

Dear Dave.

First off, let me say (3 years after the fact), congratulations on reaching 300. Month after month Cerebus had been the highlight of my comic book buying experience. Many of the comics currently on the shelf, I quickly lose interest with, primarily because, though they may be a fun comic book romp, rarely do they have anything of substance to say, or insight to offer. It's obvious they are designed as entertainment time wasters and ad filler, rather than as thought provoking art. Cerebus is everything that comics *should* be, and you and Gerhard have set the watermark for everything I creatively aspire to. Yes, Cerebus is a tough act to follow.

I am apologetic for not having gotten one of these fan letters out to you sooner. When writing one of these, the sheer amount of things to say spirals out of control to the point where wrapping words around it all becomes incomprehensible. There are numerous pages of first draft letters that have been started, and then ultimately abandoned, due to my inability to get thoughts in proper order and put into words (a severe handicap for someone who wants to eventually turn creating comics into a full time job). In fact this letter came dangerously close to suffering the same fate. There is too much to say, and anything written has seemed inadequate. I mean seriously, what can *I* say to *Dave Sim*? *THE Dave Sim. Creator of Cerebus, Godfather of Self-Publishing, The Evil Misogynist, The Phira King of Comics!* And is it worth wasting Dave Sim's time with this? Before answering that...

Where to begin...

Never had I realized, before starting my own comic, how important it is to get feedback in the form of comments and letters. I understand now, when you talk about reading into the record for history, and like the Following Cerebus guys talking of their lackluster response, compared to *Wrapped In Plastic*:

*As was the case with Cerebus and as is the case with the Blog & Mail, there's virtually no response to Following Cerebus so all content questions tend to be guesswork. I think it creeps Craig out a little bit since he got a lot more response to Wrapped in Plastic and Spectrum but I told him it's just like an old Western: "Maybe TOO quiet." But, what are you going to do? You keep moving forward and if a horde of Apaches suddenly descend on you, you deal with that when you get there.*

Blogandmail #129 (January 18th, 2007)

As a reader and fan, I can say that for myself, I never felt (*sic*) a need to write in. Partially due to the fact that what interests me the most is the weighty subject matter that is over my head and/or that I haven't spent a sufficient amount of time pondering over to the point where I have a solid opinion, and can communicate on the matter (especially an opinion fit to see in print). Instead, I am content to simply absorb and digest the work as a whole.

My view was always that the creator of a given work does not require a fanboy response, (especially/specifically my fanboy response) and that the given work will generate a momentum of it's own to continue.

Which is still, I think, true and accurate.

However, in creating my own comic, I now understand that without feedback, without that fanboy response, it feels (*sic*) as though your voice is being lost into the void.

“Hello? Is anyone out there? What I am I doing here spending hours a day slaving over this if no one is listening anyway? Hell-oo? Someone has got to be out there... anyone? Even an echo would be nice... can I get an echo? No? I guess it's just myself here. Okay then... here's one to read into the record of history...”

Yeah. I get that.

Anyway, let me just rapid fire here, and say some of the things I've been meaning/wanting to say for years.

Starting with Cerebus.

My first issue of Cerebus was Mothers & Daughters #16, issue #166. The one with Cerebus sleeping with the chessboard on the cover. Add me to the legions of classic new Cerebus readers that opened the book saying "I had no idea what was going on, but I was hooked."

On my first back issue buying binge, I picked up Cerebus #111 and #116 containing the beginnings of the Creator's Rights discussion, which reinforced a lot of hunches I already had, even at that young age. When I was in high-school I contacted United Features Syndicate to see what the process was for getting a newspaper strip, and after reading the legal forms, I knew "*Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.*"

Mothers & Daughters covered my college years. It was an eye opening experience watching the guide to self-publishing unfold. As for issue 186, I never did understand the backlash. The only thing that disturbed me at the time was that it seemed as though Aardvark Comment was spilling over into Cerebus "The Comic". However I did observe it as being an interesting artistic experiment in the story, especially after reading Minds and seeing how Reads fit into the novel as a whole. The gender views confirmed a lot of my own hunches, and provided me with an endless amount of ammunition to defend my own stance on the subject.

I enjoyed (and agreed) with Tangent in Cerebus #265. At my first time of reading, I had lived my first four years of marriage, where I had blissfully managed to avoid (and continue to avoid I might add) many of the "impossible things to believe before breakfast" (admittedly, number 5, at times, needs to be refuted). In recently re-reading

the essay, I am surprised that it ever received the reaction that it did. The only caveats I had over any of it were minor ones relating to some allegorical stories used too back up the overall thesis of the essay. Minor stuff, that isn't worth mentioning as it would take away from the vast bulk I agreed with.

Cerebus 300. What can I say. A landmark in my life as a comic book fan, picking up that issue on March 10, 2004 from Comic Relief in Berkeley. It was a milestone experience. For years I had told myself that I would make my way on a pilgrimage (for lack of a better word) to Kitchener, to be there for the Cerebus 300 bash! But instead? Nothing. Silence. Honestly, I was in shock at the lack of fanfare surrounding Cerebus 300. This was both disturbing and disappointing.

Often I've wondered what degree of ostracism you've received from the comic book community. When I read some of your comments, I can't help but think "he's gotta be exaggerating". Then, things pop up, either in print, or online, with the token disclaimer or pot-shot that makes me think "You know what? Maybe Dave isn't exaggerating after all...". I mean, it baffles my mind. It's comics. Do people really feel *that* threatened by these ideas? By this commentary on life? Besides, what happened to the right to freedom of speech? I know that feminists are collectivists by nature, group consciousness, it's a part of the feminine psyche. But we're not just talking females here. These are comic fans. %90 male. This baffles me.

I thought your views on gender got more accurate as the series progressed. One of my favorite gender themes in Cerebus is Fruitcake Park, an idea, to this day, that I can't get out of my head as I walk down the streets of Toronto, thinking "*she* belongs in fruitcake park... *she* belongs in fruitcake park". I was also interested in the idea of a model wife in Latter Days. Which was always a caveat I had about the gender views presented up until then. However Latter Days cleared things up for me and put us on the same page (or at least how I perceive it).

I have always been justifiably weary of women, and especially so in choosing a mate. Interesting that it was a first generation Canadian, with an old-school European father (despite a liberal thinking European mother). My hunch was always that it would take a foreigner to dodge the typical North American mentality. As my experience was that typical North Americans always bothered me.

In my attempt to understand marriage, (before getting married), I read through the bible to try and get God's take on the whole marriage thing. Figuring if there is a definitive view on anything, THE place to start is scripture. What I found (and was surprised by) was it had nothing to do with love, as is told to us by society. What it had to do with was children (Leviticus 21:15, Deuteronomy 25:6, Jeremiah 29:6, Malachi 2:15, 1 Corinthians 7:14, 1 Timothy 5:14). That was interesting to me.

I consider myself blessed, as a man, married with children, to have a wife that has chosen to make a stand against the grain of current society, and place the care and upbringing of our children as her top priority, as a full time mother. She also is a rarity who sees the

difference between the gender specific roles of mother and father. In a day and age where socialist day care is the expected norm, she is quick to point out that the feminist ideal of an “independent woman” working mother is an oxymoron. A mother using day care to raise her children, is NOT independent. As a result of her views, my wife has trouble socializing with other women who do put their careers above their children's upbringing. The opposition she encounters from other “mothers” who don't see things like pre-kindergarten as a socialist form of daycare. And Montessori schools as being little more than a cash-grab on working parents naive enough to think it will better their children's education.

To mothers who say “I'm going back to work because I love my job” she is quick to point out that they can't say “I'm NOT going back to work because I love my children”, and they don't understand that being a mother should be their most important job.

In an age where 2 income families are the norm, it's effect on society is to simply raise the cost of living to the point where 2 income become *required*. Corporations win by getting more labourers. Mom and Dad win by getting more spending money. The ones who pay for all this are children who end up without proper parental supervision and guidance. And people wonder why our society is in such a sordid state.

Turning to politics...

My interest, or “quest” to unravel politics is a part of my greater personal quest for truth. To make sense of the world we live in.

As of late, I find myself agreeing with many ultra right-wing views (as I perceive them) specifically regarding family, and religion. The problem I see with capitalism in it's current state is that people are reduced to serfs. You have to turn no further than to mainstream comics to see how the capitalist system pillages it's workers. Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't that par for the course in right wing business?

I am split on what is best for an economic system.  
However I am certain that a non-fiat currency is a good start.

I have been reading a lot of anarchist literature, some of which I find agreeable.  
Specifically:

*Chomsky, noting that mainstream democratic principles date back hundreds of years, said it was the corporatization of America at the turn of the century that led to the repression of fundamental democratic principles. Wage labor may be a staple of our economy, he said, but the concept of selling a worker's time to a boss is a form of slavery. "Those who work in the mills should own and run them."*

In fact, it seems to me that the Aardvark-Vanaheim business model borders on the verge of anarchism as described above. Though I'm sure you'd disagree with the semantics, my mind can't grasp it any other way.

Now, the problem I see with anarchy as a foundation for society is that there is no motivation for people to pull their own weight in society. So chances are you will end up with a society of free loaders. Not to mention the feminism (destruction of the family unit), and atheism that automatically get attached to it.

Also, as you said on the blogandmail #143 (February 1st, 2007)

*The problem, of course, is refuting the counter-revolutionary-charge of mindless jingoism. And it seems to me the way to do that is to say, "Well, just for the sake of argument let's say that Barbra Streisand and Michael Moore are right. It's really that bad. The United States in toto is this entirely loathsome and irredeemable mess and the central source and catalyst for everything that's wrong in the world. What do they suggest instead?" And it seems to me that their suggestion is always really good parties with lots of interesting people and witty conversation and composting and trying to live the way the Indians did before Europeans came to this continent. And the implicit point (to me, anyway) is that they misunderstand what the question is in the first place. What do they suggest should be done on a global scale? And the answer is the same: All countries and all governments should be having really good parties with lots of interesting people and witty conversation and composting and trying to live the way the Indians did before Europeans came to this continent.*

This is an astute comment, and there is really no arguing it.

Still, my own political views are becoming polarized as a Yin Yang between far right conservatism and far left anarchy as I cling to the ideas I perceive as truth. Placing me, so far as I can tell, somewhere outside of the whole political spectrum. Though, as I try to better understand all of this, ultimately I am thinking that it is less about left and right wing politics and more about morality. I view our current political structure as a one party system masquerading as a two party system. This makes me think that the issues are less about left and right wing politics, and more about what is the greatest benefit to society? What is morally right? What is the will of God? I can't shake the notion that current world politics are in place to make the rich, richer, and to create a control system to suppress the rest of the world population. The conflict in human society, as I see it, really comes down to class war.

Left-Right politics is a lower chessboard.

The *real* game is happening on a chessboard much higher.

Oh, and before I go any further, let me clarify right now, for the record, that I despise Liberal thinking, and their netherworld of gray areas.

Living in the Socialist Republic of Canada, this is made crystal clear, in the animation industry where the studios are more interested in government handouts than they are in running an animation studio. As a result, Canadian animators get bottom of the barrel projects where the horribly mismanaged production companies are looking to get work made on the cheap. The projects lacking a creative vision come to Canada. Then, add to that inexperienced women in high positions in production management, and you get an unbearable working condition. Yet I digress...

Now the BIG notable difference where I *know* our views clash and conflict in politics comes down to the Bush Administration, and the War in Iraq. My point of contention is; I think the ultimate intentions of the Bush Administration were disingenuous and dishonorable. The morality behind the Iraq war I strongly disagree with, on the grounds that 9-11 was an inside job to create a false pretext for war. All of the facts and evidence I encounter keeps pointing me back to the same things. And I don't see this as a "Left" vs. "Right" issue, but rather the elite ruling class attempting to control the world resources. Or, a "Top" vs. "Bottom" issue. 9-11 is the catalyst for war that the think tanks have been dreaming up for decades. Their "New Peal Harbor", as called for by the Project For A New American Century (Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century pg. 51). As well, many of the events we witnessed in 2001 were spelled out in the 1962 Operation Northwoods Documents -

James Bamford summarized Operation Northwoods in his *Body of Secrets* as follows:

*Operation Northwoods, which had the written approval of the Chairman and every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for innocent people to be shot on American streets; for boats carrying refugees fleeing Cuba to be sunk on the high seas; for a wave of violent terrorism to be launched in Washington, D.C., Miami, and elsewhere. People would be framed for bombings they did not commit; planes would be hijacked. Using phony evidence, all of it would be blamed on Castro, thus giving Lemnitzer and his cabal the excuse, as well as the public and international backing, they needed to launch their war.*

It plays out as a mob protection racket. There is really no other way to describe it. Which brings me to the idea that our politics are being run by international gangsters.

The following is a quote from Michael Ruppert, which best sums up the idea:

*People talk to me about the issue of republican versus democrat as if they don't get it. And I say; look, here's the way you get it. It's organized crime. All you do is you call the republican's the Genoveses and you call the democrats the Gambinos. The people at the top, they treat it like a crap game, like it's their crap game, like they're making lots of money. Occasionally somebody at the table shoots each other. But the moment*

*anything threatens their crap game, they all unite to protect it. They're both controlled by the same financial economic corporate interests.*

In trying to express that same idea, I ended up creating the following image for my blog:



I wrote on the Cerebus Yahoo! Board that I was curious as to your views on the Saddam Hussein execution, as I viewed the invasion and execution, in light of the above, as a mob hit. Below is a snippet from my comments.

*What bothers me about all of this isn't the death penalty, or the fact that Saddam Hussein probably deserved a death sentence, but rather, in my opinion, the whole thing comes across more as a Mafia hit.*

*In the 1980's, top officials in the Reagan administration saw Saddam as a useful surrogate. After Rumsfeld's visit to Baghdad in 1983, U.S. intelligence began supplying the Iraqi dictator with satellite photos showing Iranian deployments, tanks and other military hardware, and bacteria cultures to make biological weapons, including anthrax. The United States backed Saddam's armies with military intelligence, economic aid and covert supplies of munitions.*  
[http://www.truthout.org/docs\\_02/09.18A.neswk.us.iraq.htm](http://www.truthout.org/docs_02/09.18A.neswk.us.iraq.htm)

*I'm really curious what Dave's view is on this. Especially given the*

*"We Got Him" photo and all.*

*Given the current government of Iraq was essentially created by the United States and its coalition allies, I saw the Saddam trial as them just rubbing his nose in it.*

*If it was a UN trial, that would be a different story...*

*This brings us to the crux of the problem I have with death penalties. While I certainly think there are evil people in the world deserving of death (Saddam Hussein being a good candidate), I have little faith in human institutions making morally correct "life or death" judgments.*

*In regards to my earlier "mob hit" comments, (which is the big problem I have with this particular execution). The way I see it is this: It is a fact Saddam was being used as an asset by the Reaganites against Iran (Bush I was Vice President at the time). Then in recent years he became a liability, so they whacked him. We've seen that story over and over again on The Sopranos. Only this story is on a global scale.*

*"In your face!" "Don't mess with Texas!". Et al.*

My problem with the current politics in general continues with Corporate welfare, our fiat economic system, and especially the World Bank, Secret societies such as the Yale Skull & Bones Society, and it's offshoot Bohemian Grove (where they, among other things, practice the pagan Cremation of Care ritual). Add to that, the current trend of selling out the country, thus gradually lowering us towards third world status, the effect is chilling.

I was debating whether I should send you some additional information regarding the above, and in the end, decided not to. Though I decided that I *would* send you some additional information regarding the Twin Towers and Norad (which I see as the smoking gun in the 9-11 conspiracy) and as a bonus, a little article on Hillary Clinton. Take them for what they are, and while these internet printouts are *not* the extent of my research, they do nicely sum up my major views or objections to the official White House story. I am guessing that others have most likely already sent you this information, or at the very least, that you are not at all interested in reading it. However, since all my research keeps sending me back to these points, and the administration has not addressed these points sufficiently to the public, they have been included here.

I'd like to challenge you on the 9-11 and Gulf War issues, because that's one of the few, if not only, areas of thought where I outright disagree with your thinking.

And hey, if your thinking is right, then I'd like to be convinced!  
And if my thinking is right, well then maybe I can convince you.  
(or course, probably not in this letter...)

So that is my thinking on politics.

Go ahead and rip into it.

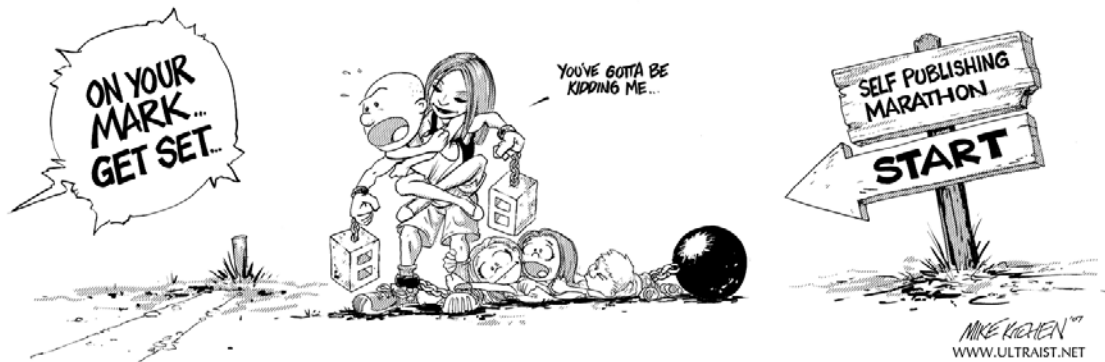
*“The universe rings true wherever you fairly test it.”*

C.S. Lewis – Surprised by Joy.

Moving on to comics...

Within the next few years, my plan is to attempt doing my black and white self published funny pages full time. Of course, I've been planning this for years, while dabbling in the Spy Guy one-shots. Currently I am running about 3 years behind schedule. God knows if in the end it will be at all successful enough to make a full time job out of it or not, but it's worth a shot. The secondary plan is to, at the very least, leave behind a stack of newsprint funny pages when I'm dead. Either way, it's a doable goal. The next comic I make is Spy Guy #1 of the unlimited series. We'll see what happens.

I have always been hesitant in sending these comics to you, as they are still amateurish. Admittedly, not ready for “prime time”. So I didn't want to waste your time with them, as I'm assuming you get your fair share of amateurish indy books. I know I have a long way to go (on page 80 or so, of my 2000 bad pages, yeah – long way to go). The catch 22 being; to reach a professional quality level, I need to get my 2000 bad pages out of my system, meaning I need to spend more time drawing comics, meaning I need to make money, meaning I need to get good. A problem compounded by being a husband and father who is pigeon holed into clicking away at a computer instead of honing my skills as an artist. But you knew that already.



This comic was inspired while writing this letter.

It was mostly drawn in the US Embassy.

The rest was finished on the GO Train, and then digitized in my basement.

Cerebus had prepped me for what marriage would do to my comic book plans. The Pro-Con speech spelled it out nicely. Of course, I never would have dreamed that it would be 10 years of set backs. All you can do is to keep plugging away at it. Like Chinese water torture. Drip, drip, drip.

Comics was something I used to think of as a young man's game. However with the acceleration of time, I am now forced to look at comics from a different perspective. Yes, at this rate, taking a shot at comics for me will have to be looked at as my own personal "old man's game". Still, I consider it a game worth playing.

The Sunday Jan. 21 edition of the Blog and Mail really hit home for me. Starting with the prayer bit, followed by Steve Peters' story about the car and commuting, and God's will. I've been suffering a GO Train commute everyday from Burlington to Toronto, for the past 2.5 years. Which has been a time killer for my personal work. The Spy Guy webcomic has been an attempt to make use of that time to hone my comic books skills. Drawn primarily on the GO Train, the webcomic I am working on is being done in the spirit of getting faster, and more productive, and in an attempt to get some more bad drawings out of my system. I am beginning to notice a positive effect on my current Spud & Harry pages.

In addition to that, earlier this week I had the "one" "two" punch of being scolded by the women of production management for having a "bad work ethic" (translates into "not communicating with them, and feeling like I'm not sensitive to their needs"- huh?), and at the same time having an old friend from Montreal contacting me, and offering me a \$10K pay increase to work from home (on a temporary project). The switch would save me 4 hours a day. A lot of comic can be drawn in 4 hours a day.

Which results in the trade off: Security+slavery for independence+insecurity. An idea that ironically happens to be the key theme of Spy Guy #1. Coincidence?

The idea this could be God's will would not have resonated with me, if the idea had not been reinforced by the Sunday edition of Blog and Mail.

I'd be interested to hear more of your thoughts on prayer, because that is something I have been intellectually struggling with.

My last experience with regular prayer was back in my teens. Ultimately I abandoned it, because I found myself falling into the trap of "God, I'll be really good if you do this for me." Which, even at the time, I found to be a dangerous and self-destructive habit. Prayer is a practice I've been meaning to pick up ever since, though haven't managed to find a system that works for me. That is intellectually sound, and doesn't fall into the above trap. How did you come up with your prayer? Any suggestions would be appreciated.

As for your latest endeavors...

The two discussions I am finding the most interesting are the Creator's Rights debate and the religious Discussions. Figures, they are the two that most seem uninterested in. Regarding the Creative Manifesto II, I am still interested in discussing The Audience

portion, though I will save that for a separate letter (as this one has predictably spiraled out of control).

I don't want to waste any more of your time. It would be better spent on your secret project and Gospel of Mark commentaries. Both of which I am looking forward to. It's been too long since we've seen a comic by Dave Sim. Immediately, I wanted to read the politically incorrect 1960s Marvel Comics parody. So, yeah! Keep going with it! There are some of us that won't hate your guts for it.

I appreciate all that you've done for both comics, and for the intellectual quest for truth.

You said on the Friday January 19 Blog and Mail:

*No one really pays attention to anything that we're saying so it's all "reading into the record" at this point. It's a matter of "putting things right".*

However that's not true. What you need to know is that your words do resonate with readers in this generation. What that number is, I can't tell you. However I can say for certain that I am one of them. I look forward to your future endeavors.

Keep fighting the good fight.

Your fan.

Mike Kitchen.

AMMENDUM:

I just heard about Gerhard leaving Aardvark-Vanaheim. I've always considered the Dave'n'Ger's business partnership as the pinnacle of an artistic collaboration.

The inner workings of Aardvark-Vanaheim is something I've always been interested in, however with this recent development, I'm all the more curious about what happened, and how things will be resolved. I was also thinking that this would be an article (if not full issue) I'd like to read in Following Cerebus.

Best of wishes to you both.