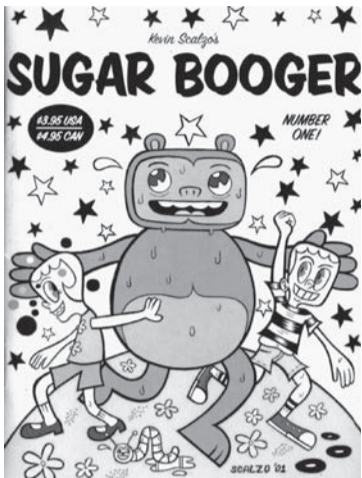


Zine & Comics review

Mark Pawson



Apologies for the absence of this column in the last issue, I was busy doing some wallpapering and went to Japan in search of strange print creations, there's a bumper crop of reading material in this issue, hopefully it was worth the wait....

Writing a book about all the previous books you've written, designed and published sounds like an ultimate conceit but Leonard Koren's **13 Books** (notes on the design, construction & marketing of my last...) is a satisfying, successful book in its own right and manages to avoid

the depths of self-indulgence. Koren's earlier books published over the last 25 years were about

baths & bathing and Japanese fashion, business and aesthetics, each book in turn is examined anecdotally in terms of: subject matter, inspiration, organising principle, greatest difficulty, degree of success and enduring lesson, the scheme is completed with Gary Panter's hand drawn illustrations of the original books, showing the cover and details from each book, (apart from one book cover which was enforced on Koren by a publisher, and which he refuses to include in his own book!) **13 Books** should be of interest to anyone involved in making

books, whether or not they are familiar with Koren's previous books. As a bookmaker, seller, collector and reviewer, admittedly I'm predisposed to this type of book, I might even revive 'Mark's Little Book about Mark's Books' which I started in 1989 and never quite got round to finishing. File next to Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers, 283 Useful Ideas from Japan and Success Stories—How eleven of Japan's most interesting businesses came to be, all by Leonard Koren.

It's a book full of dots. **Dot...age** by Yasushi Cho. is a delectable full colour handsewn book of dots, not just any dots, but those

lines of full stops..... found on the contents pages of books..... in telephone directories and on order forms..... lines of dots to impose order on empty space and inform the eye where to look next. Is there a proper name for these incidental dots known only to typographers and dot-spotters? **Dot...age** displays a purity of conception which is reminiscent of early Concrete Poetry. File inside Found Poems, Bern Porter, Something Else Press 1972.

No payment will be made until balance equals \$50.00, a small artists book by Jack Grahl is a collection of record company royalty statements which inform the recipient; 'We're not going to pay you the

money we owe you until we owe you a bit more!' A decidedly non-glamorous look at the entertainment industry/music business. Is Jack Grahl an artist or accountant? File next to your overdraft statements and bounced cheques.

Mascara was Peter Kohler's dinky little handmade publication that I imagine he carried all the copies round in his pocket for a couple of weeks before he could bear to part with them. His latest book came as a surprise, **Open** is a thick 100 page slab of a book, which I've been working my way through deliberately slowly, savouring each page of his multiple unlikely comic strips, First Ladies vs. the Ghost of Papa Doc Duvalier, Vicious Shrimp Man, Old Mad Witch, Mortal Man, Screaming Ball and the Floating Skull, The Gnome and the Antidepressants and The Laughing Fruits. File next to Al Ackerman's 'Let Me Eat Massive Pieces of Clay'

HAW! Horrible, horrible cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. A collection of morally reprehensible, heads down, no nonsense, mindless yucko-depravo cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. Is this scathing social critique, or is he just a complete Sick Fuck? I dunno and after reading it several times I'm ashamed to even get half the references in there, its the kind of book you would hope they had difficulty finding a printer to accept! There's not a single cartoon in here I could get away with describing, well perhaps the one with cute kids hustling heroin to a recently landed space alien, or maybe the one of grandpa and grandma in the computer showroom 'Yeah, yeah, yeah... Skip the mumbo-jumbo son... Just show us how to get pornography on this fuckin' thing.' But the one with an earnest looking couple at the dinner table with the woman wondering out loud 'Is sperm Vegan?' is clearly going too far, and we've not even started on sex, death, drugs and mutilation in imaginative combinations. **HAW!** is probably not available in your local comic shop. File in the Toilet or next to your collection of those naughty eros comics.

SUGAR BOOGER, Kevin Scalzo, is a beautiful pocket sized candy-coloured comic featuring Sugar Booger, a big happy bear, who likes nothing better than playing with kids in the park, unfortunately all the children he meets have been indoctrinated not to talk to strangers and freak out when he tries to make friends with them. Sugar Booger wins them over by swallowing an enormous sack full of candy and using his unique talent to produce copious amounts of sweet snot! **SUGAR BOOGER**—a versatile plaything that kids can play with, make models out of, bounce around on and even eat! Beautiful and bonkers. File next to Archer Prewitt's Sof'Boy.

I've reviewed **World War 3 Illustrated** before so they wouldn't normally get another mention, but **World War 3 Illustrated #32**, their response to 11/9/2001/NYC is an extremely powerful and moving issue. Reviewing it seems superfluous, so here's the editor's introduction in full:

"We published the first issue of **World War 3 Illustrated** in 1980. It contained images of New York City in ruins. Nuclear war seemed imminent. As conditions got worse under Reagan, war became a metaphor for our daily lives. Today in 2002 we are experiencing real war on our doorstep here in Manhattan. We see war and the city with new eyes. This 32nd issue of **World War 3 Illustrated** contains the diverse reactions of New York artists, writers and cartoonists to the disaster. This issue grows out of our personal experience. From seeing, hearing, smelling and living with this insane event. We are not trying to prove a point. We are asking questions. Trying to make sense out of the incomprehensible. Looking for our Humanity in the rubble."

File next to a couple of other copies of this issue which you'll be lending to friends.

A couple of year ago I used to flick through **While you were sleeping** and put it swiftly back in Tower Records magazine racks when I came to the pages of spray painted subway trains. Recent issues are much improved, it's put together by a bunch of twenty-nothing, never-grow-up guys from Maryland, who have mucho fun picking feuds with the Spam Museum, interviewing hookers (most issues) and interviewing whichever member of the Wu Tang Clan comes to hand (most issues). Basic interview technique—ask the most stupid questions you can get away with. There's a great 5-finger-discount shoplifting fashion feature, cacophony society style pranks and Jello reminiscing about Joey (Biafra/Ramone). There's still a few vandalised trains in there but thankfully outweighed by more interesting post-graf/billboard modification work from the likes of Twist, Reas, Espo, Margaret Kilgallen and Shawn Wolfe plus some notable recent cover artwork from Mitch O'Connell and John "Garbage Pail Kids" Pound. File where your mum won't find it.

"I love the smell of vandalism early in the morning" declares UK graffiti artist Banksy. **Banging your head against a brick wall** is a collection of recent work which he's generously stencilled on walls across London—doing his own bit for the abolition of gallery admission fees. These no frills black & white spraypainted works are deceptively simple, juxtaposing familiar images; schoolgirls hugging bombs, surveillance cameras peeping out of dustbins and Mona Lisa with a rocket launcher. Banksy's virtuoso piece is a 'designated graffiti area' stencil for use on pristine white walls, illustrated with photos of graffiti encrusted walls a few days after being 'officially designated'. **Banging your head against a brick wall** is splattered with useful how-to hints, Banksy's paranoid method rants and his *it's-only-art-if-you-can-get-arrested-for-doing-it* mantra. There's no vandalised trains in here and no Krylon spraypaint fetishisation either—'Cheap British paint is fine'. Word on the street is that the police have collected an impressive portfolio of Banksy's work and would very much like to see him put somewhere there's lots of walls and no spraypaint, so it looks like Banksy may be taking an early voluntary retirement.

PUNK PLANET #46 is a great find, this issue is an Art & Design special issue covering a broad spectrum of artists whose work is informed and inspired by their interpretations of the punk/do-it-yourself ethos. **PUNK PLANET #46** features a range of artists from the internationally known: Jamie Hernandez of Love & Rockets comics, the recently resurfaced Gee Vaucher who did all the CRASS Artwork and Shepard Fairey of GIANT/Andre the Giant notoriety to smaller local initiatives & projects; SF's Pond Gallery, Chicago Barrio Murals and the Mobilivre Bookmobile taking in along the way a host of indy cartoonists and unclassifiable individuals such as Elliot Earls—typographer/musician. I'm not sure if having four different 'limited edition' covers is very PUNK, but then I never felt the need to buy Generation X's King Rocker 7" in all four different colours of vinyl either, so what do I know?

Unsurprisingly I found some great books in Japan, perfect eye candy for image junkies, never mind the language barrier! Travel about **KAOHAME: 88 best shots** by Ijichi Hiroyuki, is a photographic collection of painted wooden figures with holes for faces—for you to stand behind and have your photo taken. The Japanese are photo-crazy, snap-

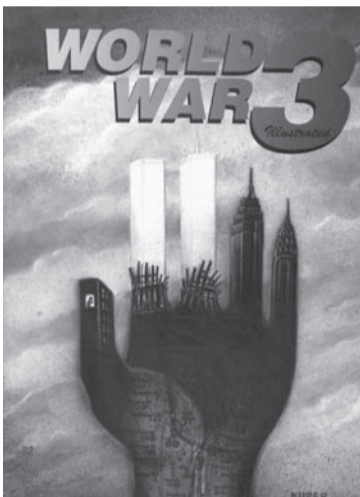


ping each other wherever they go and these Kaohame sited in tourist locations and vacation spots provide yet another photo opportunity. Hiroyuki has travelled across Japan photographing Kaohame which come in a variety of shapes; historical/folklore characters, fish, movie stars, statues, and monster sized ice-cream cones! Each Kaohame is given a star rating and accompanied with a small hand-drawn map of its location (essential to find anything in Japan) together with train information and admission charges. It would have been a nice touch to have included a few shots of the Kaohame actually being used by



sightseers and tourists.

DAGASHI is 120 pages crammed full with colour photos of cheap sweets, chocolates and candy costing ¥20-30 (12-18p) and cheap pocket money toys (¥50-100 / 30-60p)! There's a multitude of strange sweets in eye-catching packages, ramshackle old lady sweet shops, traditional Japanese sweet makers, sweet crispy tonkatsu pork fillets, candy chopsticks, lucky lottery sweets, rice snacks galore, street fair foods, snack noodles packaged as cigarettes and things you can only guess at. Imagine the research for this book, it would be like giving a couple of pesky seven year olds £100 and saying now off you go and buy as many different sweets and toys as you can, don't spend

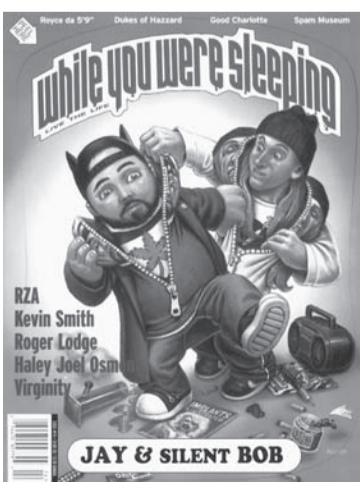


more than 50p on any item and don't come back till you've spent all the money! Watch out for Pick'n'Mix Challenge on some dodgy digital channel soon... I don't even want to know why this book was put together or what the text says, I'm just happy to know it exists. File next to Sugar Booger and a box of cheap sweets and penny chews big enough to make you sick if you ate them all at once.



In The Mambonsai 2 Paradise Yamamoto combines Bonsai, traditional Japanese ornamental shrubs with plastic railway model figures into a series of precisely arranged tableaux. Look closely amongst the shrubbery and moss in **The Mambonsai 2** and you'll notice the little people, they're not pixies or elves, but grumpy old

men, reluctant hikers, skinny-dippers and skiving workmen. Yamamoto creates beauty spots crawling with photographers and a forest which is a popular site for committing suicide. The book is supplemented with beautiful diagrams, a size chart comparing Mambonsai with the Tokyo tower and Mt Everest and there's even a Mambonsai theme song. Thankfully **The Mambonsai 2** is bilingual, with good translations, although later on in the book Yamamoto warns us "In case you know little about Japanese culture, please consult a professional before trying to decipher this high-level, intellectual and sophisticated chart." A truly unique and loopy, book. File next to Kenji Kawakami's 101



Useless Japanese Inventions.

Ultraman is the enormously popular rubbersuited Japanese superhero who has been battling goofy space monsters for the last 30 years. In **Daddy is Ultraman**, a beautiful children's book by Tatsuya Miyanishi we see the domestic side of his life, at home with his son and wife, ultramam. When Ultraman comes home after a hard day fighting evil monsters in a devastated city and sees the wreckage of his son's toy-strewn room he loses his composure and shouts at his son. Later on he apologises by making paper masks of his many adversaries for his son to play with. Its all drawn in a loose Keith Haring-esque style, with painstakingly handmade colour mis-separations. I hope the idea of **Daddy is Ultraman**-type books doesn't catch on over here, can you imagine the horrors of 'Daddy is a Tellytubby'—unless Ivan Brunetti wrote and drew it? File in your kids room, or for when you decide to learn Japanese.

Japanese books are unsurprisingly near-impossible to get hold of outside of Japan, next time you're in Tokyo (?) check out **PROGETTO, ON SUNDAYS, NADIFF, GALLERY 360** and Village Vanguard.

Closer to home is London's new **Bookartbookshop** specialising in artists books and small press publications. Bookartbookshop only opened in February 2002 and has already built up an impressive stock, successfully filling a gap in London's bookshops and providing a much needed specialist venue for artists books and small press publications. They deserve your support, and did I mention that they sell my books?

13 Books, Leonard Koren, \$17.95. leonardkoren.com

Dot...age, by Yasushi Cho, ¥780, cho@helen.ocn.ne.jp www5.ocn.ne.jp/~laughter

no payment will be made until balance equals \$50.00 Jack Grahl, 21 Hampton Rd, Forest Gate, London E7 OPD

Open, Peter Kohler, biondibooks@swipnet.se

HAW! Horrible, horrible cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. \$8.95 Fantagraphics

SUGAR BOOGER, Kevin Scalzo, \$3.95. www.kevinscalzo.com

World War 3 Illustrated, \$3.50+p&p, World War 3, POBox 20777, Tompkins Square Sta., NY, NY 10009 USA

while you were sleeping \$4.98 www.whileyouweresleeping.com

Banging your head against a brick wall, Banksy, £4, www.akuk. www.banksy.co.uk

PUNK PLANET, \$9.00 inc p+p. www.punkplanet.com

Travel about KAOHAME: 88 best shots. Ijichi Hiroyuki

DAGASHI, Shinchosha ¥1600

The MAMBONSAI 2, Paradise Yamamoto, ¥1700, www.mambonsai.com

DADDY IS ULTRAMAN,(and 6 more books in the series) Tatsuya Miyanishi ¥1170

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