



NOZ NOTES by Rob Imes

The past month has been a slow one for UFO releases, as can be seen by the UFO Checklist in this issue of *T-Frags* (which only lists the UFO releases that weren't already on the Checklist in *T-Frags* #207). I do think that members should use their own version of the Checklist as befits their particular titles' needs. For example, it makes sense that the UFO Checklist which appears in the upcoming *COMIC FAN!* #5 to have a Checklist which lists all the UFO books that have come out since the Checklist that appeared in *COMIC FAN!* #4. (Instead of just the Checklist that appears in this issue of *T-Frags*, which only lists 3 titles.) So I provided Jim Main, *Comic Fan!*'s editor, with a UFO Checklist which did just that, listing all the UFO titles since the previous issue of *COMIC FAN!* (This is the same UFO Checklist which appears in *SATYR* #9.) I also listed as much detail as I could, since it was made for a magazine-size publication (unlike this digest-size *T-Frags*, or a mini-comic), to take advantage of the larger size. The only bad side of my doing the Checklist is that my computer skills are extremely limited and primitive, so my Checklist that appears in *SATYR* #9 is not as snazzy looking as the Main Enterprises and SPS checklists in the same issue. But I want to help make the UFO Checklists that appear in our publications be as up-to-date and informative as possible. So if anyone needs a new UFO Checklist for their latest publication(s), just email me at robimes@yahoo.com and I'll send you one. I'm also going to try and keep current UFO Checklists in the "Files" section at the UFO Yahoo Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/unitedfanzoneorg>

Ironically, I'm sending this column to Nic not from my home computer, but from the public library. I have had some computer problems recently, unable to connect to the net without having to wipe my computer fresh and start over. But since I have an issue of *Ditkomania* coming up (I'll be printing it on August 11th), and everything else on the computer is working okay, I decided that I'd rather be without internet until the new issue is done, rather than be without (for example) my printer/scanner/copier, just in case the reboot screws that up. Better safe than sorry, I say. Once the new DM is in the can, then I'll use the

recovery disc on my computer, re-establish my internet connection, and reinstall all the stuff I use to make my zine. In the meantime I've been taking a USB drive to the public library once a week, to download submissions that are emailed to me, then I take the USB drive to my home computer where I can upload them to my computer and add them to my newest issue of DM in-progress. I can also write out this column at home, save it on to the USB drive, take it to the library, convert the Word document to a PDF file at a website, and email it to Nic, just in time for the TF 208 deadline. Sounds like an extra bit of hassle, but like I said, I'd rather be without the net for awhile than take a chance being without the other stuff that I really need to make my zine.

You may have noticed the illos at the beginning of my column. The first one is a preview of the cover of *Ditkomania* #74, coming out in mid-August. This Ditko-drawn image of *Shade The Changing Man* originally appeared as the cover of *The Comics Journal* #33 in 1977. I had not even seen this cover before until late last year. (I mentioned this in DM #67, which had a focus on *Shade*.) I suspect that this rare drawing was an early piece of presentation art for the *Shade* concept, since it looks a little different in style from the published comic. Brian Franczak, who runs the www.ditko-fever.com website (and also maintains a comprehensive *Ditkomania* checklist on that site), provided the image and did the logo (which emulates the original TCJ font). The new issue of DM will have a "Ditko at DC" theme, although I'm still in the process of deciding what I'll have room for and what will have to be saved for a future issue. I've found myself using a smaller size type than usual (9 point instead of 10 point), which is a bit unfortunate because it makes the words a little harder to read. However, I'm able to cram more content into an issue by using the smaller type size. And sometimes it's not that noticeable -- for example, my "Ditko and the Goblin" article was in 9 point, as was DM #73's letters page. As things stand now, even at 9 point size, the lettercol of DM #74 runs to six pages. I may have to cut that back to only two or three pages, and save the other letters for another time. When I revived DM last year, I thought giving myself a 32 page format would allow for *puh-len-tee* of space for material, but sometimes it seems like not nearly enough. However, it would be cost prohibitive for me to raise the page count (and thus also the postal cost to me) considering that many DMs are sent out as freebies to contributors, pros, friends, etc.

The second illo on the previous page is the cover of DM #75, drawn by Larry Blake. Larry actually sent me this late last year, but it looked like a good cover for the anniversary issue (which actually might be an extra-thick issue to handle all the material in it). DM #75 is pretty much put together, since the stuff in it -- dealing with Ditko's 1975 output -- was originally planned to come out back around March, until I realized that it would make more sense to have it come out as DM #75, not only because of the numerical symmetry, but in case I had to make the issue extra-thick to fit it all in. I recently have also been having plans for what DM #76 & 77 might focus on. Next year I plan to put out six issues of DM (#76-81) and I'm thinking now that DM #76 will focus on Ditko's Marvel work (to accommodate the Marvel-related articles and

art that I've received) and DM #77 will focus on Ditko's philosophy comics (since some folks have expressed an interest in writing articles about that aspect of his career). DM #78 may have a supernatural theme, since I've also got material on that topic coming soon.

The third illo at the beginning of this column is a drawing I did of Cerebus for the fanzine *Cerebus The Newsletter* which should be coming out this month. I did a review of this zine a while ago on the Poopsheet Foundation website, and offered to do two drawings, although I have only completed this one so far.

OK, I'm getting typically long-winded, so perhaps I ought to get to the reviews now. I do want to give an enthusiastic welcome to Darrell Goza and Lance "DOC" Boucher (or did I welcome DOC already last issue)? I had begun sending Darrell copies of DM anyway, so it works out well for me with him in the UFO now. I like his publications, they have a nice sleek and cool look to them, like the small-press equivalent of a sports car! The tone of KULPRIT makes me uneasy as a reader (as I think it is meant to), like walking down a dark alley at night in the real world and not having a superhero around to save you. Aside from Darrell's comics, the only other publications I've received since the previous issue of *T-Frags* are SATYR #9 and DWM #3.

DEADLY WORLD MAN #3 by Marc Haines again shows Marc's talent for combining drama and sharp humor. I liked it a bit more than DWM #2, but not as much as DWM #1. Part of this may be because of my personal tastes. DWM #3 got off to a rough start for me because I found it hard to relate to it from the beginning, with what I feel is the unrealistic portrayal of the pastor. From the first panel, it appears that this is likely a non-denominational Protestant church ("Odebolt Church of Christ") since it is named after the town and not a saint, as with many Catholic churches. And yet in the second panel, the pastor is shown alone (outside the setting of a church service) in a ritualistic stance and wearing the collar of a priest. For one so (apparently) reverential and holy-minded to then take the Lord's name in vain in the third panel (even at the appearance of so startling a figure as that which greets him) makes a mockery of his holy pose. That would be one thing, but it also makes a mockery of his very *thoughts* in the second panel. I don't believe that one whose thoughts are so prayerful would suddenly exclaim in a near expletive in the very next panel; it doesn't ring true, and reads more (to me) like the author going for a cheap gag at the expense of the believability of the character.

On the next few pages, the banter between Zach Baxter and his female coworker as well as General Mills is sometimes amusing, but also a bit juvenile sounding. Perhaps some people do indeed talk like these people do, but I don't know people who do so, and wouldn't want to. However, despite these complaints of mine, I have to admit that the story was readable, easy to follow on the page, and made me wonder what was going to happen next. I just wish things were taken a bit more seriously in this particular issue because it looks like a serious story, from the excellent cover (remiscent of Bill Sienkiewicz's art in the 1980s) to the climactic panel. The cutesy dialogue works against it, for

me. I did like how Baxter's business suit was drawn in all-black, which is very instructive to me as to how to draw a suit (I'm not good at drawing clothing) without the details of suit-depiction getting in the way. Just paint the whole outfit in black ink and it works just as effectively, maybe moreso.

SATYR #9 was the first issue of SATYR that I've read. The cover is great (I almost said "nice," but a face so hideous-looking doesn't deserve to be described that way). The bug-eyed creature by Jeff Gaither is drawn in a style reminiscent of Basil Wolverton's *Plop!* covers for DC in the 1970s. Perhaps the creature should have been given a name by Jeff, though, like "Pop-Eye Sailor" or something equally groan-inducing. "Wild Strawberries" by BeBop (who?) was beautifully-drawn, but I have to admit that it wasn't my kind of comic. The characters hang out in bars and yet they are drawn to resemble children.

"What Is It?" by Al & Rick Limacher and Jack Bertram was my favorite piece in this issue, a five-page horror story like something one might have found in an old comic. I love Bertram's Kirby-style art – but his layouts are great, too, very easy to follow for the eyes. Richard Krauss' 5-page tale had a nice, classy look and I enjoyed it. "Cocktail Hour," however, was a tale I didn't quite get. The longest story in this issue, "Just a Cup of Coffee..." was enjoyable, but didn't really fit in well with the rest of the material. It's basically a superhero story but one that focuses on a bank robber (who is apprehended by the hero at the end); the other main difference is that there are realistic touches, such as profanity. Minus the foul language, this could have been a tale in *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*. The language is presumably only there to make the story seem more like it's taking place in the real world, but such adult content doesn't mesh well with a children's fantasy genre. Had the adult content been removed (and such content was not essential to the tale anyway), this story would have made a fine contribution to a superhero anthology comic. Aside from this complaint, I thought the story was well-done and enjoyable. Although the artist's inking was on the rough side, having an unfinished look, I thought the layouts were excellent, demonstrating the storytelling sense of a professional mainstream artist.

Well, that's all for my reviews this time. I hope everyone is enjoying their summer, and I look forward to being more productive this year. Here are a few other plugs, non-UFO related, to close out this column. I recently subscribed to the SPS newsletter *Rap Sheet*, and wrote a review of their current issue over at the Poopsheet site. If you like reading T-Frags, you ought to check out the SPS zine as well, which features a fine bunch of members (including a few UFOers). More info is at www.smallpresssyndicate.com

Larry Johnson, writer/artist/publisher of the long-running small-press comic *Tales of Fantasy*, has moved. His new address is 31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 01236. I recently obtained a big batch of Larry's zines, and I think he's brilliant. Send him \$3.00 if you'd like to receive a copy of TOF... highly recommended (and a former UFO zine, too)! See you next time!

– Rob Imes