

NOZ NOTES by Rob Imes

- DITKOMANIA #87 RELEASED!

I printed up the **new issue** of my fanzine *Ditkomania* on Feb. 14th, and over the next 2 days managed to mail out copies to **158 people** (including all members of the UFO). That issue, like most issues of DM, is sent not only to paid subscribers (of which I have about 80), but also to contributors, well-known fans, industry pros, and to countries like Canada, England, France, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Australia, and Singapore. I always send a copy to Marvel as well, and I send two copies to Ditko's co-publisher Robin Snyder, who sends one to Ditko himself. I hope that the presence of the **UFO Checklist** in each well-traveled issue of DM helps to increase recognition of every member's own publications.

Of course it always seems like the deadline for a new *Tet-Frags* occurs right when I put a new issue of DM out, which means that I'm going to rush through some quick thoughts on the UFO publications that I've received this year so far.

- REVIEWS OF MEMBER ZINES:

BADGE: CODE OF CONDUCT #7 (?) (published by Dan Burke):

I received this 2003 full color magazine from Dan recently, not sure if this was an application zine or not. The visuals in this comic are brilliantly executed; I was quite impressed! The overlap of one image in the same scene as another -- like a double-exposure -- was reminiscent of a "dissolve" in film, and made me realize that this is something that is done better in photography than in regular comics illustration (although the effect may have been a bit overused here). One complaint: the fortune telling lady had her nipples exposed as she was talking to the officers, which seems to have been done for humor's sake. Not only did it not make sense in the context of a story (if we the reader are to take the story seriously), but it jars the reader out of his suspension of disbelief -- he remembers that he is reading something that someone has created, and that realization keeps pulling him out of the story. Also, it prevents the comic from being an "all ages" title, whereas I think this sort of unique fummetti would greatly appeal to the younger reader, perhaps cause them to look at comics for the first time. In other words, minus the inappropriate content, this book would have been a nice addition to any public library's comics section. Something to consider the next time one decides to add an adult element to any comic, since that will automatically limit one's audience to adults. Another technical criticism: perhaps the word balloon in the first panel ("Jack, we have problem...") could have had a jagged tail, which is shorthand for indicating a voice emanating from a speaker (in this case, the phone or walkie-talkie held by the man shown in the panel). On a positive side, the collage that opens the book was stupendous, very well done!

BEYOND HUMAN #1 & 2 (published by Hal Jones):

I don't think I received the #3 that is listed in the Checklist. (It's possible I misplaced it, though.) These two comics were, if memory serves, Hal's application zines, and were published in 2009. I was very impressed by both issues. I liked the 1st issue more than the 2nd because it had greater variety of subject matter, telling 3 very different stories (which presumably will intersect in future issues). The 2nd issue read a bit more like a religious tract, but nonetheless was an amazing artistic achievement for a small-press comicbook. I don't think some of those panels could have been more detailed! Hal's artwork is excellent in both issues, sometimes reminding me of Steve Bissette's art, sometimes of Berni Wrightson. The vibe I got in the first issue was like reading a 1970s Warren magazine or Atlas-Seaboard comic -- nice stuff! The writing was strong, too. This is a truly great comic and I look forward to reading more of Hal's work.

COLLECTED LEAGUE OF ANNOYING HEROES (published by Dan Burke):

I'd seen two of the stories before in Jim Main's publications, but it was nice to have them here in one comic. Dan's art reminds me of political cartoonist Tom Tomorrow's, but while Tom's art is heavily reliant on (i.e., copied from) existing photos, Dan's figures seem to be mostly original here (unless I'm unfamiliar with their origins). I think this is a comic which could appeal to the grumpiest old-time fan as well as the hipster alternative type reader. Nice work! But when was it published? (No copyright info or indicia within.)

HERO CENTRAL UNIVERSE #5 (published by Jason Bullock):

This issue started out slow with the laboratory resurrection, but flows more smoothly in the scenes between Solomon and the priest. I don't think the front cover works too well, since the red coloring obscures the figure too much. (Fortunately this image is repeated in a pin-up at the back of the comic, since it shows up better in B&W.) The red does get across the idea of blood, but perhaps that idea could have been presented in a more immediately grasped manner, especially for the reader who hasn't read the issue yet (and thus, who won't make the blood/red connection, not knowing the story). Perhaps the figure should have been emerging from a pool of blood, with the bottom half of the cover red and the top half white. And then the logo could have been red (to contrast with the white top), maybe have blood dripping off the letters. Anyway, just some thoughts on that!

PLAGUE #1 (published by Sam Gafford):

Compared to Sam's *Eternity* #1, this is a less impressive comic, but a welcome addition to my zine collection nonetheless. I found the lettering hard to read, especially in chapter one. I prefer all-caps, which is how comics are traditionally lettered. The art reminded me a bit of Matt Wagner's early *Grendel*. I had a hard time keeping track of who-was-who in the first chapter, but once I got that figured out, I liked it. Looking forward to #2.

SHEESH! #4 (published by Jim Main):

This was an enjoyable issue, if a bit of a fast read, with only one multi-page story (an 8-page parody of "Peanuts" which was alternately amusing and disturbing) and the rest were one-page gag strips. Jim Siergey's stuff was the best (I've enjoyed his work since the late 1980s when he contributed to Fantagraphics' *Centrifugal Bumble-puppy*); I thought the gag with the elephants was the best one. My least favorite was Jason Yates' "Little Gil" strip which was just plain strange and disturbing, instead of funny as I assume it was supposed to be. Overall, a good professional humor comic. Could have been better with more and longer strips, but it was an enjoyable read nonetheless.

TALES OF FANTASY #56 (published by Larry Johnson):

I always enjoy TOF (as I admitted in #56's lettercol), but especially enjoyed this issue. I guess that I have a special place in my heart for talking animals, so the talking crow appealed to me a lot -- hope to see him again as an ally for our heroes. The art seemed very detailed this issue, I liked it a lot -- a nice balance was made between white areas and cross-hatching to create contrast and variety on the page. The dream page was nicely done, too.

VALIANT EFFORTS Vol. 3, #1 (published by Don Ensign):

I read the text introduction first; the last story (from 1965) after that; and finally the lead story (from 1989) last. It was interesting to read them in this order because it was like watching a character transition from the Golden Age to the Bronze Age. (But I agree with the decision to have the newer story be first, since it's better to lead with one's best.) The 1960s story was rough but had a primitive charm. The 1980s story was much better and had an almost-pro slickness to it, very well-done. I look forward to more "Efforts"!

Well, that's all from me this time! See you in the next issue of *T-Frags*!! -- **R.I.**