

NOZ notes by Rob Imes

Typical for me, here's another last-minute column to *T-Frags*, written right before the deadline. Better late than never, though, and the same can be said of **TF #214** (Aug. 2010), which was mailed out by former Chairman **Nic Carcieri** to the membership last month. It was a thin B&W issue, but as far as I'm concerned it served its purpose well despite the lack of a color cover, etc. Had it come out in August as planned, it would have bought Nic another two months' time during which he wouldn't have to concern himself with TF. Ah well, things ultimately have turned out for the best, with **Steve Shipley** seamlessly stepping in with his own well-produced issues of TF, beginning with **#214b** (which also came out last month). It was a great debut, the only glitch being printing the UFO Constitution twice at the end of the issue. But, again, better to have printed it twice than not at all! (The same could be said for **Darrell Goza's** column, which was the same as the one he had in #214. Perhaps he didn't think Nic was going to put #214 out, so he reused that column for #214b.)

Speaking of Darrell's column last issue, he proposed an amendment to the **UFO Constitution** regarding the eligibility of **webcomics** to fulfill a member's 20 pages per year requirement. Darrell's suggestions regarding such members being required to display the UFO Checklist on their sites, etc. is logical-sounding... since the computer screen or site can be seen as the digital equivalent of a printed page. So his proposal is a way of keeping up with the realities of how many people today read (for example, news articles on the web having replaced newspaper articles for many readers). As e-readers become more popular and ubiquitous, more people may be reading words on a screen than on a printed page. Perhaps that day has already come, in fact. More and more people are able to surf the net on compact devices that can be held in the palm of their hand, taken with them wherever they go, and so the argument could be made that it's more convenient to have one's material on an instantly-accessible internet than on stapled pieces of paper that can get lost, get damaged, etc.

Still, I can't get past the notion for me that those like myself who generally don't read online comics would be missing out. Would we be required as members to go to those links and read those webcomics there so that we can review them in our *T-Frags* columns? If digital comics are treated the same as printed comics, the answer would seem to be yes. That would seem to be putting the burden on the reader: they'd have to go click those links, be dragged over to someone's site, read what's there. For some of us, as I've said, this is not an ideal way to read a comic, and here we would be forced to do so. I recently learned of a website that has hundreds of old pre-1960 public domain comics, where you can view large page scans of complete runs of old series, including the original ads. I have used it for research purposes (as I did when compiling that job number info in the recent DM), but I only read around a dozen pages of the comics there for enjoyment. After that it was just too much of a hassle having to click to get to the next page, wait for it to load, adjust the size so it was readable, etc. I'm glad it's there as an additional resource, but for me it will never take the place of an actual comic I can hold in my hand. And it sounds to me that's what we'd be doing here: instead of receiving an actual comic in my mailbox, I'd be getting a link to a website (and I get enough of that sort of thing in my Inbox already).

My hope is that members would be willing to do **both**: to put out a printed comic (is 20 pages per year really asking too much?) as well as having a website that promotes their comic. J. Kevin Carrier has been doing this with *Fantasy Theater* -- in fact, I bought all of the available back issues of that series after seeing the list on his site. The only way that I could go along with Darrell's proposed amendments regarding webcomics is if they allowed

for members to request and receive a free printed copy. Because as I've indicated, some of us have different tastes and temperaments. For example, some people listen to the radio a lot (that would be me) while others listen to MP3 players. Asking the radio listener to instead listen to music on an MP3 player, when they prefer to listen to the radio, is not fair to the listener, even if it's all nearly the same audio content. I have no idea how this would work, though, if a webzine publisher says that there is no printed version to substitute with, or that he can't afford to mail out a printed version because that costs money.

To be prudent, I'm going to vote NO on Darrell's amendment for now. I could change my mind if I can be convinced that it's not going to lead to me receiving even fewer UFO zines than I do at present (which is darn few). Speaking of which, by my count there were only **two** new UFO publications that came out since TF #214b. They are ***PPFSZT! #29** (Dec. 2010) and my own **Ditkomania #83** (Feb. 2011).

REVIEWS:

***PPFSZT! #29** (Jim Main, editor/publisher): This anthology is an odd mix. The format is slick, print-on-demand, and some of the content fits in well with that modern sensibility (the front cover, for example) whereas some of the contributions have a more old-school fan approach, and would look more at home in a photocopied digest zine like the **PPFSZT!*'s of old. I finally figured out my question from last *T-Frags* about the difference between *Satyr* and **PPFSZT!*; the latter is more sci-fi oriented I think, given its ray-gun sounding name. I think I enjoyed this issue as much as last issue -- hard to say when there's such a mixed bag in each issue, of stories I enjoyed and stories I didn't. George Leon's "Flying Sharks" strip, which was mostly silent, was my least favorite strip in the issue, although I do think several panels (particularly those with the child) were well-drawn. It was just a case of not justifying the 12 pages that it took up in the mag, the longest strip in it!

Art-wise, I thought Scott McClung's odd tale was the best. I liked the different perspectives that were used in the layouts (overhead shot, lower shots looking up, etc.) although I don't know how much of this Scott had to create himself or whether it's just some software program that anyone can use to get similar results. Jim Main's editorial and lettercol were welcome additions... Not many small-press comics have letter pages, that I'm aware of, and I like to see them. It shows that the audience is interested in what is going on here. (Without a letter page, most readers may assume that no one cared enough to write.) Simon Mackie's two one-pagers were good: the first one was a bit too graytoned for my taste, though. The last Mackie strip in the book had a final panel that brought back memories of *Calvin & Hobbes*. I also liked Jeff Mason's one-pager; it was refreshing due to its lack of any modern digital effects, looking like just good old-fashioned cartooning. Speaking of old-fashioned, *The Acrobat* and *The Simian* strip was so primitive and old-timey that it had an endearing quality, reminiscent of the kind of homemade superhero comics that many of us made as kids. Dan Burke's *Giant Gia* strip was also enjoyable, with great use of blacks and grays. Steve Shipley's one-pager was okay, but I can anticipate that some might find it objectionable, due to the comparison of a heroine's super powers to being lusted over by men. The argument could be made that in the former case the woman is using her power for her own benefit while in the latter situation she is being used by men for their benefit. Or more accurately, they are using each other: the male giving her things in exchange for sex, while she is accepting the attention to receive what he gives her. But this is much too serious thinking for what is simply a 1-page gag strip. Overall, this was another enjoyable issue.

Well, that's all for me till next time! The next issue of DM (#84) is scheduled to be released in early April, and I still don't have any clear idea of what it will be about yet! But that's part of the fun sometimes! -- **Rob Imes**