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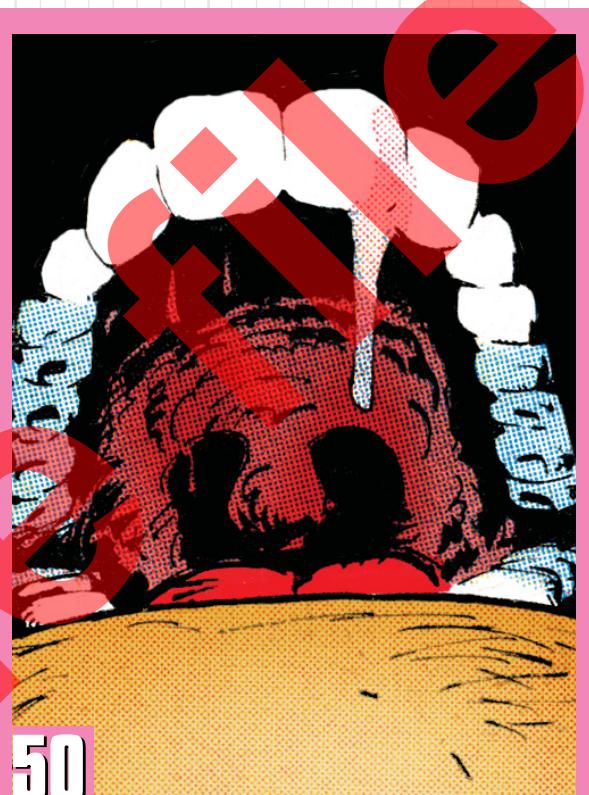


THE
FREEDOM OF DOOM
AN MACHINE SEZ 'KISS MARRIGI



FEATURING • JUDGE DREDD • YOUNG MIDDENFACE • BLACK SIDDHA • THE GIBLIGS • AND MORE

“THEY TURNED HIM INTA A SOFTY! THAT AIN’T RIGHT!”



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MECH MEGAZINE

219
COVER ART

ANYONE KNOW ANY JUST CAUSE OR IMPEDIMENT?

FRT
UNGARA

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KIDS RULE OK!

Gerald Bostock – I wondered where he'd next rear his head. I remember him posting similar comments to those printed in *Dreddlines 218* [*in which he criticised the 'childish' style of recent stories, and asked for adults-only Dredd*] on the message board at www.2000adonline.com – which was like waving the proverbial red rag to a bull. I've got to admit to quite ashamedly posting a reply that started in 'f' and ended with 'off'. Well, since his opinions have now made print I thought I'd afford Gerald with a more deserved response.

Whilst I think it's somewhat rash to base an opinion as to the editorial policy behind the direction of a magazine solely on one or two issues, I find it even more naive to assume that a comic should fall into the camp of catering exclusively to either children or adults. In a cultural climate where no subject seems off-limits within popular media, and where even that stalwart of children's drama *Grange Hill* has dealt with issues from child abuse, suicide and discrimination, it's somewhat ill-informed to assume that younger readers can't deal with mature subjects. Likewise, it would also be wrong to assume that most adults only want to read dark and brooding subject matter. If that were true, then how would you account for the success of *Viz* or the widespread appeal to both children and adults of the Harry Potter novels?

The trick isn't to place your audience firmly in one category but to strike a balance in the material you publish so that it will appeal to a broader audience. Take a look at *Charley's War*, for example: as a young reader when it first saw print I considered it to be a damn good World War I romp. Now as an adult I've been able to reappraise that opinion and see it for the highly political, anti-war statement it is. The story hasn't changed, I have. But the genius behind the strip has ensured that it can work on various levels.

I also disagree with labelling the comic 'For Mature Readers Only'. This doesn't necessarily equate to commercial success: for every *Preacher* that has seen print, a dozen *Revolvers*, *Crisises* and *Toxic!* have been consigned to comic history. The whole ethos behind publishing material with an age rating in mind can only serve to straitjacket creators. It's this kind of climate that finds authors having to ensure they've included the right levels of violence and expletives in each issue to meet that 'Mature' label, usually at the expense of good storytelling.

Finally, I want to address the really feeble attack on Roger Langridge's *Whatever Happened To ... Cookie?* artwork. Dismissively evaluating cartoonish artwork as childish not only manages to undervalue the talent of artists working across a range of children's titles but also writes off the value of works such as Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

Matt Pinder (Bradford, W Yorks)

I think Mr Bostock's brain-glue has come unstuck. At 33, I feel qualified to reply that indeed, yes, there is at least one person over 26 that still avidly enjoys reading **2000 AD** and the **Megazine** (credentials: Prog 131 to present-day). I don't know what possessed him to stop reading **2000 AD** for twelve years, but it seems to have addled his mind. Yeah, sure, *Master Moves* and *Cookie* were a bit below par, but that's not because of a perceived lack of maturity. Check out the new *Mean*

Machine story *Angel Heart* in **Meg 218**. Mature? Dang right it ain't! Entertaining? Why you gotta keep asking me so many durn questyuns?

Of course there's room for dark, adult storylines, and we've got 'em in spades. Witness the disturbing tale of a tortured psyche that was *From Grace* in **2000 AD** (the supposed kids' comic). *Black Siddha* might not be every reader's cup of tea, but it deals with adult themes (and it's my Earl Grey, mushrooms optional: I don't know what the Kermodo Dragon's got against it).

Mr Bostock's claim that *Batman* has become a mature readers only publication is rather silly (one might say 'immature'). In the world of comics, on the one hand, yes, we've got *The Killing Joke*, *Arkham Asylum* and *Watchmen*, but these are always tempered by more widely entertaining fare such as *Mad Love*, *Lobo/Judge Dredd* or (and this is telling) *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* (aka **DK2**). Frank Miller took his own dark odyssey from the 80s and produced something thoroughly modern, amazingly entertaining and about as far removed from **DK1** as you could get. Personally, I think they're all classics, and it's not even possible to place them on some bizarre binary line of mature vs immature. Where does *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* sit? Or *Preacher*, for that matter? One minute you're laughing your ass off at Cassidy and his roguish antics, the next you're watching him destroy people's lives in the harshest of ways.

An age rating? Comics, so far, have managed to avoid overly invasive censorship, and bask in the same kind of freedoms that the medium of books enjoys. I pray to Grud it stays that way ...

For the record, I don't give a flying futsie what the supposed author-injected subtext of *Blood of Satanus II* was or wasn't. I thought it was a highly entertaining story with some amazing artwork from the Mighty Mighten: let's have more of the Duke. Pat Mills is a god – pray that he doesn't strike thee down for thy cantankerous online postings.

While I'm here, a big welcome back to John *Raggedy Man* Ridgway [*Dredd: Damned Ranger*]. His work always seems to involve gorgeous panoramas of a sun-scorched Cursed Earth and the accompanying stories are somehow more poignant as he breathes life into every character, however minor. Worth the cover price for this treat alone.

Linton Porteous (Dundee)

SECRET HISTORY?

I recently acquired most of the [mid-90s] DC **Judge Dredd** comics, and was appalled by the timeline discrepancies and clumsy attempts to bring it into line with the **2000 AD/Megazine** continuity. However, the idea of exploring the origins of the Judges – Judge Fargo, President Booth and the creation of the Mega-Cities – was a good one, just poorly executed. Surely it's time for the definitive, Wagnerian version of how it all began to be written?

I for one would love to see the Judgement of Solomon, the Judges taking control, Fargo being cloned, Dredd and Rico at the Academy, etc – not just for a one off, but a ten- to twenty-part mega-epic.

After various misleading stabs at the story (DC Dredd, the Dredd movie) we deserve to know the truth!

Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done ...

Matt Webster (Bradford, W Yorks)

JUDGE DREDD

DAMNED RANGER **PART 2**

SCRIPT
JOHN WAGNER
ART
JOHN RIDGWAY
LETTERS
TOM FRAME



THEY WERE FOUR HUNDRED JUDGES STRONG, WITH FIFTY CURSED EARTH AUXILIARIES AND HOVER SUPPORT. THEIR MISSION -- TO DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH THE HEART OF THE NEW MUTANT ARMY!





