

ENTERTAINMENT

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Tuesday, March 2, 2004

A revival of comic proportions

Box-office success and aging demographic lead to revival of comic books

By Robert Saucedo
THE BATTALION

Janet Van Dyne lies in bed, moaning with pleasure, surrounded by scattered clothes and wine bottles. As she quiets down, Henry Pym, a man no more than half an inch tall, crawls out from under the sheets. Pym remarks: "All right, Jan. Your turn."

This racy scene may sound like something from a bizarre pornographic film, but in fact it is a page out of the October 2003 issue of Marvel Comics' "The Avengers," featuring the Astonishing Ant-Man and his partner-in-love — as well as in justice — The Wasp.

It is no longer uncommon to flip through a random comic book and discover all sorts of "R-rated" behavior. With the maturity levels growing along with the average reader's age, it's no surprise that most comic books are seemingly targeted towards an older college audience.

Sidra Roberts, a senior chemical engineering major, started reading Archie comics when she was only 5 years old. Today, her tastes run the gamut, including everything from science-fiction comics, superhero comics, to even children's comics. Roberts visits her favorite comic bookstore in Houston weekly to pick up the newest issues of the comic books she reads.

"I like having something to look forward to every month," Roberts said. "It's like a good TV show, except it's monthly or bimonthly."

Roberts said although more people are coming back to comic books for a pastime, things are not completely smooth for the comic book market. She said comic book publishers should start targeting younger audiences if they want to survive.

"If we do not get children into the market, the market is going to eventually cave in on itself and die," Roberts said. "Hopefully the industry will continue to grow and diversify. It used to be that the industry had all sorts of comics: horror comics, western comics, superhero comics and romance comics. You're starting to see delineation again. We're going back from the straight superhero comics that dominated for a while and are starting to see new things."

Mike Colbert, a Class of 2001 journalism major, has been reading comic books for at least 18 years.

"My dad was in Tokyo for a while, and he collected a bunch of comic books and sent me some," Colbert said. "I read them all."

He said the recent trend of mature comics is only natural. "If you think about it, you realize children don't have as much money as college students," Colbert said. "They don't have as much control of their money."

One thing Colbert said he does not agree with is the use of classic superheroes in adult situations.

"They're supposed to be superheroes," Colbert said. "They're not

supposed to do stuff like use their powers to have sex. But I guess sex does sell."

Marvel Comics, the publishing house behind such superhero mainstays as "Spider-Man," "X-Men" and "The Incredible Hulk," has lately chosen to pursue controversial ideas and stories and in the past few years has not shied away from publishing different titles that evoke different reactions. According to marvelcomics.com, these titles include the recently collected miniseries "Truth," in which several black World War II soldiers are experimented on with a super-soldier serum that would eventually be used to turn a more "suitable" white man into Captain America.

Always willing to push the boundaries of the mainstream market, Marvel can arguably be called today's most successful comic book publisher. With several blockbuster movies, hit video games, action figures and other paraphernalia under its utility belt, Marvel has created a vast merchandising empire for itself, and this is all from a company that was bankrupt five years ago.

Aside from its aging demographic, Marvel's success in recent years is largely due to its recent brush with success in the movie industry. Yahoo movies reports that the comic chain's zenith, "Spiderman," has one of the highest overall box office collections — more than \$403 million — in history. Yahoo movies also reports that following closely behind everybody's favorite mutant, is the second installment of the popular X-men series, "X2: X-Men United," with overall collections of nearly \$215 million.

The ticket sales of films based on Marvel Comics have not been ignored. Today, many film studios are actively developing as many comic book-related properties as they can. There are currently more than a dozen comic book films in active development, including director Kevin Smith's take on "The Green Hornet" and Robert Rodriguez's adaptation of Frank Miller's gritty crime comic, "Sin City."

Even though superhero movies are raking in cash at the box office, Josefina Morales, owner of the local Lytle's Comics & Games, hasn't noticed an increase in sales.

"I get most of the same people in all the time," Morales said. "I've noticed a lot of the same people who come in will try new stuff because it's being made into a movie to see what it's like."

Colbert believes an increase in comic book-based movies doesn't necessarily spell doom for future adaptations.



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

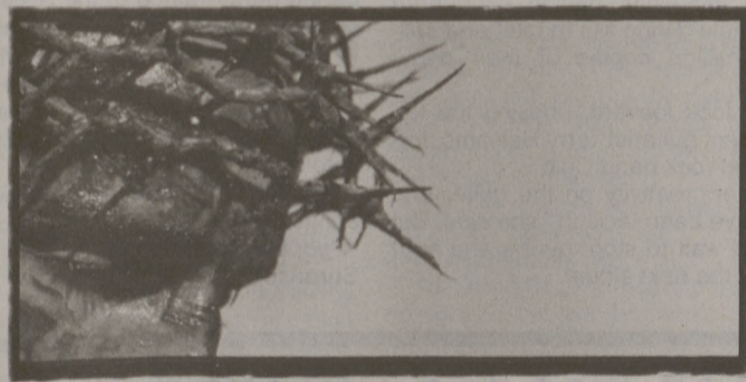
Junior mechanical engineering major **Brian Auer** reads a "Superman" comic at Lytle's Comics and games in College Station Monday afternoon.

"Sure, the possibility exists, but there are a lot of goods stories that fans enjoy and that moviegoers would enjoy if brought to the movies," Colbert said. "There are comic book fans around — not nearly as much as there were 20 years, but we are not a dying breed."

Colbert believes the recent boom in the popularity of superheroes in the media is much deserved.

"It's been a long time coming," Colbert said. "Comics were just destined to get better recognition. The stories are a lot deeper than people realize. I don't think they will ever die out completely."

THE PASSION



WHEN HE HAD RECEIVED THE DRINK,
JESUS SAID, **IT IS FINISHED.**

WITH THAT, HE BOWED HIS HEAD AND
GAVE UP HIS SPIRIT.

Why did he do it? Jesus, the Son of God. Why would he leave heaven to endure the torture, pain, humiliation of the cross?

Jesus said he came only to do the will of the Father. He came in the Father's name, for the Father's glory, doing all things by the Father, speaking only what the Father told him to speak. And that got him into trouble—with people.

His words and miracles greatly upset some people. So Jesus paid the price. He was sentenced to die by crucifixion. But ultimately it was not the Romans and Jews controlling Jesus' death. They were not making the ultimate decisions. Jesus was never fully at their mercy.

This was Jesus, who healed the blind, even raised people back to life! One was his friend, Lazarus, who had been buried in a tomb for four days! Following that one, the authorities said, "If we let him go on like this, the whole world will be following him." Indeed.

Jesus voluntarily gave up his life.

Why??

For us. To step in and take our place. To pay the harsh punishment for our sins. Again, why? Because our sin was keeping us from him. He was willing to do this, to remove the barrier—to offer us forgiveness.

"God demonstrates his own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," the Bible tells us.

What this means is that you can make a new beginning with God. He did this for you, but his forgiveness is not yours until a relationship with God himself belongs to you. And he is offering you that. Look at Jesus' passion. Is there any question how much he wants you to know him?

If you have questions about how to begin a relationship with God, please see EveryStudent.com.

EveryStudent.com

Campus Crusade for Christ at Texas A&M
http://cru.tamu.edu

The Department of Student Activities
is now accepting applications for

The Margaret Rudder Service Award

To recognize and award students who significantly
impact their community through volunteerism
and as a result are impacted by that contribution

Awards up to \$500 will be presented during
Parent's Weekend on Sunday, April 18, 2004



Additional information and
applications are available at
vsc.tamu.edu or
in Student Activities

Questions? Contact 862-1491 or
serve@tamu.edu

Join AOLP



Get Connected.

Be an Aggie Orientation Leader!

Applications available at:
aolp.tamu.edu

For more information:
862-2746

Applications Due: March 3rd by 5:00 PM
in the East Wing Foyer of Sbsa