

# DISTRACTIONS

## From First To Last ? Mike Grells Jon Sable Freelance

By VAL AMMOUR

During the past few years that the comics industry has exploded, one new company has stepped into the limelight, that being First comics. While many companies, such as Pacific have gone bust, First comics has grown steadily.

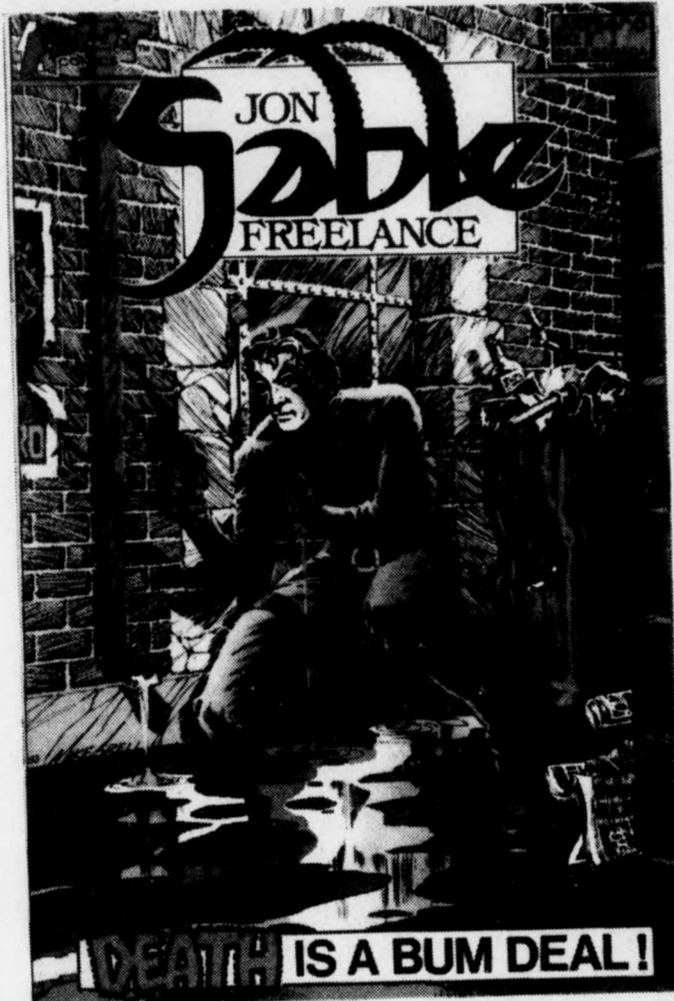
Their titles include Grim-jack, Warp (now defunct), E-man, Badger, Nexus, the much acclaimed American Flagg and Jon Sable Freelance.

Jon Sable has been around almost since the conception of the company. The storyline deals with this guy called, oddly enough, Jon Sable.

He doesn't really work a regular job. Sable is the type of person who will do anything dangerous for a fee, provided it's not too illegal. Written and drawn by former DC Comics Warlord creator, Mike Grell, Jon Sable, Freelance is of the new genre of comics. Sable is not a super hero comic, it's much more true to life, for a comic. that is. It pulls no punches. If a person gets shot, and

they do that a lot, then they die or spend time recovering. There is no miraculous escape for the villain just so he can return to try and take over the world again.

The first issue of Sable deals with this unnamed politician hiring Jon to protect him from an assassination attempt. Sable eventually corners the assassin, after having run up 40 flights of stairs, not an easy thing to do for a 40 year old man who smokes. N. super hero here, just a man. The second issue deals with a bunch of winos



The cover to Jon Sable No. 2. Sable is badly wounded and stalking a wino killer. Note the characteristic Mauser Machine pistol and his bizarre battle mask.

being bumped off; would Superman find a wino killer, never. In this issue we get to see more of Sable's Bizarre Battlemask, basically just a little makeup. He doesn't wear it for a disguise, since it really wouldn't work. He wears it because it "scares the hell out of Them".

Issues 3 through 7 deal with Jon Sable's origin, or how he came to be. We also find out more about Sable's alter-ego, B.B. Flemm. Sable is also a writer, but he couldn't sell wild life stories, however, he could sell children's stories. It wouldn't look good for a tough guy mercenary to write children's books so he created this alter-ego. At times Sable wants to give up being B.B. Flemm, but the money's too good.

Other adventures for Sable have included finding the Maltese Falcon, rescuing a ballerina from Russia and finding the stolen Coke formula. Throughout the series both the story and artwork have remained strong. Grell has

developed his characters much more than in mainstream books. Again, they seem to be much more human. They hurt, they bleed, they cry, they don't jump into danger and wait for the hero to bail them out.

Sable has enjoyed such popularity that First comics decided to put Sable in their deluxe format, ie., better paper and a higher price. Unfortunately, since then, the title has not lived up to its praise. The story has retained its quality but the artwork has suffered. Grell is trying out a new style right now. He's putting much more emphasis on his pencils. As a result, his art, which used to be very tight and fast paced, is now much looser and it just doesn't work. Mr. Grell isn't that good of an artist. If one wishes to pick up the back issues then do so, they are highly entertaining, though perhaps they contain too much graphic violence for the weak of heart. The new issues though cannot be recommended, at least until Mr. Grell goes back to his old style.

## MS. TREE TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

By COLIN CADOGAN

Sometimes the poor comic-book reviewer (that is, me) is called on to review a comic book that has been running for awhile. So, I have to try to piece together the action from a single issue, and that's tough (I wish I could pat myself on the back). Anyway, enough of the self-pity.

The review this week is about the twenty-sixth issue of *Ms. Tree* put out by Renegade Press. Again, this is a direct sales comic book so you can't get it up at the store, you have to get up early on Saturday morning and go to Wilkie's at the Boyce Farmers Market.

*Ms. Tree* (note the Ms.) is about a hardened private eye. She is not a traditional superhero (she can't stop bullets with her teeth, etc.), but as a "normal" person, she becomes famous.

In this issue, she is put into a mental hospital as an alternative to a trial and the possibility of going to jail. Apparently, she was not very happy with the man who killed her husband, so she went out and murdered him (as far as I can tell).

She is diagnosed as being a "cold, aloof person who doesn't have a lot of friends, etc." by the state. She doesn't really want to be in a mental hospital (understandable), and only cooperates with her psychiatrist to try and get out.

While in the mental hospital, she meets up with another patient who says he saw some kill a woman (a senator). This episode will probably lead into her next series of adventures.

The comic uses black, white, and orange which gives the comic contrast and a "film noir" feel. The story line is quite interesting, and I give it high marks.

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