

THE SLIMEBALL IS BACK?!?

Woo! I'm back! OK, so it's been about eight months since an all-new issue of Amoeba Adventures came out...what do you want, an apology? Chalk the delay up to overtime at work, school, and a social life, not to mention a mild case of writer's block. But I'm not planning another hiatus in the foreseeable future (although I'm not ruling one out, either). I kept fairly busy in my time "off," anyway--producing the short-lived Zine #0 & #1, and my collaboration with Max Ink, Dr. Phlegm #1, not to mention contributions to Susan Mills' Dead Fundamentalists #1, Troy Hickman's Made-Up Stuff Annual #1, The UFO's All-Comics Annual, and a tale with Sam Gafford to appear in his Eternity. And believe it or not, #11 of Amoeba will come right on the heels of this one, with art by Max Ink and Larry Towsley! ...I'll be taking a break on the art chores for a while...#13 is my last issue for the foreseeable future. Special thanks to Tony Lorenz and Jason Wright for lending a hand on the inks this time around.

This issue of Amoeba Adventures is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Bob Lorenz, Tony's father, who passed away during the production of this issue. Consolations to you on your loss, Tony.

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OUR STORY SO FAR:

Prometheus was kidnapped by the mysterious Master Macabre, who'd masqueraded as a priest to gain his trust. Macabre turned him over to Dr. Crane, a deranged scientist who'd decided Prometheus held the secret of eternal life. Pro's teammates Rambunny, Spif, and Raoul, went on a search for their friend, but ran afoul of Macabre and his Huntsmen, Oscar, Werechuck, and the reluctant Alex, who tortured them mentally and physically before letting them free. Meanwhile, two scientists, Hank Jensen and Dawn Strauss, who'd been working with Crane decided to free Prometheus. They did, but not without (of course) gaining super-powers in the process. Now, Prometheus and his new allies are reunited with a whole All-Spongy Squadron (including Ninja Ant, his friend Kyoko, and Karate Kactus, who'd all been in Japan when this began) with one goal in their minds: the utter defeat of the being responsible for all their hardships: Master Macabre.





DETAILS OF DESIGN CONCLUSION

The Circle

Written and pencilled by Nik Dirga Inks by (p. 10-13,16-20) Tony Lorenz (p. 21-31) Jason Wright

for Max Ink
...il miglior fabbro.

CHAPTER ONE: YOU ARE HERE

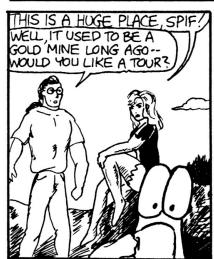




















































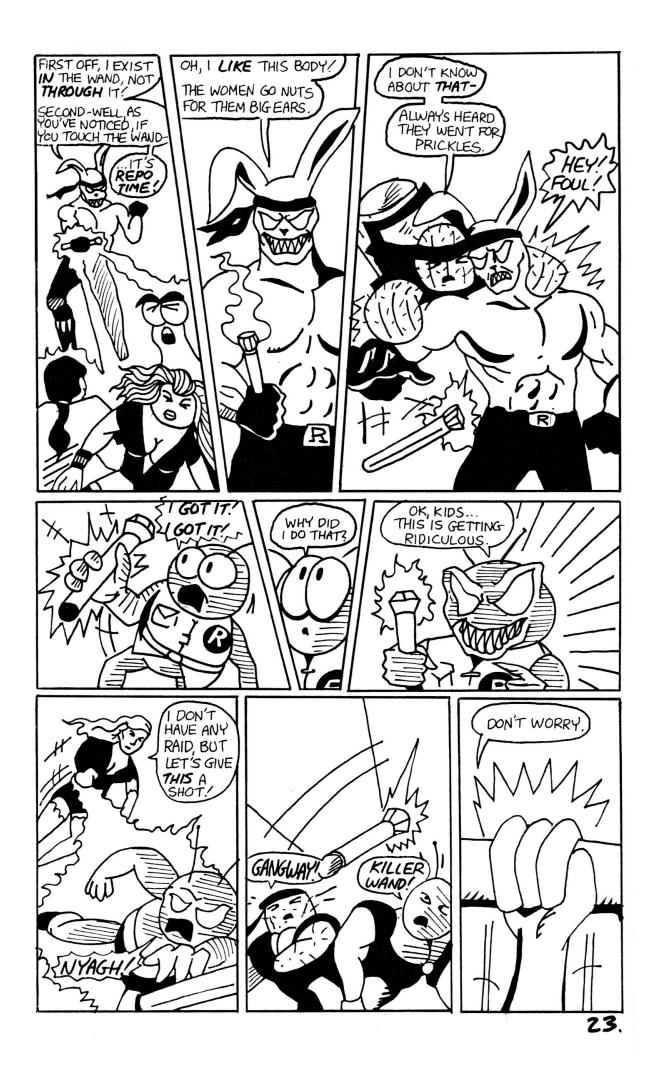


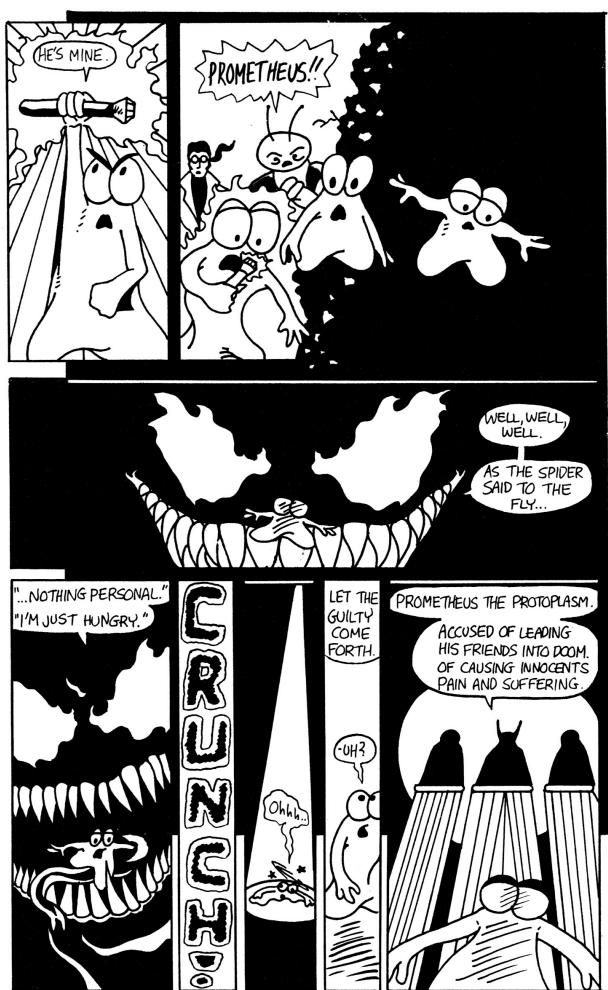




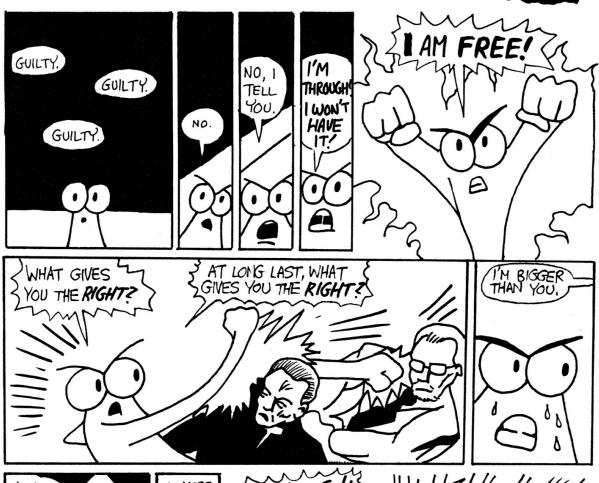


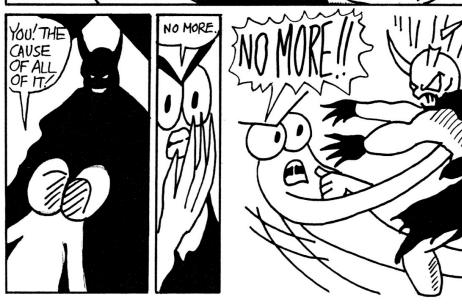








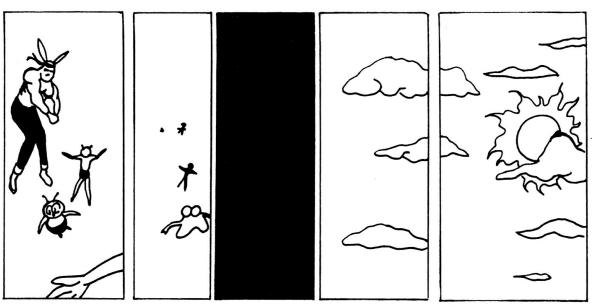


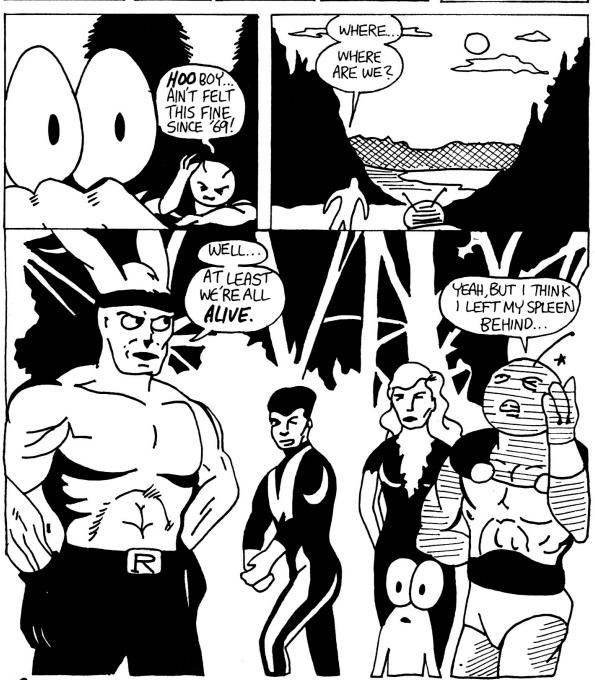


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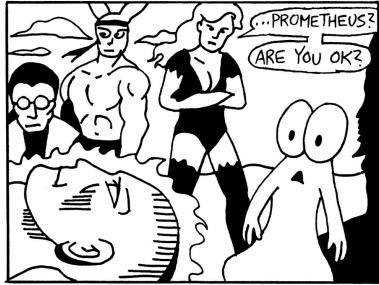
























8-13-92/6-6-93

AMOEBAMAIL RETURNS! P.O. Box 2230, University, MS 38677

Hey, does it feel good to be back in the saddle again or what? (Except for them saddle-sores..) I've got tons of mail on #9 to get out of the way, along with some comments on the issue from UFO members excerpted from their Tetragrammaton Fragments columns. Thanks to all who wrote in, and keep on writing, please! A special tip o' the Amoeba cap to Victor Plaijas Jr. of Puerto Rico, who sent me a whopping 22-page critique of Prometheus: The Silent Storm #1! The fact that I'd have to give it its own book prevents me from running it, but trust me when I say I thoroughly enjoyed your, insights, Vic! Thanks! Oh, and instead of restricting my garrulous comments to the ends of the letters, I'm going to break in occasionally when I feel the urge-in this bold type which standeth out so well. Onwards!

Jason Marcy Hamilton, Ontario

Great cover! Still can't figure out how many amoebas are there! (88--ask Lynn Allen!) There were plenty of laughs, especially Prometheus' split, a truly brilliant bit of drawing there, Nik! Maybe it's just the fact that I've been thrown into the middle of the story, but the characters of Hank and Dawn seemed very cardboard to me. I'd much rather see more of Prometheus and his pals.

Steve Keeter Orlando, Florida

Curious the way this offbeat adventure builds through all that madness with Prometheus splitting into all those zany copies, the two rebellious scientists becoming empowered and escaping, and everything leading toward a confrontation between the heroes and Dr. Crane... and then the Doc just stands there, cooly awaiting death. This is a true mad scientist in the best comic tradition. Apparently, the really big battle will be next issue. Well okay, I'll definitely be looking forward to that. This is truly an engaging cast of characters you've assembled, although I wonder if the two new human super-types joining the cast will be as fascinating as the anthromorphic heroes. I guess it's too soon to tell, but at this point Hank and Dawn look rather generic. That page where Prometheus multiplies behind the two scientists is a hoot; I laughed out loud at that one.

Peter Hopkins Louisville, Kentucky

I really liked Amoeba Adventures #9: it has the right mix of drama, humor, and weirdness like Morrison's Doom Patrol, David's X-Factor, and Burden's Flaming Carrot... (You just listed half of my favorite books!)

You really packed a lot of story into 18 pages, it seems you really took advantage of the digest format, the layout/panel. Arrangements were somewhat intricate but the story didn't suffer from it...

Larry Blake Reedsville, Ohio

Like walking into the middle of a movie. Some very odd and appealing characters. The sequence with the "mob" of amoeba and the robots is hilarious. Work on (the) inking. The scene with the flaming girl is very cliched. I've seen it over and over. Oh...and Jesus is a name, not an exclamation. That was very offensive. Unnecessary, too. (I disagree, and not so much on moral grounds as creative ones. I'm no

more interested in extensive swearing than the next guy, but I also don't want to have unrealistic exclamations like "gee-whiz" and "whoa-nelly" coming from my characters when they're in touchy situations. People swear under stress. I try not to myself, but won't go so far as to deny that people do) I'll assume that the guy who yelled "My God" was praying. I was impressed with the design of the next-to-last page until you admitted it was swiped. Oh well

J. Kevin Carrier Cincinnati, Ohio

Thank you for your excellent books! AA is the best combo of superheroes, humor, and just plain weird stuff since Gerber's Defenders (and that was 15 years ago--boy, do I feel old!) A team of 'morphs could've been nauseatingly cute, but you made it work! The nice thing about it is that the characters are such wildly different sizes, shapes, etc., that the book is always visually interesting, ever when they're just standing around talking. That's good character design! (Actually, the reason so many of the characters aren't human is a kinda silly one—when I first invented them back in junior high, I couldn't draw a human to save my life—drawing cactuses and rabbits and amoebas was lots easier! Now you know the truth!)

Randy Reynaldo Los Angeles, California

Nice stuff, Nik: I like the mixture of comedy and heroics. You also do a nice job of breaking from the action to develop the characters. The fact that you're in school and prolific is quite impressive (A letter obviously written before that seven-month hiatus, eh?).

First of all, nice cover. The design of Prometheus is simple, animated, instantly recognizable, and (dare I say it) merchandisable. The way you drew his disintegration into hundreds of other amoebas, and then his subsequence reintegration, was a nice bit of cartooning.

I found Anthony Gray's inks a little uneven, although strong overall -- Anthony is obviously very aware of using line weight to create form and depth.

The interaction between the Manipulator and Dawn was a bit melodramatic. Ironically, your anthromorphic characters come off as less stiff, and more "human" than your human characters! (Do I see a trend developing?)

Troy Hickman Lafayette, Indiana

AA #9 was another jocular jaunt into one of the most interesting universes in small press. As has become your standard, this issue is an improvement over past triumphs (no small feat). The addition of Anthony's inks was a major coup; the art has never looked better. Particularly liked the Schopenhauer quote (Hey! Funnybooks ain't philosophical!).

My only criticism: Hank's and Dawn's suits are a bit bland (hey! In that grand old comic tradition, howzabout a design-a-costume contest?) (OK! But this time I hope for more entries than I got with the protoplasm-counting contest... But, those of you budding fashion moguls out there, feel free to send in designs for a new costume for Dawn (Max Ink's already designed a nifty one for Hank next issue) in time for #12, and the winner will get... let's see..how about a free grab-bag of 15 or so small press books

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that I've got to get rid of (I'm moving soon)— fine stuff from my Zine days that I either have duplicates of or just can't keep. A nice treasure-trove for a budding costume designer... Back to you, Troy) I must admit I'm puzzled about how this is all going to come out. Will the humans gradually phase the anthromorphics out of AA? I don't think so. A half-and-half Squadron? Now that would be peculiar. A spin-off book? Hmmm...no, you're already working like a Clydesdale. Y'know, mi amigo, you've accomplished what few comics these days can do: you've made us wonder. Thank you.

Larry Johnson Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

What is really spectacular and intriguing here is the transformation of Hank and Dawn, the two scientists, by the strange encounter with Prometheus; one literally becomes a being of fire (appropriate for the fire giver--Prometheus). Matter transformation, a concept which fits comfortably in a superhero universe. The action in this book is non-stop and truly entertaining. I'm anxious for the crew to meet up with the evil Macabre again. This tale seems to hold up on its own pretty well, but with a reading of the previous chapters more substance is evident. (Hey, what a plug, Larry! By the way, folks, #6-8 of AA, the first chapters of this storyline, are all available for \$1 each) The inking is strong and bold, a pretty good fluid line. Nik's series shows an enthusiastic creator behind it, and it's nice to see original and inspired work like this in the UFO.

Well, one thing astute readers may glean from this letter column is the almost unanimous yawn regarding the introduction of Dawn and Hank-lots of you felt that they were overshadowed by the more interesting Squadron. Starting next issue, we're going to get more acquainted with Dawn

and Hank, and I'm attempting to move them beyond mere ciphers. There'll be a few shocks next issue about the ultimate direction of the Squadron, Troy, and some of your questions will be answered. Hang on tight!

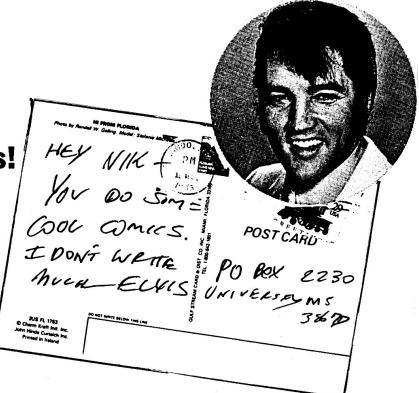
As I briefly mentioned before, congratulations must go out to Lynn Allen o' Kentucky for having the only correct guess as to the number of Prometheuses (Promethei?) on last issue's cover: 88. She got an original Rambunny sketch for her troubles. Other answers included "45,", "93.5," and the most zen-like answer comes from Erik Kaye: "an infinite number of Prometheuses exist... for we, in turn, are all Prometheus, and Prometheus is all of us." Groovy.

NEXT: Whoa, what a cliffhanger, eh, kids? It's the day after, and a time for decisions. You'll be amazed as at least two members quit, a new one joins, and several directions you thought I was going in prove to be totally wrong. Plus, Ninja Ant goes apartment-hunting, Raoul wreaks havok on the streets of Spongopolis, and the fate of Spif! All in "Little Earthquakes," written by yours truly with guest art by the magnificent Misters Max Ink and Larry Towsley! Amoeba Adventures #11, coming to you far faster than this issue did!

AND IN THE MONTHS TO COME: I told you, I'm back in the saddle again! Besides #11, you can look for the solo debut of Spif in Spif #1 by Troy Hickman and Max Ink, the long-delayed first Amoeba Adventures Annual with Lynn Allen, a guest-appearance by Karate Kactus 'in Sam Gafford's Eternity and another team-up with Jason Marcy's Powerwus...not to mention Amoeba Adventures #12, a very special issue packed with guest-artists and writers! More on that next time!

The KING is back... and he's reading Amoeba Adventures!

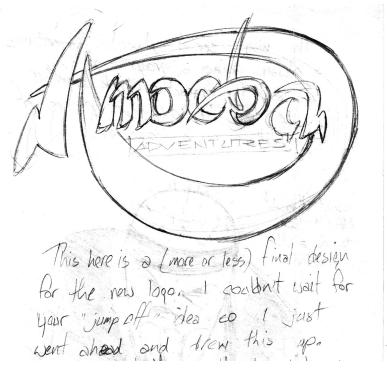
This cryptic postcard was received by me recently...with an Orlando, Florida postmark, proving that, Jungle Room aside, Elvis does have good taste!



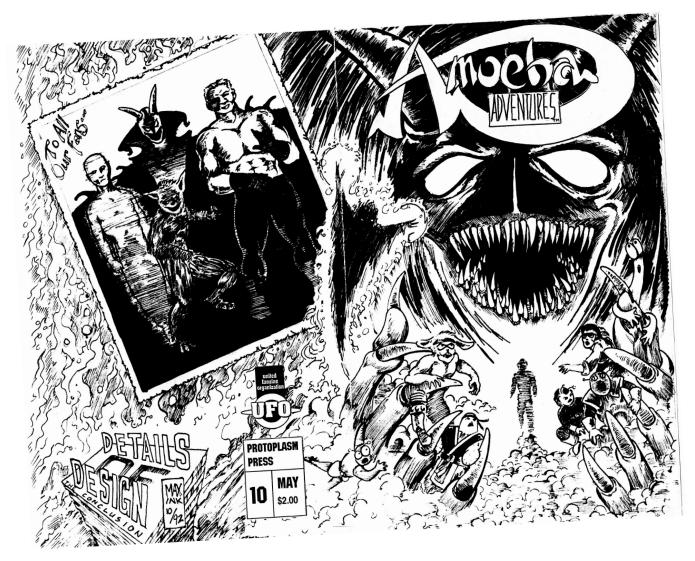


SPECIAL 2020 BONUS SECTION

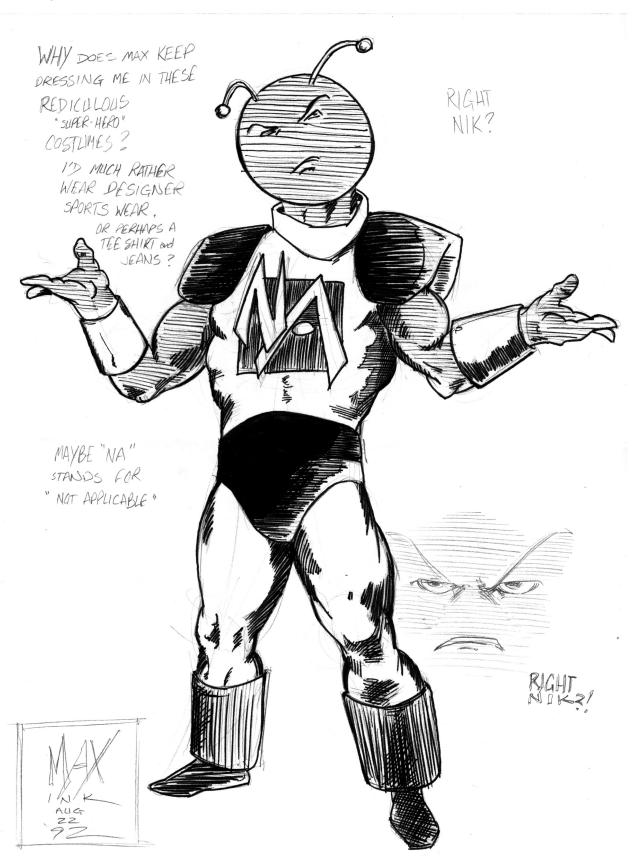
I have to admit, Amoeba Adventures #10 was sort of a letdown for me. There was a crazy delay of about 10 months between #9 and #10, much of it due to me trying to wrap up all my tangled ideas in one story. I had also become very self-conscious about my artwork and my inking in particular, getting a lot of help for #9 and #10 by good friends. While both Tony Lorenz and Jason Wright did a great job inking my art for #10, the end result was a bit too choppy in styles and I think made the book less of a cohesive whole. Lesson is, don't doubt your own worth. In the end #10 would've been stronger if one artist drew the whole thing.



Max Ink's new logo design which debuted in #10



(Continued) More problems with #10 included a great cover by Max Ink with some nice half-tones that didn't reproduce well at ALL on crappy photocopiers of the era, and a cast that had gotten too large to really work - 10 heroes, 4 villains! With #11, I radically scaled back the cast and took a less consciously "superhero" direction for the series. #10 wasn't wholly successful in my mind, but it was a good turning point.



This letter to Max Ink was written when we briefly considered "relaunching" Amoeba Adventures after #12 again at #1 with him as artist. He asked me to talk a bit more about the characters, so there's some good background below, as well as several hints of stories that never were.

Standate 11.02.92

there will be a pet alligator. an insurance salesman. "---" the vilain so evil he doesn't have a name. lotsa bad jokes. Roque girl secuts, and an intriguing invention of Spifs that goes wrong.

It's all fun, eh? I am greatly looking forward to doing this series (I am cocky about our chances) I particularly like "---" (that's how it's written) (don't ask how it's pronounced)

OK...let me now expound forth on each of the characters who'll be "members" or hangers-on in the new series---as per your request. Hope this helps you get a feel for 'em.

Prometheus-His origin is related kinds in Pro H. & #6, which if you don't got tell me. It's a bit confusing...too much, I think, and in the new series III take some steps to simplify it. He is, of course, very confused about it all especially after the events of IV #8-9. All he trows is that some beings, the Inner Gods, have claimed to have created him as some sort of champion in a cosmic battle of idealogies. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen. Also, The Promethean is involved in this too...he is not so much Prometheus as a facet of Prometheus.

In my mind, what Amoeba Adventures is all about is Prometheus and his quest for truth in his life. Along the way, yes, he becomes a "superhero" of sorts, but in the end I see that as just a part of his continuing journey. The other characters are integral to it, but Pro is and remains my favorite character. I see him as me, or you, or anyone caught up in something much bigger than them...he's totally ordinary in many ways, and that's what fascinates me. What would Joe Average do if he suddenly became a superhero? A king? A god? It's a question of the use and abuse of power, and Prometheus is latently the most powerful of any characters in AA. Is it corrupting him? Look at Karate Kactus' thoughts in AA #1, or Pro's own in #9 and #4.

RAMBUNNY-Easily the most popular character. He began, obviously, as a parody of the macho steroid-laden genre of heroes, Rambo, Punisher, etc. His appeal comes in that he is really much more. Hints of his origin were laid out in *Prometheus #4* and *AA #7*, and the whole shebang will come out in *AA II #3*. You might have caught the duality of his character, in that often he seems torn between conflict and peace. This is something I consider to be a fundamental human conflict, also. We want peace but never seem to want to hold it. He is a man at war with himself. It's a war that I never see as really ending, either. Although, major changes in him occur when his previously-unknown-to-him son appears in #4 of *AA II*.

Some of the more basic facts, OK...his age is around 50, he fought in 'Nam, which is where he became "Rambunny," his "real" name is Peter (#7), last name unknown as of yet. He's a complex character, and it's a bit hard for me to distill him down to bare facts and essences, but I hope this helps. Same with the others.

Spif-As you may have guessed, Spif is my way of injecting me into the book. He's kinda an idealized version of me, of course. His origin and *lots* about him will be revealed in the upcoming *Spif* one-shot, which will come out next spring...whenver I finish pencilling the damned thing!! Troy Hickman wrote it from my plot, it's very good. To now, #3 of AA is the best look at his character. As you can tell, he's been through a lot of changes, from "Dr. Spif" to "Mr. Spif" to just plain Spif these days. Again, *Spif* #1 tells the tale of what happened to him between #6 of *Pro* and #1 of *AA*, why he suddenly became Mr. Spif, etc...."the lost episode," you could say.

But since you ain't read *Spif*, let me give my take on him as he is now... He got into the superhero biz as a lark, and a sense of purpose...he wavered, but now is back to that same idea. He wants to help people. He has also moved away from the idea of violence as solution, too. (Funny, I have a team of wanna-be pacifists!) Loyalty is big for him (you'll see that in #10). If I had to narrow him down to a few words, I'd say Spif is the Boy Scout who got lost in the woods, came back, scarred and tired, and is now a Scoutmaster. He may one day lead the team, I think. (Rambunny quits that job in #11)

N'N' ANT--ah! A funny man! He's the jokester of the team (Raoul is funny, yes, but through his own stupidty), fancies himself to be Errol Flynn or Zorro, the lighthearted adventurer. Born and raised in Japan, he lived there until the Asbestos Mushroom kidnapped him and brainwashed him as part of a scheme against Prometheus (*Prometheus* #3) [entirely off the subject--sometime down the line, if we get famous, I'd like to retell *Pro* #1-6 using your art...I still think those were some well-plotted stories that'd be great if I'd rescript and have them done by a talented artiste!]. Anyway, after the guys defeated the Shroom and Kronos, (#4) NA opted to stay in America

(Apologies for the weird black streaks, relics of a badly-maintained 1992 laser printer.)

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for a life of adventure. His homesickness did get the best of him, though, and he went home in Amoeba #5 with KK, where you'll recall we met his family and Kyoko. He doesn't get too serious about life, preferring instead to live high times. There's a funny little story I did that John Hurley's inking (I'll put in #12 of AA, I think) in which NA takes on a demon from hell. It sums him up perfectly. He's fun. I look forward to the double-date with Spif and Dawn in AA II #2.

karate kartus--The most invisible of all major characters. He's always kinda been a background presence, wise but silent, who cracks a line now and then, but doesn't draw the attention Rambunny, say, does. I'd like to do a short story with him sometime to let him shire. Has cally, he's a cross of Miyagi from the Karate Kid movies with Colossus from the X-Men (in manners, not oclis) and some others I can't think of now. As you've said, he tends to think things through. I'm looking forward to traking him team leader to let him get out in front a bit.

He's also older, the equivalent of 50 or so in human years. He trained in Japan for a while (he's NA's

He's also older, the equivalent of 50 or so in human years. He trained in Japan for a while (he's NA's cousin, remember, full name Isuzu Toyota---NA's is Mitsubishi Toyota.) and then came to America to be a super-hero in the 70's. He made somewhat of a name for himself fighting folks like The Spool, Immestro the Shape-Changer, Captain Eggplant, and the infamous Yakface (all of these adventures were recorded in Karate Kactus' Kamakaze Komics, published in my head only). I will probably bring up his past at some future point. He then retired and came out of seclusion when his cousin Mitsu was kidnapped by the Shroom. He decided he wasn't retired yet and life's been peaches and guacamole ever since.

RADUL THE BOY COCKROACH—Character? What character?

Seriously, Raoul's just a big bozo. He's your typical eight-year old brat who thinks he's a superhero. Never changed, never will. Next!

Dawn Star--The newest member. We're still ironing out who she is, but I can tell you this much: As established in #8-9. she's rather fiery (pun intended) and independent minded. She joins the team because she has little else to do since her science career is basically over. This whole experience is a bit like a fantasy come true for her, and we'll see her growing into the role of heroine fast. She's still learning what she can and can't do, powerwise. Yeah, her powers are derivative as hell of many others, but I plan to work on that with #10 (I may use your cue and make her look physically more imposing when she's aflame, as well) (Great minds work together).

Also, beginning in #11, a semi-romance will develop between her and Spif (what do you expect, they're the only two humans on the team), which also helps lead to the double date in AA II #2...both her and Spif will change a bit with this relationship.

MANIPULATOR won't have to be worried about after #11. (Foreshadowing!) By the way, do you like or not like all these hints plot developments etc. I'm giving you? I feel you oughta know 'em in your capacity as upcoming artist supreme. What think you?

KYOKO- doesn't really join the team, but helps out considerably in #10-11, and on occasion afterwards. She came to America with the others (#5, #9) to follow that good ole American dream, and not so much out of love for NA...(that was a really badddd ending to that short story in #5, it made Kyoko look like a Harlequin romance milksop, so I've opted for a new portrayal, starting in #10) She likes NA, but isn't ready to really committ to him or anything...one thing that happens in #11 is that they move into the same apartment building...that short story with the demon I keep mentioning has her in it, too. I'd xerox it to you but it's in California while John's inking it. Oh well. She will continue to play a small but important part in the series. Oh yeah, while I'm mentioning it, in #11-12 the guys decide to move our of the Amoebacave and rebuild the destroyed HQ (blown to bits in #5) It'll be a honest-to-god Superteam Headquarters (Nik style), and will be the official home of most of the guys starting with the new series. (Except for NA & Kyoko)

Whew! I think that covers 'em all. There are more supporting characters that I can't reveal, and of course all the villains...I don't know how good I've done at enlightening you as to what makes my characters tick, but I've tried. To quote George Bush, "read my scripts"...those are the best indication of what they're all about, the stories



In 1993 I joined the fanzine club Small Press Syndicate, which was undergoing a terrific revival under chairmen J. Kevin Carrier and Tyim Courts. The moody, very Frank Miller-inspired Rambunny image here was done for the cover of Rap Sheet #36.

Meanwhile, over at the United Fanzine Organization, I did a fun "jam" cover with "Burp Boy and Upchuck The Dog Wonder" creator and fellow UFO member Scott McClung during a brief meeting in Memphis over the holidays, teaming up Prometheus and Scott's Frog Boy. The cover appeared on Tetragrammaton Fragments #137.

