



*THE ORIGINAL UNIVERSE*

*NUMBER 4*

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**The Original Universe** is published approximately 6 times a year on a bi-monthly schedule. Sample issues are available for \$3 Canadian, about the same cost as many comics. You can also subscribe at a cost of \$12 per year.

The zine is also available free for The Usual. The Usual consists of several options:

- i) **LOC (Letter of Comment):** This is the most common method, and recommended even if you use the other methods as well. This is simply a letter to the editor giving feedback on the issue itself, maybe feedback to other contributors as well. This letter can be sent in e-mail.

There are two content rules: a) try to be interesting. B) don't start a fight with another or several other members. I simply won't publish those.

- ii) **Cover art:** I always appreciate this. Keep in mind not to use copyrighted characters without proper attribution, and keep art to PG-13 at most.
- iii) **Interior art:** "fillos" are a longtime tradition for zines: small illustrations to break up sections of text.
- iv) **Articles:** if you write something to share with fellow readers, I'll print it. Please keep article submissions clean.
- v) **Zine trades:** If you produce a zine, I'll be glad to exchange a copy of this one for yours.

To remain on the mailing list you have to contribute The Usual at least once every 2 issues. Failure to do so gets you bumped from mailings. You'll be reminded if you're close to that point.

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Contact: My e-mail for this zine is [theoriginaluniverse@gmail.com](mailto:theoriginaluniverse@gmail.com)

My Snail-Mail address is

Jeff Boman  
6900 Cote St-Luc Road #708  
Montreal, QC H4V 2Y9  
CANADA

Next Deadline: **May 12, 2008.**

### About the cover:

The Rocketeer (c)2008 to the Dave Stevens estate

Howard the Duck (c) 2008 Marvel Comics, created by Steve Gerber

Thundarr the Barbarian (c) 2008 Ruby-Spears, co-created by Steve Gerber

## EDITOR'S CORNER

It's time to get issue 4 ready. The holiday season of 2007 was a headache for me. Hopefully it won't happen again.

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I'm starting with very bad news that I heard February 2nd:

Many of us in Montreal know Emru Townsend (Lloyd in Ontario too I think), and outside the city you may also know his writing in **fps**, **APAToons** or even from his freelance work in **The Computer Paper** and elsewhere.

I've known Emru ever since our days in Concordia University's Animation program. He was in the course just a year behind me.

On his sister Tamu's Livejournal I learned that he's been diagnosed with leukemia. He's waiting for a compatible bone marrow donation now. I'm hoping that one is found very soon. Meanwhile I've been sending email to every potential donor I can.

Emru is African American. African Americans are very poorly represented in donor match databases. I encourage you to get friends to get tested. That would improve the odds of a match for Emru as well as for others.

- Of course, get tested anyway regardless of whether you're caucasian OR African American. African Americans have a higher chance of being a match, but you may be anyway. The more tested, the better chance of a match.

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This computer is crashing frequently. I suspect the CPU chip is the reason, as this happened in the past.

**Update:** I'm not hardware savvy, but the drive with Windows on it seems to be the one that keeps crashing. I may have to get it replaced very soon.

Frequent readers of *Comicopia* have heard this from me several times in the past. After 4 such situations since 2002, I think it's safe to say that the store this computer came from (called **Micro Bytes**) has really gone downhill in quality (it used to be the best in Montreal), and that this particular machine is a lemon.

My chief co-worker builds machines, and for less cost, better quality. I think I'll go through him this time.

**Update:** it's now more than 3 weeks since I brought this system for repair to the shop. My friend was sick when we were intending to come over. The shop actually messed it up worse; we were able to bring it to my friend and he had it all working in a few hours.

The problem, after 4 years of on and off repairs: the store technicians were sloppy and careless. They messed up more than they ever fixed. Solution: I'll buy parts through them, but from now on I'll have my friend take care of it. That'll be far less expensive and repairs will actually work / last.

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Speaking of computer stuff: the black toner cartridge in my laser printer needs a refill — about two years after I got it. That's pretty good! Even better I have a cartridge refill store at my nearby mall... hopefully I'll have it filled before I print this. If not: I work in a computer room with a laser printer right there. I can use it to print out my zine master copy.

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I'm currently working hard on my 2nd Edition stat corrections for **Hunters Inc.**, my **Mutants and Masterminds** sourcebook. The 1st edition one came out 2 years ago. I want 2008 to be my next publishing renaissance!

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April 1st this year won't only be April Fool's day. It will also be the start of the second annual Script Frenzy: a 30-day marathon to produce a film script.

At first I didn't see anyone else in Montreal taking part this year, and I didn't want to be the only one. Others are taking part now, so I'll be putting my screenwriting chops to the test again.

I still have to come up with an idea for a story, but that will come (I hope).

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I was stunned to learn that my 8-year old nieces have already come into a family thing that I missed (fortunately): high cholesterol. The girls don't eat meat, and their regular diet of choice really messed

them up.

My sister Randy has been changing their diets to have healthier foods as a result.

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Meanwhile my nephew, just turned 12, is already up to his father's shoulder. He's already about 5'5"! That already only makes him 6 inches below my dad, with only his father similarly tall.

He's really going to be our family's first basketball player, if he's interested in the sport!

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Speaking of family, the 6 Degrees world has hit me again:

One of my gaming industry contacts on Facebook asked if I knew someone in my contacts. That person is my brother-in-law's brother, and I went to high school with him.

It turns out that my industry contact used to game with him! I contacted this brother to make sure, and he confirmed it. Both these contacts are in Ottawa.

My world is getting smaller by the minute it seems!

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With it now being 2008 I have started to get ready for the Paradise City Comic Con in Toronto in July. I've missed the last two, I hope I won't have to skip a third. So far based on prices flying will be less expensive (and far less bumpy!) than a train. Go figure.

I have the master copy of my ad flyer for this zine. Hopefully we'll get a few new members from it.

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One of my friends in Toronto bought the first 3 issues of TOU. He asked me to autograph them before I send them.

I don't have an overblown ego, but stuff like this (and several comments last issue) would get me one, if these things happen many times more!

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Chapter 2 of **Avatar: Rebirth** will be in next issue. Because of my PC troubles I wasn't able to work on it for this issue. I'm offering more cool stuff instead though.

I'm also going to my original deadline plans as well. The delay on this issue ultimately put them back on course.

## COMIC COMMENTS

### One More Day

It has finally come out. Joe Quesada has just tried to brush off reactions saying it's a "controversial story" for Spider-Man readers.

In this case "controversial" is just doublespeak for sloppy writing.

Personally, I find the idea that a married Peter Parker limits the stories available ludicrous. Wally West, DC Comics **Flash** is married now - and has kids. The stories are now different, but different in a good way. Why this works: characters evolve over a period of time. From the look of the ending to this story Peter is a very young adult again. This is a major step back. If readers want to read about a younger Peter Parker, that's what **Ultimate Spider-Man** is for. Fans of the character are probably a bit confused right now.

Percy printed the Newsarama comments from JMS

about the way this was done, and I agree with Joe. A lot was hand-waiving to justify huge changes without any real explanations. MJ and Peter aren't married? Wave hands "it's magic". Aunt May is alive? Ditto. Her original home wasn't burnt down? Same. Peter never revealed his ID? Same. The entire world has forgotten that reveal? Same. Peter no longer has organic web-shooters? Same. Harry Osborn never died? That makes no sense, but same.

Ironically, Joe Q. vetoed the way Joe wanted to make the change, because it trashed 30 years of continuity - yet that's exactly what he chose to do. Look at how long Harry has been dead. Peter and MJ were married for a long time too.

Was Peter ever an Avenger? We don't yet know (actually, we sort of do now, although it hasn't been explained yet). What about the current New Avengers? Again, we don't know (though this has now been shown in passing).

As a writer and a gamer, I developed a name for such changes: 'deus ex meshuginah'. This was a full instance of that. The new stories may be good reads, but I'm not at all pleased by what led to them.

I spoke a little about this on a Web message forum with Percy. You'll remember I felt that having over-used characters as the big villains in the **Annihilation** series' bugged me; I'm wondering how much of it now comes from Joe Q. edicts.

Also Percy made a very good point to me: Peter Parker made a deal with the devil to save his aunt May. That's not heroic at all.

I have now read a few months worth of stories of Peter Parker as a pathetic, poor loser again. I think I'll drop the title now. It's in the style of the stories before I read it. I'll pass like I did the Carnage and Spider Clone ones.

## Jim Shooter's new Legion

The new Frances Manapul / Jim Shooter run on this title has now begun. I've so far read two issues of it and I have to say: I like it.

The sole negative I found: Karate Kid is no longer Asian. He actually looks like the original, Val Armorr. That was just strange as Shooter said he intended to work with the current continuity, and that any changes would happen organically. It made the change disorienting and jarring.

Save for that single glitch, this actually held together plotwise, and the art was very nice on the eyes. Phantom Girl again looks like a future fave character (provided that you remember that she's not real) instead of a character that you'll spend too much time trying to recognize. That was the case in the past.

Next issue introduced new members trying out for the team. I was hoping that some of them had appeared recently (the new Wildfire and Matter Eater Lad), but all of them were new rejects... not even Subs material.

## Another Ongoing Run Not So Good

This actually involves the Legion as well, and it also is a follow-up on a title I've covered here before: I've now read the third issue of Gary Frank's run on *Action Comics*, with Superman and the Legion.

I'm a big fan of Gary Frank's art, but halfway through this arc, I don't think he has a handle on this storyline. You can't really call this the Adult Legion - more like the Middle-Aged Legion. All these characters are shown with many wrinkles. Granted many of them have faced imprisonment, and prisoners don't tend to be pretty - but all of them look more tired than heroic.

I believe Frank's earliest work at DC was during PAD's *Supergirl* (feel free to correct this if I'm

wrong), so I'm hoping this is more due to him getting reacquainted with the characters in the universe. Otherwise I don't think he's doing his fandom a service here.

In the fourth issue of this storyline he's beginning to get the feel of the characters, but after the next 2 he's done on this story.

Geoff Johns is at least writing well (no surprise there).

## Speaking of Gary Frank:

Well, not really. He drew *Midnight Nation*, a great series by J Michael Straczynski, and this is about JMS:

He no longer is under an exclusivity deal at **Marvel Comics**. He's only writing *Thor* and the 12-issue *The Twelve*.

He was very diplomatic about it on the **Newsarama** Website, but as Percy said, he's very likely fed up with the editorial decisions there. He even asked for his name to be removed from the finale of *One More Day*, the changes bothered him so much. In fact, he de

I don't know what he'll do next in comics, but it may be someone's gain.

=>The latest JMS update: He's no longer under an exclusive contract with **Marvel**. He now has several unnamed projects at **DC** and two at **Image** as well. I find that a great thing for us readers.

## Steve Gerber R.I.P.

Last issue I spoke of how his health troubles led to Dr. Fate in a mini-series instead of as a regular one.

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, he died in Las Vegas from pulmonary fibrosis. He didn't get the lung transplant he was waiting for. He was a lifelong tobacco user,

but he didn't believe it caused him health troubles. No comments on that.

Steve's most well-known creation (in fact, one that led to a long and nasty ownership dispute) is



Howard the Duck. No one else could do well with this character, as George Lucas's film proved. He also created Foolkiller, Omega the Unknown and others at **Marvel**. He created Sludge at **Malibu**, and **Nevada** and **Hard Time** for **DC**, as well as writing many other books.

He was also well-known in Animation circles; he wrote episodes of G.I. Joe and Dungeons & Dragons. He created Thundarr the Barbarian, another icon of 1980s animated series. I didn't realize that he was also a series editor for **The New Batman / Superman Adventures** show. In fact in 1998 he shared a Daytime Emmy for it.

In the early 1980s I visited a friend in London, ON with my folks. On their table was a newspaper, and one strip in the comics was Howard the Duck. The strip retold Howard's original ones. They held up well.

### **Dave Stevens R.I.P.**

On March 11th, 2008 Dave Stevens, the creator of **The Rocketeer** was announced dead due to leukemia at the age of 52.

Understandably the illness alone is one strongly on

my mind, but I also followed **The Rocketeer** since its debut at the long-defunct **Eclipse Comics** in 1982. Stevens' clean art, his storytelling, the entire concept... it gripped my imagination. Even though it took a long hiatus before ending, it's one of my favorites.

Dave Stevens rekindled fandom of Bettie Page, a pin-up queen of the 1950s when he based his female lead (Jenny Blake) on her. Even with a rebirth of her fandom, Stevens was a big financial supporter, as well a friend. Now comics legend Mark Evanier



(**Groo the Wanderer**) says he drives her to cash her Social Security cheques.

In 1991 the **Rocketeer** was made into a movie starring Bill Pullman and Jennifer Connelly. Although her face on-screen is always a draw, the film failed to create a franchise. Unfortunately Stevens didn't draw many other comics; **Rocketeer** was just the one that fired up my imagination and furthered my love of the pulp era.

52 is another age too young to go also.

One of the sadder parts of our time is how more and more of our comics legends will leave us.

### **Follow-up on Countdown**

We're in the story homestretch now, and it's getting interesting. I'm guessing a major reason (besides story climax of course) is that many issues are now focused on one major plot thread: Ray Palmer and

where he's been. That makes sense, since **DC** are now ramping into their *Final Crisis* storyline (or as I say, "Just how many Crises do we need?").

### DC Sinestro Wars Secret Files

Many, many characters in both the Green Lantern and Sinestro Corps are described here in just a few lines. Despite small blurbs they all scream out for stories. This to me is the mark of a great author.

## Movie Reviews

**Bon Cop Bad Cop (DVD):** OK, this has likely the thinnest tie to comicbooks of all the films I've reviewed to date, using Crime Comics, what **EC** were left with after the Wertham witch hunts of the 1950s gutted its horror line. In reality this was just the most profitable film from Québec, so I was curious about it.

A top executive for hockey is found murdered right on the border between Québec and Ontario. David Bouchard (actor Patrick Huard) from Montréal and Martin Ward (actor Colm Feore) from Toronto are the two cops assigned to it. Their dialogue starts predictably (Ward: "He's a true Québécois." (he points to the body) "His heart is in Québec." Bouchard: "An' his ass is in Ontario.").

Unfortunately while some of the dialogue is original (Bouchard explaining how some French swearing can be used as actual verb tenses) the overall film plot is stereotypical cop buddy film material. I kept hoping it would be different, but in the end the language was really it. I was even able to predict the ending before it happened.

There was a 2<sup>nd</sup> disc for the extras, but they were still brief: a small selection of a small few deleted scenes, a few short documentaries about the making of the film.

According to IMDB this was the first film since

**Porkys** to beat the Canadian film box office records. I expected more.

**The Prestige (DVD):** "The Prestige" was what the second part of a magic trick was called during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain: the twist that made it special. Friends and apprentice magicians Robert Angier (Hugh Jackman) and Alfred Borden (Christian Bale) are part of a trick that goes wrong, costing the life of Robert's wife. As a result they become rivals, both in their field and personal lives. There is a mystery in their competition here that I won't spoil. You'll have to watch it yourself.

David Bowie makes a surprise cameo in this film as well.

The screenplay is by Chris and Jonathan Nowlan, and Chris also directs. This was an excellent series of twists and reversals, and great character work, something I've grown used to from Chris Nowlan. In this age of blow-up action movies a film with a strong plot and interesting players is a gem.

Of course seeing Scarlett Johansson in a skimpy outfit doesn't hurt. ☺ She's too young for me, and the odds of me even meeting her are close to zero, but I have eyes still.

This film was in a 1-disc box, so there was a very small selection of extras.

Oh, and the comics link? Think of the Trenchcoat Brigade at **DC Comics**, magicians without flashy costumes. This film would fit well there... I could picture Dr. Thirteen trying to solve their tricks.

**Transformers (DVD):** How does this one NOT have a comics link? There have been several series for the property at **Dreamwave**, leading to the artist drawing for both **Marvel** and **DC** (currently in the *Metal Men* mini-series. I find he draws robots better than he does humans, but that's just my opinion).

The concept also has a place in my heart I grew up

with the original show on TV. When I was in university studying Animation my roommate had it in its whole run on videotape (Beta, so I'd have to find it on DVD now), and I remember a party at his place after when we all played with the Mattel figures...

— Enough reminiscing. Onto the film. Unlike the cartoon this is live-action with CGI for the robots. The computer generation here works seamlessly with the live-action, and really gives breadth to these giant machines. Their transformation actually makes sense. No illogical guns and tape decks becoming giants; they're all vehicles to start with.

Michael Bay generally directs action films. The last few didn't pan out well, but this one proved very successful in theatres, and it fit. In terms of the robot effects and the action sequences, it was well-done.

The basics of the plot are familiar if you saw the original: the Allspark, the creator of life, has been an object the evil Decepticons have looked for all over the galaxy. The heroic Autobots (led by Optimus Prime) have tried to thwart them at each turn. The Allspark makes its way to Earth now.

Megatron tracked it to Earth in the late 1800s to the Arctic, getting frozen solid as a result. Just before he freezes solid he engraves a map to its location on the glasses of explorer Archibald Witwicky.

His descendant Sam (Spike) Witwicky sells his great grandfather's stuff on Ebay to help pay for his first car (a right of passage for many high schoolers). It turns out that his car is actually Bumblebee of the Autobots. The 'bot's speech center was damaged in a battle, so he can only communicate through song clips on the radio.

This leads to the other Autobots coming to him, and ultimately the reformation of the Decepticons and ultimately (thanks to the US Government and their shady Sector Seven organization) the revival of Megatron as well. This leads to a climactic battle

between the two groups, and heroism by Spike to save the day. After the battle, Bumblebee regains speech and asks to stay. Happy ending. The end.

This film was a major hit at the theatres. A sequel is a given.

My one criticism (I enjoyed the film): Bumblebee was well-defined. Optimus and Megatron a bit. The **other** robot characters though: save for some action sequences and names, we didn't really get to know them. Starscream of the Decepticons we saw, and fans of the characters recognized him, but he didn't get to say a word. One of the Autobots is said to be dead after the battle, but I don't even remember his name as mentioned.

Sam/Spike was played by Shia LeBeouf. He was entertaining, but I don't think he's really the big deal that writers have hyped him as. He did get to play in **Indiana Jones 4**, so I guess he is a bigger deal though.

There were few deleted scenes, but with the cost of computer animation that's no surprise.

To a longtime franchise buff, this was overall fun - and far less error prone than the cartoon! To new fans, this still would hold up well.

**Fantastic Four: Silver Surfer (DVD):** This film made for a weird moment for me. I read the original Kirby / Lee stories this was based on, so I had them to compare this too.

The first Fantastic Four movie garnered many complaints from fans of the comic (justifiably so. Ioan Gruffud was forgettable as Reed Richards/Mr. Fantastic, and Michael Chiklis' Thing is too small), but it still made enough money to warrant a sequel.

Sadly, those complaints weren't improved on here. Worse: the Thing again has an easy out, making his transformation even less tragic.

Jessica Alba is always an easy treat for the eyes on screen, but here her dyed hair and obvious colored contact lenses are too distracting to notice her acting.

Several critiques of this film have mentioned how it's a very *pretty* film and I can see that point. The CGI for the Silver Surfer here is incredible. The pretty effects don't conceal the holes and flaws of the script though.

Galactus is only shown as a cosmic cloud here, but that makes sense on several levels. First, the studio has announced an upcoming Surfer film, so they might not have wanted to spoil the reveal of the boss yet. Secondly: Galactus is a guy in a purple one-piece leotard with a huge metal helmet. The studio likely wants to find a way to present him that **won't** look silly.

Stan Lee has a funny cameo here. I won't spoil it for you.

Overall the film had too many "Huh?" points for fans of the comic. Non-comicbook readers will just find this film too short. It's a lose-lose proposition.

This disc was likely issued solely to head off film pirates. It only has the film and nothing extra.

**Constantine (DVD):** I've owned this DVD for several years but only now got myself to seeing it.

This film is based on the *Hellblazer* comic published by the **Vertigo** imprint at **DC Comics**.

The story I heard from Comic Con before the film was that fans of the comicbook cheered when the film was announced, then were silent when Keanu Reeves was announced as the lead.

I can understand why for a few reasons:

First, John Constantine was created as a blond Brit, fashioned on Sting from the Police. Reeves is dark-

haired, and thanks to the film **Bram Stoker's Dracula** many know he would do an awful imitation of a British accent if he tried.

Second: many of us call him "Canoe", because his 'acting' seems very wooden. That style is very evident here... he has nothing in this character that doesn't seem like every other he's played before.

The ironic thing is that despite his version of John Constantine seeming wooden, the film itself is pretty good. Angela Dawson, an LA detective, investigates the unusual suicide of her twin sister Isabel. She does this with the help of an irreverent supernatural detective (Constantine) and discovers a world of war between Heaven and Hell, between angels and demons. Mixed in is a plot about Constantine playing demons for his life against lung cancer. This comes from the comic.

I like how the film teased at romantic happening between Constantine and Angela (Rachel Weisz) but ultimately don't. Just as well... the two actors have no chemistry together.

I was surprised at the actors in secondary roles. Tilda Swinton plays the archangel Gabriel; she just won the Best Actress Oscar for *Michael Clayton*. Djimon Hounsou plays Midnight here; he's been nominated for several Oscars. Shia LeBeouf is in here as well, as he was in *I, Robot* (I saw the credits on TV. I won't watch the film; I don't support the gutting of Isaac Asimov's work... but that's for another review).

As an aside: in a review of the Top 10 gay characters in the medias, John Constantine is listed (this must have been revealed during one of my hiatuses from comicbooks). The reviewer said he couldn't picture Canoe kissing another guy; actually he's played several gay characters in small films... I don't think he'd have a problem now.

I'd say this film was OK. Canoe kept it from being a great one.

As a single disc, this only offers a small handful of deleted scenes as extras.

**Lost in Translation (DVD):** This film is as difficult to fit into a comicbook theme as *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* was above. It has a very thin link again: Bill Murray starred in *Ghostbusters*, a live action comic film. Actually Japan is also the birthplace of *manga* (Japanese comicbooks) also.

*Lost In Translation* is the story of two Americans in Japan: Bob Harris is a movie actor getting 2 million dollars to star in a whiskey ad campaign. Charlotte (Scarlet Johansson. This was the first film to make a real name for her) is a twenty-something woman who accompanies her husband of only a few years on a photo-shoot. Both are trying to find themselves: Bob has been married for 25 years, has children, but doesn't feel settled; Charlotte is still trying to find her way in the world.

Through a week of the differences in Tokyo life they bond, and when Bob's week in Japan ends they share a moment. The film's a romance, but not one of lust or sexual closeness; it's one of comfort and familiarity.

I'm one of the people who feel this film could have been longer so that the story could develop more – but this was almost a slice-of-life, a few brief moments of a life that continues.

The cinematography on the visuals of Japan was truly breathtaking. It's a world that truly feels alien, yet it's just on the other side of the planet. That feeling helps add to the feeling of isolation.

This is another single disc, but there's more stuff than Constantine: a video diary of the making of the film, another interview for Bill Murray and director Sophia Coppola (she's better as a director than as an actor. She was part of what didn't work in *Godfather III*), a set of deleted scenes, and the theatrical trailers.

## HEY KIDS: LETTERS!

Lloyd Penney  
1706-24 Eva Rd.  
Etobicoke, ON  
M9C 2B2

February 10, 2008

Dear Jeff from Jamaica:

After this storm we've just had, don't you wish you were in Jamaica right now? Anyway, I have issue 3 of The Original Universe, and even though I got it just the other day, there's a deadline for submissions, and I thought I'd better get it quickly. So, here it goes...

Not to worry about what mistakes you feel you might be making with your zine. It is your zine, and there is always something to learn in any aspect of publications design. There's plenty of artists in Montréal; I wonder if they'd produce small illustrations or cartoons for you. Good publicity for them, too.

*That's a good point. I'll ask around. - JAB*

My condolences on the loss of Boots. I've said in other zines that perhaps the true value of pets is that they have so much to teach us about love, caring,

responsibility and grief, because they trust us to look after them, and their lives are so much shorter than ours. I have no pets, and haven't had any in some years, but there are lots of dogs in my building, and they get a skritch from me when they pass by, and there's a cat in Windsor I miss named Momcat. She's the cat we almost brought home last year. We seem to do very well with other people's pets. I'm sure that Squeaky will get lots more attention from you.

I'm learning more about USB drives. They seem to be the perfect connector for most new hardware, and with SD cards, they seem to be the future of portable file storage. Yvonne and I purchased some inexpensive 125 MB drives that are on our keychains, and so handy they are (for me, they carry an awful lot of e-zines). I expect that in the future, I may have to transport large files, and so I asked for a 4 GB drive for this past Christmas, and I got it. It looks like a piece of jewellery.

*I have 4 GB between 3 such drives now. 125 MB is a small capacity nowadays; I've heard of 8 GB models! - JAB*

Not that I'm a comics reader, but why do modern writers seem intent on taking established characters like Superman and Batman, and turning them into slime? Dark concepts and characters are one thing, but I've heard that some of these sterling characters have become people you wouldn't want to meet in the pages of comic books.

*BatMan as slime was one of the things changed in the recent **Infinite Crisis** series. - JAB*

Register or Not: All heroes have to register with the government or they're criminals? Sounds like Marc Shainblum's Angloman, where all superheroes have to register with La régie des super-héros et des pouvoirs super-humains. Have to renew your superhero licence every year. I think we still have

our copies at home. Even Yvonne's mother laughed at the politics in these great books.

*That was done for humor. Sadly, not the **Marvel** one. - JAB*

Anticipation...looks like it's official now, Yvonne is now working with the programming team for space and science programming, just like she does for Ad Astra, and she will probably be doing some work in Finance. And, I will be running the fanzine lounge. More to come as we find out about available space and money.

I found out about another problem with Palms...the digitizer in the screen sometimes gets out of whack. This means that when you touch a part of the screen something happens not at the place you touch the screen, but someplace else. I had to purchase a programme online that would adjust the digitizer, but it's not perfect yet.

*Strange how it's advertised as a touch screen device... - JAB*

More on cartoon characters and comic book companies out of control. Do the writers not think that while some parts of a character's "life" may change, that they can radically change the psyche of a character? Or is it, with the example of Reed Richards' endorsing the elimination of due process, a commentary on the questionable ethics and actions of the Bush regime in the States?

Annihilation...you know, that could be a weekend convention to recover from Anticipation...

I remember T.M. Maple in the letter column of Captain Canuck comics. I think there is a long essay

or even a short book on who T.M. Maple was, and what he did for the comics fandom. I'd like to see that again.

Done for now. I'll keep you apprised as to whether or not I'm going to the Paradise Comic Con or not.

*I've been researching trains and planes for it. I intend to go - especially now that I hear that it's likely the last. - JAB*

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Jeffrey Allan Boman  
6900 Cote St.-Luc Road #708  
Montreal, QC  
H4V 2Y9  
theoriginaluniverse@gmail.com

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Hi gang!

Not only is my PC working again, but I also have an LED 19" Widescreen monitor on it to play with. My desktop now seems huge as a result.

That photo of Boots still chokes me up. It's already been more than 4 months he's been gone, but I still miss him a lot. Squeaky may not remember him specifically, but she still feels very lonely... she goes to the room I'm not in and calls out for company. I can't really afford to have another cat until after her; hopefully she'll get used to this.

Re: Ramblings of a Comics Collector... Liefeld is at the butt end of many jokes these days. McFarlane... he hurts himself mostly when he speaks, but also seems to act like he's more important than he really is. / I find myself missing the Silver Age too.

Re: Comic Thoughts... it looks like my decision to drop *New X-Men* is moot: the series itself will be

cancelled due to the event I griped over.

Re: Register or Not: Who Cares?... re-reading... another problem with the changes in Spider-Man comes to me from the Thunderbolts: does Norman Osborn now remember he sired children with Gwen Stacy (That's one story by JMS that I don't like...)? Also, has he also forgotten Spidey's real ID?

Hey Kids: Letters!

**Lloyd:** It was a pleasant surprise to see you and Yvonne at Con\*Cept! I was glad to hear that Cathy won the Aurora, considering how poorly the con did in the past. She now makes our second con Chair to win the award; Anne Methe won it about 9 years ago. / I'll check out Cartoon Brew. I'm behind again, what with too many irons on the fire. Nothing new there.

**Percy:** Welcome to the transition from MCs in an APA to a LOC! / Joe Quesada was the editor of the Marvel Knights imprint initially when the line had just 3-4 titles, including an excellent *Inhumans* maxi-series by Jae Lee. Based on that success he was asked to be EIC for the entire line. He's rarely an artist now; except for a few covers, the *One More Day* travesty was mostly it (I think he also did a story for *Daredevil*). He's on par with Ruben Diaz, but Diaz only ruined the *Justice League* franchise; Quesada is messing up a whole line. / I mentioned more of the JMS fall-out earlier in this zine, and you've spoken about it online as well. Joe only demanded his name be removed from the final part of the OMD storyline, BTW. / Part of what's helped *Countdown* I think was when it stopped being tied to the plots of other titles. It's now telling its own stories, except for mention of the Death of the New Gods (in Jimmy Olson some of it is being explained).

No point in commenting on my own LOC; a whole zine of me is enough.

See you all next issue!

Jeffrey Allan Boman

## ***TODO LIST FOR 2008***

- Paradise City Comic-con, Toronto
- Write More Mutants and Masterminds works
- GenCon 2008 (this will have to wait a while. I'll have to save up again after Paradise City...)
- [ ] May 14 is my 41st rotation around the sun.

## ***TODO (HOPEFULLY!) SOMEDAY***

- San Diego Comicon (when the fires are all quelled)

## ***ZINE EXCHANGES***

None this issue. Maybe next.

You have \_\_ issues left for The Usual. Then you're off the mailing list. Please avoid that sad fact.