

ORBIT

BIG PLANET

Volume 11 #2

"News, reviews and opinions from the world of comics"

March 2007

Buffy Returns

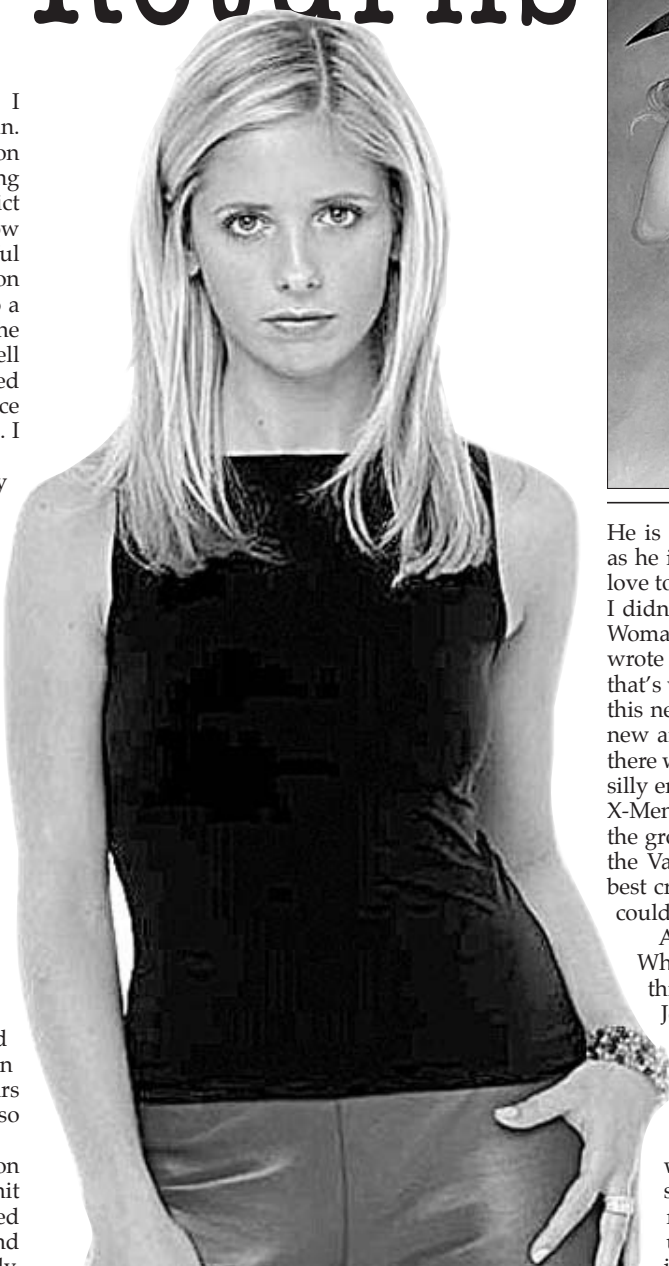
By Ian Delaurentis

I feel the need to admit upfront that I am a huge Buffy the Vampire Slayer fan. It is easily one of my favorite television shows of all time...and that's really saying something, considering what a TV addict I am. Created by Joss Whedon, the show was so strong, it supported a successful spin-off with Angel, and created a legion of super fanatics. I know there were also a lot of people who could never get past the goofy title and see what an amazingly well crafted series it was, and therefore missed out on what many consider a masterpiece of genre-crossing pop culture excitement. I guess that's why there are DVDs though.

Like countless others, I was pretty bummed out when the series came to its end. Some liked the way the show concluded more than others, but the one universal feeling was that we all wanted more. The promise of made-for-TV movies came and went, and by the time Angel went off the air, it looked like that was that for the franchise. Until now.

Written by Joss Whedon, with art from Georges Jeanty and covers by the fabulous Jo Chen, Buffy the Vampire Slayer #1 is the equivalent of the season premier of the show's 8th season in comic format, picking up right where the last episode left off. Fans will be treated to what could have been – straight from Whedon himself. This is one of the best ideas I've seen in comics in a very, very long time. The notion of such a high profile creator coming back to such a high profile character is unheard of. It'd be like Tarantino writing Pulp Fiction comics. Or George Lucas writing Star Wars comics...well no...that might not be so good...but you get my point.

I don't own one of those "Joss Whedon Is My Master" shirts, but I'll freely admit that the man is a genius. I'd say that based solely on his Astonishing X-Men work, and ignoring Buffy, Angel and Serenity/Firefly.



He is every bit as good at writing comics as he is at movies and TV. As much as I'd love to see Buffy back on TV, or as much as I didn't want him to drop off the Wonder Woman movie, I'd be happy if he only wrote comics for the rest of his career. And that's why I am sure, why I'm positive that this new Buffy series will be a hit for both new and old fans. So for those of you out there who never saw the show and who are silly enough to not be reading Astonishing X-Men, I promise that you'll be able to hit the ground running with issue #1 of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. In fact, it may be the best crash course in the Whedonverse you could get.

And for those of you diehard Joss Whedon fans reading, there are two things you should also know. First, Joss has done Buffy comics before. It's true! Pick up the Fray TP written by Whedon to see the true tale of a Slayer's life in the distant future. And next month we'll be talking lots about Whedon taking over the writing duties on Runaways. So start stocking up on Runaways TP's right now so you can be all caught up when his run starts in April. That is all.

This story was so awesome that I need to interrupt my usual parade of crazy covers to bring it to you. Kids in Arizona are having all of the fun.

Batman Sighting Puts Schools on Lockdown

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — To an Arizona middle school, Batman!

Three schools in the north Phoenix suburb of Cave Creek were on lockdown for about 45 minutes on February 15 after a student at Desert Arroyo Middle School reported seeing a person dressed as Batman run across campus, jump a fence and disappear into the desert, Scottsdale police Sgt. Mark Clark

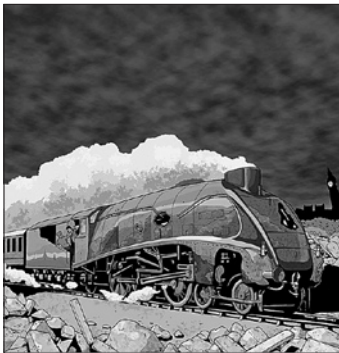
said.

The student described the person as 6 feet 3 inches tall and possibly male.

"We're assuming it was male, although they did have a mask on," Clark said.

Officers combed the desert around the middle school. A nearby elementary school and high school also were on lockdown as officers sought the caped crusader.

Journey into Astonishment
By Ian Delaurentis



Phonogram Volume 1 TP

By Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie

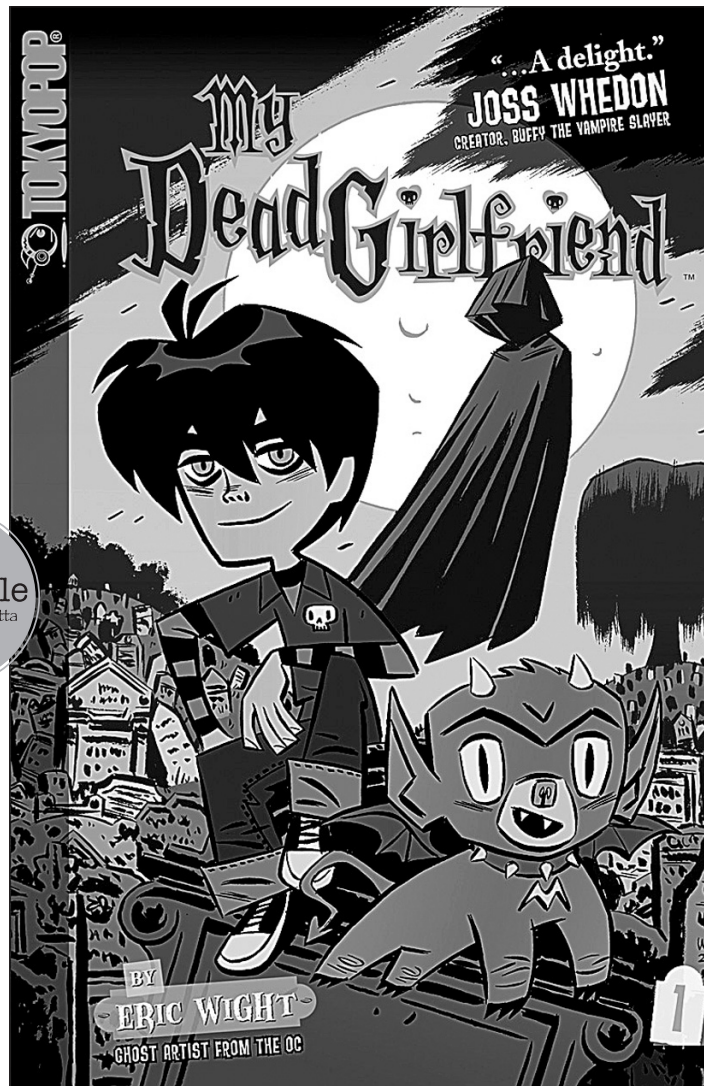
"Music is Magic". Not like "the everyday magic of a song" magic. More like "listen to the Manic Street Preachers and alter reality" magic. At least in the world of Phonogram it is. And I like it. Keiron Gillen has taken his wealth of knowledge in regards to 90s Brit-Pop and has transformed it into a mythology for a whole new reality.

Indyville
By Kevin Panetta

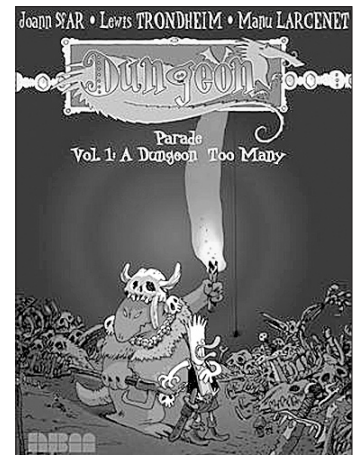
My Dead Girlfriend

By Eric Wight

Somewhere between Chynna Clugston's Scooter Girl and Ted Naifeh's Courtney Crumrin, Eric Wight has created one of the most charming graphic novels I've read in a long time. You see, Finney Bleak has a great day at the fair with a cute girl. When



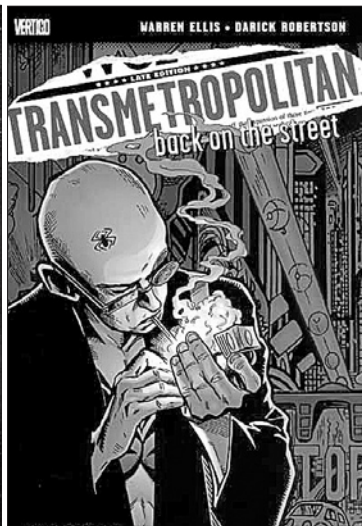
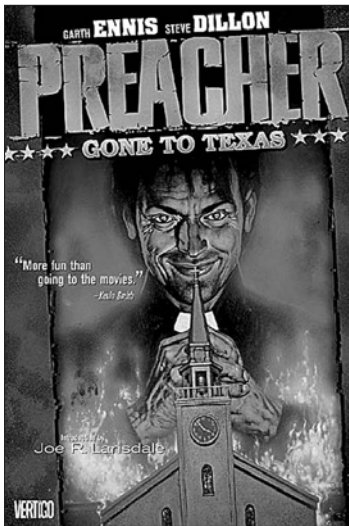
he goes to meet her the next day she doesn't show up. To make matters worse, the school bully is Frankenstein! It's a super-sweet comic, but has a morbid streak that keeps it from tipping over into a sugar coma. If you're a fan of fun comics, I can't recommend this enough.



Dungeon: Parade Vol. 1

By Joann Sfar, Lewis Trondheim and Manu Larcenet

Woohoo! I read both of the Dungeon: Zenith books in one sitting and have been waiting for the further adventures of Herbert and Marvin ever since. Sure, there was Twilight, but I want our heroes in their prime. This book has everything I could want from another Dungeon book. Dragons, beheadings and even a rival dungeon.



Picks for New Readers

Over the last couple weeks I've had several different people ask me to recommend a list of "suggested reading" for friends of theirs who want to get into comics.

The question of "what comics to give people who don't read comics" is one of my personal soapbox issues. I think a lot of us lifelong comics fans lose perspective when recommending books to newcomers.

It is without question that books like Dark Knight Returns, Watchmen and Kingdom Come are amazing works of art that set the bar for everything else in the industry. But the reason we enjoy them so much is because they took what we knew about comics and turned it around in a new way.

Somebody who has never read a comic can pick up any of these "classics" and enjoy them, but I feel like they are missing out on a huge part of the overall story because they don't know the context for certain aspects of what's going on. I strongly hold the opinion that some books are simply better for introducing people to comics than others...and some of them may not be the ones you're thinking of. Here is my list. I encourage you to e-mail us what you think are the best titles for new readers, and I'll print the best ideas in this space.

It goes like this:

1. Preacher Vol. #1: Gone

To Texas

I could have filled up the first nine slots on this list with the entire series—it's that good. The best of the best. I've gotten more people into comics with this series than you'd ever entice with either Watchmen or Dark Knight Returns.

In Case You Were Wondering...
By Ian DeLaurentis

2. JLA: New World Order

The first collection of Grant Morrison's wondrous run on JLA. It's what people expect and don't expect from iconic heroes at the same time. Again, every JLA volume with his name on it is gold. I own a page of his JLA: Earth 2 GN and it's one of my most prized possessions.

3. All Warren Ellis StormWatch

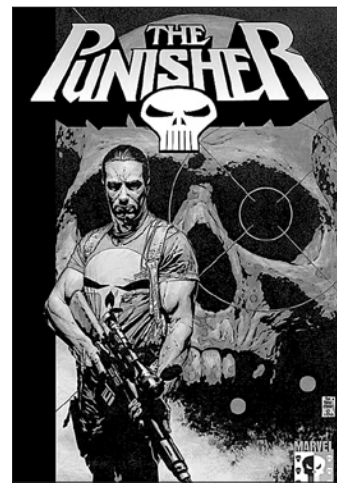
This becomes The Authority, which concludes with two volumes written by Mark Millar. I'm cheating on this one. It's several books over two titles, but that's the proper order they go in. It's the evolution of "wide-screen" superheroes and the setting of the bar for modern day superhero comics. Some of the best superhero comics ever made and easily the best superhero comics not made by Marvel or DC...that means there is no continuity to worry about so people can just sit



back and enjoy.

4. Transmetropolitan

Warren Ellis gives us Spider Jerusalem, A.K.A. Hunter S. Thompson of the future. Warren was really on a role during the 90's. Everything this guy wrote was an instant classic.



5. The Punisher Vol. #1: Welcome Back Frank

If Garth Ennis was a film director, Preacher would be the sweeping indie masterpiece that won every award ever and changed film. His take on the Punisher would be where he cashes in. Only instead of making tepid blockbusters and burning out, Ennis uses his run on the Punisher to give us a blinding mix of humor, violence and revenge. Some volumes in this run are better than others, but pay special attention to Welcome Back Frank and The

Slavers to see the best of funny Punisher and the best of way scary violent Punisher, as only Ennis can do it.

6. Y—The Last Man

Brian Vaughn is one of the best writers working on comics today and this series proves it. I had zero interest in reading it when it came out, but can't put the TPs down now. People will never expect what's coming in this series, and that's what will bring them back for more.

7. Sanctuary

Nine volume Japanese manga series about a politician and his relationship to organized crime. As far as I'm concerned this is the most accessible manga series ever to land in America, and it blows the Sopranos out of the water.

8. The Ultimates

It's the Avengers in the single most awesome summer action movie you've ever seen. It takes place in an alternate universe, so you don't



need to know any history for the characters. The characters will amaze you and you will - for sure - know what the "A" on Captain America's head stands for. If they made this as a real movie, it would officially make a gazillion dollars.

9. The Cowboy Wally Show, You Are Here & Why I Hate Saturn

Kyle Baker's proof that comics can be non-genre specific and still rule. Not westerns, no sci-fi, no powers - just stories about people. Very funny people.

10. Daredevil: Underboss

I know this is sacrilege but the best Daredevil comics ever were not written by Frank Miller; they were written by Brian Bendis, and then he passed the torch to Ed Brubaker. It all starts here with Underboss. It's like Law & Order with a dude in a ninja costume. Mind. Blowing. (PS - I really had a hard time not putting Alias by Bendis in this spot, but it had to go to Daredevil. It was a real toss-up there, though, 'cause Alias is pretty freaking rad in it's own right and pretty closely related to this Daredevil run.)

Assembling the Avengers

I'm not going to beat around the bush on this: I am convinced that Civil War terribly disrupted what was shaping up to be an awesome run on New Avengers by Brian Bendis. New Avengers had successfully turned the team into Marvel's version of the JLA – an idea that seemed ridiculous at the time, but one that was off to a fantastic start with a great cast, great dialogue and plenty of plot threads being carefully laid out. And then Civil War broke out and it seemed like everything Bendis was working on was tossed out the window (for better or worse we still have yet to see).

I know turnabout is fair play, but nothing that was put on hold when Bendis started the House of M series was all that irreversible. In fact, Marvel's continuity is so messed up now that I'm not sure any part of House of M still happened. On the other hand, we have an Avengers book that can't be put back together again now that the team has been trying to kill one another for several months. What could make this situation better? How about TWO Avengers books by Brian Bendis? Hell yeah!

Mighty Avengers #1

We're still not sure because we're waiting on Civil War to end, but this looks like the book that follows the "winners" with Iron Man leading the team. My guess is that this will be the more classically styled Avengers book with the team operating in the manner we are most accustomed to with the tower and the Quinjet, the government sanctioned status and the surprise classic Avengers villains. What a lot of people are going to notice about Mighty Avengers will be the art of Frank Cho who draws amazingly crisp



The Facts.

By Ian Delaurentis

New Avengers #28

We know precious little about what's going to happen to this title in the post-Civil War Marvel Universe. What we do know is that this will be more like an underground version of the team, featuring the non-traditional line-up of Spider-Man & Woman, Power Man & Iron Fist, Wolverine, Dr. Strange, Echo and a new mystery person in the Ronin costume. Nice choice of artist here with Leinil Yu who will provide some true grit. This would have "Secret Defenders" written all over it if Bendis wasn't in charge. I fully expect this book to over-achieve its already lofty expectations.

Marvel Zombies/Army of Darkness #1

I can't describe to you how happy

heroes and villains. He draws the ladies pretty well too, making it seem like more than a coincidence that Black Widow, Mrs. Marvel and The Wasp all ended up on this team.



this makes me. Beyond thrilled. Beyond overjoyed. I expected nothing from the Marvel Zombies mini-series when it came out a couple of years ago, but it turned out to be a surprise hit and easily one of the most inventive and fun books I've read in ages. Since then I've anxiously been waiting outside Big Planet for a sequel like Eric Cartman waiting for a Nintendo Wii. If you haven't read Marvel Zombies, I strongly encourage you to do so. As for this seemingly odd choice for a crossover, I'm all in. The set-up is that Ash from Army of Darkness (please don't tell me that I have to explain who he is to you) lands in the Marvel Zombie universe just as the zombie outbreak is starting. And apparently he makes things much, much worse. Get ready for super-zombie mayhem like you've never seen!

The Brave And The Bold #2

I feel really bad about this one. I don't know how I missed it, but I totally left The Brave and the Bold #1 out of the last newsletter. It's a new series by Mark Waid and

George Perez and I left it out of these pages. That's more than a minor oversight on my part. I feel like I've failed you...and me...and like I failed Mark and George. I even feel a little like I failed Batman and Hal Jordan who starred in the first issue. Well I'll make it up to everybody by putting this issue of the series on the front cover...huh?...I already put Buffy there this month? Guh. This is like a never-ending cycle of failure for me. Look away. Go look at this new issue of Brave and the Bold, which will be amazing. It's got Supergirl on a casino planet, which sounds like the plot to a movie from the 70's. Promise I'll try and do better next time.

Jack Kirby's Fourth World Omnibus HC

Jack Kirby created pretty much everything that I love about comics. He's like the comics equivalent of Black Sabbath and the Beatles all rolled into one. In 1970, he moved over to DC from Marvel and created four interlocked adventure series that were known collectively as "The Fourth World" (The New Gods, The Forever People, Mister Miracle, and Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen).



This is a 396-page, full-color hard cover collection of the entire Fourth World saga, reprinted in chronological order. Featuring the first appearances of Orion and the New Gods, Mister Miracle, and Darkseid this is truly comics history. The crazy Mister Miracle art is worth the price of admission alone. This is so freaking cool, I totally want one. A gold star goes to DC for putting this out.



Big Planet Orbit Volume 11 #2; January 2007 is published by Joel Pollack, Peter Casazza and Jared Smith for Big Planet Comics. www.bigplanetcomics.com.

Big Planet Comics, Inc. 4908 Fairmont Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814, 301.654.6856

Big Planet Comics of VA Inc. 426 Maple Ave. East, Vienna, VA 22180, 703.242.9412

Big Planet Comics of DC Inc. 3145 Dumbarton St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, 202.342.1961