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JULY 2017— NO. SEVEN

VALERIAN

CLASSIC FRENCH SCI-FI EPIC
HITS THE STATES IN COMICS AND FILM

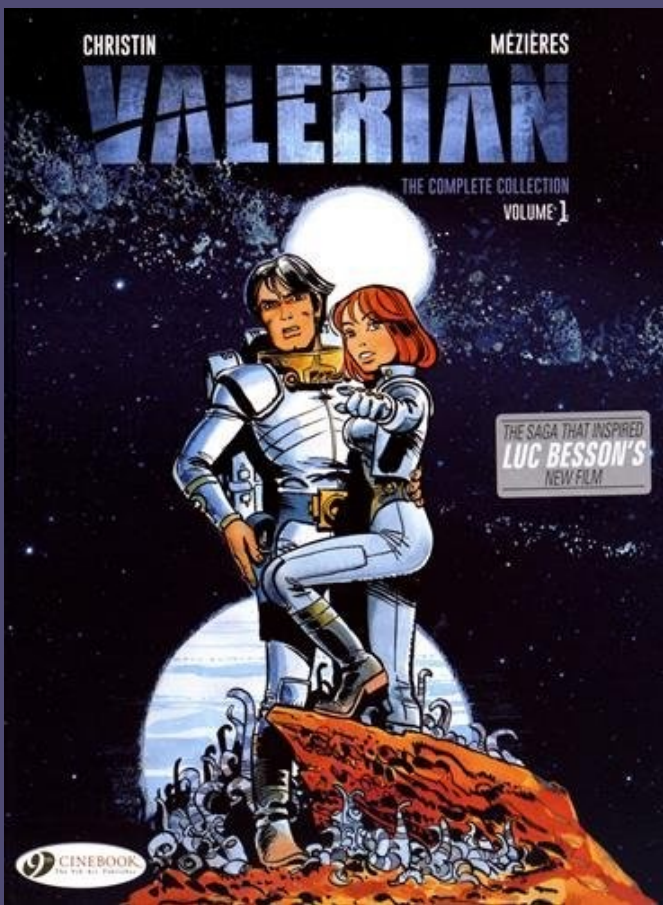
PLUS...**HANNA-BARBERIANS!**
AND... A TRIBUTE TO ADAM WEST



The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!



Valerian is a spatio-temporal agent of Galaxy, center of the gargantuan Teran Galactic Empire. Laureline is a peasant girl from the 11th Century who sussed out that this handsome stranger was from the far-flung future. Together they patrol space and time, putting the cuffs on rogue time travelers and space invaders. Introduced in *Pilote*, the foremost French comic magazine of the 1960s, *Valerian* set an international standard for science fiction comics, inspiring creators from Moebius to Lucas. Now Cinebook Ltd has gathered all the disparate graphic novels and short stories into a new series of thick and gorgeous tomes. Each is reprinted according to its place in the over-arching epic. The first volume features the more

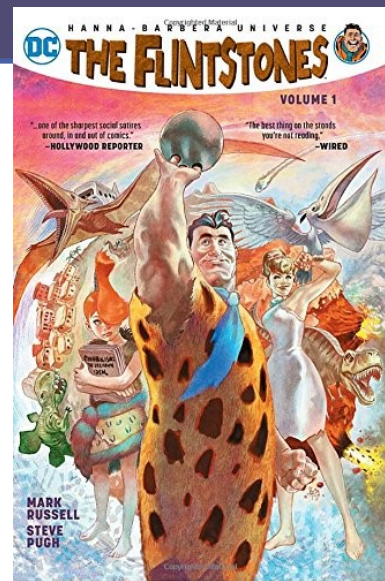
straight-forward space opera of the earlier stories. Volume 2, the source of our cover and the panel below, begins the transition into more complex stories, with Laureline taking a stronger role as writer Pierre Christin began to reflect on social issues such as feminism. Throughout the series, the art of Jean-Claude Mezieres walked the fine line between cartoonish exuberance and rough-hewn realism. His tech has a physicality worthy of Wallace Wood. His aliens are so lively, you can almost smell them. And like most French cartoonists, Mezieres is a wizard with architecture, his cityscapes an major influence on Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*. If Besson's *Valerian* is as grand as the comic, it will be astonishing.



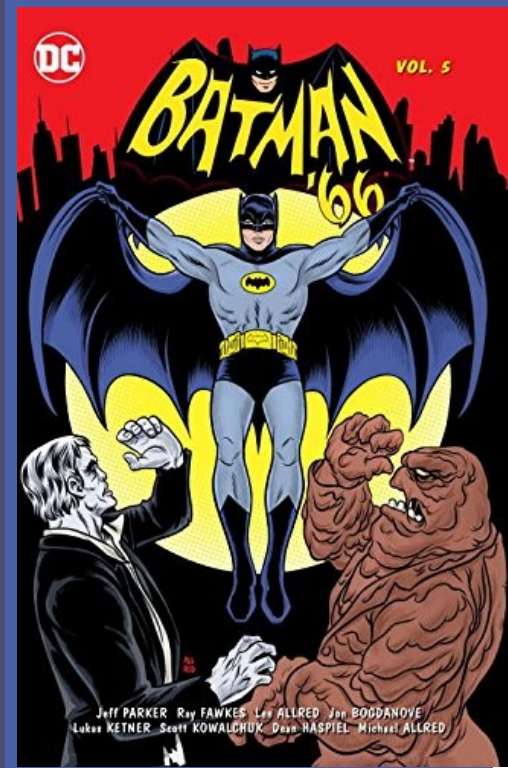
VALERIAN

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION—VOLUME ONE
 BY PIERRE CHRISTIN & JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES
 Compiling the stories
BAD DREAMS
THE CITY OF SHIFTING WATERS
THE EMPIRE OF A THOUSAND PLANETS

And featuring an interview with the authors & the director of the upcoming film version, LUC BESSON!



Scooby Doo and his pals aboard the Mystery Machine debuted on Saturday morning television in 1969. His show was the most successful of a slate of cartoons meant to replace the previous generation of supermen and action heroes who, according to childhood experts, were too violent. (That's why Scooby's haints and boogeymen were always revealed as fakes: "real" monsters were considered harmful to children and other living things.) Now, 48 years down that road paved with good intentions, Scooby's studio Hanna-Barbera is teaming up with DC comics creators to stomp mudholes in it and walk 'em dry. In *Scooby Apocalypse*, the monsters are real, and over-running the planet, and it's kinda Velma's fault. Elsewhere, in the mutant-haunted hellscape known as *Wacky Raceland*, the mysterious Announcer forces a bevy of drivers and their artificially intelligent cars to race to the death. Based on one of my boyhood faves, *Wacky Races*, this series updates Penelope Pitstop, the Anthill Mob, Dick Dastardly & Muttley and the rest with *Fury Road* ferocity. Originally created for prime time TV, *The Flintstones* returns to its satirical roots. Fred's worried about Neanderthals taking his job, Wilma wants to be an artist, and Bowling Ball Armadillo and Baby Elephant Vacuum Cleaner will break your heart. Meanwhile, the heroes kicked to the curb by Scooby Doo return in *Future Quest*, uniting Jonny Quest, Space Ghost and the Herculoids in a struggle across space and time. Recast for the 21st Century, Mighty Mightor is now a black Cajun kid and a new supergirl joins the Impossibles. This is my favorite of the four, being drawn in the American clean-line style of the great Alex Toth, who designed most of these Saturday morning stars. **Birrrd-MAN!**



To an extent, the history of mainstream comics since has been that of one long flight from beneath the shadow of *Batman*. But after several decades of cosmic pomposity and "grim n' gritty", a new wave of creators and fans are ready to re-embrace the fun. *Batman '66* is the result, a continuing series that has delighted fans by giving modern Bat-foes such as Poison Ivy, Clayface and, of course, Harley Quinn that special Batusi twist, while featuring TV villains such as Ma Parker, the Bookworm and Marsha, Queen of Diamonds, who never made it to the comics. It's a blast, the covers by Michael Allred reason enough to reserve every volume. *Holy Hold Shelf, Batman!*

Adam West passed away June 9th, 2017, at the age of 89. A familiar face on the TV screens of the New Frontier, West became an international star when he took the lead role of the Caped Crusader in the ABC network's 1966 adaptation of the classic DC superhero, *Batman*. Though the series was the epitome of camp, West played it straight. He became a role model to a generation of kids who thought the show was serious as a heart attack—and I was one of them, as shown in the comic strip at right.



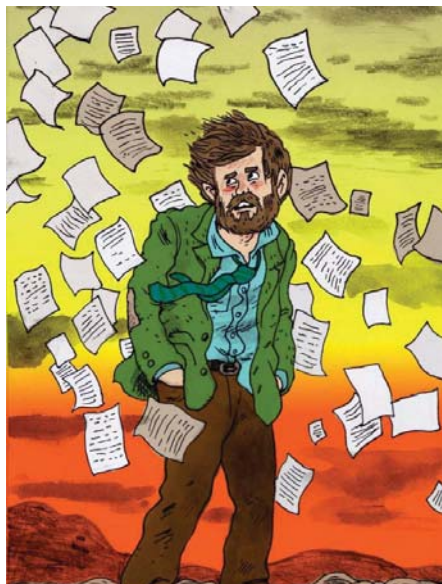
Batmania didn't happen in a vacuum. Inspired by the Silver Age comeback of superheroes, *Batman* inspired in turn an explosion of absurd concepts and characters. Michael Eury's *Hero-A-Go-Go!* (TwoMorrows) gives the lowdown on all the super-spies, super-teens and super-Presidents of the camp era. Dig born also-rans like Jigsaw, the Fly and Fatman the Human Flying Saucer, who exploited two mid-60s fads at once. Groove to cartoon heroes Underdog, Roger Ramjet and the Mighty Heroes. Captains Action, Nice and Klutz make the scene, while Doc Savage checks up on Mr. Terrific and Space Family Robinson. Not to mention all those Frankensteins running around! It's a trip, man, available for reserve from Eastside.



"Camp Is For Cowards" - written & drawn by Bill Widener. Originally published in COMICS FUNNIES #2 April 2014. © Bill Widener

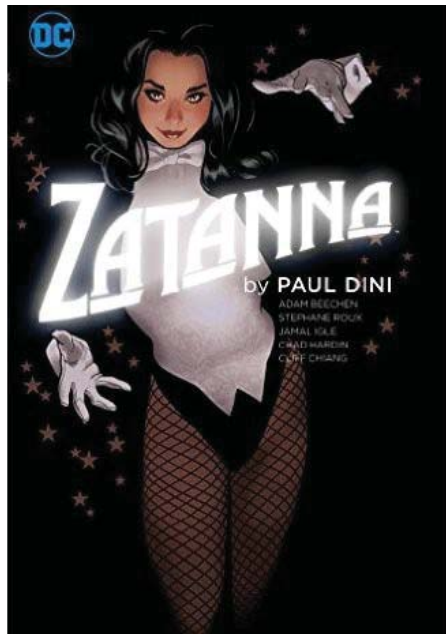


Will Eisner (1917-2005) could have rested on his laurels. As one of the creators of the American comic book industry; as the writer and artist of the justly revered *Spirit*; as the producer of the US Army's instructional comic *PS*, Eisner could have retired fat and happy and never drawn another panel. But Will Eisner had more to give. In 1978, after shopping his new project around to little interest, Eisner finally saw the release of *A Contract With God*. Sub-titled "And Other Tenement Stories", *Contract* follows the lives of the tenants of a ramshackle building on Dropsie Avenue, a mythical New York ghetto like those in which "Villie" was raised. Often called the first graphic novel, it isn't—look up *It Rhymes With Lust* or *Blackmark*. But it was the first American graphic novel to be shorn of the trappings of genre, to eschew the easy allure of melodrama, to embrace the naturalism of serious literature. Thus, *A Contract With God* was a revolutionary work. It became the keystone of a new generation of cartoonists, such as Scott (Understanding Comics) McCloud, who provides the introduction to the new edition, available from Central and Eastside, published by WW Norton as part of the centennial celebration of Eisner. If "genius" can be defined as being at the right place at the right time with the right idea, then Eisner's entire career was an act of genius. But, living the artistic life, I long ago

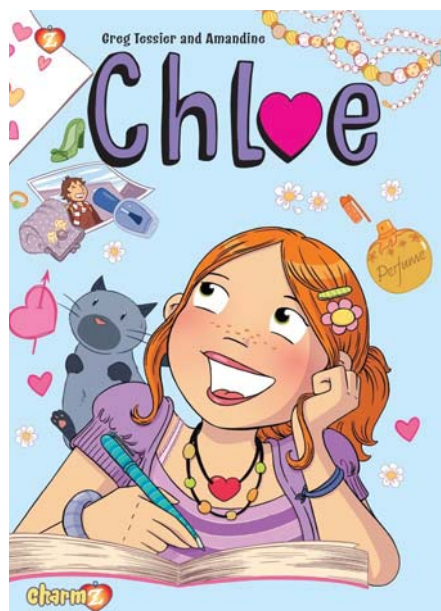


MEANWHILE

learned that when you hear the word "genius", keep an eye on your wallet, your girlfriend and the door, in case the "genius" decides to indulge himself (and it's always a him) in some misbehavior. I mean, he's allowed, right? He's a *genius*. Noah Van Sciver's obviously met a few of these guys, since he gets them so right with his character, Fante Bukowski. Introduced in the eponymous first volume (still available from Central), Fante is a would-be literary lion, a privileged loser living off his parents while he pursues his muse...usually to the bottom of a bottle of booze. In the sequel, Fante has moved to the new epicenter of American culture - Columbus, Ohio! Arch City is also the home of Van Sciver, who includes an unflattering version of himself in the story as the new lover of Fante's old flame, Audrey Catron. While Audrey deals with the ramifications of being a successful writer, Fante moves into a motel full of addicts, meets a hooker who name-drops Michael Chabon, and makes a zine. 20 thousand copies of it. That's just some of Bukowski's painfully



funny screw-ups, all rendered in Van Sciver's deceptively homely scrawl. He's a good hand with watercolors, too, as exemplified by the image left, which I used because the cover of *Fante Bukowski Two* (Fantagraphics) is an all-too-accurate parody of the dull covers common to poetry collections. Yes, the quest for fame and fortune can be rough, even for those born in the biz. DC B-lister Zatanna, Mistress of Magic, knows that all too well. Zatanna was one of the first legacy heroes, introduced in the Silver Age as she enlisted the aid of the Justice League to find her long-lost father Zatar, a Mandrake mimic who debuted alongside Superman in *Action Comics* #1. Since then, Zatanna's had her ups and downs, finally getting her due in *Zatanna* by Paul Dini. Z has a gig in Vegas, with a sideline solving mystical crimes perpetrated by the likes of Brother Night, the parasitic Siphon and an evil puppet still mad at her daddy. Available from Central, *ZBPD* was written by the former show-runner for *Batman: The Animated Series*, with art by Stephane Roux, Cliff Chiang and others, plus the gorgeous whistle-bait covers of Adam Hughes. With her outfit of top hat, tails and fishnet stockings, Zatanna is a favorite of



cosplayers around the globe, glamorous geeks who understand that, to paraphrase the Bard, clothes make the woman. Chloe Blin is no geek, but she knows that, too. The heroine of *The New Girl* (Charmz), Chloe is a nice, normal gal whose family just moved to "an ordinary, small town". Chloe is starting that special circle of Hell known as eighth grade. Chloe wants to fit in with the slick chicks, especially after she falls for a dreamy ninth-grader. But she's a mite clumsy, and a little naive, and those girls are, like, so *mean!* But virtue—in the form of self-confidence, independence and totally cute outfits—triumphs, especially with Cartoon the cat lending a paw. Tessier & Amandine's sweet-hearted dramedy harkens back to the days when average kids read comics, and comics were about average kids. Like *Little Lulu*, for instance—her comics were best-sellers for decades, thanks to the cartoonist who wrote them, John Stanley. The man who made Marge Buell's mute gamine into an icon of girl power gets idolized and analyzed in *Giving Life to Little Lulu*, a beautiful oversize book from Fantagraphics. Author Bill Schelly explores all the aspects of Stanley's career, from *New Yorker* magazine to *Nancy* the comic book, in which Stanley introduced Goth prototype Oona Goosepimple. If you're not familiar with these wonderful comics, this tome is a great way to get acquainted! **BW**

