



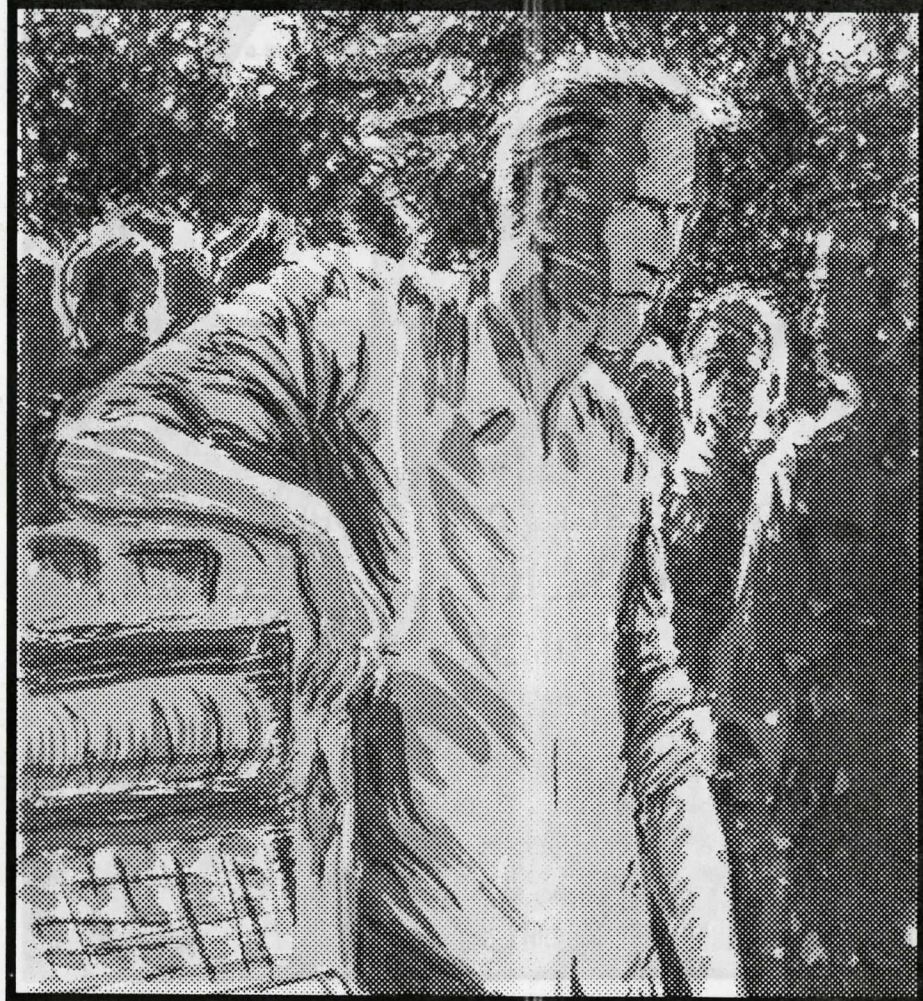
**RUBBER
SUIT
COMIX**

A Charmed Life

By Pete Trudgeon

#8

\$1.50



RUBBER SUIT COMICS PRESENTS:
A CHARMED LIFE
NUMBER SIX
BY PETE TRUDGEON

special thanks to Dave Asman and Mike Ortiz
front cover by Mike Ortiz

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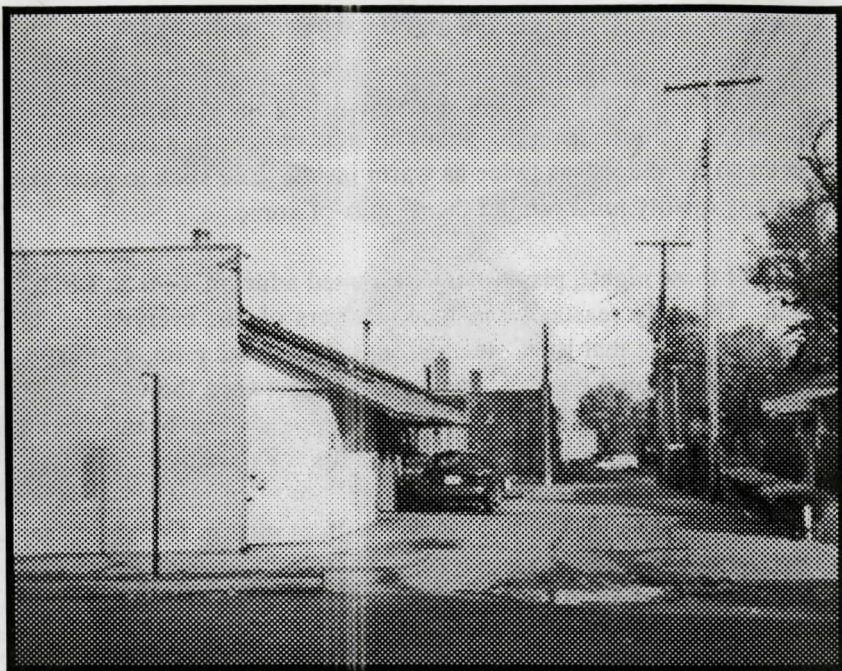
I Love Living in Detroit

I stepped off a still rain-wet pavement into the party store. Rice paddy warm outside so the door was held open with a cinder block, even so the place was twice as warm inside. The stick to your skin muggy quality must remind the owners of home.

One of these nights, piss-tired, just wanted a fuckin' beer so's to forget. The only reason I can here. Layers of dirt everywhere, the linoleum's got that hasn't been mopped since '92 grim, you expect some four legged type to spring out from between the virgin Mary candles on the bottom shelf. Dust covers, baked beans, Vienna sausage, beef stew, best bought before it has expired.

On the coolers a sticker tells me to "smile, you're on TV." Forties on the other side of the peep show glass. Gotta buy cheap, only \$2.00 on my person—all in quarters. They wouldn't care if it was wrapped pennies. In this kind've place boozers are buying their pints and fifths before the noon hour, just like the baby girl getting that bottle of cognac for her mom.





I look at the magazine rack, there's venus in skin, daddy's little girl, looking me in the eye, a cock shoved in her throat. Some guys have all the luck, some girls meat for the grinder, some baby is gonna get mind-fucked by an image they can't fathom.

I put the bottle in the revolving box, quarters go in the metal tray, don't give a shit, don't trust you eyes stare at me thru bullet proof glass, stained with years of humanity. The owner has see 'em all, every type of boozier from weekend party kids to the chronic alkey. Sitting in that plastic cage night after night, senses blunted to all forms of walking, talking horror. And they just keep coming, homo sapien slag dulled by fluorescent shine. Why bother to mop, who the fuck is gonna notice. Return to pock marked concrete, recall last weekend. It was Saturday night, half a dozen of the boys out front bathing in the storefront's crimson glow. First thought an aborted hold up, but now I see the left side of the building covered by a slide down metal security door, it's acquired an immense dent, courtesy of a piss-poor parking job.

Looking up, a lone fatality. A pigeon who didn't make a quick

enough getaway. Pinned upside down, a wing spanned in froze non-flight, eyes stare into great oblivion. Dead sky rat poetry. I should have such a death.

Hopscotch thru chock hole excuse of a parking lot, muddy puddles with oil slick rainbows. A cut thru alleyways past weeds, spray pain slurs, rust consumed metal and garbage of all species. German Shepard housed in just enough space to turn around. It barks at my truck. I pretend that he's not giving me the stay away, just grouching about his accommodations. Across the street a lanky kid skittles along a brick wall, him and hi shadow, grabbing his dick, holding up his baggies. Is he coming from or going to?

One last alley, the one with the twins, two telephone poles. The archway I pass almost every night. It tells me one, one right turn later and I'm two blocks from home.

My Model

I get the directions, going to Utica, a mainline up Mound Road. Mound of what I don't have the faintest, nor does anybody else. It's the biggest no one gives a shit mystery in this state. All anyone really wants to know is who's the joker that paired Big Beaver with exit 69.

Driving from where the weak are killed and eaten Detroit to Gomerville. Shouldn't be slinging names, but fuck' em, the only thing missing from Utica is the cows to tip.

Eventually (not my fault that Mound road is ass backwards dull) I make it to the Foxmoor apartments. This is what happens when shit kickers get some coin, a sprawling labyrinth that makes you feel like a rat in a maze, you know the goddamn cheese is somewhere. So you stumblebum your way around till you either find it or go mad trying.

Looking for number seven. There's ten, double back, six, five. Where the fuck did I put those directions? Retrieve, re-read, so I'm the asshole for not paying attention. Second driveway, third parking

lot on the left, building number seven, apartment number 104.

Heading towards her door a failure notice a step. I'm going down to late to regain the balance. Hitting ground I'm lucky I don't drop anything or dirty myself. Dropped like a drunken stumblebum, last thing I need is paranoid tenants calling down John Law.

I knock at her door, soon as she answers I can tell, the last two days have kicked her in the gut, the birdcage will do that. A woman's jail is still a jail. There you're nobody, reduced to a number, you're identity is condensed to a wristband, lie the one she shows me. No one in that place wants to hear your story cause they don't give a fuck, they've heard it, seen it, move along baby.

She's tired, without makeup looking like a 15-year old girl, stripped of glamour. Even so I wouldn't expect her to pretty up on my account. Still she gives me that smile; she sparkles again.

I give her copies of the books, her portrait on every back cover. We have a seat on her couch. I'm drinking ice water, we're smoking. I try to describe the show, attempting to make a dork festival feel exciting, or at least interesting. I try to be interesting or am I just remote?

While she's telling me about her weekend, a last blast out've state before turning over to the man. The TV blasts one of those couples' game shows, rearing its ugly face, filling the air with noise. Imagine the dating game knocking up Jerry Springer. Now their ugly little bastards run free all over the airwaves.

I stay until almost midnight. Not too long, my hostess yearns slumber. At the door she gives a hug that's like a signature, it's farewell.

On my way home pitstop at a 7-11 to buy a sixer. The Place is too bright, the fluorescents are screaming. I'm drawn into the melancholy that will last into the next day. Another anti climax, life just will not give me the codas I desire.

The Job

Trying to write, my relief didn't show, now instead of going home at

11 I have to stay until closing which means I'll be here until all most two in the morning. I've knocked off forty hours in four days. No Friday, no Saturday, and now Sunday night is shot, so I'm trying to write.

Worse, I'm trying to write, fighting boredom, hunger, aching muscles, no nicotine. smokers' blues, I've discovered lack of nicotine causes loss of concentration first, then depression arrives. Being of the kind that is blue though. Thinking about all the shit I don't want to think about. Bills, piles of them, no money to pay them, no money, no girl, no cold beer in the fridge. Writing, with no recognition, writing, years invested, little return, doing just to hold on to sanity. Trying to write to keep my mind active while on the job. Hearing the gears of the projector turning, the hum of the motor as the film runs thru. Waiting for this godawful movie to end, and end which is nowhere in sight, when it does come, I'll go home to nothing, to no one.

Head throbbing under this lamp, arm sore, showing the results of the weekend. Up and down my flesh is tattooed with cuts, nicks, scabs, and bruises. They look like junkie arms. Tired arms, tired legs,

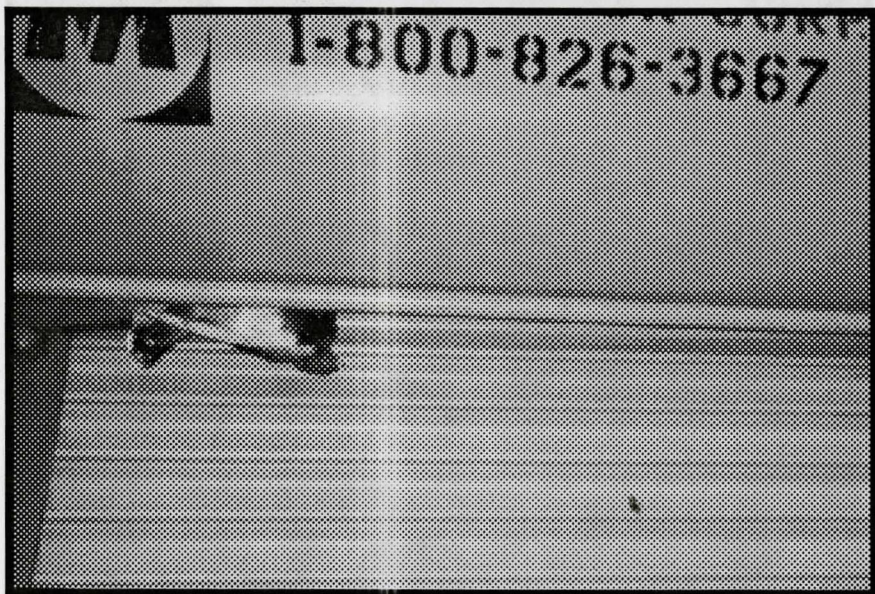


aching feet, grease on my fingertips that will take days to wash out. I've been doing this kind of work too long. Being in this room, looking thru this window down at the people sitting in the seats. Over and over, I thread the film thru projectors, press a button activating the lamp, the motor kicks in and magic happens. Light shines down projecting the audience's fantasies onto the screen. Machines can be flakey, hope nothing happens, god forbid the fantasy is interrupted.

Long after the couples have left arm'n'arm, hand'n'hand I walk out into an empty parking lot my lone truck waiting for me. Nicotine deprivation brings on an ancient melancholy, walking home from the junior high dance by yourself. Sadness with a layer of dust, finding it lying in the corner, when you though you'd thrown it away. I don't think I want to be at this job much longer.

Punk is Dead, It just doesn't have the good sense to lie down

I received this fanzine in the mail the other day. Packaging is not bad, newsprint on the inside covered with a glossy candy coated covering. If you've spent any time orbiting the small press you've run into something like this, filled with all the usual shit. Interviews with bands you've never heard of, ads of their records you'll never



buy. Columns on organizing zine fairs, hemp legalization, and how George W. is a fascist prick. Let's not forget reviews, reviews, reviews. Sound familiar? Thought so.

I should mention, this a punk zine, which is important, because punk is dead, JFK dead. I can even tell you the date it passed, January 15, 1978. If you don't already know that was the night of the Sex Pistols last gig ever. On the stage of the Winterland auditorium, Johnny Rotten asked the attending crowd, "Ever get the feeling your getting cheated?" He then exited the stage into the San Francisco night. Not a bang, but a wimper.

My realization about punk came as I was flipping thru the pages of the above-mentioned zine. As it happened Joey Ramone had just passed on. Naturally there were a couple of tribute pieces to ol' Joe. While I don't wish to come down on the authors nor do I wish to make light of the emotions and memories expressed I myself could feel sad in that end of era way these folks were expressing. Not that I didn't enjoy Ramones tunes, I did and do, but it was undercut by my remembrances of the only time I saw the Ramones perform live.

It was somewhere in the '90's, I, my friend Mike, and his girlfriend drove to downtown Detroit. The show was held at the newly restored State Theater, which resides right next door to the world famous Fox. Expectations were high, the band was already legendary bolstered by the tales my brother and his friends had told time and again about the Ramones shows they had attended. Now finally it was my turn to see the one and only Ramones.

Expectations are one thing, the reality is something else. Their set was polished, professional, phoned in, devoid of any passion, spontaneity or bite. In plain English, it sucked. This didn't occur after, but during the concert. The only two memorable things that happened had nothing to do with the music. First some dickhead was swinging around his girlfriend. He ended up getting so into it he nearly lost control and tossed her into me. Then later some drunk decided it would be a good idea to hug me.

An off night for the band, perhaps, but so what, it was still a lame show. Let's face it the Ramones should've packed it in way back in

1984, righter after they released the "Too Tough To Die" album, which was a strong piece of work. Exiting then with their heads held high, dignity intact. But they didn't, instead they slogged along for more than ten years, turning into the punk equivalent of the Rolling Stones.

Remember that last statement, next time your slamming some geezer band: what's true about old farts will one day be true for today's bands. Although rock groups as a rule don't know when to hang it up, trends usually expire naturally.

Punk didn't begin as a trend. Born out of repression, poverty, and just general misery a real show of self-expression occurred. For the first time people who had spent most of their lives feeling marginalized finally had a chance to express themselves as individuals. I bet that first twelve months the Pistols were together would have been something to be involved with.

Very quickly though punk became fashionable, then it turned into a uniform, mainstreamed by the very people it was supposed to liberate. And, yeah, the "straight" media made its contribution, but it was the punks themselves who did the real dirty work.

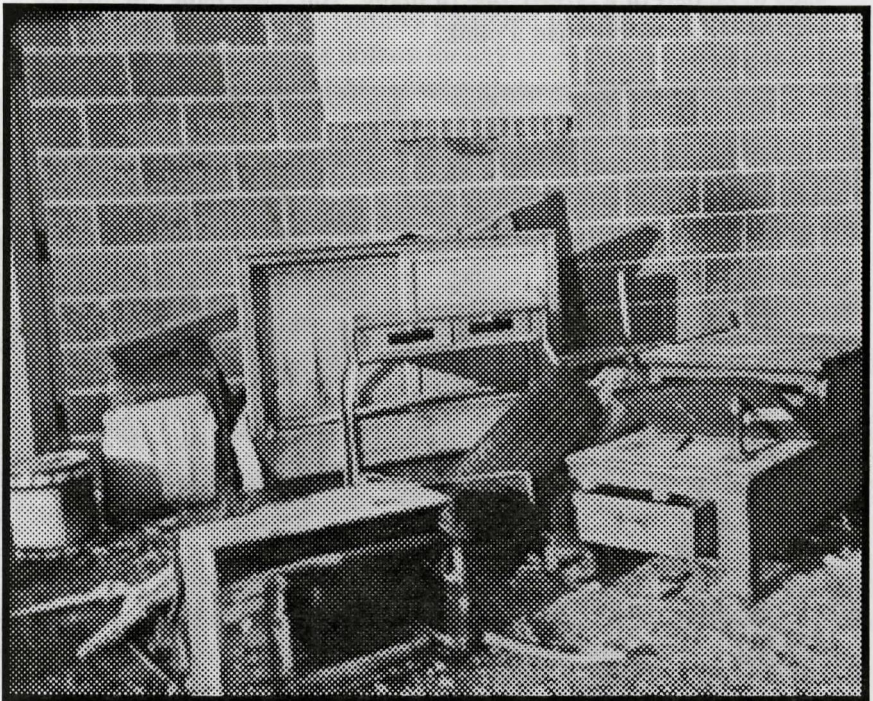
The punk look became rubber stamped, the color black, leather jackets, mohawks, and all the goth-death bullshit. Rebellion assembly line style, it's the same tired look that survives to this day.

By the late 70's hippies had become a joke, no one was buying into their outmoded peace and love trip anymore, but at least many of them had some sort of philosophy. What did punk bring to the table except nihilism? So if hippies could become outdated what makes punks immune from the same fate? They're not, just as there's no more hippies, no more beatniks, no more punks. You don't people walking around dressed like 20's flappers do you? Actually, I wouldn't be surprised if some assholes revived that look. But it'd be a costume, they could never be the real thing, you can't live out a time, you must be current.

And please don't bring up '80's hardcore, that's just a grand example of showing up at the dock after the ship's left. Back then we lived

under a cloud of nuclear paranoia, not seen since the '50's, people were convinced that Reagan was going to press the big red button and start World War III. All the punk bands sang about the same shit, republicans, the religious right, save the whales, save the planet, and blah, blah, blah. Cut to the year 2001, the only thing that's changed is the puppet in the white house. Besides, I remember that era, most of those bands sucked.

I'm in my early thirties, admittedly time has made me grow a bit perverse. To me there's a great deal of amusement in watching people engage in futile activities. For example, some guy (or gal), body covered in tattoos dressed in thrift store rags, home hair cut on top of their heads, spewing unintelligible lyrics into a microphone. All the while being accompanied by "music" made by people who should've never picked up an instrument. Who are they playing to? Mostly drunk males smashing each other's skulls into a pulp while bouncing around the mosh pit. Anyone not busy knocking the shit out've themselves is probably cruising for pussy, but they're too drunk. Then there's the straight edge types, dominos waiting to be toppled. Now that's what I call funny.



Punk has accomplished nothing, like the hippies before them. That's the ugly truth. The powerful have coopted your anarchy and now use it against you. Big brother isn't coming, most likely he's already here, has been way before punks ever showed up. If the juggernaut really starts to roll believe me, the punks will be the first to get flattened. Hippies couldn't save the world, punks sure as shit won't. Who ever said the world needs your help anyway? The very fact you call yourself a punk means you aren't one because you accept categories. It was supposed to be about individuality, being a self-contained identity. But it was given a label, one you eagerly grabbed and slapped on your forehead.

The reason I talk this shit is because I've lived it. In high school I acted the part of the punk, but I wasn't one really. Truth is I was just another teenage asshole playing dress up. That's right, kinda like you, floating around the self-publishing scene these last few years has brought a revelation. The underground scene has gotten increasingly elitist and clickish. You'll never see more self-righteous arrogance than at an underground publishing show. It used to bother me, not anymore. I do this for one reason, self-gratification and I can't wait to quote unquote sell out. Because now, I'm in on the joke. I used to be part of a crowd, one of many. But these days I'm just me, and I'd rather be me than a punk.





UNTITLED

It's a 90-degree Detroit Saturday night. Everyone moves in thick air, the back of your shirt is soaked by the time you've reached a city block. Earlier in the day families clustered in front of the soft serve stand gladly handing over dollars for any kind of sweet tasting relief. But now it's 'round midnight and that air is giving off sparks.

Theresa's place is boomin' like the hip-hop echoing out've the young men's rides that lazily cruise up and down neighborhood streets. Every available parking spot along McNichols has been claimed like prime real estate, the party has now spilled over into the park lot of a party store. A series of 25 watt bulbs rotate continuously framing the store's sign in square halo. Blue awning gives the place's hit list: Beer, wine, liquor, lotto (also known as the poor man's tax), money orders and check cashing. That last bit being most important as you never know when you'll be strapped with an uncashed paycheck at a quarter to one, very much in need of some paper to drown them hate the job blues.

In that lot are a few empty beer cans littered here'n'there, stray dead soldiers who'll eventually be snatched up to have their dime bounty claimed. Homeboys pass blunts, take sips from plastic cups, talk

trash, just generally feeling good. Their girlies buzz about, scatter chatter, giving a play by play of the comings and goings. Customers exit with their pints, packs of Kools, or like me a pair of forties, cold comfort in a brown paper bag.

If you happen to be traveling by car than exiting this lot takes skill acquired only thru experience, cause there's more than steel on wheels to avoid; flesh and blood mills about, you don't want to be the one to ruin anyone's good time.

'Round two a.m., give or take the streets choked as the club starts to empty. Thru side streets and alleys the shiny Cherokees and Lexuses will zig'n'zag looking for that edge, those extra seconds that'll allow folks to beat the congestion. All either home for a quick night cap followed by a sweat-drenched screwing or to the corner Burger King whose drive thru is already a half dozen cars deep, that burger and fries perfume can be smelled a block away. After hours types have the advantage of a 24-7 White Castle.

Come Sunday morning, the Greater Grace Temple will be rocking to the rafters, hallelujahs lifted on high to heaven, forgiveness prayers for sins, real or imagined.



A CHARMED LIFE, #6, \$2 or trade, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, tiv
copied, 22 pgs. wh
This is a personal zine from comic book artist Pete vie
Trudgeon. In it, he tells stories of going on a road trip and
to Toronto, going the Underground Publishers kno
Conference in Bowling Green, and getting drunk with Suz
friends. The stories are amusing and give a good bit of two
insight into the life of a zine guy. Pete also puts out a Cine
comic book series called *Bathing in the Blue Light*. Also
The series is pretty edgy, twisted, and full of conspir funn
acy theory. I really enjoy it, but it's dark enough to the c
make me wonder about the guy who puts it out. After to re
reading *A Charmed Life*, I realized that he's really not a B
as dark and twisted as his comic, but he's still pretty whic
entertaining. —Sean (Rubber Suit Comics, PO Box (Cine
24894, Detroit, MI 48224)

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