





CONTENTS

Cast and Crew 4

Electric Venus; or, How I Learned to Stop Caring
and Love *Weird Science* 7
by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

Pictures from a Magazine: Reflecting on E.C. Comics'
Influence on *Weird Science* 21
by Amanda Reyes

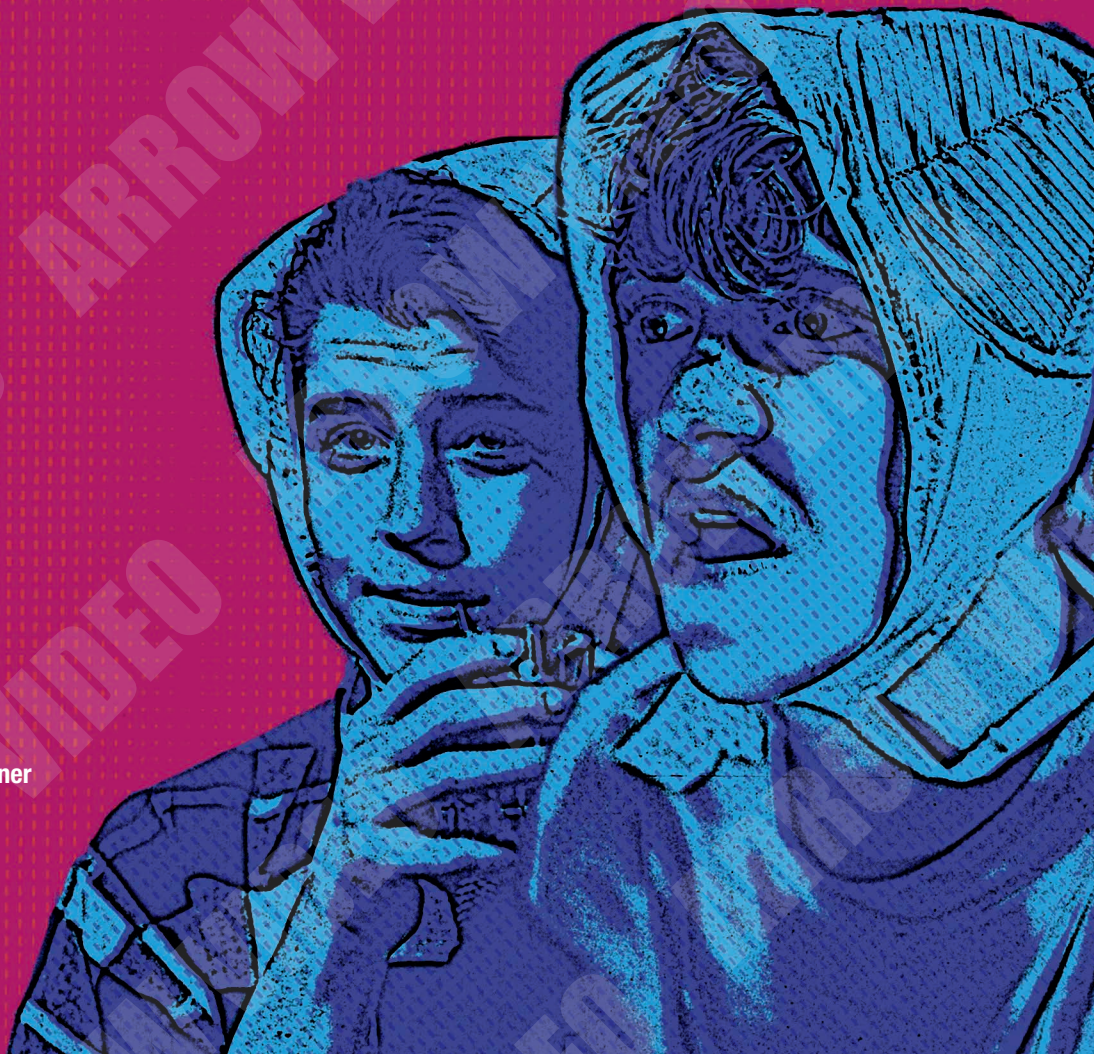
About the Restoration 42

CAST

Anthony Michael Hall Gary Wallace
Ilan Mitchell-Smith Wyatt Donnelly
Kelly LeBrock Lisa
Bill Paxton Chet Donnelly
Suzanne Snyder Deb
Judie Aronson Hilly
Robert Downey Jr Ian
Robert Rusler Max
Vernon Wells Lord General
Britt Leach Al Wallace
Barbara Lang Lucy Wallace
Michael Berryman Mutant Biker
Ivor Barry Henry Donnelly
Ann Coyle Carmen Donnelly
John Kapelos Dino
Wallace Langham Art

CREW

Written and Directed by **John Hughes**
Produced by **Joel Silver**
Associate Producer **Jane Vickerilla**
Edited by **Chris Lebenzon, Scott K. Wallace, Mark Warner**
Director of Photography **Matthew F. Leonetti**
Composer **Ira Newborn**
Production Designer **John W. Corso**
Production Manager **Don Zepfel**
Costume Designer **Marilyn Vance**





ELECTRIC VENUS; OR, HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE WEIRD SCIENCE

by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

We don't need to look beyond *Star Wars* (1977) or *Ghostbusters* (1984) to find evidence of a now-seemingly basic truth: film nostalgia makes people crazy. Beyond granting frankly spectacular insight into the back-end psychological mechanics of the contemporary man-child, more optimistically the respective fiascos surrounding recent reboots of these much-loved franchises remind us of cinema's powerful ability to act as a kind of time machine. It can magically, instantly transport us back through the decades to places and moments that we can almost smell, so intense is the sensory and emotional impact of simply watching a movie. On this front, revisiting beloved films from our youth is a secular ritual that for so many has become almost sacred, where any perceived desecration of the films in question is considered nothing less than a declaration of war.

Enter *Weird Science* (1985), a film that sits curiously in this now-contemporary context of not just factionalized but rhetorically militarized terrain of pop culture nostalgia. In terms of John Hughes fandom in particular, it's not impossible to imagine a social media battleground of the future where heathens are doxxed for casting aspersions on the memory of *The Breakfast Club* (1985) or *Pretty in Pink* (1986). But would the metaphorical war paint be put on with quite the same Rambo-esque fervor for *Weird Science*?

It's a question I cannot avoid but approach from a personal angle. Like many of my generation, I grew up with the teen films of John Hughes; after school with my sisters, on the sofa when I was home sick, or at one of the many sleepovers that I excitedly shared with my fellow girl-nerdinger friends, my life for a solid four or five years was punctuated by the experience of watching John Hughes films. In this context, questions of quality – let alone ideology – fall to the wayside; while undeniably important from a critical perspective, they just can't



even begin to equal the weighty sense of presence that memory and nostalgia bring with them. I love these films *regardless* of whether they are actually any 'good' or not; such questions feel almost beside the point in that they play so little a role in the act of travelling back in that time-machine so many decades later, propelling us every time we hit "play" back through those films to the lives that we lived – and the people that we were – so very long ago.

And yet, there is more objectively an undeniable hierarchy of John Hughes films from this era; *Pretty in Pink*, *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1987) and *The Breakfast Club* sitting somewhere at the top, with *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987) and *Weird Science* positioned significantly further down. Of these, *The Breakfast Club*, *Sixteen Candles* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* surely reign supreme in terms of cult longevity alone and form Hughes' greatest legacy from this period, but they themselves are a curious combination to unpack. If we want to get technical, while *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* are all focused on life and events that take place at high school, the primary action of both *Weird Science* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* notably takes place *outside* of high school. High school might be one of the social worlds that dominate their events, but as even the title *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* suggests, the whole point of that film is that he's *not* at school. We see flashes of that location, but the spectacle of that movie comes precisely from its *not-being-at-school*-ness. That's how Ferris – both the film and the character – so memorably transgress.

On this front, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Weird Science* have other things in common, too. Most immediately it is how they more than any other of Hughes' teen films embrace the concept of the *carnavalesque*. A term launched into the critical arena by Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in his foundational 1965 work *Rabelais and His World*, for Bakhtin the democratic spirit of the Renaissance Carnival saw an inversion of the laws that ordinarily governed social order. Here, amongst other things, the powerless could mock the powerful, the festive spirit allowing transgressions otherwise forbidden. For Bakhtin, the actual historical event was over time replaced through a sensibility that continued the *spirit* of the carnival that would manifest in literature, but has since been identified as running rampant across the arts more generally, including cinema. Whether it's

hijacking a street parade and lip synching to old Beatles songs or holding a giant house party while your parents are away organized by the human sex doll you created on your home computer, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Weird Science* both manifest this intrinsic carnivalesque spirit in ways quite unlike any of Hughes' other teen movies.

Perhaps more obviously from a contemporary perspective, however, is the fact that both *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Weird Science* are unavoidably, explicitly about boys, their subjectivity and world-views lying at the very heart of both of these films. This is a notable deviation from the Molly Ringwald-centered *Sixteen Candles* and *Pretty in Pink*, and *The Breakfast Club* which appears to make a conscious effort to share its perspective across its ensemble cast, representative as it is of different genders, classes, and subcultural alliances (race, significantly, an often-discussed absentee). Seemingly a gender-flip of the *Pretty in Pink* model, Hughes later wrote *Some Kind of Wonderful* as a corrective to his earlier film whose ending he was famously displeased with; it's worth adding here just how *feminized* Eric Stoltz's central protagonist Keith is in the film, a soft-spoken, gentle working class dreamboat (and, with his famous red hair, easy to read as a direct regendering of Ringwald herself).

But if these are Hughes' feminized (or explicitly woman-centered) teen films, both *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Weird Science* stand in direct opposition. *Ferris* and *Weird Science* might therefore productively be considered his "teen boy carnivalesque" diptych. In the case of the former, however, *class* is the primary marker of Ferris' elevation to a god-like figure in the film; it is his wealth and charisma, rather than his sexuality, that allow him to get away with the spectacular series of wacky adolescent hijinks that construct that film's narrative. He is, notably, in a happy, monogamous relationship with Sloane (Mia Sara) who – while not exactly equal in gender political terms – certainly is deemed worthy enough to join Ferris and his best friend Cameron (Alan Ruck) on their adventures.

Weird Science is an altogether different beast. With its horny nerd-boy protagonists and its female cast divided essentially into fuckable and non-fuckable, it feels closer to *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984) than the more wholesome white-bread films Hughes was renowned for during this period. Revisiting *Weird Science*, this



might be a good way to reframe the film; less as a curious glitch in Hughes' filmography, it is significant for how it fits into the broader landscape of 80s teen films more generally. Although Ferris might be actor Matthew Broderick's most famous role, *Weird Science* is arguably closer to the Broderick fronted kid-genius-with-a-computer-making-trouble film *WarGames* (1983) in many ways than Hughes's other films, a mash up between that and *Revenge of the Nerds'* horn-rimmed glasses-wearing poindexters who spend their time trying to ogle D-cup bra sized, spandex-clad female classmates.

So where does that leave us with *Weird Science* today, especially for those of us who loved it growing up? Do a quick Google search and more than one retrospective article will sternly dismiss it with the weasel word "problematic," judging it – and those of us with a secret (or not so secret) soft spot for it – as the enemy of wokeness. To be fair, it would take some impressive rhetorical gymnastics to avoid addressing through a contemporary lens some of the pretty icky politics at work in the film in terms of gender, class and (again) race. For me personally, it's frankly hard today to look at Wyatt Donnelly (Ian Mitchell-Smith) and Gary Wallace (Anthony Michael Hall) and not think of the terrifying misogynist online trolls whose violence bleeds far too often into our real world; Wyatt and Gary literally objectify women to the point that *they actually make one*, their conversations imbued with the toned down but still somehow inescapable drumbeat of what has now grown into the incel movement ("involuntarily celibate"), misogynists who terrifyingly believe they are somehow owed or deserve sex from women. This leads to demented human rights abusing suggestions such as "enforced monogamy" to supposedly even out the incels' perceived unfair playing field where they see themselves ignored and rejected by the attractive "Stacys", who are only interested in the handsome "Chads" (all real, actual incel terms, by the way).

This is scary stuff, and revisiting *Weird Science* today it's hard to balance its superficially light-hearted carnivalesque spirit with the extreme ways we've seen some of Gary and Wyatt's attitudes towards sex and gender manifest today. So what do we do? Where do those of us who so fondly recall what now feels like huge chunks of our adolescence spent in novelty print pajamas, eating undercooked frozen pizza and overcooked popcorn with family or friends, *focus*

all that warm, fond nostalgia in the face of the early traces of what has today grown into nothing less than sexual terrorism?

For me at least, the answer is to look towards Lisa. Kelly LeBrock's character was built by Wyatt and Gary to be a human sex doll, supposedly named after the Apple Lisa, a business computer released into the market in 1983, two and a half years before *Weird Science* hit US cinemas. In Japan the film was apparently released under the name *Electric Venus*, a reference to the Roman goddess of sexuality and love, whose meaning – like so many mythological figures – has ranged across contexts and cultures, but perhaps in this instance is most usefully conceived in regard to her skill for converting venal vices into something more romantically virtuous.

It is frankly hard to push for Lisa as particularly 'feminist' as such in the way the term is understood today; she does, after all, frequently refer to herself as "belonging" to Gary and Wyatt, which is technically true. She is an object that they made. She was programmed to serve them, and to serve them she does. Yet what is so fascinating about the relationship between the two young men and their supposedly perfect creation is this: *they can't handle her*. In the face of her confidence, her attractiveness, her intelligence and her kindness, which are products of their *exact* making, the result of their *exact* desires, they *still* can't handle her. At times, early in the relationship, they even can't face her. They made their perfect woman, but she is too much woman for them. The dark truth at the heart of their scientific success is that due to their busted, broken, messed up masculinity, they cannot enjoy the very fruits of their own creation.

Making the best of a bad situation, Lisa's role shifts significantly. As she cannot 'please' her owners sexually because they are rendered literally impotent by their insecurities in the face of a strong, smart woman, she opts for a secondary, more neutered role; the classic trope of the fairy godmother. Despite her push-up bras, miniskirts and spiked heels, Lisa's way of 'satisfying' Wyatt and Gary becomes notably less sexualized (at one point, Gary even describes his feelings for Lisa as "sisterly"). Instead, she mobilizes a much broader strategy aimed at a general increase in their social standing – that good ol' 80s teen movie thematic chestnut, "popularity." More specifically, she helps get them girlfriends who

they might actually have a chance of having some kind of mutually respectful relationship with.

These girls are the perfectly milquetoast Deb (Suzanne Snyder) and Hilly (Judie Aronson) who, while typical of Hughes' particular brand of nice, inoffensive 'normal' girls, are miles from his more fascinating subcultural experiments, such as Ally Sheedy's Allison in *The Breakfast Club* or Molly Ringwald's Andie in *Pretty in Pink*. When we first meet Deb and Hilly, after all, their boyfriends are the incandescently moronic Ian (Robert Downey Jr.) and Max (Robert Rusler), who the girls admit to dating only out of boredom because there's no one better on offer. The idea of being single, it seems, never occurs to them. Deb and Hilly are passive and take whatever comes their way; they frankly seem docile enough character-wise to be good fits for the infantilized Gary and Wyatt by the film's conclusion, two young men who couldn't even begin to cut it with the human rendering of their own sexual fantasies so are thrilled to find two girls as vanilla as they are.

Wrapped up in the scientific success of their invention is the failure of Gary and Wyatt's masculinity, until that very invention herself – Lisa – steps up. Through the carnivalesque space of the 80s teen movie house party, it is *Lisa* who is ultimately a much more accomplished and successful creator of functional masculinity in a social engineering sense than Gary and Wyatt ever were in terms of creating their supposedly perfect woman. Lisa is the creation forced to create, the builder forced to build, the designed object forced to design. What she makes – for better or worse – is two young men less ugly, less stupid, and less of the belief that they somehow deserve sex just because they are white, middle-class boys.

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PICTURES FROM A MAGAZINE: REFLECTING ON E.C. COMICS' INFLUENCE ON *WEIRD SCIENCE*

By Amanda Reyes

The science used in John Hughes' 1985 teen comedy *Weird Science* is certainly, well, weird. The Pentagon is hacked via a dial up modem, dolls are hooked up to computers, and oversexed fifteen-year-olds wear bras on their head as part of the woman-making ceremony (well, rituals might not be science, but they are important). In its frenetic and oh-so-eighties way, it all seems to work. If you also noticed that the "creation" scene is comprised of a vibrant and unusual color palette (even the *Bride of Frankenstein* [1935] clips are colorized), you may feel a heavy comic book vibe emitting from the screen as well. Indeed, one of *Weird Science's* best-kept secrets is that it was inspired by E.C. Comics' early fifties publication *Weird Science* (1950-1953). And, as it would appear, there's quite a history leading up to this one moment of serendipity.

But, before I ask what you maniacs would like to do first, why don't I suggest that we simply start at the beginning...

From My Heart and From My Hand: A Brief History of E.C. Comics

In the years preceding the creation of E.C. Comics in 1945, comic books were already a very prosperous venture. During World War II, billions of comics exchanged hands, and it's no overstatement to claim that in the 1940s it was the most popular form of entertainment. In an era that was engaged in a very black and white war, comics and their superheroes added bright colors into the battle of good against evil, aiding the war effort in their own unique way. After WWII, publishers sought to hold on to their aging readership and introduced new, more mature themes, and a disparate variety of genres found themselves on many a comic book page, including romance, crime, science fiction and horror. However, with the introduction of some of the more evocatively titled publications (*Tales from the Crypt* [1950-1955], *Weird Terror* [1955-1958], *Witches Tales* [1951-



1954], etc.), parents began to fear that the consumption of violent and sexual imagery may negatively influence impressionable children.

Much of that anxiety was triggered by a man named Fredric Wertham. Best known for his 1954 anti-comic call to arms, *Seduction of the Innocent*, Wertham's crusade actually first hit print in 1948 when "Horror in the Nursery" appeared in an issue of *Collier's Magazine* (written by Judith Crist who would later become the movie critic for *TV Guide*). In that article, Wertham claims that he is approaching the troublesome comic publications "not as a psychiatrist, but as the voice for the thousands of troubled parents, who, like myself are concerned primarily with their children's welfare." There are accounts of boys slapping, tying up and even murdering young girls, all because they were influenced by the violence they saw in comic books. Wertham's article was a rallying cry that was taken seriously enough that it inspired comic book burnings around the country.

In 1944, right before the beginning of this moral panic, a man named Maxwell C. Gaines started his modest comic book publishing house, which he called E.C. Comics ("E.C." then stood for Educational Comics). Gaines was a bit of a force in the industry, and is associated with helping Superman to go up, up and away! E.C. struggled with its releases and titles such as *Picture Stories from American History* (1945-1947), and *The Old Testament in Comic-Book Form* (1942-1946) brought in lackluster sales. When Maxwell died unexpectedly in a boating accident in 1947, he was \$100,000 in debt.

His twenty-five-year-old son, William Gaines, inherited E.C. Comics and decided that if he were to save his father's company, he'd have to change the direction of their publications. Looking towards a more adult audience, E.C. (now standing for Entertaining Comics) tried its hand at several different genres, finding the most success with the anthology comic *Tales from the Crypt*, as well as their humor publication, *Mad Magazine*, which is still in print today.

William, who claimed he created the horror comic genre, and who called the introduction of more adult material into his releases "The New Trend," would ultimately pay the price for Wertham's unrelenting crusade when he was asked to appear before the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency.

When confronted with an image of a severed head, which graced the cover of his publication *Crime Suspense Stories* (1950-1955), William assured the court it was in good taste. His remarks made the front page of *The New York Times*, a regulation committee called The Comics Magazine Association of America was formed (albeit voluntarily through the publishers) and the horror and crime titles faded into obscurity.

William folded most of his releases, but was able to hold onto *Mad Magazine* as well as Al Feldstein, who had been his partner in some of E.C.'s best loved genre output, including *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror* (1950-1955) and *Weird Science*.

It's My Creation: Al Feldstein and *Weird Science*

Weird Science found its way onto comic book store shelves in 1950 and ran for 22 issues, ceasing publication in 1953, the year before *Seduction of the Innocent* was published. What was left behind is an interesting array of anthology tales, where aliens took over the Earth, monsters emerged from meteors, and doctors shrunk their assistants, among many other flights of fantasy.

Weird Science was a collaborative project between William Gaines and Al Feldstein, who was the editor. Like William's father, Feldstein was already an industry pro by the time he joined E.C. Comics. Born in Brooklyn in 1925, Feldstein was about fourteen years old when he won a poster contest at the World's Fair in 1939, and he was only fifteen when he began working at the Eisner and Iger Studio, a comic book packager co-run by the legendary Will Eisner.

After he graduated from New York City's High School of Music and Art, Feldstein attended Brooklyn College while taking art classes at the Art Students League, and then entered the military, serving with the Special Forces during World War II. He didn't give up on the comic world during the war, and created *Baffy* for the Blytheville, Arkansas base newspaper, while pursuing other artistic endeavors as well. Once back home, Feldstein found employment with different outfits, finally coming to E.C. in 1948 where he



was hired to write *Going Steady with Peggy*. That strip never got off the ground floor, but Feldstein and William discovered they shared a wonderful rapport and decided to continue their working relationship and friendship.

Feldstein was extremely prolific in his years at E.C. His writing and art graced much of E.C.'s genre output, including their romance, western, and of course science fiction and horror titles. Eventually, he was writing four scripts a week (one a day!), while serving other duties in the editorial department. His scripts were mostly derived from "springboards," which were essentially one or two sentence plotlines concocted by William, which Feldstein fleshed out. The duo used a variety of sources to create these tales, often lifting from genre publications, and even taking stories from the masters such as Ray Bradbury (who politely contacted them about payment before suggesting they adapt some of his other work).

After *Weird Science* folded, Feldstein worked on several different projects, some only lasting for a couple of months. He eventually replaced Harvey Kurtzman as editor at *Mad Magazine* in 1956 and stayed on for the next 29 years. And while many concentrate on his work with this groundbreaking satire publication, *Weird Science* was certainly influential in its own way. Feldstein's strip "Made of the Future!" has been cited as influencing the film *Weird Science*, which may or may not be the truth, but we'll get to that in a minute...

For now, did you know screenwriter Dan O'Bannon found inspiration in "Seeds of Jupiter" from *Weird Science* #8 for his chest bursting scene in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979)?

I know, right?

Just Flesh and Blood: Milton Subotsky and the Amicus E.C. Adaptations

E.C. provided yet another point of inspiration for an American-born British filmmaker named Milton Subotsky. Subotsky, who co-founded Amicus Films, met his partner Max J. Rosenberg in the fifties and their first collaborative effort was on a British TV series titled *Junior Science* (1954). Subotsky, a fervent comic collector, pushed for Amicus to adapt several stories from the E.C. archives for

their various theatrical releases in the early seventies. Amicus' best known and most loved adaptation, "And All Through the House," was one of five stories adapted in the anthology film *Tales from the Crypt* (1974), though the original story was actually published in *Vault of Horror* #35. Like E.C., the anthology format and wraparound stories became signature Amicus, and those films are as beloved as the stories they were adapted from.

In a 1973 interview with *Cinefantastique*, Subotsky commented that getting the rights for *Tales from the Crypt* was a difficult venture. He said: "...money didn't interest Bill Gaines... He was more interested in seeing a good film made from the material... I kept coming back to Max from time to time to keep urging that he obtain the film rights to the E.C. Comics, and finally he met with Bill and they were able to work out a deal." However, although Gaines seemed to like the Amicus output, the company had to approach him for rights for every adaptation. Subotsky commented, "Nobody owns the film rights in any E.C. comic books. We negotiate for them as we do for individual films... Actually, Bill Gaines doesn't want his material violated, and he knows we won't do that... so, I don't think he'll make a deal with anyone else."

Things We've Never Seen Before: Joel Silver and *Weird Science*

Of course, in 1973, Subotsky couldn't have envisioned the immense amount of filmic inspiration that E.C. would have in the years that followed. Whether it be E.C.'s unique aesthetic, or the actual stories themselves, the comic company has influenced everyone from the aforementioned Dan O'Bannon to Tobe Hooper to Joe Dante to George Romero, among many others. But few would have ever attached the King of Eighties Teen Angst, John Hughes, to the gory, fantastic and often-nihilistic worlds housed within E.C.'s library.

With that in mind, it might not seem all that weird (science) that there's little documentation regarding Hughes' connection to the comic publisher. So, perhaps it would be more fruitful to look first at *Weird Science*'s producer, Joel Silver. Silver is an iconic filmmaker who brought such blockbuster movies as *Die Hard* (1988), *Roadhouse* (1989) and *The Matrix* (1999) to theaters. He is also a huge fan of the genre comics published through E.C., and found considerable success



adapting *Tales from the Crypt* into a popular HBO series in 1989. However, he is quick to note that the *Weird Science* movie is *not* an adaptation of the *Weird Science* anthology tale “Made of the Future!”, which appeared in issue #5, despite Internet rumors to the contrary. Silver claims that Hughes was only inspired by the name of the comic series, and its evocative cover art, which he saw in Silver’s office.

In a 2014 interview with ComingSoon.net, Silver states, “[T]he day that all those big books of E.C. Comics arrived, they were sitting in my office, and there was a real hot girl that day sitting at lunch in the commissary at Universal, and John (Hughes) walked in... and he was sitting in my office and saw them undoing the packaging on the books in those cases. He saw the one that said *Weird Science* and said, ‘What if two kids’ - he had two boys (in mind), but they were always him – ‘they figure out a way to make that girl that was in the commissary?’ That’s how it happened. I already had rights to the E.C. books, so that’s how I convinced them to let me have the title. They would have never done it if it was just, ‘Hi, I want the title.’”

Hughes and Silver weren’t the only ones mining the *Weird Science* comic for adolescent fantasies around that time. Perhaps in response to their film’s success, the second season of Steven Spielberg’s anthology series *Amazing Stories* (1985-1987) brought an uncredited yet quite faithful adaptation of Gaines and Feldstein’s “Miscalculation!” from *Weird Science* #15, adapted by screenwriter Michael McDowell and director Tom Holland. Straight from playing Duckie in the Hughes-scripted *Pretty In Pink* (1986), Jon Cryer plays a horny college student who accidentally stumbles across a potion that can bring gorgeous centerfold models to life, but with terrifying consequences... (Silver also produced the HBO anthology series *Perversions of Science* [1997] based on E.C.’s sci-fi fare, but it failed to recapture the success of *Tales from the Crypt* and was cancelled after only ten episodes.)

Plastic Tubes and Pots and Pans: “Made of the Future!” and Building the Perfect Woman

While Silver claims the connection between *Weird Science* the comic and *Weird Science* the movie is somewhat tenuous, it would be hard to deny that Al Feldstein’s “Made of the Future!” shares at least some similarities with Hughes’ teenage romp.

Of course, *Weird Science* the comic was aiming for an older audience and in “Made of the Future!” we meet an adult male named Alvin Blank. His fiancée Marge has just left him for his best friend Bob. A total wreck, Alvin wanders the streets of New York, eventually stumbling on an oddball tour of Rockefeller Center. He absentmindedly follows the group, and soon finds himself in the basement of the center, entering a large vehicle made of see-through materials. Before he can process what is happening, Alvin finds himself traveling to the year 2150. Once there, he steals someone’s futuristic suit, leaving his 1950s clothes behind. Taking in the beautiful ultra-modern sights, Alvin stumbles across a sign reading: “Lonely? A ‘Construct a Wife’ kit will end your problem!”

Stepping into the shop promoting this type of spouse, he finds a beautiful salesgirl asking him if he’d prefer a “normal” wife or the “deluxe” model that never nags, always smiles, and cooks. You know, the works. Alvin asks for the deluxe wife and finds a “Society Card” in the pocket of the suit he stole, which he uses for what is considered payment in 2150.

Alvin wanders around with the box he was given at the shop and manages to find the tour group who can take him back to the 1950s. He puts his fifties suit back on, and leaves behind the Society Card in the hopes it will be returned to the proper owner.

Finally home again, Alvin essentially grows his soon-to-be wife in the bathtub using the materials he finds in the box. This woman is glorious. She’s blonde and curvaceous. And a little confused. Alvin informs the woman, whose name is Jean, that they are to be married. She offers little protest, although it’s questionable that she fully understands the ritual. After the wedding, Jean wears whatever



clothes Alvin buys for her, and she becomes a diligent housekeeper, a good cook and a lovely wife.

His co-workers are impressed. Bob is jealous. He confides in Alvin, telling him that marrying Marge was a mistake. She's a "shrew," and now Bob is very unhappy. In that moment, Alvin realizes he has the perfect spouse, and that he loves Jean deeply.

Life goes on like this - in marital bliss - for months. Then one day Alvin comes home to find a note from Jean informing him that she has decided to take a look at the city and will probably do a tour of Rockefeller Center. She'll be back for dinner.

Of course, she never returns, and has most likely returned to 2150. Alvin spends his days looking for her and for the tour group. At night he stares at the bottles that contained the materials Jean was born from. He is miserable. The End!

No Heart of Gold - Gender Politics and Weird Science the Comic and Movie

However unintentional, the title "Made of the Future!" may bring to mind a different classic eighties sci-fi romp, the 1985 blockbuster *Back to the Future*. It adds a tinge of irony as many of the best loved films to come out of the Reagan era were calling to mind an unblemished nostalgia for the fifties. In a rather extraordinary full circle move, both the *Weird Science* comic and the film loosely bookend the Cold War, which began in 1947 and ended in 1991, and both manage to embrace and respond to the pervasive conservative ideologies that each era is noted for. And yet, they are also both acting against it, using their female characters to explore the dissatisfaction of the frustrating principles placed on women in American culture in both decades.

While characters such as Ren in *Footloose* (1984), Johnny Rourke in *Reckless* (1984), and even Hughes' own John Bender in *The Breakfast Club* (1985), seem to embody the enduring and endearing fifties rebel-without-a-cause trope, Gary (Anthony Michael Hall) and Wyatt (Ilan Mitchell-Smith) are just the opposite. They aren't rising up against the system. In fact, much like Alvin Blank, they long to be

a part of it. To be liked, to be popular, to simply be accepted. Also like Alvin, they understand that a beautiful and dutiful woman would command respect from their peers. If the aforementioned movies were trying to recreate the magic of Marlon Brando and James Dean, Gary and Wyatt wanted in some ways to just be Wally Cleaver from the television series *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963). They were willing to conform to the cultural norms, and just needed a way to prove it.

However, if Gary and Wyatt embody the ideologies of the fifties, Lisa (Kelly LeBrock) is actually building herself out of the tail end of second wave feminism. Lisa is a mixed message, to be certain, but while she seems to belong to Gary and Wyatt, just the opposite is true. *She owns them*.

It's difficult to argue that Lisa is not a product of male fantasy and the male gaze. In many ways she's like Jean from the comic. Physically, she appears to be a perfect human, and once born into the world, she seems to want nothing more than to acquiesce to the wild but ultimately innocent fantasies of sex. But most telling, once the trio leave Wyatt's house, we see Lisa driving a car. Sure, Gary and Wyatt aren't licensed yet (that's part of the joke), but it underscores the concept that Lisa is in the driver's seat. She drives the story, she drives the teenage boys' growth and she drives the film to its end point, where Gary and Wyatt learn about inner strength and real love.

Ultimately, it can be argued that it is Lisa's position of power that makes her so different from Jean in "Made of the Future!". In that *Weird Science* comic, the future looks a lot like the 1950s, where a woman's physical appearance and ability to make a good meal outweighs all else. She's to be seen but not heard, and to somehow find happiness with her lot in life. However, even Jean exercises some agency when she leaves the apartment at the end of the strip. Because she's been so sheltered from the world by Alvin, she longs to see what's going on outside, and inadvertently stumbles inside the time travel machine, which takes her back to the future (as it were), leaving Alvin without his ticket into society (ironic that he left that Society Card in the future world as well). The biggest difference between the comic and the movie is actually in the male characters. Alvin longs for Jean's return, heartbroken and unable to move forward, whereas

Gary and Wyatt grow beyond superficial desires and realize they have to let go of the fantasy.

Approximately a decade before Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, a groundbreaking book from 1963 that is considered the starting point of the second-wave feminist movement, and which surveys a general sense of malaise found in women forced to live as housewives, "Made of the Future!" gave just the smallest hint of what was to come. The movie *Weird Science* builds on that with its strong female lead. Of course, it's not without its issues, and it is certainly never going to be considered a feminist triumph, but it does accentuate some of the positive aspects of a changing cultural landscape. You don't have to be a malaka to see that.

Amanda Reyes is an academic, film historian and the co-author and editor of Are You in the House Alone? A TV Movie Compendium: 1964-1999 (Headpress, 2017).





ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Weird Science has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with 5.1 and stereo 2.0 audio.

The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution on a Lasergraphics Director at EFilm, Burbank.

The film was graded and restored at Pinewood Studios, London. Picture grading was completed on a DaVinci Resolve and restoration was completed using PF Clean software. Audio remastering for the stereo and 5.1 mixes was also completed at Pinewood. The extended version sourced additional 35mm materials for these sections.

All materials for this restoration were made available by NBC Universal.

Restoration supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**

Pinewood Studios Group:

Rebecca Budds, Michael Davis, John Pegg, Jon Mann, Darren Rae, Jashesh Jhaveri, Lucie Hancock, Rob Langridge, Jason Stevens

EFilm:

David Morales

NBC Universal:

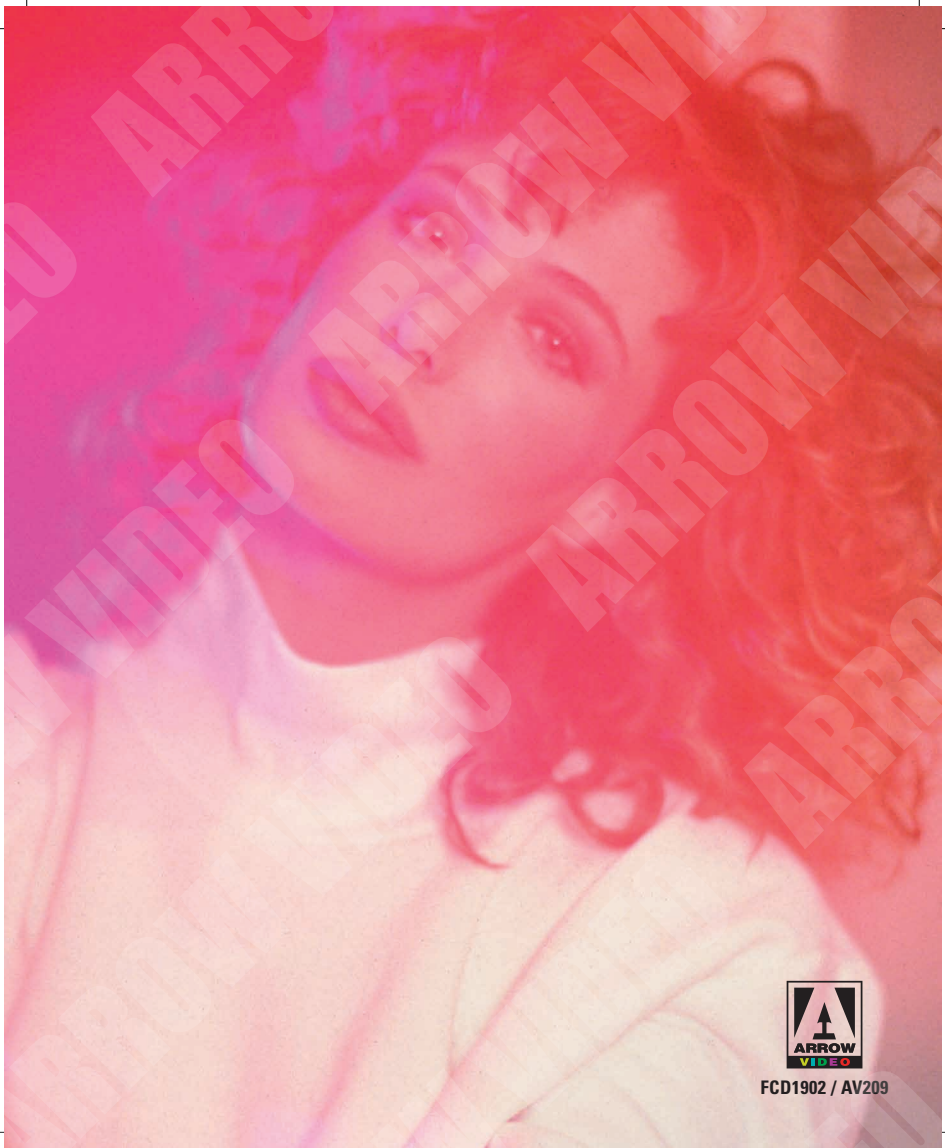
Peter Schade, Tim Naderski, Jefferson Root, John Edell

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **James Flower**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Blu-ray Mastering **Fidelity In Motion**
Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Artwork by **Tracie Ching**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Pat Bauman, Heather Buckley, Jack Cox, Liane Cunje, Elijah Drenner, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, James Hughes, Craig Reardon, Amanda Reyes, Jefferson Root, Sven Weber, Anthony Whittam



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