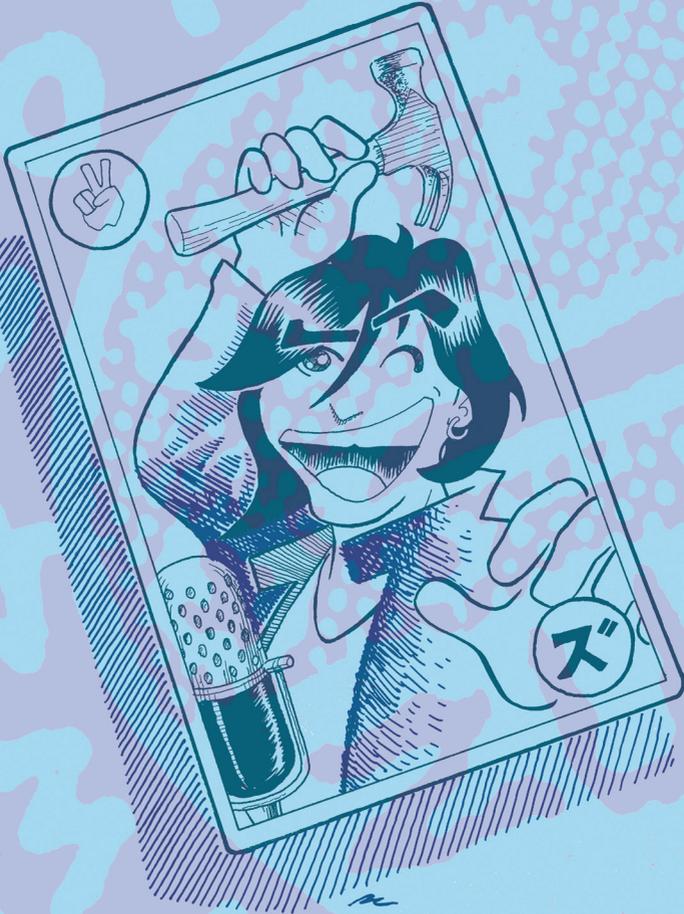


ZUM!



ZUM!number eleven £1.50 summer 2003

welcome to ZUM! eleven...

I concede that this it has been rather a while; but life has been rather full, and I'm not complaining. The main concentration of ZUM! is now on the web at <http://www.zumcomics.info> where hopefully things will continue to evolve. This real word paper version of the ZUM! has been produced using a selection of reviews from the web site. If you are able, I would recommend viewing ZUM! on the web to explore the more complete listing of comics reviews that are there. The selection here is not authoritative, but wholeheartedly subjective: stuff I like & some other bits.

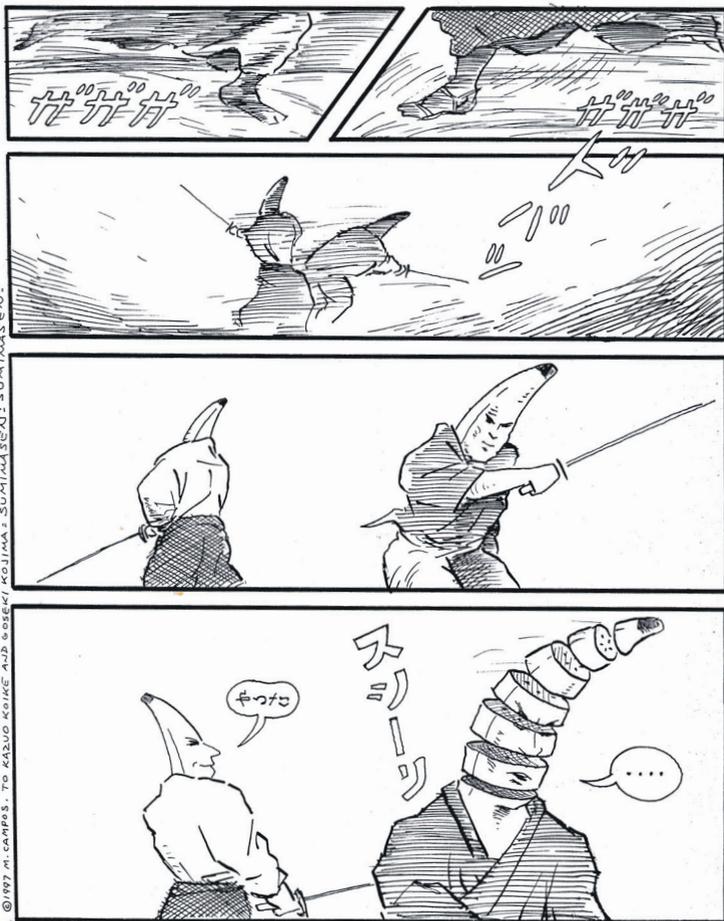
At the moment I cannot dedicate the time and expense involved producing the tomes that were the previous issues of ZUM!.

What of the Dead Banana Awards as announced in the last ZUM! - well, I got a single vote in, & I'm not sure who it was from let alone what the vote was - so I put that banana in the bin.

I think that you could do well to own every single comic reviewed herein - get out that old fashioned cheque book & send off for things - don't hesitate - do it **now!**

Contact ZUM! : Send ZUM! your thoughts! - send ZUM! your comics!

ZUM! HQ, 17 Lime St, Todmorden, OL14 5JN, UK. e: zumcomics@yahoo.co.uk



ZUM! sub- scriptions:

Ah yes, well ~ I will honour the present subscriptions as I see fit. I have no intention if diddling anyone ~ but at present I don't see much point in offering them. I plan to continue making a ZUM! like this every so often, but I have no time scales.

Boring bit:

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Malcy Duff

While ZUM! has been 'away' we have seen the development of some interesting talents; Malcy Duff being a prime example, developing from the early scratchiness of *Zero Termite* to later fluid elliptical comics that are rightly being noticed.

Cloud Dog Agency

Heartsick folk of Edinburgh weep no more! The **Cloud Dog Agency** specialises in cheering up depressed folk by, er, dropping a dog from on high for them to luv and kuddle! Yes, really! This comic tells of two of its three-nostrilled* operatives, Bob and Jim, and Jim's descent into 'Nam-style' flashback... "Agh! Not the Poodle incident!!"

But who drops things for depressed Cloud Dog Agency folk? Aaaaaah, now!

The artwork is wacked-out but effective... uhh... zis comic... it's crazy, but it works!

Terry Wiley

*no, I dunno why they have three nostrils

Gunk

This, I suspect is what home produced zines are all about. Malcy Duff exhibits a simple but clear artistic style and a distinctive, one might say revolting imagination. **Gunk** features two main stories, **Nailman** and **Green Sword** and a couple of pages of fillers.

Nailman is no super hero. This is 124 days in the life of a character who collects toenails and fingernails and, well I won't tell you what he does with them.

Green Sword is the tale of little Egbert William Billiamson who, with a name like that, suffers at the hands of classmates and adults alike. Fortunately he finds a way of having his revenge and, well I won't tell you what he does with them.

If there is a theme to these tales it is one of bodies and bodily fluids. There's also a fair amount of cutting and hacking at limbs.

Gunk is both simple and thoughtful, though what it all means I wouldn't like to say. Not one for the squeamish but worth a look, if only between the fingers.

Maurice Wakehan

THIS PAGE:

THE CLOUD DOG AGENCY:

24 A5 PAGES, COLOUR COPY COVER. ZUM!'S ISSUE INCLUDED A FUN FREE MINICOMIC ON A TURTLE THEME. (8 A6 PAGES).

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 2000 £1.50 (+P+P)

GUNK:

32 A5 PAGES

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 4/4/2000 £1 (+P+P?)

OVERLEAF:

RAINBOWS DON'T HAVE BLACK:

? A5 PAGES, PAGES, BOUND WITH RAINBOW RIBBON.

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: SUMMER 2002 £1 (+P+P?)

PRICE UNCONFIRMED)

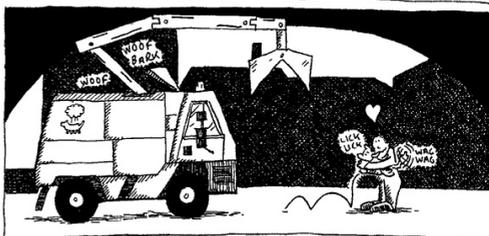
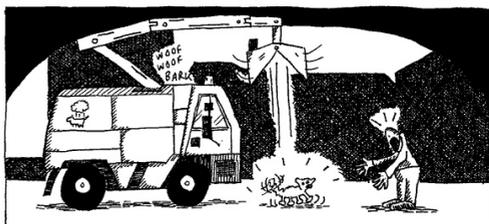
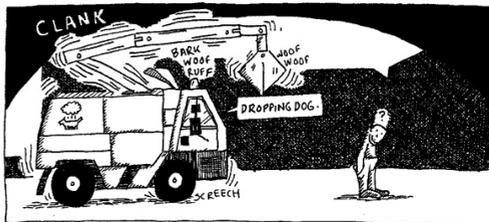
HOOPRINTS: 24 A5 PAGES, COLOUR STOCK COVER.

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: LATE 2001 £1.50 (+P+P?)

M-HAIRC:

24 A5 PAGES, DOUBLE COVER WITH FELT APPLIQUE ON THE INTERNAL COVER.

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 4/02 £1.50 (+P+P?) PRICE UNCONFIRMED)



Cloud Dog Agency © Malcy Duff

LEFT ARM
NG A BODY
I'M
ANYTHING.

DAY 8136
I'VE LEFT MY LEGS UNTIL LAST. I THOUGHT THEY
WOULD BE MORE SUBJECT TO BASHING AND PAIN.
THIS IS THE END OF ME SLEEPING FOR THE NEXT
WEEK - I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SIT UPRIGHT IN BED...

... SO I'LL HAVE TO STAND.



A WEEK OF STANDING UP.



Gunk © Malcy Duff

Rainbows Don't Have Black

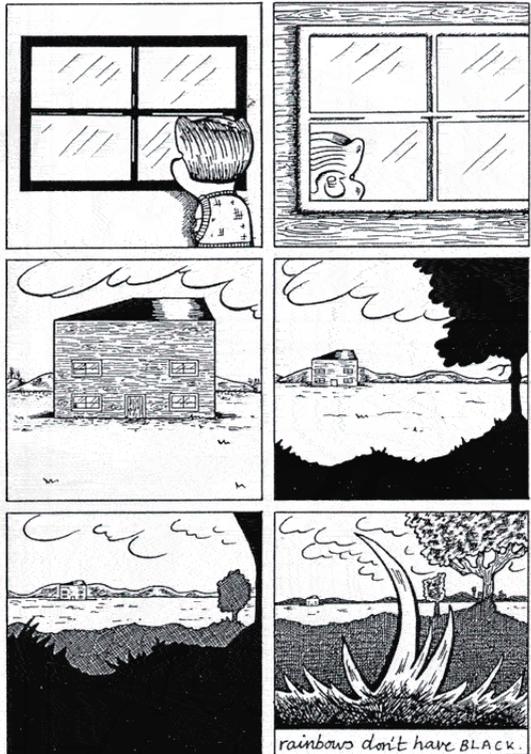
I've just been getting back into the small press, having been, variously, subterranean, homesick and blue for a number of years. Reading around the subject, I've come across the name of **Malcy Duff** a few times, but this is the first I've seen of his work.

This nicely produced little comic - complete with rainbow ribbon - tells the nearly 'silent' story of an anonymous character whose solitary existence is disturbed by the sudden arrival outside of house of a mysterious construction crew. The calmly menacing atmosphere of the narrative, assisted by Malcy's effective pacing and layouts, reminded me a little of the novels of **Magnus Mills** and **Flann O'Brien**. I must admit that I didn't really 'get' the ending, but maybe I'm just approaching it the wrong way; it's just that everything that has happened prior to this has had a basis in the strange logic of the world that Malcy has created.

Malcy's visual style employs a strong confident line, and creates a very distinctive world in which the story takes place. As mentioned, his pacing and layouts effortlessly move the story along, and he makes very effective use of visual puns and tricks based on points-of-view, scale and perspective.

So, all-in-all this is an enjoyable snack of a comic, which thoroughly uses the medium and repays a couple of extra readings. Malcy has got a clearly defined vision, and I'm definitely interested in tracking down some more of his stuff.

Tom Murphy,



Rainbows Don't Have Black © Malcy Duff

Hoofprints

It's surrealism a-go-go in this one shot from the enigmatic Mr. Duff.

A sick and dying alien rides across a desert in search of some distant goal, while in our reality a man passes the time rattling around his house until the post comes.



Hoofprints © Malcy Duff

Eventually the two protagonists are seen to be connected and the story comes full circle.

Unfortunately, I have no idea what the whole thing was about! I wanted to like this, as the art is nicely gruesome in a **Peter Bagge** way, but the whole thing left me going: "Huh?" I think it's a parable about the journey through life, and how hard it is, but the whole thing's so vague; it's difficult to be sure.

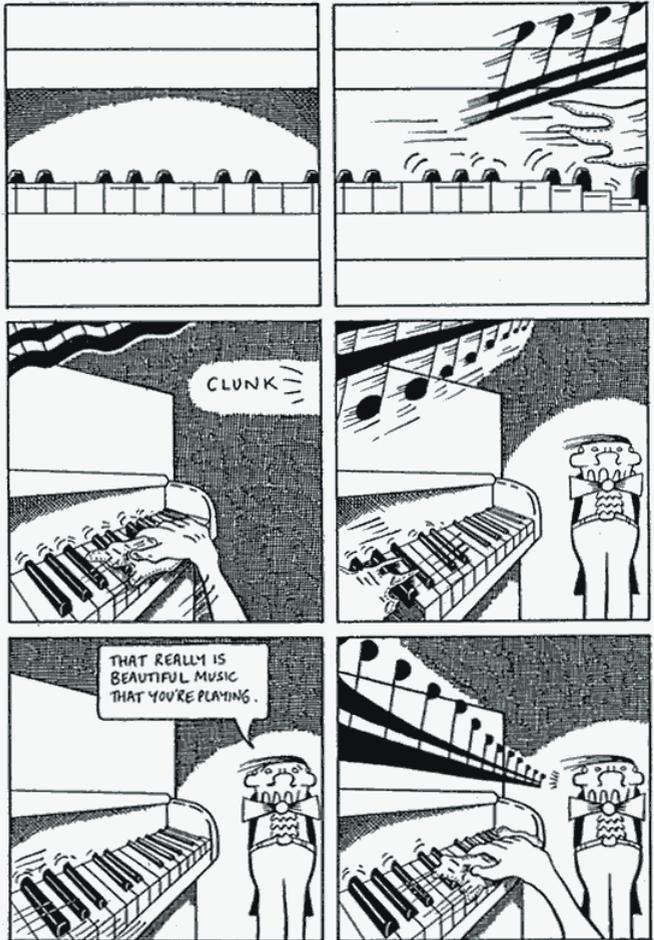
Obviously, people don't want to be spoon fed their philosophy, and I'm all for visual poems, but I think a little more was needed to make this work. As self-expression, it's fine. But by putting your work out there in the big wide world, you're making a statement. You're saying 'this is worth your time'. If you're going to do a 'visual poem', (if that's what this is) choosing to draw in cartoon 'bigfoot' style is probably not a good idea, as it detracts from the seriousness of intent. Even if you're a good cartoonist, as Duff is, you have to be able to communicate. It might work better as part of an anthology. On its own, it's just too flimsy.

Pete Doree

Mhairi

Vary - no, vah-ree... That's how I understand the name to be said. This is just a distraction though. All the comics in this particular print run have a different name, so what is the comic called? How can you identify it? It is not a name - it is an individual, then? So does this comic only exist as such, when you pick it up & read it? At this point I shall step away from that precipice of philosophy.

The press release accompanying the comic states that Malcy considers it to be a tune playing itself. The comic is certainly book-ended by someone dusting piano keys - which, if this could be 'heard' (as opposed to represented) would be a simple scale progression - a very basic tune. From there we follow to the next musical cue, which is a piece of automated music which is nonetheless played with gusto by the performer. This might be considered the 'next movement', if you like (& one with which you might also wish to draw comparisons on the theme of 'Art'). We then segue to a series of uncomfortable vignettes. In these little scenarios differing characters crop up & like motifs with their own little 'tunes'.



Mhairi © Malcy Duff

The narrative does not bind to what you might call a story, but a 'story' is there as it exists in the telling from panel to panel. In terms of comics this is more art.

It has been an interesting journey watching Malcy develop as a comic artist. Even his oldest comics (that I have seen) have had a wilful streak of whimsy - something that should be treasured, but that is often ignored. His artistic vision has become clearer, as has his approach to cartooning. At this stage his cartooning is becoming a clear & individual style. His penchant for the grotesque is quite delightfully exhibited in his cartooning language. His storytelling is becoming quite oblique; this particular comic is a good example of his experimental approach. He seems to be someone who is truly willing to take risks in the way he creates comics & it is this attitude that really sets him apart from most of his peers. If you cannot take risks when creating your own comics - just to see how things work - where can you?

This may be only a step in his overall development. To get a better idea of the greater canvas don't just buy this comic - seek out more of his work in order to watch & participate in the development of this artist (one of the joys of reading small press comics). Where this is all leading is anyone's guess...

mooncat

MALCY DOES NOT WANT HIS HOME ADDRESS PUBLISHED AT PRESENT. HIS COMICS CAN BE OBTAINED VIA <http://www.smallzone.co.uk> OR SENDING VIA THE ZUM! ADDRESS (MAILS WILL BE REDIRECTED).

Black Harvest Moon

Black Harvest Moon has a great premise.

Sometime in the near future, Vampires take over the world (or at least most of L.A.). Some red blooded Americans fight back, and a kind of civil war situation develops. Deep behind 'enemy' lines, an increasingly out of control group of vamps keep a town full of humans hostage, offering them protection in return for a regular food supply, taking just a little blood at a time from each person. Our nominal hero, Rob, is under the 'protection' of his recently returned from the dead girlfriend, Lisa.

Using this scenario as a template, writer Terry Stock creates a tense, intelligent adult thriller as anti hero Rob constantly switches sides to stay alive. The obvious comparison is Richard Matheson's classic novel *I Am Legend* (or the Charlton Heston 70's shock movie adaptation *The Omega Man*), and while *Black Harvest Moon* isn't as good as these; it is probably the most interesting comic I've read in a while; certainly from the small press.

However, it does have problems: Initially, scenes skip about too much, and for the first five or six pages, it's hard to be sure what's going on. This is a comic that needed more pages to tell it's story, not less. Characterisation, once you've figured out who everyone is, is pretty good. And the ending's okay, tho' the last panel is self-consciously nasty, and unnecessary.

Terry does have a good way with hard boiled dialogue tho'. I particularly like: "The city changed hands and the introductions were over" as the vampires descend on humanity. Nice to read some proper writing in the small press.

Colin Stanford's pencils (as featured in the back of the mag) are really good to excellent. Unfortunately, and I really hate to say this, something went wrong in the inking stage. He has a firm grasp of figure work and facial expressions, he's superb at light and shadow, good at composition and camera angles, and, for the most part, knows how to structure a page. But he seems to have inked the whole thing in what looks like magic marker, obliterating any trace of nuance or depth.

There's a great scene where Rob and Lisa talk in a field of abandoned cars, Lisa floating four feet off the ground. I just wish it'd been inked with a decent pen.

Colin's a good enough artist to deserve it.

Finally, I have to mention the cover: Terry and Colin do. They give a page over to the development of it. But (sorry guys) it doesn't work.

Unfortunately, like the rest of the comic, it's printed on the dulllest photocopy paper that just flattens it. No one knows more than me how hard it is to fund your own comic, and as a cover it would've worked, but on card, and in colour: The overall feel is of striving towards professionalism, so it's a shame production values let it down here.

Having said all that, this is a seriously good (and very nearly great) comic, easily worth the cover price, and I'd definitely want to read something else by these guys. I'd recommend investing in it straight away.

Pete Doree

BLACK HARVEST MOON:

32 A4 PAGES | £1 (+P+P!) | BARRY RENSHAW, ENGINE COMICS, 8 AVRIL CLOSE, REDDISH, SOCKPORT, SK5 6HX

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 31x02



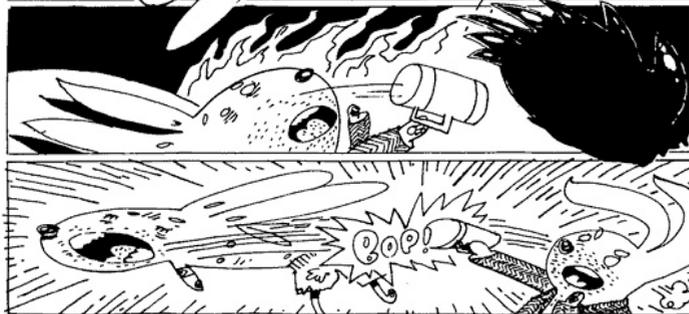
Black Harvest Moon © Script: Terry Stock, Art: Colin Stanford



Cherona #7 © Richard J Smith



Boo Koo #2 © Geoffrey Coupland.



Curl fingers around little bunny

Cherona #7&8

The 'mentality' behind these comics seems to have spent a good long time marinating in Saturday Morning Kids TV cartoons. It's a *fun, fun, fun* world & there are supervillains & baddies to be vanquished with the minimum of nastiness. I am going to have to look hard for a reason to give this comic a PG rating.

There is playfulness in the scripting of the stories taking an ironic leaning to the cartoon roots. In #7 where there is a big Rocky pastiche build up to the final confrontation, but then you find that Richard pulls the rug from under the finale in such a way to not make you feel too cheated.

In issue #8 he drops into the storyline himself & gets involved in an animus & anima situation with his female creation. Hmm - I'm probably making this sound more interesting than it actually is, but you could read a lot into such things if you were so inclined. To ensure its kids carton roots it ends with one of those, "I woulda got away with it if wasn't for dem peky kids" styled endings.

(... continued overleaf)

Geoffrey Coupland could well be a big new fish in the pond of the UK comics scene and this bold new series could be his big splash. His vivid, naive style, his audaciously rule-bending approach to storytelling, and his dark, fable-like tales are well worth checking out.

Issue 2 gives us an issue-sized chunk of the title story, putting back-ups Sally Cukor and Floating Monkey Head on hold. This is both good and bad. Developments in this installment are perhaps big enough to deserve the promotion. However a nice feature of #1 was the contrast in style between the scratchy, frenetic **Boo and Koo** and the slower-paced bold painterly strokes in the more meditative **Sally Cukor**.

In **Boo and Koo** Coupland continues to put his cutie-bunnie leads through as many diabolic experiments as his villains. Actually I don't think I could describe what's going on here if I tried so I won't. As Coupland says himself, "all rational thought shuffles into a corner and hides under its grubby duvet." But suffice to say as the dream logic takes over. In an ever-more-sinister succession of events, there's not one 'normal' scene in the comic; even a tiny link between incidents is given its own memorability.

Better still, this is not weirdness for it's own sake, but part of Coupland's grand scheme.

There's a significant moment where **KOO** tries to rescue **BOO**, but is nearly tempted away from his mission by a cunningly-placed 'coolario' collection of Space Battles figurines. Beneath the cynicism and modernity lies an almost medieval morality tale. One warning, however: Coupland also contributes a centre-spread urgently advising readers to "Abandon London Now!" and escape to a golden land. Now this issue's dated '97 and I haven't seen a third issue, begging the question - has Coupland abandoned comics now? Over the years we've temporarily attracted so many talents to our medium, only to lose them again when they realise the difficulty of finding an audience (let alone gold!) Whichever way, make sure you get these issues to see a top talent at work!

Gavin Burrows

Boo Koo #2:

32 A4 PAGES, 2 COLOUR CARD
COVER £3 +P+P! GEOFFREY COUPLAND,
ZEEL INDUSTRIES, 24 RIVINGTON ST,
SHOREDITCH, LONDON, EC2A 3DU.
RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 1997 (STILL
AVAILABLE - HINT, HINT)

Richard's cartooning has a self assured confidence to it, & he is good. Compliment barbed with a criticism: however, his confidence sometimes allows him to be sloppy. His rendering of hands sometimes get confused in the stylisation. Overall, it has to be said that my main gripe his line work. Richard had such a nice fluid cartooning style, that I would hope to see a line with more fluidity, but the density remains static. I'm not sure what he uses to draw with but it would make for a much richer comic if something with more infection were used. This would give his line work much more gravity & life. As things stand in these comics, the line work has a tendency to

flatten things out & cartooning that you could really fly, sort of 'dances like your dad'. I feel I might be over stating one aspect of the comic, but it's something that I feel could really make a difference.

The comics also include pin-ups from other small press luminaries & a backup strip in #8 from the UK Manga queen **Laura Watton**: 2 snapshot episodes of **Reluctant Soldier Princess Nami**. These are brief shouty strips that are well executed in a space that seems hardly able to contains them. It al feels very cramped in & is the aspect of them that is most unlike most all of the Manga I have read, where a story has ample room breath & develop. I've seen Laura's work over the years & have always been impressed with her draughtsmanship, so even these cramped missives are a pleasure.

Evidence seems to point to **Cherona** having a happy cult following with it's peers. This fun attitude, rather like an old British newsstand comics ploy of inclusively, kinda makes me want to join in, & send along my own bit of fan art. mooncat

CHERONA

#7: 28 A5 COLOUR STOCK PAGES, & COLOUR COPY COVER) #8: 36 A5 COLOUR STOCK PAGES, & COLOUR COPY COVE £1.50 (P+P)? **RICHARD J SMITH, 39 LOWER UNWIN ST, PENISTONE, SHEFFIELD, S YORKS, S36 6LX**

Fantastic Life Vol 2: 1 of 3

Steve Marchant must surely be rewarded a small corner of heaven that is dedicated to wry, lovelorn indie boys. He'll probably share it with **Evan Dorkin** and they'll have lots to talk about if this issue of **Fantastic Life** is anything to go by. It's not just the material, Marchant has a similar feel to Dorkin

(although maybe that's the 80's strategically shaved big hair and big noses distracting me). But standing on it's own merits, **Fantastic Life** is very good. Marchant is an able storyteller, using reflections, dual narratives and spoof to relate his urban angst tales, and the accompanying art work is distinct and of a high standard overall. In particular the **Beggars Can't be Choosers** short is very pleasingly rendered and Marchant captures the sticky and midwevy ambience of his local indie club perfectly.

In his bio, Marchant explains his reasons for 'remastering' this old material and herein I think lies the main flaw in **Fantastic Life**. After a particularly strong start, the art work declines in quality around the middle. It does pick up again but the sense remains with the reader that maybe Marchant hasn't enjoyed producing this comic as much as he might; it's as if the artwork picks up the fatigue of the material. And as much as I hate saying this (but I quote: "It's not a good way to be for a man pushing 40". The temptation to redraw every embarrassing panel from the past is

tempting, I do understand that. And as most small press cartoonists I know have to work for a living, time to draw is premium. And that being the case I think (unless the material is exceptional) that it's best to consign the past to well who knows where, but **Adrian Tomine's 32 Stories** springs to mind.

Marchant is an obviously talented one man show and as much I did enjoy this issue, I'd prefer to read the more deserving material that he's no doubt capable of.

Mardou

FANTASTIC LIFE VOL 2, # 1 OF 3:

??? A5 PAGES, COLOUR STOCK

£1.95 PLUS 60p P+P **STEVE MARCHANT, 6A STATION RISE, TULSE HILL, LONDON, SE27 9BW**

Background: Cherona #7 © Richard J Smith



Fantastic Life © Steve Marchant

If you just read Issue 3 (and I would recommend that you just read this issue, the background from Issue 2 is handily recapped at the start of the issue) then you would think that **Hope for the Future** is really funny pop-culture tribute.

On the other hand if you had read issue 2 you may want to wonder what is going on. Remember this story started off with a kinky sex death scene and ends up with a cackling villain blowing up over London. None of it really makes sense and that is only okay if the series settles on the light-hearted humour style. If the plot continues to weave around and the style to veer so wildly then it is going to be impossible to enjoy anything in it. The style of issue 3 is great, funny, lots of references for "people of a certain age" and seriously tongue in cheek. Trying to mix in straight mystery plots, naturalistic character sketches or camp "guess the reference" games is simply not going to work.

Again, the art is great although sometimes the facial expressions seem strange relative to what is happening in the panel.

I hope Perrins takes what he has hit on here and keeps at it. If he wants to try different 'takes' on his basic idea then he might be wiser to break out separate series from the main book. Perhaps focussing on individual characters rather than the group.

Robert Rees



Hope For The Future #3 © Simon Perrins

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE:
 #2: 24 A5 PAGES, COLOUR COPY COVER #3: 28 A5 PAGES, COLOUR COPY COVER
 RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 15/5/01
 £2 EACH INC P+P, SIMON PERRINS, 1 NEWTON PARK MANSIONS, ST. MARY'S ROAD, LEEDS, LS7 3JX

Lost Shoe Comics



Lost Shoe Comics #2 © Alex Potts

An unusual tale, narrow in its narrative focus, but with attractive artwork, **Lost Shoe Comics** is another example of the limitless possibilities of comics as an artform outside the boundaries of the commercial mainstream. The drawing is very appealing; good, solid, chunky lines, lots of cross-hatching, unusual angles, kind of combining hints of the European Bande Dessinee school of cartooning with the underground influences of **R. Crumb's** familiar 'bigfoot' style. The story is less substantial, but entertaining enough, with sufficient weirdness and black comedy to just about hold the readers interest over the course of the comic.

Lost Shoe Comics No. 1 concerns the trials and tribulations of one Henri Martini, dole-scrounger and supplier of counterfeit sportswear; when he becomes involved in a violent skirmish with a dissatisfied customer. Also featured are rockers with big quiffs, amputations and lots of insane laughter. Oh, and lost shoes, of course.

The artist, **Alex Potts**, knows how to compose a panel and how to design a

comics page. The eye glides smoothly and comprehensively across his well-drawn layouts. The whole book is neatly designed. It would be interesting to see how he tackles more substantial, narratively demanding subject matter, in future volumes.

Vic Pratt

Lost Shoe Comics #2

Lost Shoe Comics #2 is a strange one. It's a sort of slice of life thing about two brothers who look nothing like each other; Jesus, a quiff headed rocker, and Henri, a bizarre comedy Frenchman, who seems to have wandered in from Tintin.

The full length story concerns Henri's attempts to pull Barbera, the barmaid at their local, while avoiding his horrendously boring friend Maurice.

Meanwhile, Jesus and his buddy Pablo (who do look like brothers) beat up an old guy in the street for no apparent reason who later turns out inexplicably to be the centre of many coincidences.

I might be missing something, as I haven't read Issue 1, and maybe this was all set up there, but I was totally bemused. If this is a continuing story, some attempt really should've been made to explain what happened before.

In terms of the art, **Alex Potts** has an appealing drawing style, slightly eccentric, although foreshortening defeats him occasionally, and some panels seem extremely rushed.

The script isn't particularly funny, and is unfortunately at odds with the artwork, which is drawn, I think, in some kind of marker, it's an experiment which actually works, as it fits Alex's bold line. Barbera, for one, is a beautifully drawn character. A plump, slightly past her best girl who comes alive in a way that Henri simply doesn't. I'd actually rather the story had placed her centre stage.

The layouts are mostly good, particularly the wordless page showing the characters drinking the night away. I'm not sure if the slightly intrusive lettering works though.

Alex is obviously a talented cartoonist, with a potentially great style. I'd say he just needs to be a bit harder on himself, and take the time to produce more pages like the wordless one, or the one where Barbera finds Henri's shoe.

The cover works, with nice logo design, and at least it's on card!

I'm almost going to reserve judgement on this one, as, in terms of the story, I think I might be being unfair on a 2nd issue without seeing the first.

Mind you, you should judge everything on its own merits, so let's just say it's nearly there. Just needs a few tweaks.

Pete Doree

LOST SHOE COMICS:

#1 24 A5 PAGES, COLOUR STOCK COVER, #2 24 A5 PAGES, GLOSSY COLOUR CARD STOCK SILK SCREENED 2 COLOUR COVER

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: #1 NOT NOTED, #2 5x102

#1 £1 + 1ST CLASS STAMP, #2 £1.50 + 1ST CLASS STAMP

ALEX POTTS, 59 TENBY COURT, TENBY RD, WALTHAMSTOW, E17 7AT

Thankfully after my initial flick through, I was relieved

to discover that this wasn't a take on **Grant Morrison & Steve Yeowell's Zenith (of 2000AD)** not some gritty/surreal **Vertigo**-esque fare. Instead we have the mysterious Doctor O calling upon the services of a group of retired superheroes who reluctantly agree to capture some escaped super villains for him. So far, so typical superhero fodder: However there are lots of intriguing questions left unanswered along with some promising character interactions, which make Eden's claims in the introduction to issue 1 that this is a 'Super human Soap Opera' more believable.

When Eden cuts out the unnecessary cross hatching & keeps

The O Men #0

4: MAGENTA & DEBRIS: dreamers



The O Men #19

The best British Underground superheroes comic around at the moment, **O-Men** draws heavily on the themes and style of its predecessors (particularly **Alan Moore's** early work) but deftly mixes British introspection with American action and excitement.

This issue marks a pause in the story as the various factions reform and regroup in preparation for the showdown that is increasingly looking inevitable.

O-Men is perhaps not the best nor the most original comic around but it has a major plus in the fact that it is always improving. **Martin Eden's** art can still be shockingly static and flat, his women improbable and highly sexualised. With each issue though he improves and here it is the close ups of Molly that see the most improvement with a rounder more expressive face and a new subtlety of emotion in the eyes. The scripting is also more deft after a shaky start to this issue, multiple storylines are gracefully handled and alternated. There is even an understated surprise that is beautifully handled in a just four panels.

Superheroes are not everyone's cup of tea but they are a good form for a serial. What makes **O-Men** stand out is the development in each issue and the almost instinctual feel Eden has for breaking a story down into parts that are individually interesting but which compel the reader onto the next part.

Robert Rees

O MEN

#0: 24 A5 PAGES, #19 NO INFO

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: #0: NO INFO, #19: REVIEW'S COPY.
£1.50 + A5 SAE EACH, 6 ISSUE SUBSCRIPTION: £6, 12
ISSUE SUBSCRIPTION: £12. SUBSCRIPTION PRICES INC P+P
MARTIN EDEN, 19A TREVELYAN ROAD, TOOTING, LONDON.
SW17 9LS

Pet Static #2

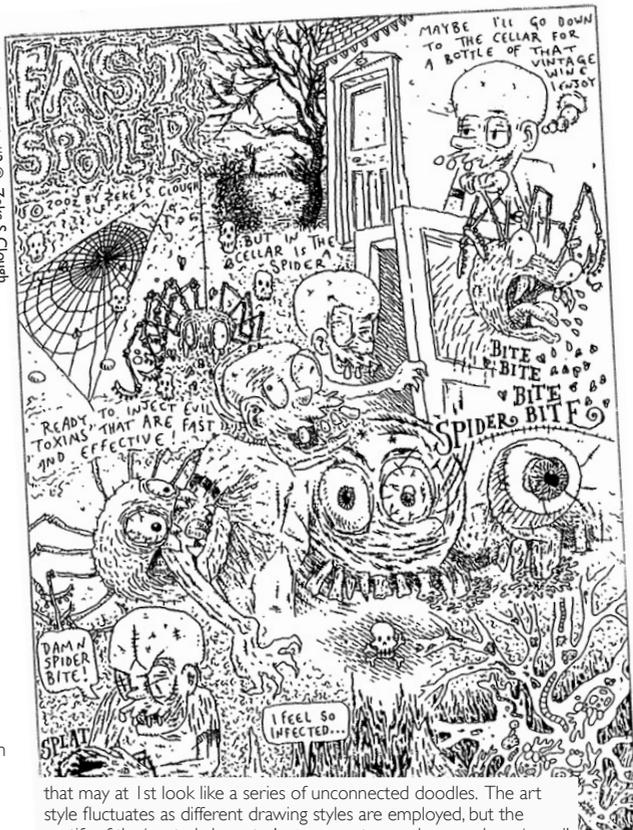
The joy of finding little treasures... It has been a long time since I happened across a comic that I have not seen before and has held my attention; giving me that thrill at finding something unique.

I was in Piccadilly Records in Manchester and they have a rack of zines to the right of the till. As I was waiting to be served I had a look at them - there is sometimes a zine worth having. To my delight here were 2 things that I would call small press comics! *Happy day!* One of them most certainly caught my eye: **Pet Static**.

Now then - this is a wonderful little beast of a comic. The artwork inside is what will really grab your attention - it's as near to Graphotism as I think I've seen from the UK; its intense imagery writes across the page - a treat for the eyes.

The brain is given a work out as well - the narrative storytelling is pleasantly obtuse. A good example of this obscurity is the unnamed story

Pet Static #2 © Zeke S Clough



that may at 1st look like a series of unconnected doodles. The art style fluctuates as different drawing styles are employed, but the motifs of the 'central character' are present as each amorphous 'panel' bleeds into the next - and a narrative advancement can be divined. As to the meaning of the strip - that would be subjective to each reader - I find it rather magikal - but on a base level... what looks like an organic sex object is transported in a suitcase.

The drawing in the central pages has a Pan-like character staring blankly, yet wildly out of the page. It has caught my attention as my image laden memory flickers with recognition - there's something about the design and the pose of the character that resonates in my brain somewhere, but I can't place it, I like the fact that this gnaws at my subconscious.

The pages that draw most admiration from me are those of the **Fast Spoiler** story. The pen work is more loose and open; it just looks so effortless and easy. It may only be a brief story but the design and flow of the page work very well; the panels and drawings bleed into one another, but retain a linear 4 tier 12 panel page. I have to concede that on my initial viewing it did confuse me as I was looking at the page as a whole drawing, rather than a sequence - a level on which I find aesthetically and compositionally it also functions rather well. It seems like Zeke is a natural comics artist.

I'm not sure of the age of Zeke - but as an artist he shows quite a lot of maturity. There is a determined vision that comes over in the comics. I am most interested to see how this all develops and his is another name in the British Underground Scene that it will be very worthwhile keeping an eye on.

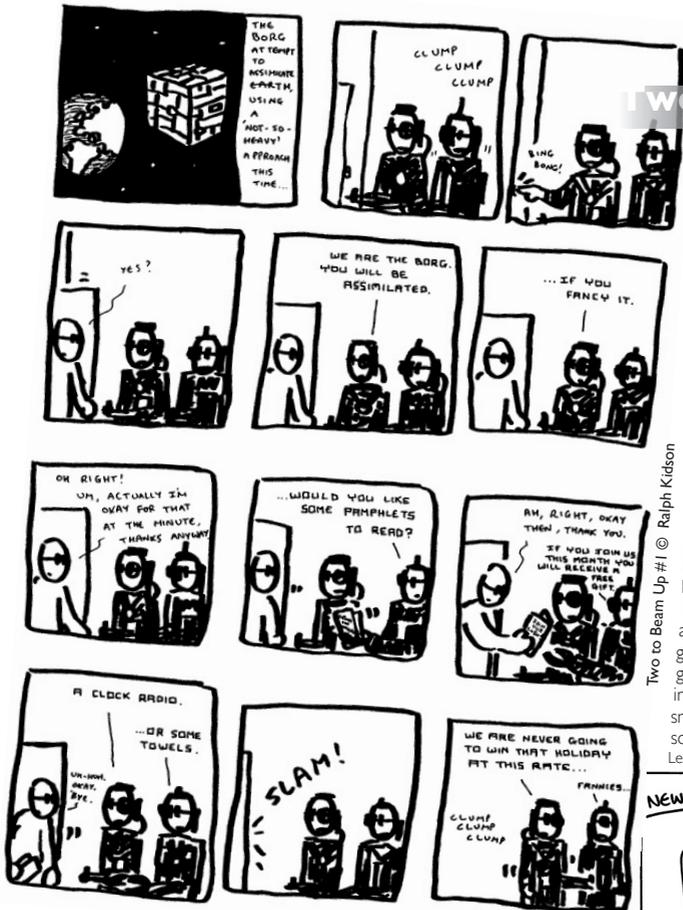
mooncat

PET STATIC: 12 A5 PAGES, COLOUR SOCK COVER

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: 24iv03

£1 (+P+P) ZEKE S CLOUGH, 133 FLORAL CT, BURY NEW RD, SALFORD, M7 2BP

Two to Beam Up #1



Two to Beam Up #1 © Ralph Kidson

A little gem... Excellent schoolkid humour from two masters of minimalism. You may need to be, like me, a sad telly addict type, specifically a *Star Trek* regular, to fully appreciate it, but its sheer visual pleasures are not to be underestimated. It's just several spoof scenes between various members of various crews. **Ralph Kidson's** ability to capture a wealth of character and expression with a few 'crude' doodly strokes has been legendary for years, and he doesn't disappoint here. He's caught Janeway's irritating eyebrow-hitch beautifully, not to mention the sheer killability of the loathsome Neelix.

Tim Brown's drawings have a lighter, brighter touch, and I don't think I've ever seen a more accurate take on mid-to-late period Captain Kirk, 'Irish Jig' and all, that he provides, and his raddled turkey-necked Bones is outstanding, too.

My particular favourite strip concerns Kirk and Spock having a politically incorrect giggling fit at the expense of Sulu. In these gloomy ol' days, a comic that suddenly pops into your head days later, and makes you snigger idiotically while sitting on the bus is something to cherish.

Lee Kennedy.

Two to Beam Up #2

Puerile, immature, disrespectful, generally in poor taste and hilarious. If you ever read *2000AD* or were into *Star Wars* you'll love this as it's mainly piss-takes of those two pre-adolescent sci-fi giants. It's the old trick of making these larger than life character very human and very fallible... and really taking the piss too; so Yoda uses The Force to make the guy at the newsagents forget about Yoda nicking porn mags, Luke Skywalker fights off a big boner as Princess Leia clings to him for safety and Obi Wan Kinobi shits himself a lot. And Tharg! Good ol' Tharg! Well, he's working at a school doing washing up but he's having another crack at presenting Tharg's Future Shocks. Of course he's not sure if he's still in *2000AD*; he doesn't read it much these days, but if you like the Future Shock please send red flavour jelly to the Chute of Jelly... or he will be cross.

The drawing is... shall we say primitive, but that's not really the point is it? The point is to be very funny, and it is very funny. But what's the obsession with wanking in St Michael's thin sliced ham?

Well I dunno.

Paul R

TWO TO BEAM UP:
 #1 20 A5 PAGES, #2 44 A5 PAGES, GREEN COLOUR STOCK.
 RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: #1: 9x100 #2: 4v01

#1: ONE QUID & MAYBE SOME FOR POSTAGE, #2: TWO QUID & MAYBE SOME FOR POSTAGE.

RALPH KIDSON, 3 LANGRIDGES CLOSE, NEWICK, EAST SUSSEX, BN8 4LZ =OR= TIM BROWN, 22 WOODBOROUGH DRIVE, WINSCOMBE, SOMERSET BS25 1HB.



Two to Beam Up #2 © Tim Brown

Wormwood #2

Artist & writer Christopher Webster's **X Files** (sorry!) type narrative parades a few fashionably gloomy pre-millennium themes; conspiracy theory, aberrant science & porno sex without developing into anything of real substance. Three of four somehow connected scenes weave in & out of each other but never outlive their momentary shock value. A porno star is mock-assassinated with a paint-ball gun, a scientist attempts to make contact with insect life by using his grotesquely enlarged brain as a bee hive, and in a weird (I think) dream sequence giant breasts decimate the Earth. (A few thousand people have already added **Wormwood** to their shopping list, I feel.)

Wormwood has a confident feel to it, the layouts and lettering look mainstream professional and the inking harsh ugly look that suits the material. Here and there though, the second-hand slickness, (Frank Miller and Guido Creddaz are mentioned on the letters page) can't disguise some basic weakness especially in anatomy and facial expression.

There are several evocative panels and effects, and it might all come to something around issue 10, but hey, remember - life is short.

Mark Robinson

Wormwood #2:

24 26x17.5cm Pages, 3 colour cover on thicker stock paper
£1.80 +P+P. Chris Webster, 13A Dulwich Rd, London, SE24 ONT



Wormwood #2 © Chris Webster

As space is limited here, I will mention more comics that I really think you should look into, but it's just not possible to give them a full review here. There have been a couple of 'diary' series comics that have been most interesting. Availability may be scarce nowadays, but it may be worth writing to check as I heartily recommend both. They are both written/drawn in a diary fashion, & thus have a sometime haphazard 'narrative', but that is the point rather, is it not? Firstly *Goatland*, by John Welding (36 Grosvenor Street, Wakefield, WF1 5BG.). John is a tasty draughtsman who is quite willing to experiment as he draws his diary; East Yorks fells & moors - full of atmosphere. Jim Cameron (PO Box 16163, Glasgow, G13 4JW) also created a more contemplative diary (titles such as *Complicity*, *Disillusion* & *Transition*) - you get the feeling of following the man as he muses on life. *Hardly The Hog* (£2.25 (+P+P)) JamUp Comics, PO Box 1466, Sheffield, S39YA) - the Coward Brothers flex their creative muscle - an intriguing mix of whimsy, brovado, filmic allusions, tounge in cheek & fine bold artwork. *Japanzine* rough & ready & just plain bizarre at times, - something that intrigues me: (£1.50 c/o Tony Lee, 16 Gayhurst Rd, Hackney, London, E8 3EH). *King Cat* - I always have to mention King Cat. Last issue I saw was 60, but I hear 62 is one the way. Quite simply the most beautiful comics I've read (\$2 (P+P) John Pocellino, *Spit and a Half*, PO Box 30067, Denver, CO 80203, USA) Andy (PO Box 8892, London, SW15) is usually worth sending a few pounds to - does various cool anthologies - his own *Konky* stuff & *Magazine* - which is sometimes a comics zine & sometimes just full of his lovely drawings of what he sees around him. *Steve Martin's Terrible Sunrise* project is a must to see - really - send off for it. The larger aim of the story is to document the WWII - the events, but more importantly - the people. It's just a marvel! Send him £3.50 or so for a copy

Zervanalia #1 & 2

There would seem to be ample room for comparison with Mervyn Peake's *Gormonghast* here. However, as I have by no means read that weighty tome, I am tentative in drawing directly.

Both *Zervanalia* & *Gormonghast* are suffused with baroque, fantastical & yet very ordinary elements. This is the backdrop. Both centre upon one central character's career & development.

The world of comics can be good at exploring the inner motivations of character through the convention of 'thought balloons'. That Denny has declined such a blunt approach is a good thing as you are left without explicit pointers to character's motivations, leaving you to impose your own reasoning on their actions. The central character, who we follow directly in stories featuring him & which all other stories seem to dance around, is named Peer. He starts off as a fresh young thing working in an arcane fabric factory. He is a bright lad & soon comes to the attention of his superiors; & discovers what this can mean. It all takes off from there. His motivations, as stated, are never explicit, but they certainly seem to be innocent. Time is the great debaser though, & he seems to become less altruistic, nay, malicious as things continue.

The stories are played out very well & it rewards re-reading to capture the inter-linking you might not have caught on the 1st reading.

The art is assured & accomplished, conveying the otherworld, yet familiar setting that the story demands very well indeed. In fact the vision is so assured that it makes many other comics pale in comparison.

Intrigue; be it in unexplained ritual & underlying politics are never far from the surface & tantalise you with the expectation of more. Oh & there's a good dose of humour as well - such as in *The Meat Wagon* in #2: bawdy, morbid humour as the meat sellers come to town to ply their trade.

At the end of the 2nd book Peer comes to an impasse. He can no longer stay & heads out into the wider world - away from the city.
mooncat.

Zervanalia #3

Top notch imaginary fabling from the mind from Derbyshire via Cumbria. There are two tales here. The first is *All Change* a provable tale of the problems between kith and kin, resulting in muddy caking and the purloining of ponytails, it is a nice prelude to the second, longer story. *Skin Lord* tells of the involvement of Prof. Scruton with a new sect which leads him twisting and turning through an imaginary narrative where he

ZERVANALIA: #1, 2, & 3: 36 A5 PAGES EACH, #3: 2 COLOR COVER. £2 EACH (P+P?). DENNY DERBYSHIRE, CATSEER COMICS, 4 HARDWICK ST, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA, LA14 5RZ

- #3 is just out - 52 A4 pages - quality stuff!! (40 Gloucester St, New Town, Chester, CH1 3HR).

Dalton Sharp, (Deadtrees Productions, 300 George St, #209, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2N3, Canada) - send him some dollars & beg for a comic - ah - such delightful fluid artwork - tis a joy to behold!

A real serious chunk of art comics is *Space Opera* by Mike Weller - I'm flabbergasted that this is not more widely noted & respected. Write to Mike Weller, Visual Associations, 3 Queen Adelaide Court, Queen Adelaide Rd, Penge, London, SE20 7DZ & see if there's any more to spare - 12 issues were released & then collected into a mighty 402 page tome - an astounding complex, sometimes experimental, challenging & I found it just a darn good read. £2.50 per issue.

Don't forget to drop by at <http://www.zumcomics.info> if you get the chance - more reviews are appearing there all the time (time allowing). Back Issues of ZUM! are available - #10 is scarce - plenty of #9 & some copies of other issues as well. Send queries, letters & importantly - send your own comic to ZUM! HQ, 17 Lime St, Todmorden, OL14 5JN, UK.



Zervanalia #2 © Denny Derbyshire

splendidly uses magnets to do battle with a depilated Bull on a carpet of vampire geese. Nurse! The screens!

The events are relentless in the later tale, imaginary situation falling upon situation like a game of snap, jumping and switching with each panel. Such exuberance could be wearisome or seem cocky but in fact comes over as a feast to be revelled in. The clear line artwork is consistent throughout and balances against the text well. Denny moves the pace along nicely, especially in *Skin Lord* building to the psychedelic influx at the heart of the story then flexing her muscles with some fine and freaky, hallucinatory single pages.

Denny's writing is a little poetic, a little descriptive and a little obtuse, just the right balance for this kind of subject matter but it is the power of the imagination, which distinguishes this comic as a little bit special.

Chris Webster

Louis: Lying to Clive

...LET, LOUIS WATCHED THE SCENERY CHANGE, AND NOW, TRAVELLING THROUGH THE DUSTY, DESERTED STREETS HE REALISED THAT THE PLACE WAS NOT PARTICULARLY BEAUTIFUL. IN FACT, IT WASN'T REALLY A TOWN AT ALL. NOTHING WAS QUITE AS IT SEEMED.



PERHAPS THIS PLACE HAD ONCE SERVED A PURPOSE? LOUIS WONDERED IF IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEA OF BEAUTY...

... BUT HIS HEART FELT HEAVY AND HE DIDN'T FEEL INCINED TO ASK.

4

Louis: Lying to Clive © Metaphrog

In reviewing *Louis: Lying to Clive* I'm burdened with the impression that the story is laden with metaphors. I worry that the metaphors are shallow, & then I worry that it is just me - am I reading these into the story?

Most comics inhabit a world of their own creation. This may be a reflection of the real world to a greater or lesser degree. In reading a comic you enter into this world & you are carried along by the logic of the presented universe. The world of *Louis* is a blurred & misshapen version of our own; dream logic seems very prevalent:

"It's like this," say the book
"OK" says the reader
"So, then that"

And you just follow the lead into, well, the 'Bee Farm' - a penal colony of some form that is autonomous & allegedly, 'almost forgotten' - presumably by the wider society. It is an unpleasant place into which Louis finds himself 'detained' to 'repay' for his crimes. I'm not entirely sure what these might have been, but it seems to be hinted that he has been manoeuvred into this situation by others.

Louis, the proclaimed protagonist of the book, strikes you as essentially innocent. He passively takes things as he finds them & is blown by events. I find the inhabitants of the Bee Farm far are more disturbing. It is not clear how long they have been there, but all excepting Louis, Veevil (anti-Louis?) & Clammy (Chief Executive) are all dressed in Bee Garb. While this seems to indicate a 'prisoner' status - striped uniform - it also seems to indicate a deeper subjection to the reality of their status as bees.

Clive is a bee. He wants to be a good bee. He is part of the institution of the hive & believes himself a bee. Louis & Clive befriend each other.

The back cover blurb suggests that this is a 'children's story', a definition I find somewhat misleading. There are ambiguities in the story that I believe would leave the younger reader disorientated, & the casualness of the ending's pivotal point concerns me. It's not that the subject matter of the comic itself creeps into any taboo areas - it's more that the plot elements are fundamentally bleak & rely on metaphors resonant to the grinding depression that adulthood can heap upon you - the reference points that these provide may be missed or misconstrued. Having said that - school can have these pointless pecking orders & children are often more 'socially' cruel than adults - so perhaps I am underestimating, perhaps I am too attuned to 'conventional modern' children's stories with their tendency toward neat resolutions.

I'm more minded to believe the "children's story" quotation arises from the 'look' of the book. I can fully appreciate that this may look like a children's story - with its realistically delineated cartoony characters & use of bright colour; but this is purely presentation - the way the artist has chosen to draw the story. It is rare to see a full colour comic produced in the UK - & so the fact that the comic itself defies the usual preconceptions causes a greater degree of bluster when trying to define what it actually is.

The mechanics of the comic's storytelling is sound & skilled. There are some nice touches here & there, like the portrayal of Louis as he emerges from a daydream; Clive is talking to him & Louis is literally not focussed on what Clive is saying. These are the sort of effects that you can only really effectively portray in comics. On the whole the pacing of the comic is... staid. There are no real melodramatic flourishes to the pages (splash panels or exaggerated colours) & this seems to reinforce the quiet authority of the comic & is therefore no bad thing.

I like the comic, but I still have a feeling of disquiet about it. These misgivings are not created by what is actuality in the story, but by trying to figure out what it is trying to be impart... I read the story & enjoyed it before I tried to review it, but now I've tried to analyse what is going on, it has left me more confused as I don't really see that there is a reason for what happens. I will just have to accept, that like life, things often have no reason (or I fail to understand the reason why things happen).

LOUIS: LYING TO CLIVE: 64 21x21CM FULL COLOUR PAGES, CARD STOCK COVER

RECEIVED AT ZUM! HQ: SUMMER 02 £9.95 (+P+P)

METAPHROG, 34 SPRINGHILL GDNS, SHAWLANDS, GLASGOW G41 2EY.

Is it funny? Did I miss the gags?
mooncat