

MILLENNIUM

FIVE POINT ONE



the paper age

MILLENNIUM

A JOURNAL FOR TOMORROWLAND

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**DUCK SOUP
PRODUCTIONS**

truth

film flam

text text text text

pages

text text text text

slings and arrows

text text text text

from the editors

blasting from the past

the paper age

when things were different

the pale boy

what a brat!

the comics pages

Quirk's mind games continue

fiction

This issue is all nearly all reruns (only the comics are new) but, most likely, you haven't seen them before.

Before MILLENNIUM went cyber three years ago, it was a paper magazine published and printed on the sly during working hours on the company Risograph machine, and distributed freely at local bookstores and cafes. Base-minded folk would say that we stole paper, supplies and time from the company, but we prefer to think of it as an informal arts grant.

We published six monthly issues in that format, and then the Risograph — our only no-cost means of production — was moved out of our department, into another building in another town. The company wasn't onto us: this was a case of management trying to do a *nice* thing (for a change) by cutting down on our department's workload; but in this case it backfired on us since surreptitious printing of a small reactionary magazine was just about the only fringe benefit we ever got from that place.

We pressed ahead, changing MILLENNIUM into an electronic magazine and distributing it over the internet. Our first efforts at this were — ehm — flawed to say the least, and not only because the program we used was limited to the Macintosh platform. It was while working for a new company that we discovered Adobe's proprietary Acrobat PDF format, and MILLENNIUM's new life began in earnest.

We published a lot of good stuff in those paper issues, stuff that reached an audience of at most 50 or 60 people. That's why we've decided to devote this issue of MILLENNIUM to reprints from our Paper Age. For all of you PC

users (and there's no accounting for taste) we've also included some material from the first electronic issue we published, which was Mac-centric to a self-destructive degree.

In honor of the occasion our usually-striking design and layout has taken a turn for the bland. This is deliberate: we're trying to emulate the design of the paper zine, which was nothing more or less than four or five sheets of paper printed on both sides, folded and stapled in the middle. We've even included a "graphical representation" of that staple—i.e., two lines in the middle of the page—just to remind ourselves of those early days when we hand-stapled every damn copy that rolled off the press.

There's something to be said for that kind of publishing. It offered more outright pleasures, for one thing: with every new issue we felt more and more like benevolent pirates, taking control of the means of production (and not coincidentally over our own Time, our own lives) and doing it right under the noses of the Evil Suited Hordes. It was almost literally intoxicating and we would recommend it to anyone. But electronic publishing has virtues not to be sneezed at (like, no more sore fingers) and we're proud to be pushing the envelope in this brave new genre.

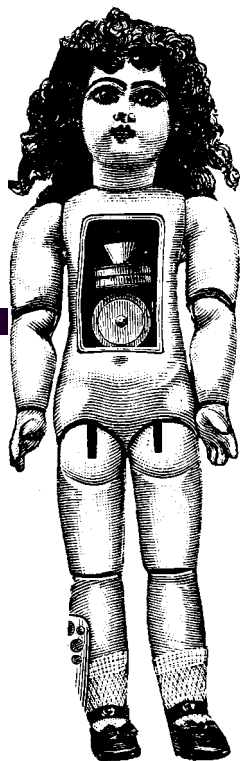
Click on the Better Angel of your Nature from anywhere in the zine to return the contents page. Use the navigation buttons above to move from page to page.



the paper age

fiction

by
Winston
Howe



When ever Mrs. Templeton traveled there was always a rolled tube of paper sticking three or four inches from the top of her carpetbag. She would sit with the bag on her grey-coated lap, the tube almost touching the back of the seat ahead, and on bumpy roads or on crowded streets she would cradle it all up against her broad body, lowering her shoulders over the paper to see that it would not get crushed. Once, sitting too close beside her in the stuffy cab, midway along the drive from Nashville to Tell City, I got a good look at the paper and saw for the first time how old it was, how it had been rolled and unrolled so carefully and so often that it had taken on the suppleness of leather, had turned under her fingers into something more permanent than Paper: aged oilcloth at its wrinkled edges.

I never did find the courage to ask what it was. It was for the same reason that I could never call her by her first name, always Mrs. Templeton when to everyone else she was just Ruth, who never played a leading role with the Jones Company, though she carried something of the Leading Actress about her, some of the quietude, the authority. She was a small woman who had filled out some with age, who favored plain blue dresses and who managed to keep her dignity without also being aloof. Oftentimes, when the cast met in the shreds of their make-up for a late-night dinner in some cafe, I would sit beside or across from her and listen to the steady turn of her voice, and think: *she is friendly enough. Maybe I can ask her now.* But she would never meet my eye when I thought I had screwed up enough nerve; instead she would start in with Lon or Mary or Jones about baseball, her favorite subject, or about radio dramas, which fascinated her, or movie dramas, which didn't. That would draw me into the conversation just as she intended, and before long she could look at me again without risking any more serious question than her opinion of Laurel and Hardy. Then she would sit back and grace me with the faintest smile, and make her harmless reply.

And so the Jones Company had played in more than fourteen little towns before I had a chance to see the poster, or learn about it, and the man it pictured her with. It was in that quiet interval following the rehearsal when everyone, even Mr. and Mrs. Templeton, went their separate ways, to read, or sleep, or drink, or just to be alone. Mrs. Templeton came out of character into the cramped room behind the stage, where I waited alone with two trays of cold food and the echo of their voices rising and falling from the stage beyond. "Winston," she said, not looking at me, as she put the water on for her afternoon tea. One by one the others spilled out on her heels through the stage door. "Could I have a word with you?"

It had been a good reading, the first ever for *Excavation*, and spirits were high; for a time all but Lon stood by in a close, informal group, laughing and working on the stack of apple danish that I had brought from a local bakery. Then Mrs. Templeton set out a prop teatray, filled the company's battered old silver pot almost to the rim, and added some pastry to the setting, enough for two. She took the whole arrangement into her hands, and pointed at me with her nose.

Her dressing room was a few steps down the hall. I held the door open and she went rattling

through into a cramped, sunlit cubbyhole with off-white paint peeling from the walls; once inside, I saw the poster for the first time. It was hanging where the wall jutted inward to make room for a small closet, close by a plant stand supporting a fluted vase filled with the petunias she had picked a few days before, along the road. Unrolled, it was at least four feet tall, reaching almost to the floor so that the figures inside might almost have been life-sized: the youth in military clothes hunched in the dark grass with a yellowing skull cradled in his lap, in his long fingers; a wisp of humanshaped fog circling up from behind him, eyeless, one bony transparent hand caressing the youth's shoulder; and beyond them both, far across the field under the black arms of a dying tree, mad Ophelia crushing flowers to her breast, her purple gown whipped up in the grip of the night air. Above, in liquid letters woven into the sky, it said:

The Montgomery Playhouse
THEODORE BAXTER

And below the youth's bended knees, simply:

HAMLET

and the playdates, hand-lettered in black there along the bottom edge of the paper: *August 20, 21 & 22, 1910.*

Mrs. Templeton set the tray down gently on her dressing table, stood with her back to me and filled one cracked cup and then the other. "This new play of yours," she said, lifting the tray again, offering it out until I had taken a cup and one of the pastries. "It has one or two very clever ideas behind it. I can see now why Jones wanted you along. You have a feeling for that dark sort of fantasy she likes."

She sat in the room's only chair and took the remaining cup, sipped from it, then broke her danish into three crumbling pieces over a paper napkin that she had laid out on the dresser top. "It has a good central vision. That's your strength; a real sense of the mystery of life. But for some of us in the supporting roles..."

I stood with the teacup in one hand and the apple filling dripping onto my fingers. There on the poster, the brushstrokes under cooling blue leaves were so graceful, a single line shaping the youth's jaw, his golden hair rising like vapor, like undersea grass, his dark eyes almost like Saint Jones' looking out past my shoulder. But it was Ophelia, far off behind the central image, the lurk-

ing, salacious ghost, who held my attention: her face was not as round, her neck thinner and longer somehow, her cheekbones just a bit more prominent, but it was still her, wearing the same expression even that I had seen under folds of fat as she stood out under the light, on the stage.

Mrs. Templeton sat looking up through her glasses, her legs crossed at the ankle. "I'm not asking you for a larger part," she said softly. "It isn't that. There was a time when I would have mounted an elaborate campaign to get a more important role, or a few more moments under the light, or a good line. But that isn't me, now."

"It's you," I said at last, not looking at her or even at her likeness of twenty-eight years before, but at the youth, the Hamlet with the face sculpted from fairy tales. "But I don't know him. A man like that can't have existed; he's too pure; he's impossible."

There was no sound in the little room but the touch of china to china. Mrs. Templeton sat up in the chair and looked over at me with the most intent, curious little expression; then she settled back and smiled, and made a pantomime of throwing aside an invisible script. "Mr. Baxter did look like that," she said, "once long before. He always looked well. But by the time I took Ophelia, when

Olivia Baxter got too old, he was nearing sixty, he hadn't looked like that for two decades, and the picture had to be idealized some. It wasn't lying, exactly. His Hamlet was beautiful, even then."

She drew herself so close to the dressing table that her legs disappeared as she slid open the topmost drawer on the right side. There was an old book of poems bound in marbled paper with leather along the spine and across the corners, a sad, dogeared copy of *Measure For Measure*, and a brown envelope large enough to hold legal papers, but now nearly empty, nearly flat. It was held fast with a strip of black cloth looped around rusting clasps; she lifted it out under the light, uncurled the cloth ribbon to its full length, and reached inside.

There were three photographs, printed on thick yellowing paper, the size of lobby cards. She propped them up on the teatray, against the pot, the cup, and the mirrorglass. "There," she said, lifting them one by one so that the lightglare rode down the figures and then vanished. "Here I am as Medea. My first leading role. And Olivia and Theodore Baxter both here in *Macbeth*, and Mr. Baxter and I in *Hamlet*. That was our last production."

It was like looking back into another age, into

some frozen pre-history of the theater, all ancient yellow figures posed in the most piercing harshness of light, haloed with their faces painted and lined, black lipstick on their mouths, kohl smeared around their eyes. There was Mrs. Templeton, so much younger, her body thin as rope, standing bloodless and terrified over a rag-covered corpse. There was a tall, vague woman dressed in black silk; she might have been better suited to a Titania, Queen of The Fairies than to the spitting, snarling Lady Macbeth she played here, a Lady Macbeth who could not even be troubled to wash. And the Hamlet, Theodore Baxter, the face from the poster all right, huge and fervent, but spreading out now into a man no amount of make-up could have made young again. Though still handsome in his long military coat, he had gone harsh, the skin more like wax than ivory beneath the curl of golden hair that was not even his own anymore, and the black lines painted onto his eyelids only added to the touch of the unnatural that rose from off of him.

“What made him stop?” I said. For the man in the picture, though old enough to be ridiculous in the part, looked as if he would be content to play Hamlet forever, well on into his nineties.

Mrs. Templeton gave me a look from over her shoulder that was not quite bitter and not quite

amused. “It was the poisoned sword,” she said. “His wife. She couldn’t stand to be alone, and she would not abide the nurses. He went back to the house to care for her, and he closed the theater down.

“The next day I came down for work as usual, all in my hat and scarf. I had forgotten about it, or put it out of my mind. I came under the marquee and didn’t even see that the signs had been taken down. I didn’t remember until I gripped the doorhandle and pulled. And I felt so cheated. No final moments, you see, no last walk out onto the stage. Just a door that wouldn’t open.

“Wistfulness,” she said, and without looking at them Mrs. Templeton snapped up the photographs and tucked them into the envelope again and then into the drawer. “It’s not the approved method of building a character, but it will do in a pinch, it’s better than nothing...”

“Mrs. Templeton?” I said. My hands were empty now but for the empty cup. My fingers were sticky with the remains of apple filling; I stood and tried to keep from wiping them on the back of my pants.

“Your play. It’s true that we are an improvisational company, we do work without a net sometimes. But you will be a better playwright if you

think some more about the small characters. Round them out, or, if they must be flat, give them sharp edges. Especially for poor Mary, she's a singer you know, she isn't used to coming up with her own dialogue. Just hold them in the back of your mind; don't force anything on them that they don't seem ready to take. And if you can't work them into anything more than setpieces, get rid of them. Better not to be on the stage at all than to be there and have nothing to do."

I looked into Ophelia's painted eyes, into the bottom of my cup, and then back. "Why is she having you tell me this?" I said. "Why doesn't she tell me herself?"

But Mrs. Templeton only turned her face down and away. Her eyebrows climbed well above the rim of her glasses; she asked if I would like some more tea. As she was filling me up she gave me a look that suggested she had once played Lady Macbeth herself. She topped off her own cup, set the pot back in its place. When she had taken a sip and swallowed, she said without looking at me, "Do you know, I never was the sort of girl who took things quietly, who stood around mooning and looking out of windows."

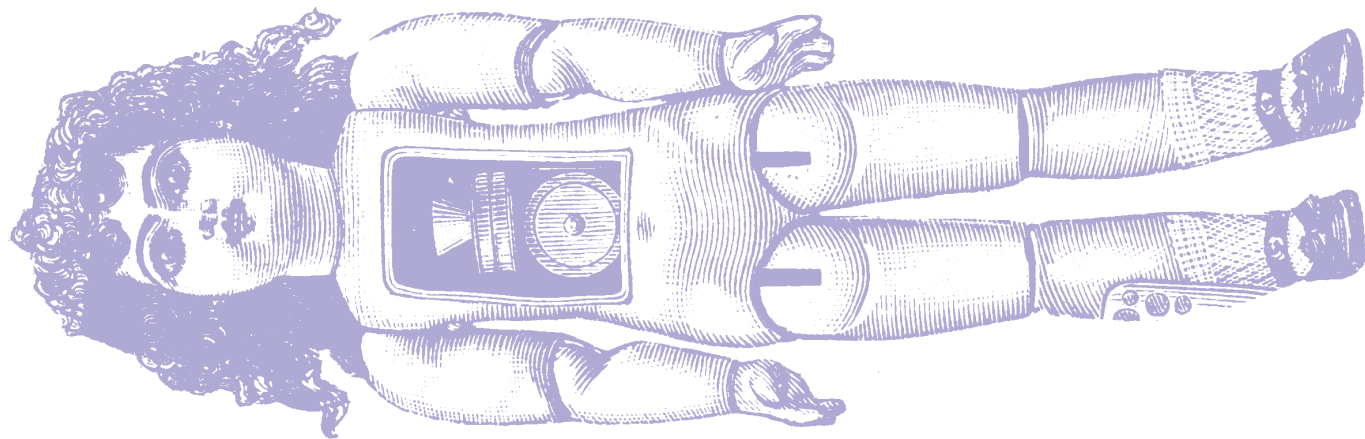
"I didn't think you were," I said.

"No? Well, I did that for a week. I did a lot of

mooning and looking out of windows and that sort of thing for the first time in my life, and I decided soon enough that it didn't suit me. There was nothing else in town, no other company at all, much less one that needed an actress. The nearest other big town was, oh about fifty miles away. I could not think about moving. I had family, then. Well, in the end I did the only thing that was open to me, the only thing I could think of to do. I borrowed my brother's car and I drove out to the old Baxter house, and I begged him to re-open the theater.

"Oh, I thought it would be horrible. It was, at first. The Baxters had retired to a beautiful Victorian mansion, a place all of brown brick surrounded by about twenty acres of gardens. In the summer of course there were men who cut the hedges and mowed the grass; it would have been all abuzz as they went out over the grounds, but when I came up for the first time there wasn't a soul about. It was the dead of winter, all of the little pools had been drained, everything lay still, white and grey along the pathways. They'd had it fixed so that guests had a long silent walk that ended under a crumbling archway at the bottom of the lawn, with a fine view of the house. It had great grey windows like those on a greenhouse. When I came up closer I could see inside. It was all dark

and empty, stone floors, sheets thrown over every scrap of the furniture. But there was one lighted room far in the back. So I put my feet very close together, squared my shoulders just as I always did before the curtain swept open. And I gave a tiny little knock.



“All the time that I waited I worried about my costume. I had chosen a colorful paisley dress with a belt and a matching hat with a flower in it, much brighter than anything I was used to, but nothing too grand. I had taken particular care to look modest without being drab... now I wasn’t certain but that drab mightn’t have been the better way to go. Because I knew what I was going to be asking for,

and, now that I had seen the house, from whom.

“Before very long, and without any sort of approaching sound from inside, the door was opened, and there was Mr. Baxter himself. It had only been a month since I’d seen him, but he had so changed... his hair was snowy white now, and

uncombed — he had just stopped dyeing it, I suppose, though I didn’t think of that at the time. He was wearing spectacles at the end of his beautiful nose, and an old, tweedy sort of suit, like a little professor-man. And he was so happy to see me. He held out his arms to me and took my freezing hands in his, and I was drawn inside.

“It was a cozy, low-ceilinged living room deep

in the house. Mr. Baxter had a fire going, which was very nice because of the way it lit some of the small pieces of his collection, his theatrical bric-a-brac, masks and prop swords and a few exotic, jeweled costumes that were set about there. We sat together and talked for some time over tea, just as you and I have done. And he never said no when I asked him, which was more than once. But after twenty minutes or so there came an awful rattling, banging sound, and when I looked up I saw that Olivia had come into the room.

“She had been strapped into an awful old wooden wheelchair, and was pushing herself along on the bare floor. She had lost quite a lot of weight, her arms were so very thin, yet she managed the chair well enough. But I believe the worst of it was the wig and the make-up. She mightn’t have seemed so pathetic if she hadn’t insisted on that. Well, she made no great secret of the fact that she was not happy to see me. ‘Ruth,’ she said, and put out her hand like this. She would not look me in the eye. She sat and shook, and worked her mouth silently, as if she had bitten into something awfully sour and could not politely spit it out.

“‘You see how it is,’ Mr. Baxter said to me, quite softly, as he led me back out along the dark hall. ‘You see it cannot be any other way than this.’ And

I agreed as well as I could, but I was feeling sorry and blubbery for myself and it came out as something like a stage whimper. We had reached the front hall. It was time to say my goodbyes. But when I looked at him I found that I could recognize his ruined old face for the first time, even under that lot of white whiskers. He said, ‘Perhaps there is something I can show you.’ And he turned away.

“I followed him through into the east wing of the house, where everything was closed off and unheated. Throughout the afternoon I had done nearly all of the talking, he had hardly spoken, but now as he went he called back to me from over his tweedy shoulder. ‘Of course it won’t take the place of the real thing. No applause, for starters, but no booing either. And it might keep you in practice until something better comes along. I can’t think of any other way that a man my size could have got to play Puck.’

“I thought, ‘Puck? *Puck?*’ And I was led through a white doorway into what must have been the largest room in the house. There were great, sheeted dinosaur shapes huddled together from wall to wall, so close that we had to turn sideways to pass between them. When he pulled back the curtains from the east windows, a shower of dust fell into the sunlight and floated in the beams.

“Under the sheets there were long rows of worktables, and on the tables were dozens of antique toy theaters. Some were quite large, made of wood and metal, but most were of paper or cardboard lithographed with the brightest, purest colors imaginable. I looked in through their roofs, down behind their shrunken prosceniums. They were perfect in so many ways, to the smallest detail; it was like looking into a forgotten age. There were models of the great houses of the world, and wholly imaginary, fanciful houses with cloth curtains and gargoyles above the stage. All were frozen in mid-act. They held orange-and-yellow jungles that seemed to go back and back, and cold palaces, and marketplaces and ships at sea, balconies and peasant cottages, and more than a few of the darkest dungeons I had ever seen. They were set out with hundreds of little flat figures, so expressively drawn, frozen in moments of passion and folly and danger. There were harlequins and beasts, maidens with the whitest skin, magicians of all types, blue knights, pirates, winged fairies, royalty and common folk. They loved and postured, murdered and bowed as Mr. Baxter and I passed along before them. We saw tableaus from *Red Riding Hood* and *Beauty and The Beast* as well as *Julius Ceasar* and *Othello*. The characters could be moved with wires

or sticks; my favorite was the house playing *The Casket of Elaine*: the figures had metal bases, they could be moved with magnets from under the stage, so that no control rod would be visible to an audience.

“There were more than eighty houses, each playing something different, each with a full script laying out in front. I said ‘Puck?’ again, and Mr. Baxter took me to a model of the Globe theater. As I watched, he lifted a back painting, added three sets of wings; the house in Athens was transformed into a dark, enchanted wood. At the end of a wooden stick, a little, leafy creature entered, and spoke:

How now, spirit! wither wander you?

When I looked up there was Mr. Baxter with a Puckish grin on his face, holding out a green-printed fairy on the end of another stick. So I took it. I made it enter from the tiny stage right, and I said,

*Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy Queen,
To do her orbs upon the green.*

and I clutched my sides and laughed and

laughed.

“And that was all. I came out to the Baxter house, not every day, but once or twice a week. Mr. Baxter had complete sets, actors, scripts for all of the great plays, and many not so great. I would take entire productions —not just the leading roles; I would be them all, men and women, children, animals supernatural beings, the entire cast — there in that big quiet room with only Mr. Baxter listening, and sometimes the family dog. ‘There was I, and little John Doit of Staffordshire, and black George Barnes, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squele, a Cotsol man: you had not four such swinge-bucklers in all the Inns o’ Court again; and I may say to you, we knew where the bona-robas were, and had the best of them all at commandment.’”

Now Mrs. Templeton put her head down and laughed so hard that she shook. She rubbed the bridge of her nose with two fingers, turned and laughed sideways at me; her eyes were wet, her lips pulled back so far that I could see where her teeth ended. She was sitting in shadow now; the sun had passed around the buildingedge long before, and I remembered how she waited in costume at the edge of the stagelight, in the shelter of the wings. She never looked at a script, yet always in those moments offstage she would stand in

silence, moving her lips so that the voices of Jones or Moscow or Templeton seemed to come out of her as they spoke their lines under the light. Then she would see me and smile, and touch her breast, whispering: “I carry them all. In here. Every word,” just before she darted out onto the stage.

“Mrs. Templeton,” I said, and she faced me now with that same embarrassed smile.

“Ruth,” she said. “Please.”

“You never played another lead again? I mean a real one, out there?”

“Oh no,” she said. “My parts are just paper.” She lifted a spoon in the tips of her fingers and maneuvered it lightly like a control rod dancing in the air. “Only paper.”

She sat for a moment mopping the stray crumbs up into a little pile with a napkin and the edge of her hand; then she took the tea-tray by its handles, stood with it and turned away from the mirror. “There’s one of these rolls left,” she said. “Would you like it? One was more than enough sweetness for me...”



The Pale Boy



fiction by Frieda Johnston

*At twelve o'clock on Halloween
Many strange things can be seen*

— Post Card Verse, cir. 1930

For three years running I could not catch him. By the thirtieth I would have the cardboard gravestones spread across the yard, the cardboard skeleton dangling by its neck from a branch of the old maple, and that night I would carve the pumpkins, alone in my kitchen, under the harsh overheads, with Lon Chaney Jr. on the television set, or Boris, or Bela, because they pleased me, and set the mood for the faces that appeared, cut by groove, in the hard smooth skin: bats and ghouls, witches carved with pumpkinskin hair carefully shredded round the crown, with ears hinged from the sides, chiaroscuro highlights veined outward round the shell: fangs, half-moons, saucer eyes. By midnight I would have dumped four or five sodden newspapers full of pumpkin guts onto the compost heap, and a half dozen new faces would be sitting

round my kitchen table, glowing from within, ready for their debut. Then a nightcap; and I would blow them out. By nine-thirty the next morning, they would be sitting along my front step, facing the road, mocking the cars that passed. There were not many of those, nor many Trick-or-Treaters at night; but that was all right. If anyone did chance to come by, at least they would know that I had the Spirit.

The first time that he came, I saw only the consequences. That afternoon I fired up my father's old Studebaker, and went into town to buy the candy; when I returned, my front yard was a mess of shattered pumpkin shells, crushed wax, torn and sodden cardboard. Someone had ripped the skeleton down from the tree and urinated on it; the pumpkins, every one, had been smashed; or so I thought. It was only in cleaning up the mess that I realized one of them must have been taken.

It spoiled the holiday; it spoiled my month. I begged two more pumpkins from my neighbor down the road, and carved them quickly, sulking like a child, doing a poor job of it, just to have something. No one came by; no one called. I was left with three bags of Smarties to eat by myself. I did not even feel in the mood to watch *Dracula's Daughter*.

For a time I determined to give it up. There was no action that I could take or not take that was not in some measure a response to the vandalism, and so a reward. I would have to do what I felt like doing, and for me, that first year, the fun had been taken out of Halloween. But when a twelvemonth had passed, and the leaves began to turn, I remembered the pleasure of being five years old, of throwing a sheet over one's head, and traveling in the night from house to lighted house, with only your older brother to guide you, no adults; and I remembered the quiet roads freshly tarred, blacker than the night sky, and the bare trees crawling by overhead, the pumpkin faces burning occasionally in the yards and windows. I was far too old to ever again experience that precise pleasure: but I could help set the stage for others.

That year, I actually heard him. It was a melancholy day of pale sunlight and drifting leaves; I had carved the pumpkins just as usual and set them out with new wooden grave markers (designed to survive vandalism: bearing awful punning memorials gleaned from Ripley's Believe it or Not: *Here Lies the Body of Edward Hyde, We Laid Him Here Because He Died*, that sort of thing); and remembering the year before I determined to hang around and keep an eye on things. Though never much

given to outdoor work, I brought a rake down from the barn and started in lackadaisically. I had cleared the front and side yards and had started out back when a sound like distant huffing and sighing drifted around the house. Three sharp exhalations of breath, like the snorting of a wild horse, as if someone had come running a long way: then the sound of stamping feet in long grass. As I turned a gust of wind came from across the road and caught me head on; I dropped the rake and ran full speed into the front. The trees there were chattering. They waved their bare branches above me and pointed in every direction. At their feet the lawn was strewn with the leaves I had cleaned up moments before; a few still swirling in a circular pattern over the ground, as if caught up in the slightest of cyclones. There was crushed pumpkin-shell everywhere, a few remnants of gouged pumpkin faces, broken candles tossed about, pumpkin pulp mashed into the screen of my front door. The “grave markers” were all lying flat. One of them had been smeared with excrement.

My first thought was *why*, and that question filled me with dismay. It wasn't until later, cleaning it up for the second year in a row, that I asked *how*, and that question helped. There was one missing pumpkin, then as before; there would have

to have been a lot of them, to have caused that much destruction, so quickly, but such a crowd of kids would have made more noise, and could never have gotten away without a trace. Where would they have come from? Where would they have gone? Across the fields? To what neighborhood? My nearest neighbors more than a mile distant; the one brother had a crooked arm, the other hated my family for some ancient reason. They had pranked fairly seriously in their youth, but were long past the age of pranks, now. They could have managed it; but not with such speed.

This is someone with the Spirit in them, I thought. This is someone I have to see.

And so I set out the single pumpkin that I had held in reserve, and the following year carved more pumpkins than ever, starting three days in advance, sculpting without so much care, but with good designs: for this was the lure. I did not want to put much effort into something meant to be destroyed; still, the bait had to be good or it would never be taken. With *Mad Love* playing on my television screen, I carved Grand Guignol faces, twisted in pain. The next day I drove the Studebaker to market, and returned with more pumpkins rolling in the back. To *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* I carved howling faces and gaunt, pathetic ones; and

on the thirtieth I went back for another load. When I had finished, my yard looked like a Passion Play mounted by goblins: more than thirty heads lining my walkway, perched upon the top step, skulking among the headstones, in the shrubs. Their pop-eyed faces carried an invitation; they kept watch over the road, the fields and the distant woods. Some had candles; but a third of them were filled with candy, Smarties and peanut butter cups and apples and Hershey bars (with almonds); the bait, if you will, or a bribe; it doesn't matter which. By then I had nearly succeeded in making myself sick of the holiday. Nearly: because I knew just enough to wonder about what was to come, and that was enough to keep the Spirit alive.

All Hallows Eve: I felt that the morning would be safe, and so slept in, fixed a big breakfast of French toast and bacon, then logged on and worked for an hour with the company in New York. Noontime still felt early, but I did not want to take any chances. Both of the attacks had come during full daylight. I opened my front door perhaps a quarter of the way, and set up a chair there in the shadows of the house, well out of sight. The book that I had chosen sat unopened in my lap. I waited.

There was no doubt that it would happen again:

but when it happened so suddenly, after hours of the most perfect calm, I started up in the chair and nearly spoiled it. One moment I was half dozing, the yard was still and empty but for the rows of silent pumpkinheads and the October breeze whispering through their noses and mouths; the next, without any sort of approaching, warning sound, a naked boy was standing on the walk, looking as if he did not know where to begin, but could not wait to start.

His skin was the color of old bones, covered from head to toe in dirt and filth, fingersmears and palmprints, like an Indian painted for war. His head was crowned with curls of dirty blonde. He was not more than seven years old, and wore an expression common to any boy of that age, made more profound by simple wildness. At my sudden move he snapped into a modified crouch; but seeing nothing human or moving inside the house, or in the yard, he raised himself again and set about poking the nearest pumpkinhead with his toe.

His eyes were pale blue. There was something odd about his mouth. He seized the nearest pumpkinhead, raised and dashed it to the stones, and seemed surprised when a wave of candy splashed out across his feet. He looked 'round the yard for the first time. The candy meant nothing to him. His



stomach muscles constricted, and he made the snorting sound again, whether in curiosity or indignance I could not tell. His eyes fell upon another pumpkin, and he immediately stomped it to death; then he seemed to grow confused. Which one to take, the rest to destroy? He could not seem to make up his mind.

He crouched again, cradling the cat-face of still another pumpkin almost lovingly between his two hands. This seemed the best time. He was not more than ten feet from where I sat, but his mind was turned away; what now? I thought.

There was a broom propped against the wall, near to my right side; now I feared to use it. I had hoped that I would recognize the vandals; easier to punish them if I knew their parents, their genesis, if I could say to myself and to everyone that they should know better than to wreck someone else's hard work. I could not put a name to this boy. Yet

he was familiar to me, familiar as twilight and gorse-bush, a half-forgotten song whispered in minor key.

As I rose to the door, the wind began palpably to climb, to bend and curve about the boy's ankles. Dead leaves were siphoned into the updraft, circling up the length of him and over into a degenerate eddy that deposited them some yards distant. I pressed my lips to the screen. "Boy," I said.

His head snapped back and for the smallest moment he pinned me in a spotlight gaze; then he was gone. I pushed through the door, following his wake into the underbrush across the road, then up and through facecutting branches to the field on the far side. At first I thought he had vanished; then a boyshape leapt with gazelle grace at the distant edge of tall grass, against the orange sky. His passing had left a narrow, slowly vanishing path through the unmown grass. I ran on.

At the bordering woods I heard the violent thrashing and snapping of someone running carelessly up ahead, bare feet cracking pine boughs, and the leaves billowing up, whispering behind. He led me through a thick barrier of trees and down into a rocky, scrubby patch of country populated only by brambles and stinkweed, thistles and Queen Anne Lace. I no longer knew if I was still on my own land.

At some point I realized that I had been running for some time without hearing or seeing anything; that I had not only lost the boy but the road back, myself, chasing only — what? — something in my own head.

The thief, whoever he was, had long gone, probably cut across the fields to a neighboring farm. Now with night coming on and no knowledge of how far I had gone, I paused in the woods, feeling a fool. I was in no great danger; in any direction but north I was bound to strike road before very long. I got my bearings on the setting sun, and began to follow it towards home.

By then the strangeness had been forgotten: all that mattered was that I'd had my face-off with the pumpkin smasher, and had got the worst of it; for all I knew, the boy had already doubled back and was finishing the job he had started in my yard.

Why not? I would have done the same.

Not far from where I thought home should be, I caught the smell of distant smoke. Grey fumes were rising up ahead, out of a grass-covered lump of earth. An alderwood curled its branches through fingers of smoke; as I came round its base, I saw a thick cluster of weeds draped unconvincingly over the mouth of a black hole.

It looked like the den of an animal; it was not much bigger than that. But there was a yellow fire burning inside, and the smell of roasted meat. The opening was not big enough for me to walk through. I could have crawled in, on all fours. Instead, I sat on the damp grass, and slid through feet first.

The smoke in there was so thick that my eyes filled with tears. Nothing moved. The boy was squatting before the fire, his back to me, edgelit orange and green and brown. He was blackening something in the flame. In front of him and on both sides the earth had been cleared round the roots of the tree, forming uneven tiers of dirt, shelves set into the walls of the cave.

They were lined with heads. At first, in the fire-light and shadow, I thought them all pumpkin-faces, ancient orange, their mouths caved in, teeth curling with rot, grinning out of decayed mirth. I

recognized some that I had carved years before. Then I could not be sure. Some seemed fresher than others. Some had beaks. Some had darkly matted fur. Flies milled at the corners of their glistening, pool-dark eyes.

The boy rose and turned. Two heads fell out of his hands. They hit the dirt with a mushy thud and rolled towards me with candleflame lapping round the eye sockets. His eyes glittered wide and white at the sight of me: he let out a wild sound like a wail and a laugh and a roar and a growl: "Haaaaaaah!", and I saw then that his teeth had been sharpened to points.

He attacked with his mouth and all four limbs, finger and toenails, shrieking birdcries so that struggling under him I had the illusive feeling of black wings beating all around me. His mouth seemed to engulf the rest of his head. Pumpkin heads rolled between my legs. I flipped onto my stomach; still the boy snapped sharklike at my fingers, wrists, at the back of my neck, at my ankles.

Then I was out in the open. There was still smoke in my face. The sun had nearly set. I followed it across the length of a yellow field, and found the Studebaker somehow, parked against the indistinct bulk of the barn. My fingers would not turn the key; blood leaked out of them onto the

seats and carpeting. Only by gripping between my thumb and hand could I start the car.

I told the doctor that I had been attacked by a wild dog. That was a mistake. It meant rabies shots, and a fuss with the sheriff's department that I'd wanted to avoid. What good would come of it? They would find nothing. That was the way of the season.

I still carve pumpkins in the solstice; but not so many. Nor do I ever put them out: instead, they sit on my windowsills and stare glowing into the Halloween night. From time to time I see the boy's face pressed against the glass, teeth bared like some awful Ubangi. I have the marks on my fingers and ankles to show that he is not a dream.





THE ART OF BUSTER KEATON

Produced for video by David Shepard and Film Preservation Associates. Published by Kino Video. Available in ten volumes at \$29.98 each, or three slipcased sets for \$79.95 (Box 1 & 3) and \$109.95 (Box 2)

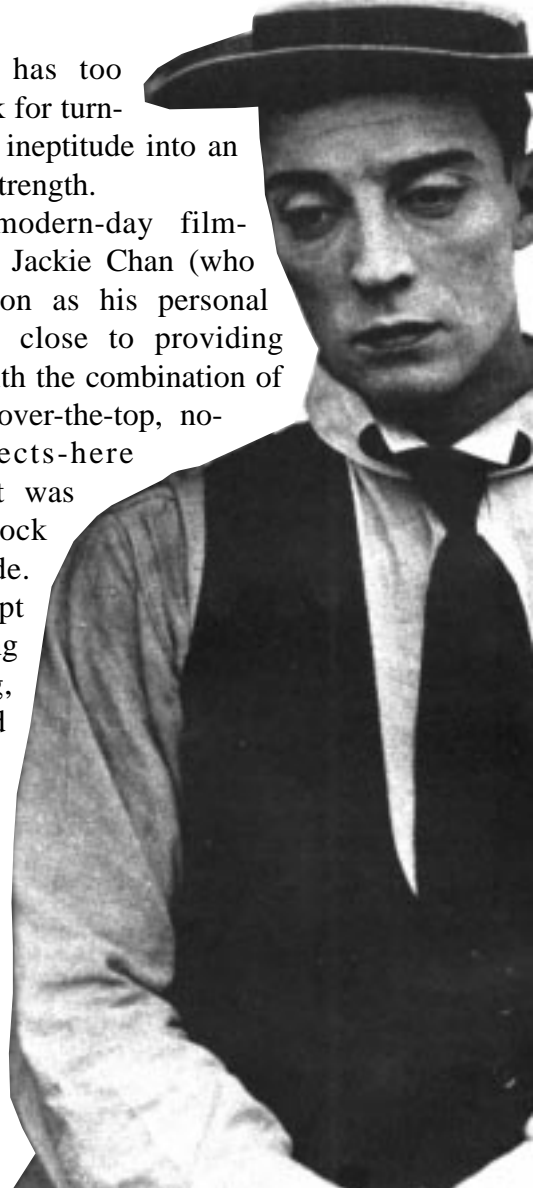
Of the three great poets of silent comedy, Buster Keaton, by no means the most popular at the time or for years afterward, may have possessed the most enduring voice. His style, that of the most extreme physical adroitness and large-scale stunt-work carried out with the straightest, most vacant of faces, has undoubtedly aged better than that of his contemporaries: Chaplin with his sometimes maundering pathos, and Lloyd's naive All-American good guy making his successful climbs to the top through sheer force of will against all the odds, retaining his innocence every step of the way. While Keaton's screen characters were often sympathetic, there was not an ounce of self-indulgent sympathy in his real-life personality or his film-making style. One never feels sorry for Buster

Keaton: he has too great a knack for turning even his ineptitude into an uncommon strength.

Among modern-day film-makers only Jackie Chan (who claims Keaton as his personal idol) comes close to providing audiences with the combination of humor and over-the-top, no-special-effects-here stunting that was

Keaton's stock in trade.

Keaton leapt from building to building, grabbed hold of moving trolley cars, put himself on collision course with trains, dove through windows, obliquely avoided



falling house fronts, pole vaulted into windows, slid down banisters, bobbed up and down on the end of rubber ropes, rode on cowcatchers, dangled from hot-air balloons, balanced on the handlebars of speeding motorcycles, clung to plummeting fire escapes, outran cattle stampedes, allowed himself to be thrown about by hurricane force winds, survived savage beatings by prizefighters, and quite a bit more, all in the service of genuinely funny, and sometimes embarrassing, plot situations that cast him in the role of the determined underdog, not too bright, but struggling with every fibre of his being against the whims of bullies twice his size — and sometimes against nature itself.

Keaton was, quite simply, the greatest film comedian that ever was — but until now, his work has been hard to come by on home video. Kino Video has solved that problem in a big way with **THE ART OF BUSTER KEATON**, a massive ten volume set that collects every silent short and every independently-produced silent feature that Keaton ever made.

The series combines one feature with two or three shorts on every volume, probably the best commercial way to package the series, a method that provides good value for the dollar in an otherwise fairly pricey set. Rather than package the

shorts in chronological order, Kino has tried to group them by theme, as when they include Keaton's two nautical shorts, **THE BOAT** and **THE LOVE NEST** with his fourth feature, **THE NAVIGATOR**. It's not always a satisfactory mix, but it does assure that there's at least some prime Keaton material to be found on every volume.

Volume one, **THE SAPHEAD**, is a case in point. The title feature is not really a Keaton starring vehicle, but a studio melodrama on which Keaton was a hired hand, providing comedy relief from the main storyline. Given that, it's surprising that Buster manages to grab as much control over the film (and our attention) as he does. Though it may be an archival gem, with historical significance as Buster's first solo featured appearance, it is not Keaton at his best; and **THE HIGH SIGN**, which follows it on the tape, while enjoyable and clever, is not much of an improvement. But the tape finishes off with **ONE WEEK**, arguably Buster's best ever two-reel short, in which newlywed Buster tries to put together a mail-order house which has had its shipping crates renumbered by a jealous rival. The mix-up that follows, climaxing with thunderstorms, train disasters and a house that spins like a wild merry-go-round, amounts to the funniest twenty minutes ever put on film.

Though remastered and restored with meticulous care, the quality of Kino's source prints varies considerably. All of the features are crystal-clear and gorgeous to look at; most have probably not looked this good since they were originally shown.

But the shorts all seem to come from fairly sad, battered prints. Though they have been cleaned up, and appear here at their correct projection speed and in their original film ratio, it is sad to think that no better source prints could be found, particularly given the high quality of the feature materials.

Still, there is more Keaton here than has ever been available before. At least two previously missing shorts have been found in incomplete form, and are offered to the public for the first time in more than sixty years. The primitive Technicolor scenes that begin *SEVEN CHANCES* have been restored, and three

rarely-screened features, including the under-rated *BATTLING BUTLER*, are now available for everyone's re-assessment. With Keaton's two studio-produced silents, *THE CAMERAMAN* and *SPITE MARRIAGE*, also available from Turner



Home Video and most of his sound features with Jimmy Durante in print from the same source, this means that Keaton's entire career is now easily obtainable from your local video store, lacking only his early work with Roscoe Arbuckle and the sad, cheaply produced sound shorts that Keaton hacked in during the late thirties.

But unless you are already a Keaton fan, it is not likely that you're going to shell out such a large sum of money for the entire ten volumes. Newcomers to the world of Keaton are advised to sample one or two individual tapes. Best bets: volume three (*OUR HOSPITALITY* and *SHERLOCK, JR.*, two of Buster's

finest, most inventive features), volume four (THE NAVIGATOR and other seagoing tales) or volume eight (THE GENERAL, perhaps the first Epic comedy ever attempted, ranked by many as one of the ten best films ever made, packaged with THE PLAYHOUSE and COPS, two of his best shorts that, respectively, take him back to his vaudeville roots in a dream of the theater in which Buster plays all the parts, and the ultimate development of Keaton's favorite nightmare, that of an innocent man pursued by the boys in blue). These films are the backbone of Keaton's career; any one of them will provide a perfect introduction to his universe.

We recommend Buster to everyone, and this is the most sympathetic treatment his work has ever been given on video. Don't worry that these are silent movies. Trust us, Keaton didn't need sound, any more than he needed a stunt double. His brand of dramatic comedy is as lively as ever, and this collection has enabled us to enjoy it for years to come.

— PETER JAMISON



BOO!

Recommended viewing for All Hallows Eve!

In *The Halloween Tree*, Ray Bradbury's paean to his favorite holiday, a skeleton man in Victorian dress bemoans the ignorance of the callow youths who dress as witches, ghosts and gargoyles without knowing why. "Why are you, boy, wearing that Skull face?" he cries. "You don't know, do you? You just put on those faces and those old mothball clothes and jump out, but you don't *really* know, do you? ... What *is* Halloween? How did it start? Where? Why? What for? ... It's all there in that country from which no one returns. Will you dive into the dark ocean, boys? Will you fly in the dark sky?"

As Bradbury knew, there is so much more to Halloween and to horror than just surface detail. So if you're casting around for a frightener this October 31st, keep it in mind that just any old hack-and-slash horror movie won't do. There are themes of persona and celebration, nature, history and masquerade that must be taken into account. In classical imagery, death is oftentimes nothing more than a metaphor for change. Forget Jason and Freddy, with their gross hackings that spatter the movie screen in gore. Let us choose a horror where things may not be what they seem, where the sub-text is greater than the context, and duality is the order of the day.

What makes *Mark of the Vampire* a perfect Halloween movie is the climactic revelation that its vampires are not real vampires at all, but actors helping to ensnare a murderer by means of an elaborate hoax. So we can enjoy Carol Borland's flapping about the manor in canvas batwings as a moment of pure theater, of sublime Halloween merriment. Likewise, Lon Chaney's hokey transformations in *The Wolf Man* may lack the pyrotechnic finesse of modern movie werewolves, but then again *The Wolf Man* isn't really *about* the physical nonsense of transforming human into lupine anatomy. It is about inner turmoil, repressed

anger and lust; it is about a tormented man trying (and failing) to rise above something dark that lurks inside of him. The now-primitive techniques used in the transformation scenes actually increase the impact of this, by not distracting, and by consisting of a fairly obvious masquerade played out in Hollywood Gothic settings of gnarled trees, tendrils of fog — perfect for the season. Val Lewton's *The Cat People* (1942) is even more blatantly about sexual repression. Like all of Lewton's elegant horror films, it piles on the suspense pretty heavily, but leaves the shock effects to your imagination.

Horror movies of the thirties and forties had real guts: they hinted at dark things that modern films, with their splashes of gore, only play at. If Brando bores you in the latest remake of H.G. Wells's *Island of Doctor Moreau*, try Charles Laughton playing the same part in Paramount's far more suggestive and savage 1932 *Island of Lost Souls*. In the 1934 version of *The Black Cat* (which owes nothing to Poe except its title and a pronounced unhealthy atmosphere), Bela Lugosi gets a rare chance to play the good guy; but as you might expect, Bela's "hero" has more than a hint of a dark side, ending the movie in Grand Guignol fashion by flaying Boris Karloff alive. These films

have psychological resonance, even today: Two years ago I showed Lew Landers's fine 1936 *Dracula's Daughter* to my then-girlfriend, and our relationship was never the same. The film's themes of lesbianism — in the context of vampiric activity as a disease that may or may not be curable — offended her deeply; for us, it was the beginning of the end. Oddly enough, this hasn't soured the movie for me: quite the opposite. I know now that there are more kinds of death than just the physical, and *Dracula's Daughter* will forever be associated in my mind with the death of that relationship. Gives it kind of a special flavor in the solstice showings that lie ahead...

Just as important as the



subtext of these films is the sense of humor that many of them share. Ernest Thesiger's dialogue in *The Bride of Frankenstein* — a film that single-handedly proves the point that comedy and horror are two sides of the same coin — is caustic and gaudy and bitterly funny. It is Thesiger's Doctor Preatorius (a sort of demented old Queen) and the overtly comical female servant who set you up for the shivers that follow; without their presence, the film would be — almost literally — lifeless.

In the same vein, though to different effect, it is the lightness of touch that makes 1945's *House of Frankenstein* so enjoyable. *House* has nearly as much visual style as its classier predecessors, but is far too crowded to build any real suspense. Instead, the

presence of so many monsters — not just Frankenstein's creation, but Dracula, the Wolf Man, a new and even madder doctor (Karloff) and his hunchbacked assistant all vie for screen time — gives the movie a kind of cobwebby festive atmosphere that makes it, above all others, a scream at Halloween parties.

All right: you're so thoroughly modern that you can't bear to look at a black and white movie. Your loss; still, there are a very few options left, if you know where to look for them. Roman Polanski's *Dance of the Vampires* (released here in the states as *Fearless Vampire Killers*, and available on video by that title) is another smashing comedy/horror movie that concentrates on subtle chills over clumsy shock. The presence of Sharon Tate adds a disturbing level of subtext to this, given her real-life fate, but the film is powerful enough on its own.

Likewise *The Abominable Doctor Phibes*, quite simply the best thing ever produced by American-International, perhaps not the cheapest studio of all time but damned near. *Phibes* gave Vincent Price his greatest role: a grieving Victorian organist who uses Grand Guignol techniques to take his revenge on a culture that has turned its back on the gothic tradition. Directed by Robert Fuest (ex of *The*

Avengers) with a real sense of Art Deco flamboyance, *Phibes* takes sadism to new heights and gets away with it by virtue of good humor, a well defined sense of the ridiculous and sheer cunning. You've just got to like a horror movie that has the wit to use "Over the Rainbow" for its closing theme.

Which leads us, by way of a simple sidestep, to *Dreamchild*, one of several fine non-horror movies that are perfect for Halloween, because of the themes they explore. Here's Ian Holm, embodying our favorite Victorian genius mathematician child molester Lewis Carroll, the very Reverend Charles Dodgson, with every ounce of sympathy and sensitivity he can muster (which is a powerful amount). Here, too, is Coral Browne, Mrs. Vincent Price herself, coming to terms, after more than sixty years spent in denial, with the very real terrors present in Dodgson's version of her adventures, and with her memories of Dodgson himself. Jim Henson's Creature Shop built the fantasy creatures; they add a wonderfully Victorian note to this crystalline, gothic gem.

If you're feeling ambitious it's always fun to fill out the program with a short subject or two, just like the movie theaters used to do. Every comedy star in the known universe has attempted the hor-

ror/comedy at one time or another, and many of these are quite rich with pure Halloween Spirit. But my favorite is Laurel and Hardy's *The Live Ghost*. A rough sea-captain (Walter Long, who could take the on the toned and oiled musclemen of today with both hands tied behind his back and one foot in chains) shanghais Stan and Ollie to crew his haunted ship; before long, the boys become convinced (mistakenly) that they have killed one of their mates (Arthur Houseman, one of the all-time great screen drunks), only to be pursued around the ship by the man's "ghost" when the still very much alive Houseman gets doused with a misplaced can of whitewash.

The business of the Hollywood serial has always been one of action and thrills, not scares or psychological mask-wearing. In the silent days, quite a few hooded, caped figures prowled through shadowy hallways — Columbia's *Iron Claw* being just one of many — but with the advent of sound these mysterious wraiths (who were benevolent as often as not) dwindled in number, and it's hard to find a sound serial that's appropriate to our occasion. But there are a few. In *The Crimson Ghost*, I. Stanford Jolley plays a gangster who likes to dress up in a very cheesy (but somehow very cool) Death costume complete with skull face, bony

hands and shroud. As a whole it is not a very good serial, but chapter three features a cliffhanger in a black room lit only by a skullfaced nightlight that nicely captures some Halloween spirit. Of course masked heroes were a staple of the serials, and the duality of some of these masked men makes them prime candidates for Halloween-stardom. Columbia produced two *Batman* serials during the '40s that are so terrible as to make for some good Halloween party laughs, and their 14-episode thriller based on Popular Publications pulp fiction character *The Spider* has some great moments of personality shifting and black capes swishing against the night air. But for unvarnished thrills, great flying scenes and the ultimate in wish fulfillment your best bet is *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*, in which scrawny Billy Batson (played by high-pitched Frank Coughlin Jr.) turns into super-powered Captain Marvel (western star Tom Tyler) just by hollering "Shazam!"

Go ahead! Whoop it up! Halloween comes only once a year, and these films (all of which are available on home video) will help you get into the Spirit!





In the mood to see some big-screen science fiction that at least pretended to intelligence — even if that was *all* it did — we went out to the latest *Star Trek* movie, **FIRST CONTACT**. We are not particular fans of any of the many *Star Trek* revivals — nor even of the original series after its first two seasons — but we were in a strange (one might even say masochistic) mood, and would have done just about anything to get away from the computer for a time.

Having seen it, we feel this film should have been packaged with a warning: **“WE TRIED TO MAKE A MOVIE THAT WOULD APPEAL TO AS BROAD AN AUDIENCE AS POSSIBLE; NONETHELESS YOU MUST POSSESS SOME BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF STAR TREK IN ALL ITS PERMUTATIONS TO HAVE ANY HOPE OF UNDERSTANDING**

JUST WHAT THE HELL ALL OF THIS IS ABOUT, OR FOR THE ENDING TO HAVE ANY MEANING TO YOU.”

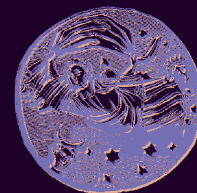
It’s probably the best *Star Trek* we’ve seen years; not that that’s saying much. It’s a movie of plusses and minuses: On the plus side, this is closer to the intent of the original show than anything the Next Generation crew has ever done; on the minus side, this is closer to the intent of the original show than... you get the idea; we’re treading old turf.

Plus: Picard finally begins to act like a Captain. Minus: he turns out to be more ruthless than Shatner’s Kirk ever dreamed of being. Minus: Oh ho-hum here we go traveling back into the past again, for — what? the eighth or tenth time? Plus: at least the past that we’re traveling back into turns out still to be the future, thus leaving real historical

periods and figures free from the meddlesome typing fingers of pompous SF writers. Plus: despite all indications of the film's first fifteen minutes, the script does have a plot, and rather a good one by recent standards. Minus: much of the dialogue is inane, and even the good bits (which cause all die hard Trekkies in the audience to cheer, fall about and generally act as if they are witnessing the second coming of Christ rather than watching a science fiction movie) aren't all *that* good. Minus: hold onto your hats while we blow up the Enterprise yet again. Plus: Ha, we tricked you! Minus: we still aren't above using it as a red herring.

The Borg are good villains, and provide grist for the old Star Trek mill about humanity and hope and dreams and aspirations without also boring us to death. With their eerie piercings and insertions, their zombie walk, they lend a whole new air to the old Federation game: *Star Trek* meets *Night of the Living Dead*.

Which leads us to our favorite minus of all: the colors are so dark and muted that **FIRST CONTACT** is virtually a black-and-white movie. Are we the only ones who miss the vivid color scheme of the original show?





PAGES

A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME

Twelve linked Novels by Anthony Powell:

A Question of Upbringing • A Buyer's Market

The Acceptance World

At Lady Molly's • Casanova's Chinese Restaurant

The Kindly Ones

The Valley of Bones • The Soldier's Art

The Military Philosophers

Books Do Furnish a Room • Temporary Kings

Hearing Secret Harmonies

Published in four volumes.

Anthony Powell's DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME — which derives its title from an allegorical painting by Nicolas Poussin — opens with a painterly image of street workmen gathered round a bucket of coal on a snowy afternoon. Not long after this, an oddly-made schoolboy called Widmerpool comes jogging out of the damp fog. Carefully wrought, deliberately low-key, these pictures form the backbone of a huge 2,800 page novel that has as its plot nothing more or less ambi-

tious than the movements, points of contact, affairs and aspirations of a generation of English youth between the end of the first world war and the beginning of the computer age. They meet, fall into love or conflict or both; they achieve, or do not achieve, their designs; some are killed, some die of other causes; some indulge in secret vices, others in secret alliances both personal and political; some deal with life better than others. In *A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME*, the title is the plot. Filled with a boatload of characters, carried along by a sustained grace of writing, it has that same effect of time distortion as Kurasawa's *Seven Samurai*: it's good enough that the reader is only dimly aware of its length.

The individual volumes appeared between 1951 and 1975, and have now been republished by the University of Chicago Press in a beautifully designed four-volume set. Each volume contains three novels; part of the beauty of the thing's structure is that each novel stands well enough alone while drawing strength from the others in the series; but it isn't until the final page that Powell's whole plan for this giant-sized literary canvas snaps into focus. Twenty four years is a long time to sustain a vision; and to maintain a cohesive writing "voice" for all of that time, dealing with the

lives of dozens of characters in a consistently humane and non-melodramatic style, is an achievement worthy of anyone's attention and admiration. Powell, whose other novels include *THE FISHER KING*, has painted a painted an elaborate, many-paneled mural out of words.

A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME packs a lifetime of reminiscences into a passing moment on the streets of London. Its narrator is Nick Jenkins, a writer of no exceptional fame or fortune, who in his lifetime is witness to all sorts of what Faulkner called "human passion and hope and folly" among high and low figures alike. Though excessively close with details about his own life, Jenkins has no such scruples about the lives of others; at least so far as we are concerned as we follow his thoughts in and out of time.

Early reviews applauded this as a comic work; but this ignores the unruffled melancholy of Jenkins's reflections. Doubters should make the effort to separate the novel's most tragic character: here the field is thick with contenders. Is it the writer Trapnel, whose life is (perhaps deliberately) crowded with the melodramatic trappings of tragedy; or Stringham, unloved son of a rich divorcee, who only seems to gain a modicum of self respect by dying anonymously in a Japanese

POW camp; or Peter Templar, whose early success as a womanizer turns into a failure so terrible that he is driven to suicidal involvement in a branch of the secret service; or Deacon, inept in art, antiques and homosexual love; or Widmerpool, dogged runner of the early pages, who combines ambition with a taste for abject humiliation, and provides the novel with many of its squirmiest moments.

The women don't fare much better, but at least outwardly most of Powell's women don't enjoy playing the tragic role. Most are far too busy getting on with things. From a critical standpoint Powell's women may be problematic: though beautifully drawn, many of them don't come into focus except in relation to the men. Pamela Widmerpool is a case in point: beautiful, almost excessively vivid, her only pleasure lies in torturing men, and her only suffering comes when she finally meets one who won't allow himself to be tortured.

Characters are Powell's strongest point; and these are just a bare few of the principal players. Other novelists, notably Proust, Joyce Cary and Robertson Davies, have written long novels in triptych form that follow a group of characters over a long period of time, or view them from widely differing perspectives, or both; but Powell goes one

step farther by focusing not on a narrow group or a triangle of players, but on an entire swath of English culture. This may be the only honest way of telling any story: that is, by telling it all, in bits and snatches, as heard or witnessed, from childhood to old age.

Painting gives the story its shape, and paintings drift all through the twelve novels. Art as a means of neatly encapsulating the little plays that people indulge in is one of Powell's primary themes. Like all of the best art, *A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME* is both melancholy and comedic. To label it one or the other says more about the reader than it does about the work; either way, this big book is overflowing with life. Read it in bed, or in front of the fire; that's the best way to enjoy this kind of dance.

PETER PAN Vols. 1 & 2

*Written and Illustrated by Régis Loisel; Published by
Heavy Metal/Tundra. Hardcover, \$14.95 each.*

In an age when psychobabble hucksters like John Bradshaw can package and sell the "inner

child” as a kind of modern snake-oil self-improvement remedy it is hardly surprising that Peter Pan has become the quintessential image of childhood lost; even less surprising that he has reached the top of everyone’s hit list as the latest sacred cow to be raped and dragged over the coals of that most dreaded of all creative diseases, “re-interpretation.”

When Steven Spielberg got his *Hook*s into the character, Peter Pan was made over into a middle-aged whiner who has lost his sense of wonder, a perfect before/after commercial for Bradshaw and the other perpetrators of the “Recovery” movement. As an example of how far our culture has descended into self pity it was right on target, but as re-interpretation *Hook* was not nearly so fresh as it pretended, settling as it did on re-stating the moral from J.M. Barrie’s play in terms that were more obvious and simplistic.

Now we have Régis Loisel, a French artist known to us primarily through the pages of HEAVY METAL, with his own version of the Peter Pan story. As a visual work it is stunning, and as a reinterpretation of Barrie it is far more drastic than anything Peter Pan has had to endure previously. But in accomplishing this it caters to the tastes of the grown-ups it pretends to despise:

nudity, death and brutality abound, often depicted far more graphically than necessary. In the end, this *Peter Pan* is depressing and sad in ways that make us long for the simple wisdom of Barrie.

In its second half Loisel’s *Peter Pan* shifts to Neverland, and, with the exception of one scene set in a dark, nightmare corner of the island, settles on telling the kind of boring “origin story” that Peter Pan never needed. Oh, there are bare breasts galore, and enough violence to justify the mature readers tag, but nearly everything Loisel has to say about Peter Pan is said in volume one, in which he recasts Peter as an abused child living in the slums of London. Here we are treated to scenes in which Peter’s drunken hag of a mother beats him and throws him into the winter streets; here also, Peter is forced to expose himself publicly, and is raped by a one armed man (perhaps intended as irony given that Barrie may himself have been a pedophile). Retreating from this Hell on earth, Peter spends a night on the docks talking to a friendly owl — until the ultimate wish fulfillment occurs, and a shooting star turns into a glittering fairy who teaches Peter to fly.

It’s not hard to understand what Loisel is trying to do, without actually approving of how he does it. To combine Barrie with the harrowing visions of

childhood found in the pages of Charles Dickens is an intriguing notion; to toss the Marquis De Sade into the mixture amounts to overkill. It is particularly to be regretted when you consider the grace of Loisel's artwork, the strength of his compositions, the subtlety of detail, color and facial expression that makes these books a pleasure to look at. Why, then, such a lack of subtlety in the story? Loisel is capable of understated suggestion when he tries — one look at the covers is proof of that. Perhaps by going out of his way to make this an "adult" book he is giving in to simple habit, or to commercial trend. Either way, the impact of his particular "take" on the Peter Pan legend is weakened.

In the final act of the original *Peter Pan*, Peter passionately declares "I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy, and to have fun." The recurring images of emasculation in Loisel's book imply something about Peter Pan that has not been explored elsewhere — the question is, does it need to be explored? Barrie's play is so complete, so self-contained, that any attempt to expand on it must be fruitless. And speaking as one "lost Boy" who still chokes up when Mary Martin sings about that

"place where dreams are born, and time is never planned," it is a terrible thing to rob Peter Pan of his innocence. It is a form of rape. With all his implications of abuse (the one-armed man being an obvious attempt to suggest that Captain Hook's interest in Peter is something more than practical), perhaps Régis Loisel should look in the mirror.

art: **** story: *1/2

— NICK HORNE

HATE

Written and Drawn by Peter Bagge; published by Fantagraphics Books. \$2.50 the issue.

Hey! Underground Comix are alive and well and living in Peter Bagge. While most "alternative" artists have settled on aiming for the middle of the road, Bagge is gleefully, gloriously out there on the fringe, with his high-energy style, lunatic characters and stories that manage to be frenetic and well-ordered at the same time. In issue 12, Bagge's anti-hero Buddy Bradley and his girlfriend Lisa set up at a comics convention, only to run afoul of some adolescent collectors and a maniacal dealer called Yahtzee. It all has the ring of truth: bizarre as these characters are, they're the

kind of people that many of us know and wish that we didn't. While I don't admire Buddy Bradley of any of his pals, I do admire the vitality of Bagge's work. Now if only he'd learn how to spell "collectibles..."

— FRIEDA JOHNSTON

FULL THROTTLE

A Heavy Metal Adventure by Tim Schafer. Starring the voices of Roy Conrad, Mark Hamill and Kath Soucie. Writer, Designer and Project Leader, Tim Schafer. Lead Artist, Peter Chan. Lead Animator, Larry Ahern. Lead Programmer, Steve Shaw. Published by LucasArts for both PC and Mac. \$29.95 - \$59.95

It should come as no surprise that George Lucas, late of *Star Wars*, Indiana Jones and the Let's-Take-Joseph-Campbell-Entirely-Too-Much-To-Heart society has used a chunk of his billions and billions of dollars to start a computer software company; nor that the company, LucasArts, should soar to the forefront of games and entertainment programming. In 1993, with perhaps a half-dozen games and several awards already under its belt,

LucasArts released *The Day Of The Tentacle*, a cartoon adventure written and designed by Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman, and in so doing proved that computer games could be something more than just hyper-serious Dungeons & Dragons clones and text-based exercises in boredom for the computer nerd crowd. With its cartoon sensibilities, great postmodern design, clever storyline and cleverer humor, *Day Of The Tentacle* represented a quantum leap forward that threatened to carry the computer game into the higher realm of art.

It was followed by *Sam And Max Hit The Road*, an even more twisted cartoon game that took Steve Purcell's comic-book "Freelance Police" — a hard-boiled dog in a blue serge suit and a naked rabbit with an evil grin and a fondness for mayhem — on a trip across the dark tourist-trap underbelly of America, to solve the mystery of the disappearing Bigfoot. Though marred — or perhaps enhanced — by some unbelievably obtuse puzzles, *Sam And Max* not only provided a veritable playground of games-within-games, but told a pleasingly bizarre story made up of at least two well-structured plots, and populated it with consistent, motivated and sometimes charming (in an eerily off-the wall manner) characters. These days, most *novels* don't bother with things like plots or char-

acters, and don't even to bother to look for them next time you turn on the telly.

So we awaited *Full Throttle* with some anticipation. A cartoon biker mystery? Could go either way: fun concept or *Scooby Doo* for the nineties. Rest easy, Polecats: *Full Throttle* takes everything LucasArts has done to date and carries it to full flower. While other companies blather about "interactivity" and deliver the same old nonsense in ever more memory-demanding chunks, Lucas and his lead designer Schafer have scored a first: a fully-animated feature film that allows viewers the illusion of participation.

It's a feature that could never have gotten made any other way: too nonconformist, too dark, too personal. Though designed with a stylish, cartoony flair and launched with tongue well jammed into cheek, it tells a fairly straightforward story of hard-boiled murder, noir angst and love lost, set in a world of bikers, bars and the open road. It is paced, directed and acted as well as any noir thriller. It just happens to be animated — oh, and because it was made for the computer, the characters won't be able to solve any mystery unless you help them.

Full Throttle uses more than four hundred megabytes of data to tell its story — better than ten times the amount found in ordinary video games. A

lot of that data goes towards achieving the appearance of feature-film animation: *Full Throttle* uses fast cuts and full motion to tell its tale of corporate skullduggery and biker justice. It is not high-flown or thematically ambitious by any stretch of the imagination, but by managing to tell a complete story within the context of an interactive "Game," and by populating it with fully developed and convincing — if not necessarily realistic — characters, *Full Throttle* deserves high praise. Some of its puzzles, like those in *Sam & Max*, are a bit tougher to solve than they need to be, and will send you scurrying to the bookstore to peek at the hint book, but if that's the price we have to pay for singularity, so be it. *Full Throttle* demonstrates that entertainment software is an area that's wide open for writers and artists to flex their creative muscles. As such, it is part of a small but growing club.

— DINA STOUT





SLINGS AND ARROWS



It's a sure sign that the world is turning into a bizarre and scary place when Barry Goldwater starts to look like a moderate. In the summer of Bob Dole's final race for the White House, Goldwater has endorsed Bill Clinton — rather like Joe McCarthy returning from the dead to say that Communism might not be such a bad thing after all.

Imagine: Nixon seems an honorable man when compared to contemporary Republicans, and *Gilligan's Island* is looking smarter and smarter in retrospect.

I was raised in a staunchly Republican family, but when Ronald Reagan was elected I began to have my doubts. Those doubts were confirmed when Reagan sold the party down the river to right-wing religious extremists, a process carried on and completed by his nervous lap-dog replacement, George Bush.

We believed that Competition was the foundation of the Free Enterprise system. But today's Republicans no longer accept things like the free

market, though they still use the words in twisted ways to mean something entirely different. When the Japanese started beating us at our own game, we responded not by improving our products or our positioning in the market, but by trying to change the rules. Big corporations encourage this with political contributions and a revised method of operation: when a competitor is encountered simply swallow it, or crush it under the kind of deceitful and underhanded campaign that only big money can buy. Does your town have a new Wal-Mart? Have you noticed the effect on your local economy? Do we really want to live in a country that is owned, lock, stock and barrel by three or four multinational conglomerates? Do you really want to be saying the pledge of allegiance to Warnaco?

Here in Waterville, Maine, a local food chain is pulling out of a downtown area which desperately needs its presence. Worse, that chain, which owns the property it is vacating, is prepared to let that property stand empty and decaying rather than allow another grocery store or pharmacy to take up residence. They have had at least one offer on the building from a pharmaceuticals chain, and refused; better to let the downtown area dry up, in their reasoning, than allow competition to creep in.

This did not phase the pharmaceuticals company in the slightest. They tore down a good old house, and built a gleaming new chain store in its place.

In 1996, this is what the Republican Party is giving you: Graft and Wal-Marts. When they say that they will lower taxes, what they mean is that they will lower taxes on big corporations and the top 5% income brackets. When they say they believe in freedom, what they mean is freedom for conglomerates to trash your home town, freedom for religious whackos to legislate your rights out of existence.

I was raised within the Grand Old Party, but I don't much like them anymore. Except for the always-forthright and honest Mr. Goldwater, they all remind me of Lionel Barrymore.

— RICHARD AINLEY

'Twas always thus: while small towns go down the drain, and the working class continues to take its hardest beating since the Great Depression, the Senate and House of Representatives busily debate such items of earth-shattering importance as the Balanced Budget Amendment and the so-called desecration of the flag.

Reps and Senators love these issues because it gives people the impression that Congress is actually doing something. They get to make a lot of speeches, rattle their sabers, puff out their chests, all the while winking slyly at each other with the certain knowledge that all this sound and fury will enable them to get through another session without having to put their jobs on the line over anything genuinely important. Issues like social security, welfare, subsidies, grossly bloated military spending, freedom of choice and the poor all get swept neatly under the rug, where they won't cost anyone an election. By this reasoning, the American people are treated like cattle, dumbed-down on a diet of patriotism and principle so abstract as to be meaningless in the real world.

By embodying our flag as an object of political debate, they lower our national values to the level of farce. Those brave men and women who fought, died and were maimed in our wars did not fight to protect a scrap of cloth. They fought for principles. Cloth doesn't mean a god-damned thing.



Principles do. One of the principles that they fought for was freedom of speech. And one of the things that speech involves is the use of symbols to convey meaning. The American flag is a symbol, nothing more. As long as it has meaning as symbol, we have to have the right to use it as a means

of expression, and sometimes that means using it to express negative things. To abolish so-called desecration of the flag flies in the face of the first amendment. To give such a dictum an amendment of its own is to turn the Constitution into a contradictory, schizophrenic mess. This is a non-issue. It has no place on the House floor. But Congress loves it, because it gets our blood pumping and makes us forget that Big Corporations and the very wealthy are systematically exterminating the working class.

Likewise, the Balanced Budget Amendment. In supporting this, the Republicans lose sight of two important facts: that Republican presidents increased the country's deficit by a greater margin than any other regime in history, and that balancing the budget could be achieved tomorrow with a

single vote, if Congress really *wanted* to do it.

Perish forbid. Far better to vote for an amendment that puts on a good show, looks good on the surface, but accomplishes nothing and disappears when you turn it sideways. Congress will *never* balance the budget, because it involves dealing with real issues, something they are not prepared to do. It also involves letting the other guy take credit. No matter who is in power, Democrat or Republican, the opposition will never allow an incumbent president to look good.

— RICHARD AINLEY

Masks or Faces? That question — originally the title of a book on theatrical tradition — bears a peculiar appropriateness to American Culture on the verge of the MILLENNIUM. How much of it is genuine? How much exists purely for show? Even when the question is raised — Where's the Beef? — how can we be sure that it raised with conviction, that it carries any weight?

Political conventions no longer decide anything, but exist only to give the candidates (already picked well in advance) a burst of carefully-orchestrated pep to carry them through the next

three months. The issues debated thereafter are often chosen for their usefulness at throwing up a cloud of dust, rather than shedding light on principle — or lack of such — in the candidates.

Here in Maine, the governor issues a meaningless proclamation declaring a couple of days in July to be “Maine Antiques Weekend” (did this really help to increase antique sales during that month? Did anyone but the Antique Dealers Association even notice? Did any of the dealers realize that they were being fed a cookie?), while the Green Party wastes its time pushing a bill so radical that it could never hope to pass. It can hardly be stating anything new to say that all through the political spectrum, folks are cloaking their own self-interest in a mantle of righteousness, and expecting the community to swallow it.

Corporations purchase hours of advertising for no other reason than to assure the general public of their sincerity (witness Maine Yankee's appalling series of commercials advertising its eerie “Information Center” theme park) and commitment to principle — when everyone knows that the only principle any corporation is committed to is that of increasing profits, and crushing anything that might stand in the way of that goal.

Inside those corporations, management sends

down gooey memos to line workers declaring every kind of sympathy and warmest regrets over the “neccesary reductions” that they are “being forced” to make. They hold “Let’s Talk” meetings for the specific purpose of preparing employees to be fired — and are past masters at the art of using diagrams and figures to lie, turning any level of profit into a deficit that they can use to justify their actions.

On television, we continue to witness snake-oil salesmanship on a leval so colossal that it would make Harold Hill’s head spin. Singer Dionne Warwick repackages herself

as psychic gang-
s t e r .

Infomercials
carry brain-
washing to a new
level of art.

Electronic scandal



sheets like Hard Copy pre-
tend to respectability (some-
thing even the National
Enquirer was never auda-
cious enough to try).

Chat Shows feed on the
low desire to say or do



anything just to get on Tee Vee. It’s
no wonder that Soap
Opera actors

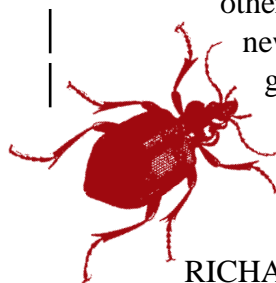
are plagued
by fans who
can’t tell the dif-
ference between
fifth-rate drama
and reality.

The craft of creating illu-
sion, at every level of society, has
achieved greater respectability than at any
other time in history. None of this is
news; but it continues to deepen and
get worse, year after year after year.

That’s what’s so frightening about
it: how low can we go, before the
entire nation bottoms out?

—

RICHARD AINLEY



As long ago as 1907, an anonymous writer
complained in *Scribner’s Magazine* that crabbiness
is an emotion that doesn’t get a fair shake. “In an
age when everyone has an inalienable right to
nerves,” they wrote, “most of us have had reason
to note and to deplore the relentlessness with



which irritability is punished.”

Speaking as someone with a pronounced streak of irritability, I agree wholeheartedly. I have a friend whose favorite complaint about me is that I am “too judgmental.” I call it “having standards,” and respond by saying that she is not judgmental enough. Nobody approves of the kind of judgmental severity that led to gassing Jews and frying them in ovens, that leads to denying people opportunity or equality, that damages people because it is based on fallacy or ignorance — but since when did the opposite extreme become a good thing? Since when did tolerance of stupidity and blind acceptance of whatever shit we’re fed become a virtue?

Suddenly we are considered “judgmental” if we didn’t like last night’s new television shows, if we thought *Judgment Day* was a waste of time and money, if we believe that Kurt Cobain was a petulant self-pitying weenie and Melissa Etheridge is a squalling brat. I may not be right about any of those observations but why in heaven’s name does the act of disagreeing make one a social outcast? It’s as though we define our self-worth by the media we consume, and in so doing become intolerant of anyone who disagrees with us about anything.

It boggles my mind that people define themselves by the vicissitudes of pop culture and mass media. I am middle-aged and I still read comic books. It doesn’t bother me in the slightest if you think that I’m wasting my time; it doesn’t bother me if you never read a comic book in your life and never will. The fabric of my entire inner being does not rest on other’s approval of my comic book habit, on their approval of my political beliefs or the books I read or the movies I like to watch. By the same token, if you enjoy watching *The Nanny* every week, go right ahead. The fact that I rank it somewhere below toxic waste does not imply that I think less of YOU for watching it. Some folks read romance novels. Everyone is entitled to their own brand of junk, so long as they don’t try to pass it off as *Henry V*.

“Confidence!” Franklin Roosevelt said. It was the root of his whole personality, and it seems to me that it is severely lacking in the American Spirit as we approach the MILLENNIUM. Confidence is often confused with egotism, and perhaps that’s where the current backlash against “being judgmental” came from. Quite rightly, nobody wants to be seen as being self-sufficient to the point of arrogance, and to that extent Confidence does have its dark side. But that doesn’t mean that repression of

our faculties, of our standards, of our tolerance for disagreement is an acceptable alternative. Speaking as a self-confessed crabby person, nothing makes me crabbiier faster than being denied the right to my opinion.

— RICHARD AINLEY

Dear MILLENNIUM;

Does Love get any easier as you get older?

— FD

You must be living in a dream world, chummy.

Dear MILLENNIUM;

Issue three was the best so far. But please tell Richard Ainley that he's mastered the bleedin' obvious and it's time to move on.

Dear MILLENNIUM;

Not only has the supermarket chain of

which Richard Ainley speaks in his latest editorial tried to freeze out the competition from occupying its old space, but I heard that they'd gone so far as to pour concrete down the drain pipes, just out of pure cussedness. Free enterprise at work! 'Scuse me while I impale a few serfs.

— RE

Dear MILLENNIUM;

People like you are the reason why I have to put up with Bill Clinton for another four years. Ross Perot was the only candidate of '96 who had the right message.

— TC

*Possibly so, but Ross Perot is a meglomaniacal little toad who ran for all of the wrong reasons. What little credibility he had was blown four years ago. We believe that Bill Clinton has his faults. But by handing over the Republican party to the extreme right wing, Ronald Reagan and George Bush did the country a grave disservice, so that now we **MUST** have a democrat in office, if only to*

rectify the damage done to the Supreme Court.

— RA.



Dear MILLENNIUM;

I don't think you publish enough Science Fiction. A magazine that calls itself MILLENNIUM should publish mostly Science Fiction.

— BF

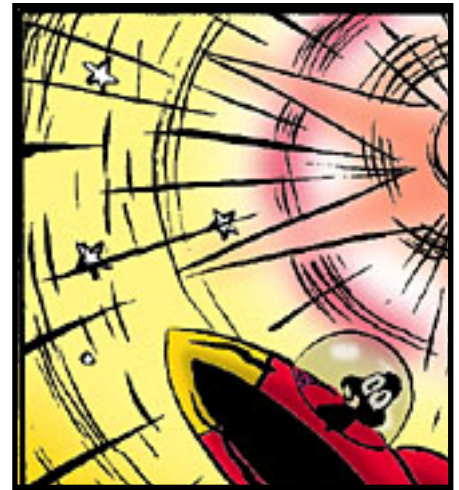
Just think of it as one of life's little contradictions.

Dear MILLENNIUM;

Ded yoo knuw thet tha wurd "TOMORROWLAND" is spellit wrang in awl uhf yawr cuvvers?

Including this one! Actually, we even spelled MILLENNIUM wrong on the cover of our first issue. It was thrown together in such haste that nobody noticed until it was too late. Seems that in the fast-paced world of guerilla publishing, no one has time to use the spell checker! Oops! (Or should we say Opps?)





the comics pages

featuring QUIRK, Space Reject

The story so far: an innocent visit to the gaming planet RYSK turns deadly when QUIRK is trapped into playing The Big Game -- a psycho-drama in which anything the combatents can imagine becomes REAL -- against his best enemy MAX-OR THE CLOWN. Round one ends with Quirk decidedly in the lead...

QUIRK HAMMER SITS AND HEAVES A SIGH. HIS WORLD WILL NEVER BE THE SAME--INDEED, IT HAS BEGUN TO MELT--

--MELT AWAY...

Sneak.

...ALL AROUND HIM

SAY!

THAT WUZ FUN!

YOU SURE SHOWED HIM!

...UNTIL IT IS NOT QUIRK HAMMER WHO SITS, BUT A STUNNED AND EVEN SLIGHTLY ELATED GAME PLAYER!

WOW! THAT WUZ NEAT, QUIRK! WE WATCHED IT, HERE ON THE MONITOR! IT LOOKED REAL!

IT FELT REAL!

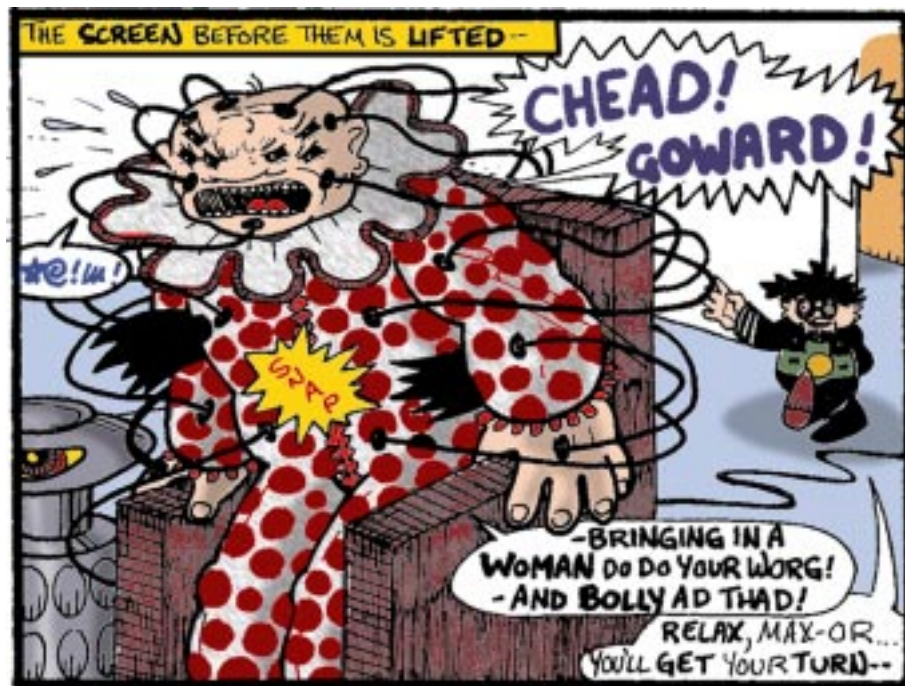
fuuink!

MAY-OR DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE!

TOO REAL FOR COMFORT!

CONTESTANT QUIRK: CUSTOM DICTATES YOU MUST NOW FACE YOUR OPPONENT

LET'ER RIP...





CHAPTER THREE:

BEING *for the* DETRIMENT OF MISTER QUIRK!!



TO THE DETRIMENT OF MISTER QUIRK, THIS MIND-GAME TAKES A PERVERSE TURN ON TRAMPOLINE.



THE ANIMALS WILL ALL BE THERE, AS MISTER QUIRK GETS QUITE A SCARE, WHAT A FLING!





NEXT ISSUE: *it gets weirder!!*

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good bye.