



Comic Book Wednesday

BY JUAN LOYA
The Battalion

A weekly fix. A scheduled habit. An idiosyncratic routine. For some people it is catching a favorite television show or a favorite music program. For others it is a more regimented experience.

Comic book fans universally regard Wednesdays as "Comic Book Day," or the release day for new comic books. More than a simple majority make the weekly trip to the comic book store to catch the next installment of the ongoing stories comic books detail.

Josefina Morales, owner of Lytle's Comics and Games, said that of the 170 subscribers she has, 80 percent of them come in on Wednesday.

"There's a group that comes in every Wednesday, no matter what," Morales said.

Though business will spread out throughout the week, Wednesday is no doubt the busiest day of the week for both comic book retailers and comic book purchasers.

Ira Babb, a comic book fan and senior agricultural business major, has been reading comicbooks for 11 years and owns over 5,000.

"I anticipate reading my new comics a lot," Babb said. "I want to find out what happened since the last issue. I suppose it's a lot like soap operas, except it's not on TV, and it's stuff that could most likely never happen in real life."

Indeed, while soap operas may offer the occasional demonic possession or resurrection from the dead, comic books entrance readers with such concepts as the "Anti-Matter Universe of Qward" or Dr. Reed Richard's patented "unstable molecules" formula.

It is rare that characters on "Days of Our Lives" will even mention genetic mutations, much less the problems facing human and mutant relations in the new millennium.

Christopher VanderKaay, a comic book fan and the video department manager at Hastings in Bryan, said that even though there are comic books in his store, he still prefers to go every Wednesday to buy the new releases.

"It's like with video rentals," VanderKaay said. "Tuesday is the day we get the new video releases, and there's like a cult of people who come to make sure they get the first copies of whatever we get in. Anything. Even if they're bad movies."

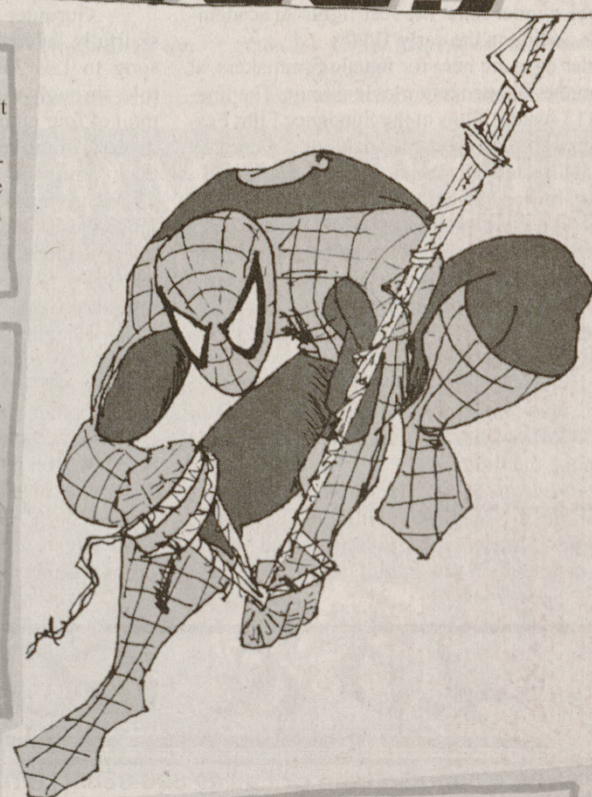
Comic book fans often display the same amount of dedication to their favorite pursuit.

"I used to read all the comics that had heroes/heroines/teams that I liked in them regardless of what the writing or art was like," Babb said. "I have about a 100 issue run of The Spectacular Spider-Man that was drawn by an artist that I couldn't stand."

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— Ira Babb
Comic book collector



Morales said she prefers customers who enjoy the content of the comics and not those who just buy them for their potential value.

"A lot of them are collectors," Morales said. "Some of them won't even let me touch them to look at the price. It's like, who do they think put them up on the shelf?"

Morales said there are less of such customers these days, and more comic book readers in general.

And as to the increase in buyers, the reason for growth may lie in the quality of the comics themselves.

"Well, Starman is really cool and there's a whole lot of genuine mystery in the current storyline. Every issue leaves you wanting more," Babb said.

"I really like what Kurt Busiek is doing in Thunderbolts right now, there are a lot of conspiracies and plots within plots."

Comic books have attracted writers from all other venues of entertainment, from television to literature to the movies in recent years.

Greg Rucka, a famed mystery novelist, is currently writing Detective Comics for DC Comics, and J. Michael Straczynski, creator of the television series "Babylon 5," is currently enjoying success with his comic book line, Rising Stars.

Veteran comic book writers have also been getting more mainstream acclaim.

Writers Alan Moore and Warren Ellis both were listed in Entertainment Weekly's 1999 IT LIST of the 100 most creative people in entertainment.

Though the number of readers may be on the upswing, such resurgence in the industry is common and sometimes fleeting.

"It seems like there were a lot more [readers] when I started reading but it's sort of fluctuated since then," Babb said.

"It seems that whenever you meet someone who's really into comics they're people who might have been collectors when they were younger and have gotten back into it a little."

VanderKaay anticipates the release of this summer's X-Men movie and the rumors of a Spider-Man film finally hitting the screens to be a promising attraction to potential readers.

"Sam Raimi (director of *Evil Dead* and *A Simple Plan*) is set to direct the new Spider-Man film, and he's one of my favorite directors, so yeah, I'm really looking forward to that," VanderKaay said.

As for longtime readers, few expect to cease their weekly Wednesday pilgrimages anytime soon.

"I suppose if the international congress of women mandated that all men who read comics are hereby off-limits to all women, if they haven't already, I'd stop reading comics," Babb said. "Or maybe if they caused cancer or something."

Graphics by Gabriel Ruenes and Ruben DeLuna



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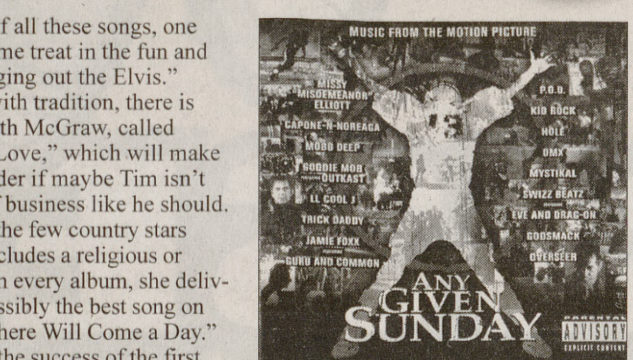


FAITH HILL
BREATHE

Faith Hill Breathe Warner Bros.

Faith Hill's fourth album, *Breathe*, reportedly an autobiographical selection of music. If the music is truly reflects Hill's life, then no guy out there could be holding his breath waiting for Hill to divorce her husband, singer McGraw, anytime soon. Following up on the crossover success of her hit "This Kiss," Faith infuses more pop into her test effort, which is packed with romantic love songs. The infectious "The Way You Love Me" will bring back memories of early '90s pop, while the sweet "I Got My Baby" has a style all its own.

Volume Control



Various Artists Any Given Sunday: Music from the Motion Picture Courtesy of Warner Sunset Records

Most film soundtracks today take second-rate songs from better known bands and put them together on an album, hoping to sell the album off of name recognition. This is exactly what this album is.

Although the film *Any Given Sunday* featured mostly techno tracks from bands like Fatboy Slim and Moby, not a single techno track is on the album. Hole, LL Cool J, Missy Elliot, Kid Rock, DMX and Godsmack. A list of musicians like this might seem to say some talent could be found on this album. Wrong. All the songs sound like B-sides from the bands.

The songs from the featured artists are poorly written and seem to be done quickly in an effort to get the album out to idiots around the nation who will pick it up and say, "Ooh! Kid Rock and LL Cool J! I've got to get this!"

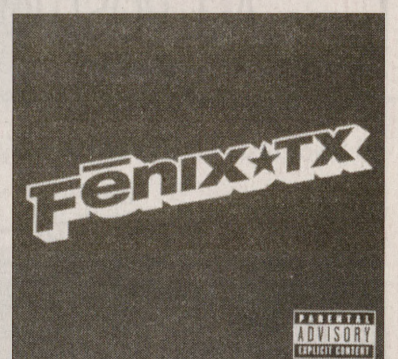
So be warned. This album is one to pass over. (Grade: C-)
— Kyle Whitacre

FENIXtx FENIXtx CD courtesy of Drive-Thru Records

The band FENIXtx originally began its life as the Houston band Riverfenix. In addition to adopting a new moniker, the band has also fled Texas for San Diego, Calif.

It is a pity too. The album, with its fast guitars and even faster drums, gives listeners a hint of how energetic FENIXtx's live performances could be.

The band's sound, which the record label compares to blink-182's, is similar to blink's in the fact that the fast-paced, joyful sound and harmonies hide the lyrics' messages of anger and loss. However, the similarities seem to end there.
— Veronica Serrano



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