

This is THE # 20, brought to you by Richard Harter from 5 Chauncy St.#2, Cambridge MA 02138. Dancing girls inscribed on the margin by Alphonse. (Assuming that there are any.) Mimeo-graphy by the Penultimate PelzPress.

THE 20

Elliot Weinstein (and others commenting to him) - The suggestion that an artist be commented on in the form of artwork is really a copout. You have asked for more helpful and detailed criticism than a mere "it's crap." Well, Sir, for the sake of suffering humanity I shall try to answer your plea. The following comments are addressed to the strip of Space Petrol in L-359.

To begin with your general layout is bad. Your drawings and panels are far too crowded. You are using outline cartooning, i.e. your creatures, objects, etc. are defined by a few simple border lines. This is a simple and effective technique, well suited to cartooning. However it does demand that the drawing be open with blank space around the lines.

Your lettering style is simply crude. The lines of print waver up and down. The letters are in various different typefaces and are pitched at different angles. It is not given to everybody to have a good handwriting. However anybody can develop several styles of good looking printing with a little bit of experimentation.

Your lines are often wavery and varying in intensity. Apparently you have not or can not master the trick of drawing a smooth flowing line. This is particularly noticeable in your drawings of arms.

Hands are always a problem to a cartoonist. However the method you often use (example -- raised hand in first panel) looks very crude. I suggest that you study a number of comic strips and see how various artists draw hands. The human's hand in the lower left panel is OK.

Look at the arm and the hand of the Screwlooser in the fourth panel. Now stand in front of a mirror and try to hold something club shaped so that your fingers, arm, and wrist are in the pictured position. After you have massaged the Charly Horse out, try it again, holding an object in a natural position. Draw what you see. Hold it up again and keep revising your drawing until it looks like what you see. If you have any talent for drawing at all you can learn to draw the human body - you carry a model around with you.

The lines on your planet suggest neither crack lines of a dessicated world nor continental outlines. Your drawing of an atomic explosion is not very good - however it would be helped if the mushroom cloud weren't transparent. (You forgot to blank out the horizon.)

And so on. In summary your cartoon strip is crudely drawn, much in the fashion of a grade schooler. It shows very little sign that you have made any effort to look at your work and see what works, what doesn't work, and why. It's hard to put the lines in the right places if you haven't tried to find out where they are.

I'm sorry if my comments have been strongly and somewhat harshly worded. My apologies, also, for not being more specific and detailed both in my criticisms and suggestions. However...

I will also add, while I am laying out the criticism, that your continuity is poor. You are simply not good enough a cartoonist to sustain a story line. Moreover your conceptions aren't humorous enough to make up for the bad artwork.

Freff (L-358) I really don't have time to go into project MAC at MIT has been doing. I will try to give you a full rundown, either in ApaL, or personally sometime after Boskone. However the following may whet your appetite a bit.

Several years ago the Artificial Intelligence group at MIT found themselves at somewhat of a loose end. The early attempts at creating intelligent problem solving programs had run into a dead end. So they conceived what seems to be a profitable approach - they are trying to create a robot.

On one end they have a mechanical arm and a scanning eye. The motion of the arm is controlled by a digital computer, which takes the visual information from the scanning eye uses it to construct a model of what it sees and moves the arm to perform actions in the real world. At present and for the foreseeable future they are working in a restricted universe of childrens blocks on a table. (The idea evidently is that if they work with a very simple universe they can figure out thoroughly how to handle it.) The raster scan of the scanning eye is taken as an input. This information is fed to a program which enhances light and dark areas which are in turn fed to a program which deduces boundaries, and creates, in effect, a two dimensional line drawing. This line drawing is fed into another program what objects there are and what boundaries go with which objects. The machine now knows where things are and what they are (geometrically). It also knows where the arm is, both visually, and directly from sensors in the arm. This information, along with instructions about what the arm is supposed to do, is fed to a program which controls the motion of the arm. This program uses a combination of direct computation and feedback to control the arm. The program, in effect, knows where the arm is, where it is going, and where it has to go and what it has to do.

The speech program is a relatively new addition to the system and is not integrated in yet, although it can be in a straightforward fashion and is designed to be integrated in. Basically it consists of a program for each major word plus a store of factual information about the real world. The speech program decodes English sentences into a set of instructions and data that can be operated on by the computer. In effect it understands what you are saying.

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It is late and I am tired. I will go into detail on what exactly they have done, what the implications are, and what the limitations are in a couple of weeks.