest thing ever because Stan swore.

Q: Obviously you were at Marvel for a long time. Was it at the back of your head that you thought maybe it was time for a change or was it just one of these happy accidents? What happened?

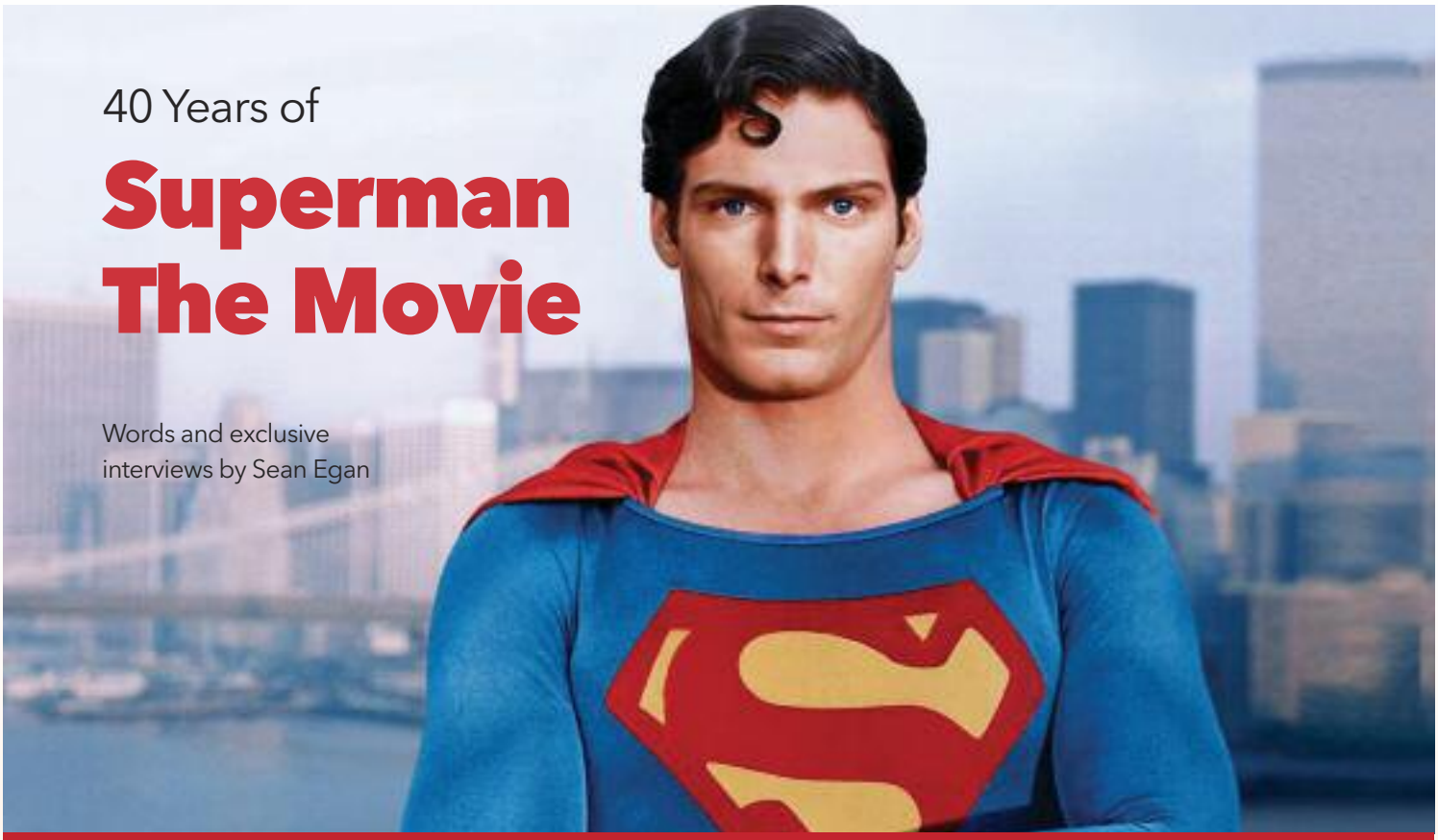
BB: It was a little more complicated than that. Over the years DC had come a courting. Not to be bragging but I don't think it's any surprise that once you have a hit book somewhere, someone's going to say 'hey let's get him over here.' And it happens to anybody who's been on anything that's successful. So over the years there have been overtures but nothing more serious than I guess it was like three or four years ago Dan [Didio] and Jim [Lee] had made a pretty bold move towards me and it was good. "Oh boy I'd like to do that," I thought. Some great stuff including working with Jim. Even though I had thought about it, at the time it didn't feel like I had finished what I had started at Marvel.

There were a couple of projects in front of me that I was really dying to get to like Miles Morales and Jessica Jones. It just felt like all those pieces had gone to a place where they didn't need me as much anymore or I didn't feel like I needed them as much. So this time around when the offer came we were able to sit and have a serious conversation about what kind of partnership I was looking for and what they were looking for that they didn't have already. So we had a very delightful conversation, myself and Dan in California. We met up and had coffee and honestly other than maybe a handshake at a convention I'd never met the man.

There would be no circle in which we would interact. But I must say, having met him and spent months together really developing things, I can honestly say I'm really glad that I took this leap because I feel not only did I leap I left at the right time. I think that maybe ten years ago this wouldn't have been as good a mix as it is right now.

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40 Years of

Superman The Movie

Words and exclusive interviews by Sean Egan

You'll **Believe** a **Man can Fly!**

"The head of National Periodical Publications called the head of production at Warner and said, 'Listen, these producers want to buy the rights to Superman.' The head of production said, 'Well, take as much money as you can upfront because it will never make a movie.'"

Pierre Spengler is recalling his negotiations in the summer of 1974 to licence the Superman character for a big screen adaptation. What is remarkable about this anecdote is that National Periodical Publications (later formally renamed DC) was the publisher of Superman comics and Warner Brothers was its sister company. It's illustrative of the fact that forty-odd years ago, nobody had faith in the idea of a Superman motion picture – including those who stood to make the most money out of it.

Superheroes on film had hitherto been restricted to low-budget serials aimed at kids, but father-and-son producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind envisioned a more elevated cinematic exploration of the genre. They continued to show lofty purpose even despite unpromising market testing. Their first choice of screenwriter was Mario Puzo, a gritty literary novelist and the co-writer of the acclaimed film adaptation of his own book The Godfather. The conjunction of his name with that of the world's most famous comics character was bizarre, but also designedly newsworthy. More interest was aroused when it was revealed that Guy Hamilton – director of four James Bond movies – was to direct. Spengler, who was retained as on-the-ground producer by the executive-producing Salkinds, says, "Then as a final fanfare, we announced Marlon Brando and Gene Hackman." Casting two heavyweight thespians, as Superman's father Jor-El and arch enemy Lex Luthor respectively, made investors and distributors take notice. Even Warners woke up, belatedly insisting on a blush-saving US distribution option.

Puzo took his task very seriously. "He went to DC Comics and looked at their archives and read a lot of comic books and came [up] with the idea of starting with Krypton, then having the Daily Planet and then having the three villains coming to earth," recalls Spengler. "All of that was basically Mario Puzo's construction. But he did not deliver a script that you could shoot." Robert Benton was one of the writers tasked with working on Puzo's material after the latter left the project in late '75 to fulfil other commitments. Benton recalls that it was not formatted like a screenplay but rather a "a huge, huge treatment." At 300 pages, it was massively overlong even considering that the Salkinds had commissioned two scripts because they had opted for the economy of scale involved in shooting a Superman movie back-to-back with its sequel.

The first person to attempt to turn Puzo's work into a screen-friendly script was Norman Enfield, who had graduated on Salkind productions from dialogue coach to publicity assistant to screenwriter. Internet chatter questions Enfield's existence – he did nothing in movies after

1978 – but Spengler denies he is pseudonymous, as does a photograph on Ilya Salkind's website. "He worked with Guy Hamilton for a couple of months," Spengler explains of Enfield. "Unfortunately, it was a waste of time."

The producers then turned to Benton and the late David Newman. Interestingly, before starting a screenwriting career that included the bloody Bonnie and Clyde and the jolly What's Up, Doc? the pair had written a 1966 Broadway musical about the Man of Steel entitled It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superman. However, Benton reveals that the Salkinds, "knew nothing about the musical we'd done, it was just a coincidence." With his movie The Late Show soon to start production, the time Benton was able to devote to Superman was limited. "I said to them, 'Look I can work on it for one draft plus a polish, and David and his wife will work on other drafts after that.'" Benton says of the screenplay he and David Newman produced, "[It] was less serious than Puzo's treatment because we were incapable of doing something that serious. That was fine with Guy Hamilton." He adds, "You don't have to make fun of something to make it witty." Leslie Newman's recollection is, "It wasn't like David and Robert did something and then I came in. We all worked on it at various times."

Contrary to Spengler's recollection, Newman says that the writing trio reinstated some classic Superman elements that Puzo had ditched, such as Superman's alter-ego Clark Kent being a print reporter. "We loved that. We've all had newspaper writing and things like that in our background in our circles." Some classic elements, though, were shown through a post-modern lens, such as the moment when Clark is looking for a phone booth in which to change into his Superman costume and is discombobulated by an open-design payphone booth. She reasons, "We thought of it as having a little fun, a way to make things still work." For her part, Newman had "very strong feelings" about Lois Lane, Daily Planet reporter colleague of Clark, as well as Superman's love interest. She states, "I wanted Lois to be someone who was as focused on winning a Pulitzer Prize as she was on getting Superman."

Plans to locate production in Italy were abandoned in order to take advantage of the superior special-effects expertise available in the UK, but tax exile Hamilton couldn't go back to his home country without taking a financial hit. When he bailed in late 1976, it was the producers who took a financial hit. "His contract was clear that he didn't have to work in England, so we just had to honour our contract with him," says Spengler. With Brando on a fee of $3.7m plus a percentage and Hackman $2m, costs were skyrocketing without a single frame having been shot.

Richard Donner describes Superman as "Norman Rockwell Americana." It was perhaps fortunate, then, that it was Donner who replaced Hamilton, as it meant that the production finally had a key non-European crew member. At that point, Donner's only major movie was The Omen, but he was not shy about asserting what he felt the Superman project should constitute. "It needed a sense of reality," Donner says. "Newman and Benton were given a direction to go in. The direction was a parody on a parody. I didn't see it as that. I felt when he said, 'Truth, justice and the American way,' you better fucking believe him." The new director also perceived the movie as "an unrequited love story" between Superman and Lois Lane. The Newmans' last draft had already been subjected to minor finessing by George MacDonald Fraser, but in his quest for his watchword of "verisimilitude," Donner now engaged the services of screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz.



Though a pugnacious character, Donner gets misty eyed about the Superman cast and crew, "There's not one person I would ever have thought about replacing," he reflects. "They were all perfect for it, they all understood it." He is particularly effusive about his young English film editor Stuart Baird ("Stuart was responsible for making that picture happen") and Mankiewicz. As well as a wholesale retooling of the script (he later asserted he was responsible for more than half the sequences and around 80% of the dialogue of the finished film), Mankiewicz helped with locations, casting and editing, hence his special billing as "Creative Consultant."

Donner is also understandably grateful to Zoran Perisic, the "genius" who had the small task of working out how to make a man fly. In this mission, Donner found that there was "very little" he could use from the Salkinds' pre-production processes. "They were still doing it the way they did the old TV show," he scoffs. "It was ridiculous. So I surrounded myself with the best Europe had to offer." Crucial to the banishing of risible memories of Fifties TV Superman George Reeves belly-flopping through windows onto an off-screen mattress was Perisic's invention, the Zoptic System. "A front projection machine which enabled us to do mobility and flying with compatible zoom lenses," as Donner explains it. In simple terms, Superman wouldn't look like he was suspended against a piece of film footage. Not that this breakthrough came easily. "Everybody was very discouraged," recalls Spengler. "We weren't getting any results, until one day, once we were almost ready to drop Zoran, he called us into Theatre Seven at Pinewood and showed us Superman flying around the Statue of Liberty. We looked at that and said, 'Wow – that's it. Got it.'"

But who to do the flying? Though an extensive litany of celebrities is reputed to have been considered for the role, Spengler says, "Some of these names

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"She was charming, cute," says Donner of Kidder's portrayal of Lois Lane. "She was wonderful."



were the consequence of ideas by the sales agent." One such was Charles Bronson ("I simply refused to even check availability"). There were those who took it upon themselves to petition to be the Man of Tomorrow. Spengler: "Neil Diamond was really pursuing us to consider him. It would have been a crazy idea. Then there was Schwarzenegger. To which we basically responded that Superman is not Austrian." Spengler also confirms that Muhammad Ali was considered, but not seriously. "Even today it's not politically incorrect to say that Superman is not black."

It was Robert Redford, biggest screen heartthrob of the era, who was the producers' actual first choice. He seriously considered the Superman role, but ultimately turned it down. "Bruce Jenner was one of our first ideas," Spengler says of a man then still only famous as an athlete. "One thought at one time was Paul Newman. He could play the father, he could play the Superman, he could play Lex Luthor. He had the good sense to turn down all three."

The knock-backs from stars shortly came to seem like providence. All the mooted names had one drawback: the thought of them in a Superman costume was somehow laughable. "If you saw Redford or any of those guys in a costume, it would be Robert Redford, not Superman," reasons Donner. "They had such a visual identity it would be very hard to convince the audience that they were somebody else." "We came to the conclusion that we needed to have an unknown," says Spengler. "That was the beauty of having Brando and Hackman in the film: that we have enough names there."

Leafing through casting bible the Academy Players Directory, Ilya Salkind noticed the profile of one Christopher Reeve. The young thesp was given a call. Reeve passed his screen test for reasons other than his 6'4" height, blue eyes and chiselled face. "He was capable of these two goals of a straight Superman and then the fumbling Clark Kent," Spengler explains. "He was so perfect," enthuses Newman. "It gave me gooseflesh how right he was." Not that Reeve didn't need some improving. Spengler: "We [gave him] a high-protein diet and a lot of exercise."

Margot Kidder was chosen to play the other half of the unrequited love story. "She was charming, cute," says Donner of her portrayal of Lois Lane. "She was wonderful." Ned Beatty was cast as Luthor's comical sidekick, Otis. Serious talent like Terence Stamp, Trevor Howard, Maria Schell and Susanna York speckled the supporting cast.

Spengler describes the premise of Superman's costume as "theoretically a ridiculous one," noting, "It would have been completely counter-character that the guy would put on his own chest an 'S' to say 'Superman'." Puzo had gone some way to solving this problem by suggesting that the Elders of the planet Krypton wear "the futuristic letter 'S' imprinted on their clothes." This was refined to differing chest emblems, with the 'S' unique to Jor-El. Spengler: "It was the family crest. I can't remember whose idea it was." On earth – where Jor-El's son Kal-El grows up after being despatched from the doomed Krypton – the symbol is wilfully misinterpreted by a smitten Lois as an abbreviation for "super man". A simpler solution was found for another costume issue. When it was noticed that the position of Reeve's genitals visibly changed from shot to shot, he was provided a swimmer's cup to slip down the front of his clinging trunks.

Main unit shooting began on March 28, 1977. Donner declines to criticise Hackman for what some might term lack of commitment to his role ("An actor doesn't want to shave his hair. I can well understand it") and says the reputedly difficult Brando was in fact "a pleasure to be around. I never saw anything but professionalism." Brando was given cause to dust off the English accent he had learned fifteen years previously for Mutiny on the Bounty. Explains Spengler, "We all thought that probably Krypton shouldn't be as yet an American colony, and since we had Harry Andrews, Trevor Howard, Terence Stamp, all of those [English] people, it made sense for Brando to be at least mid-Atlantic if not completely British." As for Brando's pay packet amounting to







more than $250,000 per day for his two weeks' filming, Spengler shrugs, "Look, he put the film on the map so that was worth all the money."

Instead, the on-set tensions were between the director and the producers. Donner recalls, "They kept saying, 'You're overbudget' and they wouldn't tell me what the budget was." Spengler concedes in retrospect that the secrecy was unwise, but says it was "a policy of the company dictated by Alexander Salkind" designed to stop anything beyond the "official announced budget" being "disseminated." So fraught did the relationship become between director and producers that another crew member (and hence salary) had to be added. Says Donner, "I wouldn't talk with them because I felt everything they were doing was counter-productive, so Richard Lester was brought in to be the intermediary."

Whatever that secret budget was, Spengler says that the production went "wildly, wildly" over it. Not only had the quest to make Superman fly been agonisingly slow and costly, but shooting units had multiplied like rabbits. "At some point we had eleven units simultaneously shooting on two continents," recalls Spengler. Although the producers had always known the endeavour would be costly, they certainly hadn't anticipated what it became: the most expensive motion picture ever made. "It was frightening," says Spengler. "We were not financed by a major company." He adds, "But if you're in the ocean, you've just got to swim."

The intention had been to shoot the two pictures in a cumulative schedule of thirty weeks. "We ended up shooting the first one in a schedule of more than a year," notes Spengler. Donner: "We had used up the time to deliver the first one on time and continue doing a second one." The postponement of completion of Superman II at least enabled the provision of a satisfactory finale for the first movie that it was agreed it currently lacked. Puzo's slightly presumptuous cliff-hanger ending – the trio of villains consigned by Jor-El to the Phantom Zone being freed and heading towards earth – was jettisoned for the intended finale of Superman II: the Man of Steel turning back time by reversing the earth's rotation, thus bringing back to life Lois Lane, slain in the aftermath of a missile attack launched by Luthor. As rendered, the plot twist made no sense, but the fact that Superman didn't turn back time to a point before the launch of the missile was a discrepancy that – pre-internet – attracted less debate than it would today.

John Williams' score was in truth uncomfortably close to his Star Wars music, but at the same time suitably majestic and stirring. After that final sweetening, the producers scrambled to get Superman: The Movie – as it was finally titled – into the cinemas before the end of 1978 in order to catch the lucrative Christmas market. As part of this objective, they showed the picture simultaneously to the film critics of Time and Newsweek. "Donner quite cleverly insisted that we should have the theatre full of children," says Spengler. Whether or not it was because of the resultant climate of rapture, the critics were impressed. Foreknowledge of their good notices helped alleviate the producers' anxieties over the fact that the failure of the film would certainly bankrupt them. "It was nerve-wracking," Spengler admits.

Courtesy of advertising-team head Andy Vogelson, the movie was released with the unforgettable strapline, "You'll believe a man can fly." The public pretty much did, even if they laughingly doubted young Clark keeping pace with a speeding train: undercranking was no match for Zoptic. Some might quibble about a facileness and cartoonishness to parts of Superman: The Movie that was old-fashioned even in the Seventies, or the fact that Superman is in costume disappointingly little. Moreover, all the delays meant that the film's pioneering was limited: the Incredible Hulk TV series pipped it to become the first thoughtful live-action treatment of a comics character. Nonetheless, Superman: The Movie was the first superhero effort with a serious tone to appear on the big screen.

The picture's appeal across the generations and IQ levels was reflected in ticket sales. An unexpected fillip was provided those sales by the fact that it was released into a world made newly receptive to the fantastical by Star Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind. "That became at that time the most successful film in Warners' history," Spengler says with satisfaction. The success warranted two sequels from the Salkinds in 1980 and 1983, plus 1984 spin-off Supergirl. More, in fact. "Ilya and I were a little bit too pretentious, because Alex was ready to make IV," Spengler says. "And it was, [I don't want to] repeat the same thing, blah blah.'"

Where Ilya Salkind and Spengler were reluctant to tread again, others weren't. Superman: The Movie started a slow-burning revolution that fully ignited when CGI was able to do all the things Donner had had to execute with smoke and mirrors. "Look at your local and see how many superhero movies are on," says Spengler. "That's really the legacy."

"The Salkinds figured out something very smart," summarises Benton. "That you could take a children's comic-book story and turn it into something with substance."

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When the young **Dave Gibbons** first read a Superman comic in the late 1950s, he would never have dreamt that he would one day team up with Alan Moore to **craft one of The Man of Steel's most memorable stories ever.** First published in Superman Annual #11 in June 1985, '**For The Man Who Had Everything**' was very much a precursor to the pair's seminal Watchmen series, the first issue of which debuted in comic stores just a few months later in September 1985. Since then, Gibbons has returned to the Big Blue on several occasions, **most significantly penning 1996's World's Finest** mini-series for artist Steve Rude in 1993.

An Interview with Dave Gibbons

"My very earliest memory of reading a Superman comic was the one that my granddad bought for me from Woolworths when I was about seven-years-old," he recalls, referring to a British reprint of 1956's Action Comics #219. "The cover had Superman in a cave, surrounded by big sacks and chests full of jewels and gold and Lois Lane standing at the entrance of the cave looking shocked that Superman was indeed a super miser! I vividly remember reading that, and then both my granddads would send me Superman, Batman and World's Finest or other comics."

Breaking into professional comics in the early 1970s, Gibbons drew Harlem Heroes and Dan Dare and Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor for Doctor Who Magazine for 2000 AD before becoming one of the first British artists to make the transition across the Atlantic to DC. After illustrating several back-ups featuring Green Lantern Corp and The Creeper, he became the regular artist on Green Lantern with January 1984's #174, a position he would hold until the following year's #185. Having known Moore for a number of years, 'The Man Who Had Everything' grew out of a pub conversation from a few years before between the duo and others at a comic convention.

"Alan had this idea for a Superman story in which Krypton had never blown up," explains Gibbons. "Many years later, I found myself at DC party at a con in Chicago, which ended up being really pivotal for me. I started the evening by going up to (DC Executive Editor) Dick Giordano and talking to him about this project Alan was doing with the old Charlton Comics characters. I said that I'd really like to draw it and that Alan was all for it as well, and Dick said 'it's yours' and that was Watchmen. I then reeled away from that conversation and bumped into Superman editor Julie Schwartz, who asked me 'hey Dave, when are you going to draw some Superman for us?' I said 'any time you like, Julie but who's going to write it?' and he said 'who do you want to write it' and I replied 'Alan Moore!' and he said 'sure, I'll fix it up.' A few days later, I visited the DC offices in New York and



actually phoned Alan from the phone on Julie's desk to ask him if he wanted to do it and he said 'great!' The story was essentially his latest imagining of his 'what if Krypton didn't blow up?' story. So it came at an auspicious moment and at one of the best con parties I've ever been to."

While Gibbons reveals that "we worked on it while we were doing the designs and fleshing out of Watchmen," Gibbons insists that 'For The Man Who Had Everything' was a strictly separate entity to the classic, 12-part maxi-series. "We brought the same kind of focus and attention to detail to Superman that we would later bring to the Watchmen characters," he reasons, conceding that he took a slightly more fluid approach to the layouts than in the more rigid Watchmen, for which he famously adopted a nine-panel grid.

"It was written as a normal script and I imagine Alan had some idea about the disposition of the panels on the page," he continues. "But we weren't using a set grid, and I certainly had no input from Alan as to how I should map the page out. Watchmen was diligently done on a nine-panel grid at my suggestion because it was a very complex story, and I felt that doing it that way would make it easier to read and also give it a certain formality and timelessness, which is something we really wanted. But in the case of Superman, I just wanted to tell the story in the most dynamic way possible."

Rather than any of the leading Superman artists, Gibbons drew inspiration for his depiction of the Man of Tomorrow from Wally Wood's version in Mad Magazine's satirical Superduperman. "He somehow made his spoof of Superman look more solid and exciting than what most of the regular Superman artists had done," he reflects. "Not that I didn't like them, as Curt Swan was a fantastic artist who make Superman and his world very believable so he would always be a huge influence. When it came to Krypton, there was something in the way that Wayne Boring drew the skyscrapers that had a very fabulous, fabled kind of look, so was an influence, as was Dick Sprang (who drew World's Finest but was better known for his Batman work), whose panel designs were really powerful. I also had a Superman Treasury Edition that had a very detailed map of the Fortress of Solitude, which both Alan and I relied on to make sure that the continuity of the battle there was accurate, so we did also pay homage to the Superman artists of the past."

Set in Superman's remote Arctic hideaway, 'For The Man Who Has Everything' opens with Wonder Woman, Batman and Jason Todd's Robin arriving to celebrate Kal-El's birthday, only to discover he has become the victim of a surprise attack from villainous alien, Mongol. Rendered comatose by deadly plant Black Mercy – which as we see on the credits's page is dramatically furled around his chest - Superman is stuck in an idyllic Krypton that never actually exploded, although not everything is as utopian as it initially seems.

"We thought 'it's Superman's birthday, who would he invite?' and obviously he'd been friends with Batman for a long time, and he would bring Robin along while Wonder Woman was in there just so it wasn't just a boy's club," says Gibbons. "It was great to draw those three or four DC icons in one story and the fact that we were able to do it in a double-sized issue but not over a whole mini-series meant that we could do it in quite a concentrated way, which was quite a joy. The presence of all the characters was important to the story as well since if we'd had Flash and Green Lantern in there, the whole thing would have got a bit muddled and lost, so having just those primal characters really worked well."

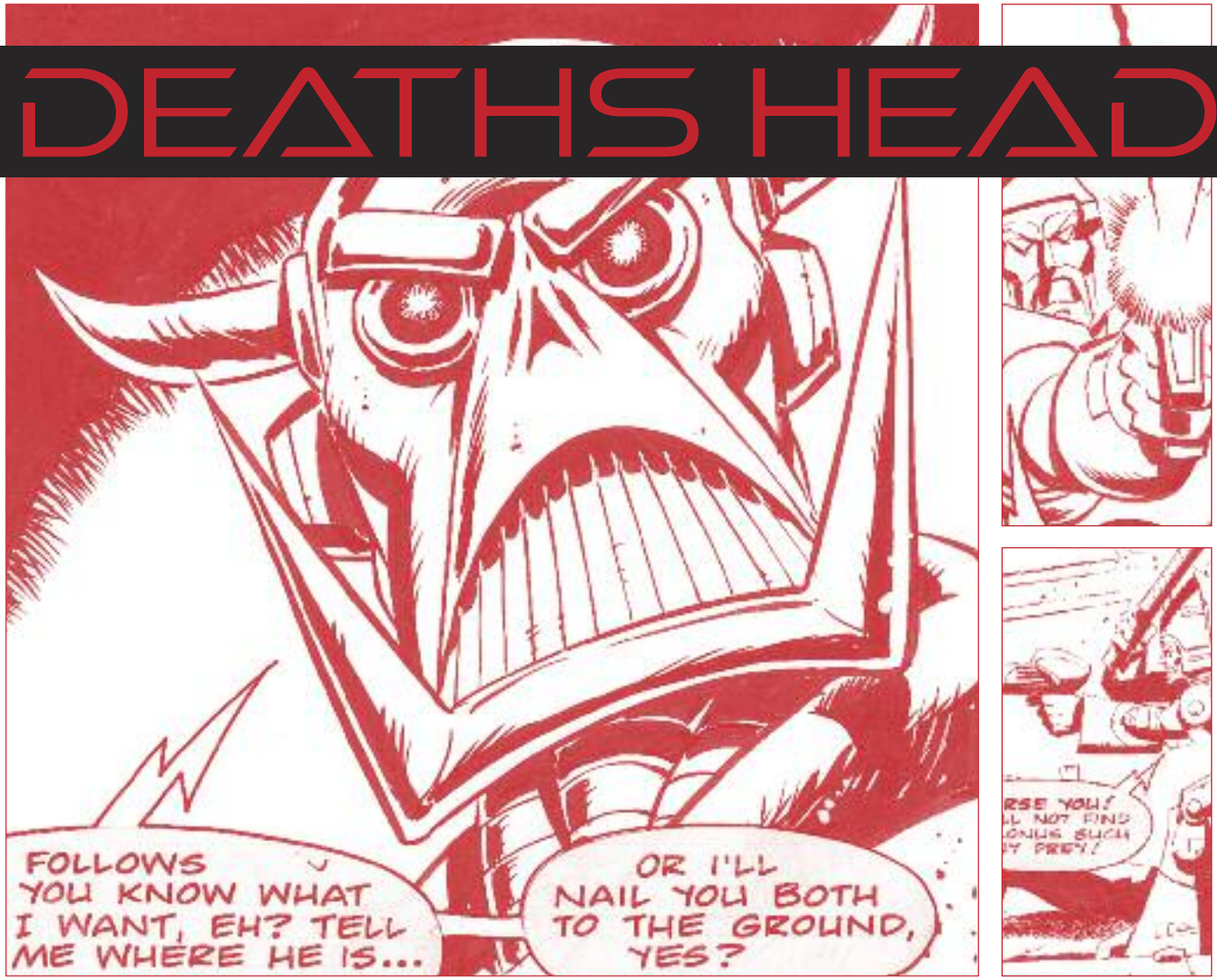
Claiming that "it was Alan's idea to make it Superman's birthday," Gibbons aptly also based his World's Finest series around a popular gift-giving occasion, in this case, the most wonderful time of the year itself, Christmas. "There's something about that time of year that makes me think of Superman and Batman, perhaps because as a child I used to get a Superman, Batman or some other annual for Christmas, so they were indelibly linked together. I also like the way that things shut down at Christmas, and the idea of snow being everywhere, and there being good will in the air. There's something slightly idealised and corny about Christmas but it just fits those characters very well. I also loved how the Christmas week editions of various British comics would have snow on the logo, and sprigs of holly around the price tag, so there's something about comics and Christmas that really resonates for me."

Set between Metropolis and Gotham City and also featuring Lex Luthor and The Joker, Gibbons attempted to highlight the similarities between DC's two big guns, pointing out how they were both orphans, something that definitely hits home during the festive season. "There's something very American about it as well, as I loved Christmas films like Its a Wonderful Life and Miracle on 34th Street," he continues. "Christmas is where the worlds of fable and magic kind of blends together with reality. There's something magical about that time of year, although in my cynical old age, I think Christmas is a rather overrated consumer fest than an actual event. It's become over-commercialised, so if I was to do another Christmas story now, it would have a different tone to it. Actually, I also used Christmas in 'Another Bloody Christmas,' a Hellblazer story I wrote and drew for 2000's Vertigo: Winter's Edge anthology, which was John Constantine with a very cynical look at the Christmas season. I later followed it up with 'Happy Fucking New Year' in Hellblazer #250, which was illustrated by Sean Phillips, and was a rather sideways look at celebrating New Year."

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DEATHS HEAD



The Death's Head creators are back! Simon Furman and Geoff Senior the creators of the merciless robotic bounty hunt…- sorry, freelance peacekeeping agent have returned in To The Death: Forged By Fire. The print version of their story is appearing in The Great Big ComicScene Annual. But what is the story behind this money-seeking metallic Marvel mercenary? Chris Hallam jumps into the time portal and finds out…

HEAD START

He was only supposed to be a temporary character.

It was 1987 and artist Geoff Senior was approached by his prolific Marvel UK collaborator, writer Simon Furman about creating a new character for Transformers comic.

"A 'throwaway' bounty hunter was needed for a Transformers story and Simon came up with a simple description of a character with a 'skull-like' head," Geoff Senior recalls today. "With 'the words 'skull-like' in my own head, it was a question of developing a robot-like character as he was to battle the Transformers."

Furman was pleased with Geoff Senior's early designs. "I wanted him to somehow have expression in his face and his eyebrows provided the answer," Geoff says. "A warrior figure with an array of weapons which he selected and attached to his arm. I'm not sure if it was his right or left arm. It may well have been either one depending on the situation he was in at the time. He was metallic though a bit battered after a hard life of scrapes". He adds: "I've no idea why I gave him a loin cloth."

With loin cloth or without, the brutal robotic bounty hunter, Death's Head had been born. Furman and Senior didn't know it then, but he would become perhaps their most famous single creation. He is still in action more than thirty years later.

HEAD MASTERED

Certain key elements of the Death's Head's personality were established immediately. Death's Head was introduced as an external character brought into the wars of the Autobots and Decepticons only by the offer of a bounty placed on the head of Decepticon leader Galvatron by leading Autobot, Rodimus Prime. It was thus essential he remain detached and morally ambivalent. Death's Head has no interest in personal vendettas, he is only interested in money: a true product of the Eighties! In fact, the character himself is from a futuristic 21st century: he only travels back to what was then the present (that is, the 1980s) to pursue his quarry: the strip was then embroiled in what was becoming an increasingly complex time travel storyline









with events shifting frequently between the 1980s and an imagined future, two decades later.

This mercenary, business-like approach gives Death's Head a dangerous quality. Like Long John Silver or Han Solo, one senses he could go either way if the price is right. Indeed, this does happen: Death's Head ends his period in Transformers, by forcing himself into a time portal alongside Decepticons Cyclonus and Scourge, after betraying Rodimus by attempting to fulfil a rival Decepticon contract to kill him instead of Galvatron. He had also assassinated leading Decepticon Shockwave and been brought briefly under the thrall of the God-like Unicron, in the course of his adventures.

His enduring popularity now seemed assured. Simon Furman had brought a welcome note of humour to Death's Head, for example, imbuing him with a strange aversion to being referred to as a bounty hunter (""Not bounty-hunter, yes? Don't like that term, understand? Freelance peace-keeping agent, yes? For certain financial remuneration, of course,") and an unusual broken way of speaking, usually ending sentences with "yes?" or occasionally "eh?" For example:

"I defy you, Unicron, yes?" "Do us both a favour - yes?" "Buy this comic…and stay healthy, yes?"

HEAD SHRINKER

Another feature was Death's Head's size. It was now established the character was going to enjoy a life outside Transformers. He had, in fact, already appeared in a one-page story 'High Noon Tex' drawn by Bryan Hitch, in several Marvel titles simply to avoid Hasbro claiming copyright on the character. Now he appeared, emerging out of the time portal, to battle Sylvester McCoy's version of the Timelord in a one-off story in Doctor Who Magazine. The upshot of this was that the Doctor shrunk his adversary to human size to make him more manageable: he was no longer bigger on the inside. Or, indeed, on the outside.

The Doctor also transported his foe seemingly at random to his "favourite planet," Earth in the year 8162, setting up the character for a promising future in a range of Marvel titles.

HEADLINER

Death's Head then made a further cameo in issue 5 of the comic, Dragon's Claws set in the 82nd century where the Doctor had sent him. Death's Head then finally appeared in his own comic. Virtually destroyed during the course of his Dragons Claws' appearance, Death's Head now got a new look and a new artist, the then teenaged Bryan Hitch, as at that point, Senior was still busy with Claws.

Death's Head now had a new human companion, Spratt, a new office and new enemies (such as 'Big Shot'). But the small US-style format of the comic served Death's Head badly. Neither it nor Dragon's Claws sold well or got beyond issue 10. He appeared briefly in the short-lived Strip magazine in 1990. And that was it. The end of the road, yes?

TO THE DEATH

Well, no. Death's Head has never quite gone away. He has appeared in Fantastic Four, She-Hulk and even in toy form. His character has been relaunched twice although perhaps again never quite matched the magic of the original.

Geoff Senior has spent many years working in advertising and now recounts: "Whenever I met up with Simon I'd occasionally hear that Death's Head has made an appearance here or there. It's good to know that the bounty hunter we launched all those years ago is still going. I know he's changed appearance several times but to me he'll always be the original clunky, green-costumed tin head- yes?"

But, now with To The Death, Furman and Senior are back. "Simon and I always wanted to do more with Death's Head and Dragon's Claws," Geoff says. "This is familiar territory with lots of adventure, action with a squad of interstellar troops and a ridiculously tough bounty hunter going by the name of Killatoa…It's an exciting rollercoaster of a story. To The Death Is by far the biggest thing I've done in comics for many years…It's great to be drawing comics again."



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Welcome to the latest Tripwire Presents TV and Film section of Comic Scene UK. Each issue we shall be offering the best in TV and film coverage in the pages of the magazine. This time around, it starts with a roundup of the huge Lucca Comics and Games, which took place the end of October/ beginning of November...

Comics With An Italian Twist



Pictures clockwise from top: Cosplayers at the Villa Butini, Lucca; Irish comic writer and artist Declan Shalvey and comic legends Walter and Louise Simonson in Lucca **Pics:** Joel Meadows

Lucca Comics and Games is a massive comic show that takes place in Lucca in Tuscany in Italy at the end of each October. It ocntinues into the beginning of November. It started back in 1965 in Bordighera in Liguria and moved to Lucca way back in 1966. It has grown from a small show to a monster of a comic convention. Back in 2016, they reported that they attracted a staggering 260,000 visitors.

European comic shows are a little different to their American counterparts and Lucca Comics and Games 2018 took over several locations in the old walled city of Lucca. Lucca does exist as a more modern working city but the comic show only takes place within the confines of the walled city. This gives it a very unusal feel, almost like a theme park in a historical Italian city.

The majority of attractions and events at the show focus on European comics and creators with all of the major publishers like Panini, Salda Press and many others. However, in 2018 there was also a significant amount of US and UK creators in attendance too like







Pictures clockwise from top: Visitors to the comic show walking through the old city (check out the R2D2 bag); *Oblivion Song* artist Lorenzo de Felici; Argentinian comics legend Jose Munoz and *The Walking Dead* co-creator Robert Kirkman
Pics: Joel Meadows

The Walking Dead co-creator Robert Kirkman, US comics legends Walter and Louise Simonson and Marvel, Irish Image and Marvel writer and artist Declan Shalvey and British Valiant artist Trevor Hairsine.

There was also a noticeable presence from things like HBO's *Game of Thrones* and Warner Bros. used it to promote *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* as well as the forthcoming *Aquaman* movie. After dark, around the walls of the city, tents spring up selling all manner of geek related items as well as food concessions. It turns into a nerd funfair at night with events continuing to take place until pretty late.

"The scale of Lucca is insane even for someone who has been to New York Comic Con and San Diego Comic Con."

The scale of Lucca is insane even for someone who has been to New York Comic Con and San Diego Comic Con. Lucca Comics and Games is an overwhelming show in a really beautiful setting. I am glad we went once but I am not sure I would go back as it's all just too much. It should be experienced at least once though. Lucca is a lovely place and it is an impressive mix of all things nerd in one of the most beautiful places you are ever likely to visit.

Lucca Comics and Games will be held again at the end of October/ beginning of November 2019







Back To The Fight Club



pic: Allan Amato

Chuck Palahniuk's Fight Club was turned into a cult movie starring Brad Pitt back in 1999. Back in 2015, a comic sequel, *Fight Club 2*, came out from Dark Horse. January 2019 sees a second follow-up, *Fight Club 3*, reuniting Palahniuk with interior artist Cameron Stewart and cover artist David Mack. Joel Meadows spoke to Palahniuk to find out a little bit more about the new series also published by Dark Horse...



COMIC SCENE:What is the one line elevator pitch for *Fight Club 3*?

CHUCK PALAHNIUK: Who is Tyler Durden, really, and what has been his plan since the beginning of time?

CS: This is the second sequel to *Fight Club* and once again it's a comic series rather than a novel. What are the advantages for you as a writer to create this as a comic rather than as a prose novel?

CP: Both the novel and the film have established their audiences. They'd both be tough acts to follow, that's why the third interpretation had to be as a comic. I've since fallen in love with the ordeal of writing a comic script, and the license it allows me. I can depict things that would be forbidden in film -- the army of dying kids from FC2 -- and depict things that would seem too unreal and phony if presented in just prose. It's that ability to portray a Little Nemo in Dreamland fantasy that prompted me to do Fight Club 3. Picasso said something like Art is the lie that tells the truth better than the truth. I wanted to use comics to depict an Art Bell, Ground Zero, late night-radio type of story using the established Fight Club characters. Our fantasies tell a greater truth about us.

"Picasso said something like Art is the lie that tells the truth better than the truth. I wanted to use comics to depict an Art Bell, Ground Zero, late night-radio type of story using the established Fight Club characters"

CS: You are teaming up with interior artist Cameron Stewart and cover artist David Mack again. What is it about working with them that continues to appeal to you as a writer?

CP: Nobody in comics draws gesture and expression better than Cameron. His skill saves me from writing tons of expository dialog (my biggest gripe about many comics is their over-written dialog). And David, well, David's great at creating images that seem as if they've emerged from our dreams. Perfect for this series in particular.

CS: How closely have you collaborated with Stewart on this series?

CP: This go-round, not as closely as we collaborated in FC2. Truth be told I was a little shocked to see his early work for FC3,





it was more realistic than anything I'd ever seen him draw. A mutual friend tells me Cameron's begun painting, and that might be behind his new, more realistic work. Whatever the case his new style works for Fight Club 3 because much of the story is gritty and low-rent and those bits have to contrast with the impossible fantasy elements.

CS: As this is your second graphic novel series, has it become easier for you to write for the comics format?

CP: It should be easier, but I've thrown more challenges into my own path. Now not only must I reinvent the characters, I've got to retain some of the conventions of FC2 -- such as the "real" objects covering parts of the pages -- but I also have to brainstorm new visual and formatting ideas that will give this next part of the story its own look. Why waste a chance to experiment?

"I do not think of my characters as having a gender. Marla is just a strong, forceful, smart character, and who doesn't want to have another such character in any story?"

CS: This is the third tale of yours featuring Taylor Durden. What new facets of his personality are there to explore with him as a character?

CP: What would it be like to accept Tyler as an ally instead of an enemy? What if the enemy this time was something entirely NOT Tyler?

CS: Marla Singer is the other main protagonist in the story. What was the appeal for you as a writer to feature a female protagonist in this third Fight Club story?

CP: All kidding aside, I do not think of my characters as having a gender. Marla is just a strong, forceful, smart character, and who doesn't want to have another such character in any story?

CS: Are there plans for a Fight Club 4 comic?

CP: I should live so long.

JOEL MEADOWS

Fight Club 3 starts in January, published by Dark Horse Comics. Fight Club 2 is available in trade paperback now also from Dark Horse Comics.



Fight Club 3 #1 covers: from left: KIrbi Fagan, David Mack and Duncan Fegredo





Swimming To Save DC At The Cinema

***Aquaman* is the latest DC Extended Universe movie out this December. However, with the box office performance of films like Justice League and Suicide Squad, can Jason Momoa's king of Atlantis save the day? JOEL MEADOWS takes a look in his watery crystal ball...**



There is a great deal riding on Warner Bros' *Aquaman* film starring Jason Momoa and out in December in the cinemas. The last DC Extended Universe film was Wonder Woman, which was released at the end of 2017 and generated $821.8m at the box office. This is the closest that DC has had so far to a huge international movie hit. Justice League, which was also released in 2017 and made $657m at the box office. This film introduced the world properly to Aquaman (Jason Momoa) and it needs to be a hit as big or probably larger than *Wonder Woman*. If Marvel/ Disney weren't in the market, then $800m for a superhero movie would be pretty good. But when you point out that the two Marvel films released this year (*Black Panther* and *Avengers: Infinity War*) grossed $1.344bn and $1.41bn respectively, then that puts everything into sharp relief.

If DC have any chance of giving the onscreen House of Ideas aka Marvel Studios a run for their money, Aquaman needs to get close to the $1bn mark at the international box office. It is uncertain just how close it will get to this. *Wonder Woman* came closest of DC's movies but that was the end of last year.

Director James Wan does have a good pedigree as a director of hit horror movies The Conjuring and The Conjuring 2 and action franchise film Fast & Furious 7 but sometimes it is less about the director of superhero films than it is about how all the chemistry comes together. Taiki Waititi had a career as a man who makes quirky Kiwi comedy films but Thor was a known quantity, which helped it to hit its $854m worldwide box office.

Wan just explained in an interview in the latest issue of Empire why Aquaman appealed to him:





Arthur Curry (Jason Momoa) faces off against Orm Ocean Master (Patrick Wilson)

"I've always loved telling underdog stories. I'm an underdog myself. When you come from the horror world, you're always seen as the bastard stepchild and no-one ever takes you seriously."

Momoa, who this film arguably will stand and fall on as the protagonist seemed upbeat about Aquaman when EW spoke to him back in July:

"It's tough because you're going from one filmmaker, Zack [Snyder], who gave birth to it, to another. The new director has to be able to build a whole new world and set the tone. And James let me do silly stuff. He'd encourage me to be more goofy and then I'd watch [scenes during post-production] and I was like, "Holy s–, he kept that in!" I did a lot of stuff that I didn't think he was going to keep."

In a brief red carpet interview he did with The Upcoming, he admitted that it felt a bit strange that it was finished and out for people to see: "It's been five years in the making so it's a little surreal now."

"These are the most stunts I've ever done in my life so it's action-packed," Momoa revealed in the same interview.

Momoa does have a very big worldwide following partly thanks to his role in one season of *Game of Thrones* as Kol Drogo but is this enough to guarantee an impressive performance?

"As of this writing, early word on Aquaman is very positive indeed. I believe that the film will easily clear $800m worldwide and it may beat Wonder Woman, the other highest-performing DCEU movie."

As of this writing, early word on Aquaman is very positive indeed. I believe that the film will easily clear $800m worldwide and it may beat Wonder Woman, the other highest-performing DCEU movie.

By the time you read this, the film will have opened and we shall all know if it has worked.

2019 currently just has one DC movie, *Shazam!*, in April while Marvel has *Capain Marvel* in March and *Avengers 4* at the end of April. If *Aquaman* is a hit, then DC and Warner Bros. will be able to breath easier. Jason Momoa's shoulders will have to be fairly wide to carry this burden.

Aquaman is out in cinemas now.



Queen Mera (Amber Heard)

Keep On Swinging



***Spider-man: Into The Spider-verse* is a brand new animated film from Sony Pictures out this December which gives Miles Morales, the alternate Spider-man, his debut onscreen adventure. With a lot of buzz around this feature, JOEL MEADOWS looks at its genesis...**

It's been quite a year for Marvel at the cinema box office. Releasing two films (Black Panther and Avengers: Thanos) which grossed a staggering $2.74bn at the international box office, the year ends with Spider-man: Into The Spider-verse, an animated film that features Miles Morales, the Spider-man of another dimension, who teams up with the web slinger we all know (Peter Parker) and other superpowered Spider heroes to face a huge interdimentional threat.

Buzz is already mounting for the film with movers and shakers like Oscar winning director Guillermo del Toro talking it up. Sony has already announced before it has even opened in any of its territories in EW this week that they shall be moving ahead with at least one follow-up movie set in the same world. That shows real confidence on the film company's part.

So how much do we know about this animated movie? It has been been helmed by three directors (Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey and Rodney Rothman), a practice not uncommon in animation as the work needed to create an animated feature is very labour-intensive. Its screenplay is by Phil Lord, best known as one half of the team who brought the juggernaut Lego Movie and its related fims like The Lego Batman Movie and Lego Ninjago Movie to life with Christopher Miller. Voice talent includes Hallee Steinfeld as Gwen Stacy, Nicolas Cage as Spider-man Noir, Shameik Moore as Miles Morales/ Spider-man and Liev Schreiber as The Kingpin.

"It's been a two year process and I'm very excited to get this movie out at New York Comic Con. What is it like to be Spider-man? he's one of the most loved superhero characters ever."- Shameik Moore, the voice of Miles Morales/ Spider-man

Moore spoke to Marvel back in October at New York Comic Con where he seems to have had a great time playing the voice role of Morales.

"It's a great process. There are other cool Spider-men involved as well. It's been a two year process and I'm very excited to get this movie out at New York Comic Con. What is it like to be Spider-man? he's one of the most loved superhero characters ever."

Jake Johnson, who voiced Peter Parker in the film, was equally pleased when he got the call, he revealed also to Marvel at New York Comic Con back in October.

"I was really excited to play Peter Parker. I grew up a fan and also for this I was really excited to play Peter Parker in a Phil Lord/ Chris Miller version, because those two are extremely talented so I knew the movie was going to be in good hands."

The directors had a very specific vision



of how it was going to be created as well. One of its directors, Bob Persischetti, whose CV includes head of story on animated films like *Puss In Boots* and The Little Prince, outlined their approach in an interview all three co-directors did with Collider back in August.

"First the challenge was 'Oh we're making another Spider-man movie. [The question was]: Why are we making another Spider-man movie? Because we're telling Miles Morales' origin story. Great. We're going to make it animated. If we're going to do that there is no better medium for honouring where the comics first came from which is a printed comic book. So we took a lot of the same processes that were 75 years old and we tried to turn that into a cinematic language. That was the starting point."

"If we were going to do this as an animated film, there is no better medium for honouring where the comics first came from which is a printed comic book."
– Bob Persischetti, co-director, Spider-man: Into The Spider-verse

He took a break and continued:"Then on top of that the actual animation, the style of the animation, the way the animation moves, it's still all CG. There are some hand-drawn burst cards we like to call them but it is pretty much 100 per cent CG. But we've learnt how to break the machine and create a new pipeline. That took a long time," he admitted.

Spider-man: Into The Multiverse is the first cinematically released Marvel anmated adventure but it won't be the last. Box office predictions are a little on the conversative side (around $30 to $40m for its opening) but Marvel and Sony are building a new universe here and it's bound to capture fans' imaginations.

Spider-man: Into The Spider-verse is out in cinemas in the UK from 12 December and US from 14 December.





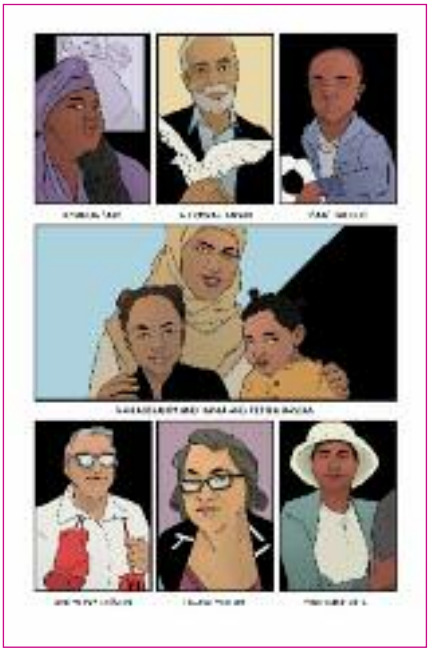
24 PANELS



Described by Kieron Gillen as "the spiritual sequel" to 24 Stories, comic book anthology 24 Panels is a natural extension to the prose collection that Steve Thompson and Rhona Martin put together earlier this year in conjunction with the actor Kathy Burke in order to raise funds for PTSD relief for the survivors of last year's Grenfell Tower disaster. Known for his creator-owned series Phonogram, The Wicked + the Divine and now Die!, Gillen was then brought on board as editor-in-chief to help recruit creators and produce the 112-page volume, which was published late last month by Image Comics.

"24 Stories had been such a success, I had a feeling we could recreate that concept well in comics form," says Thompson. "That is to emphasise stories that were hopeful and uplifting because as odd as it is, those aren't always the stories you see most in your local comic shop."

Taking a lead from Grenfell Tower's 24 storeys, creators were told to tell their





tales over the course of just 24 panels, although it was completely up to them to decide how to reach that mark. "A blank page can be a unique torture, and narrowing the challenge in an interesting way while giving flexibility seemed useful," reasons Gillen. "Someone could do a single page, with a single panel, so they could do less than 24 panels. We suspected it'd mean that most stories would be short, although Dilraj Mann pushed his story to eight pages by having three panels per page. It was also useful in that it stopped writers' scripts sprawling and killing artists working against an impossible deadline to finish everything up."

While based in London himself, Gillen wanted to recruit a range of writers and artists from nearby and further afield. "Like the original 24 Stories, we wanted a mix of curated stories and stories drawn from open submissions from the public, which we then selected from," explains Gillen. "In terms of the curated half, I approached people specifically and while it's not solely



London or even UK creators, they were the first people I did try to approach. Even the foreign people I approached often had a connection to London such as (writer) Alex Di Campi, who spent years here. I wanted a mix of really big names and interesting new voices, and to try to show the breadth of creative talent in comics generally and the UK specifically. Having Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie in the same book as Liz Lunney and Dilraj Mann is a statement of the power of a community, all of which speak to the intent of the book."

As he also lives in west London, Grenfell Tower felt uncomfortably close to home to Lucifer writer Dan Watters.' "When I heard about the anthology, I wanted to contribute however I could, and I approached Kieron to that end," he says. "Without putting too fine a point on it, I live in a tower less than half a mile from Grenfell, managed by the same people, so this happened in my neighbourhood, to my neighbours. The whole area has changed in huge ways since that night, and though it often feels like its been brushed under the carpet as much as possible by those upstairs, the neighbourhood hasn't forgotten anything. It's around us every day."

Drawn by Sarah Gordon who travelled down to W11 to authentically capture the essence of the neighbourhood, Watters's story 'Scratchcards' is inspired by his memories of that dreadful day in June 2017. "On the morning in question, I was woken at 6am by a phone call from Alex Paknadel, my close friend and sometimes co-writer," he continues. "Alex was up early with his kid, and had switched on the TV to see a building ablaze that he initially thought was mine. I looked out the window to see that half the sky was dark. The story is about a rupturing of the normal, being confronted by something unimaginable and trying to absorb it into yourself. I hope it succeeds to that end at least."

"Kieron contacted me asking if I wanted to do anything for it, and obviously I did, as it was for an extremely good cause, and it also focused attention on an incredibly serious failing of the current British Government," adds Al Ewing, whose untitled one-pager is illustrated by Doug Braithwaite. "In the end, I opted for something short and wordless, focusing on the themes of support, community and therapy. And as the story was to be no longer than 24 panels, I had the idea of using those panels as separating spaces, and showing the bridging of the gaps between people, symbolised by the comic book-style gutters between the panels. It's a fairly simple idea that has been executed perfectly by Doug who did a wonderful job showing the emoitons of the people in the panels as they came together into a group."

Stating that he was "delighted when Kieron asked me to take part," Paul Cornell has based his one-page tale – the Rachael Smith-drawn 'The Gleaming Green' around the recuperative benefits of his favourite sport. "It's a very peaceful meditation on the sport of cricket, and more precisely how it relates to stress and mental illness," he explains. "It's about the joy of watching the sport, how well it works to relieve stress, and how many cricketers suffer from depression, in particular, and are open about it. Cricket has made great strides, and has gone way further than any other sport, in addressing those needs."

Initially determined to confine himself to his editorial role, Gillen was eventually persuaded to pen a story himself. "We realised that an introduction would make some sense for the book, and that an introduction doesn't necessarily have to be prose," he admits. "So I got together with my old friend, Sean Azzopardi, and tried to do something that showed the wide principles of the book, with the message being phrased as one of community, from many voices, coming together to do something. I hope it works, and I hope it explains why it's as important to do an anthology to support people suffering PTSD now. Because trauma just doesn't go away magically, and just because it isn't in the news as much, doesn't mean it's not in their heads."

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Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine


SATANA CALLS THE CHURCH THE BODY ORCHARD.
HER FRUIT HANGS FROM THE HIGH WOODEN BEAMS -- MEN, WRAPPED IN A SPELL THAT CONTINUALLY REGENERATES THEIR LIFE --
-- LIFE THAT SATANA CONSTANTLY GNAWS AT.
SATANA IS A SUCCUBUS. TO LIVE, SHE EATS SOULS.
SHE HASN'T SEEN HER BROTHER IN MANY YEARS.
I HAVE TAKEN ON THE BLACK HALO; THE ASPECT OF THE ADVERSARY.
BUT I AM NOT MY FATHER, JAINE.
OH, TO HELL WITH YOU! LITERALLY!
YOU'RE THE DEVIL, RIGHT? ISN'T THERE KIND OF A JOB DESCRIPTION THAT GOES ALONG WITH THAT?
YOU'LL FIGHT HEAVEN, ALL RIGHT-- TO WIN EARTH!

HELLSTORM

Spawning Warren Ellis's Marvel Career

Created in 1973 by Roy Thomas, Tom Sutton and Gary Friedrich "Hellstorm" is one of Marvel's demon characters. That is the Marvel universe interpretation of horror, nothing particularly horrific about it. An occult anti hero over shadowed by the big names, like Dracula, Man Thing, Ghost Rider and Blade etc.

Daimon Hellstrom is the son of Satan (with human woman Victoria Wingate), setting himself up as an occult investigator, being picked up by creator teams when the plot needed something a little demonically tinged. In that time he had joined and left the Defenders and married team mate and model Patsy "Hellcat" Walker. This is where we join the story as Marvel, in their drive to expand in the early nineties, thought they would give him a shot in a new title.

Launching in 1993 the series had managed to have two writers even by the time Ellis took over with issue 11 in 1994 featuring a Steve Pugh cover. Ellis ditches outgoing writer Len Kaminski's storyline, and shoots the cast forward a few weeks to begin his own.

This was Ellis's "mainstream" debut. Up to that point Ellis wasn't known in the US, but he had begun to make a name for himself with his idiosyncratic style; steely & irreverent, with doses of cyberpunk and graphic horror. He seemed a good fit to revamp what was essentially, an occult superhero book on its last legs and needing a kick up the backside. Ellis had already made his name with nihilistic anti heroes like "Lazarus Churchyard" and a number of other projects being queued up at the (short lived) Tundra / Atomeka line.

Ellis begins his run with "Red Miracles", the newly rechristened (?) Hellstorm, finally accepting his heritage and pursuing a serial killer of magicians who makes armour out of their skins. Ellis spends the first few issues finding his feet and developing his supporting cast. Jaine Cutter is a young woman, prototype suicide girl and Siouxsie Sioux clone who develops into the romantic interest for our hellspawned hero; Gabriel, the one-eyed troubled demon hunter, Anton Devine, occultist, satanist and professional whiner and the hangers on from the previous run, Isaac the Gargoyle, harbouring a keen interest in 70s British cop shows and looking like a taller Etrigan the Demon who had let himself go, fulfilling the role of guardian to a comatose Patsy.

The strip meanders in a darkly comic way for a few issues, before Ellis gets a firmer grip on the tiller with issue 16. The plot starts kicking into high gear with a recap of Daimon's origin and confirmation of his heritage and the realisation of his true destiny and his father's legacy. All the while Ellis sows the seeds for an extended run, he had already reintroduced Satana, Daimon's sister, and introduced Stephen Loss, an elderly portly gentleman and fanatic groomed as Hellstorm's new bête noire, and Lavoisin the bearer of Hellstorm's child and heir to the throne of Hell.

The tone is anything but subtle. Ellis being Ellis this is all darkly amusing, but don't expect insidious shadowy horror. This is early Ellis with the rough edges, all body horror, insults, whisky and cigarette smoke. Farcically, the book continued to carry the Comics Code Authority mark on the cover. The CCA had become not just a toothless guard dog, but one that had been muzzled and shackled as well, a joke and an anachronism.

Joining Ellis on the this run was Argentine artist Leonardo Manco, later known for a stellar run on Vertigo's "Hellblazer" and more recently "Rogue Trooper" and "Judge Dredd". With lots of blacks and a grainy scratchy style, his atmospheric, suitably spooky (although occasionally indistinct) art, coloured by the d'emon d'raughtsman, D'Israeli. It was a perfect fit for the infernal Malcolm Tucker dressed as a member of the "Fields of Nephilim" that the Son of Satan had morphed into. Manco was joined by previous series artist and Vertigo mainstay Peter Gross, Derek Yaniger and Martin Chaplin, collaborator on Ellis's vampire story "Sugarvirus". Calling in some favours and recognising the importance of a striking image to sell a comic, Ellis and editorial bring in a number of top name cover artists including Brian Bolland, Steve Pugh, Kevin O'Neill, P. Craig Russell, Mark Buckingham, Steve Pugh, Gary Erskine and Duncan Fegredo.

Sadly, despite some great reviews and a rising profile this was all too little, too late. With typical Ellis facetiousness, the book ends in issue 21 with a "great news for all readers" message, plot threads are wrapped up quickly and succinctly (if not completely satisfactorily) in the final issue. A previously solicited "Satana"special was also cancelled.

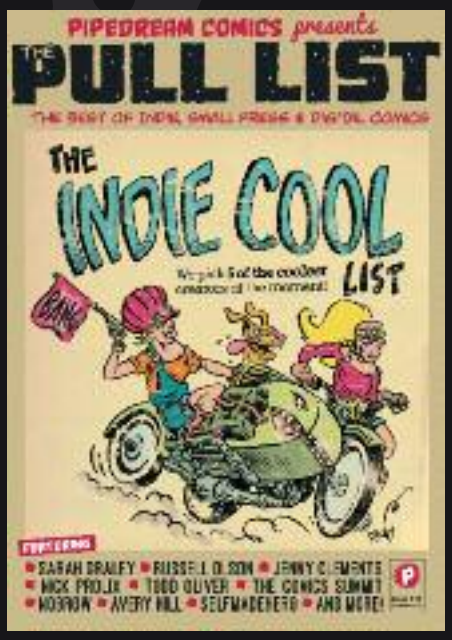
However, that isn't the end of the story. Ellis and Manco soon reunited to re-launch another third rate occult hero "Dr. Druid". Sadly, that fared even less well and lasted 4 issues, concluding with an encounter with Hellstorm that didn't end well for the titular "hero".

Happily for us, all three publications, Ellis's "Dr. Druid", "Hellstorm" and the previously unpublished "Satana" special, are to be collected by Marvel in a hardcover omnibus, scheduled to be on the shelves in October, suitably enough, just in time for Halloween. Hopefully including all those fabulous covers.

Its a fun series, but mainly remembered as the mainstream debut of Ellis and a fresh take on the Marvel Universe. Ellis has definitely gone on to greater work, but it was here that you can see the origins of his very distinctive style, and it's the start of his rampage through the Marvel universe which peaked with "Nextwave" . It's also the place where you can see him testing the themes, ideas and concepts that he would take with him elsewhere and integrate into more sophisticated properties like "Injection", "Strange Kiss" and "Planetary".

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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"And the winner is...."

Alex Thomas looks at the pros and cons of comic book awards

As the year comes to an end, it's that time when everyone starts putting together their Best Of lists, looking back on their highlights of the year and trying to decide that impossible task of what was the best book of the last 12 months.

Trying to pick one book out of the many we review at Pipedream Comics is no easy task, and so we prefer to put the decision in the hands of the readers. Every year we nominate the 10 best indie and small press comics of the year and ask for readers of the site to vote for a winner. (Previous victors include Tillie Walden's On A Sunbeam and Ellice Weaver's Something City)

In our eyes they are all winners, but it is nice to crown an overall 'best of the year' – especially one that is chosen by popular vote. And this year we are delighted to announce that we are teaming up with the wonderful folk here at ComicScene to help bring you this award. But does the world really need more awards?

The problem many people have with awards, is that singling out one title for special praise means there are others who miss out. In our mind though, we think the positives of having a winner and group of nominees outweigh not including everyone and that is why we continue to run them. But also



because UK comics aren't served with a creditable awards any more.

In mainstream comics, the Eisner awards that are given out at the annual San Diego Comic Con every year are the Oscars of comics and winning this prize is still the ultimate accolade. However at the same time they have over 30 categories, ranging from best writer or artist to best academic and scholarly work or best webcomic, and so they are able to cover the bases in a way that others might not be able to.

The Ignatz Awards are part of the Small Press Expo and honour the best of small press, but with them being based in the US inevitably have a more transatlantic flavour to their winners.

Here in the UK, the Yancy Street Awards continue to fly the flag for more mainstream comics awards and are a part of the Edinburgh Comic Convention every year, but this is now something of a rarity.

In years gone by we had the British Comic Awards, presented at Thought Bubble every year, but these haven't been awarded since 2016. And perhaps most well known of all were the Eagle Awards which were started in the 1970s and were part of the also now defunct UK Comic Art Convention (UKCAC). Despite being brought back in the 00s and even featuring an award named in honour of the late great Stan Lee (The True Believer Award), alas these have also faded into the ashes of time along with UKCAC.

Instead the focus for awards seem to have narrowed with groups such as the Scottish Independent Comic Book Awards (SICBA) rewarding Scottish books or Excelsior Awards aimed at younger readers,

So is it time to bring back a British Comics Awards and how would it work? We'd love to hear your thoughts, so why not tweet us @comicsflixukus.

And if you would like to be involved in Indie Comic of the Year then visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk from the beginning of December, but in the meantime enjoy our run down of 25 of the great titles who are in contention.

The 25 BEST INDIE COMICS OF 2018

BROUGHT TO YOU BY PIPEDREAM COMICS

Our pick of the best independent & small press books

APOLLO



After the crazy antics of Last Driver, Matt Fitch and Chris Baker have chosen a new subject that is both down to earth but also still out of this world. Teaming up with veteran artist Mike Collins their take on the Apollo moon landing mixes historical detail with a bit of trademark Fitch and Baker outlandish-ness to make a fascinating and fantastical look at this iconic moment of history.

Buy Apollo from SelfMadeHero.com

AWAY



Having made his name with books like Brethren Born and Late Knights, writer Jon Laight has swung for the fences and hit a home run with his first collaboration with Markosia. Ably assisted by artist Grant Richards, Away



sees a fire-fighter learn that he is secretly a galactic champion, who embarks on missions in the blink of an eye, while his loved ones remain unaware. As the missions get more advanced, so does the time he spends away from his family. Laight uses his personal experience as a fire-fighter and family man to make this ambitious sci-fi tale as emotive as it is epic.

Buy Away from Amazon

BASTARD GALAXIA



An evil skull faced villain attempting to take over the universe may sound like a familiar tale from Saturday morning cartoons of our youth. But Steve Gregson and Matt Simmon's Bastard Galaxia takes some of the more ludicrous ideas from those cartoons and milks them for everything their worth, in this hilarious webcomic that has been collected into an epic trade. From the opening chapter which sees him address his bone troopers, Bastard Galaxia has a frenetic pace that keeps firing gag after gag at you like some kind of high powered evil joke ray. Packed full of nostalgic 80s references and crude silly humour it's one of the funniest, strangest and most enjoyable books we've read all year!

Read Bastard Galaxia at www.bastardgalaxia.com



THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN COSMIC

It's been quite the landmark year for writer/artist Andy W. Clift, with books like 32 Kills and Red Rocket Comet, but this has been perhaps his most accomplished work of all. The Adventures of Captain Cosmic is the kind of comic you just don't get any more – an unfussy, all-ages space adventure, that's a total joy to read. Inspired by the pulp serials of the 1940s and 50s, but with the kinetic artwork of classic Silver Age Marvel, The Adventures of Captain Cosmic isn't trying to be snarky and poke fun at the genre, it's an uncomplicated love letter to the period, and so remains fantastic fun at all times. The stories can be a bit lightweight as a result, but it is the artwork which really makes it, mixing psychedelic Kirby space scenes with the slickness of Darwyn Cooke or Bruce Timm. A truly interstellar read!

Get The Adventures of Captain Cosmic from frontiercomics.bigcartel.com

DEADENDIA



The latest from Pantheon's Hamish Steele has the slick visuals of an Adult Swim animation, but the eclectic and inclusive cast of Lumberjanes. Norma and her best friend Barney work in an amusement arcade which also happens to be a gateway to hell. As well as dealing with the demonic residents, we also see Barney dealing with being trans and their attempts to find their own identity, cope with family and also find love. While it may not have the crude belly laughs of Pantheon, Deadendia is a fantastically original and beautifully realized series and is the kind of book that when it finds it's audience will create dedicated fans for life.

Buy DeadEndia from Nobrow.net

DEATH SENTENCE: LIBERTY GIRL



Monty Nero and Martin Simmonds' tale of sex, drugs and superpowers makes a welcome and explosive return with a visceral, action packed new arc. Set in a world where superpowers are a sexually transmitted disease with a 6 month expiry date, our heroes Verity, Weasal and Roots are back for more as Nero and Simmonds continue to build their violent, sweary and outrageous series, reminding us all just how exciting super-powered storytelling can be in the 21st century.

Death Sentence Liberty Girl is available via Kickstarter



FOLLOW ME IN

Kat Chapman's first full length graphic novel is part travelogue and part doomed love story that chronicles the breakdown of her relationship while traveling in Mexico. It makes for a truly unique read as you are drawn into the wonderful world she is visiting thanks to the stunning scenery artwork. But at the same time the whole book is tinged with a sense of sadness about the end of her relationship. This mixture of styles turns what could have been a fairly ordinary travelogue, or slice of life tale, into something poignant and personal .

Get Follow Me In from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

ETERNAL



Ryan K Lindsay and Eric Zawadzki's fantasy adventure evolved from a 20 page short into a highly ambitious 50 page graphic novel thanks to Zawadzki's eye for a good layout and beautifully designed pages. The tale of a female sword maiden, her son and their battles with local tribes, this is career best work from both men, featuring some truly stunning set pieces and a cleverly conceived almost cyclical plot. A great example of artist and writer working in synergy to create something really exciting and different to their usual output, but ultimately creating one of their best books.

Get Eternal from Amazon

FEARSCAPE



Ryan O'Sullivan's ambitious tale of a failed writer who inadvertently becomes mankind's saviour has the ambitious world building and lyrical style of a Neil Gaiman book. O'Sullivan tells his story using verbose language and 4th wall breaking layouts, including entirely blank pages filled only with dialogue that showcases O'Sullivan's lyrical voice to perfection. Add to this effortlessly cool and immaculate artwork from Andrea Mutti and you have a smart and ambitious piece of fantastical story-telling that draws you in from the very first page.

Buy Fearscape from comiXology

GATEWAY CITY

Reading Russell Olson's retro sci-fi crime noir is like being thrown into your own inter-dimensional vortex. At first you are sent spiralling back to the 1930s and a world of gumshoes and contraband booze, before being catapulted across the galaxy to a planet full of alien gladiators. Gateway City is a love letter to the classic pulps, but with the slick production values of a contemporary indie. Olson's artwork oozes class and the pages feel so old school, they should leave ink-stains on your fingers. But below this vintage sheen is a superb, twisting, turning, crime story about private eyes investigating alien gangsters. With a new collected edition giving the series a slight realignment, Gateway City is a vintage delight and with this and Lady Hollywood, Olson has announced himself as one to watch.

Purchase Gateway City from www.etsy.com/uk/shop



ROLLED A ONE



Space Captain's Chris Baldie leaves his moustachioed hero in space for a more earth bound story as a group of friends embark on a quick game of Dungeons and Dragons. Baldie manages to mix fantastical moments with a wonderful selection of character moments, as this group of disparate friends bond and bicker over their fantasy adventure. The action flits from real life moments in the kids basement, to scenes within the role playing game and it makes for a fantastic and exciting story. All brought to life by Baldie's brilliantly detailed artwork which has the personality of Asterisk and the densely panelled pages of Hilda. This is another high rolling adventure from one of our favourite creators.

Get Rolled A One from etsy.com/uk/shop/chrisbaldie

MANDY THE MONSTER HUNTER: THE LEGEND OF THE SPINDLY MAN



Although they made their name with gory horror like Shock Value and Slaughterhouse Farm, Hellbound Media's true star is the ass-kicking, monster hunting Mandy. Her latest adventure sees her take on her most terrifying villain yet, in the form of the sinister Spindly Man – a kind of Babadook meets Pennywise the clown style super villain who has been kidnapping kids and terrorising other monsters. With artwork from the extremely talented Lyndon White giving the Spindly Man a terrifying arachnid quality, writers Mark Adams and Matt Warner continue to build the world of their must-read heroine and have managed to create one of the most consistently enjoyable and original female small press comics heroes around.

Get Mandy The Monster Hunter from www.hellboundmedia.co.uk

ON A SUNBEAM



Previously released as an epic webcomic, Tillie Walden's coming of age space opera makes our list thanks to its print debut via Avery Hill Publishing. Released in the aftermath of Tillie's Eisner award win for Spinning this now feels like a bold move away from her more personal and introspective work, but without ever losing what makes her work so compelling – i.e. a subtle and intimate look at teen sexuality and the search for identity. Add to this an out of this world sense of design and world building with giant space cathedrals and ships that look like koi carp then you have this utterly unique book that continues the exciting trajectory of one of comics most innovative voices.

Get On A Sunbeam from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com



KINGDOM

Jon McNaught captures the minutiae of a holiday to the English seaside in this perfectly observed slice of sequential story telling. Packing his pages with up to 30 panels at a time, McNaught focuses on the quiet moments and subtle details of a scene to create beautiful moments. From the mundanity of a motorway service station to a trip to a provincial museum. They combine together to make a nostalgic and slightly melancholic look at family holidays, as he creates mosaics of moments which he weaves together into a very readable, but also very poignant book.

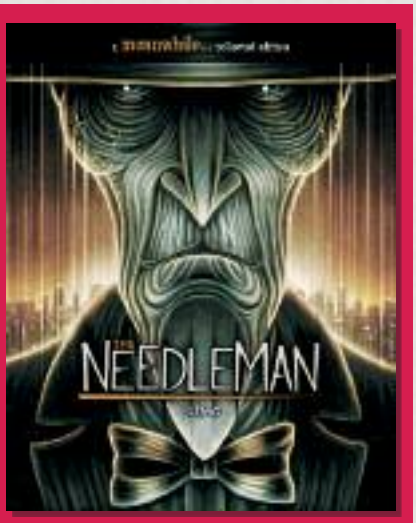
Get Kingdom from nobrow.net



KILLTOPIA

Dave Cook and Craig Paton's ultra-violent, dystopian thriller is not only a fantastic example of an ambitious small press sci-fi book, but is also a fantastic example of how to market a self published comic. Thanks to months of build up from Cook, by the time it was finally launched we had gotten used to the concepts on offer, and the name was never far from the top of our most anticipated book of the year list. Thank goodness then, that it more than lived up to our sky high expectations with its world of killer mechs, larger than life wreckers and an undercurrent of dry British humour. All this is brought to life by some stunning Frank Quitely-esque visuals from Paton and a hyperactive, eye-popping colour palette too. Over the course of 2018, Killtopia went from a being small press star with bags of potential, to a full blown indie comics sensation when it was picked up by BHP Comics and claimed its rightful place on the shelves of the nation's comic stores.

Get Killtopia from bhpcomics.tictail.com



THE NEEDLE MAN

In a shadowy art deco city, the secret police known as Needle Men dispatch their unique brand of justice. But when one of them comes across a criminal who is set to turn their ordered world upside down he has to break the normal chain of command. Martin Simpson's incredible graphic novel is like Fritz Lang's Metropolis, but with the art deco styling and golden colour scheme of Baz Luhrmann's Great Gatsby. With some of the most breath taking art we have seen all year, this is one of those books which raises the bar of quality for indie comics.

Get The Needle Man from www.comichaus.com

RETROGRADE ORBIT



A great example of how science fiction can be used to tell modern parables. Krystyna Baczynski's tale of a young alien girl living on a mining colony and yearning for her family's home on the irradiated planet of Doma, is a heart warming and poignant tale of searching for identity. Taking elements of Krystyna's own experience as the daughter of a Ukrainian immigrant it mixes this emotive story of family and a search for belonging with slick industrial sci-fi styling and a beautiful sense of design and composition. All rendered in a beautiful duo-tone colour palette. Released at the same time as On A Sunbeam and Follow Me In, this may well be Avery Hill's most underrated release of the year, but one that is the most deserving of discovery.

Get Retrograde Orbit from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

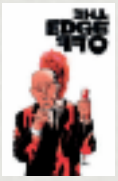
THE BAWDY TALES OF LAZLO CALE



You don't get a lot of 'bawdiness;' these days, but its the perfect word to describe Andrew Maxwell and Goran Gligovic's intergalactic art heist escapade. Our hero Lazlo goes from high-price male escort to international art dealer, but when one of his clients persuades him back for one last job he is drawn back into conflict with his long time nemesis – who just happens to be Edgar Allan Poe. This is because the whole book is set in a world where an inter-dimensional bomb has realigned the universe and all realities exists at the same time. Which in short allows Maxwell to create a world that mixes futuristic tech and Parisian Art Nouveau decadence. Add to this an adult tone which is just the right side of risqué and you get the brilliant and ambitious slice of sci-fi slickness with one of the most charismatic and exciting lead characters we've read all year.

Get The Bawdy Tales of Lazlo Cale from ComiXology

THE EDGE OFF



If William Burroughs wrote a straight to DVD action thriller and turned it into a small press comic, then it would be somewhere close to Fraser Campbell and Iain Laurie's psychedelic revenge thriller The Edge Off. The concept of a hit man out for revenge on gangsters who kidnap his daughter may sound like the plot of Taken 4 but thanks to a sub-plot involving a hallucinogenic designer drug that our hero Lee has been forced to take, along with Laurie's twisted and surreal artwork that feel like a waking nightmare, and it makes this into one of the most strange, and truly unforgettable books you will read all year.

Get The Edge off from cabalcomics.bigcartel.com

PIRATE FUN: THE FIRST TRIAL

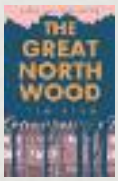
Fun Mudlifter is back in the follow up to Colin Bell and Neil Slorance's cult small press classic Dungeon Fun. Continuing the zany antics of our anti-heroine Fun and her ghostly guide Graves, Pirate Fun is a laugh out loud mix of crazy antics, clever wordplay and super sight gags. After mining the fantasy genre for all it's worth, this time they've gone to the world of pirates for a world of krackoctopuses, pirate game-shows and magical mer-men. It features all your favourite characters from Dungeon Fun: from Fun and Graves through to Bronan, Hel and Frank Baxter. But there's also new characters like Philip Fun (a poor punning Peter Pan parody) and Blancbeard the pirate, to name just a few. Pirate Fun is like Adventure Time crossed with The Secret of Monkey Island and is the perfect all ages comics, but with more than enough to keep older readers happy on their adventures!

Pirate Fun will be returning to Kickstarter in 2019



Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
For more great indie comics coverage visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk

THE GREAT NORTH WOOD



While we've always loved Tim Bird's thoughtful looks into the English landscape, this is the first time he has created a book which we have enjoyed reading as much as we have enjoyed thinking about the message inside. Centred on an ancient wood that stretches across south London, Bird tells the story of this area through a series off vignettes that are anchored together by a fox who appears in various guises. It allows Bird to look at everything from ancient rituals to local myths to urban decay and the decline of the English countryside. With it's large format and intricate panel design it is a poignant and thoughtful book that is also very readable and a really underrated gem that should appeal to a huge variety of comic and non-comic fans alike.

Get The Great North Wood from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

THE TIMES I KNEW I WAS GAY



The most ambitious book from the team at Good Comics yet, this autobiographical tale from Ellie Crewes chronicles her journey of coming to terms with her sexuality. But rather than rely on some great expositionary moment, it tells of the complexity and dilemmas that this process involves and it makes for a much more compelling and intimate read as a result. Chronicling her early life, through to her coming out in her early 20s, it's a beautifully poignant read that is made to feel even more personal thanks to Ellie's sketchbook style which makes it really feel like you are getting a glimpse into a very real story as it reads like a diary. Her use of full page imagery helps to pace the story to perfection and this is without doubt the best thing that Good Comics have released to date.

Purchase The Time I Knew I Was Gay from goodshop.bigcartel.com

TRUJILLO / L1MA



It's difficult to pick which of Gustaffo Vargas' books deserve mentioning here and so we have opted for both. His unique blend of dystopian cyperpunk sci-fi and stylised South American visuals has created some of the most exciting and original small press comics we have read this year. Set in a near future Peru, L1MA and Trujillo feature Incan street gangs, drug peddling animals and grim and gritty gory action. They read like an ultra-violent Futureshock and while not for the feint hearted they are some of the most visceral and exciting small press books we have read in a long time.

Get Trujilo and L1MA from gustaffovargas.bigcartel.com



WOLF

Set in the 1970s, Rachael Ball's tale of a family coming to terms with the loss of their father, while also attempting to find out the story behind their mysterious neighbour the Wolf Man, is a glorious mix of heartfelt kitchen sink drama and fantastical childhood misadventure. It alternates from poignant family moments with raw emotions, to surreal flights of fancy involving a go kart based on HG Wells' Time Machine, and even has elements of horror with the mysterious man next door (who is much more than he might seem). Ball handles all these strands to perfection to create a truly timeless read.

Get Wolf from selfmadehero.com



RED ROCKET COMET

Writer Matt Garvey is no stranger to best of lists, thanks to books like white NOIR and The Ether. But this year's entry is perhaps his most ambitious yet. Jerry and Lloyd are retired superheroes who share a past, but what dark secret is it that means Lloyd is appearing at Jerry's window in the middle of the night? This Watchmen-esque opener develops into something really special thanks to the story being split into two distinct time-lines. Each strand has artwork from a different artist providing the light and dark for each part. The dark is provided by Circusside's Grayham Puttock, whose shadowy and ominous pencil drawn style gives it a dark and horrific undertone. While the light is handled by man of the moment, Andy W. Clift, whose retro style gives the vintage story a real old school feel, but with a hint of danger at the same time. While it is the artists who shine in this page-turning one shot, it is Garvey's idea and management of the two sides of the story that makes this his most accomplished book to date.

Get Red Rocket Comet from mattgarvey.bigcartel.com

"There is only one way to build a community, and that's to make everything you put out for the community"

We talk to **Lorenzo Etherington** about the amazing success of How to THINK When You Draw and how to build a community

One of this year's most exciting stories has been the Kickstarter success of Lorenzo Etherington's How To Think When You Draw (the most successful comic Kickstarter ever!). As further reward for this amazing achievement we are awarding them the first ever Pipedream Comics Community Champion award, for bringing together the comics and art community together like never before. We catch up with Lorenzo to find out more about it's amazing success.

Congratulations on the amazing success, did you ever expect it to take off in such an amazing fashion?
Lorenzo Etherington: Thank you so much – it was an amazing thing to witness, and I say witness more than "make happen" because it was really the community around the series that made the campaign explode the way it did. It felt like there was a lot of goodwill around the tutorials in general, and to see that convert into such a huge event was magical. When I hit the target in the first 30 minutes after making the campaign live (before I'd told anyone about it!) I felt that something epic was about to unfold!

What's been the best and most challenging part of this success?
LE: I'd done a few Kickstarters before, and although they had been smaller, the mechanics of running a simple book-based Kickstarter really scale up quite simply. The best thing was probably sending my 'how to draw' books to backers at Disney, Pixar, EA, Dreamworks, Blizzard, Ubisoft, Sony, Rockstar etc



The Etherington Brothers are the winners of our first Community Champion Award

For those who have been living under a rock can you tell us a bit about it?
LE: How To THINK When You Draw is a massive series of FREE online drawing tutorials, covering an enormous range of subjects. The series is extremely user-friendly, designed to benefit every skill level, from the absolute beginner to the seasoned professional. They are used by everyone from children up to seasoned professionals at the world's BIGGEST animation, film and games studios. The Kickstarter was for a book which gathered together the first year or so of them into a full colour hardback 200 page book.

And why do you think it resonated with so many people?
LE: I think when I launched the series, learning on the internet had become so monetised that it was almost impossible to learn to draw online without having to constantly dip into your pocket to unlock a pay-wall or subscription teaching service. I think people were tired of that, they missed (as I did) the more generous internet from 10 – 15 years ago, where people shared their skills online because it was amazing to be able to help people with no barriers.

You've have done an amazing job of creating a community, is that something which is important to you?
LE: I think there is only one way to build a community, and that's to make everything you put out FOR the community. It's all about giving people an endless stream of content which helps THEM, not which solely serves YOU. Our followers know that every day they'll get content from us which will be 100% focused on helping them raise THEIR art and writing.

Find out more about their up and coming books & Kickstarters at theetheringtonbrothers.blogspot.com

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
For more great indie comics coverage visit **www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk**

"We wanted to give a platform for indie creators."

Pete Genepool talks to us about the new look Comichaus Anthology and the importance of the Comichaus app.

This latest issue of Comichaus has come from a long period of hibernation for the comic. What's been going on behind the scenes?
Pete Genepool: We took a much needed time out for about five months just to get our plans straight for the future. It seemed like the best time to do it as we had just released #10 which tied up all the current story-lines. We wanted to ensure that it was going in the right direction and also concentrate on building the Comichaus App content up. We believe the app is so important in allowing readers to discover indie comics, but as with most things it is very chicken and egg. You need the content to get the readers, and publishers want to make sure you have the readers before adding the content! We're very happy now with the way it is continuously growing.

Now out in the wild, #11 of Comichaus consists of one-shots, instead of the usual ongoing strips that's defined past issues. Why the change in format?
PG: It was a very hard decision to make, as we always wanted to do an indie 2000ad with the continuing story arcs, but we have found that it was a big commitment for the indie readers, especially as we started it off as a monthly. It is a long time to have to wait to see how your favourite story pans out.

What exactly can readers expect from #11 then?
PG: The same, but with all the stories being self-contained. We are no longer keeping the story pages to just six pages, so creators



can spread their wings a bit, but essentially we are going to still be featuring amazing indie creators' stories. Cover for issue 11 is by the incredible Adam Brown, who also features as page artist within for his collaboration with Mark McCann. We also have our winner of the University of Dundee competition we ran, where Anna Morozova did art and letters for a script we provided. Creative alumni from such small press publishing groups as Madisu Comics and Mad Robot Comics are also involved.

I understand some ongoing strips from previous issues will be continued as trades?
PG: Yes indeed! 'Chalk', 'Karyn Shade' and 'The Troubleshooters' will all have trades coming which will also include the first chapters previously printed in the anthology. Can't wait to see those in print. The creators are just working on these 'Chapter II' instalments as we speak.

How have the various writers and artists involved in Comichaus reacted to the change in the comic's format?
PG: It has been overwhelmingly supportive. I think from the creators' point of view it is an easier sell for them to have one book with their story in it. Or a trade with a complete story, so everyone has been really cool about it.

What will be different about Comichaus from #11 onwards?
PG: It won't be published as often as we were doing previously (monthly) but apart from that it will still be featuring and supporting as many indie creators as we can fit in. We had commissioned a lot of content for the next year before we decided on the new format so we have plenty of stories to publish.

Comichaus has proven to be a fiercely diverse publication. What was your vision for the comic in its early days?
We wanted to give a platform for the indie creators and work with them on increasing their profile, and ours. Grow together in a big creative family I guess. I think with the current climate within the industry diversity is as essential as it has ever been – and we want to strive to keep the quality and the diversity going in the publication.

Much emphasis has been given



Comichaus' app continues to bring the best new indie comics to your iPad





Issue 11 features all new one shot stories including Night Swimmer and Blasphemy

on Comichaus the app, but as this anthology demonstrates, Comichaus is also a comic and a publisher. What's it like to wear multiple hats? Do they complement each other?
PG: I would like to think they do. Featuring indie creators in the anthology, in our other published titles and on the app/marketplace site goes hand in hand in my mind. It all crosses over and we can promote the whole thing and benefit everyone in the long run. Our endeavour is to give something back to the Indies and create a model for them where they can gain more of a profile and have readers discover their comic books. My dream would be for the app to grow to a size where the Indies can make some money and also promote the print copies of their books.

Comichaus has been on the indie scene for two years now, how has the anthology been received in that time?
PG: When James McCulloch and I first discussed doing this crazy idea, I for one had no idea we would have had so much support within the industry. Readers and press alike have been very complimentary and each good review gives us the confidence to try new things.

If you're familiar with the U.K indie scene, every issue of Comichaus features a familiar creator, how easy/difficult is it bringing comic creators on board the anthology?
PG: Thanks to James we were never short of material at the start. He hooked up so many great creators to be involved and it has just snowballed from there. We are constantly being sent submissions but have had to slow things down a bit now as we are quite far ahead scheduling wise. I do feel there is a massive confederation of Indies out there who are all working together and cross pollinating. We have featured quite a few spin off stories ourselves from our peers and I think this mutual support is essential as will undoubtedly be stronger together.



Pete and Comichaus have released original series like 32 Kills and Lizard Men

With this new format in the can, what does the future hold for Comichaus?
PG: Just continuing to build and support as much as we can. As we are only a small indie we keep having to think outside the box regarding the app and getting the word out there. All of the publishers involved with the app so far have also been amazing at helping get the word out. We would love to keep gaining more and more content from the Indies and hopefully get hold of some of the bigger indie publishers' books as well. We also have four new books out now, '32 Kills', 'Close', 'Lizard Men', and 'City of Lost Souls'.

What's been the most rewarding thing about working on the comic?
PG: Every sale and everyone who reads it. Even one person coming back to a comic con to buy the next issue feels great. From the app perspective – seeing people using the app and discovering their next favourite comic book is a massive buzz also. I personally love looking at how many times everyone's books on there has been read by a member of the public.



GUNSLINGERS, DEVIL DEALERS AND COLD ZOMBIES

THE MANIC PAST OF COMICHAUS

Anthologies are ten for a penny across the indie comics landscape. They're a sure-fire way of unlocking diverse writers and artists in creating a work that's stripped of the necessity to be traditionally cohesive. One such publication to give traditional cohesion the middle finger is Comichaus. As if to affirm its metamorphic state, its newest release, #11, signals a new era for the comic, as it does away with the ongoing strips that's defined its existence so far in favour of one-shots. With such a move on the cards, we felt it's due to look back on the comic's past incarnation as a multi-layered anthology with thrills and spills that bleed into each of the comic's first 10 issues.

What's instant and steadfast about Comichaus when reading it is a no-nonsense approach to some deliriously nonsensical strips. Stories range from action-heavy science fiction, dystopian Westerns, to apocalyptic human dramas, but each strip is executed in monochrome. Despite the welcome diversity in themes and ideas, the black-and-white approach implants a grim, steadfast mood throughout each issue. The bulk of these strips boast a serialised pattern, which promises to be a stark split from #11 in the years to come.

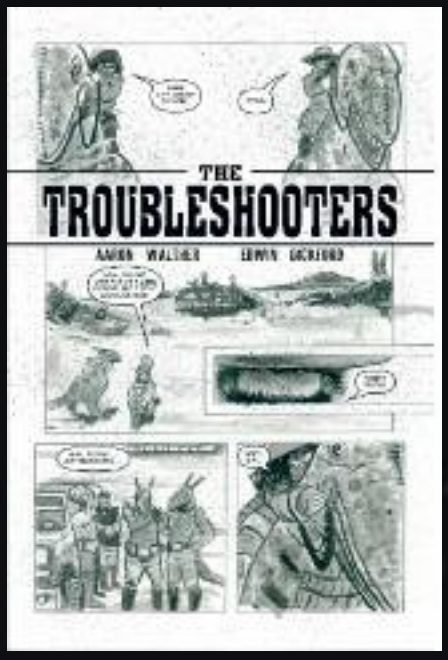
By its own format then, another key characteristic flourishes from strip to strip – a snarling, punky attitude to story-telling. Comichaus' stories aren't then really told, they're spat out like bursts of rapid gunfire, whether the

strip in question deserves that manner of story-telling or not. Karyn Shade, the first ongoing strip in Comichaus' first issue, is a good example of this. A three-part knock-'em-sock-'em crime thriller with supernatural overtones, it's wraps itself up before its story can be explored robustly. Jessica Byrne's humorous razor-sharp art is let-down somewhat by James McCulloch's script, who's jittery nature matches the horror themes of the story, but rarely settles down to tell a cohesive story.

Card Shark Comics' Feather is a more positive example of how the serialised format of Comichaus works at its most muscular. A five-part mini-epic that depicts the Earth falling victim to a bird-like disease that leads to an Armageddon between the Rapture and the Earth's remaining resistance fighters is given a simple yet conscience emotional canvas. Two estranged lovers, both representing each side, brings the two faction colliding with explosive results. It may not be the most original story you'll read, but it's one of Comichaus' vibrant and narratively successful endeavours. It's bolstered by Dave Cook's well-tuned script, one that balances action and emotion and Norrie Millar's manic artwork, in which landscapes and characters blur together. Perhaps then it's not a case of how many instalments each strip has, but how it uses those instalments.

The Troubleshooters fuses the strongest and weakest elements of Comichaus together by weaving an absorbing universe with a narrative that crumbles into an unfocused affair. What starts off as a delectable affair of tense loyalty as two gunslingers wander into town and offer their services amidst a civil war goes awry when the focus shifts onto a laboured betrayal of love from different characters. The forthcoming collected trade edition of The Troubleshooters, one of several strips to do so, will hopefully correct the course of this strip, or at least make sense of it. Beyond this, any excuse to revisit Ed Bickford's gorgeously swamp-like artwork, a perfect visual companion to its Western themes, is a good one. Chalk is the most glorious





From issue #1, stories like Karyn Shade and Trouble Shooters stood out from the crowd

thing Comichaus has done thus far. A six-part epic that gleefully exploits Comichaus' anthology nature, high dosages of smirk-ridden romance and sky-high fantasy made it an intoxicating read. It's a welcome expansion then to have Chalk be one of the three strips leaping from the anthology into its own collected trade in the near future.

FUNNY & FRIGHTENING

Scattered throughout these early issues are a variety of one-shots whose scope can't help but pale in comparison to the comic's focus on the serialised strips. However, they're often a humorous read and their one-off nature gives each issue a balanced pace. Foreshadowing its future however, towards the end of Comichaus' first era, the anthology grew increasingly reliant on one-off stories and ongoing strips that bore a smaller scope. The sublimely haunting Cold and the oddly youth-orientated yet entertaining Mandy the Monster Hunter became the last of the longer arcs, supplemented by the four-part Homeopathos by Madius Comics duo Michael Sambrook and Rob Jones, a quirky, enjoyable outing into humour-laced psychological action. It's one of Comichaus' later-day gems that showed how briefer strip runs didn't lose the narrative impact of earlier strips.

Later issues condense the insanity still further. Sandwiches and Monochrome Kid from #9 evoke uneasy surroundings yet bear the twisted grin Comichaus has made a trademark for, particularly in the downright weird two-parter Splendid Grins. #10 brings it all home with Gary Welsh's standalone epic The Lost Legionnaire. Lettered by Jones, its melodramatic yet brutish take on historical fantasy sends #10 out on a high, and with it the first run of Comichaus itself.

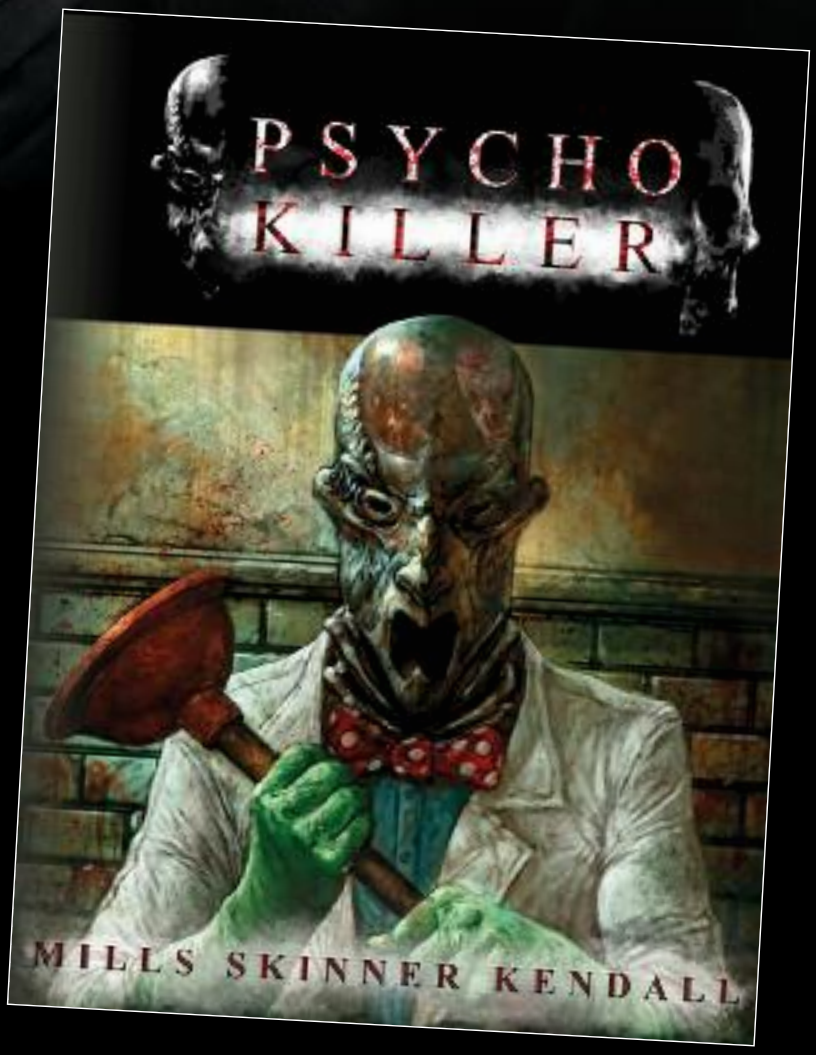
Throughout its past 10 issues, Comichaus has proven delectable with its growling eclecticism. A palpable sense of menace lingers over each issue, so it will be interesting to see if that menace can drip into #11 and beyond as the newly regenerated Comichaus takes shape. The comic's rough urgency may be in danger of evaporating with the standalone strips, but their one-off nature has the capability to retain Comichaus' delightfully unpredictability. That's always a sign of a great anthology, a familiarity that encourages you to pick the issue up, but an uncertainty in knowing what's inside.



THE LAST WORD

with **Pat Mills**

Starting in Comics Today

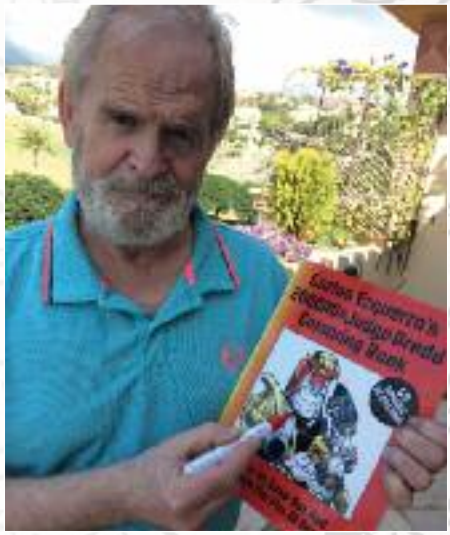


This is a question I'm often asked: **How do I get started in comics today?** I'll do my best to give you a brief overview of possible ways, although I may not be up to speed on all the very latest possibilities. I know it's tougher than when I started out, but there are still ways and means. It's toughest of all for writers. It's going to be hard, if not impossible, to attract a 'hot' artist to work with you. You can pay for an artist, of course, and self-publish, but that can be a miserable and risky business unless you really understand the independent comics market and its limitations. Networking is also a possibility, but I have to say that the various people I knew who tried networking didn't make it, because they seemed to put all their energy into schmoozing and boozing with editors at conventions and not actually writing or drawing. Anyway, here we go:

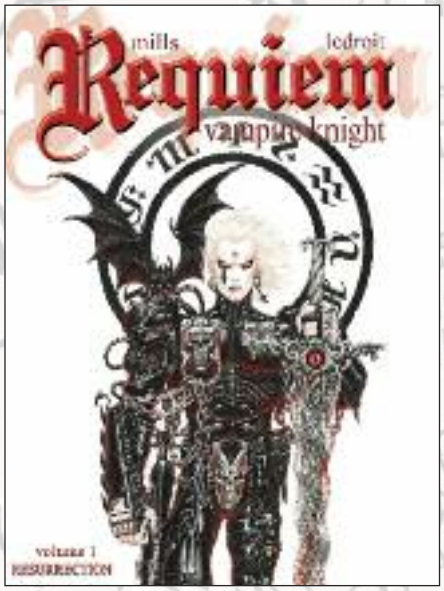
- Writing or drawing for fanzines like Zarjaz and Dogbreath. These two are dedicated to 2000AD characters and, if your script or art is accepted, it could give you the confidence to try 2000AD itself.
- 2000AD and the Megazine. It sounds really daunting breaking into Tharg's command centre. But, if you really study the publication and persevere and you have something special to say, you may get lucky. But don't expect a quick result.
- Mainstream British comics. D. C. Thomson has to be one possibility. I believe they're still supportive of promising new writers and artists. There's Commando, The Beano and probably other publications as well. A sideways technique is also worth considering: work for one DCT publication – even one you don't especially like - so you can gain an introduction to the one you're really interested in. There's also Egmont publications like Toxic; Panini's Doctor Who magazine; and The Phoenix.

- American comics. There's a whole spectrum of obvious possibilities from superhero comics to IDW and Image Comics.
- French comic books. Unless you have a knowledge of the French market and connections, or a very French or European art style, I would say, with great regret, don't go there.
- British publishers. SelfMade Hero is the obvious name that comes to mind, but they have a very specific arts-orientated niche in the market. Titan Comics is another possibility. Once again, you could consider the sideways approach – get into one publication that may not be to your liking, establish yourself, and then gain an introduction to another. It used to happen all the time on 2000AD: writers and artists would use the Galaxy's Greatest as a stepping stone to gather a portfolio to work for Vertigo or Marvel. It annoyed the hell out of me, but, hey – you gotta do what you gotta do to get started.
- British 'up-market' publishers. There's a number of them and I know there are a few successes here, but the numerous negative stories I've heard about them confirm my own experience. (Quick example: one well-known mainstream publisher wanted to know how many followers I had on twitter before deciding whether to commission me. Even tho' you can buy followers on twitter!) I know of established and successful creators who've been given a truly miserable runaround or lived on a pittance of an advance to produce their graphic novels. I'd personally forget them.
- American and British children's book publishers. There's an overlap here between children's books, YA and comic books. Macmillan's is a case in point. Their standard will be high.
- Girls comic (and adult female) market. Potentially and historically this market could easily outsell the male comic market by two to one. I've no info on anyone who's commissioning, alas. Sadly, our industry is still largely a male sandpit.
- Independents. Crowd funded comics. Web comics. Guerrilla comics.

  Not my area of expertise, not least because I could not face those Diamond distributor forms and they're NOT vital – see below. It's a lot of effort for a small return, but it's useful as a showcase. I'm a huge fan of guerrilla artist, the British comic Banksy, Darren Cullen. www.spellingmistakescostlives.com. His fantastic innovations and imagination show that anything is still possible today! His important and ground-breaking work is a potential role model for others to follow in their own field.
- Comixology and Kindle. They work, they make money – I can tell you that from first hand experience. Okay, Millsverse is publishing Requiem Vampire Knight series by Ledroit and his art is world class



and absolutely mind-blowing, but, BUT! It sells largely to an American audience even though they are traditionally resistant to such European art. So your British art could, potentially, find an even more receptive audience. Tip: Go for a series. It will sell better.
- Kindle Print (previously Createspace). The traditional attraction of publishers is that they will pay for a good-sized print run and do lots of marketing for you. Not anymore – you have to do your own



marketing if you want to make money. Do not rely on publishers who will normally keep their marketing team for their A-list authors. And, with Kindle Print and similar systems of print on demand, the print run is no longer a factor. So why not publish and market yourself? The quality of print on demand is just as good. Check out our Psychokiller – art by horror artist supremo Dave Kendall. And the 2000AD & Judge Dredd colouring book by the late great and deeply missed Carlos Ezquerra. Yet, despite the proven quality of these books, when we first published them a year or so ago, we could only find one comic artist in America who was 'considering' using Createspace. Just one! Even though it was finally, finally empowering creators! And I've talked to artists since about publishing their work this way. Guess what? They ain't interested. They'd rather their work collected dust! Crazy! I wonder if it's some kind of old-fashioned snobbery? Or they still believe in last century's dream that if they find a publisher, he will wave a magic wand, produce a beautiful book, market it, distribute it, and give them a huge advance. Dream on!
- Showcase your work here in Comic Scene UK as several artists have already done.

There's a lot more to say about getting started and I go into it in detail in my weekly blog series Storyteller on **www.millsverse.com**. Each week I highlight a different aspect of publishing with my usual no-holds barred approach. **Hope it helps you and, meantime, good luck!**

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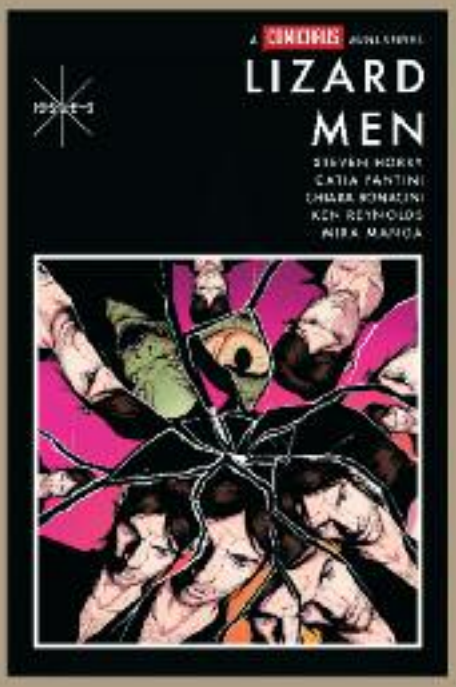
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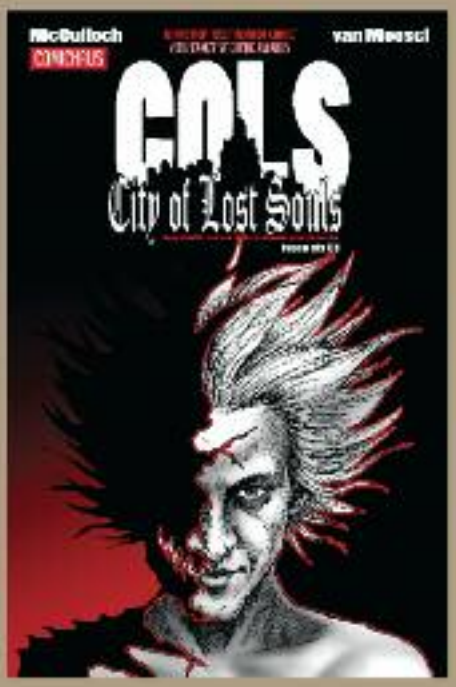
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