

Comics growing up... costly, but mature

by Wesley Oginski

In the early days of the comic book, many independent companies published comic books. E.C. or Red Circle are just names of a few of them.

"Today we're seeing an explosion in the independent field," says Bruce Thomson, a comic collector and co-owner of Darkstar Collectables. There are more independent companies publishing today than ever before. "The big thing in today's market are the independents because they allow their artists more control."

We can define independents in two categories, but they do have some things in common. First, the independents do not approach the size of the two large conglomerates, Marvel and D.C. Thomson explains the major difference though. "Marvel and D.C. have set policies they must publish under. Independents aren't published under the Comics Code Authority."

With the popularity of the independent brands D.C. and Marvel are feeling the effects. The decline in sales experienced by number one publisher Marvel is generally attributed to rises in the sales of independents. Also, both conglomerates have begun to publish new lines of comic books outside of their set policies, as prescribed by the Comics Code Authority.

"The Comics Code Authority has practically lost all power," he says. "One of the more unfortunate things in comics today is its leading to violence." One of the popular independent titles available details the adventures of a mercenary, and many others rely on the use of graphic violence and sexual innuendo.

For this and other reasons, Thomson says, "I think the independents are going to die over the next two or three years." Another reason is inflation. "95¢ for a comic is atrocious. Over the past five years I've seen the price

rise from 25¢ to 95¢. All the independents sell for a dollar and a quarter."

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your perspective, there are a lot of people who are willing to pay the higher prices. So it appears Marvel and D.C. are here to stay. Thomson does say two independent companies have a chance of surviving the upcoming turmoil. "Sales wise I would have to say FIRST Comics is best. Quality wise, Pacific Comics stand out," he says. "I see FIRST and P.C. surviving."

Yet another type of independent

will also probably survive. "The independent books that do very well are the lines that sell only one book," he says.

"One of the finest independents published today," Thomson says, "and has world acclaim is *Cerebus*." It is the only comic book sold in the Soviet Union from the western hemisphere and it has high European sales. "It is the highest selling number one independent title and it's Canadian." *Cerebus* is published from Toronto and Canadian Dave Sims draws and

writes it. (Sims is appearing at the Comics Convention in Edmonton, this weekend).

A second well selling independent title is *Elfquest*, which Thomson says is the second best selling book at Darkstar.

"One of the more enjoyable things about comics these days is that they're much more intelligent," Thomson says. The independents have forced the big two to grow up and reach out to a more mature audience. From the sales figures, they must be doing something right.

Comics are classics

by Bob Gardner

Comics may never read like Shakespeare of Kafka but not all comic stories are as trivial and mundane as the antics of Archie or Casper the Ghost. Consider some of these modern-day heroes and their stories: Adam Warlock committed suicide in order to prevent himself from becoming something evil, Captain Marvel died of cancer after being exposed to radioactive gas, Iron Man is an alcoholic who can't even climb into his costume. Green Arrow accidentally killed a man and nearly gave up crime-fighting forever for it. The Wolverine kills

fairly regularly and rather enjoys it. Daredevil saved his enemy Bullseye from falling off a building and then dropped him anyway. Heroes are not always perfect.

Less perfect are the clear-cut, good and evil worlds we usually associate with comics. Black and white occasionally turns to grey. Daredevil's life was once saved by his arch-enemy the Kingpin, a crime syndicate boss. The Kingpin's explanation for the favor:

"Consider it an illustration of the true nature of our

relationship. Your attack on Injun Joe has served to quell a mutiny in my organization. Consider also, that when you needed to find this hideout you did not contact the police. You came to me. We need each other. We are partners after a fashion. We are the power in this city."

The relationship between good and evil can be complicated, difficult to define. Mister Miracle learns this from the villain Darkseid: "The interplay of light and shadow - each absolute in its own sphere, yet forever limited by the other - yes, and forever bound to be where the other is not. Without light we would know no shadow and without shadow...." Good cannot exist without evil, evil cannot exist without good, and both must remain forever unvanquished.

While some comic writers prefer to engage in lofty, philosophical pursuits, others tend toward more blunt social commentary. From Green Lantern/Green Arrow #76 (1969):

"Listen, forget chasing around the galaxy and remember America. It's a good country...beautiful...fertile...and terribly sick. There are children dying, people cowering in fear, disillusioned kids ripping up campuses. On the streets of Memphis a good black man died, on the streets of Los Angeles a good white man fell. Something is wrong. Something is killing us all. Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls."

Howard the Duck's views on Kung Fu movies:

"Cheesh....Like you hairless apes haven't screwed up your world enough. You misrepresent an ancient philosophy, package it a violent entertainment and sell it to your young to emulate. You glorify violence like this, make it socially acceptable and, believe me, somebody's gonna get hurt."

Comics don't always take themselves so seriously, of course. Howard often did battle with such creatures as the Deadly Space Turnip, Garko, the Man-Frog and once even a giant salt shaker. Occasionally, a comic character will make fun of his perilous situation. When Dr. Doom is about to be attacked by giant mechanical octopusses called Octomechs he says simply, "Octomechs? How droll."

Not all comics are the same. To suggest so would be as absurd as to say that all novels or all films are the same. As with any art form you get the good and the bad and everything in between, and some comics are worth more than just a casual glance.

REGGAE MUSICALE 1983



L.I.P. Promotions presents
THE ENCHANTERS
with Special Guest **PEGGY McCARTY**
in concert

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4th, 1983; 8:00 pm.
University of Alberta SUB Theatre (Ph. 432-4764)

Tickets: \$8.00 advance
\$9.50 at door
Tickets are available at BASS Ticket Outlets 432-5145
Charge by Phone 424-3355

BAR SERVICE

Yet another GREAT



Your Hosts
The Same Wonderful People Who Brought You "RUGBYFEST" present,
HALLOWEEN
SATURDAY, OCT. 29TH 1983
Door Prizes - Costume Prizes Happy Hour - 8-9 PM.
Everybody Welcome - Bring A Mob

Ellerslie Rugby Park (1 km west of Highway 2 South on Ellerslie Road)
Ellerslie Road & 111 Street, South Edmonton - 988-5245
NOTE - This luxurious Clubhouse is available to rent.

CABARET

Absolutely no minors admitted.

DINWOODIE
2nd Floor SUB

Tickets are available from the SUB Box Office (2nd Floor SUB) and various club members.

NOTE: These events are open only to U of A students, staff, and guests.

Arts Students' Association present

Blood Fire

Friday, October 28, 8 PM.

Chemical Engineering presents

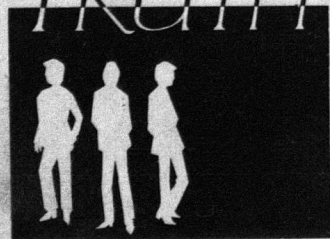


THE PARACHUTE CLUB

with guests: BOYS YOUR OWN AGE
Saturday, October 29, 8 PM.

U of A Women's Centre present


TRUTH



with Special Guests

Friday, November 4, 8 PM.

U of A Golden Bears Gymnastics Club present



DAVID WILCOX

with guests

Saturday, November 5, 8 PM.

UP & COMING:

- November 10 Secret Society
- November 19 B-Sides
- November 25 Sound FX