

UNGA BUNGA

by Sam Morgan

A COMIC BOOK COLUMN

UngaBunga is meant to be a weekly, bi-weekly column devoted to the comic book. It's my intent to cover a wide range of trends, history, recommended reading and even reviews of comics, creators and companies. So to take a cliché stance, I'm going to cover everything from *Action Comics* to *Zot*. If you have an interest in the genre, I hope you'll stick around for the ride. It's not often that you see comic columns outside of comics trade magazines like *Wizard* or the *Comics Buyers Guide* but here I am, here's you reading and here's *UngaBunga*.

In 1940 Hitler beat his savage fists upon the face of Europe and Canada decided to close its borders to American comic books. *The War Conservation Act* was passed to conserve American dollars by restricting non-essential goods, like American comic books crossing our borders.

Canadians contrary to popular belief are not naive. Without stateside comic books with their four colour interior characters, Canada decided to jump into the comic book market. Publishers decided to fill a void in the heart of Canadian children.

The first issues of Canadian Comics were a pale comparison to their American counterparts. The inside was like a do-it-yourself colouring book - black and white with lots of things to colour. Because of the black and white nature of the Canadian comics they became known as *Canada Whites*.

Before there ever was a Wonder Woman, Canada had "Nelvana of the Northern Lights."

This nation's first super-heroine appeared in *Triumph Adventure Comics No 1* (August 1941), 3 months before Wonder Woman's appearance in *All Star Comics No 8*.

Nelvana embodied the extreme

Canadian North. Her powers were derived from the Northern Lights and her father Koliak. Incidentally she did not resemble a member of the Inuit,

daughter who granted her immortality. Occasionally she would alter her appearance or turn invisible to catch an alien or two.

What really sets her apart from heroines of the 40's to 60's is that in her alter ego, Alana North she wasn't resigned to taking a subservient role to her male companion, Corporal Keene. Unlike today's heroines she never needed to parade in a thong and pasties in order to boost her sales - she had class.

The first issue of *Dime Comics* saw the introduction of Johnny Canuck, Canada's second national hero.

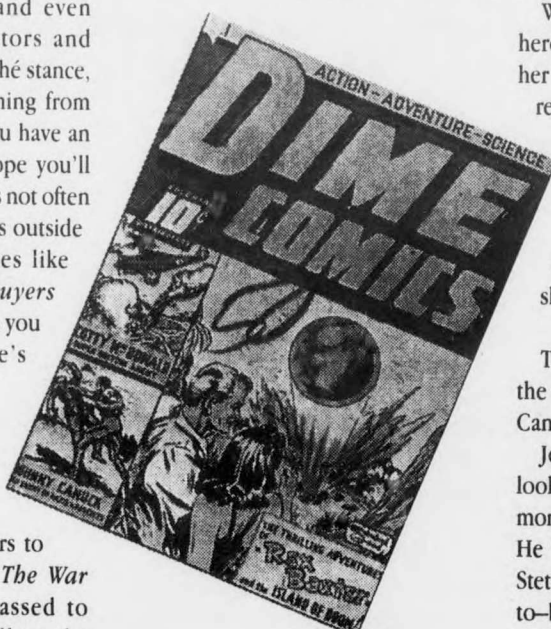
Johnny sported the same Aryan looks like the Nazis he fought each month until the end of World War Two. He wore knee-high leather boots, a Stetson, hip bulging pants and a soon-to-be-torn white shirt.

Nelvana's exploits were either in Canada or the heavens above. However Johnny Canuck acted as Canada's "ambassador of might" combating the Axis menace everywhere but Canada. In fact it wasn't until his last story after the war that his knee high leather boots finally touched Canadian soil.

Canuck had no superhuman powers other than what seemed to be exceptional luck. He was blessed with a strong jaw, his creator's Leo Blanche's look's, great fisticuffs abilities and great hair.

Johnny Canuck lives as a testament to Canada's ability to create an entertaining hero for the masses. Canuck got to live out every Allies nation's Child's dream when he squared his knuckles into Adolf Hitler's face not once but three times.

After The War, Canadian heroes were without direction or enemies, ideas got lost, sales dwindled and gradually, they faded away into obscurity. The Golden Age of Canadian Heroes died in 1947.



traditional denizens of the Canadian Arctic. She was a stereotypical beautiful Caucasian brunette.

In comparison to other American and Canadian super heroes, Nelvana had near infinite powers. Thanks to the Aurora Borealis, she was fast as light. She could call upon the phenomena's rays and liquify metal, even in the daytime. Nelvana was also a god's

Sister Mary pays a visit to STU

by Jethelo Cabilete
Brunswickan Entertainment

The elements of dark humour came into play on September 28, with the Theatre St. Thomas presentation of *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*. Written by Christopher Durang, this play offers us a wry and darkly witty commentary on absolute faith, and church doctrine and dogma. There are certain themes and genres among the various plays written by Mr. Durang. The most common ones appear to be death, dark humour, religion and a penchant for soliloquies. Nevertheless, this version of *Sister Mary... is humorous and well done*.

This is the tale of a nun, one Sister Mary Ignatius, and her rather strict definition of the world and what is feasible behaviour. This is, however, one scary nun! Her absolute faith is that of the fanatic, and her justification of her own behaviours leaves one wondering whether people like this actually exist;

the answer of course being yes. A rather warped version of popular Catholic teachings and stories are the staple of the teachings being taught, and conflict arises between the "good" Sister and a few of her charges who have grown up and experienced the real world. The ending is rather disturbing, but still maintains a touch of morbid humour that leaves one to be reflective instead of disgusted.

Under the excellent directorship of Jodi McDavid, the play came alive utilizing a minimalist set of a few chairs, a pew, a flip chart and podium. The performers themselves, deserve a few kudos for their performance. Without a doubt, Erika Buiteman's rendition of Sister Mary leaves one with memories of Sunday school and being "bad". Ms. Buiteman presents a vitality in her characterization, and her character's sarcastic wit and staunch beliefs are echoed in her eloquent body language.

She is positively fiendish without being mean. Thomas, the little boy who is the

next victim...I mean pupil of the Sister's teachings, is pleasantly played by Dylan Esers. His positively blank demeanour and cherubic nature belie the brainwashing and naiveté that seems to be the staple of Sister Mary's school. The returning students of the "good" Sister: Diane (Kathleen Grady), Gary (Greg Giberson), Philomena (Christine Wolstenholme) and Aloysius (Jeff Embleton) each give a wonderful account of their respective characters. From the soft-spoken, almost whiny tone by Mr. Giberson, the rebelliousness and energy of Ms. Grady, to the weak-willed and nervous portrayals by Mr. Embleton and Ms. Wolstenholme, the action and dialogue continues without a hitch.

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You began on September 28 and continues until the 30th. The performances begin at 8:00 p.m. at The Black Box Theatre in Sir James Dunn Hall. Be sure to see it!

Junior Goes Wild at The Dock



by Peter J. Cullen
Brunswickan Entertainment

Offstage, Mike McDonald speaks proudly and extensively of his band, Jr. Gone Wild. On-stage, his energetic voice is backed up by his frenetic guitar playing and the other three band members. They enact little movement while they play, simply portraying a been-there, done-that attitude. But that is only because they have been almost everywhere and have also received several awards throughout their 12-year-existence. Jr. Gone Wild, hailing from Edmonton, Alberta, were at the Dock last weekend to promote their new CD, *Simple Little Wish*. But even the dismal crowd turnout did not dampen the playing enthusiasm of the band; the show sounded great and it backed up the album material excellently.

McDonald formed Jr. Gone Wild at the age of 20 because he simply loved the notion of being in a band. "Mostly at first it was punk rock was happening and I got into the Sex Pistols and stuff and we all wanted to make a band and yell and scream about anything," he said. McDonald ultimately dropped out of school to pursue his rock n' roll dream. Now at the age of 32, he knows that he made the right decision. "There are a lot of artistic elements to being in a band that I was discovering very quickly and that's why I found out I wanted to be a musician. And I just grew from there," he said. McDonald also attributes his musical interest to many inspirational musicians. "I still love bands like the Buzzcocks... I've always been a big Bob Dylan fan, as well. And Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard stuff... The Byrds, and of course, The Beatles," he said.

McDonald's passion for old country music shines through on *Simple Little Wish*, which he co-produced. While the album has a country feel, it also pulses with a definite rock n' roll edge. The new 14 track CD took less than 3 months to record with the majority of the songs written during the studio sessions - an unfamiliar venture for Jr. Gone Wild. But McDonald thinks this may have made the production better. "This was the first time we tried writing stuff as we recorded, but I thought it worked pretty well and I really enjoyed working that way," he said. "You like to spend some time and let a song develop... but there's also something to be said for spontaneously creating it right there on tape."

Inhibitions were certainly dropped for *Simple Little Wish*, as McDonald discusses his conquered drinking habits with 'The Guy Who Came In from the Cold', 'Apres Vous', and 'Airtight'. He also expresses his despise for heroin on 'Dropping Like Flies', as overdoses have claimed many of his friends. As a writer he feels his lyrics help explain himself but they also benefit others. "I know

some people are listening so what I'm trying to say in those songs is that you can overcome things. Things look real bad sometimes but look through your past and it always gets better eventually," he said. After almost 3 years of alcohol abstinence, McDonald now believes that self-destructive behaviour can be stopped, saying, "Allow change to happen and accept that perhaps you can control your destiny. If you're killing yourself, you should stop. I guess that's what my message is."

Jr. Gone Wild had just reached the halfway point of their cross country tour with their arrival at The Dock. Saturday night proved to be another one of those 'learning experiences' for the band as the attendance constantly dwindled throughout the evening. But McDonald seemed undeterred by this, saying, "Sometimes you end up playing to just only the staff because nobody came," he said. Originally starting with a crowd of 40 to 50, by 2 AM the staff almost outnumbered the patrons. However, this was not a reflection of the group's performance. Although McDonald's lyrics were slightly muffled by the amps, Jr. Gone Wild proved they can play and play well. McDonald sings his engaging lyrics with an energetic and driven voice; he knows what he wants to say and he conveys it well.

McDonald hopes this tour, accompanied by a much larger one in a few months, will increase the band's profile. Exposure has always been limited for Jr. Gone Wild due to their lack of air time on commercial radio. "There's a lot of politics... It's a lottery; you've got to be in the right place at the right time. But we've got a list of accomplishments that can't be denied," McDonald said. The achievements include the Excellence of Achievement in the Performing Arts award from the city of Edmonton, a video prize in Calgary for Jr. Gone Wild's new video, and also several music awards in Alberta.

After co-producing *Simple Little Wish*, McDonald expresses interest in producing for other bands as well. "The recording arts is something I take as seriously as the performing arts," he said. "It's a tough job but it's not tough in a bad way. It's just hard 'cause you gotta concentrate and it takes every amount of skill you have... I'd definitely love to produce more things."

McDonald plans to write and record more albums in the next few years. "It's entirely possible that Jr. Gone Wild will be around in 10 years," he said. He believes the band will endure because "we've got things other bands don't have - like a history." But overall, McDonald appears satisfied with the path he has chosen for himself. "I made a decision a long time ago what I wanted to do with my life and I'm doing exactly that."