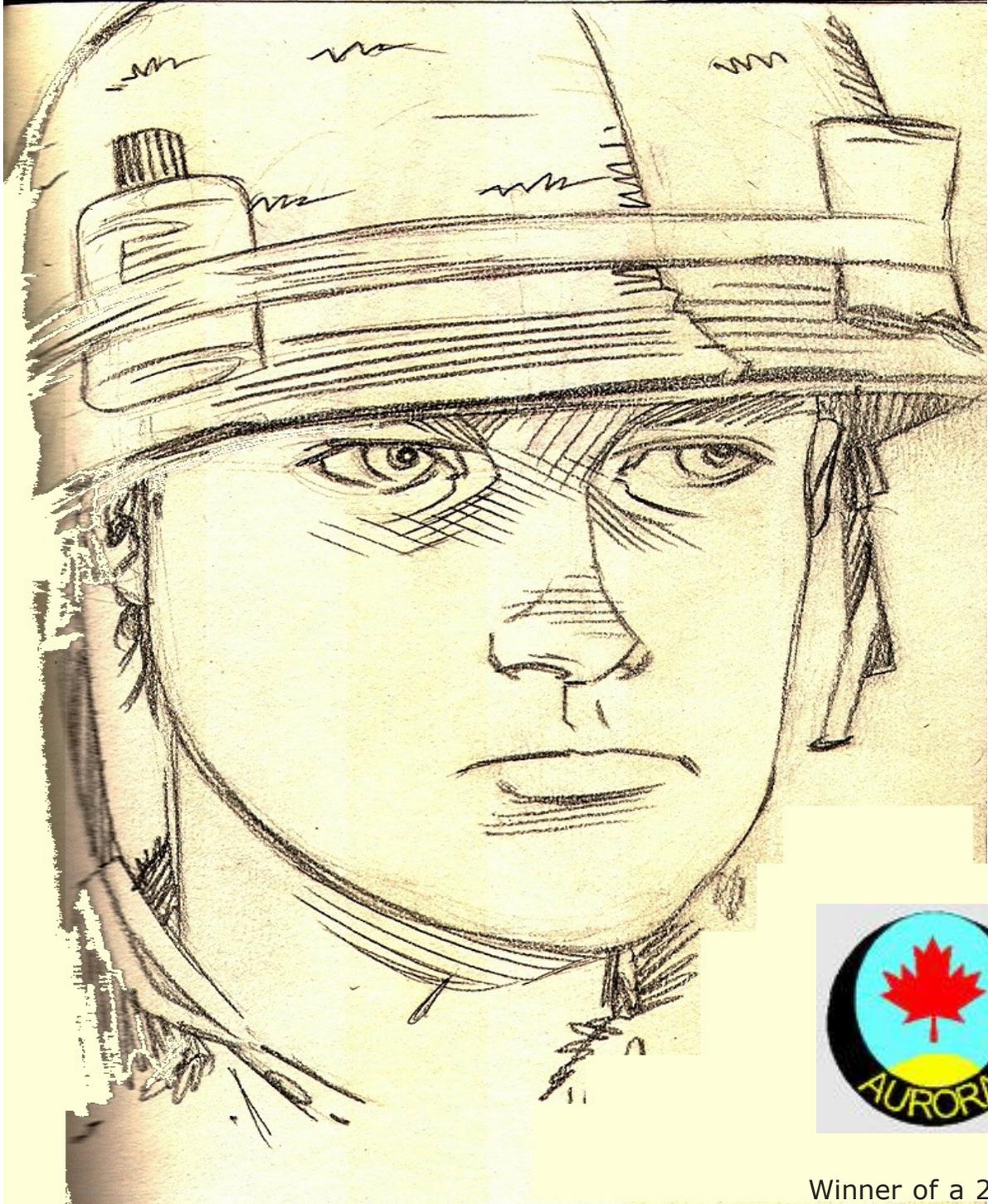


THE ORIGINAL UNIVERSE



Winner of a 2009
Aurora Award

2010 AURORA AWARD NOMINEE

ISSUE 11

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The Original Universe is published 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.

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Next Deadline: **June 1.**

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About the Cover:: Private Marks from **The 'Nam** drawn by Michael Golden.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

I spoke too soon about Keycon: as soon as I sent out last issue, I began one of the Royal Bank's High Interest (0.75%? Please!) E-Savings Accounts for it.

It's in May, and the Toronto Comic Con is in March. I intend to go to that, and I suspect that the account won't be high enough for both.

Lodging costs in Winnipeg are high, even using hotels.ca to save some money - so it's still questionable.

The guest list for the Comic Con has many more non-comic creators so far... but the chance to meet old-time wrestler the Iron Sheik, and to meet Gil Gerard and Erin Gray will be cool too (Buck Rogers was a big part of my childhood). Newer 'zine member Liana K. is listed as a guest there too, and if member Justin Mohareb is there I'll have a chance to see him too.

==

Another huge 'maybe' for me: I've entered the DUFF race for this year. Lloyd knows what that is; it's not the beer from The Simpsons!

It stands for the Down Under Fan Fund. If I win I'll get an all-expenses paid trip to Aussiecon 4, the 2010 Worldcon in Australia Labor Day. After I'll be in charge of re-growing the account until 2012.

I have five other competitors (two are one entry), but some of them may be more well-known; one of them joins this fanzine this issue in fact. We'll see who wins... this'll be the furthest that I've traveled to date if I win! I'll know after March 31st. It's just a fun race.

Update: I quickly produced a mini perzine to promote myself for this. Because of the time I spent on it, chapters 5&6 of Avatar were postponed again. You deserve better than a rushed job. Update 2: I was the first person eliminated.

==

If I do end up going. I'll worry about my cat Squeaky. She'd be sheltered as I'd be gone for a few weeks... thing is she's lost a LOT of weight. She doesn't seem in pain, not to have anything worse than her age catching up (she'll be 17 by then) but I'm still worried.

==

I spoke too soon about my PC being all fixed up...

The good news: the new hard drive I bought in December is working well. Also good: most of my system is working well.

Not good though: the USB ports (powered by the motherboard) are not working. A friend tried to fix them for 6 hours, but it looks like I'll have to get the motherboard replaced.

Fortunately it's under a replacement warranty -- but I hoped I was finally free of hardware headaches.

Until it's fixed I still don't have access to my Liana piece or the story for the other specials unfortunately.

==

I'm busy on the writing end again. Many LOCs for many different zines; at X-Mas I got the Pocket Player's Guide for the Mutants and Masterminds game to more quickly revise my sourcebook material. Turns out that my publisher is giving up though, so I'll have to re-shop my stuff... I also finished an article for my friend Chris Garcia's zine Annual.

My publisher for M&M stuff has announced that except for yearly royalties (I got them) he'll be getting out of publishing others. He'll give back rights on request, so I'll have to shop my work around again. Mean while I'll pitch work to Polymancer Studios here in town.

I'm taking part in this year's Script Frenzy. I'm using the main characters I'll use in the 2010 NaNoWriMo. Different story, but this will help

me to flesh out what I hope will be series characters.

==

I'm also researching for the next story in my universe dealing with a character called "Statik" (I'm changing her name). It's set in NYC. I wrote only the first chapter - just before 9-11. That event wiped out my enthusiasm then; I want to regain it now.

==

I also did my fanly duties: I sent in my nominations for both the 2010 Auroras and the Hugos.

The Auroras will be awarded at Keycon as I mentioned above (Liana mentioned it last issue too). I didn't nominate us. If the zine makes it, like last year, I don't want to influence it. (An update: I got nominated again!)

The Hugos were interesting. Our own Matthew and his SO Grace Seybold are both eligible for the John Campbell award, Matthew for his first time and Grace for her second and last. I nominated them both, and hope they win. One of them, anyway.

I also nominated Lloyd for Fan writer. I hope he wins as well.

==

My nephew's 14th birthday was near the end of 2009.

He's begun to give my sister teenager grief, but he still treats me well, so I'm happy.

==

Hope you enjoy this issue. I don't know if it can top issue 10, but I'll try!

MUSINGS FROM A SEASONED COLLECTOR

by Gregory Woronchak

Having said last issue that today's comics suck, I've decided to first explain why comics of yesterday were better. Ready? Here goes:

1) It's all been done. The Golden and Silver Age (and the Bronze, to a lesser extent) of comics featured wild creativity; new heroes and concepts were introduced monthly, stuff the average reader hadn't seen before. Plots that were fresh and startling have become repeated and recycled over the years to the extent that today's comics are simply regurgitation. Compounding the problem today is the glut of books flooding the market place.

2) Creators in the past were more creative. Writers and artists had no qualms or fears about introducing new characters and interesting situations. Today, the very structure of corporate comics (where they've become a product with the only goal of generating sales) handcuffs any creative team. Clueless suits and marketing departments stick their noses in the process, resulting in books that are inconsistent, politically correct, and appeal to the widest common denominator.

Creators hesitate to produce any material without considering the dollars involved in their 'property'; the goal today is to break into Hollywood with some lame, half-baked concept that the hype machine labels as 'brilliant' and avant garde (Nemesis, for example). Comics in general today are boring, and feature retreads of tired stories and resurrected characters because the creators hang onto their original creations greedily.

3) It used to be about the love. Creators used to try to break into comics because they had tremendous respect for the characters and medium itself; comics weren't a 'stepping stone'. Today, creators seek only to make a mark on any title they tackle, usually by tearing down the status quo with shocking 'events'. Artists

disregard previous models for a given character, driven by the need to impart their own stamp on these icons.

Professionalism is often lacking as well; books are late, which is a lack of respect for the precious and dwindling readership. Late books are spun as 'worth the wait', but this ends up as an insult to the giants of yesterday (Kirby, Colan, Kane) who were able to produce amazing work without missing a monthly deadline.

4) Decompression sucks. The current trend of writers from outside comics (or ones who don't have a clear knowledge or respect for the unique language of writing comic book scripts) is damaging. Comics have become static storyboards, with page after page of characters having discussions with clever, unrealistic dialogue. Plots that used to be resolved in a three-issue epic are now spread over years and touch on nearly every title in a given line. Less is definitely more, a lesson which is sorely lacking on the hack wordsmiths who believe themselves to be the 'rock gods' for comic fans.

Comic books used to be fun, inventive, unpretentious, and gave entertaining value for the consumer's money.

They can become so again... *to be continued.*



Blackest Night, Part 2

Note: Most of this is spoilers!

This will be a 3-part article. I don't yet have the last issue.

The main series

I can't say this enough: Nekron is very powerful and disturbing. In #5 he shows it to great effect: heroes that came back to life gather to fight him, and after reviving the skeleton allegedly of Bruce Wayne to distract them he says just one word to them: "Die." it makes their bodies instant, very powerful zombies on his side: Superboy (Kon El), Wonder Woman, Ice, Green Arrow (the least powerful, granted), Kid Flash (Bart Allan), Superman (!). The issue ends with him saying the same thing to Hal Jordan (Green Lantern) and Barry Allan (the Flash). We fade to black, wondering what will happen next.

Both Hal and Barry confirm the fact that both Nekron and Black Hand are far more powerful than they remember (Nekron could only revive a corpse or two; Hand was almost a joke villain).

One thing that Barry confirms in both a message to all and to those here: these are the reanimated bodies of the departed (though Dr. Light still isn't explained), but not at all their souls. That explains why returned heroes are so nasty.

Unfortunately this gets repeated ad nauseum, as I'll speak of often here.

The title of the next chapter is disturbing: New Guardians. There was a team by that name after the Millennium series -also drawn by Joe Staton. The characters didn't take off with fans. Even though I'm a fan of Geoff Johns' writing, I was concerned that these characters would return and stink up the story.

I didn't have to worry: the leaders of the different color corps are the New Guardians, and they all have established characters as temporary deputies. Most are heroes, two villains. The choices make sense mostly, and also serve to illuminate personality factors for some:

Green (Will), Ganthet. As an Oan, this makes sense.

Blue (Hope), Barry Allan Flash. Again, this makes sense with his personality.

Violet (Love), Wonder Woman. She's a Black Lantern at the time, but managed to break free.

Indigo (Compassion), Ray Palmer Atom. This makes more sense later.

Red (Rage), Mera. Supposedly WW's "death" puts her over the edge.

Yellow (Fear), the Scarecrow. Again, this makes sense.

Orange (Greed), Lex Luthor. This was a surprising choice, but also an illuminating one. Lex is not the altruist he claims to be, and this personality light makes more sense.

This could be an interesting mix, though I'm sure that the inclusion of Luthor will gall many. It does indeed bother Hal, as does the Scarecrow. Luthor proves to be a major problem in issue 7.

We also learn that life really began on Earth in the DCU, and that there is an entity that forms a White Lantern. Sinestro usurps that power, so I'm not too upset that the avatar of white light is an image of white supremacy; not only is the recipient a villain to start with, but he also isn't caucasian.

Still... granted these ring colors are based on the base color wheel, but the notion that black is evil, white is good has bothered me ever since the use in Disney movies.

Speaking of the Orange Lanterns:

I don't like the emotion it represents, but I'm finding Agent Orange (Larfleeze) very entertaining. He just says a few words and he makes me laugh: in issue 4 all of the Lanterns recited their various oaths on a 2-page spread. Larfleeze never had to say one, so when it came to him all he said was "Huh?". As the last of 7 this was funnier.

Back to 6

In a neat detail, the Atom's first word as a member of the Indigo Tribe was "Nok!". We still don't know their language (Johns swears he

won't reveal it yet), making it funnier.

In Green Lantern and Corps Books

Green Lantern filled in parts of the universe of the other color corps, but did not add anything for the character. In one issue Sinestro and Star Sapphire Carol Ferris fight. In another the various Corps leaders go on a mission together. We see what Atrocitus' fellow Inversions looked like, and they made Cenobytes from HELLRAISER look tame in comparison. Larfleeze also got out another great line.

In the final issue of this set, the 50th of this title, Parallax is released to thwart black lantern Spectre. His task is done in 51, and Hal is freed. We don't yet know where Parallax is, but we hear the upset of Hector Hammond about it.

Green Lantern Corps had much more going on. First reversing the usual pattern of Kyle Rayner's love life, HE dies. Unfortunately it only lasts into the next issue (his revival is a *deus ex machina*), but it sets up a few big events.

Kyle's demise drives Guy Gardner into major rage, leading him to become a Red Lantern, but one keeping his green ring too. Kyle tries to rescue him. He is rescued in #45.

Third, we see just how powerful Mogo is, and it is incredible. This is one planet you don't mess with!

Fourth and most important the central power battery is destroyed by the Black Lanterns. I suspect that this will play a large part into the continuation of the New Guardians.

Other Books

Adventure Comics finishes a story of Superboy Prime, supposedly redeemed by his crush girl Laurie, herself a Blue Lantern. It then resolves the turn of Superboy as a Black Lantern. In this instance a tie-in does add value to the main series. It explains why heroes became zombies in #6 - begging the comment that this should have been explained in the main series though.

Over in **Booster Gold** Blue Beetle is again

risen, this time as a Black Lantern. Not surprising, he's darkly funny. He's also beaten, again no surprise.

Harbinger appears in **R.E.B.E.L.S.** She was killed on Earth (in Themyscira), but she still ended up thousands of light years away. That was a bit weird.

Also, Stealth appears, the mother of Dox estranged son. I remember her days as a hero, and try to forget how her race's biological imperative forced her to violate Dox and make him a father.

At one point Dox gets the power he needs by becoming a member of the Sinestro Corps! This doesn't last beyond an issue though. Still, the idea that he was perfect for an evil group based on fear was very disturbing.

Secret Six has a 3-part story too, but the first part is in a one-shot below, so I'll deal with it first.

Skip Week Shots

In January there were 8 one-shots released. Each one was designed as the next issue of a title canceled for some time (dead books. Appropriate). They were released as a skip week event.

For those of you who don't know what that is: January is a 5-week month, but DC Entertainment is on a 4-week publishing schedule, even though it blows it often. Rather than have nothing that week, they made this the event this year instead.

Each one-shot is suffering from what I see as bad storytelling now: they all start the same way, with the memories of the being downloaded into the body used by the Black Lantern in the story. I realize that every comic could be the first read by someone - but the creators could still do something new. In these and others they don't.

7 issues in on the main series, most if not all of us readers get the set-up, so we don't need it hammered into our heads. That's what this does. Now it's lazy writing to me.

The Atom and Hawkman #46: This was the first book I read. It not only explained why Ray is the most compassionate being to be chosen, it also finally reveals what the Indigo Tribe's powers and limitations are. After more than 7 months, it was about time!

This title seems to swirl around the end of Blackest Night. We know that (not surprising) the heroes win. Ray's next chosen task: to resurrect his friend Hawkman.

Cat Woman #83: I didn't know that Seline Kyle had a sister; not surprising since I didn't read this series. The only person she ever killed (eye for an eye though), the original Black Mask, returns here.

By issue's end that sister is now an enemy though.

Starman #81: In a switch on the talks with a dead brother in dreams, he's the zombie this issue.

This was a strange issue not having any of the original creators, and also disturbing how the Shade's immortality is shown: the B-L takes his heart, but he gets better.

Power of Shazam #48: Outside of a few panels of the currently de-powered Batsons, they are barely mentioned here.

Instead this issue focuses on Osiris, who like in mythology rises... except as a Black Lantern. His companion Sobek (secretly Famine from the Four Horsemen) also rises, and contradicting other B-L lore, end up fighting each other. In the end Osiris is redeemed, even though I never felt he needed it.

The Question #37: For this title the entire creative team is back. Most of the classic characters are as well; Lady Shiva and professor Rodor are back too, with the new Question Rene Montoya.

Charlie Victor Sage is the zombie here. He's eventually defeated by the others letting him go, shutting their emotional link down.

Rene sets off to bring Charlie back to life. He's done so before, so it's possible - but this

upsets me much as David Banner having ALS did: these are not things you can come back from in the Real World. I'm still mourning Emru's death from leukemia in 2008. I find this an insult to him and others.

Weird Western Tales #71: This was one of the most 'out there' one shots; few likely remembers this series. The characters who starred in it (Scalphunter, Bat Lash, the Tornado Twins and Jonah Hex) appear so briefly here that they don't change that fact.

This issue has two major points to it:

- Quentin Turnbull was despicable (as we saw in the recent 6-Gun War story in Jonah Hex). His descendant here is equally reprehensible;
- bad as Quentin was, his zombie still works with Hex.

The Phantom Stranger #42: Another title with little resonance to fans, the Stranger along with the Blue Devil try to free the Spectre from Nekron's thrall. They don't ultimately succeed.

Suicide Squad #67: This is really the first part of three, the other two in Secret Six. The storyline is co-written by Gail Simone and John Ostrander. John has recently had large expenses to pay, and Gail helped him lately by getting him work.

John Ostrander is my comic scripting inspiration. I praised his run on Spectre. I loved the Suicide Squad run. Gail Simone is likewise an excellent writer.

That said, I was disappointed by this issue and the entire story. It didn't feel like it flowed well. The artwork didn't really help either. Jim Calafiore has a very bland look to my eyes.

The Miniseries

Blackest Night JSA

The Black Lanterns show some cunning here: they fool the Society into believing they feel remorse for their actions and are trying to be better. In reality B-L Damage blows up a path to B-L Lois Lane's husband, so that she can revive the Golden Age B-L Superman.

Johnny Quick appears as a Black Lantern, which is strange; he went into the Speed Force, leaving no body behind. Still he's here to snare his daughter Jesse.

Ultimately Mr. Terrific creates a one-time device that severs the connection of all the zombies present. Power Girl takes some major hits first though.

Blackest Night Wonder Woman

In my view this mini again did a great disservice to the character. After a sole nice touch (B-L Max Lord's head on backwards), this 3 issue piece had no real overall plot. Issue 2 deals with WW becoming a Violet Lantern, and 3 deals with her fighting with Red Lantern Mera. Max Lord reappears in issue 3, but otherwise the 3 issues have no relation.

As a result, this series comes off as nothing more than a cash grab.

The sole plus: the art. Nicola Scott seemed to take a break from Secret Six to devote her energy to this series, and it paid off.

Blackest Night Flash

Geoff Johns and Scott Kolins return to a concept they've produced well in the past, and they still don't disappoint. The Rogues face Black Lantern versions of dead members and Captain Cold's sister the Golden Glider. Meanwhile Boomerang Jr. faces B-L Captain Boomerang, who convinces him easily to bring victims to help him revive.

Like the Wonder Woman title above the second issue deals with his deputy role, here as a Blue Lantern. Unlike that title, this returns to its actual plot. For that issue though Flash goes around the elements of the Blackest Night storyline with thoughts that things will be righted, an emotion consistent with hope. His repeated motto is "All will be well." That makes a cool battle cry!

Boomer Jr.'s actions here are quite vile, even to the Rogues. His fate ends up bad through

them.

Things to Come

This leads to the penultimate issue. Part 3 will most likely be shorter due to that.

MOVIE VIEWS

Once again credit to my friend Alan J. Porter for the inspiration for the theme of this piece.

Slumdog Millionaire (DVD): You would think there's nothing to relate to comics here, but there is a thin link: a young man founded Vimanika Comics in India a few years ago, with heroes and villains drawn from Indian mythology, so he has a title called Karna among others.

This film begins with a character named Jamal Malik, the titled 'Slumdog' because he grew up as an orphan along with his brother Salim in Mumbai. He's a contestant on the Indian version of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' and doing very well. It's suspected that he's cheating, so he's being interrogated by nasty local police.

We learn of his life growing up, and of how all of the questions/answers relate to it. We also learn of the girl who grew up with the brothers, Latika, who Jamal is in love with and meets again.

His older brother Salim is a street gangbanger, an early protector and antagonist for Jamal. In the end Jamal gets his girl, Salim sacrifices himself to end the mobster after Jamal, and there's a happy ending, and a dance number like many 'Bollywood' films.

This film from director Danny Boyle won a best film Oscar, the musical director winning for best song. Despite this the film wasn't engrossing to me. Outside of using India and some narrative flashbacks to the lives of Jamal, Salim and Latika, I've seen the basic story (2 brothers, one a criminal who tries to make things right) before.

This disc had no extras. That made it less enjoyable.

District 9 (DVD): From an Oscar winner to a 2010 Best Picture nominee, and one I enjoyed - in large part because it was an original science fiction story. It was also a good allegory for Apartheid, which occurred when director Neil Blomkamp grew up in South Africa.

Aliens given the derogatory name Prawns came to Earth in a vessel that they had no control over. They were given a camp outside of Johannesburg, but 28 years later that welcome has worn out. A company called Multi-National United (a munitions company) gets a contract to evict them from this squalor. Wilkus van der Meure is put in charge, but he gets infected by a strange chemical and begins to transform into a Prawn himself, and the stories of the corporation, their mercenaries and a Nigerian gang here boil to a head. Fortunately for Wilkus he befriends a Prawn male and his son, helping him to get free.

This film is gritty. It begins as a documentary, and after Wilkus starts to change becomes a standard narrative. The effects are also very fast and brutal themselves; for weapon fire, that makes sense.

The extras include documentaries on elements of the film. Learning that for part they used a former nuclear plant... that unnerved some of the crew; it unnerved me too!

There is also a selection of deleted and extended scenes. I could see why they weren't used; some just didn't fit, some would have slowed the pace too much.

The comicbook link here is an easy one: science fiction itself.

GI Joe: the Rise of Cobra (DVD): As well as being a Hasbro property, the Joes have a long history in comicbooks. I haven't been following the current Devil's Due titles, but I did read the entire Marvel run, mostly drawn by Herb Trimpe. I always remember a story with 3 generals and a Cobra invasion; they each dive into battle one after another grunting how each one doesn't want the other to have a

more glorious and heroic death!

This movie though... let me start with the good things. First is Christopher Eccleston as the evil arms dealer who becomes Destro. He had an excellent run as the new Doctor Who. I wish it had been longer, but David Tennant next was no slouch. Chris next had a small but pivotal role on Heroes. Here he appeared to dominate every scene he was in.

Brendan Frasier has an uncredited cameo in this film as well. It's more for color than importance, but it's neat.

The visuals and effects in this film are very well done. Also, calling a villain The Baroness makes sense now.

Now for the bad:

First, a big problem for an action film, it was too long, and because of the direction choices, felt it. The action didn't flow.

A huge logic hole marred the film: the villains find and attack the secret Pit. Not only do GI Joe not move it for safety - the villains never deal with it again. It is forgotten about.

Duke and Ripcord get cybernetic supersuits. Not only does this not fit the style of the team, but also duplicating a gimmick doesn't fit.

Two minor things hurt the film, one in general, one for me:

The visual of Snake Eyes doesn't work here, and he comes out looking and acting goofy.

Marlon Wayans from the Scary Movie franchise plays Ripcord here. I like his older brothers Keenan Ivory and Damon. Marlon though annoys me.

This film creates Cobra Commander and Cobra. It smells like a set-up for a franchise, but it isn't a film that encourages sales for one.

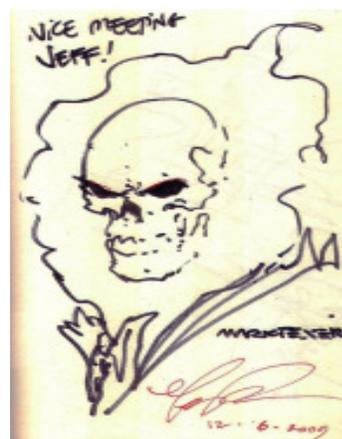
Outside of previews, this DVD has no extras, and no Easter Eggs that I could find.



MONTREAL COMIC-CON December 9, 2009

I saw what I could at this 1 day show. As with the last show I spoke about last issue, there were a lot of guests.

Richard Serano of Optimum Wound was there again, as was Kelly Tindall, Yannick Paquette and another guy who was at the last show and Con*Cept 2009. There was also legendary artist Michael Golden and fellow legend Mark Texiera. They were both listed for the last show, but they were



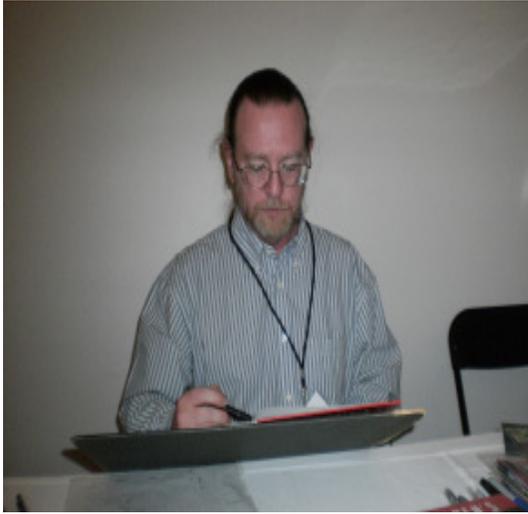
Mark Texiera

in China at the time. Mr. Golden drew the cover, Private Marx from The 'Nam.

I related to Mr. Texiera how I've followed his work since before the Hex series, though I think he thought I kept saying his nickname 'Tex'. There was a lot of

noise in the hall.

I shared my opinions on the Watchman film with Kelly. He liked it a lot, but agreed with me



Michael Golden

on the mistake of the squid not appearing. He's been to everyone of these shows, and he had some young fans this time.



Without book

There were many non-comic guests too. I spent some time with Richard Hatch (not the

nude guy from Survivor... the original Apolo and Tom Zarick from the original and remake of Battlestar Galactica). With him I realized the



With book

original was nearly 30 years ago!

Another guest was Lloyd Kaufman, the creator of Troma Films, creator of The Toxic Avenger. I bought his book Make Your Own Damn Movie. I have two photos with him; the second was for me to hold up the book as product placement. :) I saw him here in town when he first released Tromeo and Juliet many years ago... it's on DVD now.

I told him how I'm a screenwriter from University. He signed my book "You're a terrific screenwriter."; may his words prove prophetic someday!

Like the last show the Star Wars costumed fans were there, and there was an anime voice actress that I didn't have a chance to see. There were also representatives of a computer school I didn't have a chance to speak with.

The shows still needs good panels, but at least it is continuing to improve little bit by little bit.

COMIC THOUGHTS

After Blackest Night...

- Comes The Brightest Day, a 26-issue bi-weekly series to allegedly brighten up the DCU.

At the time of 52 Dan DiDio said the DC Universe would get lighter, that it always gets dark before the dawn. The dead rising as zombies across the universe seems to me the darkest that things can get!

The titles are both lines in the Green Lantern oath ('In brightest day, in blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight.') so it resonates strongly to me. There are a lot of things that I'm curious about though:

Roy Harper (Arsenal) was recently maimed (he lost an arm) in *Justice League: Cry for Justice*. It will factor into a One-shot and a mini-series. That won't go away, and such events don't go away in a year. I wonder how that will be resolved.

There are darker series and concepts like *Secret Six*, Checkmate and the Suicide Squad that can't be made brighter. Hopefully this won't mean that the Six gets cut.

Also, there are new and more mature story techniques, more intelligent storytelling that can't be lost. I'll look forward to how these are resolved.

Update This may answer some of my pondering: on NEWSARAMA scribe Geoff Johns said that *The Brightest Day* is just a storyline, not a line change.

The story starts with the new *Flash* #1. I think that fits well with Barry the temporary Blue Guardian, a symbol of hope.

Avengers: Re-Assembled

At first I thought the *Siege* series leading to reforming the single team was just a rumor. Now I know it's real. 7 years of stories starting with *Disassembled*, through Civil War, the Dark Reign plotline, maybe even House of M... all led to the hero team being re-formed. Unlike DC and the Brightest Day, this is as part of a line-wide story called The Heroic Age.

There will be a covert team called *Secret Avengers* though, so the world isn't all rosy.

As part of this, all of the Avengers titles will be canceled. That's a shame in one instance: there have been a few spotty issues, but overall I've enjoyed *Avengers: the Initiative*. **Update:** I learned that it will be replaced by aew title called *Avengers Academy* using some former *New Warriors* and *Initiative* characters. There will also be another *New Avengers* title with *Luke Cage, wife Jewel, Wolverine, Spider-Man and others*. *So the books are changing/re-launching. The line isn't contracting.*

Part of the reason for The Heroic Age was cited as the current more optimistic US Presidency. If the next regime is as gloomy as Dubya though, will the universe get darker again though?

I'm still unhappy with the current stories in the **Marvel** Universe. I still feel they've insulted both our intelligence and that of the fictional denizens. This won't lead me to pick up more books.

GET READY TO SURF THE WAVE

First Wave that is... **DC Entertainment** have begun a new series for Doc Savage, his team and others. This will make the third attempt for Doc (Kirby, then many) and the

Blackhawks, and a second for Justice Inc. (again Kirby) and the Spirit (Darwyn Cooke). I know at least one other huge fan who'll get it: my friend Gabriel Morrissette didn't only draw stories in the 2nd try, he's also a fan of the character (he created Wild Dog and Cat Savage from it. I have a page I'm on from the saga from my 27th birthday).

This will be on a world in the multiverse of the DCU. It won't be a world of pure pulp though; the company is advertising it as the 40s style with cell phones and personal computers.

As well as the Blackhawks, there is the Bruce Wayne Batman (he suits pulp) and a tweaked version of the original Black Canary (non-powered).

I first saw Rags Morales art years ago when DC had a license with TSR (original owners of Dungeons and Dragons). He drew the *Spelljammers* series back then, and I already dug his art.

Rags and pulp. A guaranteed sale with me!

I just read in solicitations that there will also be a separate title for Doc Savage and for The Spirit.

There's a Doctor in the House

Doctor Voodoo, that is.

Marvel needed a change. Greg talks about the lack of new ideas now; Doctor Strange had many - in the 1960s and 70s. Now lazy writers only dealt with Dormammu and Nightmare.

Doctor Voodoo has faced them both at the start of his series, granted... but Dormammu was just to wrap him up in the first few pages of issue 1, and Nightmare got several issues, but he's done now as well. Adding voodoo concepts with the magic that we've grown accustomed to helps.

Hopefully future issues will deal with newer things.

So far Rick Remender has proven to be a talented writer on this book.

Absolute Thrill

Geoff Johns latest work on Smallville was a 2-hour episode called 'Absolute Justice', introducing the Justice Society to the series and its universe.

Johns has much history with this team, what with penning 2 series with the characters. There were some changes in the characters for TV, but he still treated them with respect. Even though they just had cameos, Alan Scott (Green Lantern) and Ted Grant (Wildcat) were there. Too bad not in costume though.

For those of us who've read the titles, this 2-hour episode was a giant Easter Egg. Not only do Amanda Waller and Checkmate become part of the TV universe, but Task Force X (aka the Suicide Squad), Hawkgirl and Inza Nelson got mentioned. Despite the breadth of coverage the episode didn't feel bloated.

Michael Shanks also was a fantastic performer as Carter Hall/Hawkman.

Various Comicbooks in Bullets

Time for my lightning round:

- The Legion of Superheroes will now have their own new title. No hard guess if I'll pick it up. :)
- The first round of Red Circle/Archie Super Heroes character launches has led to a second round of debuts: the Comet, the Jaguar and the Fox are some of them.
- These will also lead to a one shot *Mighty Crusaders* title. The name is their super team.
- I nearly dropped *All-Stars*, but my friend Alan J. Porter said something that gave the title a reprieve: scribe Matthew Sturges is a member of his writing group in Austin, Texas.
- Well, Arsenal *won't* be the sole remaining Titan... there will be a one-shot spin-off from *The Brightest Day* called *Titans: Villains for Hire* for Deathstroke's new team, a team that will include Cheshire.
- I don't know if this will be the new status quo, but I'll be surprised if it is. There's already a team of villains in *Secret Six* - and unless Gail Simone or John Ostrander are also writing this one, titles featuring villains don't sell well... *Joker*, *Eclipso* and *Marvel Super-Villain Team-Up* have shown that.

**HEY KIDS:
LETTERS!**

Here are the comments of the issue. - JaB

Hello, Jeff! You know, it's kind of funny that I have never read your zine before, but here we are as candidates for the 2010 DUFF race and I finally get the chance to see your zine. I have to admit it's a very good looking issue, even though I'm not much of a comics fan anymore. Still, there is some material worth commenting on. First off, I am glad you're doing much better now since taking that fall and being awarded the 2009 Aurora. Good for you!

I bet you mentioned that in your DUFF platform; that's a nice kudo. Other than the injury and missing out on some events - you are so right in noting that personal well-being is much more important than a con event - it sounds like you had a great time at Anticipation. I haven't been to a Worldcon since 1978 mostly due to financial reasons, but the ones I attended were a blast. Ah, let's see here... Back in my teen-aged years I read comics, but didn't really start collecting them until I was in college. My favorites were Green Lantern (so I enjoyed reading the articles about him and the Black Lanterns), the Flash and Dr. Strange. When the Conan boom was going great guns in the 70s I collected those, eventually gathering up the first dozen or so issues of *Savage Sword of Conan* and others of that ilk, and was a fan of Barry Smith and John Buscema. That was good stuff. However, since then I haven't done any serious comics reading or collecting; the interest waned. Yet I fondly remember walking to the nearest Walgreen's with my older brother where we bought the latest comics we enjoyed (Rick liked Sgt Rock and Batman). I still have some of these old comics, too, stored in Mylar bags. Some of those are probably worth a nice chunk of change by now. ***I wouldn't be so sure of that... the speculator market dried up after Superman came back to life. With rare exceptions (those may be) most aren't worth the initial cost. - JaB*** I had no idea that the Disney Corporation bought Marvel Comics, so that was news to me. Again, this article ("My Two Sides") was interesting to read, but didn't jar loose any comment hooks for me. Even so, some interesting reading for someone marginally interested in this sort of thing. Have you been watching the new season of *Caprica* on SyFy channel? So far it's not bad, thus I am not going to pass final judgment on it until after I have seen the first month's worth of episodes. I kind of liked the origin of the Cylons angle, and the cinematography is excellent. We shall see how the storylines progress, though. ***In Canada it's on Space: the Imagination Station. - JaB*** One thing to say about *Robot Chicken*: great show! So much funny stuff, and I love it. Their takes on classic shows and movies is marvelous. What else can I say but that? Well, other than those comments I can't really say much more except that it's neat to

see a loc from an old friend of mine, R Lorraine Tutihasi, and other good folks like Lloyd Penney and Steve Green. Thanks for posting this to efanazines, Jeff. I liked it a lot. And good luck in the DUFF election. We shall see what happens. All the best, John Purcell "If either the right wing or the left wing gained control of the country, it would probably fly around in circles." - Pat Paulsen (1927-1997) A Pat Paulsen 1968 Presidential campaign slogan and bumper sticker: "I've upped my standards. Now up yours."

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February 12, 2010

Dear Jeff:

Thanks for the gentle reminder that I needed to get a letter of comment off to you for The Original Universe 10. It will be very nice indeed to be able to put 2009 Aurora Award Winner on the cover to no. 11.

The Palais de Congres was enormous, and perhaps being in your chair was the best way to get around in it. Even with the escalators and elevators, getting around in the Palais was our daily exercise. I'd heard of many problems behind the scenes, and of some adults on staff who just don't work well with anyone, but experience-wise, it was one of the best Worldcons for me. The actual award was for Fan Achievement, not Fan Experience, but hey, those pointy little trophies are great.

I stand corrected now. - JaB

My own preference is that a fanzine be printed on paper, actually published. Given that, I quite understand that .pdfing zines for online reading has saved fans so much money and time. It actually allows me to carry all outstanding, yet-to-be-responded-to zines on a USB stick, and carry them around with me to get to when I have a moment and a computer at hand, which seem to be most of the day. No matter if a zine is paper or e- or web, it will get some response from me. You've made the effort to create the contents, and you and the contents require some feedback.

I have so many friends in the USA who have complained in the past that you need a passport to go to Canada, and I wearily reply that you don't need that passport to go to Canada, you need it to come back home.

I expect that somewhere down the road, one or two companies will own everything in media, in spite of government regulations trying to prevent that. Disney owns Marvel and ABC, Warner owns DC, Comcast just bought NBC Universal, and locally Shaw Cable is buying CanWest Global. The real money isn't with the networks, it's with the cable distributors. Of course, Rogers Cable owns so many television stations, cable stations, Pay-Per-View and so much more, Shaw, who is the other big cable distributor in Ontario, had to get in there, too. I think that with a few companies owning nearly everything, we will need to make a choice between them; we won't have access to both.

I remember the first Battlestar series, but never got into the current and just-finished version. The sequel, Caprica, looks like it's already cancelled. It's been a long time since something SFish on television really caught my attention enough to make me want to follow it. Wall-E won so many awards, and now Up is

following in its footsteps, or trademarks as the case may be. Seems anything Pixar touches turns to gold. And now, I have seen a teaser film about Toy Story 3.

Coming up shortly in Toronto is Wizard World Toronto, a big comic/media convention. This is the former Paradise ComiCon, sold to an American chin of comic conventions. It's on March 26 to 28. I may be there, if only to promote this year's Ad Astra. It would seem that any convention advertising on FaceBook will greatly increase their attendance. Ad Astra will be doing so, so let's hope we get a good boost.

My loc...don't think Liana K. is on the BoD for Ad Astra any more, and that's a shame. I wish I was going to Keycon, but money never allows for it. For 2010, our finances say that we go to local cons only. The nomination for the Aurora was great to have, but few fans in Canada know of my writing for fanzines, so while I may get a nomination for it, I know I probably have little chance of bringing home the most dangerous SF trophy in the world. Sharp edges! I have won two Aurora, but I think I have lost about a dozen.

Hey, I am done after all, so here's my loc a little earlier in the day than anticipated. Take care, and see you next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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33 Scott Road Solihull UK B92 7LQ

13 February 2010

Hi Jeff, Sorry to hear about George Tuska. As you wrote in your short tribute, he was one of

those solid artists who might not have raised the roof with every appearance, but had the visual sense and skills required to make every panel count. Too many of the latest generation of comics illustrators have cribbed their 'style' from artists who grew up by copying yet another group of professionals in the 1990s; it's a process similar to genetic degradation in cloning, and has led to a widespread ignorance of such basic tools as perspective and anatomy. I'll shortly begin work on the next tranche of TAFF reportage, covering my arrival in Montreal.

It was really fun meeting up with yourself and other members of the city's sf & fantasy association, and I'm so glad I took advantage of the kind offer from Ann Methe and Jean-Pierre Normand to stay at their home prior to the worldcon. (The opening chapter of my TAFF report appeared in Steven Silver's fanzine *Argentus*, available online at <http://efanzines.com/Argentus/Ag09.pdf>; the same issue also features several illustrations by my late wife, Ann.)

Have you seen the trailers for *Kick Ass* yet? I can't decide whether the cinema incarnation's going to be a dreary spoof of superhero comics or a genuinely satirical lampoon of the genre. Guess I'm going to have to go and watch the darned thing (which, seeing as I'm nearly one-fifth of the way into my personal challenge to catch one hundred movies on the big screen this year, isn't too much of a hassle). All best — Steve

==

Dear JAB,

I hope by now that your arm has fully healed from that fall you took during Anticipation (with the added unfortunate consequence of you having to miss your own award). Perhaps that was the hidden message meant to be conveyed by the mighty arm on the cover of TOU 10?

Not intentional. - JaB

As this is a LOC submission that is minutes from being late, I'll dive right into the comics...

I enjoyed the lowdown on DC's Blackest Night series. This material is too current for me, but I always like to get a little dose of what is happening in the DC and Marvel universes as I work my way up to these events. In fact, since the last issue I've managed to finally get a copy of the landmark Crisis on Infinite Earths to see what all the fuss was about. To be honest, while it may have been monumental in some respects, I was not too keen on seeing literally EVERY notable DC character ever created up until the time of its writing. Cramming all those characters often made the story telling uneven and awkward. While it did succeed in creating a uniform universe from that point on, and had significant impact on some characters (notably Barry Allen), I think a little less emphasis on trying to squeeze everyone in could have opened up other avenues in the overall story. Still an interesting read.

I had numerous problems with it myself, but I don't want to rant. - JaB

Over the holidays I picked up a few pre-bundled comics series in a clearance bin at a comic shop.. One series was the 3rd story arc of the Stephen King inspired Dark Tower series: "Treachery". Now I've read a few Stephen King novels over the years, but did not know anything about the Dark Tower series of novels, much less the comics based on them. But the cover artwork painting of the first issue was more than a bit intriguing and lucky for me that I can't pass up a bargain. I say lucky because this series was a revelation in many ways. For the initiated, the world of the Dark Tower series is a mashup of the old wild west with more than a touch of mystical forces and elements of fantasy. Even though this was the 3rd story arc of the series, the short summary of preceding events was all I needed to be immediately absorbed in this fascinating world. While writer Peter David is the driving force, its the fantastic painted art collaboration of artist Richard Isanove and

penciller Jae Lee that really deliver the dark brooding atmosphere of the Dark Tower world. I enjoyed Treachery immensely. I was determined to get the preceding stories and was lucky enough to then find a hardcover copy of the first storyline, "A Gunslinger Born", for a paltry \$10.

The local bi-annual "big" comic show ("big" around here means that there were more than 5 sellers) proved to be fruitful in that I managed to complete my "Y the Last Man" series and also picked up a few other titles that will be sure to please. One is the first GN of Transmetropolitan that seems to be universally well received. I'll be reading that soon enough, but only after I get to that Dark Tower HC.

King would be another rant for me right now... - JaB

Looking forward to the next issue,

Dario Sciola

Ottawa, ON

==

Dear Original Universe Jeff,

Congratulations on another issue. When confronted about what to write you about, it always seems so daunting a proposition, because the list of topics regarding comics and fandom is so vast. I personally think that's what makes it good.

I'm a writing maniac myself, albeit a slow-typing one. -JaB

But I have to take issue with the comments your friends made regarding Wizard World Toronto that you alluded to in issue 10. You rightly pointed out that in this economy, no one is doing as well as they used to, but this persistent idea that the Toronto Comicon and/or Wizard were/are being run into the ground... I think I'm going to scream if I hear one more person speak with authority about things they know nothing about.

I attended Wizard World Chicago for a few years before deciding not to return this year. That decision had nothing to do with any dissatisfaction regarding the show itself. The problem was that I wasn't making any money at it because people in Chicago no longer have the disposable income to buy indie comics at a convention.

My last year spent at WWC was depressing. People that came by the booth every year and bought the new book came by and didn't buy. They said hello, and apologized for not having the money to spend. I heard story after story of people who had been laid off, had their hours cut or their wages slashed. Chicago is in a bad place. Yes, the shops on The Magnificent Mile are still going strong, but the people who shop at Armani and American Girl aren't showing up at a comic book convention.

The last time I was in Chicago, (this year for the Harry Potter exhibit which is coming to Toronto in April) my friend and I ended up striking up a conversation with a recently homeless man who used to work for the airline. He'd gotten laid off. The bank foreclosed. This is the reality of the middle class economy of Chicago right now. This sort of trouble affects all businesses that rely on disposable income, and that means that not only will numbers be down at a show, but even when people do buy a badge, they have less money to spend on the show floor. That means people like me don't show up, not because we don't love the people down there, but because we can't afford to lose money.

Since this has been a two-year slide, yes, I imagine Wizard is taking a hit. The complaints I've heard about the show have been things like having no free comic in the weekend pass bag, a lack of convention t-shirt, increased price of admission... I've been hearing these complaints for years. Fandom LOVES to complain. Fandom doesn't like to face economic realities. Fandom needs to learn to complain more effectively, because right now there are just too many unrealistic expectations, so the big shows are just looking at head counts.

It makes sense for Wizard to expand to Toronto when shows like Chicago are faltering. Toronto has shown that it has an appetite for large comicons, and... holy snap this city desperately needs the competition in the marketplace.

I hope this show succeeds because it will force all shows in Toronto to do better, and fandom has gotten extremely lazy in this city. The anime kids are kicking our butts when it comes to a good party, even at the smaller shows. I was just at G-Anime in Ottawa and it was a great time. The Calgary Comic Book Expo has plenty to do. KeyCon in Winnipeg only has about 500 people attending, and it's an amazing time. We have all this talent and access to so much in Toronto, and we cannot get the fans and retailers involved in a meaningful way — there is always some excuse or complaint. Meanwhile, I'm screaming as loudly as I can for various shows to address accessibility, diversity, and dignity issues and I keep getting told to piss off... except at the anime shows. These shows understand that being good ambassadors for their fandoms and not being raging snots to attendees means that more people will like what they like. I hated the anime I'd seen until I started going to AN. Then I got recommendations about better things to watch and got really into Deathnote. Hetalia is the next one I'm going to try. The only reason I sampled again is because I had such a damned good time that I bothered to learn that anime is more than J-Pop singalongs and Yaoi.

So any new element to the comicon landscape in Toronto is a good thing, as far as I'm concerned. Yes, the booth prices are crazy at Wizard, but the thing that has impressed me in my dealings with them thus far is when I ask them why they do something, they have an answer and they bother to have a discussion with me. That's a big difference from the treatment I usually get from Toronto conventions.

I'm not promising perfection, because that's silly. What I am suggesting are two things:

1) We give this show a try, because an improvement in the Toronto landscape benefits Toronto fans

2) We take a collection among Original Universe readers to send you to Toronto, so you can report on the convention and give an objective opinion. I'd be happy to donate to that.

Thanks. As you know, you saw me there. With this zine unfortunately not in hand. - JaB

Regards,

Liana K.

==

Jeffrey Allan Boman

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2009 Aurora Award Winner, 2010 Nominee

2010 DUFF Nominee

You'll know the results on DUFF next issue along with Script Frenzy.

Issue 10 lived up to my hopes on being special for the first in double digits. I have to try at least to equal it again!

Letters:

Lloyd: I've known Rene since our days at Concordia, and I was on the Con*Cept con-com with both he and Terry for years. I'm glad they succeeded here too. / Re: the Aurora banquet... I get too emotional to be intelligible speaking at these things. Even if I get to Keycon I'll have someone else speak for me if I win. / I'll see you at the Comic Con. Liana is a guest there. She'll be able to answer your questions. / If I can afford to I'll go to Keycon. Ad Astra is too much for me right now.

Dario: You'll read my report on the Toronto Comic on next issue. / You may not have good pickings for conventions in Ottawa, but you can read 17 years of my writing in the Library of Canada; there's an archive of COMICOPIA there. / I've heard so many bad things about **The Spirit** that I've avoided the film so far.

Matthew: By now we know the results of **Siege**.... Roger Stern had one of the runs on **Avengers** until Bendis, there was no really enjoyable run - and he isn't always good. / Congratulations to you and Grace on your Campbell noms too. I voted for you.

Lauraine: If it makes you feel any better, I have a short story unfinished that I began in 2000. I wish I'd finished that draft; I liked most of it to that point. Getting into the mindset of a bigot then proved a slayer for me. / An Iphone is a dream for me too. / I'll be glad for your fillos some day. / BTW: I've received both issues of FELINE MEWSINGS that you sent me. Thanks! / Many readers were disappointed by that last **Legion** series. That's a major reason why it failed. It was finally called the Earth Prime version of the team. The original one has now been brought back.

Steve: Welcome! If I can get Chris Garcia here, I'll have both of my big TAFF winner endorsers here. / At one time, there was an edict that neither Ben Parker nor Bucky Barnes would ever return from the dead. They were seen as the sacred cows at **Marvel**. Uncle Ben sort of came back (Peter David brought an alternate reality version), and no writer not of Ed Brubaker's caliber could do a good job with Bucky. Add the desecration of the memory of Gwen Stacy though, and officially nothing is sacred in the MU anymore. I don't see that as a good thing myself.

Read you all soon,

JaB

==

Finally, my content for this issue is ready now!

WAHF: Olivia Arduini, Matthew Surridge (hope the home repairs pan out), Justin Mohareb (good luck shopping that article), R-Laurraine Tutihasi (thanks for the zines).

Next Issue

To catch up, next issue will have fewer articles:

- my convention report for the Toronto Comic-Con;
- a list of links from it.

I will still have my regular features however.

See you in a few months.

At 3:15 AM that day she got extremely ill. She began to lie down first in my bathtub then on my kitchen floor, panting.

I brought her to the vet, where I learned that she was in major respiratory distress and needed an oxygen tube. The vet told me she could perform surgery on my kitty, but at her age she could die on the operating table. The kinder thing to do (which I did) was to have her euthanised. I cuddled my baby as she died.

The sadly ironic thing: just 3 days earlier we celebrated her birthday.

She's my phone wallpaper, and will stay so on my phone. When I have to switch I'll transfer the image over.

The vet gave me another young kitty that needed a home the same day. I needed the company or I'd quickly go bonkers. Garfield is a very affectionate cat. He'll never replace my baby in my heart, but at least I won't be lonely.

First Boots November 23, 2007, now Squeaky... my first generation of cats are now completely gone.

EDITOR'S CORNER (Continued)



**RIP Squeaky Boman Nov 1, 1992 -
May 4, 2010**

We Remember

I don't look forward to these words, but legends in the field deserve to be honored:



Richard "Dick" Giordano (78): he survived lymphoma and leukemia, but pneumonia finally did him in.

His credits were numerous: as well as great runs on **Batman** and **Green**

Lantern / Green Arrow in the 1970s with Neil Adams, he was an executive editor at **DC** in the 1980s, a major early voice for creator rights, a founder of Continuity Associates with Adams, a board member for **The Hero Initiative**, a freelance artist at **Charlton Comics**... an attempt by me to do his body of achievements justice would be inadequate.

His last offering that I was aware of was a recent issue of **Jonah Hex**. Something seemed off with it. Now I may know why.

I've never heard anyone speak ill of him. After Julie Schwartz he seemed much loved.



Frank Frazetta (82): Just before press time came the news of another art legend passing away.

In comics Frank known for his powerful Conan the Barbarian, the Shining Knight, Vampirella and others. His powerful art-style has graced the covers of innumerable novel covers, as well as inspired that of many van airbrushed illustrations.

On newsarama.com many artists shared how he was an influence on them.



Zines in Trade

Feline Mewsings 38 & 39. R-Laurraine Tutihasi ed. This is both Laurraine's zine for FAPA (a venerable SF APA) and a perzine (personal zine). As a result is has both her Mailing Comments and LOCs from others.

Challenger 31. Guy Hoyle III ed. A great Andy Kubert cover!

On My Sleeve by John Hertz (now DUFF delegate). An entertaining collection of his articles for others.

TODO LIST FOR 2009

- Con*Cept 2010
- Finish the zine Website
- Finish my Mutants and Masterminds updates (now 3rd Edition Rules are coming out!)
- Kindredspace
- Pitch a project to Polymancer Studios

TODO SOMEDAY

- Keycon 2010, Winnipeg (I'm not going, but my potential Aurora speech got sent)
- Toronto Comic Con (GONE, DONE)
- San Diego Comic Con



You have ___ issue(s) left for The Usual. Then you're off the mailing list. Please avoid that sad fact.

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