

THREE ROCKS

Three Rocks #4. Published for Capa-Alpha in August 2013 by Rogers Cadenhead, 135 Jenkins St., Suite 105B #244, St. Augustine, FL 32086. Email: cadenhead@gmail.com. Web: <http://cadenhead.org>.

'Pathfinder' Comic Headed in Right Direction

There have been several comic books adapted from role-playing games over the years.

Eclipse Comics published a four-issue *Villains & Vigilantes* mini-series in 1986 by the game's creators, Jeff Dee and Jack Herman.

From 1988 to 1991, DC Comics published an *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* series that lasted for 36 issues, a *Dragonlance* comic that spanned 34 issues, a *Forgotten Realms* title for 24 and a *Spelljammer* book for 15.

In 2010, IDW secured the license for a new *Dungeons & Dragons* comic book based on the fourth edition rules and setting. It has published 16 issues of that series, a five-issue *Dark Sun* mini-series, five-issue *Forgotten Realms*, two-issue *Eberron* and five-issue *The Legend of Drizzt: Neverwinter Tales*. A new mini-series, *Forgotten Realms: Cutter*, began in April.

The newest entrant to the subgenre of RPG tie-in comics is *Pathfinder*, a monthly series launched by the comics publisher Dynamite and the game company Paizo Publishing in 2012 for the Pathfinder game.

I've read the first three issues, and it's an excellent mix of comics and game material. The story by writer Jim Zub and artist Andrew Huerta is about an adventuring party that journeys to a new place, the town of Sandpoint, and becomes embroiled in a



mystery involving aggressive goblin raiders with grotesque marks on their bodies.

Huerta's a much better illustrator than the ones I've seen on IDW's D&D books, which weren't even salvaged by Marvel Comics legend Sal Buscema doing the inking.

Zub's story is a little thin thus far, but his protagonists are an intriguing bunch. There's an enigmatic female human sorcerer from Varisia covered in tattoos, a foolhardy male human fighter, a female elf rogue of the Forlorn and a serious-minded human wizard who reinvented himself in middle age as an aspiring Pathfinder. (I didn't know it when I read the comics, but these are iconic

characters featured in the game rules and adventures as pre-rolled characters.)

Where this comic stands out is in the quality of the supplementary role-playing material. James Jacobs, the creative director for Pathfinder, has provided enough on Sandpoint and the places encountered by the characters to serve as the starting point for a campaign.

Issue #1 contains a six-page Sandpoint gazetteer with a map of the town of 1,200 on the Turandarok River, a two-page encounter on a Junk Beach locale outside the town and four pages with stats and background on the PCs. There's also an 11-by-17 playable map.

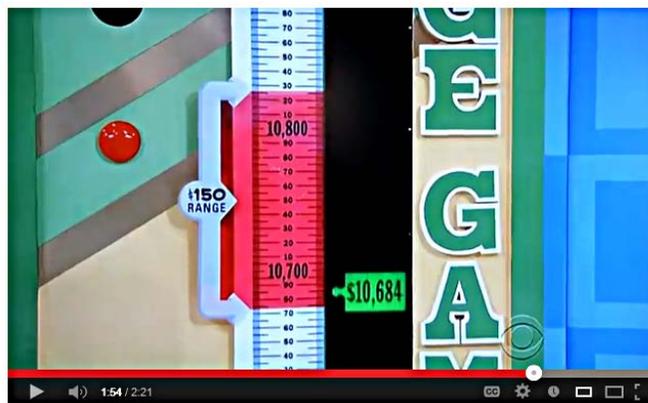
Issue #2 includes a two-page description of the Shank's Wood locale, a two-page encounter at a decrepit building called the Shankshack, two pages on PCs who join the party and another 11-by-17 map on the shack.

Issue #3 has a six-page scenario in the Paupers' Graves cemetery with a write-up of the male ghoul who presides over it, Jediah Kheln. An 11-by-17 map covers catacombs under the cemetery.

All of the game material is in color with terrific art and production values on par with Pathfinder's *Adventure Path* modules. The maps are included as inserts that can be slid out of the comic without damaging it.

So far, seven issues of the monthly comic have been published and a *Pathfinder: Goblins!* five-issue mini-series begins in August.

Though I own the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook* and *Bestiary* and several adventures, I've never played the game. This comic makes running a campaign sorely tempting. Sandpoint is big enough for PCs to get into trouble and small enough not to overwhelm a new GM.



All in Color for 40 Dimes

In the five months I've been reading Capa-Alpha since my return, the contributors who are keeping up with new comics appear to be outnumbered by fans whose interest reminds me of the *Price is Right* Range Game. The

year of the comic has to fall within a red window to be a winner.

I can't blame any comics fan for preferring the past, particularly when prices of \$2.99 and \$3.99 have become the norm and

experienced creators are an endangered species at Marvel and DC.

But as someone who still makes the Wednesday pilgrimage to my local dealer, I'm always looking for advice on new books worth reading.

Here are two on my current pull list.

Flash: I tried every New 52 book when the universe sort-of rebooted and kept reading around 12 titles. Over time, cancellations, editorial meddling and creator changes have winnowed that down to three. The DC book I'm most enjoying is this one by Francis Manapul and Brian Buccellato. Manapul's fantastic cartooning, innovative splash pages

and spectacular layouts are paired with a storyline that's engaging without taking itself too seriously. If one of the reasons you read comics is to see a hidden city of super-intelligent gorillas attack an American metropolis, this is your comic.

Lobster Johnson: This book, which comes out as a series of one shots and limited series, was my gateway drug to the Mignolaverse last year. Tonci Zonjic's art on *Lobster Johnson: The Burning Hand* reminds me of Alex Toth, and the coloring and production values of the Dark Horse book are spectacular. I keep dropping super-hero comics so I can afford more Mignola.

Mailing Comments for CA 583

Hurricane Heeran: As I understand it, a trademark would not keep a character out of the public domain who would otherwise be there.

It just keeps that mark from being used to identify or market a product such as a comic book.

Dynamite doesn't have the permission of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., to use Tarzan in its *Lord of the Jungle* comics, because it contends that it doesn't need it. The first eight Tarzan novels were published before 1923 and thus are in the public domain in the U.S. and many other countries. Dynamite's comics don't use the word Tarzan on the covers or in solicitations. The name only appears inside the books.

ERB, Inc. filed a federal lawsuit against Dynamite alleging trademark infringement and unfair competition over Tarzan, John Carter and Dejah Thoris comics in February 2012.

I hope the lawsuit fails. Books and characters who fall into the public domain should be usable by all, as long as trademarks are respected.

Copyright was intended to be a limited right, not one that could be carried into perpetuity.

Burroughs has been dead for 63 years. He and his heirs had 67 years to exclusively use Tarzan and related characters from each book's original date of publication.

They still have the exclusive right to market products under the name Tarzan. That's a pretty good deal.

Bob Rozakis: Congratulations on the birth of your grandson Alexander. I'm going to hang on to this issue in case he grows up to become president, prevent the rise of Skynet or abolish the designated hitter.

Rick Rubenstein: When I wrote my first Java book, everyone was learning the language – including authors. It was a much smaller and less ambitious language then, which wasn't good for much beyond simple applets running on web pages.

In all the years I've published the Drudge Retort, I never heard from Matt Drudge. My co-publisher was being interviewed on KABC in Los Angeles in the '90s about the site and Drudge angrily called in. A joke about how the Drudge Report was "70 percent accurate," and we hoped to get half as far on 35 percent accuracy, made him blow his fedora.

These days, Drudge uses his site to promote crackpot news from Alex Jones, spread birther nonsense and obsess over black people in groups of three or more committing crimes.

Jim Korkis: Count me among the mob to convince Gary Brown to collect his best fanzine material in a book.

I bought a few collections of APA contributors recently – *Ah! Sweet Laney!*, a collection of Francis Towner Laney's writings

edited by Robert Lichtman of FAPA, and *Warhoon 28*, a giant compilation of Walt Willis' work. Books like that give notable APA contributions a much longer shelf life.

Allen J. Schuler: I see a few non-house ads in DC comics I'm reading. *Catwoman 29* includes ads for Esurance insurance, Combos snacks and Walmart's *Man of Steel* movie ticket promotion.

I would count *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Spawn* and *Walking Dead* as breakout creator-owned comic books that made an impact on the wider culture and truckloads of money.

The *Turtles* movie grossed \$135 million and the *Spawn* movie grossed \$54 million. *Turtles* also has been an animated series three times and a new movie is coming out in 2014, though the property was sold to Nickelodeon by Peter Laird for \$60 million in 2009.

Todd Macfarlane's net worth from comics, TV, movies and toys is estimated at \$300 million. Robert Kirkman's *Walking Dead* is the highest rated cable TV drama of all time and his net worth is around \$6 million.

Longtime comics fans talk a lot about work-for-hire creators who were screwed over. Perhaps we should talk more about the creators who kept the rights to their work and made a fortune.

Ed Buchman: I enjoyed the comic book cover gags from Heritage Auctions so much I subscribed to its email newsletter, which took some time to find at <http://comics.ha.com>.

Now if I can just avoid buying anything ...