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Tuesday, 07 October 2003 18:00

Sean Leary, entertainment editor of the Rock Island Argus and Dispatch, has just released the second issue of the humor publication The Dingo. In the spirit of the work at hand, I offer my own Top 10 list (for the counting impaired), and some constructive criticism.

Top 10 Reasons to Check Out the New *Dingo*

11) In “Thrilling Tales! Featuring: The Dark Avenger,” Dan O’Shea takes a look at a superhero in old age. The concept is solid, and the execution works.

10) The cover promises: “Now with even more swearing than Harry Potter books!” And it delivers. As we all know, profanity is *always* funny.

9) Keetjie Ramo’s “Actor Connected to Terrorists” is an inspired piece of writing, a faux news article describing the arrest of Kevin Bacon in a terrorism-related investigation. The piece’s last paragraph goes a bit far for my tastes, making the joke too explicit, but it’s salvaged by an ever-clever Johnnie Cochran.

8) The cover promises: “Childish, lewd, *and* self-indulgent!!!!” And it delivers.

7) In “You Always Remember Your First Days of School,” Jason Tanamor takes readers on a journey with an uncertain end, as the narrator relates being made fun of at school because of being Asian. The story ends abruptly, with a groaner that must be read to be believed. I mean that as a compliment.

6) The cover photo by Minda Powers-Douglas shows a heavyset, African-American Captain America, apparently at some sort of comics convention. That’s funny enough, but the picture has been altered so he has one of those privacy-protecting black rectangles over his eyes. Apparently, the superhero outfit doesn’t disguise his true identity enough.

5) Michael McCarty’s “Disconnected” is a surreal, nightmarish piece on telemarketing, offers that seem too good to be true, and a lack of privacy in our culture. It works as comedy, a morality tale with a little chill, and social commentary.

4) At $12, *Dingo* is a better value than most comedies Hollywood puts out in terms of humor return on investment.

3) “Recession Fairy Tales,” by Matthew Hamilton, gets off to a rough start, wrongly claiming that most fairy tales are sunny affairs. (Read your Brothers Grimm, man!) But after the superfluous opening paragraphs, it becomes a strong updating of the “Jack & The Beanstalk” story, with effective digs at bureaucracy, dumpster-diving, and eBay.

2) With roughly 100 pages of humor content, it can be consumed in one sitting.

1) “Arnie’s Army,” the debut of Steve Anderson, shows that humorous fiction doesn’t need to be childish, lewd, or self-indulgent to work. The story is an observant family portrait that looks at a drunken uncle from a child’s perspective, and it finds the right balance between a kid’s

innocence and an adult's understanding. That make it sounds heavier than it is, but Anderson gets off a few good lines: "He was Leatherface before Leatherface was Leatherface, without the chainsaw and hippy [sic] kids and general bloody mayhem."

Top Five Things to Improve *The Dingo*

5) The kitchen-sink approach to a humor-magazine has been expanded to include decidedly unfunny music reviews, which look, sound, and smell strangely like filler. An already uneven product gets unevener. Next time, stick to humor, and wait to publish until the amount of material warrants it.

4) Many pieces in the second issue of *The Dingo* are underdeveloped. Local radio personality Missi Sullivan describes a bad experience at "seven-minute dating" in "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places," and while it doesn't work, it has potential. "All of your friends will tell you love will find you when you are not looking," she writes. "I can't stop looking, which is why a majority of the guys I meet have the look of a deranged serial killer." Therein sits the kernel of a great story. A stronger editorial hand could have helped the writer turn it into something absurd and funny but with truth at its heart. The trouble is that it doesn't go far enough.

3) A lot of the material is tired. "Mrs. Malaprop Lives" is a collection of tortured usage, similar to those funny e-mail messages you might receive from friends and family who are otherwise incommunicado. (Or similar to collections of quotes from our president.) Connie Wilson compiles the mangled English ("The lady was in such poor condition that she needed artificial perspiration in the ambulance"), makes a tart comment ("Right Guard, anyone?"), and then moves on. The list is amusing enough, but it's time to retire the concept. As George W. once said, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, won't get fooled again."

2) Ditto on Top 10 lists. Letterman only does them because he can't *not* do them.

1) Although it's promoted as a "national humor magazine," *The Dingo* has a distinctly Quad Cities flavor, with nearly all the writers having ties to this community. And I like that about it. There are two directions the magazine can go: It can live up to its billing and publish pieces from all over the country, or it can turn inward and become a Quad Cities publication. I'd prefer the latter.

The Dingo *is available at Quad Cities bookstores, and from Amazon.com.*