

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE PLAQUE PUBLICATIONS



BLUESLETTER48

THE BPP ROSTER

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THE 2008 GAFFY AWARDS RESULTS!

The results are in and here they are. Some members abstained from voting in various categories and a few members didn't vote at all. Hopefully next year we will have a better turnout, There were a few ties this year as well as landslide decisions. Congrats to all winners.

People who voted: Steve Skeates, Adam Owen, Jim Main, Sam Gafford, Brien Wayne Powell, Steve Keeter, Darrell Goza, Jeff Phillips and Noor Hafizah.

Best Cover Artist-Nate Corrigan-5

Doug Freeman-1
John Lambert-1
Adam Owen-1
Kevin Darmanie-1

Best Illustrator-Nate Corrigan-2

Darrell Goza-2
Jack Bertram-1
Sam Gafford-1
Steve Skeates-1
Larry Blake-1
John Lambert-1

Best Penciller- Larry Blake-2

Sam Gafford-2
John Lambert-2
Nate Corrigan-1
Darrell Goza-1
Kevin Darmanie-1

Best Inker-Larry Blake-3

Darrell Goza-3
John Lambert-3

Best Comic Writer-Jim Main-3

Sam Gafford-2
Brien Wayne Powell-1
Tim Kelly-1
Adam Owen-1
Nate Corrigan-1

Best Article Writer-Steve Skeates-4

Steve Keeter-1
Dennis Kininger-1
Sam Gafford-1
Robert "Floyd" Sumner-1

Best Fiction Writer-Steve Skeates-3

Sam Gafford-1
Brien Powell-1
Darrell Goza-1
Keith Royster-1
Adam Owen-1

Best Minicomic-Monster World-3

Chase!-3
Human Patriot-1
Magnet Man-1
Newt Trontarr-1

Best Digest Publication- Green Piece-6

Kulprit-2
Captain Spectacular-1

Best Magazine Publication-Comic Fan!-5

Kevin Cool#13-1
BPP Special #4-1

Best BPP Webcomic-Magnet Man-6

Best Cover-Captain Spectacular #3-2

Green Piece-Number One Hit!-2
BL #47-1
Green Piece-When Girls Collide-1
Chase!#4-1
BPP SPECIAL #4-front-1
Kulprit #3-1

Best Artist-Adam Owen-3

Darrell Goza-2
Nate Corrigan-2
Dan Taylor-1
John Lambert-1

Best Editor-Jim Main-5

Darrell Goza-2
Sam Gafford-1
Adam Owen-1

Best Writer-Sam Gafford-3

Tim Kelly-1
Steve Skeates-1
Jim Main-1
Nate Corrigan-1
Adam Owen-1
Kevin Darmanie-1

Best Publication-Monster World-2

Gumshoe Comics-1
Magnet Man-1
Chase!-1
Green Piece-1
Scriptgraphics Small Press-1
BL #46-1
Captain Spectacular-1

Best Character-Newt Trontarr-3

Captain Spectacular-3
Magnet Man-1
Green Piece-2

Best Publisher:Jim Main-3

Sam Gafford-2
Darrell Goza-1
Adam Owen-1



Notes From The Chair...

From Emergency Chairperson Jim Main

Well, I'm still here, running the show (with help from former Chairman Sam Gafford) and I most say things are looking a bit more organized from the time the ball dropped. At this moment I have yet to hear any more from Floyd in regards to matters involving money owed to certain member's account balances. When it does surface, I'll let you know and send it your way.

The Bluesletter: As it stands , the BL has gone pdf format for good now. Why waste any \$\$\$ when we can do it electronically? I will miss the print copy but I can run one off for myself now.

The 2008 Gaffy Awards: they have been voted on and tallied and are located here in this issue. Next time around I hope to see more nominees in a few catagories . . . such as comic book format, magazine format, webcomic . . . anyway, congrats to all the winners here!

Main to run again! : Yes, I'll be running for BPP Chairman next term. I know this may strike you as odd, but I have learned quite a bit from this term as Co-Chairman and think I'll be doing better now that I have a new scanner again. I have yet to hear of anyone else wanting the hot seat, and I don't want to see the group go away. So, I'll try one more term, if you'll have me.

That Freakin' BPP Catalog!: Who wants to see this project happen? It seems to be stalled. The cover was to be a collage of BPP related characters that each member was to send B&W jpegs of for easy paste up. The interior pages were simply digest size ones, sent also as jpegs, wich would give a listing of available publications you have for sale as well as ordering info. What is so hard about this? Do you NOT want your books promoted? I would like a final decision on this by the next BL.

BL#49: Since I'd like to see this publication done more frequently, the deadline for next issue is March 5th. Hope to see many of you there.

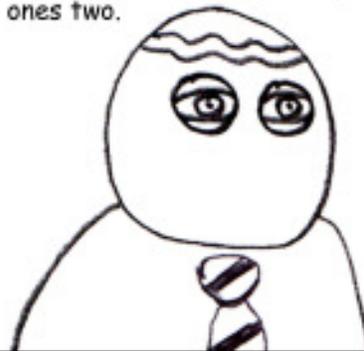
Adios-

"Grim" Jim Main

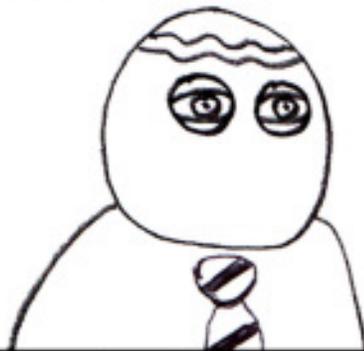
Hey BPP folks! Magnet Man here. Brien is off reading the rare comic adaptation of Charlie Chaplin's *One AM*, so he asked me to fill-in for him.



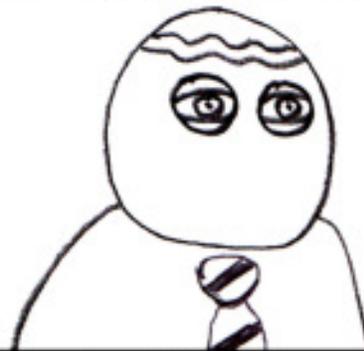
I have actually been pretty busy myself lately. I've filmed two short films & been in a slew of online comics. A couple of print ones too.



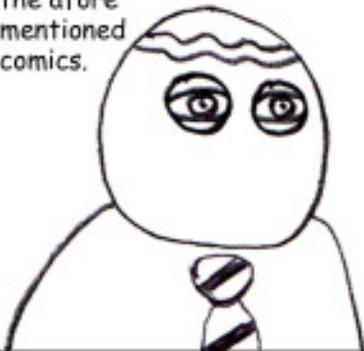
The biggest thrill for me lately is being able to hang out w/Brien's all-time favorite wrestler, Jimmy Valiant.



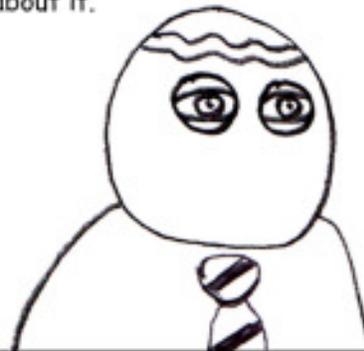
Jimmy is in the WWE Hall of Fame, & had a long, exciting career spanning 5 decades. He's also a super nice, selfless, loving guy.



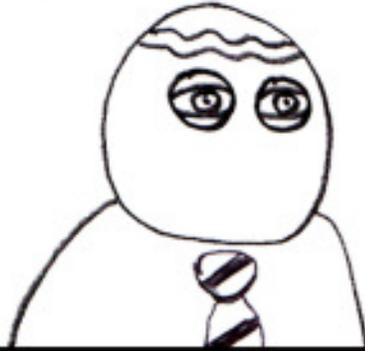
He co-starred w/me in one of the afore mentioned movies & 3 of the afore mentioned comics.



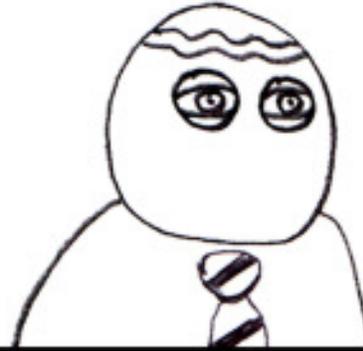
What does this have to do w/the BPP? Not much, but Brien insisted I talk about it.



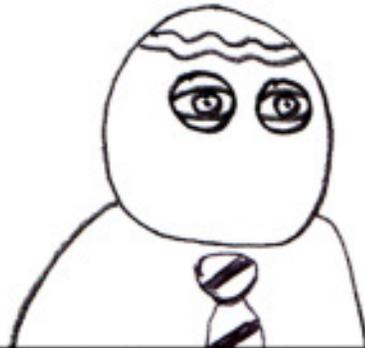
He also wanted me to tell you that his wife Gala & son Douglas are both doing wonderful & are the joys & blessings of his life.



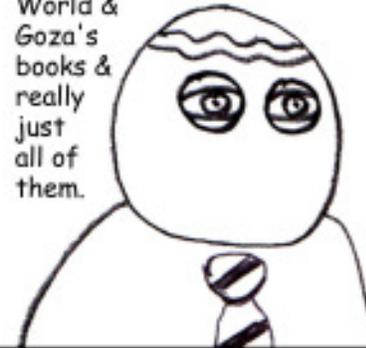
Yeah, he's a sappy guy. What can you do?



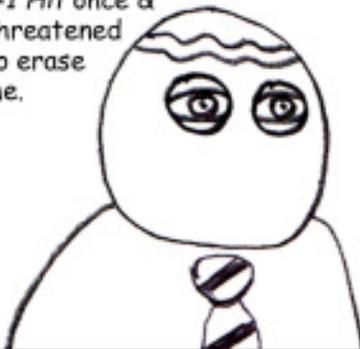
He is very stingy w/the books you guys send him. He bags & boards them all & calls them his 'nigh-mint small press treasures.'



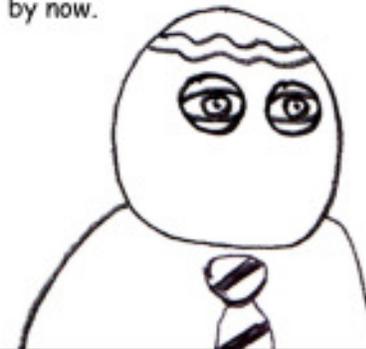
I do occasionally risk life & limb to sneak a peak at them & I am very impressed w/what I've seen. Great books like Chase & Monster World & Goza's books & really just all of them.



He did catch me messing w/his slabbed copy of *GreenPiece* #1 Hit once & threatened to erase me.

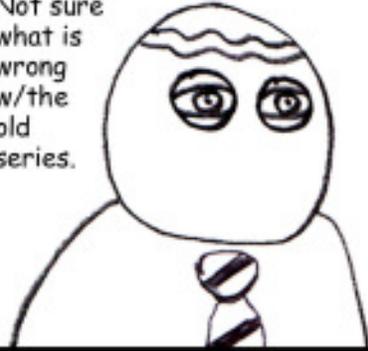


Good luck w/that. I've already been reproduced about a zillion times by now.

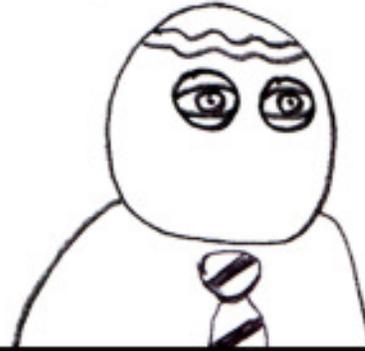


As far as what's new for me, Brien has this great idea for a whole new MM print series that he is all excited about.

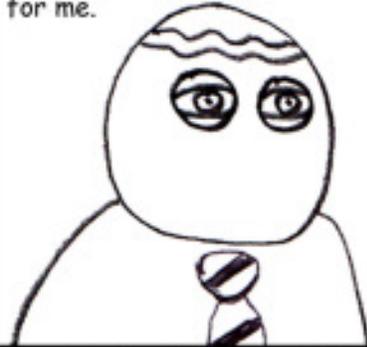
Not sure what is wrong w/the old series.



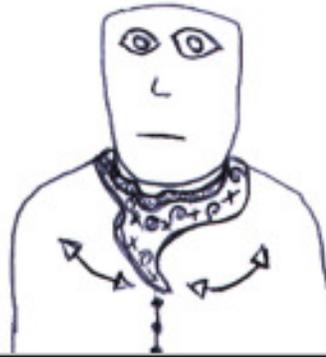
If memory serves, when he left me hanging in the original series, I was about to go back to Hades. I'd really like to get that over w/.



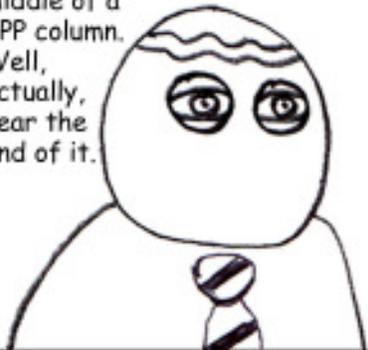
I'm also shooting a new short film that should be straight to DVD-R/ youtube sometime later this year. Well, I guess that's about it for me.



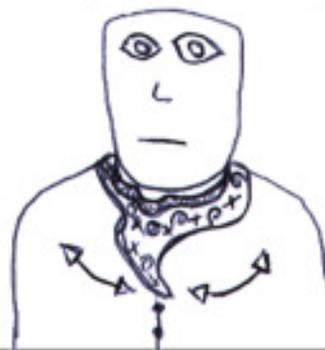
Hey Max! How's everything?



Foreheadless Horseman?! What are you doing here? I'm in the middle of a BPP column. Well, actually, near the end of it.



Brien sent me. He said something about breaking up the monotony.



THE
END



The Goza Volumns (I'm Independent Dammit!)

Welcome to the New Year!

Here we go again. A New Year that already has us starting historically in a place that's completely different than anything that's gone before in the U.S. of A.

After eight years of America tanking financially, becoming morally ambiguous, and P.C. conscious to the point of stupidity, it's time to reflect and chart a new course for the country as a whole and the BPP in particular.

Jim Main poised the question: "Is it worth being in the BPP?" and there weren't enough members answering him to seem to make it 'worth' it. I'm going to chalk it up to living life in this economic down spiral as being the culprit. [By the way, you all should have received 'Kulprit' #2 & #3 if you're reading this, and yes, it is an unapologetic plug.]

Here's the rub: If we take any given month and do at least two hours of work on any two given days, you'll make the commitment to the BPP group. That, in an of itself, makes the case against us keeping the group going. This is the least we have to do to make it worthwhile being here. But don't despair, we're not alone in this.

When I was about a year or so in small press, my best friend at the time (also a creator) showed me an ad from the only small press newspaper connecting small press creators at the time: 'Alan Light's Buyers Guide'. It was a curious publication at the time but it showed that we weren't alone in our endeavors. Anyway, the ad that caught my eye was one by Tim Corrigan (yep, BPP member Nate's father!) who was canvassing for creators to submit to his fledgling publication: 'Tim Corrigan's Superhero Comics. He'd initially posted that he was paying \$10.00 dollars a page to contributors and I can only imagine that he must have been deluged. Very shortly he ran another ad stating that the original ad contained a typo and that the ad should have read: \$1.00 dollar a page. I don't think that made one bit of difference to the creators who submitted work.

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However riotous the beginnings, he was off and running. Many of today's older creators, who got their first taste of being published, came from those humble beginnings and the mini-comic craze was initialized. Whereas Tim may not have been the first to start books in the mini-comic format, he certainly popularized it! At that time ScriptGraphics had gotten two of its own 8 and a half by 11 inch issues out into the fan press and even Phil Seuling, the father of the modern comic convention, purchased our second book while we were attending a show he had in NYC.

College interrupted our publishing schedule and even though I submitted to many of the small press publications of the time it would be another three years before ScriptGraphics would re-emerge as a force in the fan press.

While visiting my best friend, who was back home from being away at college, I stopped in a record store to pick up the latest tunes and the owner had a spinner rack of small press offerings. Go figure!, but that introduced me to Bobby Sommerkamps 'SuperChicks'. It was horrendously drawn and even though the story would win no awards for its writing, it was done in the mini-comic format and that got me thinking: "What if I brought ScriptGraphics back as a mini comic?" That was an 'Ah-Ha' moment.

I purchased that 'Superchicks' mini comic and showed it to my friend. We had a good laugh about the subject matter and art and then I told him of my plans. He liked the idea but college for him wouldn't allow him to participate. Since we started ScriptGraphics together I asked him if he minded me charting and piloting its course from then forward and he gave me a thumbs up. Within the week I had incorporated the name, mapped out the course and began brainstorming the first issue. What had begun as a fan fantasy was now becoming a possible artistic future.

Here's a consideration I had after just the first week of doing the art for the book: I'd need a faster art style if I was planning a twelve page monthly publication!

This would be a grind even if I was motivated (I was) but the limitations of my skill would always be impacted by life. Now don't get me wrong, I was and am still a fast artist. Maybe not as fast as

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Larry Blake, but certainly up there. Doing art is always a phenomenal balancing act. You've got to take in more work than you can possibly do, yet must find a way to always get it done by the deadline. Add to that the fact that most of the time, by the time you're a week or two in, you will be far less enthusiastic about doing it than you were when you first started.

On top of that I had a freelance career outside of comics which was just as demanding. Those were good, if grueling, times. I bring all of this up because being in the BPP reminds me of those times. Everyone that's here is here because we've made a choice to be here. Every time you make an excuse for not doing the two hours of work on the two days a month you agreed to, you minimize yourself and your internal psyche beats you down. Every time you complete something you are made more completely whole. Creative muscles work much like every other muscle in the body. They have to be exercised too. By the way, this is only one possible schedule... you'll make your own, of course.

Of course, none of what I have to say or the suggestions I may offer have any meaning if you act like a procrastination junky. Excuses are easy to come by for junkies. If you think I'm kidding, stop by and volunteer at any drug treatment center and you'll hear it all. See yourself in them and you'll get a real dose of the cost of not keeping your word. I did and that's how I know the psychosis.

For a time I had a real bone to pick with the 'higher ups' in the BPP. I'd heard a lot of talk about what we weren't doing but saw little from them. Now they've stepped up and have produced like gangbusters (or should I say BPP busters) and that leaves me with nothing but praise for them.

'Is the BPP worth it?' Don't tell me, show me...

Darrell

Next: The numbers of Publishing. Costs that don't add up.

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The Goza Volumns (I'm Independent Dammit!)

The numbers of Publishing.
Costs that don't add up.

If you're like me you don't have any additional cash to shell out for your small press addiction. I call it an addiction because of all the time and coin we'll put into this 'hobby' without any real return on investment. We say we do it because

of our love for the products, but just try to stop. I dare ya!

Here are some sobering statistics: if you're producing a small press product, say a mini-comic, the average print cost works like this...

An 8 and a half by 11 inch sheet of paper printed on both sides will cost you between 16 and 20 cents each. The good news is that it will yield you 4 pages of a mini. The bad news is you'll probable want your book to be, at a minimum, 12 pages. That's 11 pages of content and a cover. In the old days we used the back cover as a mailer page so our content was cut by 1 page.

3 pages of a mini which makes a 12 page book will cost you around 60¢. The envelope to mail it in will cost you (if you buy in bulk) \$35 per 250 making your cost per envelope: 14¢. Right now your cost to produce the book is 74¢. A stamp will cost you about 58¢ for a whopping total of \$1.48. This is for a small black and white mini-comic while a regular comic costs just over twice that, gives you twice the page count, color and a more consistent schedule.

I haven't even begun to cover advertising costs or paying the 'help' particularly since I've seen the very people who will make the product saleable in the first place have been asked to be the last paid. (Don't get me started!)

Is it any wonder small press producers treat what they do more like a 'whenever we get around to it' hobby?

Keeping it in perspective, there are some small press producers that operate more like the professionals they want to become but they are few and far between, which is why most creators have run helter-skelter to the web.

There's no up front costs to be recouped and it's pretty much an open forum where anything is possible if you know how to create and upload it. Unfortunately, it suffers from the very syndrome that is affecting the medium it sprang from. It too is proliferating vomit

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inducing stories which neither speak to uplifting the spirit or giving a 'meaty' story worth telling. I kid you not!

The ScriptGraphics staff took three weekends (sat and sunday) to evaluate the new medium before making the plunge into it. We do our market research as any good business does while trying to position itself. Here's what we did and what we found:

Aja Frost, Ben Collins, Cletus Goza, Michael Reed and myself googled in web comics and each took whatever came up and created criteria to place comics into. Some were well illustrated but the storied left much to be desired. Others were well written but the art was worse than bad, it was atrocious. Sometimes it was the lettering which took the 'umph' from an otherwise good offering.

Of our ten point system, getting six and a half would make the grade for most of the web comics we surveyed. Each of us got through over 800 web comics each and only 2% got higher than 9 of the 10 points. That means of nearly 4000 web comics less than 200 were really good.

Most were better artistically than with their stories overall and a large majority didn't have a clue about story structure, storytelling, character development, or even something as simple as grammar.

Others didn't give us the impression they were even concerned about such things. They had a forum to do the story and were only interested in getting their ideas 'out there'. There's so much product out there now we're sure we only scratched the surface; but our journey will continue. Of the ones that were good, they were really good and of the bad ones, well, bad doesn't even begin to cover it.

Still, it gives us an idea of what kinds of stories and what kind of art we should be doing. One of the things that stood out the most for us was that the vast majority didn't or wouldn't adapt to the new format of the medium they were displaying on. One of the first lessons in design is that you match your message to the format or change the format to meet the message. Until screens go lengthwise, how we do web comics will have to change.

Another thing we found annoying was that many web comic producers brought the same lack of regard for consistency of material and lack of 'on time' performance to their audience. Here we have an rapid method of delivery and it wasn't being utilized well at all.

As Aja is fond of saying: "Just because you can do Super Stoopid Man, doesn't mean you should".

A lot of the web comics I'd read contained nothing more than self appreciating jokes that you'd have to be really acquainted with the

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creator of the web comic or even one of his or her inner circle to 'get it.

We also found that female's did a better job of storytelling and wrote much more sensitive and better thought out stories. Guys most exclusively went for the action and tough guy image-ography much more often.

Still, we're glad for the amount of products out there or should I say 'in there' given the format of the medium. Here's the cost breakdown (to use as a comparison with my earlier example):

There's very little up front cost and that's only if you go with a monthly provider. If you use your local library or a friends house if you don't already have your own computer with online access, you can connect to a free comic showcase site and it will cost you nothing. You're not limited to black and white production because of the cost of color. Again, you'll have to have access to a digital coloring program.

Advertising is easier too. Join some online web comic groups (like the BPP) or a web ring that specializes in what you do and promote, promote, promote...

Please remember to keep a schedule. The fans you're catering to expect it. The work will not get any easier because you're using the web, in fact, it'll be tougher. If you're not comfortable keeping a set and advertised schedule then let your fans know you'll be uploading your stuff irregularly and let them know what that irregularity will look like.

Then just keep your word and do the work!

The kind of access you'll be exposed to online can be intoxicating and under that kind of pressure it's not hard to fall prey to the flip side of online celebrity fame: Arrogance.

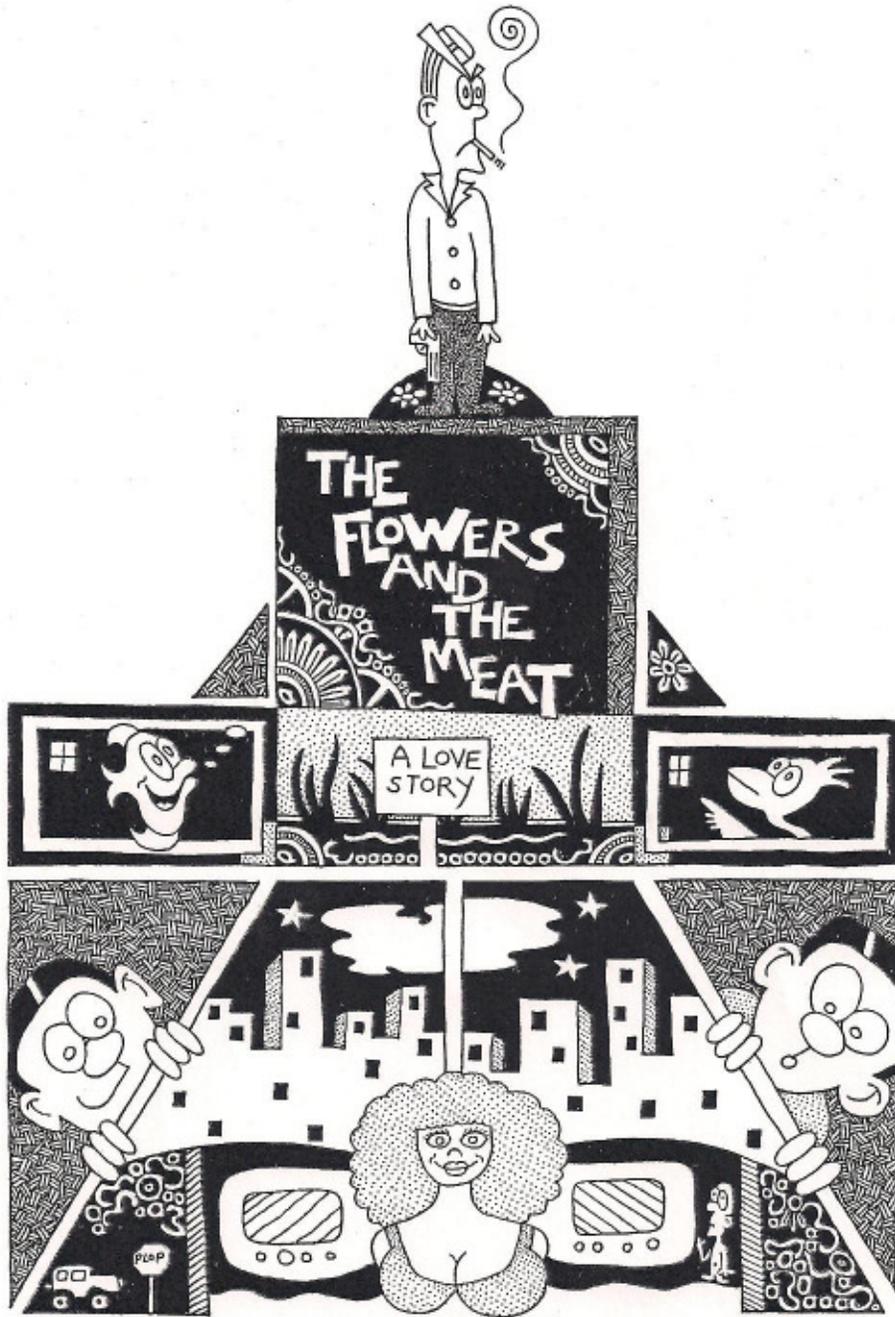
Darrell

Next: The Self Deluded

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For additional information, check out our primary website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~nightray2002>
or Darrell Goza's Comicspace site at http://comicspace.com/darrell_goza



TEMPTED TO AND ATTEMPTING:

DOES BAD PROOFREADING MAKE FOR GOOD POETRY?
OR WHAT?

COURTESY OF
THE ELDER STEVE

*

As further proof (as though the egregiousness that's been in existence since 1923 weren't conclusive enough!!) that I'm an utter loser when it comes to proofreading, I could of course call your attention to what slipped right past mine eyes vis-à-vis my previous Bluesletter column! I have no call to believe, though, that an incredibly vast number of you didn't (in fact) immediately pick up on what I'm even now attempting to clue you in upon, the way within the 47th I made reference to the 46th by citing that particular issue as being "the particular issue of the Bluesletter I'm attempted to review here." Surely, that should have been "attempting" rather than "attempted," and, the thing is, I read that column over close to a hundred times prior to sending it off to the appropriate Bluesletter editorial dudes, yet each time I obviously read that word as actually being the "attempting" I wanted rather than the "attempted" it really was! Generally, that's the way it works bad-proofreading-wise, especially when you're proofing something you yourself wrote! It was (as a matter of factuality) something like three weeks later, when I suddenly for some now unknown reason decided to read my column over yet again, that somehow enough time had passed for me to have unconsciously yet adroitly become a bit more objective about my column, actually this time around employing my eyes rather than merely my mind's eye as I read that

piece and therefore finally noticed my mistake! Wow! What a revelation!! Where this entire belaboring of the point is leading, however, is directly toward the fact that I like it! That miscue of mine, I mean! Sure, it doesn't belong in an article, but that's because it's pure poetry! A short sublimely succinct phrase that simultaneously suggests "tempted to" and "attempting" – that's brilliant! Inadvertent and stupid brilliance to be sure, but brilliance nonetheless! And, on that note...

But no! Wait! There's more – a variety of features reaching well beyond a mere scintillatingly poetic typo and into the realm (for instance) of this very correspondent seemingly hogging (within the above-mentioned previous issue of this very newsletter) far more space than I deserved, doing so via the use of such large bulky bigfat cumbersome letters! I mean, c'mon now -- eight whole pages when what I had to say, had I but used a smaller typeface, could have easily fit onto a single file card!! Oops! By which I mean, sorry about that! Really, what I was up to back there back then was hardly an attempted coup -- no way (that is to say) should anyone start writing sarcastic ballads about some silly egomaniacal madman drooling all over himself in anticipation, seeking to take over as much of a magazine as he can possibly git his grimy claws upon, especially considering that the Main Problem was with my printer which was acting like a jackass, so when Jim Main (no relation) suggested that maybe this time around I might wanna e-mail in my column, I veritably leapt at the chance, blissfully unaware that this would unerringly lead to my five-page article somehow morphing into something downright bulbous typeface-wise, and therefore by necessity what little I had to say ended up (yipes to the max!!) getting spread all out all over eight whole freakin' pages with way too much empty white space hanging out around the edges! However, no way is anyone outside of myself to blame for any of this; I at least wanna make that much clear! Additionally, I did desire to at least mention the salient

reality that from now on I'm gonna try like hell to make sure nothing like *that* ever happens again!

However, I must say my biggest misstep vis-à-vis my previous column has gotta be that I got so carried away rhapsodizing about the BPP's sad loss of the great Larry Blake that I totally spaced out my plans to answer a certain inquiry from Brien (as posed in issue 46)! And, why would I *not* wanna answer Brien's question?? After all, it deals with my latest foray into actual paying comicbook work, as well as the first time in over forty years I've been graced with the joyous opportunity to have the great Dick Ayers once again (this'll be the fourth time actually, but who's counting?) illustrate one of my stories! The way I see it, something like that deserves all the publicity it can get!!

In other words, Brien, one huge "thanks indeed" for asking! Fact is, for a while there it had been so long since I had heard from either the editor or the publisher of the comic the aforementioned tale is gonna be an integral part of that I was beginning to think this had become yet another one of those instances (an exceedingly prevalent happenstance within both this and even the previous decade) where a story I'd worked on had fallen through the proverbial cracks! More recently, however, those two gentlemen and various others have gotten back in touch in order to tell me all about a restructuring at the publishing co-op and that ALL-SMASH FUNNIES is now back on track! I have an essay in the first issue (that's the one that'll be out any day now!), whereas it's in the second ish that "Possessions," plotted by Jon Gilbert, scripted by sincerely yours, penciled by Dick Ayers, and inked by Mike Rickaby, will be (like that scary maiden aunt at the family Christmas party who's had a bit too much wine) eagerly embracing everyone within reach and veritably kissing 'em on the lips! Consider yourself forewarned! And, within the meantime...

* * * * *

**B.P.P.'N #5...by "Grim" Jim Main, 13 Valley View Rd.,
Brookfield, CT 06804. For publication in the BL #48.**

Greetings ladies and germs. Hope you are all doing well and that you had a great holiday season.

I've been quite busy lately with my new books...CHASE! #5 is done and I should be getting it back later this week (I'm writing this on Monday the 12th) so you'll be getting that book soon.

Other upcoming BPP books from me:

COMIC FAN! #4-many great articles this issue, with a cover feature piece on the THUNDER AGENTS by Glenn Walker. Our own Steve Skeates chimes in on his days as a writer for THUNDER AGENTS publisher Tower Comics. Comic fandom legend Grass Green is in the spotlight in Lance Boucher's COMIC FANDOM 101. Sam Gafford is keeping his column a secret from me, so I can't tell you anything about it yet! Plus tons of reviews, as usual, in THE SPINNER RACK section. Lots of great art by Dave Farley, Carl Taylor, Dan Taylor, Hal Jones, Jack Bertram, Larry Blake, Marc Haines, Grass Green, Rick Limacher, Michael Grassia, Larry Tisch, and others.

DARK CORRIDOR #3-more great horror, suspense and fantasy fiction and illustrations this issue from writers Sam Gafford, Michael Vance and Mark Orr and artists Scott McClung, Terry Pavlet, Dan Taylor, John Lambert, Jack Bertram and others. Plus our review section Den of The Dark.

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!#1-a new annual minicomic from me with expected material from Brien Wayne Powell, Noor Hafizah, Sam Gafford, Dan Taylor, Terry Pavlet, John Lambert, Dave Farley, Barry Southworth, Jack Bertram, Rick Limacher, Al Limacher, Tim Tobolkski, Tim Temmel, Jeff Gaither and hopefully others.

COSMIC MAN #2: Great story by Steve Keeter. Equally great art by Tony Lorenz. All this with a kick butt cover by Scott McClung and inside cover art by Jack Bertram.

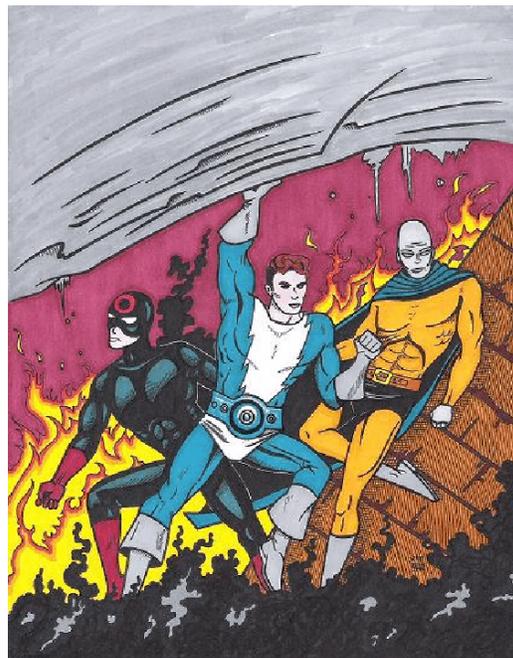
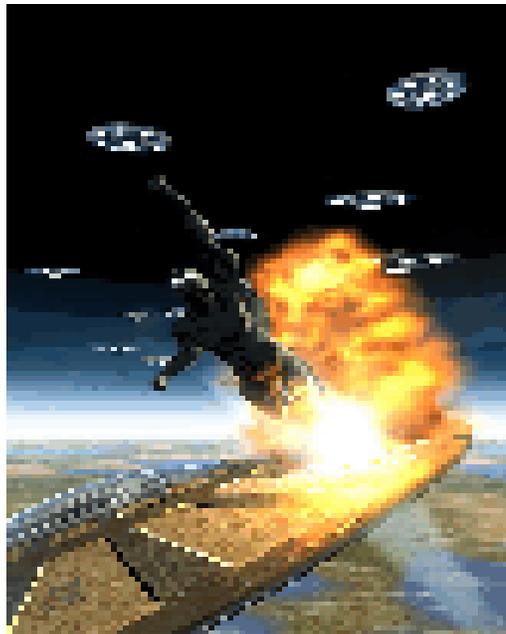
OTHERWORLDS #1-a minicomic size publication of horror, fantasy, sf illustrations by many talented folks such as Dan Taylor, Noor Hafizah, Dave Farley, Hal Jones, Barry Southworth, John Lambert, just to name a few.

So, yeah, I'm doing my part as a member of this group for sure.

Books I've received recently are Kulprit # 2 and 3 and Text Novel #2 from Darrell...Brien Wayne Powell's Jimmy Valiant vs. Werewolfman and Boogie's Silent Knight...plus Steve Skeate's latest publication The Lost Mailbox of Duty-Free Observations #1969. I must say that I enjoyed them all and will discuss them more later. I will say that each of them were all worthy of the BPP symbol of quality and made for some great reading pleasure.

Nothing else to report at this moment. I'm hoping to see a good deal of BPP books this year from the membership. Let's keep on rockin'!

Adios—
"Grim" Jim Main



MALKAR & ELKAR

THE STORY OF THE CONQUERING BLOODLINE

PROLOGUE / BACKSTORY

This is the story of two brothers, twins, named Malkar and Elkar. The two were born of the human race on the far off world of Ozlay, a lush tropical world hidden from the pathways of Pirating clans of aliens or mounting armies of other factions we will speak of later. Humans, in the year of Malkar and Elkar's birth, were one of a dozen endangered species in the galaxy. With no sovereign world to call their own, with no government and no power to speak of, Humans became easy targets of whoever felt like exploiting them.

The two lived on a shoreline village capturing snap fish for their family. They were skilled with a dozen tools of the fishing trade including dagger-rods, razor nets and skip stones. Having been trained and inundated in the trade since literally their sixth month of life.

When the boys were very young, a rogue pirate ship, happened upon Ozlay and murdered almost every living human with the exception of Malkar and Elkar. Malkar was captured as a trophy. Elkar was left for dead, a pirate's stave protruding from his chest. The last Malkar saw of his family, of his twin brother was smoldering ruin.

Days later, Elkar awoke wounded horribly, and witness to the mass open grave that had been his people. The weapon had luckily not cut into his heart, but with his family gone he lost his will to live. Pirate fodder (any plundered world) was always targeted by salvage clans. Salvage clans were non violent races who wanted no part of the bloodshed, but saw nothing wrong in cleaning up after the pirates, hoping for scraps to subsist upon. One salvage clan called the Traychell visited Ozlay within a day of the pirates leaving.

They were a compassionate people who saw to the wounds of Elkar, even offered him work on their vessel. The Traychell were a massive slug-like race who saw benefit in Elkar's smaller stature. He was put to work fixing the smaller things his benefactors could not. Leaving his world behind, Elkar vowed to someday to avenge his people.

The trophy Malkar was not treated as well as his brother. Being a trophy to blood thirsty pirates meant dueling in vast arenas filled with an assortment of other trophy animals and prisoners. Malkar's first year on the pirate ship he survived such duels by a combination of blind luck and his skills as a fisher-boy. Malkar's

second year aboard the pirate ship he survived the dueling arenas by murdering anything put in front of him.

On Ozlay, Malkar had been a quiet, good natured boy who was proud of what he and his brother had accomplished. Working a trade to keep their family fed and turn a small profit in the process was all he could have hoped for. On the pirate ship however, that boy was gone forever. When other pirate vessels docked with his new home, he was set against their strongest, always to prevail. His hard work and skills as killer only mad his captors view him as a valuable commodity.

Eventually, he was bartered around, between other pirate vessels for spare parts, food and once for a barrel of cognac. Eventually, ten years after his plight from Ozlay, Malkar came into the keeping of a Gaming tradesman named Colden. Colden continued the brutal arena sports, but with full intent of seeing Malkar killed. Humans were not well thought of in the galactic gene pool and seeing their often quick and violent deaths was entertaining to many that populated his arena matches. Colden sent in a variety of beasts, soldiery and monstrous discoveries only to have them dispatched by Malkar, who was an inventive killer. Colden's propensity for cruelty was known throughout the galaxy, but as his victims were only human he rarely attracted the censuring of any constabulary.

Elkar thrived, but not from under the oppressive boot of pirate captor or anti humanist gamers. The Traychell educated him. He found them to be a kind but apathetic people. With them, he traveled from world to world, taking what goods and supplies they could from the bloody wake of pirate ships. His hatred of the pirates only grew as he saw them lay waste to numerous other species across the universe.

Elkar eventually came to part ways with his hosts on another plundered human world. The Trachell followed the paths of pirates to the barren ice world of Teoron. They found rubble and remains but during their search for salvage, they found the human populace far from decimated. The humans there responded violently to their world being invaded not once but twice, viewing the Trachell equally fallible. The rubble was not of their cities but of the pirate vessel. Lost in the initial fray, Elkar was captured by the humans and the Traychell, his foster parents for a dozen years abandoned him without a second thought.

CHAPTER ONE

Malkar sat on the arena floor that was his master's main source of income. Colden, a fat blue slave master had used Malkar for sport and profit for many years. This night was to be no different, with the exception that it was to be Malkar's last night breathing air. Colden floated down to the floor, standing on a thin black metal board. He was adorned in expensive fabrics and metals, many of

which Malkar was sure he'd earned for him.

"You takey and you drinke..." Colden said dangling a small crystal bottle in front of Malkar's face. "The Pickroy Caste coming tonight, they big big army in the systems... you give them a good fight, but you die before too long."

Malkar took the bottle, but spoke no reply. He knew better, he was just a slave.

"You fight good, considering I try to kill you past few years..." Colden said harshly "Tonight, only person who kill human is you human" Colden laughed uproariously.

Malkar studied his slave-master Colden. Studied him the way he studied the hundreds of adversaries he'd killed over the years. Fat as he was Colden could be easily tripped up and immobilized by his own weight for a moment. Malkar observed such a moment would give him a chance to top the slave master and snap his neck.

"When I give signal, you drinke, you fighty and you die. Old soldier want retire with one last fight, he come to me with his private troop. They two hundred strong all pay in cash." Colden was giddy with the prospect of cash from a small army of purple skinned creatures. He pressed a jewel button on his ornate outfit, and the black metal board he stood on rose up and out of the arena floor "When I give signal... You drinke drinke!!!" Colden cried excitedly.

Malkar stared at the seating platforms above. A dozen mechanical security guards buzzed and whirred between chairs, flanked by non-mechanical operators. He fingered the small crystal bottle in his hands. A silvery blue liquid sloshed inside it. His compliance meant his death, his disobedience also meant his death. The latter had some appeal to him, but only in that it would buy him another day of life. When people crossed Colden they spent their final hours being tortured to death. Even still, he preferred the option of another day to drinking the spoonful of poison he recognized as Slipticide.

The bottle opened easily as Malkar upended it onto the arena's dusty floor. He watched as the contents sizzled and burned the floor. All around him voices and murmuring sounds began to ebb in. The crowd had arrived. The show would begin. He noted the uniforms first. Soldiery of the Pickroy Caste wore ornate black and silver clothing which nicely complimented their muddy purple skin. The soldiers filled better than half of the arena seats when the remaining crowd was allowed in.

Aliens traveled from all over the surrounding sectors to view a Colden arena fight. Although the Pickroy soldier's retirement party was more of a specialty event, that did nothing to dissuade the fans of bloodshed from attending. Malkar took no

notice of the majority of the creatures in attendance, but did notice a cluster of a dozen figures covered in heavy blue robes. He took them for clerics, holy men of a sect he wasn't familiar with.

Music blared. Colden usually played a mish mash of galactic contemporary music. What piped in was not contemporary, but an anthem, no doubt connected to the Pickroy. Malkar noted the way half the audience stood to attention, hands locked to temple in salute. The other half of the audience cautiously mimicked the soldiers, not wanting to offend them. The only members in attendance who did nothing was the blue garbed collection of clerics. Malkar admired their courage, but also thought it could be blind stupidity, to shun the anthem of the Pickroy Caste.

Eventually, songs sung and protocol observed, one of the Pickroy stood, flanked by another. The first was tall young and built to fight. Malkar took this person as his opponent. They stood a hundred feet above on a round wire form platform divided into two sections. When fighting time came the smaller of the two sections would detach and lower the fighter into the arena ring. "My brothers in arms..." the younger began bellowing over an immediate chant from the rest of his people. "Tonight, we are witness to commander Kozz's retirement battle. The gamer called Colden, has found for us a worthy human adversary ." this was met with snickers and broken laughter from the crowd of soldiers. They had obviously never seen Malkar fight before. "Lord Kozz..." the younger soldier said gesturing to the older fatter variety.

Lord Kozz stepped forward slapping his compatriot's shoulder. "Forrg my young friend, I am grateful." He began to bellow "So grateful for one last chance to show my people my worth."

Forrg replied "Now the real blood bath begins... politics... for our Lord Kozz... a death on the battlefield would be preferable." This was met with a wave of laughter that shook the arena. Malkar sized up his opponent, this Lord Kozz and was not worried.

Eventually, his owner, Colden came forward to speak. Colden regarded both Kozz and Forrg, smiling broadly at the latter. "Shall we start my friends my very good friends in Pickroy?"

"Of course gamer!" Kozz said stepping onto the smaller platform. He stood exultant as he was lowered down, arms outstretched. Behind, above and around him his men cheered. When he touched the floor, their already loud exhalation seemed to triple. Malkar almost felt the need to cover his ears.

Automated anti-grav robots descended into the ring, each holding heavy red metal

metal axes. "Today we fight with the ceremonial cleave!!!" Kozz shouted to his men, but also to Malkar who he now stood face to face with.

"Humans, I have killed many of your number. Sometimes on the battlefield, they do not make very good slave soldiers." Kozz punctuated this by spitting in Malkar's face.

Malkar said nothing, only eyed Colden waiting on the signal. Weapons in hand, the two adversaries backed up from each other and awaited their signal to begin. From far above them, Forrg shouted "BEGIN!!!" which caused an instant eruption of noise from the crowd in attendance.

The two circled each other. Kozz making a dozen poses meant to impress while Malkar noted Kozz's weakness in stature and neglect of proper defense. Malkar had killed beasts ten times his height and soldiers with ten times his experience. It amused him to think he was meant to throw a fight against such a feeble foe. Swinging wide and clumsily, Kozz whirred the axe in the air. Malkar actually forced himself into the blade's path, to make it look good.

"I have drawn first blood on the human!" Kozz signaled and shouts erupted. "It is only a matter of time before I wet my hands in his blood!!!"

Malkar swung, one handed, dropping the axe in the process. Kozz erupted in laughter, then struck Malkar with his weapon's flat dull side. The human fell, sham or not, the purple Pickroy soldier still packed a punch. Malkar rolled twice, using the kinetics of the blow to his advantage. He was on his feet again in an instant, having re-secured his axe in the process. Kozz stumble-stepped back at this show of agility. For a moment, Malkar suspected Kozz was wise to the ruse. The moment came and went, as a flush of arrogance washed over the old soldier's face.

"Dance all you want human, this day ends with your head on a pike!!!" on cue, the audience of his own peoples, roared applause. Allowing himself an instant to regard the crowds, Malkar noted the blue garbed clerics were bent forward, intently watching the fray. His instant to observe was too long as it gave Kozz the chance to strike hard with his axe. The blade struck Malkar's shoulder, stopping at the bone. Screaming, he staggered back, rolling again with the force of the blow.

Regaining his composure he struck the axe against the floor, shattering the black-wood handle in the process. Unencumbered by a heavy fanciful weapon, Malkar grabbed a length of the broken wood in his hands.

Kozz gloated "My enemy cant even master a simple weapon as our battle axes" the crowd roared, but in a much diminished fashion. Malkar knew these soldiers

had a keen eye for battle, they knew a sham was in play. Dropping the axe in favor of a sharp staff was tactically superior. Kozz laughed, amused by the situation he would never be in control of.

“DIE HUMAN!!!” Colden shouted from above, Malkar followed the voice up, focusing on the fat blue face. Colden nodded. Malkar nodded back. With an empty hand, Malkar mimed a drinking motion while regaining his stance over Kozz.

“Taking drink, human? It doesn’t surprise me that your weakness shows so early in the fight.” Kozz said mockingly and was surprised none of his men roared support. Malkar noted the blue robes again, their stance carried a hint of dismay. Malkar tossed the staff between his hands, liking the weight of the thing. It was solid, simple and unpretentious. When Kozz lunged in at him, he continued the sham, lurching over as if in pain, letting Colden think the poison was doing its work. Clumsily though Kozz tripped and fell over Malkar’s dropping form. Malkar got back on his feet, as Kozz’s heavy form passed him by he struck the purple man’s skull hard.

Kozz staggered, wincing at the pain “A lucky accident, a lucky accident I assure you.”

Malkar shrugged, then squatted down awaiting the oncoming attack. It came, and was clumsier than before. When Kozz was close enough, Malkar struck the fat mans right wrist hard with his staff. The solid snapping sound echoed clearly. The room was silent.

“Impudent human garbage—you will pay you will pay!!!” Kozz screamed. An angry murmur began to work through the crowd.

Kozz held his axe one handed, and thrust forward in another feeble attack. This time, Malkar sank his weapon into Kozz’s soft shoulder. Memories of solid muscle were there but not nearly enough to slow the stabbing. The stick protruded from Kozz’s back and Malkar pulled it free on the wet half of his weapon.

Looking up, he saw Colden and Forrg shocked and disgusted. He saw hatred in Colden’s eyes. Malkar knew his death would come soon, if not by the Pickroy soldiers, then by torture devices of the gamer.

Turning, Malkar meant to finish his last arena fight. Kozz was spraying blood on the floor but to his credit, was still defiant, assured he would win the fight. Malkar grasped Kozz’s good arm at the shoulder and pulled back hard. The audible snapping sound was louder than when he took the wrist. Kozz screamed in a tone that

finally recognized the truth of the situation.

As the old arrogant soldier writhed in pain on the floor, Malkar secured his simple weapon that still dripped Kozz's amber blood. "For my brother... for my people!!!" he shouted just before he thrust the weapon through the head of his foe, nailing it to the arena floor.

Violence erupted in the seating platforms. Pickroy soldiers were destroying Colden's mass of security mechs and any other spectators in their way. They were trying to get down to the floor of the arena and didn't mind killing anyone they could in the process. Malkar stood defiantly waiting on them.

Colden was busying himself trying to get clear of the fray on his thin metal levitation board. The hate in his eyes, the fear and anger were all to be pent up and saved for Malkar. Even if it were just the mangled corpse, Colden planned to defile what was left of his traitorous slave. He was safely away from the riot, when a golden blast of energy split his board in two.

Falling, Colden struck the floor of the arena wetly. His spine issued a muffled cracking sound and vile liquids poured from his mouth. He wasn't dead yet, but getting there. As the fray continued above him, Malkar walked over to his dying slavemaster. He had freed his staff weapon from Kozz's head and had one final use for it.

Malkar's body was stained with two tones of blood when he settled in to assess the fight above him. He would need to pick out targets and decide which compound assaults to initiate. Looking up and locking in on the fight, Malkar was surprised. The blue robed figures were heavily engaged in the fray and although their numbers were small, they enacted harsh damage to the over confident Pickroy soldiers.

Malkar wasn't surprised that the blue robes killed over half of the Pickroy.

Malkar wasn't surprised at the efficiency of the blue robes fighting techniques.

Malkar wasn't even surprised by their ability to fight under obviously heavy garments.

Malkar was surprised that when the fight was over and the blue robes uncovered their heads, his saviors turned out to be humans.

COMIC GEEK PRESS

By Jeff Phillips

Welcome to the start of a wonderful new year here in the bpp. I'm looking forward to putting out some books and getting some feed back. Let us all pledge to make this a great year for the BPP. There has been some great ideas thrown around the yahoo group, let's see if we can make some of them happen.

To our faithful leaders I say a big thank you. It's a thankless job but you have performed it admirably. I hope we can pull together this year and make it a more enjoyable endeavor for the next victim. I mean leader.

Well I must confess that things have slowed down at the old mailbox here in central Texas. That being said I did receive a few books in the mail.

Sam gafford was kind of enough to send me **monster world #3** to replace the issue that got lost in the mail. This issue appears to point to a possible connection between Ballard and the master. Sam does a wonderful job of giving us just enough info to drive us nuts in anticipation. Thanks

Sam I've developed a nervous tick.

Monster world #8&9 came also since the last Bluesletter. Sam's art has improved each issue filling the panels with more depth. Sam fleshes out some of the support characters of the story revealing some of the history. The tension of the approaching battle increases, as the stories seem to be picking up steam.

Monster world letters special #1 who can resist a issue devoted to fan mail? This was just plain fun to read.

Chase #3&4 you just can't pick these issues up without being wowed by the quality. Jim Main has put together quite a team on this series. For a mini comic chase is the opposite of what you expect. The art is beautiful and the story paced to keep you hanging on each page. Chase shows the potential of a mini comic.

Hero tribute #2 Darrell goza's ability to use some of his unused art and tie together a story is pretty amazing. This is a brilliant idea that I'm curious to see if he can continue to pull off. I can only wait patiently for issue #3 to arrive in my mailbox.

That covers everything that came my way. I know some of you are wondering where

Slumberland #2 is? It's sitting on my dresser half done waiting on me to sit my butt down and finish it. I'm going to kick my own butt if it's not done soon. I want to thank those of you that push the rest of us to get busy. Hopefully you want have to push so hard this year.

Ok I'm done... uhm... quit reading... what are you doing... why are you still reading this... go on to the next article... bye!



The Winter 2009 Blue Plaque Publications Checklist

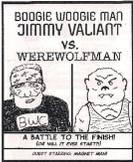
The B.P.P. (Blue Plaque Publications) is a co-op of small press and fanzine publishers who have joined together to promote, encourage and aid each other in their efforts. Publishers interested in the group can contact Jim Main, 13 Valley View Rd., Brookfield, CT 06804 (or at jmain44@aol.com) You can also check out the group's message board at <http://yahoo.com/clubs/BluePlaquePublications>.

Below are some of the most recent publications from the group. The codes F,M, C and D describe the size of the book. (F-Full magazine size, D-Digest, C-Comic book, M-minicomic)

The Lost Mailbox of Duty-Free Observations#1969

\$1.50 From Steve Skeates, 95 Jefferson Ave., Fairport, NY 14450

More great, insightful, and educational material from Steve Skeates are found in this publication. Besides some truly wonderful comics and illustrations, his article "Jumping The Gun" is a must read for writers. (F)



Boogie Woogie Man Jimmy Valiant vs. Werewolfman

\$.50 from Brian Wayne Powell, P.O. Box 911, Forest, VA 24551

Werewolfman is on the loose and out for revenge against legendary pro wrestler Jimmy Valiant (www.jimmyvaliant.com) Will the Boogie Woogie Man be able to best his latest foe? & what can Magnet Man possibly do to help? Find out in this special one-shot issue! (M)

BOOGIE'S SILENT KNIGHT (A Magnet Man Christmas Special)

\$.50 from Brian Wayne Powell, P.O. Box 911, Forest, VA 24551

Magnet Man travels to Boogie's Wrestling Camp in Shawsville, VA to spend Christmas with Jimmy Valiant and his wife April (www.jimmyvaliant.com) But when a nasty dragon tries to ruin the holidays, they may need a Christmas miracle to save the season! (M)



MONSTER WORLD #9

\$1 from Sam Gafford, 624 Metacom Ave., Warren, RI 02885

The battle between vampire and werewolf is almost here! S.T.A.K.E. is gathering their forces to join the fight but who will live and who will die? The Master's plan reaches fruition but what is it exactly? What is his TRUE goal? (M)

CHASE! #4

\$1.25 plus stamp from Jim Main, 13 Valley View Rd., Brookfield, CT 06804

Jackie Spratt, last seen at the end of issue #2, tries to make his way back home through the treacherous landscape and climate of the Swiss Alps. What will become of him? (M)



KULPRIT #2

\$1.50 plus stamp from Darrell Goza, 1715 East Cambridge St., Allentown, PA 18109 Written and illustrated by Kevin Darmanie & lettered and edited by Darrell Goza.

The man trying to run from his violent past finds that it comes seeking him, forcing him to revisit and re-become his history! (D)

KULPRIT #3

\$1.50 plus stamp from Darrell Goza, 1715 East Cambridge St., Allentown, PA 18109

Written and illustrated by Kevin Darmanie & lettered and edited by Darrell Goza.

With his vigilante persona back in effect, Kulprit begins to thread his way through the maze of violence and murder to get to his own intended target while that very same target faces a tragedy all his own, which pushes him towards his own twisted destiny. (D)



DARKSTONE & OTHER STORIES: TEXT NOVEL #2

\$1.50 plus stamp from Darrell Goza, 1715 East Cambridge St., Allentown, PA 18109

The second issue of prose stories written by Keith Royster and Mark Wayne Harris with an illustrated cover by Keith Royster and Darrell Goza. Edited by Fenwick Thaddeusford. 1. Darkstone, a full blooded native american walks the mean streets of NYC and takes on a present day gang. 2. Kestrel is a mage of little importance until he's forced to take on a task of monumental importance. 3. Is a robot more than blood and dust...or less? (D)

Hero Tribute #2

\$.75 from Darrell Goza, 1715 East Cambridge St., Allentown, PA 18109

A man has a recurrent dream that he has superpowers. But is it just a dream when you wake up and there are brief after effects? (M)

