



Volume 1, Number 1

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## A Note from the Editor

WELCOME TO the first issue of *Lulu's Clubhouse*, the newsletter of Friends of Lulu. While our focus will remain on women's issues pertaining to the comics field, we will also cover news and events in comics from a broader perspective. Unlike some of the other comics news media, FoL doesn't show bias toward any particular company or entity. In other words: we're dedicated to bringing you the **straight scoop**.

And make no mistake, getting the straight scoop is vital to survival in today's industry. One of the things I've discovered is that women professionals are often cut off from the "inside word." Information about the business end of comics may not seem useful for someone who's just trying to meet a deadline, but as recent events have shown, it's more necessary than ever to know what's going on with publishers and distributors.

The comics industry has very much become a "DIY" (do it yourself, for the nonpunks out there) affair. This is obviously true of self-publishers, but it also goes for "self-retailers," "self-marketers," and everyone else. Knowledge is power, as they say.

We hope to have a second issue out this fall. But we can't do it without you. We are looking for contributions of all kinds: articles, columns, cartoons, drawings, you name it. (Observing the dearth of artwork here, cartoons are the most needed submission.) Don't be shy—this is your chance to speak out!

Also, members, send in news about your projects! Member News will be a regular and, doubtless, lengthy feature.

Finally, a personal thank you. As organizer of the first few Lulu meetings

## News from All Over

THIS MIGHT JUST BE the Year of the Girl, at least as far as Saturday morning TV is concerned. According to a recent article in *Variety*, heavy hitters like DIC Animation are introducing a number of girl action heroes for Saturday morning. For instance "Sailor Moon" is a Japanese import that chronicles the adventures of a schoolgirl with extraordinary powers who battles an evil empress and her minions. DIC president Andy Heyward is quoted as follows: "Not only is it a monstrous success in Japan, where it has done a billion dollars in sales already, but the show is popular in countries in the West, like France, Italy and Spain.

"The story is gripping and haunting. I

was knocked out by the storyline and story arc. It's s soap opera. it moves from one place to another, and the arc develops as the series continues. . . . Empowerment is a big theme in the series, and with kids that's very important."

But "Sailor Moon" isn't the only show with a girl hero headed for the small screen this fall. Saban (the same outfit that brings us "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" and the X-Men cartoon) is distributing "Tenko and the Guardians of the Magic." And Stribling Productions is launching "The Tale of Tillie's Dragon," described as being about "an imp with knee-socks and her best friend, a mischievous dragon."

Look for "Sailor Moon" merchandise to flood the toy stores this fall. If any of these shows is a big hit, the door may open wide for action material with a greater girl appeal. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

- Trina Robbins is working on *The Great Superheroines*, which Kitchen Sink will publish in 1996. Says Trina, "It's a history of superheroines in comics, starting from 1940 and going on to today. I'm covering characters like Mary Marvel, Moon Girl, Venus, Miss American, Phantom Lady, the Blonde Phantom." Careful readers will note that this list goes much further than just Wonder Woman. "There were tons of superheroines in the past," Trina goes on. "Not only did they have their own books, but most of them were aimed at girls, as opposed to today's superheroines, where the only way the companies feel they can sell them is by making them thinly veiled pin-ups."

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(and originator of the name "Friends of Lulu"), I'm constantly amazed by the energy and positive outlook surrounding this organization. And the synergy keeps growing. The support, encouragement and commitment that everyone has given me (and Lulu) has been more gratifying than I can possibly put into words.

—Heidi MacDonald



## Letters to Lulu

Kim Yale  
Succasunna, NJ

I was reminded of a quote from Carolyn Heilbrun's insightful and incisive book *Writing a Woman's Life* while attending ProCon for my first time this year—specifically, during a panel moderated by Noel Wolfman that was a Q&A with four individuals representing their various companies—Larry Marder for Image, Bob Schreck for Dark Horse, Bobbie Chase for Marvel, and Archie Goodwin for DC.

When the topic of expanding the marketplace finally surfaced among the panelists, I asked the logical question: whether any of the comic book companies represented on the panel have given any thought to publishing material that would attract and appeal to 52% of the population and 76% of the readership in this country—women.

The response from the panelists unfortunately confirmed the tremendous lack of creative vision and commercial savvy plaguing our industry; in fact, one of the panelists looked like I'd just asked him to pick up the Pyramids and move them to Portland.

For 15 years that direct sales market has been the core of

comic book publishing, and the superhero genre its fiscal mainstay. Publishers and their marketing departments steadfastly ignored expanding their readership and focused instead on catering to a very narrow audience—the white, male adolescent, at the expense of everyone else. Retailers, for the most part, went along with the program and did little or nothing to become professionally run stores by normal business standards and practices. This meant that (with the rare exception) every other kind of genre was ignored and systematically banished from the racks.

The Draconian adjustment our industry is currently experiencing is the direct result of the lack of diversification on the part of the comic book industry. You go to a typical Japanese manga publisher and they start their line of comics with the age group of 1- to 4-year-olds—and that includes girls and boys. No one is ignored and there is no creative or commercial onus if someone wants to do a fantasy comic—all genres are available for the child, teenager and adult, male and female, gay and straight. Diversification of the marketplace. And the books sell.

You go to the typical American comic book publisher/retailer and what have you got? Super-

heroes. That's it, for the most part. One genre dictating *what* kind of stories can be told, *how* they will be told, and *who* tells them.

This is where Heilbrun's quote comes in. She said, "There will be narratives of females' lives only when women no longer live their lives isolated in the houses and stories of men."

What I am saying is this: it makes good business sense to publish, promote, and back stories that girls and women will read, created by both women and men. But to do so requires a fundamental shift in thinking on the part of the people making the creative and marketing decisions. It means The Lost Boys have to climb down out of the clubhouse, leave Never Never Land, and start comporting themselves like adults. The deplorable evidence from ProCon is that outdated and inferior ideas are still determining editorial and business policies and that women professionals and women characters in comics will continue to be isolated in the male sexual and power fantasy stories. It's a crying shame how the comics business continues to cut off its nose of potential profit to spite its own face.

### Announcements

**Volunteers** are needed to staff the Lulu booth at the San Diego Comic-Con (July 27-30). Write to us or call Heidi MacDonald at 212-533-9630 to volunteer. Training and a FAQ sheet will be provided. Bonus: you get to sit down for a while!

**Minicomic contributions needed:** The Bay Area chapter of FoL is putting together a minicomic to introduce members and personalize the organization. The Subject: Who you are, where you're at. Contributions should be on one or two 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" pages—this is the finished size, but feel free to reduce a larger original. Send them to Friends of Lulu, 64 Shattuck Square, Ste. 201, Berkeley, CA 94704, Attn: Lisa. Deadline is July 14.

**Contribute to Lulu's Clubhouse:** Send stories, art, news, and letters to Lulu's Clubhouse, c/o Jackie Estrada, 4657 Cajon Way, San Diego, CA 92115.

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Dedicated to Marjorie Henderson Buell

## LULU'S DIARY

*How to empty a theater: Schedule a screening of Crumb, a brilliant but highly depressing documentary about a dysfunctional family of cartoonist-types, during the Capital City Trade Show, where, according to one observer, the mood was that of "The chickens waiting for Frank Perdue to appear." . . .*

*Unclear on the concept: To say that Marvel/Heroes World is having a bit of a problem with the switch to self-distribution would be a bit of an understatement. Apparently, some of the retailers out there still think it's all just a hoax. One frustrated Marvel rep actually asked a retailer if he hadn't noticed that the Marvel comics were suddenly missing from the Diamond catalog. Replied the baffled retailer, "I thought Marvel was having a skip month."*

*Upgrading the image of comics: Neil Gaiman recently appeared on a couple of NPR shows to talk about comics. When he says "Ko-mix," it sounds so much more legitimate than the American "ca-mix."*

*Maybe we've just been saying it wrong!*

*Musing: Now that Marvel has bought Fleer and Skybox, has the House of Ideas become the House of Cards?*