

Comic-Con International 2009, Minority Journalists & The Barack Obama Era



**poppnfresh1 has sent you a message:
black panel 2009**

Listen man ive been going to the black panel for years. Unfortunately i waited 2 long to buy tickets i refuse 2 take a chance on buying tickets on ebay and still maybe not be able 2 get in. .please tell me you are going this year and iam begging you 2 record this years black panel it will be greatly appreciated IAM WILLING TO PAY FOR A COPY OF THE ENTIRE BLACK PANEL U NAME THE PRICE

You can reply to this message by visiting your [inbox](#).



I am dedicating this article to the note that I received above from one of our **MoneyTrainDX & FuTurXTV.com** Youtube subscribers called **poppnfresh1**. I was going to write this article anyway about why I was allowed as a minority online journalist to cover Comic-Con International 2008, but not allowed as a minority online journalist to cover Comic-Con International 2009. But the note from **poppnfresh1** explains in a nutshell the need for niche news outlets or alternatives from mainstream journalism and why there has to be a consistent effort to have diversity of news media at Comic-Con International 2009--even if we have an African-American President.

To give a brief background on myself: I am a freelance online journalist that covers a wide variety of major media, marketing and technology events like E3 Expo, Sundance, NAB, Cannes, CES, AFI Festival, Digital Hollywood, etc.. My written work, videos and still photos are posted on Hiphopbattle.com and some of my video interviews are shown on FuTurXTV.com. And what most people like **poppnfresh1** do not realize is that it was a struggle just to get approved to cover Comic-Con International 2008. Below are all events FuTurXTV.com and Hiphopbattle.com were officially approved to cover as press in 2008 and early 2009 just look below:

FuTurXTV.com and Hiphopbattle.com were approved as press to cover the 2008 Iowa Caucuses, 2008 CES, 2008 Sundance Film Festival, 2008 MAGIC Fashion Show, 2008 OMMA Global Hollywood Conference and Expo, 2008 MultiCltural Media Expo, 2008 Future of Television Conference and 2008 CTIA Wireless Conference, 2008 NAB Show, 2008 Spring Digital Hollywood, Hong Kong New Music West 2008 Music Festival & Conference, LA Games and MobileForum, 2008 CGS World Championships, Licensing International Expo 2008, 2008 ad:tech Singapore, 2008 Madison+Vine Conference and 2008 Entertainment Marketers of the Year Awards, 2008 ComicCon, The Edinburgh Interactive Festival 2008, The Edge Music Festival 2008, AMPLIFY!! 2008, GC - Games Convention 2008, CTIA Wireless I.T. & Entertainment 2008, 2008 Urbanworld Film Festival, NY Games Conference 2008, Digital Music Forum West 2008, Politics 2008, Contentonomics, Popkomm 2008, Middle East International Film Festival 2008, AFI Film Festival 2008, 2008 International Black Film Festival of Nashville, OMMA Video 2008 and OMMA Mobile 2008, 2008 Digital Hollywood Fall, Web 2.0 Expo Europe 2008, The Dubau World Game Expo 2008, P2P & Video Conference, TelcoTV Conference & Expo 2008 and the Singapore 3DX Film & Entertainment Technology Festival.

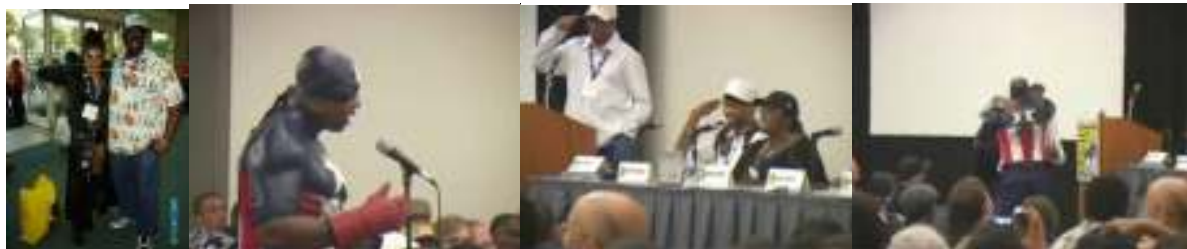
In 2009 FuTurXTV.com and Hiphopbattle.com have been already approved as press to cover the 2009 CES, 2009 Sundance Film Festival, 2009 Tribeca Film Festival, 2009 CES, 2009 CTIA, 2009 NAB, 2009 LA Games Conference, 2009 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, 2009 Digital Hollywood Spring, 2009 Hollywood Black Film Festival, E3 Expo 2009 and Edinburgh Interactive Festival 2009.



Well last year in the Spring of 2008, we applied as press to cover Comic-Con International 2008. At first FuTurXTV.com and Hiphopbattle.com were rejected by Comic-Con 2008's publicists for no good reason. I kept my cool and didn't flip out over getting rejected. I just remained persistent and vigilant about why we should be allowed at Comic-Con 2008. I kept reaching out by e-mail and on the phone to everyone and anyone who would listen at the Comic-Con press office until someone finally allowed us to be press. And I fully understand the position that a major media event like Comic-Con has in not allowing or approving every new media request.

But Comic-Con 2009 has an online application process of pre-screening out those media requests that do not occur before a certain deadline. And Comic-Con has online procedures to weed out first time applicants from returning journalists. And Comic-Con like many large media events like Sundance or Cannes does not accept on site media requests. You really do not want to show up at any top media event nowadays and hope that they will feel sorry for you and let you in. That ain't happening no matter what excuse you give. And personally E3 Expo is still the hardest U.S. press pass we ever had to earn. But nothing truly tops the Cannes Film Festival for having highly stringent and the most selective press applications.

But one of the main reason why might have been approved as press for Comic-Con 2008 was because we were insistent that we wanted to cover Comic-Con's minority themed panel called The Black Panel. I had never covered Comic-Con before, so I did not know they annually host The Black Panel composed of mainly black or multi-racial artists, writers and comic book publishers. So I will admit I was definitely geeked about covering and filming The Black Panel to later post on the Web. Which we did do on Youtube, Dailymotion and on our mobile social network Zannel.com. There was only one other person filming the Black Panel, but I am not even sure that they were minority journalists. Anyway, we fully covered and filmed the first Black Panel which had as its panelists Method Man (Def Jam artist), Reggie Hudlin (president, B.E.T.), Denys Cowan (B.E.T. Animation), Rusty Cundieff (director, *Chappelle's Show*, *Fear of a Black Hat*), John Dokes (Marvel Comics), Dwayne McDuffie (Milestone Media, Justice League, Ben 10), Faith Cheltnham (Tot.com) and Prodigal Sunn. During the Black Panel 2008 Q&A session I waited behind a brotha dressed in a Captain America costume. In fact, his costume was so on point that the moderator and most of the panelists saluted him and the moderator gave him a hug. It was a highly funny and spontaneous moment that we captured on film.



Black Captain America

The Black Panel Salutes Cap

The Moderator Gives Cap A Hug

I asked The Black Panel 2008 panelists if they thought the NAACP, Urban League and other pro-black business and social activists groups were doing enough to promote black or minority comic books to black youths as a viable career option? Jamal Igle, who was the head illustrator of Supergirl, was an impromptu panelist. But Jamal and other black comic book illustrators are not featured at the BET Awards or on TV One. Or you're not gonna find Jamal's face or others on The Black Panel regularly featured in Ebony, Essence or Jet. We have black leaders who are always talking about the lack of diversity in Hollywood and Madison Avenue. But in my opinion those leaders are completely clueless to the lack of diversity in the Comic Book, Gaming and Web 2.0 Tech worlds and industries. So my question was at first aimed at Method Man, whom I had interviewed before about whether the NAACP was doing enough to help inner-city youth. But my question was broad enough that a few of the panelists chimed in to give their thoughts. And anyone can see the Youtube and Dailymotion.com links to see that whole exchange at The Black Panel.



The Black Panel 2008

David L. "Money Train" Watts

Method Man

And after the first Black Panel 2008 we covered The Black Panel #2. which was about BET Animation and Marvel and BET's new Hannibal and Black Panther animated series. We filmed that too and I had to chase down Reggie Hudlin afterwards to get a quick quote, a photo together and hand him a copy of our groundbreaking Hip-Hop documentary ***The Good, The Bad and The Bling*** to show him a sample of our work as journalists. To this day I have no idea why Black Panther or Hannibal never got launched on BET. I would hope that even after BET fired Reggie they would still put those high quality animated series on their network.

When The Black Panel #2 finished, myself and my trusting cameraman Auggie Cavanagh with Leaky Garage Productions interviewed Method Man after his signing for his new comic book called Method Man. I have to give props to Meth's manager Shauna Garr for hooking us up with the interview. Meth's book is quite unique because his comic book character named Peerless is a direct descendant of the Bible's Cain and uses his spiritual originated super powers to vanquish demons and biblical evil spirits. I wish I had read Meth's comic book first before I interviewed him because I would have asked him more details about his personal spiritual and religious beliefs and how they shaped the development of his first comic book.





Method Man Autograph Signing Session Method Man Comic Book Method Man, Money Train & Meth's Artists

And to be fair this was our first time covering Comic-Con as press, so we were greatly impressed by the size and scope of the event. Looking back I would have actually preferred to have arrived on Thursday and had more time to plan out what we would be doing. When one covers a large event like Cannes, Sundance or CE3 once than it is much easier to cover it again as press the second time. But we still managed to film over 7 hours covering other minority comic book artists and other general Comic-Con panels, booths, costumed dressed attendees and artists.

And we also covered events outside Comic-Con 2008 like an outside preview screening of **Fringe** and a special Comic-Con 2008 screening of **Tropic Thunder**. I just wore my Comic-Con 2008 **Fringe** t-shirt I got at the Comic-Con preview at a Pomona College Hip-Hop concert we were promoting. And many of the students told me that **Fringe** was their favorite show. When we left Comic-Con 2008 we were dead tired from the whole experience. And we look forward to coming back in 2009. Our MySpace link to <http://tinyurl.com/lclslijv> has all the photos we took in 2008. And I should add that for almost every photo there is corresponding video footage. I wish we posted all seven hours of footage we covered at Comic-Con International 2008.

One must also understand that Comic-Con does not have any requirement of returning journalists to submit their past articles, photo galleries or video links. They asked for nothing from me as a journalist, so I was not overly worried about my chances of getting in again. So I sent a note to the Comic-Con press office inquiring on the status of my letter. I get an e-mail back from Comic-Con press not answering my question, but offering me a general, but valid ID and password to login to the Comic-Con 2009 media section on their Web site. But I knew just being able to login to the media section did not mean I was approved to cover Comic-Con 2009.

So I hit the press office again for clarification of my status. A few hours later I get an e-mail back from the Comic-Con publicist and says flat out that due to internal capacity issues" at this year at Comic-Con 2009 we would not be able to accommodate FuTurX.com and Hiphopbattle.com a press pass again. It was kinda weird at Comic-Con 2008 seeing some of the world's biggest game publishers like THQ, Konami and Xbox crammed into small booths on the far wall of the Comic-Con Exhibition Hall. There really is not enough space at the San Diego Convention Center for any type of real expansion of Comic-Con. When I was there last summer



I heard some small talk among attendees about Comic-Con moving to Las Vegas. I seriously doubt that would ever happen. But now that E3 Expo is fully back the top video game brands might feel less of a need to be at Comic-Con like in the past.

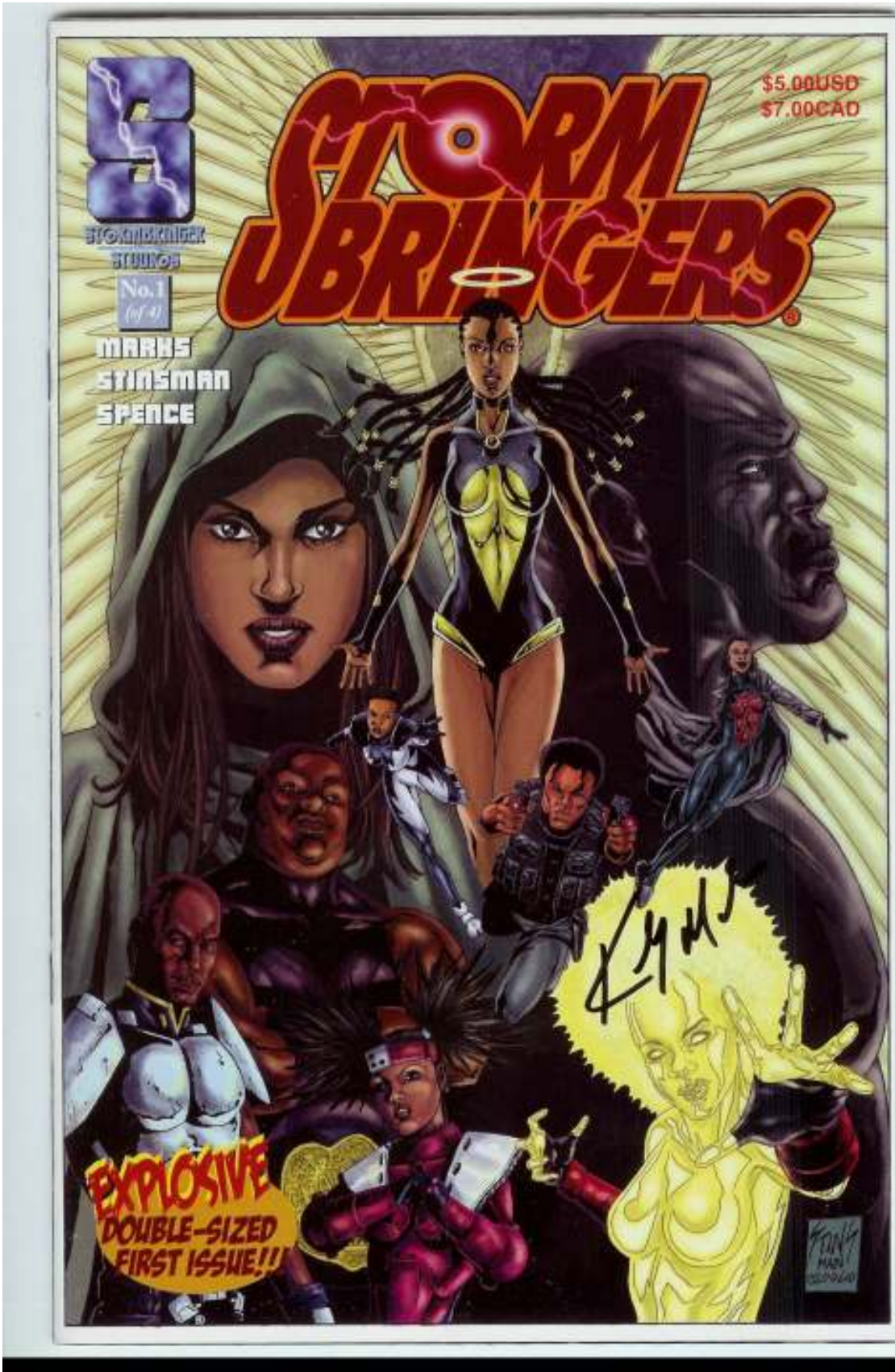
But continuing with my story: I quickly fired back an e-mail to the Comic-Con 2009 publicist asking how could the reserved media space capacity at Comic-Con 2009 be already maxed out yet on www.comic-con.org returning and new journalists still could submit their press request applications. And there was no explanation or rationale on why there was sudden cap on returning journalists over new applicants that had never covered Comic-Con before. I didn't get this excuse at all and challenged that irrational premise in a follow-up e-mail.

Then the next day I get a note from someone in the Comic-Con 2009 PR office that now said that the new and expanded reason why we were being denied a press pass as returning journalists was because they sat around their office and reviewed Hiphopbattle.com. They saw our Comic-Con 2008 photo gallery and no articles and thus concluded that was not enough to justify us being a returning journalist. And they also said I personally did not meet Comic-Con's PR standard as a "real" journalist. I was more of a "creative" type. This last personal insult was Comic-Con saying they had to weed out the undesirables who abuse their press status. By this time when I got this e-mail back from the Comic-Con PR office I could barely contain my anger. Because I've been down this exact path before when someone has looked at Hiphopbattle.com and assumed that we didn't matter. I can clearly remember a few years ago I was applying as first time press to cover ad:tech San Francisco and the press staff coordinator denied us as press because he stated after reviewing Hiphopbattle.com that:

"I'm afraid we're going to have to pass on this request as it does not sound like ad:tech is an appropriate venue for your audience."

Translation: the ad:tech San Francisco press staff coordinator glanced at our Hiphopbattle.com Web site and easily thought our black, minority or urban audience were not sophisticated enough or smart enough to understand a possible ad:tech press article or video report about all the difficult complexities of the great and mysterious Advertising Industry. Comic-Con is a major event, but it is not bigger than Sundance, Cannes, E3 Expo 2006, CES, or Toronto Film Festival that we covered before as online press for FuTurXTV.com and Hiphopbattle.com.

Anyway, after I got the Comic-Con 2009 PR office e-mail that hastily reviewed Hiphopbattle.com and re-confirmed our rejection as press for Comic-Con 2009. I of course sent back a lengthy note demanding to know if Comic-Con press had a standard policy to check or review the past coverage or lack of coverage from all returning 3,000 journalists? I then gave the Comic-Con 2009 publicists and press staff several links to all the other viral ways we promoted our photo and video coverage of Comic-Con 2008. FuTurXTV.com's Youtube, Daily Motion, Bebo, MySpace, Facebook pages and even on our Zannel.com mobile social network.



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And if I cover a media, marketing or film event and have video footage I typically do not post an article. I did not take any filming at this year's E3 Expo, so I have to write an article to document my experiences. And also my Hiphopbattle.com editor can choose whether to post video clips or just a photo gallery. That's why I make sure to spread out my Comic-Con 2008 video coverage on multiple fronts than merely relying on just Hiphopbattle.com. But after all that jumping through hoops with the Comic-Con International PR office we were still denied press to Comic-Con 2009.

One would think that now is the golden time to be a minority journalist with the election of Barack Obama. But with the recent closing of the black search engine Rushmoredrive.com, the closing of Vibe magazine and several U.S. black owned newspapers, radio stations and TV stations on the verge of going under I would say the opposite. There really is no practical reason for many white people to accept that we still need minority news outlets when we have an African-American president. But that sentiment is only valid if one believed that the mainstream news media can adequately cover every news story from a majority and minority standpoint. The media cannot do that. When a month ago there is a "supposed" nationwide poll by NBC/Newsweek, Gallup or Wall Street that says that Barack Obama has a 65 + favorable rating then all the stories were saying how great a job he was doing.

Then exactly one month later those same polls say Obama positive job rating has dipped down to below 49 points. And now Obama's grand agenda and initiatives are in jeopardy. And now a month later nothing that Obama wants to get done on health care will happen. But what I know is that many black people, who are extremely confident that Obama is doing a good job, do not suddenly a month later think he is failing. The true purpose of minority journalists is to not to take a sudden snap poll in the African-American community on a particular economic or social national issue and then pretend that the results apply to all non-minorities. Only the mainstream media gets to play that game. It is to their advantage to build up Obama one month and then tear him down the next. Cable news outlet can internally generate lots of discussions and reports based on polls that have no data or input from minorities.

So in the end I will have to write back to our Youtube subscriber **popppfresh1** and tell him that I will do my best to contact the moderator and panelists on The Black Panel 2009. And I even have to wonder how long Comic-Con will keep hosting The Black Panel in the Obama Era when they have a quota on how many minority journalists or news outlets are allowed get press passes. Or when they try and demean minority journalists like myself by saying we are "creative" types. Hopefully, I'll get to go cover Comic-Con International 2010, but if FuTurXTV.com & Hiphopbattle.com doesn't get approved again for whatever lame reason I still have plenty of memories and great video footage from Comic-Con International 2008.

Sincerely,

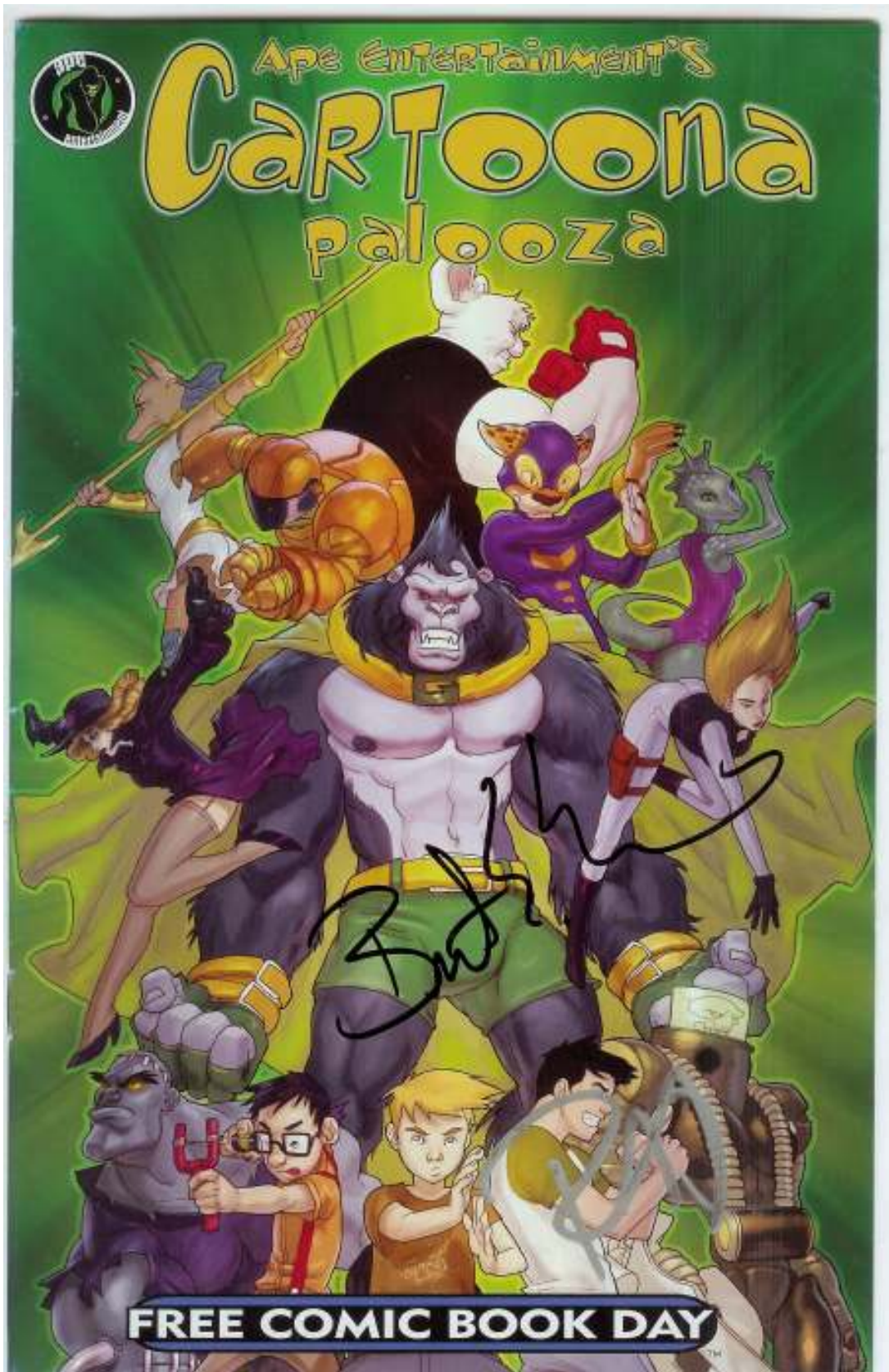
David L. Watts aka Money Train

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Hiphopbattle.com



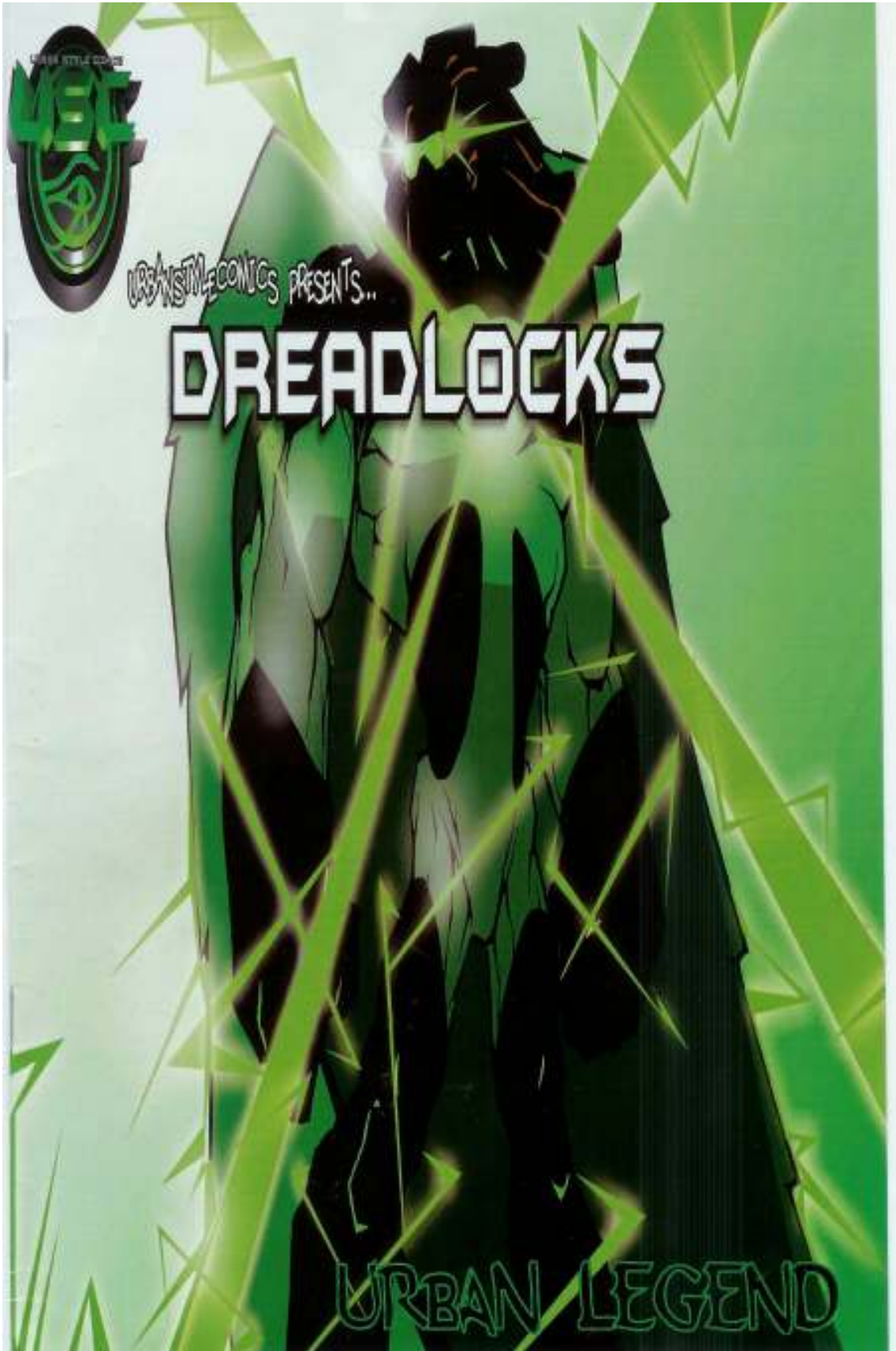
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CHOPPER ZOMBIE

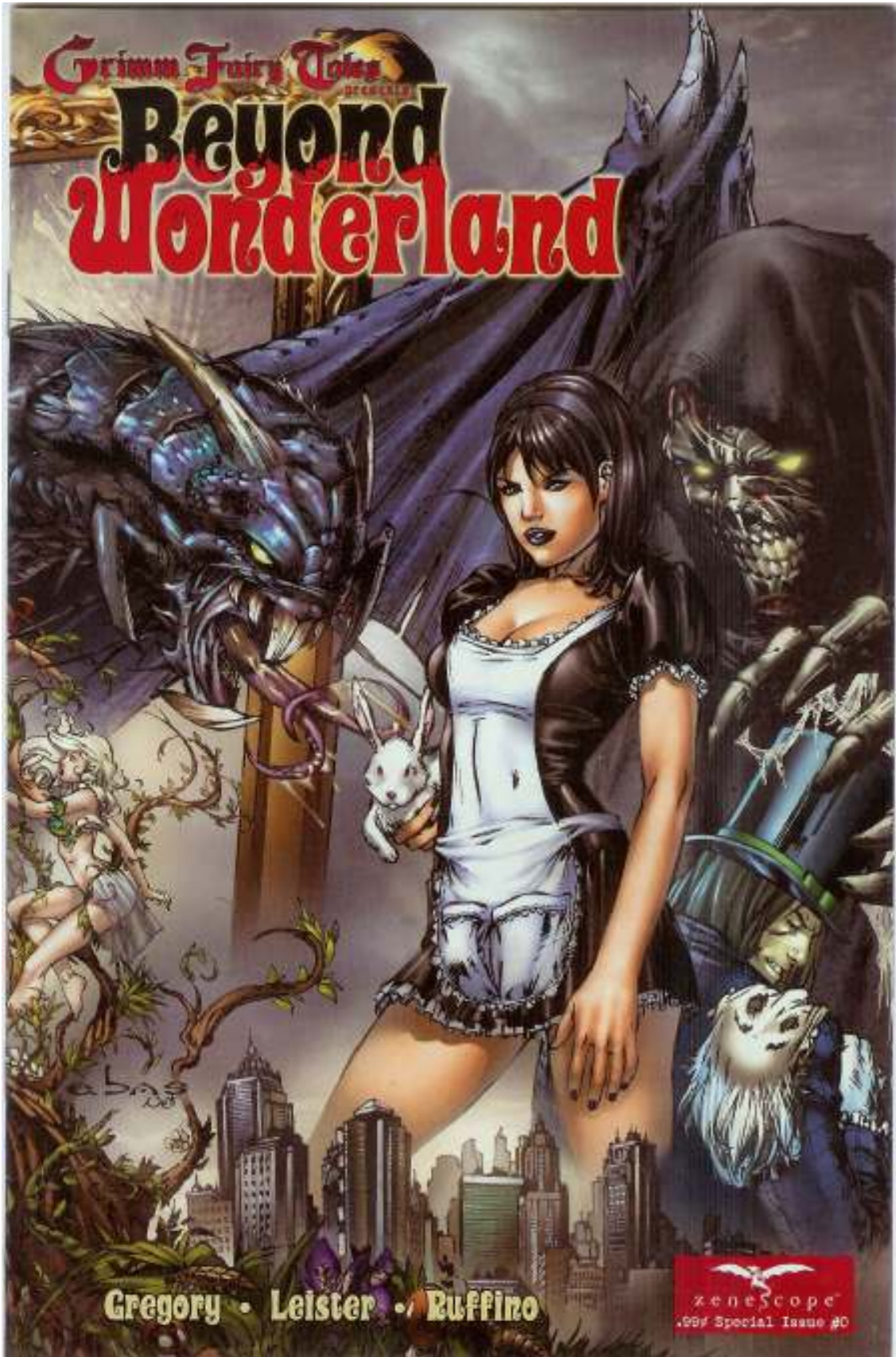
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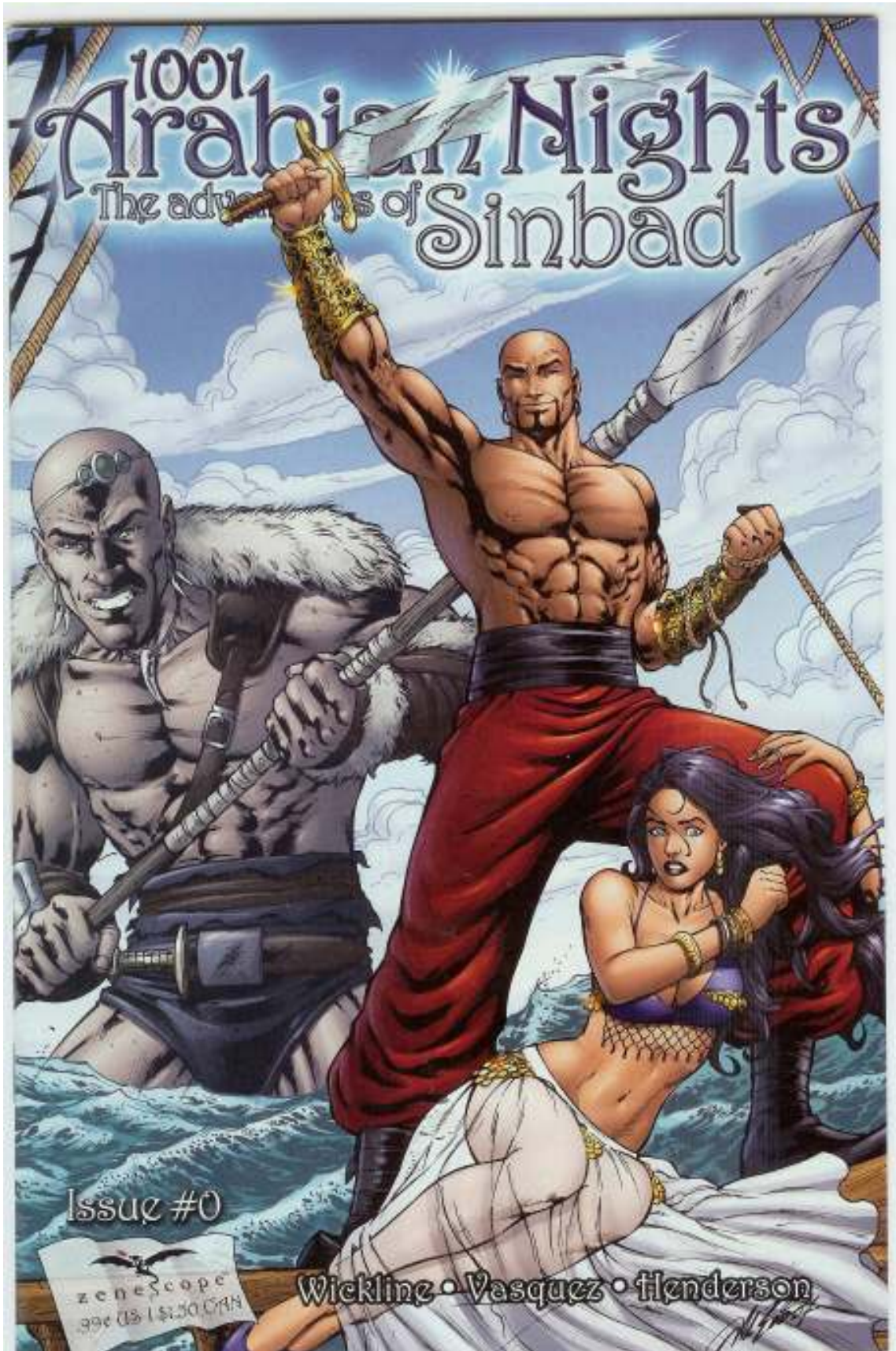
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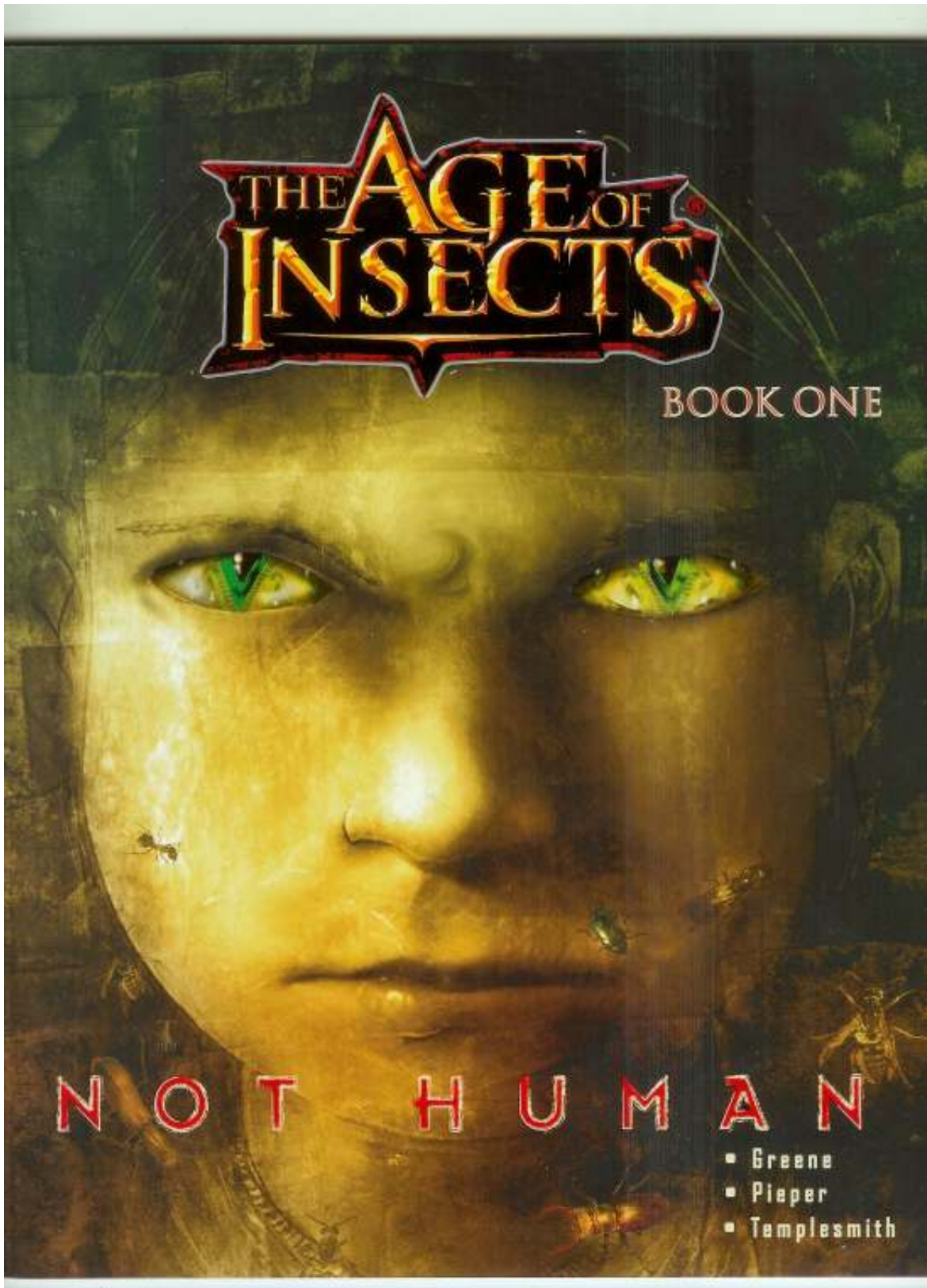
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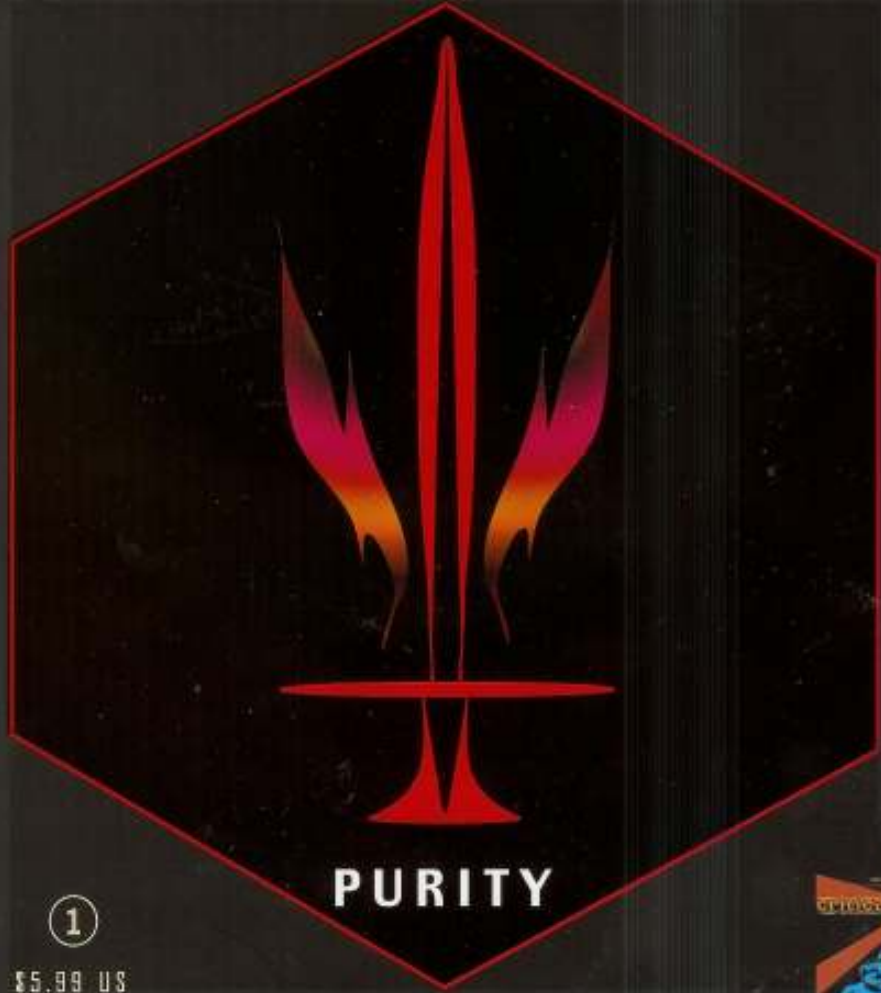
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