

9-2017

Heavy Ink: A Documentary on the Comicbook Revolution

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Recommended Citation

Adler, Renzo, "Heavy Ink: A Documentary on the Comicbook Revolution" (2017). *CUNY Academic Works*.
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2296

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HEAVY INK
A DOCUMENTARY ON THE COMIC BOOK REVOLUTION
BY
RENZO ADLER

A capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2017

Heavy Ink

White Paper

by

Renzo Adler

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the capstone project requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Heavy Ink: “Heavy Metal” & The Comic Book Revolution

By

Renzo Adler

Advisor: Matthew K. Gold

Heavy Ink can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/228903132>

The password is: heavymals

Heavy Ink is a documentary short focusing on the comic anthology magazine, *Heavy Metal*, examining its history as both a standout comic magazine, and how it fits into the larger tradition of comic books. What started off in 1977 as a sci-fi offshoot of *National Lampoon* ushered in a new era of comics by bridging the gap between American and European comic sensibilities with a talent pool from all over the world.

Heavy Metal would go on to have reverberations beyond comics into music, movies, and the global entertainment landscape of today. *Heavy Metal* introduced the world to artists such as Moebius, Philippe Drulliet, Vaughn Bode, and Richard Corben along with a plethora of underground and established cartoonists from around the world, daring to do what the likes of Marvel and DC could not (until both launched their own imitations).

This film examines the feedback loop of influences in Europe, America, and Asia from comics to rock music and how they all converged on one comic book magazine. But was *Heavy Metal* a product of its time? A pre-internet manifestation of multicultural interests? Or was it simply the right magazine at the right time?

In *Heavy Ink*, I interview former *Heavy Metal* editor, Brad Balfour (and other comic

artists/authors/historians), on film and examine *Heavy Metal's* history and the reverberations it created that are felt to this day.

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Narrative

When I was little (the early 1990s), it appeared to me that comic books were just sort of achieving a modicum of mainstream recognition, or at least face value attention that would come at a high price (the speculative market boom and bust of the 90s comic book scene is a story for another time). DC's 1992 *Death of Superman* event was a standout moment for me at the age of six. In the early 90's DC comics published the Death of Superman where Superman finally met his end at a creature called Doomsday and the rest of the world must cope without him. While comic readers at that point had already seen plenty of characters die and come back to life, it was a shocking moment for non-comics readers. I already knew about comics, but now grownups were talking about them on the news too? Weird. It was a major event that attracted huge sales and mainstream media coverage and acted as a sort of symbolic loss of innocence for generations that grew up with Christopher (and/or George) Reeves or the Super Friends (even though Marvel and DC had already put out plenty of comics with sex and death beforehand, but those barely registered on the radar of non-comic readers or mainstream popular culture). Not long after this I became aware of a magazine called *Heavy Metal* that was at my local bookstores and comic shops. At a glance, it seemed like a comic book (though the magazine-sized format caught me off-guard), but when I looked inside, it was absolutely shocking. Inside the pages were sex and violence in lurid color. *Heavy Metal* was very much like the comic books I already knew, but in other ways was so unlike them. When I was reading *Heavy Metal* I had the feeling that I was looking at something secret or forbidden (and considering my age at the time I was reading these comics, it certainly was not meant for my eyes). Due to the content of these magazines I did not have the audacity to ask my parents to buy it for me, so I had to be satisfied with riffling through

them while glancing over my shoulder at bookstores. From my adolescence through my teenage years, *Heavy Metal* was relegated to being a book I was only vaguely familiar with. Then, from high school and into college I started delving deeper into the world of comics beyond the superheroes I knew from when I was younger. This meant reading independent comics, foreign comics, comics that were deeply personal or artistically and thematically explorative. It was through my interests in comic books, and also science fiction literature and cinema, that I found that many of them were influenced by *Heavy Metal*. So I went back and decided to re-appraise *Heavy Metal* and how it fit into the cultural landscape of comic books. First I had learned that the *Heavy Metal* I had become familiar with in my youth during the 1990s was under the editorship of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* co-creator Kevin Eastman, and that this era of the magazine was critically regarded as being rife with sex and violence, but slightly devoid of imagination and quality writing. By looking further back, I became acquainted with the *Heavy Metal* of old and realized what I was missing. Moebius' complex layouts and detailed art, the mindbending writing of Matt Howarth, the beautifully crafted but thematically primal works of Richard Corben. This was the *Heavy Metal* that I, and so many other before me, became fascinated with. Over time, I became more and more invested in comic books and their history, I realized how much sprung from *Heavy Metal* and how the magazine itself was the byproduct of a rich history. My passion lead me to eventually create my own internet video series based on interviewing comic book authors and publishers, *Beyond the Longbox* (more on that later), and it became only a matter of time before I would return to *Heavy Metal* yet again to capture its history on film.

Impetus for the Project

The purpose and impetus of this project is based on two polar opposites. One is life-long study and passion, the other is just being at the right place at the right time. The purpose of this project is to examine the cultural exchange that occurred with comic books in the Twentieth Century. Colloquially considered one of the great American traditions (along with the Blues), comic books saw a global proliferation after WWII with reverberations felt in Europe and Asia. *Heavy Metal* embodies that migration and how it came full circle to a point when it was no longer necessary to have a *Heavy Metal* to propagate that cross-pollination of talent from different countries thanks to the internet, social media, and the rise of Japanese *manga*. In some ways, *Heavy Metal* is not a 100% unique occurrence as there were anthology comics beforehand and afterwards. Nor is it the best anthology, since in the film Gary Groth does his best to dance around *Raw*'s (the comic anthology edited under Art Spiegelman of *Maus* fame) superiority as a serious comic publication, and *Heavy Metal* is often remembered for being drenched in machismo (at best) and sexism (at worst). Yet *Heavy Metal* undeniably had an impact in the way it brought together American and European sensibilities to science fiction, fantasy, and comic storytelling and art. Through a combination of American editorship and French comics and artwork,, *Heavy Metal* expanded horizons throughout the comic world (and I would like to emphasize the word "world") and extended into media beyond.

Heavy Metal started in 1977 and by now many of its contributors are either dead or elderly. Looking back at the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris in 2015, the death of Moebius in 2012, HR Giger's death in 2014, and Bernie Wrightson passing away in March of 2017, the mortality of people involved in *Heavy Metal*'s history or that of the European and American comics scene is all too apparent. Heavy Ink was not simply for the sake of telling a story that needed to be told,

but to also hear voices that may one day be snuffed out by time. Getting to talk to Brad Balfour about his days at *Heavy Metal* and his involvement with comics and fandom history made me realize the importance of chronicling this history of the evolution of comics at home and abroad so that we can better understand our own culture (and subcultures within) and how comics reflect us as people. So many different writers, artists, and editors contributed to the comics medium, and we can't risk losing their stories. I believe *Heavy Metal* represents a sort of turning point in the international exchange of ideas that leads to comics as an art form. Over the years there has been a greater proliferation of international comic books and *manga*, and now, thanks to the internet, there is more rapid exchange of art and ideas in comics internationally than ever before. *Heavy Metal* was essentially the starting place for this exchange. One of the things I wanted to convey in this film is not simply *Heavy Metal* as a publication that is and was very popular, but also reflecting how comics are part of an artistic and cultural exchange between countries and cultures.

The other impetus for the project was simply happenstance. Brad Balfour, the primary interview subject for the film, works as a journalist for the *Huffington Post*, *Spin*, *Black Film*, and his own site, the *Film Festival Traveler*. I met Brad several years ago while working at a film festival in New York. We started talking about movies, comic books, and the sort of topics that come up in this documentary, and it wasn't long after that I became a contributor to his site. Getting to know him better, I learned Brad was an editor at *Heavy Metal*. After gaining confidence with some of my own pet projects related to comic books, I got the idea to interview Brad on his time at *Heavy Metal* and to record his thoughts on the growth and evolution of the comics medium.

Relationship to Track

What influenced me to work on this project in the first place was seeing the various communities of artists that sprung up on the internet, particularly on Twitter and Tumblr. Through these communities, I saw artists communicating with their fans and other artists, and engaging in a way that was new and fascinating with me. And through this communication, comic book enthusiasts and artists see a rise of artistic exchange as well. Now very rapidly anyone going online can see artists riffing on other works of evolving their own pieces with the help, input, and influence of other artists online. My research of *Heavy Metal* lead me to believe that *Heavy Metal* was a nexus point or first major for this exchange. *Heavy Metal* was very much about an exchange of artists and ideas. It brought European talent over to the US, but *Metal Hurlant*, the forefather of *Heavy Metal*, was also influenced by the underground comix scene in the United States.

While I was taking Digital Humanities courses, one of the projects in the class I had was to create a proposal for a potential digital humanities project and how it would be executed. My own proposed project was a digital map of the city of Tokyo, marked with annotations related to regions that had been destroyed in various works of pop culture such as films, comic books, and games. My classmates had proposed projects that also went in directions that fascinated me. One was a digital log of Taylor Swift's lyrics and tracked patterns in her music and pop music in general, another was a digital map of New York that interfaced with Instagram to pinpoint any photos tagged with the term "sprezzatura," and another was a classmate interviewing their grandmother as they took a road trip and recording the trip in an interactive log. These projects all had elements of being deeply personal, while also being tied to a subject matter or medium

that at a glance may be considered unimportant or irrelevant or niche, but can also be tied to our own humanity, or society or technology. That is where I see *Heavy Ink*: as a project that is deeply personal, but at the same time tied to art, to film, comics and to how people and cultures consume and create comics. To be honest, I felt this was such a personal and niche topic that I was very nervous about it not being accepted (my plan B was to do a project tracking the life of film critic Donald Richie and how the movies he reviewed reflected Japanese society). *Heavy Ink* embodies the lessons I learned in the MALs and Digital Humanities departments about preserving the past, while also utilizing the tools to look forward and join the future.

What Practices Worked Best to Realize Goals

I don't consider myself exceptionally knowledgeable or experienced in filmmaking, but I can at least say for sure that filming and editing is like accidentally breaking ten plates, then duct taping them all together to make one really nice plate and hoping nobody notices. *Heavy Ink* was based on a framework of prior experience I had co-producing a YouTube show on the subject of comic books called *Beyond the Longbox*. The basic concept of the show is that I interview comic book authors, artists, and publishers. Our goal is to get lesser known creators and independent publishers to tell their stories, and to expose viewers to new and unusual comics. I considered it very important to the ethos of the show to have the creators/editors of these comics speak for themselves, rather than having myself do so in order to bring the viewer into a more intimate program. I produce the show with my friend Rishi Gandhi. Rishi acts as a cameraman and editor, while I help arrange and conduct the interviews. Rishi taught me basic editing and camera know-how. While my skills were not on par with his, this experience served as the foundation for how I would go about writing, filming, and editing *Heavy Ink*.

For the soundtrack, I tried to pick music that didn't just sound nice, but that also felt appropriate chronologically or thematically. The film is bookended by the Devo song "Gates of Steel". "Gates of Steel" is a marvelously rousing song, and as a band that had their heyday during the 70s and 80s, Devo's growth was roughly parallel to that of *Heavy Metal*, and they were also featured on the soundtrack to the *Heavy Metal* animated film. The rendition of "Gates of Steel" heard at the end is performed by Katie Rice (in her now defunct folk rock duo, Kot'n Katie & Kali Kazoo with cartoonist Kali Fontecchio), who is also a comic author and animator that has worked on the webcomics *Skadi* and *Camp Weedonwantcha*, so the song acts as both a musical passing of the torch, but also ties into this new generation of comic authors, as well as mirroring how the end credits song of the *Heavy Metal* movie was a Devo song (a cover of Lee Dorsey's "Working in a Coal Mine"). Telex's cover of "Rock Around the Clock" was used at the Legacy of *Heavy Metal* chapter since, like *Heavy Metal* and *Metal Hurlant*, it is a combination of European and American influences (American song, Belgian band), while also being a song with musical allusions in its title. "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun" by Pink Floyd was used during the segment talking about European comics and some of the themes reacting to World War II since the song is very ambient and menacing sounding, while also delving into a dark sci-fi theme (a suicidal spaceship captain) from a British band that were very much "children of the sixties" that were reacting to World War II's effect on the world. "Who Do You Love" covered by Nash the Slash and "Floyd" by The Residents were both used since they were bands active in the late 70s/early 80s during *Heavy Metal*'s heyday, and favorites of writer Lou Stathis and *Heavy Metal* contributing artist, Matt Howarth, who used the artists as characters in his *Those Annoying Post Brothers* comic books. "I Zimbra" by the Talking Heads, and "V2 Schneider" by

David Bowie were both used since they were from the late 70s, roughly around the same time Ted White was editing *Heavy Metal* and Brad had gone to France. Both are songs with multicultural influences, with “V2 Schneider” being Bowie’s tribute to German synth pop, while “I Zimbra” was New York’s Talking Heads taking Dadaist poetry and combining it with African beats, and both songs have fantastic rhythm and energy to them. “Welcome to Tomorrow” by Attilio Mineo and “Saturday Night on Saturn” by Les Baxter were both chosen for their sound reflecting America’s Space Race era infatuation with science fiction, and both as songs from the period Brad was talking about from his youth.

Evaluation:

When I initially pitched this project, I envisioned a film of about fifteen minutes in length, twenty minutes max, but there were factors I did not account for. The historical breadth of information, and the verbosity of my primary interview subject, Brad Balfour, led to there being a lot of footage to sort through and a lot of history (comics, sci-fi, *Heavy Metal*) to cover. When I make an episode of *Beyond the Longbox*, typically over two hours’ worth of footage is whittled down to six or eight minutes, but *Heavy Ink* was a whole other matter. Because *Heavy Ink* is meant to encapsulate the history of *Heavy Metal*, as well as comics in general, there was much more information to go over and things that people who are not totally versed in comic books would need to have explained. A choice had to be made: do I increase the length of the film or cut down on the content? Ultimately, I decided on increasing the length of the film to better do justice to the subject matter, but at the same time I had to be mindful during the editing process to create a film that moved at a good pace while also coherently conveying the history of the subject. Unfortunately, I became slightly overzealous in my additions and the film ended up

being about forty minutes in length. One of the problems of editing without having someone to bounce your ideas off of is that you can get lost in your own ideas of what is and isn't important to the film. Footage that seems vitally important to you can be extraneous or confusing to other viewers. By seeking out some criticism and pointers, I managed to shave down the film so that it was approximately thirty minutes in length. *Heavy Ink* ended up longer than I originally envisioned, but I managed to keep the film from being too long or too slow.

Setbacks

Having some minor experience with filming interviews and short films, I can say with certainty that 90% of filming is learning how to make the best of situations you did not plan for and just working with what has suddenly been presented to you. One night Brad called me out of the blue to head over to an event he was covering at an exhibition on *Punk* magazine at the Howl Happening Gallery on New York's Lower East Side. It was an exhibition of art from the magazine, plus appearances from the two creators of *Punk*, Legs McNeil and John Holmstrom (appearing on separate dates since they had a falling out). *Punk* ran from 1976 to 1979 and was the brainchild of John Holmstrom and Roderick "Legs" McNeil and covered New York's early punk scene and the likes of The Ramones, Debbie Harry, Lou Reed, and Iggy Pop. *Punk* is what I consider a sister magazine to *Heavy Metal*, a product of the same cultural primordial ooze that emerged out of the Post-WWII world of grit, grime, sex, and nuclear paranoia. Cartoonist John Holmstrom provided comic interviews and drawings of the bands the magazine covered along with editing it. Holmstrom studied under Harvey Kurtzman and Will Eisner, two comic artists revered for their contribution to the medium of graphic novels. Kurtzman created *Mad Magazine*, and Eisner's work on the *Spirit* and books such as *A Contract with God* gave the two

artists a legendary status among comic readers and creators alike. Holmstrom is not quite as famous as his former tutors, but his contributions to the medium has a personal connection for me. I discovered his work in *Punk* as a teen with a voracious appetite for Blondie and Iggy and the Stooges. Holmstrom's comic strip interview with Lou Reed grabbed my attention for its humor, irreverence and ingenuity, though at the time I did not realize Holmstrom cribbed this idea from Harvey Kurtzman. Holmstrom would go on to work with *Heavy Metal*, drawing short comic strip reviews of video games for the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision, sometimes with punk luminaries like Joey Ramone appearing in the strip alongside John. Brad introduced me to John and in the middle of the gallery we sat down for a short interview. I tried improvised a boom-mic by combining an audio recorder with a monopod, but because I was operating the camera that the same time I was holding this ersatz boom-mic, the stick would occasionally drift into shots, which I would have to cover up using cutaways. And while Holmstrom was a contributor to *Heavy Metal*, he did not have too much to say about his involvement with the magazine, but his thoughts of the influence of Harvey Kurtzman on European comics and the relationship between rock music and comic book proved to be invaluable.

As I had mentioned earlier, I was not the cameraman for *Beyond the Longbox*, so this film is my first attempt at setting up all the shots by myself. Naturally, this came with many trials and tribulations. The equipment I used was a HD camcorder that my family owned, a tripod I've owned since high school, and a separate audio recorder. The camcorder was suitable for my purposes, but not exactly ideal for getting a truly cinematic look. Since I was inexperienced with this equipment, setting shots was laborious and just getting the focus right was a (frequently failed) task. I use lots of cutaways in this film partly to highlight some of the truly spectacular

artists that worked for *Heavy Metal*, but also to hide my many, many out of focus shots.

At the onset of filming, several of Brad's interviews were filmed in particular locations with the intention of having the locations tie into the film's narrative. Due to the nature of the shoot and working with Brad's busy schedule, we were never able to get a single stationary studio space to conduct interviews at and had to move from location to location for our shoots. Unfortunately, many problems arose from each shoot being in a unique setting, oftentimes in public. The result was a fluctuation in sound and picture quality. These locations included the New York Historical Society, The Society of Illustrators, and The French Cultural Center.

For the shoot at the New York Historical Society, Brad and I met at Starbucks at the beginning of the day to talk and go over our plan of action for the day. I showed him that on archive.org one can download free back-issues of *Heavy Metal* along with many other magazines. Brad was captivated by being able to have memory lane accessible at his fingertips, and pointed out his contribution to the magazine along with those of various other authors. He was very proud of his article "Art and the Nazis" from the July 1981 issue of *Heavy Metal*. We looked over other popular magazines for science fiction that long since passed like *Starlog* and *Omni*. While sci-fi may have been considered a niche fandom it still had a presence in the world of print. The New York Historical Society was doing an exhibit on superheroes and comic books and their connection to New York's history called *Superheroes in Gotham*, and Brad thought it would be a good place to shoot. After all, New York was the city where Will Eisner wrote sad stories about rain soaked brownstones in *A Contract with God*, and where Mayor La Guardia personally appointed police to protect Timely Comics for its anti-Nazi comic book, *Captain America*, which

was published before the US had committed to entering the war in Europe. The exhibit featured various odds and ends from American comic history, mostly sticking to superheroes that people would be familiar with from major blockbuster films, with a few bits of history from the annals of comicdom. Brad and I thought some of footage of the exhibit would make some great B-roll, but we weren't allowed to film in the exhibit itself, so we had to improvise and find a new location. After a few clumsy attempts at filming in the lobby outside the exhibit (too many people walking by) we went down to the main lobby of the museum where I shot Brad sitting on a bench with the Batmobile from the 1960's Adam West *Batman* show behind him.

Unfortunately, due to my camera work, the Batmobile is mostly obscured and just the tailfins of the Caped Crusader's favorite mode of transport are visible.

Our next shoot was at the Society of Illustrators. The Society of Illustrators is a hub for cartoonists and artists spanning generations. The idea for that shoot was to have Brad talking about both the importance of illustrators to the history of comics while filmed in front of the artwork on display in the society. Unfortunately, the Society of Illustrators has narrow hallways that are unsuitable for shooting one on one interviews and the main gallery had too many people coming and going within it, so we opted instead to do the interview in the bar on the upper floor. The French Cultural center is a meeting place for many aspects of French culture, including movies, art, music, literature, and of course, comic books (*bande dessinée*). I must give the French Cultural Center credit because their selection of French and Belgian comics was very expansive. The idea was to shoot Brad talking about various French comic authors while then holding up a book relevant to their work. The problem with this is that since I only had one camera, I couldn't have a camera trained on Brad while another was focused on whatever book

he was holding. This led to shots that would awkwardly shift zoom and focus to get a look at whatever book Brad was holding, making the footage practically unusable. The sound of Brad picking up and flipping through books also became irksome. At the very least, the Cultural Center provided us with a back room and table so we could shoot in peace. On another day, we shot at the Film Society of Lincoln Center because Brad had to go there later in the evening to cover a movie premiere. I set up a shot just outside the theater with Brad sitting against a wall, but after about half an hour of filming we were told by the police to move because we didn't have a permit, despite not even filming anything that showed the location and being out of the way. We had to pick up and move our shoot to a public table in the pedestrian park just outside the theater, and I had to steady the camera against the table while cars and people went zipping past us.

Filming MoCCA Fest (named after the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art, which is a little odd since the museum that the fest was run by was absorbed into the Society of Illustrators in 2013) was a boon, but also had its own problems. MoCCA is a convention I make a point of attending every year since it's a great convergence of authors and artists young and old, pros and newcomers, webcomic authors and print diehards. I figured it would be a great opportunity to pick some brains about *Heavy Metal* and maybe get some B-roll. I was with Brad as he introduced me to Gary Groth, the co-founder of Fantagraphics and an editor at *The Comics Journal*. Gary had the history and the knowledge of comic book history and imparted onto the film some truly great thoughts on anthology comics, underground comix, and *Heavy Metal*. I wish I could have sat down with him somewhere quieter to do a proper interview because of the terrible din in the convention center. Even with my audio recorder trained on my subjects, there

is so much noise in the background of all the scenes filmed at MoCCA Fest. Along with Gary were authors and publishers on the other side of the age spectrum. The head of Peow Studios, Patrick Crotty, is one year my junior, so I thought it was important to get the input of someone who works in comics in Europe, but has now come to the United States. Guillaume Singelin was also at the booth with Patrick, and I had been following his work online for years now. Evan Dahm was an artist I already knew from filming him for an episode of *Beyond the Longbox*, so I could talk to him without all the introductory rigmarole I had to do with people I was just meeting.

In the end, none of the footage setting up and explaining the locations we shot at was useable because I had to splice together interviews in a way that each section of the film took footage from several different shoots. However, I don't consider this a major loss. None of the locations we shot at were directly pertinent to *Heavy Metal*'s history. If we had done a shoot at *National Lampoon*'s office or a gallery that had original artwork from *Heavy Metal* or *Metal Hurlant* it would be a different matter. But trying to turn *Heavy Ink* into a travelogue with the footage I had would muddle the narrative and just bog down the film. In a more expanded version where I find actual original artwork, or maybe go to France, it might be worth having a travelogue element to the documentary, but for this version it is an idea better left on the cutting room floor.

One of the great difficulties of conducting interviews with anybody is how the topic of discussion would shift rapidly, and go back and forth through periods of time and strains of thought. If a person flubs a line you want to go back and correct them, but doing so might mean they lose their train of thought so you can easily lose whatever point you're trying to get them to

reach. Usually when I do interviews for *Beyond the Longbox*, I instruct the person I'm interviewing to repeat the questions I ask them in their answer ("What is your favorite color?" "My favorite color is blue."). Particularly with Brad and Gary Groth, I was somewhat unprepared for just how much they knew, so even though I did not ask a ton of questions, they still gave a lot of information. However, Brad doesn't stick to just one subject very long, which was both a gift and a curse for this film. I had a wealth of information to work with, but it was so all over the place that it was tricky work making sure Brad's thoughts could be concentrated in a way that is coherent for the viewer and for myself. I would sometimes have to edit together three or four different interview sessions with Brad to form one thought on a particular subject matter.

A shortcoming of the first cut of the film is that all my interview subjects were men, most of them white, so the film lacks the perspective and history of women in comics on this subject matter. Part of me wonders if this problem is endemic to the very subject matter of the documentary. While I was at MoCCA Fest, I did ask several women who were comic authors about their experiences with *Heavy Metal*. Most of the men I talked to have some anecdote about reading or were at least familiar with artists like Moebius that *Heavy Metal* brought to the States, the women I talked to were less interested in the magazine. One of the women I interviewed stated that even though she drew science fiction and horror comics with a sexual bent, she wanted her comics to be a step away from the machismo of *Heavy Metal* and to take a different tone, and that the magazine never really resonated heavily with her (she mentioned the 90s animated series *Aeon Flux* as a major influence). If I could talk to any woman working in comics right now and get their thoughts on *Heavy Metal's* legacy, Charlie "Spike" Trotman, the founder of Iron Circus Comics, would be at the top of that list. Spike is the author of the webcomic

Templar, Arizona and edited several anthologies (*Smut Peddler, New World, and Sleep of Reason*). I really would have wanted her perspective since her anthologies are both an echo of the traditions of *Heavy Metal*, and a step away from it. Spike accepts entries from up and coming artists for her anthologies, but she also has a strict “no superheroes” rule, like how *Heavy Metal* was a step away from comic book heroes. Her anthologies delve into subjects like sexual identity, again, like *Heavy Metal* also treated sex as something not to be shied away from. On the other hand, Spike also employs far more women, minority and LGBT authors than *Heavy Metal* did. As someone who is taking comics in a direction that is simultaneously indicative of and in opposition to *Heavy Metal*'s image, it would have been interesting to get her thoughts on camera. So, one thing I wanted to do, but I am not certain if I have succeeded, was to show that the critique of *Heavy Metal* and comics as sexist is not totally unwarranted. This is also tied into a problem regarding children reading comics. *Heavy Metal* and *Metal Hurlant* were both big steps in taking comics out of the “children’s ghetto” (as Brad puts it), but an adverse effect of this push for comics to be seen as a more serious medium is that children may be pushed out of a medium that was once theirs to enjoy too.

However, since I had an additional semester of time to complete the film, I decided to make a second cut that would rectify this mistake, and I set out to interview two women for the film to get their perspective on *Heavy Metal*. The first was Katie Skelly, author of the comic books *Nurse Nurse, Operation Margerine, and My Pretty Vampire*. Katie is part of a scene of young comic authors that have grown up with a diet that is equal parts Japanese manga for girls, and alternative American and European comics, leading to a visual style that is simple and cute but with subject matter that is dark, violent, sexual, and provocative. I was familiar with Skelly from her comic work and as co-host of the podcast *The Trash Twins*, in which her and fellow author

Sarah Horrocks review various comic books and movies. Asking Skelly to participate in the film was a little bit of a gamble since I had never heard her talk about *Heavy Metal* before, but on Trash Twins she discussed authors that were published in the US thanks to Heavy Metal such as Guido Crepax and Milo Manara and that she was knowledgeable about comics history and could offer the perspective of an artist, so I decided to take my chances. The interview went well and while she is not an avid reader of *Heavy Metal*, her views on comics history and sexuality in comics were invaluable. She also provided some perspective on *Heavy Metal*'s diminished reputation during the 1990s. The second woman I interviewed was Julie Simmons-Lynch, former editor of *Heavy Metal*, and the daughter of Matty Simmons, the owner of *The National Lampoon* and *Heavy Metal*. Julie agreed to the interview thanks to Brad vouching for me, but due to her schedule and currently living in Ithaca, the interview had to be done over the phone. However, what this interview lacked in visual footage, it more than made up for it in her recounting of Heavy Metal's heyday, her departure, and her own views on the magazine, both as one of its architects, and as a feminist.

Continuation

This documentary serves as a sort of proof of concept for a larger, potentially feature length documentary and an archival program. Unfortunately, I probably would not be able to carry over all the music I added to the film's soundtrack, due to copyright reasons, but for this version I wanted a soundtrack that fit my own artistic vision, so for now this could be considered an ideal soundtrack. The length of the film would also be taken into consideration. Currently the film clocks in just shy of 45 minutes, but considering the expansive world of comics, I think there is room to grow the film to an hour, an hour and a half, maybe even two hours. Ideally, I would

also interview more people that worked and drew for *Heavy Metal* to get their perspective, and I would like to go to France and talk to Philippe Manoeuvre, Jean-Pierre Dionnet, and other artists and writers who were part of the formative years of Metal Hurlant to get a better picture of the international influences of *Heavy Metal*. Another possible approach is shifting focus of the film, and rather than having it focus on *Heavy Metal* the magazine shaping comics and science fiction, it would be shown as part of a perpetual international exchange that has gone on through the history of comics, its authors, and its fans, leading up to the rise of manga in the United States. Another approach could be focusing on the way comics branch off in various artistic narrative directions to show how comics within the genres of superhero, eroticism, autobiographical, science fiction, kids', historical fiction, and speculative all influence each other.

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