



INTRODUCTION

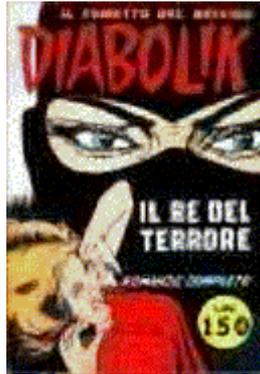
Italy, end of 1962. The baby boom (increase of births) is near and the prospering economy is about to end, the social crisis of 1968 is about to start. It is in this general view of life where values seem stable, good people go to church and the law is perfect, then Diabolik is born. A big shock for the society. The comic strip reading for children becomes violent and cruel, it loses morals, steps over man's rights exceeding in every way and direction. Diabolik appears revolutionary and so condemnable and in fact he will be later on. These extremism today are entertaining. This strip makes us have fun and it doesn't represent a bad example for anyone. Let's enjoy it.



November 1 1962



Comic Strip Books



NOVEMBER 1st 1962

On November 1st 1962 Angela and Luciana Giussani's fantasy create Diabolik together with the drawings by Enzo Facciolo, Glauco Coretti and Flavio Bazzoli, supported by the Astorina publishing house of Milan, Italy. Since then, Diabolik has won a great number of loyal readers, going through lucky times and less positive periods (especially when Angela Giussani dies in 1987). The strip's narrative base is very simple: Diabolik is a clever and capable thief, able to take other people's places, thanks to the disguises he invents. This allows him to bring to an end colossal and spectacular robberies. Diabolik's eternal enemy is Inspector Ginko, a cop with a firm character that has dedicated his whole life catching criminals in defense of the citizens of the world. The eternal struggle between good and evil, cops and robbers, becomes always more spectacular and pleasantly repeating. If on one hand this could appear lacking in originality, on the other, in the 1960's this was at the basis of Diabolik's editorial success. The strip, in fact, arrived in the newspaper kiosks in a period in which no one could compete with it. It was a unique product and still today, in spite of the changed general view of life, maintains its charm and an enviable personality that assures a constant level of sales.



THE COMIC STORY-STRIP

Diabolik is a story that wisely mixes many elements that have already been seen, to create a formula that, even if not new, results decidedly pleasant and enthralling. Diabolik, man of the past, very mysterious (he doesn't even know his own name), is a criminal, very clever in his disguises and planning and putting into practice bold and spectacular robberies. After his first appearance, the case was given to Inspector Ginko, a promising policeman, incorruptible and with an impressive moral code.

So, the story develops on a "cops and robbers" line, emphasizing on the 2 characters, episode after episode, their own creative capabilities (D) and police strategy (G). The leading character is negative, the criminal, able to become with his feats, the readers' favorite. By his side, we have, the positive hero that fights him with (almost) equal weapons, winning the reading public's favor too. There are other characters that during the narrative and temporal evolution of the series become main parts of primary importance (their women). The plots of the different episodes seem at first inspired by the French "noir" and then they evolve later getting closer to a James Bond atmosphere as for the spectacularly and technological contents. The narrative setting is mixed time to time with elements belonging to detective-science-fiction-spy-horror literature, without influencing the main plot, pleasantly repeating. Everything is put together in a personal and involving way, especially if considering it all together. The uncertain and confusing beginning is soon enough replaced by more incisive and dynamic moments that emphasize the key passages of the story (the robbery, the escape, the chase, and the tricks used for the escape) making the reading more pleasant and easier. The repeating of the plots is also recovered by the graphic transposition than never makes it boring. The reader pleasantly feels at home with the usual characters, noise, sounds, dialogues and "shots" gradually discovering details about the characters that eventually become cult objects (see "Diabolik, who are you?"). Thanks to this mixture of elements chosen by the authors with enviable good flair, Diabolik represented for years the only real form of strip story for adults, boasting many attempts of imitations (Criminal by Max Bunker among all) only recently having more "trendy" products able to contrast it's success (Dylan Dog and other related products).



The Characters



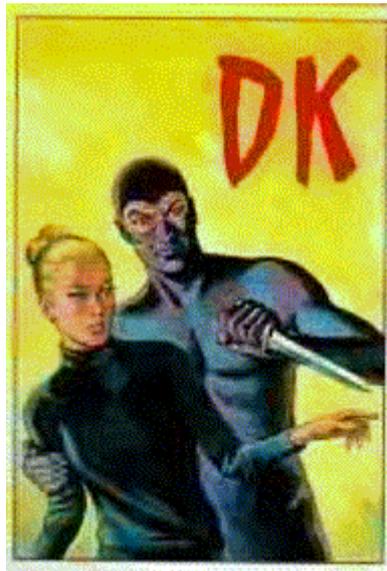
Diabolik



Eva



Ginko



Diabolik's Profile



Diabolik and Drugs



Diabolik in Jail



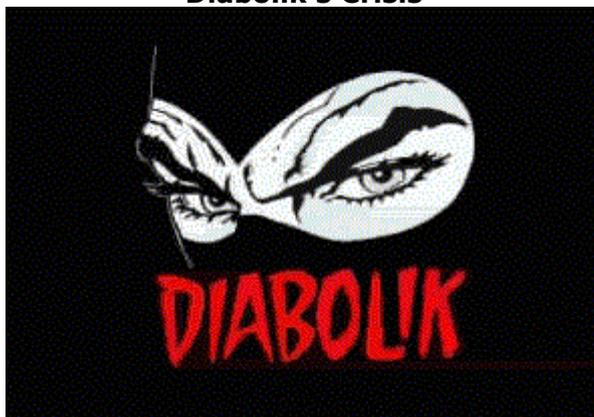
The Jaguar



Diabolik's Past



Diabolik's Crisis



DIABOLIK

Man of deep culture and witty intelligence. Diabolik decided to apply his crime virtues with particular attention and dedication, to "robberies with skill". This idea isn't surprising. Arsenio Lupin or Fantomas had already made themselves well-known as the charming "black" or negative hero. Diabolik isn't an innovator, but only a copy of already well-known heroes. Maybe his secret is right in this reassuring continuation. In the beginning Diabolik is represented like a criminal in all his features: he robs, kills, kidnaps, slaughters, cuts throats and stabs, and all this doesn't upset him at all with a total contempt for other lives; he'll do anything as long as he reaches his prefixed aim. During this stage Diabolik doesn't appear much in his stories and maybe this could be a precise choice of the writers, to confirm the "image" of the diabolical character, a ghost, different from normal humanity. During the narrative evolution the character Diabolik has many aspects. Besides sharing his life with Lady Kant (first appearing in "Diabolik's Arrest") you can slowly uncover his private life, the way he pays careful attention to the evening news, his passion for art and expensive jewelry, his skill in electronic technology (his abilities in miniaturization would make the Japanese green with envy), his passion for the Jaguar, but above all his capability in taking care of his psyche to the point of becoming a "normal" man. Infact, if the first Diabolik, like we've seen is a psychopath, Diabolik in the middle stage and "maturity stage" is without a doubt a sensible man, that loves his job, appreciates his enemies' capabilities (Ginko, among all), loves his woman and fights organized crime. He naturally continues using men as if they were puppets, but if before he would've killed them to take their place, now he just hides and drugs them in a basement, and then frees them unharmed once he has reached his aim. This vein of humanity is surely the result of different factors: man's maturity, his relationship with Eva, the continuous and tiring struggle with Ginko and life itself. Together with this evolution, his presence in the story becomes prevailing and even excessive. We discover that Diabolik shaves with razor blades, at the gym he prefers the rings, Eva and him sleep in separate beds, he doesn't sleep much, he spends whole days fixing up his jaguar equipping it with famous tricks (changed directly from another legendary car, 007's Aston Martin DBS). He often goes on vacation at the beach with his lover. He looks for new houses to transform into "shelters. In short, the mature Diabolik seems all in all like a serious professional about 40 years old, with a home and a job but in this case with a shelter and robberies as a job. During the years Diabolik refines his technique that was a bit "rough" at the start.

The disguises become perfect, unrecognizable and when they're not usable (Ginko controls the faces more often) he has to change some features with paraffin so he can't be caught. The tricks he uses for

the escapes become even more clever and they can count on a showy use of the newest technology, always able to stop and surprise the enemy. If taking someone else's place could be improbable or thoughtless, we can see that the "criminal" has developed remarkable psychological techniques. This allows him to condition his victims transforming them in involuntary accomplices in his robberies.



DIABOLIK AND DRUGS

Since the beginning, drugs have appeared in the strip. Diabolik has to deal with drug dealers, he uses drugs but never for personal use, only if they can help him reach his purpose. You would think during the story that Diabolik thinks positive about drugs. Not only does he deal drugs to make money, but he also fights as hard as he can against gangs that sell them. Of course his only aim is to get hold of the bag full of money but when he gets the drugs he destroys them so they can't be sold all over again. Doing this, the drug dealers want to make him pay for it but they don't know they have no hope against Diabolik. He achieves three important goals: the robbery, he destroys the powerful organization and he wins Ginko's admiration who reminds everyone that Diabolik isn't a normal criminal. In "Heroin for Ginko", the police inspector is paid back for showing his high esteem; Diabolik and Eva detoxicate him from heroine dependency that a band of criminals caused him. A literature exists on the substances Diabolik uses. The usual ones are Scopolamine and Pentothal, used on a regular basis to "make" someone talk or to lead to impotence (the suppression of an innocent's will that is guillotined instead of Diabolik is a typical example). Scopolamine (more present in the first stage) and Pentothal (present during the "mature" stage of the strip) have become legendary in the Diabolik universe. Besides this we know the criminal often goes to the Orient to get new drugs. You get to know Krusion, the drug that simulates death (Diabolik saves himself in "Buried Alive") and a plethora of other small drugs more or less created for each situation during the episode (see "Murder Delirium", in which a specific drug appears that makes you forget what happened in the last 24 hours!). Furthermore, Diabolik uses, almost thoughtlessly, gas (narcotic and cyanide among all) and poisons when he has to get rid of his enemies once and for all (see "Same Destiny for Two Opponents"). There's also the case in which Diabolik himself is victim of attacks from chemical-bacteriological substances.

An example is "Police, the Accomplice", where during a robbery his will is suppressed fortuitously by his own gas. "The Human Guinea Pig" in which he is injected a terrible poison that makes his courage disappear (by the end of the episode an antidote is found) or when he undergoes a very strong dosage of radiation, leaving Eva a hard duty in "purifying" him. So, if on one hand taking people's places makes Diabolik invincible, on the other his skill in the chemical-medicinal drug field enables him, in more than one occasion, to carry out robberies that would be impossible to do or get out of delicate situations. All this is to remind everyone how he's against any form of drug addiction.



DIABOLIK OR EVA IN PRISON

It could seem incredible, but the situation that sees Diabolik or his accomplice arrested and put into prison is recurring, almost a regular appointment. He usually gets to this point after failing a robbery, when Ginko uses the necessary safety measures to make Diabolik fail in his attempt. So, he's arrested and put into prison where he closes himself in complete silence, laying on a folded bed with his hands behind his head (the only exception is seen in "Ginko's Victory", where Diabolik confesses to his opponent the dislocations of his shelters). Generally, in this stage Diabolik's psychological picture has two possible configurations:

- Trust: his lover Eva is surely out there with an infallible escape plan.
- Depression: he doesn't see a way out and so he thinks "It's really over this time" or "Ginko made it" or a lapidary "It's over".

Logically, being executed at dawn would be Diabolik's destiny, but of course this never happens. It could never happen, it would be the end of the series (in spite of this, the authors and the readers like imagining a hypothetical victory by Ginko, end of Diabolik, Eva's death, ambushes at the shelters, and the terrifying sentence the sergeant would say to Ginko, "Diabolik is dead". Diabolik usually escapes from prison thanks to Eva's help, she disguises herself in policemen, photographers or executioners just to save her beloved. When the tricks don't work anymore, the two criminals count on an unforeseeable number of slave cops of the game, warders, heroine addicts or corrupted nurses. They become more or less willingly accomplices during the escape, allowing Diabolik to become free again in spite of Ginko's impressive safety measures. Things are different with Eva. Once she's imprisoned, she's always confident that Diabolik can free her (except, maybe, the first time in "The Train of Death", in which she thinks that he's in love with another woman). Moreover, she's always put into female prisons where there are less safety measures a more easily affected staff. Even Ginko is more indulgent with Eva, justifying her crime as if they were consequences of Diabolik's negative influence on her so, Eva never risks to be guillotined and this obviously gives Diabolik more time to put his plan into practice.



THE JAGUAR

Diabolik would've never been the successful criminal we know if he didn't have by "his side" his famous automobile. Whoever read, at least once, a Diabolik adventure, knows that his car is the legendary and rigorously black Jaguar and above all, equipped with devices and tricks that even James Bond would envy. Diabolik's Jaguar scares everyone like a real criminal would; everyone, from Ginko's policeman to

his naive secretary and to a famous drug boss perfectly know that getting too close to Diabolik's car could mean dying. Even Eva respectfully calls it "his car". Everyone is afraid, because if the Jaguar's aim is to assist Diabolik and Eva during the robberies and get away, it's also equipped with devices that would prevent any stranger from using it against Diabolik. For this purpose the car has two devices:

- Anti-theft devices that signal Diabolik if someone has pried too much into the car; they are like the ones the 2 criminals place near their shelters. they are typical warning lights, usually, put in not very visible places (for example under the motor, so it's immediately visible for them when they come out of the sewers).
- Devices that knock-out whoever tries stealing the car.

Among the most drastic plans is the self-destruction device, which is masked behind an apparently harmless button; others are the different needle-throwers and narcotic gases that are activated with a simple lighter or the window wiper switch: others imprison you inside the car. One thing is for sure, Diabolik's fantasy has no limits in inventing new tricks for his car. In many occasions it transforms itself in different means of transportation able to face the sea's depths (sealing himself perfectly from infiltration's), to fly (thanks to helicopter rotors), to move around on a lake (thanks to special skids and a boat motor), to go along train tracks with special train wheels and so on: there are no limits for Diabolik's Jaguar. Besides being a great car for his escapes, his Jaguar is also an unreplaceable mobile support base for Diabolik: he uses it to carry thousands of necessary devices for the robberies, to bring heavy gold ingots to the shelter, but also to go around and follow their future victims spying on them with directional microphones that they shoot on the cars they have to follow with magnet signaler. Diabolik considers his car like his shelters dependence and like them it has many escape devices, used to get rid of the cars that chase him, following a recurrent scheme: Diabolik drags behind him the police cars, avoiding or running over blockade posts thanks to the front armored bumpers and four wheels (that never get flat even if you shoot at the tires) and if he doesn't stop the chasers with lasers that burn down the motors or bumpers, he drags them into traps. Once they're there, Eva and him push buttons on the remote control and then anything can happen: Ginko and the cops suddenly have rocks, tree trunks (real or in plastic), nets, trap doors, that stop them. To prepare these devices and equipment, all these cars (he destroys practically one in every episode), Diabolik has to spend a lot of time in the garage: So you presume that even if he's not a normal person Diabolik has small or big hobbies that normal men have, during the week-ends he repairs his car and takes it to the car wash as if it was his favorite toy. His personality is reflected on it (the Jaguar is fast, always and only black, lethal just like the owner). But we have a doubt: if Ginko knows that Diabolik drives a black "E" Jaguar, why doesn't he check out all the owners of black "E " Jaguars?



DIABOLIK'S PAST

The character's past is one of the most unknown and discussed subjects of the whole DK saga. This criminal, like we've already said, doesn't have a name, he doesn't have a precise age, he certainly doesn't celebrate his own birthday, he doesn't have a nationality, he doesn't have relatives or parents. It seems like he's come out from nowhere and this makes him even more mysterious, sinister and charming. On one hand, if all his non-existent personal data has contributed positively to his image, and on the other, as the strip went on, he started showing his limits and most of all, it seemed like the writers themselves didn't have a clear idea on how to give explanations on the character's past. So, they began giving hints on his past and here comes a new series of episodes that were made to calm down the reader's curiosity, giving a "taste of the past". This operation reaches its best in the legendary "Diabolik, who are you?", where Diabolik and Ginko, apparently condemned to die in short time, have a last, intense and sincere conversation. At this point, the inspector with no delay says the words that give the title to the episode, asking, directly, Diabolik information about himself. That's when the readers find out that Diabolik doesn't even know about his own identity, he only knows that he was the only survivor of a shipwreck saved when he was very little by a gang of outlaws that had their base on a secret island. On this island he learns all the techniques and knowledge that characterize his criminal talent. The young survivor, obviously, uses his own personal qualities and soon becomes better than anyone else on the island and so his rescuers become his first victims. On the island, he gets the idea for his "name". In fact, Diabolik is a black panther's name from which his style and personality are inspired from. Besides "Diabolik, who are you?", his past comes out on certain regular terms on the strip (for example the most recent "Threats from the Past") but it's never completely resolved: We agree with the author's choice, mystery is Diabolik's fundamental component, furthermore, we know that the writers have a complete dossier on his past. We just have to wait and be patient.



DIABOLIK'S CRISES

It's very difficult to cause Diabolik crises: he has a strong temperament, an iron will and a lot of luck. And yet, in some rare occasions he looks lost. Even if in rare circumstances and however different from one another, if you exclude all the circumstances in which Diabolik was hurt, it's worth remembering some episodes. In a dramatic episode, ("The Human Guinea Pig"), they use Diabolik to study the effects of a gas that destroys courage; this is very difficult for Diabolik to understand since he started being afraid in the most common situations, even suicide crosses his mind. Eva tries her best to infuse courage into him, but only the antidote saves him. In a recent episode ("In the Tunnel of Insanity") Diabolik has to put up with one of his old victim's revenge: Sweet Elizabeth, Diabolik's former lover that had reported him to the police ("Diabolik's Arrest"). Diabolik gives her an atrocious treatment (he made her become almost insane), she then decides to pay him back in the same way; when he's totally out of his wits, Elizabeth kidnaps and torture him slowly, then sends Eva the photographs. But in the end Diabolik's lucky star saves him before Elizabeth kills him. "Shadows from the Past", one of the best episodes, reveals, at last, Diabolik's weak human spot. The criminal doesn't bring to an end a robbery because years before, during the same robbery, he had accidentally, almost, stabbed to death a little girl. Diabolik never forgot the terrorized and surprised look on the little girl's eyes. He has psychological problems and he refuses to talk about it even with Eva. But Eva's determination finds a solution getting to the origin of the problem, making him face the subject. This represents the only time that Diabolik doesn't have control on his will, and not because of a drug or hypnotic effect. "Shadows from the Past" gives us a hint on Diabolik's mysterious past, putting another piece to the puzzle, that however remains incomplete. Ginko can't even imagine this side of Diabolik's personality, that remains a unique example in all the criminal's history, his own woman realizes that if she ever betrayed her man he could kill her or make her go mad (like he did with Elizabeth, his first girlfriend when she reported him to the police). Once because she hadn't obeyed him, he put his hands around her neck and tried strangling her. But Diabolik's love for her is stronger than his anger (see "Desperate Struggle"). In the beginning, Lady Kant was never usually involved in Diabolik's robberies, she waited for him at the shelter, terrorized at the idea that he could be arrested or fall into a trap. Even when she participated, later, in her first robberies, she only did because Diabolik had forced her to. You could tell she didn't have the skill or the ready wit that will characterize her later on, instead.



Eva Kant



Eva Kant's Profile



Eva's cars and wardrobe



Eva's Superstitions



Eva's Crisis



EVA KANT

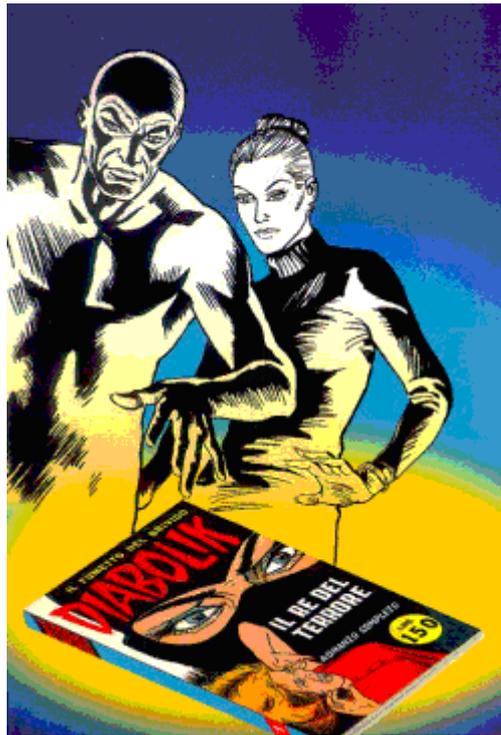
Eva Kant, the blond leading character in Diabolik's adventures, loyal and inseparable partner, is the character that has probably gone through the deepest psychological evolution. We don't know much about her past, less than we know about her partner's. When she appears the first time (number 3, "Diabolik's Arrest"), she immediately captures the male readers attention and naturally Diabolik's too. She's attractive and charming, even if there are suspects about her: they say she's a widow and she's rich because her husband, Lord Kant, left her the title "Lady" when he died during a safari in not very clear circumstances. Diabolik is about to rob her, when a magnetic attraction immediately takes place between the two of them: his steel color eyes had already attracted many women who ignored his real

(and terrifying) identity. The others were too naive for him. Eva, though, knows who he is but she doesn't fear him. She saves him right from the start when he's about to be guillotined, helping him escape from prison. It's Eva's courage that makes him, one of the most implacable criminals, fall in love. The episode after she frees Diabolik, however, Eva begins thinking about the decision she has taken, she loves Diabolik but she is also a little afraid of him. You shouldn't forget that in the beginning Diabolik killed anyone who got in his way with absolute no pity. In no time, Eva begins to gain confidence in herself, she becomes daring and soon enough she becomes Diabolik's partner, maybe because she becomes aware of how much he loves her after he saved her many times from jail, risking his own life, or maybe because she feels its time to "soil her hands" (by this time, one calls her "Lady" anymore). Eva learns Diabolik's tricks (she knows how to make disguises, use the acids, narcotics and needle-throwers). Sometimes she plans by herself escape plans for her boyfriend, she even made her own private secret shelter that Diabolik doesn't even know about it. In the beginning Diabolik doesn't believe they're on the same level. You can tell from the way he calls her "my little fool" or "my adorable pest". As a matter of fact, neither does Ginko or the readers think they're on the same level especially when Diabolik is condemned to the guillotine, while as Eva only to 20 years of prison because in their opinion she has undergone his negative influence. Naturally, Eva doesn't like the fact that he doesn't consider her on his same level and many times, she's forced to compete with him (see "Eva's Robbery") to show him her ability in planning and doing a complicated robbery. This spirit of competition and her jealousy are the main reason why they fight and this complicates or sometimes ruins their plans. Jealousy is another recurrent subject that makes Eva suffer a lot, always insecure of his love (see "The Train of Death"), when Diabolik kidnaps a beautiful woman to make her think he's forgotten about his blond "Lady", temporarily in jail. Although, the reason he does this is to reduce her prison's surveillance, so he can organize the escape. When Eva finds out about his presumed "love affair" with another woman, she's deeply hurt (because she thinks about how she's ruined her life with a criminal that abandons her so soon)! There have been many misunderstandings between the two in these 38 years but they've never been unfaithful to each other. And so after many escapes, going 200 km per hour on their Jaguar, daring robberies, jealousies, misunderstandings and many vacations at the beach (Eva's favorite destination), Eva earns Diabolik's trust and Ginko's respect, who admitted more than once that Eva is Diabolik's worthy partner. During recent years Eva influences Diabolik to the point that she can persuade or dissuade him from doing a robbery, some are done just so he can give her a statue or a jewel. Diabolik even designs jewels for her, chooses romantic places, goes on vacation more often and creates a perfume with an original fragrance for her. So you can clearly see that in the beginning he didn't even let her know what he intended doing, whereas now, he calls with the radio clock just to let her know that he'll be a bit late. Eva has become very important for Diabolik in a way that no other woman could ever hope to be.



EVA'S CAR AND WARDROBE

One of the strip's characteristics is to be, contemporarily, in and out of time: Diabolik is one of those characters that never grow old, while the world around goes on and changes. In Diabolik we know time passes by because of some details like the clothes Eva wears and the cars she drives. During the first stories when Eva just waits for her man at the shelters, she wears very elegant dresses; tight skirts that reach below her knees, but very classy, they emphasize her splendid body and her predication for anything that is elegant. Some years later, during the 70's, Eva starts wearing bell bottoms and knotted shirts showing her bellybutton. Since she has a model's body, Eva wears a lot of short mini skirts with high heel shoes. In the 80's, during the day, she wore Bermuda and stir-ups and during the night, very elegant, tight, long gowns made by Ghenf and Clerville. Eva can afford luxury since she's well off, but even so, she'll wear a comfortable pair of blue jeans. Finally, when Eva takes actively part in the robberies she chooses her "working uniform": black turtle-neck pullovers and black pants with flat shoes. The car is the only thing that doesn't change, they always use the same black Jaguar but Ginko changed his from the famous Citroen DS to the more modern XM. Eva, on the other hand, seems to have a preference for small cars to move around in traffic and park easier. However, Eva seems to like new cars, even if they're small. You see her go to Clerville's with a Mini then a Panda and later with a Y10. Unfortunately, since the strip is in black and white, we can't tell what colors she prefers for these cars white during the day or black during the night like the Jaguar: black like a dark sky with no moon.

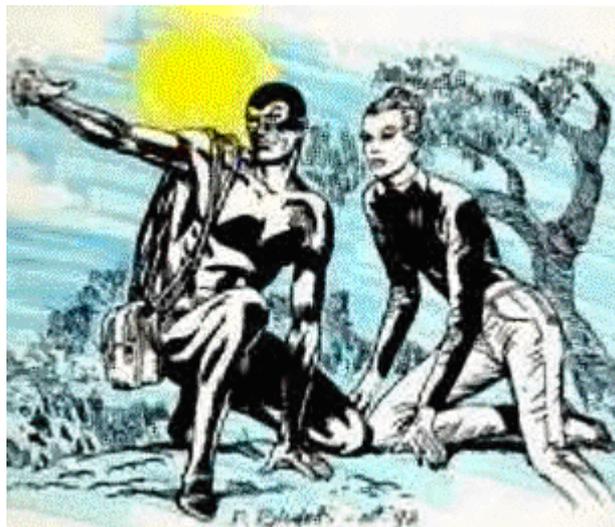


EVA'S SUPERSTITIONS

Eva, during the years, has become, progressively more courageous, daring and ruthless, but she has never been able to free herself from a weakness that has always characterized her and that Diabolik accuses her of: superstition. This insecurity has different aspects: Eva firmly believes in the legends about cursed jewels, to the point that she tries dissuading Diabolik in stealing them, but he doesn't listen to her. In some cases, however, he has to change his mind (even if he won't admit it) because fate, in some ways, prevents him from meeting with success. That's what happens in "Curse of the Black Pearl", that causes death to anyone who steals it from the legitimate owner. Diabolik doesn't believe in the curse, but only in his capabilities, so he tries stealing it, but the results are disastrous; the shelter where Eva's at gets on fire and she's saved by a miracle, Diabolik is bitten by a snake and Eva gets arrested while she tries to get the serum for him. The situation turns to normal only when Eva, without telling Diabolik, gives the pearl back to the owner. Even in this case Diabolik doesn't admit that the pearl brings bad luck, instead, he always finds a logical explanation for all the mishaps. In the end, though, the authors show that in this case Eva's right. However, he didn't fail every time he tried stealing a "cursed object", since his skills can overcome any spell. Diabolik is often interested in jewels and objects that belonged to Egyptian pharaohs and that were found in their tombs. These objects are famous for their curses aimed to anyone who tries to plunder the tombs. But for the credibility of the story and its characters, stealing "cursed" objects can't always be a failure. There are many stories of stolen Egyptian jewels, necklaces, belonging to the pharaohs' wives and other ancient treasures.

Eva's superstitions aren't only based on these aspects but also on her presentiments. She goes to gypsies that predict her future: the answer is always ambiguous, but Eva always gives her personal explanation drawing to the conclusion that the next robbery won't go well. In "Incredible Prophecy" she tries everything to prevent Diabolik from going on with his plans, making him exceedingly angry. The episode usually finishes with Eva that swears to herself (and her partner) to never believe again in prophecies: the readers know she'll keep her promise only till the next episode. Her superstitions are dangerous because besides making her behavior unforeseeable, they are a double-edged weapon because everyone knows about it and tries using it against her and Diabolik. In one occasion, a couple

of people find out about Diabolik and Eva's real identity: since these people aren't honest, they decide to steal the 2 criminal's riches using a clever system. They give Eva a pendant telling her it's a good luck charm. She, naturally, accepts it. But the pendant has a transmitter inside it. Eva never leaves her charm, thinking it will bring Diabolik good luck during his robberies. Only in the end they find out about the trick, but by then, they had already run many risks, all because of Eva's superstitions. Diabolik can't stand this aspect of Eva's personality, they have a lot of arguments about it too, but in the end he always forgives her for everything maybe because he realizes no one can be perfect like he is.



EVA'S CRISES

Eva Kant, the criminal genius' companion, is cool and clever like her partner. She doesn't have, though, the same strength and mental resistance that he has. For this reason sometimes she passes through crises, during which she can't keep up with Diabolik and becomes a burden for him instead of an assistant. These situations rarely happen and if they do, they're justified by the fact that she's

undergoing long and intense stress. A typical example is represented in "The Long Night", episode in which Eva and Diabolik are disguised and have to stay side by side Ginko and Altea: this is a very difficult situation for Eva. But then bad luck doesn't stop here. The 2 prisoners that Eva and Diabolik are disguising themselves as, free themselves, and warn Ginko, who starts an endless chase. Eva has to race away and face a long swim during the night (where she almost drowns) and then a tormenting escape in a motor boat. Finally, tired in desperation takes over her identity and she tells her boyfriend she's had enough of that kind of life. Only when Diabolik proves his love for her, getting himself arrested to save her life, she comes back to her senses. Eva recovers energy and courage and stops being a burden, becoming again Diabolik's reliable partner. Obviously, it's not only Eva's nature's fault if she has crises. In many cases, fate is responsible. For example, when Eva falls from a chair, hits her head and risks a permanent paralysis, when she got a pneumonia but above all when she's convinced that she only has 3 months to live because of a tumor. Eva doesn't want her man to suffer so she prefers giving a "Desperate Goodbye", pretending to be in love with another man. Diabolik goes through a very hard time during which he tries to react with his invincible willpower. After long pain, regret and indecision, Eva decides to tell Diabolik the truth: the adventure naturally concludes with a happy ending. In "Without a Past", Eva has amnesia and goes to Ginko who takes advantage of the situation and makes her reveal where Diabolik is. The trap doesn't work because Eva, just in time, gets her memory back and saves Diabolik and herself miraculously. The cause of Eva's problems could also derive from those people that try to separate her from her man, knowing they don't have much hope, they use sly means like hypnosis or drugs to make her forget her past, but as you can imagine, they have no success. There's also the case when someone tried using Eva to eliminate Diabolik using hypnosis but it turned out to be a failure (Diabolik is always on the alert) and Diabolik ends up freeing Eva from any negative influence instead. There's also an unscrupulous psychiatrist that uses Eva as a guinea pig for his experiments on new drugs that eliminate your will. A more tragic case is in "Drug Slave" where Eva thinks she's a big drug dealer's daughter and starts using heroine and when she goes back to Diabolik she causes a lot of trouble before she gets out of it. Obviously, Eva's crises put her life and Diabolik's in danger, if in the end everything goes for the better, it's because that mocking destiny that has put them in danger reverses the situation to their advantage. Ginko is well aware of these 2 aspects in Diabolik's favor but he thinks and hopes that good luck will be on his side one day.

GINKO

Ginko's Profile

Ginko's office

Ginko: Face to Face with Diabolik

Altea of Vallenberg

GINKO

Ginko, the inspector Ginko, is without a doubt a firm and stern man, that his superiors, fellow citizens and policemen admire very much. Even if he always fails in catching Diabolik, with the other criminals he has many professional successes that we don't know about (since he isn't the leading character). If this wasn't true, how could he still be in the police forces' upper levels. He's a serious professional that has had a unique experience during his career in the police force. Ginko represents a reference mark for every citizen that has public or personal order problems or safety problems. In many episodes he has to fix the safety measures for the noblemen's castles, help his friends' children who have started with drugs, supervise the bank's burglar alarms, fight against corrupted cops and secret agents that try to manipulate him, organize the transportation of valuables for art galleries and a lot more. Ginko helps everyone with pleasure. He also knows that, for example, organizing the transportation of valuables, he'll meet up with Diabolik and this means another chance for him to finally catch his number one enemy and retire from his job with his career's best success. Ginko isn't ambitious. He's totally, absolutely, incredibly a believer in man's good-will, an angel policeman. This is proved by the fact, among many, that after 30 years of chasing Diabolik, when he does finally catch him, he demands that the normal routine is followed. This means: spending a night in jail (Eva frees him right away) or sentencing him to death on such-and-such day at such-and-such time (an innocent drug addict will be sentenced in his place instead in one of the episodes); or take him to the worse jail (during the ride he'll run away with his accomplice Eva). In short, anyone else would shoot right at Diabolik's heart after all he did, if you had finally caught him. Not Ginko. In the beginning, Ginko's character wasn't sketched very much, he looked more like a new Sherlock Holmes with his friend Gustavo Garias as Watson by his side, both trying to catch the new criminal (Diabolik), the 60's kidnapper-serial-killer. When the strip became a series the authors changed Ginko's character a little, he soon became an integrating part of the plot. We see his character grow as the series goes on: he's no longer "an" inspector but "the" inspector pax excellence. Gustavo Garian finally gets out of the way taking with himself encumbering doubts about Ginko's sexual tastes (in no time he gets engaged to the high-class duchess Altea de Vallenberg). With Gustavo out of the way, Ginko's free to become, on his own, a hero. As time goes by, Ginko changes his mind about Diabolik. First he considers him a "devil" with human features and then a "damned" criminal because he realizes that Diabolik "has his own code of honor". The struggle between good and evil becomes a clash between gentlemen. Diabolik isn't a normal criminal, Ginko considers him a strong component even if he always has to remind himself that he is, however, a criminal, even if Diabolik just saved his life (see "Heroine for Ginko). At this point, Ginko keeps trying to capture Diabolik but deep down you can tell he prefers knowing him out there planning new robberies, so he can look forward to a new chess game with his favorite component.

GINKO'S OFFICE

Inspector Ginko's office is the "ghost-character" of the series, that is, it exists even if it isn't always mentioned. Diabolik, in fact, personally visits the police station in Clerville, more often than you can imagine. There are different reasons; Eva and Diabolik often disguise themselves as other criminals, they get arrested and are taken to Ginko's office (in this case, they never speak otherwise they could be caught). Diabolik continuously robs the police's safe, especially when he wants to get back the loot Ginko found in one of his shelters; sometimes Diabolik goes to Ginko's disguised as a jeweler so he can ask information about the security systems. Actually, these things happen in the first episodes when Ginko isn't aware yet of Diabolik's skills. When Ginko's sixth sense gets better, Diabolik starts avoiding the direct approach and starts using other techniques. At this point, the inspector's role becomes crucial. His personality comes out: he's orderly, methodical, serious, not very original (he hasn't changed his dark suit or his black and red tie in all these years). During the years, not much has changed in the inspector's office: same desk near the wall, on top of it on the left, there's a lamp and on the right there's a telephone (you should notice that the station has just recently given a new push-button phone with many communication lines that replaced the old black dial phone). At the center of his desk, he has an, almost, empty pencil holder and some police files, all kept nice and in order. On the wall behind him Ginko has a big map of Clerville and under it a piece of furniture that's supposed to contain files and on top of it a pile of documents all lined up perfectly. The last but not least, important

element is the window. Without it Diabolik would have a lot more problems in keeping under control the office. Infact, the first thing Diabolik does is put microphones in the room (magnet microphones are typical) so he can listen to how and when they'll transport gold or any other police operation. Naturally, Ginko sometimes finds these microphones and uses them to trap his enemy giving false indications. Useless to say, Diabolik knows when he's been caught and when the microphone has been individualized but Ginko thinks he has the upper hand for once (for example "The Last Move" where Eva tries to draw attention on herself and so to the microphone). However, as time goes by, Ginko becomes so suspicious that he makes his cops search his office many times a day. But between a search and another, Diabolik and Eva are always able to obtain a lot of information about exhibitions and transfers of precious goods that they don't even know about. At least it makes up for all the time they spent in spying Ginko's office watching him work for hours in complete silence or listening to his trifling conversations with Altea. In extreme cases (like "Death's Shadow"), the inspector uses Diabolik and Eva's microphones to contact them in case he needs information. After all that, Ginko's office is for Diabolik, the place where he finds out information about many things that intrest him like, the homicide, narcotics and the vice squads.



GINKO: FACE TO FACE WITH DIABOLIK

It's more than right to imagine that the 2 main characters meet face to face in various occasions, the criminal and the incorruptible police inspector. There are various types of situations when they meet: when Diabolik is arrested and also the more unusual like when Diabolik collaborates with Ginko taking the sergeant's place . The first is a classical and predictable situation. When Diabolik is arrested he doesn't even speak to Ginko because he's already planning his escape. There are other dramatic ones like in "Diabolik, Who Are You?", in which the two enemies are both being held as hostages by some murderers that want to eliminate them. In this occasion Ginko hopes that his agents find him before Eva Kant does, but since this never happens, Ginko sees his criminal escape and also must admit that he saved his life. When he meets Ginko with a disguise, he behaves in a different way: first of all he has to be careful that Ginko doesn't recognize him, then he tries to take advantage of the situation by trying to find out about the transfer of goods. Sometimes, Diabolik laughs under his mask and thinks "if Ginko only knew who he's talking to". As a matter of fact the authors, who are always on Diabolik's side, make the inspector look naive, and create situations in which Ginko himself, unconsciously, helps his enemy: he saves his life, when the aspirant heirs of the person he is pretending to be with a disguise decide it's time to read the will; he exculpates him, thanks to his accurate investigations, from the charge of murder set up by friends or relatives that had bad intentions; he hands right over a precious jewel , thinking that he's his assistant; he congratulates him personally, for a successful fight against crime. The hard rule of the story is that only when it's too late, the poor inspector realizes he was dealing with Diabolik, but at that point he just kicks himself, swallows the bitter pill and tries to find , in Altea's arms, the strength to go on and fight his eternal enemy.

ALTEA OF VALLENBERG

The Duchess Altea of Vallenberg is one of the characters of the story, being "Ginko's woman". Altea's background is simple: she's the king of Beglait's cousin's widow, she likes making high-class friends, traveling and sometimes taking part in political projects. Altea is the perfect woman: she comes from a rich family (she doesn't work and she lives in a castle), she's always elegant and cultivated, young and beautiful in every circumstance, even if Diabolik kidnaps her or if she catches a fatal disease (see "Shadow's Death", where she's in a hospital bed but she's wearing make-up). Altea comes into Ginko's life when there's a political problem: Diabolik blackmails the Beglait monarchy and the negotiations are held right in the Duchess' castle because it's considered a neutral zone. But she doesn't have hard feelings towards the criminal because it's in this circumstance that she meets the big love of her life: Ginko. Altea and Ginko fall in love immediately, just like it had happened between Diabolik and Eva, realizing that it's forever. It couldn't be otherwise, they're the perfect couple: they're both strong but sensitive towards people in difficult situations; they have their principles and values of life, they refuse any type of violence. Ginko, except for his only fault, perfectly in character with his role (he's the eternal Stakhanovite, who always gives priority to his work), is the perfect man for Altea. If this wasn't so, how could it be that a beautiful high-class woman with a lot of men that would love to be with her, chooses to tie herself sentimentally with a simple police inspector, , even if a famous and admired one, he surely can't offer her a luxurious life like she's used to and like he can't stand. Altea accepts the relationship with Ginko, in the good or bad, for love's sake (only once did she have hesitation, she was disappointed once again when Ginko missed out on another of their dates), but as a matter of fact she only has disadvantages being with him: Ginko's rarely by her side, because his work takes him away and never accompanies Altea to her receptions (the few times he did either he had to leave the party early or something happened like: burglaries, kidnappings or other problems); Ginko tells her directly that he can't marry her because he's a cop and so she'd be in danger too many times (see "The Last Move"), especially she would have to look out for Diabolik, because he knows about Ginko's relationship with her and so she'd be the victim if he decides to have revenge or blackmail Ginko. Moreover, she's often in contact with Diabolik or Eva since they often disguise themselves as Ginko and involve her in very dangerous situations. There's something strange, though: Altea doesn't hate Diabolik or Eva like she should : Altea is often the two criminals' accomplice because she's grateful to them (see "Shadow of Death" where she helps Eva make Diabolik escape from the hospital, because thanks to Eva, Ginko and other people save their lives). Obviously, she never regrets it because she doesn't tell Ginko about it, since he'd never forgive her and their love story would end. In short, Altea is polite, kind, good towards everyone, but deep inside she lies and what's worse, to Ginko. But in a way she's punished by "The superior Mind" that dominates the story, Altea has such bad luck that no one else could have. In these 38 years she goes through thousands of mishaps: different criminals kidnap her, she's blackmailed, forced to leave her own country in disguise because of a revolution; recently she has been a victim of one of the worse crimes: he's invited to a friend's house, he's paralyzed and she feels responsible for it, he makes passes at her and then rapes her ("Rape"). When this happens, Ginko isn't there to help her, at least not in the beginning, Diabolik is , wearing his disguise as the inspector (Diabolik with the a little bit of humanity frees Ginko so he can help his woman). It's interesting to see, how in more than one occasion, Eva never faces these sort of violence (who knows what kind of massacre Diabolik would organize for his revenge). Altea, on the other hand, is sacrificed. Luckily, the world of the story-strips, unlike the real one, gives its characters a surprising quick recovery: so, just like Ginko and Eva detoxicate themselves from drugs in a few pages, so does Altea, get over this bad experience by the end of the story thanks to Ginko's love. Altea, though, isn't

always a victim. In more than one occasion , she shows that she has guts too: she has to save Ginko, so she puts on a blond wig, puts on vulgar make-up and sexy clothes so she can mingle with the bad crowd and get information and exculpate Ginko. Beautiful Altea, with eyes the color of the sky (that's how Ginko calls them when they first meet in "The Big Blackmail") is all in all presented as a positive character, the right woman for the most incorruptible inspector in the world. And yet she looks like Eva a lot especially when she's worried about her man and ready to do anything to help him. Maybe for this reason when the two women meet each other they help themselves out . Who knows, maybe one day they will become like two great friends that meet in famous cafes, confiding in one another how difficult it is to live with the world's most famous criminal and respected police inspector.

THE WORLD OF DIABOLIK



Shelters



Trips and vacations



Places



The Underworld



The Comic strip's Language



Love and Friendships



Who interferes with Diabolik....

THE SHELTERS

Diabolik and Eva's houses have felt the effects of the story's evolution the most. In the beginning, Diabolik, when he was still engaged to Elizabeth, lived in a villa in the center of Marseilles, and we all thought that it was his permanent address. He had, in fact, created many secret passages that could guarantee him in anytime an escape or an access to the villa itself, passing through gardens or sewer systems. In this stage, when he's not "working", Diabolik can still go around without disguising himself: no one knows what he really looks like. He still isn't that popular in the crime scene. By the end of "The Elusive Criminal" he's not able anymore to live in luxurious conditions in only one house. After a confusing stage, when the criminal hides in small mountain houses or caves, the authors brilliantly resolve the problem introducing a new concept in Diabolik's reality: the Shelter. The shelter is just like a house, but it has precise characteristics: it must be isolated, the basements must have unusual wide walls, it must be accessible by many ways, equipped with many and different possibilities of escape. Diabolik does the rest, he fixes the shelter's alarm systems, traps, TV cameras, every type of laboratory, safes and any type of comfort that suits his needs. As you read along you see that Diabolik has shelters almost everywhere so he has more possibilities of getting away. It's practically impossible to count all his shelters, however, you can characterize them: "Operative shelters". They usually have laboratories for the production of masks, an equipped garage with many types of Jaguars and other means of transportation, a basement with a jail where he hides his prisoners and, finally, an impressive cash reserve. This type of shelter is the one you see the most in the stories, since its characteristics make it a perfect base for the criminal. The operative shelter, moreover, seems the one with more efficient defense systems in case of some intrusion. The "Pleasure" shelters. Very similar to the operative shelters, but they have more comforts. Usually, these shelters are on the beach, built on top of high cliffs. Inside, there are the laboratories for the masks and there's always a cash reserve. They don't have jails in the basement but they do have many secret tunnels, including the ones the ocean can offer, they're a lot more spectacular than the operative ones. Besides the usual big garage, there's also a dock hidden by the rocks able to hide a big motorboat, sub-scooter and, in some cases, a small submarine. "Meditation" shelters. They're usually in the mountains, far from the towns. This is where Diabolik and Eva go after particular stressful experiences (kidnappings or the arrest of one of the two). It doesn't have much, a small cash reserve and something else.

- "Flying" shelters. It's not a real shelter, but a small home or apartment, temporarily rented for a specific robbery. In these cases, Diabolik and Eva use an operative one as a support base. This shelter is always abandoned once the robbery is done.
- Secret shelters. They are either Diabolik's or Eva's shelter. They don't tell each other about it. They can be useful when they have an argument and in other different occasions (see "Ginko's Victory"). The police The shelters are so important for the narrative line of the story that sometimes they

have had very important roles in many episodes (see "Ambush at the Shelter" or "The Last Shelter"). In the Last Shelter Ginko, by chance, finds all the shelters except one. Diabolik watches take 30 years of loot and finds himself with nothing, except for one cave-shelter.

TRIPS AND VACATIONS

Diabolik is always on the go; he moves around a lot and goes where the next robbery will be, he goes abroad (usually to the Orient) to get rare drugs or because he has to sell "hot" loot, he moves from one shelter to the other so he can't be caught by the police or because it isn't safe anymore (by the way, we wonder: since they're always running they obviously don't have time to pack their bags, does this mean they have a complete wardrobe ready in each shelter?). They don't have a permanent address, moving around all the time causes a lot of problems, especially for Eva (she'd love to decorate her own home). Diabolik tries to resolve, in part, this problem by making the shelters in the most charming places and as comfortable as possible. He builds them in isolated places on top of cliffs, cottages in the mountains, elegant homes in residential neighborhoods. The principal role of the shelters is to make the two thieves relax (Eva begs Diabolik hundreds of times to take her to those charming shelters at the beach). However, our heroes often go on trips for simple leisure (at least that's what their intentions are at the beginning but they always end up with a robbery). Going on vacation hasn't always been part of the story because as you can imagine Diabolik doesn't like it, he'd rather work 365 days a year. This isn't Eva's case. When she becomes an important part of the story, she demands a vacation, however, they don't often go and Diabolik is the one that takes the official decision. Little by little, Eva's requests become reality more often; so they go on month long cruises on their boat, in desolate places, where no masks are needed, or trips to beautiful summer resorts (usually famous and fashionable ones: recently Greece). Like normal people, Diabolik and Eva don't deny themselves many luxuries when they're on vacation (why should they, they have no financial problems): they go to very elegant restaurants, night clubs and casinos. It seems impossible for Diabolik and Eva to stay out of trouble for too long, so during their vacations they always find new jobs. In other occasions, while they're gone, other criminals incriminate them for other robberies so as soon as they come back they have to get away (see "The Last Move"). Diabolik and Eva usually go on vacation together. In rare occasions, though, Eva doesn't agree with him and they have arguments. She decides that she won't wait for him when he comes back from the next robbery and she leaves him and goes to the beach alone (Ginko's Victory). In the beginning, Diabolik seems relieved (he can finally work in peace!) but then he starts missing her and goes looking for her, proving to the readers that he's more of a kitten than a mean Black Panther. He looks for her at the beach shelters where he usually finds her and then they finally make up. Ginko and Altea never go on vacation together; a cop like Ginko never goes on vacation or anyway if he does he never has the chance to remain the whole time. Luckily, Altea is an unemployed noblewoman, so she is practically always on vacation, going to the Vallenberg castle and to her friends' luxurious palaces. Vacations have become a very important part in Diabolik and Eva's life, in fact many stories have been set during them ("Mafia" and "Tragic Vacation").

THE LOCATIONS

The story of Diabolik is as if in a time warp whereas Diabolik and Eva never grow old, they remain 35 or 40 years old. You can't say the same about the geographic surroundings, especially during the first episodes. Obviously, Diabolik lives in France, at Marseilles, where he has a beautiful home. Policemen wear a classic uniform like the one seen in the film Pink Panther with Peter Sellers. Low life and all walks of life are predominately found at the city's port. In this country they have the death penalty (the guillotine) and many of the characters' last names are French, especially the noblemen's': Duke of Belmont, the Count Derasé and Esmeralde Radié. Little by little, when the characters' personality became more obvious, even the geographic setting was better defined. The typical cities where Diabolik lives or steals are Clerville and Ghenf, small villages with a lake that we presume are in Switzerland or France. During the first episodes you have the details that describe how the cities are in reality but later on the settings change according to the story line: in one episode Clerville is near a

lake where Diabolik runs away from the coast guards; in other episodes there's a river not clearly defined. Along its banks there are large boats which give hospitality to old folks and the needy. Clerville is full of green hills from which Diabolik surveys his next victim's house. He's surrounded by mountains with steep and winding roads along which Ginko and his agents hopelessly try to catch him. The names of the roads are unreal too: Platinum Rd , Polar Rd., Jasmine Rd. and so on. But now let's in every detail the two main cities. Ghenf doesn't appear much in the story but usually it's near a lake, where there are very elegant houses and luxurious clubs. So it should be a typical high-class resort with many jewelers, casinos and people on vacation. But there's a harsh clash in all of this: Ghenf has a jail, a peaceful and elegant town shouldn't have one, because having a jail means having criminals that could escape and hold people hostage. Clerville, instead, is a very big city that has the same characteristics of a metropolis: it has outskirts with residential and industrial areas, but also bad neighborhoods with drug dealers and prostitutes, there are also seedy hotels and clubs (the Roxy Club). But it's also a modern and rich city with a train station and an international airport. The hospital must be really big because in one episode Diabolik was kidnapped and they had reserved an entire floor for him; the public park is where young couples go when they want to be alone but also where criminals go to attack young girls. There's a museum and luxurious hotels with the most common names (Excelsior, Splendor). Clerville has many cultural activities also and this is what interests Diabolik most: jewel and rare antique exhibitions and other events where rich women go to. Naturally there are schools and colleges and an elegant avenue with beautiful shops and boutiques where Eva does her shopping. Clerville, though, unlike Ghenf, is a city where common people live (not only rich people or criminals), there are supermarkets and banks where common clerks work with their calm and quiet secretaries. Clerville's newspaper, "The Gazette", and the TV keep the people informed on the main crime and news; the local radio instead, transmits only Ginko's news and bulletins. Moreover, Clerville is the main town of the province where the car's license tags begin with CL12345, but the city has only state and province roads, where Ginko has road blocks ready. There's a court house and a jail cell used for capital punishments (for Diabolik) and to keep common criminals in, that are many, sometimes a prisoner has to be taken to another jail because its too full ("Tragic Destiny").

The last setting is in the city's sewer system: those who already know Diabolik know that his favorite way to get around is using the sewer (except when he's with Eva because it's a very inappropriate place for a "Lady"). Naturally Diabolik uses the sewers of every city where he plans robberies. He uses it when he has to get away but also when he has to get to his target: a museum, a bank, or a house that naturally has a manhole. It may seem incredible, but Diabolik never gets lost in the passages of the sewers due to his sense of orientation. Besides these 2 cities, many secluded towns exist near the criminals' shelters or near their escape roads. There are many small States that have an extraordinary importance: one is the State of Beglait (it borders on the Dukedom of Vallenberg) that has a very unstable monarchy, often threatened by possible revolutionaries and by Diabolik who steals jewels from rich people and the Queen. When there aren't any jewel exhibitions around, money transportation, or important diamond or platinum deliveries, Diabolik goes to the Orient to get various drugs or to sell precious gems. In Diabolik's stories, the Orient doesn't have realistic characteristics: it seems mythicised, divided in good and evil, just like the old adventure books or fairy tales. The States have exotic names like Kuantaj or Dalimian that have capitals like Fan-Kiang and Bindjar. The first State (see "Fire-mark") reminds us of China, the people have almond-shaped eyes, there are a lot of bicycles and politically, there has been a revolution that has brought to an equal regime. The presentation of this country is pretty naive and so is Diabolik's attitude when he decides not to commit the robbery since he has been fascinated by this atmosphere of equality. Dalimian is, instead, a country with very confusing features, with impenetrable forests, rivers with piranha's, rubber trees, slaves with Indian costumes. There are many other examples because the Orient ,generically, is a world of cruelty, injustice and mystery where Diabolik and certainly Eva that is superstitious, don't feel very comfortable in. The reason? It's obvious, in oriental countries they usually don't use bureaucratic methods for justice that would give Diabolik time to escape, here, they shoot you as soon as they catch you. And, without a doubt, oriental cities don't have good sewer systems so Diabolik wouldn't know how to move around. He prefers staying in Clerville where he only has to face Ginko that however never gets to catch him .



THE CRIMINAL WORLD

The criminal world has maintained a primary role in the Diabolik story, even if, in the first episodes more importance was given to it and its characters. The first stories were set in the city slums (Marseilles port), where all the small thieves and counterfeiters meet. In these episode, the criminals had typical, famous and French nicknames: Pinion the scarred face and so on. They had love affairs, they all went to the bar at the docks and sometimes they helped unlucky guys hide themselves when they got into trouble (like the case in which Diabolik accused Gustavo Garian of murder). But in the strip we now know the criminal world has a different aspect, it has become a character itself and not just a setting for the story. No more criminals like Jean Gabin, but simple small professional thieves: Diabolik, himself, often goes to the slums to gather up a good gang of thieves when he needs help. There's also organized crime that deals drugs, has prostitutes or secret gambling houses using night clubs as a cover. In these clubs the dancers are usually the bosses girlfriends. These clubs are so unique that Diabolik and Eva often have romantic dinners there (during which they always get mixed up with money smugglers or they get arrested during a police raid). The only thing that has remained the same from the first episodes are the police informers, that risk their lives for a few dollars, however, they are a valuable source of information on robberies, kidnappings or other crimes. The criminals aren't the only ones that ask information, (Ginko himself has his famous informers that "hardly ever talk, but when they do, the info is reliable"). The head gangsters have their informers too when they want to know who wants to trap them and so does Diabolik when he wants to know who are the thieves that stole his idea of a robbery he was planning. The criminal world is always informed about everything and everyone: if the criminal world didn't know about it, then the robbery was surely done by uncensored (unknown) people. Clerville's and Ghenf's criminal world doesn't scare anyone. Everyone knows where they hide, where they have their clubs and sinister neighborhoods. It's a state in a state, with its own leaders and politics.

THE COMIC STRIP'S LANGUAGE

The strip has a very personal and absolutely simple language. In Diabolik every communicative form, like the dialogues and the visual expressions, are special:

THE WRITINGS

They follow three main guide lines: the narration, the dialogues between the characters, the superfluous dialogues. The figures have taken the narration's place. The figures are the "squares" in which you have the strip illustrated and commented on. In the first episodes they had an important

role, consequently giving a more static impression while reading it, not a banal story. It sounded more or less like this: "3000 kms away from here, the terrible criminal Diabolik and his beautiful partner Lady Kant are hidden in a small cottage in the middle of the mountains". Obviously their attempt is to try giving a thorough psychological examination of the characters, cutting off all the possibilities of having not very deep and immature dialogues. The dialogues between the characters is one of the most important elements that characterize the story. They may seem improbable. Ginko describes Diabolik as a "damned criminal" or when he's really mad a "rotten one". Diabolik on the other hand says things like "let's go to the shelter" or "Damn, the police" or "That damned inspector is on our tails". Other times they use very unusual words or verbs like "to narcotize", "to influence" "to change features" and things like that. Superfluous dialogues are one of the amusing facets of the strip's serial. This happens when 2 characters say to each other things they should already know, for instance, Diabolik is telling Eva how their supposed to do the robbery right when they're on the front door of the house where they're about to do it or when 2 cops are driving the truck full of money and they ask about the safety measures which they should already know about perfectly.

THE SOUNDS

They are fundamental in the strip. They are so important that the third reprint of the series has the title, "Diabolik Swiss", the typical sound of Diabolik's dagger.

SWISS Diabolik's needle-thrower or dagger

SCRIII wheels that screech

UUUHHUUU alarm

BANG gunshot

STUMPF OR STUNF gunshot with silencer

RATATATA machine gun

TAC device you put on a wall or that goes off with remote control

SBRANG car crash

WROOMMM car getting away

BOOM bomb

AAHHH scream of terror

MMMHH choked moan

SLAM slammed door

CRASH broken glass

CLICK light switch

GRRR a mean dog's growl

OH last cry of who dies from "Pentothal"

DRIING (OR R-RIING) phone ring

SPLASH someone who falls into water

SWHAHAM scary explosion

AH when someone hits their head

CRAK thunder

FIIII loud whistle

DRIIIN when times up at the jail's recreation area

SBRANG metal rolling shutter that is closing

TRAC TRAC key turning

KNOK knocking on the door

FFSSSS gas

SCREEEK a car braking suddenly

BIP BIP BIP signaler

WWRRR helicopter rotor

TUM TUM prisoners knocking the door down

BBZZZZZ a long electric telescope

CRRR-CRRR alarm device in the shelters

ZZZZZZ laser ray

THE DRAWINGS

The increase of the good graphic quality has made the Diabolik strip so pleasant and dynamic to the point that it seems it has reached its greatest potentiality. The strip started with roughly designed figures that had no "direction", that is, they were set in big empty spaces and the characters didn't have enough details. Diabolik and Ginko looked older than they do now, the cars didn't have a style, the pictures were out of perspective and so were the proportions. When they decided to get new and more capable designers and when the strip went through an evolution, these negative aspects disappeared. Years have gone by and we are used to seeing how this story is directed (like a film) and how the figures are coherent and according to the narrative phase. The characters are better, firmer, and more defined. Their movements are more dynamic, so the story isn't static anymore. Cars are now like the ones we see on the road, more attention, finally, has been paid to the details giving the strip a pleasant and orderly look. The sounds and the noises are very important because they make you feel really part of the story. An example: the police sirens that seem to burst your eardrums while Diabolik is trying to open a safe.

THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE

In the beginning parents didn't want their children to read Diabolik. There was a lot of violence, sometimes it was even gratuitous. Diabolik was too ruthless but in the same time he was a hero. It seemed negative for children. Luckily as time went by, people changed their mind and Diabolik changed too, he didn't kill if it wasn't absolutely necessary. In many numbers of the strip, the story ends with the triumph of life's good and positive principles, for instance, when Diabolik saves Ginko's life, or when he meets a little girl (he shows his loving side), or when he follows the rules of fair play, something he would've never done before. Recently, Diabolik promoted a campaign against abandoning pets during the summer; they surely did this to change people's mind about him. If he was a mean guy before, now his crimes are considered fiction in the strip's fiction, and parents don't have anything against him anymore.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN DIABOLIK

Even if it may not seem so, feelings like love and friendship have a primary role in Diabolik's world. We often see secondary characters that have affairs, they cheat on their rich fiancés with their chauffeurs or with their secretaries thinking they have finally found true love (then they later realize they were wrong). Very honest and above suspicion, bank clerks and policemen often give up on everything they have for a woman's love getting into big trouble and becoming criminals. The head gangster's wives have affairs with their right-hand men almost all the time. When Diabolik and Eva disguise themselves as someone else, in more than one occasion they have to face these lovers that they didn't even know existed (see "The Man from the Fortress"), sometimes they even have to kiss them (but nothing else!), otherwise they could be caught. In most cases, these affairs end tragically (in many of the stories, the women accidentally kill their lovers thinking it was their husband but Diabolik had put a mask on them). The only relationships that seem to go on are Diabolik and Eva and Ginko and Altea. In fact, many episodes finish with a close-up on Diabolik kissing Eva and recently, even with Ginko kissing Altea. It's important to Ginko having the Duchess of Vallenberg by his side, she supports him in all the bad times. He would've retired a long time ago if she wasn't there. Altea seems sweet and kind so she deserves having a happy love life (if it could ever be possible with someone like Ginko). However, their relationship hasn't changed much since the first day: at the start they didn't feel too sure about it (they don't belong to the same social status), but now you can tell love has treated Ginko well, he even looks younger (see "King of Terror" and then see the latest stories, if you want to notice the difference). In 38 years Ginko and Altea have never had an argument or a serious problem, perfect individuals, that means, a perfect couple. On the other hand Diabolik and Eva's relationship has had its ups and down: they've gone through a lot of problems before becoming the solid couple they are now. They've had plenty of problems: men and women trying to win Diabolik's heart and making him forget Eva (or vice-versa) or even trying to kill her. Significant titles like "Betrayal", "A New Love", "Desperate Goodbye" are some of the best episodes. These numbers were always sold out because many readers hoped, and many feared, that something could destroy their love. Many times you finally think it's over between them, it seems so real to the readers and to the characters of the story like Ginko. A couple of times Eva even tried to commit suicide. But the happy ending is always assured. Secondary characters are really jealous of what Diabolik and Eva have together. Ginko, at the end of "Diabolik's Arrest" says that Diabolik is more vulnerable and easier to catch if he has a woman by his side. He couldn't make a bigger mistake, as the Italian saying goes "Union is Strength". Otherwise how could they escape from jail all the time if they didn't help each other. Diabolik and Eva are a lonely couple, they don't have many friends since they have such a strange profession, but from time to time they meet new people. In "The Witness", they meet a blind couple, Daria and Carlo Linder. The 2 thieves never had to wear a mask when they were with them. Then they met the writer Saverio Hardy ("The Man of the Fortress"), that, even if he had several occasions, he never told the police where Diabolik's shelter is, actually he hides it from them. Then there's Bettina, a nice blond girl, that took many "souvenirs" from Diabolik's shelter, and many times she tried fooling around with him and Ginko. They are even blackmailed for this ("Mean Blackmail"). Some of these friends still mix with them even after finding out who they really are. The strange thing is that these people aren't afraid at all of "the King of terror" and his partner: instead they say they're nice and pleasant people. Maybe because no one like them could ever have such interesting stories to tell.



PEOPLE WHO GET IN HIS WAY

The stories usually begin with Diabolik getting news from a newspaper or overhearing something at a club, many times, though, his plans are ruined because someone gets in the way. Those who already know the strip know that Ginko is the "Diabolik Expert" and other cops are jealous about it and so are the private investigators. All these people don't have 38 years of experience so they have to rely on their clever ideas if they want to catch him. One of these ideas is to simulate a robbery that would look like one of Diabolik's, forcing Diabolik to go look for the real culprit but instead he'd just fall into their trap. Ginko uses this technique too, so Diabolik has become very well aware of it and he never falls for it and the culprit is always put to shame in public and so forced to emigrate, at times even to commit suicide. Another original idea is when they use gypsies to try to trap him using their crystal balls to predict what his next moves will be but Diabolik always gets away and finishes his robbery with Eva's help simply concentrating on another target. Several times Diabolik is kidnapped and the criminals ask a lot of ransom money or sometimes they kidnap and force him to kill other big criminal boss. Unfortunately even honest but poor people help the criminals kidnap him because they need money. Useless to say, in the end few of these people ever survive. Other people fall in love with Eva hoping they could take Diabolik's place by her side. The same thing happens to Diabolik with women. What is strange is that even if everyone knows that their bond is very solid and stable they'll do anything to grab Eva's or Diabolik's attention. For example, the women walk around the edges of high buildings and get involved in fast getaways. These naive people always end up with a bullet in their chest that was instead directed to Eva or Diabolik. There have been a few of real clever women though. Even knowing that he would never leave Eva, they take advantage of the situation and enjoy a nice cruise with Diabolik acting as though they were married. She won't win his heart but her friends will die of envy! We wonder how come he doesn't cheat on Eva having all these romantic situations with other women?

DIABOLIK'S TECHNIQUES



DISGUIISING HIMSELF AS SOMEONE ELSE



HIS MASTERPLAN



TRICKS FOR ESCAPES AND ALARM DEVICES



THE MECHANISM OF THE ROBBERY

HIS DISGUISES

Without his disguises Diabolik wouldn't be Diabolik, but just a common thief. This tells you how important they are in Dk's universe. In the beginning it was more problematic, the masks weren't that handy, they were more difficult to make and easier to recognize. Moreover, in this stage, Diabolik is "ruthless", this is proven by the fact that he always disguises himself as the person he has just killed. As time goes by, Diabolik's psychological condition gets better, he makes more comfortable shelters and he grows closer to Eva. All this convinces him that it's not always necessary to murder someone. So he decides he can just kidnap his victims while he disguises himself as them and not eliminate them if not extremely necessary. But before the disguise, they have to single out the victim. He or she must have only one fundamental characteristic: they must be built like Diabolik or Eva. It doesn't matter if they have strange feet, moles, scars, a French accent or cellulite. If they're built the same way, that's all they need! Once they single out the victim, they just spend a little time studying the habits and imitating the voice. If they don't know how their victim's voice is, once they're disguised, they say they have a sore throat and speak very softly. And then, of course, they commit the robbery. Kidnapping his victims instead of killing them helps Diabolik a lot. He can question them and get better information. But on the other hand, many times the prisoners try to escape, risking the safety of our two heroes. Luckily, Diabolik's shelters are full of special devices like trap-doors, secret passages, needle-throwers behind the walls or computerized tiles ("The Torn Dress"). Almost all the kidnapped victims have heart

problems. You find out about it when Diabolik questions them in his shelters' basements; he injects them with a big dosage of Pentothal that makes them talk, but after a few words they die of heart attacks. It's interesting to see how Diabolik stays calm and cool when someone dies, he's only worried because he didn't get enough information from them before they died. When the few hostages that don't have heart problems survive, the day they're let go, Diabolik drugs them, puts them in a car and then leaves them out in the countryside, where after a bit the police will pass by. Ginko immediately understands that it wasn't a normal kidnapping, and once he finds out who the ex-hostage is he puts the pieces together and realizes that Diabolik is to blame for everything. At this point he's really furious for not having it figured out before but in the same time he admires his enemy's skills. This technique is Diabolik's principal weapon, but there are many risks. Even if during the years the masks have really improved, they still sometimes, break or deteriorate and in the worse moments. Ginko has installed new safety measures, he controls peoples' faces. You must consider that they are, however, synthetic and so easily recognizable. In "A Car to Hell", for example, a scientist creates a sensorial machine able to tell what substance was used to make the masks. So Diabolik can't go around as he pleases if that machine is near, otherwise the police could catch and arrest him right away. Usually, during the episode the machine is destroyed and our hero is saved. In "Hot" Diabolik and Eva are caught because of the hot weather. The masks are synthetic and so their skin perspiration doesn't show because of the mask's material and all this seems strange since everyone is sweating so badly. Human errors are also the causes of many of their risks: in "Fatal Error" Diabolik can't personally photograph the person Eva is supposed to disguise herself as so he makes the masks using a photo he got from a newspaper. Only when it's too late he realizes that the photos were taken on the wrong side. Consequently, Eva is caught because her mask had a scar on the left side of her face but it was supposed to be on the right.

THE TECHNIQUES USED TO COMMIT THE ROBBERY

Of course like all the strips that have a thief as the main character, the technique of the robbery has a fundamental role in the story. In Diabolik, many technological solutions are used to give the readers spectacular action. To do this, the writers use their fantasy beyond any limits, sometimes "flying on imagination's wings", that is getting to the point where the robberies become more daring, bold and impossible. Diabolik and Kant use their own inventions going beyond the laws of physics. Like for example, thin, telescopic but very resistant stairs that when they are closed they fit in a hand-bag but once you pull them out you can easily reach the fifth floor of a building with no problem. Another example is the radio-controlled car that drives better than the best police drivers. Even if these new inventions are used the readers well know that the "plot" will remain the same: Diabolik plans the robbery, he carefully studies the case (see His Disguises) and then he goes on with the action. At this point, he takes for granted the fact that the robbery will be a success (when it doesn't go that way, the reader knows that, anyway, by the end of the episode he'll end up with better loot than he had planned for at the beginning).