

# *THE ORIGINAL UNIVERSE*



## **Convention Report - Part 1**

# **Issue 12**



Winner 2009 Aurora Award and 2010 nominee

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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.

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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About the Cover:: The logo for the 2010 convention. It changed for 2011.

# Editor's Corner

This issue is hopefully out much sooner than expected. I intend to focus on a few less things each issue, so that I can produce it faster. We'll see if it works out. *Because of what I spoke of in e-mail and here that didn't happen. I'll talk about why later on as well.*

===

Some of the membership already know this: John Hertz won DUFF. In fact, Aussicon 4 happened last Labor Day.

Each round the person with the lowest number of votes was eliminated. I was the first person cut; I'm more upset with how few votes I got: 7. This is a clear message that I need to be better known the next time I try out for a Fan Fund. There will be another time; this isn't the end for me.

===

I also didn't finish Script Frenzy 2010 on time, but I wrote 68 pages out of 100. Chronic fatigue caused me to sleep in front of my keyboard more than write. Nevertheless, 68 pages is still quite an achievement!

I'll still finish the script though. My original intent was to use it to flesh out the characters for NaNoWriMo this year. I succeeded in fleshing out a few (actually most) but I want to get to all, and I want to finish!

===

Speaking of writing competitions: as I write these words NaNoWriMo 2010 is just hours away. *It's over now.*

Since Day One of this zine, it has delayed me here more. I won't let that happen this year fully. I'll push to make my daily word quota, then finish this zine.

===

Squeaky really affected me last issue. I think that was the first piece I ever printed here full of typos!

She was actually over 18 and a half. An incredible age for a cat. For a human, that is like a blink.

I do and always will miss her, but I think her going so quickly calloused my grief a little. Boots wasted away over a few months; that was tougher to deal with.

Now I have to turn my heart to Garfield Oscar, my new cat. Although it wasn't very long, I've forgotten what it is like having a frisky young cat in the house. He still needs full toilet training, and he's shredded my shower curtain twice already.

He's a lovely critter, but very high maintenance.

===

Someone else won the 2010 Aurora award, a Vancouver guy. According to the vote statistics, we came in a distant 4th.

I'm not upset about it. I don't yet have readers west of Ontario, so I expected to be unknown there.

All that's really important and cool to me is that the zine is now a 2-time nominee and 1-time winner. A second win would just have been gravy.

The 2011 crop will be held at SFCOntario 2 in Toronto next year. I hope to attend, regardless of

nomination.

===

Did you donate any to Haiti relief? I did: \$30 to Doctors Without Borders in the US, and \$15 (matched by our government) here in Canada. That way I covered our continent.

This makes for some synchronicity: natural disasters (the Tsunami and hurricane Katrina) also saw me get active.

(Since I wrote those words there has been a tragic earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand. I'm donating for that too.)

===

As I write this I'm finishing the 2nd Edition of **Hunters' Inc.** and later its sequel **Wrapped in an Enigma.**

With 3rd Edition of **Mutants and Masterminds** looming, and the parent company's edict that no 2nd Ed. material come out after July 1, that window is rapidly closing though. I may not have them out until 3E.

**Update:** I missed out on 2E entirely - chronic fatigue again - and this zine will now come before 3E stats.

Updating that book came first, since stuff I get paid for always does. this is why TOU is so late.

===

We had family woes: on July 3 my uncle in Burlington, VT died from heart disease. He was 68.

I wasn't able to attend his funeral on the 5th, but I was there for the last weekend of shiva (7 days of mourning).

He's now my first immediate relative gone, since my grandmother in 1988.

===

More pleasant family news: on Facebook a cousin found me. She's a cousin of my grandmother, and through her another, similar cousin contacted me.

I began a family tree over a decade ago. Most of the family I know is here in the Montreal area, but now I know by name members in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Texas and LA!

I enjoy learning more of my roots. The Nazis eliminated so much, so every person I find is like I'm spitting them. I'm glad I can do so again.

I now also know of 4 great uncles and aunts lost during the war.

===

More sad stuff: two of my friends died of cancers in the fall:

**Jeanne Robinson** I first met with her husband Spider here in Montreal in 1995, then at another convention in Toronto a month later. Spider had a song party at that one; Jeanne blessed my singing voice there.

She had a rare bile duct cancer. Spider apologized to me about not getting back to me right away, but as I told him: it wasn't a race. It didn't upset me.

She was cremated with some of her ashes given to her family so they'd be able to visit.

My other friend: **Marg Kasman**. Several of you know her husband Ron. I've stayed with them in Toronto since 1996. When I was there for the WizardWorld con last year Marg was soon going to have her first chemotherapy treatment. I'm not callous; cheaper lodgings aren't more necessary to me than someone's

suffering.

I don't know what cancer she had; I'm not cruel enough to ask now - but she died about 7 months later, so it was a very aggressive one.

She was also cremated. I couldn't be there for her memorial service, so I sent Ron some memories by e-mail: the night before I left for Montreal after Paradise City 2006, she and her sons - both over 20 - were playing Monopoly and had a great time.

Ron told me they made a great visual to open the ceremony. I'm honored that I could contribute anyway.

===

To end on a positive thing: my PC is finally repaired! I now have access to most of my files (sorry Liana I couldn't yet find my recordings. I have to find my SD cards after all). I don't have all of my files for Silhouette, but that's OK. I was planning to rewrite it anyway, and I have my entire APA archive; I can find the missing parts easily.

## Comic Thoughts

Here are a few thoughts on what I've read:

### NOW it Makes More Sense!

A few issues ago I had comments on the new line-up for the JLA. That was just for a storyline though. Most of the team left for their own reasons; for instance Mon-El went back to the Phantom Zone after the recent war for New Krypton (he first created the worlds of the Legion from bottled cities held by Brainiac. He'll return in the 30th century with the Legion itself. Green Arrow I'll speak about soon).

The point of that team was that they didn't work as one. Only Batman (Dick Grayson), Donna Troy and Congorilla stayed, with new teammates to come.

Jesse Quick, Jade and Supergirl have been announced, (so there are Flash, Green Lantern and Superman types) and Starman 2 (Mikaal Tomas) joined in story. I'm hoping that Dr. Light 2 (Kimiko) rejoins, since she has no series otherwise.

In general James Robinson is one of my favorite comic authors. **The Golden Age** and his **Starman** are two of my favorites.

### Despite That:

I was really disappointed by his **Justice League: Cry for Vengeance** series -- though that wasn't completely his fault.

It was originally planned to be a regular series, then the P-T-B chose it to be a mini.

The first 3 issues were good reading. After that however we felt the story compression. Congorilla and Mikaal vanished from the story and the membership of the main league changed with no

logic.

In the end it just set-up the changes for Arsenal and the problems with my next point:

### Green Arrow is No Longer a Hero

He's now a vigilante and a cold-blooded murderer. I won't support his new series because of that.

Granted Prometheus was a scumbag. Among other crimes he created devastation in Star City, caused the loss of Roy Harper (Red Arrow)'s arm, led to the death of Roy's daughter Lian, and would have destroyed millions of lives in other cities.

Still, a hero is better than them. The rationale given by Ollie, "I'm not a superhero. I'm a hunter." doesn't make it OK that he shot Prometheus between the eyes, then used his tech to escape from the real heroes.

I stopped reading the Punisher long ago for similar reasons.

### Where's Kid Eternity?

Did I miss the issue of **Teen Titans** in which he quit the team?

It seems that he just disappeared from the team, and because the others found him disturbing, they just all forgot about him.

Maybe he's being saved for a future storyline. Wendy hasn't appeared either after it was revealed that the Calculator is her father.

(This was resolved in the latest issue. He's dead, Jim.)

Thank You Len Wein!

He's the scribe for **DC Legends**.

At first I was concerned that this would just be a wall of text. Strange how these creators are writers - but too much text in a comic is tedious.

I didn't have to worry. The title is a pictorial piece and at least until a few decades into the 21st century will have a potential similarity to **Marvels**. The current lead isn't immortal.

## Avengers Round-UP

All 4 titles of the 'Heroic Age' are now out.

**Avengers**, while I haven't yet warmed up to the line-up is now seemingly the title for the classic villains, or at least (so far) twists on them. John Romita Jr. art is a great sales point too.

The series over time has not been a favorite. I find it still very removed from the characters. Most of them seem foils to Iron Man.

I read a lot of comicbooks because they have different 'voices'. This one doesn't have one for me yet.

**Secret Avengers** has become one of my favorite reads.

I remember when Mike Deodato was considered a hot artist on **Wonder Woman**. His current style I don't like much. A covert Avengers team I'm not thrilled by. The line-up bugs me too: Nova on Earth seems wrong to me. Ant-Man (the current one) is supposed to be a jerk -- and teams with Moon Knight on them don't tend to last (Heroes for Hire tanked with him. So did West Coast Avengers). Both have left now for a few issues, but both are back now..

Despite these gripes the writing by Ed Brubaker has been fantastic. Nick Spencer (DC, **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents**, now under an exclusive deal at **Marvel**) is taking over so that may change. He'll only be there for a few issues; then Warren Ellis will then take over. He's been hot and cold on licensed properties lately, so I'll see how he does here.

**Avengers Academy** has a lot of potential. I won't spoil the surprise, but it's a doozy. Robbie Baldwin / Speedball still has issues from his Stamford-Penance days; he could be a real loose cannon as an instructor. I like Hank Pym as the Wasp (now Giant Man again!) and Avengers Infinite Mansion too, so their use here is a plus for me. Mike McKone was a big draw in early issues of the current **Teen Titans**, so that's cool too.

**New Avengers** is so far a weird thing. The idea is that it's supposed to be a new team, but it has Wolverine and Spider-Man - who are both already on the main team. Wolverine would be on 2 X-Men teams and 2 Avengers teams (unbelievable), Spider-Man 2 Avengers, 1 X-Men (huh?), in **FF** and his solo, the Thing here and the Fantastic Four, and team leader Luke Cage here and the Thunderbolts. Being everywhere like that isn't believable. On the plus side: Stuart Immonen is the penciler. I've met him and I really like his work.

Over the issues the rest of the team has been revealed as the former New Avengers less Captain America and Hawkeye/Ronin. Squirrel Girl is now the nanny for Cage/Jones baby. This title is entertaining now.

In a related title, the new **Thunderbolts** is unusual. Luke Cage's double duty is leading this team of allegedly super-villains who want to reform, based in the villain super-prison on the Raft. Juggernaut was a member of the X-Men, so I thought he had already done so; I guess not. Moonstone is puzzling; how many times has she proven to not be worth trusting? Man-Thing isn't a villain, but he's only transportation here, so that's fine. Crossbones has no powers, so why he's there is puzzling. [Note: he now has powers, and through his actions has washed out of the group.]

At least it makes a team that promotes thought!

## Thank You DC!

My wallet is breathing easier thanks to the company decision to drop its titles by a buck, from \$3.99 to \$2.99. Dan DiDio hopes that this will encourage readers to try more titles.

In order to do this co-features were dropped. I don't shed a tear over that; some (like the Atom) were great, but some weren't. Some will be finished in Spectacular One-Shots.

## Thank You DC #2!

After 9 years, **DC Comics** are bringing letter columns back.

The company stopped letter columns in 2002, citing Web forums as an alternative. The company still hypes them, but I think they've come to realize that near-instant online messaging doesn't replace the community feeling of letter pages. The late T.M. Maple came to fame in them; I don't think he would have online.

I like this. I'm nowhere near top dog but I have 11 letters printed so far. I'll have to get back into the routine for them now.

## Avoid Dimestore Distro

I try to avoid such negativity in the zine, (I'm often critical, but not negative) but this company deserves it.

In August 2009 I pre-ordered **Faction #0**, helping it to win Small Press Idol that year.

As I write these words it is June 23rd, 2010. The comic has been out for nearly a year now. D-D head Ian Shires has sworn to me 3 times that my copy would arrive soon to me, but it never has.

The author and **Carpet Bag Comics** rep Erik Hendrix has sworn that he'd send it to me now along with the issue 1 that I bought from him. I'll see what happens. (**I got them. I'll review next issue.**)

I no longer support Small Press Idol. As a small press guy myself I feel bad for the folks who work with it, but Ian Shires doesn't deserve it.

## Various Comicbooks in Bullet Form

Atomic Turbines to speed!

- Seriously, why do Nazi villains in **JSA**? First Bill Willingham wrote a dumb Mordru, now this sloppy tripe.
- Fred Hembeck put his Omnibus on eBay with an original sketch. I won it. It's huge!
- **The Rise and Fall of Arsenal** is now done, leaving him a junkie killer. Same as Green Arrow, I don't like the change.
- The writer of that mini, J.T. Krul, is the new regular writer on **Teen Titans**, and **DC** are raving about him. I have yet to be impressed - until **Teen Titans**. There he's found his groove.
- **Moonstone** are advertising a great lineup of characters, including Airboy, the Spider and Kolchak, the Night Stalker. Unfortunately the art lineup for them isn't great too.
- It's long over now, but the LSH did an online vote for the new leader. I voted for Gates. He needs more 'page time'. He's begun to show, but not enough yet.
- It's official now, and I'm not spoiling it: the Magog comic ended, and a few months later he died. The title wasn't great, so I'm not upset with this.
- Not so the supposed death of Doctor Voodoo. Unless it's a swerve, a character with great potential is already gone.

# Wizardworld Toronto - Part 1

## Travel

At first I thought I would travel by Porter Air, then I realized that the taxes would kill my budget. I didn't at first want to go by train (they have lousy suspension) but the price was better, so that's how I went.

Time-wise it was as long as I remembered from other trips: 6 hours there and 5 home. I fall asleep on the train, but I don't get rest. As a result I had the impression of jet-lag for a week, without an actual plane!

For next year I'll hopefully have enough savings to fly (yes, it'll happen again).

## Hotel

I stayed at the Hilton in Toronto. The room seemed bigger than my apartment! For the price, the room outpaced my anticipations. I'll choose them again if they're available for other years.

I will order food from outside in the future. Likely where they make their money is their restaurants, where like all hotels the prices are exorbitant.

I caught Liana on the phone the second time I tried her. I got to say hi at the con the next day at least.

## The Convention, Day 1

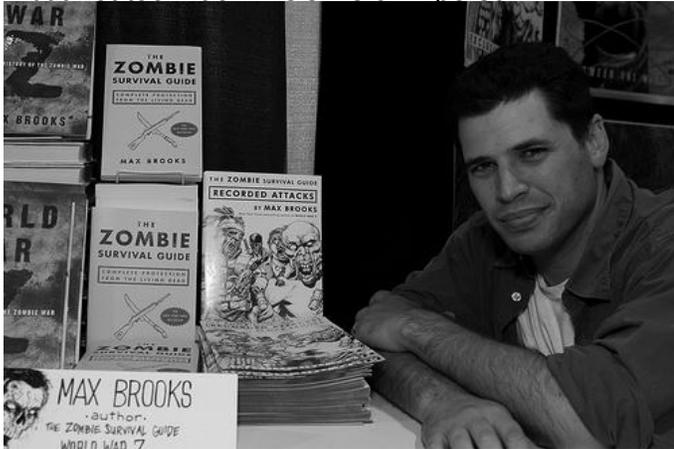
I'd forgotten in a short few years just how huge the convention center there is! It was used well, as there was a lot to see.

The first thing I saw was the booth for McHozers, a Toronto-based comic publisher. I've been friends with boss Chris McQuaid on Facebook for years now. I missed him at the last Paradise City Comic-Con (the one I saw Dario at), but I finally met him in person!

My next comicbook related meeting... well, to be honest I haven't read the book yet, but I was hooked right in by their salesman when he asked me, "Do you like vampire stuff?". I do; some day I'll talk about Vlad Tepes, but this isn't the time. **Vampire Conspiracies** I'll review another time.

I saw Max Brooks, writer of several zombie comics and the novel 'World War Z' (I got it in a novel exchange but have yet to read it) and got it autographed. After I got home I had a "Duh!" moment when I learned he was Mel Brooks son; I

would have asked him a little about his famous dad -- but not too much. He's his own person.



Max Brooks

I saw a lot of wrestling folks that first day; only Greg and Justin here could dig it.

After all, I've been watching it for nearly 3 decades, so I'm into it. I met and bought photos from legends 'Hacksaw' Jim Duggan (he was a Toronto Argonaut before wrestling. He's Hall of Fame bound



Ax and Smash

now!), the Iron Sheik (he liked my t-shirt, so it was half price) and Demolition Ax and Smash. Ax is a lot friendlier in person. I told him how I found his next character (the Repo Man) silly; he just smiled and said it gave his ring career a longer life.

I also saw Bushwacker Luke (he really is a New Zealander!), and the Honky Tonk Man may have tried to hit on me (I'm hetero though, so it didn't work). Although he was there I didn't see the Super-fly Jimmy Snuka. Dawn Marie I saw briefly, but she then went to sit with Snuka, so I lost her too. I saw how huge Kevin Nash/Diesel is, but



Traci Brooks

didn't get to talk with him. I also didn't get to talk to Consequences Creed. He was released from TNA a month later.

I did get to talk briefly with Taylor Wilde (she was released ½ year later), Jackie Gayda (she was expecting her 4th(!) child with Charlie Haas (I guess not getting work from WWE gave him a lot of free time for this), and spent the first part of the weekend paling around with Traci Brooks (she was the first lady wrestler in TNA, and was there until early 2010). I told her how I found it scummy how the company let her go a few months after getting her to pose for Playboy, as WWE did with Chrissie Hemme (that's my true opinion).

She's married to a wrestler I like a lot (Frankie Kazarian). In fact she texted him while I was there. I was friendly with her during the weekend.

I briefly saw the media guest advertised big on the flyer: Luciana Carro, who played Kat on Battlestar Galactica. She appeared way less than a season, had a different hair color and style on the show, so I didn't recognize her. I don't think many people did.

Some of the bigger name actors (like Jewel Stait, then Dr. Keller on **Stargate Atlantis**) were there Sunday-only, but Candace McClure (Dee on BSG) was there all weekend, and she was in most episodes. I think she would have made a better choice.

Next I saw ladies who I realized after were models in Playboy. I saw Liana on TV months later stating how we're all nerds, but nerds who collect photos of naked women? That would be a disturbing thought!

I saw actor Doug Jones. His was the body of the Silver Surfer in the Fantastic Four film, Abe Sapiens in Hellboy and in many other films. He was very friendly, hugging everyone who came to him.

Next was a comicbook encounter for me: one of the creators of a series called **Bad Kids Go to Hell**. I bought the TPB of the series and got some temporary tattoos.

I saw Leonard Kirk, artist for **Agents of Atlas** at **Marvel**. I've known him since around 2000, and I've seen him at many conventions.

My last comicbook meeting of the day (most of them I did on Saturday) was a time travel surprise for me: Chris Howard & Jeff Wasson were selling their collected **Dressed for Success** series. I bought this in 1995 from them at a festival in Ottawa. I have

the book (autographed) on a bookshelf.

They have launched a Website and also have a new series. I'll list them next issue.

With the soundtrack to **Iron Man 2** featuring AC/DC there was a group photographing people with the legendary Angus Young's guitar for a Website. I'm one. Had I known I would have untied my long hair before.

I saw Liana late in the day. The con organizers had difficulty finding her a table, despite the huge size of the hall. There was a dealer at the convention spreading condescending stuff. I won't dignify it by repeating it. She brought it to my attention; ask her, and she may tell you about it. There was a lady in a slinky red dress for **V**, but it doesn't validate the comments.

I briefly saw Gail Simone and her SO at Liana's booth. I didn't learn his name.

**I don't want to make you wait too much longer, so Day 2 will be next issue.**

**HEY KIDS:  
LETTERS!**

Jeff;

Happy Canada Day! At least they told me it's Canada Day. I had to work. Ah, well.

**You had it better: you said this for Canada Day 2010... the 2011 one just passed. -JaB**

Had some folks out yesterday to play games and eat BBQ, which was fun. I've decided I'm quite fond of Red Stripe, a lager imported from Jamaica.

I want to let everyone know that my friend Ilan and I are doing a podcast entitled Squideye and the Bitter Guy. It can be found on iTunes or at <http://satbg.libsyn.com>. It's quite fun.

I am finding I'm doing a lot of trade reading recently. I finished 100 Bullets the other day, and all I can say is thank God. I think there was a bit of padding to get it to the 100 issue mark. You have to admire Azzarello's ability to get a story that big published, though.

Risson's art on 100 Bullets is sublime, though, and made up for the propensity for the book to drag in bits. I'm contemplating giving it another run through, start to finish, to see if it holds up.

**I'll have to look into TPBs too now. Glad this one was good. -JaB**

Last weekend was the annual Can't Stop the Serenity screening to raise money for Equality Now. Toronto's showing raised over \$8000! Cindy and I helped out, she by being auctioneer and I by drawing door prizes.

Afterwards, the local Browncoats headed out to dinner. On the way there I stopped off and picked up a few trades from the local BMW.

The weakest was the first Wolverine: First Class trade. That's disappointing, as it was written by Fred Van Lente, whose work on Incredible Hercules is awesome. The stories seem to be a series of Kitty Pryde & Wolverine stories, and I already read that story.

I also got the Alpha Flight Classic trade. Although it only covers the first eight issues of the book, I'd forgotten how GOOD it was. Byrne put together a very strong team, and gave us adventure and fun and made it feel Canadian. Although I'm not sure how well an unemployed engineer will keep his supersuit up and running on a single income salary. Maybe that's why it blew up.

Spoiler, btw.

The big book I got was X-Men Utopia. It was a compilation of a bunch of X-Men related Dark Reign stories, from the time when the Avengers were run by Norman Osborne.

Man, that was a bad idea.

It was neat, and had a lot of ideas in it, but there was also way too much going on: there were plots and counterplots and tonnes of characters who I had no investment in (i.e. every mutant invented in the past 15 years).

It was cool, though, to see a short onscreen reunion of the New Mutants.

Plus, there was a short story about Aurora that was horrible, but it seemed to indicate she was in fact still alive.

Summer's getting into high gear now. The Toronto Fringe Festival is going on right now, and in two weeks it's Polaris. I'm not going to it much, as Saturday is a Rush concert.

Two months left until Fan Expo. Apparently the VIP tickets for Stan Lee sold out the first day, but I'm still looking forward to seeing him at the show. There was an SF author who was supposed to come who won't be making it, which is disappointing.

**Stan will be at the Montreal Comic-Con in September. -JaB**

Have a good summer!

Packing foam!

Read the Bitter Guide to the Bitter Guy.  
<http://thebitterguy.livejournal.com>

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July 4, 2010

Dear Jeff:

Thanks for the e-mail reminder that the deadline has come and passed for The Original Universe 11. A quick letter follows...

### **The irony of that warning is hitting me now. -JaB**

Interest from a bank account? A rare animal these days. I remember when you could get 7 to 8% interest in a bank account. Today, most of those accounts are interest-free, and the bank nibbles at your savings every month. And they can't figure out why people don't save their money?

My condolences about losing Squeaky. Yvonne and I don't have any pets, but we certainly enjoy the fleeting company of the various dogs that live in this building, plus the cats that our friends here have. Pets teach us all about love, responsibility and how to handle grief, and they are so valuable to us. No wonder we all love our fuzzy buddies.

Hope you had a good time at the Wizard World. I chatted with Liana and Steven, and ran into an old friend, Tony Davis, at the pulps table. Other than that, there really wasn't much for me there... I still think that shows like Wizard World and the FanExpo hurt local conventions, and steal their ideas outright. I expect that given another ten years, local fan-run conventions will be very small, for only the professionally-run conventions will deliver what the majority of people want, which are SF actors. I've also seen discussion about the demise of the professional SF author; perhaps these two ideas are connected.

### **My convention report started this very issue. -JaB**

Thank you for the Aurora nomination... I did get on the ballot, but I finished a distant third. I may live in Toronto, but I have no idea who Roy Badgerow is, and did he win the Aurora for a single astronomy lecture? Must have been quite the lecture.

I am sure Gregory Woronchak knows that while the various comics companies appreciate the collector, they are really after the new reader or someone who's been collecting for perhaps less than ten years. That way, they can run the same old plotlines, but they will be fresh to that new audience. Characters that may have died in the 70s or 80s can be resurrected, and have new adventures. Or, they can try new approaches; who's seen the Wonder Woman costume?

My loc... with some problems here and there, we have severed any committee connections with Ad Astra. We will still help a little bit at this year's con, but we will not be on the committee. There are always other projects to work on, and we are working with Lee Ann Farruga and Adam Smith on next year's planned Canadian National Steampunk Exhibition. Could be a lot of fun.

Yvonne and I have been to the Harry Potter exhibit at the Ontario Science Centre, and once Polaris is done, we want to go back. It was a great sight to see, with so many props from the various movies, and the gift shop is amazing. (So are the prices...)

Liana is right, fandom does complain a lot about conventions. But then, the average consumer also complains a lot. Our disposable income is always being reduced by rising prices for just about everything. Some friends have no disposable income at all, and we don't see them any more. I do not wish any convention to die, because I know they are started by passionate people with big dreams and a personal stake in the convention. My departure from Ad Astra after 29 years on the committee does not mean I want the convention to fail. I expect I will always attend Ad Astra, but my time working on it is done. It is easy to become disenchanted with fandom as a whole because it can be very negative and snarky, but the snarky types are outnumbered by the good folks who make fandom a place I've stayed in for a long time.

A cuddle and a skritch to Garfield (he wouldn't be an orange tabby, would he?), and thank you for another issue. We won't be at Con\*cept this year; just not enough money, and saving for other trips. See you with issue 12!

### **Garfield is orange. -JaB**

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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College Station, TX 77845

25 July 2010

Well, Jeffrey, neither of us made it as DUFF delegate this year. \*sigh\* I guess that's okay, but still, it would have been nice to go. I have lots of *Askance* readers in Australia, and this would have been the perfect means to meet many of them. There is always 2012, y'know.

Loads of comic-oriented material in this issue, but that is far outstripped by the banner on the cover: "2010 Aurora Award Nominee." Very nice, and congratulations! Since it is now the morning of July 25th, the winners were announced last night. I could not find any listing of the winners (a very quick Google search didn't reveal this info), so I still don't know who won. I bet in a little bit the listing will be posted to FaceBook and LiveJournal. Here's hoping your zine had a good showing. For that matter, good luck to Lloyd Penney, too, and other nominees.

**Here's a site: <http://http://sfscope.com/2010/05/2010-prix-aurora-award-winners.html>.**

**According to it the winner was Richard Greame Cameron for *WCFSAZine*. Maybe again in 2012. -JaB**

The main article that caught my attention was Gregory Woronchak's article ("Musings from a Seasoned Collector") that derided the current state of comic books. Since it's been a long time for me to actually read these darned things, I can't relate to what Gregory says, but I do see the correlation to current movies and television shows: there is so much copy-cat work being done that it really is quite shameful. My wife frequently states "there are no original ideas in Hollywood anymore," and she is quite right. Look at all the movie versions of old TV shows and superhero movies, and that's not even considering the sequelitis that afflicts Hollywood. So I believe Gregory when he says that it's all been done before, past creative artists and writers were more original, and even a casual reader could see the painstaking detail and love of the genre that went into a comic book. And some of the thematic material was extraordinarily mature and thought-provoking. It will be interesting to read future installments of this series to see how Gregory proposes the comics industry to refresh and revitalize itself. Somehow the corporate take-over of this industry needs to be reversed, and I'm interested to read how Gregory presents that concept.

I still haven't seen *District 9* or *GI Joe: the Rise of Cobra*. Fortunately, my younger daughter Josie is now working at the nearby Blockbuster video store, so I believe I shall give her the necessary cashola to rent those out - using her employee discount, of course. For that matter, I also want to watch *Slumdog Millionaire* and see what all the hullabaloo was all about.

Nice pictures of the 2009 Montreal Comic Con, although I wish you had written more about it. Then again, reading

between the lines here, it sounds like it's improving a bit each year, so as that happens, your reviews of the event will likewise reflect that improvement. There aren't many comic cons in the College Station/Bryan, TX area; the nearest ones are in Houston (90 miles southeast of here) and over in Austin (107 miles west-southwest of here). Those aren't too long of drives, but since I'm not too much into comics, the only times I'd go to a con in those cities is for Apollocon or OwlCon in Houston or Armadillocon over in Austin. Speaking of which, the next Armadillocon is August 27-29, 2010, and Valerie and I are planning on being there for that one. She has some craft work and artwork to display/sell, so maybe it will be worth the trip for her.

**It is improving. -JaB**

As I write this, the mega-event San Diego Comic Con is blasting along, with all 120,000 attendees plugging it up. Eek! that's way too many people in place for me. I think I shall stick with the 300-600 folks at an sf convention. That's the perfect size of a con for me.

And with that, this loc appears to be done. Suggestion: go ahead and put my name and address header on my loc and all of the locs you get. Of course, you may have to ask folks if they don't mind having their addressed pubbed, but most loc writers don't, otherwise they wouldn't have included their addresses. Logic: it's a wonderful thing.

All the best,

John Purcell

"Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."  
- Horace Mann (1859)

Hello again JAB,

I'll start off this LOC with a tip of my hat to John Purcell for providing that great quote from Pat Paulsen which brought a great smile and good memories. And here I thought that I was the last person on Earth who remembered that great comedian and his antics on the "Smothers Brothers".

I guess the biggest news from these parts is the announcement of the revival of CanCon (weekend of 21-22 Aug) here in our capital. I was so thrilled to hear this after almost accidentally stumbling upon their site that I immediately preregistered. I don't expect an expansive con but any SF con is better than nothing. I do hope that they get enough to keep going and build from there. Reading the historical information on the site ([www.can-con.org](http://www.can-con.org)) was quite interesting as well. It seems that the organizers are the ones who helmed the con here before the [dot.com](http://dot.com) bust took them abroad for a time. So while the con is new in one sense, they are not novice operators.

On the comic reading front I've completed the entire "Y the Last Man" run which I thought was a great series. I've now

started the "Walking Dead" and enjoying that just a much. I was a bit surprised that WD was a black and white only series, but must admit that it works well for the subject matter. Zombies seems to be everywhere these days and especially in my entertainment fodder. My current non-comic book read is "Living Dead", I just finished watching the Zombieland movie (thumbs up on that) and aside from WD, I also read Marvel Zombies 3. I guess you can never have too many Zombies. it's just a matter of time before I catch up with whatever the DCU has to offer in terms of the undead.

**I have the collected WD TV series, and I'm watching it slowly. -JaB**

As I write this, I've just learned today of the passing of Harvey Pekar. While I have never read any of his American Splendor comics, I first got acquainted with him from the Comic Book Confidential documentary (a great late 80's documentary BTW). When I finally got to see the American Splendor movie I was amazed at how spot-on Paul Giamatti captured Harvey's quirkiness. Even more inspiring was Harvey's life as depicted in the movie and as himself in the 'real life' interludes throughout the movie. As odd a character he came across as, his integrity and honesty was beyond reproach. He was the 'little guy' that we could all root for, the guy who bucked the trend, a man who called them as he saw them, right or wrong. I find it a remarkable coincidence that he got started as a comic writer because of his early friendship with of none other than Robert Crumb, another comic book legend. That they shared a passion for vintage Jazz vinyl and originally met in Cleveland long before either had made their mark is equally astonishing. He will be missed.

Good luck on your quest to get your savings in order to attend Keycon!

Dario Sciola  
Ottawa, ON

Jeffrey Allan Boman  
6900 Cote St.-Luc Rd. #708  
Montreal, QC H4V 2Y9  
**2009 Aurora Award Winner, 2010 Nominee**  
**2010 DUFF Nominee**

Hi gang!

It's been a busy year... I'll get to the LOC replies with haste:

**John Purcell:** I'm hoping we have another WorldCon here in Montreal someday. I missed most of the panels. // I never saw any of season 2 of *Caprica*, but people I know were disappointed by it. // Ironically the storyline that killed the comic speculator market was called *The Death of Superman*.

**Lloyd Penney:** Soon I have to go to the electronic versions of even comicbooks. // Folks forget how we now need passports to go to the US too. // Re: Keycon... I'll more likely save for Worldcon in London, England for 2014. I could see Steve Green again there, as well as other friends too.

**Steve Green:** I haven't seen *Kick-Ass* yet, but I'm far behind in my movie viewing as is.

**Dario Sciola:** I could write a book on all the gaffes in *Crisis* that I found. // The most of Steven King's writing that I've read was *On Writing*. I met him in person in the late 1980s; the book made me like him even less.

**Liana K.:** As an 8-time NaNoWriMo author (4 of them wins) writing never daunts me. // I've now been to both WizardWorld Torontos so far. Since I stay out of the politics of organizing cons since 1999 I can enjoy them again.

Year 2 was in a smaller room, but I enjoyed it more.

===

That wraps up this LOC section. I'm almost done now!

See you soon,  
JaB



Next Issue

Part 2 of my WizardWorld report.

I'll hope to include then what I didn't this time.



## The New 52: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly

This is already happening while you read these words: using Flashpoint as a launching point, **DC Entertainment** will do a 'soft reboot' on their entire universe. The look of some characters will change, both in terms of costumes and backgrounds, and the universe itself will change. It had been called by some the 'DcnU' (or DC new Universe) on Newsarama and elsewhere.

The relaunch raised a few eyebrows, mine included. Some of the new titles are ones that didn't succeed before (I, Vampire, Resurrection Man), they bring back unwanted creators (Rob Liefeld!) and bring back genres played out (WW2 ended over 60 years ago). Plus Wildstorm characters suddenly get brought into the DCU (Grieter, Voodoo and the Stormwatch team).

The start at issue 1 again is disappointing, but not a deal-breaker. Action Comics had its historic 900<sup>th</sup> issue, Detective Comics its 800<sup>th</sup>. While many of the events won't happen in the new universe, the stories still exist in print.

There are 3 angles to view this on:

### THE GOOD

The grim and gritty past will be done with. Dan DiDio has stated plans for the universe to get brighter; now it can.

Already, the new Aquaman title will deal with the character always viewed as a joke. There will be a sense of fun.

If more titles embrace this approach, the better.

### THE BAD

This will likely be the longest part of this article...

### Zines in Trade

**Feline Mewsings** R. Lorraine Tutihasi Ed. issues 39-44. Lorraine's quarterly FAPA-zine. Has both mailing comments and LOCs.

**Challenger**#32.Guy Lillian III ed.. More available online.

**The Zine Dump** Guy Lillian III ed., issues 24-26

**The Fortnightly Fix.** Steve Green Ed. issues 1-20. I guess you'd call this a "micro-zine". 3-6 pages, short and to the point. Far more regular than me.

**WARP.** Cathy Palmer-Lister Ed. issues 76-78. Fan-club newsletter of MONSFFA, Montreal's SF-F club. LOC section including Lloyd Penney. Yes, he's everywhere.

**The Drink Tank** 267-287

**Claims Department** 3-13

Both edited by Christopher J. Garcia.

Does Chris ever sleep? He created a new **Drink Tank** every WEEK. The topics are varied, the page count too, but with my schedule so erratic, that impresses me. It alone should earn him a Hugo.

**Claims Department** deals with one of Chris's other passions, steampunk.

While it's easy to call Rob Liefeld art bad or ugly, Wildstorm characters are bad too. While Warren Ellis made Stormwatch way better – and his run on The Authority was even better. Characters like Grifter and Voodoo though... they have the 'kewl' look symbolic of Image, but they lack the depth to make their books interesting to read.

Booster Gold plays a big part in Flashpoint, and as a result he'll lead Justice League International. That seems like a good thing – but it just means he's in a few panels. He won't have his own book.

Some properties won't have appearances, like the Marvel Family and the Justice Society. Co-president Jim Lee has said that concept is being 'given a rest'. With superheroes now only existing for 5 years, a hero team from WW 2 not existing makes sense – but he also said that the multiverse exists. Both concepts could exist on two of those worlds.

Although the massive changes in some concepts could confuse new readers I'm still disappointed that Dick Grayson won't be Batman, and that James Robinson's Justice League will no longer exist. I don't like the Bruce Wayne character, and I liked the attempt at a new approach to the team.

## **THE UGLY**

DC are calling this a 'soft reboot'; it's claimed that most events are being kept.

Hard or soft it's still a reboot, and like a business downsizing it doesn't work.

(I was downsized in 1994. That company no longer exists.)

The reboots on the Legion of Superheroes failed. So did those on Power Girl. Those on Hawkman left the character 'radioactive' until Geoff Johns saved him. This could be a major gaffe too.

The entire Superman Family are being made less sympathetic. Supes will still be the first superhero, but the world won't trust him. Superboy and Supergirl will both be cold to humanity. That doesn't sound heroic to me.

It's claimed that events like The Killing Joke, Identity Crisis, Blackest Night and Brightest Day still happened, but without huge changes,

they can't. KJ saw the Joker cripple Barbara Gordon (as Oracle she became the first truly disabled hero. Daredevil is blind, but his other senses make up for it). She'll be jumping around as BatGirl now. Sue Dibney won't be around long enough to have an emotional impact for IC, and without the Ray Palmer Atom there's no Jean Loring there, and many of the supers in there don't exist. Same with BN & BD.

The loss of many creates a Butterfly Effect on much continuity. For instance: There was no Wonder Girl, Aqualad or Kid Flash, so they had no Teen Titans then. There was no Raven, no Jericho and Cyborg wasn't with them, so the New Teen Titans couldn't happen either.

There will be 2 other genres, western with All-Star Western and war with Men of War. There are no pure horror, fantasy or science fiction titles.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

I'll be getting all 52 #1s, then picking which ones I continue with. I already have some guesses, but they may change with the quality of the actual titles.

## Tributes

### DWAYNE MCDUFFIE

February 20, 1962 – February 21, 2011

I look on this section with dread, as it's often a tribute to someone in the industry now gone. Unfortunately this piece will be no different.

Dwayne McDuffie was a comicbook author who turned 49 the day before heart surgery at the Providence Saint Joseph Medical Centre in Burbank, CA. He died from complications of the surgery.

Dwayne was an African American writer for comicbooks and animation. His credits in both fields are HUGE; I'll likely miss a few:

He first came to my attention (and that of many people) with a mini-series called **Damage Control** at **Marvel Comics**.

This 6-issue mini-series was a sit-com about a construction company that repaired the building damage caused by superhuman fights. It was fun, and it was also very different.

Even in superhero work, his stuff was different. He co-created and was EIC of **Milestone**, the first line of superheroes to include many heroes from minorities, something lacking in comics. His creation Static was a member of the Teen Titans and will so on have his own series again, and his Blood Syndicate and Xombi characters were merged into the pre-**Flashpoint DC** Universe. He's also written a run on **Justice League** and **Firestorm** for **DC** and **Fantastic Four** for **Marvel**.

In animation, as well as Static Shock he wrote and/or produced **Justice League** and **Justice League Unlimited**, as well as the **Ben 10** franchise.

Many pros in the field said he was a great person. I was linked to him on many social networks, so I have a personal stake in him too.

He will be missed by many, me included.



### GENE COLAN

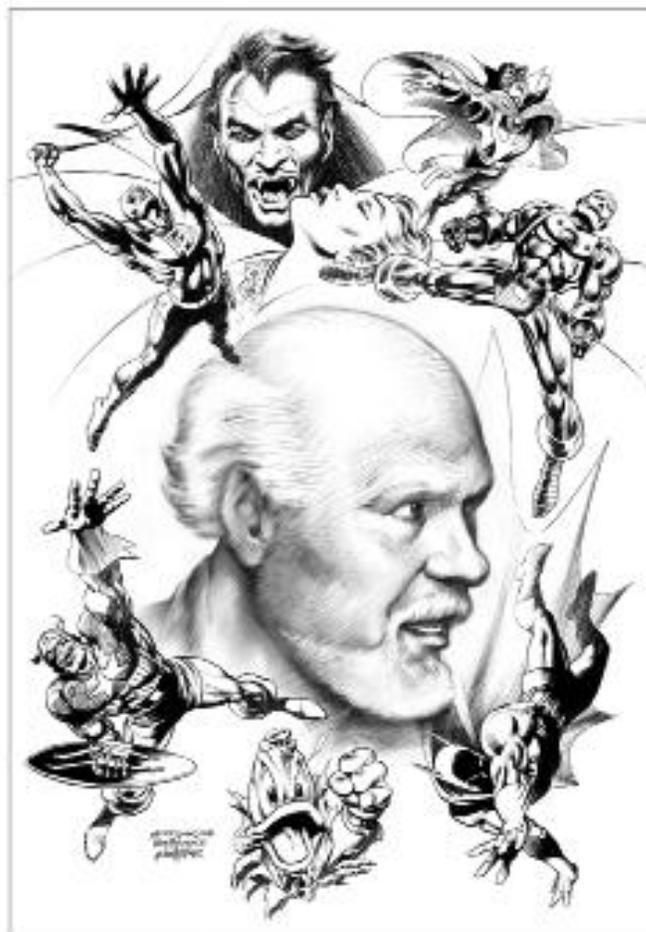
September 1, 1926 – June 23, 2011

This master of art drew virtually every character at **DC** and **Marvel** since WW2 when they were National Comics. He won Eisner awards, Eagles from the UK, the Sparky, was inducted into the Cartoonist Hall of Fame in 2005 too.

He drew most of the legendary **Howard the Duck** series and created history with **Tomb of Dracula** and the first **Night Force** series at **DC**. **Torchwood** on TV owes a lot to it.

I couldn't do all of his achievements justice in a few small sentences here; he was a grand master.

He was 85 and died due to complications of liver disease and a fall.



## **ToDo List**

- ◇ **Write Mutants and Masterminds 3E version of Hunters Inc.**
- ◇ **Write Savage Worlds Super Hero Companion version of same**
- ◇ **Get Windows 7-compatible scanner for PC**
- ◇ **Get a laptop for digital reading**
- ◇ **Clean up my living room**
- ◇ **Save funds for trip to Worldcon 2014 in London, England**
- ◇ **Try out for Taff to same in 2013**
- ◇ **Montreal Comic Con Sept. 18-19 2011**

**Someday / Maybe**

- ◇ **San Diego Comic Con**

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