



CulturePulp

PDX culture in a box (several small boxes, actually)

words & pix by M.E. RUSSELL and KHRIS SODEN; Photoshoppin' by CHAD ESSLEY

**THE DATE: FRIDAY, JAN. 21. THE INTERVIEWEE:
"CITY OF ROSES" CARTOONIST KHRIS SODEN, 29.**

YOU MAY NOT KNOW THIS, BUT "CULTUREPULP" ISN'T THE ONLY NONFICTION COMIC PRODUCED IN PORTLAND!

OR THE FIRST.

OR THE BEST-DRAWN.

(OR THE ONLY ONE WITH FOOTNOTES.)

AHEM!

NO, I WORK ETERNALLY IN THE SHADOW OF MR. KHRIS SODEN, WHO DRAWS "CITY OF ROSES" -

- A COMIC STRIP DRAMATIZING REAL EVENTS IN PORTLAND HISTORY!

HI.

CulturePulp 021: HistoryPulp!

SODEN'S STRIP IS HARD TO FIND.

IT APPEARED IN THE VERY BACK OF THE ORGAN - AN ART-CRIT BROADSHEET THAT PUT OUT ITS FINAL ISSUE THIS WINTER.

FOR MY MONEY, "CITY OF ROSES" WAS THE COOLEST THING IN IT.

LITERATE, ECCENTRIC, WELL-RESEARCHED AND HANDSOMELY DRAWN!

THANKS.

"SODEN'S TOPICS HAVE INCLUDED JOHN COUCH'S ARRIVAL IN OREGON CITY ..."



"BLOODY SAILOR RIOTS ..."

"THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT..."

THE ORIGIN OF PORTLAND'S "STUMPTOWN" NICKNAME ...

... AND THE 19TH-CENTURY OREGONIAN!

I CAN IMAGINE.

THERE'S ABOUT 20-30 HOURS OF RESEARCH AND 18-20 HOURS OF DRAWING IN EACH EPISODE.

SAY I'M DRAWING THE INTERIOR OF A DRY-GOODS STORE. I HAVE TO RESEARCH WHAT SORT OF STUFF THEY'D BE STOCKING ON THE SHELVES!

AND I HAVE TO KNOW WHICH BUILDING GOES WHERE - SO AT HOME, I HAVE RE-CREATED MAPS.

YOU'VE ONLY LIVED HERE FIVE YEARS.

HOW'D YOU GET SO OBSESSED WITH PORTLAND HISTORY?

I REALLY WANTED TO KNOW THE CITY - AND THE EASIEST WAY TO DO THAT IS TO KNOW HOW THE CITY HAPPENED.

MY GATEWAY DRUG WAS EUGENE SNYDER'S BOOK "EARLY PORTLAND: STUMPTOWN TRIUMPHANT."

OKAY, BUT HOW'D YOU GO FROM THAT TO DOING A COMIC?

CHESTER BROWN DID STUDIES OF JESUS' LIFE IN COMIC-BOOK FORM, TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM THE GOSPELS - AND IT REALLY HUMANIZED THESE MYTHIC FIGURES.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT FRANCIS PETTYGROVE OR ASA LOVEJOY, THEY'RE ALMOST ICONIC AT THIS POINT. YOU DON'T THINK OF THEM AS HAVING DAY-TO-DAY LIVES!

HAVE HISTORY NUTS NITPICKED THE DETAILS OF YOUR COMIC?

NO! MAYBE IF I HAD A LARGER AUDIENCE....

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

I'M DOING A FULL-LENGTH COMIC CALLED "CITY OF ROSES: GOD'S MADMAN."

IT'S ABOUT HALL JACKSON KELLEY - THIS GUY WHO TRAVELED TO FORT VANCOUVER PRETTY MUCH ALONE IN THE 1830S.

HE WAS WRACKED BY FEVER AND WANDERED AROUND WHAT'S NOW ST. JOHNS - TALKING ABOUT HOW HE WAS GOING TO BUILD HIS OWN CITY THERE.

IT'S STUFF LIKE THAT THAT JUST FASCINATES ME!

ENDNOTES AND DIGRESSIONS:

1. Would you like to see Khris Soden in full historical geek-out? He's giving a free lecture and slideshow on the history of the Pearl and River Districts (featuring his drawings, plus photos and maps) on Friday (Jan. 28) at 7 p.m. in Swigert Commons at PNCA (1241 NW Johnson St., Portland;

503-226-4391). "It's as close to a live-action 'City of Roses' comic as we're going to get," he promises.

2. Want to see what all the hype's about? You can read several "City of Roses" comics for yourself at www.KhrisSoden.com. I really hope the strip finds a new home, and soon.