

# DISTRACTIONS

## Comics Survey

by CAL RIFKIN  
Distractions Reviewer

The first issue of DC Comic's newest deluxe mini-series, *The Shadow*, has just been released.

If the quality and the fast-paced action can be kept up for its three following issues, *The Shadow* is destined to become a classic example of what comics are capable of; evoking strong reactions from its readers. For the most part, comics have gone stale, bringing the reader no sensation of emotion, just informing him/her of the characters latest tribulations. The *X-Men* is a perfect example of schmaltzy soap-opera scripting with a storyline that has been plodding along at snail-pace for years.

Howard Chaykin, *The Shadow's* writer-artist, is known for his unconventional and ground-breaking, story telling techniques on his critically acclaimed comic, *American Flogg!*, and he's putting his talents to good use on *The Shadow*.



Some examples of Chaykin's work from *The Shadow* #1.

As Chaykin said in Fantagraphics Books' 1986 Writer Preview Special, "*The Shadow* is going to be an extremely violent comic book. *The Shadow* is going to be a very hard-boiled, no nonsense, no bullshit, and no due process king of character, as he was in the pulps." Those pulps being the dime novels written by Walter B. Gibson in the 1930's. The first issue boasts a

painted cover by Chaykin showing *The Shadow* with his trademark hat and ruby ring, with his up-to-date armaments being a pair of mini-Uzi pistols. Of special interest to Shadow-philes is the poster

### Chaykin's *Shadow* destined to be a classic

on the wall behind *The Shadow*; it's a reproduction of one of the original *Shadow* posters distributed in the 1940's. Obviously, the creators involved have done their homework on *The Shadow's* history.

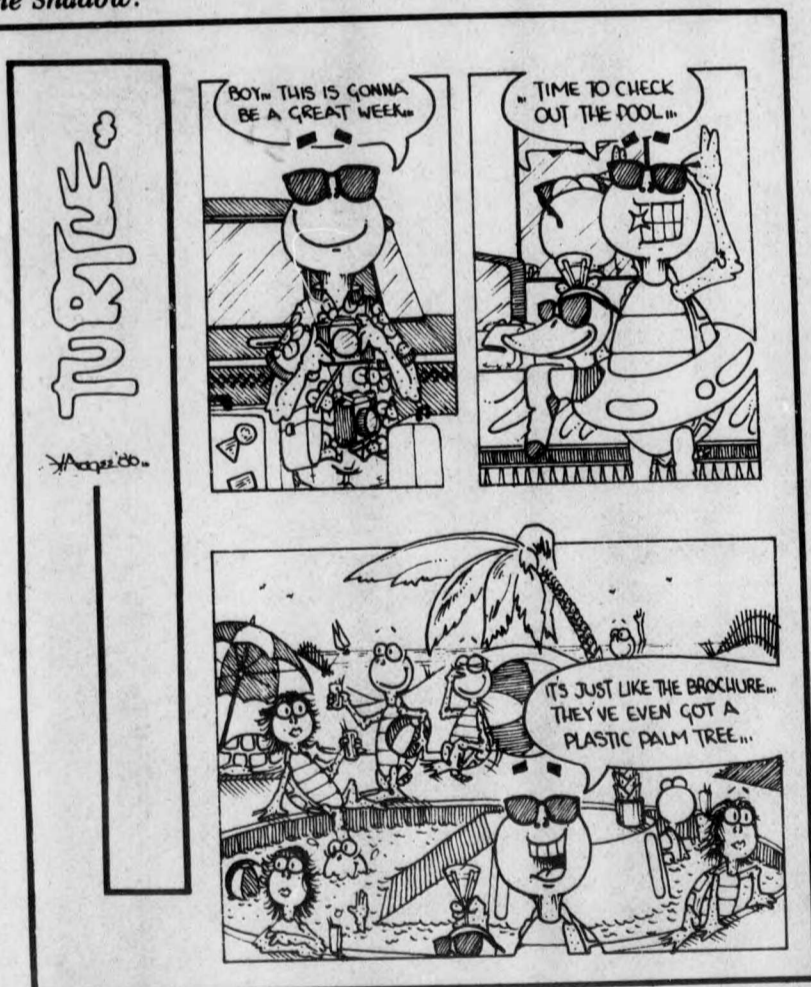
The story begins with the vicious murder of Clyde Burke, a mystery writer, and, unknown to all but a few, a former agent of *The Shadow* in his fight against crime. Set in present day, all of *The Shadow's* former agents are now in their 70's or older. Following Burke's death, a street bum is torched by two hoods, three mysterious men leave the legendary Himalayan retreat of Kalapa on their way to New York, and a legal aid counsellor, Cliff Marsland, takes a long vacation inside his water cooler. Very graphic and very different.

We meet Harry Vincent's daughter who works in New York's Crime Stats Department. We're introduced to Preston Mayrock; very rich, very powerful, and very much

up-to-something-that-bodes-evil. The character's aren't two-dimensional, often we see them for only one or two pages, but the illustrations and dialogue are concise and natural, conveying all the information that the reader needs to get to understand a character, and why they do the things they do.

Murder, violence, and sex abound, but all in such a way as to be, in Hitchcock's words, "completely and irrevocably essential to the plot." *The Shadow* is one of the best comics I've ever read, and I would give it my highest recommendation. It's not available on the newsstands, only through direct-sales outlets, like a comic or book shop, or at *Wilkie's* booth at the Farmer's Market. It's \$2.00 Canadian and is recommended for "mature readers."

To end off, I'll leave it to Chaykin himself to describe *The Shadow*; "Nasty stories of a bleak urban landscape. I would call this a no-shit, kick-ass crime comic."

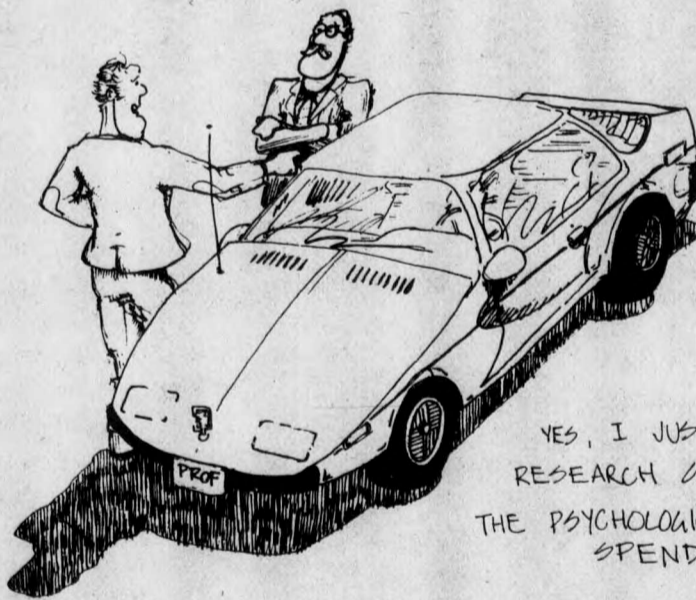


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## Comics Survey

### New artwork but old story

by COLIN CADOGAN  
Distractions Reviewer

At first glance, *Alpha Track* is a very attractive looking comic book, as it is printed on glossy paper, in full color.

It has an intriguing cover with a blue faced (nicely costumed) alien on a background of stars. The art is slightly crude and inconsistent, and the captions are not of uniform quality.

However, on the whole, I would have to say this comic is quite good for an independent publication. But, I would also like to read a well thought-out story.

This comic is unfortunately not up to scratch in the story department. Upon reading, it seems that the writer had been influenced by the "pulp" science-fiction of the 1950's,

not seeing that this genre has become outdated.

The aliens are just mean, conquering the Earth "because it was there." The humans are gallant and brave under every nasty torture the aliens can dish out. The writer did not seem to realize they were using stereotypical characters which everyone has seen before on "V"

The plot follows this general outline. The aliens invade Earth, and the United States governments develops "plan X" (in this case, "Alpha Track"). Fortunately, the president and vice-president don't reveal the facts behind "Alpha Track" when they are subjected to the evil alien "mind-sifter". Being as courageous as the chief officers of the U.S., I will not reveal what "Alpha Track" is.

If this story line intrigues you, head down to the Market to pick up "Alpha Track" from "Fantasy General Comics".



A detail from the cover of "Alpha Track" #1