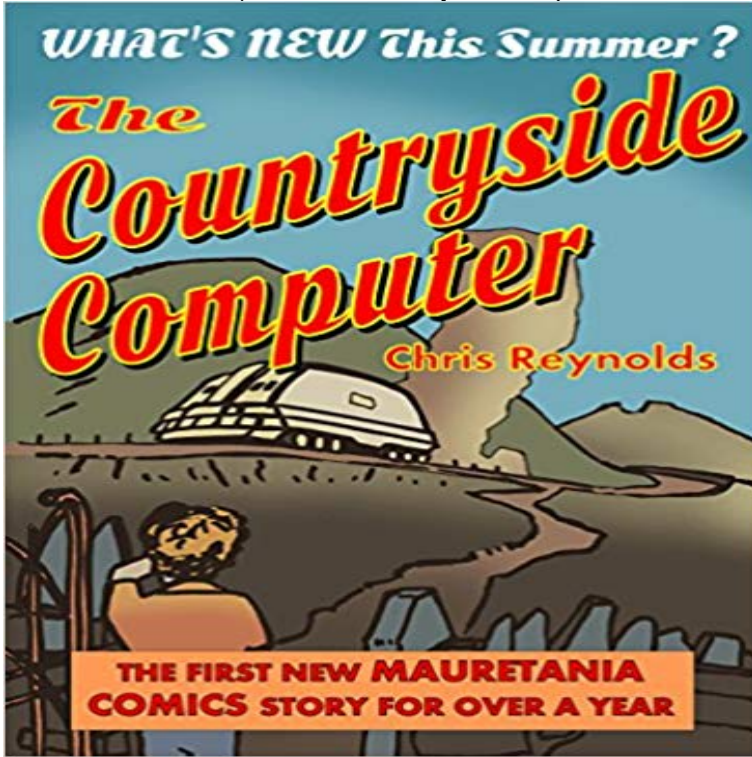


The Countryside Computer (Mauretania Comics)



Apocalyptic Sci-Fi Comic Strip. Whats new this summer? The Countryside Computer comes to all the local farms along the newly-widened roads! THEN of course the war came... We find out quite late in the story that its set during wartime. Quite often in narratives of WWII we are sold persuasive images of technology helping to win the war for Britain... whether that technology is radar, sound mirrors, or the use of machines at Bletchley Park to crack the Enigma codes. The latter narrative especially is very popular just now. Everyone loves a code-cracking story. But mainly I think because those Bletchley machines feel like sort of Ur-computers to us. What I like in this story is how technology seems to ruin everything... the Countryside Computer is bad for local farming and just wipes it out by the end of the story, even after its apparently been beneficial for prices. Although having made that assertion, I cant find any direct link in the narrative to back it up! Even so, the computer is a nice pessimistic image of how technology is not always on our side. The next thing I like is the computer acting as a responsive suicide-booth, much like the machines in early episodes of Futurama. The way in which it kills (using a certain ferrule) is horrifying. And it happens so casually too... the killing program is voice-activated, and once set in motion its impossible to stop it. Equally telling is the way the computer subsumes a man, showing how we literally pass into the inner mechanism of the computer. The third thing I like is the appearance of gigantic clouds throughout the story. They seem to appear at significant plot points. They are like characters in the story. They remind me of the cloud formations that are common over New Mexico and which are often mistaken for flying saucers. But they are also menacing clouds. At least one of them looks like a mushroom cloud. Another example of how WWII technology

became our enemy, rather than our friend. Lastly there's the use of the computer for pricing goods. I need hardly remark how computer operations have ravaged and destroyed financial markets in recent years. Your understated image here contains a lot of implied criticism of that process! Indeed if we could be so bold as to read the Countryside Computer itself as a metaphor for monopoly capitalism, it stands up to scrutiny. The roads are widened simply to accommodate it. It looks like an unwelcome visitor. It does not belong in the countryside. It is capable of killing us, and taking us over. And when it's sucked all the life from the land, it moves on somewhere else. All of this takes place in an absolutely impersonal manner. Chilling stuff. - Ed Pinsent. Add to CArt Now!

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