

**741.5**

**MAVEN OF THE MACABRE RICHARD**

**SALA**

**1955-2020**

**OCTOBER 2021 - NO. 61**



**The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of**



**Lexington Public Library**  
*Reading Is Just the Beginning!*

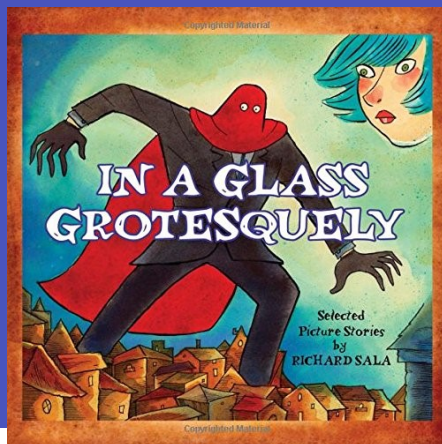
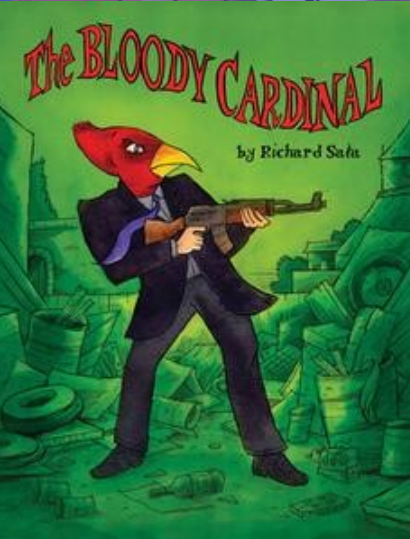




Above: a dastardly and degenerate cast of characters from the fiendish finale of the Bloody Cardinal's career of evil. The Blue Dwarf, antihero from the heyday of the penny dreadful, leads our ESP-driven damsel in distress Phillipa Nicely into new realms of being while Quadrummando whacks everybody with a machete.

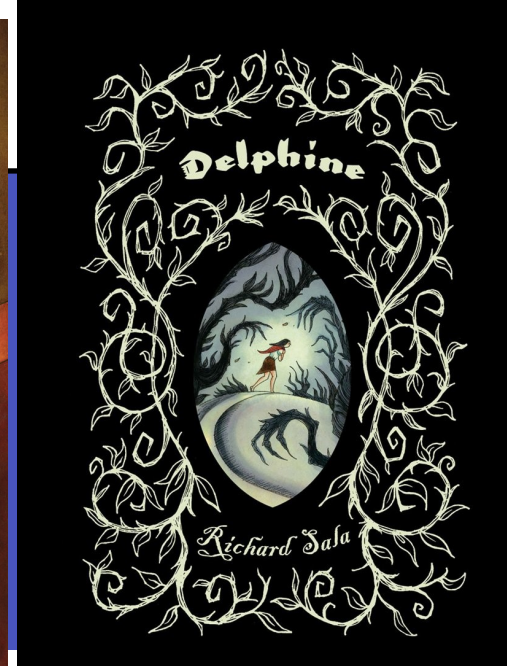
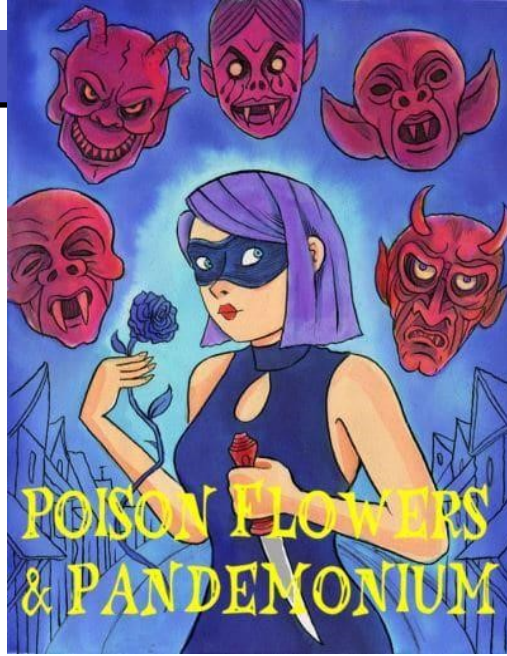
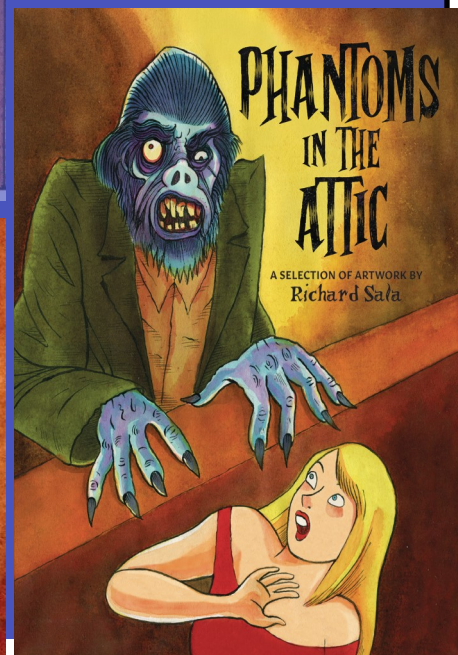
Thanks to the Tubi channel, I've been watching the old monster movies that traumatized me as a kid. Not of *This Earth, The Hideous Sun Demon*...but not *From Hell It Came*. Yet I was tempted to give that one another try by the cool rendition of its leading monster, Tabonga (upper right), drawn by Richard Sala.

Too bad Sala didn't film that sloppy piece of imperialist junk. He would have made it fun. The odd but charming, playful and perverse, horrific yet colorful fun that was the hallmark of his work from its nervous, scratchy beginnings to its smooth and confident culmination. If that's your kind of fun, too, then check out Sala's latest and last release from Fantagraphics. Available from Central and Tates Creek, *Poison Flowers and Pandemonium*



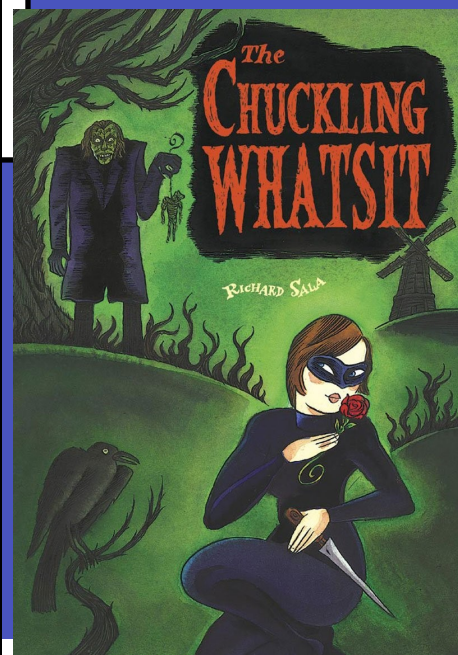
Tabonga, Tree Demon of the South Pacific

Macabre and mischievous, stylish and sinister, **RICHARD SALA** was one of the foremost cartoonists of his times

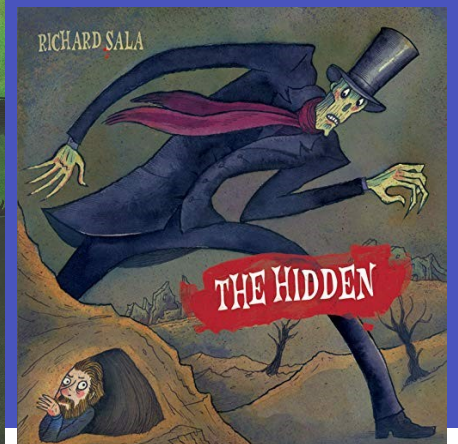


The Golden Man on Moonbase One

Celebrate the life of this master of the weird and winsome with his final book, **POISON FLOWERS AND PANDEMONIUM**

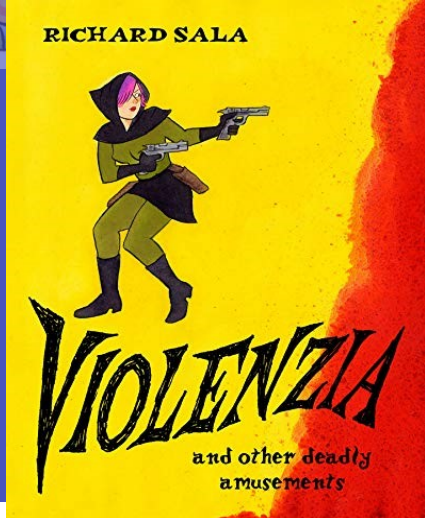


is made up of four parts. Two of them are described above. The others star a couple of Sala's monster-magnet heroines. Fantomina Fantomella (beneath) is a vigilante who wears a mask like the oppressors of her city, a mob of costumed goons lording over a Gotham without heroes. Her ruthless crusade ends the book the way the tale of the Bloody Cardinal begins it: in a whirlwind of violence and vengeance. Between all that mayhem,



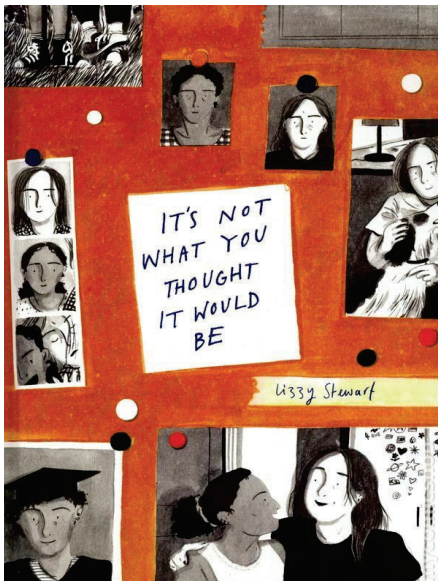
Above: a page from a document found in a bottle on the seashore, "Cave Girls of the Lost World." Not only drawn but handwritten by Sala, the age-browned pages relate the saga of high class college students stranded on an island full of dinosaurs, cavemen and Bat People. It's a saucy romp through savage adventure!

Sala's mute minx of mystery Peculia (far left beneath) finds a bestiary of monsters, most of them, like Tabonga, the Ebonites, triffids, or the Golden Man of *Lost in Space* (above left), from the same B-movies and TV shows that haunted my childhood. Sala was one of the visionaries of that creature-featured generation. He will be missed.



Go to [lexpublib.org](http://lexpublib.org) to find these other groovy, ghoulish delights by Richard Sala!





“What they don’t tell you about the end of the world, the lunatics and the scientists, is that it happens every day.” These words from the narrator of “Heavy Air”, the opening story of *It’s Not What You Thought It Would Be*, stand as an epigraph for the rest of the book. It’s a graphic novel made up of short stories, small pieces like “Blush” and “Day Off” interspersed between longer works. Two things make all the moving parts click. One is the three part story of a friendship between two women and how it changes over time. The other is the theme of self-determination and its burdens and barriers, especially for women. But that makes the book sound heavier than it is; author **Lizzy Stewart** brings a deft, light touch. Her art is deceptively simple, using a variety of media, from ink washes to colored pencil, to tell her gentle, humane stories. Another fine release from Fantagraphics, *It’s Not What You Thought It Would Be* is available at Beaumont, Central, Eastside and Bates Creek. All LPL locations have a copy of *Spy Island* from



## MEANWHILE

Dark Horse. Sub-titled “A Bermuda Triangle Mystery”, *Spy Island* is a fantastical farce riffing on secret agent clichés, much like writer **Chelsea Cain**’s controversial take on Marvel’s *Mockingbird* (See 741.5 #3). There’s even a scuba-diving corgi. And killer mermaids and super-villain dads and sister issues and, oh yeah, a cranky Kraken, too. Artist **Elise McCall** and colorist **Rachelle Rosenberg** do a bang-up job that looks even better thanks to the super-fab ultra-mod book design by **Cain**’s co-conspirator in the Ministry of Trouble, **Lia Miterique**. Another fun satire of pulp fiction from Dark Horse, *Bang!* finds a trio of heroic archetypes—the suave super-spy, the two-fisted troubleshooter, the dowager detective—confronting their own impossible existence while that of the real world hangs in the balance. Other snazzy



new series include *Commanders in Crisis Bk 1: The Action*, a Morrisonian take on multiversal superheroics wrapped in a murder mystery; the creepy crime drama *That Texas Blood* with art by **Sean Phillips**’s kid **Jacob**; V2 of *Tartarus* and V3 of *Coda*, both intense fantasy series good for fans of *Saga*; and the caustic crossover *Chew/Outer Darkness*. Meanwhile, the Fantagraphics series devoted to the work of international comics icon **Alberto Breccia** continues with its first release in color. Available at all LPL locations just in time for Halloween season, *Alberto Breccia’s Dracula* is a burlesque of horror clichés that still evinces a lot of heart. By the end of the book, after seeing Drac beat up by Superman, losing his teeth, falling in love and leading Edgar Allen Poe to his fate, you almost feel sorry for the old bat. Unlike the astringent realism of *Mort Cinder* and the smoky proto-smudgecore of *Perramus* (both still available at [lexpublib.org](http://lexpublib.org)), *Dracula* is rendered in a loose, baroque line made almost palpable by **Breccia**’s exquisite coloring. As noted, these comics were created during the mid-1980s,



when the last in a succession of military regimes ruled Breccia’s native land of Argentina. But twenty years before, Argentina was the home of *Beatnik Buenos Aires* (Fantagraphics). Set in 1963, this collection of enigmatic vignettes captures that combination of the ludicrous and glorious that has always defined bohemia. Writers, photographers, sculptors, painters, poets and dancers follow their bliss, all rendered in gorgeous charcoal by **Facundo Percio**. Find it at Central, Bates Creek and Village. All locations have a copy of the new hard-back compiling DC’s 1970s *MANHUNTER*. Originally a short-lived back-up series in the faltering *Detective Comics*, “Manhunter” became a cult classic. The sharp, cynical scripts by comics vet **Archie Goodwin** and the groundbreaking layouts, lettering and drawing of then-newbie **Walt Simonson** made this sardonic mix of spies, superheroes and kung fu assassins one of the highlights of the Bronze Age. Check out this lovingly curated collection today!



Back issues of 741.5 are available at [lexpublib.org](http://lexpublib.org) under the COLLECTIONS tab!