

No. 26
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Canada)

Critters



VAN HORN

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Told you I'd get the next issue out within a couple of weeks! Of course, that left me no time to write an editorial, but . . . —KIM THOMPSON

LETTERS

John Eaton
Marietta, GA

Dear Kim,

This is the first letter I've written to any comic book's editor, but I felt I had to give praise to the wonderful job everyone on *Critters'* staff has done. Congratulations on a well-written and superbly illustrated effort. I find *Critters* second only to the great job Stan Sakai does on *Usagi Yojimbo* (my favorite character/comic). Since these are both by Fantagraphics Books, I hope you'll pass on the praise to the entire staffs of both books.

I particularly found *Critters* #23 enjoyable to the utmost. I loved the flexidisc. One question, though: of all my friends that read that particular issue, I seem to be the only one in possession of a clear-red vinyl flexidisc. Is there some significance to the colored vinyl?

● Not a whole lot, other than the fact that only 500 of the 12,000 were printed that way. You got yourself a collector's item; enjoy it! —KT

Bret Kaiser
Springfield, MO

Dear Mr. Thompson,

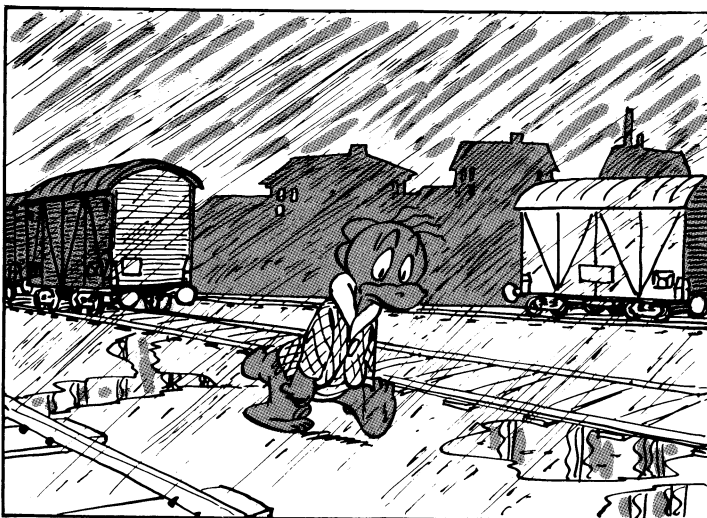
I don't know what great cosmic force is compelling me to write to you and the artists on *Critters*. Could it be that it's engraved in the walls of destiny? Superior extra-terrestrial beings, maybe? The ghost of John Lennon living in my pencil? Boredom? Anyway, as long as I'm writing, I may as well say something that makes sense and pertains to issue #22. I was at a slight loss, to say the least, when reading the newest "Blue Beagle" feature. I didn't happen to come by any issues of *Watchmen* and understood close to nothing. I was happy to see "Gnuff" and the new "Ambrose" thing, though. I'd like to see how Overstreet explains the deal with the covers to collectors 20 years from now. Ought to be pretty interesting. . . I'll be glad to see the return of "Lionheart" in issue #23. He's one of my favorites.

After rereading my more recent issues of *Critters*, I've decided that "Fission Chicken" is my favorite feature. I was wondering if you could give me a little info on the comic. For instance, how long has Mr. Morgan been doing "Fish"? Is it the only comic he does? What about availability of original artwork?

Gotta sign off. It's finals week here in High School Land and Mrs. Kubuchek's geometry final has been known to be lethal. Besides, my mushroom and sausage pizza is getting cold. Also, personal congratulations on being editor of *Usagi Yojimbo*. I think

[LETTERS CONTINUED ON PAGE 29]

Critters



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NUMBER 26

JULY 1988

C O N T E N T S

Angst

"No Script"

by William Van Horn

In a potentially disastrous bit of confusion, Ratface and Louie are cast adrift on a sea of non-events. 1

Gnuff

"The Price of Fame"

by Freddy Milton

As Gnicky's career totters due to mismanagement, he seeks to escape his fate—in vain. 6

Lionheart by Tom Stazer with Anthony Smith

"The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, and The Stupid"

Lionheart finds himself deeper into the two-headed dog mystery, and encounters a familiar-looking conspirator. 19

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ANGST

DO YA EVER GET THE FEELIN',
RATFACE, THAT YER STUCK IN
SOME KIND OF A BOGGY NOWHERE,
JUST DRIFTIN' ALONG AIMLESS
AN' WITHOUT HOPE?

SURE, LOUIE.
EVERY TIME I GO
TO THE POST
OFFICE!

NAW, I MEAN LIKE YER SOMEWHERE
WITHOUT A **SCRIPT**, YA KNOW?
LIKE NOW! ME AN' YOU, WE DON'T
KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOIN' OUT
HERE WALKIN' THE STREETS
IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL
THIS SNOW, DO WE?

I DON'T
KNOW ABOUT
YOU, LOUIE,
BUT I'M
FREEZIN'
MY RATTY
LITTLE TUSH
OFF!

YEAH,
RATFACE
BUT
WHY?

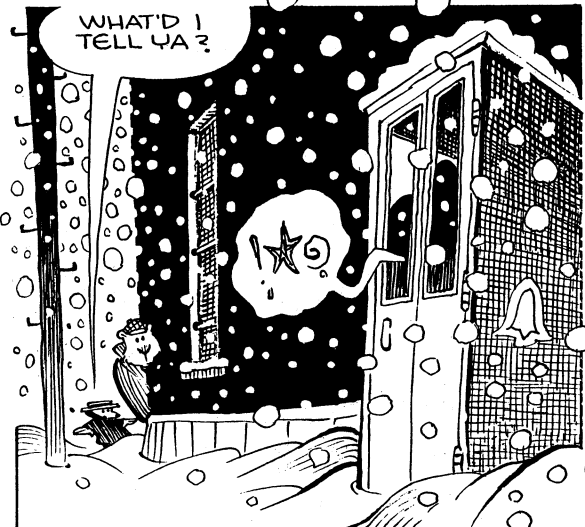
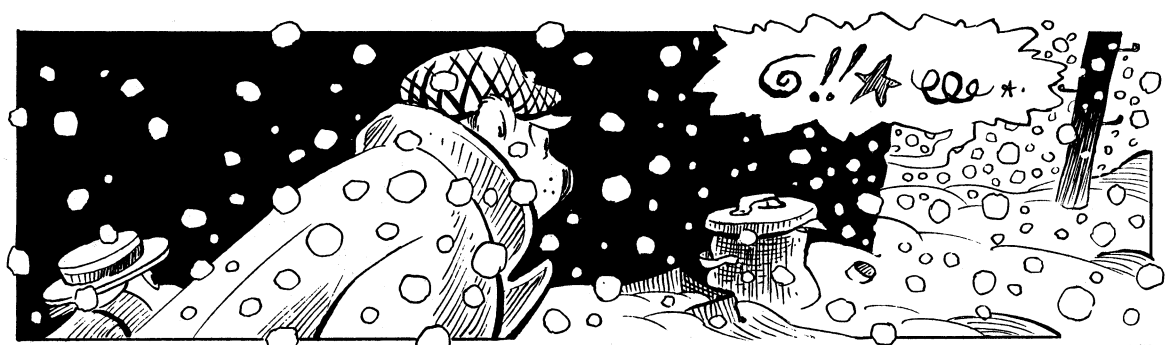
BECAUSE THIS IS MORE
DRAMATIC THAN IF
WE WAS SITTIN' IN
A HIGH CLASS PARLOR
SOMEWHERE SWIZZLIN'
TEA!

I **HATE**
TEA!

WELL, THERE YA ARE! SO
WE'RE OUT HERE INSTEAD
WAITIN' TO GET OURSELVES
ENTANGLED IN A FIRST
CLASS DRAMA OF SOME SORT.

YA THINK
SO, HUH?

TAKE MY WORD FOR IT,
LOUIE. WE AIN'T GOT
ALL THIS DRAMATIC
SETTIN' FOR NOTHIN'!
SOMETHING IS **BOUND**
TO HAPPEN!



WHAT'D I
TELL YA?

IT'S JUST A
GUY IN A
PHONE BOOTH,
RATFACE!
NO BIG
DEAL!

OH, IT'S SIMPLE NOW,
LOUIE, SURE! BUT IT
COULD BE A BEGINNING
TO THE BIGGEST
STORY OF OUR LIVES!



I DUNNO —



WELL,
WHAT
IS
IT?

A COIN SNATCHER?
SOMEONE WITH A
YELLOW PAGE FETISH?
OR A **SPY** WITHOUT
A DIME?



NAW — IT'S JUST
SOME GUY GETTIN'
UNDRESSED.



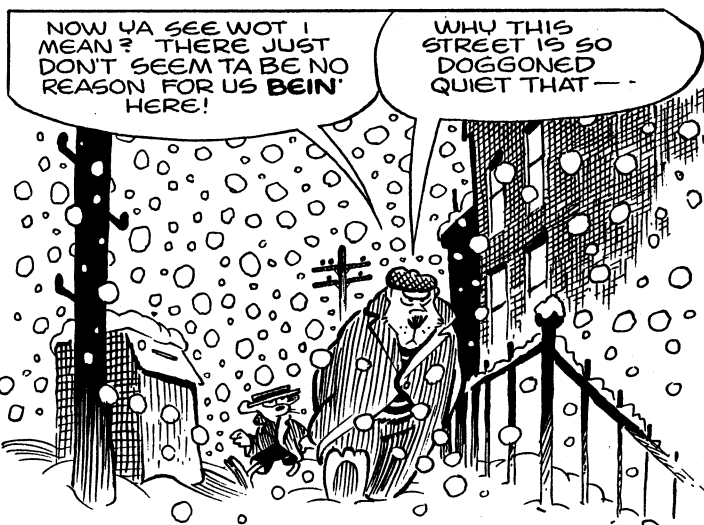
IN THIS WEATHER?
IT'S A **PREVERT**!

NO IT AIN'T,
RATFACE. IT'S
JUST ONE A THEM
FLVIN' GUYS
CHANGIN' INTA
COSTUME!



HE'S GOT THE PHONE
TANGLED IN HIS JOCKEY
SHORTS, AN' THE OPERATOR'S
THREATENIN' TA CALL THE
COPS!

OH.



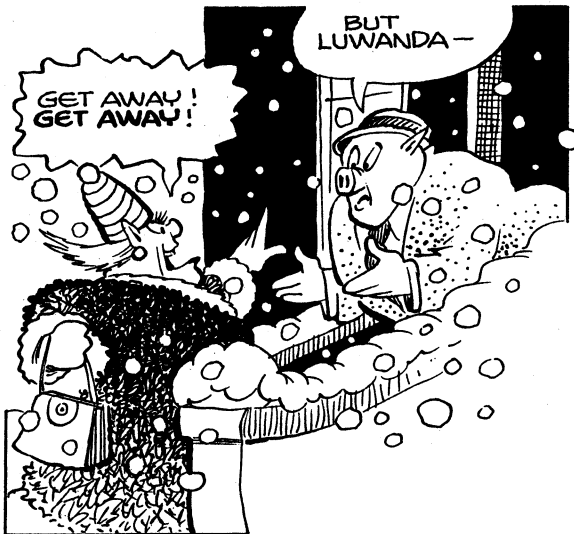
NOW YA SEE WOT I
MEAN? THERE JUST
DON'T SEEM TA BE NO
REASON FOR US **BEIN'**
HERE!

WHY THIS
STREET IS SO
DOGGONED
QUIET THAT—



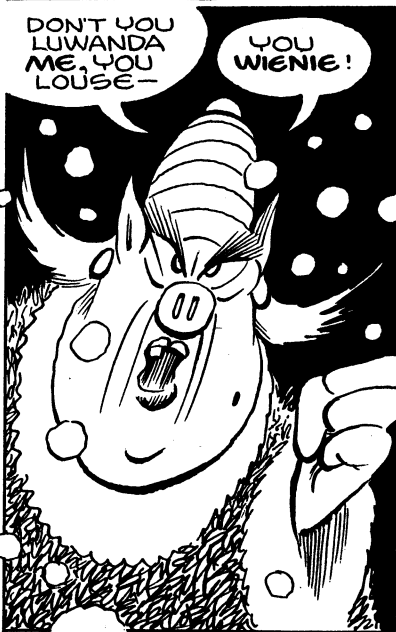
GET YOUR LECHEROUS
MITS OFF ME, YOU
FILTH!

THIS IS IT,
LOUIE. I
FEEL IT IN
MY BONES!



GET AWAY!
GET AWAY!

BUT
LUWANDA—



DON'T YOU
LUWANDA
ME, YOU
LOUSE—

YOU
WIEENIE!



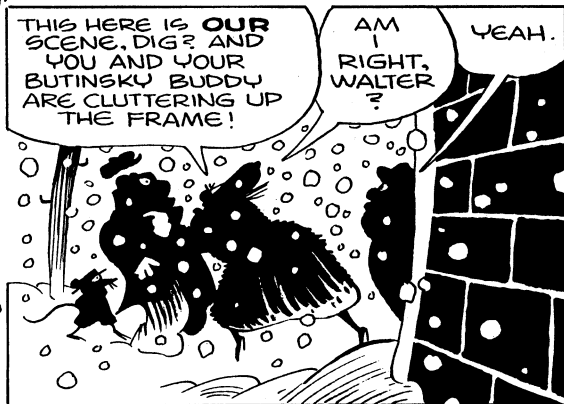
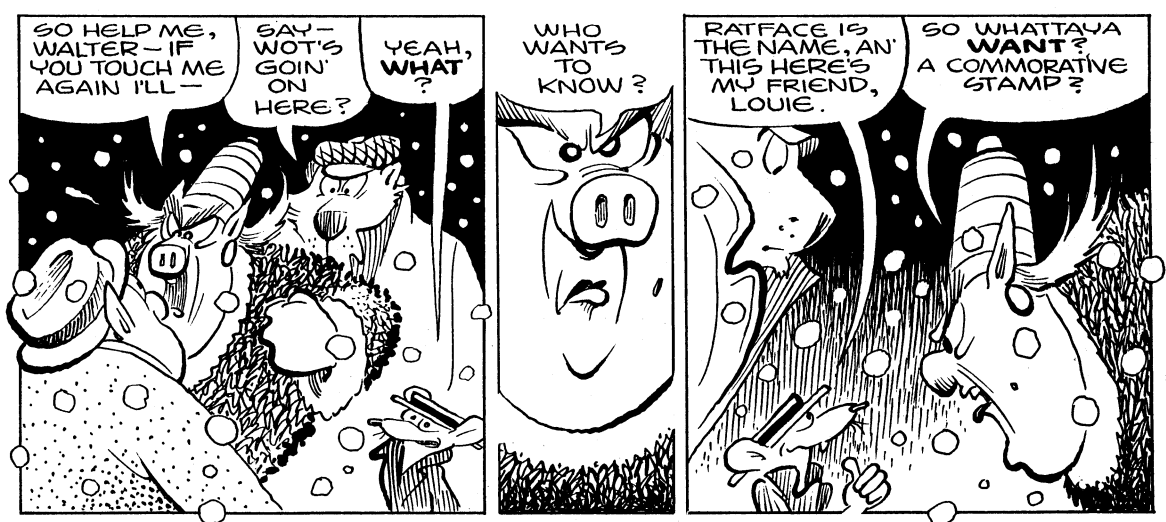
YOU BEEN RUBBING
THOSE LUST CRAZED
EYEBALLS OF YOURS
ALL OVER SWEET
LITTLE MISS GUTBAG
ALL DAMN DAY!



AND DON'T
TRY TO
DENY
IT!

BUT
LUWANDA—

LIGHT OF
MY LIFE—



WELL, THERE AIN'T NO DOUBT ABOUT IT NOW, RATFACE. WE'RE SMACK INTA THAT BOGGY NOWHERE I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT! JUST DRIFTIN' —

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, LOUIE. BUT MAYBE WE'RE BETTER OFF!

HOW'S THAT?

TAKE THOSE TWO BACK THERE, AN' THE GUY IN THE PHONE BOOTH. THEY'RE ALL LOCKED INTO THEIR LITTLE SCENES, YA KNOW? TRAPPED EVEN! WHY THEY'LL BE DOIN' ALL THAT SAME STUFF FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES!

WHEREAS YOU 'N' ME — WE GOT FLEXIBILITY!

WE DO?

SURE! WE CAN DRIFT ALONG NOT KNOWIN' WHAT THE HELL WE'RE DOIN', OR WHERE WE'RE GOIN', OR WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN AND STILL COME UP SMELLIN' LIKE ROSES!

MEANIN' NO STORY, HUH, RATFACE?

MAYBE NEXT TIME, LOUIE. MAYBE NEXT TIME.

VAN HORN

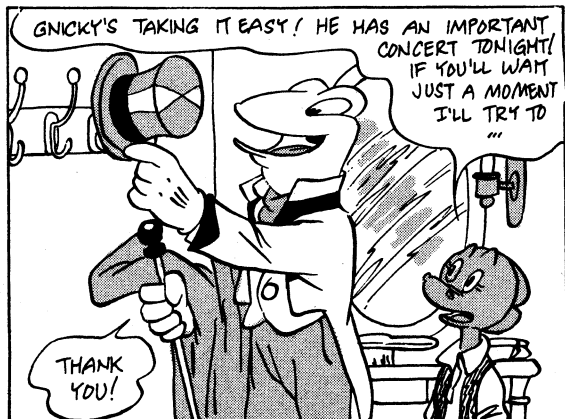
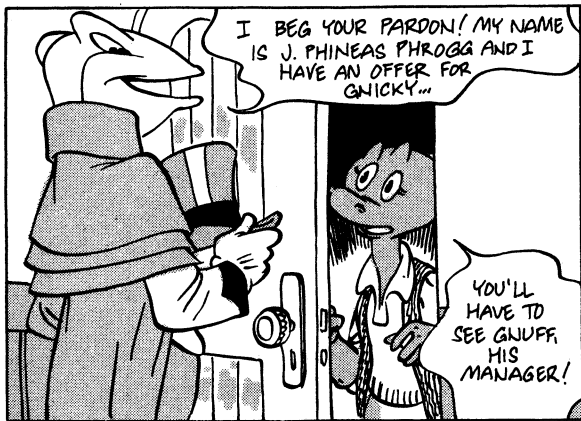
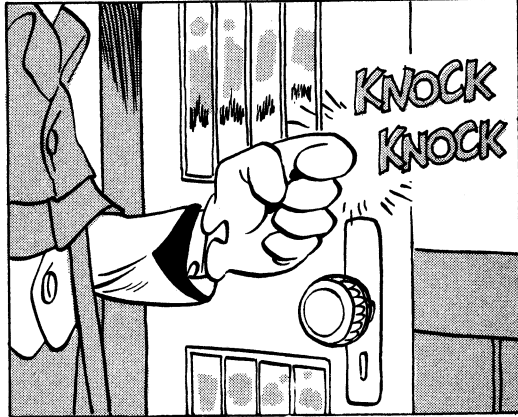
Freddy Milton's Gnuff

"THE PRICE OF
FAME"

2000 SEATS? THAT'S ALL? WE COULD
FILL TWICE THAT MANY! THIS ISN'T A
CONCERT FOR CHARITY!

I'M SORRY!

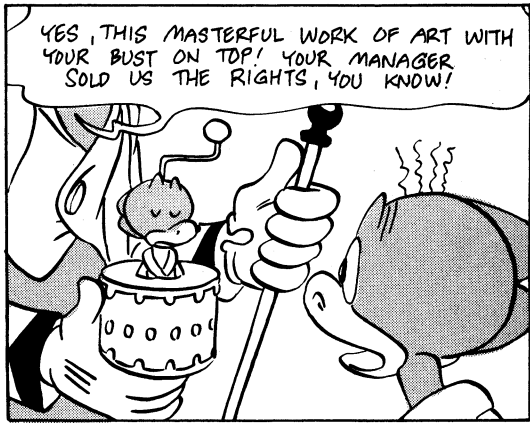
GNICKY IS IN DEMAND
AS A CONCERT PIANIST!
AS HIS MANAGER, GNUFF
IS LEARNING HOW TO
EXPLOIT HIS SUCCESS!



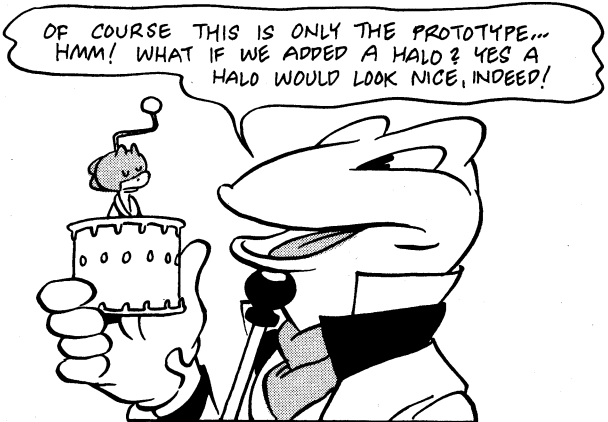


I WAS HOPING YOU WOULD CONSIDER COMPOSING A PIECE ESPECIALLY FOR THIS MUSIC BOX?

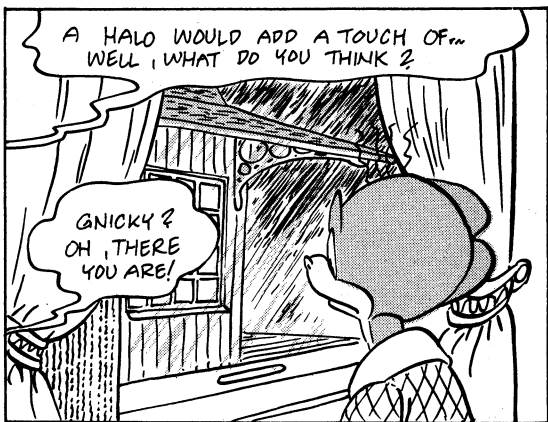
MUSIC BOX?



YES, THIS MASTERFUL WORK OF ART WITH YOUR BUST ON TOP! YOUR MANAGER SOLD US THE RIGHTS, YOU KNOW!

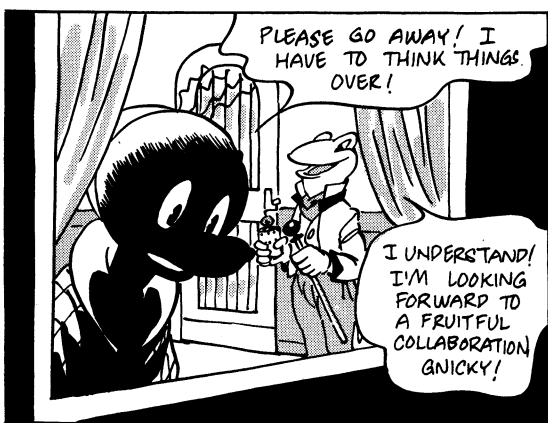


OF COURSE THIS IS ONLY THE PROTOTYPE... HMM! WHAT IF WE ADDED A HALO? YES A HALO WOULD LOOK NICE, INDEED!



A HALO WOULD ADD A TOUCH OF... WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GNICKY? OH, THERE YOU ARE!



PLEASE GO AWAY! I HAVE TO THINK THINGS OVER!

I UNDERSTAND! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO A FRUITFUL COLLABORATION GNICKY!



PERHAPS YOU COULD WRITE SOME OTHER LITTLE PIECES FOR US?

PLEASE GO...

GO!

BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU CAN ONLY USE FIVE NOTES... COSTS, YOU KNOW!



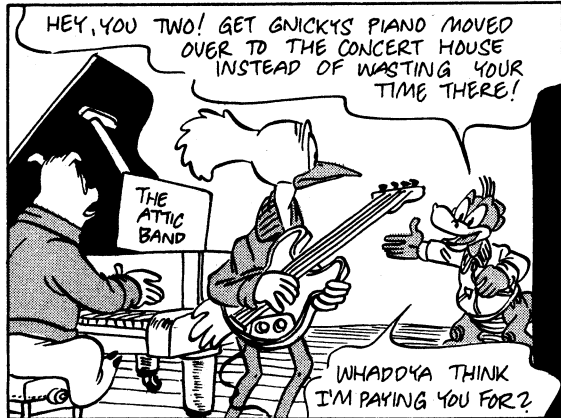
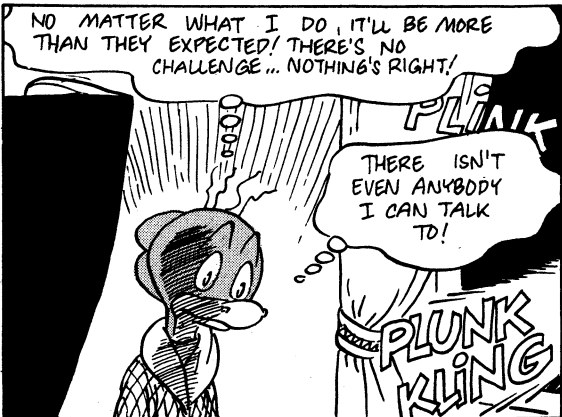
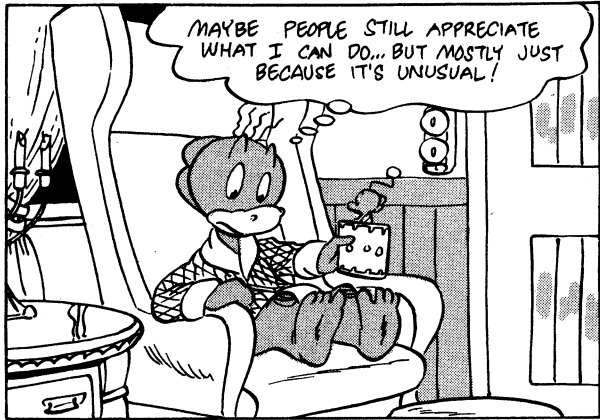
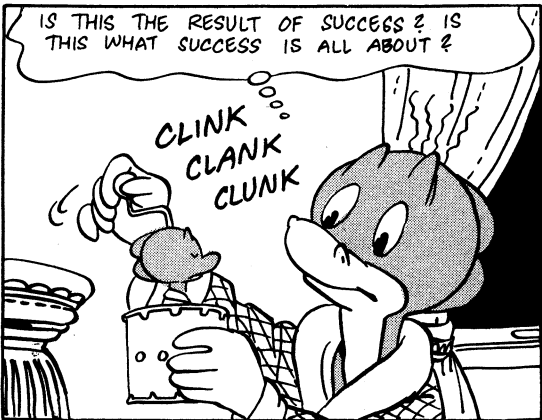
VERY WELL, I'LL GO, MAESTRO! I'LL LEAVE THE MUSIC BOX!

GO!

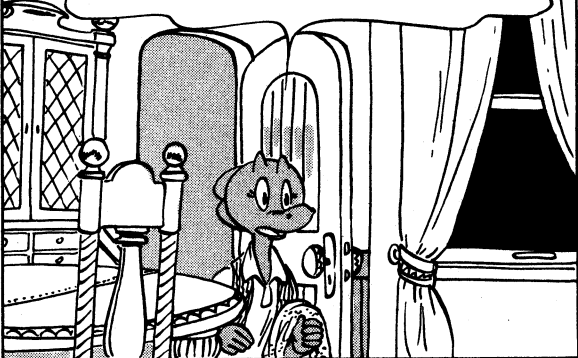
GOODBYE... AND HAVE A GOOD CONCERT!



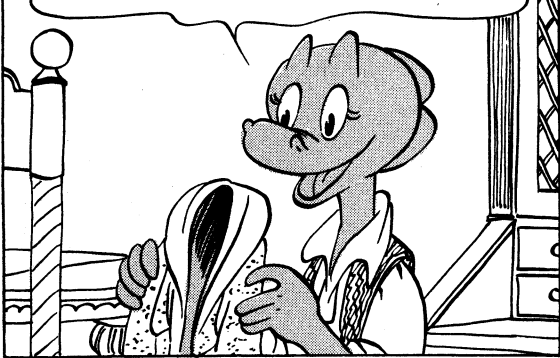
HMM... SEEMS DISTRACTED... JUST LIKE ALL THE STARS! ALWAYS SO EGOTISTICAL!



GNICKY! YOU SHOULD START GETTING READY NOW FOR THE PERFORMANCE TONIGHT!



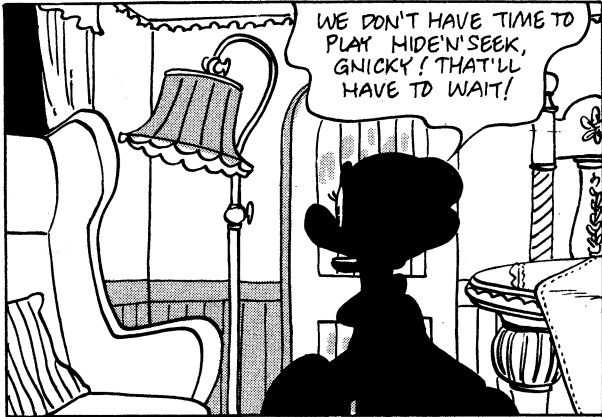
YOUR NEW RHINESTONE JACKET WAS JUST DELIVERED! ISN'T IT PRETTY?



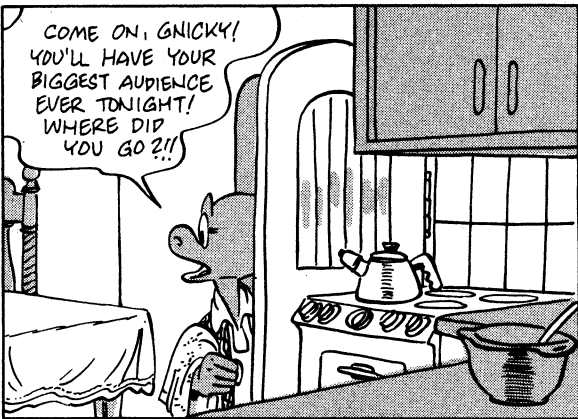
GNICKY? WHERE ARE YOU, GNICKY? CAN'T YOU ANSWER WHEN YOU'RE CALLED?



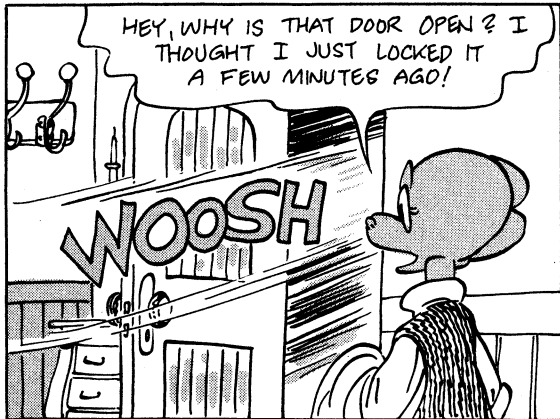
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO PLAY HIDE'N'SEEK, GNICKY! THAT'LL HAVE TO WAIT!



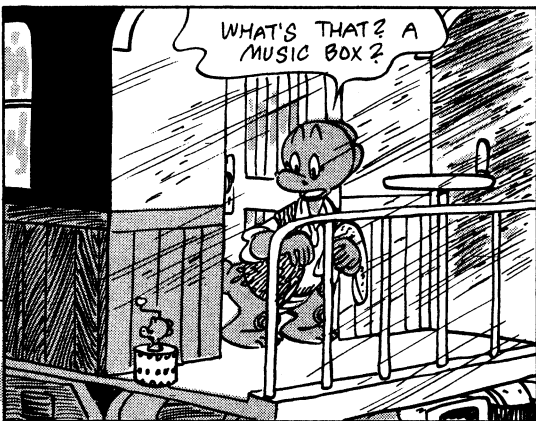
COME ON, GNICKY! YOU'LL HAVE YOUR BIGGEST AUDIENCE EVER TONIGHT! WHERE DID YOU GO?!!



HEY, WHY IS THAT DOOR OPEN? I THOUGHT I JUST LOCKED IT A FEW MINUTES AGO!

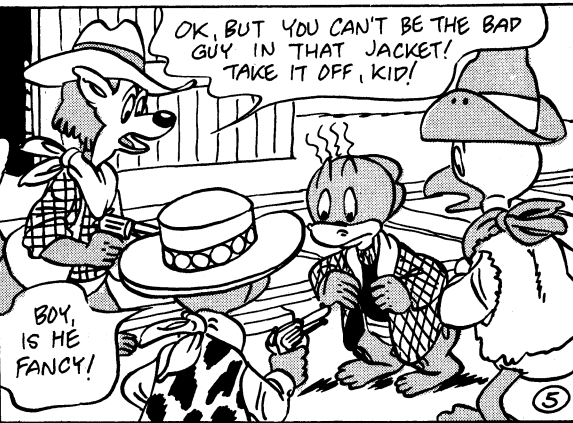
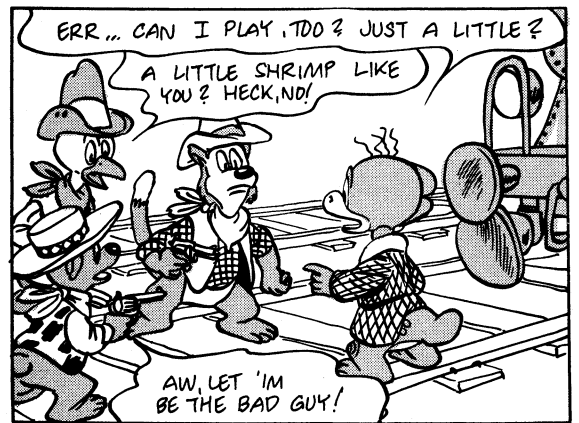
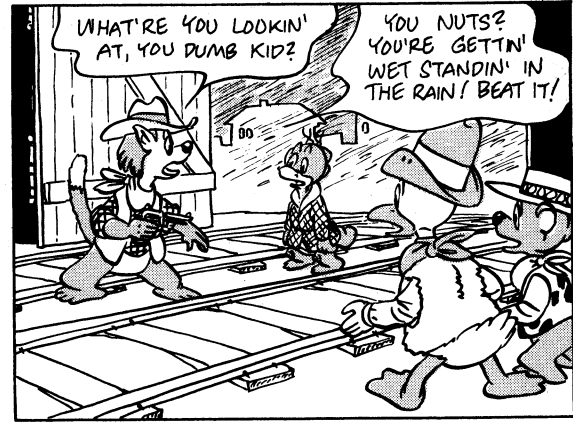
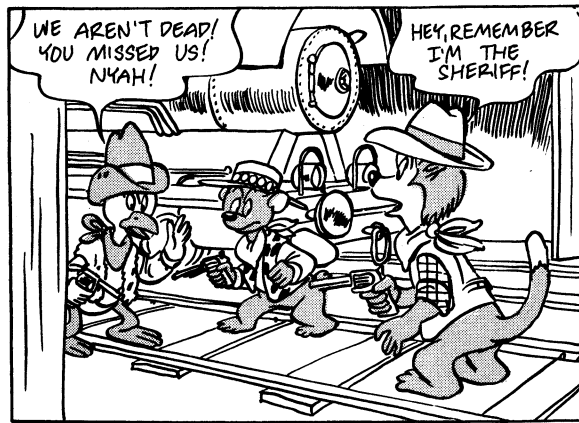
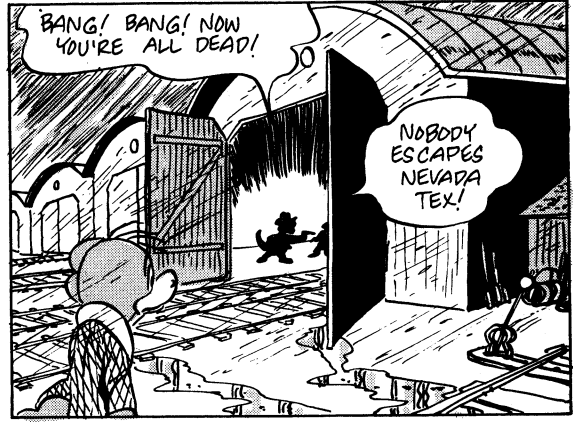
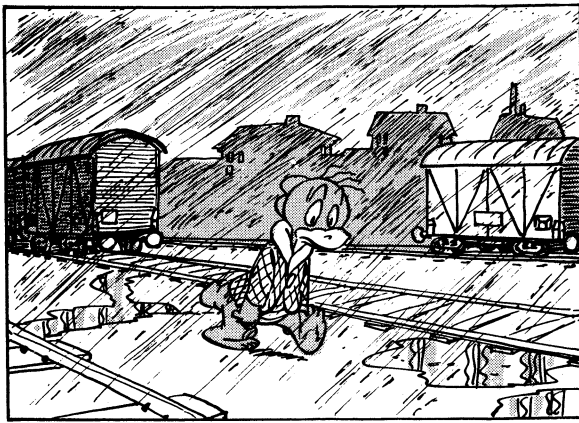
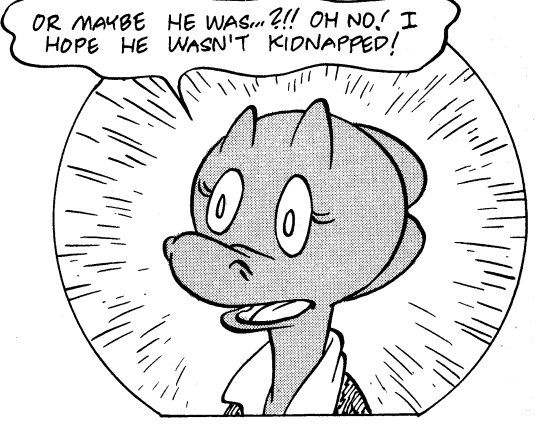
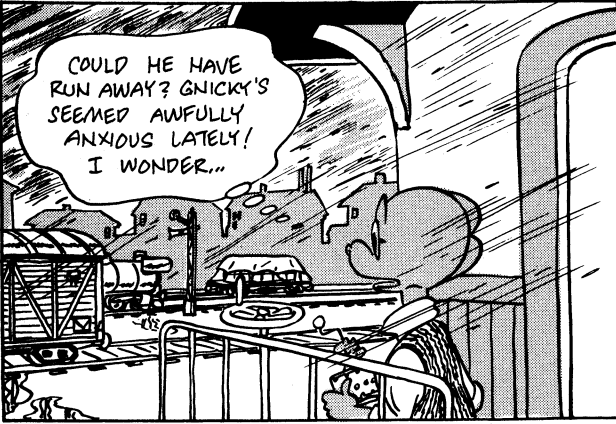


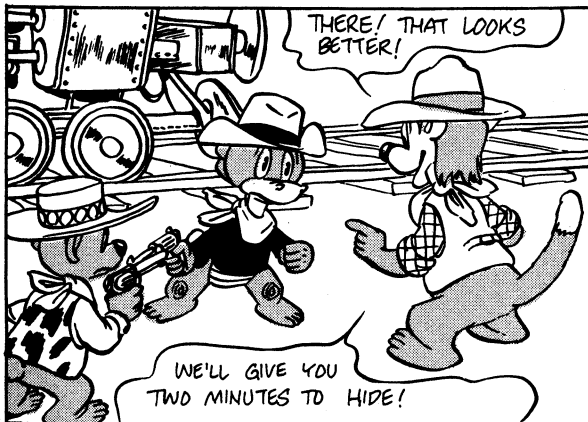
WHAT'S THAT? A MUSIC BOX?



THERE'S ONLY THE RAILROAD YARD AND THE COLD RAIN OUT HERE... DID GNICKY GO OUT?

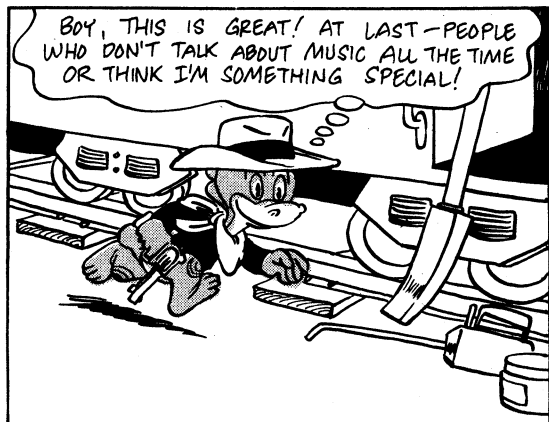




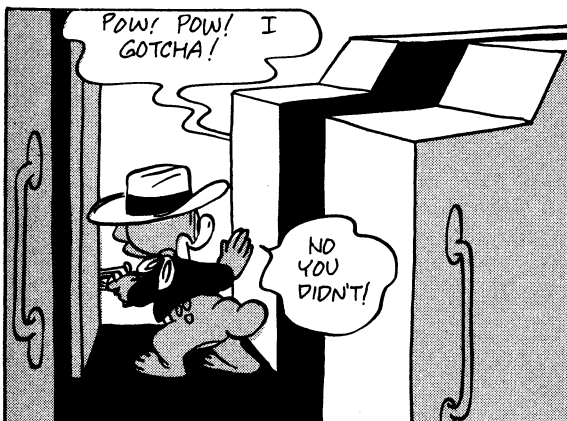


THERE! THAT LOOKS BETTER!

WE'LL GIVE YOU TWO MINUTES TO HIDE!

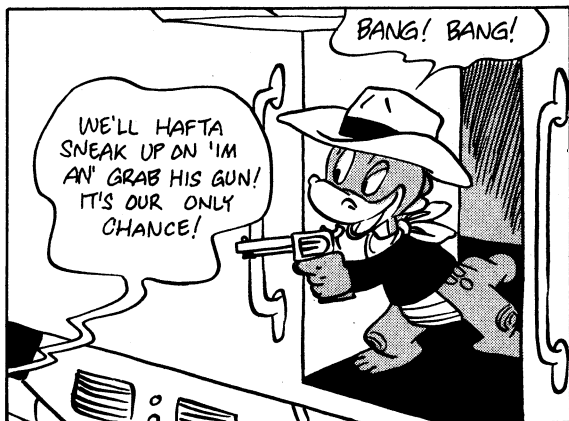


BOY, THIS IS GREAT! AT LAST—PEOPLE WHO DON'T TALK ABOUT MUSIC ALL THE TIME OR THINK I'M SOMETHING SPECIAL!



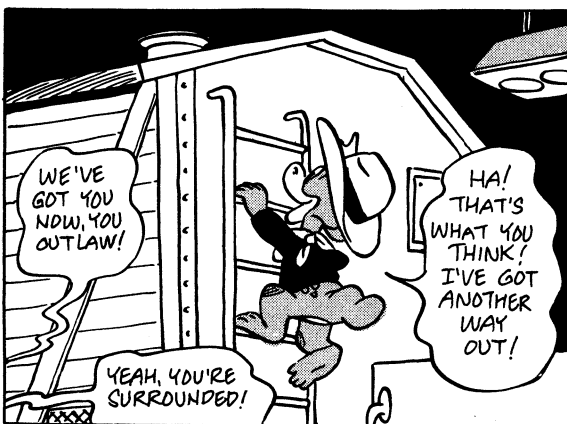
POW! POW! I GOTCHA!

NO YOU DIDN'T!



BANG! BANG!

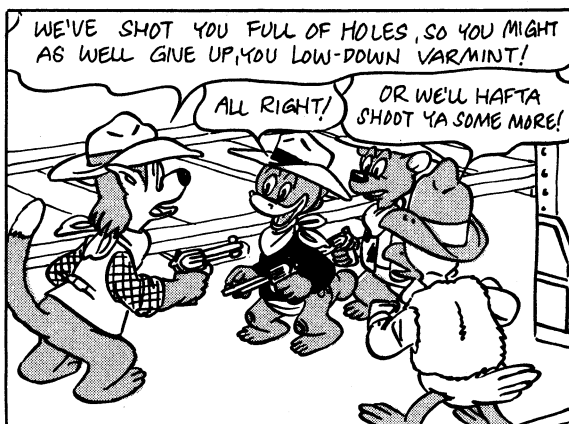
WE'LL HAFTA SNEAK UP ON 'IM AN' GRAB HIS GUN! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!



WE'VE GOT YOU NOW, YOU OUTLAW!

YEAH, YOU'RE SURROUNDED!

HA! THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK! I'VE GOT ANOTHER WAY OUT!



WE'VE SHOT YOU FULL OF HOLES, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP, YOU LOW-DOWN VARMINT!

ALL RIGHT!

OR WE'LL HAFTA SHOOT YA SOME MORE!



WHAT'RE YOU KIDS DOIN' HERE Z?!

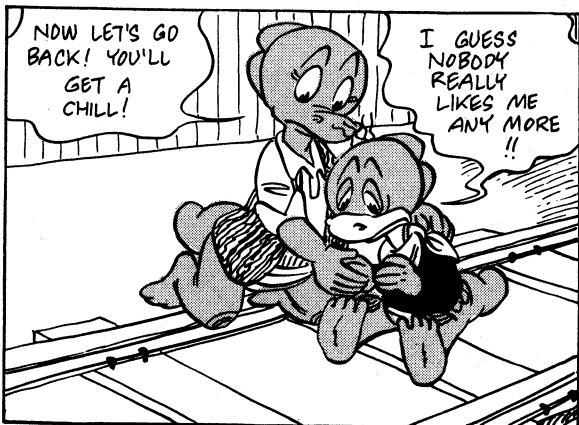
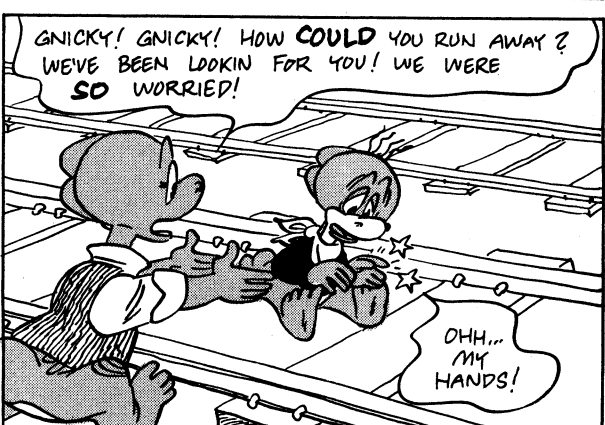
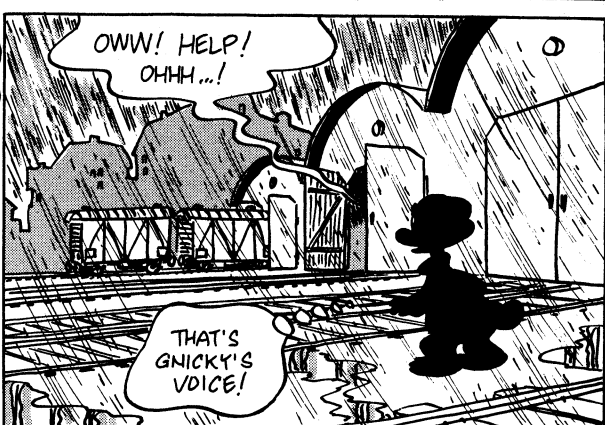
JUST PLAYIN'! THE NEW KID'S PRETTY GOOD!



HIM! THAT'S GNICKY—THE BOY MUSICAL GENIUS! HE'S GOT A CONCERT HERE TONIGHT!

WHAT TH—Z?!

HIM Z?!



THE CONCERT AUDIENCE TAKES ITS SEATS...

MY SON HAS A VERY MELODIOUS VOICE!

YES, MINE IS ALSO QUITE GIFTED!

WE ARE GIVING OUR NIECE COPIES OF GNICKY'S RECORDS! WE HOPE THEY WILL INSPIRE HER!

IT'S A MATTER OF PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION! NOW, AS FOR OUR GRANDSON...

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? THE LITTLE PRIMA DONNA SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE BY NOW, DAG NAB IT!

WE'VE FOUND GNICKY! HE'S GETTING READY NOW!

DON'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM! HE'S ALL WORN OUT!

IS HE, NOW? HE'S UNGRATEFUL, THAT'S WHAT HE IS! RUNNING OFF WHEN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR HIM! IF THAT DON'T BEAT ALL! AND I'M THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIM!

TAKE IT EASY...

BUT I'LL PUT A STOP TO IT! RIGHT AFTER THE CONCERT TONIGHT! YOU CAN BET ON THAT!

GNICKY'S HAD A ROUGH TIME... SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED TO HIM!

WHAT ABOUT ME? YOU THINK I'VE HAD IT EASY?!!

I'VE GOTTEN HIM BACK-UP SINGERS AND MUSICIANS! I'VE HAD THE PIANO REFINISHED! DO YOU SEE **ME** SUDDENLY RUNNING OFF?

NO, NO, GNUFF, BUT...

I HOPE THE CONCERT'S A SUCCESS! WE'VE NEVER SPENT SO MUCH TO PUT ONE ON BEFORE!

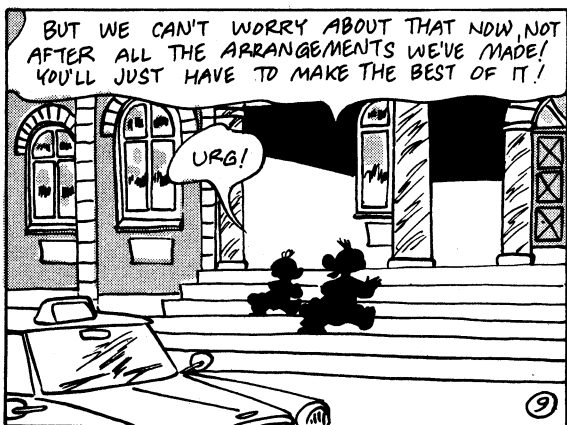
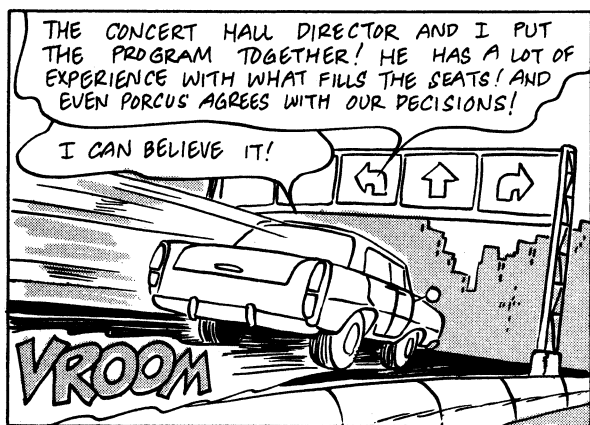
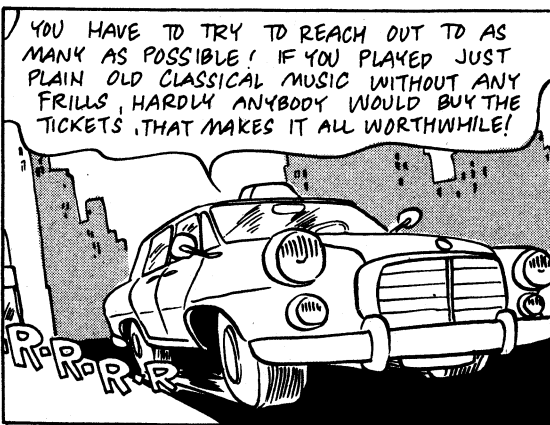
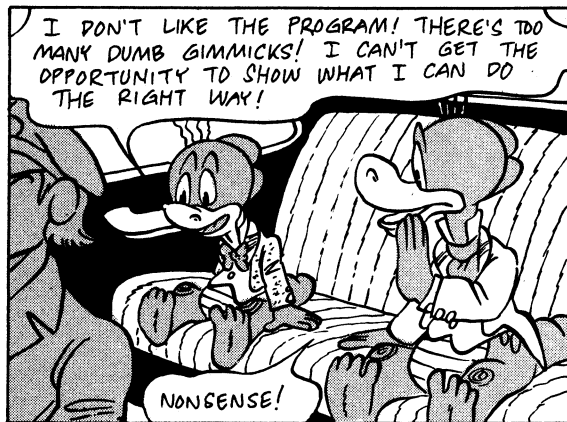
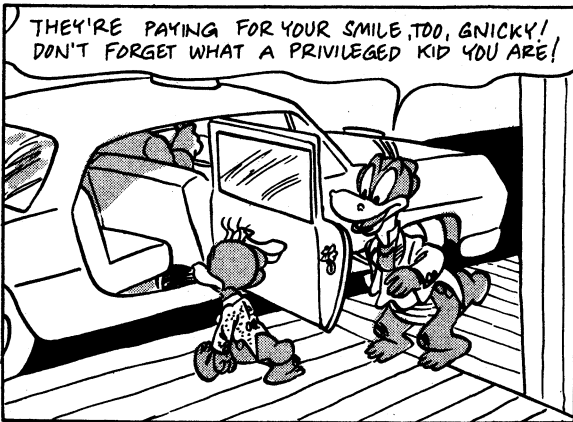
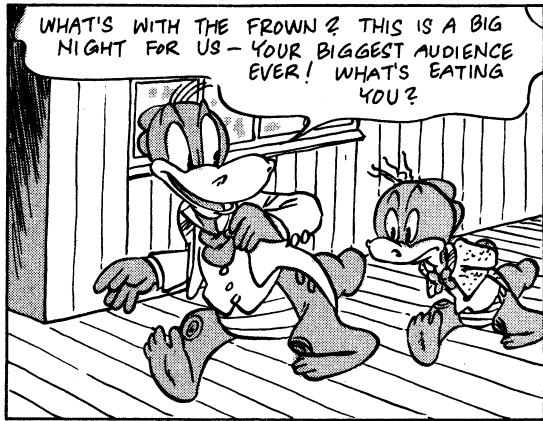
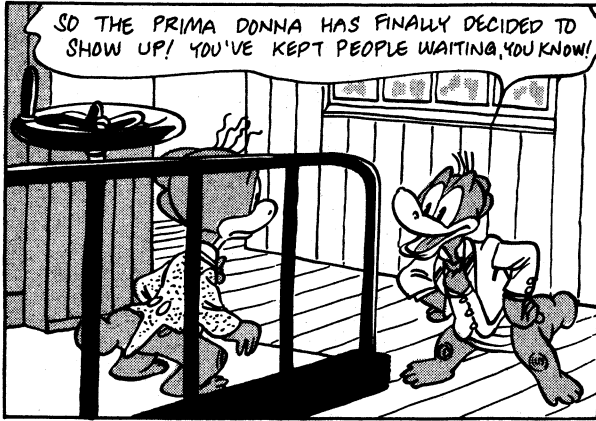
IT'LL BE A SMASH, MR. PORCDS! TRUST ME!

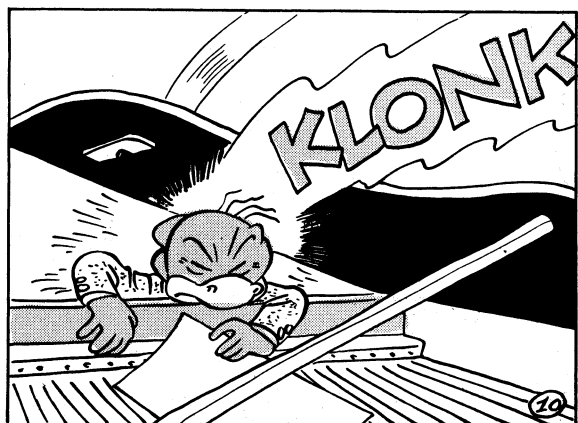
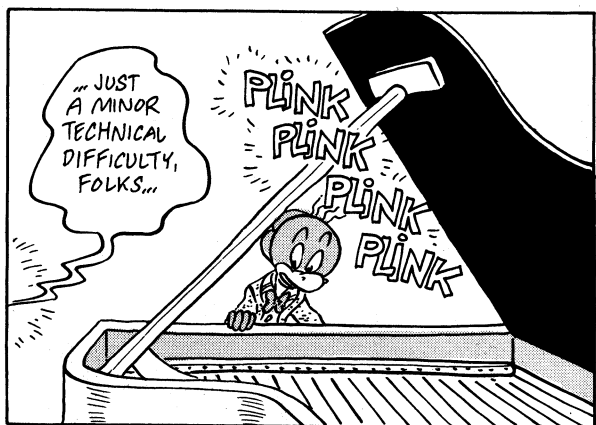
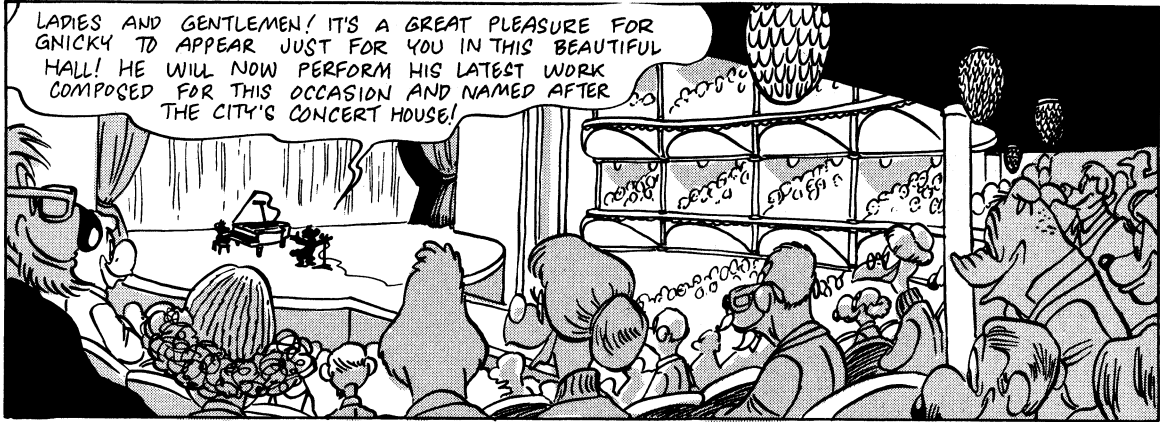
LISTEN CLOSELY TONIGHT, CHILDREN! GNICKY WAS ONCE ONE OF MY STUDENTS!

HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHERE HE'D BE WITHOUT ME, BUT LUCKILY...

AND TO THINK THAT OUR CITY IS MOST FAMOUS FOR BEING GNICKY'S HOME TOWN!

PLEASE DON'T OVERLOOK THE CONSERVATORY'S SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION!





THE AUDIENCE
DOESN'T LIKE IT...POOR
GNICKY!

I'LL BET IT WAS THAT
PIANO LID! THAT KID IS
GETTING TO BE NOTHING
BUT TROUBLE!

WHAT DO I KNOW? I JUST RUN THE AGENCY!
IT'S PROBABLY A PUBLICITY STUNT TO GET
MORE COVERAGE! AND IF IT WORKS, OF COURSE
IT'S ALL RIGHT!

I CAN PLAY BETTER THAN THAT, HONESTLY!

YOU'RE RIGHT! WE'VE BEEN TAKEN IN
BY THAT UPSTART! THIS IS
SHAMEFUL!

GNICKY TRIES AS
HARD AS HE
CAN, BUT IN
VAIN...

KLACK
KLONK
THUMP
WHAM
DONG

GNICKY'S RIGHT
BACK WHERE HE STARTED!

AND NOW WE KNOW
FOR CERTAIN THAT
PEOPLE DON'T APPRECI-
ATE OUR KIND OF MUSIC
YET!

WE'VE
BEEN
HAD!

WE
WANT OUR
MONEY
BACK!

ER... EVEN A GENIUS
CAN HAVE AN
OFF-DAY...?

NOT IF YOU WANT A
PIECE OF THE TAXPAYERS'
MONEY!

WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO POSTPONE THAT
INCREASED GRANT FOR THE CONSERVATORY!

THE KID'S A
SWINDLER!

JUST AN AMATEUR!

FRAUD!

MOST
IMPROPER,
I SAY!

HE
MADE
FOOLS
OUT OF
US!

WAIT! JUST A MOMENT, PLEASE! I CAN EXPLAIN!

THROW
HIM OUT!

CHEAT!

HE'S A
DISGRACE
TO THE
CONCERT HALL!

GIVE US OUR
MONEY BACK!

AFTER THE SCANDAL, THERE'S NO HELP TO BE FOUND! AT THE "SOUNDS FINE" MUSIC AGENCY...

THE FINE PRINT SAYS THE CONTRACT IS NULL AND VOID WHEN HIS SUCCESS FADES!

YES, BUT MR. PORCUS...!

NOW PLEASE LEAVE! I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH AN UPCOMING STAR!

IT'S ALL OVER! WE JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT IT!

IT'S FOR THE BEST! YOU WERE SHOWING THE STRAIN EVEN WORSE THAN GNICKY WAS!

WHAT ABOUT ALL THE MONEY WE MADE?

IT'S BEEN SPENT! SUCCESS COSTS A LOT TO KEEP UP! MAYBE YOU EVEN OWE US SOME MONEY AT THE AGENCY...

YOU MAY SEND US A CHECK WHEN WE DO THE FINAL ACCOUNTING!

UH, GNICKY... WANT TO PLAY IN "THE ATTIC BAND" AGAIN?

WE ONLY NEED A PLACE TO PRACTICE!

OH BOY! I'D LOVE TO!

SO GNICKY & CO GO BACK TO THE ATTIC...

PLINK
PLUNK
KLAKK
TWANG

HEY, GUYS! I'VE GOT THE LATEST ROLLING ROCK BLUES BAND ALBUM!

WOW! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THAT!

LET'S PUT IT ON THE STEREO RIGHT AWAY!

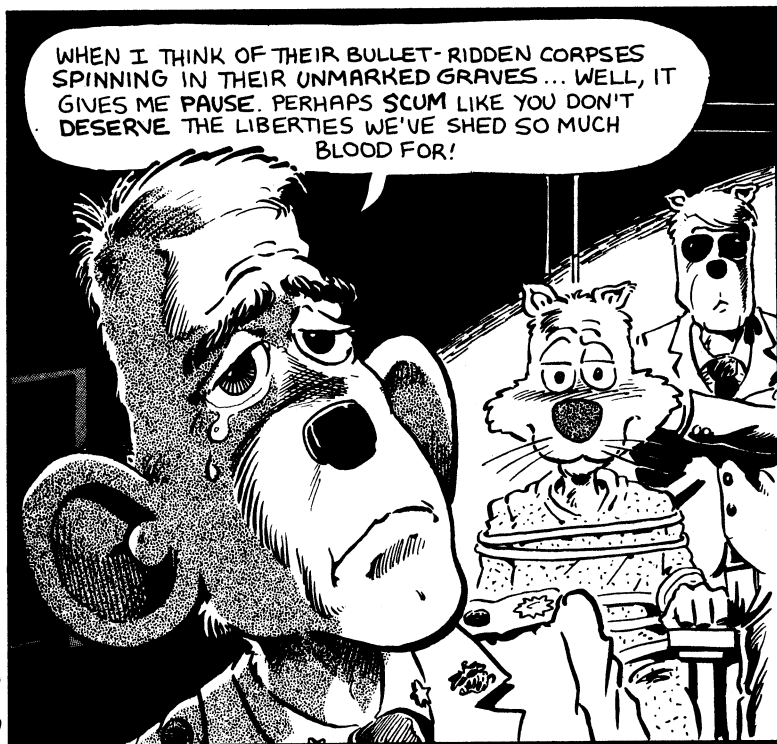
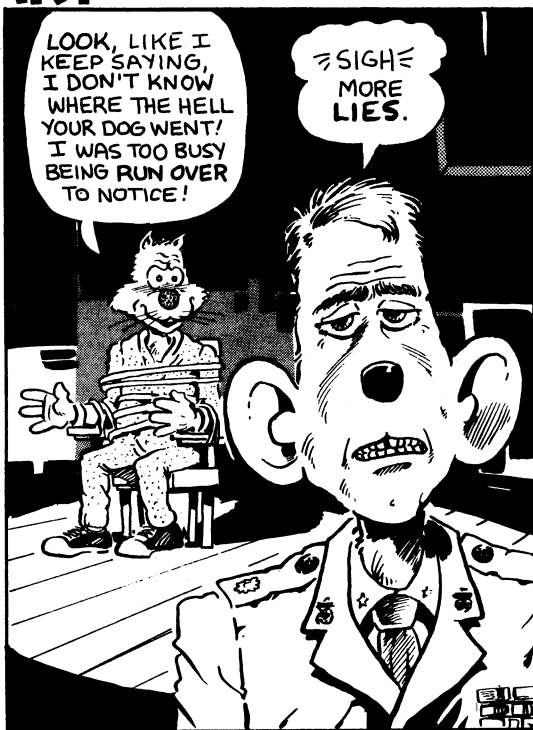
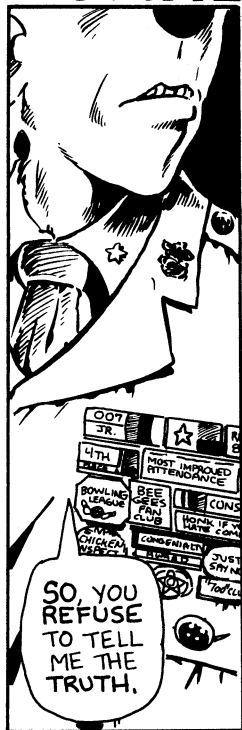
AND GNUFF DOES HIS BEST TO SQUEEZE THE LAST BIT OF MONEY OUT OF THE AFFAIR...

WHADDYA MEAN, JUNK?! THIS IS A SUPER-LUXURY PRIVATE CAR WITH VELVET UPHOLSTERY AND GOLD DOORKNOBS! IT'S GOT TO BE WORTH A LOT MORE THAN JUST A LOUSY \$385.16!

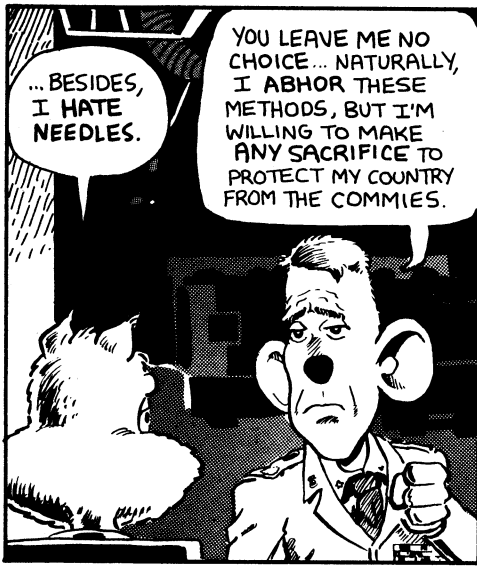
END

LIONHEART

part two



the the the and the
GOOD, BAD, UGLY STUPID

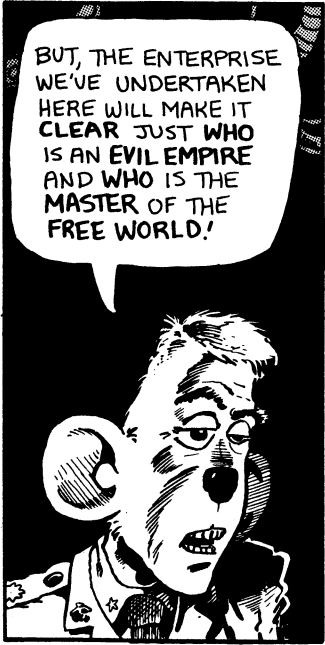


... BESIDES,
I HATE
NEEDLES.

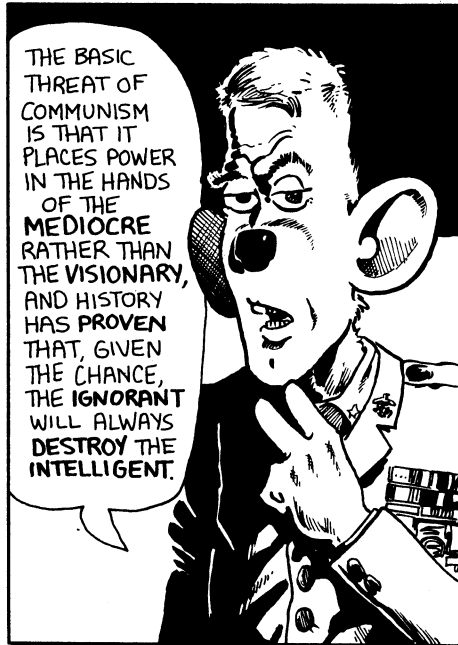
YOU LEAVE ME NO
CHOICE... NATURALLY,
I ABHOR THESE
METHODS, BUT I'M
WILLING TO MAKE
ANY SACRIFICE TO
PROTECT MY COUNTRY
FROM THE COMMIES.



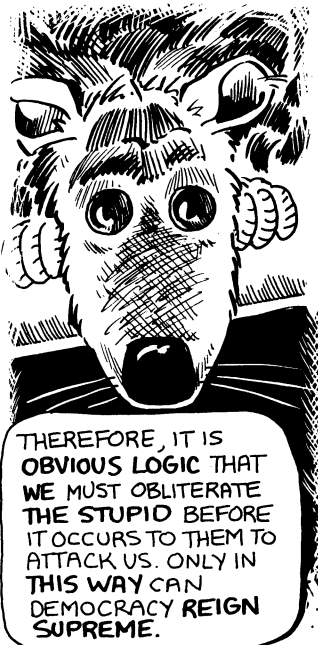
LET ME GIVE YOU A
CRASH COURSE ON
GLOBAL POLITICS:
ALL THIS TALK OF
GLASNOST AND
ARMS TREATIES IS
INTENDED TO LULL
US INTO A FALSE
SENSE OF SECURITY,
TO MAKE US
EASY PREY.



BUT, THE ENTERPRISE
WE'VE UNDERTAKEN
HERE WILL MAKE IT
CLEAR JUST WHO
IS AN EVIL EMPIRE
AND WHO IS THE
MASTER OF THE
FREE WORLD!



THE BASIC
THREAT OF
COMMUNISM
IS THAT IT
PLACES POWER
IN THE HANDS
OF THE
MEDIocre
RATHER THAN
THE VISIONARY,
AND HISTORY
HAS PROVEN
THAT, GIVEN
THE CHANCE,
THE IGNORANT
WILL ALWAYS
DESTROY THE
INTELLIGENT.



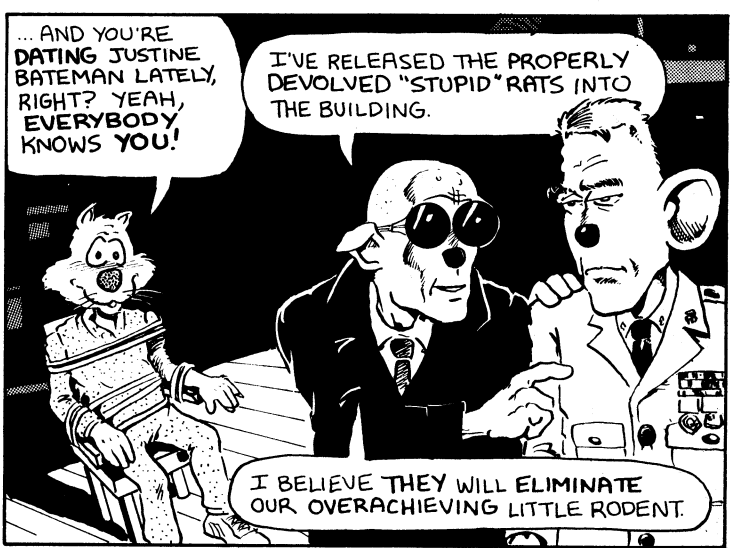
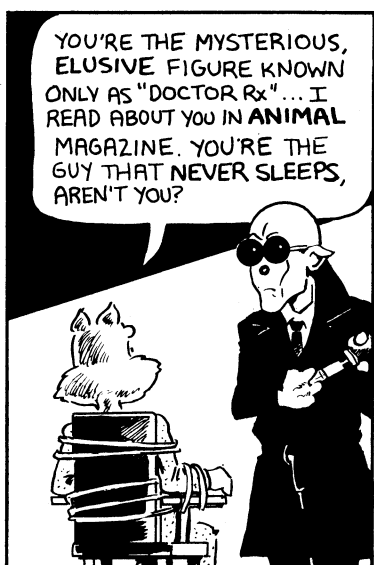
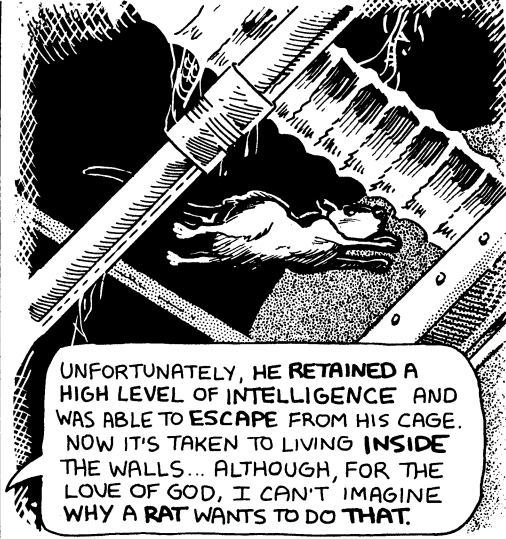
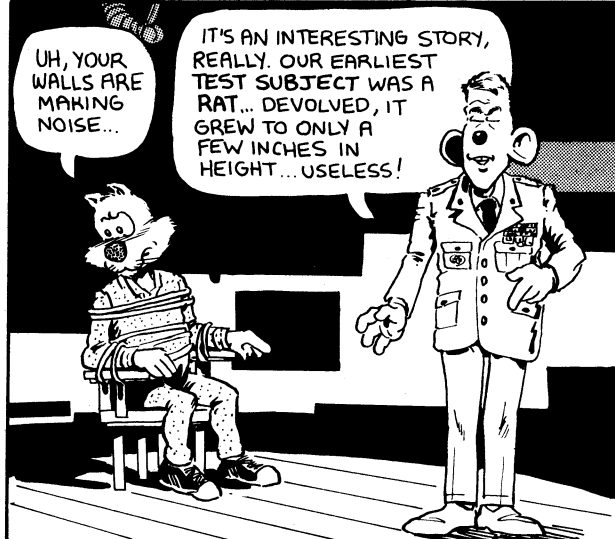
THEREFORE, IT IS
OBVIOUS LOGIC THAT
WE MUST OBLITERATE
THE STUPID BEFORE
IT OCCURS TO THEM TO
ATTACK US. ONLY IN
THIS WAY CAN
DEMOCRACY REIGN
SUPREME.

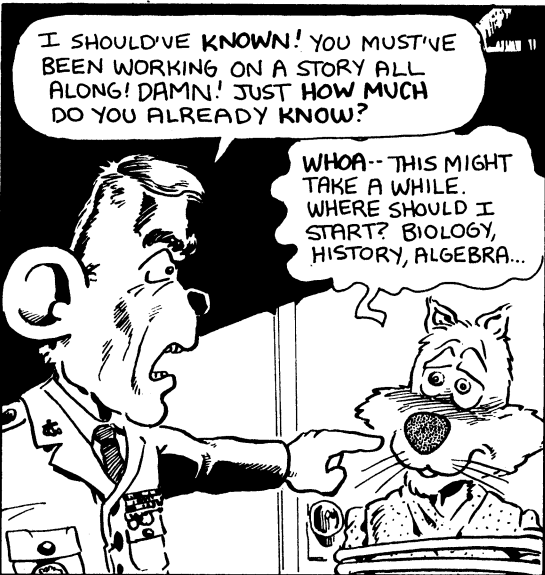
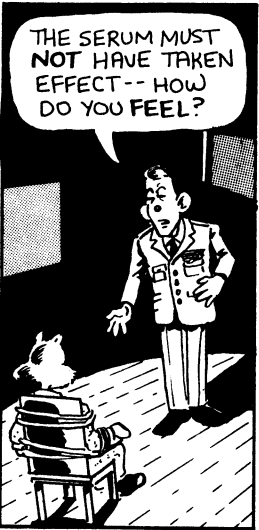


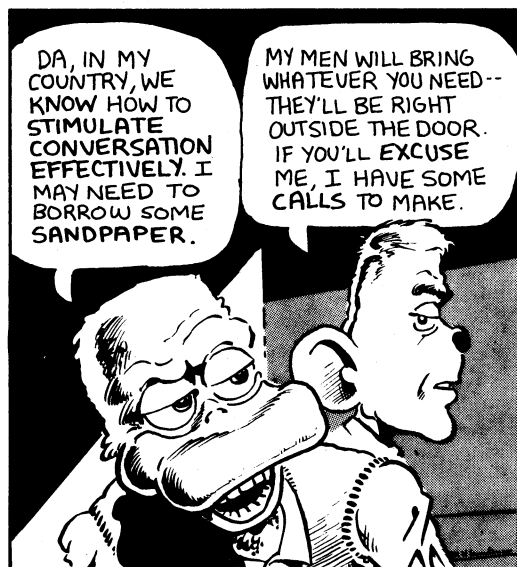
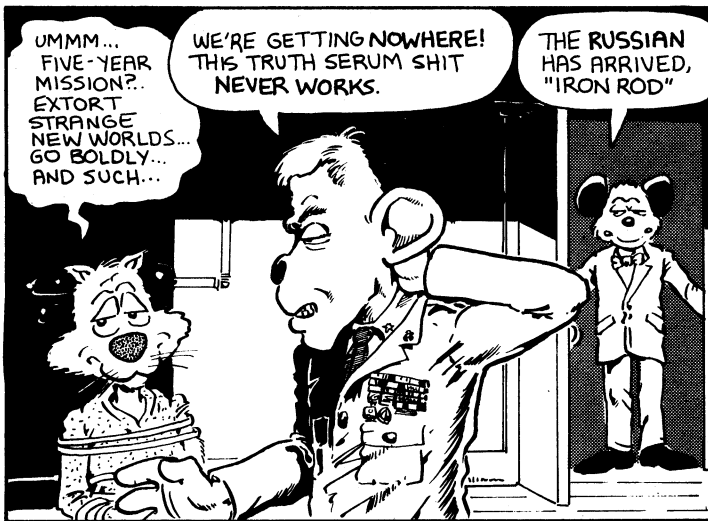
"SURVIVAL
OF THE
FASCIST," EH?

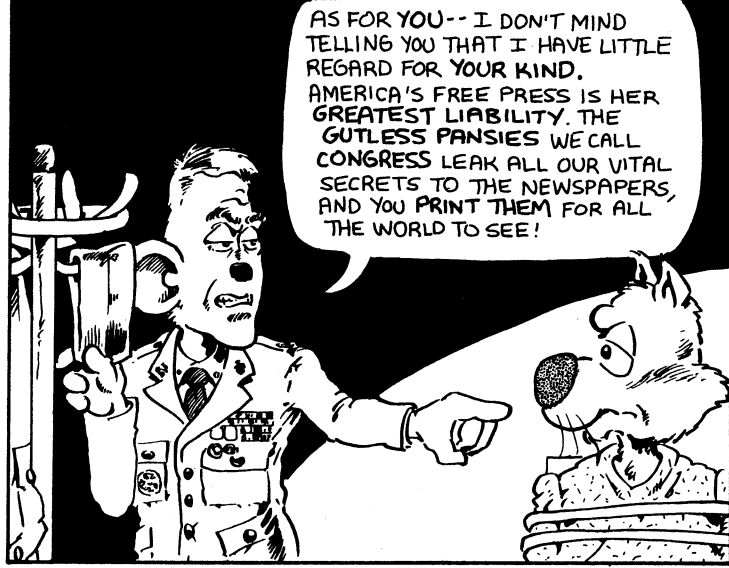
IF ONLY
THERE WAS
ENOUGH
TIME, I
WOULD
PRESENT
MY SLIDE
SHOW.

SKIKK
- KRIKT-
KLIKT!

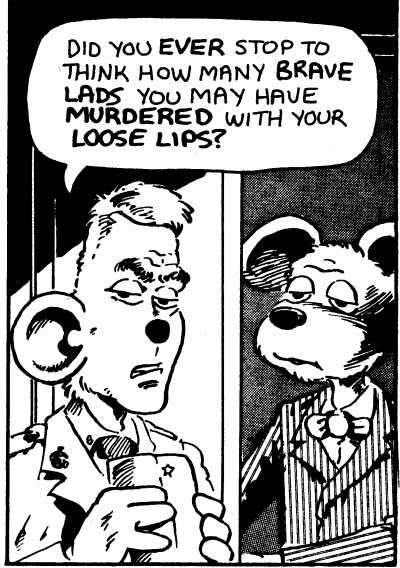








AS FOR YOU-- I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU THAT I HAVE LITTLE REGARD FOR YOUR KIND. AMERICA'S FREE PRESS IS HER GREATEST LIABILITY. THE GUTLESS PANSIES WE CALL CONGRESS LEAK ALL OUR VITAL SECRETS TO THE NEWSPAPERS, AND YOU PRINT THEM FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE!



DID YOU EVER STOP TO THINK HOW MANY BRAVE LADS YOU MAY HAVE MURDERED WITH YOUR LOOSE LIPS?

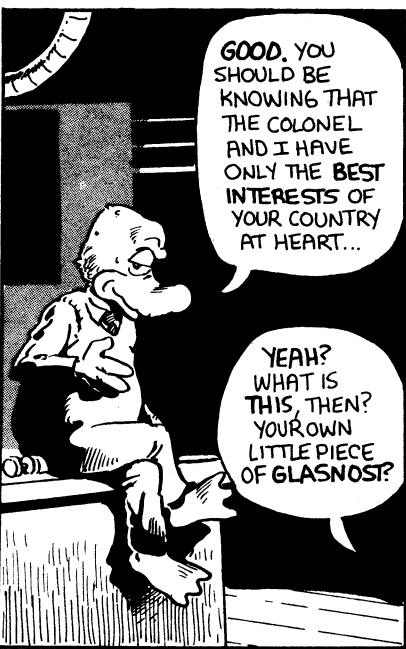


IT IS CRIMINAL.



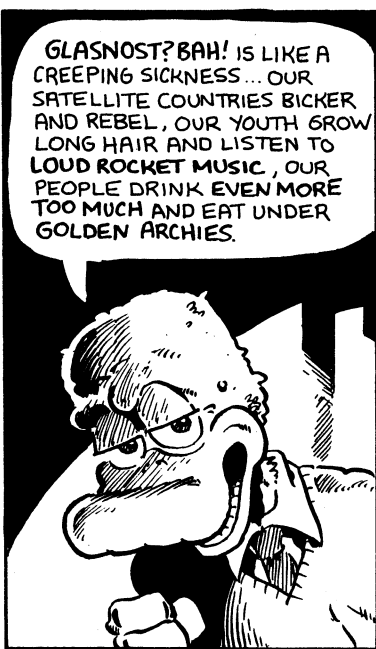
YOU MIGHT AS WELL COOPERATE WITH US, SO WE CAN AVOID ANY INJURIES TO YOUR PERSON.

SUITS ME.

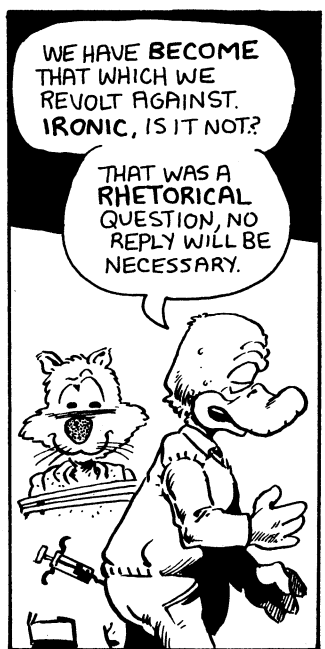


GOOD. YOU SHOULD BE KNOWING THAT THE COLONEL AND I HAVE ONLY THE BEST INTERESTS OF YOUR COUNTRY AT HEART...

YEAH? WHAT IS THIS, THEN? YOUR OWN LITTLE PIECE OF GLASNOST?



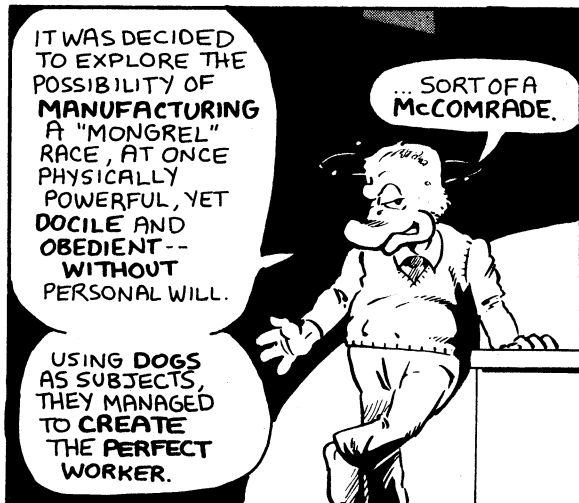
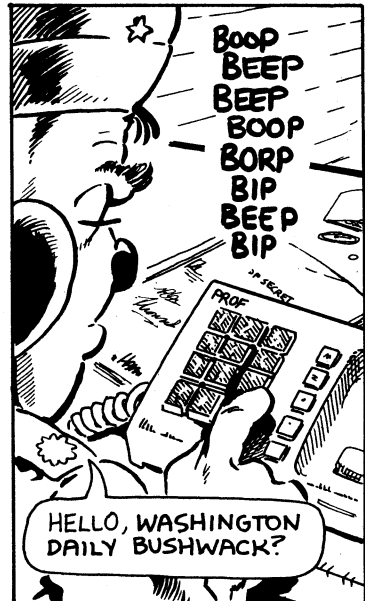
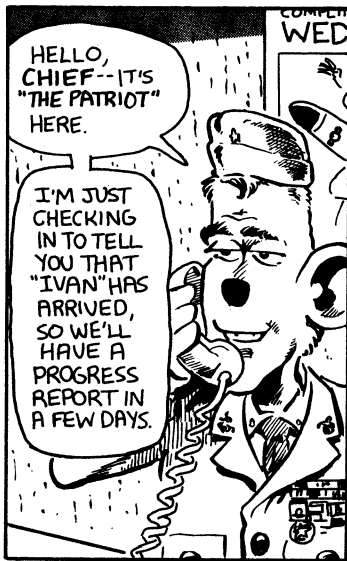
GLASNOST? BAH! IS LIKE A CREEPING SICKNESS... OUR SATELLITE COUNTRIES BICKER AND REBEL, OUR YOUTH GROW LONG HAIR AND LISTEN TO LOUD ROCKET MUSIC, OUR PEOPLE DRINK EVEN MORE TOO MUCH AND EAT UNDER GOLDEN ARCHIES.



WE HAVE BECOME THAT WHICH WE REVOLT AGAINST. IRONIC, IS IT NOT?

THAT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION, NO REPLY WILL BE NECESSARY.

MEANWHILE...



SADLY, A MINOR BUREAUCRAT RECOGNIZED THE SINGLE FLY IN OUR GREAT SOVIET OINTMENT: THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE WORKING CLASS WOULD RELEASE THE COMMUNIST PEOPLE OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

OVERNIGHT, THROUGHOUT THE U.S.S.R., A GIGANTIC LEISURE CLASS WOULD APPEAR:

YUPPSKIES!

SOON, PFFFT! COMMUNISM DISAPPEARS FOREVER.

YOU CAN APPRECIATE THE BASIC PARADOX.

THE PROGRAM WAS DENOUNCED AS FANTASTIC AND UTOPIAN, THE PRINCIPALS EXILED.

THE WORK DESTROYED, MOSTLY.

SO, HOW DOES ALL THAT ADD UP TO A TWO-HEADED DOG WORKING FOR THE MARINES?

THE SECOND HEAD WAS A GERMAN INNOVATION, FIRST ATTEMPTED DURING THE WAR. THEY WERE A CURIOUS PEOPLE, EASILY BORED.

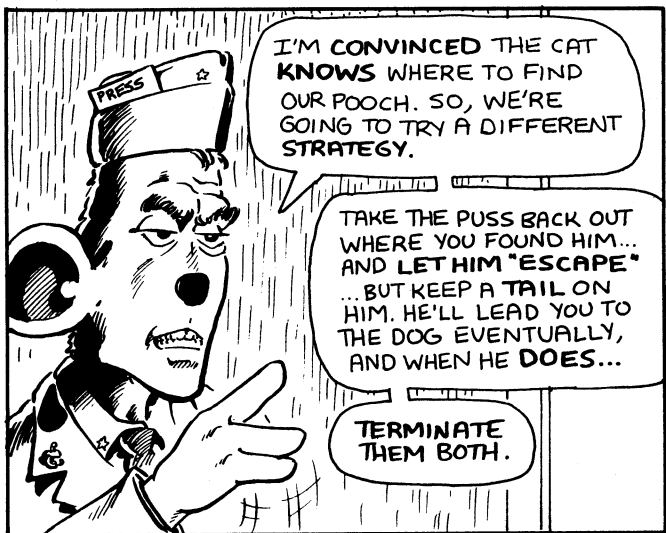
I ADMIT IT IS AN ESPECIALLY REPELLENT TOUCH-- IT OFFENDS EVEN ME. BUT THAT IS EXACTLY THE EFFECT WE WANT!

THE COLONEL AND I HAVE STRUCK A BARGAIN WHICH WILL BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL: WE WILL CREATE A LABFUL OF MONSTROSITIES, THEN EXPOSE THEM TO THE WORLD AS A CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN ATROCITY.

THE REST OF THE PLANET REPULSED, OUR PREMIER SHAMED AND UNSEATED, HIS GLASNOST REDUCED TO A MOCKERY...



WHILE, OUTSIDE...



INSIDE...





LISTEN, COMRADE BUTTINSKI, YOU PROMISED ME YOU'D KEEP A LID ON THIS MARXIST RHETORIC!



CALM DOWN, WE ARE TO BE WORKING TOGETHER -- I THOUGHT YOU TRUSTED ME!

YEAH, YOU AND ED MCMAHON!

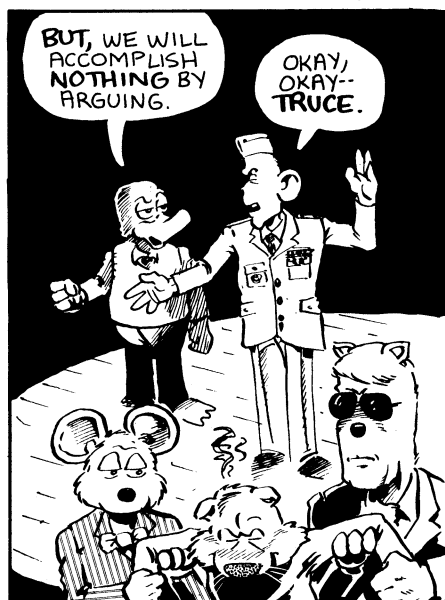
"YOU MAY ALREADY BE A WHINER..."
MMFFP!



I'M NOT ABOUT TO SIT STILL WHILE YOU SLANDER MY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-- I AM NOT A POTTED PLANT!



AND I AM NOT JUST HERE AS COMMIE RELIEF! WE ARE BOTH HERE IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRIES!

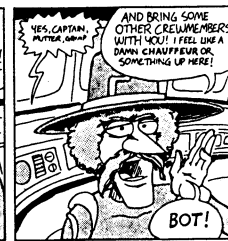
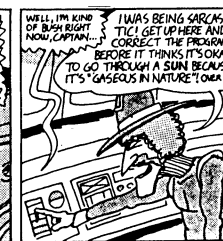
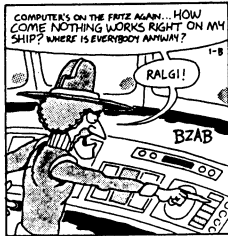
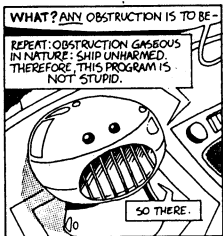
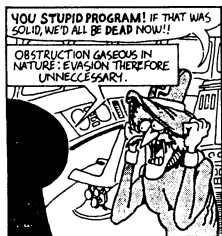
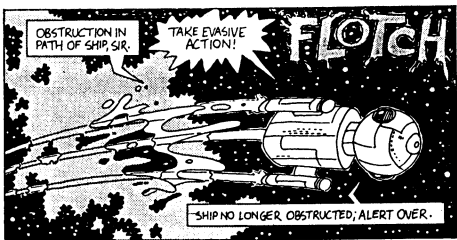
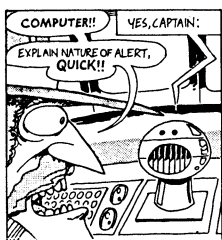


BUT, WE WILL ACCOMPLISH NOTHING BY ARGUING.

OKAY, OKAY-- TRUCE.



... I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT I GUESS WE CAN BE CIVILIZED ABOUT THIS!



© 1988 J.P. Morgan

[LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER]

I'll prove Newton's law of gravity for my science project this semester. . .

● Oh, oh—actually, the “Blue Beagle” story had virtually nothing to do with Watchmen, so if you didn’t understand it’s all your fault!

J.P. Morgan’s “Fission Chicken” came in over the transom (as we editors like to put it) a year and a half ago. As for John’s earlier work, let me quote from his original letter to me:

“Allow me to introduce myself: a frustrated Parsons alumnus who, after a couple of years at an ass-deadening job (don’t ask), is attempting to climb back in the saddle after falling off. One place kind enough to print my stuff was CARTOONS. Trouble is . . . I used to be a lot more enthusiastic about cars ‘til I actually got one! So now I’ve moved on to more interesting subjects, like costumed chickens who pummel helpless villains and blow things up.”

In addition to this, John has self-published his own mini-comix, Fudgong Funnies, and he worked up some samples for a proposed Star Trek type humor strip, a handful of which we are printed on this very page.

We won’t even talk about the banks. —KT

Arthur Yee
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I would like to compliment you and Fantagraphics for publishing three of the best funny-animal/anthropomorphic comics on the shelves today—Cap’n Jack, Usagi Yojimbo, and the best of them all, Critters. All three comics show the versatility of anthropomorphic characters by portraying them in

funny, serious, satirical, and even realistic situations. (Try that with 90% of other comic book characters. Ha!) I am a big fan of animal comics and it is great to see a comics publisher put out more than one quality title in that genre. I know the black-and-white comics glut has hurt the sales and printing of such titles but it seems the survivors of the glut are mostly better written and drawn funny-animal/anthropomorphics titles. That would include Fantagraphics’ menagerie. I hope you will continue publishing those three for a long time.

I enjoyed Amazing Heroes #129, with the Steve Gallacci and Freddy Milton interviews and the Rowrbrazzle portfolio. I wonder if Fantagraphics could publish selected features from Rowrbrazzle in either Critters or as a Critters special? I am not a Rowrbrazzle member (yet) and I saw many interesting excerpts in your Rowrbrazzle sampler that perhaps deserve wider exposure than just to the club’s 50 members and allow non-members to sample the best of Rowrbrazzle’s talented members’ works. For example, it might be interesting for non-members to read Deal Whitley’s Opporknockitytoons, the precursor to High Orbit in Albado, or the contributions of such notables as Mike Kazaleh and Steve Gallacci, or perhaps even give newcomers and talented unknowns a rightful place among the established artists in Critters and future stardom!

I love Critters! Please tell Steve Gallacci to consider starting “Birthright III.” With the huge load Mr. Gallacci is carrying (Fusion, Albado, his Thoughts and Images empire), the man deserves a rest. But, I do hope he will

start “Birthright III” in the near future. I’m losing sleep speculating on what lies ahead for Prince Alfon, Jenna, and Company (no kidding!). I have a gut feeling Mr. Gallacci is not finished with this saga and he will return to plotting “Birthright’s” next episodes. The question is “when?”. I wait patiently until then. In the meantime, I will just have to make do with Critters’ other features, “Gruff,” “Lionheart,” “Blue Beagle,” and others. I guess the wait for “Birthright” isn’t too bad with the other features going on in Critters.

(One other feature I am still waiting for other than “Birthright III” is “SpeakingStone.” (Talk about cliffhanger series!) I hope Reed Waller and Kate Worley resume “SpeakingStone” fast before I get gray hairs as well as loss of sleep.

Critters isn’t just a comic book . . . it’s an adventure!

I also have some questions:

(1) When is Captain Jack’s next issue coming out? I know Mike Kazaleh’s illness caused last issue to come out late and his working on the Mighty Mouse show probably took most of his time away. Are The Captain and Friends alive and well?

(2) Any chance of the following returning (in new episodes): Leggo Lamb, Firecracker Jack, Qwa’s Quest, The Masked Apple, Ty Templeton’s Pogo-style strip, Lela Dowling’s poems, Teddy Payne and the Bluebears?

(3) Any chances of future appearances by Ken Macklin (perhaps borrow “Weasel Patrol,” “Dr. Watchstop,” or “Contractors” from Eclipse), Joe Sinardi (Maxwell Mouse Follies, recently released by Renegade Comics), Chuck Fiala’s “Bullet Crow,” and Jim Engel’s “Dick Duck, Duck Dick” (formerly from NOW Comics)?

(4) Classic reprints of funny-animals from the ‘40s, ‘50s, and ‘60s from DC and Harvey or by Barks (non-Disney) and Kelly?

(5) More foreign funny-animals—following Freddy Milton’s success?

● What a lot of questions! “Birthright III” should be back before the end of the year. “SpeakingStone” has been indefinitely postponed. Captain Jack #10 is currently at the printers and will be out in March—but after that, it will probably be a long wait, because Mike will begin working on the second season of The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse. (All cheer!) Most of the “repeaters” you requested have standing invitations to return, although “Qwa’s Quest” was pretty well self-contained, and Ty T. doesn’t want to repeat what was intended as a one-shot parody. As for (3), we may have work by one or two of the cartoonists listed soon. No “classic” material is currently planned (you can find some Golden Age Walt Kelly material from Eclipse), although Fantagraphics Books may have a big, big announcement regarding Pogo one of these days. (Let me put it this way: just about the biggest announcement possible.) In terms of foreign cartoonists, we have a demented 10-page strip by the titanically talented German cartoonist Volker Reiche (and old collaborator of Freddy Milton’s and Daan Jippes’s), which will be scheduled as soon as I get around to translating it. —KT

Dear Kim,

I just bought *Critters* #23. Overall, it was well worth the wait and the extra \$2.00. The cover especially. Templeton's stuff is great. But I'll talk about "Teddy Payne" later.

"One Night in the Cold": Adorable. Sakai's whimsical expressions were excellent, as usual. It's really amazing that he could do it that well in just two pages! The tokage are wonderful, even if they do only have silent parts. Oh well, Charlie Chaplin started that way, too.

"Lionheart": I have always liked Stazer's work, and this was no exception. "Christmas" was an excellent summation of music today. As much as I liked this installment, I hope the next "Lionheart" serial has a bit more depth to it—more mystery...

I have liked Sam Kieth's stuff in the past (sort of), but "The Final Blowout" just didn't work for me. Sakai could carry off a one-page short, but Kieth couldn't, at least, not this time. Try it again, Sam!

"Teddy Payne" was very good. Templeton's art flows nicely and the characters, especially Teddy, were very appealing. I wouldn't mind seeing the Bluebears around again. Ty?

I haven't listened to the soundsheet yet, but the "Right to the Blues" lyrics look good. "The Sinister Ducks" article was funny. Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* was one of the best books ever. Too bad he left.

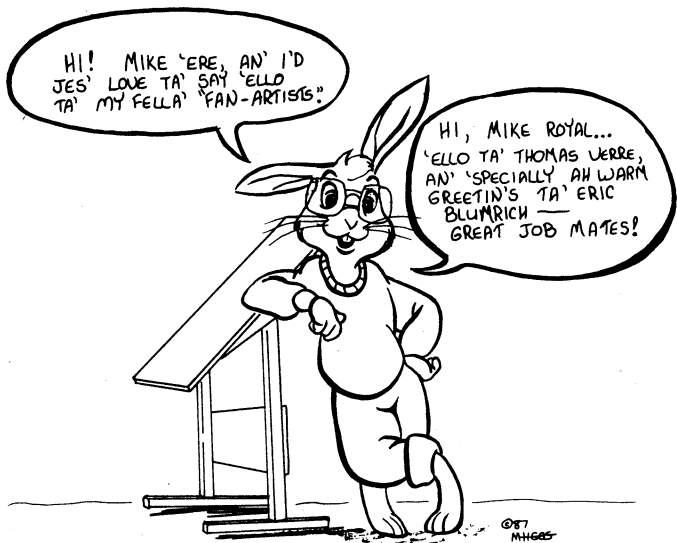
The rest of the issue was even better than usual. I find the art in "Lizards" a bit static, but the stories are always a poetic interpretation of life; like aggression/anarchy vs. love and poetics. On the whole, I enjoy "Lizards" as a break from the lizard-eat-lizard world of "Gnuff" and from the violent anarchy of "Birthright," even though the last two strips are among my favorites. Since you already know how much I like "Gnuff," I'll go now to the strips I didn't like...

I didn't like "Nize Baby '88" simply because I found the use of dialect made the story extremely hard to follow. It didn't flow and the art was spastic. "An Anecdote" was okay but I don't like Marc Schirmeister's art, or, at least, not this sampling of it.

I don't want to end on that sour note, so I won't. It was one of your best issues. All



character © Ty Templeton



that was missing was "Birthright III" and "SpeakingStone." I'm looking forward to the next Christmas issue!

● For those who'd like to see the original Nize Baby strips and short text pieces, the current issue of NEMO contains a large sampling. Personally, I thought Mike did a great job pastiche-ing Milt Gross's classic work.

I'm sure the current "Lionheart" serial is more to your liking; sounds like just what you ordered!
—KT

Mike Higgs
Fantasy Studios

Dear Kim,

I will begin by saying that I confess to being one of those rabid collection completists, and purchased two copies of both issues of issue #22. I always buy two copies of every funny-animal comic, one to seal away, one to take to cons and let people finger through.

The fan art in the letter column is always a nice touch. It shows that people aren't content with just reading critters, but like to draw them as well. I'm no cartoonist, and will not try to make anyone believe I am. I just draw funny-animals to relax. I've practiced my inking, and I think it's better now—but I'll be the first to admit that it needs work.

Oh, Kim, don't feel bad about being greedy—you humans have it in your nature.

● I'm relieved to hear that. —KT

C.E. DINKINS
Oakland, CA

Dear Kim,

Ah, music! Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, Cat Yronwode's *Bop Comix* won't fold

after one issue and we won't have to wait five years for a special edition of *Critters* to remedy the loss. *Savage Henry* and that frozen music video called *Mister X* just aren't enough: I feel poorer for not having a music comics anthology to read. Radio is a mess, as is anyone else's record collection; and my life has brightened considerably since I all but stopped going to public concerts. That's story ideas in them thar hills!

Yeah...and you were trying to decide what kind of anthology comic to lose money on next, right? Well, I'd buy it, confident that preferring Claudine Longet's cover of "Here, There, and Everywhere" to the Beatles', having six albums of Anthony Braxton's unaccompanied saxophone compositions, and owning a selection of Nonesuch Explorer LPs (an international smorgasbord tempting xenophiles with such treats as *P'ansori: Korea's Epic Vocal Art and Instrumental Music*) that've never been played more than once is, rather than one man's personal problem, a tiny reflection of the peculiarities of taste that help shape the vast phonographic supermarket most of us share the use of. (New shipment of Glenn Gould reissues, aisle 7; all James Bond soundtracks one dollar off, today only.) Cartoons, as well as writings, about music ultimately pique my curiosity to hear what I haven't heard before. Better understanding what I've heard is up to the listener, of course.

Speaking of unheard music, the flexidisc was a nice Christmas present, but, uh, how do I remove it from the comic book without pulling out one of the staples? (Okay, okay, so it's a *minor* act of mutilation and I don't consider myself a collector any more. Fine. But talk about breaking taboos...!)

● Just buy a second copy, he said greedily. Listen to Mike Higgs, he knows what he's talking about.
—KT

KEIF LLAMA

XENO-TECH

BY MATT HOWARTH

BUT TO ME,
BOB DYLAN
IS
SPACE MUSIC.



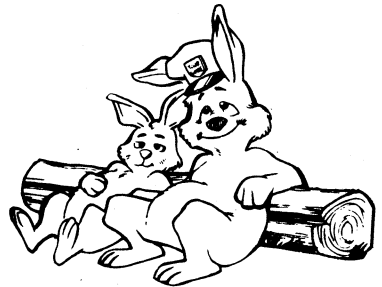
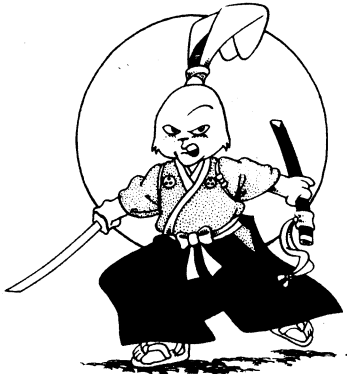
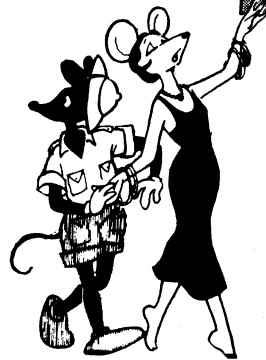
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SPACE-FARING
HEROINE IN THE
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KEIF LLAMA,
XENO-TECH!

PREMIERING IN
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Welcome to the Fantagraphics

MENAGERIE



ADVENTURES OF CAPT. JACK

Adventures of Captain Jack #3: Part 2 of "Sat. Night": Herman and Beezlebub visit the netherworld.

Adventures of Captain Jack #4: Maniacal astronauts and a batty back-up strip.

Adventures of Captain Jack #5: "Farmer Fred, I'm In Love With Your Daughter" Part 1: Arrival on Janet's planet. (This is the one that drove the distributors nuts around the country.)

Adventures of Captain Jack #6: Part 2: Herman and Janet decide to go away together.

Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Part 3: Beezlebub intrudes in Herman and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: A daring escape, the Captain in drag, and more.

Adventures of Captain Jack #9: Pool hustling with Saturated Fats, and the conclusion of the storyline!

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birthingright* continue, *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birthingright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper*!

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* tale with cover, *Birthingright* concludes, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

Critters #8: Jack Bunny by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Hallowe'en issue with Gnuff behind a mask, *Lionheart's* nightmare, and *Dog Boy*.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover story, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #12: *Birthright* returns, plus Waller/Worley, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover, plus *Birthright* and Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthright* and *Gnuff*.

Critters #15: *Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken*, and *Birthright* races on!

Critters #16: *Gnuff* ends, another *Nilson Groundthumper* story by Sakai, and *Birthright*!

Critters #17: *Lionheart* returns, plus the conclusion of *Birthright*.

Critters #18: *Leggo Lamb* by Jim Engel premieres. Also, the conclusion to *Lionheart*, and *Blue Beagle*.

Critters #19: *Gnuff* returns, plus *Sam and Max*, *Freelance Police*, *Lizards*, and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #20: *SpeakingStone* by Waller/Worley, *Gnuff* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #21: More *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*—32 pages worth—plus a Sam Kieth cover!

Critters #22: *Watchmen* cover parody for *Blue Beagle* story, plus *Gnuff*, *Fission Chicken*, and *Ambrose*.

Critters #23: Christmas issue with *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*, *Lionheart*, as well as strips by Marc Schirmeister, Sam Kieth, Tim Fuller, Mike Kazaleh, Bob Conway, Ty Templeton and Anthony Van Bruggen—plus a flexidisc with songs performed by Templeton & Alan Moore!

Critters #24: *Gnuff* continues, plus *Lizards* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #25: The return of *Lionheart*, plus *Gnuff* and *Angst*.

Critters #26: *Angst* cover by Van Horn, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters Special #1—Nilson Groundthumper and Hermie: Both the *Albedo* stories, plus a new 10-page strip!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Journey off into surreal experiences with "Werewolf Bikers" and more!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

Dog Boy #3: *Dog Boy* shows how to publish your own comic book.

Dog Boy #4: *Dog Boy* goes to Hell, plus *Dog Girl* invades the White House. Guest starring Reagan!

Dog Boy #5: An experiment misfires, and *Dog Boy* and *Benb* combine to form... *Dogb!* Oh no!

Dog Boy #6: "Drinkin' Man's Blues," with a striking painted cover.

Dog Boy #7: Jazzy issue exploring *Dog Boy's* multiple personalities!

Dog Boy #8: Alfred Knoot starts a new newspaper, *Dog Girl* goes graffiti-crazy, and more!

Dog Boy #9: Dancing with the cats, *Dog Girl* in jail, *Benb* goes crazy!

HUGO

Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: *Hugo* becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: *Hugo* is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

MYRON MOOSE

Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wiggly books.

Myron Moose Funnies #2: Parodies *Batman*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Spirit*, more.

Myron Moose Funnies #3: "Comic Book Fans," and more silly snot.

USAGI YOJIMBO

Usagi Yojimbo #1 (2nd printing): *Usagi* journeys tells how he became a samurai. Plus: Dennis Fujitake!

Usagi Yojimbo #2: *Usagi* goes into training and has his first duel.

Usagi Yojimbo #3: The continuation of "Samurai," and a "Croakers" strip by Don Dougherty.

Usagi Yojimbo #4: The conclusion to *Usagi's* origin, and the first half of a penguin strip by Gary Kato.

Usagi Yojimbo #5: A one-issue tale of silk, treachery, and greed, and the end of the penguin tale by Kato.

Usagi Yojimbo #6: *Usagi* vs. a water elemental, plus two more *Usagi* tales!

Usagi Yojimbo #7: *Usagi* makes a friend, plus Phil Yeh!

Usagi Yojimbo #8: A difficult assignment, plus Tom Luth.

BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AND OTHER STUFF

Usagi Yojimbo Book One: Every *Usagi Yojimbo* story before *Usagi #1* collected in one handy 160-page volume, with a new Stan Sakai cover.

Amazing Heroes #9: Behind the scenes of DC's *Captain Carrot* comic with Scott Shaw! and Roy Thomas. Plus a funny-animal pictorial.

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on Neil the Horse and Dave Sim on *Cerebus*!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

Amazing Heroes #129: Interviews with Steven A. Gallacci and Freddy Milton, "Why I Draw Funny Animals" by various, the new *Mighty Mouse* show, plus more!

The Comics Journal #73: Carl Barks featured, with long retrospective.

The Comics Journal #82-83: Mammoth interview with Dave (*Cerebus the Aardvark*) Sim.

The Comics Journal #99: Big interview with Arn (*Neil the Horse*) Saba.

Anything Goes! #3: Featuring a full-color *Captain Jack* story by Mike Kazaleh, *Cerebus* vignette by Dave Sim, and *Cerebus* cover by Neal Adams.

Anything Goes! #6: Cover painting by Stan Sakai of *Usagi Yojimbo*, worth the cover price.

NEMO #21: 28 pages of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo* strip—a treat for classic funny-animal lovers!

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