

The Ensign Report #6 (Jan. 2013) UFO Edition.

Comments and opinions by Don Ensign. Published in Tetragrammaton Fragments #226.

Postscripts: RE: Last issue's *To Matt Baker with Love*. Dan Burke has a special affection for the work of Matt Baker. Many of us long time comics fans can relate. We have our short and long lists of favorite comic book artists who command our admiration and deep respect. Dan's enjoyment of Baker's work is justly signified by the title of his series of books dedicated to the late artist. RE: *Tales of Fantasy* #58: I did very much enjoyed Larry Johnson's adventures of the HAND. RE: I'm sorry to see Steve Shipley leave UFO after his successful two year tenure as Chairman. I wish him well.

Ditkomania #69 (2012- Rob Imes)
As with previous issues I appreciate the three reviews of the same book, *The Creativity of Steve Ditko*. While this is not a volume that will not likely find its way on my bookshelf anytime soon I appreciate each reviewers thoughts. Just a couple comments. Reviewer Hirschak disagrees with Yoe's comment about Ditko's propensity for populating his comics with "ugly people". I suppose I'll cling to the old adage that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." One of the reasons I like Ditko's work is that he doesn't inhabit his comics with fashion models. His people are normal and eccentric which proclaims character. They are often weather-beaten--they've been around the block a few times with a dignity that is beautiful by experience and not just surface gloss. A big part of the charm of Ditko's artwork is its quirky bizarreness. But, of course, Ditko can draw handsome men and pretty girls when he needs to. Another comment that I disagree with is Hirschak approval of Yoe's assessment that Ditko is "the greatest comic book artist of his time." While I like Ditko's work that statement is a matter of personal preference--opinion. I suppose Ditko ranks some where in my top 20 favorite comic book artists but making absolute

statements concerning personal favorites is a matter of opinion. If the statement were "Ditko is *one* of the greatest comic book artists of his time" I'd have no problem with it. The feature I liked most about this issue was Javier Hernandez's "Picto-Bio" of Steve Ditko's career. This was a nice intro to Ditko's work in mainstream comics that could serve as an excellent primer for -- say a website dedicated to the artist's career. I appreciate Nick Caputo's article (and the reprint page from *Tales to Astonish* #28 by Jack Kirby) about *Amazing Fantasy* #15 concerning thematic background elements that were current in Marvel Comics of the period. This in my mind is the value of a zine like *Ditkomania*--it allows fan scholars and writers to look back on the work of an artist or character and discuss what made those stories special. I appreciated the other articles and the excellent letter column. Another fine issue.

Tune In #17 (2012- Rob Imes)
I'll have to admit I'm not hugely fascinated with old radio shows but nevertheless I found this revived title quite affecting. Somewhere I read that the Golden Age of Radio was from 1930 to 1962. If that is true I lived during part of that period. However I can tell you from 1953 television dominated my family's leisure time entertainment experiences. Radio was relegated pretty much to a companionate media softly blurring in the background while doing household chores. Recently I came across an old letter from my uncle addressed to my father dated May 17, 1925 from Port Stanley, Washington. In part it said, "We got the report on all the base-ball games every night at six o'clock over the radio. Also the market reports makes it pretty good. You want to get one this fall you can get a two tube set from Sears Roebuck for 40.00 or less that will reach all over I think." During the mid-

1960s one of the local radio stations began playing some of the old radio shows like "The Shadow" and others and I listened for a time and enjoyed them. Even though these shows were maybe 15 to 20 years old at the time it seems as if they were from a different century. When one is young your perspective is so much different. While I'll have to plead ignorance of most of the radio programs reviewed in the various articles I enjoyed reading about them. I am sorry to hear of one of *Tune In's* main writers (Shawn Danowski) early demise. He took obscure radio problems and wrote about them with real clarity and affection that one couldn't help but be impressed by these long ago audio artifacts. Very good writer and a real lose.

I appreciated you having the courage to print your 1992 essay "See No Evil". Sometimes we write or draw material in the enthusiasm of youth that we later wish we hadn't-or at least not published it. I also appreciate the background information you provided to catch new readers up to speed concerning the history of *Tune In*. My only suggestion is to find spot artwork to breakup the page after page of solid type. Good first (or 17th issue) of this revival zine.

Ron Hanes Adventures #1-13 (2000-2012, Randy Reynaldo) This is a tribute to a former UFO member, Randy Reynaldo. I've known of Randy Reynaldo's Rob Hanes small press comic books for many years. I first ran into him at the San Diego Comic Convention back in the 1990s when he was doing Rob Hanes as a digest-sized book. In more recent years I've lost contact with him and re-discovered Randy and his booth at the recent San Diego Comic Con (see photo *T-Frags* #224).

In some ways Randy and his creation represent one direction that a successful small press publication can take. Randy has been very faithful over the years to consistently produce Rob Hanes material on a regular basis for apparently a "cult" following. Someone has noted that Randy has had tremendous perseverance with his book.



Despite the obvious professional product *Ron Hanes Adventures* has not broken out of small press. There have not been any Rob Hanes comic book deals with major publishers, no cartoons, no TV or movie deals or other accruements of larger success.

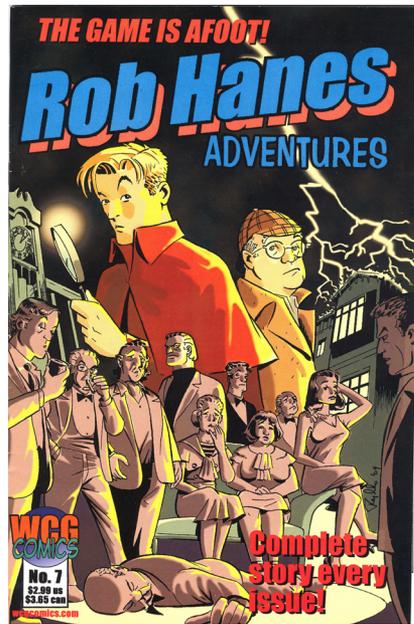
Reynaldo is very good about citing his influences and the nature of the Rob Hanes character. With the cautionary note that I may be just repeating what Reynaldo has said (and probably better) about his own work here are my thoughts on Ron Hanes. Rob Hanes is a globe trotting troubleshooter with a large private investigator agency, Justice International. This allows Hanes to engage in adventures in real and fictional countries (i.e., Koman, middle eastern country) around the world. His adventures take occur in "real" places like Japan, Russia, Red China, Hong Kong, the Balkans, France, the South Pacific, Equatorial Africa and the USA. He is part Terry and the Pirates, part James Bond and part small town boy makes good. One comics friend who wasn't familiar with Rob Hanes, quickly quipped, the character is like a grown-up Jonny Quest.

Randy's artwork is a joy to behold. He

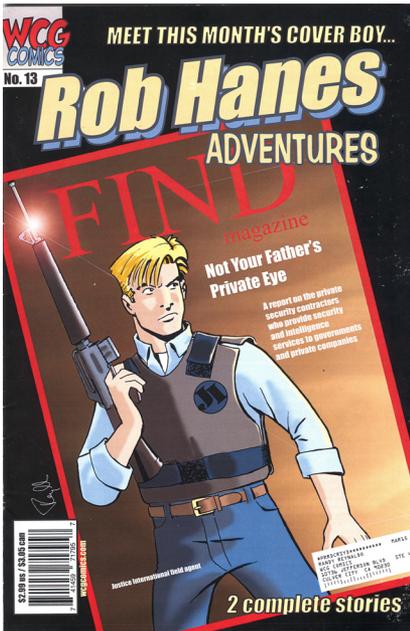
is open about his influences from Milton Caniff, Noel Sickles, Roy Crane, Will Eisner, Alex Toth and others. He has a flair for layout both with individual (inside) panel composition and solid panel-to-panel and page-to-page storytelling, which I'm sure, has come about from lots of hard work and natural talent. He has learned his lessons well from Caniff, Sickles and Toth. Reynaldo's work, both writing and art, is very, very good for small press. His work reminds me of the art of Pete Morisi, a Charlton Comics artist, most noted for his work on the action hero, Thunderbolt. But Reynaldo's work is sharper and crisper and has more energy than Moresi's. Perhaps the resemblance has to do with Morisi and Reynaldo working from the same sources. Reynaldo does his art homework in referencing sources for place scenes in Moscow or Paris or Shanghai. He draws weapons and vehicles convincingly and the action moves steadily from panel to panel with interesting camera angles. Reynaldo takes seriously Alex Toth's numerous injunctions to par out extraneous detail which gives the his drawings an effortless streamlined appearance. Reynaldo describes Ron Hanes' adventures as "light". Light is a good adjective for Hanes' exploits. The adventures are breezy, not to be taken too seriously romps in international intrigue. However the stories do have a certain plausibility to them. They don't go over the top entering into the realm of the incredible in terms of the goals of each adventure. These stories could conceivably happen. Hanes is not trying to stop the world from being destroyed or being conquered by a mad dictator in every story. Hanes himself is a pretty light-weight character. One of the adventure genre staples of these tales--they are loaded with beautiful women many of whom have had prior relationships with Hanes. Even with these dangerous and alluring damsels Hanes seems to keep a semblance of boyish innocence (sort of like Denny Colt "The Spirit"). He can have a physical relationship with one of the

numerous attractive women without emotional entanglements. Yet this is a rare occurrence and discretely happens off camera. Someone has said you would never want to have James Bond over for dinner and if you did you should safely lock up your wife and daughters. Hanes is a much safer and friendlier character.

This presents one of the strong features of the strip along with the humor--Hanes, while a very competent operative is not an invincible James



Bond. He has his foibles, short comings and even gets tired and fails. Rob Hanes has a gallery of characters (besides the women) that come in and out of the stories. Characters like his rather unlikely partner, the paunchy and glorious average Abner McKenna, the spirited magazine writer Tiffany Lance plus reoccurring unsavory political strongmen, pirates, criminals and other assorted heavies. Reynaldo is able to inject an aspect of real life here. People come in and out of all of our lives not in a mechanic way but in an often spontaneous and unplanned manner. The current *Ron Hanes Adventures* is a



normal comic book sized publication with 13 issues and comes out about once a year. There are several other compilations of his earlier digest-sized books (*Adventure Strip Digest*, some of his UFO bannered stories) that are available from his web site. Most of the stories revolve around international intrigue, industrial espionage and so forth. Some of the later issues deal with "off beat" topics like murder mysteries (#7), baseball (#10) and reality TV shows (#12).

The comic strip globe-trotting adventurers are almost an extinct breed. Rob Hanes carries on the tradition of Terry and the Pirates, Steve Canyon, Buz Sawyer, Johnny Hazzard and other comic strip adventurers and does it with a zest and imagination fit well for the 21st century. It makes one wonder that some animation or movie studio is missing out on a potentially lucrative property. One likes to think that Caniff, Sickles, Crane and the other great adventure comic strip creators would have looked fondly on Randy Reynaldo's Rob Hanes.

As alluded to above each issue of *Rob Hanes Adventures* contains a letter column and helpful commentary by Reynaldo.

Bio-Speak 6

December 19, 1958 was a big day in my ten year old life. It was the first time I saw *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. I was blown away by the great special effects--the giant one-eyed Cyclops, the two headed Roc, the fire breathing Dragon, the magical woman-serpent and the miniature princess were cinematic marvels that mesmerized this country boy. I got in for a whole \$.35 to witness this movie extravaganza. Years later I found out about the stop-action magic was created by Harry Harryhausen. I saw it again June 12, 1959 (four days before George Reeves death) and for a third time from Feb. 25-Mar. 1, 1963 as a noon movie at my junior high. I purchased the Dell Comic book version of the movie with art by John Buscema and script by Gaylord Du Bois. I remember being

some what disappointed with the comic as the Cyclops were just giant one-eyed



men not the Pan-like gargantuan of the film. Also so much was left out--the comic could have been twice as long. Later I realized that the Cyclops was probably more like what Buscema depicted and Du Bois was a fine scripter dealing well with what he was given. In recent years I purchased a DVD of the movie and it holds up well as a fairly sophisticated fairy tale. It is still enjoyable and a great kids movie.