

741.5

THE FIRES OF CREATION

SAMMY HARKHAM'S RÉVÉLER DU CINÉMA

BLOOD OF THE VIRGIN

OCTOBER 2023 NO. 105

PLUS...SPARKY

& ERNIE

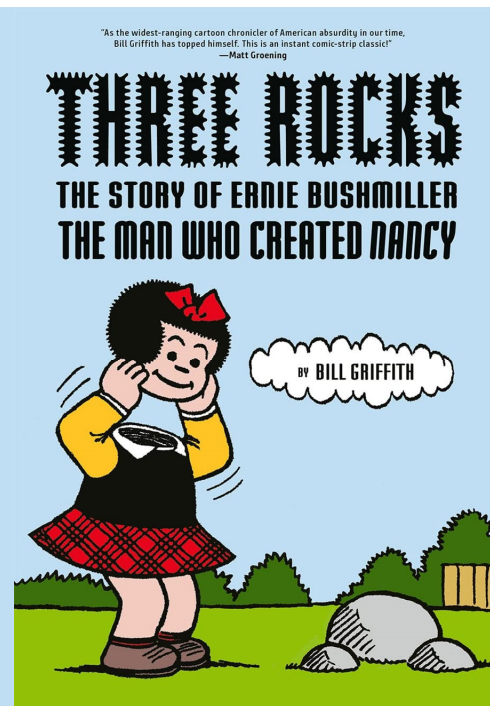
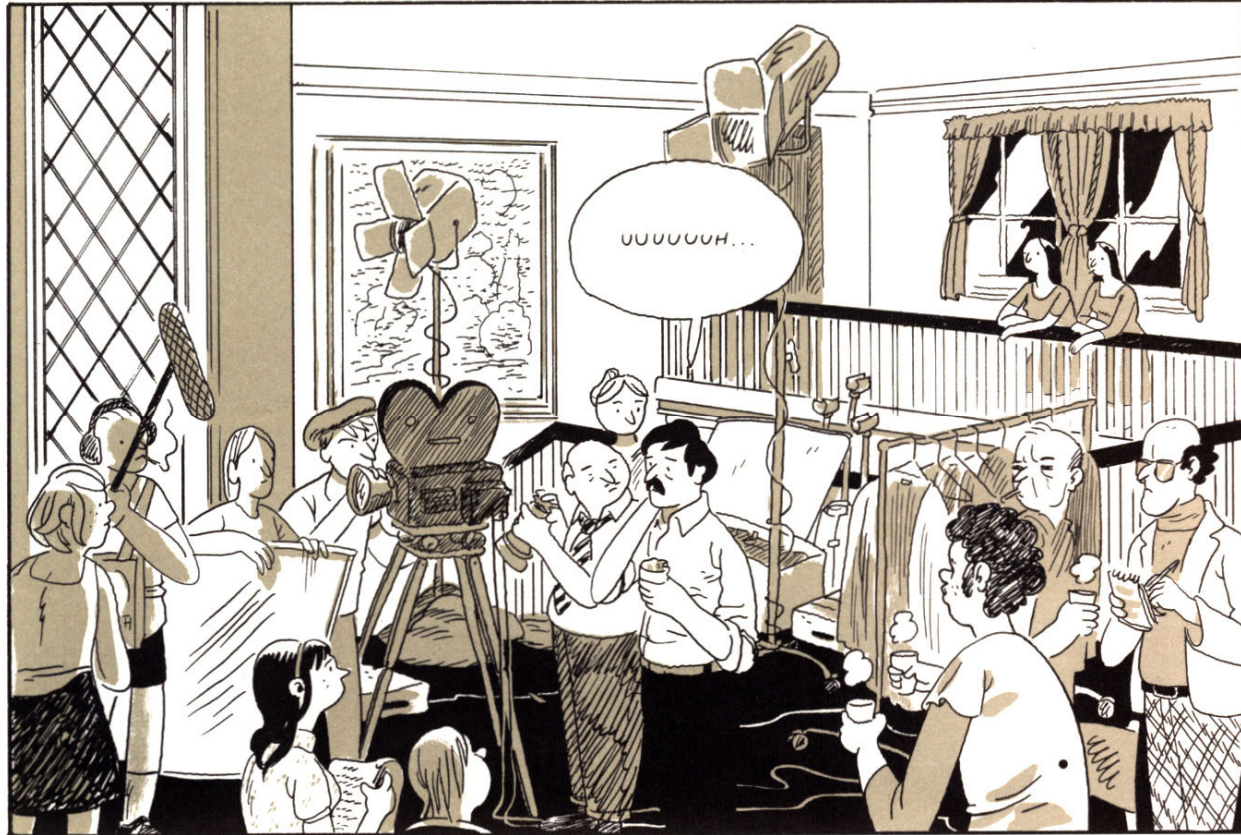
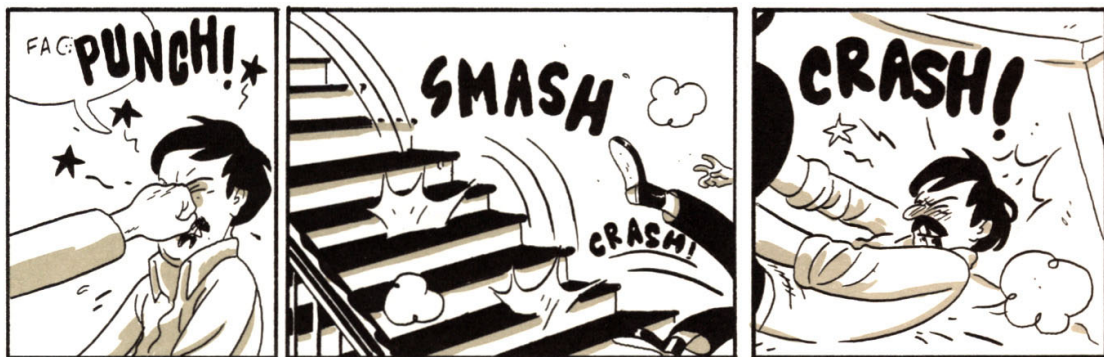


The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



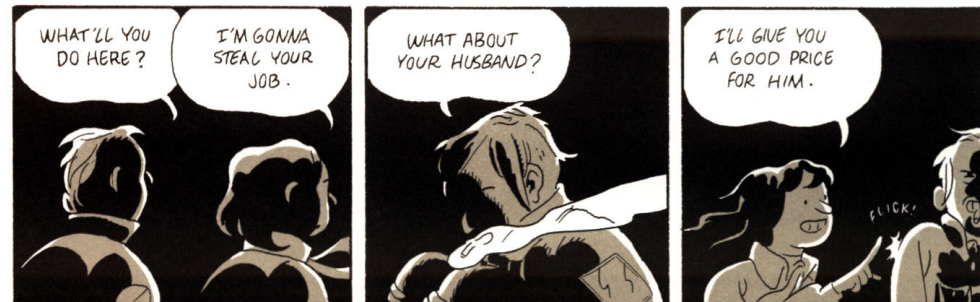
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Reading Is Just the Beginning!

It's 1971, and our hero Seymour is a film editor. He works for a producer who keeps the nation's drive-ins and grindhouses in business with shlock movies hacked out on the cheap and often on the run. Seymour has ambitions, though. When the opportunity arises to take over a floundering horror flick called *Blood of the Virgin*, he jumps at it. But heavy hangs the head that wears the crown, as Seymour learns the hard way (center image). Meanwhile, Seymour's long-suffering wife takes the kid to visit the folks in Auckland (below) and is in no hurry to come back home. Seymour does what he can with *Blood of the Virgin*, even after the funding is yanked before the film is finished. His life goes from bad to worse as his artistic intentions are undermined by commercial realities, including taking a few beat-



There's exactly sixty-nine points in the iconic bob adorning the dome of little Miss Nancy Ritz. Her creator Ernie Bushmiller was adamant about that, whether dealing with his assistants or those drawing her comic books (advertised in the promo below, circa 1950). That attention to detail helped his strip *Nancy* become one of, if not *the*, iconic American comic strip. From its origin as a girlie

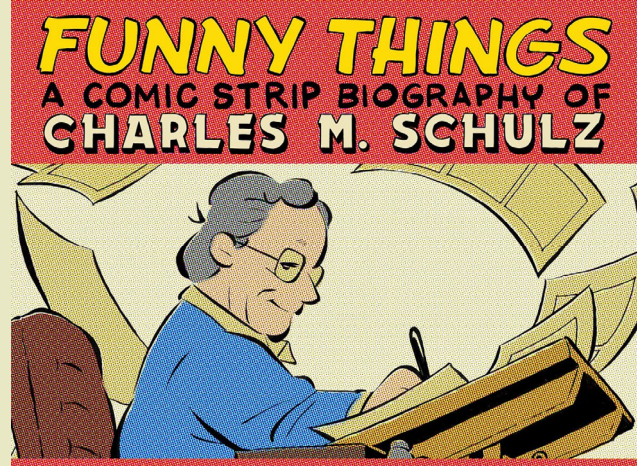
strip starring her aunt Fritz Ritz to the timeless neverland of the 60s and beyond, *Nancy* was as pure a distillation of the gag cartoon as ever existed. Bushmiller ate, drank, bathed, even drove with half his mind working on gags, as shown by the sequence top left. He was a consummate cartoonist, as revealed in Bill (Zippy) Griffith's lovely new book. A combination biography and monograph, *Three Rocks* is a wonderful history of American comics available @ lexpublib.org!



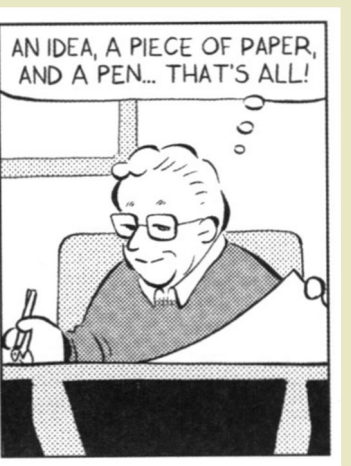
downs (top) not entirely undeserved. Seymour is a true believer- in film, in horror, in himself- who nearly throws away his life over a crappy werewolf movie. He's a stand-in for others who put their heart and soul into art despised by the wider world, like comics, to which author Sammy Harkham devoted 14 years creating this quiet masterpiece. His art is a *clair ligne* take on the homely humanism of classic strips like *The Gumps* by Sidney Smith and Harry Tuthill's *Bungle Family*. Seymour's saga is broken up by chapters devoted to his mother-in-law's untold experiences during the Holocaust and the history of a ranch hand gone Hollywood, the only color work in the book. But it's all relevant to the greater story of storytellers and the price they pay. Reserve one of the best of 2023 at lexpublib.org!



His bosses at the syndicate titled novice cartoonist Charles Schulz's new strip "Peanuts" because the name he wanted was too much like that of an artist then popular, now long forgotten. That was one of the last times Charles Schulz did what his bosses wanted. Later, after the global success of *Peanuts* made him one of the last of the celebrity cartoonists, the man his friends called "Sparky" would meet any demands he didn't like with a heart-stopping threat: he would quit. And the *Peanuts* gravy train would grind to a stop. Tough talk from a man who was as introspective and haunted by failure as the character who made him a star. That contrast between a sweet soul and an iron will comes up again and again in *Funny Things*, the graphic biography



from Top Shelf. Schulz fought for his creation and its artistic integrity: against the syndicate, comic book publishers, even the CBS network, which initially loathed the Christmas cartoon that's become a holiday fixture for millions. Sparky remained steadfast to the literal end, refusing to hand the beloved cash cow over to a successor. Sparky was born a cartoonist and died one, mere days after his farewell strip. Italian artists Luca Debus and Francesco Matt present the life of Charles M. Schulz the way he lived it: six days and a Sunday at a time. From his bland Midwestern youth to the years of triumph and treasure, with all those kids between, Schulz was himself a all-American character. *Funny Things* is available at all LPL locations.



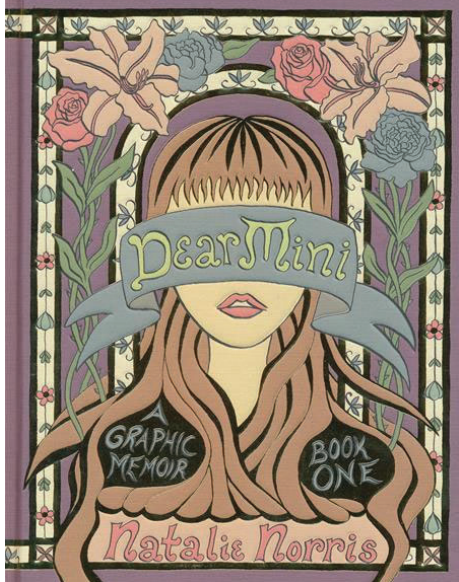


Our cover feature, *Blood of the Virgin*, is about the making of a 1970s exploitation film of the same name. **Scott Snyder's** latest comic from Dark Horse is about another horror film, *Night of the Ghoul*. A legendary "lost film" from the 1930s, ...*Ghoul* has never been seen since the mysterious fire that broke out during the last day of shooting. Now film fanatic Forest Inman has a reel made up of bits and pieces of what looks like one of the scariest movies ever made. Inman doesn't know the half of it, as he discovers to his eternal regret. Tracking down the film's director leads Inman and his son into a literal labyrinth of corruption and monstrosity revealed by the raw, moody artwork of **Francesco (Black Beetle) Francavilla**. A true Halloween treat, *Night of the Ghoul* is available at all LPL locations. As is *Year Zero: Volume 0*; written



MEANWHILE

Daniel Kraus, author of *The Shape of Water*, this prequel to *Year Zero* follows the format of the popular horror series. A international cast of characters— a dirty Russian cop, a transgender flight attendant from South Africa, a North Korean soldier stationed at the border and an African American nurse working a backwater ER more dangerous than the DMZ— watch with varying degrees of helplessness as the world is all too quickly swallowed by the chaos of a zombie apocalypse. The solid realism of artist **Goran Sudžuka** and colorist **Miroslav Mrva** give physical and emotional heft to a story told before yet always new. Unfortunately, that's true of our next item: It's a story we've heard too often yet each time it's as bad as the first. *Dear Mini* is the *Graphic Memoir* of **Natalie Norris**. Ten years after the events described in this "illustrated letter", the adult artist reveals what happened when she visited France after her sophomore year in high school. Already on the primrose path, teen Natalie meets fellow hellion Mini. Girls just wan-



na have fun. So do boys. Rough fun. Dirty fun. Too often cruel fun. "I told myself that this was just what happened to girls like me," Norris writes. "Girls who didn't know what was good for them, girls who were racking up quite a debt with the older boys, girls who, eventually, would have to pay up." Girls like Mini, to whom Book One is written, asking why she didn't do more to protect Natalie from an obviously bad situation. That assault, with its ebb and flow between the possibility of safety and the surety of danger, unfolds over 44 pages. 44 pages during which Natalie's friends turn a blind eye, 44 pages during which other men aid and abet the rapist, 44 pages of harsh truth made more scourging by how beautifully **Norris** draws and paints. An amazing work of comics art, this fine Fantagraphics release is a tough read, so caveat lector. Meanwhile, on Earth M, the world of the Milestone Universe (see 741.5 #84), scientists Kelly Vu and David Kim have created a kind of nanotech that could heal all sickness in the world. It just needs a controller. Thanks to the machinations of their less altruistic competitors, they become that controller. Their two minds share the same super-



powered body. Now the *Duo* face not only the high tech oligarch that tried to rob and kill them, but a crew of immortals less than thrilled about the new kids on the block. Saving the world turns out to be a lot more complicated than the funnybooks let on in this thrill ride driven by Asian creators **Greg Pak** and **Khoi Pham**. A simpler story told simply by the rough-cut but cinematic art of **Frank Cvetkovic**, *Lost Boy* is about just that: a tween lost in a Wyoming winter. For company he has only a fawn, also orphaned by the same accident that cast Jack out into a wilderness howling with both the unforgiving wind and a relentless pack of wolves. An old school story of survival worthy of **Jack London** and pulps like *Adventure*, **Jay Martin's** *Lost Boy* is available in the TEEN section of all LPL locations!



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