

NOZ Notes

by
Rob Imes

UFO BUSINESS

I've decided to run for Chairman this year. My intention would be to keep the club running in the manner that it has always been run (but hopefully with less drama than the UFO has historically had). **Dues would remain \$20 per year** for the publication of the newsletter on a bi-monthly basis (six times per year). It should cost me a bit less than that to print up the zine, but any extra money could be used for printing up additional copies (which I plan to do anyway) that could be circulated to potential applicants, possible reviewers (to help promote the club), or even put up for sale on eBay for anyone wanting to buy a copy online.

There are **12 members** of the UFO right now, including myself, so at \$20 each that comes to \$240 per year. (If you take me out of the equation, so that I'm not paying money to myself, that leaves \$220 per year.) I would print up **30 copies** of each issue of *T-Frags*, with roughly half going out to the members (again, I wouldn't need to mail a copy to myself, but I would keep a copy or two for my own *TF* collection) and the rest being either sent out as freebies to those who may be interested in joining the group; those who can help promote the group (say, bloggers who review small-press zines); and ones to sell either via eBay or the listing in the UFO Checklist. (Obviously, the sold copies will pay for themselves, assuming there are people who would want to buy one.) That should be do-able without going over the \$220 for the year. If cost does become a problem (which I don't foresee), I would print fewer copies (say, 20 instead of 30) to deal with it, instead of raising membership dues since I'd like to keep dues as low as I can while allowing enough money available to promote the group a bit.

My primary inspiration for how to run the club is how Jim Main ran it back in 1984-85 when he revived it after it had been dormant for a few years. He published the newsletter as a means of keeping the members informed of their membership obligations, so there was no confusion about who needed to do what (and by when) and how things were done.

To that end, I'd like to see a longer version of the Constitution, and will be putting one together soon for the membership to vote on

(or discuss changes to the wording, etc.), so that questions or problems can be solved more easily whenever they arise by seeing what the Constitution says about it. I will be putting it forward whether I am elected Chairman or not, in the hope that it might make the club's rules clearer to all.

I'm a nostalgic person, and a lover of tradition. It should be obvious, seeing as how when I revived *Ditkomania* in 2008, I kept the old numbering, and tried my best to emulate the zine's previous style by keeping the old logo and the old names of the columns (*Editkorial*, *Ditko in Your Future*, etc.). Even when I joined the UFO, I insisted on using the old 1980s UFO symbol instead of the modern one, such is my love for older things. I find them charming and appealing, not cold and corporate as so many things are these days. Even some indie comics are doing their best to look like corporate comics, ignoring the fact that homemade, amateur comics (that are well done) have their own special appeal -- to the reader's heart.

My thinking is, "*If it's not broke, don't fix it.*" If things are working well (and I think they are, here in the UFO) then keep it going. If that sounds good to you, then please consider voting for me as Chairman of the UFO.

Last issue, I suggested that there be a change to Article Two, Section C of the Constitution which says: "*These member columns are generally used for reviewing of memberzines, discussion of club business, and voting on applicants and other important matters. Members may also want to submit comics and artwork, discuss their publishing plans, etc.*"

On the UFO Facebook group, Don Ensign proposed a slight alteration to the change I had suggested last time. Don suggested that it be changed to read: "**The purpose of member columns is first to review the memberzines that one has received and second discuss club business (such as voting on amendments and applicants).**" I agree with Don's suggested wording. Does anyone else agree?

Reviews

THE BROTHERS UFO

(Published by Dan Burke)

I think this book was done as a lark for the UFO membership itself and not a memberzine *per se*, given the lack of a UFO symbol and checklist. It's impressive looking from a format perspective (hats off to Createspace, the site that bound the book). The content is another matter, as has been already debated on the UFO Facebook wall. If the UFO still had "Sat/Unsat" ratings, I'd have to give this one a "U" on its content for the fact that much of the material is simply reprinted from other places with little in the way of original material.

THE BRIDE OF ODD

(Published by Dan Burke)

This book is thicker and a bit better content wise, but it's uneven in its selections. Some of the material was of interest, some not. My wish is that this same high-scale book-publishing treatment (once again, thanks to Createspace) would have been devoted to more material worth the high-end format used, or at least printed in a more logical and archival manner, worthy of one's permanent bookshelf. Instead in this book, we get the following (among other things):

- **37 pages** reprinting a few threads from the UFO Facebook page. I have to admit that the FB page sometimes leaves a bad taste in my mouth when posters get into lengthy arguments, some of which is reprinted here.

- **36 pages** devoted to showing scantily-clad 3D model images (not in 3D in the book, of course), promoting a website. This is not using the space well (too many pages -- an entire issue of DM runs only 32 pages counting covers, as a point of comparison) and not taking good advantage of the medium (B&W printed pages don't show color 3D images as well as a webpage does).

- **26 pages** devoted to reprinting portions of *T-Frags* #129 (from 1992). Ian Shires' 3-page editorial and his 2-page member column (in other words, 5 pages total) are spread out across 17 pages in this book because Dan decided to make the type size bigger. I would have preferred that the pages were reprinted at their actual size (they were

digest-size, after all, only a little bit bigger than the page size of the *Bride of Odd* book) so that readers could see more of the issue's pages. Dan adds a page of commentary putting down former Chairman Shires as "arrogant," "very mean" and a "blowhard." On another page, he shows a photo of a Star Wars villain and says it is a photo of "Emperor Shires." I don't know Ian myself, but slamming him personally in print, in a trade-paperback edition reprint of his writing, seems a bit unseemly. (My thanks to Dan for sending me the original issue from which this was reprinted.)

So, that brings us to a total of **99 pages** that consist of either UFO FB posts, 3D models, or TF #129 pages. I know that one shouldn't critique someone for the book that they **didn't** make, but I can't help but think about all the worthwhile things that **could have** been done with those 99 pages in a bound book format. Imagine if Dan had put together a book of his brilliantly-drawn comics, such as the one in **PPFSZT! #37* (reviewed on the next page). In that comic's editorial, Jim Main had said that Dan gave him a bunch of material to use because "Dan was unable to go to press with it." That seems odd (speaking of "Odd") given that he just put out these two thick books. I'd like to see more creators do their own Createspace books, if it's as easy as Dan makes it look (although maybe it isn't).

Having said all of the above, there is some interesting stuff in the book. The Model Agency section is amusing: I liked the fake covers especially. "The Search for a Chairman" was funny. I was hopeful that the parody of Larry Johnson's *Tales of Fantasy* would be funny, but while it was well-drawn I thought the attempts at humor missed the mark.

If I had to vote "Sat/Unsat" on this book, I'd probably have to vote "Unsat" (just barely) given the high price tag (\$9.99) for the low percentage of worthwhile pages. (If more of the pages had justified the higher-price treatment, that'd be different.)

FANTASY THEATER #22

(Published by J. Kevin Carrier)

Kevin obviously knows what it takes to not only tell a good story (with both words and pictures) but to fashion it all in a satisfying package as a good editor as well. This comic was a delight from start to finish. The cover begins with an improbable scenario worthy of 1960s Superman comics

as an old woman declares herself to be Capella. The cover illustrates the backup story and I think it was a good choice to let that be told last since it's a more serious story than the Glorianna tale at the beginning. So, the reader can enjoy the light-hearted nature of the lead tale, and then get pulled into the darker aspects (but not too dark, thankfully) of the cover-featured Capella backup. So, even the positioning of his stories demonstrates Kevin's balancing skills.

Like Mike Tuz (in this issue's lettercol) "I always love to see letters pages" and the inclusion of fan art generates a feeling of family and fun. The printing is nice and dark, too, so that the art shines. If I could make one criticism of Kevin's art, it would be that there is a heavily-outlined simplicity to it, almost too simple. It might be good to try and make the linework more subtle or detailed. However, what we see is Kevin's style and I'll enjoy it regardless. My favorite visual in the issue was on page 14 when Capella's friend Mona is listening to her from behind the door, where the two are separated by a black line, and then in the final panel she flings open the door so that they are now in the same panel. *Very satisfactory!*

***PPFSZT! #37** (Published by Jim Main)

As with any anthology title, there is going to be good and bad on display, but the good news here is that this issue was largely very good, beginning with the beautifully intricate cover by Brad Foster. Dan Burke provided stylish art on "The Machine" with a script that was both amusing and imaginative. The one-pager "Alan's Golf Ball" had an improbable premise but was very well-drawn and fun. Rock Baker's art on "Mutation of Lisa Avery" reminded me of Charles Burns' classic look. I didn't like the art in "Bug Hunt" but the story was good, so I didn't mind not liking the art after awhile. In fact, there was only one story that I didn't care for, "The Chip," because it didn't seem to make much sense -- seemingly just a set-up for the twist ending. "Birth of the Blob" was well-done in the 4 pages that it ran. Simon Mackie's story was very strange, but was a change of pace from what went before. I also enjoyed the pin-ups and one-page gag strips at the back of the comic. There's a lot of variety here, but it's unified by the issue's "science fiction" theme, which held it all together well. A 56-page professional-looking comic for \$6.75 postpaid is a good price when the contents are this entertaining and the production level is this high. Congrats to everyone involved. *Very satisfactory!*

TALES OF FANTASY #57

(Published by Larry Johnson)

I'm going to try and write a letter of comment to TOF reacting to this issue (I missed doing so last time), therefore I'll be short here. Suffice to say, I found that the focus on the BSI (Brookston Scientific Institute) was a welcome change of pace for the lead story (they had appeared as background characters in previous stories, and had a backup feature in a recent issue). The BSI lends itself to endless possibilities for stories, since fictional scientists can come up with stuff that in reality aren't scientifically possible (like making spiders gigantic, as in this issue). As with *Fantasy Theater*, the black ink is nicely dark, making the art jump off the page. TOF is one of my favorite comics! *Very satisfactory!*

VALIANT EFFORTS Vol. 3 #2

(Published by Don Ensign)

It's always a little uncomfortable to see a story on a subject like child porn in what is ostensibly a children's genre (superheroes). One has to be careful not to exploit the topic while addressing the problem of it. There are half-naked children shown on the cover, but it's made clear that the people who did this to them are vicious criminals. On the last page when the kids hug The Golden Protector, I was reminded of a Steve Ditko "Mr. A." story where he rescued a kidnapped child and she hugged him at the end, showing a compassionate side to a character that is criticized by some readers of being too unsympathetic to the bad guys. In the same way, the Golden Protector's uniform might be seen as fearsome, but the children recognized him as their protector by his actions defending them, despite his intimidating presence.

The lead story was more interestingly drawn, but a bit disjointed. I was glad that Don mentioned the Perez influence in the editorial, or else I would have been totally confused about what was going on. It's always a bit problematic when the majority of a story is being told as a flashback. It doesn't help that there is no payoff for all of this backstory for the reader because by the time we reach the "continued next issue" caption, we still haven't gotten to the origin of the character yet. Which makes that "to be continued" all the more frustrating. Having said all of that, this is certainly a slick-looking publication and I look forward to future issues of this series. *Satisfactory!*

That's all for now! See you next time! -- R.I.