

SOL RISING

December 2004

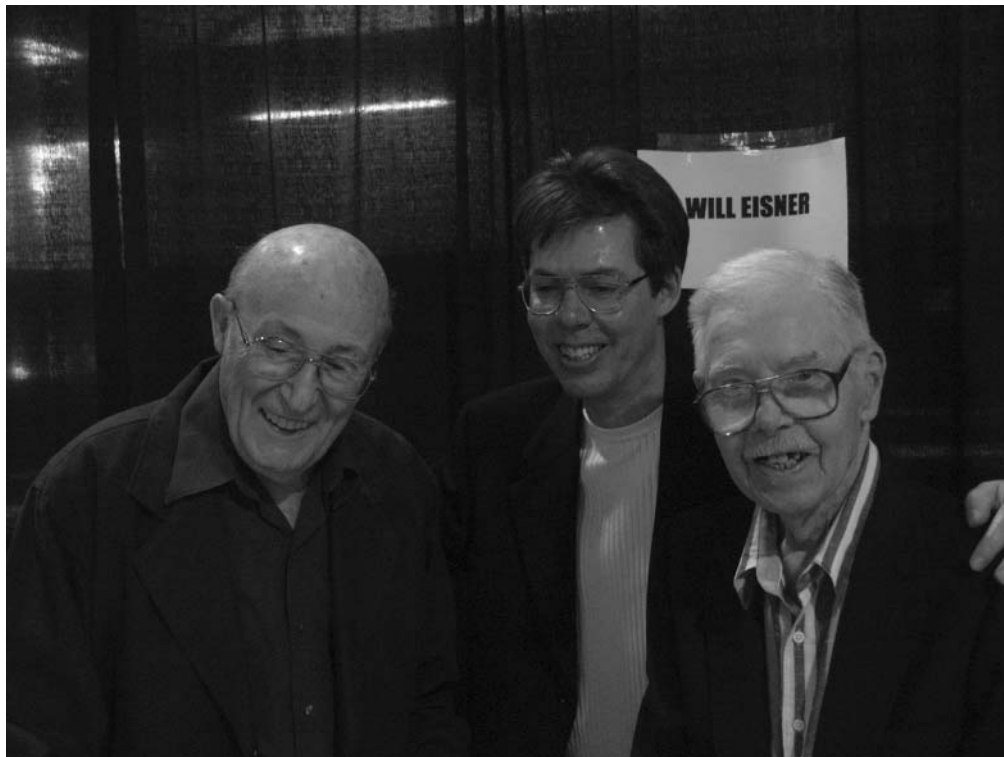
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The Newsletter of The Friends of the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy

New At The Merrill: Comic Books?

A Look at the Biggest Phenomenon to Hit Libraries
Since, Well, Books



Left to right: Legends of the comic business Will Eisner, Dave Sim and Ed Furness at the Paradise comics convention this past June. Photo by Andrew Specht.

In recent years comic books from North America and all around the world have become increasingly popular. Now, some comics are being afforded the same literary merit as the great classics of literature, and are finding their way into libraries and special collections across Canada. The Merrill is just one of many sites where comic books are being made available to the general public. In this issue, *Sol Rising* takes a closer look at the Comics Phenomenon. Andrew Specht profiles Will Eisner, one of the greatest legends in comic books, Collection Head Lorna Toolis looks at the Merrill's new graphic novels club, and Sabrina Fried chimes in with a primer on graphic novels now available for reading at the Merrill...and elsewhere.

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SOL RISING
Friends of the Merrill Collection
Number 31, December 2004

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Reach Us

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www.friendsofmerril.org/

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Contact Sabrina (sabrinafried@rogers.com)
if you wish to submit articles, essays or art
pieces. Please put the term 'Sol Rising' in your
subject field to bypass the Spam filters. Be a part
of SOL Rising, speak out!

SOL RISING

Friends of the Merrill Collection

Number 31, December 2004

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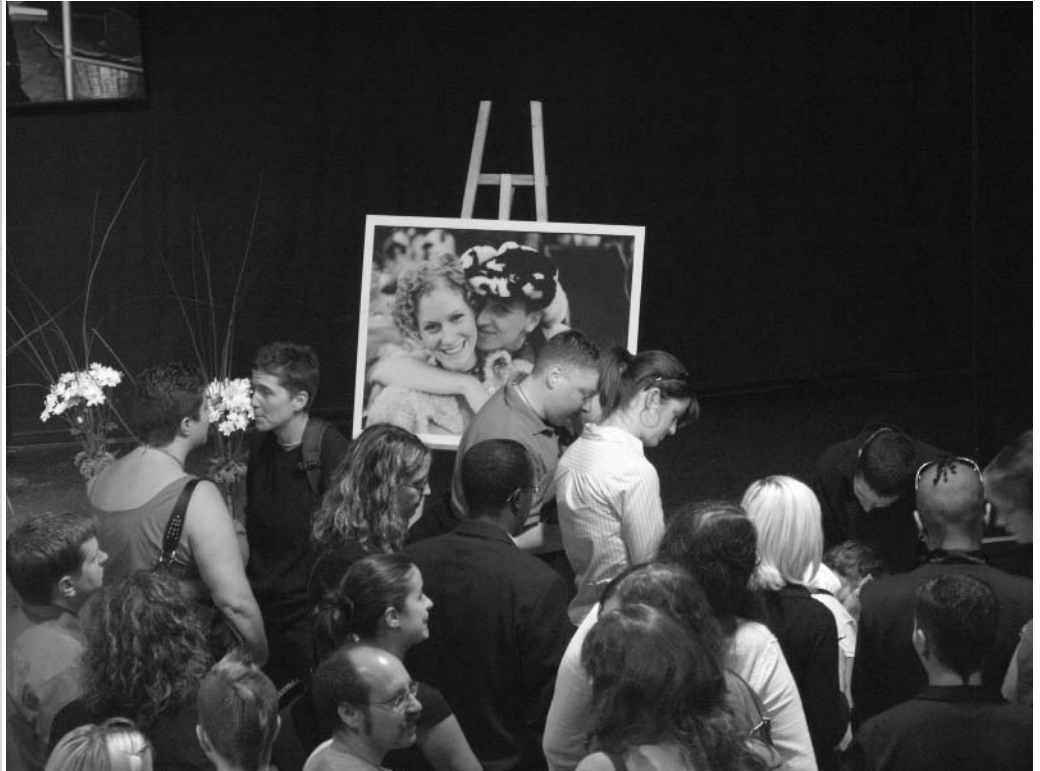
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In Memorium: Liam Hustins

By Jamie Fraser



Mourners pay their final respects at the wake for former Friends executive and Sol Rising editor Liam Hustins. Photo by Andrew Specht.

On July 30th The Friends of The Merrill Collection lost a good friend and former member of the Executive, Liam Hustins. His sudden passing was due to natural causes and came as a great shock to myself and all his friends in the sf, horror and media communities.

I'd known Liam for many years, first as an employee and then as a good friend. His enthusiasm for the horror genre led him to start up a workshop for beginning horror writers. He was delighted to get involved with The Merrill Collection and the Friends. He became a regular contributor to our newsletter, *Sol Rising*, eventually taking over as copy editor. A kind soul, he was always volunteering his time and services for readings and other events.

A celebration of Liam's life was held on August 21, which would have been his 31st birthday. Nearly 150 people showed up to honour and remember him. Many gave little talks about their memories of Liam and one of his best friends sang

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From the Collection Head

By Lorna Toolis

Popular Culture Mutates Yet Again

The Merrill Collection has been collecting graphic novels since a time when most librarians thought they were meant only for illiterates. Times change; when Kim Hull, one of the Merrill librarians, was asked to organize a graphic novel club for the Lillian Smith branch, she invited local graphic novelist Bryan Lee O'Malley¹ as a guest speaker. His comments were instructive and relevant to the sf field, as well as the comic industry.

Mr. O'Malley was concerned about a shrinking audience for comics, something he attributed to a lack of opportunity for contact. He pointed out that the path by which young people were introduced to comics has disappeared. Increased competition for shelf space means that now young kids seldom find comics in drugstores or supermarkets. At best they might find some reprints of Archie and Veronica comics, of marginal interest to anyone old enough to fight off puréed carrots.

As David Hartwell once said in another context, "The golden age of science fiction is 12." If you are going to be hooked on books - any kind of books, it is going to have to happen before you are in your mid to late teens, of an age to go wandering through specialty shops, which are obscure, hard to find for younger people, and expensive when they do find them.

Mr. O'Malley was also concerned that much of his lost potential audience was a "post-textual generation," more committed to games than they ever would be to the combination of image and text that makes comics great.

Applying these concerns to science fiction and fantasy, I don't see any path problems. *Star Trek* begat *Star Wars* and then all other fictional generations since then: we live in a science fiction-saturated media universe. The path to science fiction (as opposed to the path to text) is likely to start with television. From there a young person will likely jump to games, x-box or otherwise, possibly comics, also possibly becoming fond of standard text at the same time. Fantastic content, you observe, survives any changes in form

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but words are admirably precise, less prone to interpretation. I see why many people in my profession view the drift from pure text with alarm, but it seems to me that the process is enrichment, rather than substitution. (Certainly some young people only play games and will never become fond of text. Like the poor, they have always been with us; chill).

SOL RISING
Friends of the Merrill Collection
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Special Thanks

The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy wishes to thank all our generous donors from the past year for their generous gifts.

Money donated in this manner will be used to purchase materials that the collection would otherwise be unable to afford. These additional funds increase the collection's ability to obtain desirable materials. As the cost of books continues to rise, all assistance is gratefully received.

Donations to the Merrill Collection of twenty-five dollars or more over the basic Friends membership fee are eligible for income tax deductions. The Toronto Public Library Foundation receives the money, places it in a special account for the Merrill Collection, and upon request, issues a tax deductible certificate at year's end. Donations may be made by cheque or charge card. Anyone interested in doing this should talk to the collection head.

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1. O'Malley, Bryan Lee. *Lost at Sea: Oni*, 2004.

SOL RISING

Friends of the Merrill Collection
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Upcoming Events

December 5 2004

Christmas Cream Tea

The Merrill Collection

Once again the Merrill hosts its annual Christmas Cream Tea. Come hobnob with fellow Friends at the collection. Tea and goodies will be served

December 18, 2004

The Graphic Novel Club

The Merrill Collection

This month the topic of discussion for the club is graphic novels that have made the transition from the page to the screen. Successfully or otherwise, you decide.

Beginning January 5 2005

Graphic Novels Show

Toronto Reference Library

Comics of all types and stripes will be on display at the Reference Library.

April 8-10 2005

Ad Astra

Days Hotel and Conference Centre

One of the foremost literary sf cons in the GTA, Ad Astra is back for its 24th year. Guests of Honour this year include Nalo Hopkinson, Spider and Jeanne Robinson and Don Hutchison.

May 5 2005

Friends of the Merrill AGM

The Merrill Collection

May 27-29 2005

Anime North

Toronto Congress Center

For the Anime fan, the largest fan-run anime con in the GTA is back and bigger than ever before. Details are not available yet, but plans are in the works for both Japanese and North American Anime celebrities to appear.

Sunburst Award Ceremony Held at the Merrill Collection

By John Rose

The Merrill Collection hosted the fourth annual Sunburst Award ceremony on September 23rd, honouring the five novelists short-listed for the 2004 Sunburst Award and presenting the award to the winner, Cory Doctorow.

The Sunburst Award is one of Canada's best-kept literary secrets. Now entering its fifth year, it's a juried, prized award, presented to the Canadian author who produces the best work of speculative literature in the award year. The jury is made up of five judges chosen from the literary community; the judges for the 2004 Sunburst Award were Caterina Edwards, Claude Lalumière, Yves Meynard, Lyle Weis and Michelle West. The jury read from a selection of nominated titles of adult speculative fiction, and drafted a short list of five titles in June. The winner, Cory Doctorow, was announced at Worldcon and the award was presented at the Award ceremony in September. The prize itself consists of a hand-made medallion modelled on Marcel Gagné's Sunburst design and a cheque for \$1,000. Previous winners of the Sunburst Award are Nalo Hopkinson for her collection *Skin Folk*, Margaret Sweatman for her novel *When Alice Lay Down With Peter*, and Sean Stewart for his novel *Galveston*.

This year's Sunburst Award finalists were: Luanne Armstrong for *The Bone House*; Margaret Atwood for her dystopian vision *Oryx and Crake*; Virginia Frances Schwartz for her coming of age novel *Initiation*; and Robert Charles Wilson for his novel *Blind Lake*. Cory Doctorow won the award for his short story collection *A Place So Foreign and 8 More*.

The ceremony consisted of readings from each of the shortlisted works; author Robert Charles Wilson read from his novel *Blind Lake*. While the four other authors couldn't attend the ceremony, each author was represented by a Toronto writer. Sandra Kasturi read from Luanne Armstrong's *The Bone House*, David Nickle read from Virginia Schwartz's *Initiation* and Nalo Hopkinson read a section from Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Karl Schroeder accepted the award in Cory Doctorow's place, from jury member Michelle West, and read a short acceptance speech.

The evening was a success for Merrill staff and members, and the event was covered in both the local media and Locus Magazine. A group of about 60 people were on hand for the readings and for the treats afterward, and the readings and presentation made for a dynamic event.

The Word on the Street is all About the Merrill

By Jamie Fraser

September 26 marked the 20th annual Word on The Street. This year the venue for the annual event was switched from Queen Street. to Queen's Park. Well over 100,000 people came out to enjoy the lovely weather and the new site for this popular literary event. The Friends of The Merrill Collection were very well represented and it was our most successful presence to date. The new site and in particular our location deserves special mention.

The clever layout for the new site was simple but highly effective, having the tents and stages circling the large park. This ensured plenty of access to all the tables while leaving the centre of the park open so people could rest, eat or otherwise enjoy their findings. Everyone I've spoken with agrees that this was a superior and more enjoyable location, and that Queen's Park should become it's new home.

The TPL Foundation kindly donated some tables to be used by the Friends groups of the three special collections. We were extremely pleased with the camaraderie and co-operation of our fellow Friends groups. Having the tables together worked to everyone's advantage, and I hope we're able to keep the same arrangement (and location) next year.

Many thanks to the TPL and great appreciation for their gift of such a great location to promote The Merrill Collection. The TPL tent was the first one encountered by those coming from College Street, and so everyone entering on the park side would see our Friends table first. It was such a great spot that we had a steady flow of people at our table throughout the day. It didn't hurt that I was often standing by the entrance so that they were forced to walk by the Friends table. (Actually it did hurt, but not until the next day when I woke with sore feet and sunburn to the back of my neck and legs.)

We sold most of the shirts and other merchandise we brought with us. Several hundred flyers were handed out, mostly to those who displayed a serious interest in the Merrill Collection. The little green man posters we were giving out were very popular, with a large number going to teachers. This was an encouraging sign as it's always good to get them while they're young.

The "we" that I keep referring to are the many volunteers who were willing to give up part of their Sunday to help staff the Friends table. We always had at least one, usually two, volunteers behind the table. And unless you've worked it yourself you can't really appreciate what it's like having to deal with so many people, many with questions having nothing to do with the Friends. By 11:30 I left to find out where the toilets, Harlequin booth, and the lost and found area were located, just so I had a real answer for them.

So for myself, the members of the Friends Executive and the TPL Foundation, I would like to thank these volunteers for all their help. They did a great job and I look forward to working beside them next year. Special thanks to those who helped early in the morning with set-up and to Jim Pattison for helping me take everything down and pack up at the end of what was a very long but successful day.

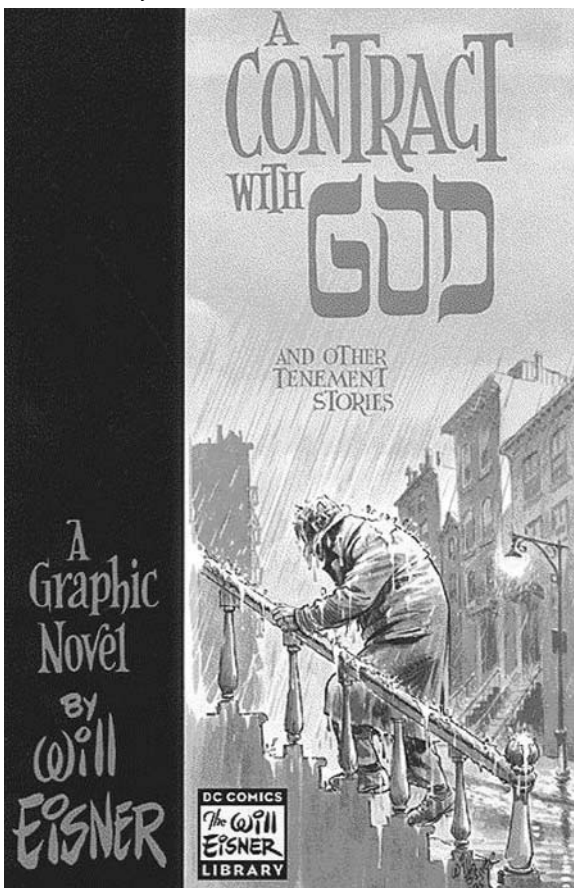
Will Eisner: Graphic Novelist

By Andrew Specht

There are few people in the world of comics that are lucky enough to be able to claim a true place in its history. There are fewer still that are lucky enough to claim such a place more than once. Will Eisner is such an individual. At a time when comics were just getting started, he and his partner, Jerry Iger, headed a studio from which the likes of Jack Cole (Plastic Man), Jack Kirby (Captain America) and Lou Fine (Quality Comics Group) all got their start, along with many others. If that were not enough to permanently cement Eisner's legacy in the history of comics, he then went on to create, in 1940, one of its most unique characters, *The Spirit*.

To describe the *Spirit*: he was a large, gumshoe lug with a blue mask whose chief power was the ability to survive the frequent beatings doled out in the seven-page O. Henry-esque forays to which Eisner would subject him on a weekly basis. Eisner would work on *The Spirit* from 1940 to 1943, pause for a stint in the army, and return

from 1946 to 1952, taking under his wing in the latter period such mercurial talents as Wally Wood and Jules Ffeiffer. After a brief foray into science fiction, Eisner finally tired of the character and retired to his commercial art company, where he would stay until the late seventies.



A Contract with God is widely recognized today as being one of the first true graphic novels.

In 1966, Harvey Comics (of *Casper the Friendly Ghost* and *Wendy the Good Little Witch* fame) did a special reprint edition of Eisner's *Spirit* comics, and later, in the early seventies, Kitchen Sink did two "underground" editions of *Spirit* stories. Not interested in returning to his previous creation, yet seeing the new, mature potential in graphic storytelling, Eisner approached a number of New York publishers with a quartet of illustrated stories under the title *A Contract with God*. In an attempt to elevate the publishers' estimation of the material, Eisner coined the term "graphic novel."

"They'd still look at it and say, hey, this is a comic book." In spite of this, the first edition managed to get published in 1978, and reprinted by Kitchen Sink, Eisner's longtime publisher, in 1985. (Upon the folding of Kitchen Sink, Eisner's many publications would go over to DC Comics.)

Perhaps my favourite Eisner work of all time is his masterful *Dropsie Avenue: The Neighborhood*, the graphic 300-year history of a small Bronx neighbourhood as it moves in and out of one ethnic group to another. Eisner manages to engage us in whole families and their lives, in a matter of little more than three pages at a time, if that. Watching characters move in, marry and often die, you never know if a humble rag man might not turn out to be a king-maker. Cecil B. DeMille, Martin Scorsese or Frank Capra would be hard-pressed to engage an audience as this book does. It is currently available from the Will Eisner Library (DC Comics).

Finally, Eisner's most recent published work, *Fagin the Jew* (Doubleday), is a wonderfully innovative turn-of-narrative on Dickens' classic *Oliver Twist*, from the point of view of its much-maligned Jewish villain. Eisner takes you deep within the motivations of Fagin, from his early life and disappointments, through his treatment by a society

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his favorite song, "Danny Boy ". It was a long, loud and raucous affair and one that Liam would have really enjoyed.

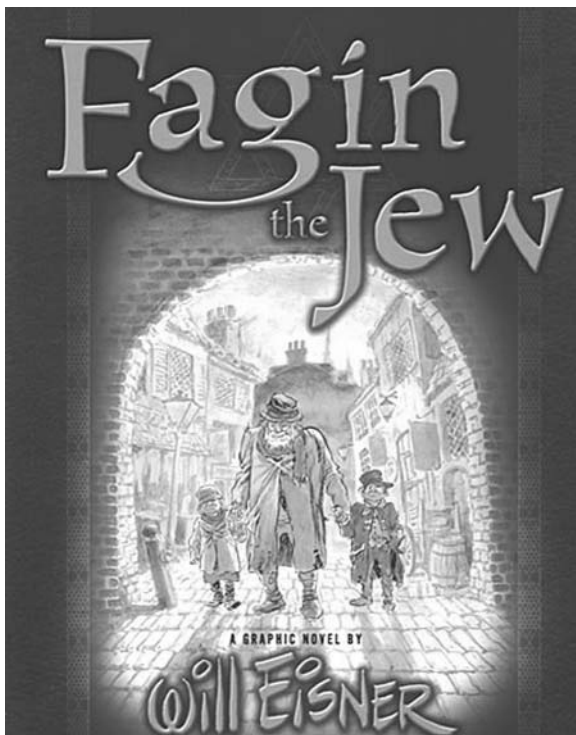
Liam was a native Newfoundlander and the funeral services were held there. He was cremated, and his ashes were then emptied in to the Atlantic ocean.

It's been a very sad and trying time for everyone, especially his parents, sister and other family members. Our hearts and best wishes go out to them all.

Liam had great appreciation for The Merrill Collection and it was his wish that his personal collection of books be donated to The Merrill Collection. And so, just last week, I helped his girlfriend, Aimee, pack up the books which we then delivered to the Collection.

This is but one example of Liam's kindness & generosity, and why he will be missed so much by all of those whose life he touched.

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that could let him be little else than what he ultimately becomes. We are shown that, in the end, Fagin redeems himself and is granted a delicious stab at Dickens when the author deigns to visit him in prison shortly before his execution to say, "Goodbye old Fagin, in my later books I'll treat your race more evenly." Eisner's Fagin retorts, "A Jew is not Fagin, any more than a Gentile is Sykes."

Well into his eighties, Eisner shows no sign of slowing down and is currently working on *The Plot*, a documentary in graphic novel format exposing the history of the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," an anti-Semitic forgery created in Czarist Russia, still touted about today by those who for reasons of their own wish to believe in a shadowy Jewish conspiracy to rule the world. From drawing superheroes, Eisner has himself come round to fighting the real-life evil of prejudice.

Left: *Fagin the Jew* is Will Eisner's most recent published graphic novel, but by no means his last

The Works of Will Eisner

The Building	Life on Another Planet (Signal From Space)	Spirit Archives Vol. 1	All About P'Gell: The Spirit Casebook, Vol. 2
City People Notebook	Minor Miracles: Long Ago and Once upon a Time Back When	Spirit Archives Vol. 2	Spirit Color Album #1
A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories	Uncles Were Heroic, Cousins Were Clever, and Miracles Happened on Every Block	Spirit Archives Vol. 3	Spirit Color Album #2
The Dreamer	Moby Dick	Spirit Archives Vol. 4	Spirit Color Album, Vol. 3
Dropsie Avenue	Name of the Game	Spirit Archives Vol. 5	The Spirit Jam
Fagin the Jew	New York, The Big City	Spirit Archives Vol. 6	
Family Matter	The Princess and the Frog	Spirit Archives Vol. 7	
Hawks of the Sea	Sundiata	Spirit Archives Vol. 8	Instructional Non-fiction
Invisible People	To the Heart of the Storm	Spirit Archives Vol. 9	The Art of Will Eisner
Last Day in Vietnam	Will Eisner Reader	Spirit Archives Vol. 10	Comics & Sequential Art
The Last Knight: An Introduction to Don Quixote		The Christmas Spirit	Graphic Storytelling
A Life Force		The Outer Space Spirit	Shop Talk
		The Spirit Casebook	Will Eisner Sketchbook

Graphic Novels at the Merrill

By Sabrina Fried

I'm a bit of a comic nut. When I started reading comics about 15 years ago (yes, that's reading, not just collecting), comics were those little, slightly dirty things that kids read until they grew out of them and moved on to more sensible things, like whatever their parents actually approved of. Few willingly admitted to reading the books in their adult years. Most of the comic shops in town took their design hints from adult video stores and built their entrances so that their clients could enter and exit discreetly. The small, 30 page pamphlets were printed on paper not much better than newsprint, into which the ink bled in all sorts of interesting and unpredictable ways.

And this was after the medium of comic books had already had about 50 or 60 years to refine itself.

These days, comic books are better designed and laid out than some novels I have seen. Instead of having to sneak into the comic shop through the back entrance, it's considered trendy to strut around town with a bag from the Silver Snail or The Beguiling in tow. Movies based on comic books routinely top the box office, books based on stories that originated in comic books are becoming more commonplace. And even the libraries have embraced comic books as a form of valid literature.

The collection of graphic novels at the Merrill is still small, but it is growing steadily. It consists of stories told in comic book format - graphic novels in the proper sense of the term - and trade paperbacks, books reprinting a collection of issues from a comic book series. Among the books in the collection are some of the more literary comic series, books of significance to the history of comicdom and a fair sampling of everything else. If you're just getting into comics, here are some of the titles available now at the Merrill that I recommend. For those of you with young ones, please keep in mind that not all comics are designed for younger, or more sensitive audiences. If you are unsure about a title, ask the staff at the Merrill.

Akira: Way back when, before anime and manga were household terms in North America, *Akira* was already a popular import from Japan. Set in a post-World War III Tokyo, *Akira* is the story of Tetsuo and Kaneda, two streetwise youths who find themselves wrapped up in government conspiracies, gang battles and the search for a mysterious force known only as *Akira*. A classic of manga and the inspirational force behind a good number of modern North American comics, the six volume edition available at the Merrill is a black and white English trans-

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Volunteers Needed!

If you would like to help with the following events, contact Lorna Toolis at ltoolis@tpl.toronto.on.ca

*Writers for *Sol Rising* and *Solar Flare* (Ongoing)

*Set up and clean up for the AGM (May 2005)

*Staffing the TPL Special Collections booth at The Word on the Street (September 2005)

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So Bad They're Good

An occasional look at sf movies that bombed at the box office despite big budgets and pretensions to grandeur - but took on new lives as "cult" films

Featuring Guest Reviewer Jamie Fraser

Species: Canadian Boobs do not a Good sf Movie Make



Pamela Anderson, eat your heart out! Or she'll do it for you.

I've agreed to fill the shoes of my colleague Ted Brown while he continues to pursue his movie career. While I had no problems coming up with titles, it took a while to choose the one that I believe to be a perfect example of this unique genre. The winner, or loser depending on your point of view, is the 1995 science fiction/horror film *Species*.

This is one of those films that had everything going for it and yet somehow ended up a complete and utter mess. It had a good director with a proven record of success, a solid cast of talented actors, and just enough action, horror and gratuitous nudity to give it great cross appeal. In short, the ultimate date movie. What went wrong?

Well actually quite a lot, from its hopelessly derivative and predictable premise to its cardboard characters and their laughable dialogue. Most importantly, there is frequent (but superb) nudity for no good reason, always a sign of a quality production. The plotline is simple, not too surprising as it came from the writer of such sf classics as *The Golden Child* and *Virus*.

A human egg is mixed with extraterrestrial DNA; this leads to the creation of Sil, a cute 10-year-old alien girl. She then escapes before evil scientist Xavier Fitch, played by Oscar winner Ben Kingsley, can arrange her death. He brings in an elite taskforce which is given the task of tracking Sil down and destroying her before she manages to find a mate and start breeding. This group includes Michael Madsen as government hitman Press Lennox, Alfred Molina and Marg Helgenberger as Scientists and Forest Whitaker as an empath.

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Upcoming Movies

December 2004

Blade: Trinity

The third movie based on the *Blade* comic book. Blade joins forces with two human vampire hunters to protect humanity from the Vampire Nation. Or something like that.



January 2005

Elektra

Remember the *Daredevil* movie? If not, don't worry, I'm sure we'll get to it in *So Bad It's Good* soon. Either way, famed comic book heroine and DD sidekick Elektra is back with a movie of her own. The big news is her costume is being touted as "more like the comic book." Should I be worried?



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The sudden, enormous popularity of blogging would argue against the diminishment of text. Everyone has a list of blogs they visit regularly - one of the factors Merrill now includes in programming an author reading is the popularity of the author's blog. (We learned this the hard way, when Orson Scott Card posted a forthcoming appearance at the Merrill Collection on www.hatrack.com and 175 people showed up).

Now our patrons, in addition to seeing the show, read the book and visit the author's blog. Soon the technology to create your own game/movie will be as accessible as the ability to write your own fiction or draw your own comic. The forms of popular culture continue to mutate at remarkable speed. Science fiction and fantasy continue to be wildly popular, perhaps because the context is sufficiently flexible to survive the changes in form.

The comic audience may be smaller than it used to be, partly because of marketing forces, but partly because we live in a culture which offers us so many choices that we wind up with smaller audiences devoted to different forms, rather than larger audiences spending all their spare time reading. This doesn't impact the sf field as a whole, because sf is content, rather than form.

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Meanwhile, the young alien girl finds privacy in the stateroom of a train so she can cocoon herself. She soon bursts out (naked of course) in her new form, a 20 year old beautiful and statuesque blonde, played by Canadian actor and model Natasha Henstridge. Sil then kills the female conductor, so we get to watch this incredibly hot alien babe dress up in the uniform.

Now she has to find a suitable mate so she heads for a ritzy nightclub, and the horny alien goddess is quickly allowed inside. After meeting a guy they go back to his place, but Sil senses he's diabetic and tries to leave. The guy resists, so she uses her alien tongue to blow the back of his skull off.

By this point the group is panting on Sil's tail thanks to the empath, who, after they find Sil's car, predicts, "She walked." Tired and in need of rest they go to their hotel, where the hitman proceeds to shag the female scientist as the empath gathers his thoughts. And the lonely male scientist sits in the bar where he's soon picked up by a gorgeous blonde, who by coincidence, turns out to be (gasp!) Sil the alien hottie.

The future Doc Ock is thrilled with his companion, until the post-coital moment when she turns into a multi-tentacled monster and rips him to shreds. A few minutes earlier, the empath detected Sil and told the others, who were in the adjoining room. (Yes that's right, the Alien mates with one of her pursuers, in a room right beside more of them.) Rushing out, they miss her by seconds; if only they hadn't stopped to put on their clothes.

Now in her natural form, Sil is chased by the group into the sewers, where she kills Xavier Fitch before being cornered in a cave full of oil and burned to oblivion.

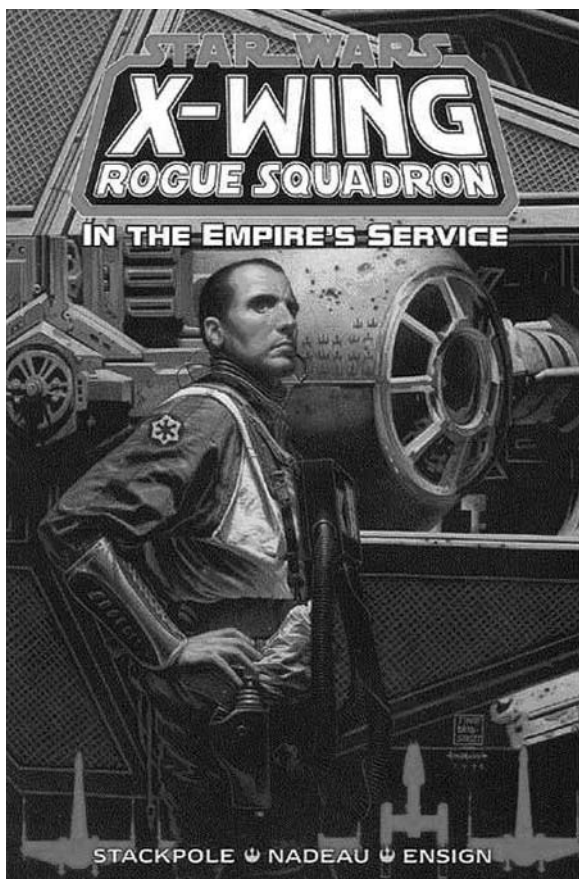
It must have sounded *great* on paper, but it ended up being nudity-driven fluff mixed with horror. It fares poorly when compared with *Lifeforce*, the original naked space chick movie, and well worth seeing. The horror and shape-changing was handled much better in John Carpenter's *The Thing* or the first *Alien* film. Even though they did use H.R. Giger to design the alien creature.

As for the acting, Madsen and Helgenberger are good but Henstridge blows them all away in her debut role as Sil. It just goes to show that good acting and spectacular Canadian breasts still do not always guarantee a great film.

lation presenting the series the way it was intended to be read.

Chronicles of Conan: A new trade paperback series reprinting the classic *Conan the Barbarian* series from Marvel Comics, and (at times loosely) based on the writings of Robert E. Howard. The collection follows young Conan the Cimmerian on his travels through strange lands as he embarks on all sorts of quests in search of gold, women and wine. Featuring the artwork of Barry Windsor Smith, the issues collected in this series are credited with defining Conan for an entire generation of fans. For these new editions, the artwork was digitally recoloured to adapt the colouring technique to modern printing methods. Corrections to the text were also made. The set at the Merril is not yet complete, but consider the volumes available merely a chance for you to whet your appetite.

Lone Wolf and Cub: The James Bond of manga, *Lone Wolf and Cub* was recently reprinted in North America in its entirety for the first time. The 28 volume set comprises nearly 7000 pages of hand drawn and painted art and tells the story of Ogami Itto, former executioner for the Shogun, who becomes an assassin to clear his name and avenge the death of his family. Only a few of the series' volumes are currently available at the Merril, but considering the series' popularity, it is definitely worth the read!



The cover to *Star Wars X-Wing: In the Empire's Service*. This arc featured the story of Baron Soontir Fel, an Imperial pilot who defects to the rebellion under suspicious circumstances. Is he a spy? And now that he is here, can Wedge trust him with an X-wing and military secrets? Cover by Tim Brastreet.

Star Wars X-Wing: Sure, it's a comic based on a movie, but the *X-Wing* series was the first of its kind in tie-in comics in that it featured characters who either barely appeared in the *Star Wars* movies, or not at all. The *X-Wing* series received both fan and critical acclaim during its run, featuring stories that were complex, yet retained that sense of *Star Wars* "fun" that had made the franchise what it is today. Taking place just a few years after the events of *Return of the Jedi*, we catch up with Rogue Squadron, the same Rogue Squadron once led by Luke Skywalker, which has now been handed over to Wedge Antilles, the only known pilot to survive all three original movies. The first arc of the series was never collected into a trade paperback, but the rest of the series is all here in convenient single-story-arc tidbits.

Upcoming Movies (cont'd)

April 2005

Sin City

Frank Miller's shocking and controversial comic finally comes to the big screen. Depending on how much is changed in the translation, this should be one interesting show.



May 2005

Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader. Do I really need to say more?



We invite you to become a member of The Friends of the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy

What is the Merrill Collection?

The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy is the largest single collection of science fiction and fantasy maintained by a public library in North America.

The collection serves a widely varied public, maintaining a reference collection of over 50,000 volumes. Scholars have access to older and more obscure materials as well as comprehensive collections of the most recent authors. Students have access to a comprehensive collection of critical material relating to the genre. Readers have access to current and obscure materials available only through this special collection.

The Merrill Collection was established in 1970 as The Spaced Out Library by the Toronto Public Library Board with a donation from sf writer Judith Merril. The collection currently holds over 50,000 works, including monographs, short story collections, periodicals, fanzines, and complete sets from such speciality publishers as Arkham House, Cheap Street and Gnome Press.

The collection was renamed The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy on January 1, 1991.

Who are the Friends?

The Friends of the Merrill Collection is an organization through which members of the science fiction community can support the collection.

The Friends is a citizen advisory group to the Toronto Public Library Board with its own constitution and bylaws. The stated objectives of the organization according to its constitution are:

1. To encourage interest in The Merrill Collection and the interests of the library.

2. To increase awareness of works of the fantastic imagination and of Canadian contributions to this field.

3. To advise the Toronto Public Library Board on policy matters concerning the Collection in consultation with the library's staff.

4. To act as a resource for The Merrill Collection and other public and private collections in Canada and elsewhere in consultation with the staff of the Toronto Public Library Board.

What do the Friends Do?

The Friends of the Merrill Collection is not a fan organization.

It is a group of people with the common interest of promoting the Collection and to make the best public collection of speculative fiction in the world. This is done by publishing the newsletter *Sol Rising*, and by sponsoring appearances at the library by prominent people in science fiction, fantasy and related fields. Three appearances or other programming are scheduled quarterly with the fourth quarter being devoted to the annual membership meeting and informal get-together. Additional events are also scheduled from time to time.

What does your membership offer?

1. Members are entitled to vote at all meetings of The Friends of the Merrill Collection, including the annual general meeting in May. This ensures that the membership has a voice in the policies of the Library.

2. Members will receive all issues of *Sol Rising* which are published during their membership year.

3. Membership entitles you to free admission to all public appearances and programming sponsored by The Friends (our guests have included Gene Wolfe,

Lois McMaster Bujold, Tanya Huff, Robert J. Sawyer, Karen Wehrstein, Glen Cook and more). Members will receive advance notification of such events and an opportunity to attend a reception for our guest following the regular appearance.

4. Members receive a 10% discount on all purchases made at:

Bakka-Phoenix Books (formerly Bakka, The Science Fiction Bookstore)

598 Yonge St, Toronto

The Beguiling

601 Markham Street, Toronto

Jamie Fraser Books

427a Queen St. West, 2nd Floor, Toronto

Sci-Fi World

1600 Steeles Ave. West, Concord, Ontario

A current membership card is required at time of purchase.

5. Members receive preferred pricing and opportunities to purchase selected items offered for sale by The Friends of the Merrill Collection.

Want to be a Friend? Fill out the form below for both new memberships and renewals of existing memberships.

Visit our website...
<http://www.friendsofmerril.org/>

The Friends of the Merrill Collection would like to thank all the generous supporters and volunteers, without whom this would not be possible.

I wish to become a member of The Friends of the Merrill Collection. I have enclosed a cheque or money order (payable to "The Friends of the Merrill Collection") for my 2004/05 membership fee as indicated (memberships run from May 2004 to May 2005):

Individual \$30.⁰⁰ per year

Student (under 18) \$15.⁰⁰ per year

Institution \$37.⁵⁰ per year

This is a:

Membership renewal

New membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please mail to: **The Friends of the Merrill Collection, c/o Lillian H. Smith Branch, Toronto Public Library, 239 College St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5**

In addition to my membership fee, I would like to make a contribution to the Friends. I understand that tax receipts are unavailable at this time, and that my contribution will go towards funding the Friends' activities.
\$ _____