a graphic novel by MATT HOWARTH





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MYRIAD QUEST

story & art © 2014 MATT HOWARTH

based on the universe found in the MYRIAD SONG Game (property of Sanguine Productions LLC)

Editors: Norman Rafferty Richard Hughes

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Matt would like to dedicate this graphic novel to Seth Mcfarlane, for his cultural ecellence in reviving Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" TV series.






































































































NOTES FROM THE ATTIC

Back in 2013, Norman Rafferty at Sanguine Games contacted me to find out if I might be interested in doing some art for their "Myriad Song" Role-Playing-Game Book. Specifically, he wanted to hire me to do illustrations of the various planetary systems involved in the game. He was also curious if I'd be willing to do a short comic strip which would act as an expose for the various alien species involved in the game. I agreed to do both.

What started out as a simple work-for-hire commission job swiftly kicked my creative juices into overdrive. The comic strip I did ran longer than originally planned, dealing in more detail with the species and their interstellar politics. Sanguine was especially pleased with what I did, and loved how I left the story open-ended, to serve as a possible adventure for gamers to resolve the predicament in which I left the characters.

While working on the comic strip, my mind continued to toy with the "Myriad Song" universe, and I came up with an idea for a longer separate story When I mentioned my basic notion to Norman, he expressed a strong desire to see me explore this storyline at some future point. Once the "Myriad Song" game was released, things began to fall into place for this project.

In March of 2014, a Kickstarter campaign was launched to raise the funds to hire me to do the story. At the inception of the campaign, all I had were a few vague ideas in mind; but my creativity is a difficult beast to restrain, and by the first week of the month-long campaign, I had a story outlined and a few pages of art finished. I continued to work on the story throughout the campaign, and by its completion I had done the basic pencils (and some inks) on the "Myriad Quest" graphic novel.

Finishing the inks and scripting the story took a bit longer; not due to any difficulties but because I became totally immersed in the project. It had been some time since I'd done a deep space black-and-white project, and I'm afraid I kinda got swept away. The inks were far more detailed than what I'd been doing in recent years. (You must understand, all the detailed crosshatching and hordes of dots and tiny lines that used to define my art had been discarded as I began working in digital color during the initial decade of the 21st Century. It wasn't a laziness on my part; I was exploring alternate means of rendering and all of that old detail-work was simply getting buried when color was applied to the art.) But "Myriad Quest" was going to be a black-and-white book, so I reverted to the techniques I had set aside. Dense crosshatching, clouds of dotwork, busy backgrounds...all of these aspects came flooding out of my fingers onto the paper. It was literally taking me more than a day to ink a single page of the story (my normal inking speed is about 3-4 pages a day).

I did not complain. In fact, I loved every agonizing moment of it. Several scenes came out so lovely that I was honestly quite impressed with the work. That only fueled me to increase the detail, consequently further slowing me down. I labored on this project steadily from March through to June (admittedly, the work was not entirely uninterrupted, as various other small commercial jobs came along and were squeezed in between "Myriad Quest" sessions).

Needless to say, my interest in science has always been strong, and I was completely enthralled by the prospect of the new "Cosmos" series that aired on TV during this period. Alas, I lost track of the real world and missed the first few episodes of the show. One Sunday night I was watching something else on television and when that show went to commercial, I was off channel-hopping (yes, I'm one of those people who do that, in order to catch glimpses of other shows on at the same time) and I stumbled upon "Cosmos." The show was just heading into a commercial break and the announcer teased that next they'd be exploring the subject of black holes. "Well," I grunted to myself, "screw that other show-I'm sticking with this!" I love black holes, always have since my first exposure to the concept in the early writing of Larry Niven back in the 70s. I was sincerely impressed by how the new "Cosmos" handled the subject and was suddenly overcome with the urge to put a black hole into "Myriad Quest." Initially, the last scene of the book was supposed to deal with the asteroids falling into a star, for I knew the inherent visuals would require extreme astronomical visuals. It was an easy tweak to change that star into a black hole. (For this reason, "Myriad Quest" is wholeheartedly dedicated to Seth McFarlane for reviving and modernizing Carl Sagan's classic TV series; that's right, if you didn't know, the wacky creator of "Family Guy" and "Ted" was a major producer of the revived "Cosmos" series-and kudos to him for such a laudable accomplishment.)

With the work almost completed, I took a weekend off to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the June 1st, 1974 concert by Kevin Ayers, John Cale, Brian Eno and Nico (which had become a major holiday for Howski Studios throughout the last three decades of the 20th Century). With only a few pages left to ink, I stepped back and started to actually script the story (until this point the plot had existed primarily in my head). A few extra pages needed to be done to accommodate certain scenes that ran longer than my initial art, expanding the graphic novel from its intended 48 pages to 50. Over the weekend of June 6-8, I finally did the cover art, spending nearly six hours digitally doing the starscape alone. (I'd like to point out that this starscape and the one on the last page of the story was done over the span of three nights while chatting on the phone with my close friend Ferret.)

Ferret also played a vital role in supporting and promoting the Kickstarter campaign that funded "Myriad Quest." He and I used my Facebook page to shamelessly massage the campaign. Other parties who helped promote the campaign were Warren Ellis, John Shirley, Michael Chocholak, and Misha Nog'ha.

Let's not forget the people who actually pledged funds to the campaign. They are listed below, and I want to extend my sincere gratitude to them for their support in a project that swiftly became a labor of love on my part. Their faith and support helped to fuel my creative fervor on this project. Really, guys and girls: a big hearty thank you!

Among the pledge incentives were cameo

appearances and speaking roles in the story. For public documentation, they are herewith outlined (so everybody knows who's who)...

On page 9, in panel 3: a Resident appears seated at one of the blimp's viewing tables.

On page 16, the figure to the far left is Sanguine editor Norman Rafferty.

On page 17, the gas-masked figure in the background crowd is Dark Aldebara, a character created by Ashtoreth Haas.

On pages 18 and 19, the role of Professor Yonder is played by Sid Sondergard.

The scenario in the large panels on pages 20 and 21 was inspired by the cover art by Lynn Hogan for the "Myriad Song" book.

The astute reader might recognize a figure in the last panel on page 23 as the interdimensional scoundrel Ron Post. (That annoying Post Bro also makes a second cameo appearance among the creatures pictured on the back cover of this book.)

On page 31, the role of Specks was played by Craig Smith, who was the original webmaster for more than a decade of my Attic website. (It always tickled me that while I sat in my studio in Philadelphia on the USA East Coast, my main website resided on a server in Craig's closet in Brunswick, Australia—typifying the global nature of the internet.)

The librarian in the last panel on page 31 was played by Chandra, a character supplied by James Birdsall.

On page 32 in the last panel, the Mullen clan (I to r: little Eva, Deborah, John, and Mia) can be seen among the dancers. (Deborah was responsible for bringing a computer into my life and studio during the late 90s.)

On pages 33 through 35, the role of Razor Redd was supplied by Bryan Feir in the form of a mutated version of his character Sara Skunkworks.

On page 35, the bearded fellow dancing on the left of panel 3 is Sanguine personnel Edwin Dean.

On page 35, in panel 3 and on page 36 in panels 1 and 2, the girl seated on a guy's shoulders is played by Richard Imundo and his daughter Dashiell.

On pages 35 and 36, the armored guard is played by Sanguine editor Richard Hughes.

On pages 35 through 37, the guard armed with the paper fish on a stick is played by the Neo-Canton Guy, a character created by Ferret who starred in his "Neo-Canton Legacy" and "Phoenix Restaurant" books and was a frequent guest in my "Savage Henry" comic book series.

The Myriad technology psionically revealed to Rhys on page 43 was inspired by the Krell machinery from the 1950s film "Forbidden Planet."

Most of the alien races found in "Myriad Quest" come from those who populate the universe of the "Myriad Song" game, but some of the alien creatures (like Doccu and the unnamed Triop) are products of my own warped imagination.

Since music plays such a vital role in my creativity, many readers have expressed an interest in what bands I listen to while working on a particular project. Since the work on "Myriad Quest" spanned several months, it would be impossible for me to list every album that helped fuel my efforts. But I can offer a loose roster of certain bands that contributed sonic inspiration to the project: Astralasia, Banco del Mutuo Soccorso, Franck Balestracci, Ian Boddy, David Byrne (specifically "The Catherine Wheel" album), Can, Michael Chocholak, the Crimson Projekct, Electric Orange, Brian Eno, the Future Sound of London, (early) Peter Hammill, Hawkwind, (early) Jefferson Airplane, Juno Reactor, Leaether Strip, Lush, Magazine, Paul Nagle, Bill Nelson, Orbital, Richard Pinhas, Pink Floyd (mainly a bunch of live material from 1969-1971), Porcupine Tree, Primus, Procol Harum, Steve Roach, Todd Rundgren, Terje Rypdal (in particular his "Whenever I Seem to Be Far Away" album), Klaus Schulze, Sparks, Spirit (specifically "The Twelve Dreams of Dr Sardonicus" album"), Steve Stevens, The Stick Men, St. Vincent, Sula Bassana, System 7, Tool, Tuxedomoon, Erik Wollo, and XTC. (One would have expected me to concentrate on space music for such a spacey project, and indeed that had been my original intention...but I kinda got sidetracked with a binge of early 70s psychedelic and progressive bands and other albums that I suddenly wanted to hear.) I can at least specify that the script was written entirely under the influence of Miles Davis (mostly outtakes from his fusion period during the early 70s) and Tangerine Dream.

June 12, 2014





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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Perhaps best known as the writer/artist of the "Those Annoying Post Bros." comic book series, Matt Howarth has many outlets for his twisted creativity. And all of them are notoriously "strange"

During his career of four decades, Matt has authored and drawn a variety of unconventional comic books and graphic novels, and contributed graphic fiction to numerous publications in the fields of comics and science fiction...and music. For, among all of Matt's creative outlets, there runs the influence of alternative and electronic music. He has found several ways to achieve this crossover of diverse genres.

From 1987 to 1994, Matt did a comic book series called "Savage Henry" (about the wacky adventures of a guitarist from an alternate reality). Most issues of this series featured authorized guest appearances by real musicians; among them: the Residents, Hawkwind, Moby, Ash Ra Tempel, Klaus Schulze, Nash the Slash, Foetus, Yello, Wire, Steve Roach, Richard Pinhas, Ron Geesin, David Borden, and more. Conrad Schnitzler (an original member of Tangerine Dream and Kluster) was a regular guest in this series and several graphic novels.

In the early 1980s, Matt did a minicomic series entitled "The Comix of Two Cities", based on lifeforms created by the Residents in the band's "Mark of the Mole" trilogy of albums. In the late 1990s, these stories were reprinted as a comic book series.

Perhaps one of his strangest creations is Matt's "Konny & Czu" series, chronicling the antics of a pair of interstellar con artists. Besides Matt's innovative storytelling and meticulous art, what makes these strips unique is that they feature absolutely no human beings or any remotely terrestrial lifeforms. Another of Matt's sci-fi creations is the "Keif Llama: Xenotech" series, featuring the adventures of a plucky troubleshooter coping with problems between mankind and alien civilizations.

Since the early 1980s, Matt has been doing music reviews, first as a weekly comicstrip, and since 1998 as text reviews for his Sonic Curiosity website.

A culmination (in Matt's opinion) of his desire to merge comics with music has been a series of collaborations he's done with a variety of internationally renowned musicians: in which a comic strip by him comes as a PDF file on the CD, while the band's music is a loose soundtrack inspired by his story. So far, he has done this type of collab with: Arthur Brown. Michael Chocholak, German synthesists Fanger & Schonwalder, Galactic Anthems, ex-Soft Machine bassist Hugh Hopper, Legendary Pink Dots, Mental Anguish, Bill Nelson, Ozone Player, Quarkspace, Radio Massacre International, Conrad Schnitzler, Klaus Schulze, and Syndromeda, with more in the works. Matt has also written a collection of short stories (Enriched Visions) inspired by the ambient soundscapes of Robert Rich.

It is plainly evident that Matt Howarth is obsessed with strange music, and he is not about to stop incorporating such things into his creative efforts.

Among Matt's notable non-musically related works are: two issues of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" (the adult edition); scripts for DC Comics' "Justice League of America"; doing comedy comics for the International Star Trek Conventions in the early 1970s (before the fans coined the term trekkies); doing illustrations for several novels by SF author Philip K. Dick; work on Harlan Ellison's "Dream Corridor" series; illustrations for Warren Ellis' "Transmetropolitan" series; an original graphic story collaboration in 1977 with SF Grand Master Hal Clement; numerous illustrations for the 1984 Dune Encyclopedia; "Tryxxx", an erotic SF graphic novel; strips for the SubGenius Church; work for Phil Foglio's "Xxxenophile" series; Several adaptations of classic literature (by H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jack London, and The Cabinet of Dr Caligari) for Graphic Classics; cover art and numrous interior illustrations for the textbook series "Strange Tales from Liaozhai" by ancient Chinese poet Pu Songling; graphic adaptations of stories by award winning authors Greg Bear and Vernor Vinge for the World Science Fiction Conventions; and-believe it or not--even more.

Since 2000, Matt has self-published over 100 digital publications, all of which are available from his online catalog.

It may stop, but it never ends.

MATT'S ATTIC (main website) www.matthowarth,com

- BUGTOWN MALL (online catalog) www.bugtownmall.com
- SONIC CURIOSITY (music reviews) www.soniccuriosity.com



FACEBOOK PAGE www.facebook.com/matt.howarth.710

BEYOND THE FARTHEST STARS, A TREASURE BEYOND ANY PRICE

The alien masters of the Syndic ruled over the tenthousand planets... until they were gone, leaving the Myriad Worlds to their own devices. Only the extremely brave or the terribly foolish would dare explore the mysteries that the Syndics left behind....

Rhys is a soldier, born to follow orders without question. Narli is an aristocrat, who knows no master but herself. They each have one piece to the puzzle, to find a lost treasure trove of technology abandoned by the Syndic Empire. But even if they can put their differences aside and work together, they will still have to survive the dangers of their MYRIAD QUEST.

RDD





