

GEPPI ACCUSED OF STEALING, SELLING ORIGINAL ART

The Comics Journal reports that Sad Sack Inc. has filed suit against Steve Geppi, the owner of Diamond Comic Distributors. According to the report, the company alleges that Geppi stole 15,000 pages of original comic book art from a Harvey Comics warehouse.

TCJ's report dates back to an October 4th press release from SadSack.net. According to the release, the legal action initiated by Sad

Sack, Inc. alleges that Geppi, Geppi's Comic World, Alexander Acevedo and the Alexander Gallery engaged in fraud and conversion and that all defendants engaged in conspiracy and unauthorized sale of goods. Along with the complaint, Sad Sack, Inc. is hoping to obtain an accounting of profits from the sales and the return of any artwork that has not been sold.

Sad Sack, created in 1941 by George Baker, was an immensely popular comic strip and later comic book about a bewildered civilian trying to be a soldier. The strip first ran in *Yank* magazine while Baker served in the army, and later moved to its own Harvey-published title in 1949. Harvey still publishes an occasional Sad Sack comic book. During its heyday, **Sad Sack** was published in over nine languages and in thirteen countries.

Sad Sack, Inc. was founded by Alfred, Leon and Robert Harvey, and Baker in 1972. **Sad Sack Comics** was the longest continuous running Harvey Comic title, and spanned five decades, lasting 287 consecutive issues. In all, there were about a dozen Sad Sack comic book titles and 850 Sad Sack issues, more than 800 of these issues were published after 1954.

According to the complaint, current Sad Sack, Inc., President, Alan Harvey discovered the artwork to be missing after Geppi was given access to the Harvey warehouse where Sad Sack Inc. stored art. When confronted, Geppi specifically denied knowledge of the goods.

In 1984, Steve Geppi and Geppi's Comic World, Inc. purchased certain of pre-1955 artwork from Harvey Publications, a former parent company of Sad Sack, Inc., which artwork was maintained in the Harvey Comics warehouse. This may have included some pre-1955 Sad Sack art, but, without question, did not include any of the art from the over 800 post-1954 issues. Sad Sack's art was clearly marked with the date reviewed by the Comics Code Authority and folloed with the abbreviated comic book title, month, issue number, and page number, making them easy to identify.

Several years later, Harvey found the art being sold by numerous dealers at the San Diego Comics Con International. Harvey was able to follow the trail of the artwork back to Alexander Acevedo of Alexander

Gallery in New York City, and informed Acevedo that there were about 15,000 pages of Sad Sack comic book artwork, including 800 George Baker covers missing. The art is worth not less than \$1,740,000, although the company seeks additional punitive damages not less than \$3,500,000, according to the complaint. Harvey was informed that Acevedo "purchased the art from Steve Geppi." However, Harvey informed Acevedo that Geppi never owned the artwork in question.

"We believe back alley deals to unwitting remote purchasers are destroying the physical art, its history and the price of Sad Sack's collection," states Jenice L. Malecki, Esq., attorney for Sad Sack, Inc. "Courts in New York City, a preeminent cultural center known world-wide for its artwork, artists, dealers and patrons, places a heavy burden to prove ownership on those alleged to engage in the illicit trafficking in stolen artwork."

"I really don't understand how this happened, Steve Geppi is a known person in the comics industry and a leading distributor," said Alan Harvey, "but he has stolen a piece of history, as well as my family. We did business with him over the years and trusted him. He became a successful man. We helped him achieve success. We were proud and happy for him; but now those feelings are polluted. It is truly a sad story. Obviously, our trust was misplaced."

Geppi has yet to issue a statement in response to the complaint.

In the interest of full disclosure, Geppi owns equity in, and sits on the Board of Directors of Fandom.com.

DIAMOND OWNER SUED OVER SAD SACK ART!

HARVEY IMPLICATES GEPPI IN \$5 MILLION STOLEN ART SUIT!

October 24: Sad Sack, Inc. owners of George Baker's famous comic, radio, film character, and World War II veteran Sad Sack, announced October 4th, that they have started a legal action against Steve Geppi, Geppi's Comic World, Inc., Alexander Acevedo, and Alexander Gallery. The action alleges that Steve Geppi and Geppi's Comic World engaged in fraud and conversion and that all defendants engaged in conspiracy and unauthorized sale of goods.

The news, which was broken on Friday on The Comics Journal website, TCJ.com, not only illuminates the sometimes shadowy world of buying and selling original comic book art, but also shines a legal spotlight on the reputation of one of the most powerful men in comics. Steve Geppi owns Diamond Comics Distribution, which through a series of exclusive brokerage contracts with the Marvel, DC Comics, Dark Horse and Image controls 95% of the Direct Sales Market. Geppi also owns Diamond Select Toys, which licenses and manufactures collectable toys and two months ago purchased the largest gaming distributor in America. Outside of comics he is a well-respected figure in Baltimore, owning a share of the Baltimore Orioles. He also owns equity and sits on the Board of Directors of Fandom.com.

The details of the complaint allege that Alan Harvey, Sad Sack, Inc.'s President, discovered the artwork missing after Steven Geppi had access to the Harvey warehouse, where Sad Sack also maintained art. According to the Sad Sack press release: "When confronted, Geppi specifically denied knowledge of the goods. Several years later, after the Harvey family was devastated by the death of its founder Alfred Harvey, Alan, the founder's son, found the art being sold by numerous dealers at the San Diego Comics Con International."

"It took a lot of patience, persistence and hard work," Alan Harvey said, but he claims he followed the trail to Alexander Acevedo of Alexander Gallery in New York City. Mr. Harvey said he informed Mr. Acevedo that "there were about 15,000 pages of Sad Sack comic book artwork, including 800 George Baker covers missing. Mr. Harvey, was informed that Mr. Acevedo "purchased the art from Steve Geppi." Harvey maintains that the art, which he says is worth, \$1,740,000 was "never owned" by Geppi.

Besides the cost of the art, Sad Sack Inc is seeking additional punitive damages not less than \$3,500,000, and an accounting of profits from illicit sales and return of any artwork still in the possession of the defendants. It is unclear if criminal charges would be lodged against the defendants if Harvey prevailed in the civil suit.

"I really don't understand how this happened, Steve Geppi is a known person in the comics industry and a leading distributor," Alan Harvey said in a press release, "but he has stolen a piece of history, as well as my family. We did business with him over the years and trusted him. He became a successful man. We helped him achieve success. We were proud and happy for him; but now those feelings are polluted. It is truly a sad story. Obviously, our trust was misplaced."

"We believe back alley deals to unwitting remote purchasers are destroying the physical art, its history and the price of Sad Sack's collection," said Jenice L. Malecki, Esq., attorney for Sad Sack, Inc in the same press release. "Courts in New York City, a preeminent cultural center known world-wide for its artwork, artists, dealers and patrons, places a heavy burden to prove

ownership on those alleged to engage in the illicit trafficking in stolen artwork," she maintains.

According to the 16 page complaint, in 1984, Steve Geppi and Geppi's Comic World, Inc. purchased certain of pre-1955 artwork from Harvey Publications, a former parent company of Sad Sack, Inc., which artwork was maintained in the Harvey Comics warehouse. This may have included some pre-1955 Sad Sack art, but, according to Harvey "without question, did not include any of the post-1954 art. Sad Sack's art was clearly marked with the date reviewed by the Comics Code Authority and folioed with the abbreviated comic book title, month, issue number, and page number, making them easy to identify."

Alfred Harvey founded Harvey Comics as Alfred Harvey Publications in 1940, he also founded Sad Sack, Inc. with his brothers Leon and Robert, and Sad Sack creator George Baker in 1972. Harvey was one of the biggest comic companies, selling more than a billion comics between 1941 and 1982. Sad Sack Comics was the longest continuous running Harvey Comic title, spanning five decades, and lasting 287 consecutive issues. In all there were about a dozen comic book titles and 850 Sad Sack issues, more than 800 of these issues were published after 1954. [FULL PRESS RELEASE: SAD SACK.net](http://FULL.PRESS.RELEASE.SAD.SACK.net)



SPLASH

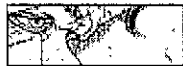
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Daily Comics



BLOODY HELL!

FROM HELL BANNED FOR IMPORT IN ARTIST'S HOME COUNTRY!

October 25: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's internationally acclaimed graphic novel, From Hell, has been banned for import by Australian Customs officials.

Two copies of the Eddie Campbell Comics collected edition of the book were seized from Perth's Quality Comics on October 20, who immediately alerted Diamond to the situation.

This seizure follows on the heels of the Office of Film and Literature Classification's October 3 decision classifying From Hell a prohibited import in Australia under Regulation 4(1A)a of the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations. This decision has its roots in a March 2000 seizure of a copy of Kitchen Sink's From Hell #7 from a Quality Comics shipment. The objectionable material in that book depicted a woman's breast being removed in the context of an autopsy conducted by a doctor. On October 23, Eddie Campbell spoke to the original customs officer who took offence to the scene, which depicted a

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BY GREG McELHATTON



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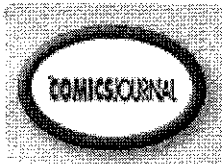
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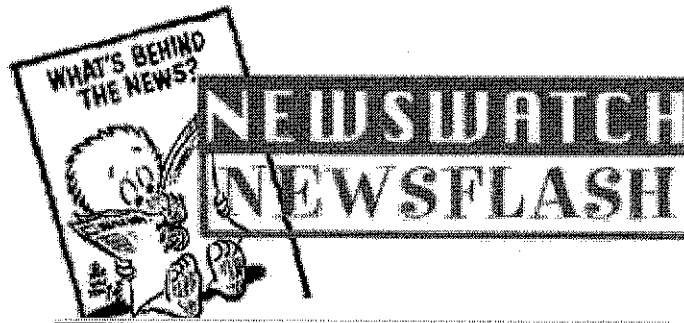


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Sad Sack vs. Steve Geppi

by Michael Dean

posted October 19th, 2000

Sad Sack Inc. has filed suit against Steve Geppi, owner of Diamond Comic Distributors, charging that Geppi pilfered 15,000 pages of original art from a Harvey Comics warehouse.

According to the complaint, the *Sad Sack* art, was discovered missing several years ago, shortly after Geppi had had access to the warehouse. When confronted by Sad Sack Inc. President Alan Harvey, Geppi reportedly denied any knowledge of the absent art and the matter was dropped. The current suit stems from the discovery of pages of the missing art being sold at the San Diego Comic-Con International. According to Harvey, the sales were traced to the Alexander Gallery in New York and then to Geppi. Geppi, Geppi's Comic World, the Alexander Gallery and gallery owner Alexander Acevedo are named in the suit, which seeks compensation of \$1,740,000, plus an additional \$3,5000 in punitive damages.

The art in question includes 800 covers by *Sad Sack* creator George Baker and other *Sad Sack* art dating from after 1954.

Geppi has not, as yet, responded to the Journal's requests for comment. The Journal will continue to follow this story as it develops.

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