

Viewing invisible people

by Leslie Furlong

Halifax, with its limited number of beaten tracks, quickly reduces people-watching to a stale, almost incestuous pursuit. It is a city, small enough to see the same people every day and large enough not to actually know who they are, and once they are out of sight, it's like they no longer exist. Will Eisner recognized this trait unique to urban living and, by way of his favourite mixed media, pen and ink and imagination, made it the backdrop for the three stories that comprise *Invisible People*.

BOOK REVIEW
Invisible People
Will Eisner
Kitchen Sink Press

Eisner, in the circles in which his name is known, has achieved the reputation of a master graphic storyteller (that's cartoonist to you and me) by way of decades of work that elevated the comic strip above the level of juvenile escapism while remaining entertaining, beginning with his original creation *The Spirit* and then maturing in the seventies with the graphic novels *A Contract With God* and then *To the Heart of the Storm*. His book *Comics and Sequential Art*, the result of teaching for several years at New York's School of Visual Art, remains one of

the definitive texts on the theory and practice of cartooning.

This collection flies right in the face of what one has come to expect from the three stories on an individual character at a dramatic point in their otherwise mediocre existence. The first and the best, "Sanctum", deals with a man who spends his life perfecting the "art of urban avoidance", achiev-



ing total anonymity that eventually proves to be his undoing. "The Power" tells the story of a faith healer that can cure all things except for his own empty life. The final story, "Mortal Combat", places a middle-aged man between the conflicting wills of an overbearing mother and the woman that wants him. Each story lays the melodrama on thick, especially in "The Power", both in the text and in the art, but comics



are rarely noted for their subtlety. It is also an old style of storytelling, straight-ahead third-person narrative, but a lack as it has always been, is his art, using the page layout itself to form part of the narrative structure along with the text, not just a gimmick. Do not expect the finely detailed anatomy and flash that most modern comics use to sell themselves, but expect the work of a master that possesses purpose and emotion.

This book will most certainly be difficult to find on the shelves of most bookstores, but you may have luck at a speciality shop (they won't bite), or else you can most likely have it special ordered. Extra effort is always worth it when trying to find good comics.

Swing the song and dance axe

Irony. I love it. Can't get enough of it. I would go so far as to say that I'm addicted and that I don't want to kick the habit. Irony is at its best when it's dark, and during this past week it has been served up to Dalhousie students pitch black, hold the cream and sugar.

This past week Halifax has been the site of two major events on the arts front. First was the Halifax Pop Explosion, featuring premier local musicians along with major indie bands from across the country and the US (Check out the centre spread). The second was the Atlantic Film Festival which showcased several of the short and full-length films that have been produced with regional talent both in front of and behind the camera. Music and performance in just one week.

Also in this week, Howard Clark announced to Dalhousie students and the world the possibility of deep, bloody cuts to the school's arts departments, removing the Music, Theatre, and the unique Costume Studies departments from the curriculum, stating that they, in addition to Library Studies and Public Administration, are not part of Dalhousie's "mission". Music and performance in just one week.

Clark believes these cuts, as well as significant increases in your tuition,

will increase Dalhousie's ability to compete nationally, like education is some sort of foot race, and along the way save the institution from tumbling into the Pit of Mediocrity. I think it means just the opposite, that by such a biased attitude towards the arts, Dalhousie will end up merely closing its eyes before jumping, or being pushed, or whatever the autopsy will say.

The problem with Clark and his bean counters is that they are used to dealing with tangibles. Science and medicine and business all have end results that are clearly marked and expected, but the arts don't have the same a-b-c progression. They aren't supposed to. That's the point. The effect they have is of an internal nature that can't be held, touched, or counted. It can only be felt.

University is more than a factory for manufacturing spare parts for industry, churning out graduates with degree in hand, ready to put the peg in the hole. By eliminating the performing arts programs, Clark is supporting a convergence towards the middle, a Spartan system of education with the sole purpose of grinding out happy workers, sacrificing culture and identity along the way.

Leslie Furlong

Iggy plugged

by David Cullen

"In normal life I bottle things up and smile. Only in this world, the music world, can I deliver something worth living for to my life." And deliver he does. With his first release in over three years, the 46-year-old Jean Genie bottles nothing up and does damn little

MUSIC REVIEW
American Caesar
Iggy Pop
Virgin Records

smiling, but gives his fans no reason for remorse. *American Caesar* contains all the raw power of Iggy's early work with the Stooges while sacrificing none of the lyrical thought attained on his previous effort, 1990's brilliant *Brick By Brick*.

At 71 minutes plus, this 16-track opus is modest in neither length nor scope, offering blissfully little filler compared to many of his prior outings. The album begins with a one-minute narrative entitled "Character" featuring an uncharacteristically gentle acoustic guitar which cleverly juxtaposes Pop's bilious commentary on today's "white bread boys" in the music business. In fact, despite the predominant crunch that permeates well over half the album, some of *American Caesar*'s finest moments emerge in its acoustic numbers, particularly the bouncy, Dylan-esque "Highway Song" and the brutally cynical "Social Life". Both songs express a vigorous defiance, the latter of which epitomizes the mighty Ig's image as the perpetually disenfranchised white punk. "It's just that social life/ It's got you on the run/ That goddamn social life/ It's torture dressed as fun", sings Ig and it's as believable now as it was 20 years ago when he and his Stooges first blared out "Your Pretty Face Is Going To Hell". With a 28-year

career built on electric ferocity, the Godfather of Punk has triumphed significantly in his apparent ease at translating his aggressive attitudes into an acoustic format. Apparently old dogs can learn new tricks.

However, lest any of you diehard Pop fans fear that the *American Caesar* is approaching his Ides of March, worry not — this is not another cheesy unplugged album. With such standout selections as "Hate", "Sickness", "Boogie Boy" and "Wild America", Pop proves he can still deliver the kind of sonic assault that has typified his best work.

Although *American Caesar* remains consistently radio-hostile throughout (with the exceptions of "It's Our Love" and "Beside You"), the album closes with its two weirdest tracks. What's so weird about yet another cover of "Louie, Louie", you ask? Ordinarily nothing, but none of the other bands who've covered it have changed the lyrics to

muse over social issues such as communism, capitalism, health insurance, homelessness, world peace, AIDS and education. Musically, though, dear old Ig hasn't done anything to Richard Berry's classic Kingsmen hit that

wasn't brilliantly achieved 15 years ago by Motorhead.

The album finally winds itself out with the seven minute "Caesar", a cut you really have to hear to believe. It may not be the unkindest cut but it's certainly the strangest. Ostensibly a narrative tribute to the historically famous Roman Emperor, we're left wondering if this was just a goofy afterthought or an inspired metaphor for the downfall of America. After all, the album is called *American Caesar* and if this is a title that's supposed to be indicative of Pop's current status as an aging, raging rocker, he displays a savagely defiant lack of interest in leading the empire he so poignantly disembowels.

not another
cheesy
unplugged
album

faith **Hope**
TRUST

RELIANCE
guidance

You Can
Add These Words
To Your Life.

In today's world, it seems that People don't understand it takes these words to make it out there.

Without them, it's hard. We know.

At Community Bible Church, we can help show you how to put these words in your life, and mean something. Come and visit, come and join us in our life in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sunday Worship Service

Dalhousie Arts Centre Room 406 (LeMarchant Street Entrance)

11:00 AM Every Sunday

Community Bible Church.

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