

SOL RISING

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

FREE

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Mythspring Launch



Julie Czerneda and collection head Lorna Toolis ham it up for the camera at the launch of Julie's latest anthology, *Mythspring*. For more coverage on the book launch please see page 5. Photo by Andrew Specht.

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Friends of the Merrill Collection
Number 34, May 2006

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Reach Us

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Call for Submissions!
Contact Sabrina (sabrinafried@rogers.com)
if you wish to submit articles, essays or art
pieces. Be a part of SOL Rising, speak out!



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From the Collection Head

By: Lorna Toolis

The Toronto Public Library is kind enough to send me to various conferences in pursuit of professional development. In the last issue of *SOL Rising* I wrote about the World Fantasy Convention. This year I went to the 27th International Conference for the Fantastic, which takes place every year during March break, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This year the Conference was attended by 320 people interested in the ideas represented in the field of speculative literature, mostly academics, some writers, librarians, bookmen.

2006's Conference was titled: *Drawn By the Fantastic: Comics, Graphic Novels, Art and Literature*. Three papers were presented at each of the sessions, over 80 presentations in all. Intellectual greed always poses something of challenge in this structure. Conferences are like television, in that the most interesting sessions will invariably run opposite each other. The sessions offered an exotic melange of ideas: proposed, analyzed and discussed intelligently for the length of a long weekend.

This year's conference theme reflected usage patterns at the Merrill Collection, where research on graphic novels has increased dramatically over the last several years. Graphic novels were discussed in numerous sessions: superheroes (most often *Batman*), *Planetary*, *Transmetropolitan*, the works of Neil Gaiman and Alan Moore.

Of course, graphic materials have been popular for a very long time. Sarah Thompson of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston gave a beautiful presentation: *Samurai Sword and Sorcery: Heroic Fantasy in 19th Century Japanese Prints*. The vivid colour slides of the 19th century Japanese prints brought her material alive.

Charles Vess, the artist guest of honour, was the source for several presentations and his original art was displayed in a separate room next to the book room. His materials were discussed in the context of art and graphic novels both.

Eden Lackner, an independent Canadian scholar, presented a particularly thoughtful paper discussing the assumptions of ethnic and national identity underlying Internet discussions between media fans. Other sessions discussed race and gender in sf, the nature of genre; sf themes in television and movies; subversion in *Mad* magazine; horror, both classic H.P. Lovecraft, vampires, and modern, the connection between myths, folklore and fantasy; more than any one person could take in, even those of us desperate enough to slide in and out of

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THE
MERRIL COLLECTION OF SCIENCE FICTION
SPECULATION AND FANTASY

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Ten Years for a Toonie!

By: Jamie Fraser

Saturday April 29th will mark the tenth anniversary of the Fantastic Pulp Show and Sale. As always, the show will be split within two areas of the Lillian H. Smith branch of the Toronto Public Library branch at College and Huron: the Dealers Room in the lower level, and The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction on the third floor. Ten years ago our show was the first of its kind in Canada, and it's now the second longest running show of its kind in the world.

As this is our tenth anniversary we've gone all out to ensure that the show will be a memorable one. The Dealers Room will be our largest yet. There will be some new dealers and displays this year. We are also welcoming the return of dealers who've been with us since the very beginning. For those who haven't yet attended, the room features a wide selection of pulp magazines, reprints and pulp related items, and both rare and collectable science fiction, fantasy and horror material. There will be pulps, hardcovers, paperbacks, movie ephemera, chapbooks and limited editions, signed items, artwork and much more. Some authors and publishers will also be present to sign copies of their books.

Upstairs we will continue our annual Pulp Show traditions, such as scheduled tours of The Merrill Collection, with the times posted in both areas. Our always popular slide show display of pulp art will be shown in the afternoon. As well, this year's display of pulps from the Collection's holdings has been carefully chosen to show the evolution of Pulps from their beginnings through the final years. The showcase will include the most spectacular covers and unique and rare editions in the Collection. We'll also have a special photographic montage covering the history of the Pulp Show, and much more.

Issues of pulp magazines such as *The Shadow*, *Doc Savage*, *Planet Stories*, *Astounding*, *Horror Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales* and many others will be available for sale throughout the room. These wonderful magazines feature gorgeous, striking and often lurid cover art by such legendary artists as J. Allen St. John, Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok, George Rozen, Frank R. Paul and Margaret Brundage. The most famous of the *Weird Tales* artists, Brundage's spectacular covers usually featured lovely nude women, often in scenes of danger or torture.

The quality of writing in the pulps is often incorrectly described as being poor or second rate. This is in fact a terrible falsehood, usually perpetuated by the same ignorant people who think Pulp Fiction refers to 1940's and 1950's pocket books and/or B movies from the same period. In actuality only less than 15% was poor, most of the rest was very good with the remainder being excellent, high quality writing. Much of the credit for this goes to the editors who, whenever possible, chose those stories of higher literary merit.

But, as always, it came down to the writers themselves and the era of the Pulps

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Special Notes

DONATIONS: HOW THEY WORK

Your thirty-five dollar membership generates an income tax deduction certificate for that amount, as do all cash donations over the membership fee. The Toronto Public Library Foundation mails the certificate to you and you deduct it as a charitable donation the next time you do your income tax. The money that you donate is moved into the Merrill Collection's book budget and enables the Collection to purchase that many more books. Think of it as a means of directing the use of your tax dollars – what better use could the library make of your money than buying books?

MISSING MEMBERS

When members forget to send a change of address to the Friends of the Merrill Collection, we try to locate them. If you know where any of the people listed below are currently living, please contact the Merrill Collection staff.

Patricia Orr

Upcoming Events

at the Merril

September 24, 2006

**The Word on the Street
Festival**

Queen's Park

Once again, the Friends of the Merril and other Friends groups associated with Toronto Public Library will have a table at Toronto's biggest party celebrating the printed word. Stop by our table to purchase books, mugs, posters, T-shirts and other goodies. All proceeds from sales during the festival will support the Merril Collection.

TBA

**Science Fiction Flea
Market**

Location: TBD

Local fans will hold a flea market of all sorts of interesting, er, stuff. From books to comics to memorabilia, there are sure to be many wonderful and bizarre things available for sale.

The Merril Collection Joins the Cashless Economy

By: Lorna Toolis

On March 23, at the book launch for *Mythspring*, the Friends of the Merril Collection passed another milestone. Staff and the Friends Executive gathered to watch the first member of the Friends renew his membership using his credit card.

"You could have used your debit card," the staff member told him helpfully. "We take any kind of plastic money."

"Not pay with dirty pieces of paper anymore?" muttered one. "Tis sure to end in tears."

"Gold coins were always good enough for my family," a traditionalist snarked.

"Whee!" commented a third, as bits danced all over the planet, crediting the Merril Collection with its extremely reasonable membership fee.

"Does this mean that the dark forces of the earth know that we are here?" a patron worried.

"The Bank knows all," another member agreed.

"The Library knows all," a staff person corrected. "And we see that you get an income tax deduction certificate for your membership and any extra you care to donate on top of the basic fee. Think of it as a means of getting the federal government to spend your tax dollars on books!"

"Good for Christmas presents, too," the Chair of the Friends of the Merril Collection added hopefully.

"Ho, ho, ho," said the Collection Head, sharpening her claws on a nearby pillar.

There was a long, thoughtful pause, as the members considered it. Then they all reached for their pockets and started crowding around the machine.

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the back of the rooms, cutting between sessions.

Not that the Conference was totally drowned in academia. Other attractions included an excellent book room, rare materials sold at auction and socializing around the pool. A Saturday book launch by the swimming pool for *Polder: A Festschrift for John Clute and Judith Clute* attracted almost the entire conference membership. Attendees would have to be inhuman not to appreciate the 27 degree difference between poolside and Toronto.

Sf is always about subtext; serious cultural concerns reflected in our entertainment. This year many of the papers discussed the human body and the ways it which it can be morphed, good and bad; we are the alien. The ICFA 28 theme is *Aliens, Vampires, and the Gendered Other: The Fantastic as the Queerest Literature of All*. I'm looking forward to it.

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was a spawning ground for talented authors in all genres. And many of the more famous literary characters and their authors came out of the pulps. Tarzan, Zorro, Fu-Manchu, The Shadow, Philip Marlowe, Conan, and The Saint all emerged from the pages of the pulps. Writers such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert A. Heinlein, Zane Gray, Robert E. Howard, and Philip K. Dick all wrote for the pulps.

Anyone interested in the pulp era or its artists and authors should make a point of attending this remarkable show and sale. Four important facts to remember: it's the only show of its kind in Canada, it's held at The Merrill Collection in downtown Toronto, it's only on once a year, and lastly, this will be the tenth annual show and we're still only charging two dollars for admission to all events.

I'll see you there.

Mythspring Launches at the Merrill

By: Lorna Toolis



On March 23, over 70 people attended the booklaunch for *Mythspring: from the lyrics and legends of Canada*. The launch was sponsored by the Friends of the Merrill Collection and Fitzhenry and Whiteside. *Mythspring* was edited by Julie E. Czerneda and Genevieve Kiernans. Both editors were present for the launch, as were contributing authors Roben Goodfellow, Lorne Kates, Mark Ladouceur, Karin Lowachee and Karina Sumner-Smith.

Julie read from "Mirror, Mirror" by Genevieve Kiernans and commented upon the editing process. The writers were introduced to the audience and contributed to the discussion. The evening turned into a high-energy event, with a lively discussion about the source material for the stories in *Mythspring*, which ranged from lost subway stations to the Wendigo. After the discussion and comments, authors and editors signed copies of the book made available for sale by Bakka-Phoenix Books.

Left: Editors Julie Czerneda and Genevieve Kiernans (in wheelchair) pose with the authors of *Mythspring* who attended the book launch at the Merrill. Photo by Andrew Specht

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.

Awesome In Its badness? *Highlander 2: The Quickening*

By: Jamie Fraser



Immortal humans suddenly become immortal aliens. Well, at least the armour turned out well.

Avengers TV series) and filmed *Highlander 2: The Quickening*. They completely reworked the fantasy mythology of the first film into a science fiction adventure. Now instead of being ignorant of the origin of the immortals, our two heroes, Connor MacLeod of the Clan MacLeod, and his immortal mentor, Ramirez, turn out to be exiles from the planet Zeist. The evil General Katana (Michael Ironside) had banished them 500 years earlier, unaware they'd become immortals on Earth. Several flashbacks are used to explain all this.

The most difficult part of writing these critiques is deciding what film to choose. There are so many bad sf films to choose from. I first narrow it down to the movies that I've seen, then all direct-to-video productions are ruled out, as are most movie remakes and sequels. Note I said most, because every once in a while one of them truly stands out from all the others, a shining light amidst the pathetic and sordid cauldron of bubbling celluloid.

This particular hidden gem was chosen for several legitimate reasons, but in the end because it's both a remake and a sequel to the 1986 film, *Highlander*. The original movie was thoroughly enjoyable, with unique elements of fantasy, humour, adventure and tension. The casting and use of accents was off putting but the storyline and skillful direction kept you from dwelling upon it. The idea of a long-hidden group of immortals who duel to behead each other so the last remaining immortal can claim a mythical prize, is a tough plot to swallow. But the story sucked you in, the cast and direction was spot on and in the end it all worked out. The film was successful and became a cult classic with a large and devoted following.

But three years later the same director and two of the lead actors got together with Brian Clemens (lead writer for *The*

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This film opens in 2024 with a bitter old Connor MacLeod sorry he'd used his super genius to create a Shield that had saved Earth from a dying ozone layer but turned it into a dark, hot world. Katana sends two assassins on flying skateboards after Connor but he kills them, absorbs their lifeforce and becomes young again. Now determined to destroy his Shield, he's thwarted by the corporation he created, and by General Katana who has come to kill his oldest foe. Ramirez magically comes back from the dead to assist him, along with an activist (Virginia Madsen) who believes the ozone to be intact.



Highlander 2: Special Edition DVD: Reimagined for a new generation of Highlander fans with more special effects and new scenes. They also correct continuity errors from the original release so that Greedo fires first.

humour, and performances. Especially that of Michael Ironside, who is to Canada what Lance Henrickson is to the US: a great character actor and one of the screen's best villains.

This story is almost incomprehensible and the special effects are cheesy. It's the great action scenes and bizarre performances that lift this film to fun, kitsch status. Sean Connery brings a tongue-in-cheek attitude to his scenes as Ramirez, Christopher Lambert mumbles and lurches his way through the first half but then regains his cocky Scottish (by way of France) attitude. John C. McGinley is perfect as an arrogant, sniveling executive who gets what he deserves.

But it's really Michael Ironside's crazed yet touching performance as Katana that saves the film. His arrival on Earth shows him plummeting through our atmosphere, and crashing through the ground right into a moving subway train. After brushing himself off, he takes control of the train and turns it to its highest speed until it goes off the tracks and through the tunnel walls. Now, that's an entrance! His manic attitude and actions, along with some great lines, make Katana the most interesting character in the movie. It's Mr. Ironside's greatest screen villain ever, and this coming only a year after his superb work as villain/partygoer Richter in *Total Recall*.

Highlander was a critical and box office success, and with director Russel Mulcahy and stars Connery and Lambert reuniting for the sequel the expectations were high. As, evidently, was the cast and crew. So everyone was shocked by how awful it was. Roger Ebert said that it was "A movie almost awesome in its badness," and that was one of the nicer reviews. But putting aside all its faults allows us to enjoy this movie for its kitsch,

Curiosity educated
the cat.

Add to the discussion in our magazine. Advertise with us.
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Write for *Sol Rising*!

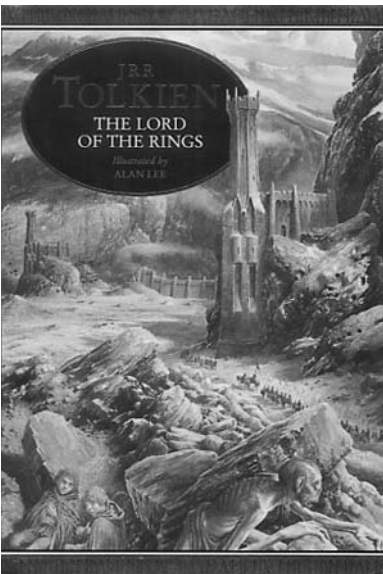
Sol Rising is currently looking for articles on science fiction, fantasy, horror, speculative fiction, genre movies, fandom and any related subject you can think of.

Writing experience is not required. For more information please contact Sabrina Fried by email at sabrinafried@rogers.com.

Green Reading: The Environment in sf and Fantasy

By: Sabrina Fried

I don't think I need to say much to frequent and seasoned readers of sf and fantasy like you that the books we all enjoy so much tell stories far more complex than the sum of their words. Analogies of alien worlds and beings, distant futures or unknown pasts, magic and technology unimaginable in today's world are used to describe things happening here, and now, in ways that a more mundane description might not succeed. The theme of the environment is a common one in these books. In some cases the authors describe our relationship with the planet the way they think it should be, in others they describe the way our world is and what could be if we are not more careful in our actions.



In the Lord of the Rings, JRR Tolkien discussed his fears about the effect industrialization was having on the environment using fantastic elements from mythology. In the process, he just so happened to inspire an entire genre of novels.

The granddaddy of epic fantasy, JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, begins in a quiet, pastoral Middle Earth, an analogy for the British countryside. In the Shire, the pace of life is slow. The Hobbits plant what they need, never more, and enjoy endless year after year of good harvests. As Frodo ventures closer to Mount Doom and the eye of Sauron overshadows the world, the parts of Middle Earth that we read about become dark wastelands, ravaged by Sauron's war machine, or the careless behavior of Men. Over the decades, scholars have suggested that what Tolkien was trying to write about was the encroachment of industry upon the "natural splendor" of the hinterland. Tolkien was lamenting the short-sightedness of his fellow Britons who were destroying the land that sustained them in return for the perceived wealth of money or political power. These were the people who had allowed the One Ring to twist and dominate them.

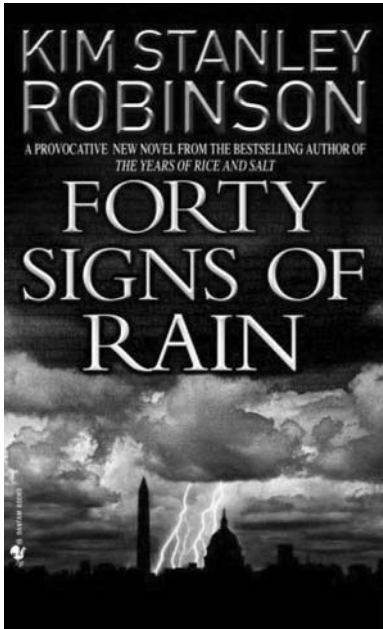
Epic fantasy of the "sword and sorcery" variety, like the *Wheel of Time* series or any other of the countless multi-book franchises, likes to present the world the way we wish it was: verdant, bountiful and, ironically, absolutely nothing like the kind of world that resulted in the creation of these books. As much as we would all love to live in such an unspoiled paradise, let's face it: the mass-produced paperbacks that most of us read these days require pollutive and unsustainable processes of large scale papermaking and printing to exist. Epic fantasy as a genre is a romantic look at medieval Europe, where knights can roam the countryside and have adventures, comfortable in the knowledge that there will always be a hearth and a stout tankard of mead awaiting them at the end of their dragon slaying mission. The hero of the story doesn't need to worry that the manure from his horse will give him cancer, or that there isn't enough firewood in his realm to keep the boilers stoked, all he thinks about is slaying the dragon and rescuing the princess, or whatever other such heroic tasks have been set for him. These pastoral fantasy novels very much play into the idea that "nature" is somehow separate from the human world. It is something that the protagonists venture into while traveling to the place where they will do their heroic deeds. It is the storehouse for the crops and wood and minerals that shape their tools of everyday life, but its only value is in what uses it has for humanity, or whatever species the hero happens to belong to. And through magic, or technology the hero can bend nature to his will, with few personal consequences for doing so.

By comparison, in science fiction novels like Gregory Benford's *Timescape*, or Kim Stanley Robinson's *40 Signs of*

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Rain, humanity's role in shaping its environment, and not necessarily in a positive way, is acknowledged, as is our foresight, or lack thereof, in acting to prevent ecological disaster. In *Timescape*, the contemporary world has found itself on the edge of ecological disaster, the direct result of human-created pollution. In desperation, a scientist attempts to contact his past self in the 1960s, hoping that given a few extra decades of dedication to serious action, the ecological death of the earth could be prevented. The premise of the book is that had we known then what we know now we might not have undertaken some of the pollutive behaviors that we find ourselves unable to shake. The book ends just as the disaster is coming to a climax, at least in one fiction. Whether the scientist succeeded in effecting any changes by informing his past self of what was to come is left up to the reader to decide.



In 40 Signs of Rain, politicians dither while the world drowns, at least until parts of California start falling into the sea. Fiction or critique on American geopolitics? You decide!

In *40 Signs of Rain*, scientists working at the NSA have started to record trends around the world of the impact global warming has had on human inhabited regions. As sea levels rise and weather becomes more violent and unpredictable entire cities and countries are uprooted, and yet for the most part the western world tries to carry on with normal life as if nothing was happening, at least not until parts of La Jolla, California start to fall into the sea. (It is important to note at this point that *40 Signs of Rain*, the first book in a trilogy, was first published in 2004 before Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and other regions off the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.) With characters perfectly positioned to allow us to read closer into the complicated world of scientific lobbying and politics, we are given a chance to question whether politicians are even concerned about the well being of their citizens, or whether they are undertaking short-sighted and ultimately destructive actions in order to grant themselves money, power and re-election. Though I had issues with the way every character in this book essentially became a mouthpiece for Kim Stanley Robinson's ideas, I can't argue with the force of those ideas themselves.

You can believe what you want about global warming, or any other fashionable environmental issue circulating on the world's stage today, and still read these books, for ultimately all fiction should be written with the intention of telling a story first, and teaching second. But wrapping up a discussion of serious environmental issues in the shiny, colorful guise of entertaining science fiction or fantasy allows the message to reach an audience who might not otherwise allow themselves to be exposed to these ideas. I know a reader who cringes at the idea of reading anything relating to the study of scientific ethics, and yet loves *Jurassic Park*, a story of rampaging dinosaurs that just so happens to discuss the consequences of genetic engineering and cloning and "playing God." Novels about science fiction and the environment might use heart-racing action or the promise of a good space battle to rope in readers who don't know much more about the environment than "littering is bad, recycling is good." Though I find it the height of irony that books attempting to encourage sincere dialogue about the environment and humanity's place in it are still more often than not printed on virgin paper, or wasted through stripping when unsold copies come to the end of their profitable life on bookstore shelves. Clearly the publishers need to read their own books a bit more closely.

Volunteers Needed!

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

*Writers for *Sol Rising* (Ongoing)

*Set up and clean up for the AGM (May 2006)

*Set up, clean up and booth staff for the Merrill table at the Word on the Street (September 2006)

What, No Spandex? Comic Books on the Big Screen

By: Sabrina Fried

I happened to be in a bookshop the other day when I overheard a conversation between the bookseller and a slightly confused customer. The customer had just come back from watching *V for Vendetta* and was sufficiently moved by the film to want to read the book on which the Wachowski brothers' film was based. This particular bookstore was situated almost next door to a movie theatre, and was well prepared for this sort of question. The bookseller promptly guided the customer just past me to their "Now Showing" table and picked up a copy of the *V for Vendetta* graphic novel. The perplexed customer flipped through a few pages of the comic, then exclaimed to the bookseller. "I had no idea they had made a comic out of this book too!"

There are no shortages of movies that have wound their way through movie theatres in recent years that are based on books or comics. Entire flame wars are waged over the Internet as fans of a particular tome debate who should be cast as their favourite character, or whether the chosen directors are up to the task of recreating the author's vision on the big screen. Making it to Hollywood is the kind of paydirt that can turn a book with only moderate sales into a bestseller, and just having a book optioned by a movie house lends a certain amount of literary merit to the author's entire body of work. After all, if it's good enough for Hollywood, then it's good enough for you, right? Big blockbuster movies based on a particular book or series can even attract to the book thousands of readers who might otherwise have never picked it up in the first place. Perhaps they read the book to get the parts of the story that were not filmed, or to acquire some trivia about the franchise that the story comes from so that they can seem more knowledgeable about it in conversations with their fellow moviegoers, or they simply read it to see if a particular rough spot they disliked in the movie was done any better by the author. On the other side, simply stating that a movie is based on a book can encourage countless viewers who would not otherwise go to see a movie at all to spend a night at the theatres. After all, if the author's idea was good enough to make it past six kinds of editors at their publisher, plus a few dozen Hollywood types, then it has to be good, right?

So why then is the phrase "based on a comic book" still the kiss of death for so many movies? Sure you have your *Spiderman* and your *Batman Returns* (which did good box office and, more importantly, were well received by reviewers and fans alike) but for every *Spiderman* there is an *Elektra*, and for every good *Batman* film there is a *Phantom* (and a not-so-good *Batman* film). The critically acclaimed, Oscar nominated *A History of Violence* was actually based (albeit loosely) on a graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke. But even director David Cronenberg didn't find out about this fact until late into the production, and the marketing campaign didn't mention the connection of the movie to the graphic novel at all save for a short acknowledgement and a few preview pages available on the movie's official website. This movie wasn't your typical superhero fare. Underwear stayed firmly on the inside of everyone's pants in this film. In most scenes, anyway.

At the risk of sounding snobbish and drawing generalizations about a truly diverse medium of storytelling, comic books in North America have become typecast in Hollywood. They're not supposed to translate into thought-provoking art house pieces, they create the popcorn flicks with brand recognition so strong that the movie trailers don't even need to say a word or show a line of text for the audience to know exactly what film they are advertising. Witness the latest trailer for *Superman Returns*, which is not much more than Superman's CG cape fluttering in the wind and a short montage of generic "growing up in small-town America" scenes.

The reason Hollywood has fallen in love with stories from comic books is not because they come pre-packaged with a loyal fan base, because if they relied on only the fans of the actual comic books, they'd barely make back their original investment. If you don't count manga, which can sell millions of copies each month in its native lan-

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guage and continue to sell piles of copies when it is brought to North America and translated, then a comic is considered a success only if it sells a few thousand copies every month. The typical comic book makes more revenue from the advertising between its pages than it does from being sold to its fans. Sad, but true. Just because someone likes the idea of Spiderman doesn't necessarily mean they buy the comics that tell Spiderman's story. They might buy the *Spiderman* video games and action figures and DVD box sets of the various animated series that have been done over the years, but under no circumstances the comic books. And the same people who loved the "mysterious freedom fighter V" of the Wachowski brothers' *V for Vendetta* would be appalled to read the way Alan Moore originally wrote him. In the graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, V's motivations for his reign of terror are a lot less noble than the ones he was given when Hugo Weaving put on the mask. The reason Hollywood has fallen in love with comic book stories is because it is an entire fresh source of ideas for them to make use of and, as an added bonus, those fresh ideas happen to come with their own built-in branding machine. They don't even have to do all that much in the way of tie-in work since one of the biggest categories of any tie-in campaign, literature in either novel or comic form, is already done.

And yet Hollywood is nothing if not sensitive to the needs of its target markets. In North America, the idea that comic books are only for kids still prevails, despite decades of EC comics, mature themed titles from DC's Vertigo imprint, and titles from Dark Horse Comics so racy and controversial that the publisher has taken to shipping them shrink wrapped with warning labels stuck all over them. And these are just the mainstream comic books. For most comic book based movies, efforts are made to keep the productions as PG-rated as possible.



V for Vendetta: Masked anarchist turns altruistic freedom fighter. I find that very hard to believe, Mr. Anderson.

Costumes are "reimagined" when necessary to fit more realistically on the body of the actor playing the role (and cover up certain parts that might be exposed in the comics, or on chilly film sets, if you know what I mean). Violence is toned down where the standards of what is considered appropriate for movies and comic books differ. When the comic book *Hellblazer* was adapted into movie form, the film was re-titled *Constantine* after the main character to produce a less provocative title and prevent confusion with the 1987 horror film *Hellraiser*. The main character, British occultist John Constantine, was also re-cast as an American in the guise of Keanu Reeves, who bears no physical resemblance to the character. The changes were made in the hope that it would make the film more appealing to the members of the audience who had never read the comic book. Fans of the comic book were disappointed in the changes, to say the least. Word quickly spread to their non-comic reading associates and the movie quickly ran out of steam at the box office. Whether or not there will be a sequel to the movie remains to be seen.

It may just be a matter of time before movies based on comic books start to get the same kind of notoriety as movies based on books receive now. But ultimately the worth of a movie should not be judged on where its source material came from, just as a comic book should not be judged by whether or not it has been optioned for film. The comic books that have been chosen for movie adaptation all share within them the potential to create movies with good and entertaining stories. It is up to the movie houses to let the comic books' potential be reflected in their films. This does not necessarily mean that they have to slavishly shoot the panels of the comic books frame for frame, but they must ensure that the spirit of the comic book translates into whatever makes it onto the big screen. Otherwise you don't have *Superman*, you just have a really cute looking actor running around in really tight spandex trying to pretend that he is not standing in front of a blue screen.

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