

Vaguely humanoid little green creatures, interchangeably called lizards, toads or frogs—various odd and whimsical monsters, of all conceivable sizes and shapes—four-foot high "Broads," bedecked with barbaric body paints, and stacked like an adolescent's daydream—all moving in a complex drama atop Deadbone Mountain, four miles high and a billion years ago . . .

Vaughn Bode is a genuine prodigy. In the last five years, he has developed from an obscure illustrator of college magazines and underground comics to the sole exponent of his own peculiar blend of illustration and text. Recently unknown, he is now surrounded by an increasingly large circle of fans.

His imagination is amazingly prolific. He has, so far, created over 200 different series, with over 15,000 individual characters—and all this by the age of 29. Bode insists that he is not a cartoonist, but rather a "pictographer"—and that Pictography will become a literary form of the future. But before it does, his fans believe, other artists like Bode will have to appear.

Bode's work is somewhat like that of W. C. Fields, in that the viewer remains untouched or else is fascinated. There doesn't appear to be much middle ground between these extremes.

The interested reader will quickly begin to ignore the many errors in grammar or spelling in the captions, attracted as he is by the weird

Deadbone Erotica:

on collecting Vaughn Bode's comic strips

by Walter Wentz

situations of subtle pathos or humorous tragedy—yes, I said humorous tragedy—through which Bode's creatures move, speaking an uncouth dialect somewhat like Brooklynesse:

"Why for does youse paint all da time, Jones? Why you doesn't come outside to play in da' warm sunshine? . . ."

Tired old movie schticks are reworked into gloriously plausible conclusions; for instance, the case of the beautiful girl adrift on a stream, heading for the waterfall. In "Going Down the Janely Jane," we see the beautiful young Broad caught by the current, helplessly drifting toward Ice Fall Falls; two young "frogs" on a natural bridge over the Falls plan to form a living chain, and catch her upstretched hands as she goes over the brink . . . so they catch her—and then they all hang, tautly suspended over the abyss, wonder what next? It is here that Bode's mastery of expression becomes obvious.

Other strips in the book concern death ("Morning Mourning"), the transcendence of fame ("Jones Goes to Bones"), loneliness ("Harry in the Amber Block"), religious fanaticism ("Brother Victory"). A good many concern sex, and yet others concern things no human is likely to encounter. "YARGH!", for instance, concerns the thoughts of an unpopular reptile falling down a cliff:

"an who I screamin' for anyway? . . . There's nobody about to hear me pathetic cortelings . . . An I doesn't zactly groove on auto-screamin' either . . . Of course, it do kinda' ease da' 'tensions of da plunge,' so to speak . . ."

It is surprising to find that the cartoon—pardon, the pictography strips collected in this oddly-shaped paperback first appeared in a skin-magazine, Cavalier.

Bode's strip, DEADBONE, has run in the magazine for over three years now, and the first two years are represented in this book. Since April of 1970 (the cutoff date of this collection) DEADBONE has been appearing in color, but seems to lack a little of the whacky spontaneity of the old black-and-white strips. Perhaps success is affecting Bode, but that may be only my opinion. At any rate, I'll enjoy checking it out for the next few years.

The individual who becomes a Bodeophile, or even a Bodeomaniac, will be pleased to find his scarce, early work now becoming available in an underground comic series—The Print Mint is now publishing a six-volume set entitled JUNKWAFFEL.

Subject-matter runs from the frivolous to the cynical; from the adventures of an experimental rat with glandular deficiencies to Bode's nightmare vision of a postwar World. This latter series, "The Machines," depicts an Earth overrun by robot fighting machines, speaking an uncouth Brooklynesse accent, who have already obliterated human civilization and are now busily obliterating each other. It would seem hard to find humor in such a theme, but Bode manages to do so. Heavy stuff, but vastly entertaining.

The Last Picture Show:

'the garden reverts to desert'

When Peter Bogdanovich was 12 in 1952 he must have realized that he was into something. From then through 1971 he kept an index card file on every movie he saw, and he claims to have 6,000 of them. Figure 300 films a year or a steady 6 films a week and you begin to get a sense of what it would be like to be a dedicated and disciplined film freak. Bogdanovich certified himself as a fan by doing lots of interview-type books and articles on great American movie directors and stars, and along with Andrew Sarris is probably one of the few American film critics who really thinks American movies are good. So when Sarris calls Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* neo-classic, or rather the work of a new classicist, we know immediately that the classical antecedents are Orson Welles, Howard Hawks, and John Ford.

There's nothing obviously flashy or far-out about *The Last Picture Show* (unlike, for example a Kubrick film) except some fantastic 360-degree pans, a few almost impossible long interior dolly shots, a dedication to deep focus, and total abstinence from the artificial motion of the zoom lens. Bogdanovich believes along with Welles that movies are the greatest narrative form that's ever been invented and the best toy any kid could get. He doesn't wow us with obtrusive technique, but rather creates a straightforward, highly crafted, traditional American narrative film that happily avoids all the preciousness and sentimentality of, say, *The Summer of '42* by among other things being in black and white ("I thought everything would look too pretty in color").

The moving story of growing up in tiny Anarene, Texas 1951-52 thus has the gritty grubbiness of pictures in a high school yearbook. We learn what it feels like to live in that claustrophobic emptiness which makes life in a dying small town positively non-epic. But Bogdanovich doesn't parody or put down the town and its inhabitants, indeed he treats them with the greatest respect. It's not because Sonny, the main character, is less of a person than his heroic Texan predecessors that he gets stuck; his world simply does not provide any more opportunities for heroic action. The problem with his consistently losing high school football team, that they don't know how to tackle, is Sonny's problem also (if football is an allegory of life). He's never learned to make those defensive moves you need to keep the world from just rolling on over you, to keep your side from just falling apart. Getting out of town like Duane and Jacy do doesn't make for much freedom either. Duane signs up with the Army to go fight in Korea, and Jacy flees to the big city university to catch a rich husband (after all, she's the prettiest girl in town and her father owns all the oil wells).

Range lands have become oil fields, and the only real cowboy in town, Sam the Lion (i.e. Sam Goldwyn) maintains the only institutions of community fun—the cafe, the pool hall, and the Royal movie theatre. If it weren't for Sam's wise, kindly fatherliness, the town would be utterly desolate. The magical dreams shown in his films, we learn, are no longer possibilities in Anarene. At the Saturday night movie, Sonny and Duane neck with their girl friends in the back rows. "Sure did like your movie, Sam" they say about *The Father of the Bride* as they leave to go neck in their cars. But the reality of marriage that we see in Anarene belies the basic family values reflected on the screen. The night before Duane is to leave for Korea, he and Sonny go to the last movie at the Royal. It is Howard

Hawks' *Red River*, an epic film where a cattle drive functions to work out satisfactorily the authority conflicts between father and son and the town of Abilene is established at the end of the trail. But neither Korea nor Anarene is Abilene, there aren't any fathers left, the romance has become an irony, and Anarene is slowly closing down. The modern day equivalent of that cattle drive is the small cattle truck which kills Billy, the town's conscience, on that windswept main street. Perhaps the key scene in *The Last Picture Show* is where Sonny, sitting with Sam by the side of a lake, is told that "this land sure has changed." As the camera slowly pans the barren landscape it is as though the great Western myth of civilization changing the desert into a garden has come full circle. The garden has reverted back to desert.

The last shot is similar to the first, an apparently empty ghost town-like main street, except that at the end the Royal theatre is closed, everyone is isolated in front of their TV sets, Sonny has invalidated his relationships, and the dreams and possibilities of the future are also closed. The era that ends in *The Last Picture Show* was the one represented in the great films of the 30's through the 50's, when we believed that wars got won and over, and when the fabric of society held together so that life as a grown-up provided something viable to look forward to, when romantic quests and epic adventures were possible. In the films of Hawks and Ford the world works toward getting together, in *The Last Picture Show* as in 1972, we regret how things come apart.

by Linda Blackaby

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MOVIES OF THE WEEK

The Last Picture Show

(Paid Advertisement)

"The Last Picture Show," A BBS Production for Columbia Pictures directed by Peter Bogdanovich, based on the novel by Larry McMurry and starring Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Ben Johnson, Cloris Leachman, Ellen Burstyn, Eileen Brennan, Clu Gulager and introducing Cybill Shepherd, is about a time and a place just twenty years gone but seemingly light-years away. It's about growing up in a town running down, where being free means getting out. And it's about the nineteen-fifties.

The fifties. You'll remember what you've tried to forget: romances beginning and ending in the front seats of pick-up trucks, rusting Hudsons and gleaming Ford convertibles. Hands that could take apart motors becoming useless when confronted by brassiere hooks, hands getting slapped down an inch above the knee. Guys wandering through Saturday nights burdened by virginity until the surprising and peculiar moment when somebody, maybe their girl friend, maybe their girl friend's mother, says yes.

It's 1951 in Anarene, Texas, when boredom sits so heavy that boys like Sonny Crawford and Duane Jackson talk about leaving for good, even for Korea (and those yellow-skinned girls!), while girls spend their days growing plump and linesome, leaning anxiously toward their mirrors. There was a time when people still went to the picture show, to meet, laugh and cry in the darkness, but television is making its inroads and now only a few couples kiss in the back rows. Their parents sit home, getting drunk or just getting old, watching "Strike It Rich." And so even the picture show closes up.

For BBS Productions, which has produced a series of poignant contemporary probes—"Easy Rider," "Five Easy Pieces" and "Drive, He Said" filming the way it was meant capturing the way it looked and the way it felt to be young and vulnerable in a northern Texas town in 1951 and 1952.

Mark of the Devil

Austria — 1700. A time of superstition and religious persecution. Albino (Reggie Nalder)—a peasant turned witchfinder is terrorising one of the many towns—raping and burning innocent men and women. He returns from

one of the many executions which earn him money, to find two strangers in the town. One is Christian von Meru (Udo Kier) a young Baron, the other is Jeff Wilkins (Herbert Fux), official executioner to Count Cumberland, one of the national witchfinders. Christian announces the forthcoming arrival of Cumberland, to whom he is apprenticed. Albino is enraged when he realizes that his days of power are over, but he dares not oppose the new authority which has arrived. Drunk and confused he attacks and tries to rape Vanessa (Olivera Vuco), a rebellious and fiery girl who works in the inn. Defending herself she stabs him in the face, only to be seized and accused by Albino of being a witch in front of the townspeople present in the inn.

Albino, feeling powerful once more, sticks her body with a pin to find the devil's mark, but is interrupted by the entrance of Christian and Jeff. Christian's reaction to this injustice amazes everyone. He orders Albino to be whipped in public and that evening, invites Vanessa to dine with him at the castle.

The two are attracted to each other and for Vanessa, Christian is the first person she has ever seen oppose the feared Albino. She begs Christian if she can stay the night. Although she senses a certain coldness in his reply, he agrees.

The following morning, soldiers arrive at the castle in readiness for Cumberland's arrival. Vanessa, falling in love with Christian, talks him into spending a day with her in the country-side. It is only when Christian leaves her abruptly upon seeing Cumberland's coach arriving, that she realises why he is so distant from her—he has been indoctrinated into Cumberland's way of thinking and Cumberland is a religious fanatic.

On the way back to the town, she is seized by Albino—now having officially drawn up an indictment against her in revenge for his beating. Cumberland has arrived. A man with a strict moral code condemning all earthly pleasures. Christian sits beside Cumberland (Herbert Lom) as the various suspects are brought forward accused and condemned to the torture. Suddenly, to his horror, Vanessa is brought forward by Albino. Christian pretends that there is no indictment and Cumberland orders her to be thrown into prison until her case can be examined.

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