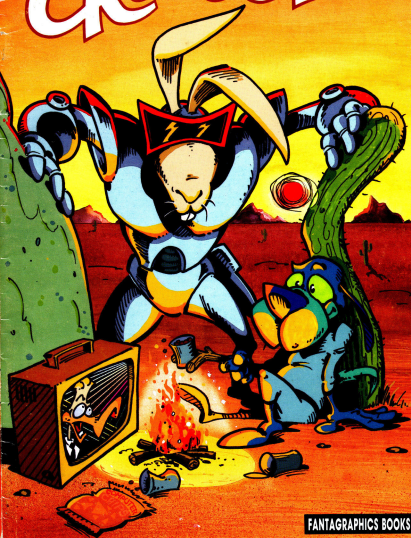


No. 34

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Critters

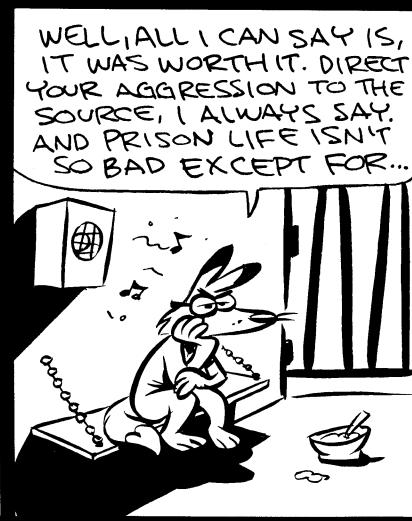
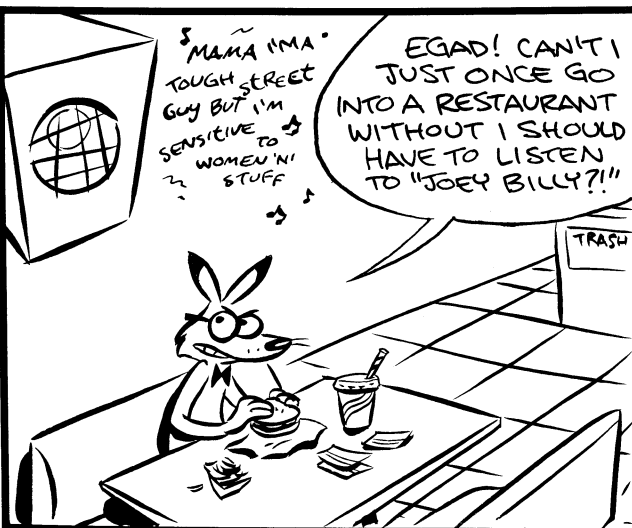


FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

FONTAIN the FOX in:

"THE MUSIC LOVER"

A study in frustration by Mickey "Himself" Kazaleh - 1988



Critters

EDITORIAL

Those raucous souls who have been demanding new talents and series in Critters should be especially happy this issue, as we greet no fewer than four virginal (at least to Critters) creators: Mark Marcus, John Wilcox, Frank Lintzen, and Kyle Rothweiler.

I've known Mark and John for quite a while (they're regular contributors to the Amazing Heroes Preview Special, among other things); since the two forged their collaborative skills on several strips for the late, not-too-lamented Spotlight Comics (brief home of Mighty Mouse the comic book), their first Critters story should introduce them to the radical new concept of actually being paid for their comics work. Wow. "Tails from the Darkside" is designed as an irregular anthology series, and Mark and John have a few other things up their sleeves, Critters-wise.

I suppose I should take some credit for bringing the two together with Frank Lintzen, the latest appallingly talented Canadian cartoonist to burst on the scene. Frank sent us a package of sample artwork over a year back, and while he had technique to burn, his work as a writer was less than substantial. Casting around for something for Frank to do, I noticed that on the envelope his package came in, he'd drawn this wonderful tough-looking anthropomorphic dog with a peace sign belt buckle. So when Mark and John asked if I knew any funny-animal artists looking for writers, it was a matter of mere months before I said "aha!" And the rest is history.

I've printed a portfolio of Frank's drawings on the inside back cover. They aren't funny-animal oriented, but they certainly ought to see print somewhere, and since we have a couple pages to fill out...

Bringing up the rear this time around is Kyle Rothweiler, who aside from being a brilliant cartoonist and a hilarious writer, is also amazingly prolific. I have just received complete Xeroxes of his fourth "Duck 'Bill' Platypus" story, so you'll be enjoying these wacky gems for a while yet. Astonishingly enough, this issue's story is only Kyle's second published story. Ye gads, don't other publishers in this country have any sense or taste?

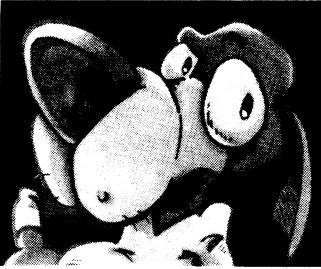
Oh yes, our printer pulled a neat trick on us last issue and reversed pages 6 and 7, in the middle of the "Fission Chicken" story. The printed page numbers were correct, however, so our more alert readers probably noticed the discrepancy on their own.

Next issue: the twin returns of Fission Chicken and Lionheart, another "Duck Bill" story, and some more swell stuff, which I'll list later on in the letters column—all in our special gala, regular-sized, not-a-thing-to-do-with-Christmas-if-I-can-help-it thirty-fifth issue.

Thirty-fifth! Are we middle-aged yet?

—KIM THOMPSON

WANTED FOR TREASON



REWARD

NUMBER 34 MARCH 1989

C O N T E N T S

Fontain the Fox by Mike Kazaleh

"The Music Lover"

When is a murder not a murder? When it's in the name of good musical taste. So much for the piano man.....0

Blue Beagle by Tim Fuller

"DOGNET"

The Beagle finds himself a hunted hound in this latest installment. Guest starring the terrifying Robohop.....2

Tails From the Darkside

by John Wilcox, Marc Marcus, and Frank Lintzen

"Thanks But No Thanks"

A new anthology series premieres, featuring funny-animal horror shorts. Mmmm, good.....13

Duck "Bill" Platypus by Kyle Rothweiler

"Dr. B.F. Muleskinner"

A loony romp through the madcap universe of Duck "Bill," Guru Guggenheim, and other oddballs.....24

Critters #34, March, 1989. Critters is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1988 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All stories © respective creators: Tim Fuller, Mike Kazaleh, Marcus/Wilcox/Lintzen, and Kyle Rothweiler. Cover colored by Tim Fuller. Production by Mark Thompson. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and the authors. No similarity between any of the names, characters, and institutions in Critters and those of any living or dead persons is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to Critters become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: November, 1988. Available from the publisher for \$2.50: Fantagraphics Books, 1800 Bridgegate St. Suite #101, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

The further adventures of

THE BLUE BEACLE

by TIM FULLER

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE STRIP IT'S BEEN!!
MAYBE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHEN I SAY
I WISH I'D NEVER HEARD OF THE WATCH-
DOGS, MUCH LESS JOINED THEM!

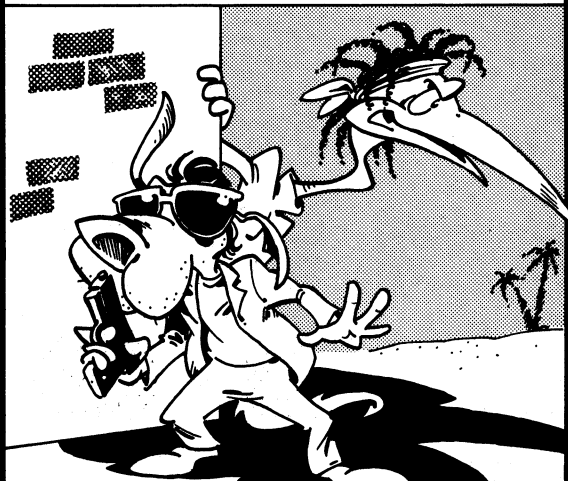


WE KEPT RUINING THE PLANS OF ONE
LIEUTENANT COLONEL COLLIE NORTH,
A RABID PATRIOT WITH A MISPLACED
SENSE OF DUTY.

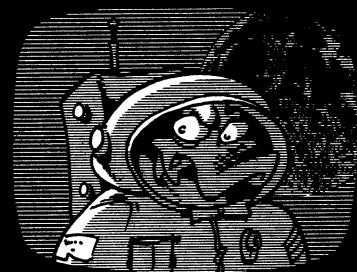


AIDING THE
CONTRA
PANDAS,
DRUG RUNNING,
TURNING
FROGS INTO
A HIGHLY
ADDICTIVE
SODA POP,
BUT HE WENT
TOO FAR WHEN
HE BRAIN-
WASHED MY
PAL QUAX
BEDROOM!

BUT WITH MY AMAZING ABILITIES, I WAS A
TOP UNDERCOVER AGENT IN NO TIME.
MY PARTNER, WHOOPI CRANE, AND I WERE
TOO SUCCESSFUL ON A DRUG BUST IN FLORIDA.



IN NO TIME QUAX HAD
INFILTRATED THE DEFENSE
SYSTEM OF THE ORBITING
STAR WARTZ SPACE
STATION AND WAS READY
TO START WORLD WAR III
IN ORDER TO MAKE COL.
NORTH A HERO. I HAD
TO GO AFTER HIM AND
THAT'S JUST WHAT
NORTH WANTED.



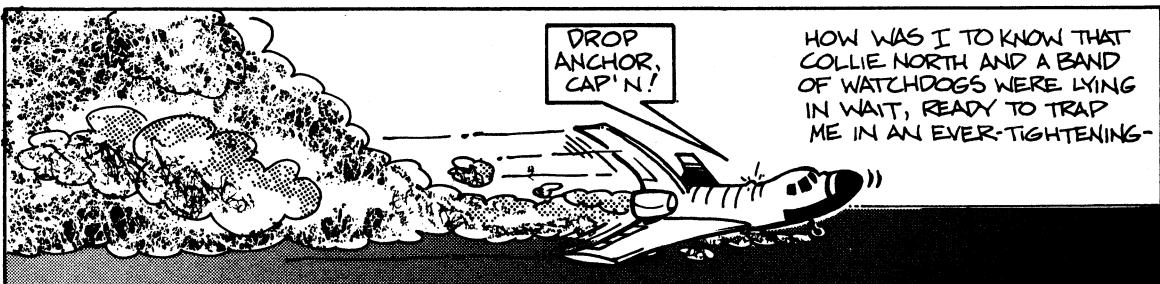
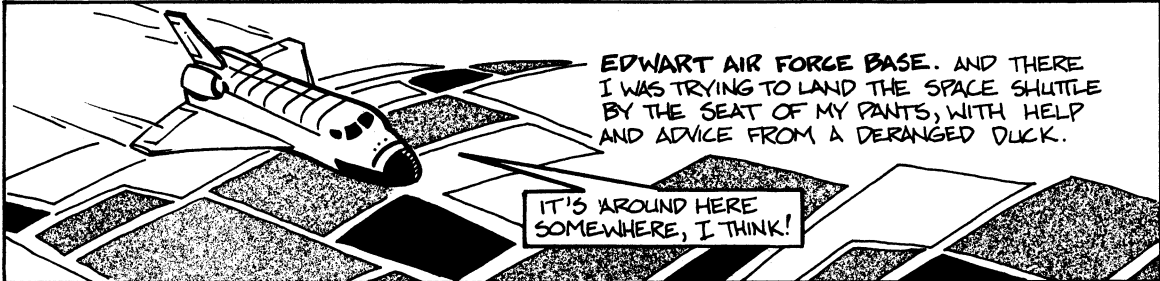
BUT HE DIDN'T COUNT ON
ME GETTING THE RUSSIAN
COSMONAUTS INVOLVED.



I RESCUED QUAX AND
PREVENTED DISASTER.
BUT THE SPACE STATION
GOT DESTROYED--UH--
ACCIDENTALLY!!



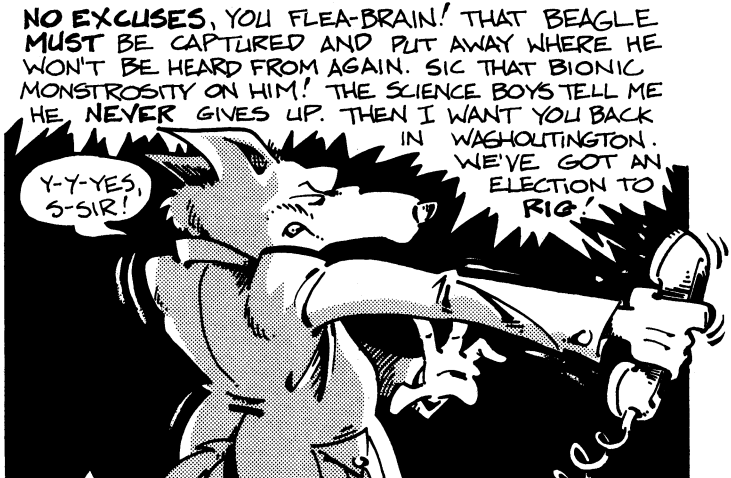
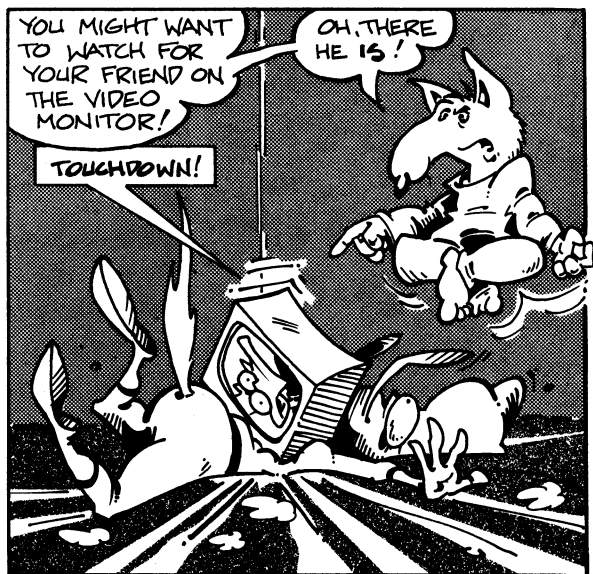
I DIDN'T
EXPECT ANY
THANKS, BUT
I WASN'T
READY FOR
MY RECEPTION
BACK HOME.

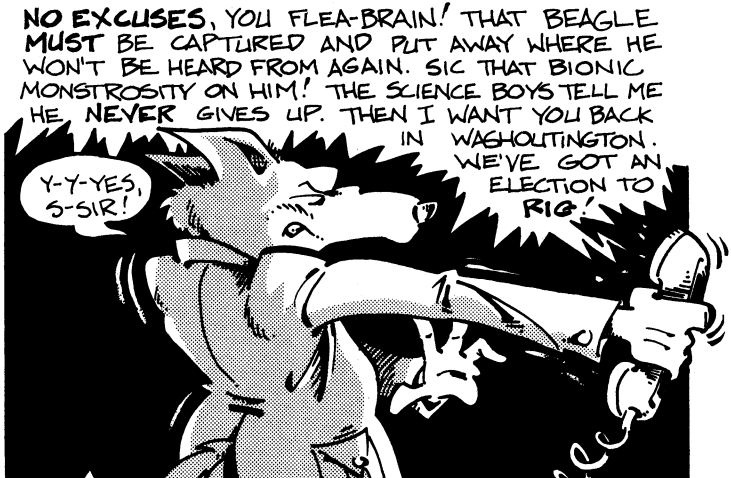


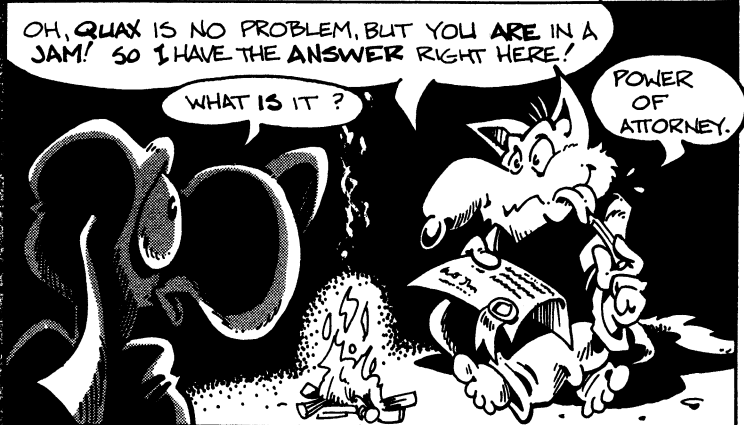
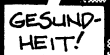
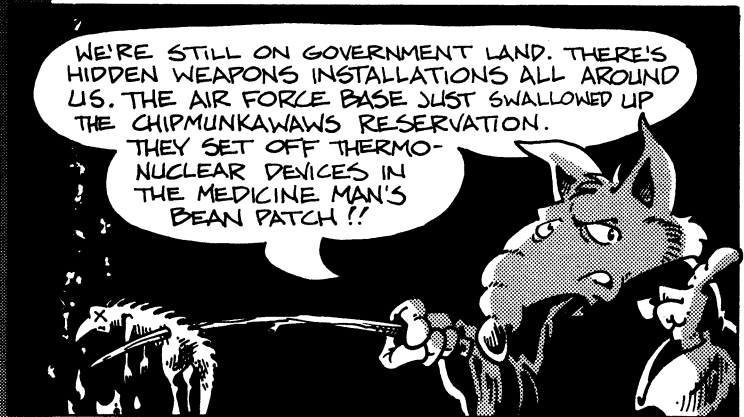
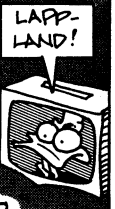
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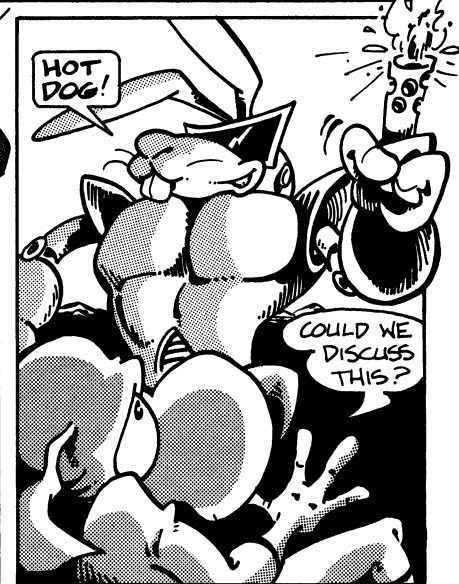
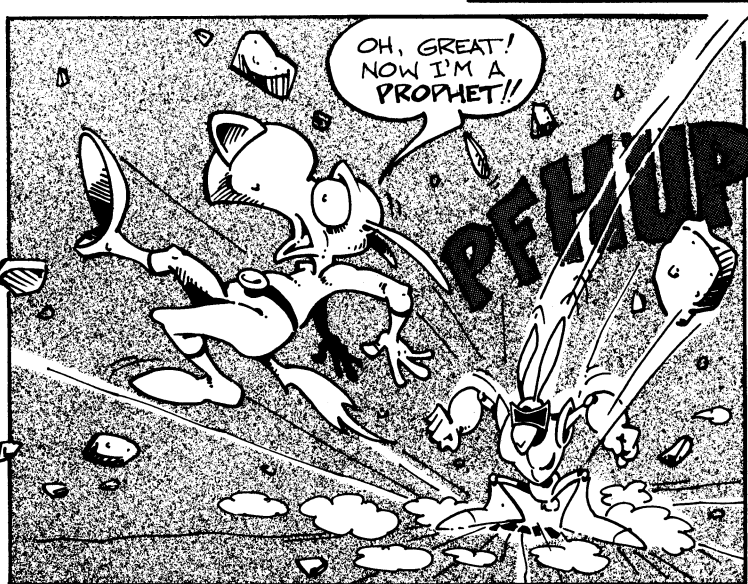
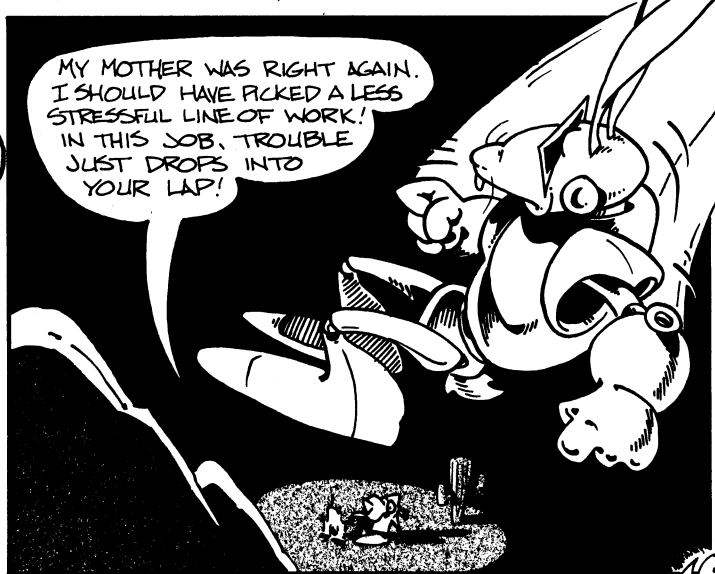


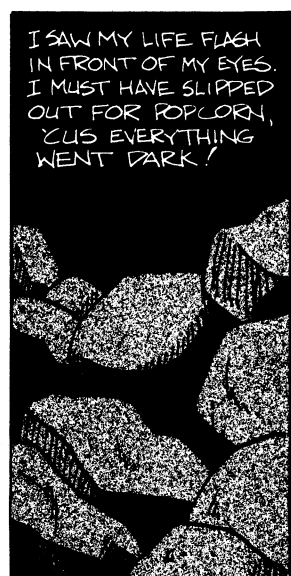
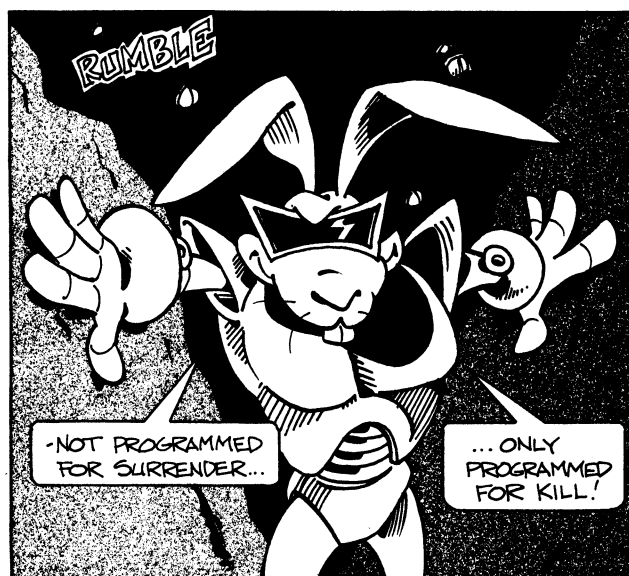
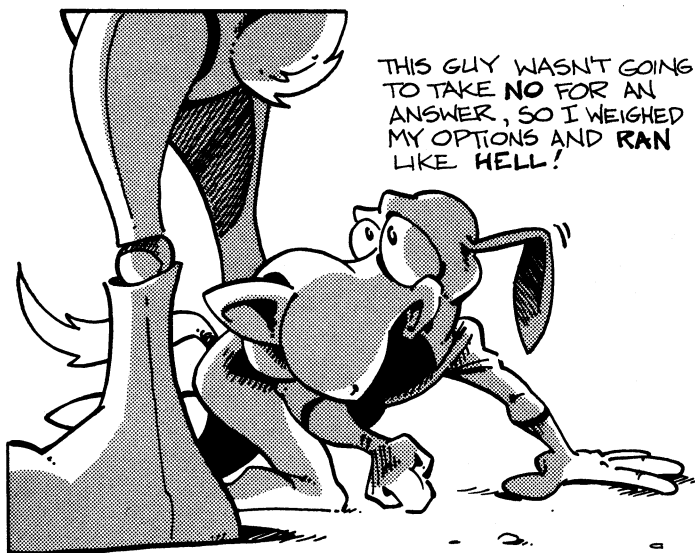


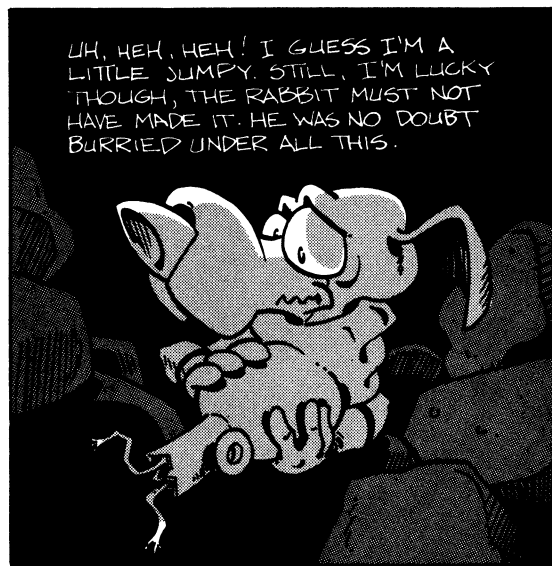
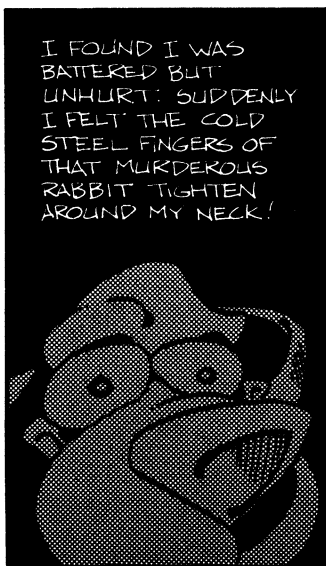
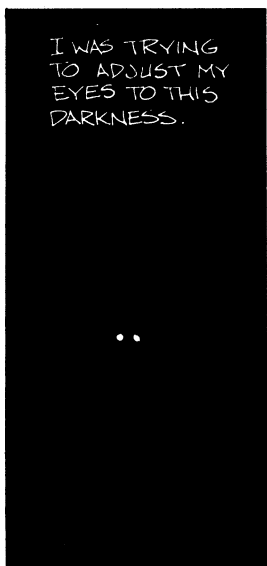
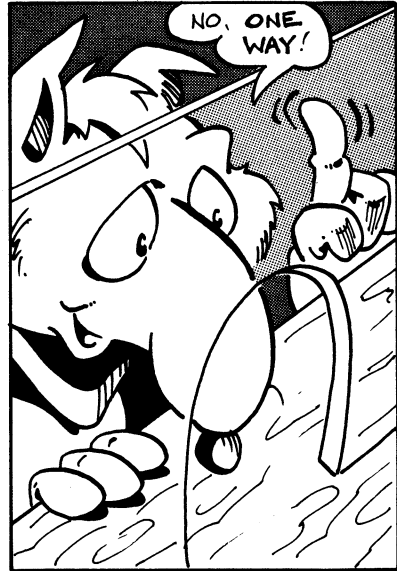
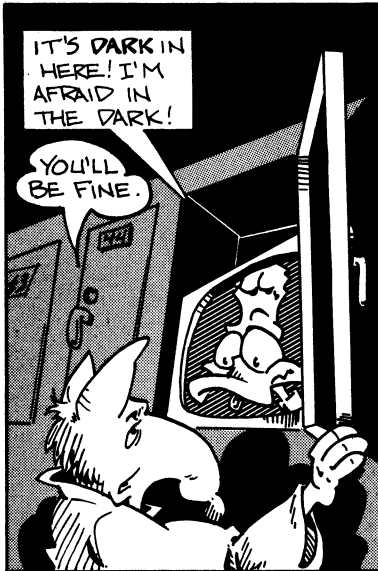


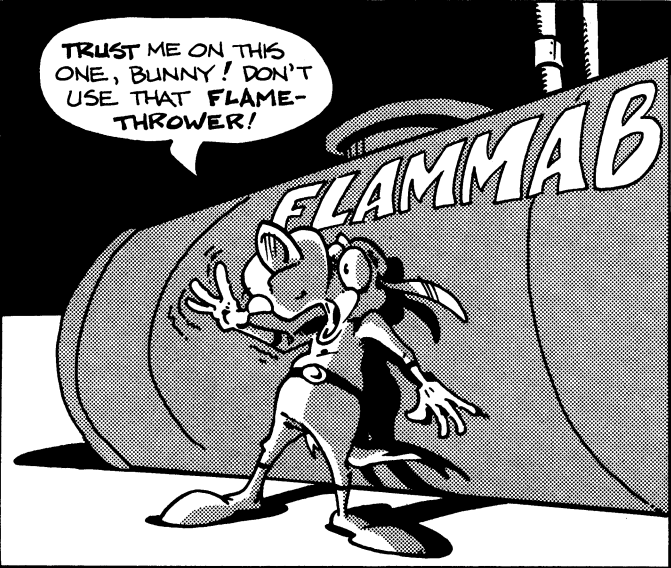
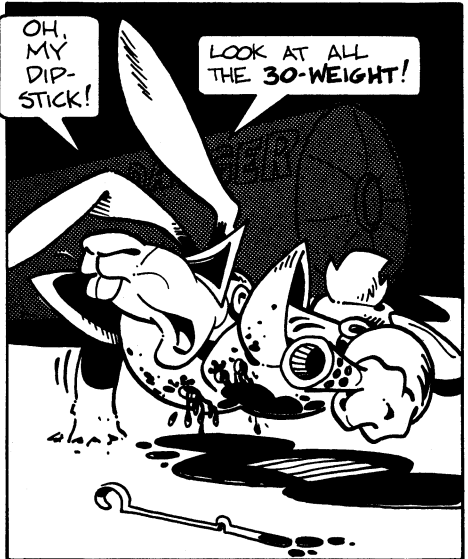
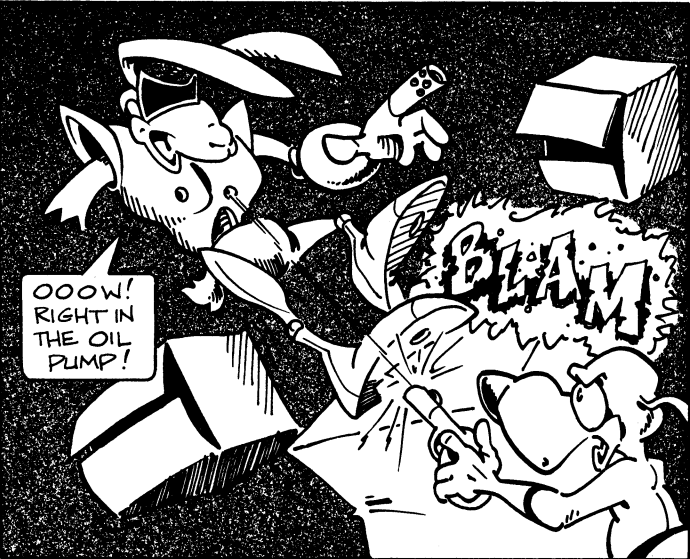


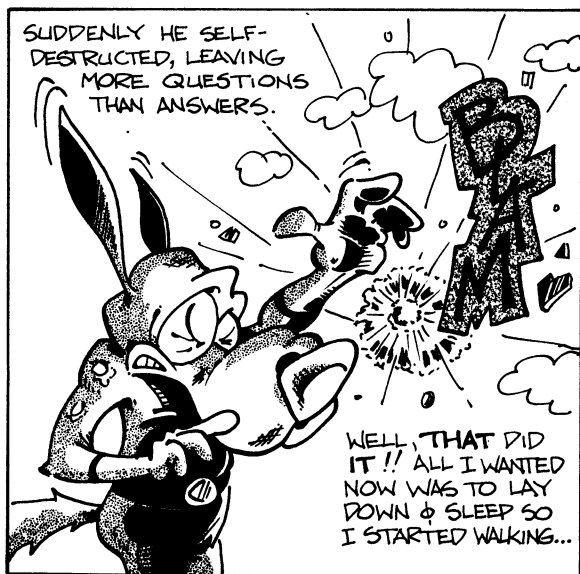


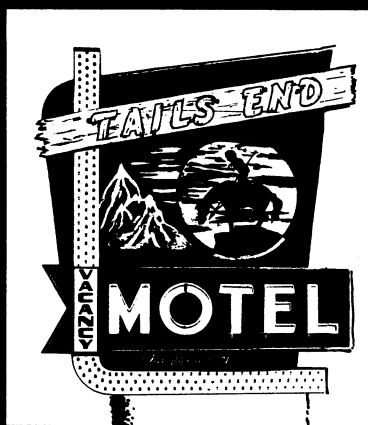
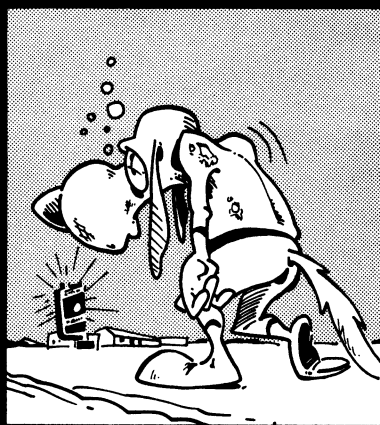












TAILS FROM THE


DARKSIDE



GOOD EVENING, DEAR FRIENDS... SO GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT...!... WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME BRANDY...



...COME AND SIT BY THE FIRE WHILE YOUR UNCLE MARK TELLS YOU A STORY...



THIS ONE TAKES PLACE NOT SO LONG AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...



LATER, THAT SAME EVENING ...

...IT'S QUARTER AFTER TEN !!
WHERE IS HE ?!!

ERRR! I'M LATE...
GOT CAUGHT IN TRAFFIC...

YOU GOT IT?

OF COURSE!

SURE, SURE...
LET'S JUST GET ON WITH IT...

I'LL PICK UP THE REST WEDNESDAY THEN?

YEAH, BUT IT'S GONNA COST YOU!

WHAT DID YOU MEAN??
WE AGREED UPON--

LOOK! YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO ARGUE!
YOUR PEOPLE NEED THIS MORE THAN I DO!

WEDNESDAY MORNING...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! ONLY ONE MORE HOUR TIL' LIFT OFF! DO YOU THINK THERE'S REALLY LIFE OUT THERE?

...what?...

YOU KNOW, THAT PLANET THEY FOUND? THE PROJECT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS?! WAKE UP, MARTY!

OH, SORRY, PENNY...

I'VE GOT A LOT ON MY MIND...

... OF COURSE. WELL, I'LL LET YOU GET BACK TO WORK. SEE YOU AT THE LAUNCH?

OH...
YEAH, SURE..

...IN A FEW MINUTES, THEY'LL ALL BE OUTSIDE GETTING READY FOR THE LAUNCH. THAT'LL GIVE ME PLENTY OF TIME TO GET THE JOB DONE. THEN I CAN JOIN THEM OUTSIDE, AND NO-ONE WILL BE THE WISER!...

A FEW MINUTES LATER...



MARTY ??...

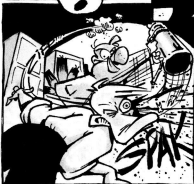


SO YOU'RE THE ONE!!!



panic!

GREAT!
FIRST TREASON
AND NOW MURDER!
I'D BETTER GET THE
HELL OUT OF
HERE!



damn!



...T-MINUS
FORTY...

...T-MINUS
THIRTY-FIVE...

THAT'S
IT!

...YEP... I'LL
BE RIGHT
WITH YOU...

RESTRICTED
AREA

KLIK!!

Click!

...T-MINUS
TWENTY-FIVE...



T-MINUS TEN...



BY THE TIME HE COMES TO... I'LL BE LONG GONE...



3...2...1... LIFTOFF!
WE HAVE LIFTOFF!...



LET'S SEE... I'LL OVERRIDE
THE SYSTEM. PIECE OF
CAKE! AFTER ALL, I
HELPED DESIGN THE
DAMN THING!...



I'LL PUT IT ON AUTOMATIC,
AND GO INTO HYPNOSIS
FOR THE MONTH IT'LL TAKE
TO GET THERE...



I'LL THANK GOD
WHEN THIS WHOLE ORdeal
IS OVER!...

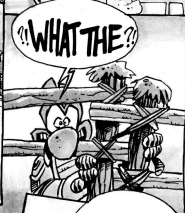
ONE MONTH LATER...

YAWN!

WELL, THERE IT IS! GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT'S DOWN THERE... BUT IT'S GOTTA BE BETTER THAN THE DEATH PENALTY!...

WAKE UP!

BETTER GEAR UP AND STRAP IN!... COULD BE A ROUGH LANDING!





WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE
MARTY HAD A LOT LESS
TO BE THANKFUL
FOR THAN HE THOUGHT...
EH, KITTIES?

FIN.

WRITTEN BY:
JOHN WILCOX & MARK MARCUS
ART BY:
FRANK LINTZEN

"HAPPY THANKSGIVING!"

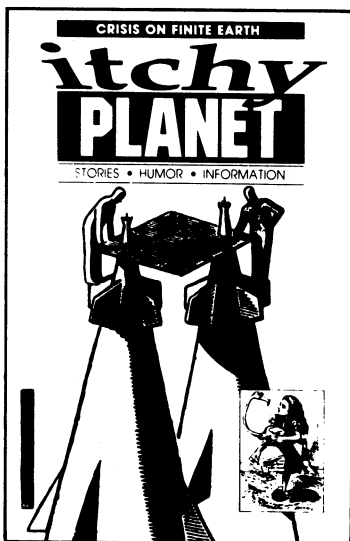
THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN HAVING AN ITCH YOU CAN'T SCRATCH...

Pollution, famine, terrorism, disinformation, racism, corruption, censorship—as we careen into the 1990s, it often seems as if the world is spinning out of control.

Cause for fear? Certainly. But no fear is worse than that anxiety you feel when you know something horrible is going on, but have no idea what it is or how to deal with it.

itchy PLANET gives you a chance to scratch that itch—to learn about the real problems of the world, to understand their causes and their effects, and to gather information on how to deal with them—how to participate in making this a better world for you and your children.

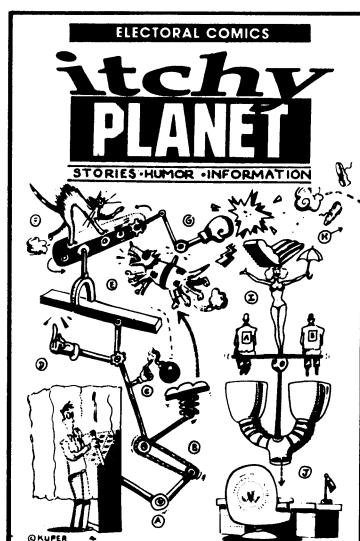
A lot of comic books claim to be realistic. *itchy PLANET* is one of the few that's real.



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© 1988 Norman Dog



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itchy PLANET #2: "Comics Warp Our Vision" issue. Censorship, corporate piggishness, racism, sexism, and addiction: Joyce Farmer, Mary Fleener, Steve Lafler, Dennis Worden, Mark Campos, Nick Thorkelson dissect your favorite medium.

itchy PLANET #3: special timely Election issue, with strips by R. Diggs, Larry Gonick, Joyce Brabner and Stephen DeStefano, Leonard Rifas, Scott Bieser, Seth Tobocman, and Spain—plus a cover by Peter Kuper.

Please send me the following:

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Please add 50 cents postage when ordering one comic; \$1.00 when ordering two or more. Outside of U.S., 75 cents for single copies, 25 cents for each additional comic.

name _____

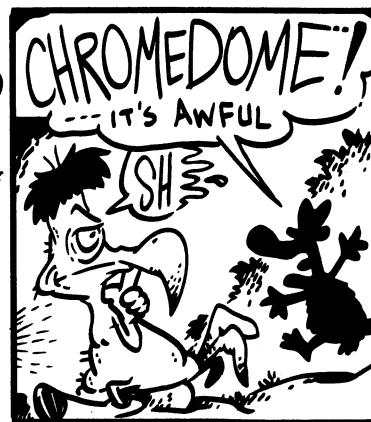
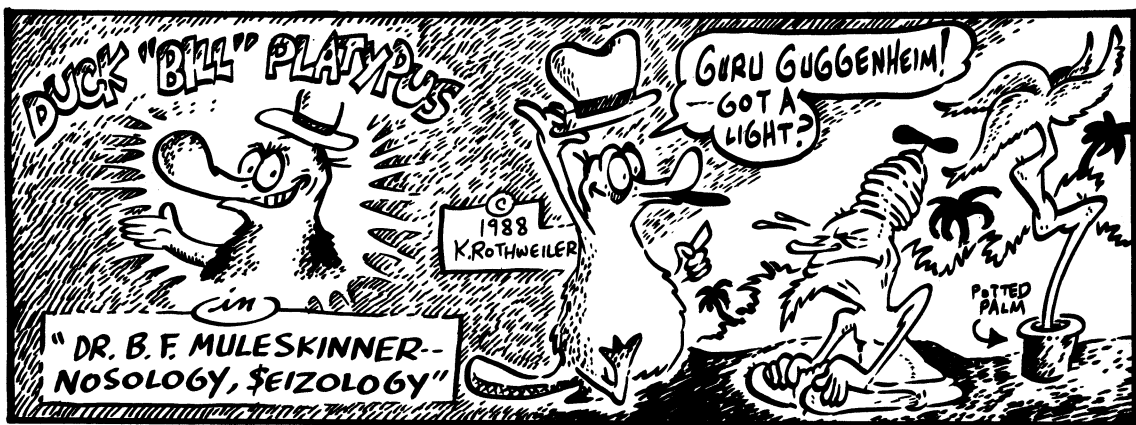
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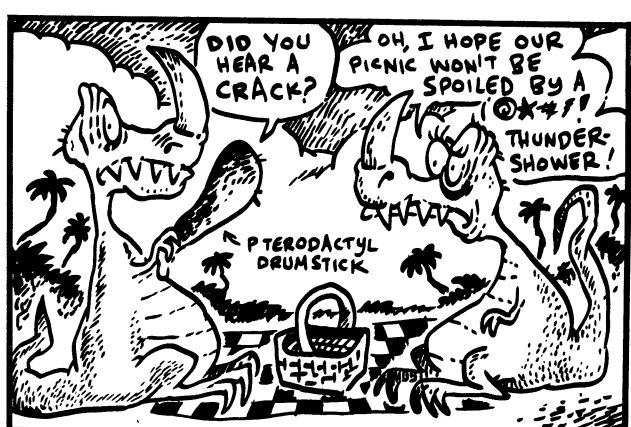
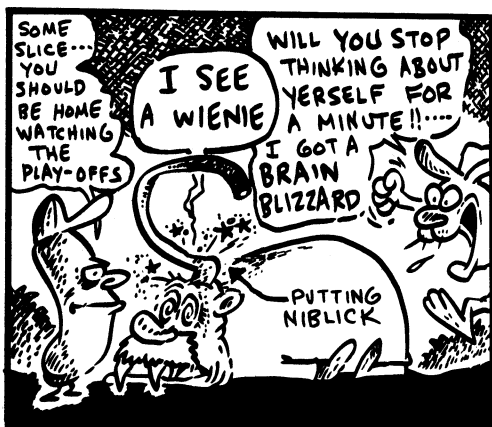
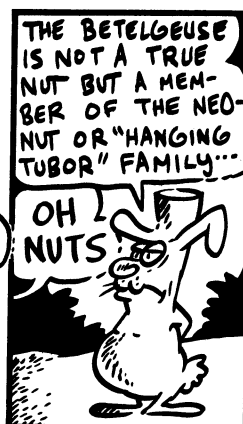
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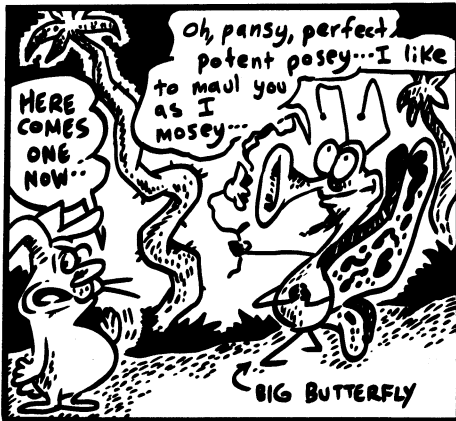
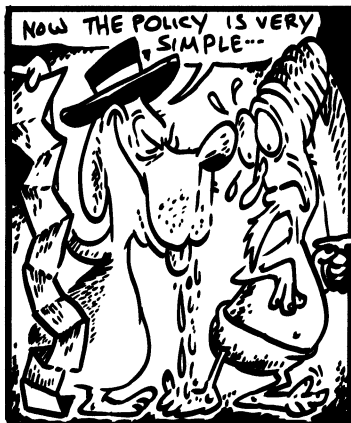
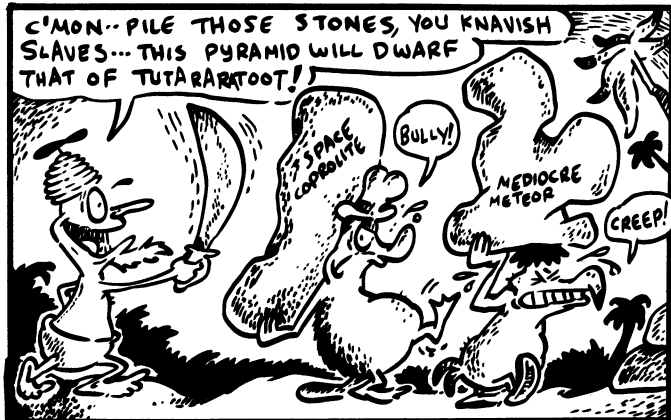
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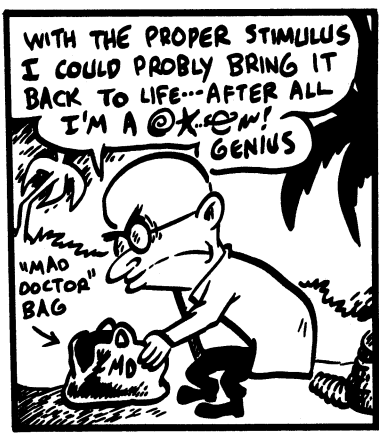
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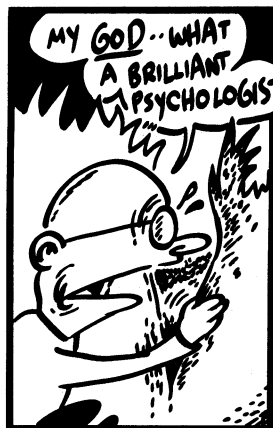
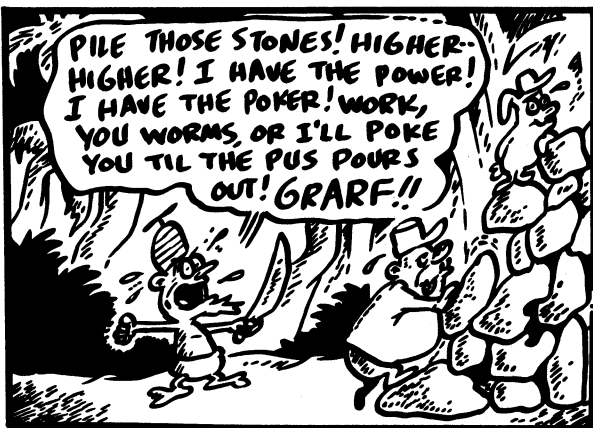
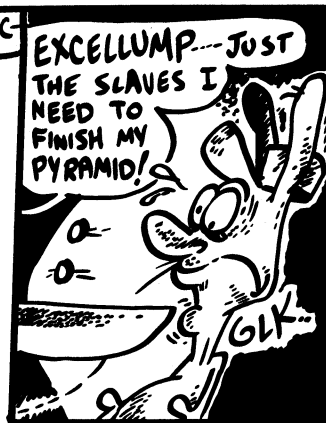
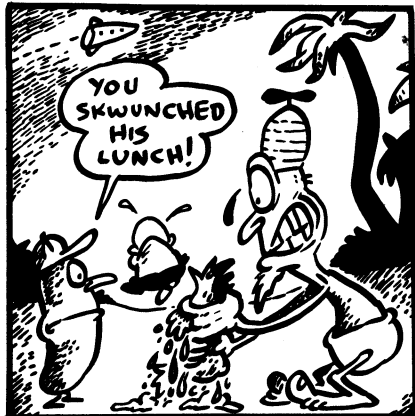
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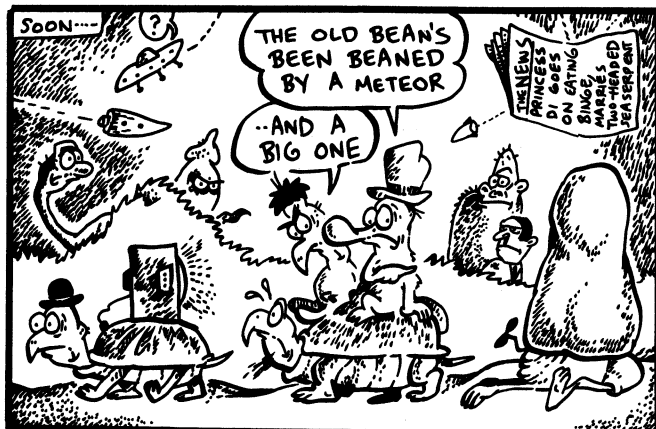
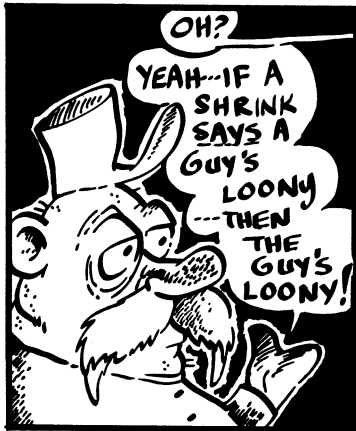
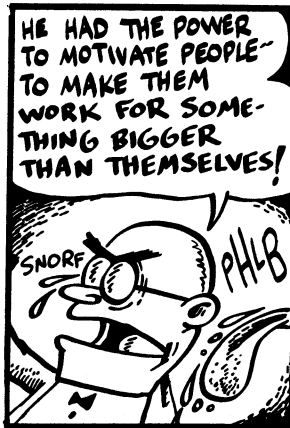












LETTERS

SEND 'EM TO CRITTERS LETTERS,
1800 BRIDGEGATE STREET, Ste. 101,
WESTLAKE VILLAGE, CALIF. 91361

Stu Shiffman
New York, NY

Dear Kim,

This comic continues on gangbusters. Fission Chicken, he's great! Morgan has a light cartooning style that I greatly admire. More, more, I'm still not satisfied!

I'm also looking forward to the return of the "Gnuff" characters and anything possible by Mike Kazaleh and Marc Schirmeister. His pantomime (Schirm's, that is) was one of the best I've even seen by the Mad Mullah of Pasadena. Definitely, get more Schirmeister. . .

● *This issue features a one-page strip by Mike Kazaleh, and next issue will feature a short Marc Schirmeister strip involving dragons. If that's not enough for you, #37 will include a nine-page Kazaleh strip (featuring Hyper AI), complete with a cover! "Gnuff" is a little farther on the back burner—mostly because the big 46-page continuities (with 12- and 13-page chapters) require a little more room to accommodate.* —KT

Peter D. Moreno
San Bernardino, CA

Dear Critters:

I used to read *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Fish Police* because the art and the stories were wonderful, but now I read *Critters* and I like it even more than *Fish Police*.

Stan Sakai and Mark Armstrong are the best artists. Timothy Fuller and J.P. Morgan make the best stories. J.P. Morgan has a wonderful imagination. I like his art work also.

"Fission Chicken" is my favorite strip in *Critters*. My favorite story is "Marketing Experts From Beyond."

Are there going to be any comic book character team-ups in future issues of *Critters*?

● *Not exactly (he said mystifyingly).* —KT

Bret C. Kaiser
Springfield, MO

Dear Kim,

I was reading the letters page in *Donald Duck* #267 when the subject of Freddy Milton's Duck story "The Big Sneeze" came up. The title sounded familiar, so I checked the back issue service page in *Critters* #28 for a description of upcoming issues. Sure enough, in *Critters* #30, "Gnuff returns in 'The Big Sneeze.'" Out of curiosity, when did Freddy do the original? And how long has he been working on the Gnuff version?



ILLUSTRATION BY PETER D. MORENO

Also, I have taken great interest in J.P. Morgan's "Fission Chicken." Would it be possible to acquire a small piece of scrap art or something done by Morgan? I'm not asking for anything big. Just a two-minute sketch or doodle. I would be happy to pay him for it. He is my favorite writer/artist in the business today.

Before I sign off, I'd like to say how much I enjoy *Critters* and its variety of artists. Incidentally, what is your print run on an average month?

● *You don't want to know what our print run is at present, Bret. It's pretty sad.*

The "Big Sneeze" story is pretty elaborate, and told in detail in *Amazing Heroes* #129, in the Freddy Milton interview, which you can purchase for a moderate amount from Fantagraphics Books. At present there have been four versions of the Big Sneeze: (1) Thirty-one page "Disney Ducks" version, published only in Holland; (2) "Milton Geese" version, otherwise identical to first, published only in Denmark; (3) "Woody Woodpecker" version, completely redrawn and expanded to 46 pages, published throughout Scandinavia; (4) "Gnuff" version, otherwise identical to the third, except for one page completely rewritten by me and re-drawn by Freddy to straighten out some continuity peculiarities that had seeped in when the story was finally wedged into the "Gnuff" canon. Whew! —KT

David DuPerre
Jacksonville, FL

Dear Mr. T.,

Ron Wilber is leaving "Lizards"? Too bad. "Lizards" was probably the most original and unique feature ever featured in *Critters*. I can't imagine anyone replacing Ron and having the same style that gave "Lizards" its distinguished look. I wish Ron and John Holland the best of success in whatever they decide to do next.

A few questions:

- (1) How do I get an issue of *Albedo*?
- (2) Any "double-issues" ahead?

(3) Are there going to be any new characters ahead?

Enclosed is a drawing of a character I've been working on. His name is Elliot and he is a raccoon. Hope you enjoy Elliot as much as I enjoyed drawing him for you.

PS: I've been collecting comics for 13 years (I'm 14 years old) and I'd say *Critters* is the best comic yet!

● *Thanks for the drawing and the compliment. As for your questions,*

(1) Send two dollars to Thoughts & Images, P.O. Box 19419, Seattle, WA, 98109. Ask for the latest issue—or, if you want the first Command Review, reprinting the first two issues' worth of "Erma Felna" stories, send \$4.00.

(2) Not for the time being.

(3) Indeed there are.

—KT



Rene Stoops
Tubahof 15
4876 ZM Etten-Leur
The Netherlands

Dear Mr. Thompson,

After reading *Critters* #31, I finally decided to write you a letter. About one year ago I did not know that a comic book like *Critters* existed (I collect quite a lot of comic books, but mostly Marvel, DC, and Gladstone Disney comics) until Fred Milton answered a fan letter and wrote me that his strip "Gnuff" was being published in *Critters*, and being a big fan of his work, I ordered your comic through my local comic shop. The first issue I got was #24. After reading eight issues I can tell you what I think of *Critters*: it's great!

Although the best strip is still "Gnuff," "Fission Chicken" and "Angst" are also fantastic! When I first read "Lizards" I did not like it very much, but after a few more stories I'm really starting to like them.

"Lionheart" can't get me really excited, there is nothing wrong with the art, but the story is not always that comprehensible for someone from Holland. (I follow the main items of your politics, but some of the political jokes are hard to understand, but I did get the Ollie North jokes!)

"The Blue Beagle" also has some political satire but this strip is, in my opinion, much better than "Lionheart."

From what I read on the letters page, one of the most favorite strips is by Stan Sakai. I've only read one story (#27), and so far I quite like it, but the winning entry of Tracy Horton (#30) I liked even better! It really defines Hermy, from what I've seen.

● *Rene requested that we print his full address, which I think is a not-so-subtle hint that he could use a pen pal or two.*

—KT

Josef Ricketts
Springfield, IL

Regarding your latest issues: Fission Chicken, Blue Beagle, and Lionheart. Do you see any similarities between the three? I really like Fish and Lionheart, and don't mind BB too much, but the combination is a sort of overdose on humor strips. "Birthright II" is what attracted me to *Critters*; regrettably, it ran out just after I started buying the book. I still enjoy reading *Critters* (and have also started collecting *Albedo* to make up for "Birthright's" demise), but something is missing: the "serious funny-animal" strips. Does Thoughts & Images have a monopoly on that genre? At the moment, the only things that you have in that slot—"Lizards," "Angst," etc.—have nothing resembling an ongoing plot. "Gnuff" does, but it is so domestic and slow-paced that I question its appropriateness in a book such

as this. Yes, I know you like it, as do other readers, but wouldn't it be more palatable in its own book?

In any case, what I'm saying is that I'd like to see some more serious and complex stories; right now, the qualities are mutually exclusive in the titles you stock. I look forward to "Birthright III," of course.

● *Oh, dear. If you're looking for more serious work, this issue should rattle you a bit and next issue—with "Fission Chicken," "Duck 'Bill' Platypus," and Marc Schirmeister—might send you right over the edge. Well, at least the recent "Gnuff" was less domestic, wasn't it?* —KT

Michael Higgs
Fantasy Studios

Dear Kim,

The dust has now settled, and the time for me to dig out the typewriter has come once more. It's good to hear that sales for *Critters* seem to have "stabilized" for the time being. Alas, Steve Gallacci hasn't had that much luck. You readers who are always spouting off about being such great fans of his, prove it by going out and purchasing massive quantities of his titles. We all must fight together to save our favorite medium of entertainment—the black-n-white "funny-animal" comic.

The Iran-Contra scandal seems to have inspired a couple of our favorites to do stories about it in the humorous vein: or is there something to be learned here? You can get an education in the darndest places! I haven't seen "Lizards" in a couple issues. Next to the ever-famous "Birthright," this seems to be my other well-taken-in strip. It is definitely unusual. I like unusual. Maybe that's why I like the old "Dr. Watchstop" and the "Weasel Patrol" by Ken Macklin and Lela Dowling. (Pity that Eclipse got them before you did, Kim.)

Everybody has seen my fictional secretary and myself portrayed as rabbits in this letters column, but some have asked me if anything goes on between the two of us. I just shake my head and say, "Is there anything happening between me and a fictional person? You take over at writing for a while, your imagination is better than mine."

● *I don't even want to think about it.* —KT

Joseph A. Rosales
San Antonio, TX

Dear Kim,

Today I did something I very rarely do: I went back and actually reread one of the old comics in my collection. Cover to cover, front to back. Care to take a guess at which one it was?

Well, just in case, I'll tell you. It was *Critters* #1. Way back when there wasn't even a letters column, because there weren't any letters. Back when you seemed trying to justify publishing a funny-animals anthology as much to yourself as to your readers. From the editorial reminiscing on the nature of memory to the final dedication to Carl Barks, I once again absorbed the comic you worked so long and carefully to create. And strangely enough, the issue held up. It could have been issue #10, or #26, or #33, if you were willing to break up the continuity. It has the quality, humor (albeit a little dark in that first book), and confidence in itself that *Critters* has always striven for, and almost always succeeded in. How long has it been, Kim, since you went back and took a good look through *Critters* #1? Try it. It is like opening a portal to the past: "Within those pages, the laws of time and space are suspended, and there is some of you." Remember?

● *Very much so. That was far away and long ago, wasn't it?* —KT

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL HIGGS





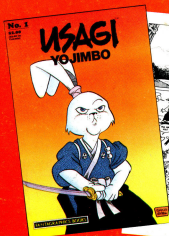
HERE IS A SMALL SAMPLING OF THE ARTISTRY OF FRANK LINTZEN, WHOSE WORK GRACES THE FIRST "TAILS FROM THE DARKSIDE" THIS ISSUE.



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