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FALL 2008

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DRAW!

THE PROFESSIONAL "HOW-TO" MAGAZINE
ON COMICS AND CARTOONING

HOWARD CHAYKIN

INTERVIEW
& DEMO

JET CAT &
TUTENSTEIN
ANIMATOR

JAY
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PLUS: MIKE MANLEY
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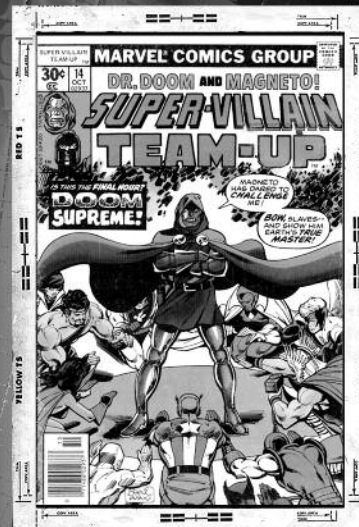
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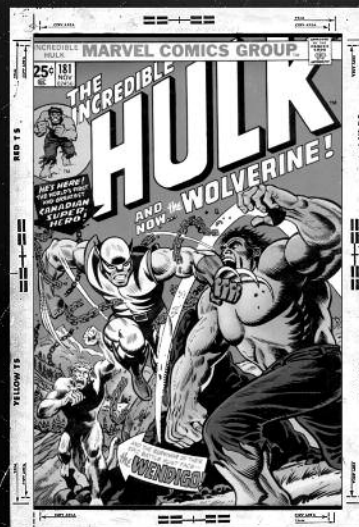
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THE PROFESSIONAL
"HOW-TO" MAGAZINE ON
COMICS & CARTOONING

FALL 2008

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CONTENTS

3

HOWARD CHAYKIN: In the Service of the Story

Interview with the writer/artist



22

The Not-So-Secret Anymore JAY STEPHENS

Interview with the creator of *The Secret Saturdays*



50

COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

"Working with Photos"

by Bret Blevins and Mike Manley

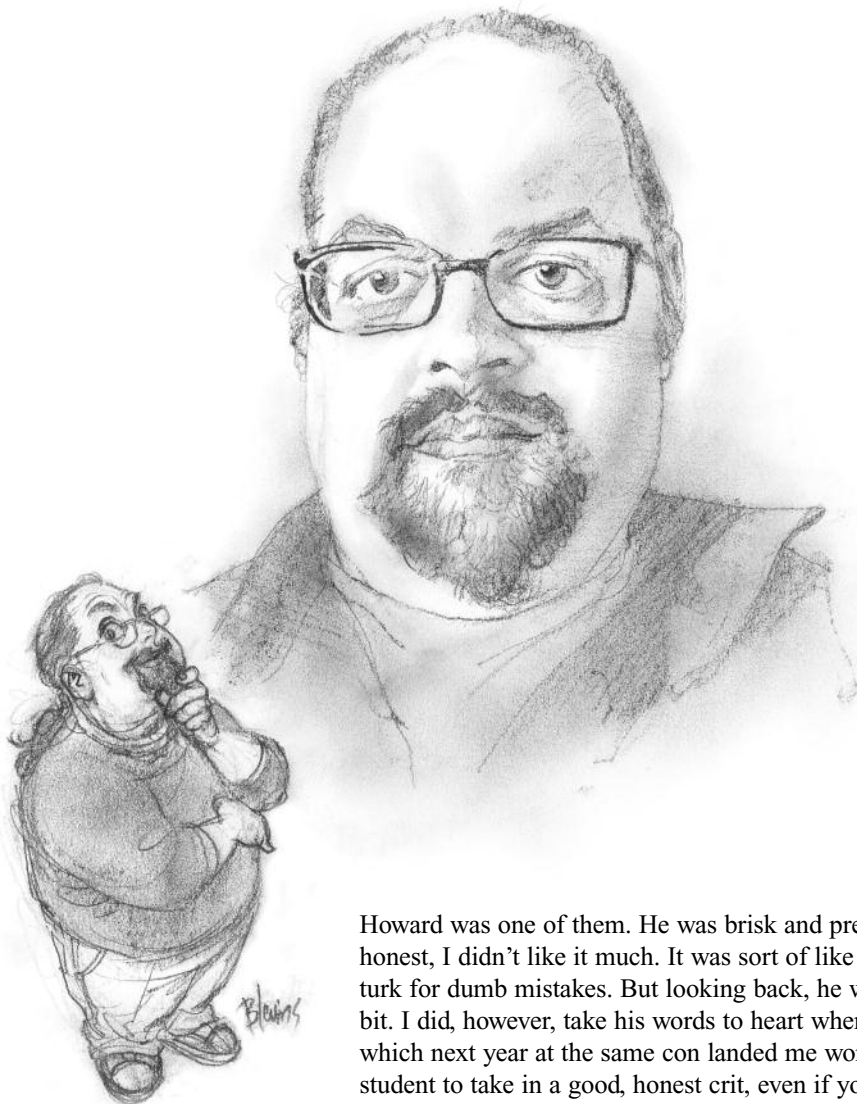


69

THE COMIC CRITIC

Reviews of Comics, Cartoons, and Related Goodies
by Mike Manley





Figurative interpretation
by Bret Blevins

As you read this the first wisps of the fall air should be upon us. Summer went fast; it always seems to after the 4th of July. Many, like myself, will be returning to school and getting back down to business—and this issue of *DRAW!* is getting down to biz-nez, too. The usual thanks go out to my main men, Bret, Eric and John for putting in a lot of solid work on this issue and helping it get out the door and into your hands. Thanks to Glen Whitmore for his great color job on this issue's cover illo done by Mr. Chaykin.

A funny story. Howard was one of the first pros I met many years ago at the local Chicago Comic-con, long before it was absorbed into the Wizard empire. Howard was running hard with his ground-breaking work on *American Flagg* at the time, and was a bit more cocky than he is now. Like many wanna-bes at that show, I was hauling my work around in my portfolio and showing my work to people in hopes of getting the big break.

Howard was one of them. He was brisk and pretty harsh in his crit of my work, and to be honest, I didn't like it much. It was sort of like an old newspaper guy ripping the young Turk for dumb mistakes. But looking back, he was right, even though at the time it stung a bit. I did, however, take his words to heart when I was back at home doing new samples which next year at the same con landed me work. It's important for the young artist or student to take in a good, honest crit, even if you don't like it (and who does?), because that is the best way to see the mistakes and weaknesses and to, more importantly, learn how to correct them.

Another funny story. Jay Stephens almost made me have a car crash. Years ago, back when Jay was doing his book, *Land of Nod*, he would do these funny little strips with his character, Captain Rightful. Well, after buying my haul of comics from the local shop, I hopped in my car and was driving back home. The comics I bought lay on the seat next to me in the back and a few fell out as I drove. On top of the comics that slipped out was the *Land of Nod* comic, and the back cover was a strip featuring Captain Rightful... and it caught my eye as I was driving—I know, I shouldn't have been looking at anything but the road. That strip was so funny that I started reading it for a second and laughing at how funny it was—and almost rear-ended somebody! SCREEEECH!

So let this be a lesson: Always put comics in the trunk. On a serious note, a big thanks to both Howard Chaykin and Jay Stephens for taking time out of their busy schedules to do their interviews with *DRAW!*, and we'll see you around Christmas time!

Go *DRAW!* some comics!

MIKE

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HOWARD CHAYKIN

In the Service of the Story

From his earliest days in the comic business, to his exit into television and then his plunge back into comics, Howard Chaykin has continued to be one in love with the medium of comics. Few artists of his generation have been able to embrace change, yet stay true to the heart of their visions as Howard has. But no matter what medium he happens to be working in, or whether he's writing, drawing, or both, for Howard it all comes down to telling a good story in the best way possible.

Interview conducted by Mike Manley
and transcribed by Steven Tice



DRAW!: One of the reasons I wanted to interview you for the magazine is because you're one of the few artists who have worked in a lot of various parts of the industry, not only in comics as a writer and an artist, but you've done illustration, you've worked in TV—

HC: I just can't hold a job. *[Mike laughs]*

DRAW!: And one of the thrusts of the magazine is to show people that cartooning, or the kind of skills you acquire to be a good storyteller, a good comic book artist, can really apply to a lot of other venues. You don't have to just draw *Captain America*, y'know? And even out of your generation, which I guess includes artists like Walt Simonson and [Bernie] Wrightson, guys like that, you're one of the artists who really has, I think, sort of stood out as having done a wide variety of material.

HC: Well, I have a limited attention span, and I need to keep myself interested, so I was always looking for something else to do, but never burning a bridge. I was able to spread myself a little thinner than a lot of guys, not out of any profoundly evolved skills, but more out of interest than anything else.

DRAW!: When you were starting out, I know you apprenticed with guys like Gil Kane and Neal Adams.

HC: Gray Morrow and Wallace Wood, as well.

DRAW!: Wow, I'm jealous! In the case of someone like Adams, who came really from the commercial art background, did that influence your thinking as you were working with him?

HC: No, not really. I was unaware of Neal's background when I met him. All I knew about him was he was this incredibly hot comic book artist. He was also a very charismatic figure in his time, and there were a lot of guys who were sort of floating around him, guys who were both part of his orbit and guys who weren't really, but were sort of sucked up into the maelstrom. And we all sort of hung out, crossbred. A lot of it started at the First Fridays, which began at Roy Thomas' place and then sort of ended up at Jeff Jones' place. That's where I met Neal, I

think. We all palled around, and there was a lot of fellowship. We all promised ourselves that we would never become like the older generation, hating each other's guts, and of course we all did.

DRAW!: *[laughs]* Well, one of the things I take from looking over your career, and it's funny you mentioned it, your career is not like a lot of the older guys. The old-time cartoonists who sort of had their gig, and they worked diligently, and then one day the companies said, "We no longer need your services," and then many became bitter old alcoholics and drank themselves to death. That seems to be the story for, unfortunately, a lot of old cartoonists. But you've jumped around—you're doing this, you're doing that. You're not letting yourself stagnate as far as your career, but also creatively. Your generation of guys

who came in were also interested in fine art and illustration. Not that the older generation wasn't, but that seemed to be a lot more of the thrust of, say, Jeff Jones and Kaluta.

HC: I think what it comes down to is that we were spoiled brats. The generation that we came of age in, in retrospect—I was born in 1950. I used to not talk about that, but now, with Wikipedia and everything else, everybody can find out anything, so there's no point in lying.

DRAW!: Unless you go in and edit it yourself. *[laughs]*

HC: I was delighted to note that somebody actually went in there and cleaned mine up. The first time I read my Wikipedia biography and was, like, "What the f---? Who is this guy?" And then

I came back to it about six months later, when somebody pointed it out to me, and I said, "Wow, somebody came in and actually cleaned it up and got it all right." Now to the point where I check my IMDb database stuff, and they've even got information in there that I do not share publicly. Somebody that knows me well went in there and cleaned it up.

DRAW!: Wow.



Pencils.
TONY AURORA & BOREALIS ©2008 HOWARD CHAYKIN

HC: Pointing out that I have an adopted father and am illegitimate, stuff like that, which I was kind of impressed by. At any rate, one of the things, in the 1960s, we all were just so smug and self-righteous about our stuff. And then, of course, in maturity I've come to realize just what spoiled brats we were—just completely smug, obnoxious a--holes who never really were grateful for the world that our fathers had saved for us. We had this idea that the world was our oyster and we could do anything, and as a result of that we did. I mean, our capacity for the great commercial art from Neal, the fine art from Jeff, the level of pretension we allowed ourselves was enormous. And my one problem, I always felt, is that I wish—I first came to southern California in the early 1970s as a hitchhiker, and I wish I'd stayed, but I could not at the time translate what I did for a living as a comic book artist into making a career in show business.

DRAW!: Really?

HC: If I'd come out earlier, my career would have ended earlier, but I think I would have had a bigger and better career.

DRAW!: When you went out there, you didn't imagine that you could get a job working at Disney or—

HC: I wouldn't have wanted to do that. I mean, I never worked in animation. I work in live action. I never worked on high-quality shows, but I had a good career, and I couldn't visualize doing that in the early '70s.

DRAW!: Doing production art?

HC: That a guy with my skill set could conceivably make a living in television. Do you follow me?

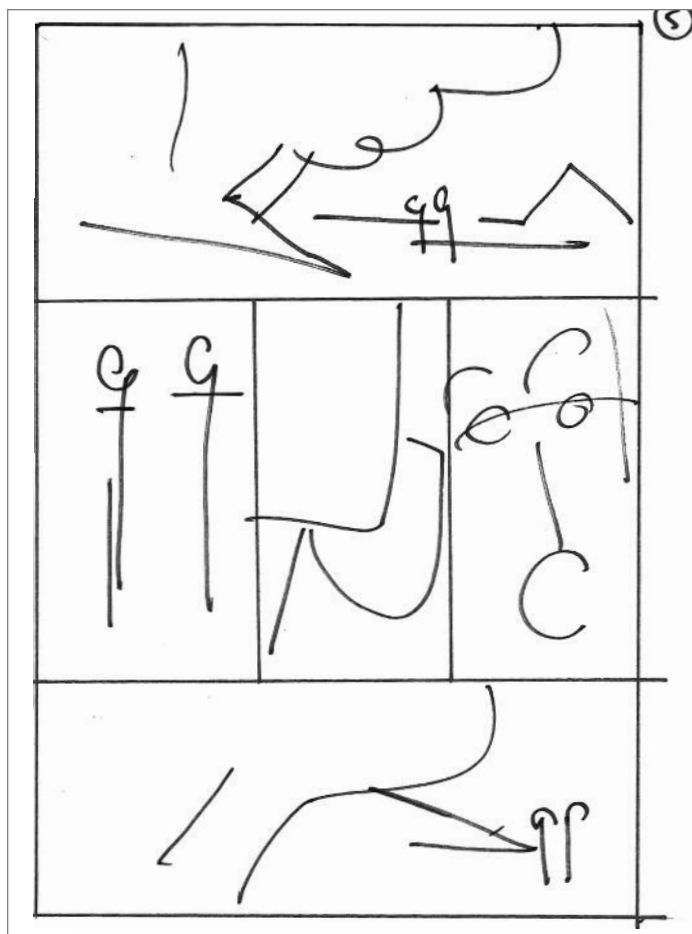
DRAW!: Right, yeah.

HC: It wasn't until I came out to California on a permanent basis in the mid-1980s, when *American Flagg* had sort of gotten me representation, that I was able to see how I could use what I was doing in comics and translate it into the show business. So it was a big change for me.

DRAW!: I imagine going into that world, you could bring some of that back into comics, right?

HC: Well, to a certain extent. The magazine you're doing is called *DRAW!*, and I'm of the belief, and I believe this wholeheartedly, that the artist is a profound participant in the writing process, for good or bad, particularly in comics, because of the element of narrative provided to the artist, and what the artist has to then bring to the narrative. I believe the story is everything—good, bad, or indifferent—and that the artist's job is to make a writer look good. And I work with writers who are terrific; I'm on a roll right now. I've been really blessed these past couple of years, because I decided to start working as an artist with other writers, while I'm also writing for other people, drawing other people's scripts, and I'm writing stuff for myself to draw. I'm spreading myself in a different direction now.

I've been working with Marc Guggenheim pretty steadily, and Marc's just fabulous. Marc, I've said more than once, is one of the most artist-friendly writers I've ever worked with.



An example of Howard's layouts.

ARTWORK ©2008 HOWARD CHAYKIN

Jason Aaron on that *Wolverine* job we did was astonishing work, and I'm working with Garth Ennis, and Garth is also fantastic. So I've been really blessed. He has an understanding of how much to expect of an artist. One of the things I always tell young guys who are starting out as artists is to be prepared to be doing a lot of the writing. By that I don't mean the text, I mean the subtext and content. Does that make sense?

DRAW!: Yes.

HC: I gave you a long answer for a short question.

DRAW!: [laughs] Well, we like those long answers. I think I first became aware of your work on the "Dominic Fortune" stuff that you were doing when I was in high school. I was very impressed by that at the time, because it seemed there was a lot of critical thinking in the way you played with the page and everything, which, of course, you continued to really develop, especially when you got to *American Flagg*, and how you were incorporating the sound effects and everything. Was that something that you were sort of building towards? Were you studying certain artists that were leading you to—

HC: What it comes down to is that I never subscribed, from my earliest, to the idea that the only way to do it was the grid. I mean, there are formalists, and there are anti-formalists, and the formalists object to what I've done. To a profound extent, I was trying to introduce—again, in retrospect, I don't think I was

consciously looking for something other to do, but when I found out that I was interested in that, I then actively sought out stuff. I mean, looking at everything from movie posters of the '20s, the way magazines were laid out, movie posters—just different picture-making ideas.

There's a guy named Richard Saul Wurman, who was a great graphic designer who designed the New York subway system map and the map for the Underground in London. He published a number of books back in the '80s and '90s called *Access*, which were a reinvention of the concept of travel guides. Each one of them sort of reinvented how information was presented, with charts, flowcharts, and illustration breaking up text. I was fascinated by how he was able to tell a story using technique that was alien and unfamiliar to me, and that got me thinking about different ways to go, different directions to find other storytelling elements. And, to a great extent, the *Flagg* material, and to an even greater extent, the *Time* stuff, is a reflection of that investigation and discovery.

DRAW!: About what age would you say this, I guess you would call, critical thinking happened? Where you're actually not just trying to, as you said, work in the standard six- or nine-[panel] grid to tell the story, you're starting to bring in some outside influences, and you're starting to really intellectualize your creative process, your layout process, in a very specific direction.

HC: I'd say probably in my late 20s.

DRAW!: Okay. But you got into the business when you were, what, in your early 20s, right?

HC: Yeah. I'd say in the late '70s, maybe in '76 and '80, in that range, because I started drawing *Flagg* in June of '82, and began publishing it the next year. I was well on my way in that regard. Interestingly enough, when I set out to do *Flagg*, I had been away from comics for a number of years—I was in paperback art—because I had been driven out of the business by a hostile relationship with one of the editors-in-chief.

DRAW!: Back when that could actually happen in the business. I doubt if people get driven out that way anymore.

HC: I took it as a wake-up call. I really did. I found it an upsetting and embarrassing situation to be created for me, and I went away and did paperback covers for a couple of years. I was asked by Mike Gold, at first, if I was interested in doing a book with him, and it changed my life doing the *Flagg* stuff. Frankly, when I set out to actually draw the *Flagg* stuff, I spent six months both developing the design system that ultimately became the look that I used in the book and much of the work that's followed since, and looking at what had been well received—both critically and commercially—in comics, for the time I had been away. Because I don't believe you can work in a vacuum.

DRAW!: No. And things had really been changing, too. A lot of people who are in their 20s now have no idea, but, as a kid growing up in the '70s, you have your pre-*Star Wars* and your post-*Star Wars*. When *Star Wars* came out, it really started changing the way everything was advertised. It really had a big effect on commercial art, design. I mean, it really started changing things quite a bit.



Howard tells the story of jazz great, Lester Young.

ARTWORK ©2008 HOWARD CHAYKIN

HC: And a lot of that I think had to do with the fact that the people who were behind such things were guys who had grown up with pulps, science fiction, and comics. That process was already in play in the early '70s when a lot of the guys who were art directors at the advertising agencies had themselves come out of comic book fandom. I mean, let's face it, Woody did the Dr. Pepper campaign and totally screwed it up, and the AD, who was a big EC fan, brought Jack Davis in and made Jack Davis this enormous presence by having him sort of save the ass of the agency at the last minute. So much of the groundwork was being laid at that point by those guys. But you look at Spielberg, you look at Lucas—although Spielberg's not a comics fan, Lucas is. And, to a great extent, what they did was introduce their boyhood enthusiasm into the mass culture. Now you go to a television studio, you go to a TV production unit, or a film studio, and they've always got a guy who's your biggest fan, that guy they hired to be a comic book know-something.

DRAW!: Just in general, when you go out and you meet people at a restaurant or wherever, if you say you do comics or animation, people say, "Wow! That's a cool job!" Or they remember reading some favorite comic. It's not like you're seducing the innocent, that whole thing is all—

HC: You don't have to apologize for not being Rob Liefeld or Daniel Clowes, one way or the other. Depending on what kind of restaurant you were in.



DRAW!: Yeah. When you were doing the paperback covers, I remember buying, was it *Swords of Heaven*, *Flower of Hell*?

HC: Yeah. Well, actually, that preceded it. That was one of those, you should pardon the expression, “graphic” novels that was done for *Heavy Metal*. I did Westerns and science fiction, a bit of romance stuff, for Dell and for Tor.

DRAW!: Did you go through hiring models and dealing with the old system?

HC: Yeah, I did a couple of sessions with a photographer who shot for illustrators. It was just a great time.

DRAW!: In the old days, when guys like Albert Dorne were doing things, the agencies actually paid for the photography.

HC: I had a budget in the book job. I was budgeted for models and photographers, and of course I did something that was incredibly unfair and illegal, which was to shoot at least five books while I was shooting the one that I was supposed to be doing.

DRAW!: [laughs] You figure, well, they won’t know, right?

HC: I ended up getting a lot of books out of a couple of shoots. Don’t tell anybody. The statute of limitations is over, but we’ll see. I had a great time doing that.

DRAW!: Obviously, you had your heroes in comics, people like Toth, but when you started going into illustration, you’re getting into a different aesthetic. I know you’re a big fan of Bob Peak and Al Parker, and I know from our mutual friend Mr. Vosburg that you have a very extensive set of clippings from a lot of the famous illustrators.

HC: I own about 150 originals, as well.

DRAW!: Wow!

HC: Yeah. Actually, if I had to list my favorites, it would be Robert Fawcett—I own half a dozen Fawcetts—Harry Beckhoff, Herbert Paus, and Parker. The usual suspects: Parker, Fuchs, Peak.

DRAW!: You own a Sickles, or you did for a while?

HC: Actually, I’ve just put the Sickles up for sale. Ande Parks owns the best Sickles I’ve seen out there, and I keep trying to work up the nerve to convince him to sell it, but he won’t come across.

DRAW!: Well, Blevins owns those space shots.

HC: Whereas Ande owns one of the Western Union ads, which are just bitchin’. It’s a beauty. The one with the riverboat gambler on the left side.

DRAW!: Okay, yeah.

HC: It’s a great piece. Ande, if you’re reading this, I’m asking.

DRAW!: Were you buying originals to study?

HC: No, no. I became a collector in the late ’70s. My first piece was a Dean Cornwall drawing—a pencil drawing. It’s part of the Eastern Airlines mural in Radio City. I’ve been collecting ever since. But I’ve always been a tear-sheet clipper. I’ve got about 30,000 tear sheets. I’ve got 25 feet of wall space with everything bound, collected books of everybody. So I’m a huge fan. I mean, I’ve got a box of stuff that’s on file that has to be gone through and looked at.

DRAW!: I guess my question is, you were acquiring the stuff not only because you just love it and it’s beautiful, but you were also kind of schooling yourself by studying this, as well, right?

HC: I think that’s a natural outgrowth. I mean, you can’t do one without the other, I think. I don’t think I was necessarily consciously doing that, but it certainly turned out to be the case.

DRAW!: Well, you know, you have people who are fans of something, they might be fans of illustration, but are not necessarily artists themselves. But, as I always call it, the hunter/tracker sort of artist who goes out—I mean, you obviously were; you would see something, you would collect it, you would take it home. You not only enjoyed looking at it, but you were also studying it.

HC: For example, I remember very specifically drawing the splash page of *Flagg #1*. I always work with other people’s pictures surrounding me. For example, right now I’ve got a Russell

Patterson drawing above my desk, I'm looking at a Fairburn System shot of heads, and I've got several drawings of Wolverine, because that's what I'm doing right now, just to keep in mind maintaining the character's integrity. And I had a Fawcett tear sheet, a bunch of non-related material draped across my drawing table as I was doing the splash page of *Flagg #1*. It's just a matter of keeping the ball rolling, keeping the rhythm going. But I remember very specifically experiencing a bit of an epiphany about Fawcett's stuff at that moment, where, to a great extent, his design system became much clearer to me in that experience, doing the drawing while I was looking at his stuff. So I think it's as much a conscious choice as it is an organic choice. A better word than "choice," an organic *experience*.



Howard's thumbnail sketch and figure inks for the cover of *Solo #4*.
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DRAW!: One of the things I've noticed about—and I'm always, frankly, quite jealous of guys from your generation—is that—

HC: Why? We're gonna die soon.

DRAW!: [laughs] If you lived on the East Coast, you had the opportunity to do sort of the apprentice system, which really doesn't exist anymore. You could work with a guy like Gil Kane, or Neal Adams, or Wood, or Gray Morrow, and I assume that, working with each one of those guys, you learned some slightly different aspect of the craft.

HC: But I've got assistants who I think are going through precisely the same apprenticeship process that I went through.

DRAW!: I would say that that's probably due to the fact that you did that, yourself. Otherwise, you might not be aware of that.

HC: You think so?

DRAW!: I think so, because, to me, part of comics was that it was a craft. You swept some guy's floor, and then he allowed you to erase some pages, then he allowed you to ink a nose or some chairs in the background or something, and you moved up. And today—

HC: That's precisely what happened, that's what my career was, yeah.

DRAW!: And today we don't have that because—

HC: Well, I think it's because the standards are so low, the guys who should be assistants and apprentices are doing books.

DRAW!: [laughs] Well, that very well may be the case with some of them, but also you just don't—in general, the industry is very

different, and now we don't, as with so many vocations, have that apprentice system, which was just the way things were always done. It didn't matter whether you were a printer or whatever, you started at a bottom position and you worked your way up. Now people, to use a Rob Liefeld analogy, go from being some guy on the other side of the table drawing pin-up shots, to suddenly they're the next hot thing. There doesn't seem to be a graduated process. Also, you don't get that feedback. When you started out, you were getting feedback from the editors, guys like Archie Goodwin or whoever, so when you'd take in your job, you'd get a critique, right? You would get some feedback—what worked and what didn't, and what you could do to make your job better the next time, right?

HC: Okay. I mean, yes and no, but go on.

DRAW!: Were you getting that, or were you only getting that sometimes?

HC: Well, you have to remember that when I started out the editors, for the most part, were writers or magazine editors who were still sticking around in the magazine business. They weren't comic book fans. It was with my generation that comic book fans began to replace the editors. Archie was the first guy

who had a fan background who actually was a serious editor, who'd come to back to comics from fandom, after he worked at *Redbook* for as long as he had. And Archie also had both a graphics background and a text background. Most of the guys who were editing had no background whatsoever as artists, with the exception of Shelly Mayer, who was before my time. You had Joe Orlando, who was my rabbi at DC. Joe was a phenomenally talented artist who was also really good with working talent. Guys like Julie Schwartz, who I adored tremendously, had incredibly parochial tastes in art. His idea of the perfect artist was Murphy Anderson. He did not like eccentric talent, because eccentricity spoke against the core of the audience, from his perspective. And Stan [Lee] was a guy who really didn't have a strong graphic sensibility. There weren't a lot of guys with that kind of background.

When Giordano came in, he introduced an artist's eye to the editorial, and now you've got two businesses, two major companies, with a strong artist's eye in the background. You've got Quesada at Marvel, who's got a strong visual sensibility, and you've got Chiarello at DC, who is just an astonishing artist in his own right. So what I was being criticized on by editors, justifiably so, was maintaining the narrative, keeping the story going. Which goes right back to what you were saying, and I guess you're right, in the end, that today the storytelling has become functionally irrelevant. It's more the decorative qualities that are relevant.

DRAW!: When I started becoming self-critical about and intellectualizing the storytelling process, I sort of looked at it as you had the Jack Kirby school, which was all about telling the story,

and then you had the Neal Adams school, where there was storytelling, but it was mostly about these really cool sequences or shots. There was a lot of sort of perfunctory storytelling that worked or didn't work, but then there would be this really awesome shot that we'd go, "Wow, that's just a fantastic drawing!"

HC: Don't tell Neal that, because Neal thinks he's one of the best storytellers in the business.



After the figure is inked, Howard applies a zip-a-tone pattern on the coat in Photoshop.
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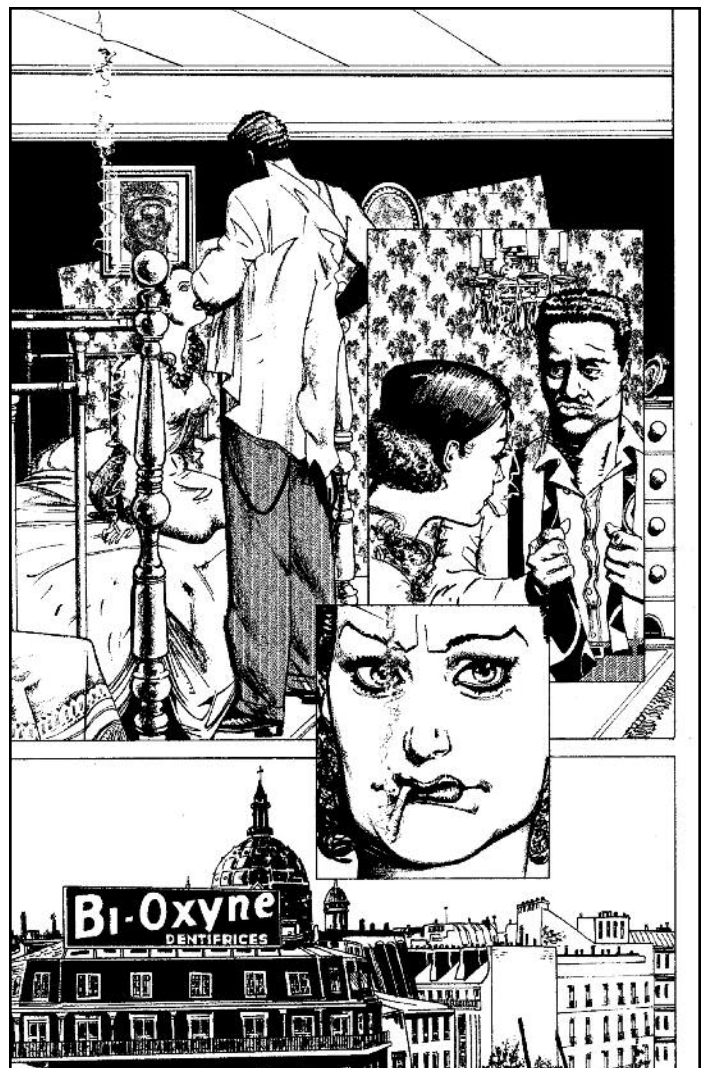
DRAW!: Well, I think his storytelling on his Batman stuff was much better than his stuff at Marvel. I think the stuff at Marvel was not nearly as successful at storytelling. It had some cool drawings, because I loved that *Avengers* stuff that he did—

HC: What, the *Avengers* and *X-Men* stuff that he did?

DRAW!: Yeah, I loved the *Avengers* stuff, as a kid. I never really warmed as much to the *X-Men* stuff, because I was never really an *X-Men* fan, but his Batman stuff, if I go back today and look at that stuff, the storytelling is much more straightforward. I don't feel that it is the artist's ego getting in front as much as him in service of telling the story, and just doing a great job of doing that.

HC: I'm guessing here, I'm putting words into someone else's sensibilities, but I got a feeling he felt that he was competing with Steranko. I'm guessing here. I mean, this is something I've never thought

about. It's been so long since I've seen either of those particular sets of works that I can't speak with any intelligence about it, but I'm guessing that if it's as eccentric as you say—and I don't recall it being one or the other—it might very well be that he was literally looking to compete with Steranko on his own terms, because Steranko was certainly an eccentric in that sense, for good or bad.



Another example of Photoshop-applied zip-a-tone (the wallpaper and slacks). Page 2 of "The Last Time I Saw Paris," from *Solo* #4.

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DRAW!: Right. And it's funny today, I think maybe we're so used to seeing comics, and we're so used to seeing whatever's the new thing coming down the pike, it's very rare when you have somebody come in that's like a Steranko, who jumps into the pool and just makes a big splash. I think it's much harder today to do that.

HC: Oh, I don't know. You've got a guy like Darwyn Cooke.

DRAW!: Yeah, but, see, I think that Darwyn is very traditional.

HC: Yeah?

DRAW!: Yeah, I do. I mean, I love his work. I think he's a fantastic storyteller. But I think his work is very traditional. I don't feel that he is one of those artists whose ego is in front of the work itself. I know that's a very fine line, what I'm talking about, but—

HC: See, for me, I think Darwyn is the personification of everything old is new again. He operates from what you and I know as the traditional perspective, but you're also dealing with a culturally amnesiac audience.

DRAW!: Right, that forgets after about six months.

HC: Yeah! His visuals really do have a strong historicity, but, at the same token, he's selling to an audience that's never heard of or seen his source material. So for them I think he's brand new.

DRAW!: I know that you are a big fan of Toth, who was also a big fan of many of the illustrators. When you moved out to California, I imagine you start to see Grandpa Toth a little bit more often?

HC: No, Alex and I—the last time I saw Alex was at Thanksgiving of 1986.

DRAW!: Wow! Did you have the falling out that everyone—

HC: I was on Alex's sh-t list for years.

DRAW!: Oh, okay. But at some point I take it you were—

HC: I was never an acolyte. The problem was that Alex's relationship with talent was you had to basically bring him groceries, and I never had that kind of relationship with him.

DRAW!: [laughs] You never brought him canned food, huh?

HC: No. And the fact is, Alex and I were always at each other's throats. I mean, I regard Alex as the single most important comics artist in the United States, ever.

DRAW!: Why do you regard him as that?

HC: He was able to take the concept of industrial design and introduce it into comics. His drawing, from shortly after he became a professional until he died, was for my money the most economic, brilliant, simple approach to comic book art I've ever seen in my life. He was an incredible picture maker, who didn't have a clue about what a story was. Just didn't have a single idea. Regarded anything that he didn't immediately grasp as pretentious. And it was a tragedy, because the work was just so extraordinary to look at. It makes my brain hurt sometimes now looking at his work, it's so beautiful.

DRAW!: Is he a guy you go back to every once in a while?

HC: Oh, absolutely. No question about it. When I get a little bit too carried away, his stuff, it just boggles the mind. He's the only comic book artist of whom I own a number of originals. I don't have a lot of comic art in my collection.

DRAW!: So you have more illustration and less—

HC: Oh, yeah. It's Alex and... I guess I own a piece of Simonson's, but that's not comic book art, it's an illustration. What else? Not much else.

DRAW!: Would you classify yourself a fan of illustration more, or just a fan of storytelling?

HC: I don't know. I actually don't even think about it. I consider myself a cartoonist. By my definition a cartoonist is a guy who writes and draws. And I do.

DRAW!: But when you're doing illustration, you consider yourself an illustrator, right?

HC: I guess, if I thought about it. Honestly, I consider myself a really lucky guy in that I've never really had to have a job, y'know? I have breakfast with a bunch of cronies every morning, and I see these guys hauling their asses out of a coffee shop to get to work, and I'm like, "Okay, I've got to go to work. It's cool." Y'know? I'm going home, sitting back at my desk. I'm here in my studio. I'm a lucky bastard.

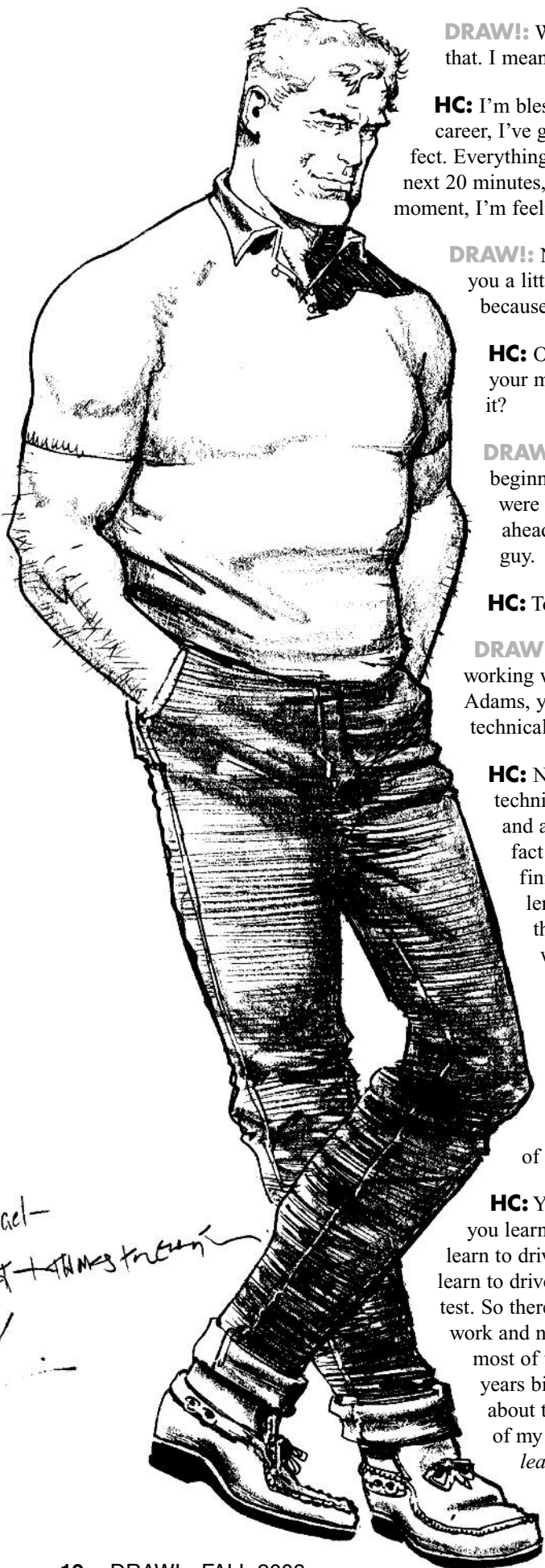
DRAW!: It is pretty great to be able to do what you like to do for a living. You can't really complain about that.

HC: I mean, I can bitch and moan, but the reality is—



Pencil and marker rough and finished inks for the cover of Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of the Escapist* #2.

ESCAPIST™ AND ©2008 MICHAEL CHABON



DRAW!: Well, all artists can do that. I mean, that's what we do.

HC: I'm blessed. I've got a great career, I've got a great life. It's perfect. Everything could fall apart in the next 20 minutes, but right now, in this moment, I'm feeling pretty good.

DRAW!: Now, I want to talk to you a little bit about craft, too, because you've done—

HC: Of course. That is what your magazine is about, isn't it?

DRAW!: Right, right. In the beginning it seemed like you were pretty much a straight ahead sort of pen-and-ink guy.

HC: Totally inept.

DRAW!: When you were working with guys like Kane or Adams, you know, Adams is a technical sort of guy.

HC: Neal has a mastery of technique that is profound and astonishing. Look, the fact is, I was so inept with finishing tools. My problem was that I spent all this energy trying to get work, and when I got it, I realized that I sucked, and I didn't have the goods to do the work that I got.

DRAW!: So was there a certain amount of fear?

HC: You know how when you learn to drive? When you learn to drive, you don't really learn to drive. You learn to pass the test. So there I was with a lot of work and no skills, and I spent most of those first couple of years bitching and moaning about technique, and the rest of my career I spent trying to learn technique. I reinvent myself every couple of years, and it's

always a matter of finding new tools to try different stuff. What I'm doing now is pretty much a version of what I've been doing for the past 30 years. Even in black-&-white comics, I work in mixed media. I work on the company stock because paper is just too damned expensive. I use Pelican ink, I use a #3 and a #2 brush—usually the Series 233, the cheap, throwaway plastic black-&-white stuff—I use a .35 Rapidograph for very fine details, and I ink with Alvin pen-sticks and Pentel fountain pens.

DRAW!: Wow, Pentel. Now, these tools, were you using these on *Flagg*?

HC: I inked *Flagg* with the Beryl Flash. Remember those?

DRAW!: Mmm. And you were doing that on tone board, too, for a while, right?

HC: Well, it was a really slick stock. I was doing it on Craftint. You can't get Craftint anymore.

DRAW!: [laughs] Well, they still make it, but they only have, literally, five or six tones now. You were using markers, too, right?

HC: Right. There was no ink on there at all. I used magic marker and Beryl Flash.

DRAW!: Were you concerned that at some point the art would turn?

HC: Never. Didn't care. I don't care now.

DRAW!: Really?

HC: I'm not working for posterity, I'm working for reproduction.

DRAW!: So you're not, as Williamson would say, working for the original?

HC: No. I don't care. I know how that sounds to collectors and fans, but my allegiance is to the client.

DRAW!: Well, one interesting thing is everybody uses the same basic array of materials, but everybody has a very different criteria. Al Williamson's thing was all about the integrity of the original. He loved the physical original, and I think he was more in love with that than actually the reproduction, which of course is a very—

HC: Do you see him at all?

DRAW!: I haven't seen Al in years. I guess I'm probably more on that side than on your side, but I do understand that aesthetic. I probably



More Photoshop-applied zip-a-tone (the woman's skirt, the man's tie, and the office floor), this time page 2 of "Upgrades," from *Solo* #4.

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have more of that, say, when I'm doing a storyboard for somebody, because I'm never going to get that back. I put it in the mail, I send it off. I'm not going to be an old man flipping through my storyboards, whereas I might be an old man who might be able to sell my original pages for some money. Do you know what I mean? Can you talk about anything you may have picked up from Woody or Gray Morrow? I know Morrow used zip-a-tone all the time, which, of course, you can hardly find anymore, either.

HC: Well, I scanned all mine.

DRAW!: You scanned the patterns in?

HC: I scanned my zip-a-tone.

DRAW!: And then you apply it in Photoshop?

HC: I have a Photoshop file of all my zip-a-tone, plus another 100, 200 patterns that I've made, found, constructed, screwed with, just weirded up; I have a huge Photoshop file of those.

DRAW!: The coloring now is so overpowering compared to the coloring in the old days that sometimes if you use zip-a-tone, the colorist is trying to go in and model your form and can sometimes just ruin that effect.

HC: I've been really lucky in that I work with colorists with whom I have a good relationship, that can use what I give them on the pattern and run with it, and make color out of it. It's been really effective. Edgar Delgado, who's coloring quite a bit of my stuff now—he's coloring the *Wolverine* stuff and he colored the *Blade* stuff—he and I have a great simpatico relationship. A very talented guy who managed to take my assembled pattern mania and make very effective, illustration-quality finishes out of it.

DRAW!: Would you say that your use of pattern was very influenced by guys like Parker and people like that, bringing that sensibility in?

HC: Unequivocally. For me, as much as I adore Robert Fawcett—Fawcett is my favorite artist of that period—Parker is the major artist of his generation. If you look at that issue of *Cosmopolitan* in '54 where he illustrates seven different stories under seven pseudonyms in seven different styles, you begin to truly appreciate what Parker was capable of. When you look at the lithopane issues that he did—the one on the history of jazz, and the one on the redesign of American magazine—you really see this guy was just an amazing painter. Also, he very casually took over *Gordo* from Gus Arriola while Gus was sick for six months.

DRAW!: Oh, I didn't know that.



Howard starts with a very loose thumbnail sketch to get down the composition and gestures of the characters. His pencils are little more than breakdowns, with no blacks spotted. Most of the drawing is done in the inking stage. Finally, zip-a-tone patterns are added in Photoshop for more texture.

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HC: He ghosted *Gordo*. This guy was just a giant.

DRAW!: A lot of that stuff is just unknown now. I mean, there seems to be some more—

HC: If I were where you are now, I'd be in Stockbridge.

DRAW!: Yeah?

HC: Because there's an Al Parker exhibition at the Rockwell Museum right now, in Stockbridge.

DRAW!: Oh.

HC: Tuesday my entire staff and I went down to Fullerton, about two hours south, to see the Leyendecker show that just came from the Haggin Museum.

DRAW!: Do you still look at the illustration field?

HC: All the time. Absolutely. No question about it. Look, keeping myself fresh is the

paramount idea of my life. It's what I have to do. And basically the way I keep myself young, green, and fresh is to constantly look at new stuff—old stuff and new stuff—and be open to possibilities and ideas.

DRAW!: Comic books today are very different in so many respects than when you started. I mean, it's hard to even do the straightforward adventure comic now, because everybody's got to have super-powers.

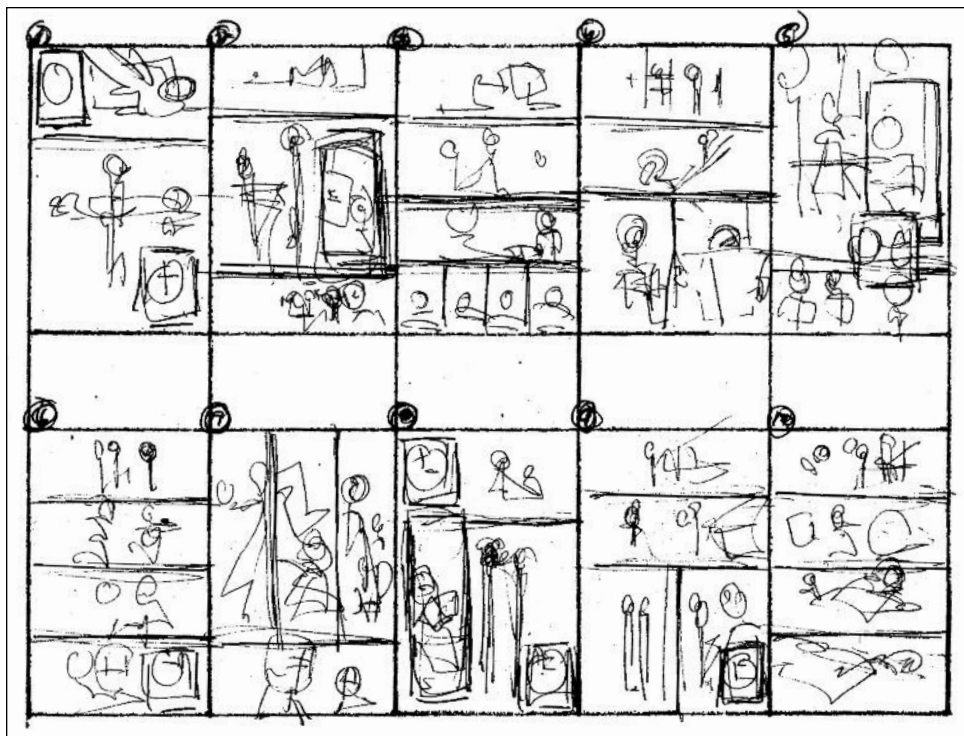
HC: Well, it's what comics are.

DRAW!: How do you go about keeping yourself charged?

HC: Well, it's a matter of the constant reinvention. That's what it's all about. You give yourself enough rope, and you go out there, and you keep reminding yourself that you're competing with people, in some cases, a third your age. In many cases, just half, but half is the good part. And that what you've got to do to maintain is to not close your eyes to the possibilities, be aware of developments, pay attention.







An example sheet of Howard's thumbnails for *Punisher War Journal* #19.

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DRAW!: And do you think the fact that you delve into other fields has also helped you maintain that?

HC: Without question. No doubt in my mind. You know, it's very easy to become completely parochial in the context of comics. It's very easy to simply do nothing but comics. I mean, Gil Kane was a guy who never ever learned how to use reference materials in the context of enhancing the material, which is why his books were all generic cities, generic suits, generic guns. It was just an incredibly generic approach. And I loved Gil's stuff. I still do. I regard him as a giant in his time. But it remains that the qualities that he achieved in the mid-'60s and '70s are what he died with. And he was a smart guy, but he didn't care that much about the stuff. He did try, at one point in his career, to introduce reference material into his work, and he just couldn't do it, because he couldn't figure out a way to do it at the speed and pace that he'd gotten used to. Do you follow me?

DRAW!: Yes.

HC: The way I keep green is to remember that I can't do what I'm doing at the same pace all the time; that it's a learning curve. I'm still beginning to learn this stuff, do you know what I mean?

DRAW!: Right. So a guy like Kane had a system, and he's got to do his five pages a day to make his living or whatever, but that alone is going to sort of cut it off at a certain point.

HC: But that's also a mindset. It's not real. You impose that mindset on yourself, and you begin to accept the fact that the fantasy you had about the way life should be is the real thing, and, frankly, it's a creation of your own mind. The fact is I'm making considerably more money per page than I was in the '70s, so you don't have to turn out five, ten pages a day. But it's

just you get into a mindset and you embrace it as reality, and you can't step outside of it. Do you follow me?

DRAW!: Yeah, yeah. So, looking at comics from your perspective, how do you view the industry today? As you say, you're using the computer a lot now. That must impact your process in a very different way, from even when you were doing *American Flag*, which was very innovative, creative, but was done "old school." Do you know what I mean?

HC: But in a profound way, much of what I've developed in working with Photoshop today is very much what I was anticipating in *American Flag*. The big difference is in *Flag* I was using an Exacto knife and Spray Mount and Xerox. Today, I'm going in there and I'm using Photoshop. Do you follow me?

DRAW!: Right.

HC: But the impact and the effects are remarkably similar.

DRAW!: So it was just having a different set of tools, basically.

HC: I'll give you an anecdote, real simple. A couple years back I was in development of a television series, and I was working with John Carpenter. We were working on a TV series version of *Escape from New York*. I had not seen the films in years, so I went out and I bought videotapes and pictures and I came home and watched them. I'm watching the sequence in the first one in which Snake Plissken is flying over New York City in a glider, and there's a CGI, a computer-generated map of New York City below.

DRAW!: I remember that, yeah.

HC: That isn't CGI. What it is is a cardboard model of New York City with fiberoptic wire running through it. It was his art director's, maybe his—I don't know, I never asked John at the time—idea of what a computer-generated model would look like when they finally existed. Okay? To a great extent, I was doing the same thing with *Flag* with xerography, anticipating Photoshop. Does that make sense?

DRAW!: Yeah. So if you were doing something like that today, the craft would be a little bit easier, right?

HC: I shudder at the word "easier." I'd say "different." Just different. Because it's a different process.

DRAW!: For most of your career you have penciled and inked your own work. At times you've had other people ink your stuff, but—

HC: Never happily. I don't know how to pencil for—I mean, I

look at Starlin, who does these incredibly tight pencils. My pencils are just gestures.

DRAW!: So you do a lot of the drawing in the ink?

HC: Mm-hmm. And the redrawing, as well, because I work a lot with patching when cleaning up.

DRAW!: So if you don't like something, you do a little paste-over and go in—

HC: All my originals are covered in Scotch Magic tape. It's a great surface for inking on top of.

DRAW!: Do you still work out your layouts small and then enlarge them?

HC: No. I do very rough thumbnails for pacing, and a lot of it is right on the board.

DRAW!: Oh, okay. So you don't do the Gil Kane thing of working out your stuff small and then pulling it up.

HC: I mean, I do rough drawings, but it's much rougher than, say—Gil was doing fully realized anatomical drawings and then tracing. I do pretty much just structural setup and do them in tight pencil, but my tight pencil has nothing to do with tight pencils by definition.

DRAW!: At the time you were coming in and cutting your teeth, were you aware of the European guys, like Moebius?

HC: Yes. Actually, to a certain extent, Gil was the one who turned me onto that stuff. My first job my first day working for Gil was clipping Robert McGinnis paperback covers, and J.C. Mezieres and Jean Giraud pages out of a few books. There was the *Valerian* strip and *Blueberry*. That was 1970.

DRAW!: Did that affect your sensibility?

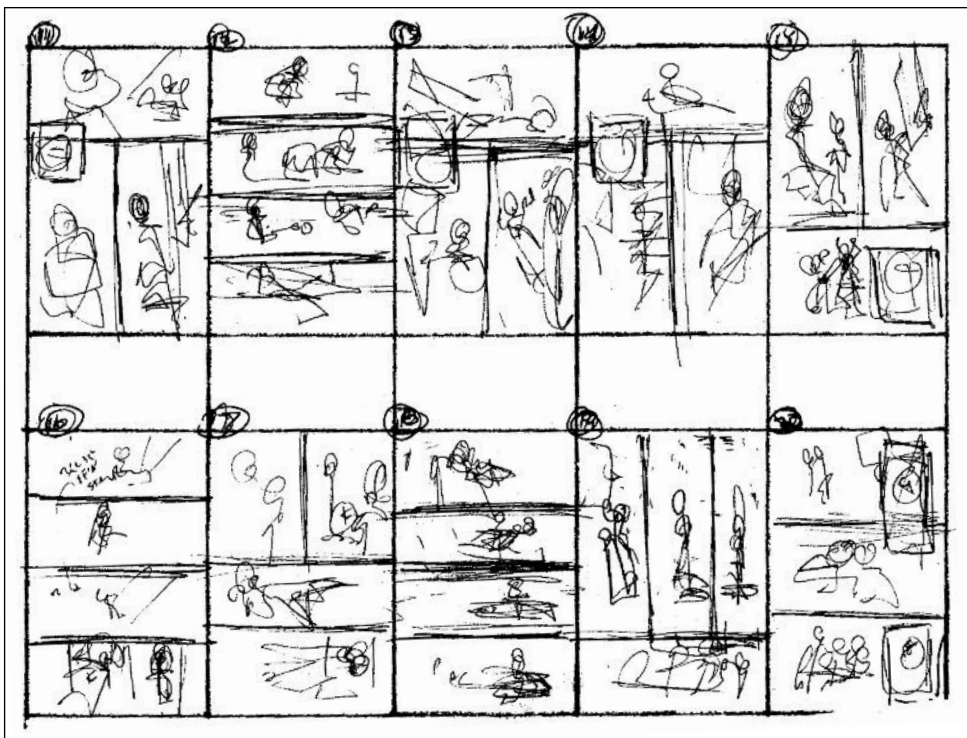
HC: Of course.

DRAW!: I always felt your work had a European flavor.

HC: Again, I saw that stuff, and in the early '70s they all started coming over to visit. They had this huge congress in, like, '72 or '73, so we got to know those guys. And, yeah, I've always been aware of them. Whenever I go to Europe, I usually bring back piles and piles of sh-t. I buy tons of comics.

DRAW!: What are you reading today? Are you into the manga stuff at all? Do you look at any of that stuff?

HC: No. I can't warm to it at all. I'm reading a lot of guys in terms of writers. I mean, we're going through a writer ascendancy



More of Howard's thumbnails for *Punisher War Journal* #19.

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period right now in comics, which I find kind of interesting. I really like what Brian Bendis is doing because I think it's kind of fun and smart. I still read *100 Bullets*. I love what Brian Azzarello is doing, and I'm a huge fan of Eduardo Risso. I love Leinil Yu's stuff; I think he's just great, just fantastic stuff. I like what Jason Aaron is doing with *Scalped*, although I have to say I'm not crazy about the artwork. I'm sorry.

DRAW!: Really? I love the artwork on that book.

HC: You must be insane! Okay. [Mike laughs] I find it a little hard to follow. And I know I'm alone in this, because there are people who—I love the book. Again, it takes place in a world I know nothing about, and I'm utterly convinced by what he's done. I find it very convincing.

DRAW!: I guess that's one of the reasons I like the artwork, because I really feel like the guys done his research.

HC: I just can't warm to it. It's a little bit too loose, and everybody has a look a little bit too alike for me. But I could be wrong.

DRAW!: So what else are you—?

HC: I like Chris Gage's stuff a lot, and I was loving what he was doing with Doug Mahnke on *Stormwatch*. The new guy—it's a perfect example, I don't know the new guy's stuff. I sort of lost my interest in it when Mahnke left. I like what Mahnke was doing a lot. It had a real fun quality to it. And I really like what Chris did with John Paul Leon on that *Midnighter* thing.

DRAW!: Mmm, that's very good stuff, yeah.

HC: Chris is a fun writer.

DRAW!: So you're trying to stay current with what's going on in the industry?

HC: Yeah. Obviously, one of the things I believe is a function of a guy who comes on like me, doing an arc on *Wolverine*, is I'm a placekeeper. My job is to be as creative as I possibly can, but not to f--- anything up for anyone else. My job is to do a great job with the material I'm doing, but to leave the material in good hands when I go. And, to do that, I check out all the material that precedes me and follow through.

DRAW!: Yeah, it's funny, because I would not think of Howard Chaykin drawing *Wolverine*. That just—

HC: I'm having a great time. Again, Jason's story was really good, and what Guggy's doing just kicks ass.

DRAW!: Well, I guess the main thing is if you can have fun. If you can say this kicks ass and you can have fun, I guess in the end that's what it's all about, right?

HC: Well, I'm inking pages as we speak. I'm on page 15 of issue #60. And, at the same time, when I get off the phone with you, I'll give the notes for Edgar on the color of issue #59, and deliver three more pages today.

DRAW!: Do you have as much info on the placement of the lettering and—you know, on *Flagg* you were the Alpha and the Omega.

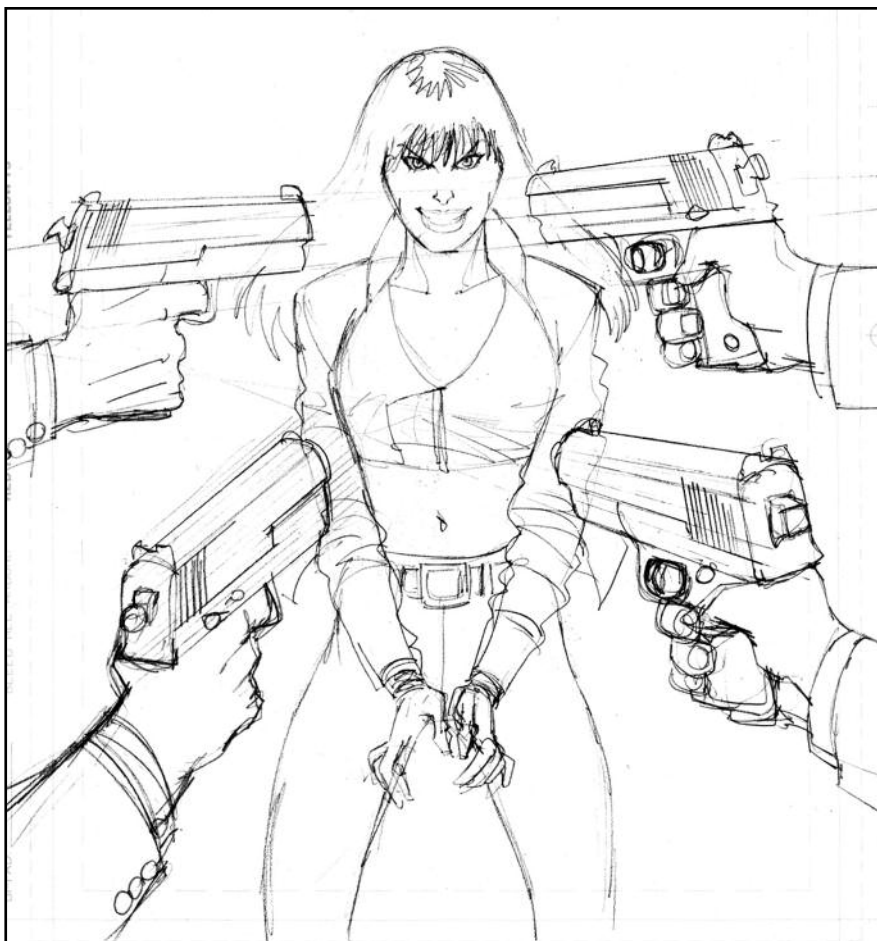
HC: I did everything. And it ruined my life. But, no, I mean, on the material I've been doing for Marvel of late, I've been very lucky to work with editors who are really sharp and



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An *Ultraviolet* cover — very loose thumbnail sketch, pencils (with no indication of blacks), and inks.
ULTRAVIOLET™ AND ©2008 ULTRAVI PRODUCTIONS, INC.



clever, and I'm having a great time working with John, and Axel was a gas. Aubrey Sitterson is a total blast. He's a really funny, brilliant guy. I have a really anal-retentive quality about the placement of balloons, because I believe it's an organic part of the material. I think it should be clear to anybody who knows my stuff that I believe it's part of the art. I have no problem working with it, placing it digitally, but my notes... I come off like an old woman, and I know it. And I'm perfectly comfortable with that.

DRAW!: Are you working full-script or Marvel style?

HC: In terms of what?

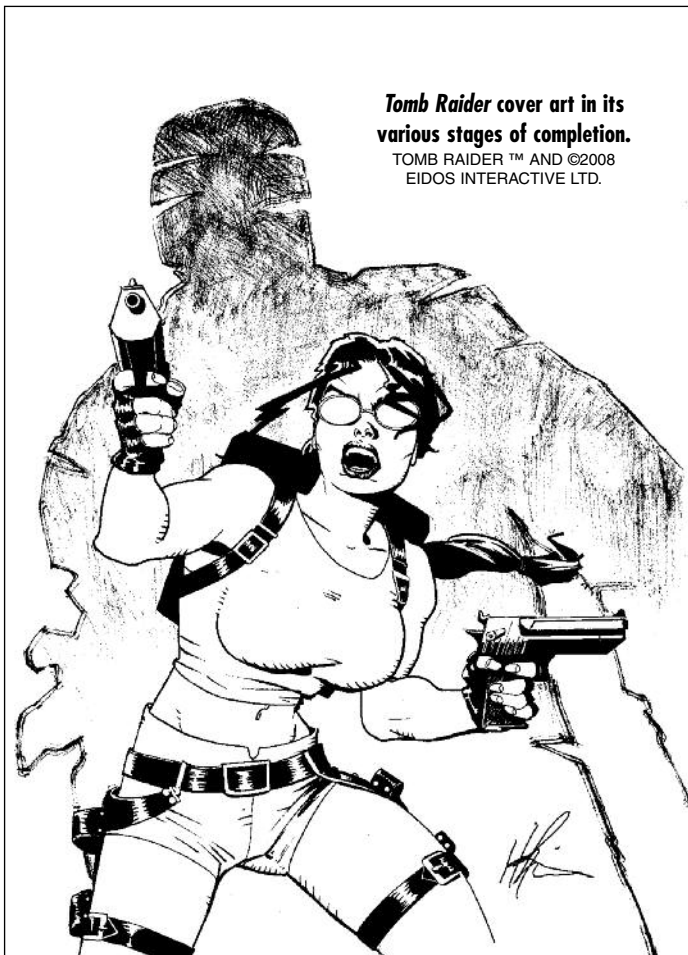
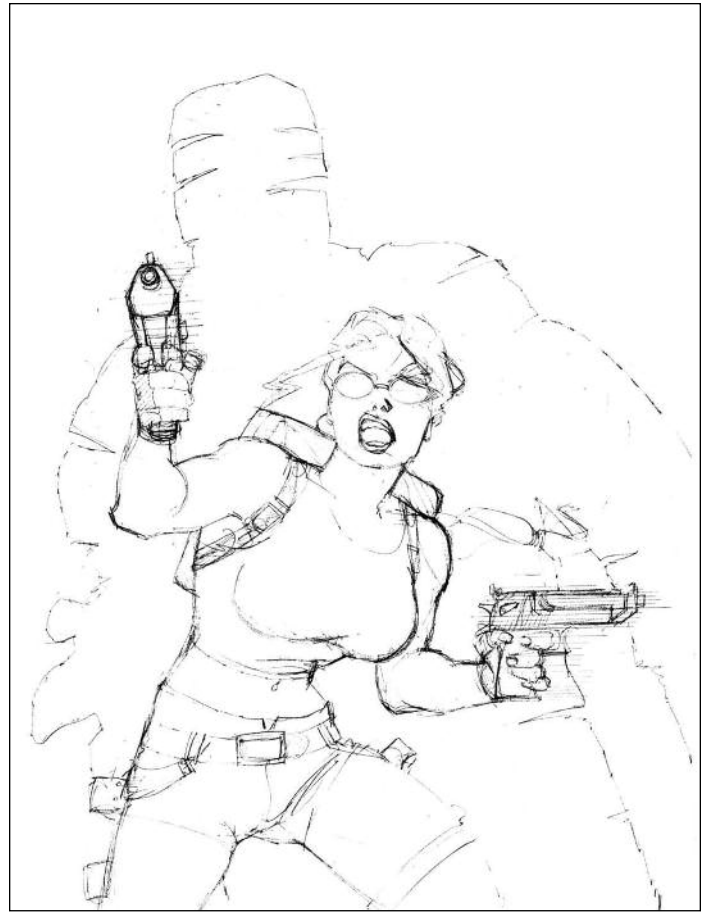
DRAW!: The *Wolverine* stuff.

HC: Guggy's scripts are very, very complete. In terms of giving me exactly how much I want, he's just top-notch. He's top of the hall.

DRAW!: Do you have a preference for working either way?

HC: I much prefer full-script. My feeling is that if a guy doesn't feel doing a full script is worth his time, then work with somebody else. I like the idea of a full script. I really do. I think it's a mark of respect for the material.





DRAW!: Now, that is a very old-school concept, because other guys—

HC: Well, that's because I believe in story, and most of the guys who prefer working Marvel style say, "I can draw whatever I feel like today!"

DRAW!: Right, "I can make this a big, cool shot here," or whatever.

HC: And I really don't care about that stuff. To me, the story's what matters, what it's all about. And I like working full-script. And I recognize the fact that there may be problems inherent in—the fact is, I have a very specific idea about narrative. I'm a curmudgeon, and I've found myself in situations where.... For example, Jason and I do not have anywhere near the same sensibility of pacing and storytelling. The same is true of me and Brian Bendis, but I was able to find a working happy medium in both cases. For some reason, Guggenheim, his stuff, I just roll right into it. But the challenge isn't such a tough thing, either. You talk about keeping greener all your life, that's another thing that keeps you going, not doing the same f---in' thing all the time.

DRAW!: You know, I enjoy that, myself. I even enjoy that aspect when I'm doing storyboards. If I'm working with Bruce Timm, you kind of do his thing, if you're working with Gendy,

you do his thing.

HC: What is it that you're boarding now?

DRAW!: Right now I'm actually boarding on a new show called *The Secret Saturdays*, which is created by Jay Stephens, the guy who does *Tutenstein*. That's through PorchLight, which is from Cartoon Network. But I've worked on *Venture Brothers*, I've worked on *Fairly Odd Parents*, I've worked on—

HC: Oh, cool! My grandchildren think the world of you. I'm a huge *Fairly Odd Parents* fan, thanks to my granddaughters.

DRAW!: I enjoy the different aesthetics you get from one show to the next.

HC: Absolutely. See, we're talking about the same thing, really.

DRAW!: Right. And in the case of the storyboard, the style of the show is really just like whether you're going to wear a jumpsuit or a business suit; it's the storytelling that's paramount. It's all about telling the story. Once you get your chops to a certain point, for me anyway, it's never been that hard to flex between one style and another style. The style of storytelling, the pace of storytelling on something like *Fairly Odd Parents* is different than *Kim Possible*, different than *Venture Brothers*, different than Gendy's stuff on *Samurai Jack*. But, again, it's all about telling the story, so all your solutions—

HC: I have a lot of respect for that, because I don't think I could do that. I'm not being facetious, I mean, I don't think I have the chops to make that kind of adjustment. And I have a lot of respect for guys who do.

DRAW!: I actually think having worked in storyboarding has made my comic book storytelling much, much better, because one of the things is it removes—y'know, guys from my generation, I think, were much more obsessed with style. "Is my style cool? Am I drawing in this style?" The style is already established, so that is removed. What you have to concentrate on is purely telling the story in the clearest, most entertaining fashion, because it's not going to look like my style, it's going to look like the style of the show. So it's purely a storytelling exercise. And one of the things I can do now, because I teach storyboarding and storytelling, is that—

HC: Where do you teach?

DRAW!: I teach at the Delaware College of Art and Design, and I'm going to be teaching at UArts in Philly in the spring. One of the things I've found, in general, about teaching is that it forced me to be critical about what I was doing. Now, I've always been a little bit of a process junkie, as my friend Jamar calls it, of the craft, because that's how I taught myself. Since I didn't go to school and I wasn't able to apprentice with anybody, I had to—

HC: But the nature of apprenticeship is the process of exactly what you're talking about. I'm exactly the same place. I know exactly what you're talking about. Yeah, I do.



The fully colored version of the *Tomb Raider*.
TOMB RAIDER™ AND ©2008 EIDOS INTERACTIVE LTD.

the not-
so-secret
anymore



jay
stephens

Conducted by Mike Manley
Transcribed by Steven Tice

DRAW!: I'm glad we finally got to talk, I've wanted to interview you for a long time for the magazine because you're one of my favorite cartoonists working today.

JS: You've been teasing me with this for a while, Mike, but now there's a really good reason, because it finally looks like I have a high-profile project.

DRAW!: Well, you were always high profile in my book, Jay.

JS: Awwww, thanks. And I know that's true, because you were the first guy to write me a letter for *Jetcat Clubhouse*—I'm pretty sure yours was the first letter I got. So I know you've been looking at my stuff. But until *The Secret Saturdays* launch this fall, up until this point in my career, I've been working as a "cartoonist's cartoonist" (if I dare say that), where I feel like the entirety of my fan base is other cartoonists. [laughs]

DRAW!: One of the things I was very interested in talking to you about was the fact that you are a legitimate, real cartoonist, you've done almost every format I can think of, plus you've had a lot of success. It seemed to start with self-publishing and build up from there, at least that's where I first became aware of your work. Then you worked for *chickaDEE*, one of those kids' magazines in Canada.

JS: And lots of stuff for *Nickelodeon Magazine*, as well.

DRAW!: Right, and now you are working on your third cartoon series. First, you had *Jetcat*, which was on KaBlam!...

JS: Yup, animated shorts, right.

DRAW!: And then you had *Tutenstein*, which was on the Discovery Channel here in the States.

JS: Yup, 36 episodes, and there's a new *Tutenstein* TV movie coming out.

DRAW!: And now *The Secret Saturdays* for Cartoon Network. So you're rocking up to a Frank Miller, buddy.

JS: I don't know. I think of myself as real blue collar, as far as cartooning goes.

DRAW!: What, Frank Miller's not blue collar?

JS: [laughs] Well, no, I mean in the sense—the reason I'm all over the place is more because I'm interested in the work. I'm not showing off, Mike. [laughs] I'm interested in all different forms of cartooning, which is part of the reason I joined the National Cartoonists Society, because I was finding that the comic book convention circuit was getting a little boring for me. I'd been doing it for a decade

or more, meeting other comic book guys, but comic books were just one of the things I really liked. So, to try to hook up with other strip cartoonists, animators, and illustrators, I finally found a place to meet them in the NCS. I've always identified myself as a "cartoonist." From the beginning, I never thought of myself as a comic book guy, or an animation guy—

DRAW!: Although you were actually doing comic books as opposed to doing comic strips. At least, most of the stuff that I was exposed to of your work in the beginning.

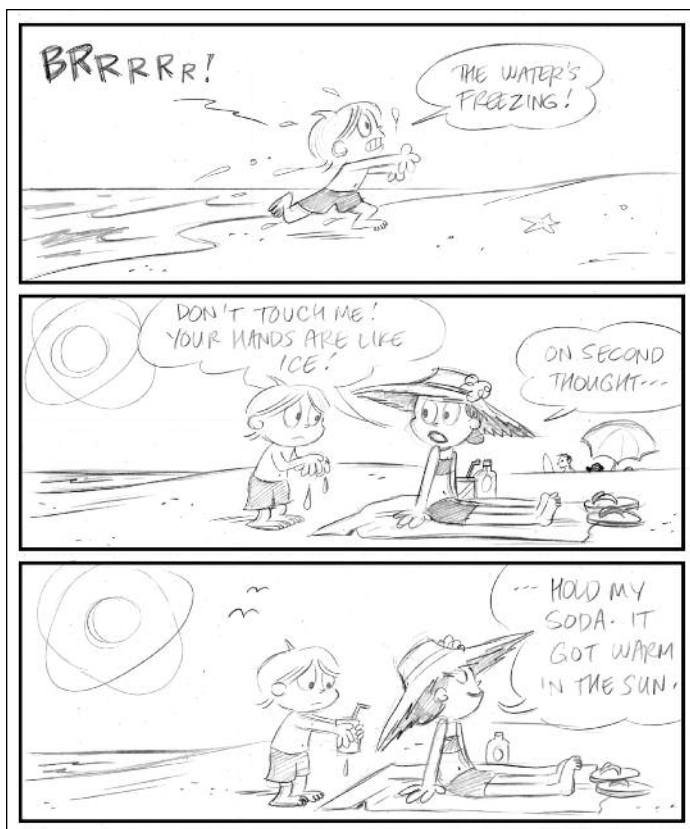
JS: Yeah, definitely. I was definitely a comic book guy at the start, and yet I never really thought of myself that way. I think part of the reason was... and you listed all this stuff I've done, which, on one level, there's no question that my career's been a success in that I've been a full-time professional cartoonist for more than 15 years, and I'm supporting a family on it.

DRAW!: That is the very definition of success for most I think.

JS: That's all I ever asked, that's all I ever wanted, and I'm very happy and satisfied with the work I have done. But, looking at success critically, when I talk about being a "cartoonist's cartoonist," I've never had trouble making friends with other cartoonists who appreciated what I was trying to do in comic



Pencils for a *chickaDEE* strip for the Canadian kids' magazine of the same name.
CHICKADEE™ AND ©2008 BAYARD PRESSE CANADA, INC..



Two strips—one still in pencil form, one fully inked—for Jay's current newspaper strip, which he does with writer Bob Weber, *Oh Brother!*.

OH BROTHER™ AND ©2008 BOB WEBER AND JAY STEPHENS

books or elsewhere, but I've never had a real "hit," Mike.

DRAW!: Well, that brings up a very interesting topic, one that I've talked a lot about. It's actually one of the focuses of the magazine, to cover all aspects of cartooning in the broad sense and to chip away the separations between them, because I think what happened long ago is that there was that separation of comic *strips* and comic *books*. The older generation of cartoonists—including guys like Kirby—were all inspired by the strips. And that was the previous generation's idea of success, if you could sell a comic strip. That also meant that you could become very wealthy, and millions of people read your work, and you also weren't looked upon as some form of social pariah because you were pandering smut to kids—all that stuff that seemed to kind of stick to comic books at least until the '60s or '70s. But now, when I talk to lay people, most lay people don't distinguish between Superman and Charlie Brown. Comic book guys do. There's really this ghettoization of, "Well, I just like superheroes," or, "I just like indie or shoe-gazer comics," or, "I just like manga." And what's interesting for me as a teacher, when I teach these cartooning classes, you never know what cross-section of people you will get. Most seem to kind of mix it up—it's really mostly the superhero fans, who just like superheroes, that seem to have the most prejudice against other stuff.

JS: That's interesting, because we just had an NCS convention, and I was talking to Hilary Price, who does a great gag strip called *Rhymes with Orange*, about this and I was surprised to find that that stigma and stereotyping still works both ways. I was arguing that we have fewer comic book people in the National

Cartoonists Society than we ought to, and it met with some resistance. That's part of exactly what you're talking about—a lot of comic book people assume that the NCS is all strip people, and it is. And comic book people seem to hate strip people.

DRAW!: Well, *dumb* comic book people do.

JS: I hear some vitriol about how awful they are, and it's so funny, because it really is, like you say, the exact same art form at its core—the combination of words and pictures. But it requires very different skills. I think comic book creators and fans have very little idea of what real skills and challenges are involved in knocking out a daily three-panel strip.

DRAW!: It is the most Puritan form of cartooning. I mean, you really have to hone everything down, and you don't have as much real estate, as much space to do everything.

JS: Absolutely, which can be a negative and a positive. There's definitely some downside to working on a syndicated strip in national papers, but there's something really beautiful about a strip that clicks. There's a new strip out right now called *Cul de Sac*, by Richard Thompson—great comic and great guy, and he was up for best newspaper strip in the NCS Reuben Division Awards this year. So was my friend Paul Gilligan, who does *Pooch Café*. There's some great stuff out there that I think comic book people are just unaware of. But I think what's surprising is the bias goes the other way, as well, in that strip folk still frown upon the comic book crowd. With the change in the form of comic books, the gravitation towards bound books, the influx of manga and how that's influencing comic sales, you find just as many graphic nov-

els in bookstores, at least up here in this area, as you do collections of comic strips now. I assumed they were gaining respect.

DRAW!: Now, are you saying bookstores as in Barnes & Noble and Borders, or are you talking about comic book stores?

JS: No, no, I'm talking about like Barnes & Noble. When we're talking about a lay person, when we're talking about cartoonists in the broadest sense and what people's perception of us might be, I think you can find more graphic novels than you can find *Garfield* and *Dilbert* collections now in some major chains.

DRAW!: Well, there seems to be, not only in the minds of the artists, but also the minds of the bookstores, still a separation between manga, superheroes, and what they would call humor, because all comic strips seem to be humor and are sold in a section often far away from the other comics.

JS: That's true, too, which is another reason I was driven out of comic books—banging my head against the wall for years trying to make a humor comic book.

DRAW!: And comic book fans, superhero fans, have no sense of humor. At least, the direct market won't support any humor books.

JS: No. In fact, most of the underground cartoonists, or whatever you call them these days, they don't have much of a sense of humor, either. I mean, Evan Dorkin and I have talked about this for years, how everyone just needs to lighten up a little.

DRAW!: That even extends, honestly, to movies, like the Academy Awards. It's never a comedy that wins, it's always the drama about some horrible person with a tragedy or a personal affliction or something like that. Comedy, which is actually the hardest thing to do, and really the most universal of all languages, seems to get so little respect. My theory is that the baby men, as I call them, the cult guy, hardcore, mouth-breather comic fanatic is embarrassed on one level, so therefore any time you make fun of Wolverine, it's like you're making fun of him, and he's already had enough people make fun of him in his life, so it's like a defense mechanism. They like watching *The Simpsons*, they love watching *Family Guy*, but somehow if you take humor and you bring it into comics, it just doesn't work for them. Or it works, but they have no appetite for it. It's the same sort of post-'80s apocalypse guy with beard stubble over and over.

JS: Yeah, it's strange, it's really strange. Often the assumption is that humor is for a younger audience. I get that a lot. I was doing humor comic books that I thought were "All Ages" in the best sense of that term, meaning that *anyone* would find it funny, I would hope, and that automatically translated, as far as my career went, into me being a "kids' cartoonist." Certainly my drawing style is very open and friendly, but I just think that's interesting, too, that if you're funny, you're automatically not serious, and therefore for kids. Which is just simply not the case.

DRAW!: Right. Charles Schulz did not write *Peanuts* for seven-year-old kids. The strips are all written for or to appeal to adults.

JS: Exactly. And I think that trying to create something—and *The*

Simpsons is a good example of something truly all-ages—that really honestly works on all levels, that's really hard. I've found in comic books that nobody was trying to do that anymore. I used to post on comic book message boards a lot, five, six, seven years ago, when everyone was complaining, "Well, where are the comic books for kids? Where are the new readers? We're just pandering for the older crowd." And nobody did a damn thing about it! I watched that ship sail away from the shore, and I kind of left comic books with it. I still dabble, but the reason I left is that I realized that nothing was going to change. I kept saying, "I'm doing these kids' magazine comics. *Nickelodeon Magazine's* a million-plus seller. *Disney Adventures* sells tons of magazines full of comics." It was a money-making opportunity that comic book publishers and sellers were intentionally ignoring.

DRAW!: There is a huge audience out there. I mean Archie still sells well.

JS: But kids aren't reading "comic books" anymore, now. And it's interesting, I think, that when we talk about rack space in bookstores, how people separate manga and the superhero stuff and the strips, what we're talking about is format. Which is bizarre to me. It's not even genre that divides them. It's literally format. I mean, there are humor manga and humor graphic novels that should be racked with humor comic strips. And then there are serious comic strips that should be racked with the graphic novels. They're not even being racked by subject matter, they're being racked by how they look.

DRAW!: Going back to when you were first getting into pro-



Felix the Cat style guide drawings.
FELIX THE CAT™ AND ©2008 FELIX COMICS, INC.

ducing your own comics, why don't you tell us a little bit about that? Because, obviously, in the very beginning you were attracted to this particular form of cartooning, and you very successfully continued to build upon that despite the fact that the direct market, or what has become the direct market, is almost completely against supporting that type of book, that type of artist.

JS: It looked like success, Mike, but really I was failing upwards. And in case anyone thinks I've been too hard on comic book geeks, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool comic book geek. That's how I started. I absolutely was a superhero freak. More of a Marvel Zombie than DC. And a couple of years before art college I was seriously into punk rock, and I discovered *Love & Rockets*. It was actually an easy transition for me. And Charles Burns, actually. Charles Burns' stuff and the Hernandez Brothers I found had enough in common with the graphic style that I was appreciating in the superhero books, but also had this punk rock feel that matched more with my attitude and environment at the time. So they kind of opened my eyes. And I remember picking up *RAW* and having this completely erroneous—I looked at Spiegelman's stuff, and Charles Burns' stuff, and I thought, "Man, it's so classy, this stuff's so beautiful. They must be living in penthouses in New York." I was so naïve. It looked like they must be rich.

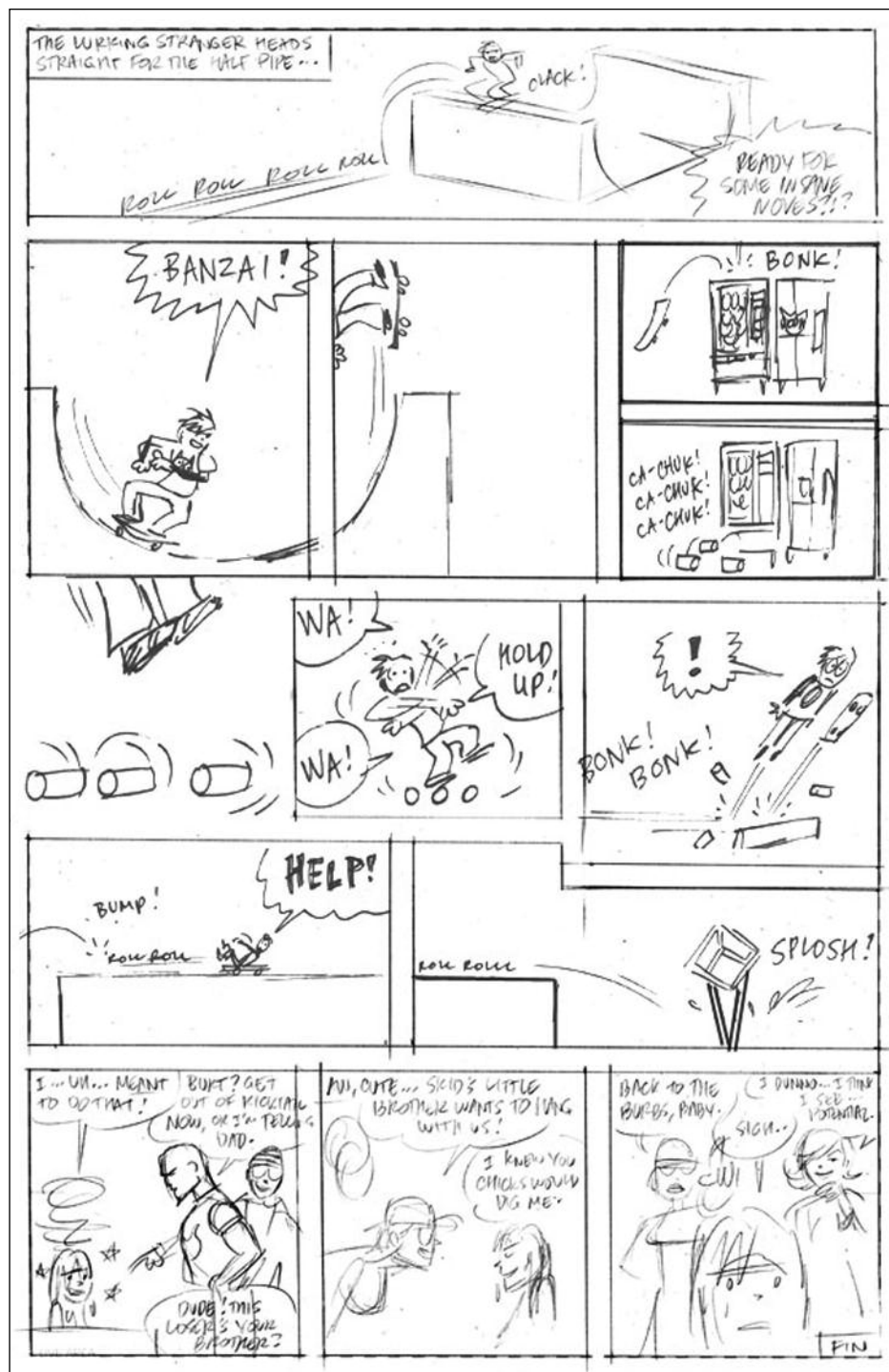
DRAW!: This is probably, what, the early '80s that you're talking about?

JS: Mid-'80s, yeah.

DRAW!: How aware were you of the business and were you thinking about becoming a cartoonist? Was this a plan?

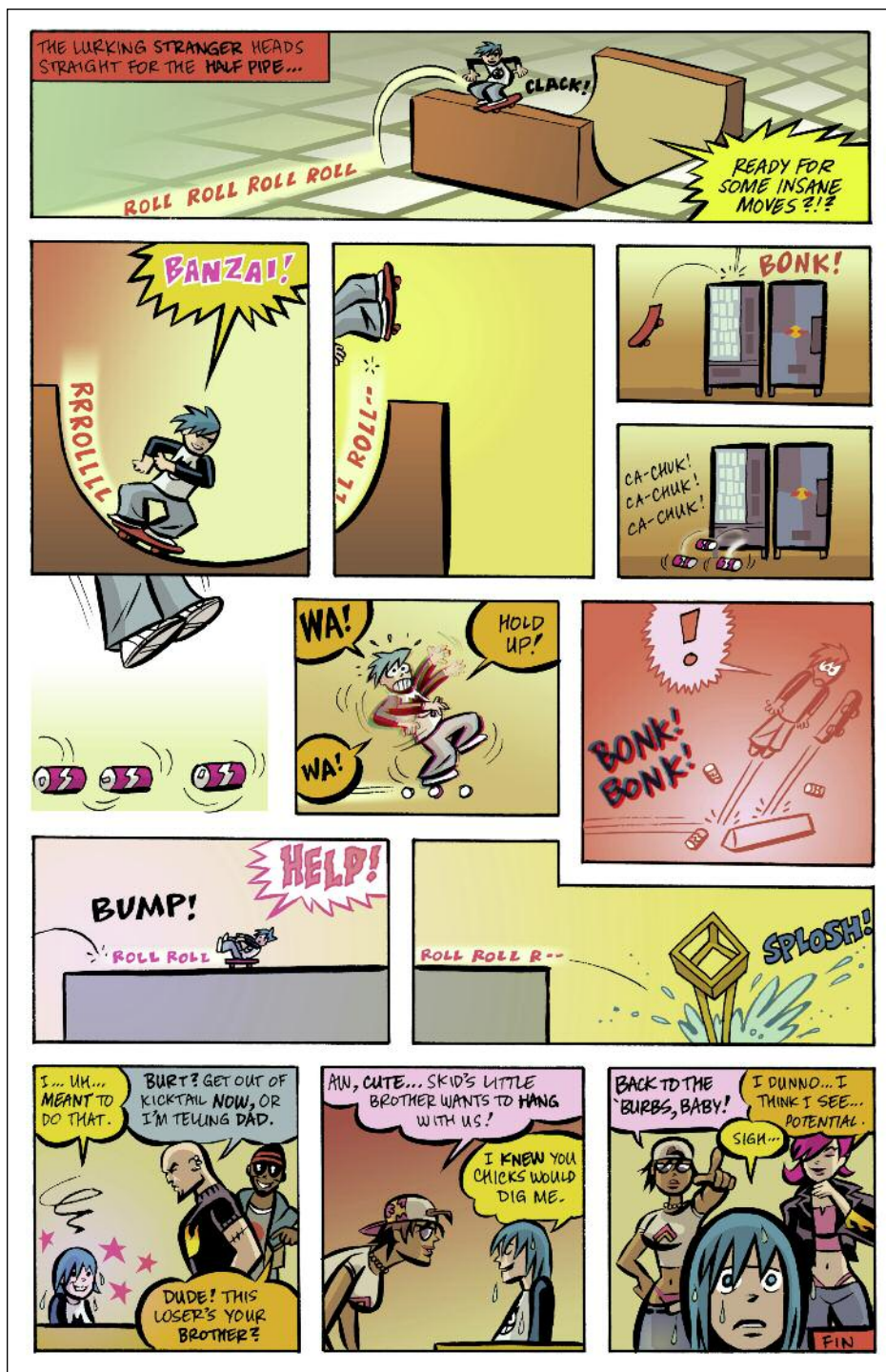
JS: I was so naïve. I was totally naïve. It was all accidental. I was always a doodler and into art. Did really well in high school art class, and sucked at everything else, so I naturally ended up at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto for fine art training. But all this time I had this feverish comic habit. Now, it wasn't just comic books. I was a voracious animation watcher, too. I mean, *Ren & Stimpy* came along around then, I think, and I was crazy about that stuff. And comic strips like *Calvin & Hobbes*, making sure I didn't miss any of those. So there was a lot of "cartoony" stuff I liked. I remember when *Eightball* #1 came out being a big fan of that, and Chester Brown's stuff.

So what happens is, I was in art school for painting, and in first year a bunch of us, freaking out and under all the pressures



Pencils and finished colors for a page for *The Urbz*, an online comic based on the *Sims* computer game. THE SIMS, URBZ™ AND ©2008 ELECTRONIC ARTS, INC.

of art school, would sort of hang around and draw comic books for fun. And I'm talking people in photography, and sculpture, and graphic design. People who were studying totally different disciplines, we'd all get together and doodle comic books for fun, as kind of a release, I guess, but also because we were passionate about it, and the instructors really frowned on it. And that very quickly, surprisingly, turned into a career for me. A couple of the guys who were leaving art school right at the end of that first year, Nick Craine and Michael Vrana, specifically—who became the editor for Tragedy Strikes Press in Guelph, which is just south of Toronto—hired me for my first paid work.



DRAW!: So you didn't have to go around with your portfolio and schlub at conventions?

JS: No, it was weird.

DRAW!: Now, what year was this?

JS: This is 1990.

DRAW!: 1990 is when you had your first paid work?

JS: Published work in a distributed comic. I'd done a few mini-comics with Art College friends before that. Tragedy Strikes had an anthology called *Reactor Girl*, which was a black-&-white art

comic anthology, and I did a couple things for that, and within three months had my own book, *Sin*, which was punk rock stream of consciousness humor, for lack of a better description. I look back on it now, and—I still have real hardcore fans of that stuff, and I can certainly still appreciate it for what it was, for the time I did it, but all I remember is, when that issue came out and I saw it at the Dragon Lady and the Silver Snail in Toronto, on the shelves, beside other work that I thought was really great, I just knew that I had to learn to draw. [laughter]

DRAW!: So you went to art school, and obviously you're learning all the traditional things in art school. What were you doing as far as learning about cartooning? How did you go about educating yourself about cartooning and things like that.

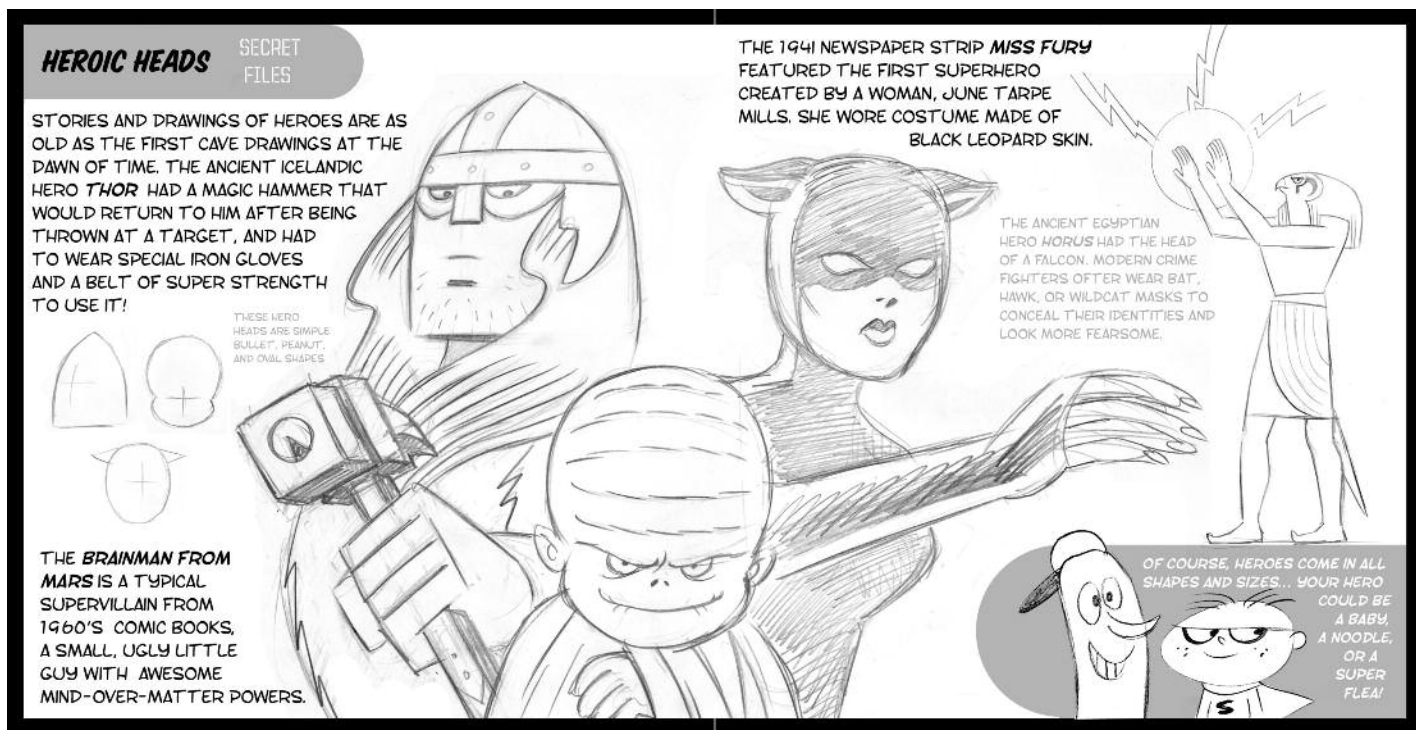
JS: Art school was great for figure drawing and color theory, 2-D design, art history and all that. But my cartooning education, I'm self-taught as far as my early career goes. The only thing that saved me from maybe slavishly copying a certain style was that I was so crazy about all comics as a kid that I would buy up anything to do with the history of the form.

DRAW!: So you were looking for books or magazines in the library on comic books, or how to draw, cartooning?

JS: Absolutely, so I had books like Maurice Horn's *World Encyclopedia of Comics*, with stuff about the Yellow Kid, Barbarella and 8th Man, great comics and characters from all around the world. Great, eye-opening stuff, and it really gave me that early impression that the form was much bigger than just the latest issue of Byrne's *X-Men*. So that kind of gave me a broader sense of what was possible, and then, like I say, once I started to get into

alternative comics, picking up *RAW* magazine, I think, was what really blew my mind to the possibilities. And I had also been a fan of Fleisher-style animation, early Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat stuff, and to see someone like Kim Deitch doing the Waldo stories, which combined underground sensibilities with that kind of look, those kinds of things were blowing my mind, too. So it quickly pushed me past the superhero stuff. It schooled me.

DRAW!: One thing that's very evident is that, to touch upon the point we were making earlier in this discussion about comic books, there's that ghettoization or separation of what is a newspaper strip, a comic book, a graphic novel, and the underground and the humor versus the adventure or superheroes. It



This page from a how-to-draw book focusing on heroic figures shows Jay's interest in comic book history.

MISS FURY™ AND ©2008 RESPECTIVE OWNER

seems like you were reading everything. You were taking the best of everything. You weren't saying, "Wow, I can't look at this because it's funny."

JS: No, I never did that. I was voracious. And I didn't think that was weird. I honestly didn't think that was weird until much later. [laughs] I thought if you were a fan of cartooning, you could wear a Batman T-shirt one day and a *Ren & Stimpy* shirt the next. I didn't think it was that big a deal. Again, I still have the impression that the lines in the sand have been drawn more deeply these days. I don't know why that is. I mean, certainly we had DC versus Marvel arguments as kids. But just the narrow-mindedness today! And it's not just in our art form, either. I'm finding it across the board. A lot of younger cartoonists, not even that much younger than me, or younger people that I'm bumping into, just don't know as much about the history of the art form—

DRAW!: Oh, don't even get me started on that. It is the biggest issue we face, I feel, culturally, in the global sense, but especially for us artists. It's one of the things I always talk about is the fact that we stand on the shoulders of all the great cartoonists, and all the great artists just in general, who have come before us.

JS: Yeah. I mean, I find this problem with animation executives, too. The people in positions of power in comic books are comic geeks, for better or for worse. It makes them bad business people, but at least if you're talking to Paul Levitz about a certain issue of *Metamorpho*, he knows what the hell you're talking about. But in animation I find, I've had pitch meetings or specific meetings about styles where I've talked about, "Maybe the background designs for this should have a UPA look." And they'll just look at me blankly—

DRAW!: "You mean like a UPC box?" [laughs]

JS: And I'll say, "Really reductive, graphic, like the early Yogi Bear stuff?" I actually had an animation executive who didn't know who Yogi Bear was.

DRAW!: That doesn't surprise me at all.

JS: It didn't surprise me, either, but it's sad. If you don't know what's been done, what's been done successfully, what has worked, what hasn't worked, I mean, my God, if I got a job tomorrow in something I didn't know anything about, like, say, American football, I would immediately read up on everything football related and figure out what the hell it was all about. It just makes sense. It makes good business sense to know what you're doing.

DRAW!: Well, artistically, there's just a disconnect socially because the older generation had to have some sort of apprenticeship system, and everything was much smaller. There was much less of everything. Today there is so much that you can kind of cherry pick the little thing that you're interested in and not have any idea how they're connected, not have any idea that, for instance, that the early Japanese manga artists were directly influenced by the Fleishers, or the American cartoonists.

JS: They were a huge influence on Tezuka, it is so obvious.

DRAW!: Right, but most of the kids reading manga don't even know Tezuka. They're just into what they're into. So one of the things I'm trying to do is to keep that connection, and make a reconnection, because what happens is, if you don't know your history, there's a lot of knowledge and a lot of useful things that people have worked really hard to prove—that work is lost. So the example I came up with in class was you would be like a caveman who used a laser gun as a hammer because you didn't know it was a laser gun.

JS: I remember *Understanding Comics* coming out, and that was my first real handbook on the nitty gritty of comics. But it kind of freaked me out. I remember reading it and feeling completely paralyzed because there were almost too many options! I kind of love and hate that feeling. One thing I love about *DRAW!* is that every issue there's at least one thing where I go, "Oh, crap. I never thought of that. I've been doing it wrong all these years! I've got to try that." Which is simultaneously terrifying and—I mean, I'm definitely always interested in learning new tricks. That's the other reason I hop the fence all the time and try different stuff. I made sure that in comic books I've tried everything. I've been just a colorist, I've been just the inker. I know you've done this, too, just sort of played around with all the aspects.

DRAW!: Well, sure.

JS: I love that. You learn a lot by inking someone.

DRAW!: Oh yes. And my thinking was that all the people I admired, all the artists that were my heroes as I grew up, could really seem to do anything. They could pencil, ink, letter, paint. There didn't seem to be very many limitations on what they could achieve, and so my goal is to be able to have that level of the command of the craft to be able to do whatever I want. If I want to paint something, or I want to draw it, or I want to ink something. I wouldn't want to be an artist who could not ink my work, or couldn't write a story, or couldn't color a story. So I'm curious, because one of the things I always liked about your work from the very beginning, I could see you were really into the classic stuff, and your work has that sort of classic, for lack of a better—classic cartoons.

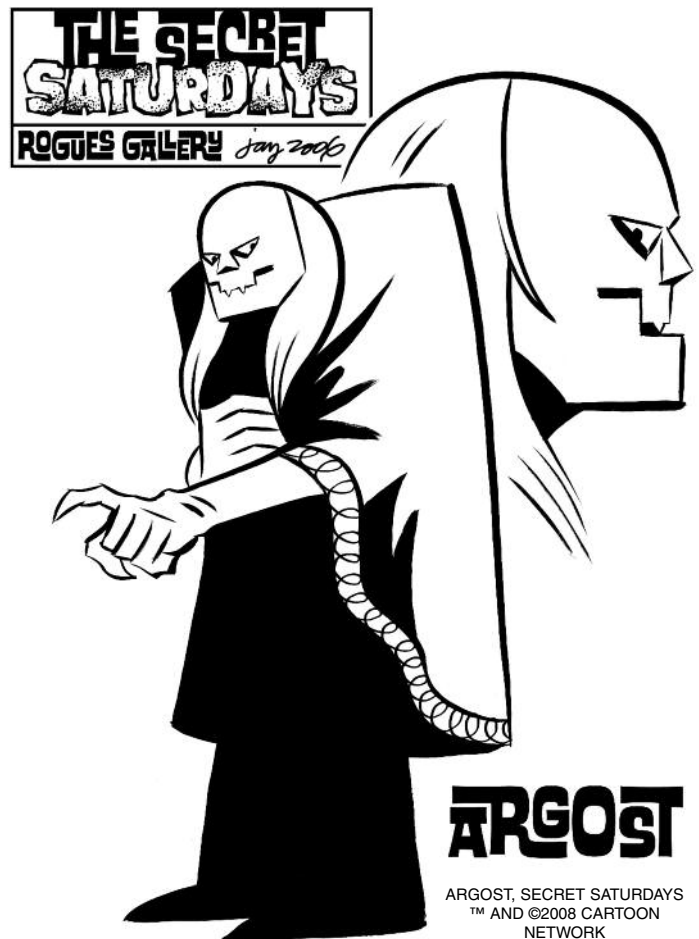
JS: Yeah, the old-fashioned—

DRAW!: No, see, because "old-fashioned" connotes, I don't know, the hard candy Grandma had in her house. That's the old-fashioned candy because they hadn't invented better tasting candy. [laughs] See?

JS: But I do have an old school sensibility, there's no question. And I think it's interesting, we were talking about animation executives being kind of ignorant of the past. In some instances, that can really help. First of all, I should excuse Cartoon Network from that, because everybody that I met there really "got" *The Secret Saturdays* for what it was, as an update of the Alex Toth/Doug Wildey, '60s Hanna-Barbera adventure stuff. But when it got kicked upstairs, I'm not so sure people up there really knew that this was a modern take on something that had been explored before. I think up there it's just forgotten, and so it looked really fresh to them. [laughs]

DRAW!: And it may not have even been known.

JS: No! Certainly the first people I showed it to at Cartoon Network, like Tramm Wigzell who's in development there, right away he said "*Herculoids!*" So he got it. Now, it's certainly not "retro." It's not like we're trying to recreate something that's been done in the past verbatim. What we're doing is resurrecting a kind of vibe that hasn't been seen in a while, with, as you've



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A Beast/Morbius page. The layouts are very loose—little more than gesture drawings—but Jay wrote in the dialogue to make sure he has enough room.

BEAST, MORBIUS™ AND ©2008 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

seen working on the show, scripts that are completely modern. I mean, I think my pitch was, “God, Alex Toth’s development art for the *Herculoids*, *Birdman*, *The Galaxy Trio*, *Mighty Mightor*, and all those look so great. The title cards are just, like, gorgeous. This show’s going to be so good!” And when it comes on, it’s the same show you saw last week.

DRAW!: *Space Ghost* was the same thing. Those shows do not wear well now story-wise, sometimes art-wise, either.

JS: No, they don’t, and they had so much potential. And I wanted to do a show that felt like that, but fulfilled the premise that these could be great stories. A good story is everything to me now, even though I certainly never thought of myself as a good writer or storyteller when I was younger. I was in art school for art. I certainly approached comics from the visual end of things, but maybe because right from the beginning I was writing and drawing my own stuff, I’ve adapted and grown both as an artist and a writer. It divides your talents that way. I meet all kinds of guys in animation, in comic books, in comic strips, who can draw circles around me. I am not one of those guys who sketches every day in his sketchbook. I mean, I just saw Stephen Silver recently—that guy draws. I know you do, too, Mike. And it blows me out of the water. I certainly still

doodle, but I think what I’ve become over the years is more of a “story man,” in the old Disney sense of the term.

DRAW!: I guess, from the very beginning you were developing your own voice. And that is a different track. Again, that’s one of the things I like about interviewing artists for the magazine is that you have a guy like me who grew up, and I wanted to work for Marvel. That was my thing. I also wanted to work in animation and stuff, but I really wanted to draw *Fantastic Four*. You have other people who never wanted to draw *Fantastic Four*, they just wanted to do their own thing. And you have so many legitimate but different takes and approaches to doing this craft, and they all touch upon certain commonalities of craft, the application of your craft, no matter whether you’re drawing *Fantastic Four*, or you’re drawing *The Land of Nod*, or you’re Robert Crumb.

JS: It’s true, it’s true. And I love it all. [laughs] I love it all. And, if anything, I find that distracting.

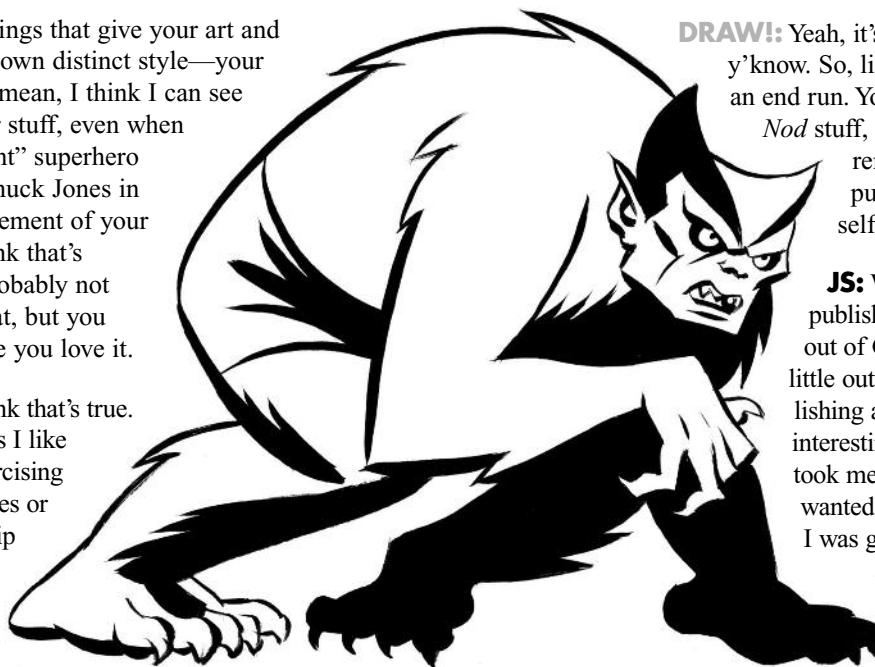
DRAW!: It was distracting for me when I was young, a little confusing, because I love Chuck Jones, and all that stuff is as much a part of me as any of the Neal Adams and Kirby and all that stuff I loved. And, as a young artist, I would struggle at times because I could not put one above the other.



Final color version of the Beast/Morbius page, and a Beast study drawing.
BEAST, MORBIUS™ AND ©2008 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

JS: Those are the things that give your art and storytelling style its own distinct style—your different magnets. I mean, I think I can see Chuck Jones in your stuff, even when you're doing "straight" superhero stuff. You can see Chuck Jones in the fluidity and movement of your characters, and I think that's great. And you're probably not even trying to do that, but you can't help it, because you love it.

DRAW!: Yeah, I think that's true. And one of the things I like doing, myself, is exercising those different muscles or disciplines. I do a strip once a month, the *Creepertins* strip, because I can just



do this sort of real pure cartooning, because I realize that there is no way I can do that in a comic book and get it into the direct market. So it's like my little fun project once a month to stretch those muscles.

JS: Yeah. Once in a while something comes along to break all the rules. Like, there was that *Franklin Richards* stuff by Chris Eliopoulos that was sort of a *Calvin & Hobbes* take on Franklin and H.E.R.B.I.E. of the Fantastic Four.

DRAW!: But I still think, because it was a Marvel comic, and because it was Franklin Richards, it had a boost that if you were just doing a story about a funny kid sort of in that style....

JS: I completely agree—that's another old gripe of mine. I could never understand why DC and Marvel weren't trying to capitalize on some of their humor properties. I wanted to do a new *Stanley and His Monster* or *Homer the Happy Ghost*! I mean, I was so relieved to see the *Teen Titans* cartoon come out from Cartoon Network and be a hit with average kids out there who have never read the comic books. I've been saying for years, "You need to reinterpret this stuff." And I know that the fans fought it at first, but who cares? And that's the hard thing to try to explain to fan-boys. They're not yours, y'know? Batman belongs to popular culture. He's not yours. There are many versions of Batman for many tastes. Your favorite version is nothing more or less than just that. That's a whole other thing, too. How many thousands of versions are there of Batman? I mean, ho hum. Really! I'm surprised that any new version surprises or upsets anyone.

DRAW!: Well, I don't think there are any new versions, there's just—

JS: Variations on the theme.

DRAW!: Yeah, it's Arctic Freeze Batman, y'know. So, like you said, you sort of did an end run. You started doing *The Land of Nod* stuff, you were doing *Sin*. I remember buying your self-published books. Were those self-published initially?

JS: Well, they were small press, published by Tragedy Strikes Press out of Guelph, here. It was a small little outfit about as close to self-publishing as you get. Here's something interesting—and this was a message it took me years to receive—because I wanted to "make it" in comic books. I was getting paid right off the bat and it was great. So I left art school, because I was making money in comics,

which is insanely lucky in retrospect. And then, of course, the bubble burst for the direct market in the early '90s and I was scrambling. But I kept doing lots of independent comics. It was a steep learning curve, and I was trying to get better fast. When I felt that I could handle my own take on superheroes, I began the *Atomic City Tales* series. And all during this time, I was going to cons and getting great feedback and support from other creators, which kept me going. And this is when my education really started to take off—starting to meet other cartoonists and really gab about comics and all the tricks of the trade.

But like I said, I had a very small audience. I had a very loyal audience, but small. And I was dirt poor. But miracles of miracles—and listen up young creators, just get your stuff out there, just put it out there—those comic books worked for me like a broadly distributed portfolio. I was getting calls out of the blue from people who had seen the comics and wanted me to do something for them. So very early on, I think early '93—really I'd only been doing underground comics for a couple of years, maybe not even—I got a call from a television production here in Toronto called *Squawk Box*, which was a YTV show, and they wanted to know if I wanted to be a writer for their show.

DRAW!: And that's from reading your comic. And they weren't calling to ask you to *draw* on their show, they're calling to ask you to *write* for their show.

JS: Right, exactly. Because they were kooky, and they were looking for weirdos, and I'm certainly that. So I did write for the show, I wrote live action sketches and skits, and then, because of my cartooning "experience," created a little bit of animation for them. We did a bunch of little CGI animations called "Wonderduds," about a really stupid superhero. And around the same time, very early on, *Nickelodeon Magazine* was starting up. Anne Bernstein was the first comics editor there and she called me based on the *Sin* stuff. So here I was, very early in my comic book career, suddenly getting high-paying work from a kids' magazine, and getting decent work in television. And you know what? I threw them both away because what I wanted to be was a comic book artist! It took me years to figure out that my sensibilities are more suited to other media. [laughter] So basically I did that YTV stint, and then they asked if I wanted to be a full-time writer, and I said no, because I have comic books I need to do. [laughs]

DRAW!: Would you go back in a time machine now and tell that to the your younger self?

JS: Everything's worked out. In fact, I think having—if I'd done it that way, I probably would have stayed in a work-for-hire capacity, writing. Maybe not, I don't know. But I think what's interesting,



Pencils for a "Mr. Cooper Nincompooper" strip for *Nickelodeon Magazine*.
MR. COOPER NINCOMPOOPER™ AND ©2008 VIACOM INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Nickelodeon continued to call, and I continued to dabble, but basically I fought moving out of comic books for as long as I could.

DRAW!: Because you still somehow thought that you could strike it, find the way of doing what you wanted to do in comics, because you loved the medium of comic books.

JS: I loved the medium. And I was deceived, too, by the support of people I admired. I mean, Mike Allred contacted me very early on. He was in touch with all of us at Tragedy Strikes Press while he was doing the original black-&-white three issues of *Madman* at Tundra. He became a really good pal, and he was very supportive of what I was doing. And Mike Mignola was a great supporter, and Evan Dorkin, who I mentioned before, Paul Pope, Dave Mazzucchelli. So I figured, "Well, if they like it, I must be onto something." But they had no idea, the bastards. [laughter]

DRAW!: Oh, it's funny, because that is the Catch-22 that we all face, really, as cartoonists still trying to work in the print medium is the illogic, the Catch-22 of how you can produce



Full color "Mr. Cooper Nincompooper" strip for Nickelodeon Magazine.
MR. COOPER NINCOMPOOPER™ AND ©2008 VIACOM INTERNATIONAL, INC.

something, people can love it, your peers can love it, but you can't get enough retailers to order it, and if the retailer doesn't order it, then it's not on the shelf.

JS: I guess it finally sunk in. Basically, I've failed at every comics series I ever attempted! I mean failed in the financial, wide-readership sense. Nominated for a couple of awards for *The Land of Nod*, but....

Tragedy Strikes went out of business, and then the editor there started his own company, Black Eye. I did *Atomic City Tales* and a new *Land of Nod* series for him. But he was stretched too thin and folded shop. And then Kitchen Sink picked up *Atomic City*, and then they folded. The disasters just kept mounting. Really, either my sales would drop so badly that I would be forced to quit a

book (I was getting food from the local Food Bank while working for Kitchen Sink—couldn't even afford one meal a day on my own), or, more often than not, the publisher went out of business. I was striking out in comic books in every attempt I made. But, ironically, I was getting tons of outside illustration and cartooning work based on those same comics. So that's why I say I failed upwards. Tutenstein was a one-shot character that I did for *The Land of Nod*, which was conceived as a series of comics where every issue was a completely different character (I only got three issues out before that one went under). And *Tutenstein* got optioned.

DRAW!: Let's stop there for a second, because this is a very important pivot point in your career. You were already working in TV. You had already been doing work outside of comics. Then you do your *Tutenstein*. At what point did you hook up with Jean-Marc Lofficier as an agent and decide, "I want to take this and see if I can sell this to whomever"?

JS: Well, I hooked up with Jean-Marc as an agent first, which was a great step for me, I think, because he certainly encouraged me to broaden my horizons outside of comic books. I mean, things were really bleak in the mid-'90s anyway. I think they're a little better now. If you're doing work-for-hire, I think the landscape's a little more exciting now than it was then.

DRAW!: Well, that might be debatable.

JS: You would know better than I. But the reason I ended up getting an agent at all, actually, is because I was negotiating a difficult contract. Between the *Black Eye* series and *Kitchen Sink*, *Atomic City Tales* and *Land of Nod* almost went to Zongo Comics, actually. Initially, Matt Groening started up Bongo for the *Simpsons* stuff and another comics line called Zongo Comics for indie stuff where Gary Panter's awesome *Jimbo* comic was published for awhile.

DRAW!: I almost did something for that, as well, but I ended up passing because it was the kind of thing where what I was initially told didn't end up coming through, and they would have ended up keeping some of the art or something.

JS: Yeah, they were actually, according to Jean-Marc—and I’m glad I had him there—some of the worst contracts he had ever seen. I don’t know if they were boiler plate from somewhere else or what. Matt Groening wasn’t really involved in that, I hope. The contracts were really work-for-hire, and whatever you created for them, they would own. Not nearly as “creator-owned” as they advertised. So that didn’t work out, and I ended up going to Kitchen Sink instead. But now I had an agent. Jean-Marc showed *Land of Nod* to producer Fred Schaefer, who works for Porchlight Entertainment, and who I’ve had a long, prosperous relationship with for many years since. We started off back then developing *Tutenstein*. Around that time, out of desperation, I’d been doing all kinds of work for kids’ magazines, and I’d been doing an alternative weekly strip called *Oddville!* for the *Seattle*

Stranger, which has a long tradition of really great indie comic strips. That was a really fun time, actually.

DRAW!: What percentage of your income were you making from, let’s say, cartooning, from comic books? You’re doing a comic strip, and you’re still doing stuff for *Nick Magazine*?

JS: 100% of my income has been cartooning for years, whether I was making ends meet or not. I haven’t had a day job since art school. The last real job I had was, like, greasy spoon manager. I had zero qualifications to do anything else! And I had to scramble. Also, during all this time—most starving cartoonists will identify—I’m doing people’s business cards, and business brochures, and medical illustrations for your local doctor’s office.

I was doing anything to make ends meet, so I was working constantly. But that strip, *Oddville!*, had a character called Jetcat in it, and Fred Schaefer saw that after he’d optioned *Tutenstein*, and optioned *Jetcat*, too. So I started to see, “Hint, hint. These characters that you’re creating that people in comics don’t appreciate, they have legs elsewhere.”

DRAW!: It’s funny, though, because *Jetcat* was actually on TV before *Tutenstein*.

JS: Yup, it went further, faster. We got *Jetcat* picked up as shorts on Nickelodeon really quickly, and then *Tutenstein* took a lot longer. I mean, from the time he optioned it to the time it aired, it was seven years.

DRAW!: Wow. So they had to keep renewing the option, I take it?

JS: Yeah, which is great. [laughs] But we developed the hell out of that show, too. Because the original concept was so basic, you could really push that character and that setup in so many different ways, so we really worked hard on getting it right for Discovery Kids, who was the eventual client. And it turned out very differently than I conceived it.

DRAW!: Stylistically it doesn’t really look like your work.

JS: No, they went a completely different way. They wanted to “age it up.” They said my stuff looked “too *Casper*,” and I kept arguing, “What the hell’s wrong with *Casper*? *Casper* was huge!”

DRAW!: See, to me that’s an interesting conundrum, because there’s no demonstrable way to show that if you had made it look like your drawings,



Two samples of the *Welcome to Oddville!* strip which ran weekly in a special section of the *Toronto Sun*.
JETCAT, ODDVILLE™ AND ©2008 JAY STEPHENS

which I think had much more charm than the final drawings on the show, that that would have actually made people go, “Oh, wait a minute, the show looks charming and nice. It’s not hard angled. I can’t watch it.” I always wonder about those kinds of executive—

JS: Well, what could I do? It was my first full series, so, I don’t know.... Jean-Marc was great in that situation. There were a couple times where I almost walked away from that deal. It was hard.

DRAW!: So having an agent, in this case—just to make things clear, Jean-Marc is also my agent, and he’s a very nice guy, he’s a very good guy. I mean, I walked away from a six-figure deal for one of those Internet start-up things just because at the end I was feeling like I couldn’t really trust the people I was talking to. And he’s not like one of those agents that tried to push you into—

JS: No, not at all. The one thing he did say to me with *Tutenstein*, it was a 26 half-hour episode order, a lot for a first season. And I was whining, “Well, it’s not my show anymore,” which wasn’t really true anyway because the basic structure of the show as it exists, even though it’s different from the comic, it’s definitely what I developed with Fred Schaefer. I reworked that premise until we had the show as you see it—the older girl sidekick, the museum as central location with the arrogant museum curator and the security guard as comic relief, the talking cat servant—all that stuff was mine. So it’s not as if I didn’t have something to do with the show. But once they redeveloped the designs and removed me from any ongoing creative role, I was pretty pissed. Jean-Marc told me “a crappy series on the air is better than no series at all.” He also helped me to focus on why I wanted a show in the first place, and what I wanted most out of it. Frankly, I was tired of being broke, so I went forward. In the end, the series came out pretty well. My contributions, including the opening title sequence, are still very present in every episode, and I actually really like Fil



Tutenstein illustration.

TUTENSTEIN™ AND ©2008 JAY STEPHENS

Barlowe’s final character designs. Plus we won a couple of Emmys and got a float in the Macy’s Day Parade, all of which helped me get *The Secret Saturdays* made.

CRAFT AND TECHNIQUE

JS: When I ink my own stuff, the pencils are extremely loose and rough. I leave most of the drawing to the inks. I’m a messy penciler, and have to really work at keeping it clean for editors, art directors, or inkers. I have the most fun inking, personally. When I was starting out, I used a crowquill nib and real ink for a thin, scratchy look, but I pretty quickly gravitated to brushwork. When I first met Elisabeth, my wife, we took off for a few months to Prague in the Czech Republic. I’d always boasted that being a cartoonist was great because I could work from anywhere in the



Jay punches up the gag by having the water hose come out of a bag, and by exaggerating the professor's expression.

FELIX THE CAT™ AND ©2008 FELIX COMICS, INC.

world as long as they had a FedEx pickup. Elisabeth found out Prague had FedEx and off we went. But I had to improvise with materials. I was working on the Dark Horse *Land Of Nod* series at the time, and most of that is drawn on a board on my lap in our Prague apartment with a Pentel Brush Pen. I liked the results so much I still use it for my inking today. It's a cheap-ass Pentel Color Brush, with replaceable squeeze cartridges and a synthetic brush tip. I love it! They last forever. I've got one I've been using for a few years and the brush tip is still perfect. Sorry to disappoint your *DRAW!* readers, but I'm kind of a low-tech loser when it comes to tools. The Pentel ink isn't as durable as the "real" stuff, but I've never been too precious about my originals. I collect other people's



original art, and have a definite appreciation for it, but I've always thought of the final, printed comic as the real artwork. Everything else is just pre-press, work-in-progress. A fine-art printmaker frames the final print, not the used silkscreen, y'know?

DRAW!: Do you rough out everything 8-1/2" x 11" or print size, and then do you transfer it? What is your creative process? How do you go about getting your comics down to paper?

JS: For the humor stuff, I mostly just wing it—just go straight to writing and drawing as I go, right on the artboard. I'll just draw it out with a vague direction or gag in mind, and then I'll lightly pencil it to get placement, and then go from there. Surprise is important in humor, and I like to surprise myself. For

adventure stuff, where there's more plot-driven or more character stuff that requires more thought, I do still thumbnails. Yeah, I'll do 8-1/2" x 11" thumbnails of the pages, just to get the layout. What I liked about doing my own comics, where I didn't have to worry about advertising and where it would go, is I liked controlling spreads and making sure that the two-page spreads are graphically balanced. I'm very interested in the flow of the story, so, yeah, I can be a bit slow at the design stage of comics.

DRAW!: So you would say your approach is fairly organic. You like to keep it organic?

JS: I do. Like I said, my pencils are pretty loose and I leave a lot of the drawing to the inking, for myself. Sometimes I work myself into a seemingly dead end with a funny comic, go away for awhile, have a cup of tea, come back and just draw myself out of that corner.

DRAW!: Your sense of the original is the comic that's the final product in your hand. I think that's interesting, too, because everybody has a different sensibility about that. I know that when I worked with Al Williamson, it was about that original that he had in front of him. That was what he loved. He loved that. And, of course, he wanted good reproduction and everything, but he was definitely a guy whose aesthetic was working for the original in much the same way if you're a fine artist and you're doing an oil painting, that's what you're working for. You're not working for the reproduction or the Giclée or whatever.

JS: That's why I mentioned the idea of a printmaker, which is another legitimately "fine art" way of looking at it. I'm not saying one view is better than the other. I understand not everyone

sees it the way I do. I saw an original George Herriman *Krazy Kat* Sunday up close a few years ago, and it just blew me away in that he used a thick, thick board, and some of his fine white line had literally been carved into the board.

DRAW!: Oh, it was like a scratchboard kind of thing?

JS: No, he'd ink normally, but then over top of the inks in places he'd sort of cut pieces out with a knife. Even a border in one panel had been all actually cut into the board, rather than a white ink line. I was so

impressed, it was like a sculpture. And certainly there's another artist who's thinking of the work as a piece of fine art, and is hoping that the reproduction does it justice. And it's not as if I don't do some projects where I am thinking that way, but, really, what I like is the proletariat aspect of comic books—that the final product is on cheap paper that is available to everyone from all economic backgrounds. True pop art. Which is no longer really true, I suppose.

DRAW!: Yeah. I guess I'm a little bit both. I love the original, but I also like that something about when you can take something and Xerox it or make another copy, and what happens to the line when it's reproduced and you put the dots on it and everything. There's that whole other aesthetic that comes with it. I worked in printing and everything long before I got into comics, so I

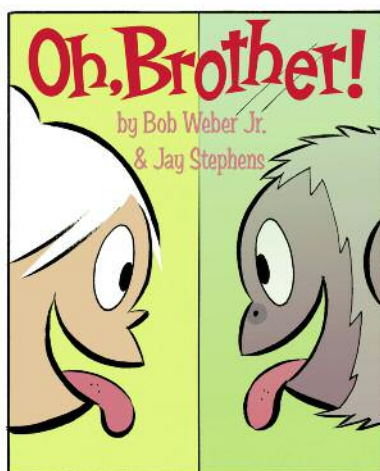
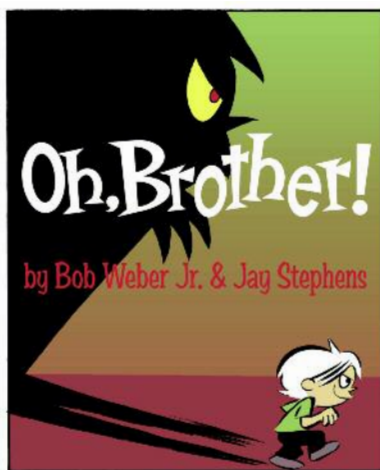
understood the printing process, and what happens to your work when it goes through the different processes, so that sort of informs my aesthetic.

Today you're mostly working with the brush marker. How do you write down your process? Do you right like a little rough thumbnail comic for yourself?

JS: Yup. It's funny, with the humor stuff, which I think comes to me a little more naturally—at this stage I don't know what kind of a cartoonist I am, because I can do both, and I've gone back



TUTENSTEIN™ AND ©2008 JAY STEPHENS



Jay punches up the gag by having the water hose come out of a bag, and by exaggerating the professor's expression.

OH, BROTHER!™ AND ©2008 BOB WEBER AND JAY STEPHENS.

and forth, but the humor stuff I usually wing it. I've done it since the beginning. I'm currently working on a daily newspaper strip called *Oh, Brother!* that I'm developing a with writer Bob Weber Jr. of *Slylock Fox* fame, and it's great to be back doing funny stuff.

DRAW!: So doing a comic strip, the daily strip, you would be doing a gag-a-day kind of thing? It's not a continuity, I take it.

JS: No. You really can't launch a strip with continuity these days because you can't count on having an audience to follow it. No, right now we're talking about a gag-a-day kind of situation, and it's really fun. Again, this is a whole other experience. I talked about how traditional and old-school I am, so it should come as no surprise that I'm one of those guys who thinks a daily strip would be really awesome. I've pitched a couple of my own strips in the past that have gone nowhere, which is par for the course.

DRAW!: Yeah, every cartoonist that you know that's done it has a wall of rejections.

JS: Exactly, exactly. But Bob and I click really well, and he's had much more experience in this corner of cartooning. I think we make for a good team. When he first showed me some of his gags, I thought they were hilarious in the sense that what was great about his writing, his concepts, was that I found them

very funny, but they're not gags I would have come up with on my own. I couldn't write how he does, and he can't draw like I do, so the sum is greater than the parts.

DRAW!: So between producing on *The Secret Saturdays* and doing all of this cartooning, you're not planning on having any time, my friend, if you're doing a TV show and you've got a daily comic book strip going. Are you planning to split yourself?

JS: I know it's crazy. It's one of those things where I pitched *Secret Saturdays* and this daily strip at the same time, and they were both longshots. It's one of those "embarrassment of riches" situations where the *Saturdays* came through and I was, like, "Yes! We're going to be able to eat for the next couple of years! Yay!" And then, a month into development, "Oh my God, the strip came through, too! I can't do both!" [laughs] It's working out, actually. The timing's been great because we're in post-production on *Saturdays* right now.

DRAW!: Oh, on the first 26 episodes, right?

JS: Yes. If they order more it'll be interesting. We'll see how it goes. I spent about a third of my time over the last 18 months down in LA, so it's been pretty hard on my family.

DRAW!: And that must also make a big difference in your

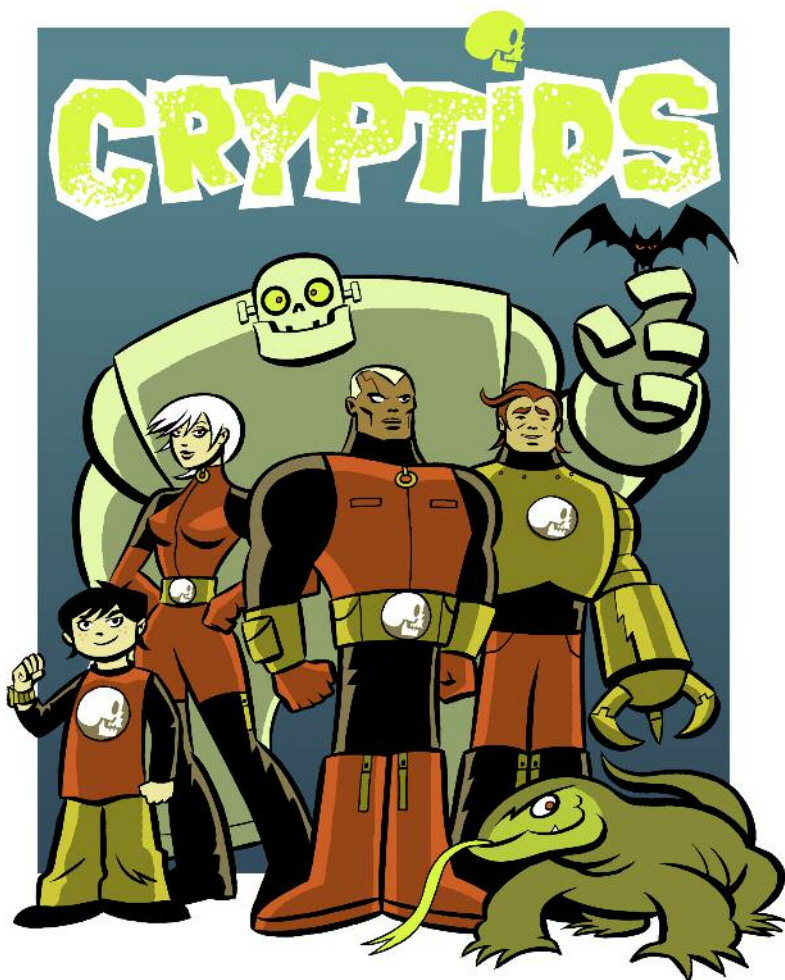
work and environment, because most cartoonists work at home by themselves in a room at their drawing table, eight, ten, twelve, 15 hours a day. Most of their life is spent there. It's sort of a forced isolation. And in animation, it's different. You've got a bunch of people in the same room. So how did you enjoy that aesthetic, of being able to go in—and, also, these people are trying to “do” you. They're trying to make a Jay Stephens cartoon.

JS: Yeah, it's weird. I like both, and I think that it was a really refreshing change to work with a large group. I really, really enjoyed it. It was really hard work to be executive producer, art director, and have to deal with office politics, too. It's a dream come true to work on a series like this, an old-school adventure show about a family of Cryptozoologists and their globe-spanning encounters with mysterious creatures and exotic villains. I still can't believe that I got a chance to bring such a cool character like Fiskerton, a giant lemur-like “Gorilla Cat” to life.

DRAW!: What are your duties as the—I mean, I know they give you a producer credit just because it's your show; they sell your show, so you get to have a co-producer credit. But, as the art director, were you literally doing all the designs? I know you were doing some designs for the characters, but what about Fiskerton's motorcycle and stuff like that?

JS: Actually, I'm Executive Producer, Mike. A little more involved than on *Tutenstein*, you might say! I got to be involved

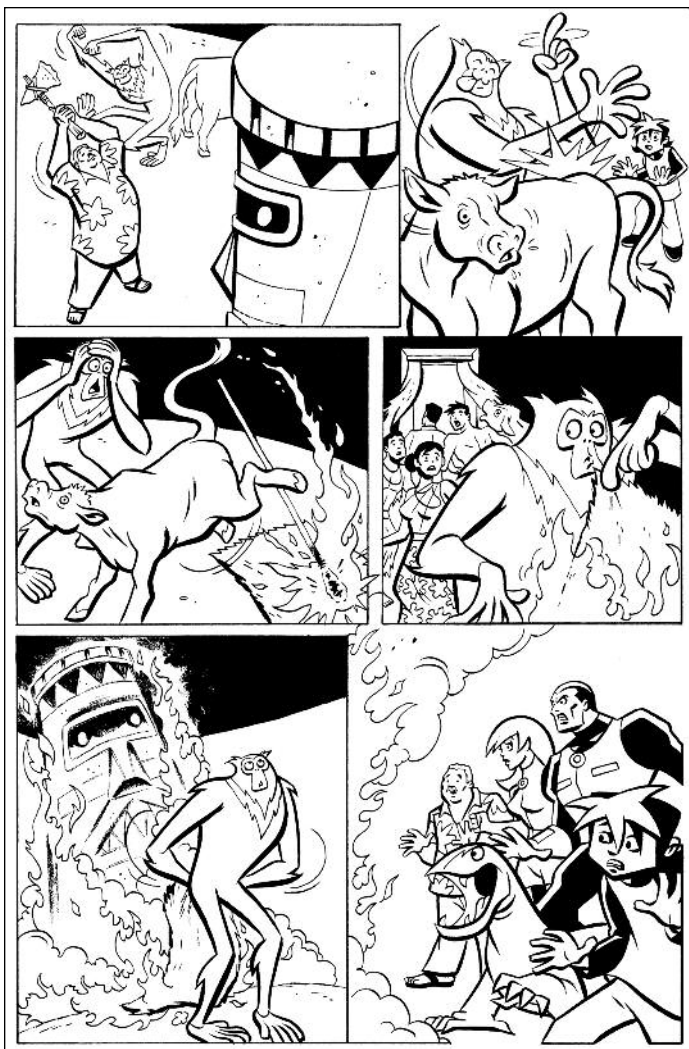
in everything from voice casting and recording to music and sound FX to marketing and promotion for the show. As for the art direction aspect of my work in L.A., I did all the initial character designs including minor background characters and animals, but I did them pretty sketchy. And then we had character designer, Dave Kupczyk, do nice, clean versions. For props and background layouts and stuff, occasionally I would do sketches, certainly for the Fisker-trike and the Claw and some of that stuff, or the Saturdays' headquarters, I would do sketches. And we just had a great team to flesh it all out. Our prop guy (Geno!!!) and our background guys were just fantastic. It was so fun to actually be in an environment with such talented people. Having a seasoned Hanna-Barbera guy like Scott Jeralds aboard as director was a real plus. Like I say, I'm the first to admit there are people who can draw circles around me, and it was fantastic to be able to have an idea, and maybe just enough skill to put it across visually, and then have a great team to make it perfect. So I loved it, it was really fun. And I think Fred Schaefer (yes, again, this is a Porchlight production for Cartoon Network) was just as surprised as I was to find out that I was pretty good at playing executive producer. [laughs] I don't know if the team would all agree, but I like to think they would. Naturally there were lots of fires to put out every day, and lots of surprising problems, not the least of which is interoffice politics. Weird things about who works well with who, and who misunderstood who, and—



An earlier permutation of the group, *The Cryptids*, and the final line-up.

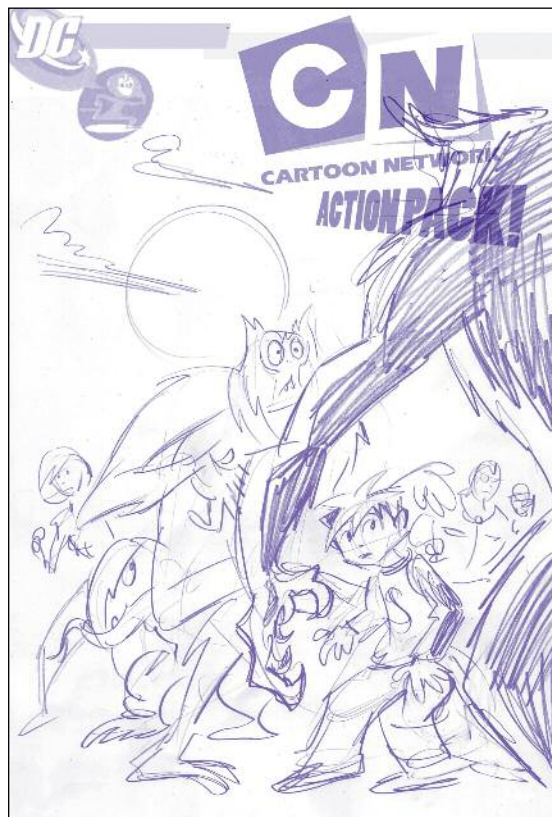
THE SECRET SATURDAYS™ AND ©2008 CARTOON NETWORK





A page from **Cartoon Network Action Pack** featuring **The Secret Saturdays** in both ink and color, and the cover art for the issue in pencil, ink, and color.

THE SECRET SATURDAYS
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NETWORK







THE SECRET SATURDAYS™ AND ©2008 CARTOON NETWORK



DRAW!: Learning to sail the egos of the studio.

JS: It was very different, and, surprisingly, I think I rose to the challenge. I think we did really well. But I found, ultimately—like I say, I spent a lot of time in L.A. at that production office last year, and at Cartoon Network in different meetings, and Mattel Toys, or in Atlanta, Georgia at the Turner compound. And, honestly, I found it too exhausting. I think that there's too much of my personal sensibility that is quiet and comic-booky, so I think that, while I very much enjoyed working on the show and would totally do it again, I realized by the end of it that I'm not the kind of guy who could do that full-time.

DRAW!: So you wouldn't want to basically move to L.A., relocate your family to L.A., and be like a TV/movie guy going around pitching stuff around town?

JS: No, no. I don't think I can do that. I don't think I'm that guy. That doesn't mean I won't be going back and pitching stuff around, but I'm going to be the guy that lives in Guelph, Ontario, Canada and comes to L.A. to pitch stuff once in a while. I think it's much easier to handle when you have a day job to come back to, when you're doing some strip or comic book work outside of it, and you're hoping that this longshot might go through.

DRAW!: Since you're going to sell a strip, do you follow the strips?

JS: Yes, I do. I still read them in the newspaper the old way, but I also subscribe to online—

DRAW!: You really are old-fashioned! Do you smoke a pipe and wear a fedora just to completely drive home the complete aesthetic?

JS: [laughs] And ride my horse.

DRAW!: And when you go to the NCS, you wear suspenders and a tie?

JS: Maybe not that, though I do enjoy a good Scotch.

DRAW!: Oh, there you go. A real cartoonist, right?

JS: Well, so that's the process pretty much. I still sketch, but I find these days, you know what? I don't really have a sketchbook anymore, and I don't remember when that stopped.

DRAW!: When you were younger, when you were in college,

DRAW!: Did you go to college? Did you go to art—?

HC: No, I have no education whatsoever. I decided to be a radio broadcaster.

DRAW!: You decided to be a radio broadcaster?

HC: Yes.

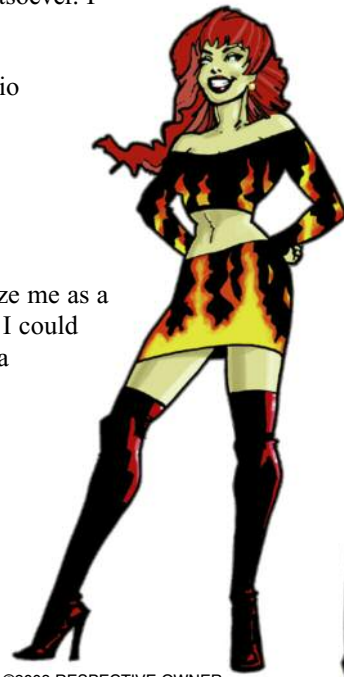
DRAW!: That's cool.

HC: My mother could not visualize me as a cartoonist, but she was convinced I could make a huge career for myself as a broadcaster.

DRAW!: Is that something you still—

HC: No.

DRAW!: You could have your own station now on iTunes, did you know that? *[laughs]*



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HC: Oh, I know, but, unfortunately, I have a career. And I have a life. *[Mike laughs]* No, basically, my education was from Gil, from Woody, from Gray, from Neal. I'm one of the proud graduates of the Wallace Wood School of Fine Comic Book Art.

DRAW!: Do you have the little certificate?

HC: No. Woody and I were not on the best of terms when those were being printed out. *[laughter]* We kissed and made up, but by that time I didn't give a sh-t. I was, however, the first guy on the Jack Abel sh-t-list, so there is a God.

DRAW!: Do you have assistants that help you?

HC: Yes.

DRAW!: I just talked to Doug Mahnke, I interviewed him—

HC: Oh, yeah! Is he a good guy?

DRAW!: He's a great guy. And he talked about having his assistant, and his assistant was good enough that he eventually went off and started doing his own stuff at DC.

HC: I read that interview, right.

DRAW!: Are you in sort of the same spot with your assistants? Do you try to get people that are basically almost good enough that they can get their own work?

HC: My pledge to guys who come work for me is that when they can do work that's good enough for the pros, it's time for them to leave. That's what happened with Joe Jusko.

DRAW!: Was he still a policeman at that time?

HC: No, no. That was before he was a cop.

DRAW!: Oh, okay.

HC: I met Joe when he was 18 years old. He was a boy. He was a giant boy.

DRAW!: *[laughs]* Okay.

HC: As a matter of fact, I only saw Jusko in his uniform once, back in the Upstart days, when there was a major—Upstart was located in what used to be the fur district in New York City.

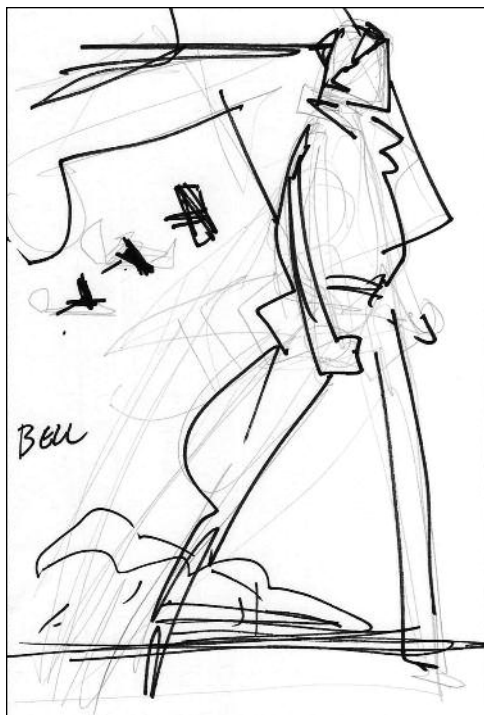
DRAW!: I was there once. You weren't there. Walt was there, and I think James Sherman was there.

HC: Had I left by that time?

DRAW!: I don't know, maybe you just weren't in that day. I still remember the time I first met you, though, at Chicagocon.



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Artwork for Marvel's *War is Hell: The First Flight* of the *Phantom Eagle* mini-series.

PHANTOM EAGLE™ AND ©2008 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

HC: Which one?

DRAW!: This was, like, 1983?

HC: Was it the year I interviewed Gil? No, that was '85.

DRAW!: You were doing *Flagg*, then, I think. You had just started—

HC: '83 was the year it debuted.

DRAW!: Right, and I remember meeting you. I met you that year, I think I had met Walt that year.

HC: That used to be such a great convention.

DRAW!: Yeah. Yeah, it's definitely not like that anymore.

HC: Well, it's not the same show; it's a different show.

DRAW!: Yeah, it's owned by different people. That's why I like shows like

Heroes, because it's actually more like what the shows were like when I was a kid.

HC: Yeah. I ran into Shelton in Baltimore and he invited me back to the show, but, unfortunately, that's in June, right?

DRAW!: Yeah.

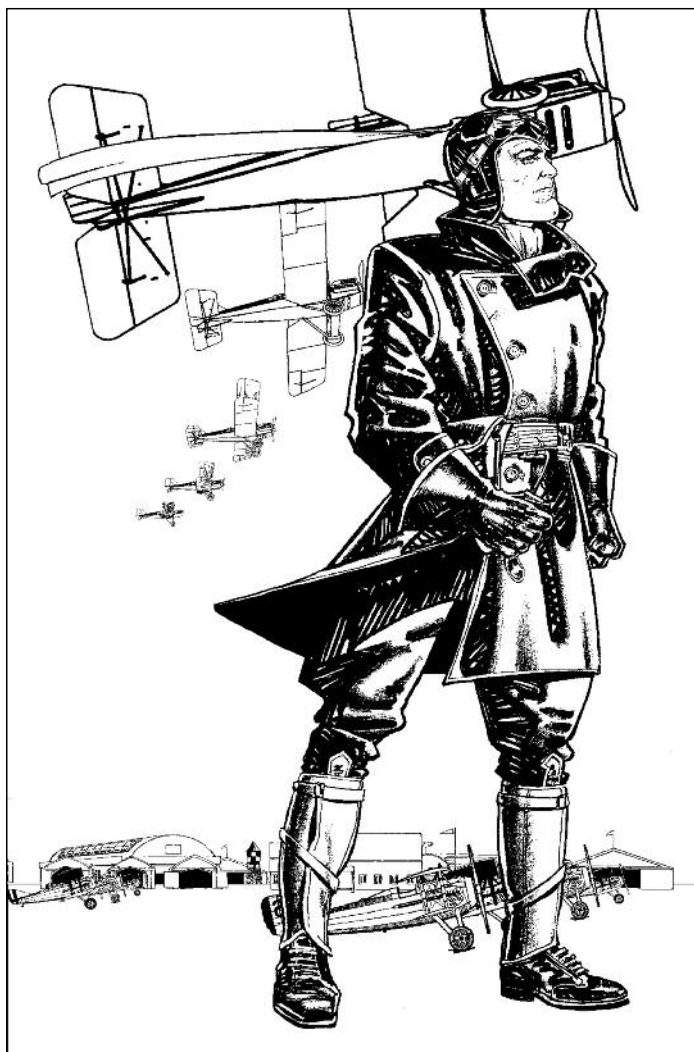
HC: Yeah, I'm going to be in Australia.

DRAW!: Oh, wow. Poor you. *[laughs]*

HC: Hey, I got no complaints. But I love Charlotte. It's a great show.

DRAW!: Yeah. I just can't take those shows now where you have dance music beating the whole time.

HC: For me, my favorite show, I love WonderCon. WonderCon is a great convention. It's a great show. To a great extent, WonderCon is to the West Coast what Baltimore is to the East Coast. You know, professionals like being there.



DRAW!: I haven't been in several years. The last time I went I think I also went to the Pro Con when they were having those.

HC: You haven't been there in a long time, yeah. First of all, it's no longer in Oakland. It's in San Francisco. It's a great show. It's really worth it.

DRAW!: Maybe I'll get a chance to do that.

HC: I highly recommend it.

DRAW!: Do you do any artwork outside of working?

HC: No.

DRAW!: Do you sketch or paint or sculpt?

HC: This goes right back to a conversation we were having Tuesday night. After we went to the Leyendecker show, we all got together and we started talking. We had dinner with Don Cameron, who's an old pal of mine. We were talking about sketchbooks, and we were talking about how Gil Kane always did finger exercises every morning to start his sketchbook. I've never had a sketchbook in my life. To me, the drawing I do is the work I'm doing on the page.

DRAW!: There are a lot of artists like that. There have been periods in my life when I've been so busy, especially doing comics, it's like being on a treadmill, so you're kind of "drawn out."

HC: I just don't do it. It's just—

DRAW!: But I do it now all the time. I do a lot of drawings. Of course, being back in school, it's all about drawing from observation and everything, which I enjoy. The last several years I've really been keeping a sketchbook.

HC: Well, I have enough work to do that I don't really have the time to spread it any thinner than I am.

DRAW!: Do you lament the passing of some of the old art materials? Like, ink is very different now than it was ten years ago.

HC: Oh, man! It's like, forget about it, it's like—



Page from Vertigo's *American Century*.

AMERICAN CENTURY™ AND ©2008 DAVID TISCHMAN, HOWARD CHAYKIN & DC COMICS

DRAW!: It's like water.

HC: Even Pelican, which used to be the gold standard, is really not the product it used to be. I mean, it goes down gray. It's really just a mess.

DRAW!: That also makes a difference in what you're doing and how you do it.

HC: Well, I accept the reality of the world that is. Unfortunately,



Advertising work for Hogan Bags. Here we have Howard's pencils, inks and finished colors for the cover of the strip.

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element of xenophobia in that.... It's more passive than active, I might add.

DRAW!: Do you think it's more of a fact that you're a kid of the '50s, and having grown up watching *Have Gun, Will Travel*?

HC: Yes, I definitely think so. I just did this whole ninja sequence—all this Japanese stuff—in the *Wolverine* book I'm doing. I'm also reading the new Stephen Hunter novel, which is an oddly samurai book. It's just alien culture, it really is. It's like John McEown said after he did a tour or three in Japan, "It's another country." So I just can't warm to it as much as I can to the good old U.S. of A. Spoken as a child of immigrants, you know what I'm saying? A Jewish kid in Brooklyn who still thinks he can be a cowboy when he grows up.



DRAW!: [laughs] I guess not many Jewish kids from Brooklyn wanted to grow up to be samurai, huh?

HC: Yeah. Well, that follows me, after my time. I mean, I grew up watching Johnny Mac Brown, Wild Bill Elliott, Don "Red" Berry, and all those guys on Hackensack TV before it became public TV, and that was probably the most profound influence on my life, those Western movies.

DRAW!: So now you're doing *Wolverine*. Do you have something else lined up after that?

HC: Yes, and I'm not sure whether it's been announced, so I'm not going to say.

DRAW!: Would that be something you're writing or drawing?

HC: Actually, I'm writing and drawing something,

and I'm drawing something, and I'm writing something. There are three major projects coming in. Also, I'm doing a couple issues for Joey Cavalieri on *Brave and the Bold*.

DRAW!: Oh, really?

HC: Kind of cool, kind of cool. I had a great time with that.

DRAW!: Do you have any artists lined up for that?

HC: I'm writing and drawing that. I'm actually writing a thing for Marvel, I'm writing and drawing something for Marvel, and I'm drawing something for Marvel.

DRAW!: I really enjoyed the *Twilight* series you did with García-López.

HC: Well, García's fabulous.

DRAW!: Yeah. I think he's the best, most underrated draftsman in the business.

HC: An astonishing talent.

DRAW!: Yeah. And he's such a nice guy, so soft-spoken.

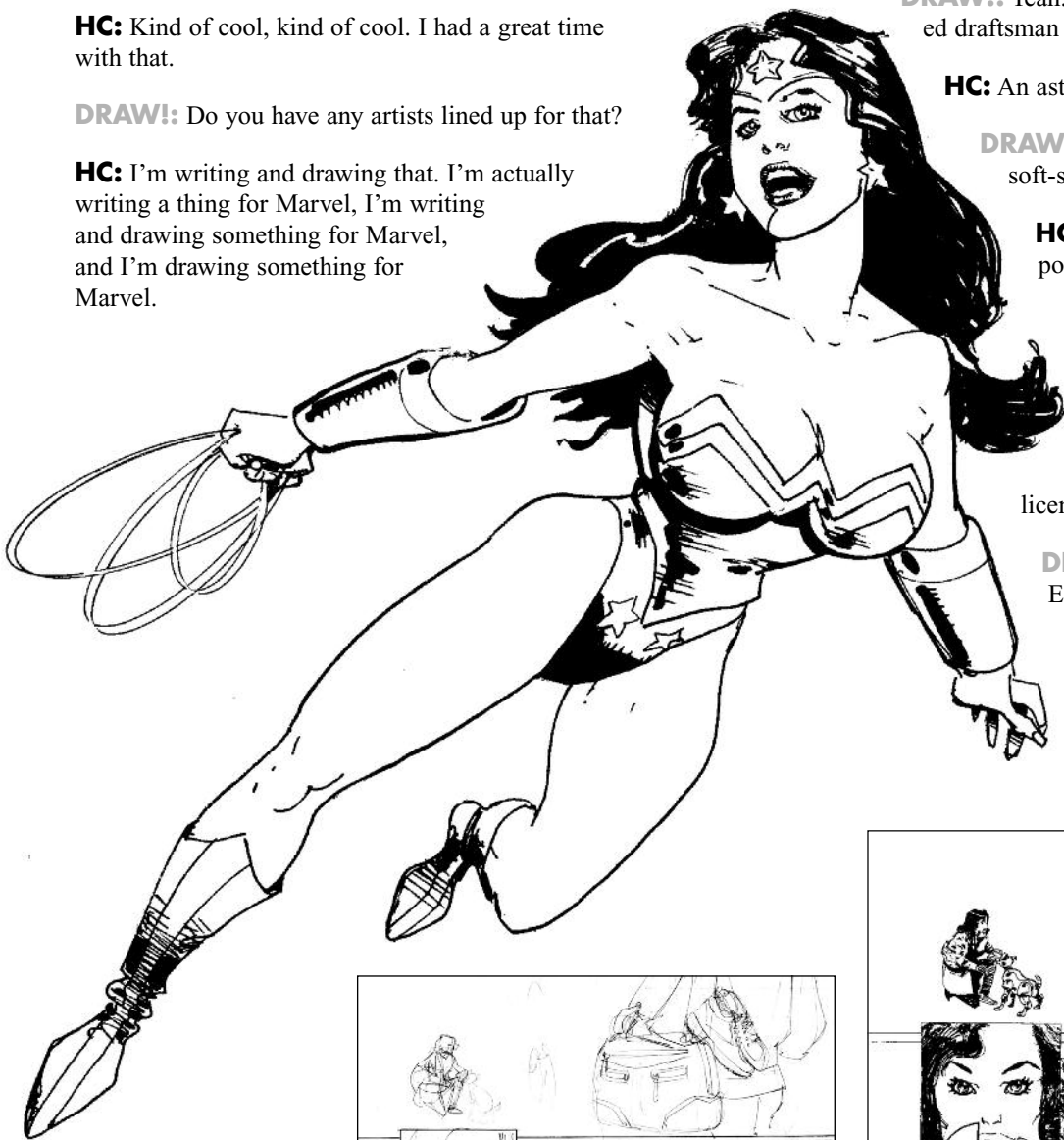
HC: I figure one day he's going to go postal and just take us all out.

DRAW!: [laughs] Do you have anything else planned with him?

HC: No, he's pretty much committed to what he's doing over there. They keep him busy with licensing work.

DRAW!: And I guess they don't do the Elseworlds things anymore, right?

HC: Although I keep hearing that they're coming back with something like that. I have no idea. I had a lot of fun doing those. Those were kind of cool.



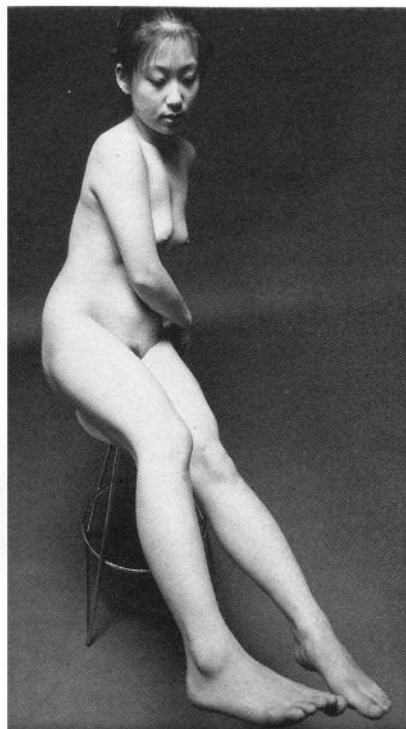
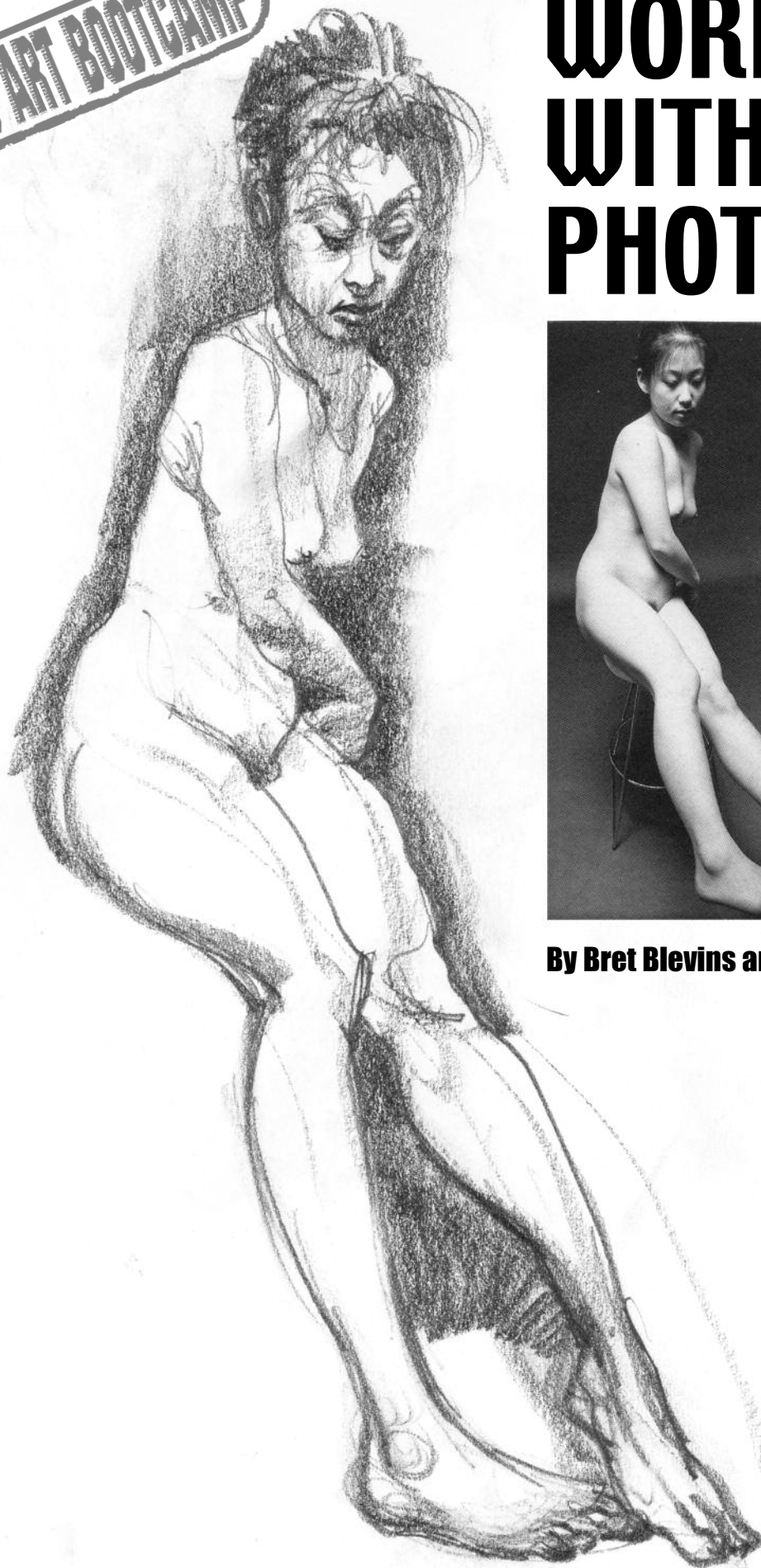
Wonder Woman sketch and interior pencils and inks for a page from the Hogan Bags advertisement job.

WONDER WOMAN™ AND ©2008 DC COMICS.



COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

WORKING WITH PHOTOS



By Bret Blevins and Mike Manley

In the fields of cartooning and illustration, questions relating to the use of the photograph as a tool or aid in drawing is a topic that seems to come up quite often. Some artists employ the use or aid of photography extensively in their work in a variety of ways, sometimes to achieve a sense of realism, sometimes for the desired accuracy in depicting people, environments, lighting, drapery, etc. Some artists use photos sparingly, only for technical information and details—like the style of a military uniform—or as a visual spring board.

CHEATING?

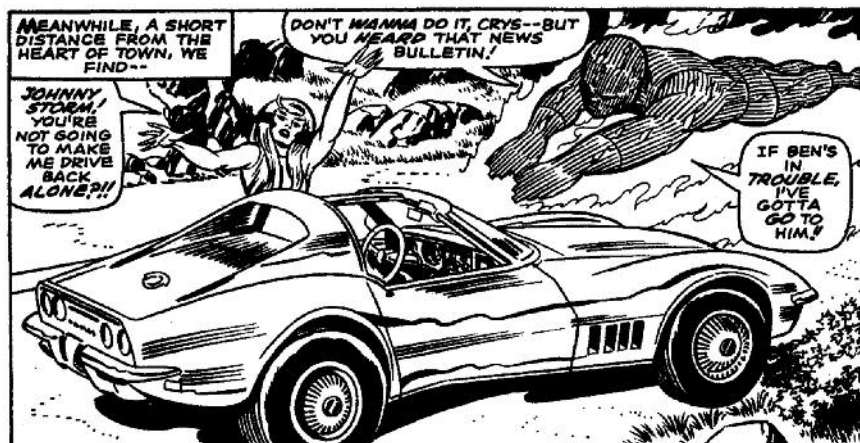
The question that comes up maybe the most often these days from younger artists is if the use of photography in this regard is some form of cheating? There is also the bigger question of copyright and legal issues in regards to using photographs in a work of art which have been taken or created by and are owned by another artist. There have been a few cases within the comics field where an artist has appropriated an image or photo from another source, usually a photographer, and used it as a “swipe” (the term given to the piece of reference art used: drawing, photo, etc.) to create a cover image. The most famous case of this might be the cover of *Dr. Strange, Sorcerer Supreme* #15, where the artist used the cover from an Amy Grant album as the “swipe” for a face drawn of the character Clea in the background. This resulted in a lawsuit. There was another case of this recently with a cover for yet another Marvel comic. This time the cover image was posted on the web for solicitation and a fan evidently spotted the swiped photo and hit the message boards with the news. It was a big stink for the artist who immediately had to redo the image and prevent what would have possibly been a lawsuit.

It's then important to deal with and understand this issue. It is illegal to take the work of another artist and use it blatantly to create another work and to sell it. That's stealing, and if the artist went the extra step and registered his or her artwork with the copyright office in Washington, it's also a federal crime, and the government can assess fines if the case goes to court. When you sell that image, you break the law by profiting of the other artist's work. You also open up your client to a lawsuit as well.

Now, we don't want to make this whole article about copyright issues, but this is something that has to be addressed up front. If you take somebody else's work, whether it's a painting, drawing or photo, and you blatantly use that image in a recognizable way as the basis of your art and then sell it, you are stealing from that other artist and breaking the law. I think it's pretty simple to understand the concept that stealing anything is wrong, but today, with the Internet and the piracy of music, videos and just about anything else you can think of, it may seem very innocent to take an image you find on a website or even a magazine and use it. “Who cares?” one might say, “I'm not hurting anyone, it was just up on that person's site, and there are a billion images,” and while you might not have actually broken into the artist's studio and grabbed the image physi-

cally, the result is the same. Many contracts you will sign when working for any major company will have a clause in it that states that you are not basing the work you do for that company on the work of anyone else, and that you hold yourself, not the company, libel in case you did and there is a resultant lawsuit.

As to the question of whether using photos is cheating, that really is up to the individual artist and the type of work they do, what they want to achieve, their intent and their artistic statement or philosophy. Some artists are not interested in reality at all, nor in depicting things in an illusionistic fashion. Jack Kirby drew cars, and if he needed to draw a specific type of car, he used reference—a photo—but he drew *from* that photo, taking the information it contained and incorporating it into his own artist statement, as it were. Alex Ross, Neal Adams, Al Williamson or Alex Raymond—much more realistic artists—would use the photo in a different way, sometimes shooting the photos themselves and transferring them down via a projector to get them exactly as they are. Here is where the biggest differences come in with the use of photography between artists: those who want more of an exact statement of what the photo contains, and those who use the photo only partially, as more of a suggestion.



A panel from Jack Kirby's classic run on the *Fantastic Four*, featuring the Human Torch's flashy Corvette. It's obvious Kirby, an artist most noted for his dynamic and exaggerated drawing, used photographic reference here to accurately draw the car, yet he also managed to incorporate it into his style so it didn't stand out in an awkward, out of place way or look traced.

CRYSTAL, HUMAN TORCH™ AND ©2008 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

HOW MIKE USES PHOTOS

I break down using photos in two ways with my work. A) Working *with* a photo. B) Working *from* a photo. These are really quite different ways of working and the end result can also be very different.

In the next example is a page from an issue of *The Destroyer* that I did for Marvel back in the late '80s. I no longer have the photos I took for the truck and the backgrounds in panels one and six. But in this case I worked *with* the photos. After breaking down my page layouts, I went about gathering reference and then deciding what I might have to shoot reference for if I didn't have something in my swipe file.

Now some of you younger readers may be asking, “What is a swipe file?” Well before the age of Google and the Internet, artists used to clip pictures from newspapers and magazines to keep for reference. I still have my old “morgue” or “swipe file,”

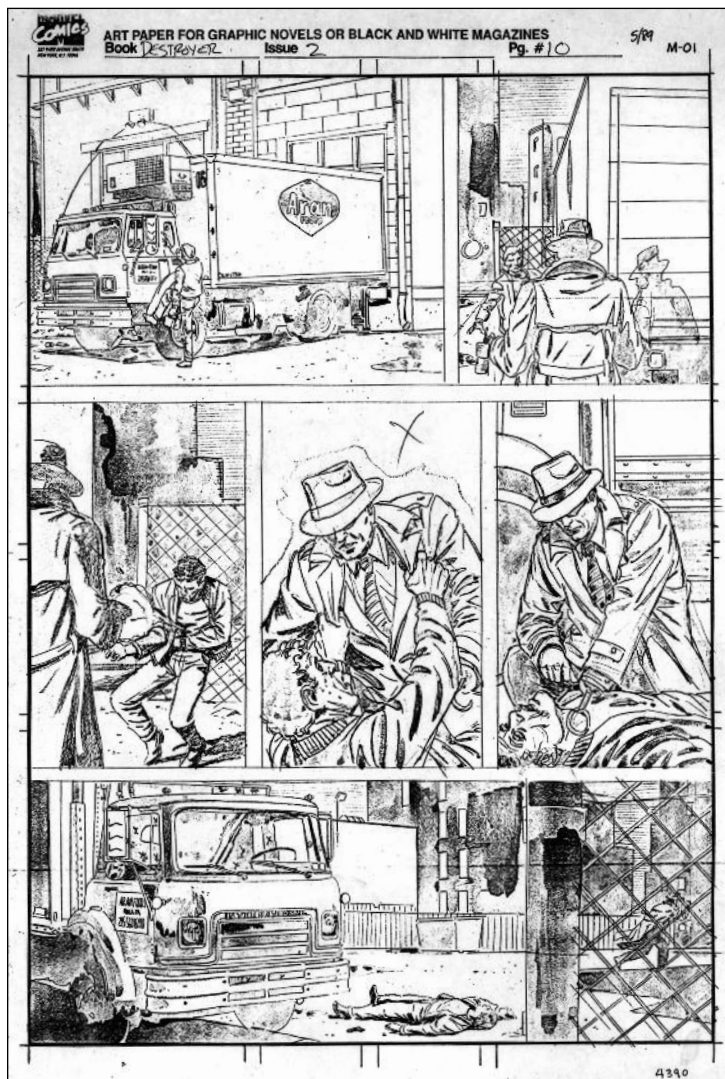
as they call it. I spent years clipping old pictures of animals, people, places and things, placing them in separate labeled folders in my filing cabinet. Some of the famous illustrators and cartoonists from years ago even had assistants for this purpose. It still comes in handy today.

After walking around my neighborhood I found a building with a loading dock and a truck parked in it, so remembering how my layout was, I shot the pictures accordingly to fit the layout of my panel. This is a very important stage: shooting a good photo. After all, a bad photo—one that is out of focus, blurred and/or poorly lit—won't help you. The best photos have a good sense of contrast that will allow you to see what you need easily. Taking the time to stage the photo, pose the model, and set a good light source or time of day will go a long way to helping you later when you are back at the drawing board.

After developing the film, using my Art-O-Graph I traced down the photos as accurately as possible, still working to turn the drawing I was doing into my style. This comic was very realistic or straight, no superheroes. I added things like the fence and more of the background that wasn't there in the photo, even changing the time of day to night. Next to the pencils you see the final page inked by Al Williamson, whose classic ink line added the final dash and verve to the art. One of Al's great skills was to ink something tight, but to let in a "little air" by doing a few things. One, he didn't use any rulers of any

kind; he inked everything freehand which gave a "life" to his line that a mechanical line doesn't have. Two, he let the forms stay open; he didn't close all the lines. When reduced this gives the drawing a sense of openness that sometimes closed drawing loses, especially if you are trying to do more realistic work—the eye doesn't hold everything in sharp focus all of the time. This approach is more atmospheric and more like the eye actually sees things.

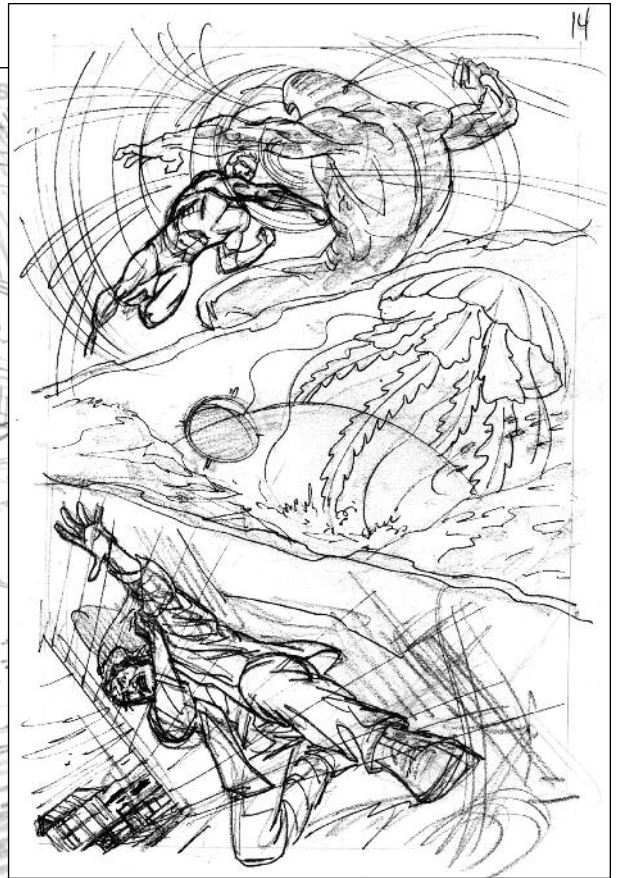
This way of working directly from photographs is something I learned from studying the classic comic strip artists of the past, like Alex Raymond and Stan Drake, as well as spending time working with Al Williamson. From working with Al I was able to see how these artists were able to do highly realistic artwork and produce it in volume and on-time, a necessity in the comic strips, as they could never be late. This then led these artists to become masters of how to use "swipe" or shoot their own photos, most often using themselves and friends as models. Al was particularly a master of this, laying out a week of strips for *Star Wars*, and before that his long and historic run on *Secret Agent Corrigan*. Once things were laid out, Al would draw in some figures, but also shoot photos as well as make use of many photo romances, which were essentially soap operas done with actors, shot and formatted to look like a comic book, or *fumetti*. Al often used them when he wasn't able to hire a model in order to have lots of swipe of one actor from many angles.



LEFT: My penciled page from *The Destroyer*.

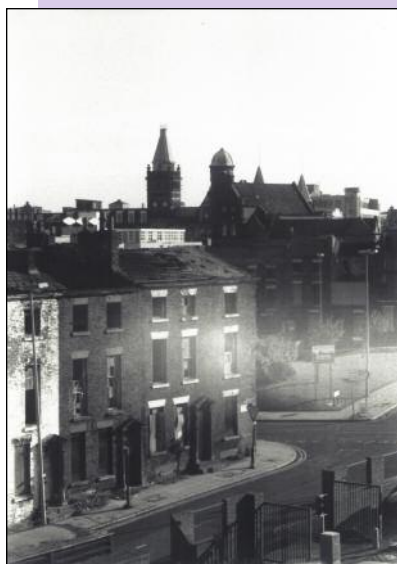
ABOVE: The page as inked by Al Williamson.

REMO WILLIAMS, THE DESTROYER™ AND ©2008 WARREN MURPHY.



AQUAMAN™ AND ©2008 DC COMICS.

The example above is from an issue of *Aquaman* I did a little over a year ago. In this story, written by Kurt Busiek, there was a flashback sequence in which the history of the villain, the Fisherman, was told. In the last panel I wanted there to be a sort of distorted, fish-eye view of the parasite taking over the next host's body, to play up the drama, and this angle and the distortion I wanted presented a more difficult drawing problem. I decided I would shoot a photo of myself with my digital camera to get a good shot from the angle I wanted to help with the drawing, lighting and drapery. In this case I did not want to work *with* the photo, instead I wanted to draw *from* the photo, to use it to get what I wanted into my drawing. To draw looking at the photo, not tracing it down, and to deviate where I wanted to get the "guts" I wanted in the drawing. This is for me the crucial difference when using photography. If, for instance, I had traced down the photo, the figure would have stood out on that page as being drawn from a photo instead of fitting into my style, my artistic interpretation, my "artist's eye," as it were. It would be the lens of the camera, not *me* that set the parameters. Instead, I used the photo only to take what I "felt" I needed, and used the information in the photo to add the "reality" as I wanted.



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

This next example is from the adaptation I did of Clive Barker's *Weaveworld*, which takes place in England, specifically around Liverpool. I did this book in 1990 for Marvel, and used that as an excuse to travel to England for a week to shoot reference. It would have been a lot harder to do this book — maybe impossible in some ways — and set it accurately in Liverpool without the proper reference. Everything from the street signs, mail boxes, etc., are different. I spent the better part of a week strolling around the city of Liverpool taking pictures of the locations I would need, and again, thinking ahead and planning the type of shots I would use after having read the script. I shot plenty of film so I'd have enough "coverage" of every location when I got back home to Philadelphia. I wouldn't be able to easily hop the plane back to England to get reference again.

On this page you can see how I clearly used the three photos directly for my backgrounds and made sure the shots I took would make good panels, good compositions. Again I needed the rolls of film I shot to work, so I was really thinking as I shot the pictures to make sure they would work as panels in a comic.





ABOVE RIGHT: The Art-O-Graph DB 400, the projector that was state of the art a few years back. It has since been replaced by a new model. More info at www.artograph.com

BELOW: Here are two great examples by Stan Drake from his European graphic novels featuring Kelly Green which show Drake using photos to not only create authentic locations but dramatic compositions by turning up the contrast on the photos. The key here, again, is to compose your photo well—make sure your light source and contrast work.



Another tried and true method of the comic strip artist was the use of a high-contrast photo for a background. This technique was most often used in the soap opera type comic strip by artists such as Stan Drake and Leonard Starr. In the examples shown you can see that Drake took a photograph, then placing it upon the copy machine and adjusting the exposure made a high contrast copy that he then touched up and pasted down. This was an effective way of saving a lot of drawing time for artists who had the tyranny of the deadline ever present in the business of the daily comic strip.

Today you can do the same thing with a photo and the computer, even converting the photo into a non-photo blue ink and printing it out of the comic paper. Then you can ink it, like I did with the panel containing the FBI Headquarters in the last panel of the *Secret Agent X-9* story I did for King Features [left].



If you don't want to use the blue-ink process with the computer, the main instruments you'll need to use when working this way is a projector, or "Lucy" as they used to be called, since they were based on the Lucigraph, which projected an image from below up onto the back surface of a glass drawing board.

The Art-O-Graph, which is an overhead projector, projects any image, any size, onto any flat drawing surface. It takes a while to get the hang of using it, but it is really a great tool. The main suggestion I will make here is that you don't want to "trace" down your drawing in a "dead" way; what you want to do is to turn the projected image into a "drawing," something that fits within the context of your artistic vision, or style.

—Mike





HOW BRET USES PHOTOS

Mike has covered the practical aspects of using photographs for reference and as a stylistic and production technique—aside from specific factual reference (the Empire State building, a WWI Zeppelin interior, etc.), I almost never work from photos except as information gathering sketchbook studies, so I will concentrate on the aesthetic problems of translating photographic source material into effective drawings.

The typical difficulty of beginning with a photograph as your source of reference/inspiration is the dichotomy of having too little and too much information simultaneously: Too little because you are limited to one indiscriminate and unchanging viewpoint and set of visual data, which is not the case when drawing from life or your imagination/memory. Too much because the camera is a poor artist—the information to be gleaned through a lens is mechanical, often oddly distorted and usually over-detailed or blurred, lacking the natural selective qualities inherent in our human vision: the accent or suppression of interest and focus filtered through our emotions and mood. Unless a photograph is carefully composed or altered later by the photographer, there is usually no discrimination between important, interesting or salient detail and the abundance of other distracting minutia that happens to be in the viewfinder.

A photograph is a one-dimensional literal recording of its subject, and unless that subject has been artfully arranged and lit to create a good composition, or the photographer captures a fortunate uncontrived instance of power or beauty, there is little chance the aesthetic qualities of effective drawing or painting

FOTONOVELAS: Here are two examples of what they call fumetti in Italy and fotonovelas in South America that I bought on my trip to Argentina in the early '90s. These are photo-comics, where they hire actors and compose and photograph stories in a comics format, and these magazines were a great source of swipes for many realistic comic artists for years, as they have many well shot and well lit photos of the same actors from a variety of angles. There were many romance novelas (left) as well as superhero or action novelas like the *Killing* novela (below).



will be found in the photograph.

Rhythm is the core source of unity, beauty, power, grace and any other quality that can be expressed in fine artwork. How this fortunate rhythm is created in a given image is mysterious and impossible to precisely parse or quantify, because each person responds to different “wavelengths” of rhythmic patterns and resonance, and the most powerful art is almost always guided through important stages of its growth by intuition.

Because so many important decisions are made through subconscious awareness and impulses that prompt choices in the creation of a picture, the simplest way to examine my approach in translating static source photographs into more effective drawn or painted images is to analyze the process and results in the following set of examples.

The painting of the skull photograph slightly exaggerates the angular qualities of the skull's structure and subtly rearranges details of from to create a more pleasing (to me) rhythm and balance of shape relationships and tonal variety. The skull's right brow has been accented and lightened in tone, the shape of the nasal opening narrowed and sharpened, the teeth slightly recast to enhance the curve of the entire jaw and strengthen the



sense of roundness and recession into space. I found the large dark shadow that drops diagonally from the left cheek down over the lower jaw in the photograph to be too large and an “eye trap” that held too much attention, so I lightened the passage and brought forth interesting shapes of the forms that created dynamic eye paths for the glance to follow and flow back into the rest of the composition. I also found the slivers of light on the folds of bandana at the back of the head too small to effectively “hold their place” in the eye’s travel around the picture, so I broadened and lightened the entire mass.

These are decisions that appealed to my sense of design and composition—another artist would make different choices and



accent or sublimate other aspects. There is no one right way—the point is to *use* the photo as raw material to forge an aesthetic statement of your taste and preferences, not slavishly copy or trace it whole.

The two *Dark Crystal* puppet images use two different techniques of translating the photo source material—the first image of the little potato-faced critter is rendered very tightly with graphite pencil and black watercolor—I increased the contrast of the overall dark and light pattern, lightening the flesh tone and base tone of the cloth. I also lightened the entire shadow mass on the lower part of the face, chest and right side of the body and introduced variety there to entertain the eye. As in the skull piece analyzed above, I felt the large shadow mass was a

dull heavy blocky shape that weakened the design. Notice how the folds and other form-defining contours have been accented with pencil or brush strokes to “energize” them—make them fun to look at and run the eye over. This is one fundamental difference (and advantage) drawing and painting



have over photography—*every* element can be manipulated to increase the harmony of shape, pattern, tone, design and composition. In this piece even the expression has been altered by slightly changing the shape and distance between the features of the face—the exaggeration creates a bit more animation and





tion—this creates a more dynamic visual tension with the similar forms of the prisoner's drapery, linking the two figures together as a visual mass—it also adds a bit of thrust to the villain's gesture, creating a sense of movement not found in the photo.

The cacophony of detail in the villain's costume has been simplified into

suggestive brush dabs, nicks and strokes that give the impression of fur, leather or metal without belaboring the eye and bogging down the visual flow. Notice throughout the drawing how the crimps, angles and wrinkles of the drapery have been simplified into large flowing dark and light shapes that help separate the various planes and forms and make the important information "read" clearly and

easily. I've eliminated all the detail from the

attitude that enlivens the character.

The photograph of the villain and prisoner is an overwhelming mass of busy detail and scattershot clusters of high contrast that tires the eye and flattens the depth of the forms. Because the detail is so dense here, I chose a loose, sketchy approach of graphite and sepia ink washes to simplify the overall effect—suggest detail but do not render it all. Again subtle changes of form and line direction have been introduced to invite the eye to enjoy a pleasant run over the flowing shapes and design. The entire mass of the hooked arm has been cocked diagonally to point downward and inward toward the low center of the composi-



THE MUMMY ©2008 UNIVERSAL FILMS



background and used the rubbed graphite tone to “pop” the light passages of the forms forward. Again I found the large, dark shadow cast on the large figure by the prisoner a visually dead black hole in the photo, so I lightened and adjusted its density and shape to harmonize its effect and integrate it gracefully into the composition.

I left this upshot of the Mummy figurine sketchy to focus attention on the subtle adjustments of contour and shape directions that “animate” the drawing—add life and gesture to the pose.

This drawing could be finished more completely in any technique, but the key of this demonstration is the “attitude adjustment”—notice how the tension and alertness has been increased by slightly attenuating the figure’s girth, separating the legs, tilting the scroll forward, lengthening the neck, etc.—an inherent weakness of photographs is the “frozen” quality of living forms, especially animals and people. Although a drawn or painted



THE MUMMY ©2008 UNIVERSAL FILMS

image is as still as a photo, the tactile mark-making artist has many opportunities to deceive the eye and mind of the viewer and create the illusion of movement and life. Use them!

The downshot drawing of the Mummy is more carefully and completely rendered, but the contour and pose adjustments are the foundation of its effect. Again the forms have been thinned slightly, making him more gaunt, the



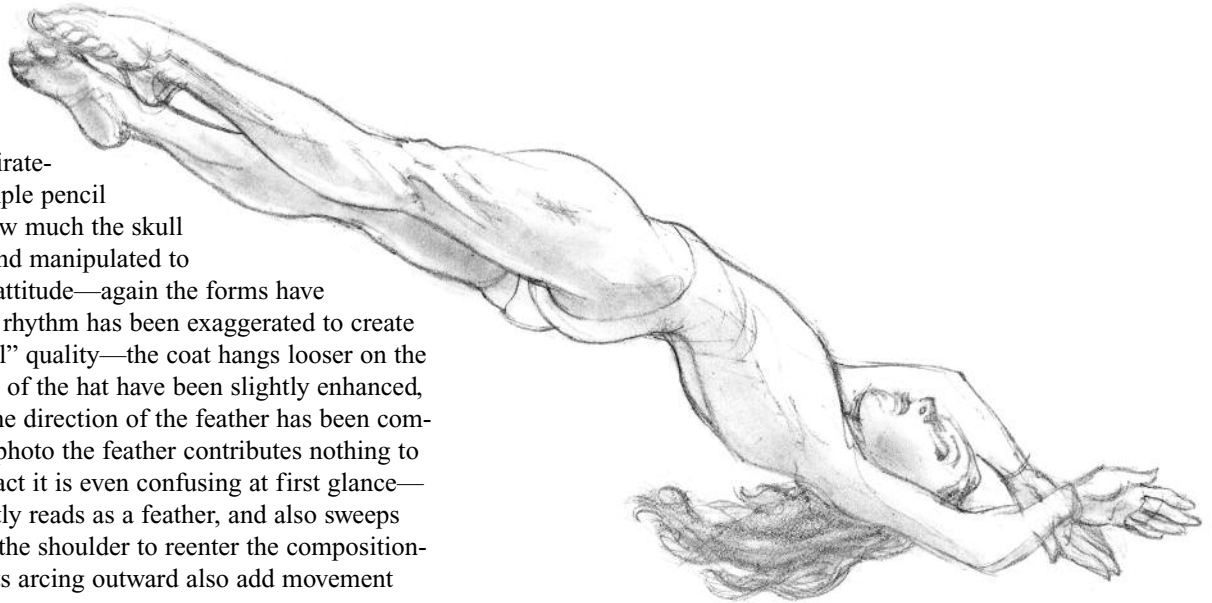
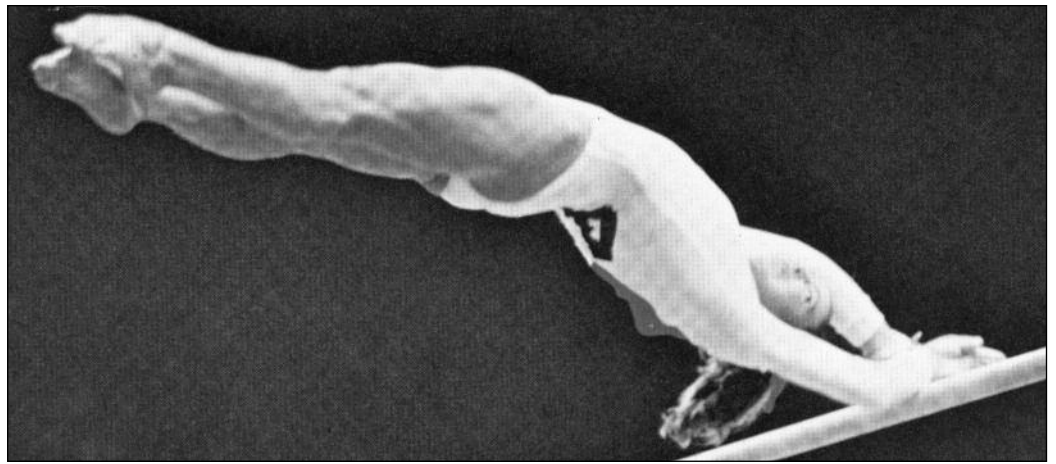
static symmetrical shape of the scroll has been “animated” slightly to give it movement, and most important for this particular photo, the right arm has been moved away from the body, eliminating the terrible tangent that mars the source—the knuckles of the right hand line up exactly with the line of the hip, locking the forms together and destroying any sense of depth between them.

The exaggeration of contrast in the lighting/tonal pattern accents the clarity of his facial structure, clarifies his features and increases the atmosphere of menace.

The portrait of the pirate-garbed skeleton is a simple pencil rendering, but notice how much the skull itself has been altered and manipulated to increase the illusion of attitude—again the forms have been attenuated and the rhythm has been exaggerated to create a more spindly, “skeletal” quality—the coat hangs looser on the body, the curving forms of the hat have been slightly enhanced, and most importantly, the direction of the feather has been completely changed. In the photo the feather contributes nothing to the shape harmony, in fact it is even confusing at first glance—the altered shape instantly reads as a feather, and also sweeps the eye back down into the shoulder to reenter the compositional flow. The splayed tufts arcing outward also add movement and life to the entire image.

The photo of the gymnast is blurred and murky, but the beautiful torque of the body attracted me to translate the figure to into a drawing—there is no rendering to speak of here, the alterations are mostly linear contour changes. Again the figure has been attenuated to enhance the grace of the movement and increase the speed at which the eye flows over the lines. I have corrected some of the distortion in the photo by enlarging the size of her head and also repositioned and completed her right arm. I lengthened the legs slightly from the knee down and separated them to create a negative space between her shins, which makes the gesture of her feet and ankles read a bit more gracefully and creates a nicer silhouette. Finally I reshaped the flow and angle of her hair to lead the eye back around to her flowing form, the last curling flip echoing the arch where her spine meets her hips.

The quick sketch from a Pose File book from the opening of the article is an exercise in accenting the movement that attracted me to the photo—the fast sweeping lines give the image an alacrity that makes the image vital—there’s not much detail, and the rough edges of the strokes, the stray “block in” lines still visible and the quick incomplete suggestion of a background tone all add aesthetic character to the sketch. This is the only drawing included here that wasn’t done especially as a demonstration example for this article—I pulled it at random from an old sketchbook. Most of my photo-based images look



like this—quick doodles to warm up for the day’s work, or to unwind and take my mind off the problem at hand after a long day at the board.

I don’t use photographs (except for prop or location reference as mentioned above) at all in my fantasy work, and when painting from a model I sometimes snap a reference photo to remind me of details I didn’t have time to fully complete during the modeling session—patterns on clothing, defining shapes of drapery, background props, etc. So for me sketching from photos is a kind of eye-hand coordination exercise, but I know that I subconsciously absorb much information about the structure (such as anatomy) of the given subject, how light falls across form, atmospheric effects, textures, and many other elements of depicting images on a flat surface.

This is my relationship to photos, but every artist is different—the important point to remember is to *use* the photo to help you achieve a desired aesthetic result; don’t let the photograph use *you* as an indiscriminate duplicating machine.

See you next time!

Bret



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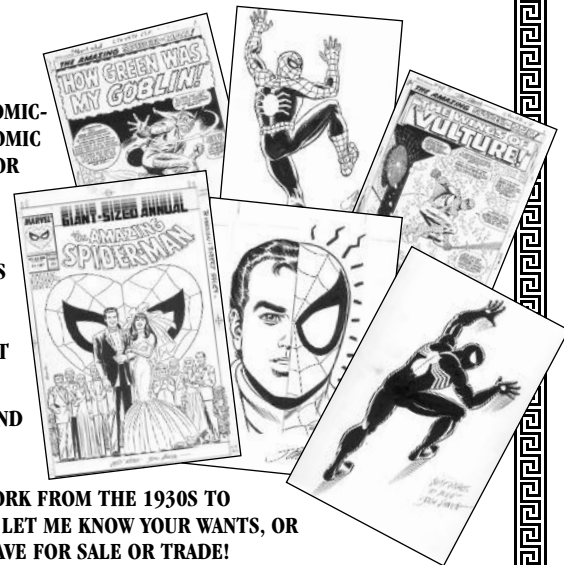
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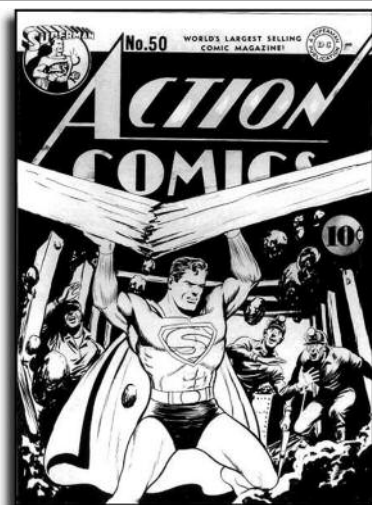
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obviously you're always sketching because you've got to do stuff for school, but did you keep a sketchbook and then find that when you started working that, because you were doing so much work, that your sketching went into your work?

JS: Pretty much. I think you're dead on, there. I think that I got so busy that my process sort of ended up being partly the finals, in a sense. I do most of my drawing here at the drawing table in my studio rather than take a sketchbook around with me anymore. I do still have a stack of paper nearby, 8-1/2" x 11" stuff, that I sketch ideas out on. I'll have a pile of ideas that are just on loose paper. I think my whole process has gradually changed, and it starts more with the writing stage now. It's weird. I think that I've become really character-driven, and

story has become so important to me in my own head that I don't even start to think about what a character should look like until I have a whole story in mind.

DRAW!: Well, that's the only way you could actually even attempt to do something like a comic strip, because I think if it was just based upon the fact that you like to draw funny little pictures—that could be the only way that a person like Charles Schulz could do *Peanuts* for 40 years. You have to be able generate those characters in your head first as people—

JS: Totally pre-conceived.

DRAW!: Yeah, and then the drawing is the execution of the idea, but if you did it the other way, I think you would probably quickly run out of material.



Pencils for an *Oh Brother!* strip.

OH BROTHER™ AND ©2008 BOB WEBER AND JAY STEPHENS

JS: I would think so, yeah. And I think you see that with third- or fourth-generation cartoons where someone else has taken over the strip from the original creator. A lot of those strips—and you know who you are [Mike laughs]—run out of steam pretty quickly, and part of that is the soul of the creator was what was driving it. And it's kind of sad. I'm not one of those guys that thinks.... In comic strips, there's this whole vocal component of cartoonists that complain that, "We've got to stop running these tired old strips. How long has *Blondie* been in the paper? Oh my God! We've got to get rid of that and make room for new strips."

DRAW!: They're the Aaron McGruders of the world, people like that.

JS: Yeah, they are bugged by these sort of zombie strips that keep going on eternally. I certainly understand the argument, and, like I just said, there are certainly some strips that feel pretty dead to me, but there are other longstanding strips that actually have new life, that aren't so bad.

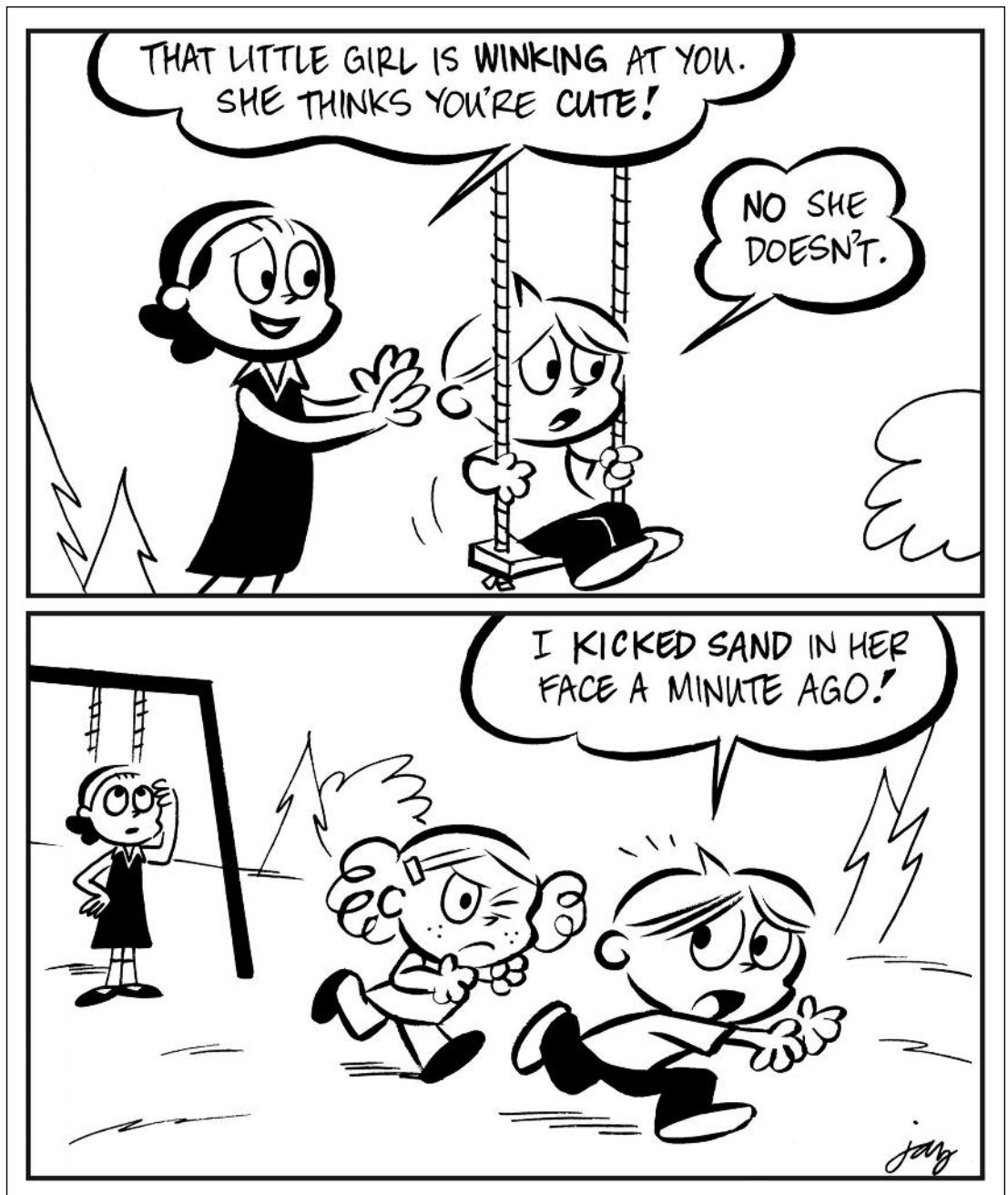
Anyway, I just find it interesting because you would never hear that in comic books. Do you ever hear someone in comics going, "Batman? He's, like, 75 years old! When are they going to stop those stupid Batman comics?"

DRAW!: Right. Well, probably because I would assume the competition is hard for that small space. The playing field is much smaller in the strips, getting smaller every day, physically being squeezed on the pages. You've got papers who go, "I don't want to run the strips because I'd rather run ads for cars or Viagra or something." And, at the same time, the people who buy newspapers, that is the part of the newspaper that they expect to be in there, and if they take out *Henry* or something, people get all up in arms.

JS: No, it's true, it's true. They get very vocal, the hardcore fans of some old strips. Comics are still right up there with the sports section as the most popular section of every newspaper everywhere. The audience is out there. The people want their comics.

DRAW!: So I guess the bottom line to you, really, is that you were producing cartoons. You had a vision, right? You were able to produce these characters, this work, these ideas, but you couldn't do it in comics because the medium, the business, would not support the kind of material you wanted to do. So by you sort of doing the end run around to animation and then comic strips and the magazines, you were actually able to connect with a broader audience that is not now in the comic book shops.

JS: Exactly. Yup. I had to go hunting for my audience. And it was there all along waiting. (I feel like Dorothy in Oz!) I just think it's so funny that, less than two years into me doing indie comics, I had television and kids' magazines come calling, and I just wasn't ready to hear it. It took me a long time to get here. I still love comic books passionately; I think it's still my favorite format. And



Another Oh Brother! strip.

OH BROTHER™ AND ©2008 BOB WEBER AND JAY STEPHENS

I'm talking about the old pamphlet format, too. But there comes a time when you just have to accept—you know, we all have our strengths and weaknesses. I'm able to see what I'm good at, what I can and can't do. It's interesting, because I was certainly that guy that wanted to grow up and draw *Fantastic Four*, and I mean specifically *Fantastic Four*, too. Mike Allred and I were once offered that series, the main book. They wanted us to co-plot, and Mike pencil, and me ink, and we had agreed with them that it would have looked great. But it was so weird, because, at the time, the *Tutenstein* cartoon was starting up, and Mike was doing all kinds of stuff, and what they offered us for the gig was penny ante. It was awful. And I'm sure it was standard, y'know? And we couldn't afford to do it; we passed on that.

DRAW!: Because the budget was too low for you guys?

JS: The workload was too high for the return, and it would have been, as Mike put it, he said, “Wow, that’s a whole year,” because it was for twelve issues, “That’s a whole year. We can’t do anything else. We can’t do any of our own stuff.” Now, later on he ended up doing *X-Force*, so he must have found a way to make it work for him. But that was a big turning point for me, because that was like a dream offer, and to pass on that, for us to be on the phone and go, “You know what? I don’t think this is going to work.” We were both creators at that point that were doing well with our own creations, and a year’s worth of your own stuff is money in the bank. You gotta think long term.

DRAW!: That’s an important thing, and that’s also something that I try to pass on to the younger cartoonists, because the fact is, and this goes back to what you were talking about before, the people complaining about how we need to get rid of *Blondie* or whatever, but in comics they’re still happy to have the nine billionth issue of *Fantastic Four*. So you’re right. At least if, in the end, you go, “Well, I worked on six issues of this and someone wants to make a t-shirt, or I can get some writing, or I can get another gig,” it’s sort of like a loss leader. It’s like you do your comic as a portfolio to get work in another medium. At least it’s your work. If you’re doing work on *Fantastic Four*, that may or may not happen, and certainly people are probably not going to be thinking, I would imagine, of you in the same way they would if they’re seeing you do your own creation, because that’s more authentically your voice. Because, no matter what you do, you can’t be Jack. You can’t be Jack Kirby.

JS: No, no. No matter how much you want to be.

DRAW!: And, I remember Jack Kirby telling me when I met him that I should do my own characters.

JS: Yup, he always said that. But I don’t think everyone can. Certainly there are plenty of writers and artists who are happy to be on *Spider-Man* and really love that gig. Maybe people will

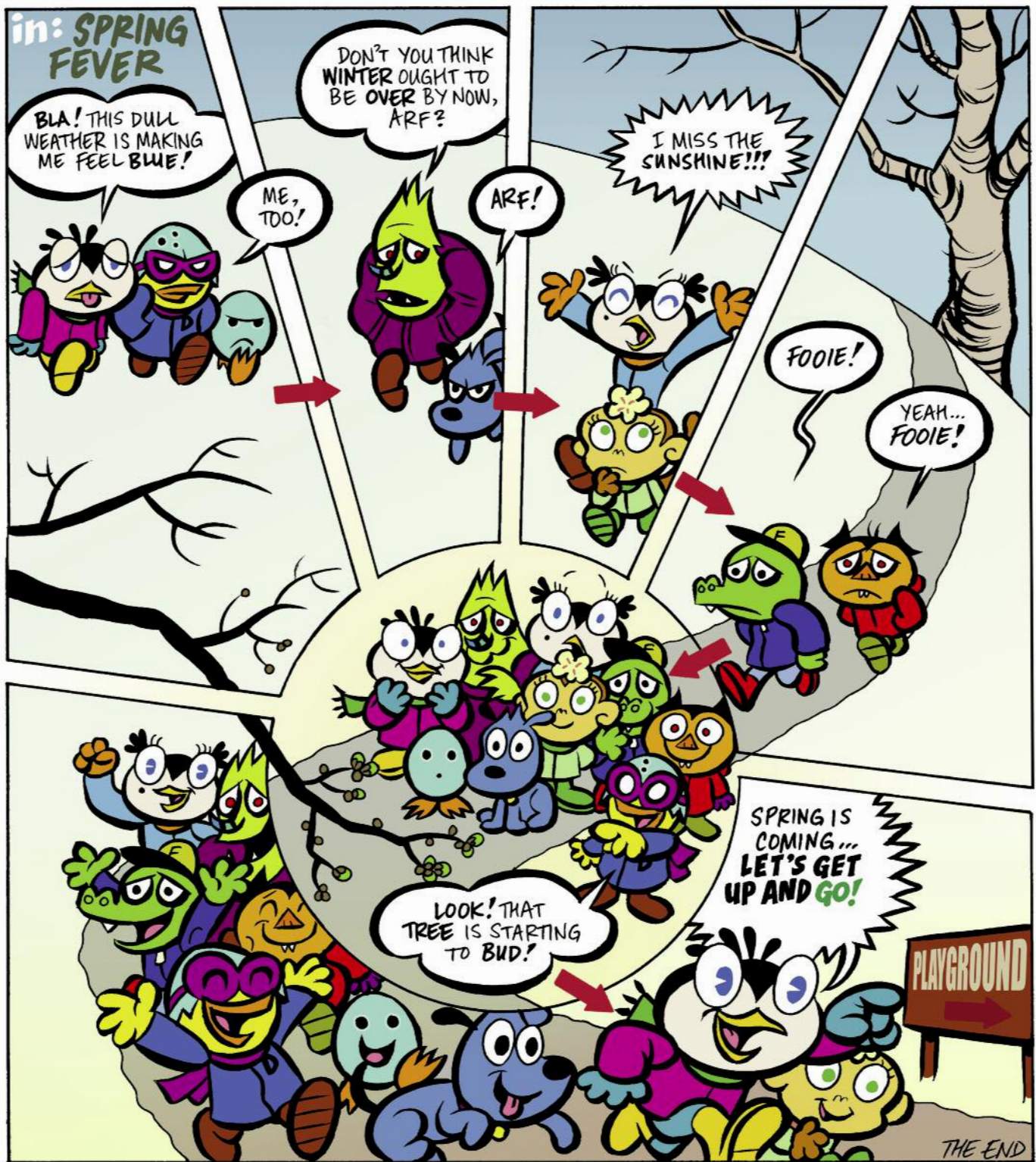


Pencils and finished colors for a *chickaDEE* strip.
CHICKADEE™ AND ©2008 BAYARD PRESSE CANADA, INC..

look at you differently if you’re someone who creates your own stuff, as opposed to someone who does work-for-hire, that’s true, but that’s not really my motivation. I think that the fear for me about freelancing for work-for-hire was that there’s always some hungry artist who’s younger and hipper that is going to take over your gig. And it gets exhausting, the idea of jumping around and trying to stay relevant as a comic book artist. The only thing that keeps those old costumed crimefighters “fresh” is new blood. New creative teams. It’s really high turnover.

THE FUTURE

DRAW!: We came in at the very tail-end of what had gone before, where all the guys we admired, for the most part, were still working to some degree. The business is very different now, so you could actually do *Land of Nod* now as a web comic and end up being like the *Player vs. Player* guys. You could do stuff like that, and that’s a whole other wave that’s just starting now. People are just getting used to that. Have you thought



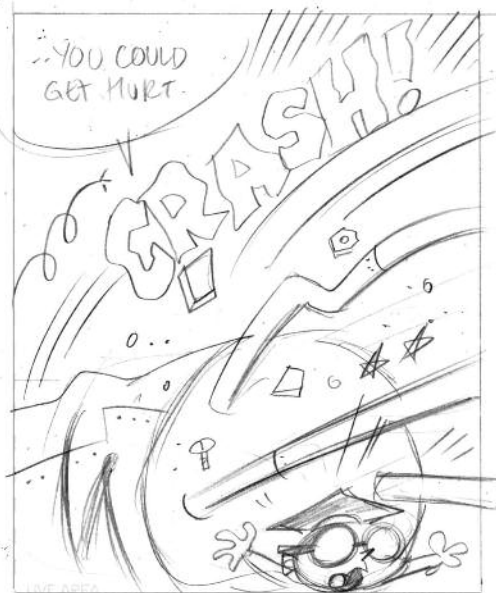
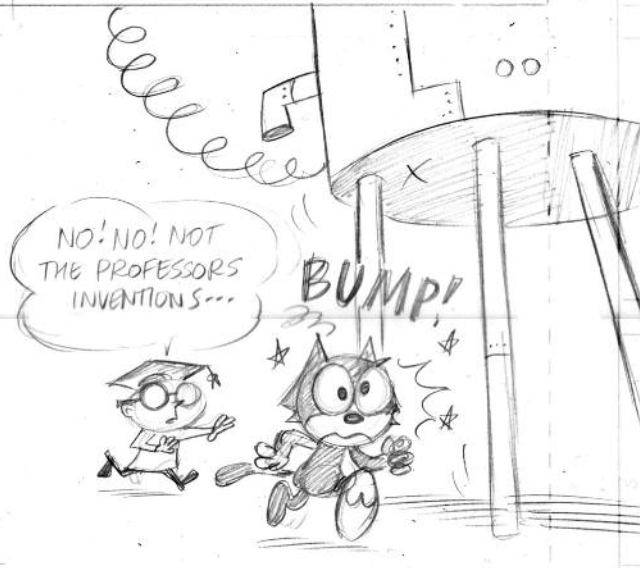
about doing web comics or embracing any of that at all?

JS: I played around with it a little bit. I think the delivery system is ideal. Distribution, it's hard to imagine it used to be a problem for any kind of idea. If you have an idea for an animation, or a short film, or a comic strip, or anything now, you can get it out to the whole world immediately. It's fabulous.

DRAW!: Maybe not in the short term, but you have those guys

at Home Star Runner or whatever, and I hear that a lot of these guys are doing really, really well. So I guess it's almost like farming. You have to say, "Well, I'm going to go out here and raise me a cartoon crop and see if the blight doesn't kill it." But I was just interested to see if that was something that you were interested in, because I would think that because—

JS: Because it's the one thing I haven't done?



DRAW!: No, I also think of you as—I sort of ghettoize, too, as all cartoonists do. I sort of think there are guys who are mainstream, and guys who are underground, whatever that means today, because I don't even think undergrounds exist in any real form.

JS: I'm not sure it does anymore, yeah.

DRAW!: But I think you're like a mainstream cartoonist. You have a mainstream style, a mainstream taste. You're interested in a general entertainment for a general audience, so I would think that your type of work would find a very receptive mass audience—I mean, obviously you've done that through animation.

JS: No, you're right, because that would be sort of the perfect combination of those two aspects. It would be the distribution, the wide-spread possibilities that television offers, but with the sit-at-your-table-and-do-your-own-thing aspect of cartooning that I like so much. It's something that I probably will explore. But I'm so old-fashioned, I want to do all the old-fashioned stuff first.

DRAW!: I do, too. One of the things I really like about doing the *Creepertins* comic strip for the *Delaware County Magazine* is that it's got color dots on it. I still color it in Photoshop, but it looks like an old newspaper strip, and I just love that aesthetic. I am sure someone who is ten years old today and is going to be a cartoonist in four or five years, trying to do their own, they're not going to have that same kind of love of the medium. The tactile sense, the smell of old newsprint, that's not going to inform their world in the way it has you or me or certainly cartoonists who are older than we are. But I think the one common thing we all have, and we can all share no matter what, is the sense of craft, whether you're using a brush marker or a sable hair, or you're using a Pigma marker, or you're drawing your strip with a ballpoint pen.

JS: I've seen some good ones drawn in pen lately. There are some people who are sort of intentionally using low-end, like just Bic pens and stuff to draw. It's amazing.

DRAW!: Right. Again, depending upon what your voice is, maybe that really works for you. The other thing I wanted to ask you about, because, unlike America, you guys in Canada—I suppose Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, anyway—you probably get a fair amount of the albums and things coming in from Europe, like, Trondheim. Have you thought about that? Have you tried approaching that, doing a graphic novel, or working in that way?

JS: I'm very interested in that, but it's not so simple. I actually have a huge collection of *Oddville* strips, color ones that I did for three years for a local paper, *The Toronto Star*, and they're sort of a weird format. They're long and narrow, and they collect really nicely into an album-sized sort of book. It's about 80 pages. I pitched it *Dark Horse*, and got, "That format doesn't sell."

DRAW!: Not here in the States, but have you approached people overseas?

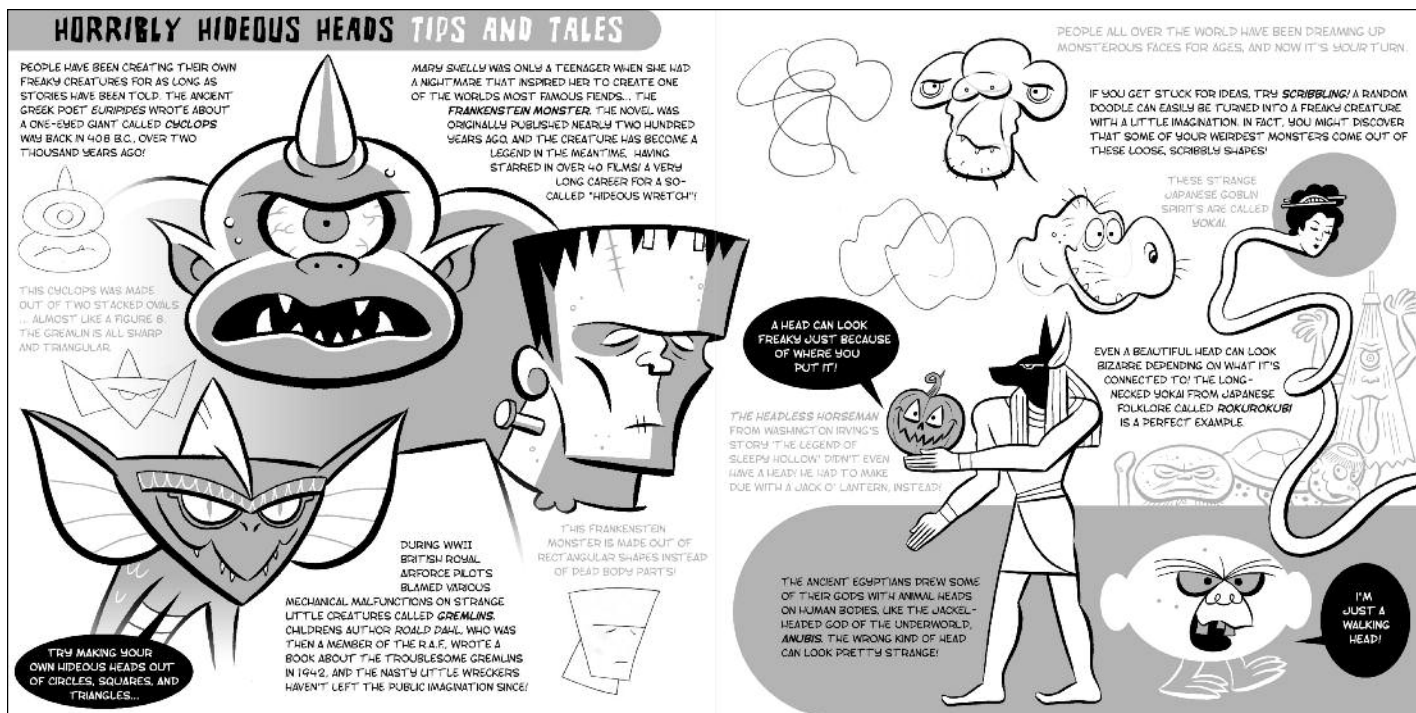
JS: No, not yet. Again—

DRAW!: Right, I understand that, but I was thinking if you went specifically to somebody who dealt with that format, if that—

JS: I guess what I'm saying is, I love that tall, French, hard-cover format. But it's not selling in France anymore, either. The problem is that specific format is "out." Let's say I was pitching a new graphic novel, a long-form story. Most, if not all, book publishers would want it in the manga digest format. I guess that's what I'm trying to say... it's all bottom line. I'd go in and pitch this full-color, 80-page, *Tintin*-sized book, and they'd say, "Hmm. Can that be black-&-white and small and about 400 pages?"



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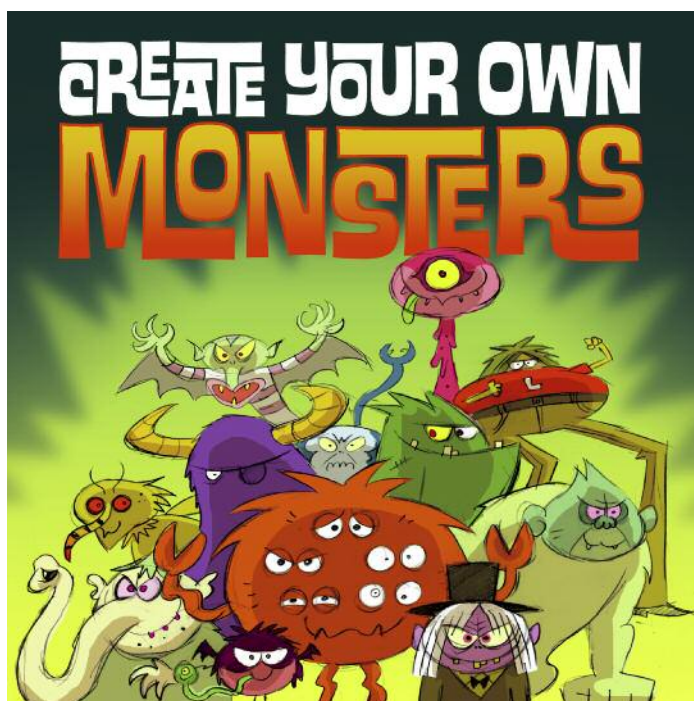


Cover art and interior pages from Jay's *Create Your Own Monsters* "how-to" book.

©2008 JAY STEPHENS.

DRAW!: So you would think something like *Night Fisher*, or something like that?

JS: *Night Fisher*'s a great book. I just read *Laika*, which I really liked. And that's sort of a chunkier, smaller format. Yeah, I mean, definitely. In fact, I've never really lost the jones for doing a graphic novel, and that's one thing I haven't done in comics. I've tried a lot of series, but I haven't really done that one-off graphic novel format. That would actually be my next step, actually. I have a couple ideas in mind, and hopefully if the *Saturdays* take off and are relatively successful, it will buy me some time to create something personal again.



DRAW!: Yeah, because I imagine the magic number is to get to 52 episodes for syndication, so you're sort of halfway there.

JS: Exactly. Yeah, and *Tutenstein*'s chugging along to that, as well. This latest TV movie we did divides into three episodes, which makes the total 40-something, so we're getting close to syndication with *Tut*, as well.

ADVICE TO THE YOUNG 'UNS

DRAW!: Because we have lots of young, aspiring comics artists and cartoonists and animators who read the magazine, what would your advice be to them—I guess even to the currently toiling, balding, aging cartoonists as well?

JS: There's a lot of us that read the magazine, right? I think that the one thing—I'm sure I emphasized it enough during this conversation—but I wish I trusted myself more, my own personal voice, earlier on. And I think I accidentally did take the right path, but you asking if I had a time machine, would I go back and take that TV writers job, and I think, y'know, no, I wouldn't, because things have worked out, and maybe I wouldn't have had my own work adapted, but certainly I spent a lot of years agonizing, trying to get work-for-hire gigs from Marvel and DC, and I think maybe I could have just trusted my own path more, looked at what other doors were opening and followed those paths. You may start off wanting to be a "comic strip artist" or a "comic book artist," but you might be better suited to the opposite. So you need to... I don't know, now, as an older guy, I'm very aware of my skill level, and my strengths and weaknesses. I think that's really important, and it's something I didn't really pay attention to for years. What am I really good at? Yeah, you can draw, you can write, but what are your real strengths? And that's a hard question to ask yourself.

The CARTOON Critic

BY MIKE MANLEY



This kicks off the return of *DRAW!*'s regular column on reviews of comics and all things related, like cartoons and animation, "how-to" books, etc. There are a few things that stick out of the pile of comics I've bought in the last six months or so. I have to say my trips to the comic shops are few and far between these days, but I do try and keep up with news via many of the web sites like Cartoon Brew, The Beat and Newsarama so I can see what might be coming out that I would be interested in, and if I might be missing anything cool. It's harder to find small press books these days—and even lower run titles by the bigger companies—and if you don't hit the shop the week those type of books come out, you often miss them.

I'll be up front, I buy comics for art, period. Sure, good stories are important, but I can read a horribly written comic that has great art. However, I can't bear to read a great story poorly told or drawn. Luckily this isn't the case with the first two issues of the stylish *Killing Girl* by Glen Brunswick and Frank Espinosa, published by Image Comics. I've been a big fan of Espinosa's art since I saw his stylish and bold *Rocketo* a few years back in San Diego. I was tipped off to it by Roque Ballesteros from Ghostbot (the guys behind the awesome Esurance commercials) who said there was this really cool comic by this guy a few aisles over, and yep, Roque was

right—it was fantastically cool, and I loved *Rocketo* the second I saw it. When Espinosa launched the regular series I was there to scoop up every issue as well as the trade.



KILLING GIRL™ AND ©2008 GLEN BRUNSWICK

Espinosa's style is as kinetic as Chinese calligraphy, with dashes of Robbins and Caniff, old Warner Bros. cartoons—bold, brushy, loose. And the air, negative space, design and color of the book are equal to the drawing: sophisticated, slightly retro, and sort of European, yet fresh, not frozen in amber, which can happen to so many artists copping a retro-feel. He is the rare artist who realizes white is a color in today's overly muddy, dark sludge that passes for comic book coloring. So I was pumped to see what he would be up to next and excited when I saw the preview and the news about *Killing Girl* and that Espinosa would be handling the art chores.

The plot of *Killing Girl* is pretty straightforward, the story tight and well crafted by Glen Brunswick. The series revolves around a highly trained killer named Sara who doesn't remember her name or much of her past, except that she was abducted as a child and became a prostitute until she was trained by the Mob's elite killers to be a

machine in their vendettas. On a job her hit goes wrong, and she finds out that her family she thought dead is, in fact, still alive. This leads her to wonder if she can get out of the job and reclaim her family and humanity.



Panel from *Killing Girl* #2. Espinosa's lush, open brush work combined with his loose, energetic coloring makes for exciting artwork.

FELIX THE CAT™ AND ©2008 FELIX COMICS, INC.

The first two issues move like a house on fire. In fact, I would have like them to proceed a bit slower and develop the characters a bit more. I felt that sometimes we are supposed to feel for characters we don't know that much about. I was not disappointed in the art on *Killing Girl*—Espinosa's same artistic sense was there—yet I have to say, I felt some of the poetry was missing that I felt in reading *Rocketo*.

At times I felt the art and story were sort of at odds in a way they weren't in *Rocketo*. Maybe the big, bold epic in *Rocketo* matched the big, bold art and poetry, since Espinosa was doing the whole package, art and story. An artist goes through a different creative process when adapting someone else's script than when working as the sole creator. I felt this was less the case in the first issue than the second, where the art is tighter, less manic. Perhaps Espinosa had less time to produce the second issue? All this said, it is still quite an enjoyable and beautiful looking comic, and a fun read. I can easily see this being made into a series on TV or getting a *La Femme Nikita* treatment by Hollywood.

Killing Girl #1 and 2, by Glen Brunswick and Frank Espinosa

★ ★ ★ — Recommended

SUPERMAN/DOOMSDAY DC UNIVERSE ANIMATED MOVIE

This direct-to-DVD movie, the first ever PG-13 animated movie based on a DC character, is definitely darker in tone in more ways than just the color palette. Loosely adapted by Bruce Timm and Duane Capizzi, the movie is based on the Superman comic book storyline from the '90s where Superman dies and which made national headlines and sent everybody and his grandmother into comic shops to buy a copy (in hopes to sell said copy for big loot down the road).

But these are different times in not only the comic market, but in the world as a whole than the "Ra-Ra '90s." The world is a darker place since 9/11, and this Superman cartoon is also darker and

more dour in tone, more serious. The film is co-directed by Lauren Montgomery, Brandon Vietti and Bruce Timm—the guy probably responsible for more good superhero cartoons than anyone else. This is a slightly tweaked version of the Kids WB *Superman* of which Timm was producer. I worked on that show with Bruce as part of the storyboard crew.

Besides the Fleisher cartoons, I

think Timm's version of Superman is certainly the best, truest version of the character that's been done. The same streamline angular style is here, though Superman's face is a lot more rugged than before and does suffer a lot more bad drawing under the Korean crew than the more youthful looking Superman from the WB show. The backgrounds are also darker in tone and in my opinion less enjoyable. Gone are the Deco-designs of the TV show's Metropolis. I'm sure this was intentional, to try and give the movie a more grim and realistic feel—after all, Superman does die.



SUPERMAN, DOOMSDAY™ AND ©2008 DC COMICS. ARTWORK ©2008 WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT.

The plot is pretty straightforward: Lex Luthor, in his never-ending plans to take over the world, has a team of scientists working on a top secret project called Apple Core, digging for energy sources beneath Metropolis when they accidentally uncover an alien spacecraft containing a killing machine called Doomsday—a military experiment gone so wrong he had to be blasted away into space. Unfortunately for The Man of Steel, Doomsday landed on Earth.

This version of Luthor voiced by James Marsters visually resembles Mr. Freeze from the *Batman* show more than the



chubbier Luthor from the WB *Superman* show voiced by Clancy Brown. This version of Lex is definitely a killer; he's much more "hands on" than the old Lex. This guy likes to get his hands dirty, actually killing people himself.

Of course like any monster movie, which the first 29 minutes of the film are, the monster Doomsday escapes and goes on a healthy killing spree. Exploding trucks, buildings, and general mayhem ensue, and it's up to Superman to stop him.

This of course is what superheroes are all about and what we all want to see, and what I think animation can deliver in a way live action can't. In the super-battle between Superman and Doomsday we see them pretty much level the city in a brutal, action-packed brawl. We see people killed, lots of flying glass cutting people, and blood. This is probably what makes it more PG-13, as the Standards and Practice people at the networks would never let things like that by. Timm and his crew obviously loved cutting loose a bit more here not being hemmed in by the S&P censors.

What I like the most about the film overall is that the character of Superman "is" Superman, this time voiced excellently by Adam Baldwin. I admit, that I am probably prejudiced when it comes to Superman. Chris Reeve was perfect to me as the live-action Man of Steel, and Tim Daly, who voiced him on the WB TV show, was also perfect, so Baldwin had big shoes to fill. But Andrea Romano, who casts the voice talent on most everything Timm does, did a great job once again.

We are also introduced to a slightly different Lois, voiced by Anne Heche. This Lois seems less cute, less spunky than the Lois played by Dana Delany. Jimmy, voiced by Adam Wylie, seems like a mid-'20s Superman's pal and less like a teen, which I find maybe the most refreshing recast. We also get to see a gothy version of the old Superman villain, Toyman, voiced by John DiMaggio, who's always over-the-top.

Luthor, clones and his obsession with Superman. There is one sequence which is even kinda' creepy where Lex fights Superman himself revealing up and personal his sick personality.

My main quibbles with all of these cartoons and shows usually come down to art issues. The film was animated by Lotto Animation, and often the backgrounds were a bit drab and looked like they were painted digitally, which often has a slightly "slimy and cheesy" look. Most of the animation was okay, and certainly



passable, but nothing as amazing as the episodes of the old *Batman* cartoon animated by TMS. In certain scenes you could really see the difference in the level of the animators' skills. The soundtrack by Robert Kral is pretty good, though generic in spots. Overall I say this is a pretty good Superman cartoon, one which I think any true fan of the character can enjoy. Timm and crew keep what's at the heart of Superman on the screen, something that was terribly lacking in the last live-action film. The DVD also contains bonus sections with commentary by the crew. I wish there was more behind the scenes on the art as I personally find actors pretty boring when they are not acting.

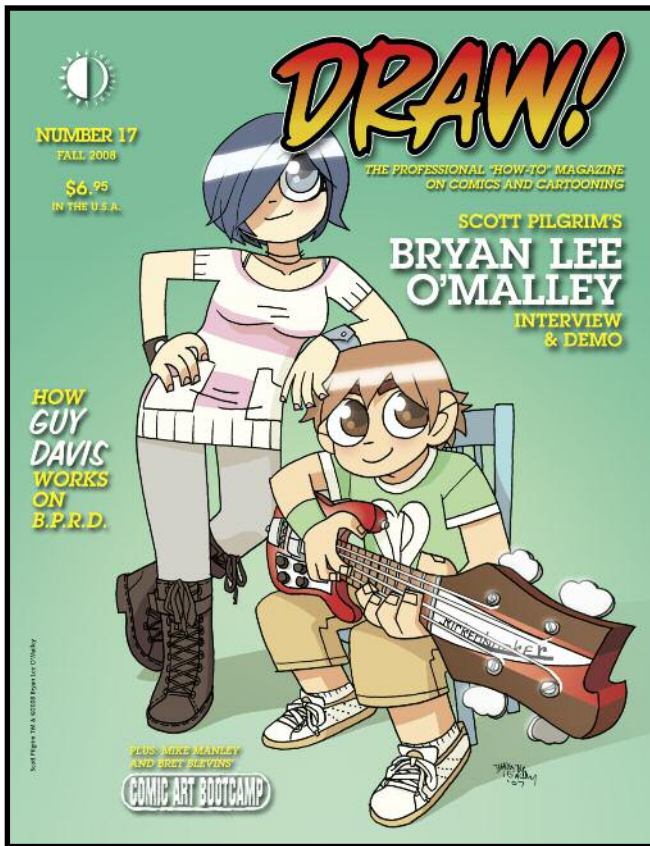
Superman/Doomsday, by Warner Bros.

★★★ — Recommended



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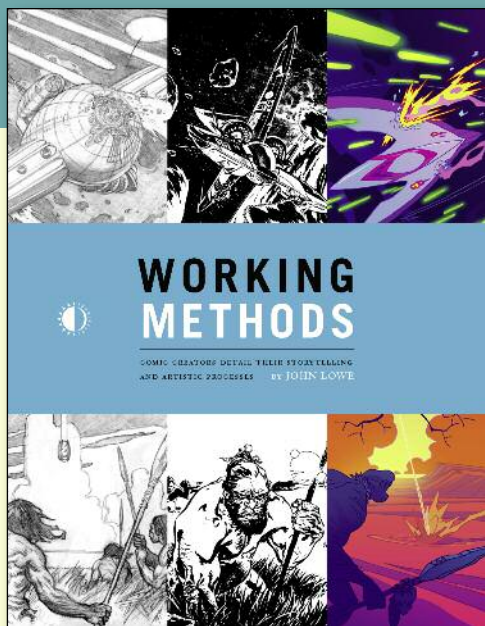


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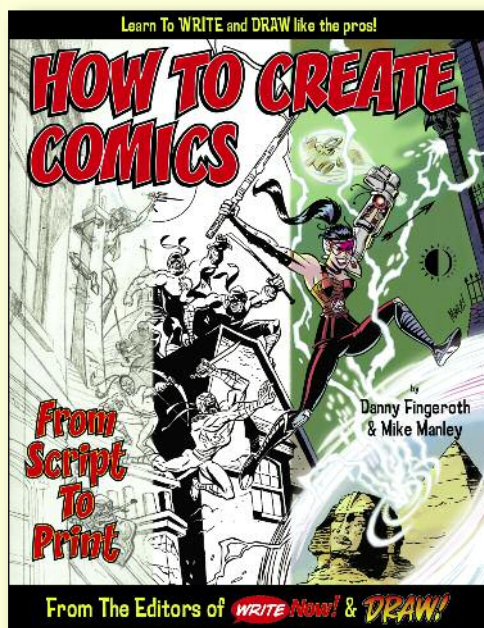
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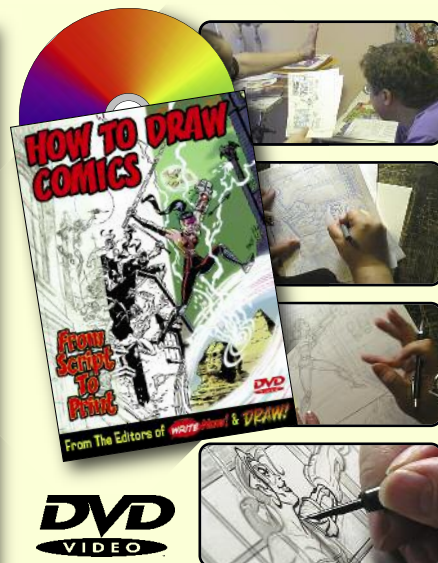
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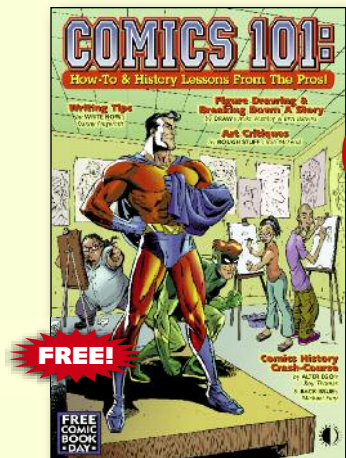


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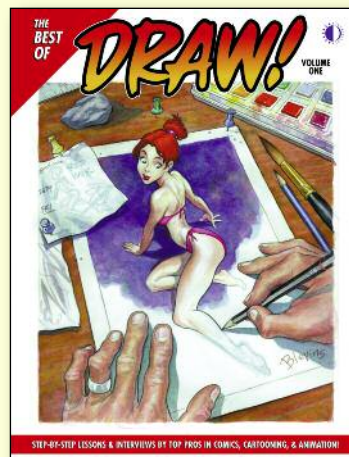
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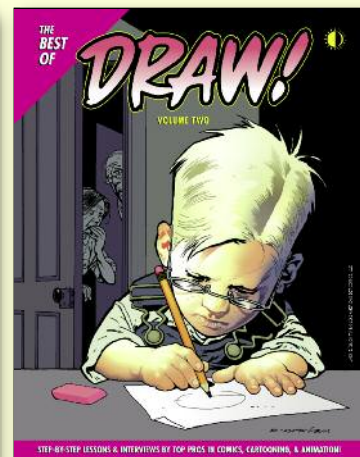
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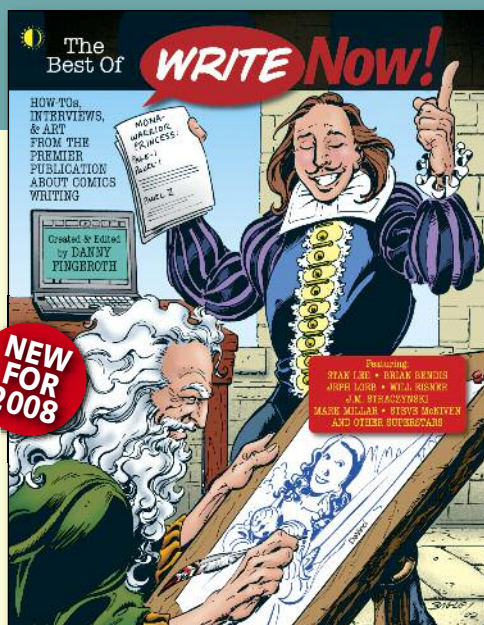
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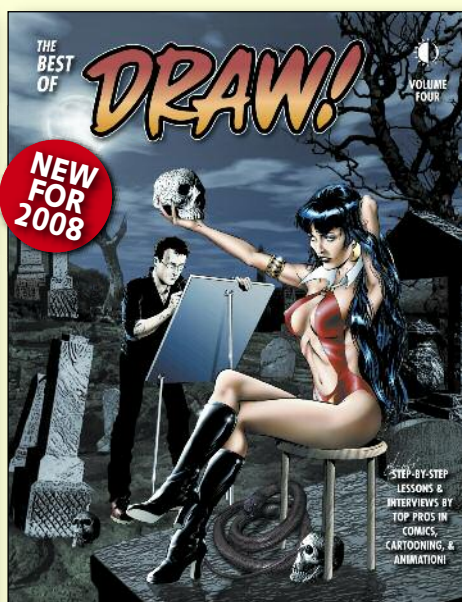


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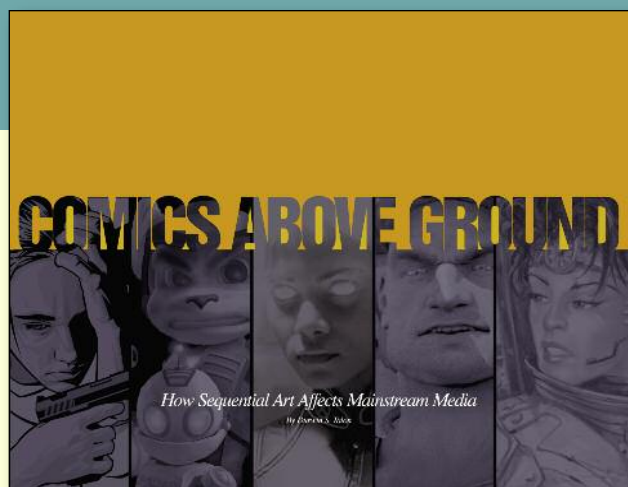


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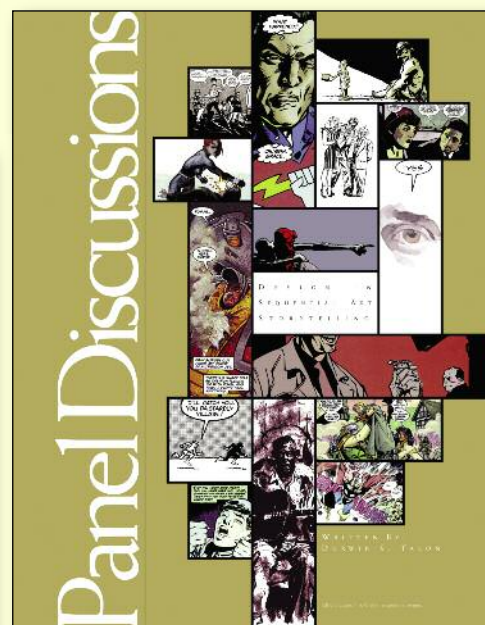
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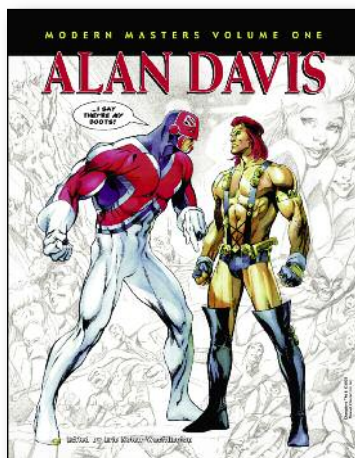
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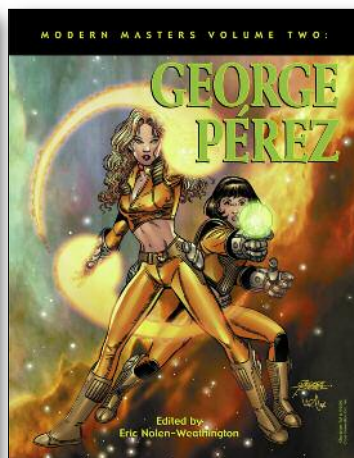
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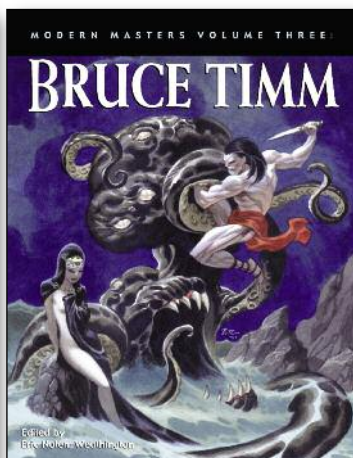
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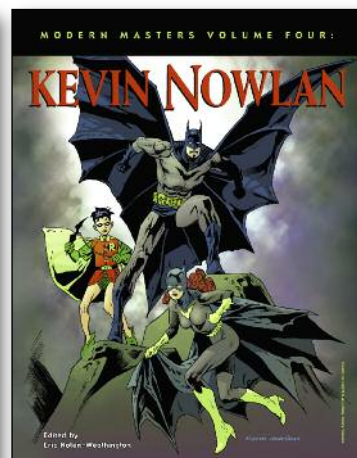
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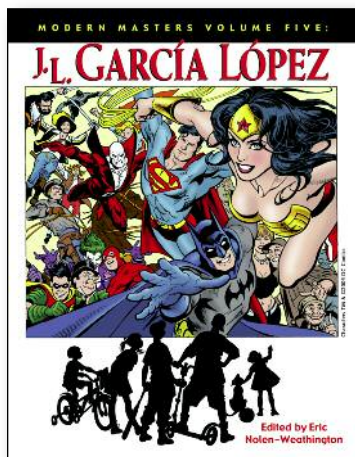
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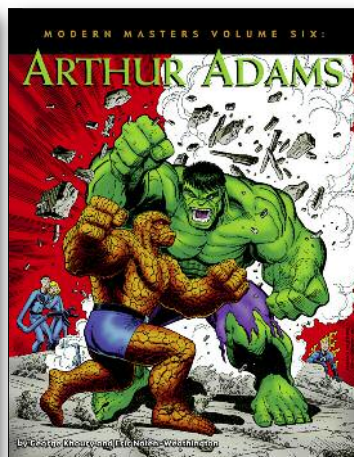
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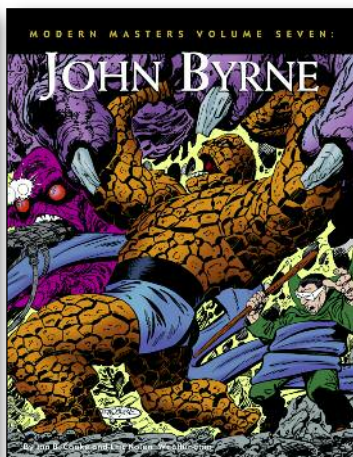
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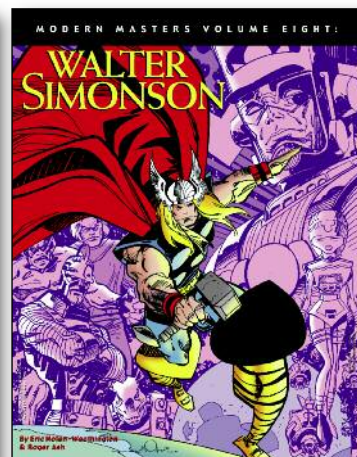
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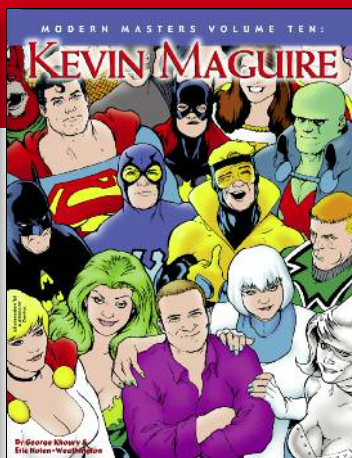
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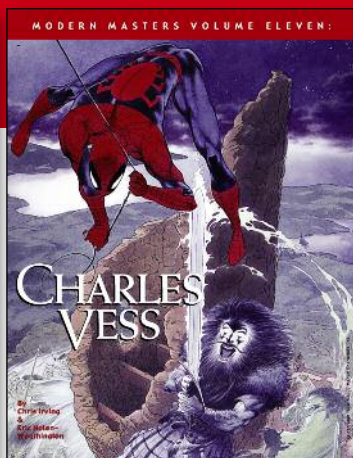
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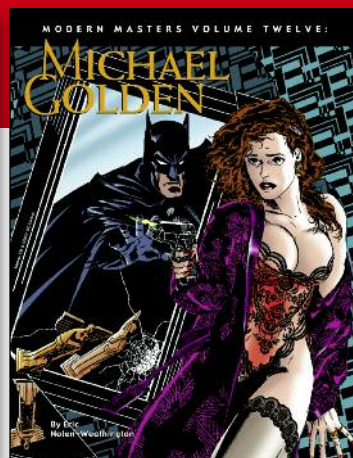
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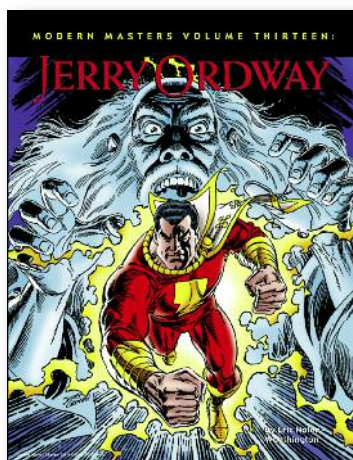
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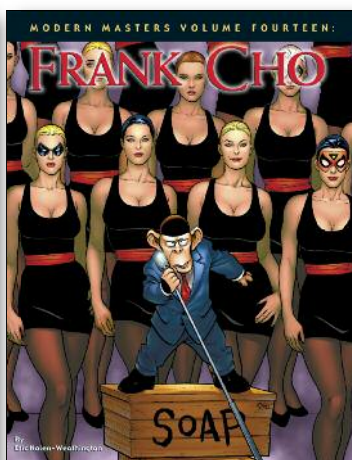
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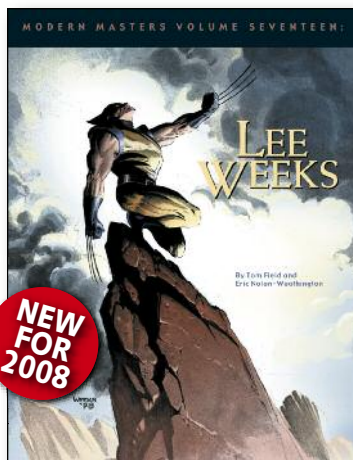
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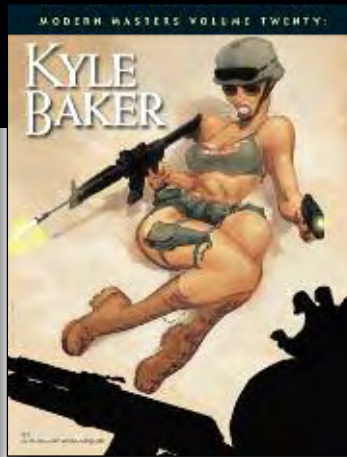


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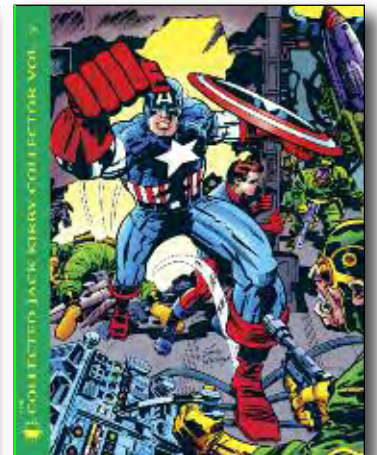
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BRICKJOURNAL #3

FULL-COLOR issue #3 has **LEGO Event Reports** from **BRICKWORLD** (Chicago), **FIRST LEGO LEAGUE WORLD FESTIVAL** (Atlanta) and **PIECE OF PEACE** (Japan), a spotlight on the creation of our amazing cover model built by **BRYCE MCLONE**, plus interviews with **ARTHUR GUGICK** and **STEVEN CANVIN** of **LEGO MINDSTORMS**, to see where **LEGO ROBOTICS** is going! There's also **STEP-BY-STEP BUILDING INSTRUCTIONS, TECHNIQUES**, & more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #4

FULL-COLOR issue #4 features interviews with top LEGO BUILDERS including **BREANN SLEDGE** (**BIONICLE** builder), Event Reports from LEGO gatherings such as **BRICKFAIR** (Washington, DC) and **BRICKCON** (Seattle, Washington), plus reports on new **MINDSTORMS** projects, **STEP-BY-STEP BUILDING INSTRUCTIONS** and **TECHNIQUES** for all skill levels, **NEW SET REVIEWS**, and editor **JOE MENO** shows how to build a robotic LEGO Wall-E!

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ALTER EGO focuses on Golden Age comics and creators with articles, interviews and unseen art, plus FCA (Fawcett Collectors of America), Mr. Monster & more. Edited by ROY THOMAS.



DRAW! is the professional "How-To" magazine on cartooning and animation, featuring in-depth interviews and step-by-step demonstrations from top comics professionals. Edited by MIKE MANLEY.



ROUGH STUFF features never-seen pencil pages, sketches, layouts, roughs, and unused inked pages from throughout comics history, plus columns, critiques, and more! Edited by BOB MCLEOD.



WRITE NOW! features writing tips from pros on both sides of the desk, interviews, sample scripts, reviews, exclusive Nuts & Bolts tutorials, and more! Edited by DANNY FINGEROTH.



BACK ISSUE celebrates comic books of the 1970s, 1980s, and today through a variety of recurring (and rotating) departments, plus rare and unpublished art. Edited by MICHAEL EURY.



ALTER EGO #81

New FRANK BRUNNER Man-Thing cover, a look at the late-'60s horror comic WEB OF HORROR with early work by BRUNNER, WRIGHTSON, WINDSOR-SMITH, SIMONSON, & CHAYKIN, interview with comics & fine artist EVERETT RAYMOND KINTSLER, ROY THOMAS' 1971 origin synopsis for the FIRST MAN-THING STORY, plus FCA, MR. MONSTER, and more!

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ALTER EGO #82

MLJ ISSUE! Golden Age MLJ index illustrated with vintage images of The Shield, Hangman, Mr. Justice, Black Hood, by IRV NOVICK, JACK COLE, CHARLES BIRO, MORT MESKIN, GIL KANE, & others—behind a marvelous MLJ-heroes cover by BOB MCLEOD! Plus interviews with IRV NOVICK and JOE EDWARDS, FCA, MR. MONSTER, and more!

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ALTER EGO #83

SWORD & SORcery PART 2! Cover by ARTHUR SUYDAM, in-depth art-filled look at Marvel's Conan the Barbarian, DC's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, Dagar the Invincible, Ironjaw & Wulf, and Arak, Son of Thunder, plus the never-seen Valda the Iron Maiden by TODD MCFARLANE! Plus JOE EDWARDS (Part 2), FCA, MR. MONSTER, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships January 2009



ALTER EGO #84

Unseen JIM APARO cover, STEVE SKATES discusses his early comics work, art & artifacts by ADKINS, APARO, ARAGONES, BOYETTE, DITKO, GIORDANO, KANE, KELLER, MORISI, ORLANDO, SEKOWSKY, STONE, THOMAS, WOOD, and the great WARREN SAVIN! Plus writer CHARLES SINCLAIR on his partnership with Batman co-creator BILL FINGER, FCA, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
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DRAW! #17

Go behind the pages of the hit series of graphic novels starring Scott Pilgrim with his creator and artist, BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY, to see how he creates the acclaimed series! Then, learn how B.P.R.D.'s GUY DAVIS works on the series, plus more Comic Art Bootcamp: Learning from The Great Cartoonists by BRET BLEVIN and MIKE MANLEY, reviews, and more!

(80-page magazine with COLOR)
\$6.95 US • Ships Fall 2008



ROUGH STUFF #10

Interview with RON GARNEY, with copious examples of sketchwork and comments. Also features on ANDY SMITH, MICHAEL JASON PAZ, and MATT HALEY, showing how their work evolves, excerpts from a new book on ALEX RAYMOND, secrets of teaching comic art by pro inker BOB MCLEOD, new cover by GARNEY and MCLEOD, newcomer critique, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships October 2008



ROUGH STUFF #11

New cover by GREG HORN, plus interviews with HORN and TOM YEATES on how they produce their stellar work. Also features on GENE HA, JIMMY CHEUNG, and MIKE PERKINS, showing their sketchwork, and commentary, tips on collecting sketches and commissions from artists, a "Rough Critique" of a newcomer's work, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships January 2009



WRITE NOW! #20

Focus on THE SPIRIT movie, showing how FRANK MILLER transformed WILL EISNER's comics into the smash-hit film, with interviews with key players behind the making of the movie, a look at what made Eisner's comics so special, and more. Plus: an interview with COLLEEN DORAN, writer ALEX GRECIAN on how to get a pitch green light, script and art examples, and more!

(80-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships Winter 2009



BACK ISSUE #29

"Mutants" issue! CLAREMONT, BYRNE, SMITH, and ROMITA, JR.'s X-Men work, NOCENTI and ARTHUR ADAMS' Longshot, MCLEOD and SIENKIEWICZ's New Mutants, the UK's CAPTAIN BRITAIN series, lost Angel stories, Beast's tenure with the Avengers, the return of the original X-Men in X-Factor, the revelation of Nightcrawler's "original" father, a history of DC's mutant, Captain Comet, and more! Cover by DAVE COCKRUM!

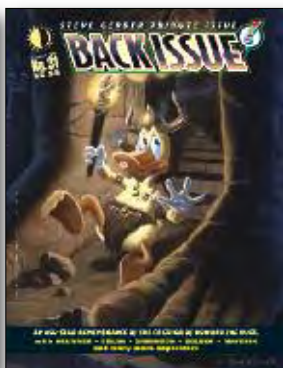
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Ships July 2008



BACK ISSUE #30

"Saturday Morning Heroes!" Interviews with TV Captain Marvels JACKSON BOSTWICK and JOHN DAVEY, MAGGIN and SAVIUK's lost Superman/"Captain Thunder" sequel, Space Ghost interviews with GARY OWENS and STEVE RUDE, MARV WOLFMAN guest editorial, Super Friends, unproduced fourth wave Super Powers action figures, Astro Boy, ADAM HUGHES tribute to DAVE STEVENS, and a new cover by ALEX ROSSI!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships September 2008



BACK ISSUE #31

"STEVE GERBER Salute!" In-depth look at his Howard the Duck, Man-Thing, Omega the Unknown, Defenders, Metal Men, Mister Miracle, Thundarr the Barbarian, and more! Plus: Creators pay tribute to Steve Gerber, featuring art by and commentary from BRUNNER, BUCKLER, COLAN, GOLDEN, STAN LEE, LEVITZ, MAYERIK, MOONEY, PLOOG, SIMONSON, and others. Cover painting by FRANK BRUNNER!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships November 2008



BACK ISSUE #32

"Tech, Data, and Hardware!" The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe, WEIN, WOLFMAN, and GREENBERG on DC's Who's Who, SAVIUK, STATON, and VAN SCIVER on Drawing Green Lantern, ED HANNIGAN Art Gallery, history of Rom: Spaceknight, story of BILL MANTLO, Dial H for Hero, Richie Rich's Inventions, and a Spider-Mobile schematic cover by ELIOT BROWN and DUSTY ABELL!

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BACK ISSUE #33

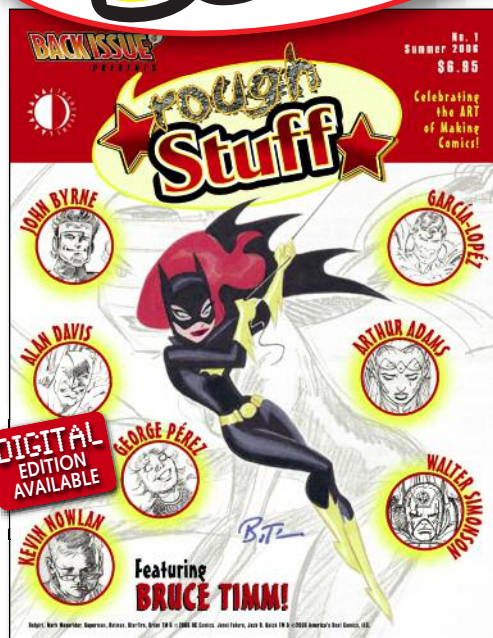
"Teen Heroes!" Teen Titans in the 1970s & 1980s, with CARDY, GARCIA-LOPEZ, PEREZ, TUSKA, and WOLFMAN, BARON and GUICE on the Flash, interviews with TV Billy Batson MICHAEL GRAY and writer STEVE SKATES, NICIEZA and BAGLEY's New Warriors; Legion of Super-Heroes 1970s art gallery; James Bond, Jr.; and... the Archie! New Teen Titans cover by GEORGE PEREZ and colored by GENE HA!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
Ships March 2009

★ rough Stuff ★

"HOW-TO" MAGAZINES

Spinning off from the pages of **BACK ISSUE!** magazine comes **ROUGH STUFF**, celebrating the **ART** of creating comics! Edited by famed inker **BOB McLEOD**, each issue spotlights **NEVER-BEFORE PUBLISHED** penciled pages, preliminary sketches, detailed layouts, and even unused inked versions from artists throughout comics history. Included is commentary on the art, discussing what went right and wrong with it, and background information to put it all into historical perspective. Plus, before-and-after comparisons let you see firsthand how an image changes from initial concept to published version. So don't miss this amazing magazine, featuring galleries of **NEVER-BEFORE SEEN** art, from some of your favorite series of all time, and the top pros in the industry!



ROUGH STUFF #1

Our debut issue features galleries of **UNSEEN ART** by a who's who of Modern Masters including: **ALAN DAVIS**, **GEORGE PÉREZ**, **BRUCE TIMM**, **KEVIN NOWLAN**, **JOSÉ LUIS GARCÍA-LÓPEZ**, **ARTHUR ADAMS**, **JOHN BYRNE**, and **WALTER SIMONSON**, plus a **KEVIN NOWLAN** interview, art critiques, and a new **BRUCE TIMM** COVER!

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ROUGH STUFF #2

The follow-up to our smash first issue features more galleries of **UNSEEN ART** by top industry professionals, including: **BRIAN APTHORP**, **FRANK BRUNNER**, **PAUL GULACY**, **JERRY ORDWAY**, **ALEX TOTI**, and **MATT WAGNER**, plus a **PAUL GULACY** interview, a look at art of the pros **BEFORE** they were pros, and a new **GULACY "HEX" COVER!**

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ROUGH STUFF #3

Still more galleries of **UNPUBLISHED ART** by **MIKE ALLRED**, **JOHN BUSCEMA**, **YANICK PAQUETTE**, **JOHN ROMITA JR.**, **P. CRAIG RUSSELL**, and **LEE WEEKS**, plus a **JOHN ROMITA JR.** interview, looks at the process of creating a cover (with **BILL SIENKIEWICZ** and **JOHN ROMITA JR.**), and a new **ROMITA JR. COVER**, plus a **FREE DRAW #13 PREVIEW!**

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ROUGH STUFF #4

More **NEVER-PUBLISHED** galleries (with detailed artist commentaries) by **MICHAEL KALUTA**, **ANDREW "Starman" ROBINSON**, **GENE COLAN**, **HOWARD CHAYKIN**, and **STEVE BISSETTE**, plus interview and art by **JOHN TOTLEBEN**, a look at the Wonder Woman Day charity auction (with rare art), art critiques, before-&-after art comparisons, and a **FREE WRITE NOW #15 PREVIEW!**

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ROUGH STUFF #5



NEVER-BEFORE-PUBLISHED galleries (complete with extensive commentaries by the artists) by **PAUL SMITH**, **GIL KANE**, **CULLY HAMNER**, **DALE KEOWN**, and **ASHLEY WOOD**, plus a feature interview and art by **STEVE RUDE**, an examination of **JOHN ALBANO** and **TONY DeZUNIGA**'s work on **Jonah Hex**, new **STEVE RUDE COVER**, plus a **FREE BACK ISSUE #23 PREVIEW!**

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ROUGH STUFF #7



Features an in-depth interview and cover by **TIM TOWNSEND**, **CRAIG HAMILTON**, **DAN JURGENS**, and **HOWARD PORTER** offer preliminary art and commentaries, **MARIE SEVERIN** career retrospective, graphic novels feature with art and comments by **DAWN BROWN**, **TOMER HANUKA**, **BEN TEMPLESMITH**, and **LANCE TOOKS**, and more!

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ROUGH STUFF #8

Features an in-depth interview and cover painting by the extraordinary **MIKE MAYHEW**, preliminary and unpublished art by **ALEX HORLEY**, **TONY DeZUNIGA**, **NICK CARDY**, and **RAFAEL KAYANAN** (including commentary by each artist), a look at the great Belgian comic book artists, a "Rough Critique" of **MIKE MURDOCK**'s work, and more!

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ROUGH STUFF #6

Features a new interview and cover by **BRIAN STELFREEZE**, interview with **BUTCH GUICE**, extensive art galleries/commentary by **IAN CHURCHILL**, **DAVE COCKRUM**, and **COLLEEN DORAN**, **MIKE GAGNON** looks at independent comics, with art and comments by **ANDREW BARR**, **BRANDON GRAHAM**, and **ASAF HANUKA!** Includes a **FREE ALTER EGO #73 PREVIEW!**

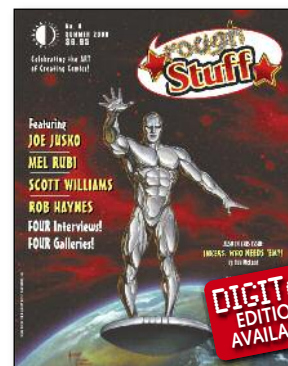
(100-page magazine) \$6.95
Diamond Order Code: AUG074137



ROUGH STUFF #9

Editor and pro inker **BOB McLEOD** features four interviews this issue: **ROB HAYNES** (interviewed by fellow professional **TIM TOWNSEND**), **JOE JUSKO**, **MEL RUBI**, and **SCOTT WILLIAMS**, with a new painted cover by **JUSKO**, and an article by **McLEOD** examining "Inkers: Who needs 'em?" along with other features, including a Rough Critique of **RUDY VASQUEZ!**

(100-page magazine) \$6.95
Ships Summer 2008

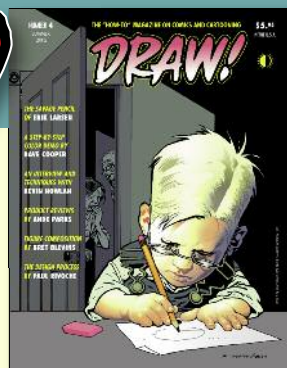


4-ISSUE SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$26 US Postpaid by Media Mail (\$36 First Class, \$44 Canada, \$60 Surface, \$72 Airmail).

DRAW!

DRAW! (edited by top comics artist **MIKE MANLEY**) is the professional "HOW-TO" magazine on comics, cartooning, and animation. Each issue features in-depth **INTERVIEWS** and **STEP-BY-STEP DEMOS** from top comics pros on all aspects of graphic storytelling. **NOTE:** Contains nudity for purposes of figure drawing. **INTENDED FOR MATURE READERS. TWO-TIME EISNER AWARD NOMINEE** for Best Comics-Related Periodical.

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DRAW! #4

Features an interview and step-by-step demonstration from **Savage Dragon's** **ERIK LARSEN**, **KEVIN NOWLAN** on drawing and inking techniques, **DAVE COOPER** demonstrates coloring techniques in Photoshop, **BRET BLEVINS** tutorial on Figure Composition, **PAUL RIVOCHÉ** on the Design Process, reviews of comics drawing papers, and more!

(88-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
Diamond Order Code: JAN022757



DRAW! #5

Interview and sketchbook by **MIKE WIERINGO**, **BRIAN BENDIS** and **MIKE Oeming** show how they create the series "Powers", **BRET BLEVINS** shows "How to draw great hands", "The illusion of depth in design" by **PAUL RIVOCHÉ**, must-have art books reviewed by **TERRY BEATTY**, plus reviews of the best art supplies, links, a color section and more! **OEMING** cover!

(88-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
Diamond Order Code: APR022633



DRAW! #6

Interview, cover, and demo with **BILL WRAY**, **STEPHEN DeStefano** interview and demo on cartooning and animation, **BRET BLEVINS** shows "How to draw the human figure in light and shadow", a step-by-step Photo-shop tutorial by **CELIA CALLE**, expert inking tips by **MIKE MANLEY**, plus reviews of the best art supplies, links, a color section and more!

(96-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
Diamond Order Code: FEB032281



DRAW! #8

From comics to video games: an interview, cover, and demo with **MATT HALEY**, **TOM BANCROFT** & **ROB CORLEY** on character design, "Drawing in Adobe Illustrator" step-by-step demo by **ALBERTO RUIZ**, "Draping The Human Figure" by **BRET BLEVINS**, a new **COMICS** SECTION, International Spotlight on **JOSÉ LOUIS AGREDA**, a color section and more!

(96-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
Diamond Order Code: DEC032848



DRAW! #10

RON GARNEY interview, step-by-step demo, and cover, **GRAHAM NOLAN** on creating newspaper strips, **TODD KLEIN** and other pros discuss lettering, "Draping The Human Figure, Part Two" by **BRET BLEVINS**, **ALBERTO RUIZ** with more Adobe Illustrator tips, interview with Banana Tail creator **MARK MCKENNA**, links, a color section and more!

(104-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
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DRAW! #11

STEVE RUDE demonstrates his approach to comics & drawing, **ROQUE BALLESTROS** on Flash animation, political cartoonist **JIM BORGMAN** on his daily comic strip Zits, plus **DRAW!**'s regular instructors **BRET BLEVINS** and **MIKE MANLEY** on "Drawing On Life", more Adobe Illustrator tips with **ALBERTO RUIZ**, links, a color section and more! New **RUDE** cover!

(112-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$5.95
Diamond Order Code: MAY053188



DRAW! #12

KYLE BAKER reveals his working methods and step-by-step processes on merging his traditional and digital art, Machine Teen's **MIKE HAWTHORNE** on his work, "Making Perspective Work For You" by **BRET BLEVINS** and **MIKE MANLEY**, Photoshop techniques with **ALBERTO RUIZ**, Adult Swim's **THE VENTURE BROTHERS**, links, a color section and more! New **BAKER** cover!

(96-page magazine) **SOLD OUT**
(96-page Digital Edition) \$2.95



DRAW! #13

Step-by-step demo of painting methods by cover artist **ALEX HORLEY** (Heavy Metal, Vertigo, DC, Wizards of the Coast), plus interviews and demos by Banana Sundays' **COLLEEN COOVER**, behind-the-scenes on Adult Swim's **MINORITEMA**, regular features on drawing by **BRET BLEVINS** and **MIKE MANLEY**, links, color section and more, plus a **FREE ROUGH STUFF #3 PREVIEW!**

(88-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$6.95
Diamond Order Code: OCT063824



DRAW! #14

Features in-depth interviews and demos with DC Comics artist **DOUG MAHNKE**, **OVI NEDELCU** (Pigtales, WB Animation), **STEVE PURCELL** (Sam and Max), plus Part 3 of editor **MIKE MANLEY** and **BRET BLEVINS' COMIC ART BOOTCAMP** on "Using Black to Power up Your Pages", product reviews, a new **MAHNKE** cover, and a **FREE ALTER EGO #70 PREVIEW!**

(80-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$6.95
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DRAW! #15

BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE, covering major schools offering comic art as part of their curriculum, featuring faculty, student, and graduate interviews in an ultimate overview of collegiate-level comic art classes! Plus, a "how-to" demo/ interview with **B.P.R.D.'S** **JOY DAVIS**, **MANLEY** and **BRET BLEVINS' COMIC ART BOOTCAMP** series, a **FREE WRITE NOW #17 PREVIEW**, and more!

(80-page magazine with **COLOR**) \$6.95
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DRAW! #16

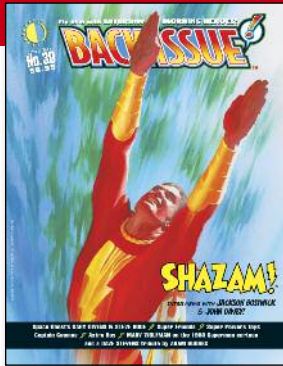
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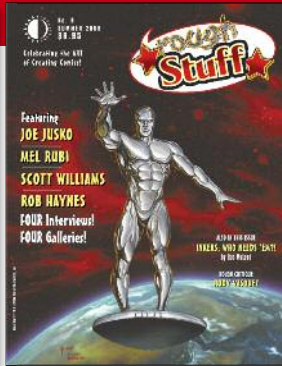
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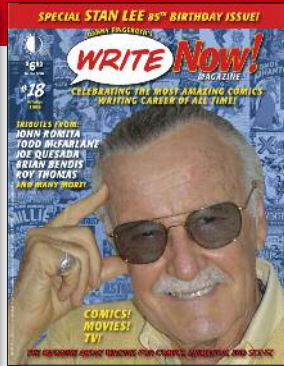
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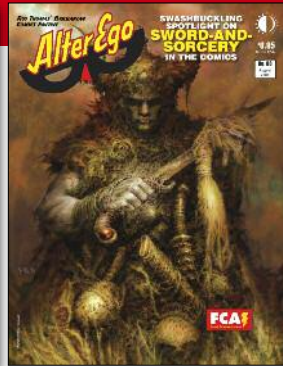
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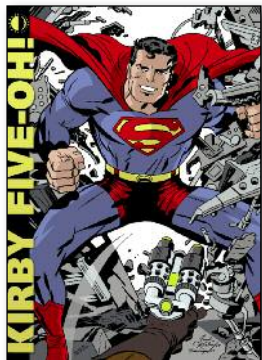
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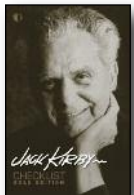


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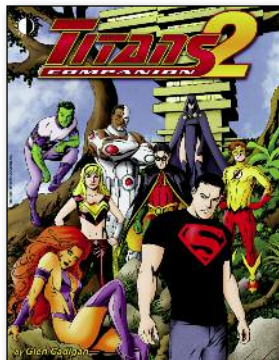
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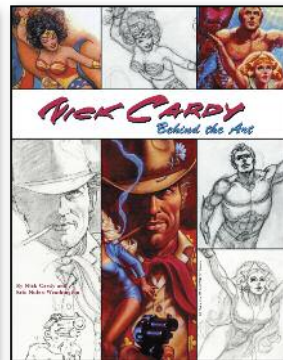
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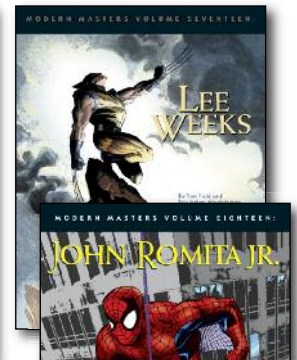
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