

# Comics column returns with praise for 'French Ice' tale

By Chris McCubbin  
Staff Reporter

It's been a long time since the last "Comics Now" appeared. A lot has happened in comics since the last one. Luckily for me almost all of it has been completely unimportant.

But there have been several high points. Here's a few of them:

**"French Ice Featuring Carmen Cru."** Art and writing — Lelong, translated by R.J.M. Lofficier, Renegade Press, \$2.

Carmen Cru is one of the most brilliant cartoon characters of the 1980s.

Carmen, a gnarled, shapeless, elderly woman, is constantly engaged in a valiant struggle to live her life on her own solitary terms. Meanwhile, the rest of society keeps butting in with its own petty rules and annoyances. This is the exquisitely simple, genuinely profound premise of "French Ice."

In the latest issue (#7) Carmen successfully copes with — which in her case means manages to ignore — a whiny, would-be suicide, a drunken priest and his obsequious acolyte, and a paranoid neighbor who thinks Carmen is a witch.

Lelong's satirical stories are dark, real and very funny, and Lofficier's

translation from the French is excellent. But what really sets French Ice above the rest is Lelong's exquisitely detailed, slightly grotesque drawing style. Although Lelong's style is entirely his own it bears comparison to such modern masters as R. Crumb, Quino and William Messner-Loebs.

"French Ice" is a brilliant work of art that can stand before the harshest literary and artistic criticism.

**"Real War Stories."** Various creators, Eclipse Comics, \$2.

This one-shot was organized by the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. "Real War Stories" is pacifist propaganda — it doesn't even pretend to be anything else — but it's sincere, honest and brilliantly executed propaganda.

An amazing assembly of professionals donated their time and talent to this project: Alan Moore, John Totleben, Steve Bissette, Mike Barr, Steve Leialoha, Bill Sienkiewicz and others.

Most of the stories are first-person accounts from victims of the U.S. military establishment — a female soldier is lied to by her superiors and harassed by her peers, a college student goes to jail rather than register for the draft, a Salvadoran human rights activist narrowly escapes the

death squads.

The stories are all very well done, but one of the high-points is "Tapestries" by Alan Moore, John Totleben (both of the classic Swamp Thing) and Stan Woch, based on the books by Vietnam vet W.D. Earhart. "Tapestries" is a stunning juxtaposition of Earhart's Vietnam experiences, his prewar illusions of innocence and sanity and his fragmented, confused post-war existence.

## Comics Now

It's worth the cover price just to get Bill Sienkiewicz's horrific cover based on the drawings of Salvadoran children.

Politically, "Real War Stories" is unabashedly one-sided and a bit simplistic, but the obvious care and sincerity behind the stories makes them thought-provoking.

**"Hellblazer."** Written by Jamie Delano, art by John Ridgeway, DC, \$1.25.

John Constantine, the hero of "Hellblazer," was originally created by Alan Moore during his mind-boggling stint on DC's Swamp Thing.

Constantine is a smallish, dapperly dressed (no long-underwear in this comic, thank God) Englishman who bears a more than passing resemblance to Sting, the rock star. He has a big chip on his shoulder that's modified by an acerbic, graveyard humor. His profession is protecting people from major-league supernatural nasties who regard the human race as a tempting midnight snack.

Judging from the first issue, "Hellblazer" is a worthy successor to "Swamp Thing." The story is fast-paced (if a tad wordy). The art is expressive and surprising, and both are genuinely scary. Fun stuff.

**On the tube:**

TV producers have finally grommed on to the current popularity of comics, and the results are better than those of us who remember "Batman" and "The Incredible Hulk" with mixed affection and revulsion might expect.

**"Once a Hero,"** a corny bit of super-hero whimsey, was the first show of the new season to fold. But it's been replaced by "Sable," based

on Mike Grell's comic "Jon Sable — Freelance," a realistic mercenary adventure book.

Sable, the title character, is an ex-mercenary. Those scum (you know, THOSE scum) killed his wife and kids, so now he's out to get any scum that happen to be unfortunate to slither into his path.

Sable's wanted for murder, so he's established a double life — mercenary do-gooder by night, kiddie book author (no kidding) by day.

"Sable" the TV show is slightly melodramatic with an emphasis on action, like a good comic book. Good, clean fun.

**"Beauty and the Beast"** is another network offering that relies heavily on the comics. I suspect that the concept of a peaceful but anti-social civilization living in tunnels under the New York subways was lifted, more or less entirely, from the Morlock characters in Marvel's X-Men.

Not only that, but, like a comic book, "Beauty and the Beast" is openly romantic and idealistic. Vincent, the misunderstood man-beast of the title is a sympathetic monster-hero in the grand tradition of the Hulk and the Swamp Thing (Have I mentioned Swamp-Thing in every review so far? Good).

# Stone's 'Wall Street' blends elements of fact and fantasy

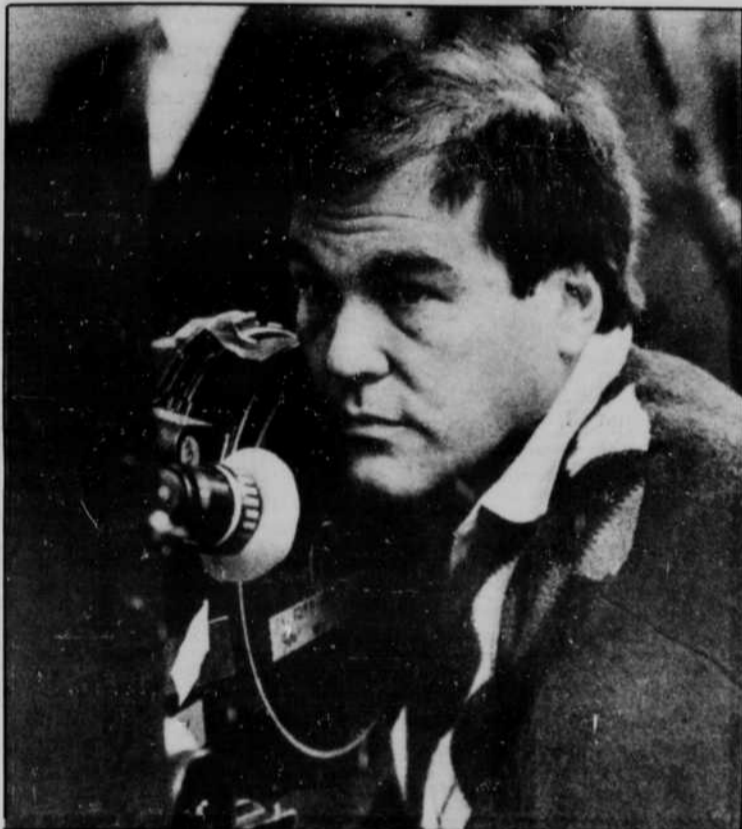


Photo Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Oliver Stone directs his new film, "Wall Street."

By The Associated Press

Oliver Stone's "Wall Street" captures the predator instinct and avarice revealed in hostile takeover fights and the insider trading scandal, but investment bankers who previewed the film say it neglects the honest majority and may reinforce prejudices against them.

## Reel Life

"I thought it was a shallow distortion of what's going on," said Paul E. Tierney Jr., a financier in Coniston partners, a New York investment firm that has engaged in some highly publicized takeover battles.

"There were elements of truth in it, but overall it was a pretty superficial and not very interesting film," Tierney said. "I think that at best it will be realized as a caricature and be light entertainment for someone."

"But at worst it will be viewed by Mr. and Mrs. America as a confirmation that Wall Street is run by a group of greedy, bloodthirsty opportunists."

"Wall Street" is the story of how Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen), a young stock trader just out of business

school, is corrupted by Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), a ruthless and conniving speculator who thrives by making huge stock profits, largely through illegally obtaining inside information on impending takeover deals.

The film depicts a world in which obsessions with wealth, power and vanity crush morality and virtue, where companies routinely are bought, sold or broken up, where a young man's dream is fulfilled in his \$1 million penthouse condo, replete with a pasta machine, sushi and a live-in girlfriend-decorator.

The year is 1985, in the midst of a record-setting stock market that appears to defy gravity. For that reason alone, "Wall Street" is largely outdated, since the Oct. 19 crash has squelched the euphoria and heralded a period of austerity, layoffs and consolidation.

Wall Streeters said other elements of the film are a blend of reality and fantasy, a boiled-down, packaged two-hour Hollywood financial soap opera that borrows liberally from the Ivan Boesky insider-trading scandal and the corporate takeover craze that has been reshaping the American economy.

"My official review is that the

soundtrack is great," said Asher Edelman, a well-known investor, takeover strategist and Columbia Business School teacher who is friends with Stone, the film's writer-director whose last movie was the Academy Award-winning "Platoon."

Particularly disappointing, Edelman said, was Stone's references to an ancient Chinese classic "The Art of War," which Edelman uses in his class on corporate takeovers. In the film, "The Art of War" is Gekko's bible for plundering companies and mercilessly crushing adversaries.

Seasoned Wall Streeters likely will enjoy watching the movie to identify popular Manhattan spots and familiar faces used as extras, but also may snicker at the idea that stock traders get seduced by blondes in limousines or obtain market-sensitive information by tailing adversaries on motorcycles.

Steven Rattner, a managing director at Morgan Stanley & Co., wrote in the Dec. 14 edition of Newsweek magazine that "Wall Street" is to investment banking what the movie "Casablanca" was to running a nightclub: It's entertaining and it makes some timely points about values, but it doesn't cover all the realities of the job."

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

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