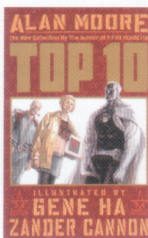
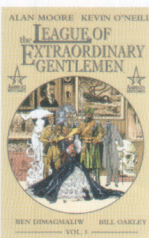
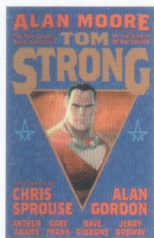


SERAPHIM + SATAN'S MEN:

THE ALAN MOORE INTERVIEW BY ROOSEVELT FRANKLIN



He's the man. One of the most important, influential and innovative voices in the comics game, he first got fame with DC's *Swamp Thing*. Along with Frank Miller's *Dark Knight*, Alan Moore's *Watchmen* marked the moment when comics became darker and more real and is considered a pivotal point in the time line of this art form's history. He's one of those cats who makes you respect the work as a graphic novel, not just something for the kids.

From Hell, his independently published black and white book done with illustrator (and publisher) Eddie Campbell, has been made into a feature film by the Hughes Bros. (*Menace II Society*, *Dead Presidents*, *American Pimp*). YRB was fortunate enough to catch up to the reclusive, media shy author at his countryside home in England for a rare exclusive two-part interview. Roosevelt Franklin, comin' thru...

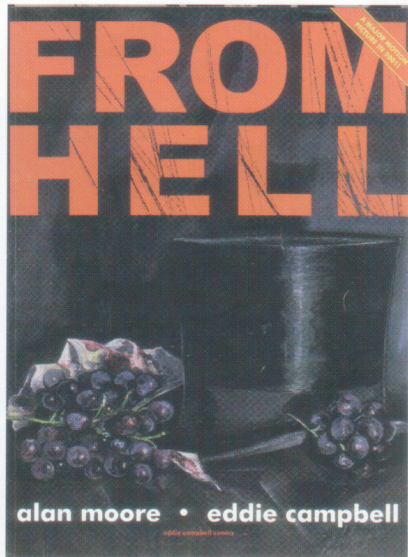
How would you sum up the main idea behind the story *FROM HELL*? Originally, I just wanted to do something about a murder. I didn't even know which murder. It struck me that murders are a human event that have not happened to many of us, but they're big and important enough to make a big impression when they do happen. It struck me that if you look to the murder, if you look to all the threads that led up to it and away from it, it might say something about the human situation.

When I happened upon the Jack the Ripper murders, originally I thought they were too played out to be much use as a subject for the work. After I looked at 'em again, I realized there was a way they could be used to tell quite a big story that involves some very interesting people and interesting times, interesting situations. I just launched into *FROM HELL* along with Eddie Campbell and it was pretty much a voyage of discovery for me as well.

What we tried to do was...I dunno; most murder stories are whodunnits, y'know? And that kinda brings murder down to something like a game of (Clue). Murder is not a middle class parlor game and whodunnits tend to make murder into a game. It struck me that there was something more interesting, not to sort of make a big mystery out of who did the murders, but try to have a look at the murders and see what happened, see all of the little connections and threads that went to make up the murders and the investigation and everything; try and look at the big picture. That was the idea behind *FROM HELL*, and by the time we finished, it turned out to have been a very big picture indeed. It covered quite a lot of ground that I wasn't expecting it to cover when I started out. I was pleased with the end result.

I don't think you can talk about anything without talking about its context. Murders don't just happen in a vacuum. They happen in a society. They've got a relationship to that society. As the murders grow out of the society, murders happening because of the social forces and things like that, the murders feed back into the society, particularly with Jack the Ripper.

This is a figure who, because he was never caught, we never got to find out that he was just a strange disturbed London guy with a bad haircut and a bad relationship with his Mother, y'know? When we catch these serial killers, they're never Hannibal Lecter. They're always these guys who've got something missing. That's what Jack the Ripper presumably would have turned out to be. Because he escaped and was never caught, he can be such a big figure in our mythology. It's like he escaped out of history and into legend. He's this huge dark specter that hangs over our culture. In every Freddy



Krueger movie, every slasher film, there is the spirit of Jack the Ripper hanging over that somehow, even more than a hundred years after the crimes happened. Looking at it, they weren't that big. This is what follows murders. Compared to the serial killers of the 20th Century, he's a loser. Henry Lee Lucas racked up a couple hundred all told; we just had a doctor over here who may have killed up to a thousand women.

Compared to them, JTR's not even front-page news. That's right. And yet, he is the name that will survive when all of those other names have been forgotten. He's something more than front-page news. He's mythology. He's the kind of specter that haunts the human mind. He's the archetypal guy in the shadows with a sharp object.

FROM HELL was an exploration that took me to all those areas. At the end of it, I'd found that I'd ended up answering questions that I'd never set out to ask. The work took me there

Your story basically comes off as a Freemason conspiracy to protect the Crown and the position of English aristocracy in society at the time.

The original story that I based a lot of *FROM HELL* on was the Steven Knight conspiracy theory from his book *JACK THE RIPPER: THE FINAL SOLUTION*. He had all this wonderful stuff about a Masonic conspiracy to protect the crown. He's got all of these incredible characters like William Gull. I chose it not because I thought it was the truest story or even necessarily that likely to be true, but because it seemed to be so consistent. It was interesting, and it was the best story that gave me the best material to work with. For example, if the murderer was one of the other suspects, then you haven't really got a rich world of characters to play with. If the murderer is William Gull, then you've got access to characters like the Elephant Man, the Royal Family, William Blake, etc... There are references to so much stuff that the story's made possible.

Do I really think that the Ripper murders were part of a Masonic conspiracy? The short answer is that I have no idea. There's plenty of evidence to suggest that they weren't. Then again, there are a few little strands of evidence that indicate that maybe, just maybe, they were. What I was interested in rather than discovering the identity of the killer was why are we so fascinated with this case? Why have we built up this complicated mythology around it? What does this say about us? It's not so much about Jack the Ripper; it's about us. He was just one murderer who killed five women, so what? Our continuing obsession with the murders is probably quite revealing about our society and the way we think. If you look at some of the people who contributed to the JTR mythology like in the final appendix, it's a story that's every bit as strange as the murders, like Stephen Knight dying of a previously unsuspected brain tumor while doing a lecture tour about the Masonic conspiracy behind JTR. We were more interested in the story than in establishing who the killer was.

The beginning of the book has a scene with Mr. Lees, the Queen's psychic, where he admits to being a fraud but at the same time realizes many of his false premonitions came true. What did you mean by that and are you a believer in psychic phenomenon?

I wanted Lees to be in there cuz he was an important part of the story. That meant I had to decide whether he was a fraud or the psychic powers were real. The solution I came up with was to say both—he thought he was a fraud.

I remembered an incident from my childhood. I was on holiday with my parents and younger brother in a seaside town in North Hampton. We went to a pub to have a lunchtime snack. The landlord asked my dad if we had seen a little boy because his son had wandered off. Wanting to be the center of attention or something like that, I immediately made up a complete fabrication and said, "Yep, I've seen this little boy. I saw him just as we were walking towards the pub. He was just going around the corner down the road that way. He was wearing a black and red stripe t-shirt and a pair of jeans that were a little too short for him, brown hair, about this tall..." I think had my dad been skilled he would've realized this was a little too detailed to be the truth. I had no idea why I said it, I guess to have a little moment of glory. My dad went to tell the (pub owner), then came back and said, "Oh yeah, you're right. That is his little boy. If he was just going down the road then he must have been off to visit his friend's house, so he needn't worry about it."

At this point, an icy dread started to creep over me cuz I'd been lying. At that point, I thought it must have just been a complete coincidence, but now the (pub owner) thinks his little boy's safe at his friends house when for all I know, he could have been murdered by a maniac. There was no way I could admit I hadn't seen the kid without admitting I had told a pointless lie. Eventually, the kid came back. He had been around visiting his friend's house. I was incredibly relieved but still couldn't tell anybody about it. It was already a completely mad pointless lie and would have sounded even more like one if I'd actually tried to explain it to somebody. I wondered whether that might not give me a key into Lees. This was somebody who felt that he was probably a fraud but madly, everything he said came true.

I've got no reason to disbelieve that psychic flashes, insights and things of that nature are possible. I've had experiences myself which...ya never know. It could all be self-delusion or it could be something real.

When I turned forty a few years back, I finally decided to take the deep plunge and committed myself. I'm very interested in magic and the occult. It's right at the center of everything I do. It's given energy to things that I hadn't suspected before. I've found kind of a charge. I'm certainly doing more work than I've ever done before, so there's a big creative buzz that's involved in that somewhere. A lot of that came about because of *FROM HELL*.

There's a bit where Gull is saying, "The one place where gods and demons exist is in the human mind, where they are real in all their grandeur and monstrosity." I finished writing that and I thought, "Oh shit, that's true. By accident, I've written a true statement and now I'm probably going to have to rearrange my entire life." The one place where you can't argue whether they existed or not is in the human mind and that's the only place they need to exist. Jehovah, Allah and all of the other gods of our cultures—maybe they don't exist. There's certainly



been a lot of people killed, a lot of the face of the world changed, and massive historical events happened because people believed they did.

How much did you really believe in this theme of the occult having an invisible hand in the machinery of history?

I didn't believe Gull's theory. That was just one that I thought Gull might have. Certain things are possible. I tend to think that the occult, which only means "the hidden", has played a huge part in human culture and development. It's difficult to see any part of human culture that isn't an outgrowth of magic.

Take the field of science, which you'd think couldn't be further away; you go back two or three hundred years, there aren't any scientists, there's just alchemists and magicians. Isaac Newton was an alchemist who based all of his work upon earlier scientists like Dr. John Dee. He was the guy who invented the concept of the British Empire, for better or worse. He wrote the book on navigation during the 16th century. He was the astrologer, conjurer and advisor for Queen Elizabeth 1st. He was a giant in a number of fields, a renaissance man, but he spent the second half of his life transcribing something that he believed to be the language of creatures he called angels.

Look at the arts, say something like opera. Alchemists invented opera. It was intended as a perfect art form that included all the other art forms. It was intended to put over alchemical ideas, which is why a lot of the original operas are full of alchemy, like *THE RING*.

Monteverdi was an alchemist. All the painters, even ones that you wouldn't think, people like Mondrian with all those regular boxes. He looks kind of scientific and mathematical, but Mondrian was a theosophist. All of those boxes and colors are based upon the very strange ideas of Madame Blavatsky's theosophists. I mean, shit, even baseball. The guy who invented baseball was a theosophist. He was one of Madame Blavatsky's mates when she was setting up her first theosophical group over in America. Einstein—apparently, his niece revealed that he used to have a copy of Madame Blavatsky's *Secret*



Doctrine on the corner of his desk open at all times. In fact, some of his ideas about the universe emerging from a single point are straight out of Kabbalah via Madame Blavatsky.

Shit, there were Civil War generals who were very famous occultists- Albert Pike.

It's difficult to find many artists, scientists, politicians or musicians who haven't, at some point, been deeply involved either in some sort of organized occult group or inspired by some kind of personal mystical vision. You start to realize, considering that magic's supposed to be a bunch of bullshit that nobody really believes anymore, that everybody who really has altered the world in any significant way has generally had some mad agenda that has got something to do with strange occult beliefs.

I think that magic's not a conspiracy. I think it's so big that it's more than a conspiracy. It's almost like the occult is...well, right from our earliest times, if you take any culture back, you're going to end up with a witchdoctor and a fire. The origins of art, those cave paintings in France, they were shamanic. The whole idea of actually turning something into a picture, an image, is such a huge leap in consciousness; to make a mark on a wall that somehow stands for the horse that you saw in the field earlier. The first people to do that or the first people to come up with language—it would have been much more eerie than people having telepathy. You could pass your thoughts at a distance just by writing down these weird little symbols. Dance would have probably come out of shamanic dancing around the fire.

You look at mathematics, and it's all people like Pythagoras who were magicians. Take Isaac Newton,

for example. How many colors are there in the rainbow? Most people would say 7: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Now, there actually are only 6 colors in the rainbow. There is no such thing as indigo. The reason we've been told there's this mysterious 7th color is because when Isaac Newton was working upon the color spectrum, his head was full of these classical ideas that everything came in sevens. There's 7 notes in the musical scale. There's 7 days in the week. It's a bit inconvenient if there's only 6 colors. Because he's Isaac Newton, everybody believed him. It just shows you that everything in our lives is often influenced by magical thinking, for better or worse.

The state of Israel, as far as I understand it, was founded mainly thanks to the work of British millennial Christians who had read in the Bible that when the Israelites returned to the promised land, this would be shortly followed by the second coming of Jesus which would be shortly followed by Apocalypse when all the faithful would be taken up to be with the Lord forever. Obviously, that's a great idea if you're a millennial Christian. They wanted that to happen as soon as possible. Around the turn of the 20th Century, there were all these millennial Christians in the British Parliament pushing for the establishment of a state of Israel over there in Palestine. This is something that's got a huge impact on our lives and that's come about because of people's strange occult ideas.

The Second World War and Hitler —I'd always believed there was an occult wing of the Nazi party called the Thule Society. That turns out not to be the case. The Nazi party was the political wing of the Thule Society. It was the other way around.

Winston Churchill, on the other hand, believed wholeheartedly in the existence of the Illuminati. Wherever you look in our history, you find there's always this bizarre, mad, occult shit going on. People like George Washington, who was a Mason, and Benjamin Franklin, who was a member of the Hellfire Club, and the Marquis de Lafayette was an Illuminist. The French Revolution- there's a lot of evidence to suggest that perhaps Freemasons and possibly members of the Illuminati were involved in that.

Jung was into astrology...

I believe he was quite into Kabbalah. Sigmund Freud had originally welcomed Jung into his group because Jung was Swiss, which would mean they wouldn't call it the Jewish science anymore. Freud was sick of that and figured Jung would get rid of that stigma. But then he realized what Jung's agenda was. I think in one of Freud's notebooks, he's got something that says like, "Dear God, please don't let Jung drag this wonderful science into the black mud of occultism." Basically, psychology is occultism. It can't be a science any more than...see, the whole thing about magic and science is that science, as I understand it, is entirely dependant upon things that you can repeat in a laboratory, things that are empirically provable. That immediately rules out anything to do with the actual mind or consciousness because science can not prove that you are conscious or I am conscious, let alone artificial intelligence. They can't even prove that we have intelligence. Consciousness is like a ghost in the machine; you can't measure it, weigh it, or repeat it in the laboratory. By rights, it

shouldn't be there. Each of us knows it is there, but science can't talk about it. Things like psychology, the study of the mind, can't really be a science. It can only be a kind of demonology. It doesn't matter whether you call it a depression, a compulsion or a demon. It's still in the same ballpark as any form of magic.

Getting to the movie, the Hughes Brothers were telling me you took a hands off approach to the movie.

Of course, it's their movie. It's not necessarily going to have any resemblance to my book, nor would I expect it to. I'm not naive. Inevitably, if I was hanging around the edges of the movie, then I'd be just like any other whiney writer, sort of saying, "Oh well, he doesn't look like that...", ya know? I look forward to seeing what they do with it, and if it's a success, it'll be their success.

From what I understand, the star Johnny Depp, is kind of a combination between Mr. Lees and the detective. Yea, he's been given psychic powers. But then, hey, it's Hollywood. In the first draft of the script that I saw, I looked at the last page first and it had got Inspector Aberline and Mary Kelly sailing off together into the sunset and she's in one piece and not in six separate carrier bags. Nah, ya know (just playing).... Johnny Depp is a great actor. Ian Holm is terrific. I mean, hey, Heather Graham —I don't really know much about her. But then I found it she was in *Twin Peaks*, which immediately elevates her to the realm of the goddesses, as far as I'm concerned. I was a *Twin Peaks* obsessive.

I'm not expecting it to be very much like my book, but it might still be a very good film. It's like Phillip K. Dick did "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"; was nothing like *Blade Runner*, but Dick's was a great story, and it was a great movie.

**Part 2 of this interview will be concluded next issue. Mr. Moore talks more about his adventures in the comics industry. My thanks to Michael Martin at Gear magazine for hookin' a brother up.*

