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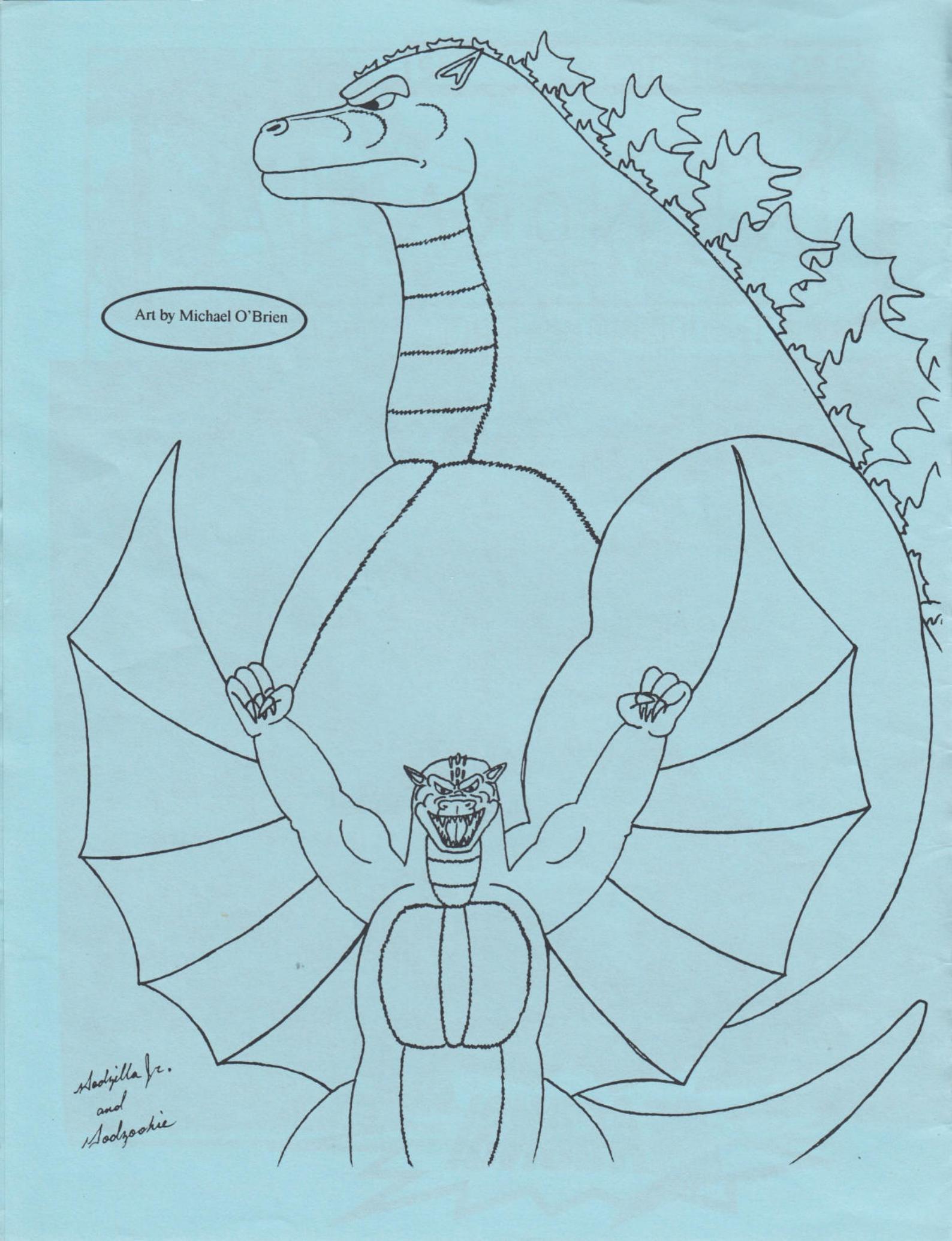
SUMMER 99

#12

# XENORAMA

The JOURNAL of HEROES & MONSTERS





Art by Michael O'Brien

Madilla Jr.  
and  
Madzoochie

**INTAKES:** After almost a year absence, **XENORAMA** is back! What? You didn't know it was gone? OK, OK, I admit it: I'm lazy. Whatty want? But now that I have a way of writing more, you'll be sick of seeing my name everywhere, I promise!

You will notice a slightly different look to **XENO** in this issue. Several new columns, and a few new contributors. How cool is that? I hope everyone will enjoy the new stuff as much as I have.

So, this issues main topic is **dragons**. Now, instead of extensive reviews of three or four movies, or lots of little "capsule" reviews, I plan on doing an overview of dragons in movies and TV and other media. Hey, I'm still learning. Plus, I three years, I can do yet another Dragon issue.

### Top 5 dragon movies:

1. **THE MAGIC SERPENT** A way cool dragon in this movie, plus ninja, sorcery, swords and action. What more could you want?
2. **DRAGONSLAYER** The most out and out mean dragon I've ever seen. Plus a hero who is very human and a great wizard.
3. **DRAGONHEART** The voice of Sean Connery helps this dragon have the best personality. A tad predictable, but a good movie.
4. **GHIDRAH, THE THREE HEADED MONSTER** Is there any other space dragon worth mentioning?
5. **THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD** Harryhausen's only real dragon, and a pretty vicious one at that. Gets killed too easily, though.

All these and more will be covered later on in the zine. There will also be various reviews contributed by people before I decided on the format, and they will show up as well.

And of course, I have a few thoughts on **Sauro-glottys** (thanks to Danny Coffin for that name, so no one has to misuse the name Godzilla in conjunction with that waste of celluloid ever again): Well, the monster itself didn't bother me, but the script sure did. It was horrible. No one looked like they were having any fun, it was dark, gloomy and stupid. What did those hacks think they had to do an **ALIENS** rip-off in the middle of a monster movie? And the huge dull middle? Even little kids were roaming around the theater during that part. This never happened when I saw **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**!

And that leads me to another subject: I'm sick of hearing people say that this wasn't quite as *bad* or as *good* as **MEGALON** (probably mystery science morons) or **GODZILLA'S REVENGE**. So shut up! Those movies may not be great, but at least they are fun. This Sauro-glottys is the result of thinking like

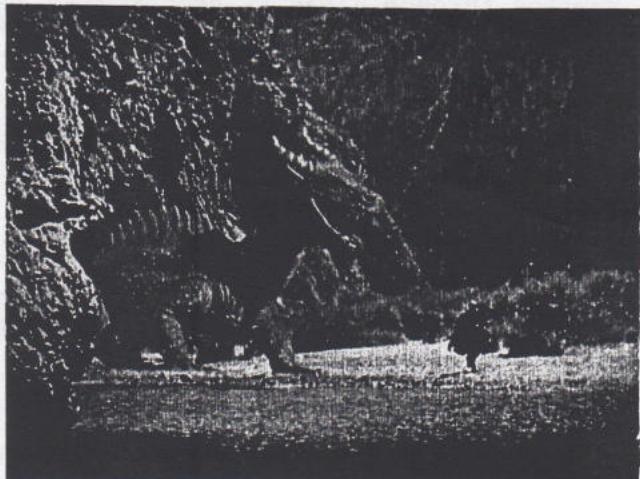
that. I would've loved to see a good movie this summer of '98, and all I got was something to push toys and other crappy merchandise. And that's all the space I'm going to waste on this "film" ever again.

Although, I do enjoy the cartoon quite a bit. At least there is no Godzooky.

Anyway, I am quite thankful that the thing was made- why else would we get great letter-boxed **Godzilla** movies, cool books and some other cool things, like a great **GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE** or **GAPPA** movies.

Likewise, I'm very pleased with Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung's success in this country. That means that there will be even more cool martial arts movies released now. I can only hope that Run Run Shaw will open his vaults before all of his films disappear forever. This truly is a good time to be a fan.

OK, go read the rest of the zine!



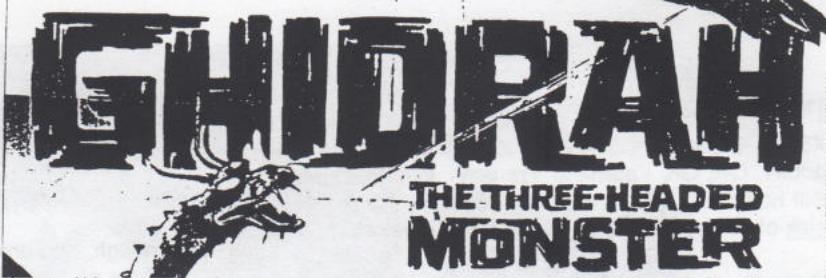
Above: Kouras is accompanied by his dragon guard in *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. Sc. kurah is inserted by means of split-screen.

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KING GHIDORAH

# GHIDORAH

## THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER



THE RANGER REPORT by Christopher Eliam

(NOTE TO NITPICKERS: This column will now be covering all aspects of Japanese sci-fi, instead of just superheroes. So there.)

King Ghidorah (aka just "Ghidrah") is among the most popular of Japan's film monsters. If pressed for a brief description, I'd say he's a gigantic, three-headed, golden-skinned, electricity spitting winged space dragon with an attitude! Ghidorah is certainly the most persistent of Godzilla's foes, having fought the Big G five times. King Ghidorah is also notable as the Japanese monster which has appeared the most times without ever playing the good guy role. Well, that's not EXACTLY true anymore. Read on to see why I end this intro so mysteriously.

King Ghidorah debuted in 1964's Ghidrah the Three-Headed Monster. Ghidrah is a convoluted movie, but it is also my favorite entry in the Godzilla series. No special reasoning; it just is. In it, Ghidorah hatches from a recently crashed meteorite, while, in a barely connected subplot, assassins are gunning for an amnesic princess. King Ghidorah's rampage through Japan is spectacular and the must-see high point of this film. Mothra convinces the recently revived Rodan and Godzilla to unite against this common foe. They gang up on the King and send him flying back into space while the human heroes thwart the assassins. Hurray for our side!

Though quite the belligerent beast in his own right in his initial appearance, King Ghidorah subsequently became the tool of alien races intent on subjugating Earth. This was the case in Monster Zero (1965; Planet X aliens), Destroy All Monsters (1968; Kilaaks), Godzilla on Monster Island (1972; alien cockroaches), and the Zone Fighter TV series (1973; Garoga aliens). DAM is probably the best of the bunch, but Ghidorah's screentime is limited to only the final battle of the film. Pity poor King Ghidorah; he always faced bad odds. Think about it - in his first three movies, he fought 3, 2, and 11 monsters respectively! Ouch! No wonder he was only Gigan's partner in Monster Island, his weakest film. He was tired of taking the brunt of the beatings. King Ghidorah's last appearance was when Zone Fighter trounced him all by his lonesome in episodes 5 & 6 of his TV show. After that, except for stock footage and Pee-wee's Big Adventure, the original King Ghidorah retired to the old kaiju home.

1991's Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah introduced a new version of the old favorite. No plot recap this time - David tells me I can't use the WHOLE MAGAZINE, which is about the space I'd need. Geez, and I called Ghidrah convoluted? Anyway, KG ravages Japan until Godzilla wallops him real good so he can have that sublime pleasure himself. Emmy Kano, a fetching girl from the future, travels to her home time of 2204 A.D. and transforms Ghidorah into a cyborg. Mecha-King Ghidorah is born! My favorite monster of the recent Godzilla series serves as a vehicle for Emmy to kick Godzilla's hiney, which she does. This is what I meant in the first paragraph. King Ghidorah was never a good guy, but MECHA-King Ghidorah was. Oh, I'm SOOOOOO clever! Well, maybe not.

That's been about it for King Ghidorah in the movies, except for Mecha-King Ghidorah's cameo in Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla (1993). There was something called "Death Ghidorah" in Mothra (1996), but that thing seems barely related to King Ghidorah himself. Time will tell when King Ghidorah will make his inevitable return.

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# THUNDERFOOT THEATER

by David McRobie

In this, a brand new column, I will be reviewing various Asian action flicks, from the good old days of the chopsocky 70s, to the "new wave" of the 90s. For this premiere column, I will be giving my top ten favorite Asian action movies of all time (at least until I see one that bumps another off this list). Excluded are out and out fantasies involving no real martial arts, crime dramas (like **HARD-BOILED**) and all of Bruce Lee's and Jackie Chan's movies (as they have been written about far more extensively in other zines). So enjoy!

**1. INFRA-MAN** (1975) In this Shaw Brothers classic, we see not only a great bunch of monsters, villains and kung fu, but also the greatest super hero movie ever made. In this exciting tale, Infra-man (a cross between Japan's Ultraman and Kamen Rider heroes) must take on and stop Princess Dragon-mom's army of monsters. To do this he uses laser beams, rocket punches, atomic kicks and regular kung fu. It's really fun to see monsters and robots doing kung fu as well. Heck, even all the members of their Science Patrol team know martial arts. Special effects and action abound on the resulting non-stop entertainment.

**2. MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE** (1975 AKA **ONE ARMED BOXER VS. THE FLYING GUILLOTINE**) Wang Yu's most fun movie, as he revives his character (and most of the story) from **THE ONE ARMED BOXER** to take on the title villain and his fearsome weapon (from the Shaw Brothers movie of the same name). There are lots of different "martial arts" styles in this movie, and whether they are real or not, it makes for a great show.

**3. FIVE DEADLY VENOMS** One of the first kung fu movies I ever saw, so it holds a special place in my heart. Two of the five venoms try to make up for their clan's misdeeds, and three are trying to stop them. There's a bit of treasure involved, see? Directed by the great Chang Cheh (we'll see his name a few more times) it introduced the cast now known as "the five venoms". However, unlike many of his other pictures, this one isn't a bloodbath.

**4. HEROES TWO** (1974) Another Chang Cheh masterpiece! This is based on the real life story of the vengeance of Fong Sai Yuk (Fu Sheng) and Hung Si Kwan (Chen Kwan Tai) against white eyebrow priest Bai Mei (Lo Lieh). The use of authentic Hung Gar style kung fu in this is great. The sequel, **DISCIPLES OF DEATH** (1974) is almost as good. Fong uses the Crane Style, while Hung uses Tiger Fist. In order to defeat Bai Mei, they have to combine their talents, which in turn led to the development of Hung Gar's most famous form (can you guess?)- *Tiger and Crane Fist!* (Saw that one coming, didn't you?)

**5. SUPER NINJA** (AKA **FIVE ELEMENT NINJA**) Chang Cheh strikes again! And this one is a blood bath as two clans duke it out for martial arts supremacy. After being defeated, one clan hires a ninja clan to destroy the victorious clan. Battle after battle ensues, all with cool weapons and techniques. Can the lone survivor learn enough to avenge his clan against the ninja? OK, OK, the real title is ...**NINJAS**, but there is no plural of the word *ninja*. That's all you say. If you say "ninas" that shows you don't understand the language. So be informed! It's still a great movie.

**6. FIST OF LEGEND** (1995) Jet Li's best film, as most of his others have him suspended by a wire, and not showing off his awesome skills. A remake of **THE CHINESE CONNECTION** (**FIST OF FURY**) without the obvious anti-Japanese overtones. Jet must return to China to avenge his kung fu master's mysterious death at the hands of a Japanese martial arts school. The beautiful Shinobu Nakayama (**GAMERA**-**THE GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE**) stars as his girlfriend. Great fight scenes with nary a wire to be floated upon. Jet's a better actor than Bruce, and is almost as versatile in adapting his style of wushu to fit into various other styles.

**7. CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA** (1981,aka **SHAOLIN VS. NINJA, HEROES OF THE EAST**) Directed by Lau Kar Leung, this is his best film. A Chinese man must marry a Japanese woman and then we get to see the fun culture shock and clash that happens. Geez, if only these people would *communicate* a little bit. Of course, then we wouldn't see all the action, would we? A nice selection of both Japanese and Chinese martial arts is displayed. Nice to see Japanese people in the 70s didn't all have fangs.

**8. A BOOK OF HEROES** (1986) A modern action comedy starring Yukari Oshima and a bunch of other people I don't recognize. It is however action-packed and quite funny. It has something to do with drug smuggling, but the plot is minor. Watch it for the fights. All this is missing is Jackie Chan (but then, it's also missing his hammy mugging for the camera). The best line (and good guys always say this to villains in films) is "A hero doesn't use a gun." and the bad guy throws down his or her gun! It almost always works!

**9. NINJA IN THE DRAGON'S DEN** (1982) A newer addition to my list, this is one kick butt movie! It stars Hiroyuki Tanaka and Conan Lee as students who team up to stop an evil wizard from taking over. The team-up only happens after a lot of other fights occur, naturally. As always, it's good to see Chinese and Japanese people as friends instead of enemies. Incredible set pieces and nonstop action highlight this tale. It's that good. If I were rating these in a particular order, it would be higher on my list, you betcha. Director Yuen Kwai would later helm 1992's **FONG SAI YUK** starring Jet Li.

**10. MASTER KILLER** Gordon Liu (Lau Kar-fei) stars as San Te, (a real life monk) who enters the Shaolin Temple for revenge and invents the three sectional staff. Torturous scenes of training and authentic kung fu make this a winner. Not nearly as hokey as Lau Kar-keung's later films would get.

**runners up:** **IRON MONKEY** (1993), **WING CHUN** (1994), **HEROIC TRIO**, **ONE ARMED BOXER**, **MORTAL COMBAT** (70s), **INVINCIBLE SHAOLIN**, **FONG SAI YUK**, **AVENGING WARRIORS OF SHAOLIN**

I know, a lot of these are older pictures. Well, that's because many of the stars these days use tricks and wires to do their kung fu, and that ain't the real stuff, baby. I would rather watch a cheap, poorly dubbed chop-sockey film of the seventies rather than any cleverly edited overblown piece of wirework made these days. In future columns, I will review four or five movies in a bit more depth, and some of these will be fantasy movies and gun dramas (if I actually want to ever watch one of them). I will try to also include stars, directors, and the studios that made them whenever possible. There will be a mix of old and new, from all across the spectrum of Asian action films. Stay tuned!



# the Serial Box

Yet another new column, in which I will review various heroes and superheroes from both the old time serials and movies from a more recent vintage. This time I will finish the **PHANTOM** review from last issue and then will follow up with the new **MASK OF ZORRO**. It helps that the lovely and talented Catherine Zeta Jones was in both of these fine features.

## THE PHANTOM (1996)

Now this movie lived up to my expectations, and surpassed them. I am a huge Phantom fan, and thought this could have been a gimmick, computer effects laden hunk of junk. It's NOT! It is very true to it's origins, and even if the true reason for the skull ring isn't quite explained, all the characters are there. The story is basic Phantom vs. Singh Brotherhood, but with Lee Falk as advisor, how could it go wrong? It didn't! Devil is here, Hero is here, Guran, Diana and her parents- it has it all. (Devil is the wolf, and Hero, though unnamed, is the horse.)

Apparently this movie was too tame or even to traditional for theater goers today. No huge stars are in it. Billy Zane played the Phantom (much better here than in that overrated claptrap about an iceberg), Kristy Swanson (**BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER**) was as feisty as she could be, but a little tame as Diana Palmer. Treat Williams was the weasly villain and was good at that, but it seems these days all these types of characters eventually become over the top lunatics. The leader of the pirates, Sala, was played by Catherine Zeta Jones, and I don't think I would have stayed with Diana if I had this choice. Cary Hiruyuki-Tanaka was the Singh leader, and Guran was played by someone whose name I can't make out in the credits, as a real person, instead of a jungle stereotype. I suppose it wasn't "hip" enough, nor have enough anachronistic references for a lot of today's audiences. Too bad for them, but thank goodness!

The action scenes are all well done, and Zane looks great in the purple costume. I don't know how many of his stunts he did, but he more than held his own. A lot of times it's the costume that makes or breaks a movie- if the costume doesn't cut it, you'll never believe the hero. It doesn't matter so much if the movie's a comedy, like say **THE THREE AMAZING SUPERMEN**, but for this type of adventure, it has to work. Now as far as I know, the Phantom's skull ring wasn't ever designed with the powers it shows at the end of the film, but in over 60 years, it may have happened some where along the way.

It's a shame this movie didn't do well at the box office. It certainly is a lot better than any of the **BATMAN** movies (save for the 1966 version) and most of the other super hero movies that have ever been made as well.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Phantom, contact Bob Griffin at PO Box 76, Mattawan, MI, 49071. It's called "Friends of the Phantom Brotherhood". Tell 'em Xeno sent you.

## THE MASK OF ZORRO (1998)

Wow, was this a fine motion picture! I was surprised, and very pleased with the direction this took. Instead of giving us a "new and improved" 90s Zorro, it relied very heavily upon Johnston McKulley's original works, and drew a lot of the movie from California's own colorful history.

As the movie opens, Zorro (Anthony Quinn) saves three innocent men in a rousing sequence. He then returns home and soon is in the local prison. We move forward twenty years and Diego gets out of prison and is ready to take his revenge. His first attempt is thwarted by the unexpected arrival of his daughter, Elena (Catherine Zeta Jones). He then stumbles across Alejandro Murieta (Antonio Banderas), or actually, Alejandro stumbles across him.

After realizing the old man could help him with his revenge, Alejandro undergoes thorough (if quick movie-type) training. They then embark together on a plan to stop both Montero (Stuart Wilson) and Captain Love (Matthew Letscher). How do they do it? Watch the movie!

All the performers here are splendid. The movie takes itself seriously, but not too much. We get to see a lot of Zorro, which is always a plus. The swordplay is well done, and both Banderas and Zeta Jones handle the scene together well. And there are several nods to previous Zorros. Too bad Guy Williams couldn't return to make a cameo.

There have been literally hundreds of Zorro movies, and this is easily in the top ten, if not the top five of all of them. Lots of Zorro, and lots of swordplay and daring do, it is really well done. All in all, a fine and worthy addition to the Zorro cannon.

For an in-depth look at this and many other Zorro movies check out the book **Zorro Unmasked** by Sandra Curtis. It is very well done, and contains a mostly complete listing of foreign made Zorro movies, and there are far more than you can imagine. You should be able to find it in most bookstores for about \$15.00. It's well worth it.

**Special Note:** This probably should be in the Xenoville's Korner section, but it fits here as well. I recently discovered a zine called **High Adventure**. It reprints older pulp stories from the 30s. If you like Doc Savage and stuff like that, this is a great read. Issue #45 presents a Captain Satan tale, and a Red Falcon story. For someone who never got to read pulps, this is great. I love it. If you are interested, an issue is \$6.00 to Adventure House, 914 Laredo Rd., Silver Spring, MD 2090. These are all fast paced adventure stories, not classics, but not forgettable, either. I'm glad someone is publishing these types of tales at all.

This column is dedicated to the Lee Falk, whom I found out passed away recently. He created both the Phantom and Mandrake the Magician, and provided millions of kids and grown ups with countless hours of reading pleasure. Now I'll never get to send him my Phantom meets Zorro story. RIP Lee Falk.

# page 7 oddities

On April 6, 1998 a true pioneer and innovator was lost to us. Wendy O. Williams, lead vocalist for the Plasmatics was found dead in her apartment of a self inflicted gunshot to the head. I was a big fan of hers and this issue of Xenorama is dedicated to her. She was the person who lead the way for such wannabes as Madonna, Courtney Love and whatsername Morrisette. She did all the exhibitionist things that these people got famous for. And yet, Wendy never got any credit. Heck, her death barely even got a mention on (e)M(p)TV. So here are my thoughts about this remarkable woman.

I was introduced to the Plasmatics in the Dominican Republic, by watching an old **Fridays** tape. Easily the best part of that anemic **SNL** wannabe, they captured my imagination with their explosive stage show. And then there was Wendy in the center of it all. Later, after her farce of a trial in Cleveland (and acquittal), she cemented my love of the First Amendment and the freedom of expression. When the "establishment" didn't like the way you look or acted, when the fascist bully boys needed a good sock in the jaw, Wendy was there! They were on **SCTV**, **Solid Gold** and **Entertainment Tonight**. My parents saw this clip, and Wendy scared the hell out of them. Well, that was good. In fact, she scared the hell out of most of my friends as well. How unlike me to like something no one else does.

In 1983, when the Plasmatics released **Coup d'etat**, originating speed metal, you would have thought their future was secure. Well, it wasn't. They broke up. I saw Wendy in concert late in '84, promoting her Gene Simmons produced album **W.O.W.** and that was the loudest concert I'd ever heard. Wendy didn't have the mohawk, but she still rocked. When she did her bit about the corporate suits and others of their ilk and a banana, it was great. Then she launched into her anthem "It's My Life".

I know she made a couple of movies, but the only one I saw was **REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS**, and it was pretty awful. What I want to know, is where are all her tribute albums and video bios of her life? They did them for truly lame groups like motley crue, milli vanilli and the carpenters, why not Wendy? At least she got a five minute clip on the "Where are They Now?" show.

Wendy was an original and I wish she could have come to peace with her personal demons. Rest In Peace, Wendy. You will never be forgotten.

(I just saw an episode of **MacGuyver** and lo and behold, there was Wendy, guest-starring as a biker chick. Bet she couldn't kicked Mac's butt if she'd've been given the chance.)

## Xenoville's Korner



2001, August 22, 1981.

Well, what is there to read this issue? It sure seems like there is less and less out there that I like to read anymore. **Oriental Cinema** is still plugging away, and I am glad to see that. It's a rare zine, very fun and informative all at once. It covers just about every Asian country in the world, and probably some I've never heard of at all. I wish Damon all the success in the world. I also like **G-Fan**, which is now approaching its 40<sup>th</sup> issue or so. Boy I wish there had been a national zine like this available when I was growing up. But people look at Godzilla movies differently today than we did then.

And does anyone know if **Kaiju Review** is still extant? I haven't heard from Dan in close to two years. I hope it's still around, as it is also very enjoyable. I'm probably just out of the loop, and there are probably lots of other cool zines out there. I do know how hard it is to get a zine out. God willing, this one will be out on a more regular basis. I really don't read many more zines any more. Only if they have something interesting to me, not because of the name.

So, how 'bout a book review? I recently obtained a copy of Philip Jose Farmer's **Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life** and it was excellent. There are so many books I've never read. And I've read a lot! The basis for this book is that Doc was (is?) a real person, and so were his aides and adventures. Farmer then gives us a family tree (including Tarzan, the Shadow and Sherlock Holmes) and lots of interesting background on various structures, including the Empire State Building (and don't worry, Kong is mentioned as well). All in all, a very good read. It's only missing the Phantom. Check it out if you can.



2001, August 22, 1981. (below) Album signing In Lenox Square Mall In Atlanta, Georgia, July 25, 1981.



Atlanta Agora, July 25, 1981.

# HERE there be DRAGONS!

Dragons! The very word conjures up a mysterious feeling, one of might and magic, of power and grace. Dragons are amazing creatures, and have been around in myth and legend for thousands of years. It seems that almost every culture has some form of the beasts. But we aren't here to talk about those dragons.

Naturally, when filmmaking was invented, sooner or later dragons were going to get put on the screen. Now mostly I will be talking about dragons in movies I have seen, but I will try to cover some of the historically important ones as well (as important as any movie can ever be, I guess). And chances are, I'll forget or miss one.

The first movie, to my knowledge, to feature a dragon, is one I've never seen- **SEIGFRIED** (1923) dir. by Fritz Lang. This was a full size mockup and is said to be very effective. Bet he still has to ride up to it to have it attack him. In 1956 Russia filmed their legend of Ilia in **THE SWORD AND THE DRAGON**. The title critter in this flick is a three headed fire breathing dragon (hmmm) employed by the invading Kugars that Ilia has to defeat (using a giant crossbow (hmmm again)), naturally after several other trials. Quite enjoyable, if obviously edited for it's American audience. Then, we have probably one of the fiercest screen dragons ever, Harryhausen's beast in 1958's **SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD**. This dragon made short work of an obviously overmatched cyclops, and probably would have devoured the rest of the cast as well if they hadn't cheated and used that huge crossbow. Still, this is one great looking animal. It is a brilliant orange hue, with horns and an elegant tail. It certainly didn't deserve it's fate. I find it odd that Harryhausen only ever animated one dragon. No, his Hydra isn't a dragon. No legs, it doesn't fly or breathe fire.



Spanish poster for DRAGONSLAYER

Then we travel over to Italy for the amusing and entertaining **GOLIATH AND THE DRAGON** (1960). Stop motion added to the American release helps. It may be the same model that came from 1962's **WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM** segment "The Singing Bone". They do look remarkably similar. This is about the only reason to watch this overlong George Pal movie, although I do like it for sentimental reasons. Anyway, there are lots of mechanical dragons and similar props in several *peplums*, and those are usually the ones worth watching. See **MEDUSA AGAINST THE SON OF HERCULES** (1962), **HERCULES AND THE CAPTIVE WOMEN** (1961), **HERCULES VERSUS THE HYDRA** (1960) (now the monster itself has two heads, but certainly isn't in the "classic" Hydra mold, so maybe the title refers to Jayne Mansfield...) and even **HERCULES** (1958) which despite it's lofty status as "king of the *peplums*" is really quite boring. The dragon looks like a dinosaur and sounds like a certain radioactive monster we all know and love... So when in Italy, look up the local fauna.

As we travel toward Japan, I must say that I don't consider Godzilla a true dragon. There is a case to be made for his dragonhood, but there are too many other kaiju around that actually look like Dragons from the East. Starting in 1964, when Ghidrah made it's auspicious debut. The golden tri-domed terror proved to be so popular that a sequel was made in 1965, **MONSTER ZERO**. Both are truly classic monster flicks, far above most homegrown films of the same period, despite myopic views of most critics at the time. King Ghidorah doesn't have all the classic dragon traits (no forelegs), and spits electrical bolts instead of fire, but it's three heads are very eastern dragon-oriented. It was revived in 1991's **GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH**, but without it's threat from outer space origin, it's just not as majestic. Manda, the thousand meter serpent, makes it's debut in **ATRAGON** (1963) and was popular enough to get star billing in 1968's **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**, the best giant monster movie of all time. In D.A.M. Manda's head was changed slightly so as not to resemble lead villain Ghidorah as much. I don't know if Manda made it into the cartoon **SUPER-ATRAGON**, as it was put in the original at the insistence of Tomoyuki Tanaka. Manda is a nice blue-gray color, but also lacks the small wings of the true eastern dragon. For that, we head over to Toei Studios, who released an unnamed dragon in 1966's **THE MAGIC SERPENT**, which is easily one of the best fantasy movies of all time. Hey it was good enough for George Lucas to "borrow" several plot elements for that '77 flick of his, wasn't it? Bright blue, it is a true eastern dragon at last. Then of course, is the Hydra no Yamata, which is shown in both **THE THREE TREASURES** (1959) and **YAMATO TAKERU** (1993). I mention these mostly because it is very easy to see exactly where Ghidrah came from. Of course, a mongrel King Ghidorah showed up in 1991's **GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH**, but this was only a radioactive mutation, and not worthy of the original's name.

Venturing briefly to China, there is **THE FAIRY AND THE DEVIL**, which has a couple of Asian dragons in it, but I haven't watched the entire thing. Does anyone have a subtitled copy? It has the dragons flying in to the theme from **Star Trek: the Next Generation** as an added bonus. Sorry I can't give you more details. And there are of course, tons of martial arts movies with "dragon" in the title, but aside from the fact that dragons are revered over there (the Cantonese word for dragon is "lung") I'm not gonna talk much more about those films. See the new column **Thunderfoot Theater** for details on those films.

Running back to America, we go to **THE VALLEY OF THE DRAGONS** (1961) and find that there are no dragons whatsoever here. There is plenty of stock footage from **ONE MILLION BC** and a guest cameo (in black and white) by Rodan. This is a pretty enjoyable film, though in a low budget sort of way. Bert I. Gordon strikes paydirt in **THE MAGIC SWORD** (1962) his slightly warped version of St. George and the dragon. This dragon has two heads and could be a sibling of the "hydra" from Jayne's film. Easily Bert's best film, with a colorful cast and decent effects- I know!

I almost forgot- **JACK THE GIANT KILLER** (1962)! Edward Small's complete rip-off of ...**SEVENTH VOYAGE** does indeed feature a dragonoid creature. If it had a better design, it could have been quite a scary wyvern-type of creature. Some have called it a gargoyle, but it looks too big for that. It does, however, top off a decidedly weird kiddie flick.



#### ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGONET

Reviewed by Christopher Elam

Ha! I'll bet David hadn't even thought about Stan Freberg's 1953 novelty record. It's a cute parody of **Dragnet** set during the medieval times. The knight St. George receives the job of slaying a dragon who is devouring maidens out of season. Famous voice actors Daws Butler ("Yogi Bear") and June Foray ("Rocket J. Squirrel") are along for the ride. I find this hilarious, even funnier than the real Jack Webb (who was a riot). Check it out on Dr. Demento's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary collection. (Chris is right, I did forget this. However, he didn't mention the pseudo-sequel- **Christmas DragNet!** -DM)

It's hard to even want to go over all the dragons in cartoons, but I'll mention a few standouts. The first, and easily meanest and scariest, is 1959's **SLEEPING BEAUTY**. Maleficent scared me half to death when I first saw her. I can't imagine Disney making anything half as scary as this these days. There is also **THE LITTLE PRICE AND THE EIGHT HEADED DRAGON** (1963), a quite enjoyable version of **THE THREE TREASURES**. It also has the great distinction of featuring excellent music by Akira Ifukube. In the 60s, Japanese cartoons sure were fun. Our hero here rides a flying horse to defeat this huge monstrosity. It would be nice if this showed up on TMC letterboxed. Then, in the rather lame and tame version of **THE HOBBIT** (1977) Smaug really stands out. Excellently designed and animated (except for being a bit bulbous) he is a true terror. Too bad the rest of the adaptation went for "cute" instead of accurate. Then there was an adaptation of **FLIGHT OF THE DRAGONS**, which appears to be (very) loosely based on Gordon R. Dickson's superior fantasy *the Dragon and the George*. I'm not sure. This also suffers from too cuteness, but it's kind of fun. Too bad the dragons are so fat. And I have to mention the great Fin Fang Foom, who had a starring role in the 90s Marvel cartoon **Iron Man** as a space dragon. Quite a change from his original story, I must say (Yeah, I read comics as well- wanna make something of it?)

Of course, the best dragon on TV was Zok, "the laser ray dragon" from **the Herculoids**. He's so cool that he gets his own paragraph. Of course, the fact that the series is pretty cool as well doesn't hurt. Friend of Dorno, Tara and Zandor, he helps the rest of the Herculoids keep peace on their planet Amzok. He has the ability to fire several kinds of rays from his eyes and tail, making him the most powerful of the bunch. It's too bad that Cartoon Network has to show 18 hours of scooby doo a day, or we could still be watching these and other great cartoons instead. I hate scooby doo. I blame that cartoon for the downfall of much cooler superhero shows in the late sixties.



### THE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE DRAGON AND PINOCHO

(Mexico, 1942, dir.- Carlos Vejar, Jr.)

Salvador Bartolozzi and Magda Donata sequelized Carlo Carladí's novel, the source of this movie.

Pinocho (Franco Jambrina) is the boy puppet, Little Cricket (Marts Ofolia Gallindo) is his conscience, Pipa (Alicia Rodriguez) is the ragged puppy dog and Dona Cucafata (Amparo Villegas) is the "crafty fairy woman." There's a dragon, a whale with big teeth, King Pitch and his Negro pygmies, Queen Chocolate, General Tattoo, Duke Pandolfo, Captain Pataputo (Jose Elias Morena) and his tribe of Negro pygmies, King of Pearl Island and Princess Caracalillo. A talking moon narrates the action and there's also a set of talking teeth and talking frogs! Probably lost, but doesn't it sound grand?

### THE BLACK SAMURAI

(1977, dir.- Al Adamson)

In Hong Kong, there lies a rich playboy, Vietnam vet Robert Sand (Jim Kelly) who's an agent for D.R.A.G.O.N. (Defense Reserve Agency Guardian Of all Nations). Among his gadgets is a strap-on jetpack, a missile shooting pen, and a black super car that comes with a cannon. He's also handy with guns, poles, nunchaku and martial arts. His Caucasian-Japanese girlfriend Takki Konumo (Essie Lin Chia) gets kidnapped by Warlock's men and is taken to a castle in Haiti where Warlock's girlfriend/voodoo priestess Sia (Marilyn Joi), who sometimes wears a necklace of animal teeth, strips her of her clothes.

The millionaire Warlock (Bill Ray) is a Caucasian who holds a skull and disappears in smoke. He's gotten rich from drugs, female slavery and prostitution. Other baddies are a dwarf named Reinhardt (Felix Silla), a black strongman named Bone Crusher (Charles Grant) and voodooists in masks of various animals such as an impala springbok, an eland and leopards. A vulture and snakes provide other thrills. -Charles Floyd Rhodes

Moving on to 1981's excellent DRAGONSAYER we find perhaps the best looking dragon in all film history. Due to the Go-Motion stuff, it works so well. This is a story about the end of magic, wizards and dragons. Peter MacNichol is fine as an unsure hero and Caitlin Clark is our heroine. We may fear this dragon, Vermithrax Pejorative, but we never hate it. Still, the dragon really isn't the star of the movie. In fact, most of these Dragon movies aren't about the dragons, but about how to get rid of them. This wouldn't change for a while, though. We don't get a nice and personable "luck" dragon in 1984's THE NEVER ENDING STORY, but he always looked like a dog to me. He returned in the rather confusing sequel as well, I don't know if he was in the TV show, but I'll take that bet. A cute film I've only seen the end of is DRAGONWORLD. I keep meaning to rent it and see if it's any good, but I can't say much more about it. I think there is even a sequel.

Argentinian poster for **GHIDRAH, THE THREE HEADED MONSTER**

Then, in 1996, there was finally a movie in which the dragon played a central character- DRAGONHEART. This was the story of the last of the dragons, and the end of an age. I found it quite enjoyable. The dragon, voiced by Sean Connery, had real personality, and we as viewers cared about him. I didn't particularly care for the overall design of the dragon, with its stumpy neck and oddly hinged wings, but I liked the dragon. It was pretty predictable, but still entertaining. I would like to see one of these movies in which the dragon lives and that doesn't feature the end of magic. I hear there's a new Dungeons and Dragons movie being made, and it's supposed to have 75 dragons in it, but these will all be CGI. Too bad, as it takes a lot to make these type of effects look uncartoony.

Dragons have been popular movie themes since almost the beginning of the film era. It's not surprising, given their power, grace, beauty and strength. I doubt we'll ever see the end of them. Which is a good thing. I'm sure I have missed some dragon here or there, and I will be kicking myself when I see this published. But that means I will have to do it later, in another issue. However, we are at the end of this article.



### **Ebola Syndrome**

Nobody plays a complete scumbag better than Anthony Wong (*Full Contact; Hard-Boiled*). After killing a few people in Hong Kong, this one finds Wong fleeing to Johannesburg, where he lands a restaurant job and gets an opportunity to show us know what he's really made of by jerking-off inside a slab of meat and serving it up to an annoying gweilo customer. A bit later, he follows this disgusting act up with the rape a convulsing Zulu woman who he was "lucky" enough to find dying along the side of a remote jungle road. Now infected with the highly contagious and extremely deadly Ebola virus, Wong goes back to the restaurant, butchers his unappreciative employers - and with his hands still dripping in blood - forms their remains into 100's of red, succulent meat patties. Naturally, he begins serving these up to the restaurant's many customers, and after infecting half of Johannesburg, Wong returns to Hong Kong where he does his oozing, spitting, bleeding best to wipe out the entire population of this city as well. In short, this is good wholesome fun for the entire family!

### **Hong Kong Godfather**

(1985, Shaw Brothers)

Liang Cha-jen stars in this enjoyable crime film with some action that is shockingly brutal for the time it was made. Hell, even today it's unusual to see a thug lift a child in the air and snap the life out of him by slamming him down across an outstretched knee! Still, there's a lot more story to this than action, so those only looking for cheap thrills should look elsewhere. Those who want to get involved in a good dramatic story, however, should seek this one out.

### **Summer With Ghosts**

(aka *Japanese Ghost Story*)

This truly wonderful film has been called a masterpiece by some. And for good reason! After years away, a man returns home to visit the town of his birth. Though his parents are supposed to have died in an accident long ago, he discovers them to be very much alive

and living happily in his childhood home. Curiously, however, they have also not aged a single minute since the time of their presumed deaths. Since the man finds himself greatly comforted by this visit, he returns again and again to spend some more time with his parents. After each visit, however, he ages rapidly... eventually coming to resemble a corpse! Alarmed, his girlfriend eventually convinces him to stop seeing his parents. And that's when all bloody hell breaks loose! See this with someone you love... and would trust with your life!

### **Lunatics**

Chow Yun-fat, Tony Leung Chiau Wai (*Hard Boiled*), and Paul Chu Kong (*Killer; Fong Sai Yuk*) are featured as dangerous, demented, homicidal homeless men who have been driven way over-the-edge in this horrifying study of their derelict lives. The catch is that these violent nutjobs have been portrayed sympathetically. Audiences simply weren't ready for it! And it certainly blew me away too! This is one serious and sobering film.

### **Bite Of Love**

Stephen Shin (*Black Cat*) directs Rosemund Kwan, George Lam, and Norman Chu in this European-styled vampire tale that many fans of Hammer horror have praised. Not being much of a Euro-vampire aficionado myself, I'm afraid I found it merely average. Still, there are some great elements, the most incredible of which involves a very sick young boy who is given a transfusion of super-healing blood from an unusually friendly vampire. Unfortunately, the vampire really can't afford to lose any of this blood, without putting his own health at tremendous risk. Complicating matters, a dying gangster learns of the amazing transfusion and orders his thugs to break into the child's hospital room and bleed the kid dry of this miraculous blood! With the kid once more on the brink of death, the vampire must return and risk everything by literally giving of himself yet again. A simply amazing sequence!

# The Cinematic Voyeur

"My task, which I am trying to achieve, is to make you hear, to make you feel...it is, above all, to make you *see*; and that is everything."

--Joseph Conrad

Positioned comfortably, the wounded knee immobilized per instructions from the medical quack with the bedside manner of the Borgias, I begin not with a customary bloodcurdling screech and howl, almost certain to peel paint and stop small, cute forest creatures dead in their tracks, but with a joke. (Which will lead to something bigger.)

Why? Because humor is the best medicine for what ails you. Because, as The 'Naked But...' Tours have so well taught so many, humor reveals our true selves.

Laugh at the following and see something new about yourself. Don't laugh and know nothing:

An elderly woman goes into a doctor's office.

"Doctor," she says. "I don't know what I'm going to do. I have the worst case of gas you can imagine. It doesn't make a sound, it doesn't smell. But I fart constantly. Why, just since I came in here I've let go a dozen times. What can I do?"

The doctor puts a finger to his lips,

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raises an eyebrow, and says, "Take these green pills for a week, then come back and see me."

A week passes. The woman returns.

"Oh, doctor," she wails. "I did what you told me to do. I took the pills, but I'm still farting. And what's worse is that now they make this god-awful noise. No smell, just the noise. What do I do?"

Once more the doctor puts a finger to his lips, once more he raises an eyebrow, and then says, "Well, now that we've solved your hearing problem, let's work on your sense of smell."

Speaking only for myself I roll around helplessly on the floor, snorting and giggling, so wonderful is the punch line, the joke as a whole, the kernel of cosmic truth within it regarding human behavior.

Such behavior on my part, though, probably marks me as a deviant of the worst kind. The sort you don't invite to dinner for fear I might suddenly start sculpting the mashed potatoes into a scale model of Devil's Tower with my bare feet while whistling the 'Colonel Bogey March'.

Oh, well.

But since we are on the subject of flatulence...

Have you ever thought that maybe dragons don't breathe fire? That maybe they just pass gas--albeit industrial strength--from the wrong end?

(Where does he get this stuff, the lady from Beverly Hills with the fake ivory fingernails ponders.)

Comes a moment of truth in the form of a confession, slipping out under the

shroud of pleasantness brought to me by way of prescription painkillers: Dragons, specifically those in the cinema, have never held much of an appeal for me.

When asked to explain this bias all I can muster is: It is because of the way they have been presented cinematically to date: Cute but superficially ugly with overly wrought anthropomorphic tendencies squeezed from the two-dimensional molds of the Peter Hyams/Paul Verhoeven School of Logic: We spent twenty million-plus on the special effects, so who cares about Common Sense? And Plot? Ta hell with Plot! We don't need no stinkin' Plot!

Every dragon movie that comes to mind (and there are not, relatively-speaking, many) overall insists on presenting dragons in ways they likely are not, were they real: Solitary, cumbersome creatures with a severe manic-depressive streak, a chip on their shoulder (scaly or otherwise), certain to face extinction owing to their lack of survival skills.

Oh, please. Come on. Deal with logic for a moment. Keep one foot in reality: If a dragon has survived a millennium don't you think they can survive another millennium? Of course they can. And the reason is simple: A dragon is a magical creature, no doubt possessing the ability to change color (effectively blending to the background) or even change shape.

And to survive a dragon will either change color or change shape. Personally, I would go with the latter. (It allows for more dramatic license, dontcha know. And would allow for the

aforementioned joke to easily be written into a script. An elderly woman/dragon that breaks wind. Stop it! I'm crying tears of joy at such a set-up!)

Which would go to explain why you don't see dragons in these modern times.

They have changed shape to preserve their existence. They have, to put it as simply as I can, adapted.

They have evolved.

Wait...was that a Creationist I just heard bellow with indignation at the prospect of the 'E' word?

Never mind. I just realized it was me. The drugs are wearing off.

Where was I? Oh, right: Dragons and their ability to survive through time.

Agreeing that a dragon can adapt, and evolve to survive time, let's go back quickly to their origins. Where do they come from? (If you say another planet I swear I will hunt you down, swingline you to the dirty bed linens, and make you watch every episode of *The Gong Show* ever broadcast.)

Was theirs a civilization that preceded humanity's? Or was theirs a time that came from, oh, I don't know...another dimension?

Another dimension. Hmm. The plot possibilities thicken like reheated lentil-mushroom soup.

So. Your task for next time is to write a story about a dragon (or two) that would make the masters of the fantastic proud. (And jokes as part of the story are much desired.)

Until next time, with towel in hand, my feet on the ground, and my head in the clouds...

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● farewell



GEORGE DESOTA

"I was an outcast, a loner. I never felt like I fit," Williams (in 1983) told PEOPLE that year.

# Ultimate Shock

Rocker Wendy O. Williams takes her own life

Long before Madonna and Courtney Love flaunted their blonde ambition, there was Wendy O. Williams, lead singer of the '80s punk band the Plasmatics. But beneath her platinum Mohawk and taped-over nipples lurked a tamer soul. "When people met her offstage, they couldn't believe it," says her longtime boyfriend and manager Rod Swenson, 52. "She was sweet and shy . . . very vulnerable and so sensitive."

Too sensitive, perhaps. On April 6, Swenson discovered the 48-year-old singer's body, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, near their Storrs, Conn., home. The onetime Queen of Shock Rock, who, Swenson says, had attempted suicide twice before, left behind a cryptic note that read, in part, "For me, much of the world makes no sense, but my feelings about what I am doing ring loud and clear to an inner ear and a place where there is no self, only calm."

Life was rarely calm for Williams, a Rochester, N.Y., native who was booted out of the Brownies for flirting with boys. As a teen, she hitchhiked to Colorado with \$50 she'd saved working at Dunkin' Donuts. She found her iconoclastic calling in 1978 when Swenson created the Plasmatics around her. Known for such wild onstage antics as shredding cars with chain saws, she recorded four albums with the group and earned a 1985 Grammy nomination before quitting in 1988. Williams later received a license as a wildlife animal rehabilitator but remained unfulfilled. "She tried to hang on," says Swenson. "I was constantly telling her to please not go. Finally, she would say, 'I just need to go. It's better for me to go now.' •

## OUTtakes:

Well, we come to the end of another Xenorama. I hope everyone has enjoyed the new columns and various other stuff that I have included in here. It's been fun. And now with this new computer, Xeno should be coming out more often. How about that? I can also promise some different layouts and headings as well. **Xeno** is more about information than style, but a little can't hurt.

One a personal note, the following Dilbert cartoon is exactly how I feel about various body piercing:



I can tell I'm getting older, as I have no idea why kids these days think it's so cool to stick steel through parts of the human body that obviously aren't meant to have holes in them. Yee-uck! I can understand rebellion. I do have both my ears pierced, but what are *their* kids gonna do to rebel against them? Here's hoping that they choose "courteously deferential" as an attitude. I know it is something I'd like to see!

And I blew it last issue, for failing to credit David Meyer for the new **Xenorama** logo that now graces the covers of last issue and the one you are holding in your hot little hands right now. It's always something I forget. Who knows what I've forgotten this issue. I will, as soon as it's published...

And can you believe it? I am being featured in the liner notes of Neptune Media's deluxe version of **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS** (well, they are calling it **GAMERA VS. GUILLON**! I think that is so cool! I hope everyone will go out and buy a copy, so that all these releases are profitable, and they will release more.

Be that as it may, it's always a fun thing to get an issue out. This one was a lot of fun as well, and I think I'll enjoy the next several issues as well. Can you believe **Xenorama** has been going now for close to eight years? That means a big ten-year bash soon. I find that astounding, I must say. In the future we will see issues that go in to outer space, look at spores, molds and fungi, a Batman celebration (60 years, you know) and who knows what else. Also, the first ever **Xenological Awards**! It looks like it will be quite an enjoyable ride. Stay tuned!



-David

**NEXT ISSUE:** Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's... Superman, in the next issue of **Xenorama**! Yes, the next issue will feature the strange visitor from the doomed planet Krypton, and lots of his various imitators! See Starman! Superargo! The three fantastic supermen! All this, plus the usual columns. This will definitely prove I'm a comic book nerd. I should also have a review of **G-Fest 99** for next issue, as it's in LA and that's near enough to me that I can attend. I sure hope that I'll be able to see **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** on the big screen in 1999.

**BACK ISSUE DEPT.:** Well, I do have a few back issues lying around, but please write to me and I'll let you know what I have in stock. The last few are available, for \$4 ppd. The only ones sold out are #2 and #9. So don't even bother asking me for those.

**LAST NOTE DEPT.:** I was just informed that **Owari** is now back in production. Send Chris Elam \$2.00 at PO Box 129, Reeves, LA 70658. Always an informative and fun read.

**YEAR'S SUPER-TERROR SHOW!**  
**THE FANTASTIC WAR OF THE GIANT FIRE MONSTERS!**

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ORIGINAL JAPANESE POSTER FOR THE MAGIC SERPENT (AKA GRAND DUEL IN MAGIC)