



AMERICAN
SPLENDOR:
COMIC-CON
COMICS

\$2.95 US
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NEO-REALISM



HARVEY PEKAR • GARY DUMM • SCOTT A. GILBERT • JOSH • JOE ZABEL

AMERICAN SPLENDOR

COMIC-CON COMICS

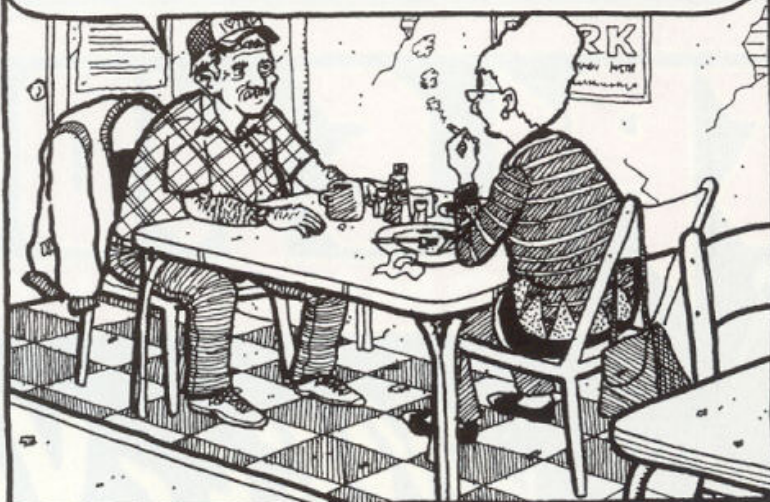
WHEEEYEEW!



Diminished Capacity

by Harvey Pekar
and Josh '96

Diminished capacity... That's what I thought I'd tell 'em if it went to court--diminished capacity.



Diminished capacity...



Hmmm...



Yeah, yeah...
That oughtta
work.



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HARVEY PEKAR
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Josh, Joe Zabel** artists

Diana Schutz editor Jamie S. Rich assistant editor Scott Tice designer Mike Richardson publisher

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AMERICAN SPLENDOR™

AN

GUEST ARTIST
HARVEY PEKAR

INVITATION

STORY BY
HARVEY PEKAR

ART BY
JOE ZABEL &
GARY DUMM

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HARVEY PEKAR

...NOMINATED FOR THE BEST GRAPHIC NOVEL...

OUR
CANCER
YEAR

...PAY FOR TRAVEL, HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS, AND SEVENTY DOLLARS A DAY FOR MEALS AND INCIDENTAL EXPENSES.

WONDER IF YOU AND JOYCE COULD BE AT THE AWARD CEREMONIES...

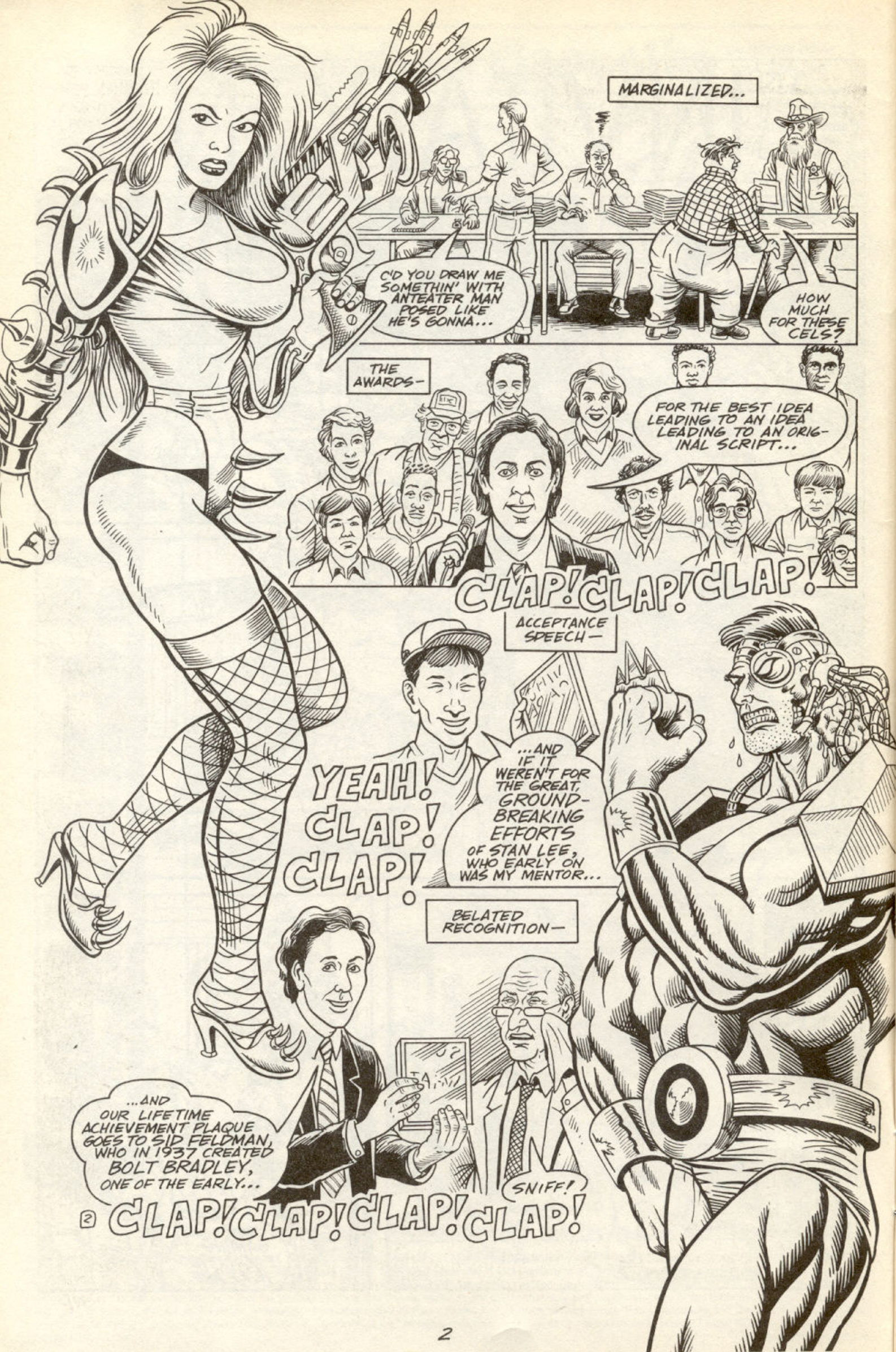
SHOULD I OR SHOULDN'T I?

ON THE ONE HAND...

CRASH!

Registration

THE GAMING FACILITIES HERE ARE...



MARGINALIZED...

C'D YOU DRAW ME SOMETHIN' WITH ANTEATER MAN POSED LIKE HE'S GONNA...

HOW MUCH FOR THESE CELS?

THE AWARDS -

FOR THE BEST IDEA LEADING TO AN IDEA LEADING TO AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT...

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH -

YEAH! CLAP! CLAP!

...AND IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE GREAT, GROUND-BREAKING EFFORTS OF STAN LEE, WHO EARLY ON WAS MY MENTOR...

BELATED RECOGNITION -

...AND OUR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT PLAQUE GOES TO SID FELDMAN, WHO IN 1937 CREATED BOLT BRADLEY, ONE OF THE EARLY...

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!

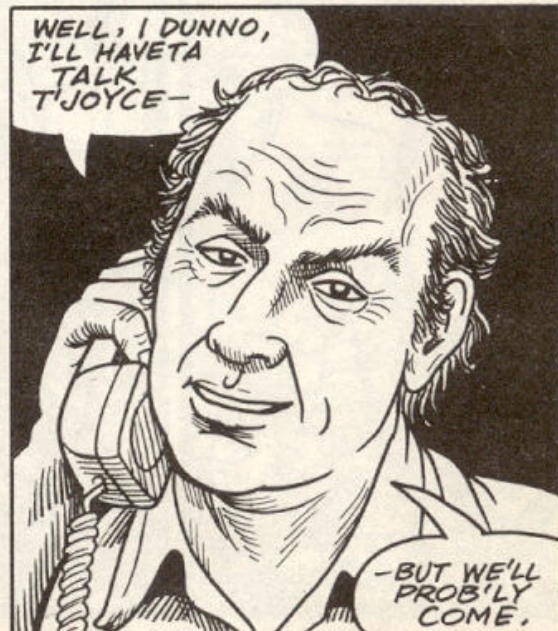
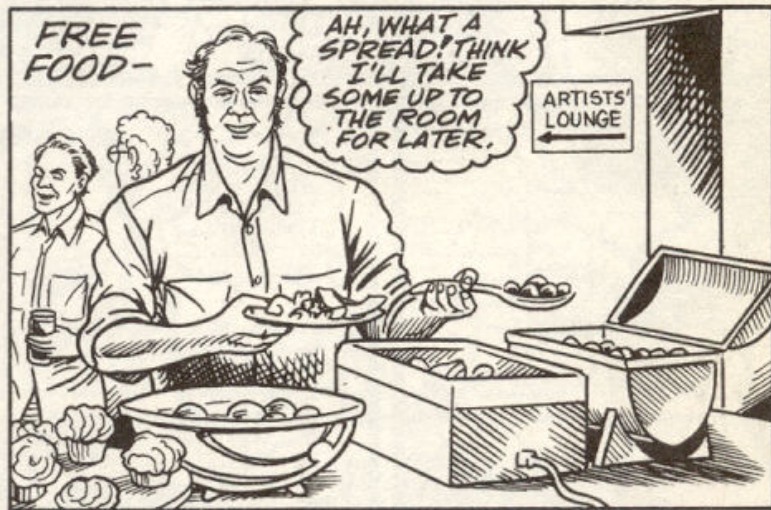
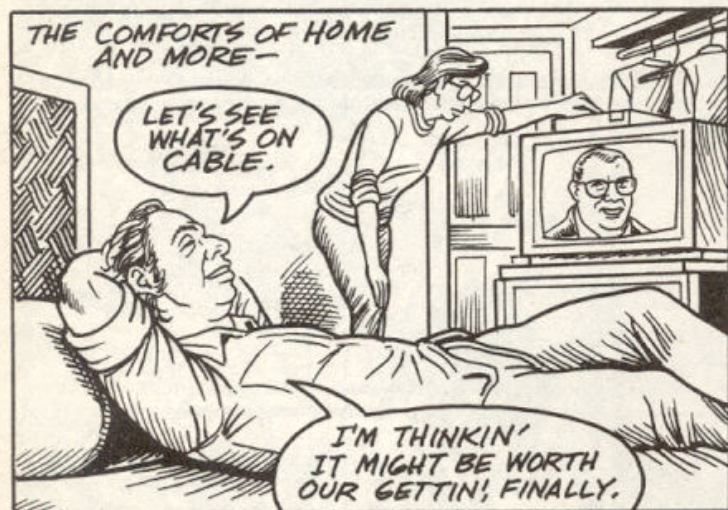
SNIFF!

ON THE OTHER HAND—SO MUCH TRAFFIC, YOU'RE BOUND TO MAKE SOME MONEY, EVEN IF IT'S NOT AS MUCH AS TRADITIONAL COMICS ARTISTS.

SORRY I HADDA CHARGE YOU OVER LIST PRICE ON SOME A' THESE OLDER BOOKS, BUT I ONLY GOT A FEW LEFT.



A CHANCE TO HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH OVER THE PHONE BUT SELDOM SEE...



THE END

WARNING

STORY BY
HARVEY
PEKAR
ART BY
SCOTT A.
GILBERT



SAN DIEGO COMIC CONVENTION, AUGUST 1995



THAT'S
MATT! HE'S
LOOKING
UNUSUALLY
FIT.



HI, HARVEY,
I'M MA--

MATT
GROENING!
I HAVEN'T SEEN
YA SINCE '91.

HOW YA
DOIN'?



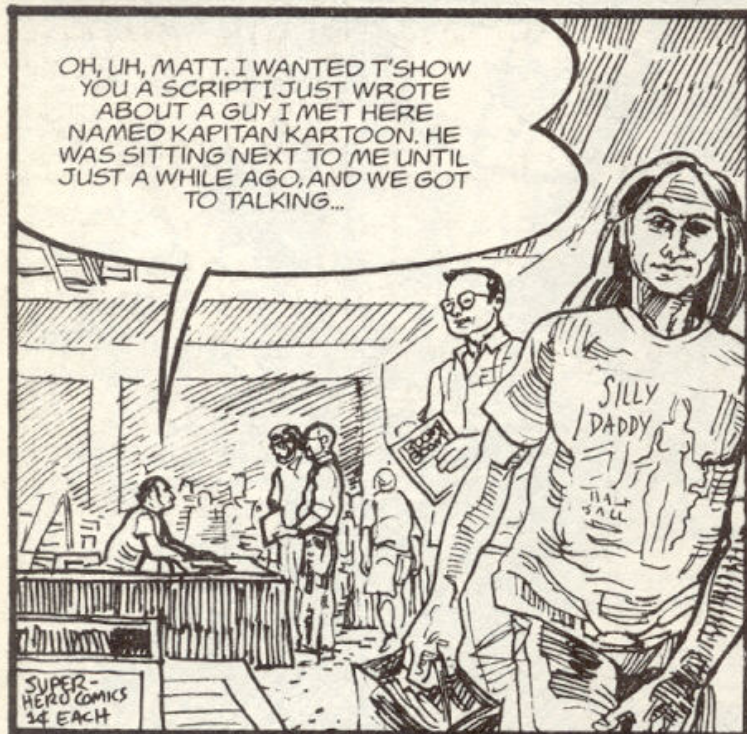
OH, PRETTY WELL. I WAS JUST TALKING TO JOYCE ABOUT YOU DOING A MOVIE.

I APPRECIATE THAT... WE NEED ALL THE ADVICE WE C'N GET.



I'LL TAKE THIS ONE.

HEY, THANKS.



OH, UH, MATT. I WANTED T'SHOW YOU A SCRIPT I JUST WROTE ABOUT A GUY I MET HERE NAMED KAPITAN KARTOON. HE WAS SITTING NEXT TO ME UNTIL JUST A WHILE AGO, AND WE GOT TO TALKING...



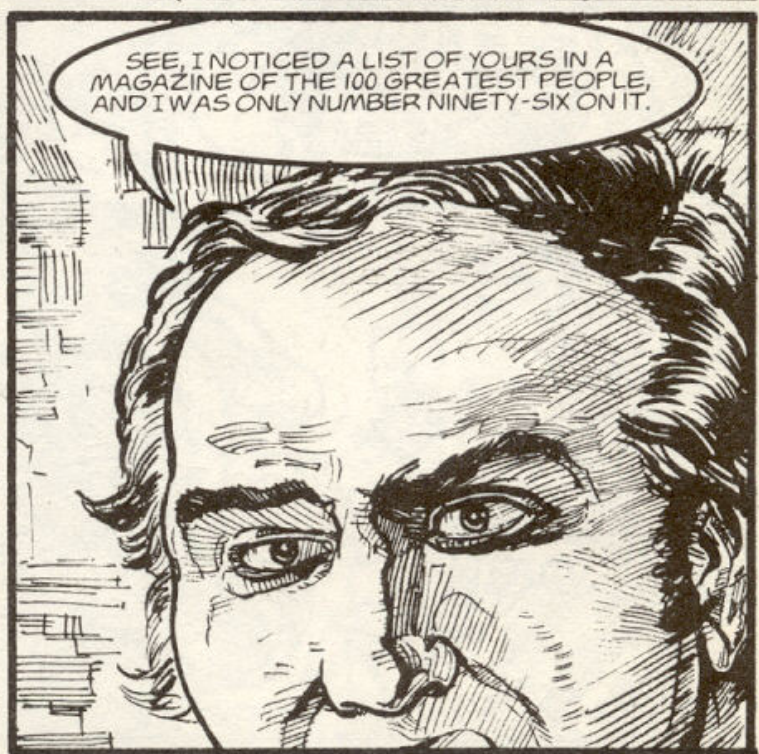
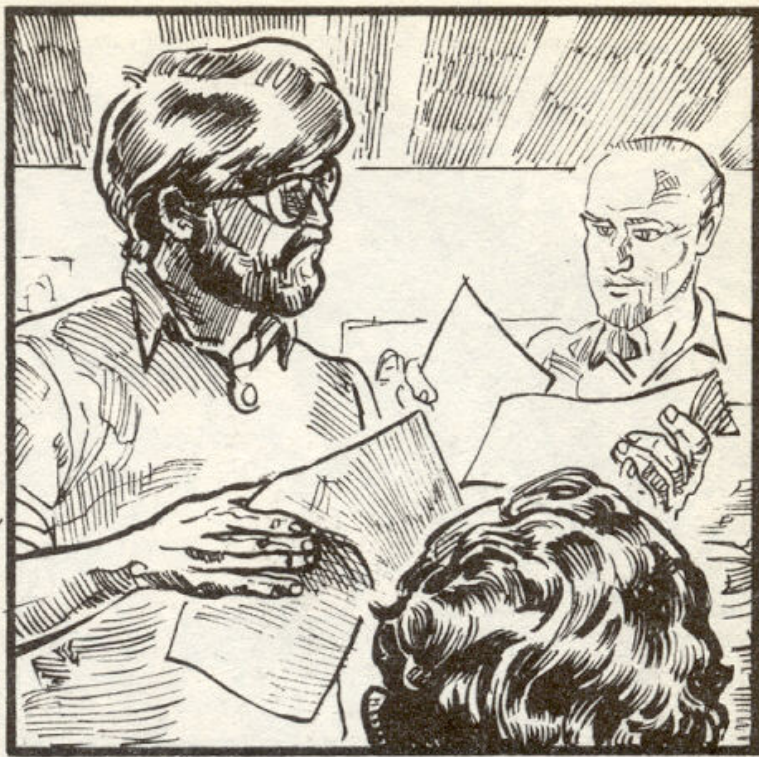
HE'S PRETTY INTERESTING. HE'S BEEN SELLING HIS DRAWINGS AND COLOR PICTURES--THEY LOOK LIKE CARTOON CELLS... MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN 'IM. HE'S DRESSED UP LIKE AN OLD-FASHIONED SEA CAPTAIN. HE HAS LIKE A SIREN HE BLOWS AT PEOPLE T'DRUM UP BUSINESS.



BUT HE ALSO MAKES MONEY AS A TELEPHONE SOLICITOR, TO MAKE BOTH ENDS MEET...IF Y'CAN'T MAKE BOTH ENDS MEAT, MAKE ONE VEGETABLE, RIGHT?



ANYWAY--HE TOLD ME THESE ANECDOTES ABOUT "TELEMARKETING," AND I USED THEM FOR A STORY. TAKE A LOOK AT IT, WILLYA?





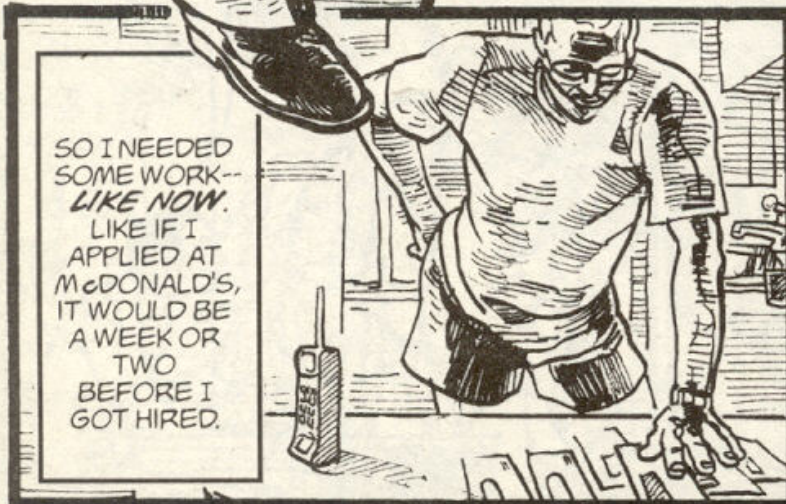
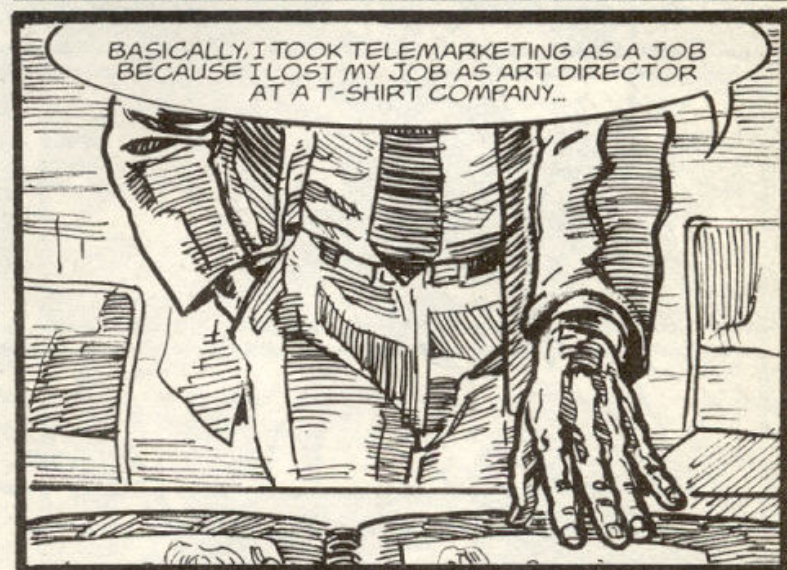
WHAT'S THE WORST POSSIBLE JOB A PERSON COULD HAVE?

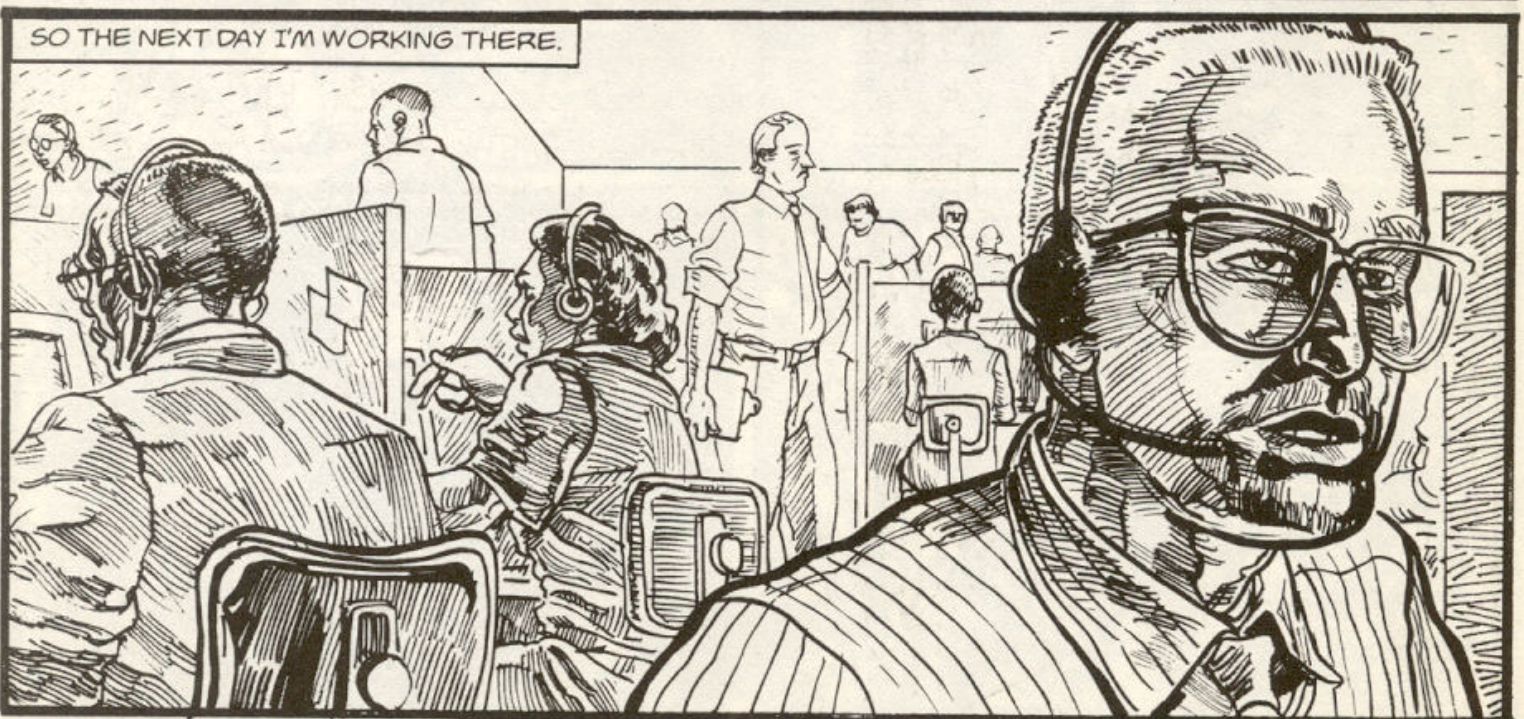
I DUNNO. WHAT?

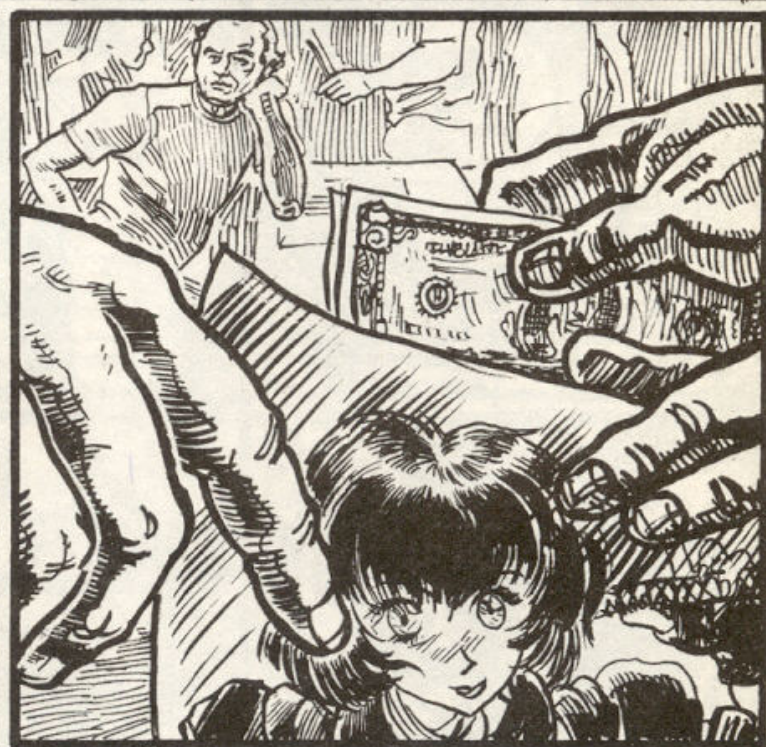
THE WORST POSSIBLE JOB

STORY BY
HARVEY PEKAR
ART BY
SCOTT A. GILBERT

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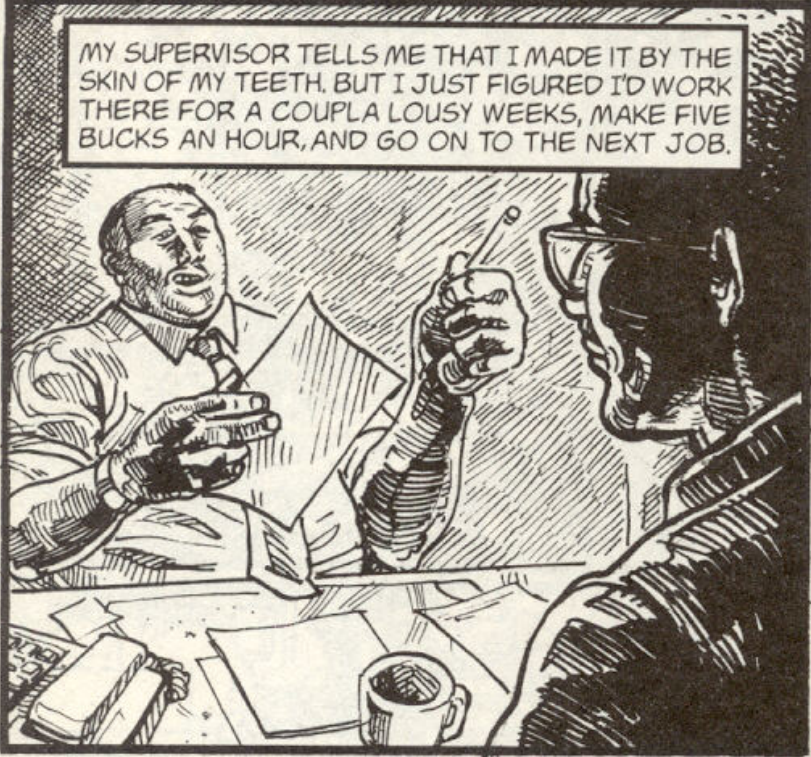
SO
WHERE
WAS I?



AFTER THE THIRD WEEK, I
THOUGHT I WAS GONNA GET
CANNED. I WAS MAKING
ABOUT ONE SALE A DAY.



AND THEN *BLOOEY!* I
MAKE SEVEN SALES ON
THE DAY THEY WERE
GONNA CAN ME.



MY SUPERVISOR TELLS ME THAT I MADE IT BY THE
SKIN OF MY TEETH. BUT I JUST FIGURED I'D WORK
THERE FOR A COUPLA LOUSY WEEKS, MAKE FIVE
BUCKS AN HOUR, AND GO ON TO THE NEXT JOB.



BUT SOMETHING HORRIBLE
HAPPENED. I BECAME GOOD
AT THE WORST JOB ANYBODY
COULD POSSIBLY HAVE.



I STAYED WITH
THE COMPANY
FOR A YEAR,
CALLIN' PEOPLE
UP AND TRYIN'
TO BADGER
THEM INTO
BUYIN' A
NEWSPAPER
THEY DIDN'T
WANT.

I BECAME GREEDIER-- I WANTED MORE SALES. MY PERSONALITY CHANGED. I BEAT THE SALES QUOTA OF THE FRIEND WHO TOLD ME ABOUT THE JOB.



I SLOWLY TURNED INTO A SALESMAN. NO MATTER HOW NASTY THE REJECTION GOT, I SHRUGGED OFF THE REJECTION.

BUT, STILL, DAY BY DAY IT COULD GET TO YA.

ONE DAY I LOOKED AROUND. I SAW MY LIFE GOING NOWHERE.



TO KEEP REJECTION FROM EATING MY SOUL, I DREW LITTLE THUMBNAIL SKETCHES AND SEXY GIRL CHARACTERS FOR THE OTHER GUYS IN THE OFFICE.



THE JOB WAS ONLY FOUR HOURS A DAY, BUT AT THE END OF MY SHIFT IT FELT LIKE TEN HOURS.



I REALIZED--I'M NOT A TELEMARKETER, A PHONE SOLICITOR. I WAS AN ARTIST. I HAD TO GET BACK TO MY OLD WORKING HABITS.



SO, I KNEW THERE WAS A COMIC CONVENTION COMIN' UP IN OAKLAND. I WANTED TO GO REAL BAD, BUT I HAD TO WORK WEEKENDS AT THIS STUPID TELEPHONE JOB.



SO I MADE A DECISION-- I CALLED IN SICK SATURDAY AND WENT TO THE CONVENTION.



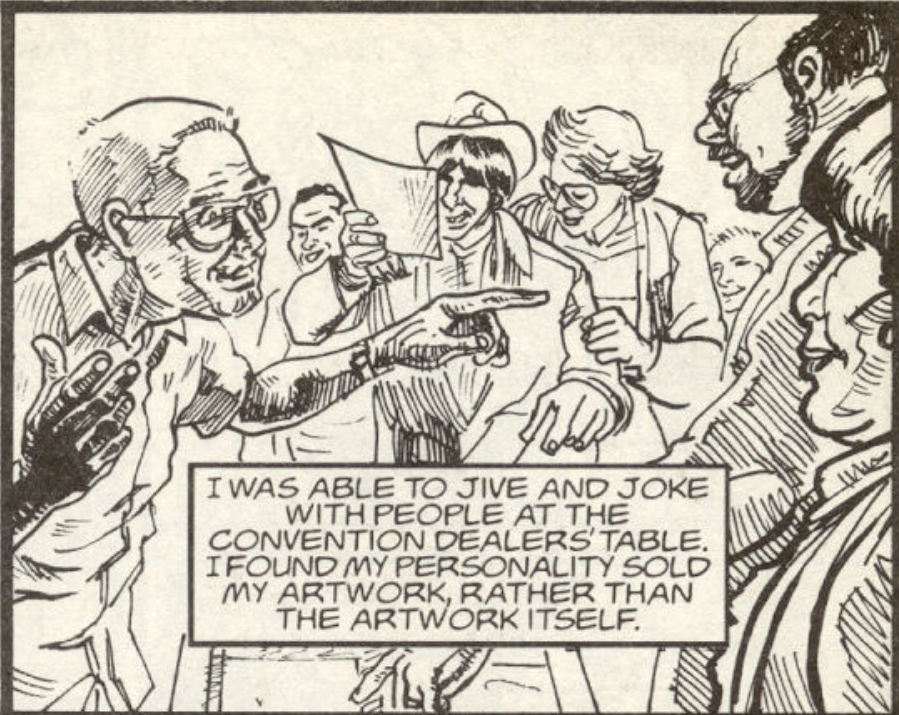
AT THE CONVENTION I SELL DRAWINGS OF SEXY GIRL CHARACTERS AND HUMOR CARTOONS.



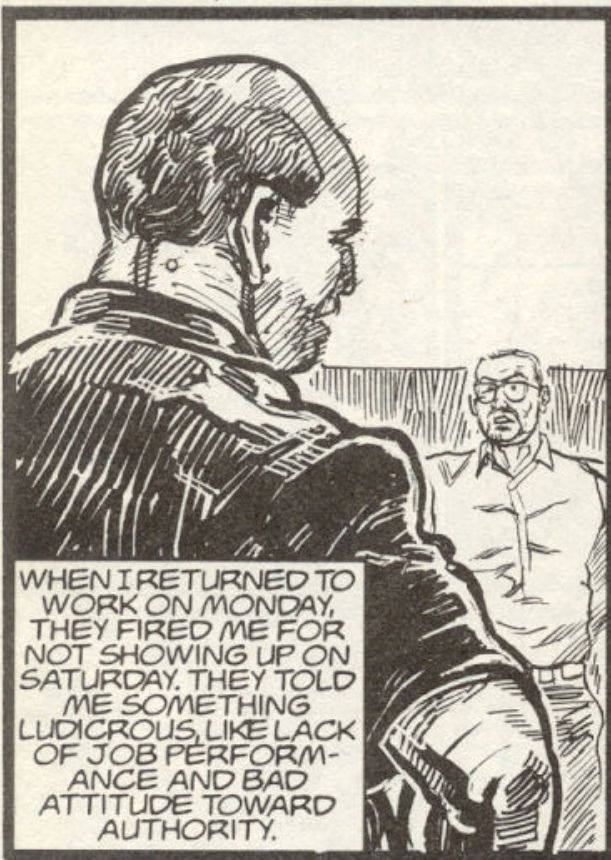
MY SALES WENT THROUGH THE ROOF.



MY TELEMARKETING EXPERIENCE
IMPROVED MY ABILITY TO TALK TO
CUSTOMERS.



I WAS ABLE TO JIVE AND JOKE
WITH PEOPLE AT THE
CONVENTION DEALERS' TABLE.
I FOUND MY PERSONALITY SOLD
MY ARTWORK, RATHER THAN
THE ARTWORK ITSELF.



WHEN I RETURNED TO
WORK ON MONDAY,
THEY FIRED ME FOR
NOT SHOWING UP ON
SATURDAY. THEY TOLD
ME SOMETHING
LUDICROUS, LIKE LACK
OF JOB PERFORM-
ANCE AND BAD
ATTITUDE TOWARD
AUTHORITY.



AT FIRST I
WAS MAD.
BUT THEN IT
QUICKLY
CHANGED TO
RELIEF.

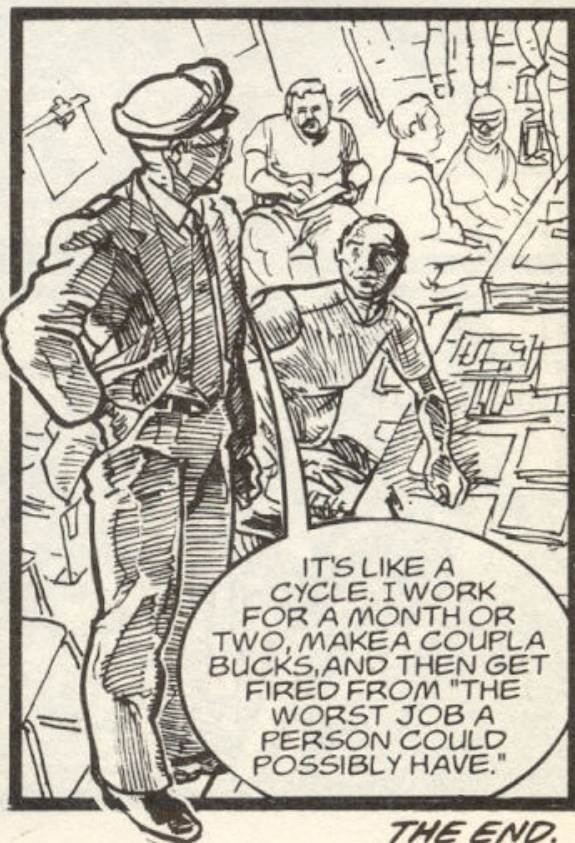
NO
MORE
"FUCK OFF,
ASSHOLE,"
I DON'T
WANT TO
BUY YOUR
PAPER."
I DIDN'T
HAVE TO
PUT UP
WITH
REJECTION
AND B.S.
ANYMORE.



I WENT HOME, STARTED
DRAWING AGAIN, AND
STARTED PLAN-
NING FOR THE
NEXT CONVEN-
TION.



MY ARTWORK DOESN'T
ALWAYS PAY THE RENT, SO I
HAVE TO GO BACK TO TELE-
MARKETING JOBS FROM
TIME TO TIME.



IT'S LIKE A
CYCLE. I WORK
FOR A MONTH OR
TWO, MAKE A COUPLA
BUCKS, AND THEN GET
FIRED FROM "THE
WORST JOB A
PERSON COULD
POSSIBLY HAVE."

THE END.

HUCKSTER

story by
**HARVEY
PEKAR**

art by
**SCOTT A.
GILBERT**



I WAS BETWEEN
TELEMARKETING JOBS, AND
MAKING UP SOME ARTWORK
FOR A CONVENTION IN A
COUPLE OF MONTHS.



I NEEDED SOME MONEY REAL BAD, SO I
CALLED UP AN OLD CLIENT WHO MAKES
T-SHIRTS, AT A LOCAL SWAP MEET.



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HE'S GOT A SMALL-TIME COMPANY, AND HE LIKES TO BOOTLEG FROM TIME TO TIME TO MAKE SOME QUICK MONEY.

HE CAN'T DRAW AS WELL AS I CAN, SO HE'S ALWAYS ASKING ME FOR ART AND DESIGN WORK.



SO I CALL 'IM UP, AND HE WANTS TO DO A KNOCKOFF OF THE NEW *TERMINATOR II* MOVIE.



HE ASKED ME TO MAKE UP A T-SHIRT WITH ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER ON IT, AND HE'S GONNA PAY ME \$45.00 FOR THE HONOR.

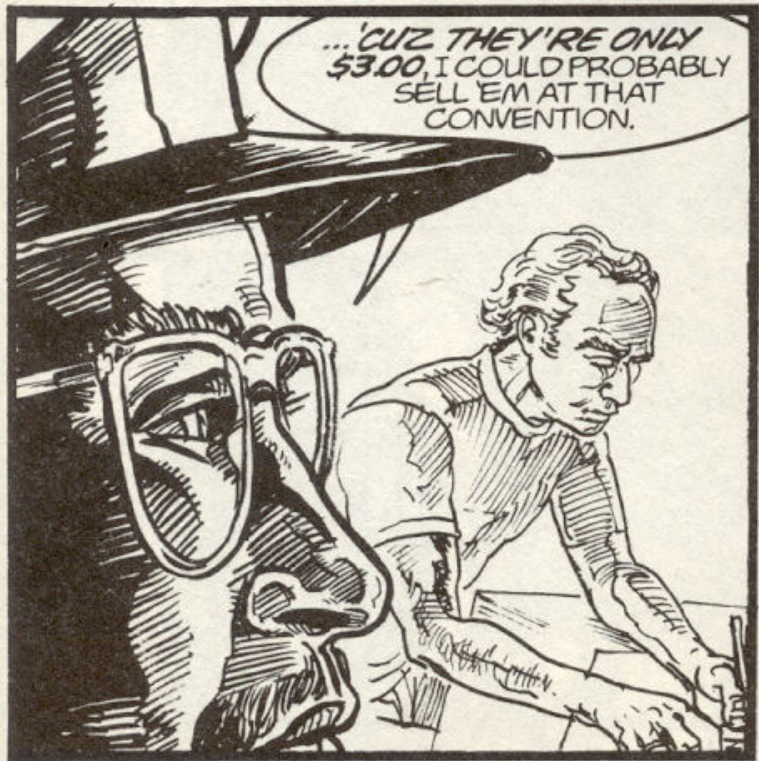
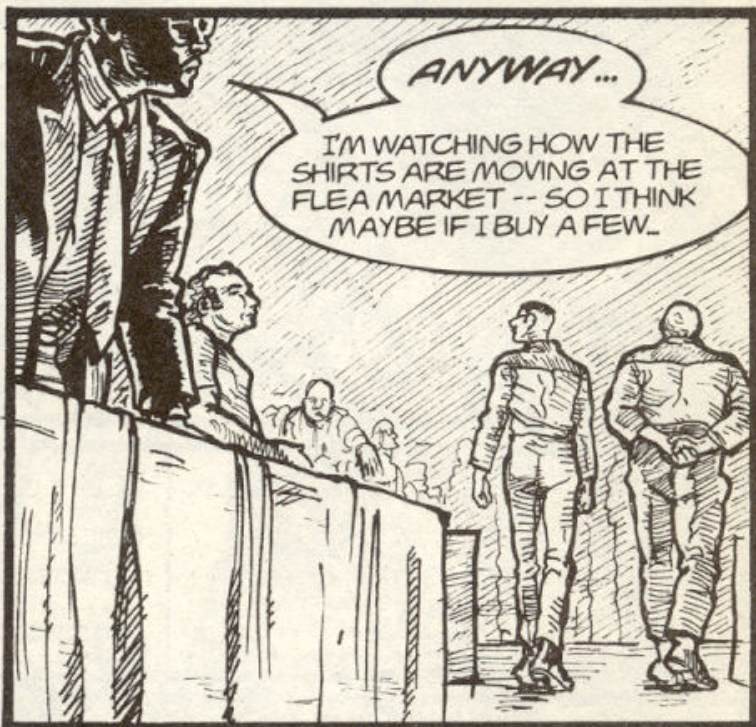


I QUICKLY KNOCK IT OFF, AND HE STARTS SELLING IT AT THE FLEA MARKET.

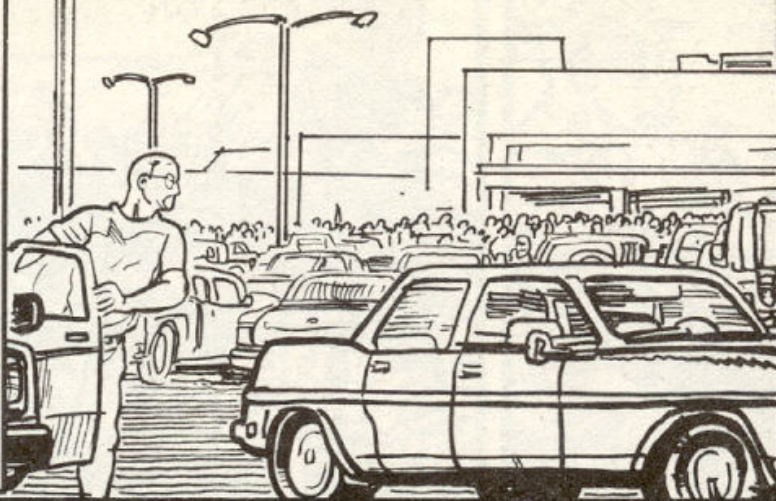


Y'LOOK JUST LIKE SCOTTIE...





I SAID, "THIS IS TOO GOOD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS UP" SO I PARKED MY CAR AND TRIED TO PEDdle SOME T-SHIRTS AT THE LINE OF PEOPLE WAITING. IT WAS FOUR BLOCKS LONG.



I FEAR THAT THERE'S GONNA BE SOMEBODY IN THAT LINE THAT I COULD RECOGNIZE, AND I'VE ALWAYS GOTTEN A LOT OF CRAP FROM MY FRIENDS ABOUT SELLING BOOTLEG MERCHANDISE.



SO I PUT ON A PAIR OF SUNGLASSES AND A BASEBALL CAP THAT I DON'T OFTEN USE, TO DISGUISE MYSELF.



I THEN WENT DOWN TO THE LINE TO SELL THE T-SHIRTS. EVERYTHING I LEARNED IN TELE-MARKETING CAME BACK TO ME, AND I BECAME THIS SALESPERSON ALL OVER AGAIN.



THIS WAS DIFFERENT THAN SELLING STUFF OVER THE PHONE; THESE PEOPLE COULD SEE ME.



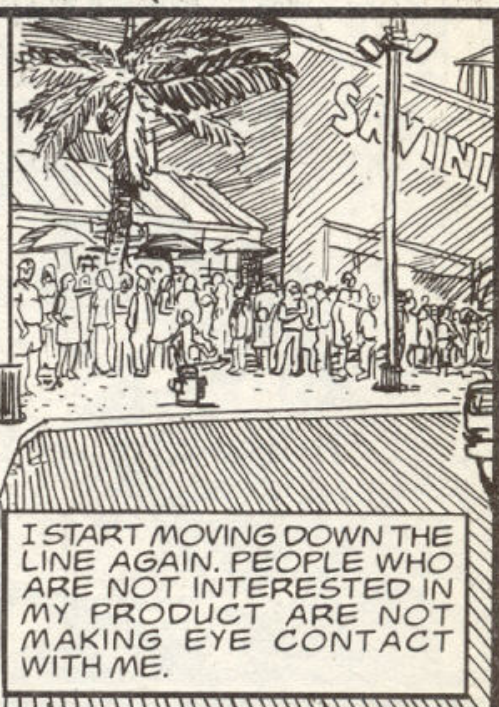
NOT ONLY THAT, I COULD SEE THEM AND THE LOOKS ON THEIR FACES. I COULD SEE WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF ME INSIDE.



I WAS TERRIFIED BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE WERE WAITING IN LINE ON A HOT DAY, AND THEY WERE IRRITABLE, DIDN'T WANT TO BE BOTHERED, AND THEY'D ALREADY SPENT A FORTUNE ON MOVIE TICKETS.



UNLIKE SOME CONVENTIONS I GO TO AND THE FANBOYS I MEET THERE, I DIDN'T THINK THESE PEOPLE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SOUVENIRS, LIKE THE AUDIENCE AT A ROCK CONCERT.



I START MOVING DOWN THE LINE AGAIN. PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT INTERESTED IN MY PRODUCT ARE NOT MAKING EYE CONTACT WITH ME.

I MOVE DOWN THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE LINE, ALL FOUR BLOCKS. NO ONE WANTS A T-SHIRT. I'M BEING IGNORED LIKE A TRANSIENT ASKING FOR A QUARTER.



SO I
MOVED
BACK UP
THE LINE.
I'M ABOUT
TO GIVE UP,
AND I
FELT LIKE
PACKING
IT IN. WHY
EXPOSE
MYSELF TO
THIS ABUSE
AND THE
POSSIBILITY
OF A
POLICEMAN
WRITING
ME UP A
TICKET FOR
VENDING
WITHOUT A
LICENSE?



I ALSO HAD THIS RIDICULOUS
FEAR OF THE COPYRIGHT
POLICE SWOOPING OUT OF THE
SKY AND PUTTING ME IN JAIL.



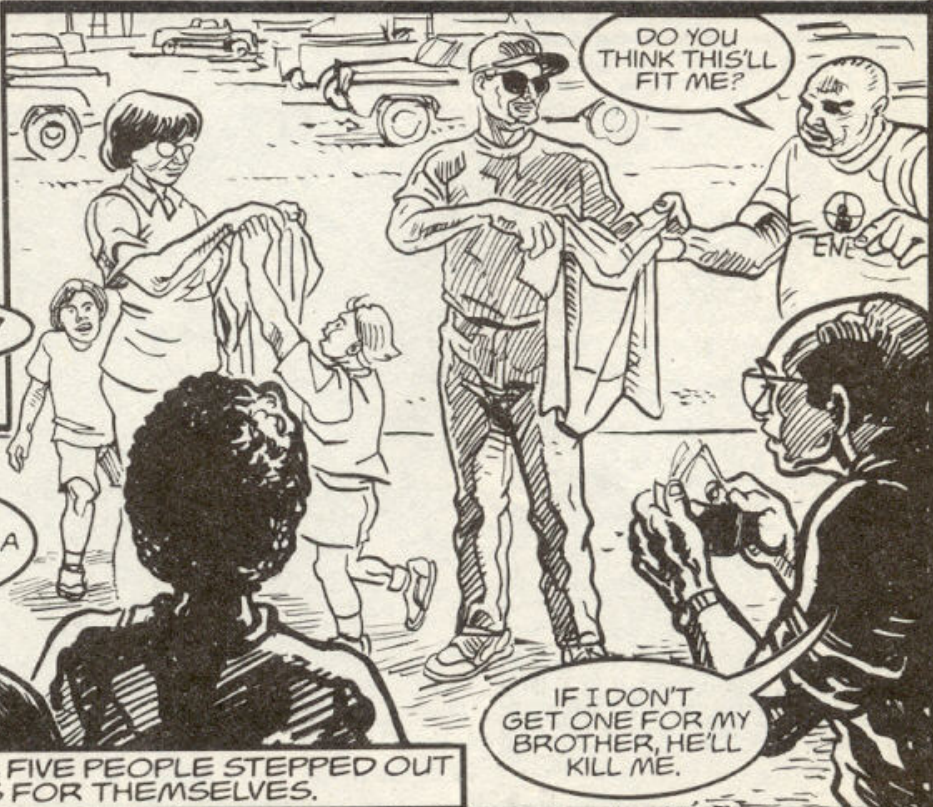
I WAS WALKING BACK TO THE
CAR WHEN A LITTLE LADY SAYS,
"I'LL TAKE ONE, MISTER."



ONLY \$7.00!



DO YOU
HAVE AN EXTRA
LARGE?



DO YOU
THINK THIS'LL
FIT ME?

IF I DON'T
GET ONE FOR MY
BROTHER, HE'LL
KILL ME.

AND AS I HANDED A SHIRT TO HER, FIVE PEOPLE STEPPED OUT
OF LINE AND ASKED FOR T-SHIRTS FOR THEMSELVES.

IN LESS THAN AN HOUR I'VE SOLD
TWENTY T-SHIRTS.



AS I GO BACK TO MY CAR
TO GET MORE T-SHIRTS,
PEOPLE ARE CHASING
ME TO BUY MORE.



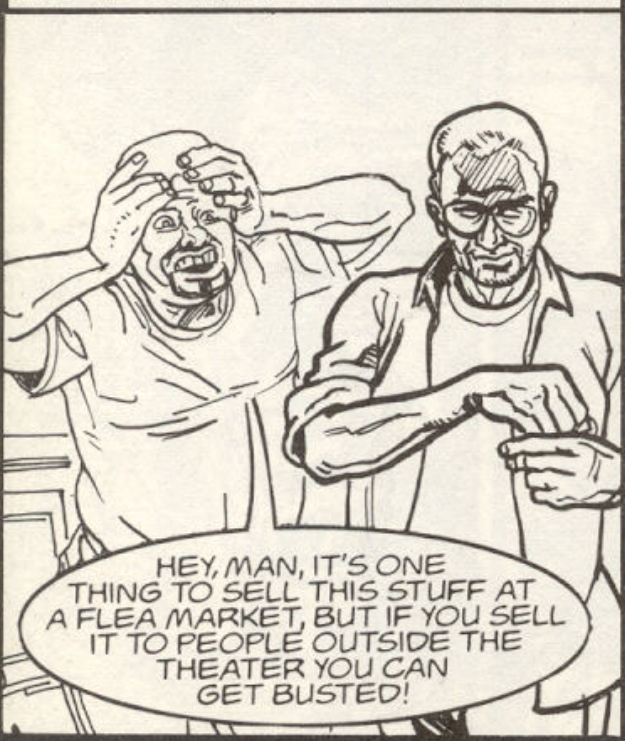
AFTER THE WEEKEND, I GAVE MY FRIEND AT THE
T-SHIRT SHOP \$105.00 FOR THE SHIRTS, WHICH I'D
GOTTEN ON CONSIGNMENT, AND I WAS ABLE TO
POCKET A \$140.00 PROFIT, WHICH I USED TO PAY
MY LATE RENT FEE.



I RUN OUT
OF ALL T-SHIRTS IN
LESS THAN
TWO HOURS,
AND I HAVE
POCKETED
\$245.00.



I TOLD HIM WHERE I SOLD THE SHIRTS,
AND HE GOT A LITTLE FREAKED OUT.



HEY, MAN, IT'S ONE
THING TO SELL THIS STUFF AT
A FLEA MARKET, BUT IF YOU SELL
IT TO PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE
THEATER YOU CAN
GET BUSTED!

NO WAY, MAN--
THEY DIDN'T BOTHER ME
AT ALL. THERE WERE THEATER
PEOPLE ALL AROUND.
THEY ACTED LIKE
I WAS INVISIBLE.



THEN HE RELATES A STORY ABOUT GETTING BUSTED FOR SELLING BOOT-LEG T-SHIRTS AT A ROCK CONCERT. I TELL HIM IT'S NOT THE SAME THING.



THEN HE SAYS:

O.K., BUT KEEP A LOW PROFILE. DON'T TELL ANYBODY WHERE YOU GOT THE SHIRTS.



I TAKE ONE HUNDRED SHIRTS OFF HIM THAT HE CONSIGNS TO ME. FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKENDS WHEN THE LINES ARE LONGEST, I GO OUT AND MOVE THE MERCHANDISE.

MY SALES-MAN'S SKILLS ARE TAKING OVER MY PERSONALITY.

YOU MEAN LIKE JEKYLL AND HYDE?



THAT'S EXACTLY IT!



I APPROACH PEOPLE WITH MORE CONFIDENCE AND GALL.

I INVENT A NEW SPIEL
FOR COUPLES:

HEY
THERE, SIR,
WOULDJA
LIKE T'BUY
A T-SHIRT
FOR YOUR
LADY? SHE'LL
HAVE ARNIE
ON HER
CHEST
AND YOU
ON HER
MIND.



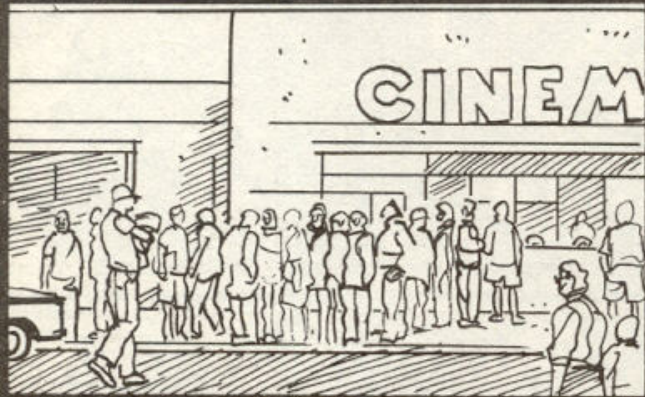
THAT ALWAYS GETS A LAUGH FROM
THE COUPLE--AND ALMOST ALWAYS
GETS A SALE.



AFTER
THE FIFTH
WEEK, THE
LINES
WERE
GETTING
THINNER. I'D
MET MY
MOST
CRUCIAL
FINANCIAL
OBLIGA-
TIONS, SO IT
WAS
ABOUT
TIME TO
QUIT.



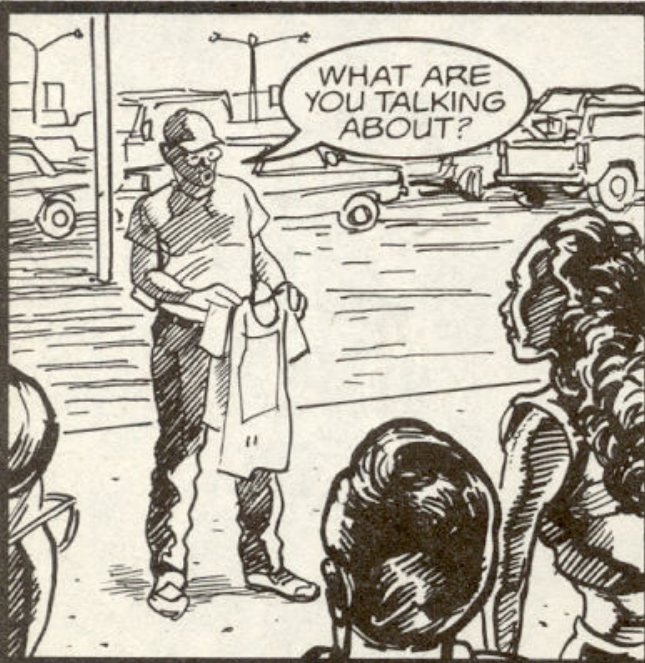
ON THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST
WEEKEND, THERE WAS A SMALL LINE
GETTING READY FOR A MATINEE.



I GO INTO MY SPIEL, AND THE PEOPLE IN LINE START
LAUGHING AND POINTING AT ME, AND SAY, "YOU'RE
THE GUY IN THE NEWSPAPER."



WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?



SOME
REPORTER
HAD WRITTEN
A HUMAN-
INTEREST
STORY ON
THE LARGE
CROWDS AT
TERMINATOR II
MOVIES,
AND IN THE
ARTICLE HE
MENTIONED
MY SPIEL I DO
WITH
COUPLES.

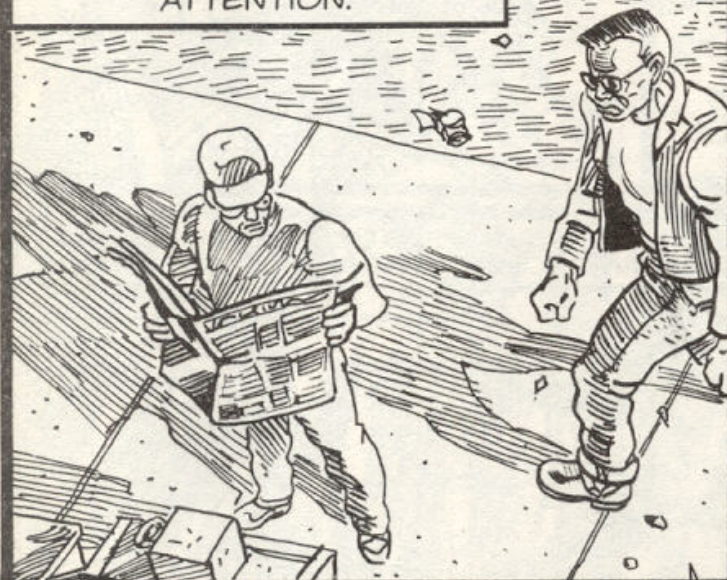


MY COVER'S BLOWN. ALL OF A SUDDEN, I'M MENTIONED IN AN ARTICLE READ BY 300,000 PEOPLE!



AT FIRST I'M PANICKED A BIT, AND THEN I RAN TO GET A NEWSPAPER. I FOUND THE ARTICLE THE CROWD WAS TALKING ABOUT. THEY WERE RIGHT. I WAS MENTIONED IN TWO PARAGRAPHS.

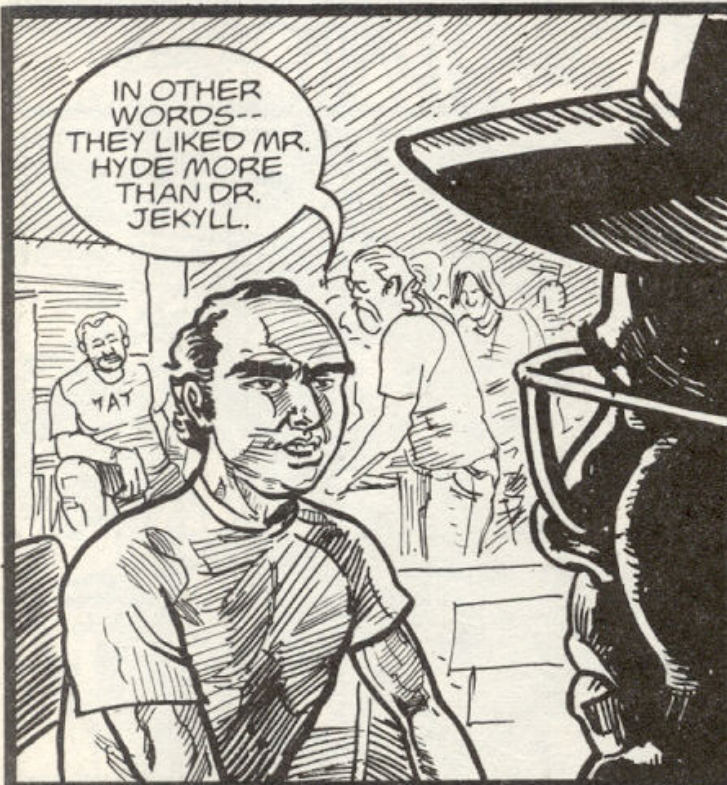
I REALIZED THIS COULD HAVE CAUSED ME LEGAL PROBLEMS, BUT I WAS KIND OF FLATTERED BY THE ATTENTION.



IT REALLY SHOWED THAT THE SALESMAN PERSONALITY IMPRESSED PEOPLE MORE THAN WHO I REALLY WAS.



IN OTHER WORDS-- THEY LIKED MR. HYDE MORE THAN DR. JEKYLL.



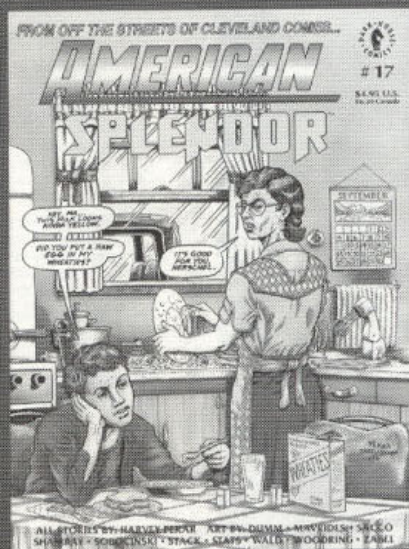
EXACTLY.



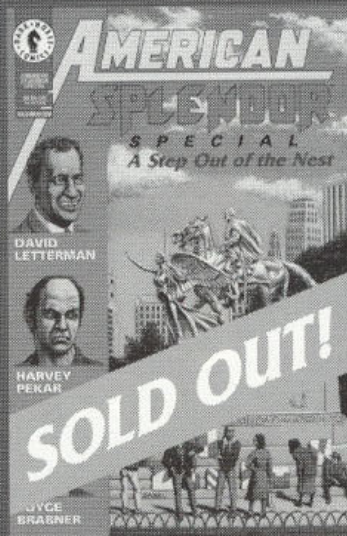
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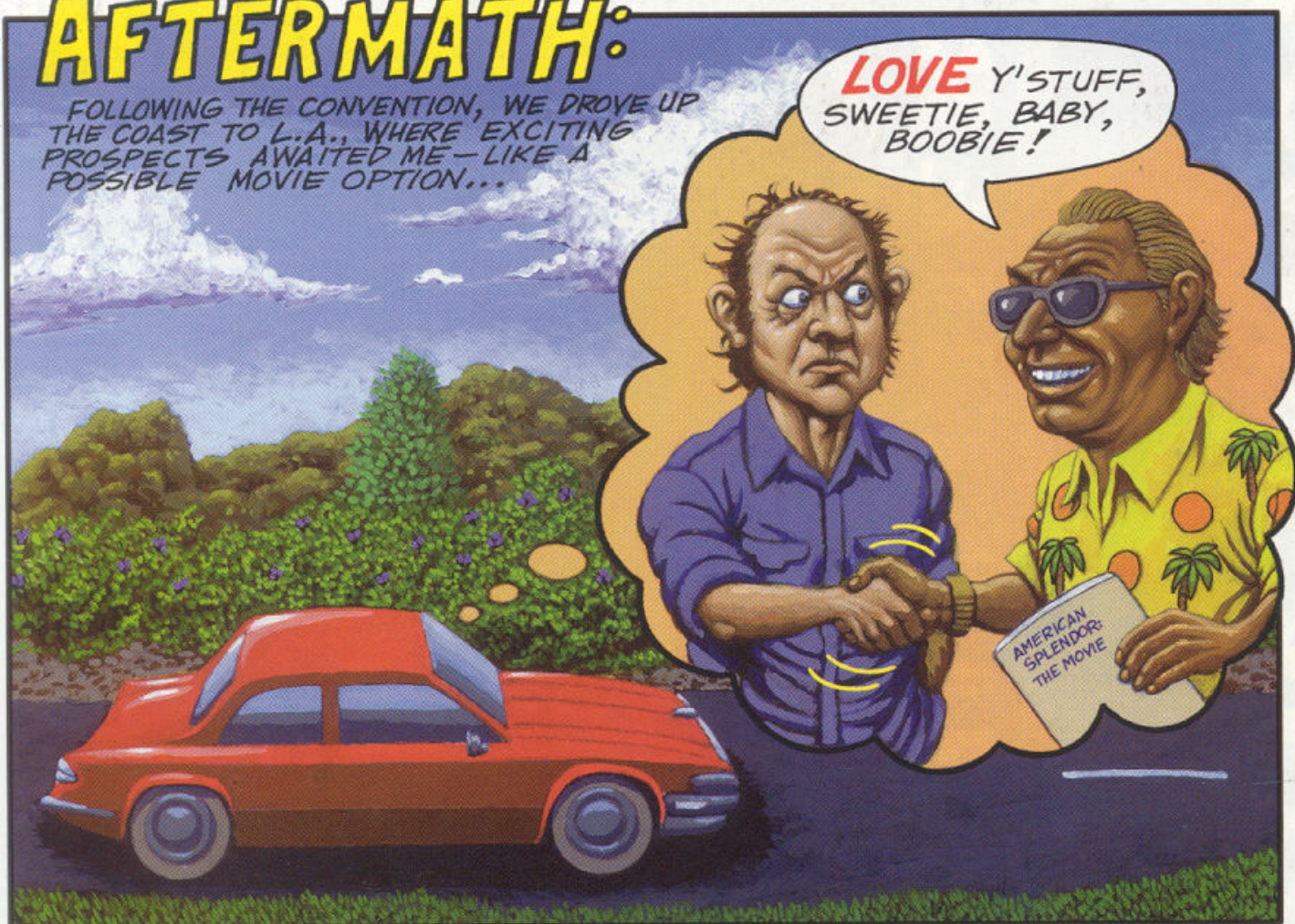
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**Only
from**



AFTERMATH:

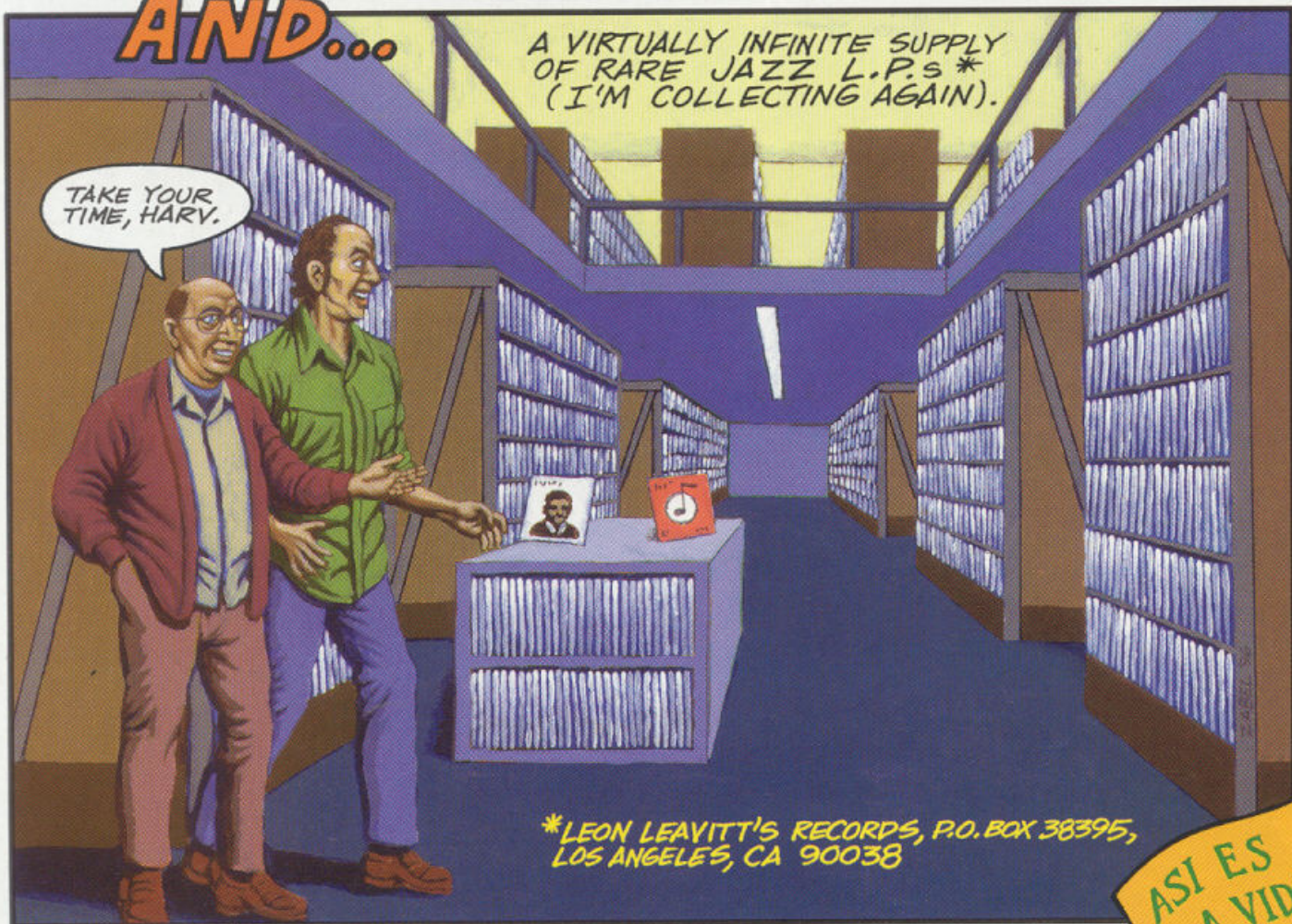
FOLLOWING THE CONVENTION, WE DROVE UP THE COAST TO L.A., WHERE EXCITING PROSPECTS AWAITED ME—LIKE A POSSIBLE MOVIE OPTION...



AND...

A VIRTUALLY INFINITE SUPPLY OF RARE JAZZ L.P.s * (I'M COLLECTING AGAIN).

TAKE YOUR TIME, HARV.



*LEON LEAVITT'S RECORDS, P.O. BOX 38395, LOS ANGELES, CA 90038

ASI ES LA VIDA!

STORY BY HARVEY PEKAR ART BY JOE ZABEL LETTERING BY GARY DUMM

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