

Venusian Spearmint



For Truth, Justice, and the Anglo-American Way!
Vol 1, Issue 5, April - May 2010

Hello all you happy people. I was a little bit confused about the last Tavern, it being on 1 April and all, I didn't know if there really *was* a Tavern or if it was an April Fool. So I didn't get an edition finished and didn't go to the Tavern.

Anywho, I had already intended to make this fanzine about our favourite archetypal comic book brightly coloured tights-wearing superhero friend, Superman. So he will be my (and a contributor's!) overriding concern in this here fine issue. And the other significantly featuring item will be MIPTV. I know there's an election on but I'm a ruddy foreigner and thus can't vote. I will say one small thing about it: how much did life imitate art, invoking *The Thick of It* when Gordon Brown made his huge 'bigoted' gaffe? Don't say you didn't think of 'Malcolm Tucker' behind the scenes, spouting ridiculous amounts of profanity to any within earshot, too.

First up, my lovely contributor's article:

Superman IV: The Quest For Peace

A review by Ian Williams

I haven't seen this film in the 20-odd years since it was released. I hated it at the time. Having read the comic book adaptation in advance of seeing the film I was already conscious of the hatchet job done on it, in reducing the running time to 90 minutes.

Having been given the so-called Ultimate Superman Box Tin for Christmas, it was with some trepidation that I slipped the disc into the DVD player.

In *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*, the world is on the brink of nuclear war. At the request of a small boy, Superman (Christopher Reeve) resolves to rid the world of all nukes. Meanwhile *The Daily Planet* has been bought by a tabloid newspaper tycoon Lester Warfield (Sam Wanamaker) and dumbed down by his daughter Lacey Warfield (Mariel Hemingway). Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman) escapes prison with the help of his idiot nephew Lenny (Jon Cryer) and creates an anti-Superman dubbed 'Nuclear Man' (Mark Pillow). With Superman critically injured by Nuclear Man, Lex helps the super powers re-arm. Superman bounces back with the aid of a green crystal from his rocket ship, and puts a stop to Les's schemes. Perry White (Jackie Cooper) stages a hostile takeover of *The Daily Planet* and buys enough shares to wrest control [from] Warfield.

I was pleasantly surprised by the first hour. Without the silly jokes so beloved of Dick Lester in his cut of Superman II and in Superman III, I actually found myself really enjoying the movie.

Around the 65 minute mark it gets nasty. The ailing Clark's return to Smallville has been entirely removed. His decrepit state as he finds the green crystal is meaningless. His return to Metropolis is nowhere to be seen, and Nuclear Man's sudden desire for Lacey is inexplicable. So the end of the picture is a bit "With One Bound Jack Was Free...After Jack Has the Nuclear Crap Beaten Out Of Him."

What I liked about the film was it avoided the obvious cliché of Lacey and Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) being love rivals for Clark/Superman. I liked the sequence where Supes spends a moment of happiness with Lois then blanking her memory, so that he

can make an important decision. I liked the comic strip stunts, i.e. the plugging on erupting volcano with the tip of a mountain top - something that was lacking in earlier movies. We have Superman - now let's see him do something 'Super.'

What lets the film down is the poor quality of the matte flying sequences. The grading of Superman's colour against the background is very poor. Such that it looks like Superman and Nuclear Man have been in a bleach wash. The idea that Superman can rid his fictional Earth of nuclear weapons as an encouragement for the real world to do the same is rather naïve but at least at the end of the movie, the status quo has been restored thanks to Luthor's canny weapons profiteering.

I don't have a problem with Milton Keynes doubling for Metropolis. It looks like a city. Big deal. You'd only know it was Milton Keynes if (a) you'd been there (b) somebody told you. It's odd to know that Metropolis is an extension of the Piccadilly Line - that runaway subway train looked very familiar.

Gene Hackman's thinning hair makes a mockery of the idea that Luthor is a vain, bald man who wears a wig. But, hell, it's Gene Hackman! Mercifully, in this movie he's been given some real and clever Luthor type scheming to do as opposed to obsessing over real estate (see *Superman: The Movie*, *Superman II* and *Superman Returns*).

Alexander Courage's music (based on the John Williams themes from The Movie) sound rather flat- perhaps the budget wouldn't stretch to a full orchestra. His use of "Otis' Theme" as a generic villains theme rapidly becomes tedious.

The deleted scenes on the disc, do help plug some of the gaps, but not all of them. We get to meet the Bizarro-like Nuclear Man prototype, but how he and Superman happened to be leaving the same nightclub is a mystery. There's more of Clark's illness as a result of his battle with Nuclear Man, but there's still a huge jump back to the barn in Smallville and the green crystal. We don't see Superman being cured or regenerating, he's suddenly just back in Metropolis when the suddenly amorous Nuclear Man comes calling on Lacey.

In summation: I think *Superman IV* gets a bum rap as the worst of the series, and it has the potential to be better. The poor quality of the deleted scenes, means that we're never going to get a director's cut as we did with *Superman II*.

But, if there was a director's cut, I'd pay to see it.

Intellectual Property (IP) Address

Back to me, your editor. Not sure how I heard about this event, but very recently I attended an event hosted by Own-It, (<http://www.own-it.org> , 'Intellectual Property Advice for Creative Businesses') at Central St Martin's intended to help professional artists understand their copyrights and something I was totally unaware of - the artist's resale right. I thought it very timely indeed because in the last issue, I asked nobody in particular if the art gallery (The Art Institute of Chicago) would have to be paid a royalty to use Grant Wood's *American Gothic* painting in the *Q.I.* quiz show. This event was free and it was terribly useful for an artist and anyone interested in copyright and intellectual property law like me.

The information I found startling was that the artist has a resale right, and two of the speakers were from an artists' collecting society, called DACS - The Design and Artists Copyright Society (<http://www.dacs.co.uk>). Apparently the EU made it mandatory for artists to be able to collect a royalty each time their artwork is sold; and DACS regularly contacts professional art dealers to find out what artistic works have been sold, and collect a royalty on behalf of the artist, just like what I understand PRS or MCPS does for composers of music. Not only this, but from 2012, artists in the UK will be able to pass along this right to royalty collection to their heirs in their wills. Downshot (well, from my perspective anyway) – you must be an EU citizen. I did in fact train in creative/fine art and I do my own arty things but I'm not currently selling art professionally.

So, I thought, what a great event at which to get my questions answered. Unfortunately there were so many people asking questions that it was difficult to get a word in edgeways, so I tried sending an email to DACS. After much to-ing and fro-ing, they kindly answered a few questions regarding the usage of Grant Wood's *American Gothic* painting in *Q. I*. Copyright law, being the minefield that it is, of course is very dependent on the specific usages of copyright works in question, so it was not very easy to try to formulate the right questions, but here is what I asked of them:

I was wondering if you or your highly esteemed colleagues could tell me if a royalty payment was necessary to use this painting (American Gothic) in the Q. I. programme starring Stephen Fry, creator John Lloyd? - i.e. paid by the production company, Quite Interesting Ltd.? And if so, to whom?

Would this usage in the QI programme fall under American copyright law as 'fair use' for education or review?

This painting (American Gothic) is also parodied constantly, so surely there must be some kind of provision for satire or parody the artist's copyright law (Europe or USA)?

I would also like to know if the gallery, in this case, The Art Institute of Chicago, would likely have been paid any fees to use the painting American Gothic, in this programme [QI]?

And here are the answers that Joanne Milmo of DACS gave me, with the help of Christian Zimmermann of DACS:

In general it is fair to say that under UK law the inclusion of a copyright protected work in a television programme constitutes a reproduction of the work and would therefore need permission from the copyright owner unless an exception applies to this use.

The work American Gothic by Grant Wood is still in copyright. However, the author is American and you would therefore need to look into American copyright law to get the specific ins and outs about the work and the use of the work. This is unfortunately also true for the application of the general fair use doctrine in the US which we do not have in UK copyright law. As copyright

is a territorial right we cannot give advice on the application of other countries law and you would therefore need to seek advice from a specialist in American copyright law in this respect.

Although we represent Grant Wood for reproductions of his work taking place in the UK, he is unfortunately not a direct member of ours but of our American sister society VAGA, the Visual Arts and Galleries Association, which I think may be better placed to answer all your questions about this work and also in how far the Institute of Art in Chicago is involved in the use of the work. It is important to note that the museum may actually hire out the images for this work and that they may therefore hold the photographic copyright in these images for which they could charge a fee.

In cases where the artist's permission for the reproduction of the work is required, artists or their representatives usually put a licence agreement in place for a fee. However, ultimately it is the decision of the rights owner in the work if they would like to charge a fee for the use of the work or if they would like to waive any fees for certain reproductions.

With regards to parodying uses of works I would like to highlight that UK copyright law does not contain a specific exception that allows for parodying uses of works, but that other European countries do provide for these types of uses. However, these laws usually have different set ups and deal with exceptions differently.

Therefore it is not possible to give you straight forward answers to the questions in your email as there are so many factors that need to be taken into account. It is also imperative to see exactly how the work was used and in what context to give you a correct assessment under UK law.

I hope this has been of some help to you. I suggest you get in touch with VAGA as they may be able to give you further information about the use of this work by their member. Their website is <http://www.vaga.org/> .

So, there you may or may not have it. Maybe this will help some of you in some fashion if you are on the artist's side of things or the programme-making/writing/producing side of things. I was surprised to find out that there is no specific allowance for parody or satire in UK copyright law. I may just follow up on that suggestion to go bug VAGA. Watch this space.

MIPTV 2010: The Market of Considerable Inconvenience

April turned out to be a very eventful month, as it was always planned to be with two major trade shows (the other was the London Book Fair). But it was made all the more interesting due to the Ash Cloud of Doom. Had I had ol' Supes around I would have asked him for a little favour...

For those who may not know, MIPTV and MIPCOM are the major world TV markets in Cannes at the Palais de Festivals. Nobody can tell you the difference between MIPTV and MIPCOM anymore, other than they are held at different times of the

year. Thousands of self-important meeja people show up from all over the world to hawk their warez (never said I wasn't self-important, mind) and Reed MIDEM Exhibitions make a ton of money. Speaking of which, I just loved the men with 'sécurité' all over their clothing, scanning the barcodes on the highly-specialised badges anywhere you went. Call them what they are, OK? - 'Revenue Protection.' *rolls eyes* Anywho, I went on behalf of my company to try to drum up some DVD sales and possibly get new distributors in new territories, and my colleague handled broadcast distribution. I met a lot of people, went to a few seminars and talks, and schlepped a lot of equipment between our holiday flat and the UK Indies Stand.

'Hiro' in His Own Mind

I saw Tim Kring, creator of *Heroes*, interviewed at the keynote address, and he was interviewed by a colleague of his so it was all terribly self-congratulatory despite the fact that *Heroes* is now totally ridiculously confusing and likely will only last one more season. That's your trouble with season-long story arcs that start to repeat themselves quickly. And I actually laughed out loud with utter contempt when he was introduced onto the stage with a flashing rock'n'roll light show and the reverb guitar opening to 'In the Name of Love' by U2 - it was truly dire. Kring made a good point; generally that he doesn't think any other show is going to have the same level of online and interactive elements all at the same time as *Heroes* did; NBC put up a lot of time and money doing it on the 'let's try this out' sort of basis. And it turns out he worked on *Knight Rider*, another high-concept show. I must have been the only 6-year old girl in America with a *Knight Rider* lunchbox... He talked about comics not at all. But I seem to recall he claimed he'd never read *Watchmen* or any other storyline he 'borrows' from with *Heroes*, so this seems par for the course. (Not a comic book I know, but has anyone seen *Carnivale* and compared it to the current series of *Heroes*?)

I Needed Superman... but I Got Captain Kirk Instead

So, onto the moment where my best mate Superman would have come in handy. Early Thursday 15 April morning I went to our UK Indies Stand and the lovely Scottish-accent of the Chief Exec of PACT (Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television), John McVay, was no longer anywhere to be heard. One of the organisers on the stand told me about the volcano in Iceland and the resulting cancelled flights. I said, that is very spooky, I had a nightmare (and I really don't have nightmares often) about a strange mushroom cloud explosion, and Bill 'The Shat' Shatner and I were frantically running away from it.* I was trying to cover my mouth and ears due to toxic gases and it was coming closer and closer, and that's when I woke up. All flights were cancelled today and McVay had gone to Nice to try to help sort out some travel back to London.

This was, at the time, not really a big deal to me as we were booked to travel back on Friday afternoon from Nice airport and I still had a hope that the issue may sort itself out in that timeframe. But of course our flight got cancelled late on Thursday night. So we had to rack our brains trying to come up with an alternative method to get home ... in the middle of a French railway strike. Our first thought was, let's get the Eurostar. The landlord of our holiday home had offered to let us stay another night with no extra charge, if necessary, so we didn't want to get stuck in Paris and go to more expense of finding a hotel. God bless that guy, we had free wi-fi and telephone calls from the flat which turned out to be instrumental.

A steep learning curve therefore ensued. We discovered French coach networks are a travesty in comparison to the UK. We didn't want to have to hire a car and drive to Paris, but would if we had to. We tried booking Eurostar online and it would fail each time; we called them straightaway on Friday morning as soon as their lines opened. Fortunately we were thinking of UK time and were calling the Eurostar booking line an hour early. After 45 minutes on hold, my colleague called me on my mobile (I was at Cannes railway station seeing how crowded the trains were) and said, there's a train on Saturday night and on Sunday. I said, let's book Saturday (tomorrow) and we'll worry about how to get to Paris later! We booked first class tix, which was all that was available, and then had to figure out how to get to Paris with no trains running that day. We overheard and asked a loud MIP person on her mobile phone which train she was using to get to Paris; it was the slow overnight train taking 11 hours. We went back to the ticket window and booked it, and then spent the rest of the day with absolutely nothing whatsoever to do except nap and look at the internet.

At 9.30 PM we got the train with people packed like sardines (thankfully we were seated) and there were no services whatsoever when I was in desperate need of some drinking water. Of course the vending machine was out of order, so I had to ration my tiny bottle of Vittel. Again, nothing to do but sleep ... got to Paris Austerlitz and took the Metro to Disneyland Paris, spent the whole day doing nothing in the café and made it back to St Pancras International at about 9 PM on Saturday, then I took a taxi home. It was about 26-27 hours in transit in total. It was terribly stressful and tiring at the time but I was just like, 'thank God I'm home!' I showered and then I slept, properly, for another 14 hours or so.

The Shat was at MIP promoting some reality show or another, and I tweeted about him on Twitter with the #miptv hashtag, asking 'Does anyone know if Shatner could fly? Is he cursing Vulcan? ;-)' Reality seeped into my dream when he showed up. I certainly never dream about him. No, really, I don't. Seriously.... hey, it was a nightmare after all!

Meeja Little People are Still Meeja People Too

As a person pointed out in *Broadcast* magazine, a thought should be spared for all of the poor personal assistants, administrators and secretaries who were forced to scramble to arrange alternative travel for their slave-driver media masters. No such luxury in my little company. I'm going a little too 'Yorkshiremen Sketch' here but we really did just sort it out ourselves using our own brains and effort. I've been a PA myself and I know how it is ... fortunately I never had to deal with a situation as completely unprecedented as Ash Cloud Insanity. I believe it was *Have I Got News For You* which pointed out some people were so self-centred and thick that they asked questions like 'Does that apply to business class as well?' when flights were totally cancelled. That's about how I imagine many of the MIP meeja drones reacted... Then of course another *Broadcast* reader pointed out the folks like me – just trying to find their way home with no help whatsoever from any travel agency or company – and I am reminded that media people are not all like that.

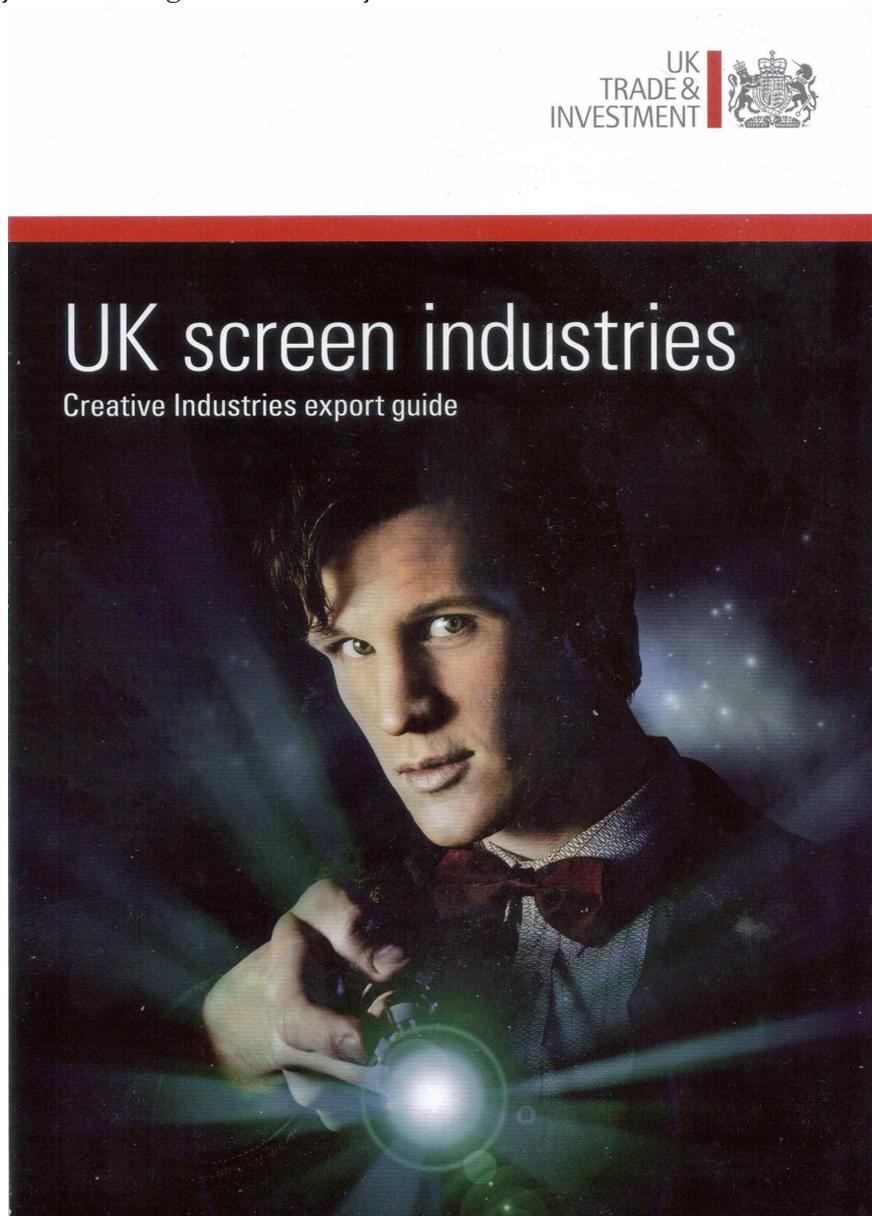
Slebs I Missed at MIPTV

William Shatner, Jason Priestley, Charles Dance, Terry Pratchett (c'mon, what self-respecting Fannish Person hasn't met the lovely 'Pratch' before, though?) And Idris Elba, promoting *Luther* (how frighteningly likened unto his father is Sean Pertwee in those ads/trailers for the programme?)

SWAG (Stuff We All Get)

I got a free shoulder bag, loads of promotional publications, and I found the daily MIPTV newspaper pretty useful, actually, for figuring out what was going on. Beyond that, it was the **most annoying promotional DVD ever**, for this thing called Popcorn TV – I think it's some kind of comedy programme on the lines of *Just for Laughs*. Every time you bumped the bloody thing in your bag, a button would activate and it would laugh maniacally and say 'Popcorn TV!!' Ugh, it was terrible.

Below is the cover of an interesting brochure placed on the UK Indies Stand, promoting UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the programme represented certainly had nothing to do with any of the UK Indies!



And the MIPTV [Not] Flying Fickle Finger of Fate Award Goes To....

Shine Group, which had their stand pretty damn close to the UK Indies stand. They could have used the Ash Cloud as a marketing ploy to sell *Ashes to Ashes*. You can't buy that kind of publicity. (They were too busy trying to get back to Blighty methinks ... but oh, wonder what Lizzie Murdoch had to say when they got back?)

More Target Novelisation Epithets

Somehow I forgot 'sprightly yellow roadster' last time out (goodness knows how)

Courtesy Ian...

"incredibly long scarf",
"broad brimmed hat",
"old fashioned London police box"
"many sided control table"
"redoubling his pace"
"gliding effortlessly to and fro"
"impossibly large control room"

From the Archive

You didn't think I had an archive, did you? Bwahaha. Anyway, here's an article I wrote in late 2004 which I don't feel I need to improve upon; discussing the comic book presence in Iowa and the Midwest, and the archetypal superhero himself, Superman. At the time, Will Eisner was still with us, and it was written for a non-fan audience and for a local newspaper in Iowa. The Stan Lee references were for whoever got them.

Hello, true believers. In this particular column, I would like to talk about one of our great American fictional heroes. No, I don't mean the sports figure who successfully avoids controversy, and nor do I mean the pop singer who can actually sing, play an instrument, and write music. I am talking about the one who is the 'everyman' by day and everyone's man when duty calls; the one who fights for 'Truth, Justice, and the American Way;' the guy in the blue tights and the red cape. I am talking about Superman.

Superman's enduring appeal has placed him in almost every media imaginable: books, television, animation, and movies, to name but a few. He's the alien to this world and the USA who adopts them as his own. As politics and current events changed, so did he, and he even appeared not long ago, albeit, animated, with Jerry Seinfeld in a TV commercial.

His first medium, though, was comic books, and DC Comics publishes his stories to this very day. His first appearance occurred in what is considered by enthusiasts and academics alike the most important comic book ever published, *Action Comics No 1*, in 1938. Every superhero after him owes him a debt, and as comic books are still synonymous in the public imagination with superheroes, an entire creative and (despite what you may think) literary industry is also indebted to him.

I bought 'Superman's death' issue, *Superman No. 75*, in 1992. I've had a poster of him on my wall, with a lightning bolt behind his sprawling red cape, for years. I groaned at his fairly recent overhaul into a strange blue 'electric bolt' guy, but thankfully he returned to normal eventually. I watched him on television played by Dean Cain in the 1990s, and I try to watch *Smallville* - all about Clark Kent's days as a super-powered teenager in rural Kansas. (Though the added bonus there is definitely the dead-handsome John 'At the Sound of the Tone' Schneider, who plays Pa Kent! Ahem, I digress!)

Two of the actors to play this all-American hero have been from Iowa. In the 1952-1957 television series, *The Adventures of Superman*, George Reeves of Woolstock, Iowa, wore the boots and 'S' logo. And the latest actor announced to play Superman in the upcoming film, *Superman Returns*, is also from Iowa - Norwalk, to be exact, and his name is Brandon Routh.

Here in the Midwest, there is a huge comic book following, and even some industry professionals. One such professional, Max Allan Collins of Muscatine, Iowa, wrote a non-superhero graphic novel, proving some of the breadth of the medium, called *Road to Perdition*, which you may remember from a fairly recent film adaptation with Tom Hanks and Paul Newman. Jane Espenson, best known for her writing on *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* and related comics, grew up in Ames, Iowa. The great British storyteller and graphic novel writer, Neil Gaiman, lives in Minnesota. Some other 'local' professionals have pencilled and inked such great characters as *Green Arrow*, *Swamp Thing*, and yes, even Superman, and they live here in this fine area of the nation. (You can check out the people I'm referring to at <http://www.shocktraumastudios.com>).

What's so special about comic books, superheroes, and Superman in particular, then? The aforementioned comic book pros all have strong ties to the Midwest. Reeves and Routh are from Iowa. The great elder statesman, artist, and thinker of American comic books, Will Eisner, famously once defined the target audience of comic book publishers as 'a ten-year old from Iowa.' Superman is the original superhero, and he is from Kansas. With this column, I submit to you that superheroes, and Superman particularly, are perhaps a little more representative of the Middle 'American Way' than you may have thought... Excelsior, indeed.

For the Regal Beagles and Legal Eagles



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