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YOU SAY YOU WANT A (COMIC BOOK) REVOLUTION...

FILMMAKER PAUL GOODWIN thought he was having a good day. He'd traveled to the Edinburgh International Book Festival to interview author Neil Gaiman for a documentary about the influential British comic book *2000AD*. The session went well, but as they wrapped up something occurred that turned the day from good to great.

"After we finished talking with Neil, he was unexpectedly picked up for lunch by his mate Grant Morrison," recalls Goodwin, referring to the comics legend most famous for his work on *Batman* and *New X-Men*. "Grant just wandered into our interview room. We told him what the project was all about, and he invited us to his house to interview him, too."

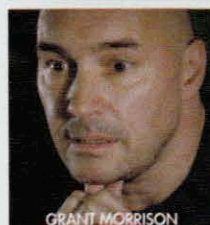
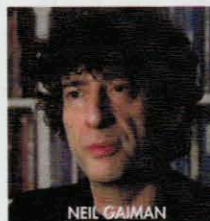
That eagerness to talk about *2000AD*, which launched in 1977 and, despite some editorial ups and downs, is still being published today, is a not-so-subtle indication of the reverence many comics professionals hold for the title. Influential heroes such as Judge Dredd, Rogue Trooper, and Strontium Dog were introduced in the weekly anthology, written or drawn by at-the-time-unknown talents like Alan Moore, Brian Bolland, and, of course, Gaiman and Morrison. All of these characters—both flesh-and-blood and four-color—are chronicled in Goodwin's documentary *Future Shock!: The Story of 2000AD*, which was recently issued on Blu-ray and DVD.

"*Future Shock!* is a no-holds-barred account of how a bunch of talented madmen revolutionized comics," raves the film's producer, Sean Hogan. "They sent shockwaves throughout the wider world of pop culture that are still reverberating today."

"The history of *2000AD* plays like a three-act film drama," continues Pat Mills, one of the publication's founders. "Genesis. Challenges. Success. Disaster (when the comic lost its way in the 1990s). Then, Triumph (2002 to the present day). It makes for enthralling and engrossing viewing."

Even for folks who aren't diehard comic book buffs, the history of *2000AD* is intriguing. From its anti-establishment, anything goes origin through the lean years, when major North American publishers like DC and Marvel raided the company's ranks for fresh talent, to the present day, with the periodical still cranking out cutting-edge graphic fiction, the documentary presents a fascinating and ultimately hopeful tale.

In fact, one of the hardest tasks for Goodwin and his



crew was trying to condense the 40-year saga into a cohesive 105-minute story. That's one of the reasons the home video release includes, along with the documentary, over six hours of extended interviews, "Behind the Strips" featurettes, and various other extras.

"At one point there was a nine-hour cut, and then a 3 hour, 40 minute work print," laughs Goodwin. "It was an epic task wrangling all of our footage, chipping away and sculpting it down to feature length. I mean, this was months and months of cutting, polishing, watching back, and cutting again. I burned CDs of interview recordings, listened to them in the car and on my

phone, and was scribbling notes everywhere. I just had to live this thing until I knew it inside and out and could make all the connections to get it flowing. Though I have to say, looking back, I bloody loved it."

Anyone with even a passing interest in the history of comics will assuredly love it, too.

PLANES, BRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES



If Jared Zichek could travel in time, he knows exactly which era he'd explore. The 40-year-old former marketing analyst—and dyed-in-the-wool sci-fi fan—runs a publishing company that produces books on automotive and aviation history, and loves to delve into and write about the 40-year period from just after World War I to the start of the Space Age.

"I appreciate the simple design, bright colors, and relative innocence of vintage ephemera, especially from the 1920s through the 1950s," he says. "The aesthetics of this period are quite different from today and appear novel to my eye, though they're obviously quaint and outmoded to the average person."

Fortunately for contemporary science fiction fans,

MATCHES MADE IN SUPERHERO HEAVEN

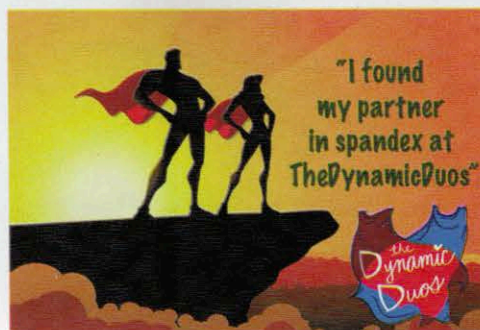
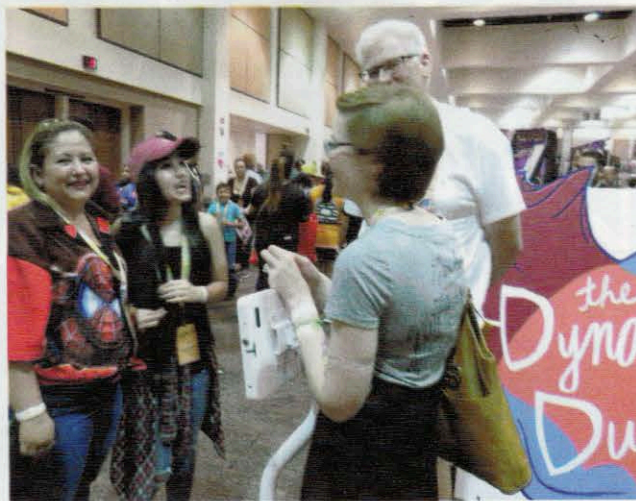
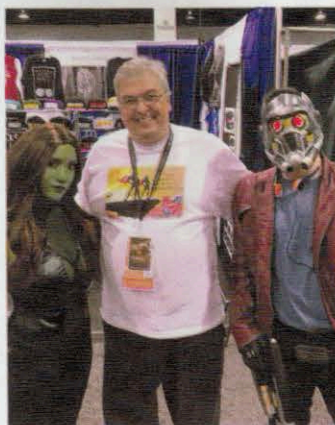
Earlier this year, Nick Kontaratos seemed the picture of health. He and his business partner, Mel Sturr, were standing at their booth at WonderCon in Anaheim, California, laughing and joking with fans while promoting TheDynamicDuos.com, a first-of-its-kind dating website specifically devoted to comic and sci-fi fans.

Three weeks later, Kontaratos was dead.

"Nick passed away on April 19, suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly," remembers Sturr sadly, adding that the cause appeared to have been complications from high blood pressure. "I was lucky to know him, and I'm glad to be able to continue our business in his honor."

That legacy is off to a solid start, thanks not only to a burgeoning membership but also the unusual approach the pair took when establishing the site. Individuals of every background and sexual orientation are welcome, and after a few questions and a handful of carefully orchestrated online tête-à-têtes, the prospective couple arranges to meet face-to-face at a local movie theater or comic book store.

"We realized, mostly from having our own kids who are now young adults, that the idea of meeting someone at a bar or a restaurant who you've only previously met online might be a little scary," says Sturr. "We felt that a comic shop or fandom-related business would be the perfect place to make this both safer and more fun. We also wanted to cater to our shy customers, figuring that if we partnered with a local business to hold a Mighty Meet-Up (what we call these



initial 'dates') at their shop it would bring more business to them and provide our clientele with a group setting to make the first in-person move."

Though it's a tad too soon to know if any serious

relationships have been kindled—the site just launched last fall—Sturr is convinced it's only a matter of time before wedding bells peal for at least some of their clients. It's an outcome he's confident Kontaratos, who had put his heart and soul into the venture, would have been thrilled to witness.

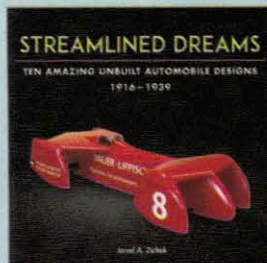
"We started TheDynamicDuos.com for all of the lonely fans out there who could make each other really happy if they only had a vehicle to find one another," emphasizes Sturr. "All of our future success will be because Nick had a passion for life and was a good person who meant something to a lot of people."

Singles who'd like to find out more, and perhaps meet their real-life superhero match, can visit TheDynamicDuos.com for a free three-week trial—just tell them Nick sent you.

those quaint auto and airplane designs are altogether riveting. Most of the vehicles Zichek focuses on were concepts (many never even made it to the prototype phase), and their sleek styling and aerodynamic curves, which are at once old-fashioned and futuristic, could readily have been lifted from a *Flash Gordon* serial or a classic 1930s feature film like *Things to Come* or *Transatlantic Tunnel*.

One of his more recent efforts, *Streamlined Dreams*, is a trade paperback that explores 10 amazing cars designed (but never built) between 1916 and 1939. It's a perfect accompaniment to his earlier tome, an impressive hardcover titled *Secret Aerospace Projects of the U.S. Navy: The Incredible Attack Aircraft of the USS United States, 1948–1949*.

"These projects were top secret in the late 1940s, not being declassified until about 15 years ago," reveals Zichek. "The book covers a pair of design competitions to build two classes of long-range nuclear attack aircraft that would've operated from a supercarrier called the USS *United States*. This would have given the Navy the capability of launching nuclear strikes deep within the Soviet Union. However, the Air Force saw this as a



threat to its monopoly on nuclear deterrence and worked successfully to have the carrier cancelled, which also led to the cancellation of the associated aircraft."

Along with his expertise in early planes and cars, Zichek also has an abiding interest in little known comic book characters. In fact, he's so enamored with the bizarre work of Fletcher Hanks that he has in the

past produced limited-edition figures of superheroes such as The Black Terror, Fantomah, and Stardust the Super Wizard.

"I found an unhinged authenticity to his crude but entertaining comics," he explains. "Hanks was an interesting outsider artist whose brilliance has only recently been recognized. It struck a chord, and I still would like to sculpt more of his weird characters and monsters."

Fans can absolutely expect more weirdness from this whip-smart entrepreneur, especially as he expands his publishing empire and returns to crafting more figures. His latest book, released in May, is an investigation into the design and development of the Convair XF-1 Pogo, an experimental turboprop plane that launched and landed tail-first. Meanwhile, on the science fiction front he's developing a series of sculptures that will include, among other subjects, a vehicle based on a cover drawn by Frank R. Paul for *Amazing Stories* magazine.

Intrigued? Folks can find out more via Zichek's website, retromechanix.com, or by following him on his Twitter feeds: @retromechanix for vintage planes and cars, and @goldenagefigure for comics and sci-fi collectibles.

