

cereal:geek[®]

animation of the eighties



issue seven
third quarter 2010

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editorial

If you thought the appearance of issue six was a dream, then the appearance of **cereal:geek** issue seven, so close to the release of issue six, must feel like some sort of crazy trip to the beginning of time itself! Not for one second am I saying that **cereal:geek** is as important as the creation of the universe, but thousands of years from now scientists will be asking the question, "How did issue seven come out so fast?!"

I won't lie to you, getting this issue out hot on the heels of issue six was a tad stressful. Even though some of the sections were completed a while back, there was still much to be accomplished! So, before I start waffling I want to take a moment to thank each and every person that worked their asses off at the last minute to get the content over to me! To say I appreciate it would be an understatement...

Issue seven is the first of two issues that address the theme of **movies**; animated movies to be specific. As well as the toy-based animated features that we all know and love, this theme will cover the animated movies produced without the might of a toy company behind them. The theme will even cover those made-for-television animated movies, and those released directly to VHS.

One of the things I should mention is that I've decided to give **Toy Advert Test** a rest for a couple of issues. I have a great deal of content for the section itself, but it was hard to justifiably squeeze it into this issue.

For the first time since the magazine's inception I present for your entertainment three new sections!

In the first, **A New Point Of View**, my homegirl (and lifelong supporter of this magazine) Lesley Ibbotson examines an episode of a cartoon series. Sounds rather straightforward, right? Wrong. See, Lesley hasn't watched many of the cartoons that appear in the pages of this magazine in a long time; and in some cases has never seen some of these shows. Be prepared for some interesting opinions! She'll kill me for calling her "homegirl"...

The second of these new sections, **Now That's What I Call An Ending!**, looks at the memorable endings peppered throughout the cartoons of the eighties, accompanied by some beautiful artwork.

The third and final new section debuting in this issue is **Stayte Of The Eighties** in which super-talented artist James Stayte takes a specific scene from an episode of a cartoon and transforms it into a comic book page or two! I do hope that these new sections bring a smile to your face, and be on the lookout, because issue nine may have some new sections, too...

See you in 2011, where my plan (believe it or not) is to publish issues eight, nine, and ten! Wish me luck!

James "Busta Toons" Eatock



The cover of **cereal:geek** issue seven was illustrated by Nathan Baertsch.

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If you have any **comments**, or if you would like to **contribute** the next issue please send an email to:

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NEWS

FROM THE EIGHTIES

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PLEASING THE PRINCESS

The cast and crew of the Japanese series *Battle of the Planets* are pleased with the outcome of their demonstration against *cereal:geek*, and their subsequent inclusion within the magazine. Princess spoke publicly, "Of course we're pleased with the outcome.

Other magazines recognize us as an eighties cartoon. And so too does *cereal:geek*, now." She did have a warning however, "Should my pseudonym 'Agatha June' be mentioned, then the magazine will find another protest on their hands." *Continued on Page Six*

HE-MAKEOVER

Just days after announcing his departure to the future-based series *The New Adventures of He-Man*, the most powerful man in the universe, He-Man, has been seen preparing for his new role by completely transforming his image. He-Man set a trend many years ago by wearing furry briefs accompanied by furry boots, a look many an Eternian copied shortly thereafter. He-Man was also known for his rather unique pageboy hairstyle, which many an Eternian did not copy. However both of these instantly recognizable elements of He-Man's look have disappeared. Our hero was seen entering the Etherian-run beauty salon *Entrapta's* wearing blue leggings with gold boots, to the surprise of many local villagers. Even more shocking was He-Man's new choice of hairstyle. Emerging from the salon He-Man's pageboy hairstyle was no more, trimmed to take a lot of the body out, and somewhat more alarmingly the most powerful man in the universe now sported a ponytail. It is unsure how this new look will go down amongst his fellow warriors, but the Evil Warriors are still adjusting to Skeletor's new look, the villain rumored to now be searching for a pair of eyeballs to compete with He-Man's new look. With Skeletor's imminent departure to the future

Evil-Lyn has almost immediately assumed the role as leader of the Evil Warriors, even going so far as to publicly state, "I'm thinking about calling this group of misfits the 'Masters of the Universe' once again"; a name they were known by before the original series began. Evil-Lyn is an outspoken fan of He-Man's new look, "Let's face it, the pageboy hairstyle had run its course." She only has one problem with He-Man's new look and his subsequent departure, "What do we do with Faker now?"

Continued on Page Three



BUMBLE-JUMPER

The ever-popular Autobot known to the world as Bumblebee has been quite outspoken with regards to the latest addition to their ranks. He was quoted as saying, "It's like the new robots appearing on the scene have managed to lose any sense of individuality". Bumblebee's outburst stems from the appearance of Bumblejumper, the latest Autobot to have made the journey from Cybertron to Earth. "I don't mind a new addition to the team; we need all the help we can get, but Bumblejumper? Is this guy joking? He's not even trying to be original!" Bumblebee went on to explain, "Cliffjumper and I were the originals. When Hubcap appeared we were a little confused, but no problems arose from that. But Bumblejumper? If Prime wants us to stick around he's gotta learn that our individuality is important to us." Cliffjumper, Hubcap and Bumblejumper were unavailable for comment.

WEIRDVILLE

Friends and Family of the evil scientist Dr. Arkeville, one of the most wanted criminals on the Earth, are carrying out their own investigation after his mysterious disappearance. Not many people are supportive of their search as it is widely known that Arkeville was a strong supporter of the Decepticon cause. One family member was quoted as saying, "He told us he was going to aid the Decepticons in overthrowing the world and that he would be operating out of Megatron's secret base of operations. That was the last we heard of him."



STAR WARS

Dr. Peter Venkman spoke out last night with regards to his portrayal by Bill Murray in the live-action *Ghostbusters* movie directed by Ivan Reitman. "Don't get me wrong, it's a great movie, and it follows the events of what happened pretty closely. But I don't understand why Bill Murray was chosen to play me. As much as I love the guy's work on *Saturday Night Live* he's roughly ten years older than me, and let's face it, doesn't look a thing like me." According to Dr. Venkman his colleague Dr. Egon Spengler is also confused as to why Harold Ramis did not dye his hair for the role, "We respect that filmmakers are going to occasionally shy away from the source material, but I would like to be well represented." Dr. Venkman concluded, "If they make a second film I'm going to request that they choose an actor who compliments my heroic features and boyish good looks."

ANALYZE THE INTRO



Based on the feature film *Ghostbusters*, one of the highest grossing movies of the eighties, *The Real Ghostbusters* had a lot to deliver during its introduction, which, while not a masterclass in animation, was action-packed and fast! And as for theme song, I think it's safe to say that it's the most famous of any cartoon of the eighties...

And now, highlighting specific shots and pieces of directing I attempt to give this introduction the attention and praise that it so rightfully deserves

1. What could be more perfect to the opening of an animated show than a direct homage to the film *Saturday Night Fever*? The animation of the foot stride is timed to perfection with the opening beat of the theme song.

2. For the first time we see to whom the feet belong. The ghost is instantly recognizable to those of us who saw the feature film. His expression is different than the shocked look as seen in the movie's logo, here clearly enjoying strutting his stuff down the street.

3. The ghost continues to strut along, dodging objects left on the streets of New York. The animators demonstrate throughout this shot how they took a simple character from a logo and gave him the perfect amount of personality and movement; the ghost showing all the great qualities of squash and stretch animation.

4. I've always loved the way the ghost's face changes from a happy expression to the more recognizable shocked one as seen in the logo. It should be noted that the artists have done a fantastic job of recreating the show's logo.

5. Our first view of the Ghostbusters' headquarters is the office, the one location in the feature film that we became intimately familiar with. Just like the film the layout is exactly the same with Janine Melnitz at her desk in front of the filing cabinets, and Peter Venkman in his own little office area. The mood of this one shot is extremely well directed and lit.

6. Our first look at Janine is quite alarming when compared to her appearance in the movie. The animated Janine has bigger hair and a more angular look throughout. Janine is animated in a very cartoony way in this shot, as she looks back at the telephone receiver bellowing.

7. The shots of each Ghostbuster reacting to the alarm are very well thought out, with each reaction summing up the character to an extent. Although we cannot see Ray initially, both he and Egon are working on an invention. Egon reacts with a surprised look, but Ray is the true star of this two-character shot; his expression is priceless. We see him with a big smile on his face because, to him, the alarm means that fun times are ahead.

8. This shot perfectly sums up Dr. Peter Venkman. While Ray and Egon, the other two founders of the Ghostbusters toy with an invention to further their Ghostbusting cause, Peter reclines on his chair, feet on the desk reading a newspaper.

9. Peter doesn't react calmly to the alarm, and this is not because he is the comic relief of the show, it is more than likely that he is so into his newspaper that he forgets that he's on call roughly twenty-four hours a day. Again, this sums up his character quite nicely. He may be the cool, smart-mouthed Ghostbuster, but he tends to do things that will inevitable involve him ending up on his backside!

10. As in the movie Winston is the last character to be featured. We see Winston animated with a wide-eyed expression, something we would see throughout much of the first season; the animation team would often be the same. Summing up the character of Winston; although first surprised by the alarm he drops everything he is doing and goes to work.

11. As Winston exits the shot we see for the first time the green ghost from the movie who we all remember as being a "bad guy". The animation is smooth as he emerges from the table and swipes the burger with his tongue and into his mouth, all in one fluid sequence. Here, and throughout much of the introduction, the green ghost, who we would come to know as Slimer, isn't given a specific role. At the time of production it was known that Slimer would be around the Ghostbusters, but to what extent was unknown.

12. Another movie trait is the fire pole. The animation on both Egon and Winston sliding down the pole is fast and timed almost to the beat of the music. As the series went on the pole became less and less of a feature, but in the first and syndicated seasons it was a part of their routine, staying true to the movie.

13. The animation of Winston reaching the floor and running out of shot is smooth. Look out for the realistic touch; as he lands he recoils, almost taking a few steps back, before leaping into his stride. Notice that in the background the lamp behind Janine continues to be the only light source in the office area, and cleverly keeps that area showcased, even though Winston is the focus of this shot.

14. The only shot that I've never been too keen on in this introduction is the shot of the Ghostbusters, namely Ray and Winston, running into the car. While the angle looks good, the fact that the characters run as if they have been sped up looks very much out of place.

15. The close up on the front end of Ecto-1 is excellent. We hear the car start and hum, as the lights are turned on. Of course in Japanese animated shows lights do not merely turn on; they flash and are accompanied by very cool line work, as if to show that the shutter speed on the camera is unable to keep up.

16



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29



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16.

The shot of Janine blowing a kiss to the departing Ghostbusters is one of my favorite shots of the introduction. It is rather downplayed but beautifully animated and characterized. The animation of the kiss is smooth, as she kisses her two fingers before directing her outstretched palm towards the Ghostbusters. This proved to be such a popular idea that in the early episodes she would be seen blowing a kiss as the Ghostbusters left the firehouse.

17.

The animation of Slimer kissing Janine features the most amusing expressions featured in the introduction. As the green ghost approaches, Janine leaps back in horror; her eyes now big and wide with her pupils tiny. As Slimer zips out of shot like a true cartoon character Janine is left reeling from the incident her mouth completely covered in slime. The entire scene is no more than two seconds long, but it is one of the best pieces of animation featured in this entire introduction.

18.

Again, sticking to his unsettled role in the intro Slimer tags along uninvited. Again we see some marvelous overly-cartoon animation as Ecto-1 reverses briefly before flying out of shot. The animation of Slimer is fantastic, with the little green ghost holding on for dear life as his face contorts. Another nice touch which really adds to the pace of this scene is that the lights from Ecto-1 trail as they speed out of shot.

19.

We briefly see the exterior of the firehouse as the angled camera pans down and straightens out to the firehouse doors. Paying tribute to the film Ecto-1 emerges straight on as the firehouse doors open. The animation on the Ecto-1 is terrific, showing that in this particular series things do not have to move as honestly as they would in the real world. The car charges straight for the camera. The hood ornament of the ghost logo fills the screen with an incredible level of detail.

20.

This panning shot featuring a horde of ghosts is interesting in that it was originally animated for the promo with Slimer in the place of the main blue ghost. Obviously when the decision was made not have Slimer portrayed as an enemy this shot had to be altered.

21.

Of course this introduction has to feature one of the most popular and recognizable characters of the feature film in the form of the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. The way in which the camera slowly pans up the ghosts, moving closer each time it bounces, is perfect, and emphasizes the threat when we finally see the looming figure of Mr. Stay Puft.

22.

One of the best looking images in the intro is this panning shot which features each Ghostbuster lowering his gun, preparing to bust some ghosts. Be sure to look at the following shot with the ghosts reacting, as all of the ghosts behind the main one have changed color and are drawn in a different style than the previous shot.

23.

A great close-up shows Peter activating the Proton Gun, complete with cool special effects, which are purposely animated on a separate layer at alternate frames. Throughout the series it was never clearly shown what each switch and button did. Sometimes the guys would activate a switch on their Proton Packs, other times they would press a small button on the handle.

24.

A great point-of-view from the ghosts shows the beams heading directly towards the audience. A nice directorial touch has the beams almost loop towards the camera rather than shoot straight out of the nozzles. Look for the brief eerie shot of the ghosts lit up in black and white just before the beams strike them.

25.

As the beams rise they begin to surround Mr. Stay Puft who understandably becomes angry. The expression on his face is very animé-like with his wide roaring mouth, and the low angle really gives an impression of just how big this character is.

26.

This particular shot is impressive showing the full power of the beams, but disappointingly, as was the case with this shot in the promo, Peter's face is obscured by Ray's beam. I always liked the expressions on the characters' faces, especially Egon's as he grimaces whilst raising his Proton Gun.

27.

We are treated to an extremely complicated and detailed piece of animation as the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man loses form, and is slowly pulled apart and sucked into the trap. The following panning shot is quick, but clever, in that we see the ghosts all spiraling downwards like a mini tornado; the power of the trap creating a very nice visual.

28.

At the bottom of the panning shot we see the Ghostbusters, beautifully lit, continuing to trap the ghosts. The animators have chosen to alternate the look of the beams from a distance, and they appear to be thinner with a circular-like field emanating from the front of the Proton Gun. The trap slams shut almost in time with the music. In the promo this shot was accompanied by Mr. Stay Puft's hat landing next to the trap.

29.

The Ghostbusters having busted the ghosts relax into victory-like poses; Peter, Ray and Winston wink at one another, while Egon, ever the intellectual, adjusts his glasses.

30.

The show's logo is designed exactly as in the feature film with the title split into two words and placed on separate lines. In order to distance the series from the Filmation show of the same name, we see a small light source fly into shot before exploding into the beautifully written words "The Real". After this action-packed introduction we knew full well that we were watching the official *Ghostbusters* cartoon, nay, the *Real Ghostbusters* cartoon.

アオリや横顔の時は
サングラスのレンズの色が
頬にかかります

色一段落とす



UPの目の処理



GHOSTBUSTERS

Columbia Pictures Television
F. W. L. & W. L. Productions
DIC Enterprises, Inc.



Character Model #18

Date 6/11/86	Artist STOCK FINAL
Description	JANINE MELNITZ
Views	FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



LOVE IN THE EIGHTIES



Peter and Dana? Please. The true power couple of *The Real Ghostbusters* are Janine and Egon, or as the tabloids like to call them, "Janion". And like any power couple they have charities that they champion - science foundations and fungus hobby groups, mostly. They have even adopted cute little baby...ghosts. I kid, but this all seems a likely future for the high profile doctor and the Ghostbusters' secretary extraordinaire.

Janine Melnitz was hired when the Ghostbusters initially moved into their firehouse headquarters. Instantly smitten with the tall, brainy Dr. Spengler, Janine dropped serious hints about her attraction. No low-cut tops and perfume for this girl, though. Oh no. Janine read technical journals and learned to operate a proton pack. While friendly to the entire group of guys - even Slimer - better yet, even Peter - Janine always made a special point to tell Egon to be careful out in the field.

While Egon never responded to Janine's affections, it was obvious that his heart was not made of rhenium diboride. Janine often made Egon pause and fluster, as much as the composed Egon is capable of being flustered. Egon could simply maneuver through the intricacies of science that emotions and

personal relationships did not allow. Or, to put in the vernacular, he was a nerd and didn't know how to deal with women.

There was the one time Egon was like putty in Janine's hands and melted for her, but this was only after she had wished for Egon's attention from a genie. But did the genie make it so Egon loved her, or did it simply break down whatever barriers kept Egon from telling Janine what he truly felt?

The other guys had occasional love interests that would appear once and never be mentioned again, but Janine and Egon's relationship was the only recurring romance on the show. This is pretty interesting, especially considering they took a backseat to Dana and Peter in the first movie.

Fans are not quite sure whether the two become a couple towards the end of the series or not. In order to save Janine from a spirit Egon finally expressed his love for her, though he tried to backtrack a bit by also pointing out that Winston, Ray and Peter platonically cared for her as well. But this gesture was enough to save Janine, and the two decided to go on their first date. It was a science documentary, but it was a good first step. Who knows where their relationship went afterwards?

THE IDW GHOST BUSTERS PITCH!

by James Eatock - illustrated by Dan Schoening

In March of 2009, I made a passing comment to Dan Schoening that the two of us should pitch a *Ghostbusters* comic to IDW. Much to my surprise, my comment was taken seriously by the talented artist!

Over the next few months I sat down in front of my computer and wrote a lengthy pitch explaining to IDW, the owners of the *Ghostbusters* comic license, why we would love the opportunity to work on a *Ghostbusters* comic. The pitch, inspired by my recent trip to New York, featured the synopses for the first ten issues, of which there was a story arc that culminated in the tenth issue.

To better sell the pitch both Dan and I thought it best to showcase us as a creative team. Thus I wrote the script to the first issue, Dan illustrated the first four pages, and I lettered them. Dan also contributed a wealth of his *Ghostbusters*-related artwork as previously seen on his deviantART page. Once the pitch was completed I had it professionally printed and bound, and sent it off to IDW.

In the months that followed we heard nothing from IDW, and decided that we had given it our best shot. We knew that they already had *Ghostbusters* comics in the pipeline, and our pitch was presumably one of many they received every other month.

In February of 2010 Dan suggested that he upload some of the pitch pages to his deviantART account to show what we had planned. What happened next shocked us!

Within hours of posting the pages the feedback came flooding in, and it was overwhelmingly positive. Not only did people rave about Dan's artwork, but they also thought my writing of the characters was spot-on! As someone who loves both the movie and animated series, this was, for me, an incredibly



high compliment. To showcase the pages even more I created a fan page on Facebook. A day or two after the initial wave of feedback I was contacted by the *New York Daily News*! Having interviewed me, they published an article talking favorably about the pitch. From there, numerous news-centric websites began covering and supporting the pitch.

During this time IDW contacted us, explained why our pitch had not been accepted, and kindly offered us the opportunity to work on *Ghostbusters* for them! Dan and I had to pinch ourselves.

As this issue of *cereal:geek* goes to print, Dan has illustrated a *Ghostbusters* story written by Peter David titled "What in Samhain just happened?"; and both Dan and I teamed-up to create "Guess what's coming to dinner?", a Thanksgiving-themed story. Both of these can be found in the *Ghostbusters* trade paperback "Haunted Holidays" published by IDW.

For me, being able to say that I wrote a *Ghostbusters* story is a dream come true. To then say I have been published alongside Peter David (whose *Incredible Hulk* comics I read religiously growing up during the eighties) is more than I could have ever dreamed!

I thought it would be appropriate over the next few pages to showcase the four sequential pages from our pitch to IDW. These pages were not approved by IDW and are run here for entertainment purposes only. Enjoy!

NEW YORK



GH0STBUSTERS

"THE THINGS I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT ERESHKIGAL"
WRITTEN BY JAMES EATOCK - ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SCHOENING



THIS IS CYNTHIA CRAWFORD
OF UBN NEWS.



I'M HERE, LIVE, IN
DOWNTOWN NEW YORK,
WHERE IT IS ALLEGED
THAT THE
GH0STBUSTERS
HAVE CAUSED YET
ANOTHER EXPLOSION
IN THEIR ONGOING
BATTLE AGAINST THE
SUPERNATURAL.

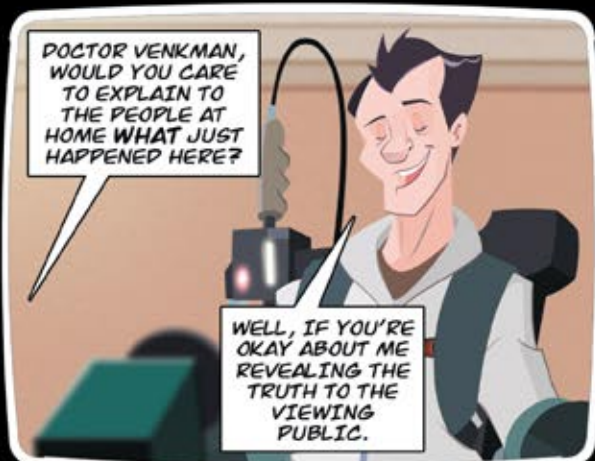
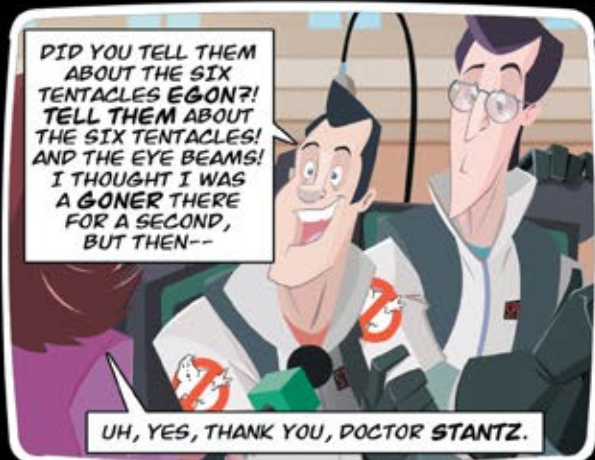


WE'RE HOPING TO GET
A STATEMENT FROM
THE **GH0STBUSTERS**
THEMSELVES. THEY
SHOULD BE--



YES, I BELIEVE THE
GH0STBUSTERS ARE
EXITING THE
PREMISES NOW.









a new point of view

by Lesley Ibbotson

I think it's safe to say that many of the *cereal:geek* contributors know a lot about the cartoons of the eighties. They're able to quote a piece of dialogue from Optimus Prime, or tell you what episode She-Ra was seen without her tiara. I am not one of these individuals. Which is why this magazine's editor thought it would be interesting to hear my opinion watching some of these shows/episodes for the first time!

The Real Ghostbusters - "Ragnarok and Roll"

Everybody loves the Ghostbusters right? Massive movie franchise, Bill Murray, Mr. Stay Puft, the list is endless. But as this is a magazine about animation, it's of course *The Real Ghostbusters* cartoon series that we are interested in.

I undoubtedly watched the series as a child. In fact as my memory serves me, I watched it before I saw the movies, and so I was very surprised to find out that Slimer was not the cuddly sidekick that the cartoon series cast him as.

The Ghostbusters was big in our household, my brother had *The Real Ghostbusters* board game in which we would fight over who got to be Venkman, and I spent one rainy afternoon making a plaster of Paris Slimer, a frankly less than thrilling activity in which I now understand why kids these days need something a bit more exciting.

As a child of the eighties I KNOW the power of cartoons, for didn't Alvin and the Chipmunks bring down the Berlin wall with the power of their rock? I can recite the *Dogtanian and the Three Muskehounds* theme tune with the best of them, and I still get a bit teary eyed when I think of those little Gummi Bears. However, as to *The Real Ghostbusters* cartoon series itself though, my mind draws a blank. Perhaps I was too busy eating *Push Pops* or learning to rollerblade to retain any plotlines or facts from the series. So I am going to revisit with eyes afresh, to see if it does stand up to the test of time.

The first episode chosen is "Ragnarok and Roll", a truly gripping episode in which the whole world is brought to the brink of destruction by a man called Jeremy and his flute. Sounds improbable, but let's approach this with an open mind and begin.

Ah, that theme tune. It brings back a flood of memories that a certain telephone information service tried to crush in recent years, but failed. It hasn't even begun yet and I am already punching the air with my fist.

My first thoughts are how good the animation looks, and how genuinely creepy the setup is. The music and brooding scenery certainly indicate that the two characters are definitely up to no good. The dialogue between Jeremy and his sidekick DiTillio is well crafted and humorous. My heart sank when I saw DiTillio as he ticks every lame sidekick cliché in the book. However, he was actually the best thing in the cartoon and provided more than a few belly laughs. His physical appearance is important to the story and it is he, not Jeremy's pretty ex-girlfriend Cindy, that can reach through to his master to save the world.

Ah yes, Cindy. It seems that this whole sorry

mess, and by the looks of things, arduous quest to discover the forces of evil, are because Cindy dumped Jeremy. Why am I not surprised? However, when we get to meet her we find out that she wanted a career rather than being married to this knucklehead, and frankly I don't blame her. And although I love DiTillio, it seems like he would always be around. Three's a crowd guys.

The climax on top of the skyscraper is edge of your seat stuff and with the prospect of the Ghostbusters sacrificing themselves to save the world, I was actually biting my nails. My notes whilst watching this simply say "Simultaneous overload!! Oh my God!" However, as soon as the theme tune kicked in, I knew these guys were going to triumph and the face of evil being destroyed was a brilliant piece of stylized animation.

And so the world was put back to rights, and everyone survived, even the wimpy Jeremy. Well, not everyone as I am sure quite a few perished in the tsunamis and earthquakes around the world, but let's not think about that. All of our Ghostbusters live to fight another day and that's what matters.

So what did I learn from this? Blonde women are dangerous. Flying monkeys in metallic codpieces mean trouble. Everybody needs their own sidekick. Well actually I learnt that *The Real Ghostbusters* is actually bloody good. I was surprised at how good the voices were, and it is always good to see Winston have a bit more of a speaking role, even if he does need everything explained to him twice. Although I enjoyed the animation, it was the storyline that I was most impressed with, and the plot of a crazed man harnessing the destructive power of the earth hit home in today's global warming obsessed world.

Though next time, get a better conduit of evil than a flute though yeah, it kind of makes you a little bit camp. Until next time guys!



interview with...

RICHARD MUELLER



Richard Mueller wrote numerous scripts for a variety of animated series during the eighties, and was most notably one of the writers responsible for bringing *Robotech* from Japan to the US, where it became an instant hit. However, his foray into writing for TV animation would be foreshadowed by his novelization of a certain hit movie titled *Ghostbusters*. An incredibly popular (and now hard to find) book, Richard expanded on what had been established in the movie. When he found himself writing for *The Real Ghostbusters* Richard took his cues from his own ideas in the book, and crafted some of the best remembered episodes of the series! As someone that was involved in the relationship between TV animation and big screen movies, I thought it most apt to ask him some questions.

EATOCK:

What was the biggest influence (books, TV, movies) that prompted you to embark on a career in writing?

MUELLER:

All of the above, but mostly anything historical. I read copiously, especially British publications, and I was misspelling words at an early age (using British spellings instead of American). I loved *Victory at Sea* and *Winston Churchill: The Gallant Years*, movies about World War II, and novels about the sea. I wanted to be a naval officer, and eventually I went to sea in the U.S. Coast Guard, but I was born too late to be an officer in the Royal Navy under Nelson or Cunningham. After a time I started writing bits and pieces about the sea.

EATOCK:

What aspects of the writing process most appealed to you?

MUELLER:

I love to write, to rewrite, and especially—and you can't do this in television—watch my characters

take off and tell their own stories. I love short stories. So do many people, but short stories don't pay very well.

EATOCK:

Did you begin your writing career with an eye to writing for TV?

MUELLER:

Yes, and no. I wanted to write everything and anything, and I do. Originally I was an actor and was in about seventy stage plays in twenty years. Then one day I realized that I hated to audition, that I wanted a nest and a library, so I switched to writing. You still have to audition but you don't have to dress up.

EATOCK:

What specifically made you want to write for TV? And was there a specific desire to write for animation?

MUELLER:

I was at the University of Iowa Playwrights' Workshop, but I was asked to leave because my writing was too commercial (which, I guess, meant not artistic enough.) Workshop grads go to New York to become starving playwrights. But since I was too commercial, I came out to Los Angeles. Less artistic, but also less chance of freezing to death come winter.

EATOCK:

How did you become a TV writer, and how did you prepare for it?

MUELLER:

In L.A. I found that no one would read my stuff unless I had an agent, and I couldn't get an agent unless I'd already sold. It was a Catch 22. And everybody in this town has a screenplay. I was screwed. So, I started following another path—science fiction. I sold a dozen or so stories to good markets, and a novel, and then someone told me that science fiction writers in Los Angeles made money writing cartoons as a day job. My first one was writing ADR for *Robotech*, *Captain Harlock*, and *Southern Cross*. Then ten of us wrote an entire season of short tracer scripts for *Robotech II*, but the Yen collapsed, and we all had to start over.

EATOCK:

You wrote the movie adaptation to Ghostbusters. How did this work come about? In the adaptation you expanded greatly on what had been established in the movie. Was this your decision to do so? And how did you get the material approved?

MUELLER:

An adaptation is a nice way of saying novelization. I had sold a novel—*Jernigan's Egg*—to Jim Frenkel at Bluejay Books. Jim's wife, Joan Vinge, was supposed to do *Ghostbusters* but she had already agreed to do *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* so I

got *Ghostbusters*. Luckily I had seen it five times (a great date movie) because the script didn't have all of the changes, but I was able to remember them. I expanded the characters and backgrounds because there's a lot more room in a novel than a movie, and I knew these guys had to come from eccentric families. I wrote it in a month, sent it in, they paid me. There was no approval process. I think they were just happy that I worked fast.

EATOCK:

How did you get the gig writing for The Real Ghostbusters? Can you recall the first time you heard about the animated series? Did the fact that you wrote the movie adaptation come into play in securing your place on the show?

MUELLER:

Joe Straczynski got the job of turning in sixty-five scripts of *The Real Ghostbusters* in five months, and needed people to handle the job. As I had recent experience and had written the novelization, he called me and asked if I was interested. I think I wrote seven scripts and rewrote two others.

EATOCK:

How often did you look to your own expansive movie adaptation for influence when writing scripts? Are you aware if any of the other writers used the paperback as reference?

MUELLER:

I wound up writing stories about Ray's Aunt Lois, Peter's father, I think about Egon's brother, and Winston's dad. Otherwise, their backgrounds as I'd created them were dovetailed with the movie and locked in my head. After a while I knew them like members of my family. I understand other writers sometimes used the novelization as well.

EATOCK:

A series bible for both the network and syndicated seasons was written. Did you ever refer to this, or did you feel that you knew the concept well enough?

MUELLER:

I'm sure I saw it and referred to it, but I was pretty well versed in Ghostbusting. I don't precisely remember it, but that was twenty-five years ago. I think I just pitched in and started writing.

EATOCK:

With the existence of the movie, were there any restrictions imposed upon you and the other writers?

MUELLER:

Outside of the usual ones on sex, violence, and actually killing someone, I don't remember any. But then I think I actually did send a human to the other side in "You Can't Take It With You." That was great fun.

EATOCK:

When writing for the series what kind of plots and situations attracted you most? And what plots did you go out of your way to avoid? Did you lean to writing character-driven stories, or situation-driven stories?

MUELLER:

Both. I loved the character flaws—Ray's innocence, Egon's stiff-necked scientific streak, Peter's opportunistic schemes. Winston was actually the most stable, which made doing stories about him a challenge and fun. Two—"Elementary, My Dear Winston" and "The Brooklyn Triangle" are favorites of mine. I also loved to work with some of my favorite adversaries (The Ghostmaster General, Shifter, Holmes and Watson, Marduk, the Collector), and really odd concepts.

EATOCK:

How much story editing did you perform on the series?

MUELLER:

I never edited, though in the first season there were a few writers that missed the mark and Joe gave me their scripts to fix. They were good ideas but the characters hadn't gelled for them or the rhythms were off.

EATOCK:

Ghostbusters was a movie that celebrated New York. This is something that appears evident in your scripts. Was this a conscious decision?

MUELLER:

The movie was set there. I grew up in New Jersey, and New York always attracted me, so I went out and got some maps and guidebooks, then turned my imagination loose. But I also took the guys to Scotland, New Jersey, Japan, Mexico and to sea. There's only so much ectoplasm that the Big Apple can take.

EATOCK:

Did you ever have much feedback to your work on the show from fans of the movie?

MUELLER:

Not initially, though I hear that Dan Aykroyd really liked the 'belief made manifest' idea I built "Elementary, My Dear Winston" around. As for fans, I don't think they knew where to find us in those days. I get more correspondence now than when the show was on.

EATOCK:

Do you feel that the animated series was as good as the movie?

MUELLER:

Absolutely. It ran six years. Not many high-concept toons had done that, if any.

EATOCK:

What was your opinion and how did you react when the network interfered with the series?

MUELLER:

I don't recall much interference with my scripts. Mostly we wound up racing each other to get to monsters and concepts first, and to clear them with Chuck Menville and Len Jensen, who took over story-editing when Joe left. I do remember that it took a long time to convince the toy company to put out a Janine action figure, and when they did it was snapped up fast.

EATOCK:

J. Michael Straczynski walked away from the series due to the network interference; were you ever tempted to do the same?

MUELLER:

I enjoyed the show too much, and I have a different sort of ego. Let's just say that he's a Douglas MacArthur and I'm a Chester Nimitz, and let your readers google that out. Besides, I felt that I had been with it from the beginning and wanted to play it out.

EATOCK:

What do you recall about the Slimer! series?

MUELLER:

I don't recall having much contact with *Slimer!* I mostly stayed on the 'big' show, but my son, who I used to take to the studio, gave me an idea about Slimer on the toilet. They bought the story, so I gave him ten percent.

EATOCK:

Out of all the writers you worked on the series the longest. Did you notice a change in quality from the first episode to the very last episode?

MUELLER:

Artistically the third and fourth years impressed me the most. Writing-wise, by the last year I thought some of the story ideas were getting pretty derivative, including mine.

EATOCK:

By the end of the series were you "done" with Ghostbusters, or do you still feel a desire to tell more stories?

MUELLER:

Both and neither. I loved the idea and the characters, but, as I said, I think the show was getting tired.

EATOCK:

During the eighties were you aware of the glut of animated features on the big screen?

MUELLER:

For the most part, the transition from television to the big screen produced unmitigated crap. There are exceptions, such as *The Fugitive*, but all of the toy-based ones are quick rip-offs.

EATOCK:

What was your opinion of cartoons based on movies (Rambo, Teen Wolf, etc.)?

MUELLER:

I certainly wrote for a few—*Ghostbusters*, *RoboCop*, *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*, *Stargate*. They can work if they are properly designed and staffed, or they can be painful and tedious. Like any creative project, preparation is all.

EATOCK:

Aside from the Ghostbusters you also went on to write for the movie-influenced Attack of the Killer Tomatoes. How did this come about? And was it a similar situation to writing for Ghostbusters?

MUELLER:

I was head writer at Marvel Productions when our boss, the singularly uninspired Joe Taritero, broached this idea. Jack Enyart, Ted Pedersen and I got together with Steve Peace (who played Wilbur Finletter in the flicks) and whipped the show up in about a week. We were delighted to have John Astin do the voice of the villainous Putrid T. Gangreen, Kath Soucie as Tara Tomato, Chuck McCann and others. It was quick and dirty, filled with in-jokes and asides to the audience, and it was fun. I heard that it became something of a minor cult-classic in Britain. But it had no long-distance range and it was no *Real Ghostbusters*.

EATOCK:

Do you think that an animated movie featuring The Real Ghostbusters could've worked? And if it had been up to you, what story would you have told?

MUELLER:

It would have had the dual handicap of being compared to both the movies and the series, difficult standards to meet. I could have written it. I'm just happy that no one asked.

EATOCK:

Aside from Ghostbusters obviously being one of your favorite movies, could you name your favorite movie, and favorite animated movie? Do you have a specific genre of movies that is your favorite?

MUELLER:

I like movies of all kinds, animated and live. I especially like free movies, because writing for toons doesn't pay residuals. I don't like most anything from Disney, James Cameron, Mel Gibson, or Quentin Tarantino. So there.

EATOCK:

Over the years have live-action movies influenced your writing in any way?

MUELLER:

Historical fiction if it's well done. Science fiction if it's well done. And well written films in any genre.

EATOCK:

Why do writers of movies (and this applies to animated movies) receive so little credit; whilst TV writers are always strongly acknowledged?

MUELLER:

Until recently writers in animation were called storymen. No animation writers were acknowledged until comic book and science fiction writers started kicking in the doors, started creating and producing shows, and holding on to creative rights. That finally began to break the system of indentured servitude that Disney had established. I think writers are looked down on throughout the industry because we can actually do something.

Richard Mueller

Who yo gonna call? 21/6/2010

I want to thank Richard Mueller personally for taking the time out of his schedule to answer these questions.

HAIRSTYLES OF THE EIGHTIES

by Tristan Huw Jones - illustration by Rich A. Molinelli - colors by Nicolas Chapuis

One of the things we have to love most about animated shows from the eighties is the unrestrained, almost legendary, assortment of hairstyles that belong to that specific decade...



Egon Spengler

One can only begin to imagine the amount of product it would take to maintain something like this! It's one of the most indescribably bizarre hairstyles to come out of any era. What's even more bizarre about it is the fact that, in spite of being so horrendously "Eighties" and completely beyond any reasonable boundaries of physical possibility, it has this unnatural ability to just completely slip below anyone's radar. You could sit and watch episodes of *The Real Ghostbusters* and just completely accept the absurdity of it all. Even Venkman, the cynical mouth of the show, just accepted it. The man could sleep on it, tossing and turning through horrendous nightmares of the Boogeyman (something the good doctor was prone to), and wake up without even needing to retouch a hair on his head. Nobody questioned it, and only in retrospect is one truly able to sit back and wonder whether or not Dr. Egon Spengler's hair was the reason for his intense interest in the supernatural, because that's exactly what that hair is.



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