

DISPOSABLE MEDIA

issue five

ART.
MUSIC.
GAMES.
LIFE.

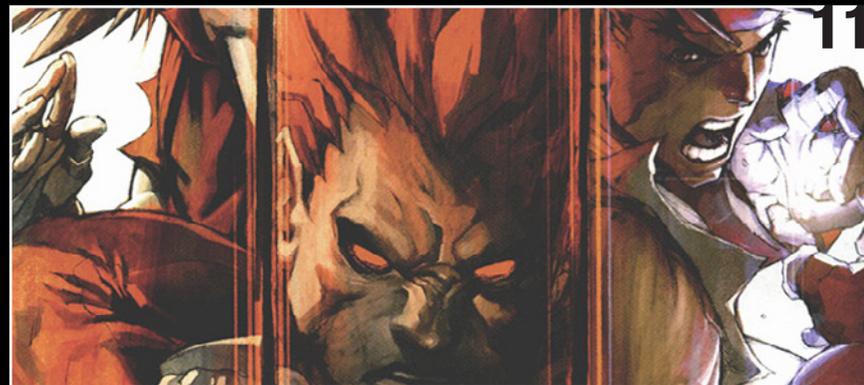




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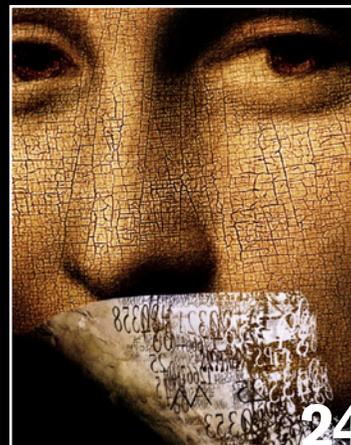
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Remember us? We're that magazine. The one that had a really good re-design, launched our best ever issue and then completely disappeared.

We got sidetracked. We really haven't got a better excuse. It was sunny, we frolicked - you know how it is. At least we captured a bit of it for the cover, eh?

The summer did stop though, so we've got back to work and you're now reading the

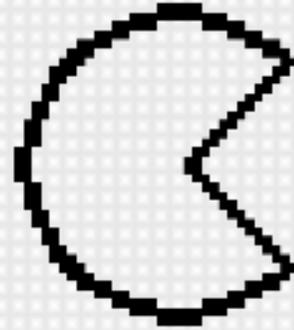
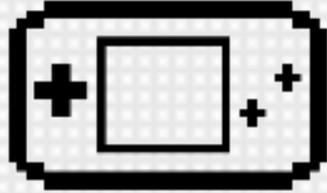
proof, **DM5.** Some of it was written ages ago, some is brand new and we hope you enjoy every little bit of it.

The future? We're not totally sure. First stop is a Wii Launch special, in a similar vein to the 360 special from last year, aimed at releasing the same week the Wii releases in the UK. We're also working on a new website to provide DM content much more regularly than the magazine does (not a terribly difficult task, lets be honest) which will hopefully be launching some time soon.

DM6 on the other hand, we're not sure about. We'll see how it all goes., but while we promise DM isn't going to die anytime soon it might change quite a bit.

Stick around to find out, would you?

-Andrew

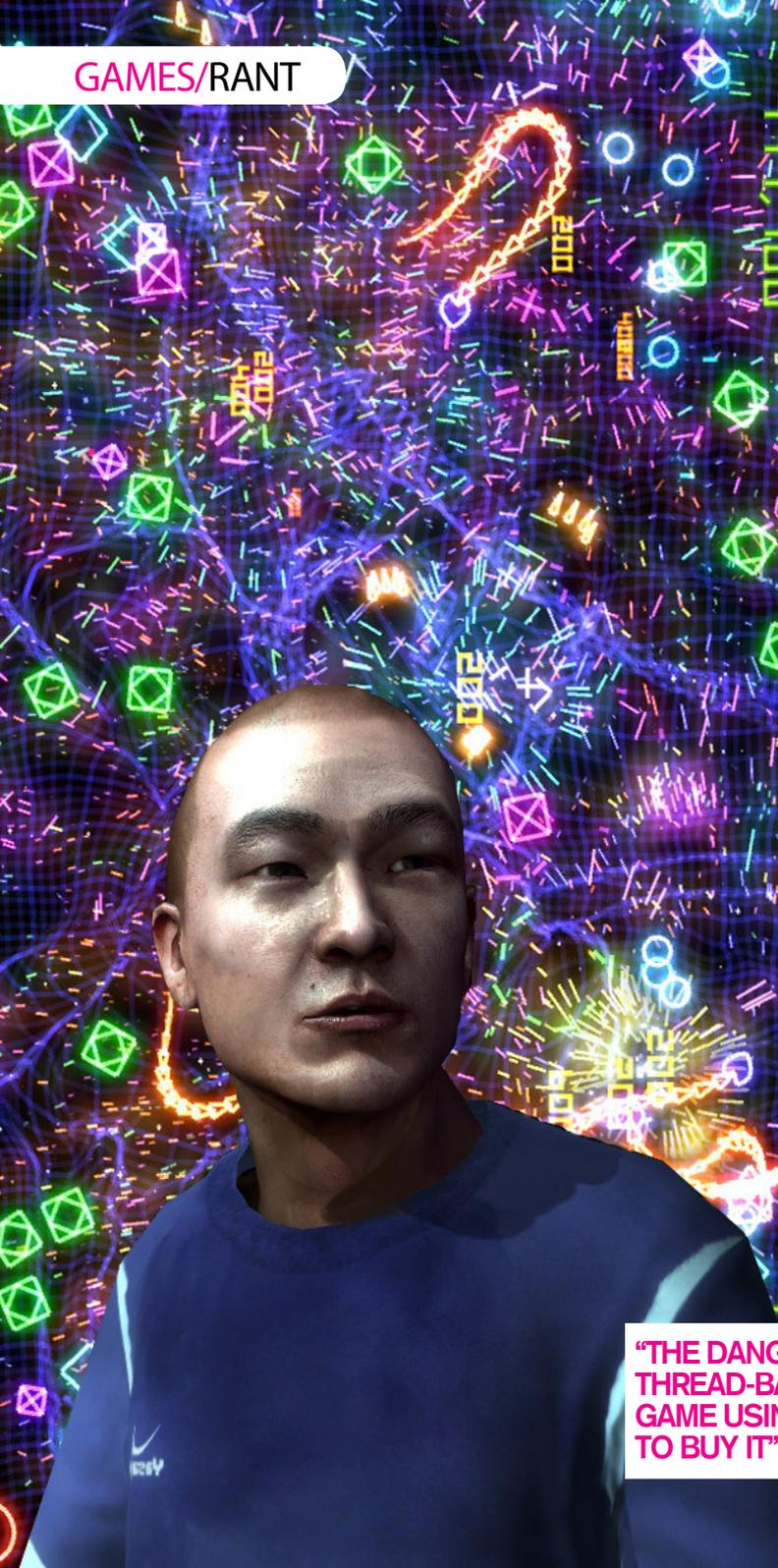


games

currently playing ...

naked war / street fighter / flicky / loco roco / new super mario bros / sensible soccer 2006





"THE DANGER IS WE'LL END UP WITH SOME THREAD-BARE HAND-ME-DOWN VERSION OF THE GAME USING EASY ACHIEVEMENTS AS BRIBERY TO BUY IT"

Like a lot of people reading this, I'm happy to put a few hours aside to play a decent game. Hell, make a game good enough and I'll put that many hours aside in one sitting but that makes me something of an exception. Everybody plays game to kill a bit of time and for most people that tends to be a lot closer to twenty minutes than a few hours. For a while it started to seem like developers were forgetting this, making games bigger and bigger and longer and longer. Recently though, things seem to be changing a bit.

It probably started with the DS, thanks to games that you can thoroughly enjoy in just ten minutes such as Animal Crossing, Zoo Keeper and most

dive for a game on your hard drive, play it and see the Game Over screen before a normal game has loaded up. So what is making this sudden push for quick thrills?

Well, money, obviously and the need to get it from more places now the cost of making a game is rocketing. Look at Geometry Wars – something that has gone from being an extra in Project Gotham Racing 2 to a fully fledged arcade game with a demo version in PGR3. While Bizarre Creations prove that you can easily get money selling extra content (or at least cars) it is even better to have something making money from people who don't want another racing game.

Rockstar Presents Table Tennis is a similar example. On it's own it is a fun, quick game that aside from some lovely graphics and a physical disc isn't too dissimilar from the sort of games on Live Arcade. Rockstar have made no secret that it was created for a reason to make a character creator to use in future (GTA) games. And



REV SAYS...

**THE FUTURE IS...THE PAST?
DM EDITOR ANDREW REVELL
LOOKS AT HOW NEXT-GEN
GAMES ARE GOING TO BE
MADE AND FUNDED.**

recently the Brain Training games prove that. Even the bigger games became quicker and more accessible thanks to the sleep mode meaning it was possible to dive into a game for a few seconds, put it back to sleep and return to it later. The PSP, of course, has the same benefit and it compared to a five minute loading time flicking Football Manager on, playing a game and flicking it off again suddenly makes it a lot more tempting.

Now we've seen this sort of spontaneity we've found we like it and we want more and with the Live Arcade the 360 is giving just that, with Nintendo already following suit and there is a "reasonable" chance Sony might "borrow" the idea too. Whatever, thanks to Live Arcade you can now

what is wrong with that? Everyone benefits because we get fun games while they get more money for little extra development cost. It'll work the other way too, grab your complicated physics code, a couple of pot plants someone made, look at it sideways, create a game, put it together. Stick a multiplayer mode, in get

Microsoft to give it the nod and get it on Live for a fiver.

Of course the danger is that we'll end up with some thread-bare hand-me-down version of the proper game with a high-score table bolted on using easy achievements as bribery to buy it, using this trend as a new way of creating rubbish. Thanks to trial versions and some level of quality control that might not happen. It's a good enough idea (for everyone) that it's easier to look on the bright side for now and remember how limitations sometimes help people knockout hugely creative stuff.

In these days of epic games, design by committee has overtaken (even if it is by necessity) that personal touch unless the biggest of big names is involved. Now big developers have a reason to remember how to make little games we'll see that come back a bit and it'll be nice seeing what kind of games they make now they can afford to make big games with their own money, not a faceless loan.

Maybe they'll get better too?

In DM2, I discussed the future of artificial intelligence in games, and put forward the concept of a virtual 'personal Jesus' who might one day live on our desktops, be fed by information on the internet, and function as a kind of desktop salesperson, amongst other things.

Since then, Google have announced not dissimilar plans to introduce artificial intelligence to their search engine.

"The ultimate search engine would understand everything in the world. It would understand everything that you asked it and give you back the exact right thing instantly," Google founder Larry Page told the assorted press and industry representatives at European Google conference, Zeitgeist '06



WISHLIST

**ADAM PARKER TELLS US
WHAT HE WOULD WISH FOR
TO MAKE GAMING BETTER
WISH FOUR:
AI-VERTISING**

While these plans were somewhat inevitable, and would naturally improve their web searching service, there are financial advantages to such a system. A log of searches made might develop a picture of a user in a way not unlike Amazon.com's bespoke recommended products system or Tesco's logging of purchases made by Clubcard owners, albeit with a far broader range of inputs than simply purchases that have already been made.

As a Google user searches for information on summer blockbuster movie X, will he later be invited to holiday where the filming took place, or tempted to buy the sunglasses the protagonist wore? The possibilities are literally endless.

"IN THE FUTURE, AS WE PLAY, WILL THE SHADOWY COMPANIES THAT WATCH OVER US BE INSPIRED BY US WITHOUT US EVEN KNOWING?"

With company forecasts suggesting that Google could one day gain a 20% share of the global advertising market, it stands to reason that they would want to know every detail about their users.

But what will this mean for gaming? As TV ratings fall among the demographics most associated with gaming and the internet (read: males aged 18-30), advertisers have had to diversify the mediums used for their message. In-game advertising is already present in games such as Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory and updated in real-time on Anarchy Online's futuristic billboards.

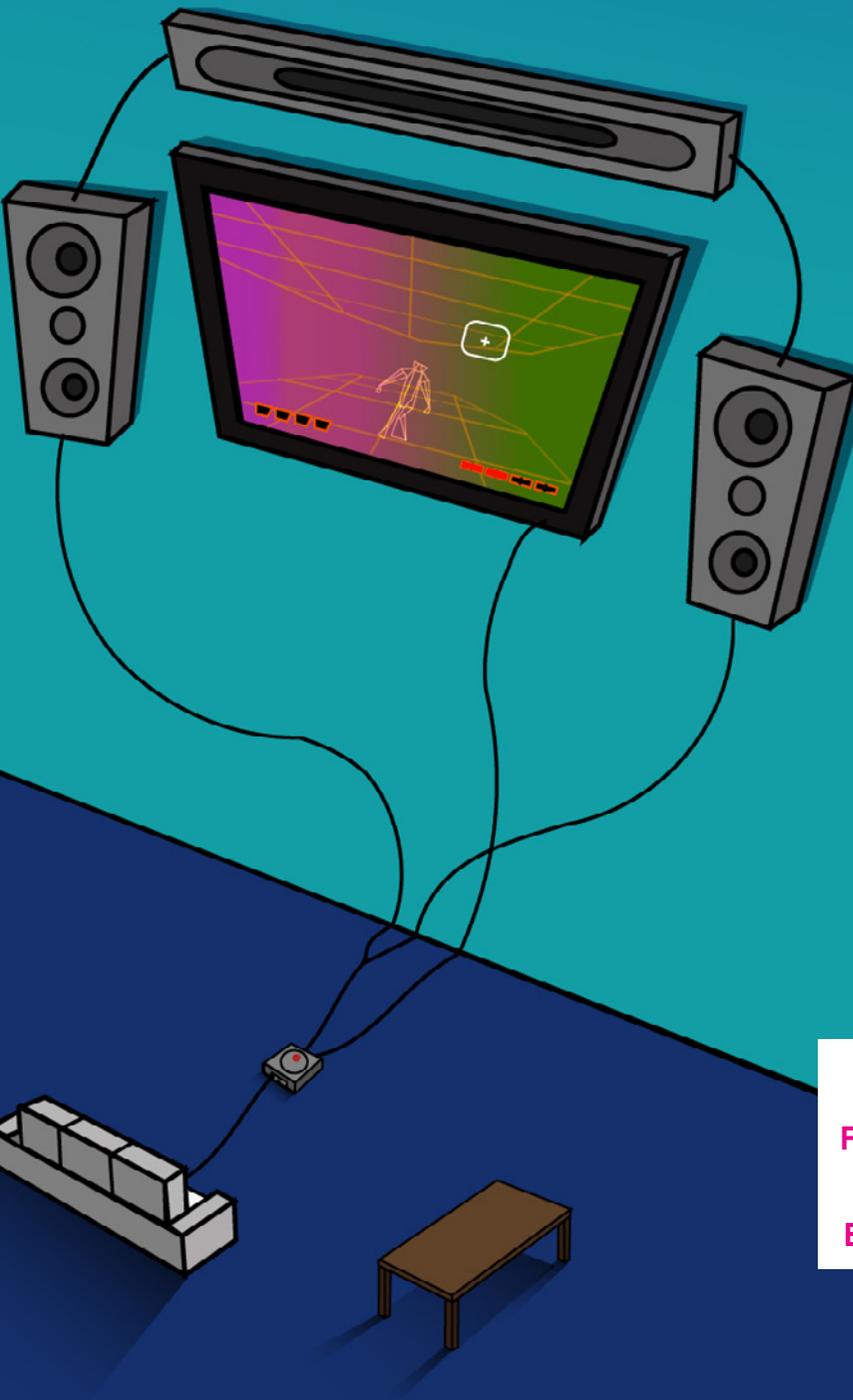
Of course, the interactive nature of the medium presents a great many more opportunities for consumer analysis. Games might be encouraged to grow thematically and in complexity in order to function, subversively, as an intricately

detailed customer survey. Inputs to such a theoretical survey could take a number of forms: from analysis of what we say through voice recognition to concepts we haven't even considered yet. Might something as bland as the syntax of our speech, or the way in which we flick the sticks of a joypad be enough to form a picture of the individual? Making a choice in a seemingly innocuous conversation tree might never be the same again.

Our culture grows as the work of one auteur inspires the work of another, be it the craze of bullet time or lens flare in games, and if entertainment were to have a function it would be precisely this: evolution through group inspiration.

In the future, as we play, will the shadowy companies that watch over us be inspired by us without us even knowing? Will we all become unaware slaves in a giant network of consciousness and together be responsible for future blockbusters plucked from our minds?

It's The Matrix without the need for plugs into our brains, and it'll happen without our even knowing.



The '360' has gotten a lot of use this month being paraded around friend's houses, it's white curves stroked and guide button prodded. When on display it unfurls its fan of colourful games to win over potential gaming mates. Expanding a chest with Ghost Recon, shaking a rear with Project Gotham, and stretching an arm with a spot of Table Tennis. Onlookers ooh and ahh at its vibrancy, detail and glimmering effects. But for all that show, all that glitz and glamour, when brought home to its nest under the TV, another side to its personality is revealed. A



GAMER'S DIARY

EVERY ISSUE **JASON ROBBINS** LETS US GLIMPSE INTO HIS LIFE AS A GAMER. THIS MONTH: **LIVE ARCADE, GOING FOR A MILLION AND UNO.**

side without normal mapping and X-million polygons, but one that is currently proving to be even more alluring.

Live Arcade is a wonderful thing, a touch of the old with a large helping of the new, as I accumulate a collection of games I feel like I'm slowly building a huge Wario Ware, snippets of action that fit a current mood or gaming opportunity. This month's case in point: Geometry Wars and UNO.

“AWAY FROM ALL THOSE CLIMBING SCORES, NEON EXPLOSIONS AND FRANTIC ACTION LIVE ARCADE USES THE SAME SYSTEM TO PRESENT AN ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE; THE LEISURE OF UNO”

GW really is a master class of retro/modern arcade gaming, it's got everything the classics had, the simplicity to explain itself without the need for a big instructions screen and page of controls, and that mysterious score barrier that separates the novices from the pro's. Have YOU broken a million?

Once you do there's another goal to achieve, getting the top spot on your friends list. This is where Live Arcade really comes into its own, you and your mates popping in and out of sessions, slowly honing your skills and aiming for

that moment when you can slip them a message to check the leader boards and initiate the next stage of the battle. Away from the craziness of the uber-beings breaking the impossible barriers and 10hour game sessions you can pick and choose your goalposts, someone you know who's just

that little bit better than you.

Away from all those climbing scores, neon explosions and frantic action Live Arcade uses the same system to present an altogether different experience; the leisure of UNO.

Here, at the card table, it's all about kicking back and taking things slow. Accompanied by a jazz lounge theme tune that none of your own albums can match, a seamless loop of audio-silk that eases out the explosions ringing in your ears. This is where you come when you've just got home from work or if it's late in the evening and you want to wind down, invite some buddies into a room and spin the yarn. There is strategy of course, but a good helping of chance and a clear prompt as to which are the only cards you can play in each shot enables you to switch off your brain and let the game play out, simply match the colour or the card value. There's a strange beauty in a game that you can't always win, it should be utterly frustrating, but you just learn to ease back and enjoy it, meeting some people along the way.

That friend's leaderboard is still there though....

GUWANGE-RUGA -DAIOUJOU-XII-KIZUNA- DOWN

**OUR FREWARE CORRESPONDENT
DAN GASSIS REVIEWS A GAME WITH A
RIDICULOUSLY LONG NAME. YE GADS!**

Firstly, a confession: I haven't heard of all of these titles before (the title is derived from G-Stream2020, Guwange, Ikaruga, DoDonpatch Daiouyou(DDP3), Ketui Kizunazigoutati, XII STAG, and Border Down), and I've only played about half of them, so if you're looking for an opinion that critiques all of the influences on display, go away now. What is certain is that the end result is one of the most polished freeware efforts (ShootTheCore states that the free download is a demo, not a full product) I've seen, evoking memories of classic Cave and Treasure titles whilst offering brand new scenarios that are sure to test your reflexes as well as any commercial product would.

Choosing from three DoDonPachi ships and one XII Stag ship, each vessel has different attacks depending on whether you hammer or hold the fire button, and once in the game proper you'll

notice homing attacks (similar to the spirit thing in Guwange and Shikigami), combo-

scoring from DoDonPachi, buzz systems, all manner of golden bonuses as seen

in many a Cave game, and much more. The remarkable thing is that it all works without being overkill, the developer resisting the temptation to flood the game with so many mechanics that it becomes stupid. No matter what your experience of the games that are namechecked, you can quite happily blaze through the game as you wish without being punished for your lack of shmup knowledge.

However, it must be stated again - this thing is polished, with enemy and level presentation that is on a par with classic arcade hits by Cave, as opposed to the simple stylings of most freebie shooters. If you focus on the backdrops then sure, they might look patchy and lo-res. However, it's likely that the backdrops are the last thing you'll be looking at. If you're familiar with Cave's works you'll know that your shot and beam weapon can become more powerful if you stay alive whilst

ACCESSIBILITY IS BOTH A GREAT FAILING AND ONE OF GRDXKD'S GREATEST STRENGTHS

collecting power-ups, and so the game rewards the skillful with super-powerful shot weapons that can destroy the larger enemies very quickly. As is also traditional with titles of its ilk, using the beam weapon can decrease your speed, but this can be a blessing for those who find the game's controls somewhat twitchy for a bullet-hell shoot 'em up.

Gripes? Well, it's only a one-level demo, but then that's no more disposable than a short webpage such as issue three's Princess title. The controls can be a bit twitchy when a keyboard is used, but this is common

with certain MAME shooters and other freeware shooters such as last issue's Shoot The Bullet (and my current gamepad is having issues with XP so I can't test for compatibility there.) There's also the problem of accessibility: some gamers may not be used to the pace of the game, some (such as myself) may not be aware of the mechanics behind each of the games that inspired this title, some might simply be overwhelmed by the options available to them at the start. This means that some players run the risk of not getting the most from the title, and thus not enjoying it as much as they could.

However, accessibility - as well as being a great failing - is also one of GRDXKD's greatest strengths, at least in a commercial sense as opposed to a mechanical one. Consider that PC gamers don't have anything available on store shelves to match the console shmups, or that most console shmups are hard to find in big mainstream stores such as GAME. Consider the fact that you'd normally have to enter the murky world of emulation to see some of the games inspired by this - either that or pay daft prices on eBay. This fanwork, although only a demo, is a great way of getting more everyday gamers interested in these more esoteric shooters without producing either a financial or legal barrier to entry, so now there's no excuse not to indulge in some of the finest free shmup action going.

IT MUST BE STATED AGAIN - THIS THING IS POLISHED



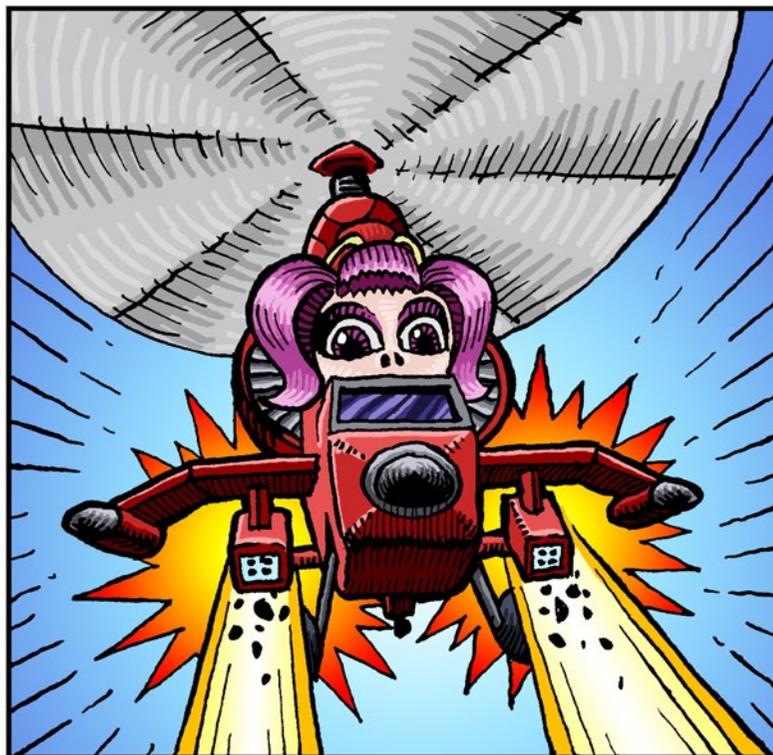
NAKED WAR

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

I'M CURRENTLY PLAYING MY FIRST EVER GAMES OF NAKED WAR. CHANCES I'LL WIN ARE SLIM SINCE I'M PLAYING AGAINST THE PICKFORD BROS. JOHN AND STE, ZEE 3. BUT WHAT BETTER OPPORTUNITY TO ASK A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT NAKED WAR AND BEING AN INDIE DEVELOPER?

Naked War is a turn based strategy game, "a development of idea's we had for Pillage". Unlike Pillage (or Future Tactics, as it was finally called) the main focus is two player, specifically playing over email against your opponent. Take your turn, click send and your moves are sent through the server and out as an email to your opponent, who opens an attachment and replies in kind.

So to the games. John first. It's fair to say that for my first game ever I wasn't really expecting to do well so a slow start seems like a good idea. I hang back and move towards vehicles. It seems sensible to start with the important question. How has it been being an independent developer for two and a half years? "Frugal. But enjoyable apart from being poor but it was a golden opportunity". Ste (from another match) takes up the baton, "It was very exciting and liberating starting work on a project we knew we could do our way, without it being spoilt by publisher interference and stupid deadlines. A chance to do it right."





Back to the game. John manoeuvres for position, shooting mountains and getting into a gun turret. The opportunity arises for me to take first blood, with a few petty blows changing hands until I completely misjudge the enemy range and get blown up, lots. Sigh. Back to questioning, about how it feels now the game is out. "We're surprised by the amount of hours people put in. Also, every reviewer who has played it has kept playing after completing their review", and Sales are, "slow but constantly improving"

(It's around this point I start a match with DM Editor Tim Cheesman, play until 4am, work out what's going on -concentrate on collecting doofers, not killing folk- and most importantly gain my first ever Naked War victory.)

Having some knowledge of what is going on makes one real difference - it shows that I'm losing, badly. A vain attempt to regroup doesn't go too well and I'm soon being chased around the map. Despite having a better range of vehicles it's not long before I make another comical error that leaves tanks colliding (as shown in the strip at the top, taken from the website tips) that ends with



both being destroyed in a single shot. One round of fire from John later and it's Game Over for me.

Since I'm feeling bitter after losing in such an amateur fashion, it's a good time to bring up my least favourite aspect of Naked War - the subscription/payment system. Unlike most games, the initial cost provides only a limited amount of gaming with subscriptions starting at \$19.99 for 20 challenges, with everyone getting a free credit to try it out. From the Zee-3 point of view this is a great system, it almost totally rules out piracy and it'll generate revenue until the last two players give up. For people thinking about trying it out though it can be off-putting. My reasoning; "Why bother trying to find out if I like it when it'll only keep costing me money if I do?"

CONCENTRATE ON COLLECTING DOOFERS, NOT KILLING FOLK!

The clincher for the system is that it's not charging you for games - it's charging you for challenges. If a friend challenges you to a game it doesn't cost you a penny. The cost is only from challenging people, so you can reasonably expect to get 42 games from 21 challenges without feeling guilty. At

around two to three hours a match that is a lot of gaming and while a one-off payment is cheaper it's impossible to complain. Unsurprisingly, to quote John, "everyone seems to like it. It's pretty popular"

Another aspect to it is that Naked War isn't set in stone, as Ste clarified "We plan to keep working on the manual, the game and the website over the coming months. In fact we see it as an ongoing work-in-progress rather than a finished project" and John confirmed there would be expansions "Absolutely. Subscription pays for ongoing development," with, "definite," plans already in mind for what aspects to expand.

Naked War is impressive. You really have to play it to get an understanding as to how neat it is. The fact it's sent over email and you can get on with work while waiting for a turn to arrive is brilliant. It even looks good, with lots of neat little touches really making it shine (although a certain creator of the graphics played it down a bit, "I guess I'm kinda proud of making an OK looking, low-tech game without spending millions") and most importantly it all works. It



might take a couple of games to get into it but when it clicks..brilliant.

In the course of this article I've clocked up 5 games. 2 wins, 1 loss and two that are still in progress. As much as I want to explain that I was close to beating John before it took a turn for the worse and that I'm in a right mess against Ste after he blasted me with a gun turret I'd not noticed there just isn't enough space here. The fact that between all the games the stats say I've spent 14 hours and 25 minutes in the game in less than two weeks should say enough about how fun and enjoyable this game is. Probably more so than GamesTM giving it 9/10, although they've got that to boast about too. John sums it all up, "It's just good knowing people like it".

What more can you ask for from a developer, really?

Find out more at:

<http://www.naked-war.com>





THE WORLD'S WARRIORS

IT'S A FRIDAY EVENING AND IN THE BACK CORNER OF A POORLY LIT AMUSEMENT ARCADE, A GROUP OF PEOPLE ARE CROWDED AROUND A SINGLE MACHINE. THEY ARE ALL OF DIFFERENT AGES AND FROM DIFFERENT RACES, THEY EVEN SPEAK DIFFERENT LANGUAGES TO EACH OTHER BUT DESPITE ALL THIS THEY GATHER TOGETHER, ALMOST DAILY FOR THE SAME REASON, FOR THEIR LOVE OF A GAME, FOR THEIR LOVE OF **STREET FIGHTER.**

WORDS: MATTHEW BOYLAN
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

For the uninitiated, *Street Fighter* is one of the forefathers in the fighting game genre. It is a pure one-on-one test of skill, be it against the computer or against a live person. This is now up to its thirty first arcade iteration, usually with a mixture of the suffixes “*Super*”, “*Turbo*”, “*Max*”, “*Upper*” or “*Dash*”!

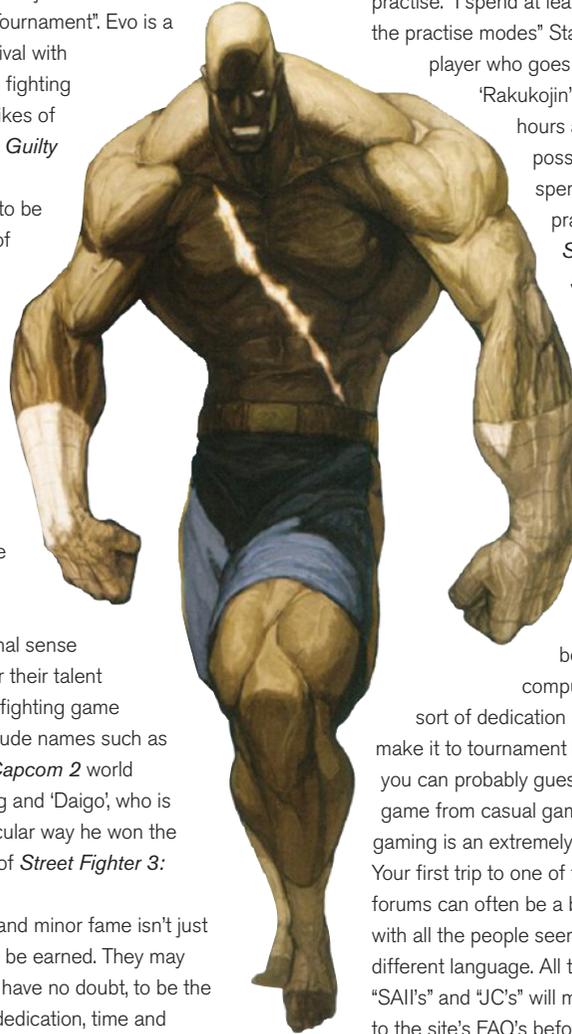
The original *Street Fighter* was surprisingly not that big of a hit, this was mainly due to its poor control system and the elitism that surrounded the game and. It may be hard to comprehend now, but Ryu and Ken's now iconic special moves were only known to a small proportion of players and these players kept the commands to themselves. It wasn't until the advent of *Street Fighter 2* that the franchise really took off,

offering a wide range of iconic characters and through a simple glitch, the series had inadvertently created the combo. A sequence of attacks which, when executed with proper timing, did not allow the opponent to interrupt the combination. A feature that you can now find implemented into the core of any fighting system since. Since then there have been many improvements to the system over the ages and many other spin off series. Arguably, proving that all good things come in threes, the best iterations of the franchise are "*Street Fighter Alpha 3*" and "*Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*", which are still played by the fans almost religiously in arcades, years after their original release.

It's these fans that make the series what it is today. To the dedicated player, it's no longer just a game; it's a part of their culture and an important part of their lives. "Personally I barely play on my own. If I have friends over we can play for 2 - 8 hours without even thinking about it, never mind things like tournaments which can take days to complete" Explains 'Nagata Lock II', an avid fan from Canada "The money I spend on *Street Fighter* is quite immense. If you go to monthly tournaments you're probably spending at least \$20 in games, another \$10 in food, and then there is all the money that is spent on fuel and other expenditures. I personally probably spend an average of \$50 every month in small tournaments alone. Add on that another \$10-\$20 dollars a week on arcades. Then add further on to that another \$200 at least for a major tournament." When you

add that up, it makes for an eye watering amount of money that overwhelms any *World of Warcraft* subscription fee. But for any of these dedicated players, there is only one goal; to win one of the major tournaments such as the "Evo 2K Tournament". Evo is a multi-day, gaming festival with tournaments for many fighting games, including the likes of *Virtua Fighter* and the *Guilty Gear* series. The Evo tournaments are said to be the biggest and best of their kind, attracting gamers from the US, Europe, Korea, and Japan. The added incentive of a possible \$40,000 in prize money also helps to sweeten the deal. These tournaments even give birth to gaming celebrities, who are celebrities in the original sense of the word, known for their talent and skill amongst the fighting game community. These include names such as four time *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* world champion Justin Wong and 'Daigo', who is known for the spectacular way he won the world championships of *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*.

This sort of talent and minor fame isn't just given though, it has to be earned. They may make it look easy, but have no doubt, to be the best requires a lot of dedication, time and



“WE CAN PLAY FOR 2 - 8 HOURS WITHOUT EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT. TOURNAMENTS CAN TAKE DAYS TO COMPLETE” – NAGATA LOCK II



practise. "I spend at least two hours a day on the practise modes" States another dedicated

player who goes by the alias of

'Rakukojin' "I try to get fifteen

hours a week practise if

possible and I usually

spend an hour a day

practising parrying in

Street Fighter 3: Third

Strike" Parrying is the

technique of tapping

forward at the exact

moment an

enemies attack

connects, and is

the core principle

of the *Third Strike*

game. "Along with

that, I'd say I spend

about eight hundred

hours a year playing,

be it against human or

computer opposition." That

sort of dedication is what's required to

make it to tournament level, let alone win. As

you can probably guess, stepping up your

game from casual gaming to competitive

gaming is an extremely daunting experience.

Your first trip to one of the community's many

forums can often be a bewildering experience

with all the people seemingly talking a

different language. All the talk of "FRC's",

"SAIL's" and "JC's" will mean an extended trip

to the site's FAQ's before anything can be

understood. But if you stick with it, you will

find an ever growing community with a loyal

fanbase who will accept and guide anyone

else who is willing to learn.

Even if it is no longer in the public

limelight, *Street Fighter* is as strong today as it has ever been. And with two new increments now on the way, this is just as good as any time as any to get into the world and culture of *Street Fighter*.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA: GENERATIONS (PS2, £20)

This is exactly what the fans have been crying out for, an arcade perfect conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 3* on a home console at last. That would be enough to keep any street fighter fan happy for months, but Capcom have decided to be incredibly generous and also include every other increment of the *Street Fighter Alpha* series. Including gem fighters and a brand new version of *Alpha 3*, this version features 4 new fighting styles taken from other Capcom games such as *Street Fighter 3*'s Parrying system. Thus screaming a version of *Alpha 3* that is incredibly enjoyable, but unfortunately not exactly to a professional tournament standard. If you have ever enjoyed a fighting game in your life, then you owe it to yourself to go out and purchase this game right now.

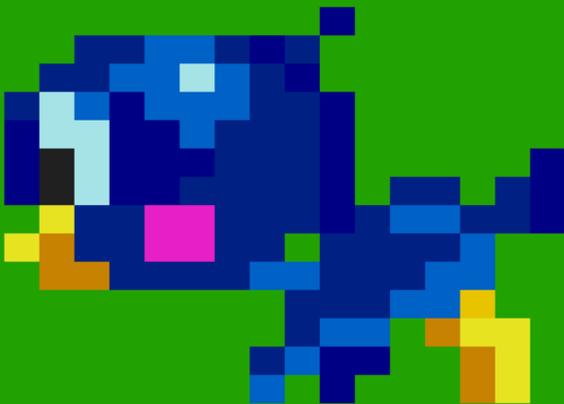


“I TRY TO GET FIFTEEN HOURS A WEEK PRACTISE IF POSSIBLE AND I USUALLY SPEND AN HOUR A DAY PRACTISING PARRYING” – RAKUKOJIN

FLICKY

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU CROSS SOME BIRDS WITH A COUPLE OF TIGERS AND AN IGUANA? EITHER A REALLY BAD PUNCHLINE, OR A 80S SEGA CLASSIC.

Words: Keith Andrews
Design: Andrew Revell



It was the summer of 2004 when Flicky first entered my life. I'd always been aware of its presence; a dedicated Sega zealot to the extreme in my youth, Yoji Ishii's ode to pet-care somehow managed to escape my attention. Yet it wasn't until my boxes-of-instant-mashed-potato fuelled student years that Flick and her chicks finally took hold.

Included in one of Sega's many money-spinning retro packs, Flicky was described by many a critic as mere filler - a title included to 'make up the numbers', as it were. But within our four student walls, Flicky became a mini obsession of top scores, league tables, and

controllers flung across the room in pure frustration. At the time, it seemed nothing else could match the story of a bird desperately trying to save her chicks from the drooling mouths of some predatory tigers let loose in a living room.

Anything to avoid work, I guess.

The original 'Gotta catch 'em all', Flicky is a simple tale of getting from A to B in one piece. Charged with the task of retrieving her offspring, play involves navigating Flicky around various recurring maps, making sure she passes her young along the way, who handily attach themselves to the back of her to form a binding chain. Reach the door, and all is well and good. Get caught by a tiger, and her litter disband only to start aimlessly wandering around like useless idiots. Useless idiots you then have to re-catch, and so the cycle continues.

Not especially technical in 2006, or in 1991 to be honest.

Indeed, it's fair to say that Flicky's first real console conversion to the Mega Drive (the game had technically already featured on home consoles, in the form of a release on Sega's pre-Master System 'SG-1000', although it naturally received little fanfare) a mere seven years after its cabinet debut hardly stretched the machine's mighty architecture. But it's to its credit that, even in the pixel-perfect 'look they've actually animated REAL stubble on his face' modern day, Flicky's appeal has not been lost.

To put it plainly, it's a pressure cooker. Each map is technically more taxing than the last, with the strain of making an ill-timed leap or a crippling wrong move causing the blood to pump through the veins at a frankly unhealthy rate. But maps eventually become a question of memory over skill, with successful



FLICKY BECAME A MINI OBSESSION OF TOP SCORES, LEAGUE TABLES, AND FLUNG CONTROLLERS

routes burned into the player's mind after a few hundred plays or so. That's not an exaggeration; Flicky was (and still is) always a hit-the-reset-button-at-first-failure kind of game.

Pin your plan down, and Flicky becomes a test of holding one's nerve and putting faith into said routes, hopefully breezing through the early rounds. Pressure off.

Until a new map is encountered, of course - a moment usually greeted with genuine excitement and fear in equal measure. Because that's Flick's little trick. Thumbed into dedicated submission from early on, 'having a quick go' at Flicky becomes as routine as popping down to the corner shop for some milk. You know exactly where everything is - you've been here a thousand times before. It's sorted. You're fine. Until you pass 'Go' and up pops a map where the door (which, incidentally, seems to escort the chicks to what appears to be a hotel lobby room), the ledges and the are-they-really-using-that-as-a-weapon flower pots are all in different positions. That's when Flicky becomes a mecca of mass panic again, and you realise you're no longer in charge of your life.

Be warned - it can happen to any of us. Flicky is a title that, like most games that have stood the test of time, manages to sidestep the issue over overcomplicated controls. No triggers. No shoulder buttons. No select button or fiddly white or black buttons. Just the ability to go left, right or jump.

Yet the fact that Flicky's (and indeed countless other's) uncomplicated nature doesn't make it any easier to play has seemingly escaped the attention of developers today. Often weighed down by the sheer scale of options available, the big



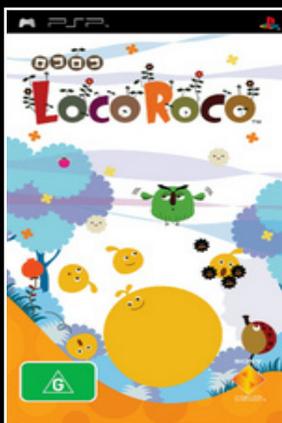
blockbusters of the 21st century rely more and more on plot over playability. It's perhaps not a fair argument to claim that such a tactic in any way leads to a poorer game at the end of it all, but there is certainly something to be said for titles of Flicky's ilk.

Simplicity is certainly in vogue. Nintendo's drive post DS has been to entice the non-gaming masses into the fold. The success of the company's brain-trained handheld in Japan is certainly testament to its achievement of that goal, to a degree. Microsoft has also thrown its hat into the ring, adding a new dimension to Xbox Live with the inclusion of Live Arcade. Destined to be the home of retro and faux-retro titles for years to come, its creation has certainly added a new string to the giant's bow, even if its appeal is unlikely to branch out beyond the hardcore anytime soon.

It does prove there is a market, however. There is money to be made - something publishers might like to consider when their latest million-dollar 'killer-app' ends up in the bargain bin in Woolies two months after its release. Perhaps we're on the brink of a full-scale renaissance. Perhaps Flicky 2 is just around the corner.

Or perhaps we should all focus on what's most important. Who's got the highest score, again?





LOCOROCO

(PSP)

It's always the simplest of ideas that still hold weight in the years to come. Space Invaders, Pac Man, Tetris, they're all inherently simple ideas that are absolutely timeless. And now you can add LocoRoco to that list.

Starting each level with a tiny little blob (a LocoRoco in fact) you traverse the terrain ahead via the simplest of control systems. Instead of a wickedly convoluted command system that might just dilute the simple concept, you simply twist the screen to the left or right using the PSP's shoulder buttons. And that's

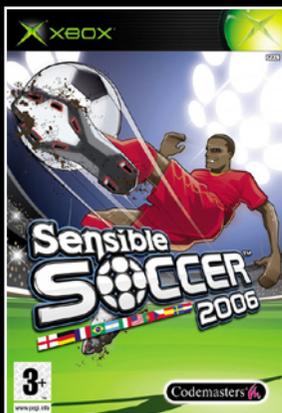
pretty much that. You can tap both at the same time to cause your LocoRoco to jump, but essentially that's all you need to solve the puzzles that the oncoming terrain possess.

Usually with gaming it's a case of style over substance, but damn, LocoRoco has them both in dazzling abundance. Finally a truly essential PSP exclusive.

Chris Pickering



"USUALLY IT'S A CASE OF STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE, BUT DAMN, LOCOROCO HAS THEM BOTH IN DAZZLING ABUNDANCE."



SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006 (XBOX)

A new version of Sensible Soccer, the finest football game ever created and from the outside everything looks great. It's got a roughly similar graphical style, Jon Hare as a design consultant, quite fast gameplay. Everything in fact, apart from being a good game.

I wanted to like it. I really, really, really wanted to like it (I wanted it to have Live play and be backwards compatible too) but like England and the world cup, some things aren't to be. Rushed out for the World Cup and also being a budget release is the reason, if not the

excuse for teleporting goal keepers, laughable artificial intelligence and incorrect line-ups which overshadow the decent passing and fine shooting. Multiplayer is bearable, but little more.

In a few years you'll look back at Sensible Soccer 2006 in the same way you'll look back at the 2006 World Cup. Rubbish.

Andrew Revell



"YOU'LL LOOK BACK AT SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006 IN THE SAME WAY YOU'LL LOOK BACK AT THE 2006 WORLD CUP. RUBBISH."



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

(DS)

The title is misleading; this is pure old-fashioned Mario, with no gimmicks spoiling the party.

Hardware features have been used to enrich the experience without diluting it elsewhere, and so the rest is as you'd hoped. Eight worlds rich in colour, variety, challenge and secrets; that feeling of fluid control and momentum as dominant here as it was in the N64 flagship; a welcome return to past and present traditions, be they SM64's wall-jumping, SMB's ceiling breaches or Yoshi's red coins. Most welcome, however, is that even those who

ignored every game after the original SMB will enjoy this - never once are you given SM64-style "objectives", for example: this is simply about reaching a flag at the end.

Star coins and alternate routes invite revisits, but then so does the game's effortless conveyance of joy, as this is something you'll replay for a long time to come.

Dan Gassis



"THE GAME EFFORTLESSLY CONVEYS JOY. THIS IS SOMETHING YOU'LL REPLAY FOR A LONG TIME TO COME."



RHYTHM TENGOKU

(GBA)

Blending the mechanics of the rhythm-action genre and the "minigame compilation" trend - various precise-yet-simple actions in a minute timeframe - Rhythm Tengoku takes the opportunity that was just waiting to be realised.

Most regular stages (around 40 in total, broken into eight groups) begin with a tutorial detailing the gist of the minigame, before the song proper begins. You'll be pulling out beard hairs, spearing ghosts with arrows, contributing to dance performances and more besides. Best of all, each group culminates in

a unique "remix" song that blends all the minigames of that group with the song's BGM in perfect synchronicity.

Like Wario Ware, each minigame has charm and humour, the amount of quality music in the game is mindblowing, and the remixes leave you gobsmacked with their seamless blending of the previous minigames. In short: an essential purchase.

Dan Gassis



"YOU'LL BE PULLING OUT BEARD HAIRS, SPEARING GHOSTS WITH ARROWS AND CONTRIBUTING TO DANCE PERFORMANCES."



music

currently listening to...

prodigy / queenadrena / colt / huski / emulsion / world's rarest funk 45's / bands on the doormat



QUEEN ADREENA

PHOTOGRAPHS: TIM CHEESMAN
WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL



QUEEN ADREENA (OR QUEENADREENA WITH THE REMOVED SPACE WE REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE) GOT TOGETHER AGAIN FOR A GIG IN SEPTEMBER AND WE WENT ALONG, TOOK A FEW PHOTOS AND THEN WROTE THIS ARTICLE.

Queen Adreena are certainly one of the more unique British bands around at the moment which is easily attributable to singer KatieJane Garside. Her onstage persona could be described as “that of a mad person” with her slender

figure contained in a stained dress violently thrashing around the stage. Combine it with vocals ranging from delicate vulnerability to uncontrolled screaming and you soon see she’s a massive part of the band’s appeal. In fact a few people might not even have

noticed that there was a band behind her, but there really is. The bassist and drummer seem to be interchangeable (over four gigs in the past few years I've never seen the same ones twice) but guitarist Crispin Gray forms the other half of the band's backbone and creates the bands sound together with KatieJane.

DAISY CHAINSAW IMPLoded IN THE WAY TOO MANY GREAT BANDS DO

The two had previously worked together in the early 90's as members of the group Daisy Chainsaw (listen to them at www.myspace.com/lovesick-pleasure) , who drew a sizeable 'underground' following and even experienced their fifteen minutes of mainstream fame,

turning down Top of the Pops and Maverick records before releasing an album and then Daisy Chainsaw imploded in the way too many great bands do. While KatieJane entered the music industry wilderness, Crispin trudged on eventually hopping with the rest of the band to become Dizzy Q Viper and then

Vapid Dolly with neither gaining much success.

In 2000 the pair reunited and formed Queen Adreena and soon released their first album, Taxidermy on Blanca y Negro. Two years later, now with ex-Clash Pete Howard on drums, they released Drink Me on Rough Trade. Their most recent studio album, featuring KatieJane's sister Melanie 'Maple Bee' Garside on bass and entitled The Butcher

and the Butterfly, was released in 2005. It was released on original Daisy Chainsaw

record label One Little Indian. With one record label per album, they've clearly never been record label favourites. Since then there has been a live CD and DVD and occasional gigs and breaks. At the moment they're on hiatus again (as usual, signified by the disappearance of their official site) and this time it was strongly rumoured to be permanent. Until the gig that the surrounding photo's were taken at, at least.

The break doesn't mean that KatieJane and Crispin aren't keeping busy though. She is currently working on a project named Ruby Throat and their myspace demos suggest gentler and more folkish than anything she has previously been involved. It's certainly no less enjoyable for it though, have a listen at the catchily entitled www.myspace.com/katiejanegarsiderubythroat. An album and gigs are promised soon. Crispin has another band, The Dogbones, who sound much closer to Queenadreena although the demos (www.myspace.com/thedogbonesuk) seem to be lacking in spark as well as anywhere



other than a shoebox to record in. As with Ruby Throat, a debut album is still in the future although they have the lead having played a solitary gig.

The last part of the Queen Adreena family, Melanie, is also busy. As well as being half of the popstastic Huski who, coincidentally, are reviewed later this issue (you can go and have a listen at www.myspace.com/huskimusic). She's also working on her second

solo album as well as being, quite surprisingly, one of the Mediaeval Baebes who are famed for being attractive and singing songs that are centuries old. Nothing in common with Huski and even less with Queen Adreena. She's a busy lady.

The gig? It was good. They even played a new song but the pictures paint a better story than we ever could.



ELECTRONIC

PUNKS

WORDS: MATTHEW BOYLAN
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

Electronic Punk, the label of the genre invented in a desperate attempt for the media to pigeon-hole The Prodigy, and yet still after all these years they remain alone in this classification. It's a testament to the career of a band that is revered as much by the rock community as they are by the underground rave scene from which they emerged in 1990.

And it was here that the Essex born trio of Liam Howlett, Leeroy Thornhill and Keith Flint started their own assault against the senses with the release of their first single '*What Evil Lurks*' which gave fuel to the flames of the rapidly growing UK underground scene. It wasn't until the release of their second single '*Charly*' that the prodigy transcended from the Dance Chart into the Pop charts, sampling a Children's Safety video to an up-tempo hardcore breakbeat sound, the likes of which had never been heard before by the mass public. This innovation continued with the release of the singles '*Everybody in the Place*' and '*Fire/Jericho*.' However it wasn't until Howlett added another member in the

form of Hip-Hop MC, Maxim Reality, that the prodigy released their first studio LP. "The Prodigy experience" is a high paced roller coaster ride through the world of the underground for the uneducated masses, with an intro that demands your attention and doesn't let go of it until the very end. Highlights of this album include the reggae acid trip that is "*Out of Space*" and the energy invoking finale "*Death of the Prodigy Dancers*".

Their second LP "*Music for the Jilted Generation*" came with a simple philosophy, that rave had become too commercial and was in desperate need of renovation before it suffered death from over exposure. This evolution was achieved by a move into introducing new instruments into the genre. "*Their Law*" is the perfect example of this, splicing guitar solos with a darker, edgier variant of drum and bass, which still sounds as

fresh today as it did ten years ago. With Jilted, Liam had now destroyed all the conventional laws of dance music and with the release of the "*Voodoo People*" he continued this rampage even further.

What came next was a pure injection of rebellion with the advent of the dirty electro punk anthem "*Firestarter*" a song so clouded in controversy due to the pro arsonist content of it lyrics, causing the song to be pulled from many retail suppliers, although this did little to stop the song from rocketing to number one in the top forty. This success continued with the raw and rough, "*Breathe*" featuring the famous almost steel whip-like rhythm interlaced throughout the track. The controversy continued with the openly explicit "*Smack My Bitch Up*", the subject of its lyrics being so blurred that it came under fire from both woman's rights groups and drug abuse prevention groups. Culminating in a two hour

attack from British chat show hosts 'Richard and Judy' to ban the single and its' video. This ensured that the subsequent LP "*The Fat of the Land*" became their biggest selling album to date, featuring tracks such as industrial drum and bass fusion of "*Serial Thrilla*" and the extremely dark cover of L7's "*Fuel My Fire*"

After a long seven year absence, with only the critically shunned single "*Baby's got a temper*" in between, The Prodigy returned with their long awaited forth studio LP. An album taking a lot of influence from Liam's time spent back in the underground bootleg scene. With highly electro tracks like "*Girls*" and the bootleg-esque and dirty "*Memphis Bells*", the public's reaction became extremely mixed.

Although constantly wrapped in some form of controversy, one fact still remains, The Prodigy have done more in sixteen years and four studio LP's than most bands could even hope to do in a lifetime, making their live performance something that should be seen at least once by everyone before they die.

CONSTANTLY WRAPPED IN SOME FORM OF CONTROVERSY, THE PRODIGY HAVE DONE MORE IN SIXTEEN YEARS AND FOUR STUDIO LP'S THAN MOST BANDS COULD EVEN HOPE TO DO IN A LIFETIME

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MYSPACE.COM

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

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WELCOME TO GOOD VS. BAD. EVERY ISSUE WE PICK ON SOMETHING MUSIC RELATED AND PRAISE IT AND SHOUT IT DOWN AT THE SAME TIME. A BIT LIKE THE NME, BUT NOT QUITE AS CHILDISH. THIS ISSUE IT'S MYSPACE.

FOR

A vast library of bands, a plethora of styles easily searchable, free MP3s, links to bands you've never heard of, videos, exclusive competitions, a chance to interact directly with the artists and a whole bunch of other lovely goodies. The rise of MySpace is well documented, with the likes of Q Magazine lauding it as a tool which will revolutionise the music industry.

The Arctic Monkeys and Lily Allen have used it to their benefit to build a fan-base before the traditional marketing kicked in. It allows bands to easily build up a relationship with fans, attracting new people via the friends system. Smaller bands may need to actively seek new fans, rather than the fans coming to them, but it still provides an easily accessible manner of communicating between band and potential customer.

For fans it's an entirely flexible system allowing them access to their favourite band, or at least a band they might not be familiar with. It offers unparalleled opportunities to explore and discover new music by browsing styles,

influences or simply by examining bands' friends' list. But you know all this. The reason MySpace is so great for music though is because of its initial draws - it's free and there are literally millions of people on there. The sheer scope and the lack of cost involved in this is a truly revolutionary aspect.

MySpace allows bands to actively bypass the typical label system and whether it's simply allowing people to download demos, stream tracks or even buy their CD, MySpace is perfect for hearing something that the radio won't play, major labels won't sign or that your friends haven't read about in the NME. The feature we

THE SHEER SCOPE AND THE LACK OF COST INVOLVED IN MYSPACE IS A TRULY REVOLUTIONARY ASPECT.

have in DM where bands send us CDs to review is essentially us being lazy; we should be looking for them, scouting out new music. But it shows how MySpace puts power in the hands of the bands, rather than labels. Which can only be a good thing right?

AGAINST

DM has a MySpace. So do I. And if either of us gets one more cold friend request from a shitty college indie band I'm gonna get, um, more angry than I was before. Every 10 minutes a new band is desperately trying to get me to be a friend so as to proclaim to labels "we have 25,000 fans!".

THE IDEA BEHIND MUSIC ON MYSPACE IS SUPERB BUT HAS BECOME DENSELY SATURATED BY BAND WAGON JUMPERS.

The ability to quickly add people as 'fans' is one of the selling points of the site and almost one of it's most misleading. The idea behind music on MySpace is superb but has become densely saturated by band wagon jumpers.

It may offer free downloads. But only by a select few. It potentially offers you a unique ability to communicate with bands you like. Who'll never reply because the site is run by a work experience lacky at the bands' label. There are loads of bands on there. Who you'll

never find as there too many awful profiles to wade through.

The whole thing has devolved into a Murdoch-run mess, a complex maze of guitar leads, mic cables and 2 minute fame seekers. MySpace is the new Pop Idol, a place where seemingly any ol' Joe with a band or a computer can become famous, the problem

being that with such an obscene numbers of auditionees, how the hell are we supposed to listen? Don't send me a friend request, I won't listen. Tell me about your band, make me interested, I

might tell you to fuck off, I might listen, but at least try. Send me a CD and I'll love you. Unless you're shite, obviously.

MySpace used to be a place for mavericks, an opportunity to plunder, now it's dominated by label-paid-for banners and plugs, fake profiles and desperate kids. It's a sordid shitty mess. And that's when it's working.

We thought that this might take off a huge amount with lots of bands wanting eight thousand people to read about them, but it hasn't really. That said we have got enough to shuffle the design of the page a bit so we'd better get on with it, hadn't we?

This issue, Grease is, in fact, the word. It's got verve, it's got meaning and it is also has a cover album devoted to it thanks to record company **FILTHY LITTLE ANGELS**. There's not room to do each band justice (there's one for each song after all) but I'll smear Grease highlights throughout. The conclusion can sit at the start though - it wouldn't be worth buying - there are too

ANOTHER ISSUE AND YET ANOTHER SELECTION OF TALENTED MUSICIANS HAVE SENT STUFF TO LAND ON...

THE DOORMAT

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL



many songs that just aren't very good. Good news though - it's all free and that makes it worth grabbing just to sit in gaping amazement as well as enjoying the few good tracks. If you like it they're asking for you to donate to charity as a thanks, so they can be saluted for that too. Go and get it at <http://filthylittleangel.com/DownToGreaseOnHoliday> and enjoy(ish).

Anyway, the first non-Grease stuff. **THE VOLTAIRES**, like a lot of bands these days are a guitar band from The North. Bless 'em if they weren't about two days too late to get into DM4 as well. Hell, they've almost certainly forgotten they even sent a disc in at all, but I'm glad they did. Two of the tracks

aren't that impressive but the middle of the three, *Clocks*, is great. Sure, it sort of reminds me of the Ab Fab theme tune but it's easily good enough to see them rub shoulders with whichever guitar band is in vogue at the moment. That's meant to be a good thing, by the way. If all else fails they can probably get a good job handing out leaflets - you wouldn't believe how many postcards fell out of the envelope when I opened it (Well, you probably would, it was nine. But that is still a lot to accompany one CD).

If there is one band you've come across on this page it's probably this mob, the **POCKET GODS**. They certainly seem to be popping up in all the right places and seem to be a hard-working bunch as well. They're different, that is for sure, mostly sounding like some sort of friendly punk get together where everyone is helping create an elaborate and pornographic collage. Suffice to say, it's not too easy to describe but different is definitely correct. Do I like them? To be honest I don't know. Sometimes, certainly. Sometimes not. But I'll not complain if they reach the big time as it'll make a nice change hearing them amongst the rest of the radio's normal fare. *Jombal Party*, the partiest of all the songs has been the one doing the rounds mostly and it's certainly the highlight. Track it down and give it a listen.

Back to Grease - the highlight? The reprisal of the theme by **THE INTERNATIONAL KARATE PLUS** who seem to have been busy imploding since this bunch of tracks was compiled and I first listened to it which is a shame so we'll move to the back-up highlight, *Sandy*, which was a close second anyway. It poses a reasonable question - is making songs sound quite a lot like Spandau Ballet really a bad thing? Probably not, at least in my book. The track is thanks to the inimitable imitator **GRACIE**

DUVIN (and thanks again for proving it wasn't a one-off either with a bunch of other downloadable tracks.)

Lets head away from that seventies musical again and right back up to the present day. **JOHNNY POINDEXTER** are next up and the generous souls are currently giving away their debut album, *Place Your Trust in Empty Spaces*, free via MySpace. Go ask them for a copy, as it's marvelous. Complex ideas communicated with samples, superb electronica and tight, occasionally dense guitar work that (possibly unintentionally) reminds you of Mogwai and the current 'Math-Rock' scene. It easily manages to be unique although sometimes it does feel like they are striving that bit too hard to be different and it goes as far as damaging a couple of the tracks. Someone send them a decent producer and tell him to keep them reigned in and the good things will easily get even better.

And we've still got more to do, mostly thanks to the fact this issue has been quite delayed. Normally we'd just cram them in but it's hardly their fault that they're all in one issue rather than spread between a couple or more. So we'll be fair and increase the page count this once. Even if we haven't quite got enough for two pages and insert odd bits of padding here and there. Here, specifically.

Next up the impressively professional sounding **51 BREAKS**. They're so nice. It really isn't work going through their CD, all so easy and nice. You want a description beyond nice? Harmonic, melodious and sounds a bit like Keane (this is music journalist slang for "has a piano" in it). There isn't really a stand out song but they are all very pleasant and professional. And no, I didn't particularly like them but it seems mean to admit it when they're so nice.

One last look at Grease - want a version of *Blue Moon* that has frequencies in it that

can smash windows? It's a bit like a high-pitched asthmatic Darth Vader was stood behind the singer and guitarist. Anyway, look to **CAPTAIN POLAROID** if you do. Better is the synth-tastic take on You're the One I Want that sounds broadly Human League like. Or more accurately like someone was watching Grease and playing on a SNES at the same time with Mario even going down a pipe at one point, I swear. It's cute if nothing else so well done to **HYPERBUBBLE**. It's probably worth mentioning *Greased Lightning* as well - imagine you put the original LP on a turntable that moves at constantly varying

speeds. Oh and that the bin-men were emptying the neighbour's bins while chanting. Got it? Yep, that's exactly what it sounds like. Thanks to **GAY AGAINST YOU** for that. Probably time to stop looking at this Grease album, eh?

Just because we're finished with Grease doesn't mean we're done though. Next up is singer-songwriter **VICTORIA KLEWIN**. Her CD landed on the doormat with a lovely handwritten note saying "don't worry about the last track, it's a Tom Waits cover so it's not as important as the rest" and while it probably wasn't written for quoting it gives a good idea of where she aims her music. Fiona Apple came to mind as well, so musically interpolate between those two points and you'll have a good impression of what she sounds like. If you think you'll like it from that then you definitely will - she writes good songs and lyrics and puts them

together well. That sentence was like a gift for quoting wasn't it? Got to keep them happy though, I accidentally scratched the last CD so I'm hoping for another to be sent when her album escapes. The fact I miss it though does prove it deserving of praise anyway.

OK, what else? **REVERE** next I think with their single *Learning to Breathe*. The most instant comparison my mind comes up with is with Leaves, famed more or less only for being one of my favourite bands and coming from Iceland. So that probably doesn't help too much for most people, however much I think it should. Radiohead without any electronic gizmo's beyond guitars is a reasonable comparison though. It's certainly grand stuff - any band that can credit 11 different instruments in the sleeve without them getting hopelessly in the way of each other are clearly pretty good at what they do. Oddly their er...C side(?), *How Did You Fall* is more memorable than the A-Side, not that it matters once the CD is in your grubby mits as whichever way the tracks are ordered they're all good and clearly created by a brilliantly talented bunch and deserve every success - fingers crossed they do a bit better than Leaves. They might even get a better website if they do well, their current one is rubbish. It's one of those clever ones that make getting to anything difficult and annoys me greatly. Great band though.

This next bit is a little unfair on the previously mentioned 51 Breaks as **BAUER** are really pretty similar. It's very much pop-indie stuff music, it's very polished and so on. But this time I quite like it, especially EP opener *Connected*. It's nothing amazing and it's certainly not in any way innovative but that isn't always a bad thing. If it helps I really quite enjoyed *Thirteen Senses* as well (famed for being reduced to £2.48 a mere two months after being near the top of the album chart in Tesco) and **BAUER** roughly remind me of

them. Both are good at writing decent songs and neither are going to sell millions of albums.

SIKORA are another new guitar band from Sheffield but thankfully troubled themselves with sounding a bit different to the rest. In fact if it wasn't for a couple of pronunciations (eg. "lukin" rather than "looking") you'd never know they share a city with Milburn. Chords ring, melodies come together and they don't feel they have to sing about queuing for kebabs either. In terms of comparison, Tenacious D minus comedy is surprisingly accurate - the songs are bright and cheerful without going past the line of making them annoying. Aside from one ballad that doesn't quite work, their debut EP shows them in a very good light and is thoroughly enjoyable. Very good stuff indeed.

Last but not least, **POCKET BOOKS**. Remember way back in DM1 there was an article about the DS game Electroplankton? If you're familiar with it then the first track here is easy to describe because it sounds like it was made with it. After that track is done though it settles down into a sort of happy-and-they-know-it Belle and Sebastian area with fun lyrics and it works well, despite the singer not having the best voice in the world. Still it's lovely stuff and it would be great to hear what it would sound like if it was recorded properly, as the quality is quite poor here. Hopefully they'll get a chance to rectify that in the future.

Well, that's it for this issue - as always, get in touch if you want to appear here next time and we'll get the address to you.



FILTHY LITTLE ANGELS
myspace.com/filthylittleangels



THE VOLTAIRES
myspace.com/thevoltaires



THE POCKET GODS
myspace.com/thepocketgods



JOHNNY POINDEXTER
myspace.com/johnnypoindexter



51 BREAKS
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VICTORIA KLEWIN
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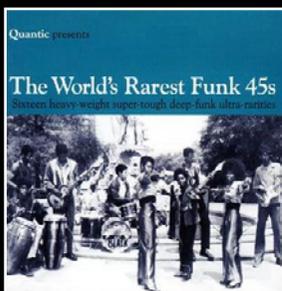
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QUANTIC PRESENTS: THE WORLD'S RAREST FUNK 45S

Trainspotting funk experts might disagree about the title, but if your idea of funk is Jamiroqua, then you're in for a bit of a shock.

The album kicks off with *Funky Thing* by Larry Ellis & the Black Hammer, chills with *Hot Funky and Sweaty* by The Soul Lifters and maintains the funk groove all the way through to *Tra La La* by The "Great Deltas". Stand out floor fillers include *Mystery of Black* by The Shades of Black and *Ain't No Other Way* by Herman Hitson.

Put together by Will Holland of the Quantic Soul Orchestra, you also get

"PERFECT FOR RECREATING A COOL SMOKE-FILLED FUNK CLUB IN YOUR LIVING ROOM."

a great 16-page booklet containing the history behind each track and photos of some of the best afros in history. Perfect for recreating a cool smoke-filled funk club in your living room. It also has links to all the relevant bands, meaning that it might be the start of a funk odyssey, so the only real downside is the imminent danger to your wallet.

Just don't be tempted to dig out some flares.

Danny Badger



HUSKI LOVE PEACE PAIN

I'm reluctant to use the same lazy cliché as every other music reviewer out there and compare Huski to Goldfrapp, but quite frankly I am lazy, and the band do have an undeniably similar vibe.

Both acts are of what I'd term the 'intelligent' electronic pop variety, and have a very strong visual presence to go along with the music. Huski's live shows see each song accompanied by a video in the same flashy neon style as on the fancy album sleeve to the left.

The act is a collaboration between the curiously named duo of Pike and

"I'M RELUCTANT TO USE THE LAZY CLICHE OF COMPARING HUSKI TO GOLDFRAPP, BUT QUITE FRANKLY I AM LAZY."

Maple Bee, with the former handling the music and the latter the vocals.

Stand out tracks include eminently head-bobbable *Make Me Your Picture*, and *Planet Urtica* (which, as someone who knows absolutely nothing about their genre, seems to me to be a fantastical dance track). They even slow things down a bit on the song *Everything Changes*.

All in all, 'tis right grand. Buy it now.

Tim Cheesman



EMULSION BLUE SKY OBJECTIVE

No, you won't find a 'painting' based joke at all in this little review of the debut album from Emulsion. Nigel Koch's - who ultimately is Emulsion - obsession with the plinky plonkey 8-bit sounds of yore is blatantly obvious as soon as the first track *LeftRightLeftRight* begins with those NES esque bleeps and bleeps. This is pure electronica through and through, much like that sublime Trash80 production 'Pain Fade Down'.

However, Koch's compositions aren't quite as immediately gripping, nor as catchy as those of the

"IT SEEMS TO TRANSCEND GENRE WITH CATCHY BEATS AND EMOTIVE MELODIES."

forementioned electronic god, with only *All Robots On Sale!* particularly standing tall as a more instantly memorable track.

But Blue Sky Objective isn't just for electro-heads or gamers. Nope, it seems to transcend genre with catchy beats and emotive melodies. Even your dad might tap his foot to this album. While painting the living room.

Damn.

Chris Pickering



COLT THESE THINGS CAN'T HURT YOU NOW, SO THROW THEM IN THE FIRE

From the band formerly known as Living With Eating Disorders, comes Colt's debut album, consisting mainly of new material with a few re-recorded LWED songs.

The album is produced by John Fryer, who has previously worked with both Nine Inch Nails and Cocteau Twins, and this may account for the industrial elements that touch their work but do not overpower the album.

Colt is fronted by Andrea Kerr, whose vocals range from delicately haunting to blistering screeches, but always remaining coherent and

"NATURAL, HONEST, HEARTBREAKING AND ABOVE ALL A SINCERE WORK OF ART."

articulate. This is the sort of beautifully disturbing music that will leave a cold sweat on your back and your bottom lip trembling.

This is an album for anyone who has ever been touched with sadness and, let's be honest, who hasn't? Be warned however it certainly isn't easy listening and may leave you feeling very fragile. Natural, honest, heartbreaking and above all a sincere work of art.

Talek Glover



DIRECTOR

CAMERAMAN



film & tv

currently watching ...

da vinci code / doctor who / the break-up / brick / sophie scholl



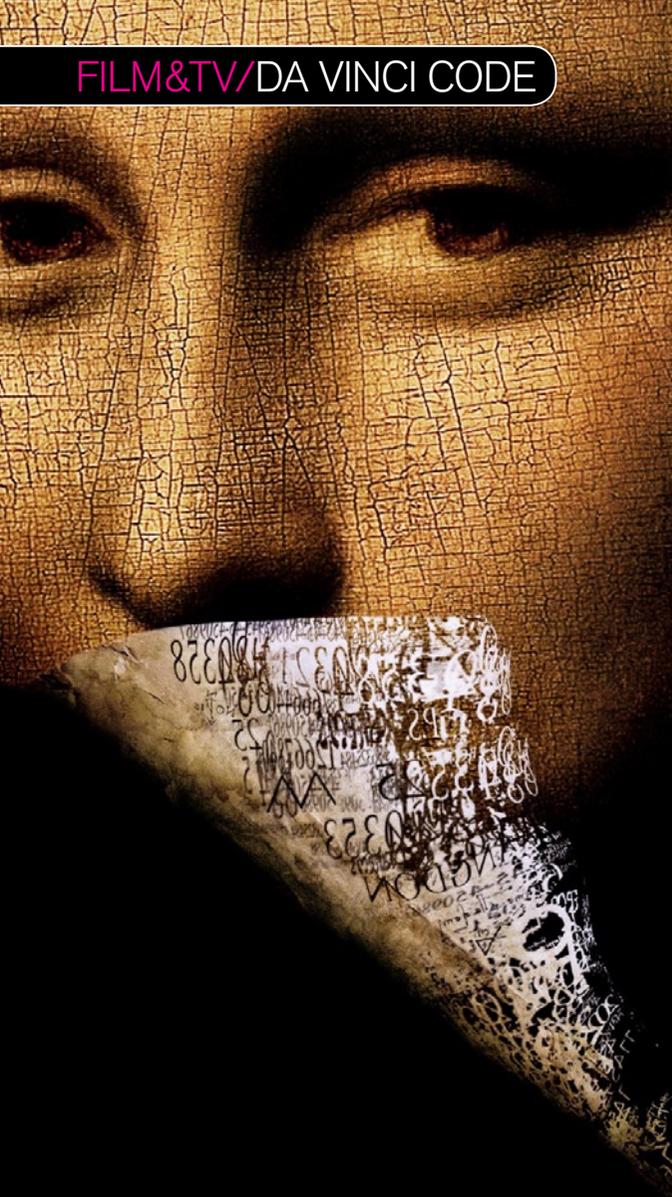
THE CODA DECODER

THE DA VINCI CODE IS A STORY. NOT JUST IN THAT IT'S A WORK OF FICTION THAT HAS JUST BECOME A FILM, BUT IN THAT IT HAS SOLD MILLIONS OF COPIES AND HAD MILLIONS OF WORDS WRITTEN ABOUT IT, WITH ANOTHER THOUSAND OR SO HERE, TRYING TO WORK OUT HOW IT ALL HAPPENED. (WE ALSO SORT OF WANTED TO SURROUND AN ARTICLE WITH PICTURES OF AUDREY TAUTOU. NO JOKE.)

WORDS: ANDREW REVELL
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

Over two years have passed since picking *The Da Vinci Code* up from a bootsale for 50p, reading it a couple of times and enjoying it. Slowly but surely it started to appear everywhere, with the film being the most recent. It's had books debunking it, DVD's debunking it and even Tony Robinson debunking it. Working out why it's got so much attention is quite bewildering - as Baldrick pointed out "it's not even written that well". That hasn't stopped it though.

Dan Brown is, in the politest possible way, a complete klutz when it comes to haphazardly splurging words and punctuation across the pages and allowing them to land wherever they choose. Read his old books and you'll quickly recognise the fact he's only got one story to tell as well - he might have got taken to court for ripping off "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" but if he could sue himself he'd have lost millions. *Broken Sword* could probably have got in on the legal action too - clever, but slightly clumsy American gets together with



“UNFORTUNATELY THOUGH, IT ALL SEEMS JUST A LITTLE POINTLESS. THE STORY RUNNING THROUGH THE DA VINCI CODE WAS NEVER THAT STRONG AND MAKING PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE ACT IT OUT DOESN'T MAKE IT BETTER; IT JUST BECOMES EMBARRASSING.”

minxy french lass and gets shot at during Knights Templar related adventures? Riiiiight. His research abilities must be great too - who else can get enough research for a whole novel with five minutes on Google?

So where did the phenomenon come from? First time through it is a fun read - Dan Brown can write the ends of chapters brilliantly, and like good comic writers, convinces the reader the next chapter will be the best one ever. It never is, but by the time you work that out you've finished the book, daft and simplistic-but-fun puzzles and all. None of those are the reasons for success though, it's the introduction page that managed that. By claiming that everything except the characters were true and factual, people started to forget that they'd grabbed it in the '3 for 2' fiction section.

You don't need a survey to find out how people first heard about it - through word of mouth. Lots of sensible people read it once, enjoyed it and moved on but since it mentioned religion it drew "those" people out. A very, very small amount of people took it seriously and loved it. Luckily for Dan Brown though, *The Da Vinci Code* suddenly took off as the dinner party conversation of choice with people determined to deride it, debunk it and demonstrate their superiority. Even more worryingly, members of major religions deemed this daft story book worthy of response. To be fair though, they are the sort of people that'll take a book and run with it, so it's a bit more understandable. Without people telling other people how wrong or bad it was, it probably would have disappeared a lot quicker.

It didn't disappear though and someone,

somewhere had an amazing idea - they could make a film of it! They haven't done a half-hearted job of it either, pulling in big names and taking it all worryingly seriously. Robert Langdon is played by Tom Hanks and as Sophie Neveu is French they cast Audrey Tautou - talk about inspired, original casting. Hanks certainly tries his best, but unfortunately he takes it so seriously that it becomes detrimental to his performance - someone should have told him he wasn't working on a great work of fiction. Audrey does a bit better, despite being quite clearly ill. Unfortunately her role was cut down hugely from the book and is no longer treated as an equal of Langdon, just a pretty sidekick. Such a relegation might be fairly predictable normally, but in a story more or less entirely based around females being trampled on for a couple of thousand years, it might have been a good idea not to do it in this flick. Whilst we're talking about good ideas, not hiring the screenwriter of *'Batman and Robin'* is another...

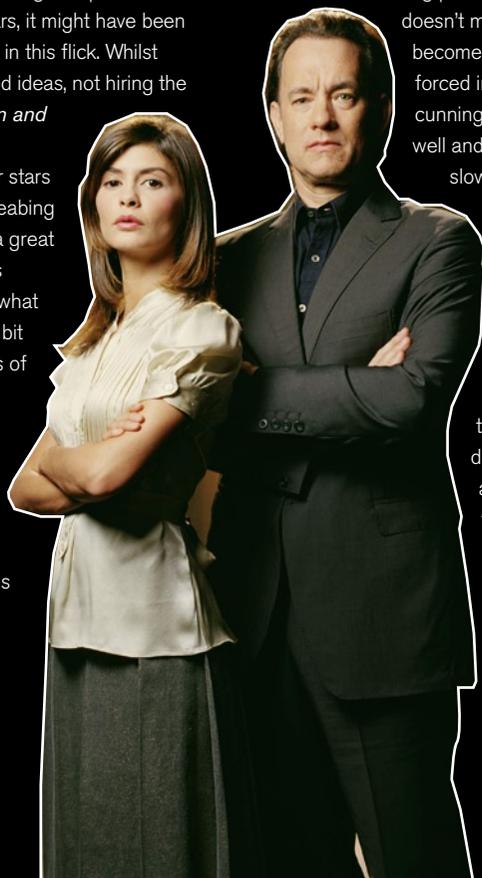
Elsewhere the other stars do well - as eccentric Teabing Sir Ian McKellen does a great job. Unsurprisingly he is clearly totally aware of what he is working on, has a bit of fun with the daftness of the story and adds to every scene he is in. Alfred Molina is fine, but it does improve the film if you try not to think him as Doctor Octopus. Paul Bettany is less good, although no complaints. He's also involved in the controversial scene of him performing self-

flagellation which seems all too graphic for a 12A film.

Good things? The film glosses over a few "factual inaccuracies" within the book. While the book claims "Mary kissed Jesus on the mouth" when quoting a Gnostic Gospel, the film takes into account the hole in the papyrus and the quote gets cut off before the last word. The effect is the same but it makes it a bit more believable. The Priory of Sion, famed for not existing, does have its existence questioned in the film with "that's what they want you to believe" - it's tacky but it might shut up a few people who complain about such things.

Unfortunately though, it all seems just a little pointless. The story running through *The Da Vinci Code* was never that strong and making professional people act it out doesn't make it better; it just becomes embarrassing. The pace forced into the book with the cunning cliff-hangers is gone as well and it makes the film drag on slowly until it reaches its terrible ending, something which the film has managed to make even worse. It really isn't a very good film at all. Those that loved the book will no doubt love it, those that hated it will no doubt go and see it just to add an extra bullet point to their carefully planned dinner party speech but if you're just a normal person you'll be left wondering why you bothered going to see it.

Oh, yeah.
Audrey Tautou.



THE DANCING DOCTOR

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW
DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

WITH ALMOST FIFTEEN YEARS PASSING SINCE ITS LAST SERIAL APPEARANCE ON BRITISH TELEVISION, THE RETURN OF **DOCTOR WHO** BROUGHT THE LIKES OF THE DALEKS, CYBERMEN, AND EVEN THE 'SHOOTY DOG THING' K-9 BACK TO OUR SCREENS. HOWEVER, NOT EVEN THE DOCTOR'S MOST INFAMOUS FRIENDS AND FOES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP THIS AGING SHOW FROM CHALLENGING A NEW FRONTIER – THE LOVE STORY.



Ever since the BBC started re-releasing classic *Doctor Who* serials on DVD a few years back, I've felt an almost constant need to apologise if watching with friends. "Oh, ignore that bit," I would say. "You know what special effects were like back then." Often whole hours would pass while I would try to explain just how it was possible to thoroughly enjoy *Earthshock*, despite Adric's presence.

No doubt, respective fans' opinions will differ, but in a lot of respects the original serials haven't aged well. It was never the stories' fault – indeed, the influence of tales such as *Genesis*

of the Daleks or *Caves of Androzani* on Eccleston, Tennant and co. is in places crystal, but television has inevitably changed. It's fair to say that the rush of budget-happy blockbusters from across the Atlantic in the last 15 years hasn't helped the BBC's flagship Sci-fi series age with any more grace.

But the successful return of *Doctor Who* in 2005 was not only a test of whether Russell T. Davies could reinvigorate what had almost

become a twee British icon from the past – BBC Wales also faced the task of challenging the idea that time-fantastical adventures no longer had a place on mainstream British television. With audiences in the UK

increasingly using the big screen for their action fuelled fix, the ever-widening box in our living rooms has slowly morphed into often nothing more than a daily portal to a fictitious square in the east-end of London. Yet, as I sit here and type in the middle of the summer, ratings figures for many of the episodes in the so-called 'second series' of *Who* suggest that, as an entity, it is now just as important to the BBC as *EastEnders*.

The modern tales have naturally benefited from a suitably larger budget and improved visuals, but the differences between then and now are certainly not purely superficial. Perhaps the biggest triumph of 21st-century *Doctor Who* has been its ability to maintain a balance. Whereas critics claimed that in the 1980s the programme became a parody of itself - stripped of humour, wrapped up in its own world and ever moving away from its core family audience, Davies' focus on the human element to stories has returned *Who* firmly back into the mainstream.

Conversely, the sheer quality of the writing and devoted handling of iconic elements such as the TARDIS, the Daleks and even the regeneration has endeared new *Who* to those who religiously watched before.

But this isn't a stagnant show. You only need look back to Tom Baker's last story, *Logopolis*, to see how the writers have changed their approach to all things familial. Stumbling into a Police Box on the way to her first day at work, Aussie air-stewardess Tegan Jovanka automatically recognises it as some sort of ship and shows little remorse when she discovers her Aunt Vanessa has perished at the hands of The Master. Likewise, compadre Nyssa loses her Father, Step-mother and home planet in the space of her first two stories, yet shows complete dedication to the Doctor throughout her two year stay.

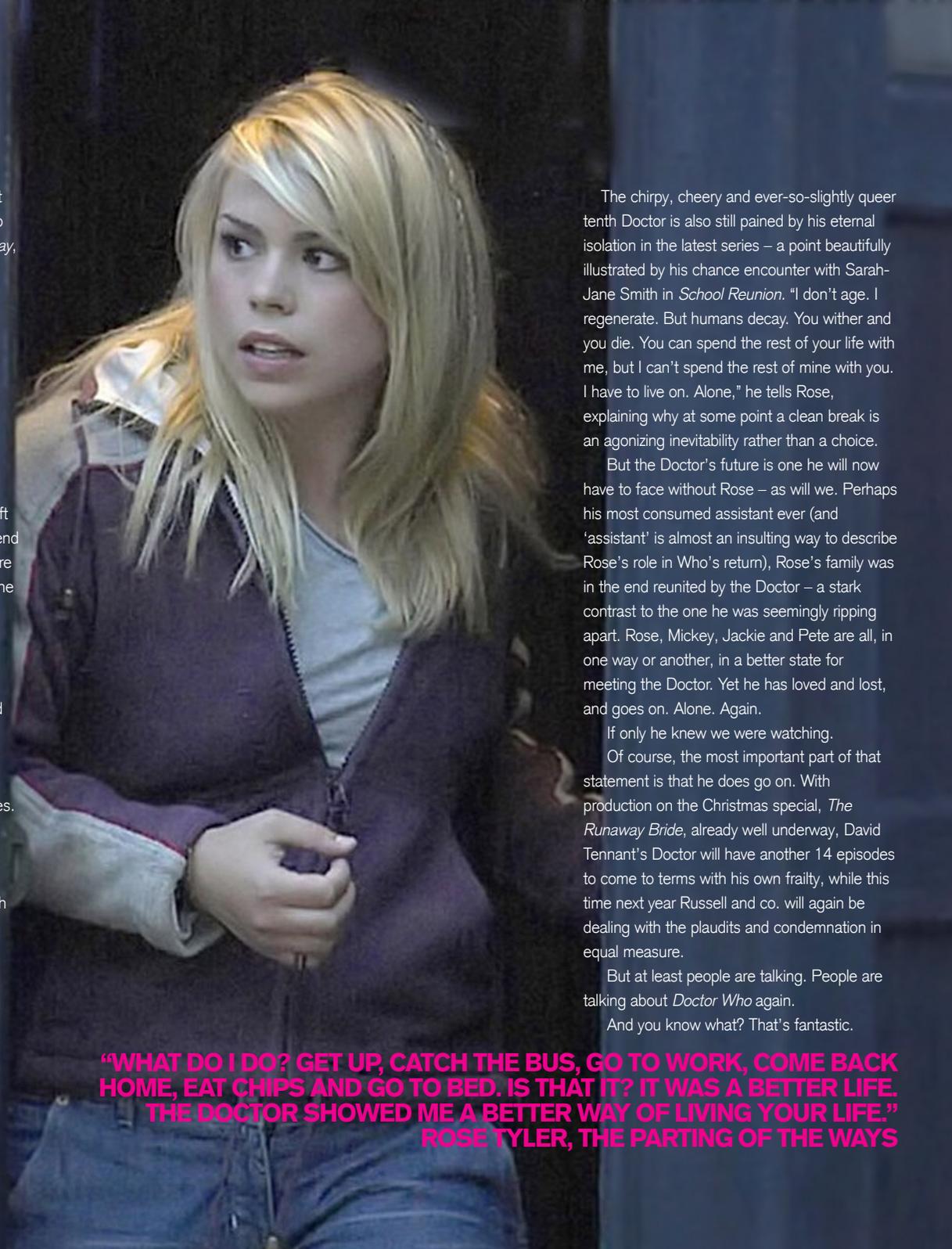
Skip to 2005, and Rose Tyler is an entirely different proposition. As much a representative of how we, the audience, might react placed in her situation, Rose spends the entire first series coming to terms with her new interstellar life. In the series opener, Billie Piper's character struggles to accept that the man standing in front of her is, in fact, an alien.

She also makes plenty of mistakes, almost tearing the Earth apart while travelling back to try and prevent her dad's death in *Father's Day*, yet becoming its saviour in the end of season finale, *The Parting of the Ways*. Her journey with the Doctor is an entirely natural one of swings and roundabouts - a contemporary account of the Doctor and his assistant. The first assistant to share screen-title billing with the Doctor, no less.

Tegan's lack of remorse for her Aunt also seems faintly quaint in comparison to Rose's strings-firmly-attached approach. The writers have never forgotten to remind us of those left behind, with mother Jackie and on/off boyfriend Mickey Smith serving to illustrate that there are no clean breaks these days - travelling with the Doctor ultimately comes at a price.

It's fair to say that Davies' family-friendly fashion has not been universally praised, especially in some fan's quarters. Often accused on focusing too much on the ins and outs of the Tyler family, the *Who* team have instead used the backdrop of a fairly-ordinary council estate in London to highlight the Doctor's more extravagant flaws and fallibilities.

Although the Doctor's solitude has been touched upon in years gone by, the fabled 'Time War' has left him wounded in battle. Eccleston's entire run is loaded with guilt, with his interpretation of the Doctor almost unable to come to terms with the notion that he is truly alone in the Universe, by his own hand. Wildly passionate and in places unstable, the ninth Doctor's swinging emotions cause him to vow to save the lives of a couple who met on a street corner after a night out (a life, he painfully admits, he's never had) in *Father's Day*, but to kill a foe he has seemingly become one with in *Dalek*.



The chirpy, cheery and ever-so-slightly queer tenth Doctor is also still pained by his eternal isolation in the latest series - a point beautifully illustrated by his chance encounter with Sarah-Jane Smith in *School Reunion*. "I don't age. I regenerate. But humans decay. You wither and you die. You can spend the rest of your life with me, but I can't spend the rest of mine with you. I have to live on. Alone," he tells Rose, explaining why at some point a clean break is an agonizing inevitability rather than a choice.

But the Doctor's future is one he will now have to face without Rose - as will we. Perhaps his most consumed assistant ever (and 'assistant' is almost an insulting way to describe Rose's role in *Who's* return), Rose's family was in the end reunited by the Doctor - a stark contrast to the one he was seemingly ripping apart. Rose, Mickey, Jackie and Pete are all, in one way or another, in a better state for meeting the Doctor. Yet he has loved and lost, and goes on. Alone. Again.

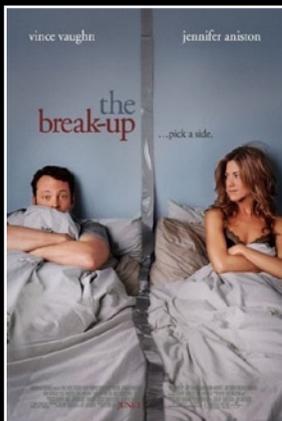
If only he knew we were watching.

Of course, the most important part of that statement is that he does go on. With production on the Christmas special, *The Runaway Bride*, already well underway, David Tennant's Doctor will have another 14 episodes to come to terms with his own frailty, while this time next year Russell and co. will again be dealing with the plaudits and condemnation in equal measure.

But at least people are talking. People are talking about *Doctor Who* again.

And you know what? That's fantastic.

**"WHAT DO I DO? GET UP, CATCH THE BUS, GO TO WORK, COME BACK HOME, EAT CHIPS AND GO TO BED. IS THAT IT? IT WAS A BETTER LIFE. THE DOCTOR SHOWED ME A BETTER WAY OF LIVING YOUR LIFE."
ROSE TYLER, THE PARTING OF THE WAYS**



THE BREAK-UP
(12A)

//director:
Peyton Reed

We're not mentioning the real-life shenanigans surrounding this, we've got enough with this entirely lumpy film. The great scenes – and there are a few – clip along at a great rate thanks to some brilliant dialogue, although anyone putting Vince Vaughn and Jon Favreau together in a scene will find it hard to fail. Even the couple scenes are fine, although Rache... Jennifer Aniston's scenes alone frequently grind to a halt.

The real problem is the plot, loosely held together and blasted with Plotyfilla to cover gaping holes.



"THE REAL PROBLEM IS THE PLOT, LOOSELY HELD TOGETHER AND BLASTED WITH PLOTYFILLA TO COVER GAPING HOLES."

Andrew Revell

Who the hell is the guy selling the house and why is he playing pool with the dudes from Swingers?

The blame will have to be placed with the director that tried to make a script with no romance into a romantic comedy. The great parts are stretched to breaking point, but just hold together enough to make this a very tentative recommendation.



BRICK
(15)

//director:
Rian Johnson

Set in an American High School, providing an insightful vision of adolescent life and a beautifully twisted style, Brick is not your average film.

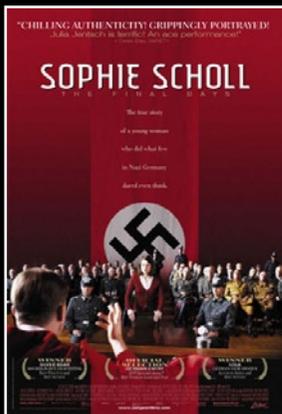
A murdered ex-girlfriend is the catalyst for Brenden (played with a stunning confidence by Joseph Gordon-Levitt) to become involved in the murky world of drug-running, teenage gangs and a dark, Lynch-like murder mystery with plenty of twists and subversive imagery.

Perhaps most lazily compared to Donnie Darko, a more accurate comparison is Baz Lurhman's Romeo



"A DARK, LYNCH-LIKE MURDER MYSTERY WITH PLENTY OF TWISTS AND SUBVERSIVE IMAGERY"

Ian Moreno-Melgar



SOPHIE SCHOLL: THE FINAL DAYS
(PG)

//director:
Marc Rothemund

There's one moment in Sophie Scholl: The Final Days that sticks in your memory. No, not the initial flurry of anti-war propaganda that Sophie Scholl, and her brother Hans – two members of the 'White Rose' ant-war movement - push over the ledge at their Munich campus. Nor the lengthy interrogation scene, where Sophie is subjected to much mental torment by her interrogator Robert Mohr. Nope, it's towards the close of the film. After an unmitigated travesty of a trial held by the Nazi judges, Sophie approaches the bench and firmly

tells them "You'll soon be standing where I am now."

The task of bringing depth to a two dimensional character who becomes so revered over the years is a huge one at best, and for the main it's an achievement well done. Things do descend into a simple case of good versus evil during the trial scenes, but it cant sullen the fact that this film packs the kind of punch we can only wish all of the same ilk possessed.



"THIS FILM PACKS THE KIND OF PUNCH WE WISH ALL OF ITS ILK POSSESSED."

Chris Pickering



BORAT: CULTURAL LEARNINGS OF...
(15)

//director:
Larry Charles

According to the press coverage this is either the greatest movie ever made, or 83 minutes of racism that nearly encapsulates all that's wrong with this country. Not since the equally overblown furor around The Da Vinci Code has so much fuss been made out of a simple piece of entertainment.

Personally I'd say the film is much closer to the former - not that I'm suggesting it's one of the best films of all time, simply that I fail to see how anyone could actually be offended by something that is so ridiculously comedic at every turn.

On that note it's safe to say that it's definitely the comedy of the year. The laughs come thick and fast, and whilst there aren't that many moments of genius it is consistently great.

This would have been a five, but for one thing: since I saw a preview screening a couple of weeks ago nearly every minute has been repeated to death on tv promo spots, so you'll probably find you've seen most of the best bits already...



"DEFINITELY THE COMEDY OF THE YEAR. THE LAUGHS COME THICK AND FAST, LEAVING MOST OF THE CINEMA IN HYSTERIC"

Tim Cheesman



comics

currently reading...

the sandman / fables / infinite crisis / deathnote / ultimate spider-man / batman and the mad monk / all new atom



CRISIS:

1) AN UNSTABLE OR CRUCIAL TIME OR STATE OF AFFAIRS IN WHICH A DECISIVE CHANGE IS IMPENDING

2) DC COMICS MAJOR EVENT CONCERNED WITH VARIOUS EARTHS. IMPLEMENTS MAJOR CHANGE, OFTEN COMPLICATING RATHER THAN SIMPLIFYING MATTERS. SPREAD ACROSS VAST NUMBERS OF COMICS TO ENSURE MAXIMUM PROFIT.

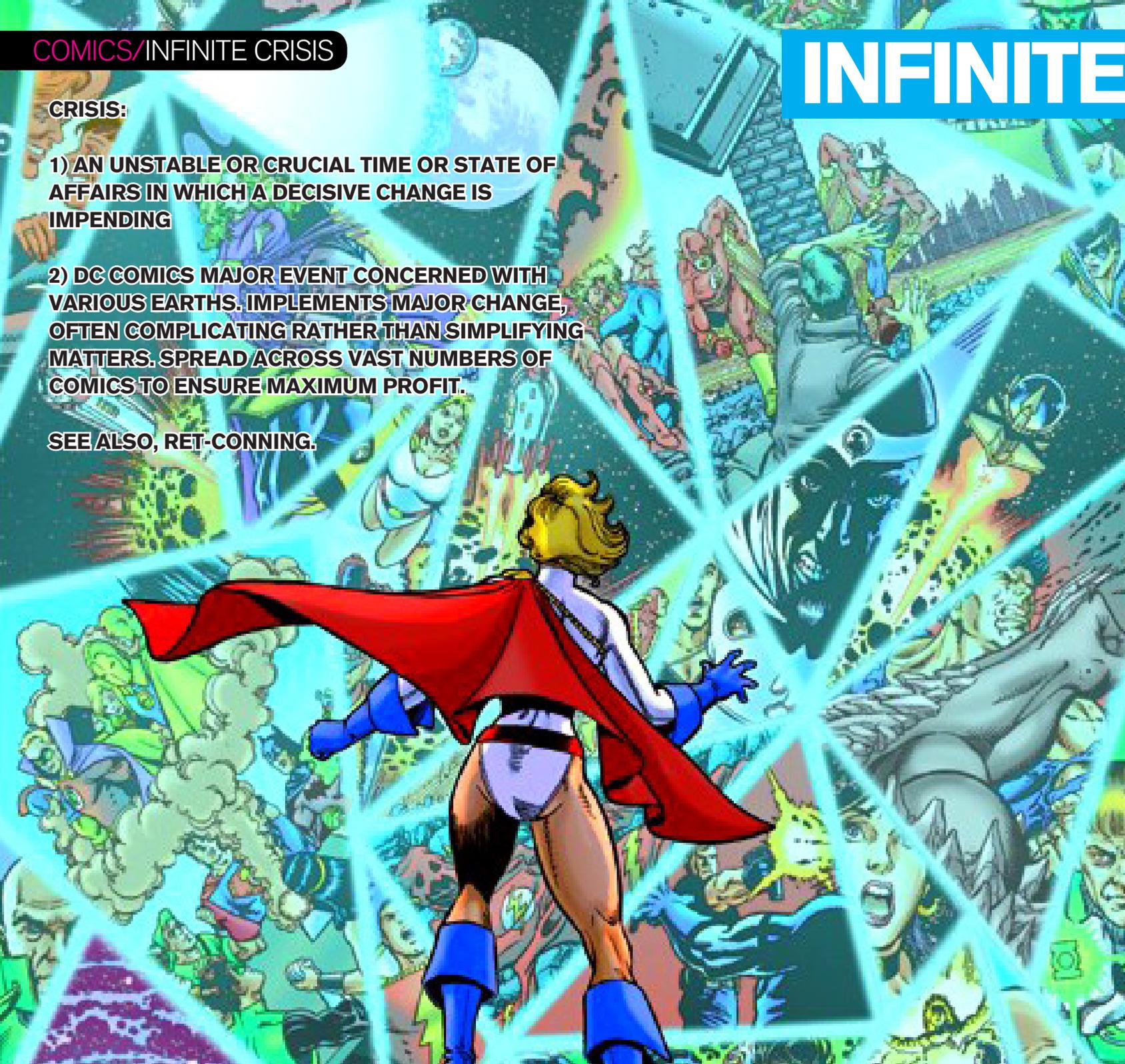
SEE ALSO, RET-CONNING.

WORDS AND DESIGN : ANDREW REVELL

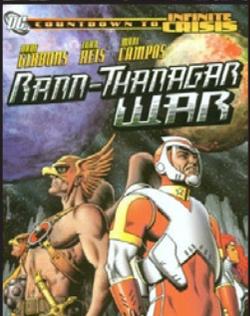
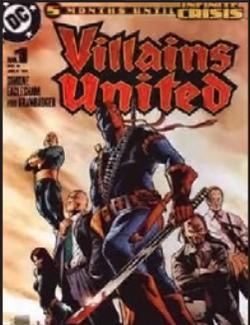
It's months since this crisis got going and it's still got months to go before it's all finished with. From Identity Crisis over a year ago, through Countdown to Infinite Crisis (via four limited series, one-off issues and enough tie-ins to make the Wayne Foundation blush financially) before the main series even started and that is now being followed by 52 and the One Year Later titles that almost signify a return to normality. It's been about as big (expensive) as DC have dared to make it and it does seem it is going to change as much as they spent months threatening it would. Until it all gets changed again, of course.

So what has been going on? If you fear light spoilers, and you've managed to ignore everything going on in the DC Universe over the last year or so ignore the next paragraph.

It all started with the death of Sue Dibney, wife of Elongated Man. That death made every hero worry about their loved ones and a race to find out who did it soon broke out. Part of the JLA had an instant prime suspect, as it was revealed Doctor Light had been mind-wiped after successfully entering the JLA watchtower and raping Sue. The mind-wipe by Zatanna was the result of a close vote, but it was interrupted by Batman, vehemently against the procedure and ended up also being mind-wiped. And that was just how it got started. Events after that ended up with an OMAC army trying to kill everyone with super-powers after Wonder Woman killed Maxwell Lord and Superman from Earth 2 inadvertently helping Alex Luthor with a plan to kill billions to create a perfect earth to replace what he saw as an earth in a terrible state but was eventually stopped by Superboy. The first 11 issues of 52 include a much more thorough summary of everything including the crisis in the back if you're behind.



COMICS/INFINITE CRISIS



Beyond that though no-one really knows what is going on. All the major titles have jumped forward a year with a few significant changes that weekly comic 52 is trying to explain. As well as trying to explain how Oliver Queen become mayor of Star City and what Batman did for a year it is also launching four or five arcs of it's own. It's going to be interesting to see if they manage to explain everything but it's been a good title so far even if it does seem to be progressing very slowly.

Why now though? Why, suddenly does the time feel right for a major comics event when there hasn't been one for years? Well, superheroes are having something of a comeback after a weak period in the nineties ever since the Spider-Man and X-Men flicks brought interest back to a business that got a bit too big around the time Image Comics were created by the "super talents" of the day. Or, the alternative explanation is that the nineties were a time of peace that didn't need super-heroes - is it really a coincidence that between the fall of the

USSR and the fall of the Twin Towers comics were in something of a lull? Whichever you choose to believe they are now back, they're being written well and part of this crisis seems to be about having a bit of a spring-clean allowing for a better starting point for a range of new titles.



the interesting part. The over-riding theme of this crisis

seems to be about the actions of heroes and the dubious choices they have made in the last few years. The earth isn't the same one that first launched Superman, characters take drugs, get HIV, die and come back to life with surprising regularity in a push for some sort of bizarre, gritty, spandex-wearing reality. There isn't a precise moment to point to when that change happened (Green Lantern/Green Arrow?) but the point when it was consolidated must be the launch of Watchmen.

Watchmen was (and still is) something a little away from the norm for comics. It stood out as a work of literature about characters that sort of happened to be super-heroes as well. It's impact came from how different it was and how it pushed realism at superheroes. What difference does this make

to this crisis? Quite a lot if you start thinking about them both at once and start looking for similarities - both involve a rape that splits a team, both involve an unknown murderer and both reach a conclusion that involves an individual wanting to kill millions to make things better

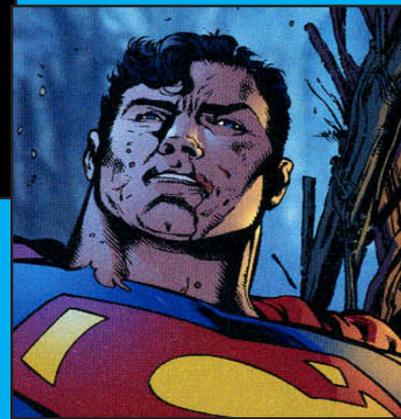
but with one key difference - in the Crisis the heroes don't get there fifteen minutes too late. They arrive in time to stop the terrible plan, but are still forced to accept why such a plan was being fomulated, because Earth's heroes were no longer doing a good enough job.

It's enough to make Batman go away and train, it forces Superman to take a year off as a human and Wonder Woman to become something completely different all to try and improve as heroes and



they each have reason to do so. DC suddenly wants its heroes to get better,

to improve and to be able to live up to the heroics that was common before Watchmen and all the rest. If the end of Watchmen changed comics for twenty years will re-telling the story but with a happy ending be enough to change them again? It certainly seems like DC is trying to find out.

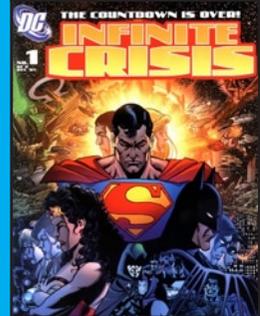


IT'S ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF HEROES AND THE DUBIOUS CHOICES THEY MAKE

After years of trying to push for the sort of gritty realism that left Gotham collapsed, Bat Girl paralysed and a Robin (sort-of) dead a

push towards heroes succeeding is going to seem like a big change. It's unlikely they'll go all the way back to the simple good vs. bad stories of the Golden Age but it'll be interesting to see how an audience weened on realism will react to any change towards positive stories, especially after a Crisis featuring several murders and a rape. As long as DC avoids its stories becoming boringly predictable and don't force a new agenda too hard it might work.

Of course, there is still the possibility of 52 diving off in another direction, with a new big bad guy being foreshadowed early on, but with a sub-plot making it possible for anyone to be a hero it does seem choices and actions are more important now than the creation of a single earth. It won't be universally welcomed, but it'll be interesting to see how it works out.



THE SANDMAN: PRELUDES & NOCTURNES

“THROUGH YOUR DREAMS, MY SLEEPING CHILDREN. YOU HAD A PASSENGER AND YOU NEVER KNEW” WORDS: DANNY BADGER
DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

Since it was originally published in 1989, Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* has become shorthand for the best in adult comic literature, putting the novel into graphic novel and winning acclaim and awards.

Almost 20 years on, and ten years after the series ended in 1996, *The Sandman* still has the power to shock and awe new readers, as well as providing fresh insight for visitors returning to the dream world. Mixing myth,

THE SKILL OF GAIMAN IS EVIDENT IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULES OF MORPHEUS AND HIS ETERNAL KIN

legend, religion, and the oft-derided fantasy tag, Volume One, *Preludes & Nocturnes* begins with the mistaken capture of the Master of Dreams by satanists. Not many authors would be confident enough to imprison their main character in a small glass bauble for the entire first issue, but it gives valuable time to sink into the twisted gothic realm of Morpheus, the ruler of dreams and nightmares.

Nightmares govern the collection of first eight issues, but despite the ongoing violence between Cain and Abel, and a visit to the kingdom of Hell itself, the most disturbing sequences all take place within the 'reality' of normal everyday life in the DC comics universe. Encounters with heroes John Constantine and *The Martian Manhunter*, and villains like *The Scarecrow* and *Dr Destiny* are never overplayed, and seem almost like breaks of sanity compared to the situations mortals find themselves in.

The skill of Gaiman is evident in the acceptance of the rules of Morpheus and his eternal kin, the handling of even the most

shocking debasement of humans, and the black humour that pervades even the black, reflective eyes of the dream lord. Every cameo and familiar reference is handled with a light touch, from the early appearance of Satanist Crowley, to the appearance of Dream's sister Death in the final issue of the collection. The one reassurance is that anyone with an attraction to goth girls will no longer be afraid of the grim reaper.

The Sandman might dress like a member of *The Cure*, but you'll be left in no doubt of the beautiful strangeness of his world. Just make sure you read the first of 11 collections in *The Sandman Library* when you're alone at night, and all is quiet, and it's sure to stay in your memory for a good time yet...



GRIM FAIRY TALES

EVER WONDERED IF IT REALLY WOULD BE “HAPPY EVER AFTER” FOR THE PRINCES AND PRINCESSES OF YOUR FAVOURITE CHILDHOOD STORYBOOKS?

Celebrating its 50th issue last month, with the much anticipated wedding between Snow White and the Big Bad Wolf, it seems that there are not only happy endings, but a rather interesting future for *Fables*, Bill Willingham's creator-owned series for Vertigo comics.

Put simply, *Fables* follows the lives of your favourite mythical characters from tales of old, and shows us a world where stories collide,

Ok, yes, Vertigo is a DC imprint, not exactly the most independent of all comic publishers... However the main reason for its existence is to let creators such as Bill Willingham practise so much care and creativity with their worlds in a safe, unfranchised, non-DCUniverse environment. The continuity in art, story and characterization provides a stark contrast to the typical schizophrenic superheroes going off on new missions, with new attitudes, to fight all-new, badder-than-ever villains every other arc. Original Graphic Novels such as the upcoming *1001 Nights Of Snowfall*, a cross between Scheherazade and *Secret Files & Origins*, provide the rich history whilst the ongoing monthly comic book and new spin-off *Jack of Fables* keep the world moving with new storybook lands and characters, all haunted by the overseeing shadow of The Adversary.

happy-ever-afters turn into acrimonious divorces, and the good/evil roles are often reversed, but never stable. Forced by war into the mundane world from their various story home lands, the community of Fabletown, New York provides a backdrop for every type of story imaginable, from murder mystery to political conspiracy with a fair bit of romance, adventure and magic along the way.

The first few issues of the series, now nearly four years old, are a little bit heavy handed in re-introducing you to the revised versions of the legends you thought you knew so well, but knowingly so in places, and they serve as a good starter for new readers.

Happily, after the initial start, the series credits its audience with a little more intelligence than usually found in hand-holding, exposition-led comics, leaving slow burning

themes to unfold by themselves in the background whilst one- or two-issue story arcs keep the audience not only sufficiently interested, but the issues themselves dense enough to take more than five minutes to read through.



The accompanying sidebars, page decorations and detailed artwork, often by regular penciller Mark Buckingham, lend to the information crammed, good value atmosphere. James Jean, arguably one of the best cover artists in the industry, regularly provides the eye candy that you just can't resist picking up off the comic store shelf, if just to figure out what his mixed up masterpieces are portraying this month.

The storybook-character-as-adults-in-slightly-twisted-situations isn't exactly a new idea - hell, even the originals

SLOW BURNING THEMES UNFOLD BY THEMSELVES IN THE BACKGROUND WHILST ONE- OR TWO-ISSUE STORY ARCS KEEP THINGS DENSE ENOUGH TO TAKE MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES TO READ THROUGH.

You are cordially invited to attend the gala celebration of Bill,

I don't think it's a good idea to promise this sort of story considering what really happens in this issue. Think about it, okay? Your favor to editor, Shelly



weren't full of happy bunnies, before Disney got hold of them. Plenty of other books find pleasure in subverting the innocence of such fairytales, Alan Moore's *Lost Girls* most famously; but *Fables* is far from following the cliché (and for the record, although Vertigo has its 'mature' reputation, it's nowhere near as 'adult' as *Lost Girls* either). It's not rebellion for shock's sake; it's using a familiar setting, and fantastical precepts, with their gorgeous colours and stylings, to tell very real, well crafted modern fables.

WORDS&DESIGN: RACHEL WILD



DEATH NOTE
(VIZ)
Tsugumi Ohba &
Takeshi Obata

The human world is rotting. The gods of death are bored. Thus begins the joint project of two of Japan's most prolific comic icons, Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata, and their frantic tale of cat and mouse with the point of view focused firmly on the antagonist.

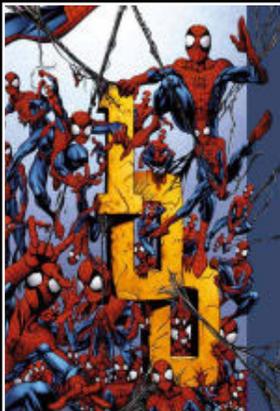
Death Note depicts the story of Light Yagami, a 17 year old genius who comes into possession of a book with the power to kill anyone just by writing their name down, but to what extremes will Light go to rid the world of murderers and criminals to create a perfect world? Or rather,

how will he be stopped?
If you have yet to make your journey into the world of Japanese and Korean comics, then make this your first port of call as its intelligent story rivals that of any crime thriller novel out there.

Matthew Boylan



"IF YOU'VE YET TO JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF JAPANESE AND KOREAN COMICS, MAKE THIS YOUR FIRST PORT OF CALL."



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #100
(MARVEL)
Brian Bendis & Mark Bagley

There are plenty of people who never expected Ultimate Spider-Man to have reached its 100th issue but here it is and it isn't slowing down. A large part of this issue is a look back over the 100 issues so far and despite the fact it's laid out like a children's book (big print and all) it's interesting to see the peaks and troughs presented in such a compact fashion. Wolverine and Spider-Man swapping brains being the lowest and highs throughout.

The issue itself is an odd one for a celebration as it is halfway through a story arc. The story is back focused

on Carnage and cloning - it's even called the Clone Saga which might be familiar to some. It chucks out a few notable revelations and is one of the better arcs but still feels odd as 100.

With long-term artist Mark Bagley leaving in 10 issues the comic will face its first real upheaval, but hopefully it'll manage another 100 issues.

Andrew Revell



"IT CHUCKS OUT A FEW NOTABLE REVELATIONS AND IS ONE OF THE BETTER ARCS, BUT STILL FEELS ODD AS 100."



BATMAN AND THE MAD MONK
#3 (DC)
Matt Wagner

DC fans might be getting a little fed up with the constant Crisis stories, so titles like this are a pleasant break. Created by one man army Matt Wagner (and benefiting from the clarity a single artist/writer brings) it is focused on retelling one of the very earliest Batman stories. Early Batman stories always seem to work better, the extra fallibility and the commitment to taking down crime makes stories more interesting and this is no exception.

Complete with vampire action,



"COMPLETE WITH VAMPIRE ACTION, GANG DRIVEN HEARSES AND WHAT BOILS DOWN TO DATE RAPE IT'S A THOROUGH STORY."

Andrew Revell



ALL NEW ATOM
#2
(DC)
Gail Simone

Here's a thrilling origin - Ray Palmer has sort of wandered off, so there needed to be a new Atom. So it's Ryan Choi has taken the house, day-job and super-hero role of Ray Palmer and it's just in time! There are some really small aliens trying to take over the world!!! Really.

To make it even worse, the entire story is peppered with barely relevant quotes from Danish physicists and American satirists just to give it an air of intelligence. It doesn't work, but at least Gail Simone can rest easy knowing she

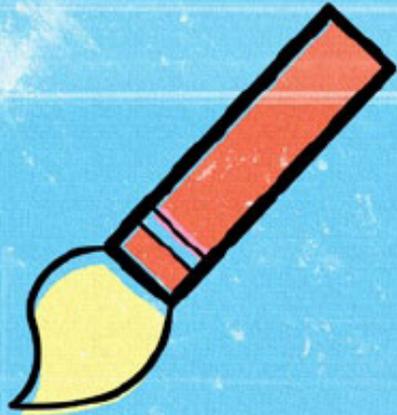
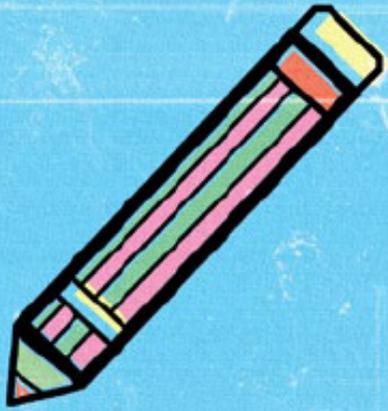
made use of that useless quote book she got last Christmas.

The fact I find John Byrnes art scruffy and old-fashioned makes little difference. The preview issue was dreadful, the first issue was dreadful and this second issue is, guess what, dreadful. It's as simple as that, avoid this comic.

Andrew Revell



"EVEN WORSE, THE ENTIRE STORY IS PEPPERED WITH BARELY RELEVANT QUOTES FROM DANISH PHYSICISTS."



gallery

the disposable media reader's gallery...

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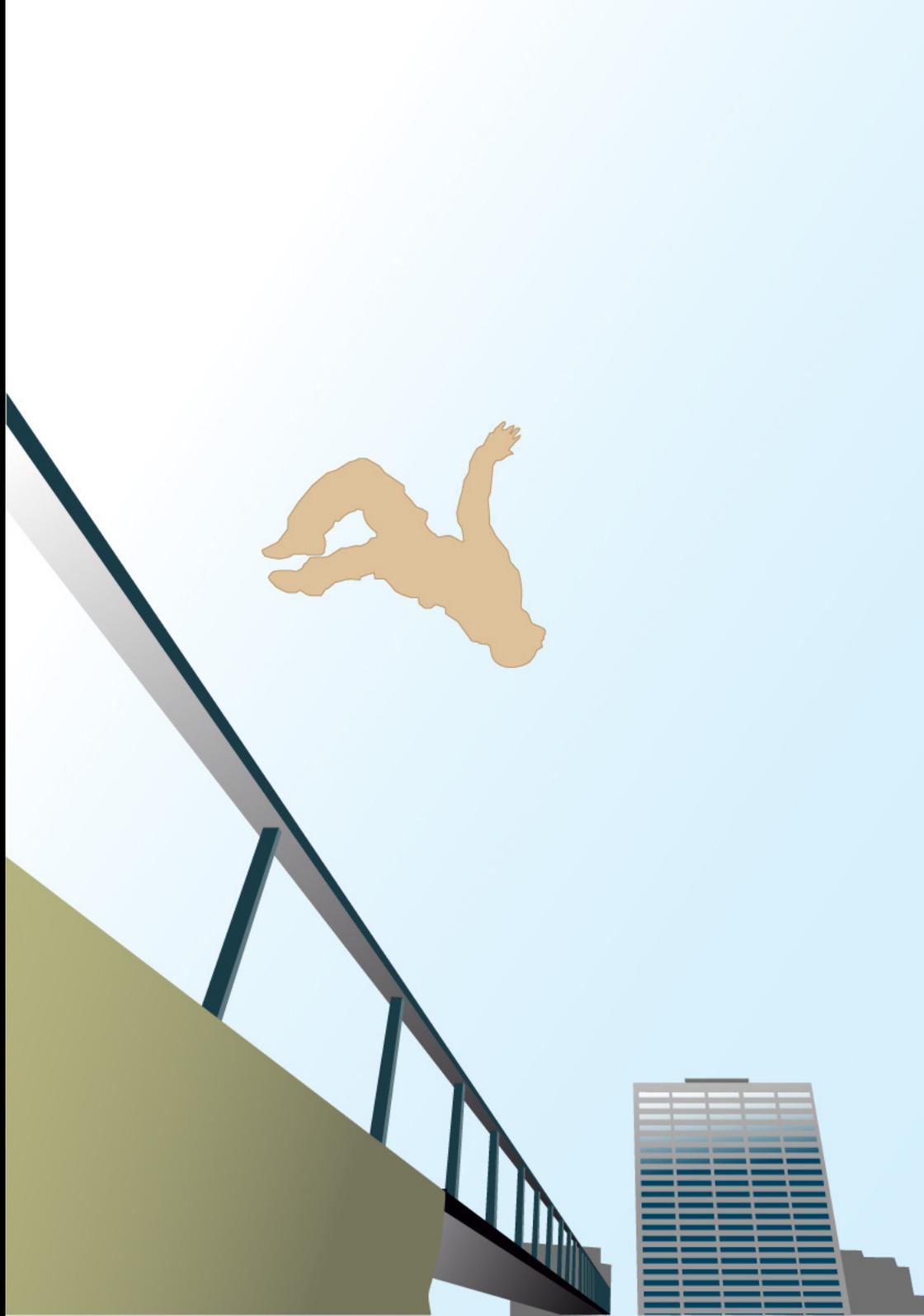
marc sach



WHAT: 'DJ HEROS'
WHO: MARC SACH
WHERE: CASUALLYHARDCORE.CO.UK

DM5/GALLERY

andrew campbell



WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

'FLIPPIN' HELL'
ANDREW CAMPBELL
MONKEYSINC.CO.UK

NEXT ISSUE: WII LAUNCH SPECIAL

WII LOOK AT THE WII. EVERYTHING FROM THE CONTROLLER, VIRTUAL CONSOLE, THE GAMES AND THE FUTURE.

LIKE THAT 360 SPECIAL WE DID LAST YEAR, REALLY. BUT WITH MORE WII-RELATED PUNS, PROBABLY.



ENJOYED
THIS ISSUE?
THEN WHY
NOT DONATE?
WE'D LOVE IT
IF YOU DID.

THANKS!

