

FOREWORD

by Charley Parker

What do high-tech minisubs, a 200-year-old parrot that speaks 70 languages, Christopher Columbus, extinct plesiosaurs and mysterious warriors from a lost undersea civilization have in common?

The answer is Capt'n Eli.

Capt'n Eli, quite simply, is a treat. Artist/writer Jay Piscopo has created a story with its roots in the adventure comics of a simpler age, but flowering in the digital space of the Internet. It's an unexpected treasure.

Ever since I started my web comic, *Argon Zark!*, back in the Internet stone age of 1995, I've watched the community of independent comics grow.

Whether in print or online, independently produced comics have presented their creators with a truly daunting challenge, essentially: "You're on your own, kid, let's see what you can do." There are no boundaries and no rules. Each creator has the freedom to call their own shots and create the best comic they know how to do. This is a great opportunity and also a real test of a creator's skills and dedication.

This is why a comic like Capt'n Eli is such a treat. Jay's pages are brimming with the kind of unpretentious fun and enthusiasm that makes us remember why we liked comics so much when we were kids.

A delightfully improbable mix of Silver Age adventure comics, *Jonny Quest*, *Aquaman*, *The Sub-Mariner*, *seaQuest*, *Star Wars*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and maybe even a little bit of *Argon Zark!*, Jay's undersea sci-fi/fantasy/adventure/mystery stories do what good comics do best: entertain.

The focus is on fun. As soon as we dive into a Capt'n Eli story we're immersed in a sea of underwater mysteries, high-tech ships, flying mini-sub, time travel, lost civilizations, undersea empires, monsters, robots, mysterious foes and equally mysterious allies. In short, a tasty recipe for adventure-comics stew.

The stories unfold through an imaginative blend of solid comics drawing and artfully crafted 3-D modeling and special effects. The popularity of anime has made many of us more comfortable with this kind of stylistic combination, and I'm personally quite fond of it (as anyone who's seen my work knows). I think it's really enjoyable when done well, and Jay Piscopo is one of the few comics artists who does it well.

He also brings that level of attention to the creation of the settings and vessels in the stories. (I love the Hydrons' sinister Nautilus-like subs.) He uses the renderings to advantage to place the action in a realm of science fiction and fantasy landscapes, er... seascapes. But, unlike many comics artists who become fascinated and distracted with their 3-D graphics, Jay knows that the art is always in support of telling a good story.

His emphasis on those timeless values of telling good, entertaining mystery stories works nicely both in print and on the web.

So for those of you who are diving with Capt'n Eli and crew for the first time in this print edition, welcome aboard! And, as Commander X instructs us heartily on the intro page of the Capt'n Eli web site, "Stand by for adventure!"

- Charley Parker, Creator of *Argon Zark!*

www.argonzark.com

