COMICS AS JOURNALISM:
GUY DELISLE’S HOSTAGE
JUNE 2017—NO. SIX
PLUS...TRUE COMICS: THEN & NOW

The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!
While working with a non-governmental organization at the frontier of the Russian Federation, Andre was kidnapped by Chechen militia. At first kept in fairly comfortable circumstance—at one point, he watches a soccer game with his bodyguard—Andre is moved to an abandoned building and handcuffed to a radiator. Thus begins a trial of body and spirit. Andre is isolated physically: though never tortured by his captors, the toll taken by inactivity and bad food, of being locked to that damned radiator night and day, leaves him weak and in pain. The smallest things become immensely important: a tiny square of furtive sunlight, a clove of garlic. And he’s isolated mentally—he doesn’t speak his kidnappers’ language, so he never really knows why he’s being held. The militia men are, in fact, rubes. Yet goons are no less dangerous for being buffoons, and there are moments when Andre fears for his life. But he is saved from his grief and loneliness by culture. Through the long, lightless days, he fights Napoleonic campaigns and re-reads the works of Victor Hugo in his head. And works on his escape, failing each time, until the moment... Hostage is 432 pages of mostly a guy locked in a room. But they are 432 brilliant pages of low-key genius. Guy Delisle has gone beyond merely reporting the facts. He makes you live every moment with Christophe Andre, inside and out, defeated...and triumphant. It’s one of the must-reads for 2017.

Hostage
by Guy Delisle
(Drawn & Quarterly)

364.154 An25d— Central
...details the one hundred and eleven days in captivity endured by Christophe Andre, as rendered by cartoonist Guy Delisle

One of the most exciting developments in recent comics history is the rise of the cartoonist as journalist. Joe Sacco started the ball rolling with issues of his Fantagraphics title Yahoo focusing on WW2 and Operation Desert Storm. Once Sacco became a picture-making reporter in earnest with Palestine, others followed his lead, hitting the road to chase stories all over the globe. Given the region’s centrality to current geopolitics, much of the work concerns the Middle East. But journalistic comics have ranged from North Korea to the Balkan states to Alabama in the early 1960s. At right you’ll find a list of such books available in the LPL collection.
Rarely has the line between fact and fiction been so blurred as in the work of fantastist H.P. Lovecraft. With the Cthulhu Mythos, Lovecraft and his associates and acolytes created one of the first shared universes in popular culture, one so complex and engaging that far too many fans came to believe that such fancies as the Necronomicon actually existed. Now Alan Moore takes yet another turn at Mythos-making with Providence (Avatar Press). Reunited with artist Jacen Burrows, Moore explores that part of the Mythos centered on Innsmouth and its degenerate semi-human citizens. As reporter Robert Blake delves into the story of a novel that drove its readers mad, he uncovers far more than the secret to a good potboiler. Like Paul LaFarge’s new novel about Lovecraft and his circle, The Night Ocean, Moore uses the context of unspeakable horrors to explore other things that were unspeakable in Lovecraft’s time, such as the Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name. That’s one form of affection missing from Haunted Love, the twisted spawn of the reprint mags Haunted Horror and Weird Love published by Yoe/DW. Compiling trashy 1950s horror comics with a romantic twist, this collection features sloe-eyed titans, wife-hungry zombies, cold-hearted Karnak as he takes a paying job from SHIELD’s Phil Coulson. It’s a dirty job, and, since this is a Warren Ellis book, a violent one, with heads and limbs flying everywhere. Just as gruesome—and well-made—is the series Old Man Logan written by Jeff Lemire and drawn by Andrea Sorrentino. In the third volume, The Last Ronin, Logan continues his quest to forestall the future from which he came, where the villains united and turned the world into a living hell. Other new Marvel volumes include V2 of Spider-Man: Mike Morales, the latest Captain America: Steve Rogers, which sets up this summer’s controversial “Secret Empire” epic; V3 of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Black Panther; the first volume of the new Jessica Jones series, which sees her leaving Luke Cage and stashing their kid; and My Feminist Agenda, the second and last volume of Chelsea Cain’s Mockingbird, as discussed in 741.5 No. 3. DC’s “Rebirth” is the latest—and one hopes, last—reboot of their major titles, and the first batch of books compiling those are here, with the stand-outs being those starring Cyborg, Batgirl, Wonder Woman...