“So many questions. Never mind. Answers soon.”
—Walter “Rorschach” Kovacs

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I Watch the Watchmen
By Rich Handley

“The country’s disintegrating. What’s happened to America? What’s happened to the American dream?”

—Daniel “The Nite Owl” Dreiber

Rich’s Journal, July 10, 2016:
I feel that I should admit something right off the bat, and I don’t want you to think any less of me when I do. Perhaps it would be best if I just ripped off that Band-Aid and worked through the pain. If I get this out in the open now, maybe we can move past it and you can enjoy this book unfettered by the spectre of an uncomfortable, unspoken truth. OK, here goes:

I’ve never been much into superhero stories.

That admission may seem surprising coming from a guy who has written a lengthy book about masked crime-fighters, but the truth is, while growing up I could never relate to characters who dressed up in Spandex costumes resembling humanized animals, adopted nicknames based on those animals, and then ran around the streets beating the tar out of similarly clad villains. It all struck me as a bit too much like what I’d expect Halloween to be if that holiday were combined with Grand Theft Auto… if Grand Theft Auto had existed when I was growing up, that is… which it didn’t.

I’m sure you still get my point.

Sure, I enjoyed Christopher Reeve’s Superman films, just like everyone else,9 and I watched the Super Friends cartoons, as well as Adam West’s Batman, Bill Bixby’s The Incredible Hulk, Lynda Carter’s Wonder Woman, and William Katt’s The Greatest American Hero. And, yeah, I’ve adored Chris Nolan’s Batman trilogy, Guardians of the Galaxy, and nearly all of the X-Men movies—and Deadpool had me laughing to the point of abdominal pain. But beyond those and a few others (The Incredibles and Unbreakable chief among them10), the genre has historically not held much appeal for me.

I should point out that in the 1970s, we had only thirteen television channels from which to choose, a few of which showed static. So when I did watch superhero TV shows, it was often more the result of my not wanting to watch what was on the other channels, and less that I was truly into them. Lou Ferrigno smashing things and Lynda Carter doing… well, anything, really… were preferable to The Love Boat, Hee Haw, or Leave It to Beaver reruns any day of the week. With nothing else to choose, superheroes sufficed.

As I became a moody, withdrawn teenager, I delved deeply into science fiction franchises like Star Trek, The Twilight Zone, and Planet of the Apes, which greatly appealed to the part of my psyche that had a habit of watching news broadcasts and becoming embittered and depressed about the changes taking place in the United States in the 1980s. With crime rates skyrocketing, government corruption and civil-liberty incursions increasing, and the impending threat of nuclear destruction ever-present at the height of the Cold War, I found myself even less inclined to watch the superhero shows I saw as a child, which now seemed hopelessly naïve. Trek, Apes, and the Zone, on the other hand, offered powerful messages to

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9 Amusingly, my mother dropped me and my cousin off at a movie theater in 1977 so we could watch what she thought was a film called Superman, which she’d seen listed in a newspaper. (This was a year before Christopher Reeve’s Superman hit theaters.) When we purchased our tickets, we discovered that the film was not quite what we’d (or she’d) expected. It was actually SuperVan, the latest in that peculiar genre of 1970s movies now known as “vansploitation,” which tended to focus on hormonally driven college students who lived to show off their customized vans, often culminating in road competitions and a lot of sex and drugs. The titular vehicle was a solar-powered, laser-armed van with a mattress in the back for a different kind of riding, and the plot involved a wet T-shirt contest. We were nine years old at the time. The staff let us in to see it anyway. Come to think of it, that might explain a lot about me.

10 Unbreakable’s superhero and supervillain, of course, don’t even wear comic-book costumes.
which I could far more easily relate. I (mistakenly) assumed that comics could not offer me that same relatability.

In college, my friend Tom pushed me to embrace superheroes. Tim Burton’s first Batman film had just come out, and we’d gone to see it a few times because we’d both enjoyed it immensely (which surprised me, given how I generally felt about such characters). He was an avid collector of Batman comics and kept urging me to borrow them, claiming that they would alter my perception of masked crime-fighters.

I snobbily resisted, and continued to do so until a few years later, when I finally gave in and read the Knightfall saga, written by Chuck Dixon, Doug Moench, Alan Grant, and others. That intricately plotted, multi-title storyline is, of course, famous for introducing the steroid-enhanced, hyper-intelligent Bane, who did what no other member of Batman’s rogues gallery had ever succeeded in doing: breaking the Caped Crusader’s back and his spirit.11 Bane deconstructed Batman, both on a figurative and literal level, exposing his vulnerabilities, and I found myself intrigued almost immediately.

I admit it: Tom was right. Knightfall was damn good storytelling, and after I finished reading it, I had to keep going. My eyes had been opened to the fact that not all superhero comics were corny slapstick, as I’d assumed them to be based on the TV shows from my childhood.

The Knightfall saga became my gateway drug to superheroes, and I kept reading Tom’s other Batman titles. By the mid-1990s, he’d introduced me to Denny O’Neill’s Birth of the Demon, Brian Augustyn’s Gotham By Gaslight, Jim Starlin’s heartbreaking “A Death in the Family” storyline, and Frank Miller’s mesmerizing Batman: Year One and The Dark Knight Returns. (If you’re noticing a pattern here—emphasizing the “dark” in “Dark Knight”—then you’re keeping up just fine.) I needed more... but I didn’t yet know that what I really needed was “more” with a second “o” in it.

Then Tom handed me Alan Moore’s Batman: The Killing Joke.

I read that graphic novel twice in one sitting, each time having to catch my breath when I was done. Moore’s chilling exploration of how a rational, ordinary individual could evolve into the twisted, psychotic, homicidal, maniacally laughing, and downright scary lunatic known as The Joker was like nothing I’d read before, not in all the dark, brooding Batman comics I’d just spent the previous few years devouring. His writing was beautiful, haunting, poetic, powerful and, above all else, literary. This wasn’t a comic book I was looking at. It was literature—and it was some of the best literature I’d read in years.

If Knightfall had been my gateway drug to superhero comics, then The Killing Joke was my religious epiphany. There was a writing god out there of whom I’d been unaware, and he wrote stories like no other. His name was Alan Moore and, like Bane, he did the impossible: He made me really enjoy superheroes. Tom next gave me Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?, easily the best Superman tale I’ve encountered in any medium, and it brought me to tears.

A few years later, another friend, Joe, handed me his Swamp Thing collection after I shared with him the above memories. I was reluctant to read it, as I’d watched the Swamp Thing films and TV series and had found the character to be slightly ridiculous. But Joe mentioned that Alan Moore was among the writers on the comic (which, he assured me, was nothing like the filmed Swamp Thing), promising that I’d be blown away by the author’s groundbreaking approach to Alec Holland’s saga as multi-tiered, millennia-spanning mythology—much more than merely a murky tale of a muck-encrusted mockery of a man. Sighing (possibly due to the gratuitous overuse of alliteration in the previous sentence), I gave it a try.

Cue history: repeat. I admit it: Joe was right, too.

Alan Moore’s Swamp Thing offered some of the most gripping storytelling I’d come across in the four-color medium, and the title character was no mere superhero—he was an elemental spirit tasked with protecting the entire planet, even from mankind. When I was done reading it, I didn’t just give it a second read, as I had Moore’s Joker story. No, I went out and tracked down every single Swamp Thing issue up to that point so that I could proudly feature the series in my own collection and re-read it as often as I liked—and I liked aplenty.

I didn’t need to be hit over the head repeatedly to realize that I’d found a new favorite writer. The Killing Joke had dealt with mature subjects maturely, illustrating how comic books could truly terrify, while Whatever Happened to the Man of

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11 And, in the process, setting the stage for Chris Nolan’s The Dark Knight Rises.
Tomorrow? had provided an emotional conclusion to the DC Comics pre-Crisis on Infinite Earths era, with Superman leaving crime-fighting behind to live an ordinary life as an automobile mechanic (something that should sound familiar to Watchmen fans). Swamp Thing upped the ante, regularly delving into examinations of societal problems that took me back to what had so enthralled me about The Twilight Zone, Planet of the Apes, and Star Trek.

I soon began hunting down Moore’s other works as well, including V for Vendetta, From Hell, and even Marvel UK’s weekly Star Wars magazine. (Yes, Moore wrote Star Wars, and it’s just as weird and wonderful as you’d imagine.) It was somewhere in the midst of all this that I first picked up a graphic-novel collection of Watchmen, Moore’s seminal twelve-issue miniseries, published from 1986 to 1987, that featured gorgeous artwork by Dave Gibbons and a vibrant, atypical color scheme from colorist John Higgins.

Set in an alternate version of 1985, Watchmen revolved around a group of dysfunctional, depressed ex-vigilantes living in a Nixon-controlled, borderline-fascist United States on the brink of nuclear war with the Soviet Union. I’d heard about this series many times during the decade since its debut, of course—it’s almost impossible to run in geek circles and not hear about it—and knew that it was widely praised as having transformed the comic-book industry pretty much overnight. Within only an issue or two, I understood why. Watchmen was a beautiful, unique, and wholly unexpected story, one that resonated with me personally since it examined the concept of costumed crime-fighters through a harshly critical lens, echoing the stance I’d held before reading Knightfall.

Bradford W. Wright, in his book Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America (Johns Hopkins, 2001), characterized Watchmen as “Moore’s obituary for the concept of heroes in general and superheroes in particular.” His description couldn’t have been more spot-on.

Wiped away were the long-held notions that crime-fighters always did the morally right things for the intellectually right reasons, that heroes and villains were rigidly defined constants, that good always prevailed over evil, and that happy endings were a foregone conclusion where the tights-and-mask crowd were concerned. In their place was a dystopian dissection of fascism, conservatism, liberalism, dogmatism, naïve idealism, hypocrisy, and the slow, painful, deteriorating death of the American dream.

As if that weren’t enough already, Watchmen contained a Batman analog (Dan Dreiberg), an amoral multiple-murderer prone to seeing everything as a joke (Eddie Blake), a crime-fighter who’d retired his costume to become an auto mechanic (Hollis Mason), and a powerful individual determined to save the planet from mankind (Adrian Veidt)—and it doesn’t take much analysis to recognize the similarities between Rorschach and the unnamed antihero of V for Vendetta. Watchmen mixed and matched elements of almost every Alan Moore story I’d already enjoyed, creating a whole that was greater than the sum of its already impressive parts.

It was mind-bending—a wholesale deconstruction of the superhero genre and a harsh condemnation of mankind’s violent nature—and it was glorious. To date, Watchmen remains my favorite work from Alan Moore. I’ve lost track of how often I’ve re-read it throughout the past twenty years, and I’m sure I’ll do so again soon.

When rumblings arose in the mid-2000s of an impending Watchmen film (the latest in a string of such rumors, following the failures of several prior attempts to put Moore’s most famous work in theaters), I decided to revisit the graphic novel yet again. I wanted to have it all fresh in my head when I eventually sat down to watch what would, no doubt, be an altered version of the story’s events playing out on the big screen, so that I could compare and contrast from a position of knowledge, not one of hasty recollection.

While I was at it, I decided to look up whether or not anyone had used the Watchmen characters in any other media. In so doing, I learned about a trio of books that Mayfair Games had released, two in 1987 (Who Watches the Watchmen? and Taking Out the Trash) and a third in 1990 (The Watchmen Sourcebook), each of which incorporated the concepts and characters of Watchmen into the DC Heroes Role Playing Game. Set before the main events of Moore’s saga, they served as DC’s first Watchmen prequels.

The books looked intriguing, so I ordered all three online even though I wasn’t an RPG player—and it turned out to be an excellent decision. Despite a number of frustrating continuity gaffes and contradictory dates (odd, given that...
Moore himself co-wrote one of them), each volume was a data dump of valuable new information regarding the heroes’ and villains’ backstories, expanding *Watchmen*’s world into something even greater.

Players, assuming the roles of Rorschach, The Nite Owl, The Silk Spectre, Ozymandias, or The Comedian, thwarted an assassination attempt on Richard Nixon in one book and helped Captain Metropolis solve a spate of kidnappings in another, unaware that (Spoiler alert!) Metropolis himself had orchestrated the abductions in a misguided second effort to convince the heroes to form The Crimebusters.

Leafing through these books helped get me into the proper frame of mind to watch Zack Snyder’s film. As Nite Owl might say, they were a hoot—and so was the movie. Say what you will about Snyder’s rather divisive film, but I loved it and still do. Despite its changes to Moore’s original work, I consider it one of the best adaptations of any story to the medium of film. Yes, it changed some things big and small, but it was beautifully shot and well acted, and it stayed remarkably close to the source material, proving wrong the oft-repeated claim that the graphic novel was entirely un-filmable.

In particular, the portrayals by Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Patrick Wilson, Billy Crudup, and Matt Frewer of, respectively, Eddie Blake, Dan Dreiberg, Jon Osterman, and Edgar Jacobi were spot-on—but the casting coup was Jackie Earle Haley, whose Rorschach leapt off the page with incredible fidelity. Everyone in the movie did a great job, as far as I’m concerned, but these five actors, in particular, captured their characters’ nuances perfectly. Whenever they were on the screen, I felt that I was truly watching *Watchmen*. With all due respect to those who disliked it (including my friend Duy Tano—see his essay on page 311), I’ll never quite understand the harsh criticism that the movie tends to receive in some circles.

To tie into the film’s release, Warner Bros. commissioned four video games utilizing the on-screen depictions of the characters and the world they inhabit: *Watchmen: The Mobile Game*, a Java-based side-scroller for mobile phones; *Justice Is Coming*, an online role-playing game; *Minutemen Arcade*, an 8-bit arcade-game emulator; and *The End Is Nigh*, a console and PC game for the Windows, PlayStation, and Xbox platforms. While each game added new content to the mythos, the first three were relatively unimportant (and two aren’t even available anymore). Only *The End Is Nigh* made substantial additions, by showcasing Underboss and The Twilight Lady, supervillains mentioned merely in passing in Moore’s story. If you haven’t played *The End Is Night*, I recommend finding a copy. If you can get past the repetitive walking and fighting, there’s a good story being told there.

In 2012, DC Comics announced its next major *Watchmen* undertaking: prequel comics spread out over multiple miniseries, under the umbrella title *Before Watchmen*, which spanned thirty-seven of a planned thirty-eight issues before the final issue, *Before Watchmen: Epilogue*, was canceled without explanation. As divisive as the film was, the prequels were far more so, as the very idea of new stories not written by Alan Moore offended many fans who felt such a project was disrespectful to *Watchmen*’s creator.

I wasn’t among them. Don’t hate me, but I found *Before Watchmen* quite enjoyable, particularly *Minutemen, Silk Spectre, and Moloch*, which packed an emotional punch and more than a few laughs, as well as *Rorschach*, which was exquisitely drawn and exactly the sort of ass-kicking yarn one would expect the vigilante’s story to entail. Some of the others (I’m looking at you, *Nite Owl* and *Comedian*) didn’t always jibe with what Moore had laid down, and some of the character backdrops in these new comics ignored those already created for the RPG books. (Alas, the otherwise excellent *Minutemen* is guilty on both counts.)

Hence, the genesis of the book you now hold.

In 2015, I sat down to re-read Moore’s miniseries, the three Mayfair Games books, and *Before Watchmen*, and I began to notice some interesting trends. There were numerous instances in which the RPG books and *Before Watchmen* were wholly incompatible, most notably in the case of Rolf Müller and Hooded Justice. (Yes, I just mentioned them as being two separate individuals. Therein lies the biggest continuity quagmire of them all, as you’ll discover while perusing the timeline.) But by and large, the two attempts at *Watchmen*...
prequels fit together surprisingly well (except when it came to characters’ birthdates, when all hell tended to break loose).

What’s more, in watching playthrough videos of the various video games, I discovered that their events mostly fit with both prequel lines as well. Contradictions inevitably arose—conflicting histories for Bill Brady, for instance, as well as differing accounts of the Woodward and Bernstein murders, the Police Riots, the passing of the Keene Act, Ursula Zandt’s death, Dan Dreiberg’s education, and Sally Jupiter’s retirement—but an intricately interconnected tapestry of Watchmen history nonetheless emerged.

I began making mental notes about how everything did or didn’t fit together, which quickly evolved into the makings of a book. Six months later, they’d grown into a manuscript of more than 350 pages, representing an exhaustive amount of research, reconciling, and contemplation. Watching Time presents a detailed timeline encapsulating every known event from all corners of the Watchmen franchise, including not only Moore’s comics, Before Watchmen, and the film, RPG books, and video games, but also viral videos and websites, trading cards, promotional newspapers, reference books, and other ancillary sources—even unproduced film scripts.

When I began writing this book, I had no idea that DC Comics would soon make the controversial decision to transition Watchmen’s characters into its mainstream continuity via its DC Universe Rebirth concept (which I learned about a month before completing this book’s manuscript, causing no small amount of panicking), or that director Zack Snyder would be working to bring the mythos to television, enabling us to watch Watchmen weekly. I can only hope that future scribes, whether on screen or in print, will continue to hold a mirror up to society, exposing the deterioration that still plagues the United States—and the entire world—now, some thirty years after Alan Moore offered up what many consider his most influential work.

For my purposes (and yours), the timing couldn’t have been better for such developments, because with major sea changes coming to the Watchmen franchise, now is a perfect time for veteran fans and new converts alike to revisit or discover all that has come before. If I’ve done my job properly, Watching Time will make that possible. I’ll leave that to each of you to decide for yourself as you pull up a seat here at the Gunga Diner, order up some four-legged chicken, cold baked beans, and a cup of Nite Owl Dark Roast, and peruse the pages of this paperback primer.

Just understand one thing as we share this space: I’m not locked in here with you. You’re locked in here with me.

Hrrm.

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14 As this book goes to press, almost nothing is known about the impending TV show, but I hold out hope that it will involve The Minutemen. For my money, the best thing about Snyder’s movie was the superb credits sequence, which made me yearn to see more of that earlier crime-fighting team in action. It’s no surprise at all, then, that The Minutemen’s story was my favorite aspect of Before Watchmen.
Part III:
LIFE DURING WARTIME
(1940–1945)

—In or Before 1940
The Big Top Circus opens. The traveling circus performs three shows daily in cities along the U.S. East Coast [BWMM].

—After the 1930s
The superhero comic-book genre fades away in a world populated by living crime-fighters, largely forgotten except among older readers who recall the fictional adventures of Superman and other heroes in the 1930s. In their place, pirate comics grow increasingly popular, including such titles as Pirate and X-Ships [ALAN].

**NOTE:** X-Ships is likely an in-joke referencing Marvel Comics’ X-Men, given the supplanting of the superhero genre by pirate lore.

DC Comics publishes *The Curse of the Crimson Corsair*, a 28-chapter pirate comic written by Len Wein and John Higgins, illustrated by Higgins, and lettered by Sal Cipriano. The series, set in July 1771, comprises three storylines: “The Devil in the Deep,” “The Evil That Men Do,” and “Wide Were His Dragon Wings.” In the series, sailor Gordon McClachlan mutinies against the cruel captain of British naval vessel Pendragon, but is knocked overboard during an attack by a Spanish frigate. Lying adrift for days, he is rescued by the *Flying Dutchman*—the ship of the damned—and learns that his act of mutiny has cursed him for eternity. McClachlan makes a deal with the undead pirate captain, the Crimson Corsair, for ownership of his own soul [BWCC].

**NOTE:** The in-universe publication date of *The Curse of the Crimson Corsair* is unknown, though it likely occurs following the 1939 rise of the pirate comic genre.

Wein, Higgins, and Cipriano are the real-world creative team on this back-up feature to 28 issues of Before Watchmen; previously, Wein and Higgins had served as the editor and colorist, respectively, of Alan Moore’s miniseries.

*Just as Tales of the Black Freighter mirrors the plights of several Watchmen*...
characters, Crimson Corsair mirrors (whether intentionally or not) claims by some fans that those responsible for Before Watchmen, in crafting a prequel to the original comic, betrayed Moore's intentions, thereby cursing the series.

● January 1940
Sylvia Kovacs’ boyfriend Charlie leaves her while she is pregnant with his son [ALAN].

● January 3, 1940
Byron Lewis records a diary entry expressing doubts about The Minutemen, which he has come to regard as an unimportant publicity stunt, and describes Hooded Justice as personifying the worst kind of hatred—the kind that needs to hide behind a mask. Eddie Blake scares him more, though, since his indiscretions are borne not of ignorance, like Hooded Justice’s, but of high intelligence [RPG3].

● March 21, 1940
Sylvia Kovacs gives birth to Walter Joseph Kovacs, the future masked adventurer Rorschach [RPG2]. Many people, including Sylvia herself, deem him an unattractive child [ALAN].

CONFLICT: Taking Out the Trash inexplicably switches Rorschach’s first and middle names, calling him Joseph Walter Kovacs throughout the book.


● After March 21, 1940
With debts mounting, Sylvia Kovacs turns to prostitution to pay her bills. Shortly after Walter’s birth, she is first arrested for soliciting [ALAN].

● May 26 to June 4, 1940
During World War II’s Battle of Dunkirk, more than 330,000 Allied soldiers are evacuated after a Nazi advance on the French city is delayed [REAL]. Hans von Krupp, a top official under Adolf Hitler, falls out of favor with the Nazi Party for failing to act on intelligence that could have prevented the Allied Forces’ escape [RPG3].

● After June 4, 1940
Hans von Krupp flees for his life and ends up in the United States. Though marked for death by the Third Reich, he remains fanatically loyal to Adolf Hitler. Allying with fifth-columnists in America, he takes on the role of a master saboteur known as Captain Axis, hoping to redeem himself in the eyes of the Führer [RPG3].
June 1940 to 1945

As Captain Axis, Hans von Krupp becomes a famous saboteur, threatening factories, military installations, propagandistic war films, and United Service Organizations (USO) events. On one occasion, he tries to implant single-frame subliminal messages into Clark Gable movies that read “Germany Must Win!” [RPG3].

Mid-1940

Nelson Gardner has a meeting room constructed at The Minutemen’s headquarters, using wood imported from Africa. He orders special chairs for the room, which take months to manufacture [BWMM].

Hooded Justice breaks an arm while battling The Screaming Skull. Subsequently, Rolf Müller misses a month’s performances at the Shriner’s Circus [RPG3].

**NOTE:** Given the revelation, in Before Watchmen: Minutemen, that Hooded Justice and Rolf Müller are separate individuals, this is apparently just an unusual coincidence.

After interviewing Hooded Justice, the New York Post publishes an article describing his accent as “different, faintly Bavarian” [RPG3].

In or Before September 1940

Hooded Justice secretly enters into a homosexual relationship with Nelson Gardner, whom he calls “Nelly” [ALAN].

The Big Top Circus arrives in New York City. The traveling circus features rides such as the Cyclone and the Tornado, carnival games like Cakewalk and Lucky 7, and Rolf Müller performing as “The Mighty Meuller.” The strongman, a serial killer, abducts and mutilates children at each city in which the circus performs [BWMM].

September 1940

DC Comics’ *All-Star Comics* issue #2 hits stands, featuring tales of The Spectre, The Flash, Johnny Thunder, The Sandman, and Red, White & Blue [REAL, HOOD].

Larry Schexnayder discovers Nelson Gardner’s secret relationship with Hooded Justice. Though Larry has no problem with the men being homosexuals, he decides the public would not react well to the news [ALAN]. The agent writes a note to Sally Jupiter, expressing concern about Hooded Justice’s “problem,” and suggests that she, when in the presence of photographers, snuggle up to the strongman so the press will infer romance and stop looking into his personal life [RPG3].

**CONFLICT:** Larry’s letter is dated February 16, 1939, which does not jibe with Alan Moore’s miniseries and must thus be ignored.
Part IX:
WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?
(1971–1976)

—January 4, 1971
President Richard Nixon asks Jon Osterman to intervene in the Vietnam War [ALAN, RPG2], then announces his plan to the American public. Watching the broadcast from Karnak, Adrian Veidt realizes there is no turning back now from the path toward war, and from the need to carry out his master plan [BWOZ].

CONFLICT: An article published on the New Frontiersman website—“Soviets Call Dr. M. ‘Imperialist Weapon,’” by Allen Wynder—cites the U.S.S.R.’s complaints about Dr. Manhattan intervening in Vietnam, and quotes Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko as condemning U.S. domination. However, that article (which also appears in the film) is dated June 19, 1970, which is half a year before Nixon asks Manhattan to do so in Alan Moore’s miniseries, and four years after the “imperialist weapon” comment occurs in the comic.

—January to March 1971
The U.S. Congress considers Richard Nixon’s plan to send Dr. Manhattan to Vietnam [BWOZ].

—Early 1971
A U.S. military unit in Vietnam ends up missing in action while trying to locate an enemy landing area. The Comedian is assigned to find the unit, confirm intel of a helicopter gunship ferrying reinforcements for the Độc Công (Vietnamese Special Forces), and dispose of all hostiles within the vicinity. Blake carries out his mission, killing many enemy soldiers (and noncombatants) in the process. Rescuing the U.S. troops, he scorches an entire village to punish them for covering for the Việt Cổng [MOBL].

—March 1971
Once Nixon secures approval from Congress [BWOZ], Jon Osterman travels to Saigon to intervene in the Vietnam War. There, he is reunited with The Comedian [ALAN], who

MIND .... The Mindscape of Alan Moore
MOBL.... Watchmen: The Mobile Game
MOTN.... Watchmen: The Complete Motion Comic
MTRO.... Metro promotional newspaper cover wrap
NEWP.... New Frontiersman promotional newspaper
NEWW... New Frontiersman website
HIGH..... Watchmen: The End Is Nigh, Parts 1 and 2
PTT..... Watchmen Him British press kit
PORT..... Watchmen Portraits
REAL..... Real life
RPG1.... DC Heroes Role Playing Module #227: Who Watches the Watchmen?
RPG2.... DC Heroes Role Playing Module #235: Taking Out the Trash—Curses and Tears
RPG3.... DC Heroes: The Watchmen Sourcebook
RUBY.... “Wounds,” published in The Ruby Files Volume One
SCR1..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: Sam Hamm
SCR2..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: Charles McKeuen
SCR3..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: Gary Goldman
SCR4..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: David Hayter (2002)
SCR5..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: David Hayter (2003)
SCR6..... Unfilmed screenplay draft: Alex Tse
SPOT..... DC Spotlight #1
VRL1..... Viral video: NBS Nightly News with Ted Philips
VRL2..... Viral video: The Keene Act and You
VRL3..... Viral video: Who Watches the Watchmen? A Veidt Music Network (VNN) Special
VRL4..... Viral video: World in Focus: 6 Minutes to Midnight
VRL5..... Viral video: Local Radio Station Report on 1977 Riots
VRL6..... Viral videos (group of ten): Veidt Enterprises Advertising Contest
WAWA... Watching the Watchmen
WHOS ... Who’s Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe
WTFC .... Watchmen: The Film Companion
is surprised when Dr. Manhattan suddenly appears on the battlefield. Blake calls this development “the big blue man versus the big red menace.” An officer named Charlie dispatches Osterman to deal with larger-scale strategic attacks while Blake infiltrates an enemy command center guarding a secret project [MOBL].

During their time working together, The Comedian tries to rile up Dr. Manhattan by needling him about his dating a much younger woman [MOBL]. Jon finds the man’s deliberate amorality interesting [ALAN], and leaves the vigilante to battle soldiers on his own while Jon floats through the air, addressing more important matters. After blowing up a tank, Blake smiles for photographers despite frustration at his blue comrade’s lack of ground assistance [MOBL].

—March to May 1971

For two months, Jon Osterman uses his mental abilities to decimate the Việt Cộng forces, increasing his size to giant proportions and destroying enemy vehicles with a mere thought. Ultimately, many of the Việt Cộng soldiers surrender directly to him, their terror balanced by an almost religious reverence [ALAN].

CONFLICT: In the Watchmen film, as well as in the movie’s British press kit, the war only lasts for another week once Manhattan enters the conflict, contradicting Alan Moore’s miniseries.

During Operation Wrath of God, French photojournalist Alain Guillon captures images of Dr. Manhattan grown to enormous size and decimating Việt Cộng forces. Guillon is awed by the superhuman’s power, yet terrified by his lack of emotional reaction to the mass destruction that he causes. The journalist also photographs The Comedian, whom he considers a monster. Guillon’s photos are widely deemed among the defining images of the Vietnam War [VRL4].

—April 16, 1971

Adrian Veidt submits articles of incorporation to New York State for Luxor Imports, Inc., registered to Dimensional Developments, Inc. Adrian names Leo Winston CEO, Dimensional Developments a principal owner, and Leroy Gibbons treasurer [RPG3].

—May 1971

The U.S. government predicts that the Việt Cộng will surrender within a week [ALAN].

—In or Before June 1971

The Comedian impregnates a young Vietnamese woman [ALAN] named Liao Lin [SCR4, SCR5].
● June 1971
The war lasts a few weeks longer than expected, finally ending when Dr. Manhattan decimates the Việt Cộng’s guerilla forces by molecularly restructuring the jungles in which they hide into noxious gases [RPG3].

● Before June 29, 1971
A soldier named Tyson serves in the Vietnam War. A fellow soldier saves his life on several occasions, but ends up with his face badly burned, earning the nickname “Rawhead” [BWRO].

**NOTE:** These events are undated, but must occur before the war ends.

● June 29, 1971—Night
North Vietnam officially surrenders to the United States [RPG3]. Tôn Đức Thắng, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, signs an Act of Military Surrender in the presence of Creighton Williams Abrams, head of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam. The surrender is unconditional, with Vietnam agreeing to cease all hostilities, liberate all prisoners of war and civilian internees, and hand over all control and authority to Richard Nixon [NEWW].

**NOTE:** Thắng was North Vietnam’s second and final president in the real world, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam’s first president under Lê Duẩn.

The Vietnam War ends with the United States victorious, and locals and troops celebrate Victory in Vietnam (V.V.N.) Night. The Comedian and Dr. Manhattan watch the revelry from inside the Saigon Officer’s Club, discussing the war and their role in it. Blake considers the whole thing a joke. Richard Nixon arrives via helicopter to congratulate the troops, and to use the ceasefire and the presence of the press to secure his re-election [ALAN].

**NOTE:** In the real world, without Dr. Manhattan’s involvement, the Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975.

**CONFLICT:** Taking Out the Trash places Vietnam’s surrender on February 1, 1971, while an Act of Military Surrender document created for the New Frontiersman website sets it on June 22, 1970. Both dates contradict Alan Moore’s miniseries.

As Eddie Blake awaits a helicopter ride back to the United States, Liao Lin confronts him [SCR4, SCR5]. Furious at his decision to abandon her, their unborn baby, and Vietnam, she slashes Blake’s face with a bottle, for which he guns her down. Dr. Manhattan does nothing to stop him—which Blake points out when the superhuman condemns the murder [ALAN]. Dr. Edward Ross repairs Blake’s facial lacerations, administering seventy-one stitches [RPG3], but the resultant scar is permanent [ALAN, FILM].

**CONFLICT:** The Watchmen Sourcebook sets Blake’s injury in February 1971, contradicting Alan Moore’s miniseries, in which V.V.N. Night takes place in June.
If you’re looking to expand your *Watchmen* collection, the following gallery should facilitate the hunt. For more information about individual titles, consult the list of works cited on page 315.

“If its atomic structure is a perfect grid, like a checker board.”

—Jon “Dr. Manhattan” Osterman
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“I don’t mind being the smartest man in the world. I just wish it wasn’t this one.”

—Adrian “Ozymandias” Veidt


Rich co-edited and contributed to *Planet of the Apes: Tales From the Forbidden Zone*, a short fiction anthology to be published in 2017 by Titan Books, as well as five Sequart essay anthologies to date—*The Sacred Scrolls: Comics on the Planet of the Apes; Bright Eyes, Ape City: Examining the Planet of the Apes Mythos; A Long Time Ago: Exploring the Star Wars Cinematic Universe; A Galaxy Far, Far Away: Exploring Star Wars Comics*; and *A More Civilized Age: Exploring the Star Wars Expanded Universe*. In addition, he has penned essays for IDWs five *Star Trek* comic strip reprint hardcovers, Sequart’s *New Life and New Civilizations: Exploring Star Trek Comics* and *The Cyberpunk Nexus: Exploring the Blade Runner Universe*, and ATB Publishing’s *Outside In Boldly Goes*.

Rich has also contributed to numerous magazines and websites, including StarTrek.com, StarWars.com, *Star Trek Communicator*, *Star Trek Magazine*, *Cinefantastique*, *Cinescape*, *Movie Magic*, *Dungeon/Polyhedron*, and various Lucasfilm *Star Wars* licensees. By day, he is the managing editor of *RFID Journal* and *IOT Journal* magazines.

ABOUT HASSLEIN BOOKS

Hasslein Books (hassleinbooks.com) is a New York-based independent publisher of reference guides by geeks, for geeks. The company is named after Doctor Otto Hasslein, a physicist and time travel expert portrayed by actor Eric Braeden in *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*.


To stay informed regarding the company’s projects, follow Hasslein Books on Facebook (facebook.com/hassleinbooks) and Twitter (twitter.com/hassleinbooks), and at the Hasslein Blog (hassleinbooks.blogspot.com).
In 1986, the comic-book world experienced a profound paradigm shift, thanks to writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons. Gone were the long-held notions that crime-fighters always did the morally right thing for the intellectually right reason, that heroes and villains were rigidly defined constants, that good always prevailed over evil, and that happy endings were a foregone conclusion. In their place, there was *Watchmen*.

This twelve-issue miniseries, about dysfunctional ex-vigilantes in a Nixon-controlled United States on the brink of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, transformed the comic-book world overnight. Since the release of this seminal deconstruction of the superhero genre, others have revisited *Watchmen*'s dystopian setting in the form of a film adaptation, role-playing books, prequel comics, and multiple video games, all built upon the foundation that Moore and Gibbons laid down thirty years ago.

With DC Comics soon to bring *Watchmen*'s characters into its mainstream continuity, and with a *Watchmen* TV show reportedly in the works, it’s time to reexamine all that has come before. *Watching Time: The Unauthorized Watchmen Chronology* contains:

- A detailed history encapsulating every known event from all corners of the *Watchmen* franchise, including not only the better-known tales, but also viral videos and websites, trading cards, unproduced scripts, and other ancillary sources.

- A mini-“crimeline” summarizing the crimes and heroics of masked crime-fighters and supervillains throughout *Watchmen* history.

- A foreword by noted comic book guru Brian Cronin, whose thousands of meticulously researched articles have enthralled comics fans for years.

- A nostalgic essay by Duy Tano, creator of the popular blog The Comics Cube, explaining why *Watchmen* is simultaneously dated and timeless.

- And a gallery showcasing nearly 250 covers from the *Watchmen* comics, trade-paperback collections, DVDs, Blu-rays, reference books, and video games.

Designed both for fans new to *Watchmen* and for those who can identify Hooded Justice’s parents, Ozymandias’s four islands, Silk Spectre’s favorite crooner, Mothman’s family butler, and Rorschach’s breakfast food of choice, *Watching Time* tells you everything you need to know about the history and characters of Alan Moore’s Hugo Award-winning epic.