



The Drink Tank 209

Watchmen is Alan Moore's masterpiece. It stands as one of the greatest experiments in storytelling attempted in the last fifty years. It is a work of genius unrivaled in the history of comics.

Watchmen announces Alan Moore as the only genius of an era which has abandoned geniuses.

~Michael Sugar, 1988.

This issue was James Bacon's idea. For only the second time in the history of The Drink Tank that I've had a co-editor, and I couldn't think of a better co-editor.

Watchmen is something that's had a great effect on many people I hang around with. I've never read the comics more than a concerted skim, which will play a part in a story that talks about a concept I had years back.

We've got the fanzine debut of Tom Tonhat. He's a local that I think I met at Silicon last year. Janice Gelb's provided her Watchmen review. We've got the legendary Ed Green writing for us for the first time in a year, which makes me happy. A couple of pieces from secret submittees, and of course, the unjustly Hugo Over-looked James Bacon. Plus, quotes from M, Jay, Sa-Bean and the notebooks and zines of Michael Sugar, one of the earliest academics to latch on to Watchmen as a cultural significant.



Work Watchmen by James Bacon

So, in my job every week we have a thing called the Weekly Brief. Occasionally there is news of importance therein, but mostly its a feel good propaganda thing, with a mixture of figures, articles or notices management feel are either them executing their role and duties as they abnegate responsibility or that they 'feel' we should know. There is also the odd article about staff, which are elicited through bribery of Gift Cheques in the case of Front Line, and just part of the deal for head office.

This is good fun, because we latch onto things people say about themselves. So every time I see a particular girl, I ask her to sing a song, she must be sick of it now, but she told us all she loves karaoke. So it must be true. We also have a daily brief, and that was once altered retrospectively, in case anyone wanted to go back and check what was said. I noticed. Chocolate rations eh.

Now, it came up that they wanted reviews, and the Herr Goebells of our marketing department, deemed that this would be a good thing. I immediately volunteered, seeing a good thing when I know it, and offered to read Watchmen, a topical comic. She agreed, and soon I had vouchers in my hand for books. Here is the edited

version of what I wrote. No where near as good as a job by Claire Briailey, but good English all the same.

Watchmen

Comics are like the telly, there is TV for Kids, TV for Adults and with Watchmen, its a comic for after the watershed. This is a complex multi layered story, set in a alternate version of 1985, where costumed 'super heroes' existed and were once legal.

At its core is a mystery crime thriller, Following the murder of The Comedian, one of the heroes, Rorschach warns his colleagues about the threat, and tries to uncover the plot he is so sure exists. As we follow Rorschach we meet and learn much about each of the different Heroes and their history. Character depth is key, flash backs and interaction allow the reader to learn much about the characters, what makes them tick, what drove them to fight crime, their state of mind, and how they deal with a world that has banned them.

There is a nasty and raw edge to the writing, these are after all people who dress up to fight crime, an absurd concept and one that would see a person shipped off to a mental asylum, sorry, I mean accommodation for persons of reduced mental capacity. This is the story's truest strength, since 1938 with Superman, comic book heroes have mainly been simplistic good vs. evil scenarios, here

the writer Alan Moore explores what a world would really be like with such costumed characters, warts and all and while at it twists around and plays with what we think is good and what is evil.

If you are expecting the sex and violence of the movie, you may be disappointed, although they feature, the real action is watching the complex mystery unwind. Not only is the story in the 'speech bubbles' but also embedded in the artwork, while each of the twelve chapters, has an excerpt from a biography or file which offer more insight and depth to the ongoing

pictures. It's a hard going story but its worth the effort.

End

So that was that, and then it appeared. So one fella, an older guy, who was once a priest or a vicar, and even served in Bosnia as a Chaplin, says to me:

I read your review, thought it was very good, em, did you get free tickets to see it?'

Immediately I realised that I had horrendously failed.

'No, its the comic'

'oh' he said, and we left it there, as one might say.



A Tale of Two Watchmen.

By Tom Tonthat

“Who watches the Watchmen?”

I watched. I saw that film twice on opening day.

My first viewing was at the premiere midnight showing. Swimming in a sea of avid comic book readers, sci-fi geeks, and devoted fans of the original *Watchmen* graphic novel, the cheers of the fans who loved the film’s adaptation of the comic combined with the whispered sneers of the fans who despised the changes the film made to the comic drowned out most of the film’s dialogue. After the end of the film, the audience talked among their friends and even strangers about their opinions of Zack’s adaptation of the original comic. They were fans debating with other fans just like they do during comic book and sci-fi conventions.

Since I could not hear the film’s dialogue during this first viewing, I wound up watching it a second time after finishing work. The audience this time consisted of average people who also finished their jobs for the day and wanted to catch a highly advertised film. Based on the conversations I had while waiting in line, most had never



read Alan Moore’s graphic novel. The audience during this 6PM showing was quieter so I could better immerse myself in the film. More importantly,

I could hear the dialogue of the characters this time. After the film, the audience quietly left the theater. And here I saw *Watchmen*’s greatest strengths and flaws.

Perhaps the biggest challenge a comic book movie faces is faithfully recreating the look and plot of the comic book while developing a story that does not alienate the audience who never read the original comics. Christopher Reeve’s *Superman*, Sam Raimi’s *Spiderman*, Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* are good examples. I never seriously read the comics associated with these superheroes, but I was able to follow the story and the characters. I even enjoyed both. Zack Snyder does an excellent job in the first half of the challenge. He sets up a spectacular depiction of the alternate 1985 where Nixon serves five terms as President and costumed vigilantes were banned after previously enjoying the limelight. The colors and buildings look like something out of a comic book, but that is the point. The actors emulate their comic counterparts as they bear their strengths and psychological shortcomings on the screen. *Watchmen* is a beautiful adaptation and a sight to behold.

Despite a spectacular opening sequence that sets up the alternate

Read *Watchmen* and then watch the film. You will experience a different world in both. One is a true world in which characters live and breathe and the other will be a diorama in tribute to that world. M Lloyd

universe—complete with how the costumed vigilantes influenced several key historical events—the film stumbles during the second half of the challenge. While excelling at adapting the *Watchmen* comic onto the movie screen to appease the comic connoisseurs, it seems to ignore the average moviegoer who never touched the *Watchmen* comics. The original graphic novel is full of character development and a variety of themes such as society as a whole, personal identity, and the threat of the end of the world due to nuclear holocaust. It is difficult to cram hundreds of illustrated pages of material into an almost three hour movie. The film brushes upon the themes like I just did in the previous sentence. Comic readers will pick up on the quick references, but the references will simply fly over the general audience. People watching things that fly over their heads usually do not enjoy what they see. While digging into the comic to make the film deeper in substance, Zack did not dig deep enough. It seems he decided to throw in nearly every theme and nuance into the movie to appease the fans.

But sometimes appeasing the fans is a difficult task. Even with such a close adaptation to the original material, Zack's personal touches and changes are present. Adding fight sequences complete with slow motion

and copious blood splatter worked well in *300* and helps add to the comic feel of *Watchmen*. Zack also cuts and changes a few scenes to simplify some of the complex plot points and shorten the film. Such changes bred two camps among the fans of the original material. Some consider any deviation from the original source is an insult. Others embrace the changes and accept the new imaginings from Zack Snyder. The latter camp most likely voted for Obama.

Watchmen was a difficult comic to convert into a film and Zack's efforts

are to be applauded. He worked well with the material to create a live action comic book. He simply bit off more than he could chew. Nevertheless, I do recommend seeing this film. For those who read the comic, it provides a good adaptation of the classic graphic novel. For those unfamiliar with the comic, *Watchmen* plays like a film noir movie where a basic homicide uncovers an even larger plot where the world is at stake. In either case, the film is such a spectacle to behold.

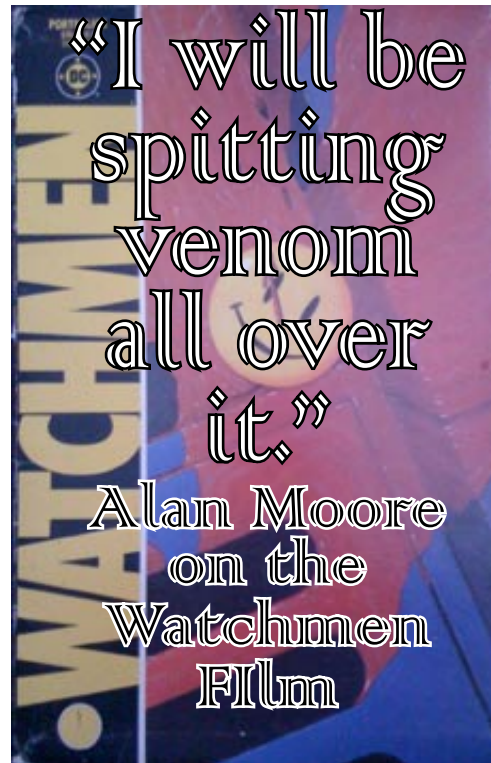


**“Sex, Violence, and Superheroes
- a secretly submissive female
perspective”**

I feel I should start any article about something like Watchmen by clarifying that I only know the story, and the characters, from the film. I am entirely ignorant regarding the comic (sorry, *graphic novel*. People keep telling me there’s some sort of important difference, but I’m afraid it’s lost on me, philistine that I am...) and so have probably missed lots of important references and subtleties and so on – I’ve definitely missed something about a giant psychic squid that people keep talking about – and for that I apologise to the true fans. But while I don’t have any particular interest in comics (yes, yes, alright, *graphic novels...*), I do often enjoy film adaptations thereof, and I greatly enjoyed Watchmen. I know a lot of people who didn’t enjoy it, and I think perhaps they were expecting a generic action-packed superhero flick, which this certainly wasn’t, but I was pleasantly surprised by the depth of some of the issues explored.

The character who most caught my attention was Sally Jupiter, the original Silk Spectre. For starters, she was stunning – in my opinion much more so than her daughter and superheroine replacement, Laurie

Jupiter, although I’m sure that some will disagree with me on that. I also far preferred the original Silk Spectre costume – that classic 1940s look, managing to be strong and yet, at the same time, intensely feminine,



with stockings, wasp-waist corset and carefully styled hair. Let’s face it, pretty much all superheroines are hugely sexual in nature – their figures are improbably good, their busts and hips accentuated, their waists dwindling almost to nothing – and although an actress can never quite match the over-exaggeration of a

drawn figure, Carla Gugino did a pretty good job!

Superheroines are women in a fundamentally male profession – a position which many women are able to identify with these days, and which is never easy, but which would have been particularly difficult in the 1940s when the Minutemen were at the height of their career, at a time when women were rarely appreciated for their intellect or strength of personality, never mind their physical prowess. This is made abundantly clear in the scene where the Comedian, aka Eddie Blake, attempts to rape Sally. This was a scene which was both horrific – let’s make no bones about it, real rape is always horrific – and, to a certain sort of person, highly erotic.

Now, this is the point where the feminists usually start climbing on their high horses and shouting about the exploitation of women. I’m not going to bang on for ages about the difference between real rape and fantasy rape – if that is not abundantly clear to you, you should seek professional help – but for some of us, helplessness and humiliation can be very sexual things. I’m a feminist – I believe passionately in a woman’s right to have equal opportunities to a man, and to have the option to choose the life that suits her and her circumstances best. And if that



very pleasant human being. He first approaches Sally assuming that she will be receptive to his advances, saying something along the lines of “you clearly want it, look at how you dress” – I can’t find the exact quote – and it’s certainly pretty obvious that her entire outfit is designed to accentuate her figure

includes enjoying being sexually submissive (or even, horror of horrors, being a stay-at-home mum and raising the kids), then that’s her right, just as much as choosing to become a high powered lawyer, or a doctor, or any of the other things that shouty feminists seem to think it is their business to deem acceptable aspirations for a woman these days.

That disclaimer (and slight rant) out of the way, let me examine what I, personally, found so erotic about that scene...

The Comedian is a very sexually powerful character. He is big, strong, handsome, virile, and possessed of an extreme confidence – a strength of personality which is just as intoxicating than his physical strength – although not, actually, a

and make her as alluring as possible. She might not be asking to be raped, but I think it’s hard to deny that she wants to be viewed as a sexual entity, and to be desired. I know that if I dress up to look sexy, it’s because I want men to look at me – I want to feel like they want me, because that makes me feel confident and good about myself in a very superficial and shallow, but very real way (and it is clear that Sally feels the same way on some level from her appreciation of the pornography dedicated to her, which we see later in the film). Rape can be seen as the ultimate expression of that, as a lust so strong that it is uncontrollable, and the idea of being desired that intensely is very exciting.

The Silk Spectre, meanwhile, is a woman at the peak of fitness,

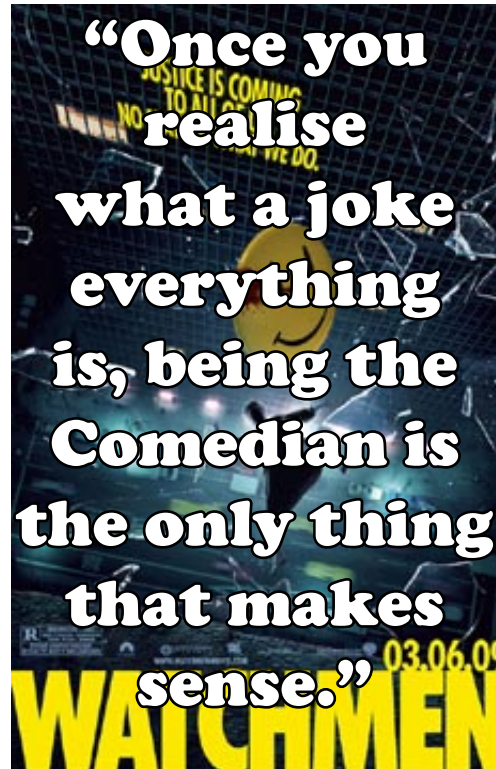
trained in martial arts, experienced in combat, a woman who regularly beats up thugs and criminals across the city. She is no soft target. And yet it is a simple fact of life that men are, in general, bigger and stronger than women. Thus, on the whole, a man will beat a woman in a stand-up fight, unless she manages to land a lucky blow and run for it (“bash and dash”, my self-defence teacher used to call it). But if he manages to land a blow, or to get within grappling distance, she’s finished. There is something about that innate helplessness of even the strongest woman in the face of superior masculine strength which turns me on. A physical demonstration of a man’s strength is exciting in itself, and I guess that’s an evolutionary thing – the desire for a mate to be strong, healthy, fit, and hence a source of good genetic material, and for him to be able to offer physical protection in a dangerous world – but the helplessness aspect is also very sexual.

Helplessness can be very liberating, allowing us to indulge in things we secretly want, but have to deny ourselves. Maybe Sally *was* attracted to Eddie. Maybe, really, she *would* have liked to have rampant sex with him (an idea borne out by the fact that she also had a consensual sexual encounter with him, and was clearly very fond of him later in life). But, in that era, a woman having sex with

a man she wasn't married to would be judged by all around her (as Sally was, indeed, later in the film), and so even if she did desire him she would have had to fend off his advances for the sake of her reputation. Being forced into things we secretly desire can allow us to enjoy them without fear of judgement and condemnation, both by those around us and by our own consciences. If we can say "but he made me, forced me, raped me..." then it's not our fault, and no-one can blame us for doing it, not even ourselves.

Personally, I often find "straight" sex difficult to enjoy – there's something about it that makes me feel a bit guilty, like it's somehow indulgent to enjoy myself that way, and I become very uncomfortable if a man puts too much effort into pleasing me. I usually feel that I should be concentrating more on pleasing him (and am constantly worried about whether I'm doing things "right", whether I'm any good in bed, and so on) rather than enjoying myself, or find myself distracted by other, more "important", real-world things I should be doing – work, cleaning, shopping, etc. There are also things I'm interested in doing, that I'm turned on by, which are to some extent taboo, and that certain people would judge as somehow "bad" or "wrong". The fact that I'm turned on by rape fantasies is one of those,

but there are others, too. In spite of my intellectual belief that consenting adults should be allowed to do as they please, I often find it difficult to admit that I like such things to myself, never mind to others, especially while retaining my self-respect – the result of the way I was brought up and what is considered acceptable by society, I



suppose. But if a man holds me down and forces himself upon me, makes me do the things I want to do but am too ashamed to admit, I have the freedom to enjoy the physical sensations without guilt or recrimination.

Rape is also humiliating. It takes a living, breathing woman with

hopes, fears, dreams, aspirations, a personality and an intellect, and reduces her to an object for a man to use for his personal, physical pleasure. At that point, he has no interest in her as a human being, only as a warm body to fuck. For me, this is most obvious in the film as Sally, having been physically overpowered, is laying bent over the pool table, the Comedian standing behind her, reaching to unfasten his trousers... He is clearly not interested in her as a person – he's not looking at her face, he has no concern for her preferences or opinions, he is simply going to use her to satisfy his basest urges. This is something that makes me tingle all over, and I found it by far the single most arousing moment of the film, but it is much harder to identify why this sort of thing is a turn-on. I think, similar to the helplessness thing, it has a lot to do with abdication of responsibility, and with freedom to enjoy sex, but in an emotional and psychological, rather than a physical, way. Sometimes, being an independent, intelligent, confident, successful woman can be stressful and tiring – we build walls and wear masks to keep up an appearance we feel we have to present to the world, and that takes effort and energy. It is draining. Taking a break from that and allowing someone else to take control, to make the decisions, is very relaxing. I guess

sometimes it's nice to know that you don't have to worry about being witty, or intelligent, or interesting, that you can drop the mask you normally wear, and that someone still desires you physically, sexually.

Both helplessness and humiliation make a woman very vulnerable. Helplessness is obviously indicative of physical vulnerability. Humiliation, on the other hand, gives rise to very strong emotions, while stripping away the defences we usually have in place to control and suppress such feelings, and makes us both emotionally and psychologically vulnerable. In a somewhat bizarre contradiction, that intense vulnerability, which arises out of something as seemingly impersonal as being used in this sort of way, can make a sexual encounter much more emotional, and much more meaningful, than it could otherwise possibly be. I find it allows a deep connection with another human being that I am normally

simply too reserved and restrained to permit myself to form – I need my defences torn down both physically and mentally before I can open myself

up in that way. All these things combine make for some of the best, most exciting, most physically and emotionally satisfying sex possible.



There are many other very sexy bits in this film, but this was by far my favourite, I guess because it happened to match my personal tastes so well. I also found the development of Sally's character throughout the rest of the film, and her relationship with the Comedian after he almost raped her, interesting in many ways – her desire and affection for him are not the typical reactions you might expect, and she is regularly judged harshly, and to my mind unfairly, by others for not feeling more negatively towards him. It was great to see a film that was not afraid to explore this sort of difficult, complicated subject, without resorting to a very black-and-white attitude.

One day, I might even read the graphic novel...

Watchmen can not be taken lightly. It is not a series which allows you easy reading. You must think through it. Michael Sugar

Watchmen

BY JANICE GELB

ORIGINALLY FROM HER LJ

Only saw about 2/3 of this movie, as I spent the other 1/3 or so covering my eyes so I wouldn't have flashbacks from the gratuitous violence. Despite that, I found this movie better than I expected.

I should start by saying that I never read Watchmen in any of its incarnations. Therefore, I didn't know the story ahead of time and was more interested in the actual plot than viewers who already knew the story. I found it fairly engaging. (One surprise was that the Dr Manhattan character, a superhuman victim of a nuclear accident [who the Salon review noted "resembles a blue, translucent version of the Oscar statuette" except with actual genitalia] is the only real superhero with powers - the others appear to be Batman-like in that their effectiveness is the result of training.)

Late add: One of the most unbelievable parts of the alternate history to me was the conceit that Nixon, even with a victory in the Vietnam War, would overcome his lack of charm enough to have the electorate repeal term limits for the Presidency.

The look of the film is stunning, especially the Mars machine, and the

montages and backstory are handled very well. The acting was terrific all the way around. Stephen told me that the actors bear a close resemblance to the way they look in the graphic novel, which makes the quality of the acting even more impressive. The soundtrack uses 80s music and you already know I'm a Leonard Cohen fan so the use of two songs of his was especially noteworthy.

I mentioned the violence previously: while I knew there would be some, I wasn't expecting the level and based on comments when we went out for dinner after the movie, I'm glad I kept my eyes shut for most of the fight scenes!

Overall, I was more engaged than I expected to be but still have many questions about the plot, among them:

- The Comedian was a murdering sociopath, even worse than Rorschach in my opinion as it seemed to be more for self-gratification than principle. If the other watchmen were so committed to justice, why didn't they ostracize him from the group?

- The whole Dr Manhattan accident seemed ridiculous: he goes back into a protected area for his watch and isn't aware, nor are his two co-workers, that a test is about to take place in the room? No signs, no schedule, nothing?

- What was it about finding out

that The Comedian was Laurie's father that would convince Dr Manhattan that People Are OK and he should go back and save Earth? The whole "out of all the sperm in all the world..." explanation seemed really weak and convoluted to me.

- Worst to me was the acceptance of the all's-well-that-ends-well message: "Well, we might have lost a million people and have major cities that are now gaping holes in the ground but life goes on and at least the USSR and USA are talking to each other." Huh?

Worth seeing for fans, might be a little too violent and dark for a nice night out at the movies for others.





A LIVE BODY AND A DEAD BODY CONTAIN THE SAME NUMBER OF PARTICLES. STRUCTURALLY,
THERE'S NO DISCERNIBLE DIFFERENCE. LIFE AND DEATH ARE UNQUANTIFIABLE ABSTRACTS.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED? DR. MANHATTAN IN WATCHMEN



**Who Watched The
Watchmen: My
Viewing of the Film**
by Chris Garcia

It was the Monday after Cinequest, a film festival where I sat through some 3 to 5 movies a day. I had

worked announcing films, doing Q&A sessions with filmmakers, and kept late hours out partying with friends. So, of course, I spent the next day at the movies.

As is almost always the case, I wanted to spend some time writing before the film started. Since the weekday shows are never full, I simply bought a ticket for a showing 75 minutes away. That gave me a full hour before the pre-movie commercials started. This made me happy.

I settled into my seat and started typing up my report on Cinequest. I

worked about 20 minutes before anyone else worked into the theatre. There are people, typically guys who are working from home that day, who will sit down early and do exactly what I was doing. They were taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi to do some work and see a movie at



the same time. Smart. At least we stop when the movie starts.

I was up through day 3 (at about 5k words) when the first folks who seemed like regular film-goers showed up. They were a small family, a kid and three adults, and they took a seat at the end of my row. About the time the pre-show entertainment started, we had about twenty-five people in the theatre. Only a couple of them seemed to be hard-core comic book types. I could tell this because one was wearing a Mad Man shirt and the other a Green Lantern ring. That made me smile.

The pre-show is a series of commercials, not always uninteresting, but this was just a tease. So many folks had been waiting so long to see how Warner would treat their favorite comic book mini-series that it had spread. I had never read it, but I certainly was as excited as everyone else. The commercials came and went and finally it was time.

This is where it got really interesting.

The film started and from about 10 minutes, all the way through the credits, it was the greatest film I'd seen all year. I can't think of a better opening for a film ever. Easily my favourite part was anytime The Comedian was on the screen. Jeffrey Dean

Morgan did an amazing job with The Comedian character and every time he was on the screen it was magic. The family at the end of my row loved it. They were thrilled with the opening scene. Even the kid, who might have been 9 or so, was on the edge of his seat.



Then things went south.

I was LiveTweeting the film, which is a no-no, but I had to. I had to share the experience. It's a Twenty-first Century Guy thing.

45 mins in & half the audience has walked out. I'm loving it.

I thought the first hour, with its lively motion and fun flashbacks, was solid filmmaking. The costumes were beautiful and the subject matter tough. The family at the end of the row stood up about 35 minutes in. I'm not why, maybe it wasn't moving fast enough. A couple of people from the back of the theatre walked out next. A few more right after I Tweeted. No one walked out loudly muttering to themselves, but there was at least one guy who left hanging his head as if they'd failed him. It was the guy with the Green Lantern ring.

After that, there were only about

15 people left. It was a big theatre, and I was in the front row of the middle section. It was perfect.

The second hour of the film came, and it seemed to start and stall a few times. There was extra violence and a ton of ickiness, which is kinda to be expected. The rape scene was brutal, but I'd just watched *The Beautiful Blue Danube* which featured a far more disturbing scene. I enjoyed the film, even looking over many of the failures in the script that were saved by impressive cinematography, art

direction or acting. The entire film felt huge, and somewhat choking. There were a few more walk-outs in the second hour. In the end, there were at most five of us left in the theatre. As I walked out, the guy in the *Mad Man* t-shirt called out to me.

"So, what'd you think?" he said.

"Well, I gotta say I liked it a lot more than those folks who walked out."

"Me, too," He said "They all don't know what they missed."



“IT WAS
KOVACS WHO
SAID “MOTHER”
THEN, MUFFLED
UNDER LATEX.
IT WAS KOVACS
WHO CLOSED HIS
EYES. IT WAS
RORSCHACH
WHO OPENED
THEM AGAIN.”

**The Crasdan Household Re-casts
Watchmen**
by M Crasdan, with Jay Crasdan,
SaBean MoreL and Judith MoreL.

If Warner Brothers had any faith in *Watchmen*, the biggest names on the marquee wouldn't be Billy Crudup and the mom from *Spy Kids*. The budget was huge, and Zak Snyder isn't exactly known for his ability to wrangle in big egos that are held by bigger stars. Warners obviously held-back on the funding so that if it wasn't a mega-hit, it wouldn't hurt the studio. The subject deserved a better cast, a stronger cast, a cast more likely to draw the green from the stupidest segments of the American film-going public.

So, after we went for our second viewing as a family, we went to dinner at Petit Valentin, our most beloved restaurant near the 5. We talked about how none of the actors were anything more than good actors who wouldn't outshine the film, which improved the film, but kept the Mob at bay. We quickly turned our attention to a game of *If I Were The Studio Boss* leading us to re-cast *Watchmen* with our dream cast.

Find *Watchmen*, understand it, and you see what it means to tell a story so beautifully, it can only portray ugliness- Jay Crasdan

Hollis Mason- The Original Nite Owl
Played in *Watchmen* by- **Stephen McHattie**

Ideal Dead Actor to Play the Role- **Paul Newman**

This is a small role, but one that would give an opportunity to bring a bit of star-power to the film. While there are many stars who would give some notoriety to the moment, **Robert Redford, Warren Beatty, John Hurt, and Jon Voight** coming to mind immediately, but the real star who needs to be a part of the picture would be **John Mahoney**. He's a star best-known for his work as Mr. Crayne in *Frasier*. He's also been great in everything from *Reality Bites* to *The Hudsucker Proxy*. He'd be great in the role, tiny as it is.

Sally Jupiter- The Original Silk Spectre

PLAYED IN *WATCHMEN* BY- **CARLA GUGINO**

Ideal Dead Actors to Play the Role- **Rita Hayworth** or **Ava Gardner**

Carla Gugino was great, but she's not a real name. There are a number of stars who would come up strong. The first name that comes to mind is the smoldering Welsh beauty **Catherine Zeta-Jones**. She's got

talent and could play both sides of the character. **Jennifer Connelly** would also be able to pull off the 1940s feel, as would **Kate Winslett**, who were SaBean and Jay's choices, in that order. I still think that Zeta-Jones would be the best for the role if you're talking about making money.

EDWARD BLAKE- THE COMEDIAN

Played in *Watchmen* by- **Jeffrey Dean Morgan**
Ideal Dead Actor to Play the Role- **William Holden, Frank Sinatra, Burt Lancaster**

First off, **Jeffrey Dean Morgan** was nearly perfect for this role. He had a blast and it showed in the way he carried himself. He was the most interesting part of the film. Of course, his biggest role other than *The Comedian* was Denny Duquette on *Grey's Anatomy*.

No need to think too hard on this one. The perfect choice is Iron Man himself: Robert Downey, Junior. He can play both the humor and the dark with easy oscillation. The man is awesome, and *The Comedian* is like playing

Tony Stark with extra evil.



Adrian Veidt- Ozymandias

Played in *Watchmen* by- **Matthew Goode**
Ideal Dead Actor to Play the Role- **Richard Harris** or **Laurence Olivier**

There a lot of guys who would be good in their younger years who are still alive. **Maxmilian Schell**, **Peter O'Toole**, and **Christopher Walken** all would have done this role just fine. The guy from *The Blue Lagoon* would have also been good. Today, there are several stars who would make a convincing Veidt. There's **Tom Cruise**, who was considered for the role, as was **Lee Pace**, the hot piece from *Pushing Daisies*. The real choice would be **Jude Law**. He was the favorite to play the role in the early stages, but he lost out to Goode. I'm in the minority on that one. Judith and SaBean agree that it should be **Paul Bettany**. Jay says that he should have been a CGI version of a young **Christopher Walken**.

Dr. Jon Osterman- Doctor Manhattan

PLAYED IN *WATCHMEN* BY- **BILLY CRUDUP**
Ideal Dead Actors to Play the Role- **Edward Ashton**, **George Hackenschmidt** (and thank Chris for those names)



This one brought a lot of argument. I thought that it really didn't matter who played the role. I remember hearing they wanted **Keanu Reeves** to play Dr. Manhattan, and I could see his wooden delivery as a plus in the playing of the good Doctor. Jay said it should be **HHH** because all that matters is the physical composition of the body showing strength and muscle beyond the possibilities in this reality. Judith said that **The Rock** or **George Clooney** would be the right choice. **Jon Hamm** was SaBean's first choice, followed by **Taye Diggs**. Those are both interesting choices. I still go with **Keanu**.

DANIEL DREIBERG- NITE OWL II

Played in *Watchmen* by- **Patrick Wilson**
Ideal Dead Actors to Play the Role- **Arthur Kennedy**, **Gig Young**, **John Cassavetes**

This is a tough one. I thought that Wilson was a good choice, but he added nothing to the box office appeal of the film. They wanted **John Cusack**, which would have meant that they'd need to write in **Jeremy Piven**. The other name that would make sense would be **Ethan Hawke**, who was SaBean's first choice for any film we've

personally recast, or **Paul Giamatti**. Jay wanted it to be **Benicio del Toro**, which would be tough to pull off. I say **Phillip Seymour Hoffman** or **William H. Macy**, though the last time Macy tried action (*Mystery Men*) was an abject failure.

Walter Kovacs- Rorschach

Played in *Watchmen* by- **Jackie Earle Haley**
Ideal Dead Actors to Play the Role- **Elisha Cook, Jr.**

There was no other name discussed, and it was only Jay remembering that he always thought



of **Elisha Cook, Jr.** whenever he'd daydream about a *Watchmen* movie. **Jackie Earle Haley** was perfect. He had the exact look, the exact emotional peel to play the role. He was scarily familiar when I saw him on the screen. He was the Kovacs from the comic, and even better as Rorschach. He carried the film on his shoulders in many parts and he was 100% the guy to go to for that one. The *Watchmen* movie



would not work with anyone else.

Laurie Jupiter-Silk Spectre II

Played in *Watchmen* by-
Malin Åkerman
Ideal Dead Actors to Play the Role-
Jayne Russell, Hedy Lamarr, Dorothy Stratten

This one led us to expose more about our personal sexual tastes than who would be right for the role. Warners thought that **Natalie Portman** or **Jessica Alba** would have been

right. **Jessica Biel** was a favorite of fan sites. I offered **Eliza Dushku**. That would have been hot. Jay went with **Jennifer Love Hewitt** or **Sarah Michelle Geller**. Both of those made me seriously reconsider being married to this man. SaBean said **Linda Cardellini**, who she has wanted to climb on and ride since she first saw her in *Scooby Doo*. Judith felt that there were some girls who would be perfect as Laurie, including **Rachel McAdams** and **Emily Blunt**, and



those that would make a good Silk Spectre, like **Eva Green** or **Ana Francic**. It's hard to find someone who could be strong enough to play all sides of the role. My choice came to me over coffee-
Milla Jovovich from 1995. She's the most like the Silk Spectre from the comic, for sure. I hear that the girl from *That 70s Show* **Mila Kunis** would be a good choice. I think she's cute, but not forceful enough.



Chris Garcia Casts Watchmen with His Friends...

After I finished M's look at who they'd cast, I started making my own list, but then I started thinking who I'd cast if I were making a fan film and had to rely on my friends to play the various characters. I know a lot of actors and as I thought about it, it came to me that some of them would be awesome in *Watchmen*. And so, I now cast it with my dear, close, personal friends.

Rorschach- This would have been easy in 2005 or 06. Jon Chapman. Sadly, with his passing, I'm required to go with someone else. Someone who can play the darkness and carry a film without needing to rely on his face. I have to go with my buddy Scott Allen Perry. He's more a director these days, but I totally loved his work in his film *Side Effects* and his turn in *The Method*. Of course, there's also Chris Erichsen, who does a fantastic Doctor and also does Rorschach really well. Hmmm...tight thoughts.

The Original Silk Spectre- No question: Kate Kelton. She's worked with me on a couple of flicks and she's done art that's appeared in *The Drink Tank*. She'd be perfect. You can find her in films like the opening scene of *American Psycho II* and in *Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle*. Also up

there is my friend Carla, who has a very Carla Gugino look to her.

The Comedian- This is tough. I'm going to go outside the box and say Tadao Tomomatsu as my Number 1, though I might go with Steve Boisvert. You'll know Tadao from his turn on Heroes (and as Mr. Shake Hands Man on Banzai) and Steve worked on our first 48 Hour Film Project project Saving Pockets. I think Tadao is brilliant, and I know Steve can dig on the role. Hard to say which one I'd go with...



Night Owl II- Bob Mussett. Without question. I love that guy, and he's a big-time-y actor in the Boston theatre scene. He's my number one choice and I totally see him pulling it off.

Silk Spectre II- This is a tough one. I



really wanna say Blanchard Ryan, a fantastic actress I met at Cinequest this year. It would be an incredible stretch to say she's a close, personal friend, but I also think she'd be awesome. I also would love to see Jen Bushard, a girl I dated back in High School who more than one person pointed out reminded them of SS2, playing the role. Or, perhaps, my friend Amrah from high school, or SaBean. She'd be good too, and I know she read the comic.

Dr. Manhattan- Wow, tough one. I could say my buddy Leon Tucker, who is a star waiting to happen, or perhaps my buddy Christian. No, the real answer is Steve Sprinkles. That would be awesome. Plus, I think he'd have to direct.

Ozymandias- That's a real tough one. Kevin Roche would be good, though it would require him to go back to a single hair color. Dave Delgrosso would also work. I've only seen him on stage a couple of times, but he has a certain

presence to him that would work. I think Dr. Noe could pull it off too.



He stood up for his country, Veidt. Never let anyone retire him. Never cashed in on his reputation. Never set up a company selling posters and diet books and toy soldiers based on himself. Never became a prostitute. If that makes him a Nazi, you might as well call me a Nazi, too. - Rorchach

Watchmen Week: The commercial push to rapidly superimpose an iconic comic brand upon the wider general consciousness. The fools.

Journal Entry

W-Day minus 210

I wait to be entertained. It seems to be all about Ledger, but for me, it's about Bale. He is the man in a cape and a cowl, a hero since his youngest days, waving at a P-51 Mustang as it slices slowly through Ballard's beautiful sky. I also know what is coming; I know that as noise surrounds me, there will be something extra, something that may make me tingle. It does, but also with apprehension, my mind so unsure. I see the trailer.

W-Day -128

Smashing Pumpkins. I try to explain that despite the music being superb, I understand that it won't even be in the movie, its just a great piece for an on-line trailer, it's been used in a Batman movie that no one remembers, nor wishes to admit to seeing. We watch, gather round the modern day science fictional reality now, a phone. It looks good, very good. In Macmillan House, in room B132, men gather and nod knowingly. Everyone knows about the movie now, well no that's not true, but the people I know well, do. Some have read it, most people I know read, lucky for me, I have not only read it, but somehow know it very well, not a friend, but occasional adversary.

W-Day -42

It's being discussed. The station manager who is not really a station manager yet, but is better than many, is also a 'liker' of sequential art. We are expectant. Ledger must get something as well, for his unfortunateness, no one will deny him, but now those who are unexpected ask about the comic, most say graphic novel, a cleaner term, clinical, sensible sounding, oh why it seems, marketing have won.

W-Day - 10

I stand in a planet that is forbidden. I see a magazine, I have to ask to read it, it is not for sale to the likes of me. It is in code, ICv2, a website now extended to trade zine. It reports that W was the



best selling Graphic novel of 2008. All time 12 month graphic novel sales records.

A whole article talks about W. 'The graphic novel of the year', 'Best selling graphic of all time.', 'All time 12 month graphic novel sales records'

Between this positive shouting, grim news is hiding. Down Turn. 12 % drop in Manga releases for 2009. Expected amount of titles 1224. 2007 was 1468 titles. Anime down 24% in 2008 down 50% from 2005. The top list of sellers, without a hint of currentness, all older titles, being churned out again and again, what about today's singles, how will we have a future back list with no new singles, that are yet to be classics.

W-Day - 9

I want to scream. I am offered the proverbial Willy Wonka ticket. But the factory is only open tomorrow night. Such a gift from a writer friend, a coming around of kindness from my con-running efforts, deny to me by the realities of salaried work. I ponder an illness, a calamity, an excuse, but my loyalty is too strong. I am gutted, but grateful, I scream some more.

W-Day -2

It's everywhere, everywhere, in the tubes, in the tunnels that people

stride through with purpose, on the hoardings, on the internet in adverts, talk has been of the midnight screenings, too early for me, I work at 4am on W Day. My patriot friend has seen it, he reports, but its behind a slice, so I avoid it. I want to savour the taste of success, for myself, but worry that it will be the burning flavour of bile rising.

W-Day

The joke is on us. The free paper that is a curse upon my workplace, that is regularly discarded by hundreds of thousands in the mistaken belief that 'somehow, someone' will take it away and recycle it, a belief that is falsified in fealty by the blue bins that consume all, the green crusher that devours the bins, the massive trucks destined for landfill. Metro is The New Frontiersmen. It is not so good, but it is an artefact, I recycle many, gathering them knowingly, understanding the meaning and desire.

Of course I do, with my wife.

I read of stickery badges been given out at the Cross of Kings. I am finished in the Bear Farm, before the rush of feet, and miss the personal 'touch' of a pretty girl no doubt in a more desirable T-shirt giving away something I would like. Hhhhuurumm



W-Day +1

Two free sheets already asked for, stocks being nicely depleted. The noise of it is deafening.

I volunteer. Review books for the company version of *Der Signal*. I speak to Damen Goebells, I suggest W. Topical I say, it will be provided for. Voucher to pay for a book, I can recycle. Ja wol.

W-day +3

I am with our own Adrian Veidt, clever, handsome erudite and strong of character, together we are on our way through the City. Coxon and I

are on the way to see the writer of Arthur Dent in the building of Allan Lane. We are invited to the tenth floor to imbibe in fine gargleblasters. On our meanderings we view the different shops in the famous Charing Cross road. Henaff would be so disappointed, it's not the eighty two we are thinking of.

Foyle's, whole window in yellow. The movie poster, some stills and books neatly on display, anaesthetically pleasing, the message is both clear and distinct. In the window the book itself, and a book about the book. no Portraits, or companions, or schlock plating toys. It's nice, it's good. I like it.

Planet Forbidden has a weaker display, although some nicer items, and inside, there is a whole wall of toys, and mugs and badges and journals. In their places also, merchandise is available, every type of thing, including a grapple hook. That looks good. Down below, where the books are, there is a sale, alternate history has been decimated, I missed its departure from its own section into the bargain shelves. Graphic novels are to be had very cheaply. S'Ok.

Orbital have moved from an excellent basement to a brand new phenomenal shop on Neil st., just off Charing cross road, its like walking into a fine

boutique or gallery but with style and purpose. The entrance way is angular and unusual, it then is a cash desk and open space, followed by a long huge shop, just full of graphic novels and comics. There is even a gallery room to one side at the back, an extra space. Here one finds homage.

The area is smiley yellow, and on the abutment wall, is a huge four foot eye and bean juice stain, human bean juice. The gallery is yellow, there are many items on show. There is a theme of showing the more unusual, dare I say absurd comics. I see nuns. Especially Hansa, The girl who loved the swastika, by Al Hartley. Hhhuuuurrrmmmm

W. There on one wall, are two pages, a full colour page and a black and white page. Its page number one, there for all to see in simple glory, the start of something more than could have been imagined.

We even get a smiley on the way out, scorched and beaned.

W Day + 6

I watch it with my friends, we talk about the important things in life, The Doc's penis, and Silk Spectre's pussy. Interlocking symbolism, perhaps.

W Day +7

I am on a bus, near Northampton. I

am in the back seat, relaxing, reading, I hear the click, and a release of compressed air, and the snap of a can being opened, the man in front of me opens a Tesco Premium Lager, he is enjoying a drink, he turns slightly and I see, it is while he is reading, open on his lap is W. There it is. I photograph this acolyte, impressed that the permeation has occurred. As he closes the book, I see a signature, too fast to see who, but here in the land of Moore, as I leave the bus, I give a nod and a wink and he raises his can, does he know, his smile says he does, I swig from my own two litre, in my grubby hands, my own well worn battered copy. Where he is coming from or going to, I do not know.





“TRASHCANS STUFFED WITH RUMORS OF WAR, WEIGHING FACTORS: MOTIVES...WAITING FOR
A FLASH OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN ALL THIS BLOOD AND THUNDER.” RORSCHACH’S JOURNAL,
OCTOBER 21ST, 1985

The Blue Lads Langer.
By James Bacon

So, I was sitting up late one night, talking with Jebbo, Dom and Stef, over in Stef's house and a plan comes together. Although we are talking about Choppers, Burners, Grifters and Boxers, all types of seventies and early eighties bikes, we agree that a trip to see Watchmen is in order once it is released. We plan it, and its comes together nicely.

Going to the cinema is a regular Wednesday night outing for the lads who partake in the 'buy one get one free' offer from Orange, a mobile phone company, but I cannot do a Wednesday, so it must be the Thursday. A lads night out, no doubt filled with ribaldry and anger is in the offing.

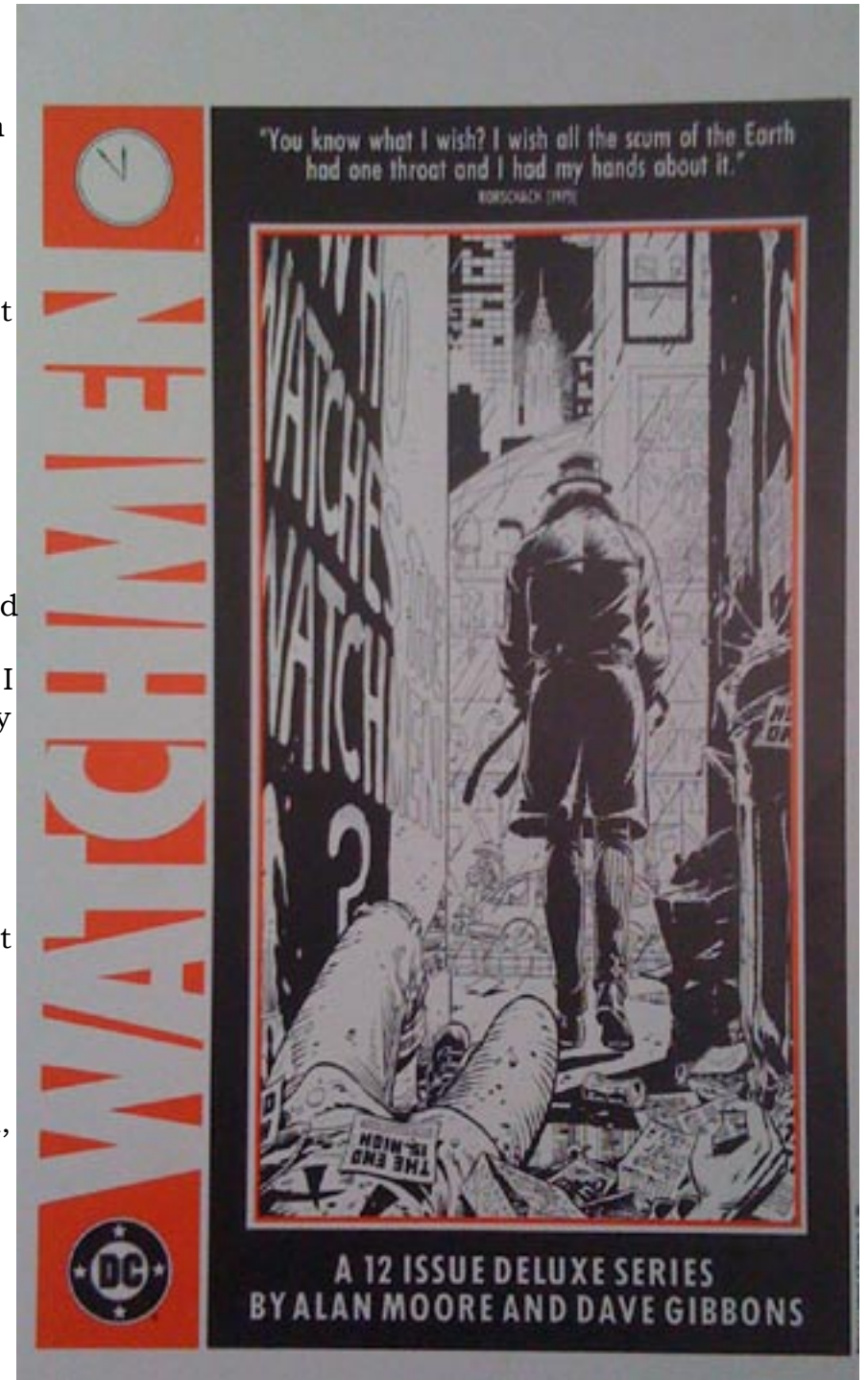
BUFF is the official name; Bachelors United Film something. All I know is that any post addressed for the Uxbridge Home for Wayward Bachelors always gets to Stef, Jebbo and Dom.

Stef convinces Max to come along, hoping to cheer her up and Jebbo goes home, somewhere up north, he is out of work at the moment, a builder.

We gather slowly at Stef's house and Stef is a great host. We chat and hang out and there is a good vibe, I am here to escape the worries of money, work and Eastercon, just looking for some mental release from reality and all those things that, well tonight I can do with out.

Dom is in great humour, and Matt is late. Max is out of sorts, her life troubles getting her down, and hobby of Eastercon wearing her out, she cannot see any wood for the tress and it's hard, but we chat about Eastercon for a bit, although I don't think I can offer her any solution, I just hope that she sees the effect and value of her good work, and that she gets a bit of good luck that triggers some movement in her favour, she deserves a bot of good luck, but I think she benefits from chatting.

Then we banter, the jokes and absurdities come on, Stef produces some salad, and then some excellent pasta, the vulgarities and profanities start to flow when Dom and myself get together, inhibitions are soon lost, as Max tells Dom to stop



apologising for using the C word, and to talk like normal. I am unsure about this, but Dom ploughs forward.

We head off, shouting up the stairs at Dom, as he yanks off his work wear and hikes up his jeans. Jebbo has found a new route to the movie house, and we follow this, it's quicker, and we work our way there while talking about comics.

The comic has not been read by us all, but Stef is especially surprised that Dom has somehow managed to read it, way back when, there is an explanation but it is unclear if he was gifted the book or genuinely someone thought that it was cool and he would like it. Max hasn't read it, and reckons she has no time. I know that feeling, my to be read pile is high now.

The cinema is not too full at all, and we are just about in time and we go in and sit down in pretty good seats. I sit at the edge, I have a two litre of Cola with me, and I know I will need to squeeze one out at some stage, so why put mates to any trouble.

The movie comes on, and we are impressed. It's good, the music is nice, its got quite the violent start, and then



some more ultra violence later on.

I get up to go to the toilet, my legs have been crossed, and one is dead, so I quickly lose my footing and stagger down the stairs, some of my friends finding this rather hilarious, as I drunkenly misplace my foot and walk

with a profound limp.

Afterwards we sit and wait for all the credits to roll by. As we leave conversation immediately turns to Doctor Manhattan's Penis. Its long and flaccid, and due to his spectacular fitness, he models himself with the perfect body, he has no fat at all on the triangle between his tummy and legs, so his willy just seems to go straight down.

So we talk about Doc Manhattan's Penis. We are not the only ones. Stephen Fry, famous actor. who is a twitter person, is reported as saying 'Right. I'm off now. Think I'll catch The Watchmen. Feel I should. I read it as it was by Alan Moore, of whose V for Vendetta I was in a film', 'Mm enjoyed Watchmen. Man in row in front fell asleep. I didn't but have to say I think it was far too long. Should read the GN now...', 'My first blue penis experience at the cinema too. Smurf alarm.', 'The blue penis, I

should add, is a reference to the sight of Dr Manhattan's resolutely cobalt membrum virile in the film Watchmen.'

It featured heavily in sensationalist headlines in comic and entertainment websites and mags, and even the actor involved,

got some quotes in. 'Actually, I didn't fully expect the interest that Dr. Manhattan's genitalia has received. But I understood his motivation for baring it all.' says Billy Crudup.

He continues, 'Dr Manhattan is this incredibly existential character who travels through time and space trying to decide the fate of mankind and everyone is like: "So, how did you figure out how big his c**k was going to be?" But, actually, his nudity was really important to me because the studio were like: "Do we really have to have a naked guy?" The single fact that this, a superhero movie, has more male full-frontal nudity than probably any studio movie ever made makes you understand what kind of movie it is.'

Yeah, well I read that they had a cockometer or something, and gave Cradupp a decent one, seven out of ten, not so sure, myself really, its not exactly what one is meant to focus on, considering this is the greatest or one of the greatest comics of all time. It has never been an issue or even talking point before, which says a lot for the power of on screen manipulation of folk.

It was funny how Laurie said that kissing Dr Manhattan was like kissing a battery, because we all thought of Matt and his balls. Matt had his balls electrocuted by a violet wand for charity, which was painfully cool. So we reckoned Dr Manhattan

must be like that. But did anyone notice that when he is having some foreplay with Laurie, his other version, who is him, is working on something and all flaccid. Not so impressive. We wondered if Laurie liked the taste of licking a slot car track.

We wandered, our way from the cinema to The Metropolitan Pub. The vulgarity becomes gruesome. Matt is the butt of some very forthright and blunt humour, he is a super fella, really decent, a great helper at all the cons I run, and really very clever. He has had a bit of dodgy luck with Girls, and some of those aspects we never mention, such is the war, but he has a strange habit, of going out with Dom and scoring with, well interesting girls. None of us are models, or gods gift, but comedy is never kind and all of us have regrets that things happened or didn't happen.

It's a form of comedy, but its very chauvinistic and sexist I expect. Then again, it's honest. Men do talk about women, when they are gathered. But then, everyone knows, All Men are Bastards.

In the pub there is further discussion, we are enthused by many aspects. The single men especially by Laurie's costume.

Max heads back to Stef's, when we decide a detour to a Kebab shop is in order. Talk is muted as we eat and walk, back along the darkened and



quiet street, across the river which is swollen, and faster flowing than normal.

Of course, after all the imagined debauchery, the real discussion happens, and we are all normal fellas with real concerns, cares and complexities. Things are discussed at times like this, that normally would never be mentioned. We circle back and forth after talking some serious things, we talk about the book.

Dom gets the comic out and he

SOME PEOPLE FEAR THAT WHICH THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND,
OTHERS FEAR THAT THEY KNOW WILL SUBSUME THEM FOREVER.
ME, I FEAR ALAN MOORE. 'NUFF SAID. JAY CRASDAN

finds Dr Manhattan's Penis. We are obviously fixated. Or plain immature.

The comic penis is very different, in the comic its a bit Grecian (small) but a discussion then starts about whether we should be able to see his balls and whether his cock is sitting on his balls. Its serious anatomical type of stuff. Dom reckons you need to worry if your balls hang lower than your cock, but then the ageing factor of balls heading for the knees, is discussed.

We laughed quite a bit during the movie. There was definite utilisation of humour to get through parts which might have otherwise been contemplative. The audience were very receptive to it, making all the right sounds at the right time.

In looking at the comic, we see the covers that were turned into scenes and the things which were not. The rape scene of Sally Jupiter is discussed, in the movie she is portrayed with a much more sympathetic angle, whereas in the comic, she does not garner sympathy so easily, yet the rape scene, in the comic, she is obviously upset and

beaten badly, lying on the ground in floods of tears, yet in the movie, her love for the comedian, or at least her nostalgic reminiscences of his desires seem very overt, and then we wonder why she is not portrayed crying or upset when hooded justice saves her from her horrendous ordeal, of course, she is in shock. Violence is a way of life for these guys, but there is some pondering as to what Snyder was at. Is he trying to over egg the pudding, by being overt about things that should be subtle.

Well they are probably a bit odd, all dressed in bright clothing.

Laurie and Sally never smoke, its 1985, they are meant to be smoking strange looking cigarettes with balls at the end. The cars are all wrong, and it just doesn't feel different enough to a real 1985.

Dom reckons the sequel will be Watchmen Vs Cloverfield. The lads all seem to agree that the changed ending was a necessary evil and that it worked well for the cinema audience.

The cast was awesome, really well picked and perfect for their roles, their acting was especially appreciated.

Rorschach is very good, one is doubtful about the Comedian, whether to hate or like him, an excellent indication of good acting and we all liked the prison scene with Big Figure, where we don't see anything. Interesting how a scene we don't see the violence at all, where our brains have to work, is perhaps the most popular.

The sound track was good, and we remind Dom that the songs get mentioned in the actual comic, but he

reckons Moore must have been on a Bob Dillon trip at the time.

All along the Watchtower, a personal favourite for me, I am a huge Jimi Hendrix fan, for near on twenty five years now. This track we all agreed to have been the most perfect choice for that scene.

'Two riders came to the door' is very apt of course, and was in the comic. No one seems to mind the lack of hover bikes, when I mention it. As we look at the comic we find the 'time are a changing' reference.

Dom feels the film could have benefited from some more graphic midget violence, that Big Figure was excellent, especially where Rorschach goes into the toilet, but some more violence would have been appreciated. We look at the cover for issue two, the statue in the rain, which was clearly in the movie, but wonder what happened to the Green House in Veidt's Antarctic hideaway, that seems to have been done away with.

We walk through the comic, gathered around the table, drinking coffee and soft drinks that Stef brings us. On his fridge is a penciled spread sheet, in code, indicating what all his friends drink and how.

V for Vendetta also had changes to 'allow' the audience to understand better what was going on. I am not so sure personally. I think its an underestimation of the capability of the



audience to understand complex ideas.

The effect of Dr. Manhattan's bombs are praised, and it is noted that the movie made frequent use of the Twin Towers. Again an overt effort to indicate a difference. Everyone liked and hated the Comedian, the scene with Kennedy and in Vietnam being considered pretty wicked.

Dom was especially taken with the graphic image of Kennedy's Brain on the boot in this scene, portraying his assassination. Everyone notes that the lack of the news stand and that central location that is very obvious in the comic is a disappointment.

This bought up discussion of the extra 'Voyage of the Black Freighter' DVD which will be called 'Tales of' and animated. This is comic that is within the watchmen, that a kid reads, and we follow as he sits next to the newstand. In the world of Watchmen, Pirates are the fodder of comics.

We also talk about rumours of a version of the movie over three hours

long, with more bits in, and then a version with the Black Freighter and Under the Hood Documentary, at over four hours long. Now that sounds more like it.

Matt wonders if its all about the pretty pictures,

but simplifying the story. Stef reckons the flashback scenes during the Comedian's funeral, have to be some of the better moments and handled very well, but again, this may be because of the good actor choices. We all agree again with one another that this was good, and that a famous name or two, might have ruined the balance.

We liked the 'Human Bean Juice' moment, when Rorschach gives Dan the Comedians smiley badge, and also the 'You Quit' moment, in the secret Owl Basement. No one else noticed the lack of Heinz Beans with 58 varieties until I mention it.

We wonder, if movies are always going to be made accessible and the relatively recent Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy movie comes up as an example of mediocre for everyone, rather than great for the few. All the important parts are there, to a degree, and we wonder is that the point or whether really the point is that it's

more than just the important bits, and working those out for yourself by reading and watching twice, maybe three times as much interaction is the important bit.

The Cufflink shot, was agreed on being very cool. Discussion then goes a bit weird, and The Blue Man group comes up, and we wonder how they clean themselves. Dom reckons he would have asked for a horse penis. He then goes looking for a dog penis. I say, as I type in notes on my Iphone that I cannot understand the context with the comic, this doesn't happen to other discussion's I realise it's not so much the subject matter, but the reprobates involved. How Dr Manhattan functions comes up, literally, and it is wondered whether he would have a glow in the dark emission and if Laurie got shocked as well as orgasming.

We find more saner ground with a discussion on how good Rorschach mask was. Stef reckons it was termites in a sack, of course, and a discussion ensues about Half-face from Batman and Rorschach's mask.

We all thought the opening credits, the slow mo images of camera shots was brilliant, some of the details, in the movie really added to the whole, the scene which changed Rorschach was well done, his disgust as he realises where the kidnapped child is, brilliant.

We then discuss other Alan Moore movies. Despite it's potential

and cast, the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen is deemed awful. So much is wrong with it from Mina to the addition of Tom Sawyer. We wonder is it because Americans need to have things pointed out, or just that's what studio companies think. We know many intelligent Americans, and Watchmen is an American comic book. Is it all about the lowest common denominator?

Matt tells us about The Man who Has Everything. I know this comic, Alan Moore wrote it and Dave Gibbons did the artwork in 1985, for the Superann 11 annual. Its a very good little story. He explains that it was filmed as an episode of Justice League Unlimited a kids cartoon. While I enjoyed the animated Batman series, and some Justice League, I must admit I have not kept up.

That's a spanner in the proverbial ratings works. We decide to move on, and rate the movies of Alan Moore comics in order. It is deemed that Watchmen is the best, followed closely by V for Vendetta as I wibble about which one is better, then turd is From Hell and League, which we concur really stinks is last.

Stef really thinks that Watchmen is brilliant, and wonders why From Hell is even mentioned, so much being hacked out of the comic, and just bashed into a movie. I don't mention that Bilbo Baggins as a murderer of

Prostitutes is secretly appealing, but only for the wrong reasons. That in a dark moment, I would have loved to splice some of the grim moments into Lord of the Rings.

Generally the men all liked it, and as I save my selection of notes,realising that I have failed to have that sane discussion that I so often see in more grown up and erudite publications, that it is in itself a reflection of the failings of the movie. When we talk about the comic, we talk about the comic and its meaning and its layers and what we missed, when we talk about the movie we talk penis.

It is now the very early hours of the morning and I must drive home, but its worth it, as I walk to the car, a good night has been had, my sides hurt a bit from laughing, and I have had a super night. I say goodbye to my best mate, turn on some Foo Fighters and head homeward.



Review of the Watchmen Movie
by
Pádraig Ó Méalóid

Before I even begin reviewing the Watchmen movie, I should start with some personal disclosure, to help put this review in context: I have been a devoted fan of Alan Moore's work for a very long time now, and have a passionate – some would say obsessive – interest in said work. I also have a very large collection of his work, not just the usual well-known stuff, but a lot of very obscure things from very early in his career, a lot of which I scan and put online at my Glycon LiveJournal. I am, for better or worse, an expert on all things Moore, and

therefore on the original work on which the Watchmen movie is based. I have also had the good fortune to have not only interviewed Moore a few times, but have met him, and even had a cup of tea with him in his Northampton home.

I am also firmly on Moore's side when he says that this original work was stolen from him, a point that probably needs to be clarified. So, to the best of my knowledge, this is what I understand to have happened: in 1985 Moore and artist Dave Gibbons signed a contract with DC Comics that allowed DC to publish Watchmen, but which also contained a reversion clause, meaning that once the work was out of print for a year, the rights to it reverted to Moore and Gibbons.

This was all before today's enormous graphic novel market, so it seems that all parties involved in the contract believed that this reversion was going to actually happen, and both sides entered into it in good faith. Certainly those were times of great change in the comics' industry, when new things were being tried, and contracts like

the Watchmen contract were the forerunners that allowed today's creator-owned properties to exist, so there's every reason to believe that whoever was fronting for DC at the time were doing so honestly. However, as soon as the last issue of Watchmen was out, DC decided to republish the entire series as a 'graphic novel,' a new term they were using to try to distance their new, more mature, product from their humble comics origins. Watchmen has not been out of print for a single day since then, effectively meaning that the very success of their work has forever kept the ownership of his most famous and revered work out of Moore's hands. Moore feels, quite rightly in my opinion, that he had been swindled out of his creation, and has sworn never to work for DC Comics ever again, and has since foresworn any interest in the book, feeling he is better off to simply walk away from it, rather than continue to be hurt by what had happened to him. It follows that he is also not interested in the film that has been made from the book, and has had his name removed from the credits, and asked that his share of any money from the film should be given to his co-creator, Dave Gibbons.

As you can see, I'm obviously not an innocent bystander, and my review of the movie is going to be informed by all of the above. So, bearing all that in mind, what did I make of the



thing? Well, to cut a long story short, and not unexpectedly, I didn't like it. A lot of this is due to my disliking how the original work was adapted for the big screen, and this review is going to feature a lot of comparisons between the two works. You could suggest that I should try to put that out of my mind, and assess it simply on its own merits, but this would simply be missing the point. My opinion, like yours, is subjective, not objective. We all judge what we see based on what we are, and I'm no exception. At least in my case I'm telling you where I stand up front...

And I should also warn you that in making the comparisons I do, I'm going to presume you're familiar with the original work. If you're not, there is a chance I may be giving away parts of the story, so you might want to stop reading now. If you go ahead and don't like what you read, you've only yourself to blame.

So, to the movie. We start, pre-credits, with the Comedian in his apartment high above the streets of New York, where he is attacked, then thrown out a plate-glass window. During the course of this, there is a protracted and very bloody and violent fight scene, which is just the first of many. And this was my first indication that this film might not be to my liking. In the book, the story starts after the Comedian's death, which is slowly told through a number of flashbacks as the

story progresses, with the violence being largely off-panel, whereas in the film it was obviously decided that it was important to make things obvious, rather than subtle, and in-your-face, rather than implied. This continued throughout the film, with gratuitous and generally very explicit fight scenes or other forms of gory violence every now and then, presumably to keep the audience's interest. After all, they could hardly be expected to be interested in a superhero film that wasn't all about the fighting, now could they? Another thing I was concerned about right from the get-go was the issue of time – ironically really, in a film that should have been, amongst other things, a meditation on the nature of time. I know that the movie-makers tried to keep the film under three hours, and apparently had to make some hard decisions in the editing, so if they decided to include this long fight sequence at the beginning, what had to give to make space for it?

Once the Comedian was safely out the window and on his way to oblivion on the pavement, we hit the title sequence, which was actually



my favourite part of the movie. This ran through an awful lot of the pre-history of the Watchmen, pretty much in chronological order, in a series of brief cameos by the original group, the Minutemen, and it really is a treat. There's a shot of Neil Armstrong being photographed by Doctor Manhattan on the moon where you can hear him saying, "Good luck, Mr Gorsky," which made me laugh out loud, the only time I did so throughout the entire movie. And, once the title sequence was over, if you actually knew who all the featured characters were, we were back to page one of Watchmen the book. From this point on we were effectively watching Watchmen-the-book as storyboard for Watchmen-the-movie,

because the action and dialogue were frame for frame and word for word. If you're going to do it that way, what is the point in doing it at all, I'm inclined to think – although I also got annoyed when they changed things, of course, because that's not what I wanted to see either. So, maybe not as objective a viewpoint as I thought!

Anyway, the movie progressed apace, more or less following the book. Things grated along the way: the actor playing Richard Nixon was in a very obvious prosthetic face, and Moloch's ears just looked silly. The costumes were hideous and ridiculous, and, of course, over the top. Even Rorschach, who was the one closest to his original incarnation, didn't look right, as I always imagined his mask being more like silk that sacking. And don't even get me started on Doctor Manhattan's swinging blue manhood. The thing is, as it all progressed, I had absolutely no sense of being swept along by the events unfolding in front of me. I really don't think that this was due to any antipathy on my part, or over-familiarity with the original work, because I have read *V for Vendetta* as often as I've read *Watchmen*, and I loved the film version of that, and continue to do so (and said so in my review of it at the time), and feel it's the only well-made adaptation of any of Moore's works, and even had the temerity to tell Alan this, sitting in his

own sitting room.

As the three hours rolled past, more and more of the important things in the book were dealt with virtually in passing. Much of the characters' origins were either completely ignored or dealt with so briefly as to make them virtually meaningless. Some of



my most cherished moments from the book, such as when Laurie figures out who her father is, or when Rorschach slowly reveals the darkness in his soul to the prison psychiatrist, are there and gone in the blink of an eye, and would be better off not even to have been included, rather than to have been dealt with so cursorily. And as we approached the end, this rushing of the story, along with more and more divergences from the original, were making me glad that at the very least I hadn't actually paid to see the film – something I had sworn I would never do, in any case, but am certainly not

likely to be tempted to do at any stage in the future.

And now I'm going to talk about the ending, and if you're not familiar with the original ending of the book, you really should back away from this review right now. Honestly. For your own good.

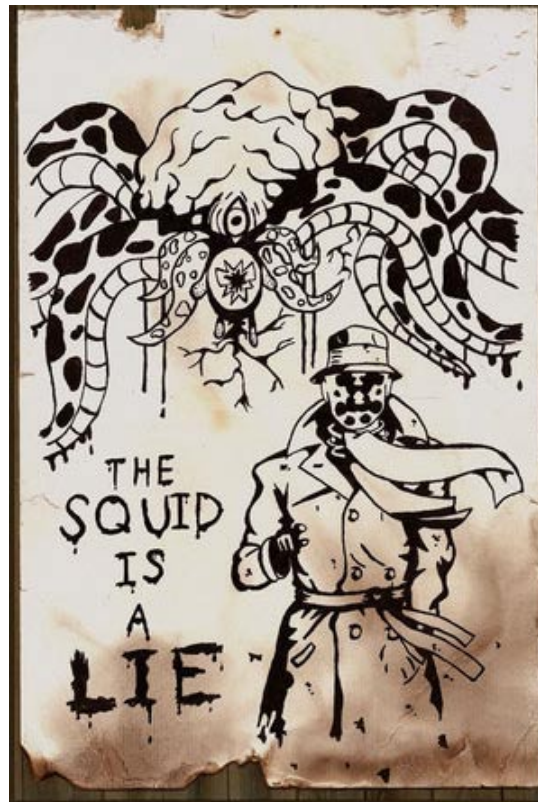
I knew going into the cinema that they'd changed the ending of the book for the film. The Giant Space Squid was not going to get its moment of glory on the screen, although this didn't prevent them having a knowing little nod in its direction earlier in the film: At one stage we see Ozymandias on a TV monitor in his Antarctic laboratory, where he is working, and on the wall in the background is what is presumably the project name, the initial letters of which read downwards as SQUID. (This is by no means, of course, the only knowing nod in the film to events or features in the book: In a restaurant, you can hear someone contemplate ordering the four-legged chicken, we see the Rumrunner bar and the Treasure Island comic shop in the background, and so on.) Everyone is finally gathered together in Ozymandias's place in the frozen south – although having Nite Owl and Rorschach walk there through the snow from the downed Owl Ship to the sound of Jimi Hendrix's version of *All Along the Watchtower*, specifically to the line "Two riders were

approaching,” doesn’t have quite the same symbolic meaning and majesty as it would if they were crossing the snow on the pair of hover-segues, like they do in the book. But, really, I nit-pick. Ozymandias explains his plan to save the world: Instead of having bio-engineered a giant telepathic space squid to level New York, so that the world rallies around against an apparent threat from beyond this world, he specifically decided to set up an apparent villain from this world instead, which still causes the world to gather together, completely unrealistically. To say more would give it all away, but I wasn’t buying it for a second.

When I went to see this last night, my wife was with me. She has never read Watchmen, nor has any real idea what it was about. Her opinion is interesting, it seems to me. She said she felt there was no hook in the film to drag her in, and most of the time she felt that the only way she could possibly have known what was going on was if she had read the book. We both left the cinema unconvinced by what we had seen, both for our own reasons.

There is a scene in the film where Doctor Manhattan is being interviewed in a television studio, just before he abruptly leaves the Earth to go to Mars. He describes something – I don’t recall what at

this point – as being as useful as a photograph of Oxygen would be to a drowning man. And this is actually the most apt description I can think of for this film: It looks a lot like the original Watchmen book, but has none of its grace, or beauty, or subtlety, or sinuously beautiful timing. Watchmen is the most perfect graphic novel there is, and a huge amount of work went into making it that way, and attempting to streamline that for the big screen was never going to work. Alan Moore said it was unfilmable, and I have seen that he was completely right.



“THE CITY
IS DYING OF
RABIES. IS
THE BEST I
CAN DO TO
WIPE THE
FLECKS OF
FOAM FROM
ITS LIPS?”
RORSCHACH

Why One Must Read
By Chris Garcia

Sometime late in the early 1990s...

I went over to M's on the T, scribbling madly in the notebook I'd stolen from 128 Tremont on the way out of Poetry with Peter Shippy. I'd already managed to fill three pages with my tiny printing, but as I got more and more into it, I'd loosened up the writing and there were about 15 pages filled with almost unreadable notes. And why did I need it anyways? I knew all this stuff by heart. When I got there, I'd be able to tell them the whole thing without fail, without forgetting a single detail.

I jumped off and headed to M's building. The doorman opened the door for me, probably remembering me from the last time I'd visited and staggered out into the snow of January shit-faced. He smiled at me with that I've seen you at your worst' smile that they must teach at Doorman University. I got into the elevator and made my way up.

The door was open and you could smell Johnny and M smoking out on the balcony from the hall. It was loud, too. I could tell SaBean, Jay, Marcus and Lisa were there, which probably meant that Ben and Sugar and Manny were roaming around either half-gone or all-the-way-there. That would be quite an audience, but it

would also mean that I'd get more than my expected crowd.

"OK, you miscreants," I called to them, "It's storytime with Uncle Chris!"

Now, I've said this exact thing before and delivered one story or another and usually the results are good. M and Johnny tossed their smokes down on the heads of whoever was passing-by below and Manny and Michael came out of the bedroom.

"What have you got for us tonight, Chris?" Johnn Reglario, my hero, said as he settled himself into the huge chair that M would much rather not have had him sitting in.

"Tonight, it's a new concept for a comic book series." I said.

"Really?" said Jay, the only one of us who had ever worked anywhere near comics back when he was an intern with Wizard.

"Really." I answered. "This is the best idea I've ever had."

Everyone took their places, and got comfortable.

"Please, I ask that you do not interrupt me and hold all questions and comments until after I'm finished." I said.

Everyone

settled down and I began.

"The year is 2014, and the entire world witnesses the destruction of half of New York City by a nuclear explosion that emanated from a single person who stood in the centre of Broadway and then unleashed death. On the televisions around the world, it is announced that if the Governments of the world do not surrender within 72 hours, they will destroy one major world capital every hour until all the governments surrender. The voice that goes out over the air is unknown, but it identifies the destroyer as MANA.

"We go back into the past and discover that in 1935, individuals around the world began to show up with super-powers. Some were gifted with great powers, while others were given only slight advantages. The





powers would only manifest after a period of deep coma, after which they'd emerge with great power. These happened to many individuals of all ages. World War II breaks out in Europe, largely between the superheroes that originated in those countries. The armies were involved somewhat secondarily. The Americans don't become involved until Kamikaze attacks Pearl Harbor and destroying nearly the entire Pacific Fleet. This brings American heroes to the war, which goes on, leading to the death of hundreds of heroes. After the Allies have managed to neutralize all of the Axis heroes, the conflict ends quickly

as it is the Allied with their heroes against the armies of the Axis, which fold quite quickly.

"The heroes return, but tales of their excesses become more and more widespread, leading to a great falling in the popularity of the heroes. In 1956, The Coral Act is passed, banning Heroes from operating in the public. The Government does not have a method to deal with the Heroes, who mostly keep working fighting evil, though many of the former heroes from the war become villains in the new world. The government keeps trying to find new ways to stop and capture the heroes, finally leading to the development of the Failing Virus in 1974, a virus which only affects the Heroes and causes them to die.

"There is a break-away group, the Deep Sleep Initiative, headed by Dr. Magnus Crisis, who are against the concept of the Failing Virus. They find three heroes and get them to agree to be put into Deep Sleep. Dr. Crisis puts the heroes under and the Failing Virus kills all the heroes. Dr. Crisis then has to keep the project going through back channels and secret funding. He is eventually the only member of the Deep Sleep Initiative left.

"MANA appears in 2014, more than 35 years after the last hero was found dead. MANA appears in New York, which leads Dr. Crisis to bring the three Heroes out of Deep Sleep.

"The first hero is Madame Racer, a speedster who can move at incredible speeds, but must get that speed from the motion of other things. She wants to leave because she was regularly abused by her boyfriend: N-Gate, a hero who can negate the power of a hero by touch and project a field which can eject superheroes. Madame Racer is frozen first.

"The second hero is Sandow, who is a hero with lesser powers than many. He never has to sleep and never tires. This allowed him to hone both his body and abilities around the clock. He is a top-notch marksman, a



excellent grappler and a peak physical specimen. He agrees to be put into hibernation figuring that when he is returned from Deep Sleep, he can start over again and become a sports star.

“The final Hero is a Russian Mystic who left the USSR and took the name of Crimea. She was a spy during the war. She had the power to read thoughts as long as she can see the eyes of a person. She can also find the darkest memories and see through the eyes of anyone who loves the person whose eyes she is peering into. She can collect and pass on dark memories. She was believed to be a communist and the rise of Anti-Soviet sentiment led many to question her. While she possesses incredible mental powers, she has little physical ability. Her extravagant lifestyle did not help either. She put herself into Deep Sleep as a way to avoid the troubles.

“The three of them come out of Deep Sleep and Dr. Crisis explains the problem, that they’ve got to find MANA and stop him. Crisis has found a tracing system that allows him to get an approximate location for MANA. The crew races out in an old super-vehicle and they begin to find clues. Crisis stays behind and searches for clues about where MANA came from. As he is working on it, there is a small explosion in the Deep Sleep system and Dr. Crisis races to stop it, but the power behind the system is actually N-



Gate, who has been held with a system that allowed them to use his powers to keep the three heroes shielded and unaging. N-Gate awakens and kills Crisis, then takes to using the Network to find Madame Racer.

“Racer, Sandow and Crimea arrive outside of Solvang, California, where they’ve found MANA. There is a showdown between them heroes and MANA, but N-Gate arrives and instantly negates her powers by enclosing her in a field. Sandow fights MANA himself, mostly avoiding damage since he can not truly do any damage. The Controller, a clone of Richard Nixon who has started a climb towards

power again, is watching the fight that his originator begun by putting MANA into their form of Deep Sleep, knowing that they’d bring him back at some point to bring the Earth under his rule. Crimea has been attempting to make eye-contact with the Clone Nixon, but he is wearing heavy mirrored glasses. She comes up with an idea, and runs towards Sandow, who turns to her and tosses her up, onto a fence which she grabs. Clone Nixon turns around quickly and his glasses slip enough for her to make eye contact and she probes deep troubles and plants her darkest memory of being forced to murder her own people during WWII as a way to gather sentiment against the Nazis. Crimea then realises that she can see through MANA’s eyes, that MANA loves Clone Nixon as his protector.

“Since Sandow turned his attention to launching Crimea, MANA bears down on him. Clone Nixon then calls on N-Gate to attack Sandow. N-Gate throws a top-power field out to Sandow, which throws him forward into MANA, who crushes him, but Madame Racer grabs hold of the moment and uses the amulet N-Gate wears to slice through his spine, leaving him alive but not able to move.

“Madame Racer then races towards MANA, who tries to grab her, falls forward onto N-Gate, which saps him of his powers. Crimea gets down

from the fence and runs to MANA, searching his fears for the truth. There, she discovers that the powers were granted by an Alien Race who were attempting to create a new breed that would be able to colonize the stars. Madame Racer then comes to MANA and uses hundreds of fast stabs to kill MANA as he is no longer with his powers.

“So,” I said, taking a pause, “what do you think?”

This was the kind of pause that worried me. It was like that scene in 1776 where everyone pauses for a second before they explode into argument on the floor of congress.

“It’s Watchmen.” Said Michael.

“Yeah, it’s Watchmen.” followed Jay.

“I can’t believe that you ripped off Watchmen?” M said, getting up and going to her bedroom.

“Watchmen? That’s the comic by the guy who used to write Swamp Thing. Neil Gaiman?” I asked.

“Right comic, wrong guy.” Jay said. “It’s Alan Moore, the guy who did The Killing Joke.”

“Ohh,” I said. “good comic.”

“Anyhow, the Watchmen is a comic about the murder of a Superhero after they’ve outlawed superheroes.” Jay said.

“You’ve never read it?” Michael

said. “I mean, there was so much that you must’ve lifted from it.”

“Like what?”

“Well, there was the fact that Nixon was the bad guy in both, that New York got destroyed...”

“Though you didn’t use a squid. Nice touch.” Jay piped in.

“And there was the thing about using heroes in war and the part about the super vehicle...”

“And even the name MANA sounds like Manhattan, one of the heroes in Watchmen!” Manny added with some indignance.

“It’s MANA, Mutually Assured Nuclear Annihilation. It’s an old Army acronym from the 50s.” I explained.

“You’ve never read Watchmen?” Jay said again.

“No.”

M reemerged.

“I can’t find it, but here, read this.” M said, tossing a copy of V for Vendetta in my lap.

“I think I’ve got your copy at my place.” SaBean said.

“So, you’re saying I’ve managed to rip-off something I had no idea about?” I asked.

“Yeah, but don’t worry, even if it weren’t a rip-off, it still wouldn’t be very good.” M said.

“Way too easy.” Michael said.

“Too many gaps in logic. Magic has to work by rules.” Jay added.

“And the rules seem so flexible.”

Michael piled on.

“And you came up with the dumbest names.” Jay said.

“It’s all just too...I dunno, too simple a take on something that requires a powerful intellect to really push through.”

“Someone like Alan Moore.” Michael said.

“Yeah, someone like Alan Moore.” added M.

I spent the rest of the evening drinking. Heavily.



L'Homme de La Montre
(The men of the watch)
A Review by howeird

This black and white documentary film opens with a panoramic aerial shot of the glittering River Suze in the Saint-Imier valley of Switzerland. The narration tells us this is the section of St. Imier which is known as “Longines”. Zoom in to a mid-1800’s era building, dissolve the walls to see Auguste Agassiz, loupe in his eye, bent over a workbench and the innards of a classic timepiece.

Agassiz looks up, notices the camera, and the next 10 minutes is a running monologue covering his founding of Agassiz & compagnie, staying true to the cottage industry format, and preserving tradition. A younger man in an expensive business suit taps him on the shoulder, tells the old man “I’ll take it from here, thank you”. Well, that’s what the subtitles said. My French is not that good, but I know “get lost old man” when I hear it. The younger man is Ernest Francillon, nephew of the old watchman, who builds mass production factories on both sides of the river, changes the company name to Longines, and markets the heck out of his Swiss watches in North America, “where the market is bigger” said the subtitles, but the French word for “gullible” was what came out of his mouth.

The narrator walks us down

the block, another workshop, another man with a loupe bending over what appears to be the results of a robot throwing up into a pocket watch case. We are told he is another St. Imier artisan, named Edouard Heuer. Heuer looks up, notices the camera, and the next 10 minutes is a running monologue covering his founding of TAG Heuer about 10 years after Francillon’s coup. “From the first patent for a chronograph mechanism in 1882, to the one filed for an oscillating pinion in 1887; and from the timer measuring the 1/100th of a second in 1916 to the first Microtimer accurate to the 1/1000e of a second in 1966”, he says, “TAG Heuer has now been in the vanguard of Swiss watchmaking for 148 years.” He doesn’t look that old, but I guess even in a documentary some disbelief can be willingly suspended. Preferably in jeweled movement.

From Longines, we are taken to the nearby Vallée de Joux, where the old man at the work bench is Antoine LeCoultre, who looks up, notices the camera, and the next 10 minutes is a running monologue covering his founding of LeCoultre & Cie with his son Elie, including a synopsis of their 200+ patents in the areas of movements, cases, bracelets, dials and watch functions.

Toward the end of this, the narrator looks at his Rolex, and takes us to the

final destination, Bienne, Switzerland. The old man is introduced as Hermann Aegler, who looks up, notices the camera, and the next 10 minutes is a running monologue covering his prowess at creating horological movements which he ships to London. His customer is Wilsdorf and Davis, run by a pair of ambitious but broke young men who buy his movements, and dials and cases from other manufacturers in Europe, and sell them in their London jewelry shop. W&D, he says, renames the company The Rolex Watch Company in 1915, and opens offices in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. They have since moved to Geneva. “A Rolex is not just a watch,” he says, “it is technology emboldened by the human spirit”. The film wraps up with a slick modern marketing clip provided by the Rolex company, which is mentioned early and often in the closing credits.

The closing credits also note that there are more than 200 watchmakers in Switzerland, which makes this documentary just a blip on the radar. So many possible watch men sequels!



What Happens When The Bad Guy Wins?

A comment on the plot of *The Watchmen*.

By Martin Young

(Don't read this if you have not seen the film.)

What if nobody noticed that the villain was crazy?

I read *The Watchmen* comic book about twenty years ago, and like a lot of people recognize it as a marvelous artistic achievement. I did then and still do consider it a work of genius. I'm not going to say that it's flawed, but there is something about it that bothers me. I thought about it a lot at the time, especially as I was reading about people who considered *The Watchmen* "literature."

What if nobody noticed that the villain's plan was mad?

Ozymandias worked from a deeply flawed view of history. He imagined that inventing a imaginary external threat, what H. L. Mencken called a "hobgoblin," would reduce, and perhaps eliminate war on this planet. Historically, the opposite has always been true. The appearance of an external threat, real or imaginary, always provides evil opportunities for the unscrupulous among the powerful. World War II, for instance, not only provided unprecedented opportunities for profiteering, it also enabled

some large corporations to eliminate their smaller competitors. The invention of an external threat is a time-honored way by which bad people gain wealth and power. So creating the appearance of a threat to the whole planet creates

a universal excuse, usable by any bad person with a little bit of power anywhere in the world. Think about what happens to civil liberties and economic freedom in any country in time of war. Think about what would happen all over the world if our rulers could always appeal to planetary security to justify their actions. (At this point I should put in a word for Mack Reynolds, whose book *The Galactic Medal of Honor* covered just such a situation.)

What If the Fantastic Four decided not to thwart Doctor Doom after all?

And so the Watchmen confront Ozymandias in his lair, listen to his



explanation, consider the present state of the world, and decide to quit fighting him. Actually, that bit is kind of cool. Isn't that the way people really should resolve conflicts? Listen to the other fellow, collect relevant evidence, put feelings aside, think it over, and decide on the basis of logic. Given that one of the major goals of my life is to promote critical thinking, I can hardly complain when Alan Moore makes it a central part of his plot. Even though I disagree with the reasoning presented, I wholeheartedly applaud the way Moore made a thinking process an integral part of his story.

What if the hero's companions turn on him?

For me, the hero of the story was always Rorschach. Deeply twisted, driven by demons and struggling with his own darkness as much as with crime, Rorschach nevertheless found his own way and followed it. I admired that, and admired the way Moore created a character who could be admirable in this way. Rorschach passionately argues for justice, for finding and sticking to a moral center, and no one is convinced. It is Rorschach who keeps to the hero's code, refusing to go along with what he sees as a deep violation of core moral principles. Refusing to play along.

What if somebody killed the hero on his way to save the day?

Not only did Rorschach remain true to himself at the end, he was true even unto death. He did not just refuse to compromise, he made his refusal public. He did not think to pretend agreement to the deception so that he would be free to denounce it later. The people he would have deceived were his friends, his companions through deep adversity, and he could not have made himself deceive them, even though the alternative to deception was death. I do not blame Doctor Manhattan for stopping Rorschach. Manhattan mistakenly but innocently believed he was acting to save humanity, after all. No, I blame Doctor Manhattan for killing Rorschach when, with all his powers, he could have merely

imprisoned him. Killing Rorschach was simply more convenient.

What if a comic book writer broke all the rules and still made it work?

No one can argue that *The Watchmen* does not work as a story. My favorite part of the book is where two characters discuss their relationship while at the same time bloodily demolishing a group of thugs. It's true that, in real life, people in that situation would have tabled their discussion until after the fight, but by juxtaposing the two narratives Moore conveys the tensions of the characters' lives with a depth and intensity that could not have been conveyed any other way. It was by techniques like this that Moore gave *The Watchmen* an emotional and social realism that had never before been seen in comic books. Not only that, but it was the fact that Moore worked in the comic book medium that allowed him to achieve these effects because, instead of allowing the costumes and the powers to distance his audience from the emotional internality of the characters, Moore used the logical and social implications of superheroing to harden and intensify the emotional impact of his story.

The painful complaints that drove me to write this piece are also what drive *The Watchmen* into the realm of literature. The great writers

create complex characters who they make real to us and place them in emotionally intense situations that they also make real to us in order to make complex and subtle comments on the human condition. In *The Watchmen*, Moore makes deeply thoughtful comments about both humanity in general and the individual human soul. He poses questions that we can spend lifetimes trying to answer, and this is exactly what literature is supposed to do.



Art this issue...

James Bacon- Photo for the Cover, plus photos on pages 2, 3, 4, 18, 19, 22, 23

Friends of The Senator provided the lovely photo of the last day of operation of that lovely old theatre in Baltimore.

Speaking of theatres, The Lovely & Talented Linda took the photo of the Neptune over there -> from the window of our room at CorFlur.

Fera Festiva (who is a UK citizen eligible for the Nova!) did the Little Watchmen on pages 32-35. I love those little guys.

Milhouse with the Watchmen Babies V for Vacation comic is by the Korean animators who do The Simpsons.



The My Little Ponies are from the group My Pony Projects, which is a weird group that I've used stuff from before.

Warners came up with 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25, 29 and 30.

Page 31 is from Jill Espair and is one of my faves.

Genevieve did the piece on Page 36. I've used it before, I'll use it again. I just love that one!

Jay Fosgritt did the image of Jay Ward's version of Watchmen with Bullwinkle and co. on page 37. You should read his graphic novel, Dead Duck, which comes out soon. You can find it and the rest of his stuff at www.jayfosgritt.com.

Anime Watchmen on Page 38 was by Hamamoto-san. That's awesome.

The Drink Tank issue 209 all about Watchmen was edited by Chris Garcia and James Bacon. Big issue, it probably took you some time to read it, so I say 'thanks'. garcia@computerhistory.org