

John G. Pierce's
Maracana



THE ENSIGN REPORT

#156

May 2011 What follows are the opinions of Don Ensign, 250-A S Paseo Cerro, Green Valley, AZ 85614 (520) 829-7703
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Don's Projects and News

Book Reviews: For those of you who have an interest in my book reviews, I've uploaded recently several to my Amazon.com review section. See (http://www.amazon.com/gp/cdp/member-reviews/AG5D2A6OY1FCI/ref=cm_cr_dp_auth_rev?ie=UTF8&sort_by=MostRecentReview) or just go to the *Showcase Present: Elongated Man* to see my review and click on "See at my reviews" at the head of my Elongated Man review. I've included reviews of *Horned Dinosaurs*, *Monster Masterworks*, *Lost Cause: John Wesley Hardin*, the *Taylor Sutton Feud and Reconstruction Texas*, *The Days of Peleg* and a number of others you may not have seen.

Captain Marvel Jr. Blog: This is an idea I've had chunking around in my head for a year or so now. In mid-March I began a blog dedicated to the Fawcett years of Captain Marvel Jr. It is titled "The Blue Boy" (<http://capmarjr.blogspot.com/>). I am posting weekly a "new" vintage story of Captain Marvel Jr. from the original Fawcett comics published in the 1940s and 1950s.



The Golden Age UK and Digital Comics Museum sites have many *CMJ* and *Master Comics* posted but as far as I'm aware

these particular stories are not available for reading elsewhere on the web. I've started off with *CMJ* #41 (August 1946) which debuts the three-part origin story of the Acrobat, one of *CMJ*'s major foes. I also post some short commentary on each story. By the time you read this I'll have posted most of *CMJ* #52 (August 1947) which introduces some of the strip's cast of characters that would continue to the end of the series in 1953. If you enjoy the old Fawcett super heroes give this site a look.

Mr. E: I've taken my own suggestion last issue about doing a "what happened to

John Pierce:

I enjoyed your Maracana, the Invincible Eagle, character study. I found your comments on the profanity in the early pulps interesting. I've encountered some of those pulps but have never gotten around to thoroughly reading them. Perhaps it was an indicator of society at the time. When Rhett Butler in the 1939 "Gone With the Wind" movie let loose the "D" word it caused quite a furor. A lowering of standards in popular media. Thanks for the great art and photos of Mary Marvel and Wonder Woman. Wonder Woman was never a personal favorite but I did buy her comic when George Perez was drawing it.

Kevin Yong:

I enjoyed your Golden Age Challenge with the Flag and USA. I also enjoyed your Hero History on Virtue. Sergio did some great art for you on Virtue. Also thanks for taking up Frank's challenge for the giant squirrel strip. Great job on the dialogue. Sorry I don't have any advice on making your computer filing system more efficient. I have the same struggles with my computer desktop as well as with my other desktops. I guess I'll give the Superman/Shazam video a pass--sounds as if the marketers mis-calculated the target audience. I'm looking forward to your take on the Purple Tigress. **Question:** How do you lift the art images of Purple Tigress panels from the FFView/Comic Viewer format? Some of the comics on Digital Comic Museum are in individual page jpeg format which makes them easy to deal with.

Eric Jansen:

I liked a lot your breakdowns on the Silver Wolf this time around. Also enjoyed your feature on how you draw comics. Recently re-read a IDW *Star Trek* comic with John Byrne providing the art and story. His work was stripped down of unnecessary details and his storytelling was right on. This was a follow up on the Gary Seven episode (Assignment: Earth) that was apparently an introduction to a TV series that never happened.

Michael Monasmith:

Good to see you back again. Sounds as if you have had a lot of exciting up and down real life adventures. I liked your "Realms of Mystery" story. I enjoyed the way you handled the confession and death bed scenes. Well done. I enjoyed the little touches with the various books lining the inner sanctum of the story's host. My only suggestion is to try and

become proficient using comic book style computer lettering--it makes one's work look more professional.

Steve Shipley:

Thanks for the walk down *Alpha-Omega's* memory lane. Thanks for running those *AO* old covers. For the most part it brings back good memories. Like you I've kept my old *AO* issues. There is some really excellent work that has been produced over the years in this humble apa.

Steve MacDonald:

The graphics on the Calvinist Gadfly and the TeamPyro blog sites are great. Good spiritual food also. Thanks for the update on all your projects. You are all over the place :). I want to see your daughter's artwork on "Galactic Division". I enjoyed you taking up the Public Domain hero challenge and giving your take on "Craig Carter" from Centaur Comics. "Craig Carter" seems to be a combination of Green Lantern, Kid Eternity and Johnny Thunder. Not that the writer of "Craig Carter" was consciously imitating those characters but the concepts were similar. Kid Eternity actually first appeared in December 1942 so maybe "Craig Carter" was a conceptual ancestor of Kid Eternity! I also liked your "Statuesque" concept. Cool concept--sort of taking the original Wonder Woman origin in a different direction. The only suggestion is in spots your prose could be smoothed out a bit. In your first column you write, "I've seen recordings of televised parts of some of her missions, news reports, investigation shows trying to find out who she really was, and even a video for her final battle defending Pilgrim City from Blatant Beast. I still have to find them." The first sentence has almost too much information--perhaps dividing it into two sentences might help. Also the second sentence implies "Blatant Beast" is a group rather than an individual. As I read it that was kind of abrupt and left me wondering if I'd mis-read something before alerting me to who or whom "Blatant Beast" was. Look forward to seeing how Steve Shipley can handle it.

Josh Burns:

Good advise to Kevin. This is the kind of meaty mailing comments that make *Alpha-Omega* profitable to be involved in.

Geoff Brenneman:

Good to see you back in the pages of *AO*

again. Congrats on your excellent school grade point. Way to go. Thanks for running the Jesse's Story chapter with Rob Marsh's art. Good stuff. Also thanks for the up date on the Ardden line. I saw them in a comic shop and wondered what they were about. Also saw posters in the same shop announcing a revival of the CrossGen line. Apparently Marvel is publishing it.

Frank Humpris:

Costumed people running around at comic conventions make for a fun atmosphere. As you've noted over the years I enjoy taking photos of these folks (Eric and others have also published lots of them). About the only costume character I did was Robin the Boy Wonder. Back in the 1960s at the height of the Batman TV show craze my church youth group had a friend of mine (another comics fan) and I dress up as Batman and Robin and performed a short, silly skit before the group. My mother made a beautiful Robin costume and it was a fun event. The only real problem is that I'm (and was then) quite near sighted so my friend and I were of stumbling around repeating our dumb lines. Still it was fun and well received. If I were to do a costume it would probably be one where glasses

could be incorporated into the costume--like Dr. Midnite or Cyclops (X-Men). Interestingly enough it is the women who wear costumes at conventions who look the best. Perhaps their attention to attire detail makes for this and women just look better in costume. Most real men in costumes just don't look right. Perhaps it is because most male comic book heroes have body builder physiques with unnatural body proportions. Most men don't have the ideal leg-torso-head proportions that comic book heroes have. Often the legs are too short for the upper body on real people as compared to ideal comic book people. Super hero comic book artists mostly draw idealized forms. Part of this comes from formula drawing and also what the audience it thought to expect. Thanks for the info on the World War II comics scene in Great Britain. Good comments on constructive criticism.

Henry Chmielefski

Here is the sentence that got chopped out in AO #155. "Sorry for the hassles with Brian and with trying to get TEA done." Sorry about that. I appreciated the article you ran on Paul F. Gray--still going strong at the drawing board at 80 years old.

Green Lantern

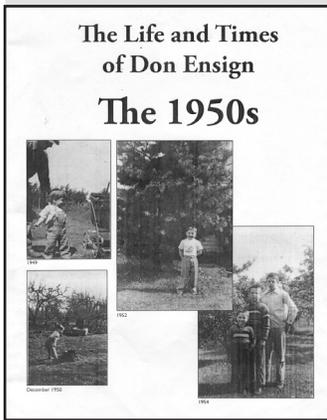
I'm mildly optimistic about the big screen Green Lantern movie coming out in June. It looks as if the producers are rolling out the CGI big guns and hopefully the writing and directing will be top-notch and faithful to the GL Mythos. For new comers I've been a big Green Lantern (Hal Jordan) fan for many years and have followed his comic book adventures through good and bad times. Green Lantern is a "weapon" super hero. His power ring gives him incredible powers which are fueled by his will power.

Green Lantern was revived in 1959 (an earlier version--Alan Scott was one of DC's major characters through the 1940s). Green Lantern this time was test pilot named Hal Jordan who discovered he was a member of an inter-galactic police force accountable to the Guardians of the Universe. Green Lantern proved popular through the 1960s and ran until 1972 when he lost his book and took up residence as a backup strip in *The Flash*. He regained his own comic in 1976 and was published until 1986 (at the end of this series GL apparently kills Sinestro, his arch-foe). For some time after that Green Lantern had a strip in *Action Comics Weekly* and a new *GL* title (beginning with #1) appeared in

1990. During this period Hal Jordan became possessed by a space demon called Parallax and ended up killing several of his Green Lantern team mates and causing havoc and destruction. Parallax/Hal Jordan give his life to save Earth from destruction. His role was filled for most of the 1990s by graphic artist Kyle Rayner. Other Green Lanterns like African-American John Stewart and Mr. Bad Attitude Guy Gardner held forth in various *JLA* series during this time. Also the spirit of Hal Jordan found a home in the non-corporal body of the Spectre where he tried making the Spirit of Wrath into a Spirit of Redemption (this included a shorted-lived series). In 2004-5 it was decided to bring Hal Jordan back from the dead. The fourth *GL* series has had its ups and downs. It started off well with Jordan returning to his aviation roots at California's Edwards Air Force Base. However over the past several years it has gotten bogged down in tedious, teeth-grating, multi-mega series crossover events such as "Darkest Night" (the ultimate Zombie slugfest) and "The Sinestro Wars". Now there are not only the Green Lantern Corps but other color versions like the Black Lanterns, Red Lanterns, Blue Lanterns, Purple Lanterns, etc. There is also a *GL Corps* title and a new *Green Lantern Emerald Warrior* title. I hope for the best.

Mr. E" tale. I've gone through the basic ideas, story synopsis, script, thumbnail breakdowns and am now working on the pencils and inking. Hope to have it ready to publish next issue.

Don's Auto Bio: Over five years ago in March 2006 I started blogging (sharingmystory.blogspot.com/) writing thoughts on my life. This led me to



writing an auto-biography that I've just "completed." I've developed it in decade size chunks (1950s, 1960s,

1970s and so on). I have interspersed it with many photos, pieces of artwork and so forth. So far its clocking in at 214 pages. I see it as a time capsule of sorts that people in the future can have a view into the life this Christian man had in the mid- to late 20th century and early 21st century. Its like leaving genealogical footprints in the sands of time for those in the future too discover. The auto bio is in a binder so later memories can be added either to existing past decades or future happenings. Perhaps the greatest thing about this endeavor is seeing how the Lord has so richly blessed my life over the past years. All praise and glory to Him.

Artist Group: From September 2007 until recently I've been involved with a local painting group called the Elephant Head Art Guild (EHAG). Our leader Tom Arndt has recently sold his home where



The EHAG Crew: (L to r:) Lois Young, Nancy Williams, Don Ensign, Tom Arndt, Karen Lepper

we have been meeting (in a studio garage) so our group is on hiatus. It has been a good almost four years of painting with some really fine folks.

The Good, The Bad and the Ugly: Revisited

Smallville Season 9: I recently got on loan from the local public library Season 9 of the *Smallville* TV show. Back in AO #148 I wrote a rant on the sixth season of *Smallville*. Here are my thoughts of this next-to-the-last season. Overall the ninth was a considerable improvement over the sixth season.

The Good: I primarily got this DVD collection for the appearance of the Justice Society of America. The two JSA episodes are fairly deeply embedded into the season. However I enjoyed them—they were quite well done—written by recent JSA scribe Geoff Johns. Most of the major JSA stars were shown (at least in cameos) were Golden Age Flash, Green Lantern, Sandman, and others making appearances. Hawkman, Dr. Fate (who gets killed) and Star Girl are the major players in these episodes. The first episode is especially effective as you get a glance of the JSA in the 1940s as “Mystery Men” and the demise of the super hero organization. Other fun things is that the show is mining DC comics history. One episode has the Wonder Twins from the 1970s comics as two mega-fans of the “Blur” (as Superman is called by the press). This makes it fun for the discerning comics fan. Chloe and Green Arrow also make important regular appearances this season.

The Bad: Perhaps this is not real bad, but the Lois Lane portrayed by Erica Durance comes off as a rather endearing ditzzy brunette. You have to like her spunk but she can be almost **too** easily deceived. The relationship between Lois Lane and Clark Kent is mirroring the “Lois and Clark” TV show back in the 1990s so much so that Clark/Superman (Tom Welling) comments that they are “Clark and Lois” or “Lois and Clark.” We’ve see that all before—it’s almost like they are patterning this season after the old TV show. However much of this has already been covered earlier with Clark’s relationship with first love, Lana Lang, who is absent this season (as is Martha Kent). This season’s overarching theme is the Earth-bound Kandorians and the villainous Zod. Zod is sort of Kryptonian Lex Luthor. Zod’s machinations tend to get a little tiresome and by the end of the season you hope for some final resolution.

The Ugly: The soap opera again takes the prize for unnecessary bed scenes with the heroes. Women are often not presented in a good light—Zartanna is a seductress out to use her skills on Kal-el. I’m not sure where to put this. One episode has Zod being killed but is resuscitated by a blood transfusion from Kal-el (Superman). The Christian symbolism is quite blatant with Superman giving his life’s blood to save his enemy.

COMICS Watch



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Back in about 1956 as a young boy I spotted a comic book in a Safeway super market filled with dinosaurs. I was greatly enamored of anything with dinosaurs. The comic was an early issue of *Turok Son of Stone*. A year or two later I was able to get a subscription to *Turok*. If I remember right it was 75 cents for a three-year subscription (it was quarterly at the time). While I was only beginning to appreciate comic book art styles *Turok* during this time boosted the work of such excellent artists as Alberto Giolitti (For samples of Giolitti’s work on *Turok* see <http://www.albertogiolitti.com/>). I enjoyed these comics coming through the mail for several year (folded!) but by the end of the subscription the Silver Age super heroes were well under way and I left *Turok* and *Andar* in the Hidden Valley fighting dinosaurs and cave men through the rest of the 1960s and 1970s into the early 1980s. The series was revived by Jim Shooter in the 1990s for his Valiant Comics imprint. I didn’t really get into Shooter’s version of *Turok* at that time. Recently Dark Horse Comics has come out with a new version of *Turok*. It starts off with an updated version of *Turok* and it’s not half bad and again written by Jim Shooter. Eduardo Francisco’s art resembles Giolitti’s but more energetic. One the last page of the first new story the heroes are captured by a beautiful savage queen. Where have we seen that before? (How about La Queen of Opar from *Tarzan*!) One of the comics I left *Turok* for was *Magnus Robot Fighter*. In late 1962 I noticed a new Gold Key comic with very nice art. I purchased it—*Magnus Robot Fighter* #2 (February 1963) --somehow I’d missed the first issue. Gold Key comics were the very classy comics of the times. Their adventure comics sported beautifully painted covers, with little advertising (compared to Marvel, DC or ACG). Also



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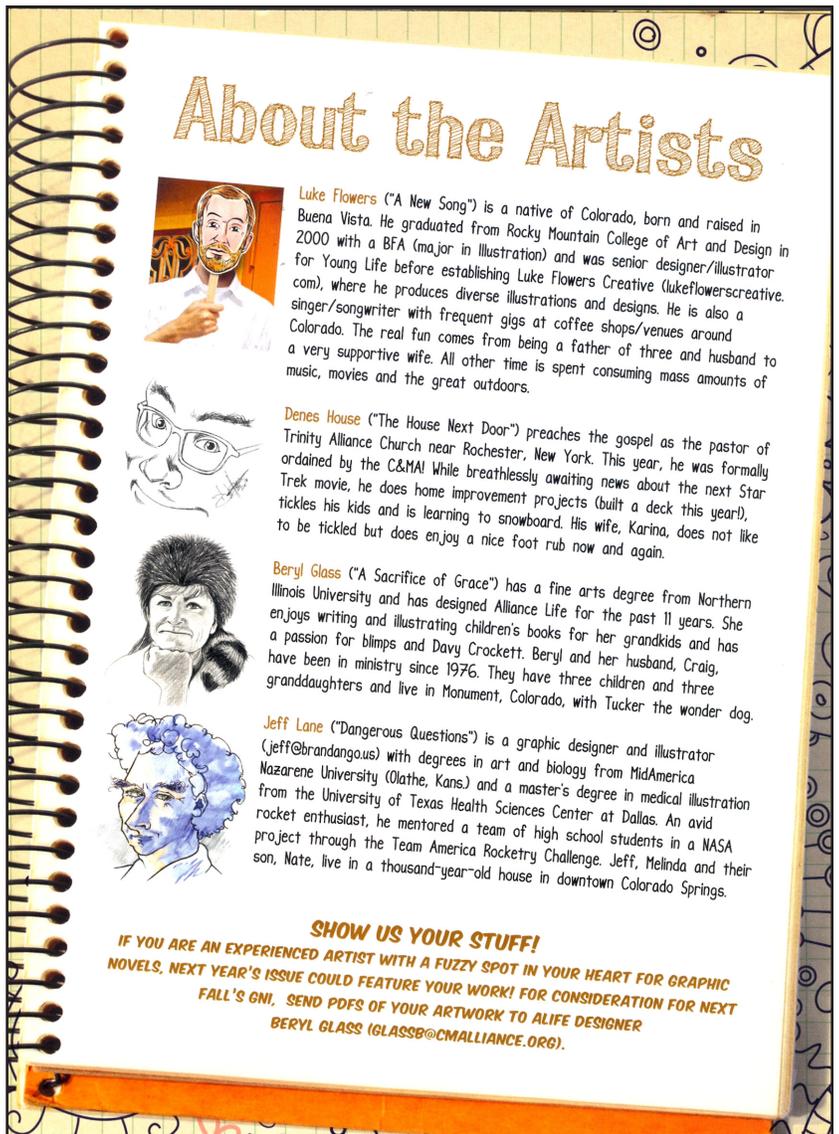
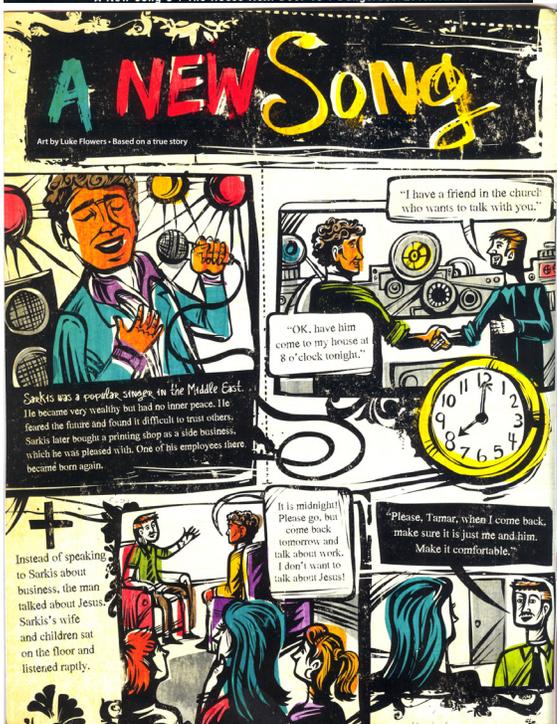
they were trying a different look to the inside art. The panel borders were gone. This gave Gold Key books a very distinctive appearance (which didn’t last). They were trying to separate their packaging away from the four color pack. The artwork was very well drawn, the story telling was clear. Russ Manning was coming into his own. I followed Manning’s *Magnus* and enjoyed the adventures though the individual stories were not memorable on the same level of what Marvel or DC were doing at the time. In the 1990s Shooter’s Valiant comics revived *Magnus*. Shooter tried to inject the edginess of that period into *Magnus*’ 4000 AD world and for this reader it didn’t work. *Magnus*’ girl friend Leeja Clane transformed from a beautiful, spirited woman into a hyper-feminist anti-heroine. After a few issues I gave it up as a hopeless lost cause. Dark Horse has again revived *Magnus* and like *Turok* it’s not too bad. The art is by veteran Bill Reinhold who does a decent job. He’s future world is darker (lots of shadows) than Manning’s but it works. Shooter’s Leeja is more of a shrew this time rather than a super feminist. Hopefully that will change.

Health Issue:

This January I had a routine blood test (for an annual physical) which showed a high PSA level. More I recently had a prostate biopsy and the result were positive. This means I have prostate cancer. As of this writing I am exploring treatment options. I talking with other men who have dealt with this problem and getting feedback from them on how they have dealt with it. I am reading the authoritative book on the subject called *Surviving Prostate Cancer*. At this point I’m leaning toward radiation treatments but all options are on the table. I appreciate your prayers for me during this time.

CHRISTIAN COMICS

A couple of months ago a friend from my local church showed me this magazine (*alife*) from the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church that is beginning an annual graphic story contest. Hope you enjoy the art as I did.





THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR

SCRIPT AND ART BY DENES HOUSE
BASED ON A TRUE STORY



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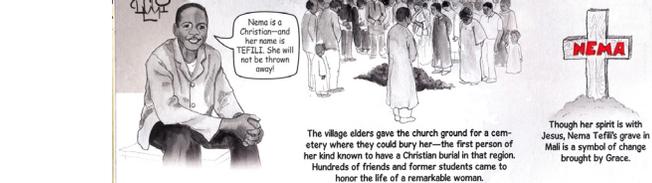
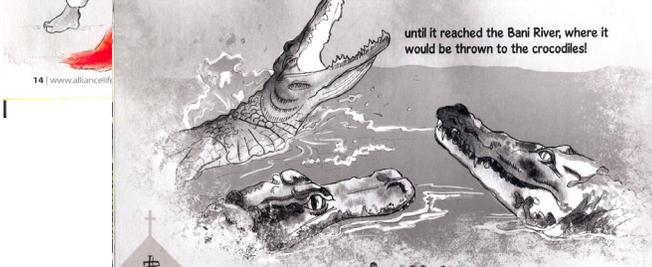
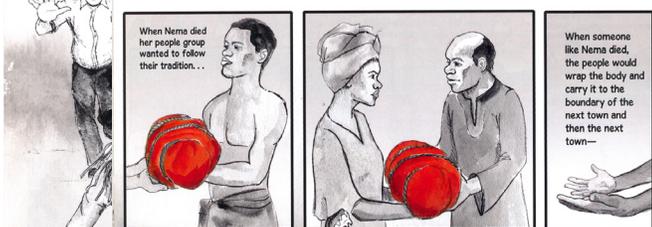
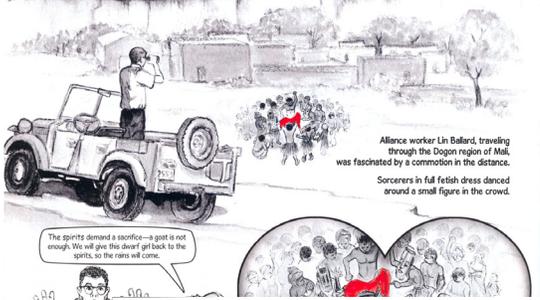


ANTONIO AND HIS WIFE JOIN WITH ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO ISLA TEBITAREA.

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A SACRIFICE OF GRACE

Art by Beryl Glass
Based on a true story retold by Fantasy Ballal and retold by Bob Peterson



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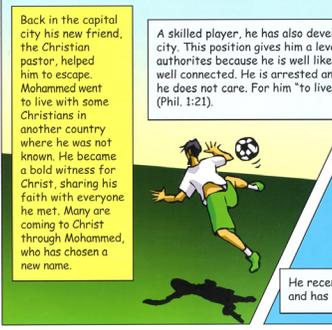
Dangerous Questions

Art by Jeff Lane
Based on a true story

There was a young African whose father was a powerful imam. The son's name was Mohammed, and he was being groomed to follow in his father's footsteps.



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