

BRENT ANDERSON
Portrait by **KEN MEYER, JR.**
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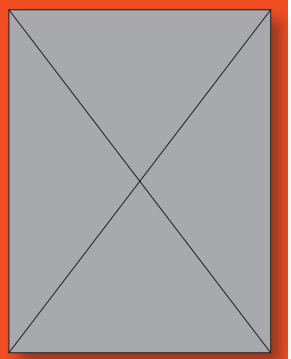
About Our Cover

Pencils by
BRENT ANDERSON
Inks by
WILL BLYBERG
Colors by
GLENN WHITMORE



The Confessor TM & © Juke Box Productions, Inc.

Above: *Artist of the issue Brent Anderson, who penciled our cover, confessed that he loves this page from* Kurt Busiek's Astro City *V2 #4 [Dec. '96], which captures the moment the vampiric vigilante, The Confessor, was introduced to readers! Courtesy of Aaron Lipson, who shared his treasured original art with us, we asked gregarious Glenn Whitmore to re-color as our cover. Of course, inks were rendered by Will Blyberg.*



comic book CREATOR™

March 2027 • The Brent Anderson Issue • Number 48

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THE MAIN EVENT

The Confessions of Brent Eric Anderson
In a professional life stretching back to the 1970s, the artist of *Ka-Zar the Savage, Somerset Holmes, Strikeforce: Morituri,* and *Astro City* shares in this comprehensive career-spanning interview about his ubringing, early years in fanzines, big break rendering a "flesh" hero (Alan Weiss's description!) with a pet sabertooth tiger, and an up-and-down life in comics. Plus the man hints at much more to come!..... 44

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Dept. of Corrections Dept.: *Despite plans for us to include in this issue a feature on alt cartoonist Ariel Bordeaux's upcoming collection, she suggested a near future ish might present better timing for the promotion.*

Oops! Dept.: *Apologies to Jeff Goodman, onetime Countrywide editor, whose photo of Myron Fass appeared without attribution in* CBC *#45. After he emailed his displeasure over the unintended oversight, Ye Ed. and Jeff got to corresponding and we'll be interviewing the gent on his* Gasm *magazine and Countrywide memories very soon! Also, Paul McCusker points out, in* CBC *#46, we failed to attribute the* 1980 Canadian Comics Annual, *which was drawn and painted by Ian Carr, and to acknowledge that the Shuster Award illo was penciled by Tom Grummet, inked by Scott Cooper, and colored by Mr. McCusker. Apologies, Paul.*

Right: *Brent Anderson's depiction of The Hanged Man, a mysterious character in the* Astro City *series.*

Please note: *Some images in this issue may have been enhanced by digital software.*

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This issue is dedicated to the memories of STEVEN BROWER, JOSHUA CASSARA, ANDY FISH, WILL FRANZ, MATT HOWARTH,

comic book CREATOR

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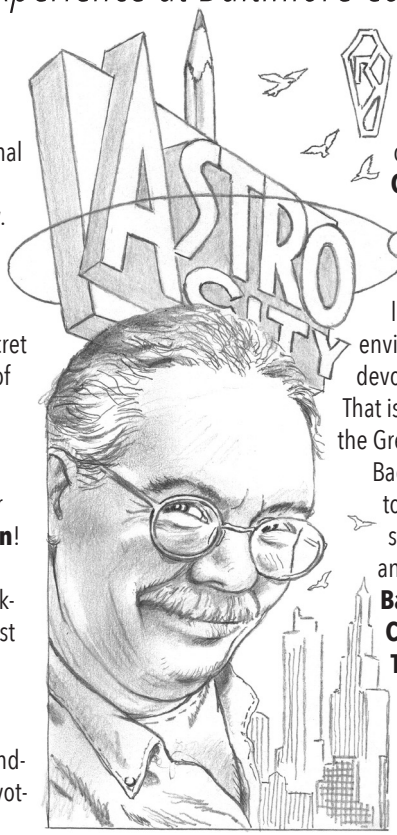
Contact *CBC*: *jonbcooke@aol.com*

No More Con Jobs?

Might a glorious experience at Baltimore Comic Con be my last?

It's a long ride to Charm City, a.k.a. Baltimore, the largest city in Maryland, which hosts a dynamite all-comics (i.e., minimal other media) comic con every fall, it being a fave annual show. At this year's fiesta, thanks to programming guru and pal **Adam Philips**, I moderated a few panels, including "My Secret Origin," featuring a discussion of the professional starts of **Steve Englehart**, **Jim Starlin**, and **John Workman**, as well as a '70s Marvel stalwart I had never previously met, Mr. **Ron Wilson**! It was great getting to know the Brooklyn-born gent and I'm looking forward to featuring the artist in these pages soon.

I also interviewed Stainless Steve on the Room 338 stage about his comics career, who kindly plugged *CBC* #37, our ish devoted to the scribe to the receptive audience! Thanks, amigo!



Brent Anderson by Ronn Sutton

But I mainly attended 2026 **Baltimore Comic Con** as an excuse to meet up with best buddy **John Morrow** – Ye Ed. and Ye Pub. strive to get together at least once a year to plot new schemes and dreams for the coming months – and I enticed the publisher to join my Sunday panel, "The Great One is Coming! Celebrating 55 Years of Jack Kirby's Fourth World." The panel's blockbuster line-up included the aforementioned Mr. Starlin, **Walter Simonson**, and **Tom King**, and I'm including the transcript of that entertaining presentation in *CBC*'s upcoming special 50th issue, which is devoted to the theme of "Why We Love Kirby."

My reasoning for that *CBC* #50 spotlight is to celebrate not only my all-time favorite comic book creator, but also acknowledge the appearance – in the very same month! – of ***The Jack Kirby Collector*** #100(!), the publication that absolutely changed my life and led to my life's work as a comic book historian. That incredible magazine, which launched the TwoMorrows empire 33 years ago(!) would result in a truly epic friendship I share with Mr. Morrow, for which I'm deeply grateful.

If all goes as planned, included in that 100-page super-spectacular will be a sample of what I plan to be an excerpt of what will be at the encyclopedic **Kirby Concordance**, an A–Z word glossary of Jack comics, characters, concepts, contraptions, and collaborators, along with a catalog of life events and the like! Compiled by John and myself, I'm envisioning this to be the project to which I devote a good chunk of my remaining years. That is, to create a definitive tome in honor of the Great One, Jacob Kurtzberg!

Back to my Baltimore foray, it was a blast to be free to wander the hall and leisurely spend time talking comics stuff with an array of pals: **Dan Parent**, **Marty Baumann**, **Derf Backderf**, **Howard Chaykin**, **Bill Morrison**, **Rand Hoppe**, **Tom Kraft**, **Joe** and **Hilary Staton**, and my fave fanzine fanatic friends, **Aaron Caplan** and **Manny Maris**, as well as making new chums, including Kubert School alumni **Don** and **Jhane Kunkel**!

As fun as the Maryland show was, I think I'm getting the notion to stop going to conventions, though my other best bud, **Rob Yeremian**, suggests I not forgo nearby **Terrificon**, a Connecticut gathering typically in the month of August, as **Mitch Hallock** runs an awesome comics-centric show, just like Baltimore. What say, Mitch? Need a seasoned moderator for 2027…?

Before getting to Cooke news, let me give a huge shout-out to **Ramón K. Pérez**, head Raid Studio honcho, who generously transported and mailed the Canadian contributor copies of *CBC* #46, after I made the three-hour drive to New York City through torrential downpours to deliver the box outside Times Square! The gent was in the Big Apple to promote his excellent *Blitz* mag at the N.Y. Comic Con. Many, many thanks, Ramón!

For real this time, I'm putting final touches on **Mind Candy: The Legendary Story of Last Gasp** (672 pages!) and it was great to confab with **Bob Chapman** in Baltimore about plans for our *Treasure Chest* history (with accompanying *This Godless Communism* reprint!). I promise you, comics buffs: this will be totally *celestial!*

– ***Ye Crusading Editor***
jonbcooke@aol.com

Brent Anderson portrait © 2027 Ronn Sutton.

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Bezaire's Bizarre Dreams

The curious journey of Canadian comics creator — and Warren horror writer — Bruce Bezaire

Conducted by JON B. COOKE

[**Interviewer intro:** *As I mention in the following Q-&-A with writer/artist Bruce Erik Bezaire, I was a fan of his (too few) stories in the Warren comic magazines, especially his chilling and prescient "Night of the Jackass" series in the mid-'70s'* Eerie *anthology, about a drug that turned normal people into savage murderers. So it was a true delight to make the Canadian's acquaintance and to also learn about his more recent comics work, material far removed from his black-&-white horror writing. –* **JBC**]

Comic Book Creator: *Alright, Bruce, please tell me your story. Where are you originally from?*

Bruce Bezaire: I'm from Windsor and basically spent my early life here, right through university before I went off to Southern Illinois University for my master's degree, and that was in the very early '70s.

CBC: *So were you into comic books as a kid?*

Bruce: Oh yeah. Going back to… gosh, I have a few spot memories, here and there. My family went up to visit some cousins, in Cheyboygan, Michigan, and I can remember, in the early to mid–'50s, being introduced to *Blackhawk*, which I thought was pretty cool. And then, it was late '50s and early '60s, when the Silver Age kicked off, I got into that pretty big time. Mostly DC.

CBC: *I read somewhere that you wrote an 80-page comic book as your college thesis?*





Bruce: That was an 80-page kind of graphic novel, in 1971. It never saw the light of day, but it got me out of the University of Southern Illinois grad school.

CBC: *Why did you choose that form?*

Bruce: Well, it's just something that I've always been interested in, and it's a unique visual language, the melding of words and pictures, something other than just words or just pictures. And it's greater than the sum of its parts, I think. So I've always been interested in it as a unique visual language, and I always thought, too, it was kind of ghettoized by funny animals and super-heroes. So I wanted to do something that was a little bit different.

CBC: *And what was the content?*

Bruce: Well, it was kind of supernatural-ish, but how to describe it… I found out later that Woody Allen did a play, *Play It Again, Sam,* where he would see Humphrey Bogart… I've never seen the movie, and I was not aware of it when I did my script, but it was that kind of thing where people, in the throes of very emotional or extreme circumstances, who idolized pop culture figures, would have their idols materialize and get into all sorts of mischief. So that was the idea.

CBC: *Can you remember the celebrities in your story?*

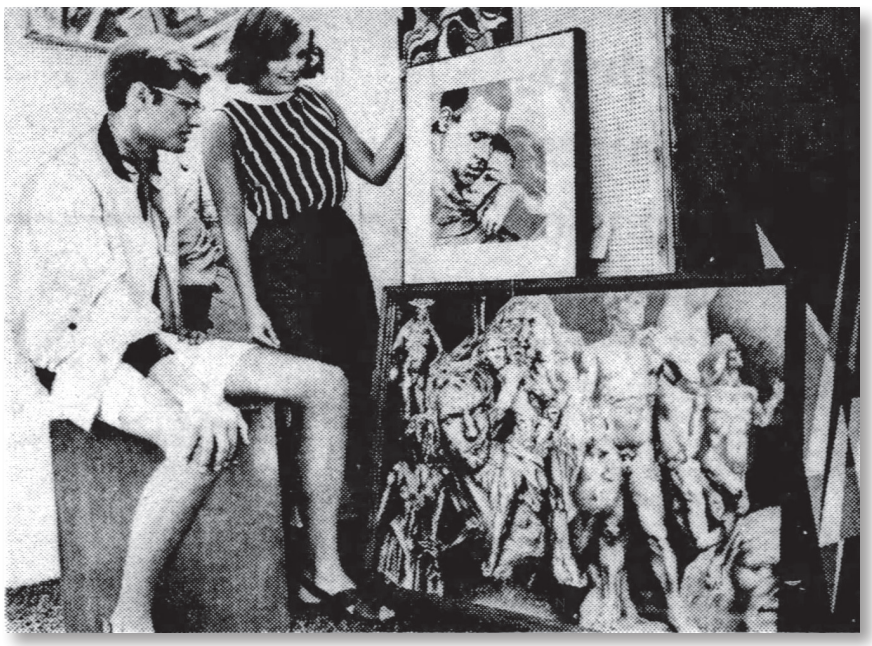
Top: *Bruce Bezaire poses with one of his paintings at Art Comp 25, the 2025 London, Ontario, exhibition.* **Inset left:** Eerie *#115 [Oct. '80] reprinted Bruce's entire "Night of the Jackass" serial, with Jim Laurier's painting adapting a José Ortiz panel serving as the cover.* **Above:** *As you will see on page eight, Rich Buckler adapted Bruce's penciled layout for "Snow" [Creepy #75, Nov. '75] from the man's splash page.*

"Snow," *Eerie* TM & © New Comic Company, LLC.



Above: *For his Southern Illinois University graduate thesis – titled "Nemesis 1971") – Bruce produced an 80-page graphic novel (in 1972, before the term was invented!), which featured numerous both real-life and fictional celebrity cameos, including a Humphrey Bogart lookalike and, as seen in the page above, The Phantom of the Opera.*

Below: *20-year-old Bruce and classmate Susan Collacott pose for* The Windsor Star *photograph for the July 4, 1968 edition. Bruce created the collage of Michelangelo's David seen at bottom.*



Bruce: Oh, yeah. Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, and then the Phantom of the Opera, the Roadrunner, all sorts of things like that.

CBC: *Quite a menagerie of people, the characters.*

Bruce: Yeah! Sherlock Holmes, Sheena of the Jungle pop up in times of extreme stress, and usually the people who generated these things through their psychic distress would not be really aware of the fact that they were responsible and they had no control over what these entities did before they went back to wherever they came from. It ended up being a crisis in this little college town, which was kind of based on Carbondale, where I was, and it didn't end well… let's put it that way.

CBC: *Did the thesis survive? Do you still have it?*

Bruce: Yeah, I've still got it. I would definitely rewrite some of the dialogue, but I'm not quite the same person when I wrote that as I am now.

CBC: *But does it still holds up for you?*

Bruce: Yeah, except for the lettering. Everything is analog. I did it all by hand, and the lettering is terrible, but the story, with a few minor adjustments, I think, would still fly. And the artwork is… it's not as good as what I've done recently, but some of it was pretty. The inking was better than the pencils.

CBC: *Did you have favorite comic artists or cartoonists?*

Bruce: Well, sure. Some of the DC guys, Infantino especially, well, I kind of liked him both inked by Murphy Anderson and by himself, which was very different. Very different. But I like both of them. Joe Kubert, of course! What's not to like!

CBC: *Did you aspire to comics at all, professionally?*

Bruce: Yes, but not so much as making a living, as just contributing and kind of having it as a creative outlet. I remember sending, when I was about 17 (so this would be in the '60s), I sent a Captain Boomerang story to DC and I would hate to see it now because I'm sure it was just awful. But I did get a nice letter back from Julie Schwartz, which I still have.

CBC: *I read in an article that you had submitted a story, both written and drawn, to Warren Publishing.*

Bruce: I don't know if you're familiar with "Snow" [*Creepy* #75, Nov. '75]…

CBC: *Sure, drawn by Rich Buckler and Wally Wood…*

Bruce: Right. So that story was actually based on what was the premise for my "Night of the Jackass" series. They were both based on vivid dreams that I had. I had this dream about this snowy wasteland of a planet Earth, and this guy's slogging through the snow, and he hears this kid singing in a building off in the distance, and it turns out to be his nephew, etc., etc. That was the premise of the story, and I thought, "Well, this could work." And, by that time, I was aware of Warren, I thought that would be the place to send it. So I wrote it up, drew it, and sent it off. They got back to me and they wanted the story, though they didn't want the artwork (which I fully understood).

CBC: *Do you remember who it was who responded?*

Bruce: Yeah, it was [Warren editor] Bill DuBay. So, anyway, one of those things I wouldn't mind having clarified is that, when that story saw print, it wasn't the first one that they published. I wrote a couple of stories subsequently, and they saw print first. But, when that saw print, DuBay had that story just crammed it full with excess verbiage and explanatory text that I didn't write. And I've seen critiques online of that story saying, "Well, Bezaire is kind of an old fashioned, caption-heavy writer," and that kind of thing. But that story was written almost without dialogue, almost a silent movie kind of thing.

But, anyway, that was interesting. And there were a couple others, I didn't have that many stories published, and I didn't write that many stories for them, but there were a couple of other kind of gaffes that made it into print that kind of set my teeth on edge. Maybe one of the worst is kind of appropriating the story and just filling it up with a bunch of backstory that wasn't necessary at all.

CBC: *Did you ever complain to them?*

Bruce: There wasn't much point really.

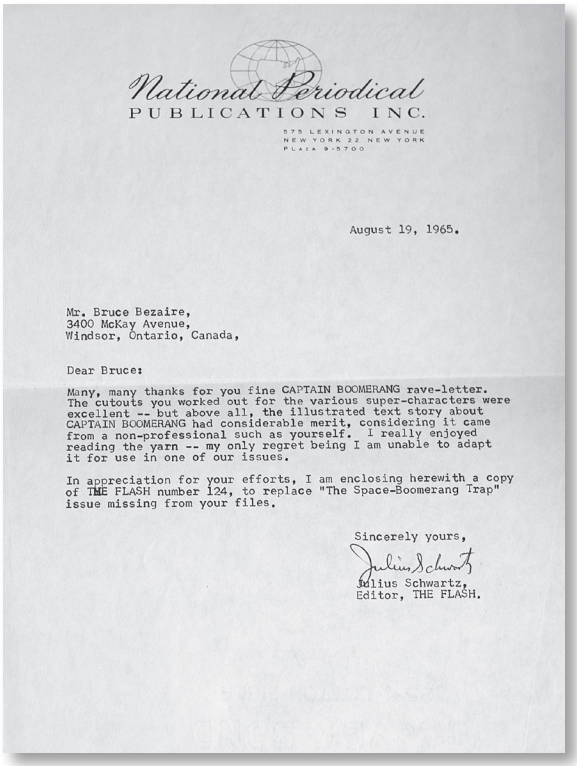
CBC: *Did you deal with Louise Jones at all?*

Bruce: No, I don't remember that. I do remember, at one point, DuBay decided he was going to cull his submitting authors, so he kind of put everybody in tears – "I'll accept only so much from these people" – and there were about 12 of us. Basically, he said, "Anything that you guys submit, I'll publish." And then other people… Doug Moench, does that name ring a bell?

CBC: *Of course.*

Bruce: He was one of their writers and he wasn't in the "I'll take anything that you give me" category, so he ended up going to the bigger publishers and doing quite well.

Thesis page © and courtesy of Bruce Bezaire.



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August 19, 1965.

Mr. Bruce Bezaire,
3400 McKay Avenue,
Windsor, Ontario, Canada,

Dear Bruce:

Many, many thanks for you fine CAPTAIN BOOMERANG rave-letter. The cutouts you worked out for the various super-characters were excellent -- but above all, the illustrated text story about CAPTAIN BOOMERANG had considerable merit, considering it came from a non-professional such as yourself. I really enjoyed reading the yarn -- my only regret being I am unable to adapt it for use in one of our issues.

In appreciation for your efforts, I am enclosing herewith a copy of THE FLASH number 124, to replace "The Space-Boomerang Trap" issue missing from your files.

Sincerely yours,

Julius Schwartz,
Editor, THE FLASH.

CBC: *This culling you're referring to, Jack Butterworth mentioned to me. So you were among those spared.*

Bruce: Yeah, though I only had about a dozen stories that I ever wrote for them.

CBC: *I would say, as a young reader of* Eerie*, that, to this very day, I vividly recall first reading the "Night of the Jackass," and just being blown away with the concept, just the idea of it, which obviously, in modern days, resembles* The Purge. [The "Night of the Jackass" serial ran between *Eerie* #60, Sept. '74, and #65, April '75 – **Ye Ed.**] *There's different incarnations of that general idea. But, back in 1980, there was a prison riot in New Mexico that was just absolutely brutal where the prisoners turned into utter monsters, and I remember reading that because I just started college and we were assigned to read* The New York Times *and that was on the front page. And so I've always equated your story with that real life horror show. So, anyway, I'm just really giving you props. I thought that was a tremendously scary story.*

Bruce: Thank you. That was another one, like I said, that was based on a dream, just these people in the dream, they actually turned into these kind of hybrid, they looked like jackasses, their faces changed. They grew the long ears, kind of like in *Pinocchio*. Anyway, so once you come up with the concept and you just let it do what it wants to do, it kind of wrote itself. And if people are going to behave badly, they're going to behave very badly. And they did in the story…

I'm not what you would call exactly proud of those, but it was internally consistent, shall we say, things developed in the way that they would develop given that concept or that premise. So that's my excuse.

CBC: *You did the job you're supposed to do, and you're supposed to scare the reader. So you could take some pride in that.*

Bruce: And speaking of *The Purge*, one of my stories was called, "Purge" [*Creepy* #73, Aug. '75] and the premise was a future society that was extremely conservative and had morality police out enforcing behavior on people, including book banning and book burning, and so on and so forth. And so that could be considered a little bit prescient, too, I suppose. There was another gaffe – an artistic gaffe – in that story. The artist was José Ortiz, who did "Jackass" and was a fantastic, fantastic artist but, for some reason, in the artwork for "Purge," he stuck in a background poster advertising a new version of the old movie, *Heidi,* starring Clint Eastwood as Gramps. The whole idea was that was the only kind of movie they were making were these very wholesome movies because the morality police weren't allowing anything else. And this was supposed to be a re-up of this old family friendly movie, *Heidi*. And for some reason, Ortiz stuck a nude woman on the poster, which makes no sense whatsoever in the context of the story. I wonder if people who read that thought, "What the heck is going on here?"

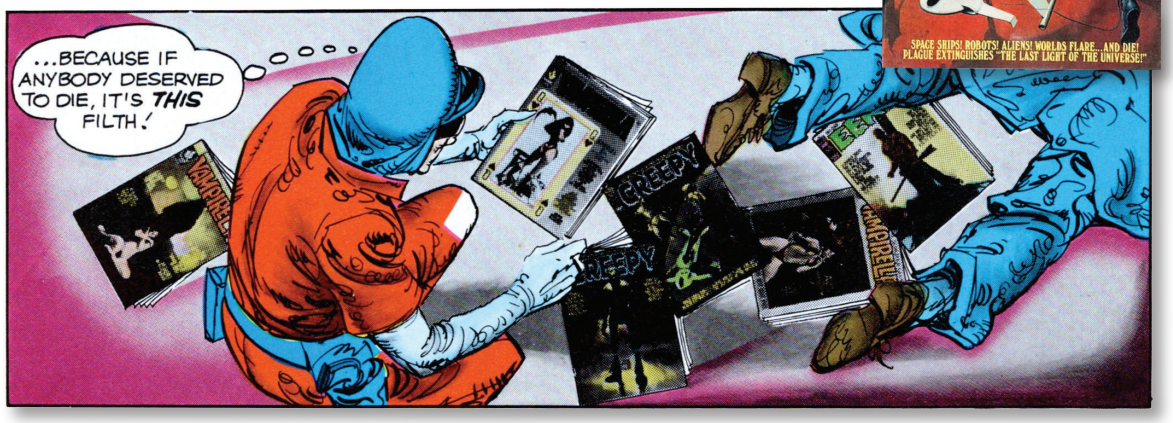
CBC: *So, when you'd send in a script, did they send you a contributor copy?*

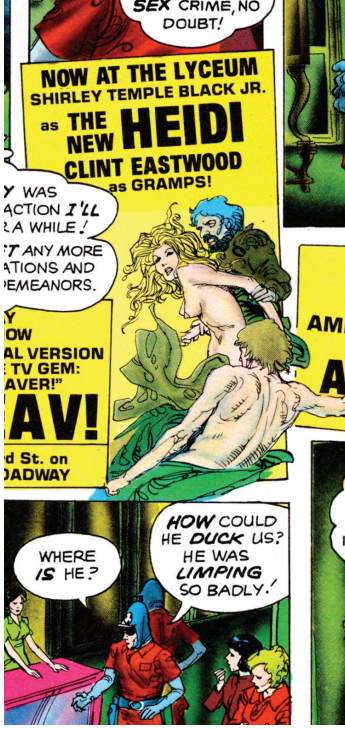
Bruce: Oh, yeah. I would get the issues, except for the very last one, which was published five years after I submitted the script, and I've never seen it, called "The Red Shot" [*Eerie* #118, Jan. '81]. And it really sort of anticipated television events like *Survivor* and so on. It was a brutal game of keep away that was televised, and it was meant to be comedic. It was written to be funny, as well as kind of scary in terms of what goes on in this game. But they never paid me for it. Maybe they tried to because we relocated and they never had my forwarding address, but it never saw print until five years later, in the early '80s, when things were going downhill at Warren and they probably dug that thing up. And I quail to think what they did with it, at that point, but I've never seen that.

CBC: *Well now, Bruce, I'm going to have to send you a Xerox of it, right? Unless you're begging me not to!*

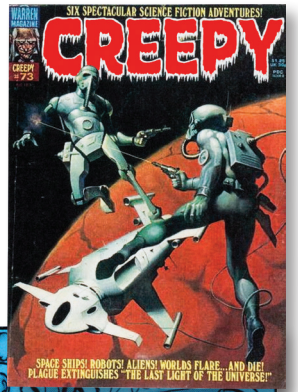
Bruce: Don't bother. The only other one I don't have an issue of is the story, "Troll" [*Vampirella* #44, Aug. '75], about a guy who decides he's going to live under the [Detroit-Windsor] Ambassador Bridge as a troll, and I've never been able to find an issue of that.

CBC: *Did you ever get any fan mail forwarded to you at all?*

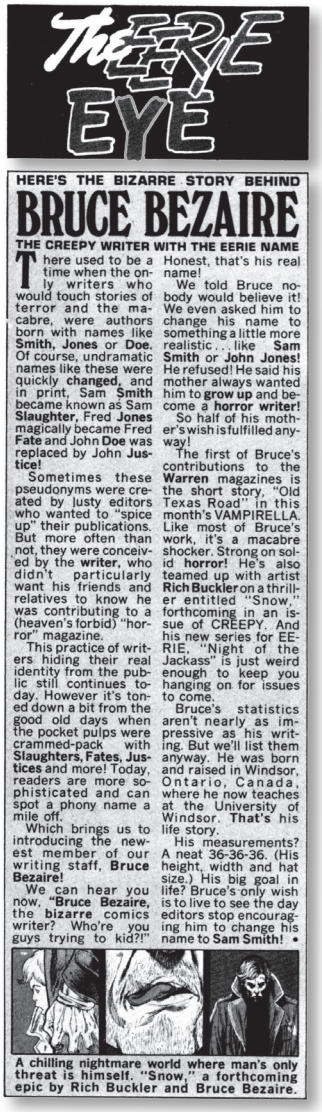




Above: *Though Bruce's script for "Purge" [*Creepy *#73, Aug. '75] surmised puritanical repression in a future America, artist José Ortiz misinterpreted what was supposed to be a wholesome family movie poster by adding nudity – to the writer's regret.* **Inset left:** *DC editor Julie Schwartz's encouraging 1965 letter thanking Bruce for his prose submission.* **Below and bottom:** *We couldn't resist including the self-referential final panel for "Purge," which includes a repro of that very issue of* Creepy*'s cover by Ken Kelly!*



Schwartz letter courtesy of Bruce Bezaire. "Purge," *Creepy* TM & © New Comic Company, LLC.



THE EERIE EYE

HERE'S THE BIZARRE STORY BEHIND

BRUCE BEZAIRE

THE CREEPY WRITER WITH THE EERIE NAME

There used to be a time when the only writers who would touch stories of terror and the macabre, were authors born with names like **Smith, Jones** or **Doe.** Of course, undramatic names like these were quickly **changed,** and in print, Sam **Smith** became known as Sam **Slaughter,** Fred **Jones** magically became Fred **Fate** and John **Doe** was replaced by John **Justice!**

Sometimes these pseudonyms were created by lusty editors who wanted to "spice up" their publications. But more often than not, they were conceived by the **writer,** who didn't particularly want his friends and relatives to know he was contributing to a (heaven's forbid) "horror" magazine.

This practice of writers hiding their real identity from the public still continues today. However it's toned down a bit from the good old days when the pocket pulps were crammed-pack with **Slaughters, Fates, Justices** and more! Today, readers are more sophisticated and can spot a phony name a mile off.

Which brings us to introducing the newest member of our writing staff, **Bruce Bezaire!**

We can hear you now, **"Bruce Bezaire,** the **bizarre** comics writer? Who're you guys trying to kid?!" Honest, that's his real name!

We told Bruce nobody would believe it! We even asked him to change his name to something a little more realistic... like **Sam Smith** or **John Jones!** He refused! He said his mother always wanted him to **grow up** and become a **horror writer!**

So half of his mother's wish is fulfilled anyway!

The first of Bruce's contributions to the **Warren** magazines is the short story, "Old Texas Road" in this month's VAMPIRELLA. Like most of Bruce's **work,** it's a **macabre** shocker. Strong on solid **horror!** He's also teamed up with artist **Rich Buckler** on a thriller entitled "Snow," forthcoming in an issue of CREEPY. And his new series for EERIE, "Night of the Jackass" is just weird enough to keep you hanging on for issues to come.

Bruce's statistics aren't nearly as impressive as his writing. But we'll list them anyway. He was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, where he now teaches at the University of Windsor. **That's** his life story.

His measurements? A neat 36-36-36. (His height, width and hat size.) His big goal in life? Bruce's only wish is to live to see the day editors stop encouraging him to change his name to **Sam Smith!** •

A chilling nightmare world where man's only threat is himself. "Snow," a forthcoming epic by Rich Buckler and Bruce Bezaire.



Above: *Bruce's bio in* Eerie *#52 [Nov. '73].* **Inset right:** *The "Best All-Around Writer" plaque Bruce received from the 1975 Warren Awards.* **Below:** *"Jackass" panel by José Ortiz,* Eerie *#60 [Sept. '74].*

Bruce: No. I would read the comments in the letter section, but that's about it.

CBC: *You were a solid writer, Bruce. And one with a name that catches the eye!*

Bruce: Well, it's a very common name here in Essex County. It's originally French, and it used to be spelled Bezer, the original French spelling. Our ancestor came over here 10 or 11 generations ago and then, at some point, the name was Anglicized.

CBC: *I was annoyed to see the biography they printed in the Warren books that only talked about your last name, with no real background information at all.*

Bruce: No, well, there wasn't much to include, at that point. I had grown up in Windsor, gone to the University of Windsor, went off for two years to Carbondale for my master's, came back, and I was teaching at the University of Windsor. So how much of a bio could they really put in?

CBC: *Well, I could have done a better job. I found a 1970 article that described you as a member of three artists involved in an art happening, which sounds kind of hippie-ish.*

Bruce: Yeah, it was pretty flaky. We were just being goofy.

CBC: *Did you ever get any correspondence from the editors at all, besides that memo?*

Bruce: The one about sort of tiering his writers?

CBC: *Right.*

Bruce: Yeah, I got that. And he would send us stuff to push our imaginations, like an old reprint of a Victorian era compendium of manners, as well as geographical information as far as they knew back then… all sorts of things. It was quite a thick book and interesting to look through. But, yeah, he would try to be helpful that way. But I do remember when he made that call.

CBC: *Warren had a big dinner down in New York City, in honor of Richard Corben and Will Eisner. Do you recall that? I'd say it was '72 or '73.*

Bruce: No, but I was invited to the Warren Awards for 1975, because they gave me the award for "Best All Around Writer," but I couldn't afford to go to New York. I got the plaque, which they mailed to me.

CBC: *Oh, yeah, you still got it?*

Bruce: Yeah, laminated about a half-an-inch thick wood, with this document laminated onto it.

CBC: *Wow, neat. Very cool. So you had a religious conversion that took place during those years?*

Bruce: Yes. I was diagnosed with testicular cancer which, at that time, in 1973, was fatal in 95% of cases, and so I had the surgery. But that prompted me. I've been raised in the Anglican Church of Canada, and if you'd asked me at the time, if I was a Christian, I would've said, "Well, absolutely." But I wasn't. It was all head knowledge. I would give mental ascent to the content of scripture, but it was not something that it was really having any significant impact in my life.

But a cancer diagnosis that gave six months to live basically will focus you a little bit. And so, before the surgery, actually knowing I was going into that, I prayed and basically told the Lord, "You don't owe me anything because I have not really been interested in what I intellectually knew, but was being very selective about paying any attention to."

So, anyway, I was just like, "I'm going to church this Sunday. If you got anything to say to me, I would really appreciate it if you would do so." And so it was interesting. That Sunday, I went back to the only church I really knew, the Anglican Church, where I was christened and had went to Sunday school for years and years. And the pastor that morning was talking about the miracles of Jesus. And interestingly enough, he was being kind of liberal in his interpretation and sort of explaining them away in naturalistic terms, like the feeding of the 5,000. Well, really, there was plenty of food there and people just needed to be prompted to share.



The Eerie Eye, "Night of the Jackass" TM & © New Comic Company, LLC. Plaque photo courtesy of Bruce Bezaire.

But I am sitting there with my Bible open and I can see what it says, and I recognize that what I understood was that the Lord could heal me physically if He wanted to, but He didn't have to, but that He had promised in scripture that He would heal me spiritually. And so that's what I took away from that. And He was gracious to do both. That night, I can specifically remember understanding that right relatedness to God and forgiveness in Christ according to the Gospel, had absolutely nothing to do with me. And it was all sourced in Him, and He had His own reasons, and He was quite willing to forgive. And so I accepted that and had no real assurance that I would be healed physically of the cancer. But after having been given six months to live, that was 52 or 53 years ago, so I'm grateful. Let's put it that way.

CBC: *Very nice.*

Bruce: And, at the time, I continued to write for Warren, I think, for maybe another year. I started to interject certain things that were more consistent with my Christian worldview. It was a story called, "Relatives" [*Vampirella* #35, Aug. '74], which is one of the stories. I remember seeing some feedback in the letter column a couple issues later where at least one letter writer was not too pleased with the religious overtone of that particular story. At one point, I just decided, "Well, I've got other things I want to do."

I'm basically a fine artist. I love comic books, and I love the visual language. So my daughter and I have, in the last couple of years, finished a 50-page adaptation of the Book of Jonah, which we're trying to get into print. I'm quite sure we could crowdfund it, but then we'd be stuck with the whole distribution problem, and we're just not equipped to handle that. So we're kind of rather hopefully looking for some kind of publishing partnership that would deal with the distribution of the books once they're in print.

Anyway, that's most recent thing that I've been involved with in the narragraphic area (which my word for comic books – narragraphic).

CBC: *Would you characterize your enlightenment as being born again?*

Bruce: Oh, yes. Born a second time. The whole notion there can be misunderstood. To be born again is to be born spiritually. We're born the first time physically and then the second time is we're born spiritually when we come into a faith relationship with Jesus.

CBC: *So it is just like a pragmatic decision to continue doing the Warren work or did you see conflict with your developing beliefs? I mean, you said you went on for a year after your health crisis, right?*

Bruce: Yeah, and I think I wrote some things during that year that I'm happy with, but "The Horseman" [*Creepy* #78, Mar. '76] I thought was a good story. I think, generally speaking, a lot of commentators that I've seen… my son will bring these things to my attention. He kind of has made a minor hobby of perusing the internet to see if anything pops up. And I've seen articles online, some of which would say that maybe the best thing that I wrote was "Galmal and the Cockatrice" [*Vampirella* #47, Dec. '75], along with the "Jackass" storyline. So yeah, there are some things that I'm okay with, certainly.

The thing about the "Jackass" stories is just they were pretty brutal, and that's kind of not where my head was at after I became a Christian. And, really, to this day, horror's not a genre that interests me. I don't go to horror movies, I don't read horror, any of that kind of stuff. But it's not like, "Oh, I have some kind of guilty feelings about it." It just does not interest me. I couldn't see myself continuing to write in a genre that I found kind of, for lack of a better word, boring.

CBC: *Right. At the time, Warren was really the only mainstream outlet for… I don't know if I'd call it "adult" writing, but let's say "mature" writing. The magazines had some really, really fine writers, I think. There was the other Bruce: Bruce Jones, who wrote some very moving stories within the horror genre, because that's the market where you're selling. But I recognized you as a good writer.*

Bruce: Well, I appreciate that. I have done some writing, for sure. Other than a comic-book script I've written, I spent 10 years writing a theology of art. Unfortunately it's not in print. It's called *The Aesthetic Trinity*[*: The Genesis and Revelation of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth in Art,* 2013]. And it might be something that could be tracked down on Amazon as a used book, I don't know. But I was teaching college at the time in the early 2000s, and from between 2002–12, I basically wrote my systematic theology of art. And so I've got it sitting here on my bookshelf. It's like 450 pages long.

CBC: *I noticed a series called* Dan Red Eagle… *?*

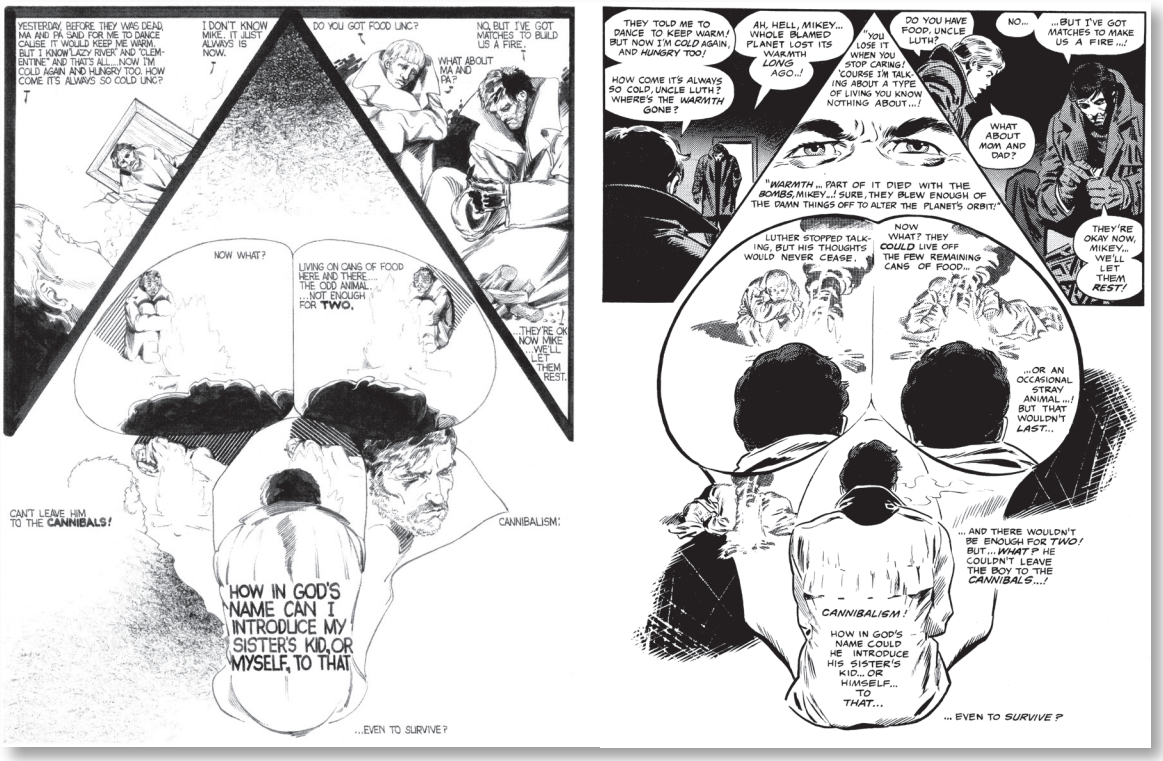
Bruce: Yeah, *Dan Red Eagle*. I worked with Indian Life, the official name of the ministry at the time. It was Intertribal Christian Communications, a publishing house out of Winnipeg that produced Christian literature for indigenous people in North America. And they had come up with this comic book character and published one issue, *Dan Red Eagle*, and the artwork was pretty terrible (to put it that mildly). It was just not good, so they were looking for a cartoonist. And at that



Above: *Bruce's "Night of the Jackass" was also interpreted by masterful Warren cover painter Sanjulian for the cover of* Eerie *#63 [Feb. '75].*
Below: *Bruce takes some pride in the fact some online reviewers view his story in* Vampirella *#47 [Dec. '75], "Gamal and the Cockatrice," stands with the "Jackass" serial as among his best at Warren.*



Eerie, "Gamal and the Cockatrice" TM & ©New Comic Company, LLC.



This page: *Among the best art jobs based on a Bezaire script was "Snow," drawn by Rich Buckler (pencils) and Wally Wood (inks). One regret Bruce haswas that he didn't receive credit as layout artist, as clearly evident in his fully-illustrated story submission, seen above and below (the latter to be compared with the splash repro on page three), proves these innovative page designs originated in the writer's imagination.*

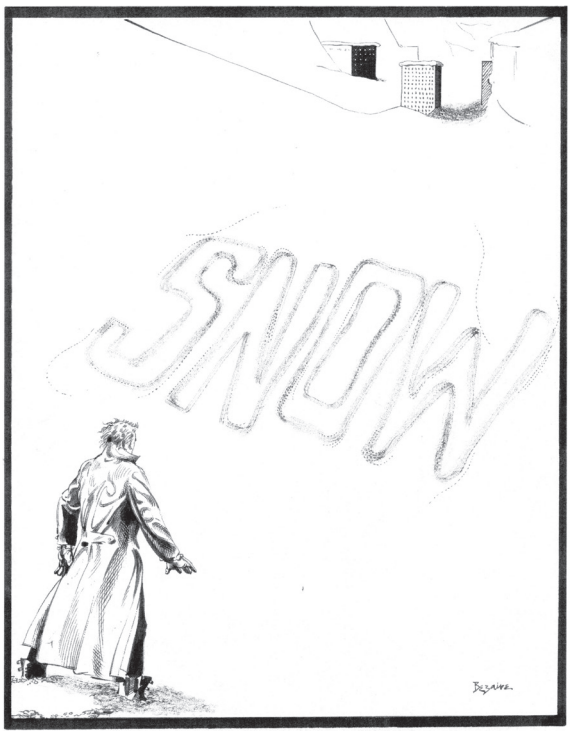
time… I don't know if you're familiar with the goods and service tax in Canada…?

CBC: *No.*

Bruce: I think it was 1990 when the government instituted this (I don't know how much percentage) tax on all goods and services, in addition to any provincial sales tax, and so on and so forth. And that really hammered the art market pretty hard because, through the '80s, I just painted and sold my paintings through an agent in Toronto, and he mounted several one-man shows in Hamilton, in Toronto. I was part of a three-man show in South Korea, and I was making a living for eight years just as a painter (which is not a slam dunk).

But, when the goods and service tax came in, all of a sudden, it became very difficult to sell art. It was one of the first things that suffered in terms of people's discretionary spending, shall we say. So I was looking for a different direction and I became aware, just through searching online, which was kind of a thing you could do for the first time back then, and came across Indian Life and saw that they were looking for an artist for *Dan Red Eagle* and I applied, and they took me on, and I ultimately ended up doing three issues.

It's a long story, the whole Indian Life/*Dan Red Eagle* thing. It's a very small ministry. They had financial problems. The book was supposed to finance itself in that sales from one issue would enable the publishing of the next issue, but they were so cash strapped that the sales from the first issue I did just went to other things and they couldn't afford to publish the second one. And I just felt, "Okay, I'm not going to try and beat a dead horse." And I went looking for a teaching job, which I ended up getting a position in Jackson, Mississippi, of all places. So talk about culture shock, relocating from Ontario to Mississippi. But I was there 10 years. And, during that time, I did a couple more issues of *Dan Red Eagle* on a volunteer basis and shipped them to Winnipeg, and they distributed them from there.



They were just black-&-white. The first one was color, and I did everything except write the story. So yeah: pencil, ink, lettering, and then coloring the story on acetate overlays with acrylic ink, and then the other two issues, which came along later in the 1990s, are just b-&-w line work. So yeah, I was involved with that for several years, just sporadically off and on kind of officially for two years, and then unofficially later on, and actually did a story for them in the early '90s that I guess rubbed some people on the board of Indian Life the wrong way. It never got published until finally, in 2016 and '17, they serialized it in their newspaper publication. And it was really cool because they did it like it was back in the 1940s, devoting an entire page to the artwork. And it just really, really was nice to see that comic book style in that scale. So that ended up getting published in the mid–'teens.

CBC: *That'd be great to see. Just backing up a little, when you stopped writing for Warren, did you inform them that you were not doing it anymore? Or did they say, "Hey, where's the next script?" How did that go?*

Bruce: No, they weren't relying on me for anything. They just said, "If you do anything, we'll take it," assuming that I was going to be professional about it and give them the best that I could under the circumstances, which I would've done. To my recollection, I just quit submitting. Like I said, the last one I sent to them, they just sat on. I never heard from them about it at all. And then apparently it showed up five years later.

CBC: *Did you ever go to a comic convention?*

Bruce: No.

CBC: *Have you ever met another reader in real life? Somebody who's read your work in the flesh?*

Bruce: Well, probably after the fact when somebody finds out that I used to do it, sometimes, I guess, they'll go and look it up.

CBC: *After the fact, right. But not contemporaneously at all.*

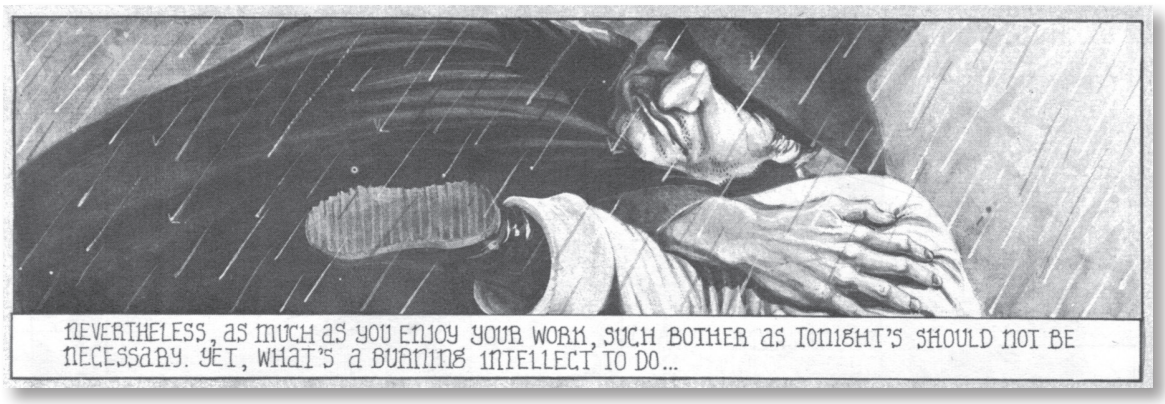
"Snow" TM & © New Copmic Company, LLC. Story layouts © and courtesy of Bruce Bezaire.

So you're obviously isolated up there, right?

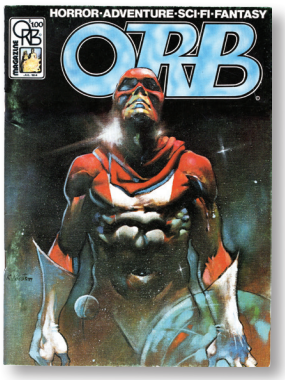
Bruce: Well, I live in Essex County. You know who else lives here or is from here? Jeff Lemire, David Finch, Jason Fabok… So those three guys are from Essex County.

CBC: *And you were also in* Orb*?*

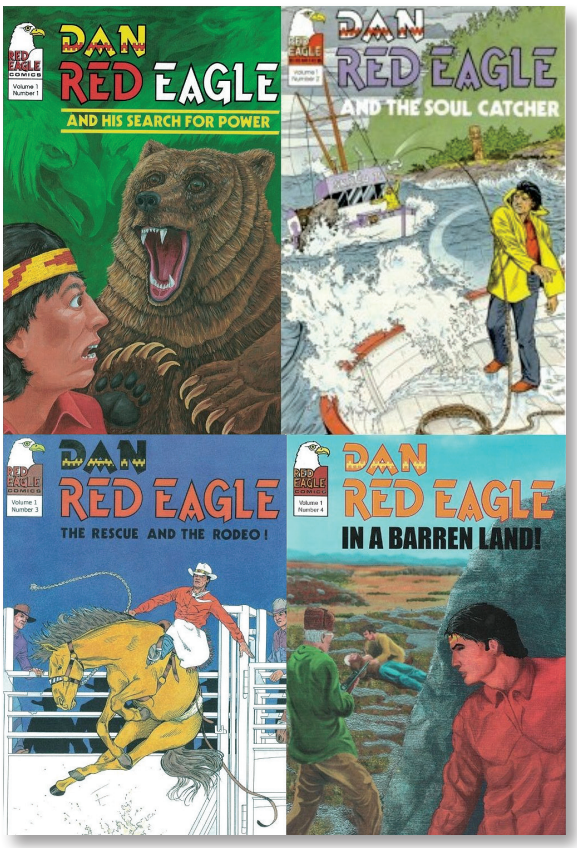
Bruce: Yeah. One story that was actually rejected by Warren, simply because I sort of insisted if they're going to use it, you have to use my artwork. And at that time, they didn't want to do that. So James Waley came by and said, "Well, I can put it in our magazine." It was in the second issue of *Orb*.



Above: *Bruce submitted his written-and-drawn "Reeve Perry" to Warren, but the publisher passed, and the story appeared in* Orb *#2 [July '74].* **Below:** *Cover of same with Richard Robertson's painting.*



Below: *Bruce's art appeared in three of the four issues of the* Dan Red Eagle *['89–'00] comic book.*



That story ["Reeve Perry"] was about a radio actor. And, when that sort of went south, he decided he was going to produce his own horror shows and record them. And so he was kidnapping people and subjecting them to all sorts of abuse and just to get them to scream.

CBC: *So how do you look back on the work? Were you ashamed for a period of time or…?*

Bruce: No, I've thought about it and, if somebody came along and said, "How would you like to pick up the 'Jackass' storyline again?" I could do that, but I would be doing it from a Christian worldview. And I would think, the way we left it, was that one of the characters had basically gone nuts, and then he was cured with the antidote, but he was ostracized from the others who he had bonded with. And so he goes off at the end of the last story, and I would just follow him and use that crisis in his life to bring him to the place of repentance. And I would make him a Christian character, but he's such a damaged person that he would be a realistic Christian character, not like a Christian romance sort of type thing. He would have the difficulties that anyone's struggling to realize the out-workings of their faith in a consistent way will go through. And if you want to say what might be a good source of horror material, just read the Book of Revelations. There's some pretty hardcore stuff in scripture itself.

CBC: *Would you agree that Buckler and Wood did a fine job on "Snow"?*

Bruce: Yes. I only wish they would've given me credit for the layout because they just used my layouts, all except for one panel, basically. But that picture or the page where the main character is sitting by the fire and the kid is sleeping and the whole thing resolves into a skull…? That was me. Buckler just used that, which was fine. But every time I wrote a script, I included a page of thumbnails and, typically, the artists would follow my thumbnail layouts very closely.

CBC: *So were Buckler and Wood the only North Americans to draw your stories?*

Bruce: Gosh, that's a good question. Probably now that I think about it, I can't think of any others.

CBC: *I was thinking that it was all Spanish artists.*

Bruce: Spanish or Filipino or something.

[*Not long after our phone interview, Bruce contacted me to ask for a follow-up to expand on a few points.* – **Ye Ed.**]

CBC: *Why don't you tell me what you wanted to add.*

Bruce: Well, I think there might be some interest in, not so much what has been published, but what *hasn't* been: my daughter and I have the *Jonah* book sitting on the shelf. We're been hoping and praying for some interest, not wanting to self-publish just because we don't have any kind of expertise with distribution or anything like that. So anyway, there's that.

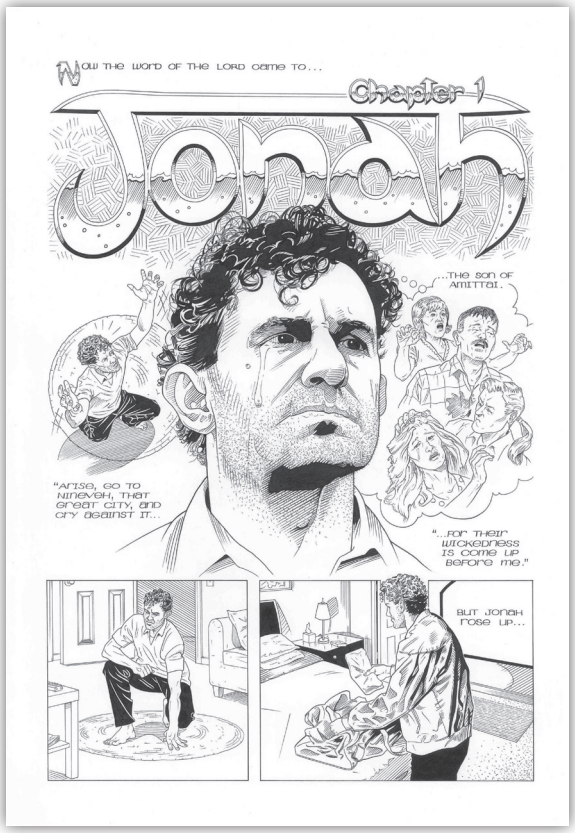
After I was in Jackson, Mississippi, for 10 years, and then we moved to the Nashville area, and I was there for 13 years, but there was a year in-between my two schools where I was doing two things. I was painting like a fine-art thing and trying to secure gallery representation. This sounds pretty naive – because it was – but I worked up a syndication proposal, a graphic narrative of the story of Noah's beginning about 120 years before the flood, and that was the title of the script: "Before the Flood," and I wrote 10 weeks' worth.

I got just so far before realizing I'm too meticulous to actually maintain that schedule. So I sent it out and got some slight interest, but the naivety of the whole thing was, I kind of pictured it as being the way they handled comic strips in the newspapers back in the '40s, where they'd seriously treat it like *Terry and the Pirates* or *Prince Valiant*. That they'd give me a whole half-page, but they just don't do that anymore. So there's that.

Also, as part of the job I had with Indian Life/Intertribal Christian Communications, in addition to *Dan Red Eagle,* was for me do a one-off kind of thing, which was a partial adaptation of a book by David Wilkerson called *Night Lark Runner,* a 10-page adaptation in the graphic narrative format, and this was back in 92.

So it was in the hands of the publisher, who were going to put it in the Indian Life newspaper, but I think

"Reeve Perry" © Bruce Bezaire. *Orb* TM & © and courtesy of James Waley. *Dan Red Eagle* TM & © Indian Life Ministries.



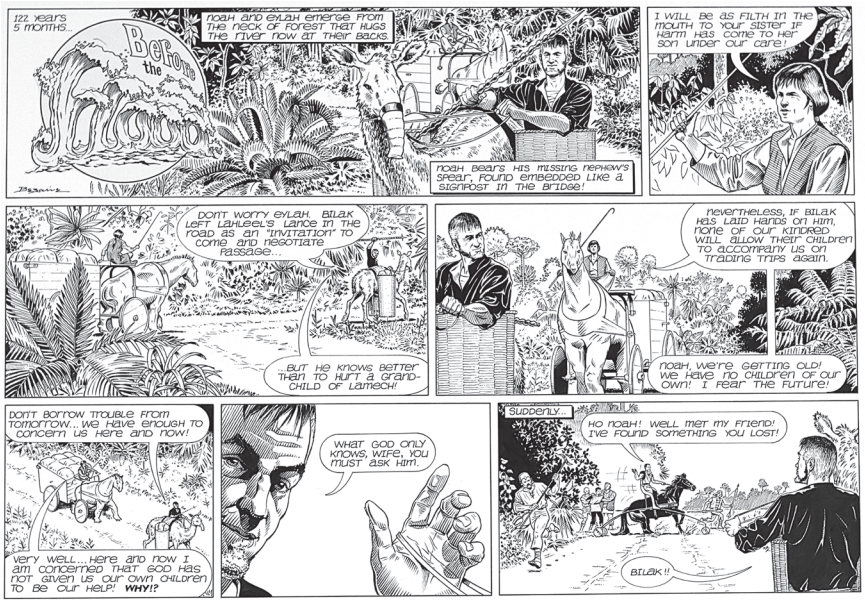
Above: *Bruce and daughter Emily collaborated together to create a new version of the epic Biblical tale of Jonah and the whale for* The Book of Jonah, *a 48-page adaptation still in need of a publisher. Go to* www.emilybezaire.com *for a look at additional pages.* **Inset right:** *Emily Bezaire and her mother (and Bruce's wife), Cheryl, posing in 2023.* **Below:** *Another Bezaire Bible-inspired effort was a newspaper strip chronicling the pre-flood life of Noah called (you guessed it!)* Before the Flood.

there was disagreement whether it was actually suitable because of a few panels and a few things that I didn't really have a problem with. I didn't write this; all I did was illustrate it, and it never saw the light of day until suddenly, out of nowhere, they started serializing it in 2016, and it appeared in half-a-dozen issues. And the cool thing about it is when they published it, they gave it a whole page or a page-and-a-half each issue. So it was published like full-size the way it would've been if it was back in the '40s! So that was pretty cool.

CBC: *Can you talk about the* Jonah *project you're doing with your daughter?*

Bruce: It's finished and it's about 48 pages. Also I wrote kind of a panel-by-panel commentary explaining the rationale for interpreting the Biblical text with modernized visuals – the text is (slightly updated) King James version – set in present day.

For instance, I take the position that when Jonah was swallowed by the fish, he actually died and was resurrected because he is an example of the death and resurrection of Christ. And the New Testament makes that very clear. So, if you're going to be an example (or a prototype or forerunner) of the death and resurrection of Christ, it stands to reason that, if you get swallowed by a fish, typically you're going to die. And he was in there three days, got puked up, and was resurrected. That's why he was such an effective sign to the Ninevites, because everybody knew what happened to him. And there he was basically warning them that they had 40 days before they were going to be destroyed. And they





believed him on the basis of the sign of his death and resurrection. So that's one example of the interpretation that I put on it that I wanted to explain. And there are other minor things like that, but that additional text would be peppered with original working sketches and so on and so forth, all of which I've kept. So that would extend the length of the bulk of the book to about 60 pages or so.

CBC: *What did your daughter do and what did you do? How did you two collaborate?*

Bruce: I adapted it. It's basically King James language without the "thees," that kind of thing, which have been replaced with "you," for instance. So it's kind of slightly modernized King James language, all broken down into panels with pacing and so on, with my page layouts, all of that. Then I did the pencils and my daughter did the inking. Then I did the lettering.

CBC: *How was that experience?*

Bruce: Well, it was great. I mean, it would be even greater when it sees the light of day. But, yes, it was wonderful working together with Emily. I think she learned a lot. She now is a working artist on her own, and she does work primarily in, well, black-&-white for sure, but ink and graphite, and she's doing some great work.

CBC: *It sounds like a natural for crowdfunding.*

Bruce: Yeah, I know. It's just then when you get the books, what do you do with them? I have friends who did the same thing. They did the crowdfunding campaign, and I talked to them months later and it's, like, "Yeah, we got all these books sitting in a warehouse!"

CBC: *Well, I mean, print on demand, so you'd only print to fulfill those who supported you through the crowdfunding. The printed book is what they would get in return. Targeting a receptive audience is key and I imagine that could be a way to go. Anyway, we can mention this in the magazine to try to help get the word out.*

Bruce: Well, that would be great. And we might end up going that way, though I'm not sure.

The Book of Jonah © Bruce and Emily Bezaire. *Before the Flood* © Bruce Bezaire. Photo and artwork courtesy of Bruce Bezaire.

Rich Buckler & Me

Flash shares the opinions of one wildly opinionated (and iconoclastic) comics professional

by STEVEN THOMPSON

I once wrote a piece on my blog about comic book artist Rich Buckler and his obvious swipes. He took offense and wrote to tell me. A few years later, though, in 2010, I contacted Rich about a project I was working on. He had already forgotten our earlier set-to and we struck up a frequent email correspondence for the next several years. He would often write long opinionated emails. I asked if I might use them on my blog and he said that was fine. Rich Buckler died in 2017 and I never got around to posting any of his thoughts, but here we have some.

Rich wrote:

"I'm an individual with eclectic tastes– I loved Jim Starlin's storytelling and somewhat manic and intensely detailed style. Hated most of Frank Miller's output (he degenerated, I think, into minimalist chaotic scribbling – and his graphic storytelling seemed quirky and self-conscious). Gene Day absolutely rocked! So did Paul Gulacy.

"George Pérez was so awful at first that I wondered if he had somehow chosen the wrong profession. Really! I remember Mike Esposito complaining that George's pencil art was not even inkable! In fact, nobody wanted to ink him at first. But George did okay and did get better – and thankfully developed into a fan-favorite and eventually I warmed up to his stuff. I still think his figures are all too short and doll-like.

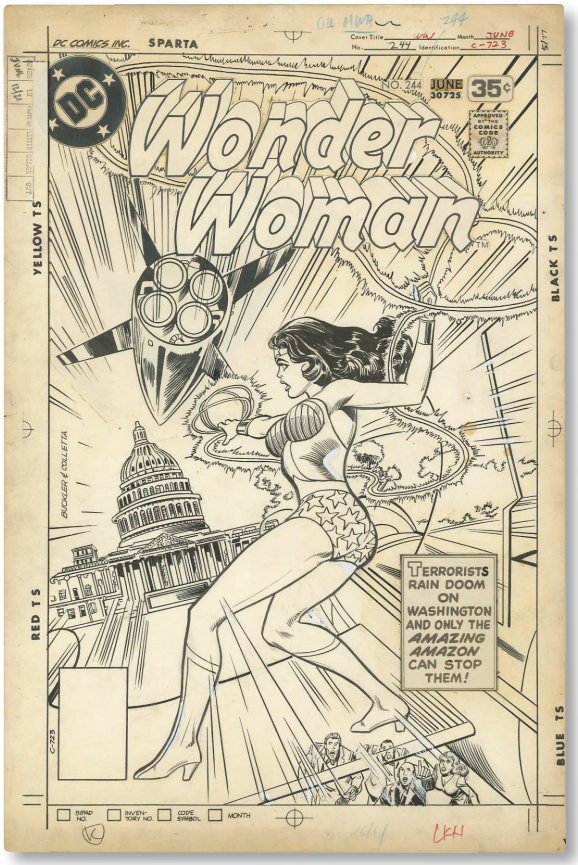
"Maybe artists do sometimes draw idealized versions of themselves. George is on the short side. John Buscema was a big, big guy. I'm 6' 2". I am certain that Neal Adams draws a streamlined athletic version of himself (especially when he draws Batman). All of Jack Kirby's heroic figures seem like taller and larger-than-life versions of himself. Steve Ditko is average height, scrawny, and nerdy-looking (a lot like Peter Parker!).

"Here is my take on a handful of the 'new guys' from the seventies. Howard Chaykin's work was always clunky and awkward – and sometimes pretentious. Marshall Rogers was out there – not all that consistent, but a lot of it was fun and totally unpretentious. Michael Golden – one of my favorites. Trevor Von Eeden – a tremendously underrated artist. Walt Simonson – sorry, I was never big on Walt. Very eclectic, but too cartoony for my taste. On the other hand, I enjoyed the cartoony zaniness of Joe Staton.

"Most of the Image guys were awful. Jim Lee has always been highly overrated – but Mark Silvestri on the other hand was always a bit underrated. Todd McFarlane – well, Todd is Todd. Love him or hate him – I always thought there was potential there with Todd that never became fully realized. Just my opinions, for what they are worth.

"I'm aware that Bill Dubay has recently passed away. Nobody wants to speak ill of the dead, but this guy was no saint – not even a decent friend or brother-in-law. I think he was a very disturbed individual. What is Dubay's creative legacy? His name on a bunch of twisted and sick stories that almost nobody remembers. How in the hell Dubay got attached to Will Eisner is another mystery to me.

"Rudy Nebres and Alfredo Alcala, two modern masters for sure. They inked in a very heavy-handed manner – but I always liked that. Rudy's inking over my penciling was a joy to behold and I didn't feel like it smothered the pencil art. Alcala was incredible – feared by many a penciler, but his finishes were always elegant and masterful. I was happy with the finished result whenever Alcala inked my work. As was the case with Rudy, Alfredo didn't bury the dynamics or the good drawing – and he was consistently brilliant!



Above: *Rich Buckler loved the inks Vince Colletta rendered over his pencils,. This example is Wonder Woman #244 [June '78].*
Below: *Ye Ed.'s pic of the man, at NYCC, in 2009.*

"Another master who is a favorite of mine is Tony DeZuñiga. Tony would actually erase whole portions of pencil art (whenever he got stuck with a job where the figures were 'weak' or poorly drawn) – but the finished results were stunning. I guess it all depended on who the penciler was and how strong the pencil style asserted itself.

"I loved Vince Colletta's inking and the *Superman Family* and *Wonder Woman* covers he inked of mine I count among my all-time favorites (I wish I owned a few of those originals). For my money, they really rocked!"

Again, as Rich wrote, just his opinions and they do not necessarily coincide with mine nor with this magazine's. Buckler himself was very talented, as witness his great "Black Panther" and "Deathlok" runs, but, sadly, he's perhaps remembered more for his swipes than his triumphs.



fin

Wonder Woman TM & ©DC Comics. Photo by Jon B. Cooke.

Rick's Days of Doofus

The nationwide journey of Rick Altergott: from Seattle in its golden comix age and beyond

Conducted by JON B. COOKE

[**Introduction:** *Last time, I spoke with alternative cartoonist Rick Altergott for part one of his interview, we were driving to and from Massachusetts comic shop That's Entertainment – this was a few years back – but this second installment occurred in the static environs of his Cranston, Rhode Island, living room just weeks before press time. Married to cartoonist Ariel Bordeaux (to be spotlighted ere long!), Rick previously shared about his* MAD*-inspired early years in Delaware, New York City start alongside Daniel Clowes and Mort Todd, and early days of his most recognized creation, Doofus. Plopping on the couch, with an R. Crumb original gracing the wall across the room, we continued the conversation…* – **Ye Ed.**]

Inset right: *Very early in his professional career, Rick Altergott had the opportunity to ink the great Steve Ditko in titles published by ACE Comics. There was What Is… The Face? #3 [Aug. '87] (where a page was repro'd in our last ish) and the one-shot Return of the Skyman [Sept. '87].*

Below: *The cartoonist in question on his Cranston, Rhode Island, porch, in 2022 in a photo by Ye Ed.*





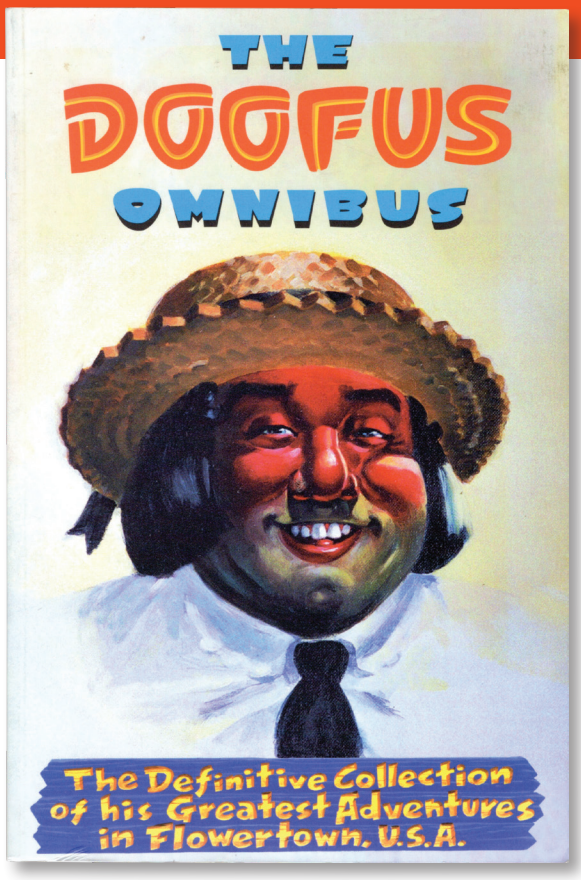
CBC: *What's your memory of meeting Dan Clowes?*
Rick: We had our freshman foundation classes together at Pratt. So we were all in the same classes and discovered that we were really into cartooning.
CBC: *Did your personalities blend well?*
Rick: Yeah, I'd say so. The dormitory for the Pratt was just a big apartment building, basically. He was on one floor and I was on another. And we had the same classes and just got along pretty well, right from the beginning.
CBC: *And you were both comic collectors…?*
Rick: Dan was much further advanced than me in terms of collecting. He actually had a really cool Steve Ditko original art from *Eerie*, one of the first issues with Ditko's ink wash drawings. That was pretty wild. He was also into Gil Kane and Moebius… We both liked *Heavy Metal,* but he had a much more knowledge of early mainstream comics than me, like the super-hero stuff.

CBC: *Did you bond over Wally Wood?*
Rick: Not as much. I was really into Mort Drucker more than Wood, though I developed more of an affinity for him too. But, yeah, we both liked a lot of the same cartoonists, but he was more deeper into it than me. I don't think I was that aware of Ditko until I met Dan.
CBC: *But you learned from him?*
Rick: Yes, and he was also able to letter and we had a similar sense of humor, so we came up with our *Psycho Comics.* It was kind of a thing that the two of us started and then other people got involved, Pete Friedrich and Mort Todd – who, since the last time we talked, has now passed away, which is sad. He was a great guy, a guy who would make things happen.
CBC: *Mort made things happen for you, right?*
Rick: Yes, he did. But he was first a student at Parsons and then SVA, and Pete Friedrich was a student at Parsons.
CBC: *Pete had work in* World War 3 Illustrated.
Rick: He was friends with those guys, but Peter Kuper was a year ahead of me at Pratt, so I didn't really know him, but he was also doing comics, too. And then, below us, when we were sophomores, this guy named Kent Williams, he was a cartoonist as well, but more in the deadly serious kind of brooding, barbarian kind of style that we all though was a pretty crack up.

Skyman TM & ©the respective copyright owner. Photo by Jon B. Cooke.

CBC: *Did you want to get into a* MAD *kind of situation?*
Rick: I would have loved to. I didn't have any idea just how deficient I was at the time but, when you're young like that, you think, "Yeah, I can do this." Drucker's a once-in-a-lifetime talent, so there's nobody who could do what he does. (Dan and I found Drucker's address in the phone book and we were going to actually go out and visit him, which would have been an obnoxious thing to do, just knock on his door. "Hey, we're big fans. Hey, can we come in and look over your shoulders and draw a movie spoof?" But that never happened. We didn't have a car to get out there!)
CBC: *I always got the impression that Mort was shy.*
Rick: He was very managed by his wife. He was one of those cartoonists, like Don Martin, whose gatekeeper was his wife, so you got to get through her to get to him. Barbara Drucker's kind of like his business manager, too. So I think his thing was he just loved to sit and draw cartoons and I'm sure that she would help find references for him if the people at *MAD* didn't supply him with them. I'm not really sure exactly how it worked.
CBC: *Drucker was really magical. I remember looking at his art, wondering, "How could he do that? How could he capture a caricature so well and so consistently?" Everyone he caricatured was identifiable. To this day, I always remember "East Side Story," in* MAD. *How he perfectly nailed Khruschev, Castro, and JFK, at the United Nations.*
Rick: And every month there was another masterpiece by Drucker, I know. My thing with him is, as I learned more about how you draw cartoons and how you make them work, it's demystifying the process. But, with him, it's the exact opposite. The more you realize you're more like, "How did he do this?" With him, I don't know how he did it. I still don't. While I even know what tools he used, I'm just, wow, how does he get such a fluid, graceful, just lively line?
CBC: *About Mort Todd: why did he change his name from Michael DelleFemine? And what did "Mort Todd" mean? The French and German words for death…?*
Rick: Yeah, pretty much. Pretty basic. He has Rhode Island roots, too. In East Providence, there's some DelleFemines, and there's a baseball field named after his uncle DelleFemine. So the DelleFemines are around.

After he moved to Maine, he was trying to do a weekly newspaper and I did some artwork for it and whoever was paying for it and [the publishers] were like, "No, you can't do this. You can't do that." It was, like, "Oh man, it's really limiting what you can get away with." And then it just didn't happen. So I think Cliff Mott was doing some comics. too, but you got to give the guy a hand for trying. He was always trying to get something off the ground. He's the one who got me involved in inking Steve Ditko when this guy named Ron Frantz was looking to publish some stuff. Somehow he and Mort got together.
CBC: *The* Fandom: Confidential *guy?*
Rick: I think he came through fandom. He was, like, "I'm going to publish my own comics. I don't really have any money…"
CBC: *He had ACE Comics. He published* What Is… The Face?
Rick: Yeah, and [*Return of the*] *Skyman*. I did some work for *The Face*. It was a treat inking Ditko though. But, at the time, I was living with Clowes in Chicago, in Hyde Park. It was 1987, I think, and it was summertime and Ron Frantz would send the pencil pages and, oh God, it was *so* freaking hot that summer! It was like a heat wave and there was no air conditioning in Dan's house. We were just sweating and we'd work at night basically just because the heat was unbearable. Dan was working on the first issue of *Eightball* and a *Lloyd Llewellyn Special* and stuff like that. And we were both working for *Cracked*, doing stuff for them. But yeah, inking Ditko was my freelance job. And one of the jobs I did, I never got paid for! So I was, like, "Oh, this sucks."
CBC: *Did you ever get the chance to meet Ditko at all?*
Rick: No, I never did. He was very good at corresponding, though. He was always courteous and would write you back. He wouldn't go into a lot of detail.
CBC: *He'd sign his name in script and then in block letters.*
Rick: Yeah, exactly. It was weird. But what a guy. He and Mike were very good friends, too. (I always called Mort Todd "Mike.") Mort was giving him work at *Cracked*, which was… I mean Mort was such a thoughtful guy, always looking out for his old time friends. He put Gene Colan and Steve Ditko in *Cracked*, two of the least funny guys in the world working for this humor magazine.



Above: *Championed by Fantagraphics co-publisher Kim Thompson (who also toiled over the collection's production),* The Doofus Omnibus, *a 112-page compilation of the strip Daniel Clowes called "an amazingly well-crafted conflation of queasy psychology, sub-moronic toilet humor and fine art."* **Below:** *Chums since their college years, it's Dan Clowes (left) and Rick Altergott posing for Chris Anthony Diaz at a MOCCA Festival a few years ago.*



Photo by Chris Anthony Diaz. Courtesy of and © the photographer.



Above: *Rick during his years in Los Angeles.* **Below:** Eightball *#1 [Aug. '89].* **Bottom:** *Dan Clowes gave his pal initial notice with this promo ad in* Eightball *#8 [May '92].*



Mike, he told us all, "Hey, we're going to be working for *Cracked*. It's going to be super-great!" He had Peter Bagge and Dan, and I was kind of like a tier below those guys, but I was like, "Yeah, I could be in here, too." And Cliff Mott was the associate editor and art director. When Mort quickly became the editor-in-chief, but I don't even know how he got his foot in the door there, but it was pretty cool that he did because he brought all of his friends on board.

CBC: *Was Robert Sproul the publisher?*

Rick: I think so.

CBC: *Was he down in Florida?*

Rick: He might have been, but the editorial officers were still in Manhattan. Mike and Dan were roommates for a while and, at that time, Mort was working at J&R Music World, in the financial district, in lower Manhattan, and he would bring home movies all the time, all the weirdest stuff. He was a really interesting guy who kind of opened up the horizons about what was cool stuff, all this Betamax stuff, like *Dolemite* movies with Rudy Ray Moore, and all kinds of weird old TV shows and stuff. He was really into it. We were all into *Dragnet* and all the Jack Webb movies. Yeah, it was pretty cool. Those are fun times.

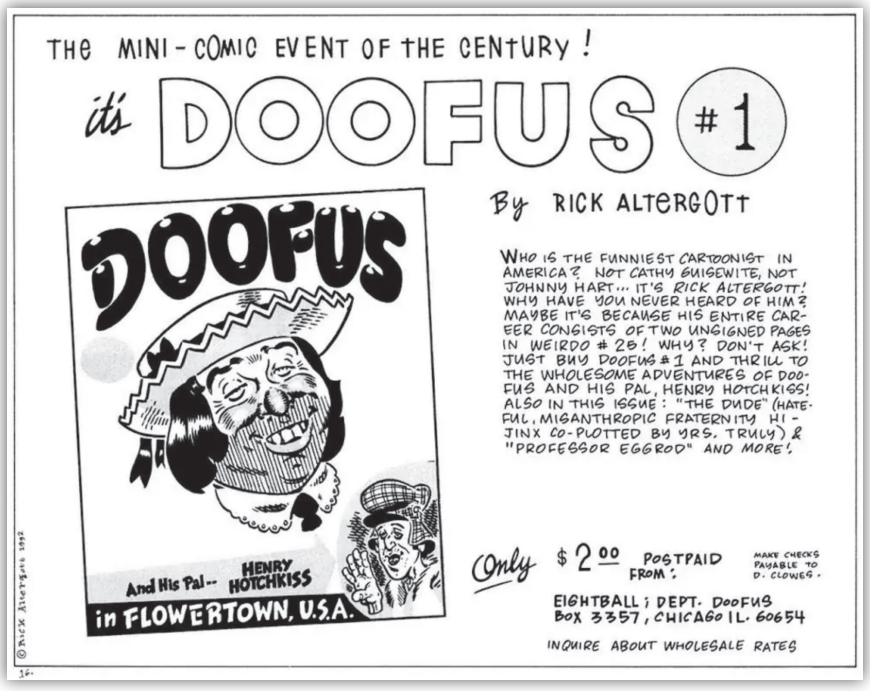
CBC: *So why don't you tell me about* Cracked. *So Mike said he had gotten a gig, got in touch with you guys or was it by word of mouth that you heard about it, or were you invited?*

Rick: Yes. I was living back in Delaware at that time, in Wilmington, so that was a nice freelance job to have. So that was neat. I guess a lot of freelancers don't live right next to where the action is, but if I had been living in New York, I probably would have pestered them more and gotten more jobs. I ended up doing… I've always wanted to do the spoofs and stuff, so I did a bunch of those.

CBC: *Did you write any of it?*

Rick: I did write one. I wrote one or two. I wrote a spoof of *Young Guns* ['88] and I also did a *La Bamba* ['87] spoof, too, so Lou Diamond Phillips is probably the only actor I drew twice.

CBC: *How were the rates at* Cracked*?*



Rick: Not bad. Probably a couple hundred dollars a page or something like that.

CBC: *This was all through the mail? Did you ever go up?*

Rick: I would visit the offices every once in a while. The place was kind of a mess. There was other publications that had their offices commingling with *Cracked*, like *Intimate Letters* and other dirty magazines and stuff they were publishing. It was kind of a dump, and the artwork was strewn all over the place. For one thing, I would visit sometimes to get my artwork back and it would just be in a big box somewhere. I remember Dan and I both went… We were, like, "We better not let them hang on to our artwork for too long." So we went up specifically to get our art. Maybe I'm misremembering, but I recall a box of stuff and I saw some of Dan's artwork and I grabbed my stuff. I think I got most of it back. But, yeah, those were fun times. Working on that kind of cartooning gig was always enjoyable and fun.

CBC: *Dan's* Lloyd Llewellyn *was with Fantagraphics, right?*

Rick: Right. And they actually debuted it in an issue of *Love and Rockets* [#13, Sept. '85], which was really kind of weird. The Bros must have been on board. It's, like, "Yeah, are we going to share our book with this new guy?" Just to introduce his character. Then there were six issues of *Lloyd Llewellyn*, and then, in '87, he was working on the very last one, which was a one-shot special, which was small regular comics book-size. The six-issue run were slightly larger, like *Love and Rockets*.

CBC: Did you get any work with him on that or no?

Rick: No, not really, no. I did do some work for Fantagraphics early. The title I worked for was called *Duplex Planet*, which was this guy, David Greenberger, who would just pump out an issue every month because he was basically just transcribing interviews.

CBC: *This was the comic with stories of senior citizens?*

Rick: Yeah. So it was like, "Okay, here's another issue. Here's another one." It was like, "Damn! This guy's just pumping out comics!" He got all the best cartoonists for some reason. He's got Jim Woodring in there, Pete Bagge did some work for him, Ariel did a… No, she did something for Denny Eichhorn [*Real Stuff*].

CBC: *Denny got everybody, too!*

Rick: He did, yeah. And it was a really good bunch of cartoonists back then if you were going to not write your own stuff and needed artists, there was quite a stable of artists to choose from that were all under kind of a Fantagraphics banner, I guess.

CBC: *That was the age of anthologies really, right?*

Rick: It really was. Denny had so many stories. He was a cool guy. I liked him, very much so, and he was really nice. He had all kinds of different jobs and stuff. And, when I first moved to Seattle, he helped me out. He got me some work at *Loompanics*, which is another publication that was out in a place called Port Townsend, which was a ferry ride. The publisher was Mike Hoy, and he was a really nice guy. Unfortunately, he died, and then Denny died. But Denny lived out in Port Townsend, too, and had all kinds of different things going on.

CBC: *Denny was great. He shared a stack of his* Northwest Extra *magazine with me with these awesome Crumb and Drew Friedman illustrations.*

Eightball TM & © Daniel Clowes. *Doofus* TM & © Rick Altergott.

Rick: Yeah, I did a page for that about a UFO sighting that he did.

CBC: *Did you get any notice through* Cracked*? Did you get enough work published for you to build a portfolio and go on interviews? Were you looking for work?*

Rick: You mean in the larger comics world?

CBC: *Yeah.*

Rick: I had an interview with Larry Hama at Marvel when I graduated from college. I had a film degree, but I didn't have any prospects at all. I put together a portfolio and went to see Larry and Pat Redding, his assistant at the time. They're both very nice, but I wasn't ready, wasn't good enough to ink mainstream comics, the job I was trying to get. I probably could ink comics now. I actually have a pretty good handle on… I certainly developed a pretty good inking style in the years after that but, when I was in my early 20s, I just didn't have the chops. And that's basically what they told me, too.

CBC: *When did you recognize that Dan was developing into a major graphic novelist?*

Rick: It was definitely while he was doing *Eightball*. I remember one time I visited him in Chicago. He lived in an area called Wicker Park and he was with his current wife… At this point, I visited him, stayed for a couple days, and he had some very deep reading. Nabokov was always one of his favorite authors, but there was some other more intellectual stuff. He was using that kind of literature to develop ideas for his comics. I wish I could remember what *Eightball* that was. It was within the first 10 issues, probably in an early one. But I thought, "Yeah, he's really got some pretty neat stuff going on."

CBC: *How did he characterize what he was going for?*

Rick: I don't think he talked about it too much. He lets the work speak for itself. One thing I was always impressed by him was that he always developed big ideas, always pushing the envelope and doing something like putting a little booklet inside one of the issues, just trying to enhance it more and raise the game up a little bit. Because this was during the 80s, where the alternative comics were black-&-white, just pamphlets, and he was trying to elevate it. And his style was really neat, too. If you look at it, he knows it's not just a drawing that's trapped with color. The color was more integrated artistically and was very pleasing in the whole. So it's not like you're wasting color on an artist like him.

At the time, to jazz up your page, you'd use Zip-A-Tone because it was always going to be printed in black-&-white. Do whatever you could do. I'd use rubylith and cut the acetate. Even back then, when we were using acetate, when I was digging through looking for some of my artwork, I came across a piece of rubylith that was loose and I could lift it up and just by looking at it, I could tell it was one that had been separated from his line artwork. He's really had a great design sense even back then.

CBC: *Was he inspiring?*

Rick: Oh yes, definitely. I learned how to letter from him because he would do *everything*. He'd write and he'd do the whole thing.

CBC: *Was there any inspiration to do long form work? Only recently you've done a graphic novel…*

Rick: It took me a long time. I should go back for a second – because this is kind of funny – I might have mentioned it, but Pete Friedrich was the one who put together *Psycho Comics*, with a office manager mentality and he'd break down the jobs to be done. One was writing, another was the penciler, one inking, and one lettering. And if he were doing all four tasks, Mort was, like, "Oh, you mean you wailed on that story?" Pete was trying to impose a Marvel assembly-line technique for early 20s cartoonists, and none of us were interested in doing that.

As far as long form, when Dan did the "Velvet Glove" storyline to be continued in every issue, that was pretty cool. And I guess he initially planned on doing a whole graphic novel because it was in the first 10 issues of *Eightball* and he was just cranking it out. It was the lead story.

CBC: *I wonder if Dan mapped it entirely out with a beginning, middle, and end, and with a collection in mind.*

Rick: He might have, but it's also possible that he just knew that it was going to be 10 chapters, but he didn't write it down in full script form. I've always thought that's a tough way to work, but I know some people like to work from a full script and that now it's time to execute it. But I can't do it that way. I think it's more if you have a basic idea of what you're doing and then while you're working on the project it becomes more, you write it as you go along, you come up with ideas as you're working instead of like, "Nope, can't



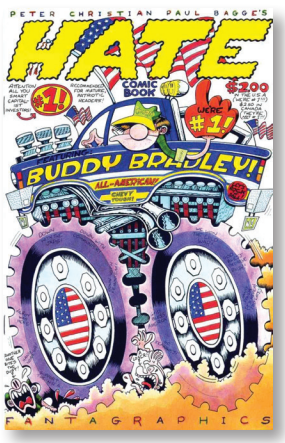


Top: *Rick both wrote and drew this Top Guns parody in Cracked #243 [Mar. '89]* **Above:** *Cover of same by John Severin and an undated photo of Mike Delle-Femine, better known to humor and comics fans as the late, great Mort Todd.*

Cracked TM & © Literally Media Ltd.



Above: *One of Rick's many freelance clients was the Seattle weekly,* The Stranger. *This super-heroic cover is from V12 #30 [Apr. 16, '03].* **Below:** *Rick's really big break came in the pages of Peter Bagge's* Hate, *starting in 1995. Cover by Bagge seen is #1 [Spr. '90].*



put that idea in. It doesn't fit this script that I've already got blocked." I don't know what other cartoonists do, but I just think breaking it down that way is tricky. I don't like that way. I know that Richard Sala would work that way, too. When he did *The Chuckling Whatsit* and others, I think he left a lot of it open so that he could be inspired and change things while he was working on it. In other words, not working from a full script.

CBC: *From a rough outline or whatever…*

Rick: And I think guys like Pete Bagge were more like working from a full script. He's like, "Here, I got to write the script." He compartmentalizes the process. I don't know that's true, but I think it is. I don't really know how he worked.

CBC: *When you were at* Cracked, *were you living at home?*

Rick: No, I had an apartment with some friends in Wilmington.

CBC: *Was it far from home?*

Rick: No, it was really close. I could have walked there.

CBC: *Did you get along with your parents? Was everything good between you?*

Rick: Yeah, they were pretty nice, though they were probably wondering what was going on with me because I didn't really have a lot happening. And I didn't really show them my cartoons. There *was* a period of time when I was living at their house and working on freelance stuff for *Cracked*, which wasn't the coolest time. Especially since I was out of college and, like, "Where's your job?" All that stuff.

CBC: *How long were you in Wilmington?*

Rick: Probably a couple of years. And then, in '87, I moved to Chicago to be with Dan and did work there, but I ended up coming back.

CBC: *How long were you out in Chicago?*

Rick: Probably about seven months or so.

CBC: *Did you meet Chris Ware? Was he emerging on the scene at the time?*

Rick: I did meet him, but I don't think I knew who he was. Well, you know what? The second time I moved is when we all moved out west because Charles Schneider, my other friend, he's also from Chicago. He had already lived out in L.A. and Dan was going to join him because his girlfriend Erica was out there. She's a native Californian and he was going to join her and they said, "Why don't you come, too?" And I wasn't doing anything better in Wilmington. So Dan and I moved out with all of his stuff and I had my car in tow. And then Charles, who already lived in L.A., he joined us for the road trip. So the three of us drove out. It took us about five days to do it.

CBC: *Was it memorable?*

Rick: Yeah, because we were in some pretty dicey towns in some spots. We had a lot of fun. It was a fun time. And then at the end of the trip, I was living in L.A. I was trying to get a job in animation and I had visited Spumco Studio before that. John Kricfalusi was there and the show was actually going on. By the time I actually worked there, *Ren and Stimpy* had been taken over by another studio and John was trying to develop other properties.

Thank God I found a job! I was working downtown at a pretty dead-end job just kind of hoping something would develop and some friends of mine helped me get my foot in the door there. All the while, Dan was living in Studio City and I was living with Charles doing a couch tour between the two. Charles and I eventually found a really nice apartment together though. That was a pretty stable period.

CBC: *Now who is Charles Schneider?*

Rick: He's an old friend of Dan and mine from the Pratt Institute days and he did a lot of movie stuff and he was involved in acting, writing video treatments, stuff like that. So he was also kind of like Mort in doing a lot of different studd, and a very nice guy. And he's still a good friend of mine. He actually visited here earlier this year and it was great to see him. He's a character and I always am finding out more stuff that he had worked on. He's been into movies like *Beetlejuice, Tombstone,* and Zodiac (as the cab driver), and many others. [*Charles plays Cool_guy5 in the 2026 release,* Primetime. – **Y.E.**] He had a Screen Actors Guild card and did some acting. He was a stage magician and stand up comic…

CBC: *Do you make an effort to maintain these friendships? They seem very enduring.*

Rick: I'm lucky, though I haven't seen Dan in years, but we're still good friends, but we don't only just text message

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each other. I couldn't tell you what he's working on. He kind of operates in a much different artistic ecosystem than I do.

CBC: *How long did you live in L.A.?*

Rick: I was probably there for three years. This was in the early '90s. And then Dan actually introduced me to Ariel who was living in San Francisco at the time. She's from in Boston but she moved out to S.F. She became friends with Adrian Tomine, who was at Berkeley. Then, through Adrian, who was friends with Dan, the two of them kind of set us up. So I owe them that connection.

CBC: *Excuse me? Clowes and Tomine set you two up?*

Rick: Sure. They set the two of us up on dates and then we got along really well and ended up, I would take the train up to visit Dan and stay with him and then meet up with Ariel and then we started going to comic conventions together. She was actually a pretty popular cartoonist at the time in the San Francisco scene.

CBC: *Had you had serious relationships prior to that?*

Rick: Not a whole lot, no. I was not really that popular with girls.

CBC: *Right. So what was it about Ariel?*

Rick: She was really nice and we definitely hit it off.

CBC: *You've been married for how long?*

Rick: Twenty-five years. It's hard to believe, huh?

CBC: *When did you move to Rhode Island?*

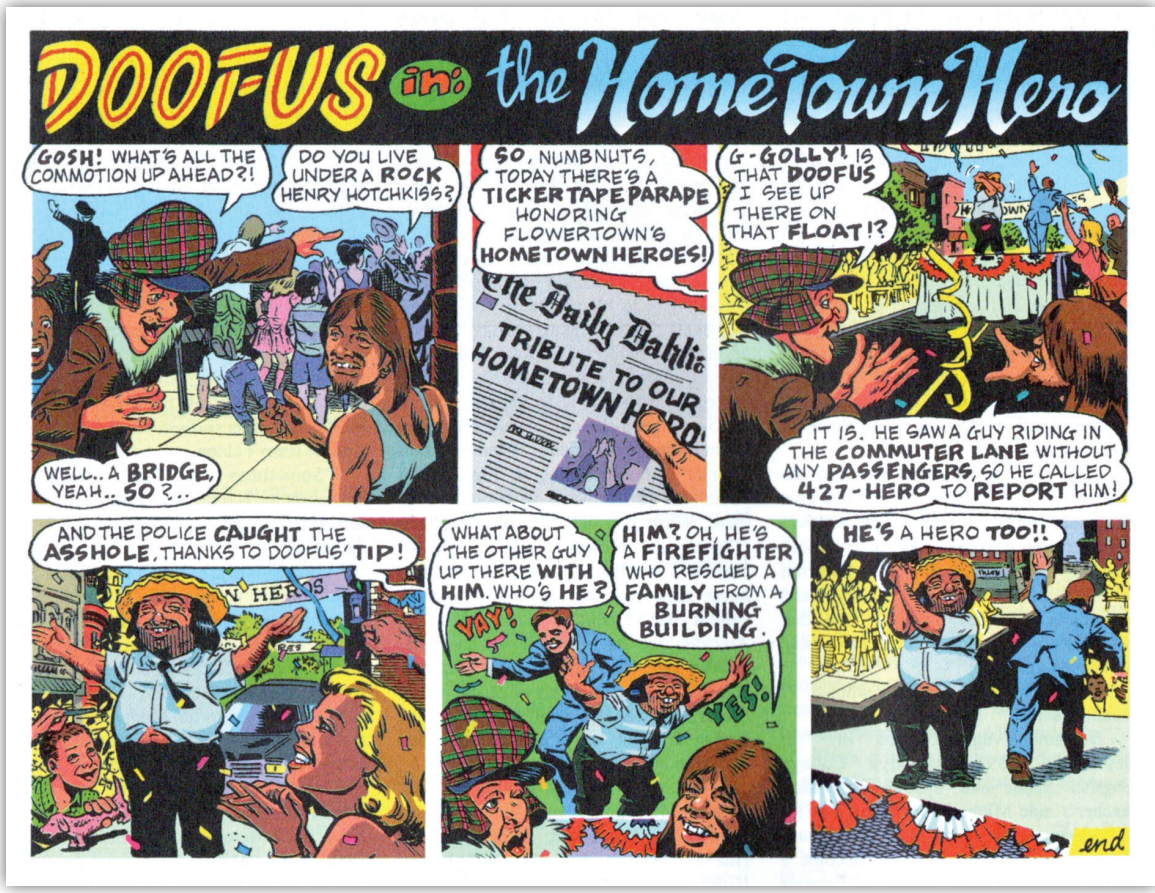
Rick: Right after 9/11, basically, the year after. We moved here the exact day [notorious Providence Mayor] Buddy Cianci left City Hall!

CBC: *Mayor Marinara!*

Rick: We had married in Seattle and then moved here and it was kind of shocking. While I'm glad we don't live in Seattle now – it's changed a lot since then – we did have such a nice scene there back then. There were so many cool people and it wasn't so impossible to buy a place to live and we always rented. We didn't own a house or anything, but nowadays I hear it's just impossible in that area.

CBC: *When was your first date with Ariel? What year?*

Rick: We had a couple dates and then we went to San Diego together one year to attend Comic-Con. She had a brand new issue of *Deep Girl* and I was working at Spumco. It must have been the mid-'90s. She visited me in L.A. for that trip and some other ones, but it was a long distance relationship at first. We were living together before we married, too. She moved up to Seattle first and I followed her up there. Her father still lives in Seattle.



CBC: *So you had known Pete Bagge through the cartoonist community? You certainly were aware of him, right?*

Rick: He had been doing *Stop!* magazine and *Comical Funnies,* with J.D. King and John Holmstrom. So I was aware of their group and so I think Mort knew them, too. So Pete was the advance scout of that scene. Everybody loved what those guys were doing. So Pete was around. I didn't meet him until one of Phil Seuling's comic conventions.

CBC: *What'd you think of him?*

Rick: I don't remember him very well, to be honest. I knew him much later on, in Seattle, where he was kind of the king of Seattle. Everybody moved to Seattle because of him. It was always kind of funny that he was always ahead of everyone else. He already had a wife and a kid, and he'd be going to Walmart to go shopping and it was *so* uncool, but that's the suburban thing, right? It was like he was mining it for humor material, too. It was perfectly appropriate in his mind that, instead of trying to be some Seattle hipster, he was a dad taking his daughter to the playground.

CBC: *Button-down guy!*

Rick: Yeah, just trying to make a living as a cartoonist.

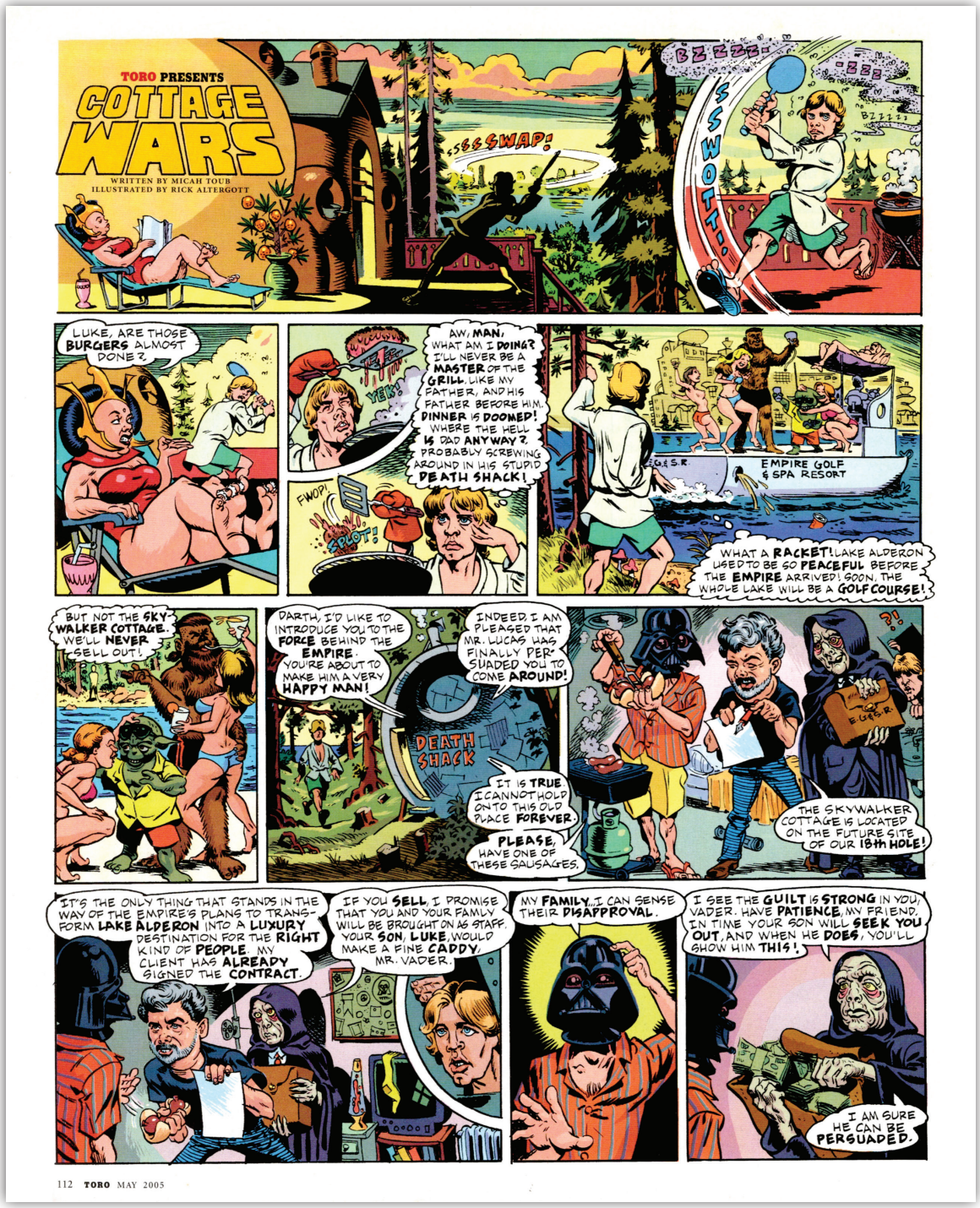
CBC: *And yet this square's material really tapped into a younger generation, the whole slacker thing or however you want to define it.*

Rick: It did, but he also knew the other generations, too. He was able to synthesize an older person's sensibilities, as well. He's one of

Above: *About the only suitable* Doofus *strip that can be reproduced in a TwoMorrows magazine is this installment (which does include a naughty word, so apologies to sensitive readers) from* Hate *#30 [May '98].* **Below:** *As a freelance artist, Rick was on call for editorial assignments from numerous publications. This piece illustrated a* Stranger *piece titled, "James Bland," about the 007 movies.*



Doofus TM & © Rick Altergott.



Above: *One truly epic assignment was Rick's* Star Wars *parody two-pager that graced the pages of Canada's lad mag* Toro*'s May '05 issue. We're unsure of piece's context, but it appears to be a commentary on not only the blockbuster film franchise but rural development in the Great White North…? Or perhaps the gag is simply above Ye Ed.'s intellect…? Who knows! But we do know that Rick's cartooning mastery is in full farcical force (get it?) in this story!*

my favorite writers. He's very, very gifted.

CBC: *I agree. I think he's one of the best writers in comics, absolutely. He was one of the few writers who could surprise me. (I mean, not to complain, comics have terrible writers, generally speaking.)*

Rick: Plus his art style is *completely* unique. There's no antecedent to his style.

CBC: *Maybe Don Martin a little bit.*

Rick: Yeah, a little bit. And there's the rubber-hose kind of thing that he uses. I've always thought his style was completely unique. There aren't very many people who can come up with a brand-new style like Don Martin. Carol Lay's another one. Her style doesn't have any… There's no reference point to someone else that you can say, "Oh, it's all brand new." That's unusual.

I wish I could say that about my work. My influences are… I've gotten to the point where I think my style is my own, but it almost seems like I'm always trying to be inspired by someone else. Or, if I look at somebody else's work, I can get inspired by it. The book I'm doing now, I was originally going to try to draw other artists to make it look like four different artists drew the comic book. Yeah, you're talking about that. But I just can't do it. It's so hard. It's like that's the most biggest challenge of my whole career trying to do that. It's interesting.

CBC: *We were talking about Bruce Timm when we were coming over here and there's something you can say about Bruce is that he was able to capture Kirby, yet he put his own spin on it. I would say that that's true of your work too, is like you capture, you very much can get the essence of Woody. For me, it's Wally Wood and it's also you – solidly you – and you have such dedication to craft with the work. I've always literally, I've always worshiped you guys who use copious amounts of ink. I mean, you really know how to spot blacks and give the work heft, not be afraid of ink, which makes your art pops out… But I'm just a reader, just a fan.*

Rick: Thanks. Wood has a way of controlling every square inch of his frame. It's amazing what he can do.

CBC: *It reaches the point of being antiseptic, almost too perfect. There's something to strive for – perfection – but I'd rather like the imperfection sometimes.*

Rick: I'm still learning. I think he reached a point where there's nothing else to learn. It's executing and you can always fall back on something you've created before, and this is this situation. I draw it this way, and it just becomes very regimented.

CBC: *And loses mojo. I think Alex Toth was the same way. Alex always agonized with making it perfect.*

Rick: Wood would be like, "Okay, we're going to lay out this issue and then we're going to steal this swipe from here and put this here." It's a recipe for a comic book.

*Star Wars*TM & © LucasFilm, Ltd.

CBC: *Then he had the perfect swiper in Dan Adkins.* [Off-the-record talk commences about the tragedy of Wallace Wood. – **Y.E.**] *There's a lesson to be learned in there. For you, what about the heartbreak of comics? Comics will break your heart. How do you look at it?*

Rick: I kind of have stepped away from it and lowered my expectations…

CBC: *When did that happen?*

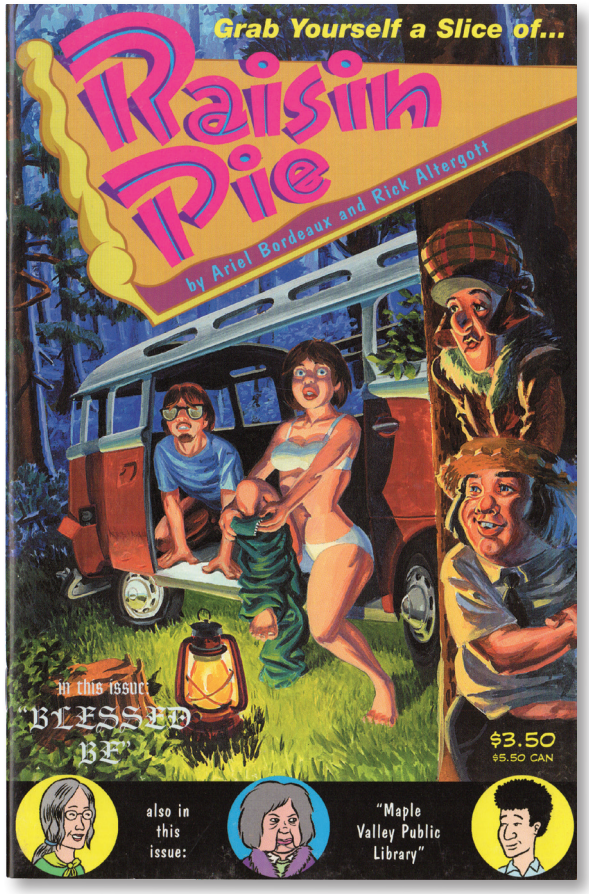
Rick: It's been a long time now. I haven't gotten much acclaim or anything out of it. It's like I can't make a living at it. I'm also like, "I could kill myself doing this and nobody will care." I once told Seth, "I can do whatever I want in comics and it doesn't matter because nobody's going to see it and I can get away with anything."

CBC: *Well, that's bullsh*t, right?*

Rick: It's pretty much bullsh*t. I was feeling sorry for myself, but there's a little bit of truth to it. I mean, I'm never going to be one of the top tier guys. I remember when Art Spiegelman was visiting town, he and I were walking around and he told me, "The thing is, once you get to a certain tier, you're like a made man and you're going to get the notice, you've reached a different plateau." I don't even know what made us talk about this. Maybe I was ragging on my terrible reputation then, too, and he was trying to cheer me up, because he's always very nice that way. But maybe he's saying that, once you get this certain level, you're there, you've made it, but getting there is the hard part and it's true.

CBC: *And it's getting the brass ring, right? It's also making it, having that thing people respond to. And you went for it with* Doofus*, right?*

Rick: I did, sort of, but I always knew. I mean, I always had Dan Clowes' career to look at and Dan truly deserves what he's gotten. Sometimes it's a little weird that he's had kind of a charmed life. I was telling Ariel the other day, he came up with his Shamrock Squid character just to fill a gap in one of his books, and the next thing you know, it's like everybody's doing a Shamrock Squid. I'm like, "This is insane. The guy has got the golden touch." But, yeah, I can't get arrested in comics, but it's just the way it is. I just do it because I enjoy doing it. I figure if it's completely removed from commerce, then it must be art, right?



CBC: *That's it! So what was that with* Doofus*, right? Did you say it started off as a mini comic, which we discussed last time.*

Rick: Yeah. I did two mini comics. I felt this was time for me to make my own comic because Dan had shown me just how cool it is to have your own book. So I just self-published my own comic and I sent it out and he actually advertised it in *Eightball*, which was pretty cool. And I got a lot of notices, people like [Chicago comic shop] Quimby's was asking for copies to sell in their store and other places like that. So I thought, "This is pretty neat!" I really felt like there was a lot of ways to get attention. It was before the internet…

CBC: *The golden age of zines, right?*

Rick: Right, the zine thing, and that's how Ariel got her start, too. That was something we had in common is that the zine thing was pretty popular. People were sending things to each other through the mail. It was a very healthy kind of cross pollination of different people. If you had your own little book, you could share it with other people through trades or send them or…

CBC: Factsheet Five [*zine review zine*] *was just f*cking amazing. An entirely new world that was so inspiring!*

Rick: Yeah! The fanzine and mini comics world exploded. It was like everything was suddenly connected. Everyone, everything.

CBC: *I even joined in with my Lovecraft zine* [Tekeli-li! Journal of Terror]*!*

CBC: The creepy stuff like *Answer Me*. Anything goes! It kept you going. It kept you really motivated and excited. And I kind of feel sorry for the current generation. One thing, I'm glad I was part of that time and I feel sorry for people now that don't really have it, but there's still… Just that show I went to last weekend, there's a lot of people doing comics, a lot of younger ones, and they seem to be pretty plucky. They're like, "I'm going to keep doing this."

CBC: *There's Instagram. The social media world can be very, very toxic, but it can also be very, very encouraging.* **Rick:** Yeah, but it's not print. It can be print. You can't excite their lives just like the zines excited our lives.

CBC: *When did you move up to Seattle? You followed Ariel up there?*

Rick: Yeah, I got laid off from Spumco and I got a little freelance animation work after that. What else was I doing? I actually did pretty well money-wise. I had a cheap rent and I had some money.

CBC: *You were living alone by this time?*

Rick: No, I was living with Schneider. Dan had moved in with Erica at that time, and I was doing the couch tour between their apartment. and Schneider I moved up there with no prospects. I found another job in animation, which was the last thing I thought I'd do. I was able to work there and make a good living for a while. But before that happened, I did some work for Fantagraphics. I think I colored an issue of *Hate*. I did stuff like that around the office.

CBC: *Did you get along with Kim and Gary?*

Rick: I did. I always had a nice relationship with Kim. Gary was always kind of aloof. He's actually been a lot warmer and friendlier in the past couple years and I've had some nice conversations with him, but back then he was a little intimidating, and that's when *The Comics Journal* could be super-acerbic. It was must-read entertainment for comics people because it was just over the top in a lot of ways and that was because of him. He was always trying to stir something up. I went visiting there last summer and it's pretty much the same as it was back then. The building's the same, but they've developed the basement into a comics library, and there's people working down there. They actually had Eros offices down there back in the day. Eric Reynolds has a bigger office now, which makes sense. Kim is no longer there, of course. [*Kim Thompson died at 56, in 2013.* – **Y.E.**]but other than that, the building is the same. And I didn't see Gary at that time when I was visiting there, but I have caught up with him in recent years. I

CBC: *You were in the pages of* Hate*, where I first encountered you.*

Rick: Always a highlight for me is that Pete sought me out and he was –

CBC: *So he liked* Doofus*? He saw that?*

Rick: I guess he must have seen it. I forget. I might have even sent him

Raisin Pie ™ & © Ariel Bordeaux and Rick Altergott.



Above: *The great kids comics editor Chris Duffy hired Rick for a number of inside front cover strips in* SpongeBob Comics. *This appeared in #17 [Feb. '13].* **Previous page:** *Rick and Ariel produced five issues of* Raisin Pie, *#1 (seen here) in 2002.* **Below:** *Reproduced from the original art, this is the very first* Doofus *strip by Rick, which appeared in the titular mini comic.*

a copy. Before I moved to Seattle, he was actually telling me, "Come on, you've got to move up here." I didn't know him well, but I knew him well enough that he was trying to get me to move up. Every time someone would come to Seattle, he'd take them to the Fantagraphics warehouse and say, "Take whatever you want." I don't know how he had the keys to it, but he would be able to do it. He was the king of Seattle. And they couldn't do anything about it because he was their number one seller and he knew it.

It was nice. After what I'd been through in L.A., which was more of a desperation kind of like, "Wow, this can be a tough town," Seattle was a lot more friendlier and chill. I had a girlfriend, too, which was nice. We were just trying to survive…



CBC: *What was Seattle like? To me, it's like San Francisco in the '60s and '70s,with the undergrounds. Seattle of the early '90s is reminiscent with the grunge era and all that.*

Rick: Weren't you thinking about doing a book about the Seattle scene?

CBC: *I'd love to, but I mean somebody's got to throw money my way to do it. I have accumulated a lot of stuff…*

Rick: It was a golden time. Everybody had their own book. All your friends… Jeremy Eaton who was doing whatnot. Pat Moriarty was doing Big Mouth comics. Jim Woodring was doing Jim. Pete Bagge was doing Hate. Roberta Gregory was doing Bitchy Bitch. Everybody had a book. And then there was other publishers too, like Michael Dowers was doing Starhead. J.R. Williams was there. He was doing stuff for Fantagraphics. Denny Eichhorn was there. So was Ellen Forney, Megan Kelso, Dave Lasky, Donna Barr… It was really a robust scene and we just plugged right in. When I moved up there, I just plugged right in. It was an instant group of friends and they were all into cartooning.

CBC: *And they all liked your stuff…*

Rick: I never had anything like that before. That's why I call it a golden time. I know it'll never happen again. Moving here was much different.

CBC: *And the internet changed everything.*

Rick: Yeah, it probably did. But even if there had been a big cartooning scene (that would have been nice), but it took us a while to make any friends. And the younger kids were the Fort Thunder guys and they were more into art comics, [Rhode Island School of Design] kind of stuff. I was too old-fashioned for them. My stuff's always kind of old-fashioned, classically drawn, but with a kind of sleazy vibe to it. That's why mine's underground, because the content's creepy.

CBC: *Why Rhode Island?*

Rick: Well, I'm from Delaware and Ariel's from Massachusetts, so we kind of split the difference and we heard about what a renaissance city Rhode Island was. It was getting all this good word of mouth. And Ariel's aunt and uncle lived here, so we had a couple of connections and then we moved here and we like it. It's pretty cool.

CBC: *I remember visiting you and Ariel in Pawtucket.*

Rick: Yeah, we lived there for a couple of years. After Eddie was born, that's where we took him home from the hospital. You were teaching a comics class at RISD extension… and that's how you and I got together and Ariel also. You invited us to speak to the class.

CBC: *Anyway, I knew your stuff, and I was aware you had moved to Rhode Island.*

Rick: Alvin Buenaventura, who's also unfortunately dead, he visited one time. He'd come around with his girlfriend and they would buy comic art. So it was like, "Wow, this guy's coming around again. He's buying art from me. That was such a nice kind of payday." He was always very supportive.

CBC: *Wow. You told me you'll be in* Kramer's Ergot *soon…*

Rick: Yeah, apparently Sammy Harkham's starting it up again in the middle of next year. I think he's going to try

Doodles the Pirate strip TM & ©United Plankton Pictures, Inc. *Doofus* TM & © Rick Altergott.

to put out another edition. Drawn & Quarterly is going to publish it as a quarterly slim hardback, I think.

CBC: *You were in earlier issues…*

Rick: I'm in a couple of them, so it's nice to be invited. One was gigantic. [16" x 21", retail cost $125] I'm in that one.

CBC: *So Doofus got noticed through* Hate. *How many issues of* Hate *were you in?*

Rick: Good question. A pretty good number of them. In fact, when *Hate* went to full color and Pete decided to have other artists, I was the first other artist. And then he expanded it out with a lot of different content and people were not happy about the coloring in *Hate* at first, which was kind of silly. They weren't doing the plaid on Buddy Bradley shirt anymore.

CBC: Jim Blanchard came on as inker…. A perfect inker.

Rick: Yeah, he might have been too perfect. He was very slick. Pete kept a pretty tight schedule, too. He was like, "I'm going to make sure this comes out regularly," because he was smart. He knows that you have to be consistent and keep people hanging on the story. He always did a story people wanted to read and put out issues in timely fashion because he took it very seriously as a job. He wasn't like one of these other cartoonist flakes who just kind of does it will-o'-the-wisp. He was like, "This is a business, damn it!"

CBC: *When did you learn that Clowes' work was optioned for a different medium? That* Ghost World *was headed for film adaptation?*

Rick: That's a good question. I don't really know if Dan and Terry Zwigoff worked together, how that worked at all, because Zwigoff did the *Louie Bluie* movie, then *Crumb*. And then he did…

CBC: *And* Ghost World *was the third one?*

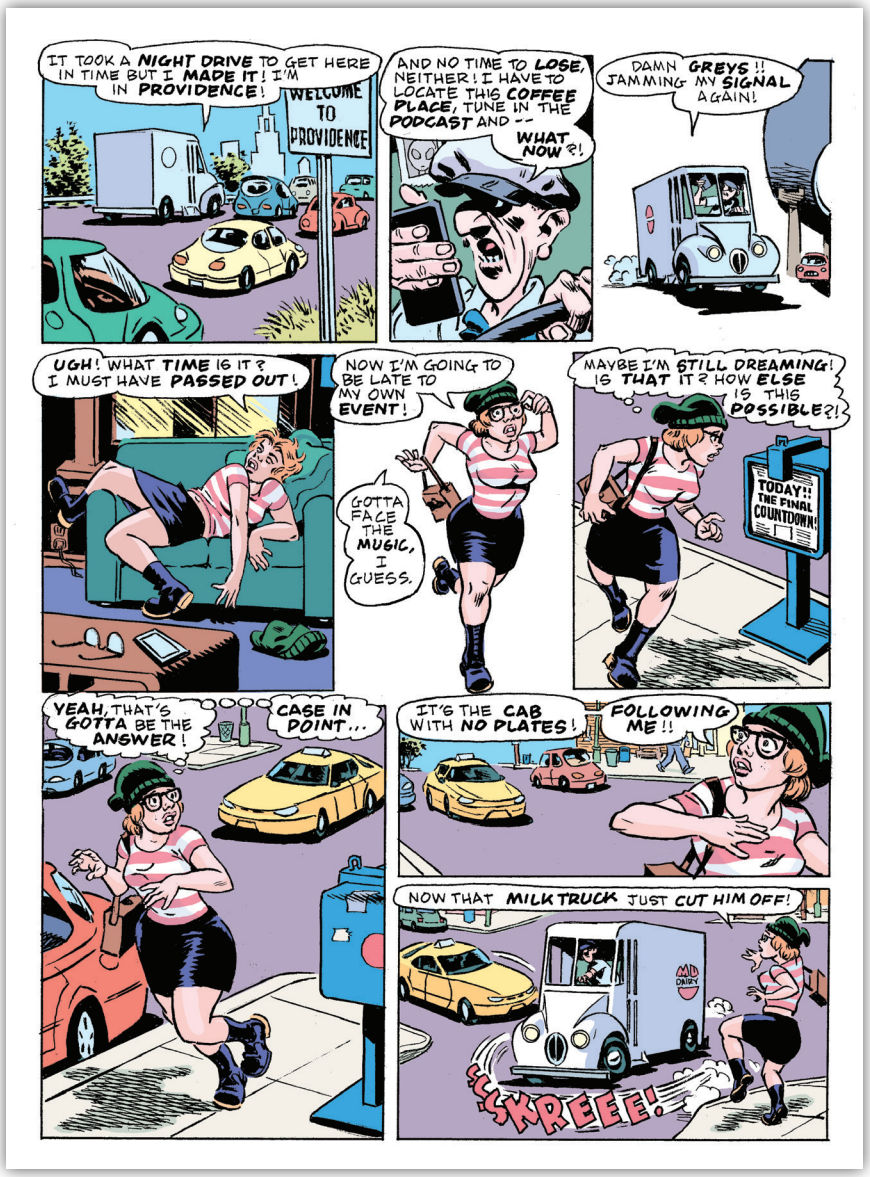
Rick: I think so, yeah. Terry would say to me that he was in such pain from physical problems that he would sleep with a gun under his pillow. I've gotten to know him fairly well. He's a nice guy. I think the two of them might have teamed together and, after *Crumb*, he probably had the ability to choose the project. David Lynch was part of the financing for Crumb, too. So, I mean, there was definitely some good tangents going on, but when they decided to work on a movie together, that's pretty cool. I don't know when the optioning came.

CBC: What'd you think of the movie?

Rick: I liked it. I watched it again fairly recently, too. The 25th anniversary version. I think it holds up. I don't like *Art School Confidential* as much. That one, he was promising guys like me, "Yeah, I wanted to get you involved in this because this is the shared experiences that we had." But that never happened.

CBC: *What was the thinking behind* Raisin Pie*? When did the germ of the idea start that you and your wife would share a book?*

Rick: We were thinking we wanted to do a publication together, but we also wanted to tell longer stories and would each split the book in half and tell a longer story that way. That's definitely what I was thinking. So it was never really a true collaboration. And Fantagraphics was, like, "Sure, we'll publish it. We won't promote it, but we'll publish it." If it's a hit, then great. If not, "Hey, you're still doing us a favor."



So we did, I think, four or five issues of it, and Ariel actually finished her serial, which is much to her credit because I left my audience hanging.

CBC: *For decades!*

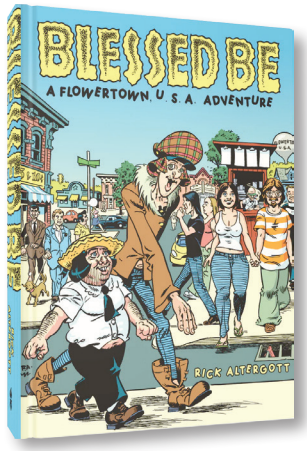
Rick: Yeah, exactly. That's probably when I realized that comics just weren't a very good way to make a living, not the way I do them. But at the time I was doing a lot of illustration too. The Seattle *Stranger* was great. Almost every week I'd have an illustration in that. And then the *New York Press*, that was a very comics-friendly publication. We had friends working in the editorial office there, too. And getting your work there was tricky because it was a weekly, and we'd fax our drawings to them and they'd print the faxed drawing. At the time, you couldn't really send a computer file. The internet didn't have that bandwidth that you could scan a piece of artwork and send it across the wire. So, every once in a while, I'd see a tear sheet of my *New York Press* illustration.

CBC: *Was the pay good?*

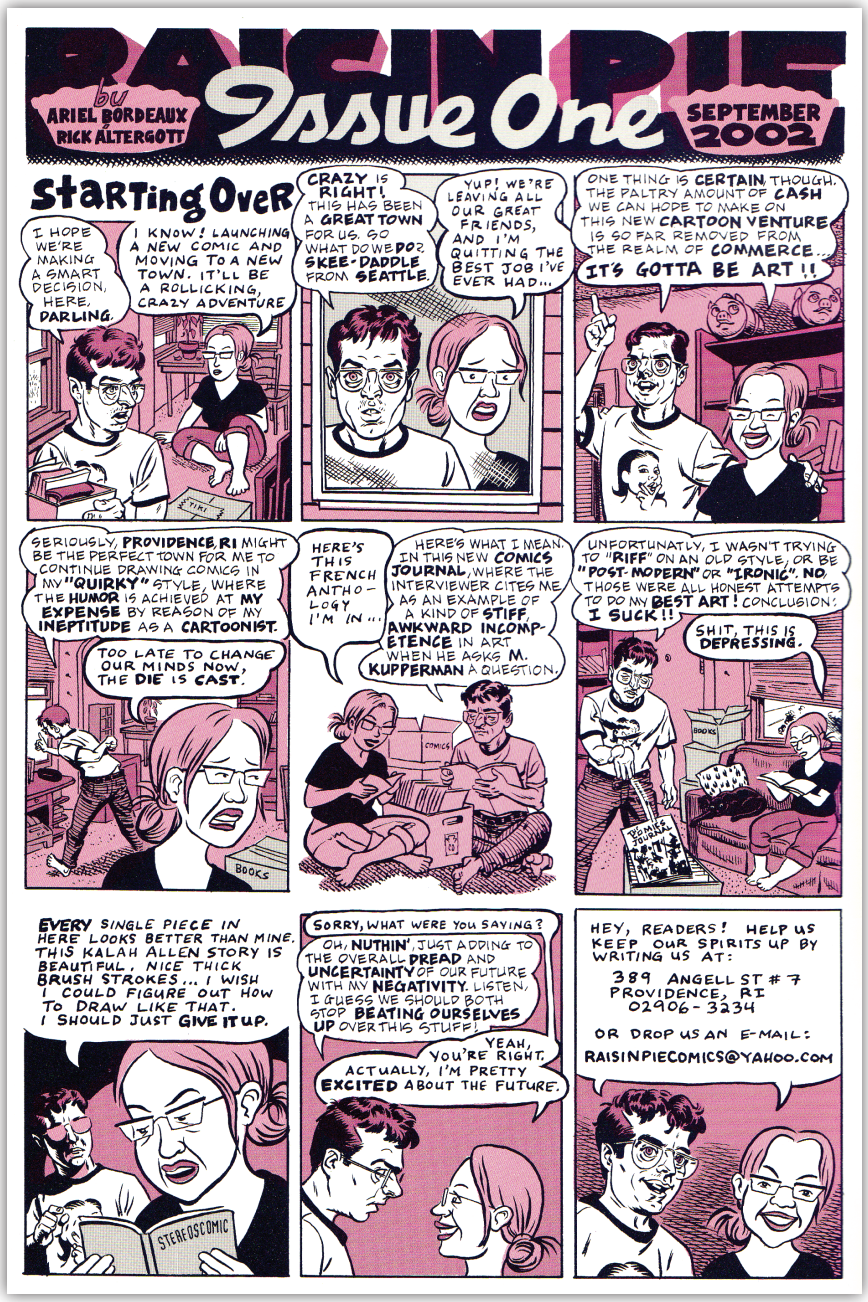
Rick: No, but it was like 50 bucks a week. If you're working full time and then, on the weekend, you do a drawing and get 50 bucks, it's not bad. And if you did another one for *The Stranger* that was like $100 or whatever it was, you're not doing too bad. We were making some money back then.

Above: *Rick is working on a top super-secret comic book project that an homage to DC's 1970s' mystery titles. Here's a rando page!*

Below: *Starring Doofus,* Blessed Be, *Rick's first graphic novel, a project in the works for decades, was published by Fantagraphics in 2024.*



Blessed Be TM & © Rick Altergott. *The Stink of Fear* page is courtesy of and © Rick Altergott.



Above: Raisin Pie *#1 [Oct. '02] explanatory intro page jam by Rick and Ariel.* **Below:** *The couple in Ye Ed.'s pic taken at the Time Capsule's* Blessed Be *release party in 2024.*



CBC: *So* Raisin Pie *is where you started* Blessed Be*, your recent graphic novel.*

Rick: Yeah, and it did morph into something different, but basically it started out with an idea and it pretty much followed that, but I added a lot of content to it. Well,

CBC: *You caught that teenage thing rather well in Blessed Be. I mean I remember that was very evocative of the keg parties out in the woods.*

Rick: I put in the notes in Blessed Be that the camper was a real vehicle and I would walk through those woods and there were people who were living in the woods back then, probably a lot more of them now actually. I never really got a sense of menace, but I've always kind of liked those kind of environments. You look out and there's a full moon and you're walking in the woods at night and there's a little stream running along and it's a place where something cool could happen or something a little mysterious.

The story, I tried to make it as illustrative as possible. And one of the things I like to always try to do is develop the characters. The cartooning, maybe it's not as… I'll spend the panels it takes to do a little bit of acting and character moving through a scene instead of just cutting from one scene to the next… My upcoming freelance job will probably be five pages, but I'm going to try to put some acting in there if I can. It's going to be a story for the Kramer's book. I might be done with Doofus and Henry Hotchkiss, but I do have another story I'd like to do with them. I don't know if people want to see more of that from me. They'll be like, "Oh God, Altergott, can't you think of something different?" Or they might be like, "No, we're glad to see you doing these characters again." I don't worry about stuff like that. I'm beyond worrying about whether people like my stuff or not.

CBC: *Is there a liberating aspect to that?*

Rick: Yeah, there is. Whatever was to happen to me in my career in comics has mostly happened, and now I'm in a place where I can I don't do it for a living and I can do whatever I want.

CBC: *Are you looking forward to retirement from your day job?*

Rick: I kind of am and kind of not. I don't know what I'll do. I don't think I have the energy to spend my whole day doing comics. It's really challenging work, especially when you're my age because you really have to focus on it. It's hard work. That's what Crumb used to say, "This is hard work." He's right.

CBC: *Go on about that. Tell me what would possibly make the greatest job in the world hard work?*

Rick: Oh, just the amount of energy you have to put into it. It's kind of exhausting…

CBC: *Is it expending the mental energy…?*

Rick: I think it is, and physical, too. I've been trying to figure out the tools I need to streamline my process and make it easier to do a page. And then you have to say, "What do you want to say?" The ideas I want to do, I've got a couple of ideas I want to do that would just be very challenging to make happen. And I don't know if I'd want to collaborate with somebody to write them, maybe because it would take a lot of research, a lot of hard work. And then, if you're collaborating with somebody, you might say, "I don't like the way this is working." And then what do you tell that person? But is it worth it? You've got to really pick your battles when you get to be my age and still like, "Am I going to do this? Is this going to be another complete waste of time and put all this energy into something and it just doesn't go anywhere?" Maybe.

CBC: *Well, did you get notice for* Blessed Be*?*

Rick: No, not really. Not the way I was kind of hoping. I made it the book I wanted it to be, so that I would be satisfied no matter what happened and I was. I built it that way. I made sure that I wouldn't be disappointed if it didn't do well because I was happy with the book itself on its own, face value.

CBC: *Really nice production on that, Rick.*

Rick: Yeah, and I'm pretty happy with it. I like it a lot. It took me so much work. It's hard to even describe how much energy and… I knew how long it took me. Hard work and there was times when I didn't work on it because I was a

Raisin Pie TM & © Ariel Bordeaux and Rick Altergott. Photo by Jon B. Cooke.

young father, raising a child, and working a full-time job the whole time and doing other freelance stuff. So, I mean, it could have gone a lot quicker, but it wouldn't have been the same book if it had. It might have been better. It's cohesiveness, but it's got a lot of stuff in it that I'm really happy with. It came about just in the process of doing it. I would never have thought of some of that stuff if I hadn't followed it the way I did. It took what it took. But whether I've got another book like that in me, I'm going to have to be much more careful. The one I have in mind would involve *lots* of research and it would be a period piece with new characters and I don't know the ending, but it's a pretty compelling setup that I really like. It would take place in the '30s or '40s, in a period when newspapers are a really popular form of entertainment before TV, when newspapers were the main source where people get their information. I think it's pretty interesting, but I haven't come up with a good ending yet. I'll probably never do it either is probably the more I think about it. Something would have to really click for that to happen.

CBC: *You were telling me about this anthology idea. What is that?*

Rick: It's just a one-shot comic that's a spoof of a *House of Mystery* kind of anthology comic. *House of Mystery* would have a couple new stories and a reprint, and that's what this book has.

CBC: *Like an early '70s Joe Orlando-edited title.*

Rick: Yeah, but the main story actually has cell phones, so it's up to date. I wish it was more like that, but I couldn't make it work otherwise. So it's going to be a weird one, but it's going to have lots of funny ads and stuff in it.

CBC: *Oh good. When do you see publication?*

Rick: Probably about a year from now, maybe. There's one kind of copyright issue that might be a problem, but I think it's probably not too bad. I hope Fantagraphics will be interested in it. It's called the *Step Into the Stink of Fear* and the cover kind of makes the joke title more understandable. I think it's pretty funny. It's another one that's probably going to be, like, "Brother, not another one of these stupid productions!" [*laughter*] I hope they like it. I mean, it'll be fun to read, I think. It's got the four stories that are pretty entertaining. I'm trying to collaborate with other Rhode Island people on it, so it's a Rhode Island book. Maybe I can get you involved somehow.

CBC: *I'd love to. I could be there.*

Rick: Yeah, I'm trying to put it together and figure it out. It's a lot of work. Boy, these comics, they're really hard work.

CBC: It's nice to also have a connection with Rob [Yeremian] and the Time Capsule too. It's a nice nexus to share. You literally live a block away! How cool is that?

Rick: Rob's amazing and it's a great store. It took us a long time living in Rhode Island to get to a place that we have this kind of scene, which is really nice.

CBC: *And your wife is working on her big collection, which I'll be talking to her about. Are you proud of her work?*

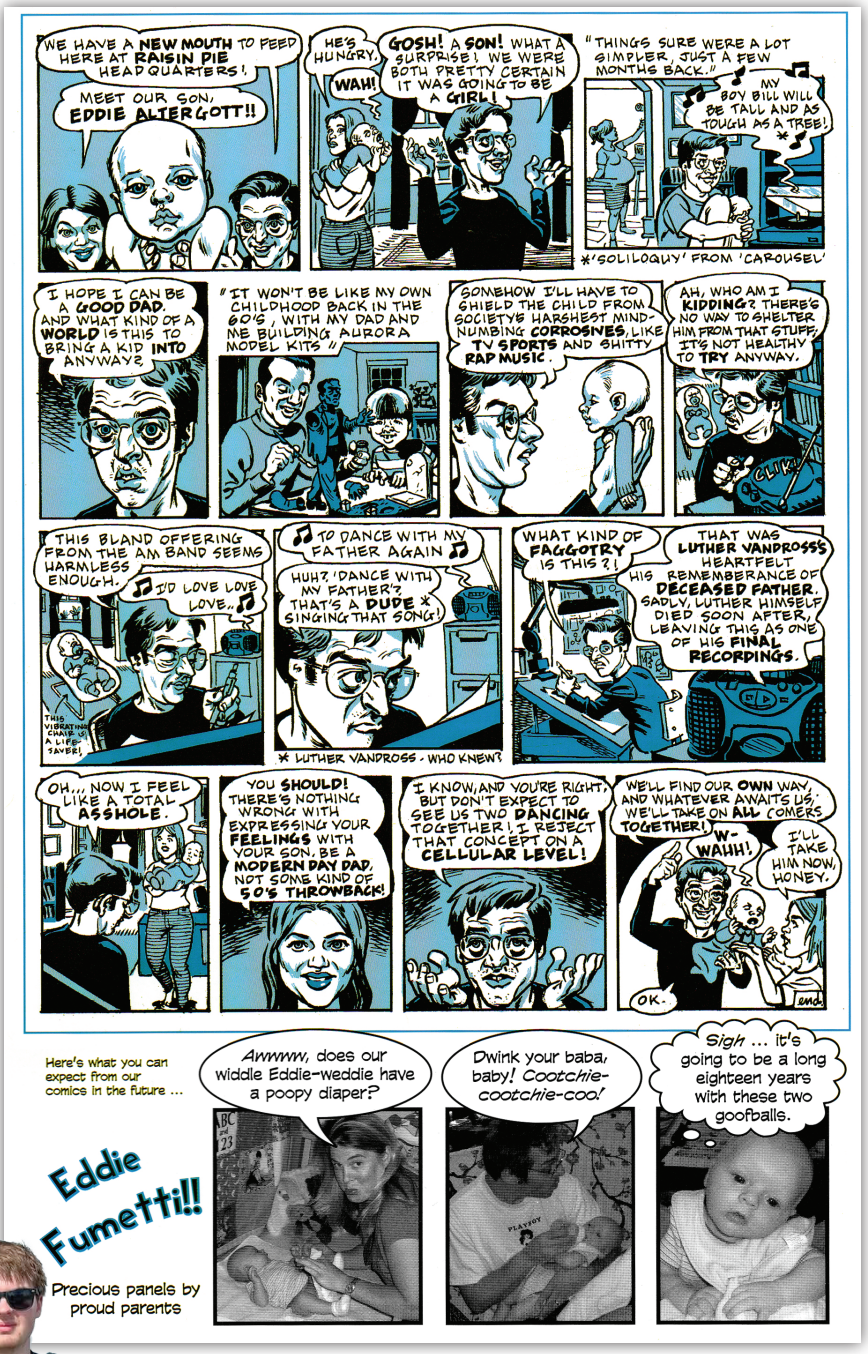
Rick: Yes. I love seeing her work. I think she's kind of surprised too, because she doesn't draw like that anymore. There's so much appealing stuff that people will be seeing again. When it comes out, I think it's going to be exciting and a lot of people are going to be impressed, too.

CBC: *Is there a* Best of Rick Altergott *you'd like to see?*

Rick: Maybe someday. I told Gary, "You should put out another, an expanded *Doofus Omnibus* because I've got so much more stuff that's never been reprinted since that was done." But I don't know if he was really into it. You never know. Kim was definitely the one who pushed *The Doofus Omnibus* into existence, did all the hard work of getting it together. But his death over 10 years ago is still shocking to me. It's still such a gut punch.

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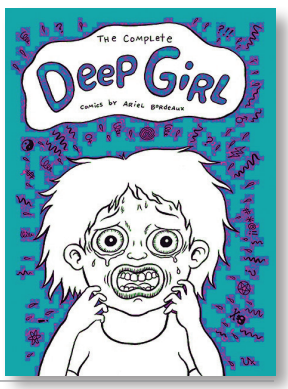




Above: *Eddie Altergott was introduced to the comics world in this full pager in* Raisin Pie *#?*

Inset left: *Recent pic of Eddie, now attending Brown University!*

Below: *Fear not! Our Ariel Bordeaux feature is coming soon!*



Raisin Pie TM & © Ariel Bordeaux and Rick Altergott. Photo by Ariel Bordeaux. Used with permission. *Deep Girl* TM & © Ariel Bordeaux..

Ennis's Exciting Times

A candid and chatty Garth Ennis reveals meeting deadlines is now second nature for the writer

Below: *Anthony Starr as Homelander, the main villain in the Amazon Prime Video series,* The Boys, *which was based on a Garth Ennis comic book.* **Bottom:** *Portrait of Garth at the 2023 Baltimore Comic Con by Kendall Whitehouse.*





by DARRICK PATRICK

[*Garth Ennis is a Northern Irish-born writer who co-created* Preacher, The Boys, Crossed, Hitman, Seven Brothers, The Pro, Just a Pilgrim, War Stories, *etc. His work has been published in titles such as* Punisher, John Constantine: Hellblazer, Fury, The Authority, Crisis, Bloody Mary, Hulk Smash, 2000 AD, Where Monsters Dwell, The Demon, Spider-Man's Tangled Web, *and many more. In 2016,* Preacher *was adapted into a TV series for AMC. This was followed in 2019 by* The Boys *becoming a massive hit for Amazon Prime. Garth and his wife, Ruth, now spend their time living between the U.K. and U.S.A..*

[*On a personal note, the Eisner Award-winning Ennis has been my favorite writer for decades. Nobody on this planet has gotten me to buy as many books as he has. I've been wanting to do an interview with him for a long time, but he's been a hard man to track down. It took me years of traveling to dive bars, down back alleys, and into rundown motels to find someone who could get me in contact with him. After being subjected to the mental and physical torture that I was to acquire these words, with the answers to the questions finally available for everyone, I just have to say that it's a very exciting time.* – **D.P.**]

Darrick Patrick: *What was the journey that led you to a career in writing?*

Garth Ennis: My parents encouraged me to read, and as a result I grew to love stories in any form. I was lucky enough to be just the right age for the great renaissance in British comics engineered by Pat Mills and John Wagner, with '70s and '80s titles like *Battle Action* and *2000 AD*. In my teenage years, I watched that develop into the revolution in American comics led by Alan Moore – and joined by superb American creators like Frank Miller, Howard Chaykin, Paul Chadwick, and Peter Bagge. Some were mainstream guys looking to experiment, some were from underground comics, but together they represented a creative fusion that changed the medium for all time. It was an incredibly fascinating and vibrant period in which the notion was developed that comics could do anything, that there should be nothing holding us back. That was what drew me to writing comics.

As for the actual details, at 18, I started sending off ideas to U.K. publisher Fleetway, who were publishing *2000 AD* at the time – as well as a new political comic aimed at an adult audience called *Crisis*. The latter was where I got my first work, a serialized 100-page graphic novel about the Northern Ireland conflict called *Troubled Souls*. I found out later on that sales on *Crisis* were falling fast (said adult audience was nowhere near as large as people had thought) and the editorial team was desperate for new material, and my story was deemed the least awful thing on the submissions pile. In fact, *Crisis* was going to be canceled, but the editor, Steve MacManus, secured a relaunch budget by telling the publisher that there was still a sizable readership out there interested in political material. After all, he said, "[Irish singer] Enya's at number one with *Save the Whale*". This cogent argument was enough to convince the bean-counters. It was only later, listening to it on the radio, that Steve realized the song is actually called "Sail Away". So, I really have Enya to thank for my big break. I'll never mock her demented Celtic warbling again.

Darrick: *Who are some of the people that greatly influenced you while growing up?*

Garth: That would have been my parents, my closest relatives (three aunts and an uncle) and some of my parents' friends. They were/are a good bunch. Smart, engaged people with an interest in events both cultural and political, albeit with their feet planted firmly on the ground. Widely read, enjoyed traveling. My mum and her two sisters were fairly independent, capable women, without representing some kind of strident feminist caricature. Like a lot of people of their generation, they just got on and did what needed doing, without necessarily feeling they were making any kind of statement. My dad had a few friends with whom he shared a certain dark, irreverent sense of humor. Some of them from the art world, some just natural oddballs. It's probably why I don't do terribly well with normal people. I'm always looking for someone with what I call "a bit of quirk" to them.

I was also fortunate to have some very good teachers – to the extent that when I encountered a bad one, I'd get a strong sense of disappointment. I'm talking about the difference between someone who can transmit their passion for a subject and get you interested as a result, someone whose enthusiasm gets you reading ahead, trying to find out what happens next – and on the other hand, some hack who's just marking time. I had truly great teachers for English and history, and I recall being about 12 or 13 and being slightly surprised that I was looking forward to these classes. At school? There's something I'm looking forward to at school? All the people I've mentioned, at home or otherwise, were also pretty decent types as regards to basic, day-to-day morality, in terms of consideration for other people. My work ethic in particular, whereby I do my best to be on time and deliver what I said I would, I know I got from my dad.

The Boys TM & © Amazon Studios. Garth Ennis portrait ©, by, and courtesy of Kendall Whitehouse.

Darrick: *Do you have any words of advice for other individuals looking to make a career with their writing abilities?*
Garth: I would say your number one concern should be maintaining your creative voice. That's the thing that defines you, that only you can deliver, that people who like your work will keep coming back for more of. It's your own way of looking at the world and transmitting that in your art or fiction, however skewed or conventional it may be. If you lose it, you end up just another interchangeable face in the crowd. So, be very careful who and what you allow yourself to be influenced by.

Of course, everyone has their influences, which they pick up from the world as they experience it, whether culturally or otherwise. That's unavoidable, although it's a good idea to sift through the art you love and decide what is and isn't worth making a part of your own efforts. Likewise, it's worth listening to people who are already established in the medium you want to work in, just in terms of advice. The kind I'm giving right now. You don't have to take it all on board; if there's something you find yourself in violent opposition to, by all means jettison it. But look at the work and careers of the people whose advice you're listening to and decide if it's appropriate to what you want to do and where you want to go.

What you really have to be careful about is listening to people who want to live vicariously through your creativity. This could be a well-meaning friend who's convinced he has a story you should write, a reader at a signing or on a message board who wants to see you tackle a particular character or steer the book you're writing in a certain direction, or a reviewer who doesn't know how to do the job, but is going to tell you how it's done anyway. They aren't creative people themselves, but they imagine they possess some degree of creativity and like the idea that they're able to steer yours. I'm not saying be mean or rude to them. You can smile and say the idea's really interesting, you'll give it some thought. Ultimately, though, you have to harden your heart. As I said, your voice is all you have: so, preserve it.
Darrick: *How do you spend your time on a typical workday?*
Garth: I spend the morning on admin, just going through emails and domestic stuff. After lunch, it's time to get stuck in. Generally, I'm not too concerned about schedule; after almost 40 years, knowing how to get stuff finished on time is pretty much a matter of instinct, and I always know how long it'll take to finish an issue. A script a week is about right, although I won't necessarily be writing every day of that. So long as it gets done, who cares, would be my motto. I still write longhand before typing, then try to edit out about 10% of captions and dialogue as I type. Something I've always found to be a useful exercise. It would be unusual for me to work into the evening. I'm generally as likely to go out to eat as stay in. As I say it's a fairly loose schedule, allowing time for socializing, traveling, whatever. My wife and I are currently splitting our time between living in New York and London, so I have to allow space for the little variations that throws up, too.
Darrick: *For new readers who may not be familiar with your work, what are some projects of yours that you would recommend to begin with?*



Garth: Right now, I have: *Babs*, a sword-&-sorcery comedy with art by Jacen Burrows, from Ahoy Comics. The first series is out in trade, the second has almost finished its run, the third is written; *The War,* a dark nuclear drama drawn by Becky Cloonan, published by Boom. Available in trade; two horror books from Ninth Circle, *Freddie the Fix* (art by Mike Perkins) and *The Kids* (art by Dalibor Talijic), and a third on the way in November, *The Snail,* drawn by John McCrea.

Over the past few years, I've been involved with a revival of the British war comics classic, *Battle Action*, with three trades available from Rebellion Publishing, and my favorite character from the comic, Johnny Red – two trades, art by Keith Burns. More *Battle Action* coming soon; Also, a revival of WW2 fighter pilot Battler Britton, drawn by Colin Wilson and back in print courtesy of Rebellion; *Rogue Trooper,* one of my favorite 2000 AD characters, with art by Paddy Goddard – two trades so far, from Rebellion.

My particular favorites are my war comics, like *Out of the Blue* (Aftershock Publishing, drawn by Keith Burns) and *The Lion & the Eagle* (Aftershock, art by PJ Holden), *The Stringbags* (Naval Institute Press, PJ again), and – pick of the litter – *Sara* and *Partisan*, both featuring female combatants on the WWII Russian front, art by Steve Epting, published by TKO. I should also mention the *Battlefields* series, three trades from Dynamite, and four Avatar trades for *War Stories*.

Above: *Artist Glenn Fabry produced this recreation of his* Preacher *#1 cover art in 2011. Written by Garth,* Preacher *ran for 66 issues between 1995–2000, later adapted as an AMC series, 2016–19.* **Below:** *Garth's boyhood love for* Battle Action *weekly is evident in his tales for Rebellion's recent reboot. Art by Andy Clarke.*



Preacher TM & © Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. Preacher recreation artwork © Glenn Fabry. *Battle Action* TM & ©the respective copyright holder.



Above: *Variant cover artist Mauricet produced this pastiche of the classic* Conan *cover painting by Frank Frazetta for the second issue of Garth's sword-&-sorcery comedy series,* Babs. **Below:** *Gerardo Zaffino's cover art for* Hitman: It was the Nineties Special, *released in December.*



And a ton of other stuff in print after almost four decades doing this, the best known of which would be *Preacher* (art by the late, great Steve Dillon, published by DC), *The Boys* (various artists, published by Dynamite), *Crossed* (extreme horror from Avatar Press, drawn by Jacen Burrows), and runs on *The Punisher* and *Fury* for Marvel's Max imprint (various artists). Finally, always dear to my heart, *Hitman*, drawn by my old pal, John McCrea, published by DC. I'm pleased to say there's a new *Hitman* one-shot coming in December.

Darrick: *Who are a few of the people in the comics industry that you hold a high deal of respect for?*

Garth: The guys who worked on *2000 AD* and *Battle Action* back in the '70s and '80s, many of whom turned out to be good people when I met them, as well as being incredibly talented. Several became good friends, like John Higgins, Steve Dillon, Dave Gibbons, and others. Really, too many to mention. Likewise, a lot of the people I've run across since, some collaborators, some friends, some both: John McCrea, Keith Burns, Si Spurrier, Andrew Sumner, Torunn Gronbekk, Stuart Moore, Pete Tomasi – again, too many to mention them all.

Alan Moore remains at the top of the pile for me. The simple fact is that if he hadn't come along and changed the medium in the way he did, I'd have seen no future in it as a viable career, wouldn't have done the work I've done, or made the friends I have. And he's still the greatest single writer the medium has ever seen. No one's managed to surpass *V for Vendetta, Miracleman,* or *From Hell*.

Then there's my good pal, Brian Vaughan, who's not only terrific company but staggeringly talented. No one else could get me reading a book like *Saga*, which, as I'm fond of reminding him, is essentially elves in space. And another mate, Rob Williams, whose sheer enthusiasm for storytelling shines from every page of his work.

Finally, I should mention Paul Chadwick, whose *Concrete* is my favorite comic series of the last 40 years. The sheer humanity he brings to the narrative, along with superb dialogue and a sharp sense of the surprises that real life sometimes has in store, is something I marvel at whenever I read his work.

Darrick: *Outside of creating stories, what are your other interests?*

Garth: I'm interested in history, particularly the military history of the 20th century – primarily WWII, which cast such a vast shadow over the world for decades afterwards. A good deal of the hardware fascinates me. I've flown in aircraft of the period such as the Spitfire, Lancaster, Flying Fortress, etc. The human experience of the period remains foremost in my interests, seeing how ordinary people reacted in quite extraordinary circumstances. There's a nice sense of things coming full circle there; I first encountered war stories in comics as a kid, came to understand that the stories were based (broadly speaking) on things that people had actually done in real life, developed an interest in military history and memoir as a result, and as soon as I could, started doing my own war comics.

I enjoy movies, TV, and novels, but it's more a case of focusing on particular titles and series than an actual interest in cinema and literature. I'm always drawn more to stories than the study of technique. The natural world is something that appeals. I enjoy hiking with friends, especially if there's a pub at the end of the trail for a well-earned pint. I can't remotely claim to be an expert, but my childhood fascination with dinosaurs never went away. One of my favorite places to spend time is the American Museum of Natural History, in New York. My wife and I both enjoy traveling very much – we're off to Japan soon – and if there's something unusual or interesting to be seen on our travels, we'll make the extra effort, even if it is a bit out of the way. Visiting the preserved cemetery set from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,* in the middle of nowhere in northern Spain, driving tanks in rural Minnesota, diving with Great White Sharks in the southern ocean (from the safety of a cage, I assure you) – if there's an adventure that appeals, we'll do our best to seek it out.

Darrick: *What is your oldest memory?*

Garth: I have a clear memory of looking out at the world through a rectangular frame and seeing smiling adults peering in at me, which must have been from a pram. I'm told that's quite unusual. Most people don't remember their lives as far back as infancy. Could have been my experimental cloning tank, I suppose. You never know. In comics, there was some British kids' stuff like *The Beano,* but the one that counts is being seven and picking up *2000 AD* for the first time, and seeing a story called "Flesh" – in which an army of Tyrannosaurs descends on the human time-travelers that have been hunting their prey to extinction. That absolutely blew my mind.

Darrick: *Tell us something about you that most people don't know.*

Garth: I'll go to sometimes ridiculous lengths to avoid using the word "exciting." My least favorite phrase, at the end of a long list, is, "It's a very exciting time."

Darrick: *When you're no longer amongst the living, how would you most like to be remembered?*

Garth: I intend to outlive everyone I know, so hopefully it won't be an issue.

Babs TM & © Garth Ennis and Jacen Burrows. *Hitman* TM & © DC Comics.

Gene, the Drawing Machine!

It's Colan (or is it Cohen?) all over with this issue's crop of letters o' commenters on CBC *#45*

[*I complain about one slow month of mail and what do I get in return? An absolute flood o' LOCs! Thanks to everybody who responded and corresponded!* – **Ye Ed.**]

Patrick Marcel

You wanted letters of comment? Here's one!

I'll keep it short. Did anyone proofread the Gene Colan 75th birthday panel retranscription? Because I've bumped over a few strange things in it. For instance, "to take non-curvy angles or non-Ditko-angles" – "non-curvy angles"? What's that? Considering the context and the reference just three lines above, "non-Kirby angles" would seem more likely and more geometrically defensible.

And I really was shocked in an issue of *CBC* devoted to Gene Colan, where he's being named just about everywhere, to come across Don MacGregor [sic] being made to say: "Oh, they should print Gene Cohen's pencils."

It's the sort of non-sequitur you find in stuff transcribed by A.I. Still, a very fine issue about Gene Colan. Looking forward to the next one about Darwyn Cooke.

[*Who's this Gene Cohen feller you mention…? Color me and my proofreader chagrined, Patrick. We'll try harder. And, to tell the truth, I do use an A.I. transcription program, about which (as I alluded to in the past) has enabled* CBC *to increase frequency to bi-monthly. I would hate to have put a human transcriber out of a job, but, honestly, almost all of my regulars have ceased doing transcription work.* – **Ye Ed.**]

Tom Field

So you want letters, do you?

Not sure you knew this, but I'm a reformed comics letter hack. Had my very first letter published in *Fantastic Four* #203, in 1978, when I was 14, and once I saw my name in print – game over. All through high school and into college, I was a diehard letter hack. I can't recall how many were published – a bunch – but I do remember the joy of getting direct responses from creators such as Steve Gerber, Bill Mantlo, Doug Moench, Jim Shooter, and Marv Wolfman. I still have every one of their notes, of course.

Back then, mind you, it wasn't just your letter that got into print – it was your full name and entire mailing address. Do you have any idea how much mail we letter hacks got as a result? Comics catalogues, fanzines, *Star Trek* merchandise ads, pen pal requests. For six months in 1979, I corresponded with am inmate from the Florida State Prison after he responded to my letter in Marvel's *Tarzan* comic.

I met some lifelong friends, too, as a result of these letters. A fledgling group called the Maine Comics Club found me as a result of that *FF* letter. I joined, attended their monthly meetings and, to this day, I'm still friends with some of the club's members, including artist Lee Weeks and writer/editor Bruce Canwell. For a kid who was in high school and thought he was the only teenager reading these comics still, life as a letter hack was a welcome reminder: "You're not alone."

Probably hard for a young fan today to appreciate the importance of these letters of comment. Hard to think of a life pre-internet, pre-social media, where you didn't have the power or means to post an opinion for the world to see. Not just your best shot, but your only shot was to type a letter, mail it off to a New York comics publisher and wait three months to see if it was chosen for publication. Most weren't, but for those lucky few letters that were published…? Nothing like the thrill of a young comics fan seeing that name in print.

And these are gifts that keep on giving. A few years ago, Marvel reprinted one of my letters in a *What If* trade paperback. And just a year ago, the family that bought my parents'



Above: *Terrific self-portrait by Gentleman Gene Colan, from 2004, surrounded by his fave comic book assignments, including the boy from* Ragamuffins. **Below:** *For kicks,* CBC *pal Mark Staff Brandl made this commemorative button.*



Art © the estate of Gene Colan. Daredevil, Doctor Strange, Tomb of Dracula, Iron Man TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. Batman TM & © DC Comics. *Ragamuffins* TM & ©Don McGregor & Gene Colan. Button courtesy of Mark Staff Brandl.



Above: *Marc Svensson, so integral to the success of* CBC *#45, snapped this photo of Gene and Adrienne Colan, when the two visited That's Entertainment for an impromptu 75th birthday party for Gene the Dean!* **Below:** *Alas, while we quoted Tym Stevens' fine history of* Starstruck, *we did not have room to include his homage art, this one sporting the stage likenesses of the Lee sisters. Thanks, Tym!*

house got in touch with me to say they'd just received mail sent to me because of that same Tarzan comic from 1978. This is almost 50 years later.

Anyway, received my comp copies of *CBC* #45 the other day [*Tom contributed a feature.* – **Y.E.**] and wanted to say:

About the Joe Hill Interview – I used to live in the same New Hampshire town as Joe, and he was a visible and friendly presence downtown. Always held the door for me and my infant daughter at the local coffee shop, and you could easily approach him and chat about his stories. His dad was just as gracious when he would come to town to visit. I have vivid memories of introducing my young son to Stephen King at the downtown bandstand and chatting for a few minutes about [King's novel] *11/22/63*.



About the Gene Colan 75th birthday – Somewhere I still have a DVD recording of this panel, thanks to Marc Svensson. He and DD uber-fan Kevin Hall were the real instigators of the birthday panel at the 2001 Comic-Con. And we followed it up just over a month later with an East Coast party, in Worcester, Massachusetts, hosted at the wonderful That's Entertainment store. Gene and Adrienne were there, of course, as were Don and Marsha McGregor – and Marc and Kevin. A bunch of Gene's biggest fans flew in from California, Canada, Ohio, Virginia. We all spent the weekend together celebrating the life and work of Gene. Marc even showed us his recording of the Comic-Con panel. I just remember it as an amazing experience to celebrate Gene's 75th birthday with so many likeminded friends and fans. We all went home with our hearts full from the memories we created… and then, not even two weeks later, Sept. 11 happened. Changed everything.

Thanks, Jon, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this special Gene issue. I've wanted to update *Secrets in the Shadows* for years now and write that tough final chapter about Gene's and Adrienne's final days. This may be as close as I come. As you know, there was a temptation to tear open the curtains, name names and spill some *real* secrets in the shadows about the Colans' end days. But to what purpose? To muckrake? I'd rather celebrate. And you put together a lovely celebration.

Hope we get the chance to work together again soon.

[*Me, too, Tom! It's always a pleasure, chum.* – **Y.E.**]

Joe Frank

"For Mature Readers?" What about us immature ones?

I assume the cover's disclaimer/warning was in reference to some of the subject matter and magazine names in the Mark Wheatley article. Thankfully, the reproductions were so minuscule I couldn't see anything unduly offensive. Just the magazine titles.

Really, had you not said anything, I'd have been far more distracted – and frankly stunned – at the coverage of Myron Foss' behavior. Pistol-whipping his partner? Encouraging someone to relieve themselves on a logo? HR or the police would have had their hands full with that guy.

I'd heard the name, previously, in regard to the Captain Marvel that split apart, but no details beyond that. Sounds like he makes the volatile DC editors of that same era seem like Miss Congeniality winners. Even the bad bosses I've had – who've thrown a metal T-square crashing across the room or smashed a light table in a fit of temper – don't quite compare. Best thing, in such instances, is to take it as a hint to quickly look for employment opportunities elsewhere.

If Martin Goodman wanted to take Foss to court, over rights to the CM name, he probably would have been hit with a hurled defendant's chair, a gavel or both.

Would Myron Foss be a contender for the worst comics boss ever or are there some close runners-up?

I liked the article about CrossGen. Thought the company was an interesting experiment though, ultimately, not a success story. Even at the time, I wondered if living nearby and being more interactive would make a major difference in comics production. Would the proximity make a story come alive in some inexplicable way? Or might the creatives get on each other's nerves? How would it improve on a good script and fine artwork, even done in two separate locations?

I read very few of them, at the time. Didn't engage my curiosity and I was wary of yet another instant line of titles. Maybe one or two independent books to start with and build upon? But committing to an entire line? I'll pass.

As these instant lines go, the finances, invariably, did

Photo © and courtesy of Marc Svensson. Art © and courtesy of Tym Stevens. Starstruck TM & ©Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.

them in. So, different location; same mistakes.

I continue to enjoy the nostalgic reminiscing about comic book outlets and conventions. Though in states I was unfamiliar with, the experiences translate quite nicely. I could identify. Even your younger readers could view it as a look at earlier days of fandom, before their experience. More, please.

Fred Hembeck hit on something amusing: how cool it was – and is – to see Wally Wood renditions of Superman, Captain Marvel, Batman and Robin in his Mad comics parodies. Though brief and changed up, somewhat, it still gave us a welcome taste of what his version would have been like. This was a nice glimpse twenty years before his rendition of Superman in All Star Squad.

I still am baffled, frankly, why you should have any problems generating feedback. The magazine has such range that you must have people who love aspects or, conversely, are infuriated by others. Either way, the fuel for responses. How can someone read such different topics and remain indifferent? Plus, here you specifically asked, and not for the first time.

Is it a matter that responses are more online, now, or handled with quick dismissals, thumbs up or icon "reviews"? If it's any consolation, I've seen the same thing in news magazines and the morning paper. They used to have many lengthy, interesting letters. Last I looked, numerous years back, it was edited sentence fragments or terse comments out of context. Hardly encouraging. Still, once you get some strident comments, pro or con, you might just prompt more – from people who like to bicker.

The great joy of this issue, as expected, was the most-welcome Gene Colan coverage. I've been eager for this issue ever since it was announced maybe a year back. He's way up there with me. Love his style and his long resume of releases.

I started with *Daredevil* an issue after he did, in 1966. His rendition of the character in motion was, to say the least, distinctive and memorable. Yet, at the time, I felt it couldn't compare to his interpretation of Iron Man (in *Tales of Suspense*) which was an instant favorite. I was initially thrilled when I heard he'd be given his own solo title at the start of 1968. Elation turned to intense disappointment when Gene was gone by #2.

Never thought I'd like his work on any strip as much as "Iron Man," but, to my pleasant surprise, he proved me wrong. How could he top that? He demonstrated, masterfully, with his work on *Howard the Duck* 10 years later. That hit so well with me. I even subscribed to the *Tucson Daily Star* to get the comic strip version. He had such a way with faces, expressions and conveying personality. That remains, for me, an absolute career highlight, at least the ones he did with Steve Gerber.

In the tribute panel, many of the attendees had a wide range of other favorites. Only natural. Gene was impressive in many genres: horror, super-hero, romance, humor, etc. He knew how to make them all work.

Perhaps what was most impressive about his style is he could not only convey emotion, but subtleties, as well. Every artist can do rage. Gene could do the complete roster of other various shades a person might experience. All seemed quite in character to the point of the sequence. He seemed honored and grateful for the panel's attention and tributes. So, besides talented, friendly.

I met Gene in San Diego and briefly spoke with him a number of times. He was, indeed, a pleasant guy. Of course, the catch was he was also rendering sketches and commissions. So, at least in my case, conversations involved him multitasking. He'd smile, look up, answer and then get back to rendering Black Widow, Daredevil, or whoever. For me, it was a treat on both levels. Conversing with him and seeing him draw. He'd do a few light guidelines and, as if by magic, the character would suddenly begin to appear.

Once, in the mid-2000s, I tentatively asked a question that got him and his wife, Adrienne, to both crack up. I requested an autograph but as "Adam Austin," his then-20-year-old Marvel nom de plume. That tickled them both. When they stopped laughing, Adrienne said, "We've been coming to



Art © the estate of Gene Colan.

conventions for decades. You are the first one to ask for that!"

One aspect I didn't enjoy reading was the needless grief some editors at DC and Marvel gave him. He was there to contribute tremendous art, which he did, not to be on the defensive because his boss was having a bad day or liked being contentious.

Amusing to muse Gene would have had his centennial in a couple weeks. Great fun to know I was reading his efforts since he was a mere kid of forty. I more than got my 12¢ worth. Thank you for a cool tribute to a tremendous talent and great guy. This issue nicely reinforced both aspects.

[*Sorry to omit your comments on CBC #43, Joe, but I always appreciate your correspondence!* – **Y.E.**]

Mike Zaloudek

Well, Mr. Cooke, a truly sensational issue deserves an LOC ! I've been anticipating this issue since it was first advertised over a year ago! The love and admiration for Gene in *CBC* #45 just pours from the panelists, audience and contributors alike. Gene Colan was and still is my favorite comic book artist. It was the later *Tales of Suspense* issues featuring "Iron Man," with art by Colan and Giacoia, that first blew me away. Subsequently, if I saw Gene's name on a comic's credits page, my heart would skip a beat, even to this day! I wonder if many of Gene's fans had this same reaction? And I wonder if Gene's fans filled their school notebooks copying Gene's Daredevil and Iron Man art like I did?

At the Comic-Con panel, Mark Evanier asked the audience to speak about their favorite Gene Colan work. Many would say *Tomb of Dracula,* and I would add to that specifically Gene's drawings of Saint, the German shepherd!

Between you and me (and everyone else if this letter sees print) I was not the biggest fan of Tom Palmer's inking on Gene's pencils. He definitely brought a polish that looked terrific, but I felt it looked as much Palmer as Colan. I preferred the more faithful inkers such as Klein, Grainger, and Adkins.

I often wondered if Gene would become one of the unsung greats in comics. This *CBC* issue certainly lays that to rest. I'd also like to point to one of your fellow TwoMorrows contributors, Mr. Pierre Comtoise. I've read all his *Marvel Comics in the…* books. Practically every page proclaims his admiration for Gene. He even had the audacity (if such it is) to comment that Jack Kirby might learn something from Gene! Funny, crazy and I love it!

[*I have always been personally mystified as to how, exactly, Gene Colan accomplished was he did with a pencil. As I've said elsewhere, it seemed like magic to me and I can imagine some inkers would be terrified at the prospect of lending ink to the man's exquisite pencils. That said, I hope Gene will be appreciated in the far distant future. Thanks for writing, Mr. Z!* – **Y.E.**]

All In the American Family

Chatting with well connected Frederick Hillel Iger, publisher of the American Comics Group

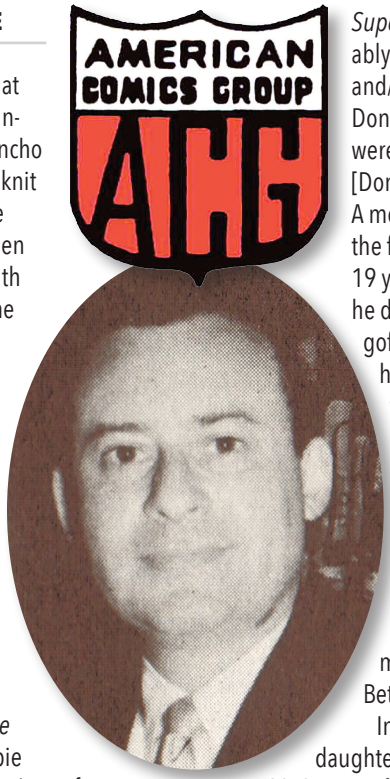


Above: *Renowned as the first true ongoing horror comic book,* Adventures in the Unknown *#1 [Fall '48] was said to have "set the bar" for the EC horror line. Cover by Ed Mortiz.* **Inset right:** *Fred Iger in 1960.* **Below:** Herbie *#10 [July '65] cover by Ogden Whitney featuring Herbie as the Fat Fury.*

by SHAUN CLANCY with JON B. COOKE

A few years before passing away in 2015 at the age of 90, Fred Iger consented to an interview about his many years as head honcho of the American Comics Group and close knit business and family connections with the founding publisher of DC Comics. I've been tracking down various folks associated with ACG, so it was a coup to talk with someone who not only ran the company, but a person also there in its early years.

As Michael Vance related in his *Forbidden Adventures: The History of the American Comics Group* ['96], "Never the largest publisher, ACG was nevertheless a microcosm of the entire industry, publishing titles in every major comics genre… At their peak, many of its titles sold 500,000 copies an issue." And, historically, the imprint is recalled for publishing the first bona fide horror comic with *Adventures Into the Unknown* #1 [Fall '48], the character Herbie Popnecker (star of Alan Moore's fave comic),* and *Herbie* co-creator and its highly regarded writer/editor, Richard E. Hughes.



In 1939, ACG was born out of a son-in-law of Benjamin W. Sangor, Ned Pines – you'll learn that familial connections were at the crux of early U.S. comics publishing – needing content for his new comics line, Standard Comics. Thus, the Sangor Shop was created, during which time Iger was a radio producer of the *Superman* radio show, a position he probably secured as a relative of Jack Liebowitz and/or through DC's other owner, Harry Donenfeld. Iger explained, "Our parents were very close friends and my mother and [Donenfeld's wife] grew up as girlfriends… A member of the family was connected with the firm and gave me my first job when I was 19 years old at DC Comics." I asked Iger what he did at the company. "Everything. I was a gofer. They had bought some scripts that I had written on order. I was breaking into the business from the publishing side rather than the distribution.

"After working there a year or so, I was promoted and I had an opportunity to buy into a comic-book company with Ben Sangor… He was the original owner and he died while we were still partners at ACG." (Today, historians commonly refer to Sangor's line as Standard/Better/Nedor, combining three brands.)

In 1947, Iger married Harry Donenfeld's daughter, Sonia – known as "Peachie" – and, likely as a gift to the newlyweds, the bride's father – a silent ACG partner – gave the groom part ownership of ACG. Though having no training as writer, Iger effectively served as managing editor and wrote some scripts himself, as well as text page fillers, working closely with his seasoned editor.

Of that editor, Iger enthused, "Richard Hughes was really hands on. Very capable and very talented guy. Good writer… After I folded up the comic book business, he got a job with a greeting card producer. He wrote greeting cards. He was such a prolific guy that he could do anything in a literary area. Lovely man… He was amazingly prolific. He could do 10 things at one time and he did most of the basic writing."

Iger also recalled a favorite artist, a man who was moonlighting for ACG with a day job as a top DC talent, Kurt Schaffenberger. "You would know him as well as I. He was a wonderful artist and personal friend… if you have any of my covers there, besides Ogden Whitney, he did all of the covers. He was a very good artist. He was a very capable guy. We were very friendly and I admired his skills and the ease of working with a guy like that. He was so amiable."

The publisher also specifically recalled a romance comics scribe at his comics outfit. "We had writers like Pat Cherr. She was wonderful. She was an independent and worked for many comic publishers and was a very prolific writer… She was a very clever woman. I think she became ill at the end of our relationship and I don't know what happened after that."

And then there was Norman Fruman, Hughes' assistant



*Moore told interviewer Raphael Sassaki, "There is an endless amount of wonderful material in the comic medium, but if I had to boil it down to single comic strip work for which I retain the most affection, it would have to be Richard E. Hughes and Ogden Whitney's sublime *Herbie*, originally published by the American Comic Group during the 1960s."

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editor: "I don't remember when he started but he applied for the job and Richard said, 'Well, if you're that good, do a script and we'll see.' And they collaborated on a script and Richard was quite pleased with Norman's work. Norman was very intellectual.

"He went on the *$64,000* [*Challenge*] TV show and he won! When he won, he wisely took the $48,000 level and then took the job offer from California and left comics… He won it while he was still working for me… Believe it or not, he was an expert on [romance] literature and baseball, and I mean a real expert. He is a very educated guy, but he was badly injured during World War II. He lost his hearing. He and I were approximately the same age." (Yours truly interviewed Professor Fruman, who passed away in 2012, a conversation hopefully to be found in a future issue of *CBC*.)

After Sangor's passing in 1953, Iger said, "I was in business for myself when Ben died and I went into partnership with Frank McCulver who was [an ad] space salesman at the time and we went into the commercial end of the comic business… We did what you might call commercial comics on order that promoted products, schools, real estate, or hotels. It went on for quite a while."

Indeed, Custom Comics, established in 1950, would outlast ACG by decades, reportedly closing shop in the early '80s. During its existence, Custom produced promotional comics for Wrangler, Hasbro, Mattel, Sunbeam Bread, electrical utilities, Montgomery Ward, Tupperware, the U.S. Air Force, and many other clients, with a good amount of work by a superb artist, the aforementioned Mr. Schaffenberger.

When the 3-D comics craze hit the industry in 1953, Iger said, "I wasn't convinced that it was going to be a success and so I didn't want to change the production routine." Still, in answer to the fad, ACG published "Truevision" comics, "Life & Color – Without Glasses!," which mimicked the 3-D effect, while retaining the four-color contents without the arduous production task of creating genuine 3-D comics.

Iger said the best-selling ACG titles were *Adventures Into the Unknown* and *Unknown Worlds*, which he recalled sold in excess of 700,000 copies per issue. "We were also in the romance comics… in the teenage comics," he shared, adding, "We did one thing that paid off to a slight degree. We did Spanish editions, where we had it translated in New York and re-ballooned and published the magazines in Spanish and sold them to Mexico and Latin America." He said those editions sold well for just a few years.

As mentioned, ACG published the first recognized horror comic book in the late '40s, and while relatively tame in comparison to EC Comics and other imprints, the publisher did not escape scrutiny during the anti-comics campaign of the mid-'50s. Testifying at the Kefauver 1954 Senate Hearings, which focused on comics as a source of juvenile delinquency, Iger recalled to me, "I had a two-day testimony with them, part of a three- or four-man commission… They were dealing with vice, they were dealing with violence. They had examples on the desk in front of them."

I asked if any of those examples were from ACG. "Yes, they were questioning it. They had piles of these things on the desk and all the publishers… it wasn't a one-on-one thing. It was a big meeting room and all the publishers had been called by subpoena."

And how did he feel about the whole controversy? "Well, to a certain extent there were some horrible examples of comic books at the time. Ghoulish, women-hating, and that type of thing that publishers were trying to sneak in and they had some gory examples." He added, "We might have shown a little cleavage in a woman's cartoon or something of that nature. The question they would ask me would be, 'Did you knowingly do this?'" With a laugh, Fred exclaimed, "Of course, I knowingly did this."

I asked Iger if he had encountered celebrities in his business life and he replied, "All I can tell you is that we had an industry dinner which had Jack Benny as the master of ceremony. I remember that they had other stars there that night. Some remarks made were pertinent to the comics business. It was a convention of publishers and distributors… As a matter of fact, the Benny monologue was recorded and a lot of people had copies of the recording. I remember some of the dirty jokes that he told… [This was] probably late 1940s or early 1950s. I do recall that I fell out of my chair laughing. Jack Benny was very risqué at this event… You have to remember that I have an old man's memory and, for all I know, it could have been a birthday party that they threw for me but, as I recall, it was a convention of people in the industry. It was at the Waldorf Astoria, I believe… I was there actually as a guest of Harry Donenfeld."

Though Iger would divorce "Peachie" (likely in the early '60s), the familial connection continued as he married Harry's son, Irwin's ex-wife, Arlene (née Levy). After DC Comics went public, when ACG severed connection with Donenfeld, Iger's former father-in-law suffered a debilitating accident that resulted in his 1965 demise.

ACG continued to publish until 1967, after which Iger focused on the Custom Comics subsidiary. When I chatted with the man, who had a commercial photo board business in the '90s, I asked if he missed publishing. With a laugh Iger replied, "You're talking about almost 50 years ago! I enjoyed it immensely. I enjoyed the creative end of it. The business end can give you [heartburn]. I enjoyed the business."

fin



Above: *Sonia "Peachie" Donenfeld, DC publisher Harry Donenfeld's daughter, married Fred Iger, on June 15, 1947, at 7:00 p.m., at posh New York City hotel, the Waldorf Astoria. The couple divorced in the early '60s. The photo is from her high school yearbook.*

Below: *The great* Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane *artist, Kurt Schaffenberger, surreptitiously worked for ACG while signing work "Lou Wahl" or "Pete Costanza" to keep tyrant DC editor Mort Weisinger from catching the artist at his moonlighting gig. This cover is for* Adventures Into the Unknown *#154 [Feb. '65].*



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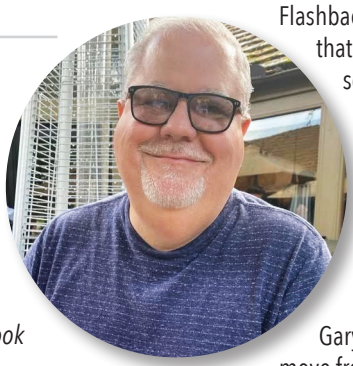
Blue Moon on the Rise!

Lloyd Smith, the comics mogul behind Blue Moon Comics, shares about his publishing mania

Inset top right: *Lloyd Smith in an undated photo and the Blue Moon Comics logo.* **Below:** *Lloyd's homage to the Atlas monsters, "Toombora," was to be published in* Bizarre Fantasy *#2 but, alas, the imprint, Flashback Comics, went under before it saw print.* **Bottom:** Night Spider Special Edition. **Inset bottom:** Awesome Comics *ad.*



by LLOYD SMITH



Who – or what – is Blue Moon Comics and why is there an article about them/it in this issue of *Comic Book Creator*? *Ha!* We knew that you'd be asking that question! The short answer is that Blue Moon Comics is an indie publisher that owes much of its present existence because of *CBC* editor Jon B. Cooke's ground-breaking *Comic Book Artist* magazine.

It all started 10 years before the debut of *CBA*, way back in 1988, when I got the itch to get into publishing comics. How could a teacher living in Southeastern Kentucky make something like Blue Moon Comics happen? I didn't really know, but I was determined to give it a try. So I placed a want ad in the venerated *Comics Buyers Guide* asking for talent to help me create the first issue of an anthology I planned to call *Awesome Comics*. Through those ads, I gathered up a ton of talent and we proceeded to put together some fun stuff. Due to a myriad of reasons, we never got to publish a single issue. Mostly, I learned that I had a lot to learn about publishing comics. Despite it all, I had managed to make a few really good friends in that endeavor, chief among them Canadian writer Jon Gilbert and artist Warren Montgomery. More on them coming up.



Fast forward nearly a decade to 1997 or so. Jon Gilbert and I had continued our correspondence over the years and, with every letter, he'd ask me about giving Blue Moon Comics another try. Over a several-month period, the stars began aligning in Blue Moon's favor.

One thing was my discovery of Steve Busti's Flashback Comics. They did cool retro-style comics that made me want to start writing again, so I sent them a Lee/Kirby Pre-Marvel Atlas style story called, "No Man Can Stop… Toombora!" Publisher Busti liked it so much that he was going to illustrate it himself. Sadly, Flashback Comics folded just before the issue featuring "Toombora" could be published.

The next thing that happened was when Gary Carlson's *Big Bang Comics* made the move from Caliber to Image. I had a deep love for *Big Bang* and knew I could write stories in their clever retro style. I sent Gary a few stories and he liked a couple of them. Due to a variety of circumstances, they never saw print, but I was encouraged to keep writing.

What finally tipped the scales, though, was when Jonathan pulled out his big guns. He informed me that he had friends like artists Seppo Makinen, Ed Quinby, and David Vance, along with letterer Susan Dorne, who were all extremely interested in contributing to a Blue Moon Comics revival. I caved. It was, indeed, time to give Blue Moon another shot. We made the decision to create a "sampler" called *Blue Moon Comics Special* #1 to more or less test the publishing waters. Our original plan was to print our comic in the style of the mini comics that were in vogue at the time, except I didn't want to do teeny tiny comics. I wanted a great big anthology, something like Marvel's '70s black-&-white mags or DC's Dollar Comics.

I rented a photocopier (from the local newspaper) that could handle 11" x 17"-size paper. That meant I could print on that big paper, fold it in half, and – *boom!* – our home-made comics would be magazine-size. The monstrous 72-page *Blue Moon Comics Special* #1 came out great, so we went full steam ahead on our flagship title, *Mystery Adventure Tales*. David Vance tightened up my design for the mag's logo and Warren Montgomery redesigned the



Bizarre Fantasy TM & © Steve Busti. Blue Moon Comics, *Night Spider Special Edition* TM & © Lloyd Smith.

old Blue Moon logo, giving our publication a much more professional look than my own limited hand-lettering skills could muster. We put together an incredibly fun and eclectic 72-page package with stories written by Jonathan and myself, and featuring art by Seppo, Steven Addlesee, David Owens, Ed, and David Vance. We were in business!



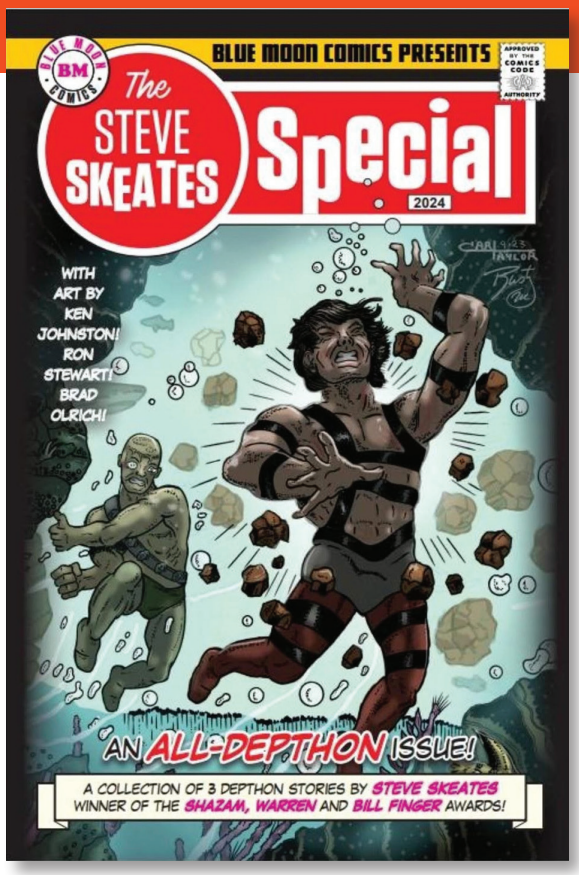
While we were busy putting together the first issue of *Mystery Adventure Tales*, TwoMorrows released a brand-new magazine whose sole focus would be on the Bronze Age of comics. My era! My inspiration! I quickly became a subscriber to Ye Ed.'s *Comic Book Artist*, loving and devouring every page of every issue.

Fortunately for Blue Moon Comics, in the very first issue of *CBA*, they ran an advertisement for veteran comics writer Steve Skeates' mini comics. Finding his mailing address in that fateful ad, I fearlessly sent "Sir Steve" (as I would come to call him once we began to correspond and collaborate) copies of *Blue Moon Comics Special* #1 and *Mystery Adventure Tales* #1. He loved what we were doing and offered to allow us to run some of his cartoons. He even volunteered to write some new stories for us, as well. Of course, I took him up on his generosity. He wrote some historical horror stories for us, and I even talked him into doing a brand-new dark humor story in the *Plop!* vein.

I also found artist Dick Ayers' address in one of those early issues, which caused my then-fresh and agile mind to swiftly devise a plan. Mr. Ayers had already inked Steve Busti's pencils for what was to have been the cover for the scrapped Flashback comic that had been slated to run my "Toombora" story. Artist Phil Fried had joined our gang of Blue Moonies and was hard at work penciling that very script. "Wouldn't it," I asked myself, "be the height of cool if we could get the legendary Dick Ayers – the very same Dick Ayers who had inked so many Jack Kirby monster stories – to ink 'Toombora'?" Just as I had done with Steve Skeates, I sent Ayers a copy of the *Blue Moon Comics Special*. He loved our mag and agreed to ink my five-page monster story for a generously rock-bottom price. Steve Busti was gracious enough to allow us to use his Ayers-inked cover for the issue of *Mystery Adventure Tales* the story would've appeared in (turned out to be #2), to boot!

So, with a huge thanks to *CBA*, *Mystery Adventure Tales* was off and running with features that included Silver and Bronze Age legends Dick Ayers and Steve Skeates! The guy who inked so many Atlas-era Lee/Kirby monster comics was inking *my* monster story! The guy who wrote so many of my childhood favorite issues of *Aquaman, Teen Titans, House of Mystery,* and *Plop!* was writing new stories for *me* and my Blue Moon Comics! And we had *CBA* to thank for all that! Filled with gratitude, I gave *CBA* #1 a shout-out in the editorial pages of *MAT* #2. In fact, there were at least three times I plugged Ye Ed.'s mag in *MAT*. And, yeah, I'm still a huge fan of *CBC*. (But, of course!) But that's not the end of the Blue Moon/*CBA* connection. Keep on readin'!

When I got a home computer and hooked up to that "newfangled internet," in 1998, we were able to get the



Above: *In honor of the comics veteran and Blue Moon contributor who passed away in 2024, Lloyd published* The Steve Skeates Special *['24], which collected Sir Steve's "Depthon" stories.* **Inset left:** *Eventually published in Blue Moon's* Diversions *#9 [Summer '22], Lloyd originally intended for his Atlas monsters homage, "Toombora," be published by Flashback Comics.* **Below:** *Home page of Lloyd's most groovy blog site.*



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Above: *This ad for the first phase of Blue Moon Comics appeared in* Comic Buyer's Guide *#1284 [June 26, '98].*

Inset right: *The second phase for Blue Moon commenced in 2020, with the print-on-demand* Diversions *#1, a title currently celebrating over two dozens issues! Other titles include* Night Spider Special Edition, *with cover art by Steve Butler, and inks by JW Irwin and LBS.*

Editor's Note: *I know that Lloyd Smith repeatedly says nice things about my work here, but I swear I initially reached out to the dude because I had admired his great web blog, Diversions of the Groovy Kind, which included tons of entries on '70s comics, my fave era. Anyhoo, I asked the Groovemeister to share a history of his very cool retro-endeavor and yours truly urges all to visit his imprint at* bluemooncomics.org*! –* **Y.E.**

word out about our comics via some great reviews and notices on a variety of comic book related websites. The notices added lots of new writers and artists to our ranks, as well. Guys like Louis Sollune (under pen-name JP Dupras), Vatche Mavlian, Evan Driscoll, Jesse Landrum, Ernest Edwards, Steve Addlesee, and many more. Buoyed by a very encouraging fan press, we cruised along for a couple of years, putting out a few dozen well-received home-made comics – *Power Corps, Infinite Tales, Vault of Shadows, Blue Moon Superheroes, Blue Moon Spotlight, Bounties,* and others – before we ran out of steam.

And then I got writer's block.

To help me through that horrible period, I again looked to TwoMorrows for inspiration. *CBA* (along with *CBC*) was, for a long time, just about the only place that properly celebrated the greatness of the Bronze Age of Comics. From the latter part of the '80s through the early 2000s, for reasons I could not comprehend, the Bronze Age was pretty much considered the least popular of all the comic-book eras. Personally, I thought the Bronze Age was the best time ever to have been a comic book fan. I was thankful that Ye Ed. and his mag backed me up on that belief in issue after amazing issue.

In 2008, inspired and reinvigorated by the many things I learned and remembered from enjoying *CBA*, I decided to try my hand at creating a blog that focused on the Bronze Age of comics. I called my version of the Bronze Age, "The Groovy Age," because the dating of my personal favorite era (1967–80) was a bit different from the "official" Bronze Age timeline. Also, I had used the title for a series of articles that ran in *Mystery Adventure Tales*, so I figured I'd continue writing those types of pieces for my blog (picking up tons of great background info from many sources, the best of which, natch, was *CBA/CBC*). I didn't try to track down creators and interview them like Cooke and company because I was more interested in just reminiscing about the comics that I loved growing up. As usual, I dreamed up a corny title for my blog, the likes of which only I and a chosen few seem to get. I



dubbed my blog, "Diversions of the Groovy Kind," as a weird play on the '70s sci-fi classic *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Maybe you've heard of that long-running blog and its author, the Groovy Agent…? Yeah, that's me, Groove-ophiles! Amazingly, the blogosphere came to love what I was doing. Not only that, but a lot of pros from the Groovy Age graciously chimed in with corrections and added info in the comments sections of my posts as we rolled merrily along through over three thousand blog posts.

Diversions of the Groovy Kind was my pet project for over a decade. I, in my secret identity as the Groovy Agent (which my regular readers – a.k.a. my Groove-ophiles – enjoyed referring to me as "Ol' Groove") would post (mostly) daily articles about my favorite '70s comics. I put all my efforts into showing off the greatness of the Bronze… eh, Groovy Age, I mean, in the same spirit as Ye Ed. In fact, if you'd care to check out the blog and go way, way back in the archives, you'll find my first (of many) plugs for *CBA* in the comments section of my August 14, 2008, post.

A few years of writing Diversions of the Groovy Kind helped me beat my comics writing slump. In early 2016, I literally dreamed up a wild ending for a story, then created a new character called Midnight Stranger around it. Since he had been reprinting some of my old '90s/'00s Blue Moon Comics under his own Will Lill Comics imprint, I sent the Midnight Stranger scripts to my old Blue Moon compadre Warren Montgomery.



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He dug Midnight Stranger enough that he hooked me up to run several stories (featuring designs and incredible art by the mighty Joe Koziarski) in his *Fun Adventure Comics* anthology. That opened the door to the creation of another new character, Ash-Aman, brilliantly illustrated by Russ Martin, which also ran in several issues of Will Lill's *FAC*.

Soon after things got rolling with Will, other small press/indie comics publishers, like Mark F. Davis's Golden Era/Surprising Comics, InDELLible Comics, Lucky Comics, and others let me write for them and their exciting characters. Perhaps my biggest/coolest opportunity was when my Western strip, Guns & Rosa, was greenlighted by Mort Todd, Roger McKenzie, and the gang at Charlton-Neo. Sadly, as fate kicked my booty one more time, Charlton-Neo closed shop before they could publish *Guns & Rosa*.

In 2018, Lucky Comics publisher John Michael Helmer talked me into bringing back Blue Moon Comics under his Lucky Comics banner. I was very hesitant, but I finally caved (yeah, I do that a lot). It was fun doing my own characters and seeing that Blue Moon banner on a comic again. It eventually brought back a feeling I never thought I'd have again: I wanted to strike out and publish Blue Moon Comics on my own.

By 2019, the time seemed right. Print-on-demand outlets like Ka-Blam/IndyPlanet and DriveThruComics made it easy to produce (and afford to publish) comics. On top of that, thanks to my experiences at those other publishers, I'd assembled an impressive team of artists. Plus, I had a good stockpile of cool comics from the late '90s/early '00s Blue Moon era that I could bring to an even larger audience! Yes, pilgrim, it was time to get back into the Blue Moon Comics publishing saddle.

In January 2020, we published *Diversions* #1. I decided to name our new flagship title after my beloved blog as a kind of continuation slash tribute to the Groovy Age. It featured three short strips, all written by me. First, we had a new super-hero I'd created and designed called Night Spider, brilliantly brought to life by JW Erwin, who is as great an artist as you'll find anywhere in the medium today.

Next was a short pre-Marvel Atlas-style sci-fi story (yeah, I enjoy writing those) illustrated by the late, great Donnie Page, whose style was so Bronze Age Marvel, it could make you cry. And the capper of the issue was my aforementioned Western strip *Guns & Rosa,* magnificently illustrated by my *Midnight Stranger* artist/partner, Joe Koziarski. That first issue perfectly captured my desire to represent multiple genres in one comic as a kind of tribute to the many different comics categories we found on '70s' spinner racks.

Then something that came to be called Covid changed everything.

One would think that a pandemic would be the death-knell for a new comic book publisher, but thank goodness, it wasn't. See, the cool part about publishing in the 21st century is that a huge chunk of the work and collaboration can all be shared via the good old World Wide Web. That being said, let it be known that a nearly world-wide quarantine didn't stop my friends – JW Erwin, Joe Koziarski, Donnie Page, Ian Groff, Steven Butler, Mort Todd, David Johnson, Jr., Marcello Rosmini, Chris Malgrain, Kent Clark, and others – from helping me produce tons of super-heroes, sci-fi, horror, adventure, and fantasy tales for *Diversions*. During and after the quarantine, we just kept right on making more and more comics.



Now it's more than five years later, we're still at it! As of this writing, we have 25 issues of *Diversions* under our belts, plus numerous collections and specials, as well as a couple ongoing series, and… lots more on the way! We're just truckin' right along turning out issue after issue of "A Spinner-Rack Between Two Covers!"

So, back to the original question: who – or what – is Blue Moon Comics and why is there an article about them/it in this issue of *Comic Book Creator*? For me, personally, Blue Moon Comics is a dream come true. But more than that… Blue Moon Comics is a bunch of like-minded creators who love comics way too much.

The imprint is and has been the home to both legendary Silver and Bronze Age comics creators as well as up-and-coming creators. And most of all, Blue Moon Comics publishes some of the best comics you've never read!

Above: *This variant cover celebrating the U.S. semiquincentennial – that's the 250th birthday! – by Steven Butler and Quinton Bedwell graced* Diversions *#25.* **Below:** Untamed Realms *#1. Art by Butler.*



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An Ode to CRAF Comics

Ye Ed. glories in his deep admiration for Redondo, Alcala, and Co.'s Filipino komiks imprint

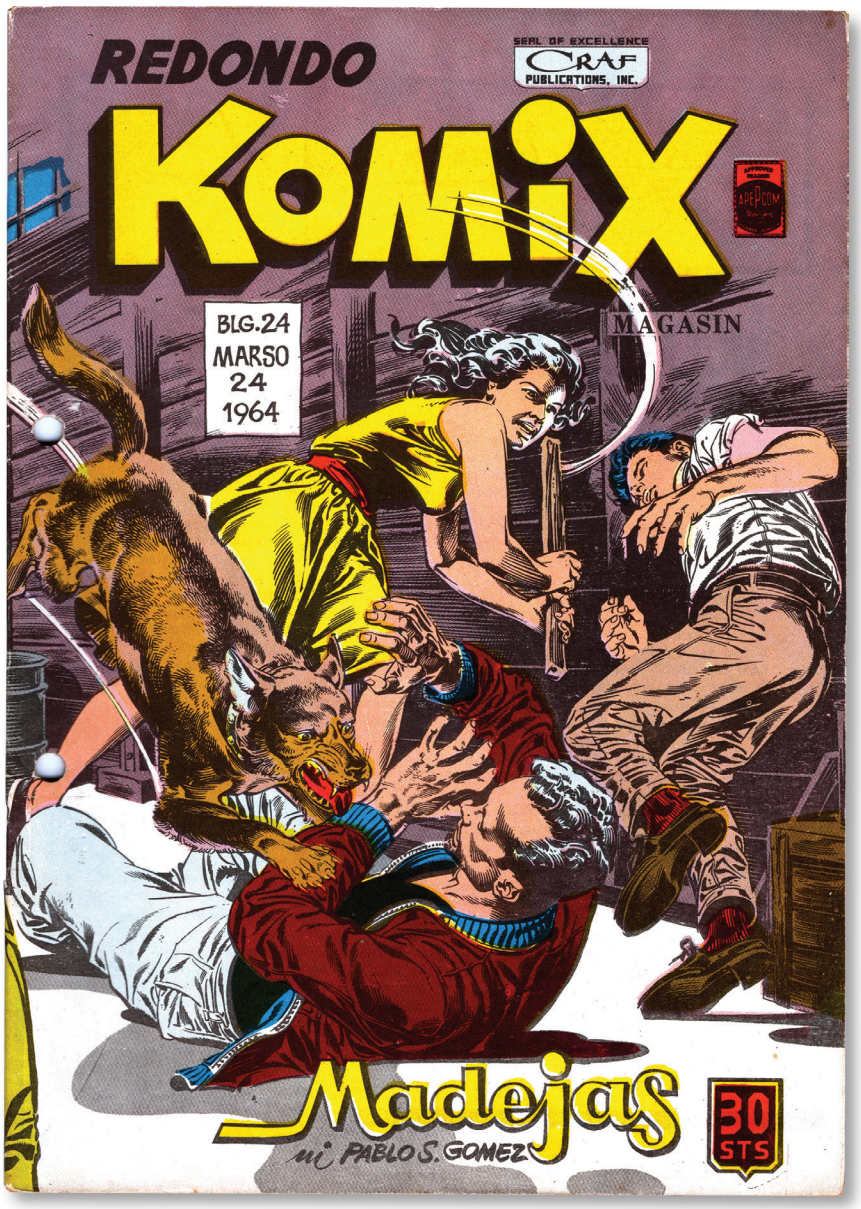
SEAL OF EXCELLENCE
CRAF
PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Above: *The brand logo for the shortlived – 1963–68 – Filipino komiks imprint, whose name was derived by initials of its founders.*
Below: *Dramatic* Redondo Komix *#24 [Mar. 24, '64] cover by the great Nestor Redondo, representative of the violence, melodrama, and artistic excellence of the books.*

by JON B. COOKE

I'll never be any sort of authority on the comic books of the Philippines – Filipino komiks – but you'll have to go far and wide to find a more enthusiastic Yank than myself. With the indispensable help of John A. Lent, Manual Auad, and David Roach – friends all – I devoted a majority of the fourth issue of *Comic Book Artist* V2 #4 [Sept. '04] to the "Invasion of the Filipino Artists," a significant study into the subject that, modesty aside, remains an excellent resource to this day.

Now what I *do* know more about is the generation of artists from that Pacific archipelago who came to the U.S. in the early '70s to make a sensational debut at DC Comics, among them Nestor Redondo, Alfredo Alcala, Alex Niño, E.R. Cruz, and Tony DeZuñiga. I would soon enough learn it was this last artist, an early arrival to the American comics scene, who persuaded DC publisher Carmine Infantino and his most successful editor, Joe Orlando, to travel to the Philippines in late 1971 and spend three days scouting that country's comic-book talent.



THE FILIPINO INVASION

The story goes that DeZuñiga, at the time a co-creator of "Jonah Hex" and prolific artist on Orlando's titles, had learned DC could afford to pay either $11 or $12 (his figures varied) a page for original art and he was sure colleagues back home would accept $10, with him and new wife, Mary (née Shields), pocketing any difference as the artist's representative. Used to getting a pittance for a page rate in the Filipino comics industry, Redondo and his talented peers signed up with the DeZuñigas.

As impressive as the onslaught of Filipino art was to readers – I'll never forget encountering my first Alex Niño story, in a 1972 issue of *House of Mystery!* – the artists' arrival was unsettling for domestic talent, the American comic book artists who viewed the poorly-paid foreigners as a threat to their livelihood. But the unease cut both ways, as the Filipino contingent soon learned just how cheap their rates were. In his interview in *CBA* V2 #4, Auad mentioned to me, "I remember Alfredo [Alcala] telling me that they were getting something like $5 a page, but Carmine Infantino said in an interview that DC was paying a lot more, so something was happening to the money."

But, back when, I had no idea there were any tensions shaking up the industry, as I was a smitten fan utterly in love with this incredible roster of hitherto unknown artists gracing my weekly supply of funnybooks! Exclaimed Roach in his survey of Filipino artists in that *CBA*, "What the Filipinos shared was a good, solid and usually… conventional approach to storytelling, exceptional draftsmanship, and exuberant, florid brushwork which harked back to the golden years of magazine illustration in the first few decades of the 20th century."

(And it became clearly evident to this young comics fan that Nestor Redondo was the greatest of this amazing crew of Philippine artists and whose DC masterpieces would be *Rima, the Jungle Girl* and *The Bible*. But I'd only discover, in recent years, that it was Redondo who organized the first Filipino crew to work in U.S. comics, predating DC's 1971 visit to Manila by a year! Plus it was under the direction of Marvel Comics' third editor-in-chief and Golden Age legend Vincent Fago! But the story of the "Now Age" comics of Pendulum Press is a subject yours truly is still investigating, so please be patient!)

Redondo Komix TM & © the respective copyright holder. Courtesy of Manuel Auad.

ART AND CRAF

Prior to *CBA* V2 #4, I had hit it off with Manuel Auad in a big way, impressed as I was with his awesome books on Alex Toth and great magazine illustrators of yore. Generously, he gifted me a stack of Filipino komiks, the quality of which absolutely knocked me out of my socks, in titles with artist names I recognized. But what I didn't realize until recently was the critical importance the publisher of these specific titles represented in the Philippine history of comic books.

Though the story of komiks stretches back to the 1880s, the medium itself didn't specifically catch fire until the post-World War II years, particularly when ACE Publications launched *Pilipino Komiks* #1 [June 14, '47], which included art by Fred Carrillo and Jesse Santos, two names recognizable to U.S. comics fans. Into the "golden age" of komiks – the 1950s – familiar talents who toiled for Ace included Francisco Coching, Alfredo Alcala, Alex Niño, Tony DeZuñiga, Virgilio Redondo, and his younger brother, Nestor.

With writer Mars Ravelo (inspired by Superman), 20-something Nestor caused a sensation with his elegant rendition of Filipino super-hero Darna and his artwork inspired an entire generation of komik artists. As Lent noted, "Komiks historians Cynthia Roxas and Joaquin Arevalo, Jr. wrote, '[Redondo] had by then developed an illustrative style which so appealed to readers that a whole generation of komiks artists tried to emulate it. The style was… artistic, but not at the cost of what attracts the average komiks readers: realism and down-to-earthiness.'"

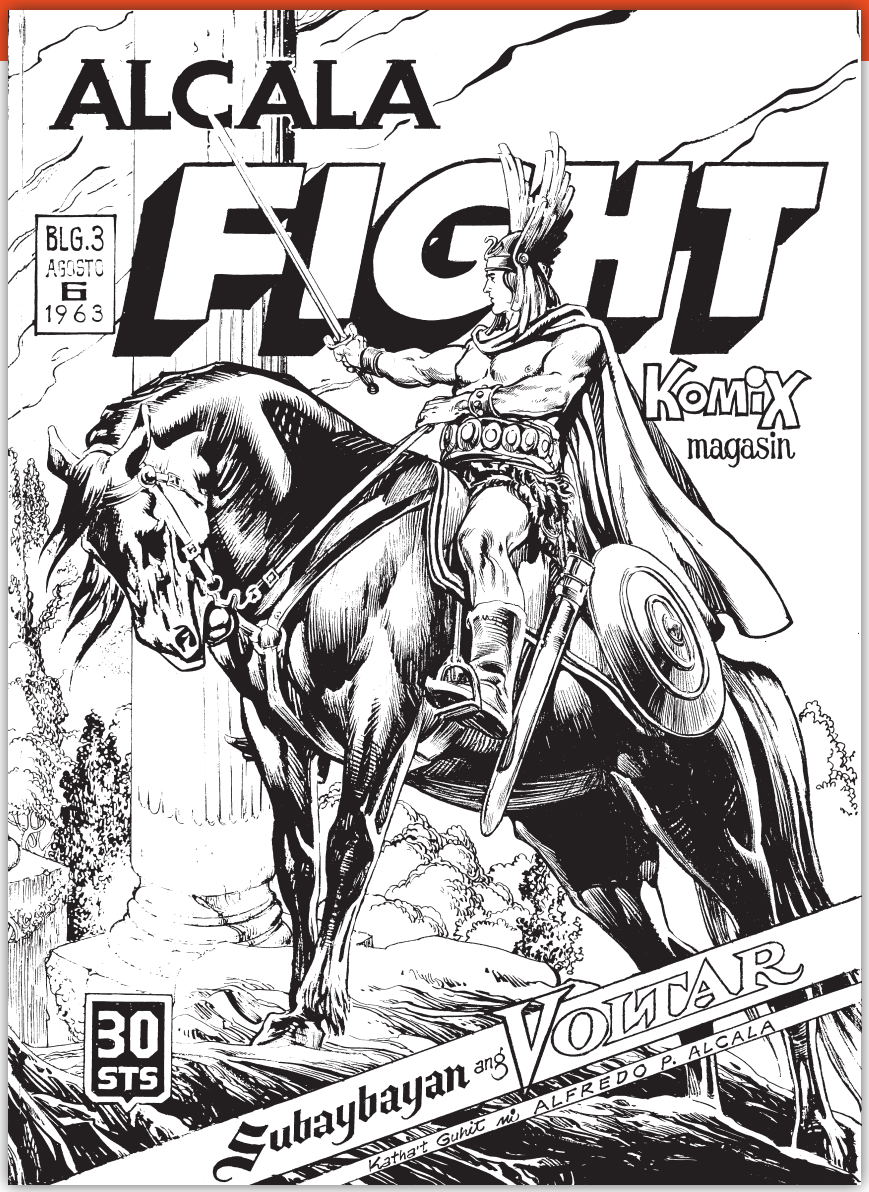
In 1963, Ace, then the top komiks publisher, was driven to bankruptcy during a labor strike, and its roster of creators was forced to find employment elsewhere. The Redondo brothers, Alcala, Amado Castrillo, Tony Caravana, and Romeo Francisco – artists all – decided to pool resources and create their own komiks imprint, CRAF Publications (the name being derived from their surname initials), which resulted in extraordinarily well-crafted comics, among the most gorgeously illustrated in the world.

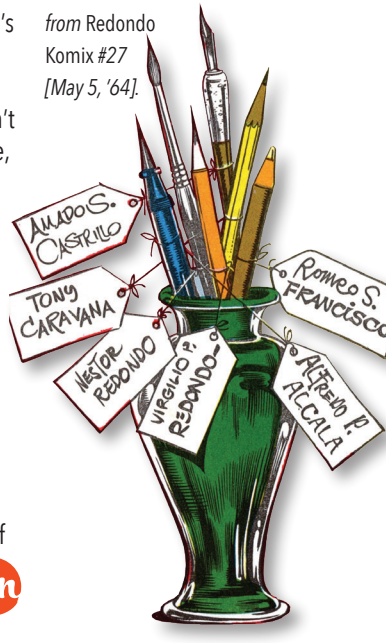
Interestingly, the CRAF partners set out to produce komik titles named for themselves, first being the bi-weekly *Redondo Komix,* whose #1 was dated May 7, 1963. In July, *Alcala Fight Komix* followed, with *Amado Lovers Komix* coming a year later. As Filipino komiks history blogger Dennis Villegas observed about the remaining partners, "I am not sure why Romeo Francisco and Tony Caravana did not have their namesake komiks at this time, although [Virgilio Redondo] told me that Francisco and Caravana were just junior partners of CRAF."

CRAF would not live out the decade, but – as I had, courtesy of Auad, overwhelming evidence in my hands – its comic books were beautiful. As an example, let me describe the contents of 44-page *Redondo Komix* #31 [July 2, '64]: first, there's Nestor's rainbow-colored wraparound cover; then his "Devlin, Swashbuckler of the Seas" serial; a chapter of jungle girl Robina by the excellent Elpidio Torres; DeZuñiga's crime series "Tenyente Alegre"; Alcala's fantastical "Magic Biloa" dramedy segment; an illustrated fashion centerspread; "Theme Song" (a regular feature illustrating song lyrics) by a young Rudy Nebres; cartoonist Larry Alcala's (no relation) monster gag strip, "Doktor Sabak"; Caravana's soap opera "Amalia ng Quiapo"; a chapter of Alfredo Alcala's excellent non-fiction WWII series, this one, "The Battle of Savo"; and a Redondo brothers collaboration featuring the protagonist brutally killing a cat (that mystifies me as I don't read Tagalog!). This characterization is woefully inadequate, but be assured the efforts by all are simply exquisite.

Lent portrayed the 1968 demise of CRAF as a result of "economic and social upheavals in [Filipino dictator] Ferdinand Marcos's late 1960s/early '70s Philippines" extinguishing the endeavor, but blogger Villegas said Virgilio Redondo told him, "It seemed that there was some sort of unspoken rivalry that emerged between these highly-talented artists. Small things were source of petty misunderstandings, such as, who will do the cover, which artist will illustrate this or that serial, etc."

My late friend Gerry Alanguilan proudly proclaimed, "I truly consider CRAF an artistic high point in the history of Philippine comics." And, from what I've observed, I wholeheartedly agree, amigo. Bravo, CRAFmen!





Above: Alcala Fight Komix *#3 [Aug. 6, '63] featured Alfredo's Voltar!* **Below:** *Cover detail from* Redondo Komix *#27 [May 5, '64].*

Alcala Fight Komix TM & ©the respective copyright holder. Voltar TM & © the estate of Alfredo Alcala.

El Loco Horacio Altuna

Our correspondent in the Southern Hemisphere discusses the legendary Argentine cartoonist

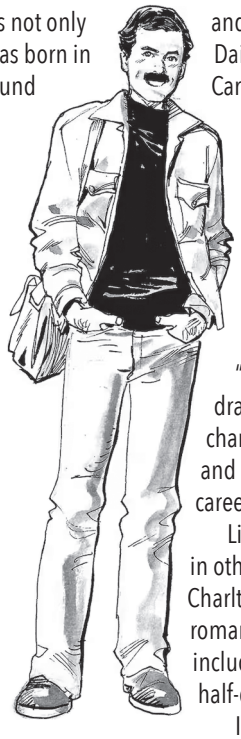
Inset right: *Among cartoonist Horacio Altuna's most recognizable characters in his native country is "El loco Chávez," co-created by writer Carlos Trillo. The long-running series stars Chávez, a whimsical, newspaper journalist who gets entangled as a single cosmopolitan fellow in romantic situations .*

Below: *Altuna in 2006, in a photo portrait by Guillem Medina.*

Bottom: *Panel from Altuna's Hot L.A., his graphic novel set during the 1992 Los Angeles race riots.*

by PABLO STADELMAN

Undoubtedly one of the most important artists not only in Argentina, but worldwide, Horacio Altuna was born in 1941, in the province of Córdoba, where he found a way to express himself through drawing. He began his cartooning career with the comic strip, *Supervolador*, in 1965, with the support of his mentor and friend, Gianni Dalfiume, who saw in the then law student, a latent artist. Altuna's unique and stylized way of depicting human anatomy opened doors for him professionally and he was participated in countless projects in the world of comics throughout his career. In each of his works, Altuna meticulously commands the story settings, providing perfect narration and page design to each layout.



His first professional job was at Columba Publishing, when, in 1967 he collaborated in various publications such as *D'artagnan, El Tony,* and *Fantasía*, which allowed him to meet and work with other luminaries of Argentine comics, such as Héctor Oesterheld, with whom he collaborated with on "Kabul de Bengala," and Sergio Almendro, with whom he made "Hilario Corbalán."

This led him in 1975, to partner with eventual friend, the star scriptwriter, Carlos Trillo, with he teamed with to carry out different projects, such as "El loco Chávez," on the back cover of *Clarin*, from 1975–88, and for which he would receive the "Best Argentine Daily Strip" award of the Association of Argentian Cartoonists.

It is in this series where he stands out as the master of an unmistakable style, where he knew how to express in his drawings, the daily work of the different scenarios of his stories and knew how to capture the essence of Argentine citizenship in each of his drawings.

Together with Trillo, he would create other fundamental works of Argentine comics such as "Charlie Moon," in 1980. In 1978, he began to draw at the Record publishing house, where he was in charge of different series, such as "Jungla de Asfalto," and "New York Blues." At the same time he began his career at the La Urraca publishing house.

Like any artist of his stature, he knew how to work in other foreign publishers, such as American publisher Charlton Comics, where he contributed a few war and romance stories in the mid-'60s, and for British weeklies, including at the imprint, IPC, where he drew the first half-dozen or so "Dredger" stories in *Action*, in 1976.

In 1982, he settled in the city of Sitges, in Spain, where he continued his work in the series, "Ficcionario," among other masterpieces. When he settled in that country, he entered a successful stage of his career that projected his fame internationally, appearing in *Heavy Metal,* as well as the European *1984* and *Cimoc*. Also, at this time, he began a long artistic relationship with Toutain Editorial, working in other publications such as *Comix Internacional* and *Zona 84*, where he teamed up with friend Carlos Trillo on

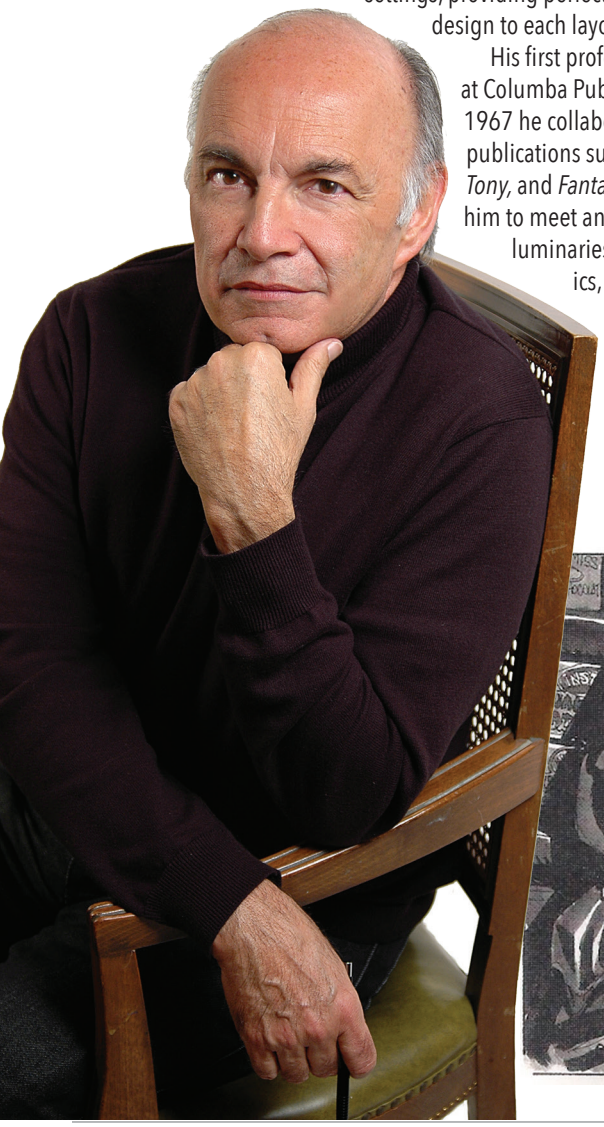




Photo portrait by Guillem Medina. Courtesy of Wikimedia. *El Loco Chávez, Hot L.A.* TM & © the respective copyright holders.



Fightin' Marines, "Dredger" TM & © the respective copyright holders.

"El Tragaperras", in addition to working with his own scripts such as "Ficcionario," in '83, and "Chances," in '84.

In 1994, he returned to work in *Clarín*, with the strip "El Nene Montanarom", which continued until 2001. In 2010, he returned to the newspaper for the last time, with the strip "Es lo que hay (Reality)," which adapted the strip, "Familia Tipo," that had already been published for 10 years in the newspaper, *Catalunya*.

His ability to capture reality through comics and to portray society, along with his defects and virtues, have made him the recipient of several international awards such as the Yellow Kid in 1986, and for his work in *Chances*, which resulted in him again receiving the Yellow Kid award,in 2004 for lifetime achievement, and the Grand Prize at the Barcelona comic fair, being the first foreigner to receive the honor.

NEXT ISSUE: *My interview with the great man himself, Horacio Altuna!*



Left: *Horacio Altuna appeared in some Charlton Comics titles in the 1960s, including the lead story in* Fightin' Marines *#75 [July '67], splash seen here.* **Above:** *Altuna "Dredger" splash page in* Action *#10 [Apr. 10, '76].*

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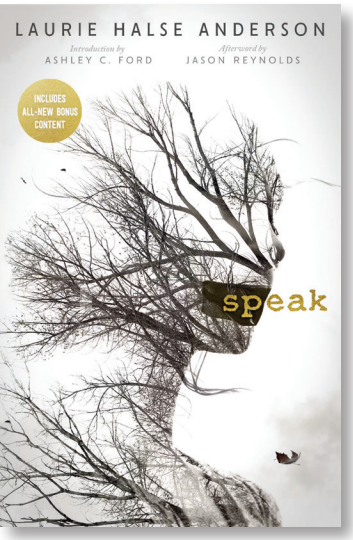
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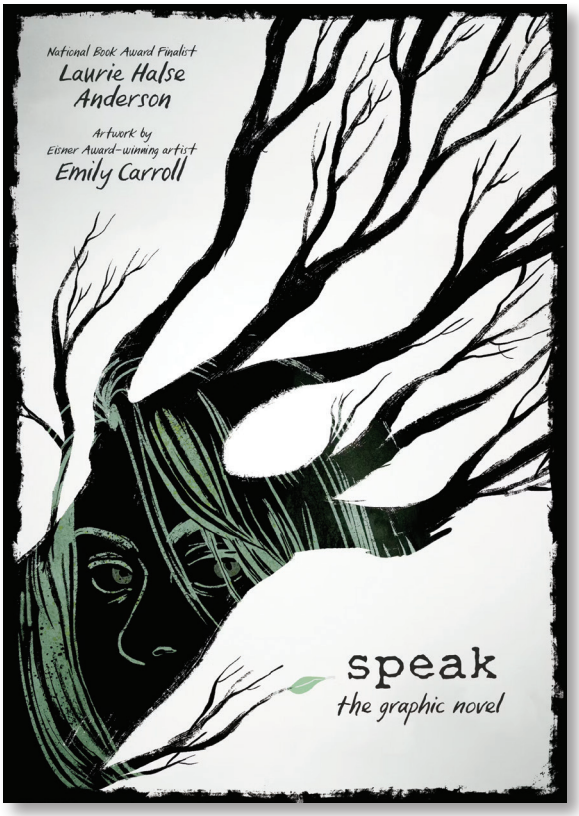
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When Silence Isn't an Option

Our resident reviewer discusses the librarian's duty to protect and a riveting graphic novel



Above: *Evocative cover art for the 20th anniversary edition of Laurie Halse Anderson's poignant young adult novel about the trauma of rape and surviving the experience,* Speak. **Below:** *Emily Carroll's cover for* Speak: The Graphic Novel *[2018], illustrated by Carroll and scripted by the original's author.*



by RICHARD J. ARNDT

Speak: The Graphic Novel is an adaptation of Laurie Halse Anderson's excellent 1999 novel about a high school girl's rape at the hands of a fellow classmate and her struggles to overcome the silence she then wraps around herself and the event. What makes this a rather unconventional effort is the 2018 graphic novel's script is actually written by the source's author herself – a rarity in the genre of graphic novel adaptations made from a young adult novel.

Now, the first thing a reader needs to know is that what is *written* – in the actual words – often gets past school and parental scrutiny without causing great alarm. However, *seeing* the same event in illustrations can cause major problems with censorship and, to be fair, rightly so.

Reading something in prose is a step away from the reality of the actual event. But observing the same thing through a visual depiction is a step closer to realism that can provoke distress in impressionable youth. Personally, as part of my duties, it is my responsibility to read every graphic novel that becomes part of our school's selection for that very reason. What can happen without any interference in the text of a Stephen King novel would would jolt the horrified gatekeepers if the book's trauma is seen in either illustration or photographs by the reader, parent, or teacher.

What the parents – and, in fact, many school board members – are largely unaware of is that the first censor of any book being placed on a library shelf is always the librarian. We have to be. We're the ones making the judgments that, when we purchase a book for our library, whether aimed at the general public, school, trade, foreign, or military library audience, we determine whether the effort is both interesting for those audiences and good enough to be worth the money the librarian has been entrusted with to fill those shelves. As a middle school librarian, I've rejected a number of books for too much foul language or promoting a political agenda that has nothing to do with good citizenship or, in some cases, reality. Of the latter, I'm talking about white supremacy books, how-to-build-a-pipe-bomb tomes, how-to-have-healthy-sex volumes with graphic depictions of explicit intimacy. With that last one, I am referring to advice columnist Ann Landers' book that had more naked bodies and sex acts than seen in the *Kama Sutra*! (Which, it so happens, I also wouldn't stock for 12–13 year-old kids!). And I've been asked if the library has or can obtain all of those "reality" books I mentioned.

Regarding *Speak*, Ms. Anderson's original novel's rape scene was horrific, but relatively discreet. Her adaptation, illustrated by Eisner Award-winner Emily Carroll, is likewise subdued, though in a much different way than the actual novel. Carroll "shows" the incident, which occurs at the end of a summer party, as either in blacked-out darkness, with the rape itself not seen, but implied by the drawings in a variety of ways. There's renderings of the victim's terrified eyes and tears, as well as images of the rapist with black holes for his eyes, or a completely dark scene with white lines showing both the text (in white painted words) and the rapist also blacked-out, this time with his eyes now white holes in a shadowy face. These were enormously effective in expressing the pain, shame, and horror of the events taking place than having every detail explicitly depicted.

Needless to say, after enduring much psychic turmoil accompanied by her school friends' lack of understanding (who honestly don't know what's truly going with her during much of the book), the young lady finds the courage and strength to finally "speak" her truth, both informing the police, her parents, and others about the crime perpetrated against her and the rapist's name.

Angry to have been exposed, the rapist stalks and attacks her again, but this time, however, she fights back, both fending him off and, in the process, changing many of her schoolmates' attitudes towards her.

In my school library, the prose version of this book has been very popular, mostly among girls, enough so that I always have at least two copies in circulation. The graphic novel is also quite in demand and, again, we have two copies of that available for check-out, as well. Teaching or having students understand that silence leads nowhere for either the victim, school body, or teachers is, I think, worthwhile for any reader. Having such a well-written and compassionate book on the subject is a good thing to present for any student's use, both for teaching purposes and for personal comfort. It's a way of saying, "You're not alone and you can do something about this," for students who may not get that message from anywhere else.

Organizations supporting victims are included in the back of *Speak: The Graphic Novel,* providing contact information for those in need of help This book, in both prose and graphic novel versions, has my highest recommendation for students and adults to read.

fin

Speak © Laurie Hulse Anderson. *Speak: The Graphic Novel* © Laurie Hulse Anderson and Emily Carroll.

Dateline:Oz!!#

by Fred Hembeck 2026



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BRENT ERIC ANDERSON CONTROL

"It's your life, Ace."

Those are the words Neal Adams shared over a transcontinental telephone call with despondent young California-born artist Brent Eric Anderson, whose first sojourn to the Big Apple resulted in far too few assignments within the comic book industry. Then illustrating matchbook covers as a freelance gig, the 20-something heard what he needed from his idol and mentor. It was time to get busy.



And busy he got, with time spent at Continuity Studios and celebrated runs on Ka-Zar, Somerset Holmes, Strikeforce: Morituri, *and* Astro City, *and much more, in a career that today spans nearly five decades. As of late, Anderson says, in this multi-session interview conducted over the last year (the guy can talk, I can attest!), that he's officially retired but yet there's projects a'plenty in the works. That Ace sure is busy!*

Photo portrait by Gazebo, courtesy of Wikimedia.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY JON B. COOKE



Comic Book Creator: *Why don't we start at the start: where'd you grow up?*

Brent Anderson: I grew up all over the West Coast, actually, between San Jose, California, where I was born, and Kirkland, Washington.

CBC: *Why so many places?*

Brent: Well, my mom and dad got divorced when I was eight, and she basically followed work. She wound up with three kids she raised by herself and we moved where the jobs were. She eventually got a job with Boeing and we wound up moving up to Washington. She worked on the tail assembly for the 747 jumbo jetliner.

CBC: *What was your dad's job?*

Brent: Well, he started out in the Navy and then, on the G.I. Bill, he got educated as an engineer, and he wound up working for Lockheed on the Polaris Trident submarine. He was one of the civilian engineers who went down on the depth tests for the Polaris submarines to see just how far they could dive without imploding. So he had like a 40-year career with Lockheed.



CBC: *Despite the divorce, did you stay in contact with your dad?*

Brent: No, I didn't. Last time I saw him, I was 13, and I didn't find out he had died until 18 months after he had died in 2002. So I don't know anything about him. I got lots of pictures and I have a few vague memories as a child, but other than that, no.

CBC: *Do you think, in retrospect, do you think there was anything to that for you, regarding your development?*

Brent: Well, yeah. I mean, after I found out that he had died, my son had turned seven and I was helping him with a genealogy family tree. And that's how I found out. I Googled my father's name, Don Golden Anderson. The very unusual middle name got me one hit and that was his obituary. I did that in the fall of 2003. But, at that time, I just started going into therapy with a counselor over my nephew, my sister, and family stuff that was going on. And, after I found out my father had passed away, I was in therapy, but not only for that, but just being a dad, as well, I guess.

CBC: *Your son at the time was roughly the same age as you were when your parents got divorced, right?*

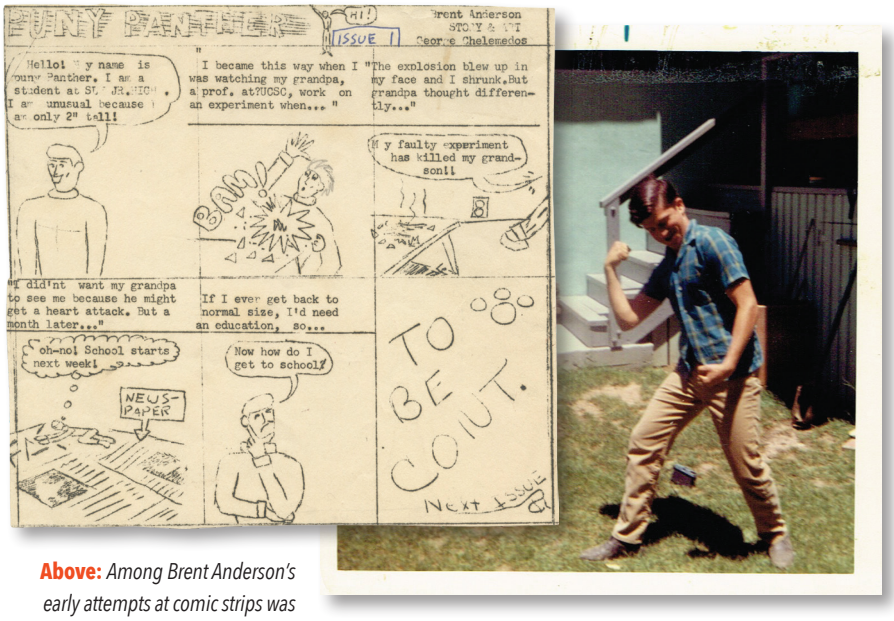
Brent: Yep. That was one of the reasons I went into therapy. And, while I was in therapy… There's a little funny story, I'll tell you: my father wanted to name me a name that he made up and thought was really great. Y-A-N-T-Z-E – Yantze. That was the name that he had come up with and my mother was kind of horrified, because you don't want your kid to get beat up at school every day with a name like Yantze. So my mom was going to call me, "Yantze Kevin," so that I could use "Kevin Anderson" at school if I wanted to. But anyway, when I was in utero, my parents went to a sporting event of some kind. And the main player on the opposing team had the name Yantze, spelled exactly the same way. And my father was so disgusted that this guy already had the name that my father thought he had invented. He just turned to my mom and said, "You can call him anything you want." So my mom called me, "Brent Eric."

When I was in therapy, thinking about this, and I always liked that song by Johnny Cash called "A Boy Named Sue." And it's about a son named Sue who grew up hard and he wanted to kill his father for giving him that awful name, right? So they have a big fight and then the dad tells him the reason he called him Sue. He goes, "I knew I wasn't going to be there for you. So you needed to protect yourself. You needed to be able to defend yourself and that's the surest way to do it." And they hugged and made up and all that in the song. Well, I never got an opportunity to make up with my father about his leaving and stuff like that, but I always wondered what kind of artwork would an artist named Yantze Kevin have produced instead of a Brent Eric.

CBC: *Wasn't Yantze an alternative title for something you were considering as a name for a graphic novel or something like that?*

Brent: Well, actually that character, Yantze, who represents me in a lot of my fiction, is actually going to show up in the several different projects.

Photo courtesy of Shaun Clancy. Samaritan TM & © Juke Box Productions.



Above: *Among Brent Anderson's early attempts at comic strips was "Puny Panther," which was co-produced by childhood chum George Chelemedos, seen inset mugging for the camera on the 1970 snapshot.* **Previous spread:** *On left page is the artist in 2018 in a photo by Gazebo. On the right page is an uncredited photo that appeared in Comics Interview #30 ['86] and a panel from* Kurt Busiek's Astro City *#1 [Aug. '95] featuring Samaritan. Pencil and inks by Brent.* **Below:** *Encountering this issue of* Fantastic Four *[#69, Dec. '67] as a middle schooler changed the trajectory of his life. The artist's appreciation for* FF *co-creator Jack Kirby is clearly evident in this Ben Grimm pin-up appearing in the "Brent Anderson Portfolio" feature in* Marvel Fanfare *#10 [Sept. '83], where he truly nails the King's version of The Thing.*

The most prominent of which is this daily newspaper style comic strip that I'm calling *You Get What You Get*. The main character is sort of a cartoon version of me and I call him Yantze, who's an artist and musician and another persona of me in a project. So, even if they don't know the story, I get to show the world what kind of art or expression a Yantze Kevin would make.

CBC: *Is* You Get What You Get *cartoony? What kind of style is it… realistic?*

Brent: I'm trying as hard as I can to push it in the direction of a *Calvin and Hobbes* style, a *Doonesbury* kind of approach, sort of splitting the difference. But it's kind of intuitive for me, because I tend to draw on all kinds of different styles, but it's only because the style has to match what it is that I'm doing at the time.





CBC: *Do you have siblings?*

Brent: I have a younger sister and a younger brother, but they have both passed away.

CBC: *If your mom was a single mom… I mean, I had the same situation. We grew up pretty poor. It was tough. My mother was a wage earner… Was it the same for you? Were you lower middle-class or lower class?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. We were homeless for a couple of weeks one time due to circumstances beyond our control. We were living in a motel in downtown San Jose for about two weeks. Everything was in storage and we were in the middle of supposedly transferring to New York City.

CBC: *I moved around a lot, too, as a kid, me and my little brother with Mom, and it's tough to get a sense of security… In retrospect, was that the same for you?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. Being in therapy for almost 25 years now, I discovered that one of my defense mechanisms resulted from moving around a lot, having an imagination that far outstripped most people I met growing up as a kid, and having all these experiences like being poor, etc., etc. I'd make up stories. I would tell people I had a life before I came to their school that it wasn't entirely *not* true, but not entirely *true* either. So that's the way that I gained friends.

CBC: *So you were a storyteller from a young age?*

Brent: Well, actually, they used to call us liars.

CBC: *Well, lying is all the rage today.*

Brent: It's been my living for over 50 years.

CBC: *So did you have any kind of disposable income as a kid?*

Brent: Oh, on occasion. My mom believed in giving us allowances for doing stuff around the house and that kind of thing. And she paid us what she could, and it generally was maybe 25¢ or 50¢ a week. See, in those days, it was a lot less expensive to get entertainment. And that's what led me to comics. I was introduced to Marvel Comics in seventh grade, around 1968, and I went to the Rexall Drugstore and they had comic books for 12¢. So 50¢ a week allowed me to buy four regular books and get two cents change, which I could use to buy two penny candies. Or I could buy two regular ones and a 25¢ annual and still get a penny back.

CBC: *Sweet. I read an interview that said your mom thought comics were an evil thing. Is that so?*

Brent: It wasn't that she thought they were evil. She believed the 1950s pogrom against popular culture and stuff. Let's see, [the anti-comics crusade] was going on when she was about 17, something like that. She'd read the papers and they were blaming comic books and rock 'n' roll music and all that kind of stuff for creating juvenile delinquents who would go to prison. And they showed examples of lurid crime comics and all that stuff EC was publishing. And she just looked at that and said, "Well, if I ever have a kid, he's going to read better stuff than this stuff. I'm not going to let him read this garbage." Well, by the time I was born, the Comics Code was around…

So I benefited both ways, actually, because my mom steered me in the direction of children's literature which, in turn, directed me towards more adult type reading, like reading Rudyard Kipling and, when I was 10 or 11, I picked up *Moby Dick* and I actually finished it, though it took me a year. So, if not for the fact that my mom insisted that I read

"Puny Panther," snapshot courtesy of Brent Anderson.

quality literature, I probably wouldn't have tried to read things like that back in the '60s.

CBC: *Sticking to the more juvenile stuff, did you read either like* Huckleberry Finn *or* Tom Swift *or any of the more typical for your age?*

Brent: Yep, all Twain's books. I tried reading books like *Ivanhoe* and I couldn't get through them because I thought it was about Indians. I read a lot of science fiction. I started reading – *War of the Worlds, The Time Machine* – I was getting juvenile editions of them. We'd go down to the five and dime, where they had a kids book section. My mom saw I was following her recommendation to read classic literature, so she'd buy me these books for Christmas every year, so I wound up with a book collection.

When I was in junior high school, I started reading Bradbury, Asimov, and Heinlein. I started picking up the *Doc Savage* reprints with James Bama painted covers, and was really, really gung-ho on those things, but I don't think my mom would call that literature.

CBC: *I don't think I would either.* [laughter]

Brent: No, I don't now. I threw them all away because I just couldn't read them. [Lester Dent] just kept hammering out the same word count month after month after month after month for the pulps… But I stripped all the James Bama covers off, which I've still got in a file here.

CBC: *I've read that "By Ben Betrayed"* [Fantastic Four *#69, Dec. '67*] *was your first Marvel comic. What about it pulled you in? What was it… Kirby?*

Brent: Boy, it's going back a long time. I mean, I've told the story over and over again, and I'm sure it's changed a little bit over the years, but what really drew me in was seeing some comics at junior high school, in the library, in the study center, where my two good friends, George Chelemedos and Steven R. Johnson. They introduced me to not only collecting comics and reading Marvel and DC Comics, but also drawing and writing them. But I remember the next Saturday, after seeing the comics at school, there was a bowling league in the town I was living in – Felton, California – and we'd do bowling from like 10:00 until noon (or something) and then my mom gave us our allowances and we could go buy stuff. So I went to the Rexall Drugstore and I saw the spinner rack there and just started looking at the covers of all these comics, with these characters that I'd never heard of before, like *Fantastic Four.*

I thought, "Wow, I wonder what makes them fantastic or Spider-Man amazing?" And the artwork just jumped off the covers and the storytelling for the *Spider-Man* issue [#56, Jan. '68], the story where Dr. Octopus rented a room from Aunt May. I didn't really know what was going on in the story because I think each of those stories, those issues were the middle part of a three-part story arc. But I bought those two issues and I took them all and I read them over and over and over again, wondering what came before and what was going to come next… So I just kept buying them after that.

CBC: *In retrospect, was Kirby important? Did he become important to you?*

Brent: Oh, absolutely! I mean, and years later, I got a chance to meet him. He signed my *FF* #1. I attended his memorial service after he died, and I sat right between Stan Lee and Jim Hudnall. Kirby had an *amazing* influence on my early career. I mean, even to the point where I was swiping Kirby figures and then Buscema figures, but essentially Buscema was just swiping Kirby at that time, because Stan wanted there to be a Marvel look.

CBC: *What was* Radium*? That was one of homemade comics that you did. Did you immediately get into making your own?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. My friend George Chelemedos showed me his handmade comics – his drawings were very crude and very simple and his storylines were based on DC-type things like Justice League and Batman and Robin. But anyway, he showed me his comics and in the school library at the same time that he showed me comics he was collecting and really liked. The one that comes to mind is *Strange Adventures* #213 [Aug. '68], drawn by Neal Adams. I remember at the time not being that impressed with Neal's work, because I wasn't being impressed by anybody because I didn't even know this stuff existed. All I'd ever seen were those Wayne Boring Superman comics and Batman comics. And by the time I started getting exposed to Marvel comics, the DC Superman comics were just silly. They were like *Looney Tunes.* So I really wasn't that interested in super-heroes at the time.

As a kid, I thought the *Batman* TV show was really stupid, but I really enjoyed it. In 1966, that was fun. But I couldn't relate any of that to what George was showing me, with Deadman screaming, "Don't Die, Tiny!" with his face on the cover and this actual dead guy lying there in a diagonal across the composition. I couldn't relate to that, but I could relate to the Marvel stuff almost immediately. So, the same day that I went home, I got some binder paper just like George was using and ballpoint pens of different colors and I drew my first *Radium* comics.

I think I drew the first two issues of *Radium* the same day. One was six pages long and the other one was four pages long. And I introduced two new villains in those first two issues. Proto was a bad guy that was based on my memory of watching *Gigantor*, the American distributed version of [Japanese anime] *Tetsujin 28-go*. So I patterned my villain off of *Gigantor,* from the Japanese cartoons. And

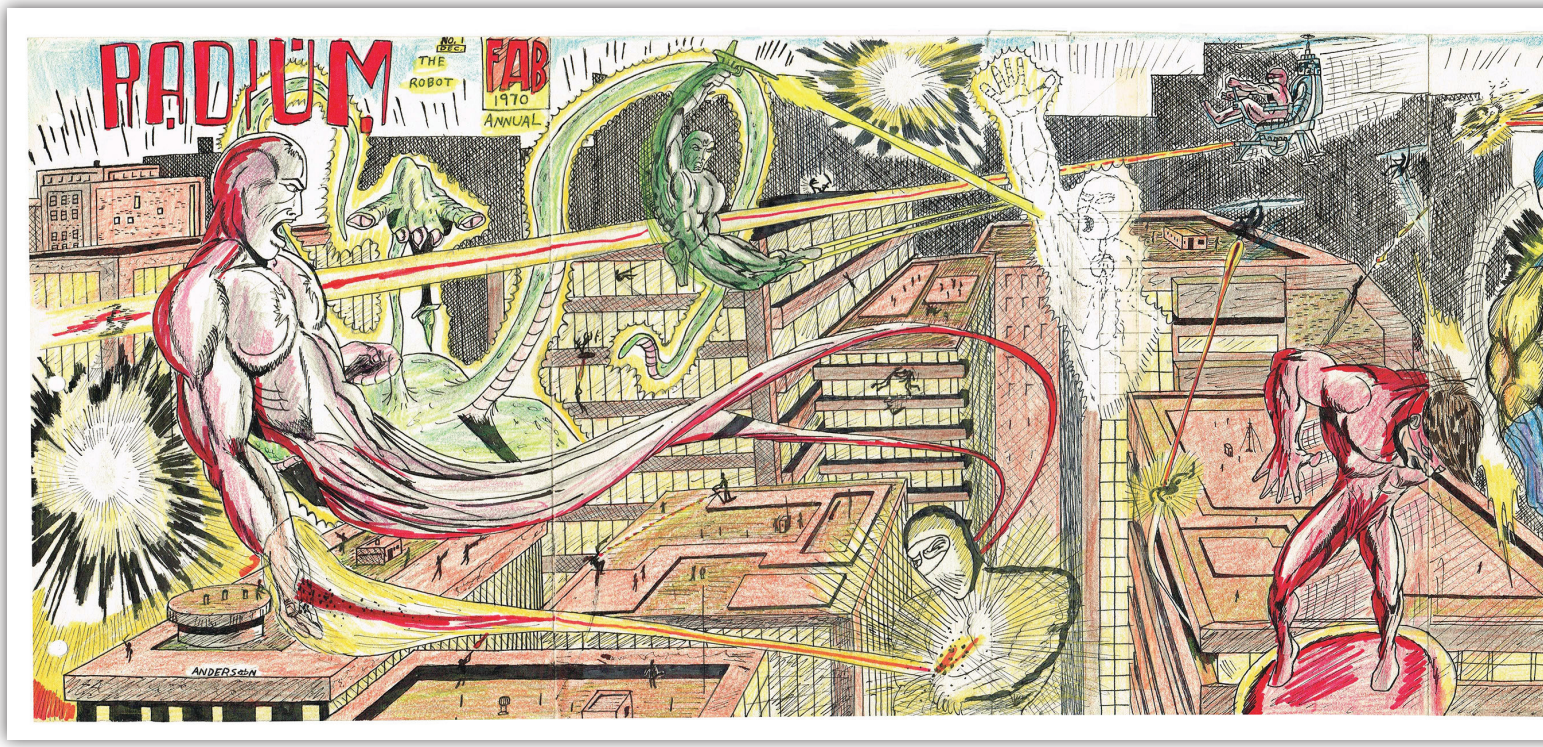


Above: *The actual newspaper text used in the background of the* Amazing Spider-Man *#56 [Jan. '68] cover was Montreal's* Gazette *of July 13, 1967 (yes, Ye Ed. is* that *obsessive!). Art by John Romita. At top is Brent's dog, Speckles, posing with other* Spidey *comics in 1970.*

Below: Strange Adventures *#213 [Aug. '68]. Art by Neal Adams.*



Amazing Spider-Man TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. *Strange Adventures* TM & © DC Comics. Photo courtesy of Brent Anderson.



Above: *Five-page gatefold cover for Brent's homemade* Radium 1970 Special *starring his* Gigantor *and* Astro Boy *inspired creation. So ambitious was the young cartoonist – who wrote, drew, and colored the super-hero series – Brent produced about 30 issues, amounting to 300 pages over a three-and-one-half year period!*

then the second villain's name was Claw (though not with a K because Marvel had already done that). Claw, a giant pink crab guy, had these big claws that could cut through anything, and he would cut up my robot, Radium.

CBC: *So you immediately began inventing your own character and villains. Where does Radium come from? Was it from the cartoons, as well?*

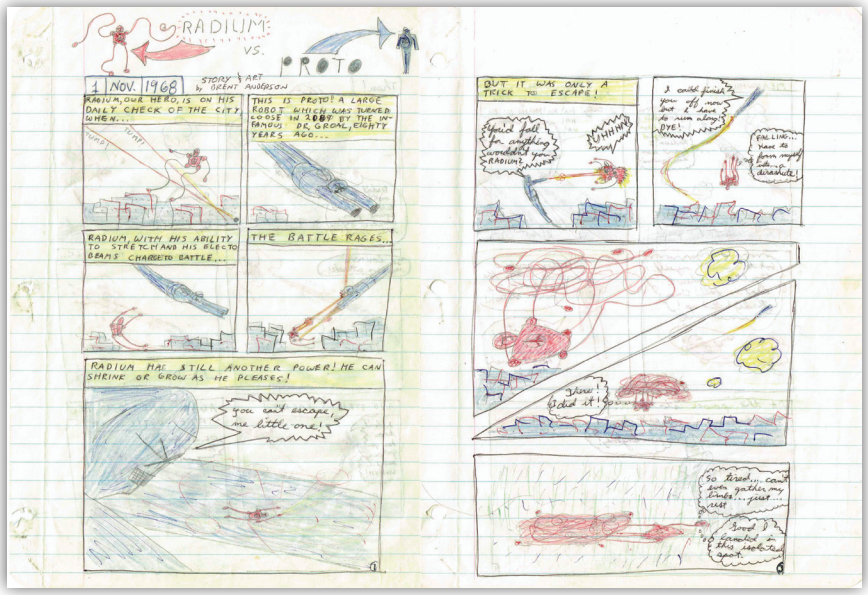
Brent: No, actually Radium was just the simplest thing I could draw very quickly. He was basically a stick figure, an inverted triangle with a peace symbol on his chest and a head with a line for the eyes and then a line down for the nose and just long, skinny arms… he could stretch…

CBC: *Was that a swipe of Mr. Fantastic?*

Brent: Probably. I had read some "Elongated Man" stories before that. But I hadn't heard of Plastic Man. When I found Plastic Man, I thought he was Elongated Man, the same guy with different names.

CBC: *How many issues of* Radium *did you complete?*

Below: *The very first* Radium *episode. Note the rudimentary design for Brent's super-hero.*



Brent: I wound up doing about 30 issues. Most were about 10 pages long. So I've got 300 pages that I did over a period of about three-and-a-half years.

CBC: *Can you see a progression of improvement?*

Brent: Oh, yeah… In its development, until the final issue came out, it was more a vehicle for me to learn to draw comics than it was to write them…

CBC: *So your comics had a readership of one or did you share them with other people?*

Brent: I shared them with a number of friends. Frank Cirocco was one of them… Gary Winnick, my friend George Chelemedos, of course. Steven R. Johnson, who was the other guy from junior high school that I stayed in touch with for quite some time until he passed away. I even contributed to his fanzines, *The Adventuress* and *The Heroine Addict*. I don't know if you're familiar with those. These were fanzines from back in the day.

CBC: *No, clever name, though it could be misconstrued.*

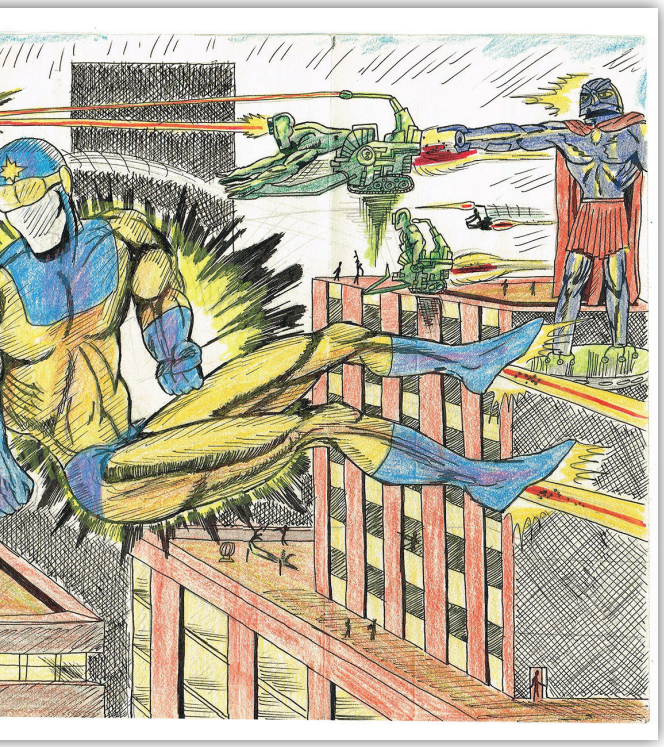
Brent: And it often was. But he said, "No, I like it. I'm going to keep it." Steve, he was in the business, but not in the art end of it…

CBC: *I read about a person influential in your life by the name of Smitty…*

Brent: Jim Smyth. I think I met Smitty between my two ventures to New York, where I went in the summer of 1976 the first time and came back that November and then I didn't go back out until the spring of 1979. So during that period of time, I was knocking around, feeling depressed and discouraged that I was not working in comics. During that time, I was taking a lot of life drawing classes and going and attending classes. Lela Dowling, a fantasy artist, was taking classes at Foothill College, in Los Altos, with a guy there that had an anatomy and drawing class named Jim "Smitty" Smith… Steve Leialoha actually knows Smitty and took classes from him at the Palo Alto Art Center.

People were talking about Smitty, who was so much fun to learn anatomy and life drawing from. So I started sitting

Radium TM & © Brent Anderson. All courtesy of Brent Anderson.



in on his classes at Foothill. Smitty was engaging, informative, funny, and (as he used to say) he had his feet firmly planted in the 18th century and was working his way back to the 17th. So he was a classical teacher. I stay in touch with him through Facebook.

CBC: *I jumped over the crucial adolescence part. In school, were you a popular kid or were you introverted?*

Brent: I was very introverted, except when I was performing my stories. I mean, if I got an ear from somebody, they would become my best friend and I'd just pal around with them and tell them all my stories and anything that crossed my mind or any interest or whatever. But, other than that, I was pretty shy and introverted. I was spending most of my time in my room writing and drawing my comics, both the homemade comics and then, later on, for fanzines and doing preparatory submission drawings to try to get into the industry.

CBC: *So girls weren't a part of the equation?*

Brent: No, but I wanted them to be. I actually got along with them quite well, just not romantically. They wanted the bad boys, I guess. And actually many are still friends today and married to other people who are also still friends.

CBC: *Tell me about the fanzines.*

Brent: Yeah. The first fanzine that Frank Cirocco and I did was called *Venture*. But prior to that, one of my colleagues from junior high school over in the Santa Cruz Mountains contacted us because we stayed in touch with them. I think it was through my friend George Chelemedos. He said, "Hey, there's this guy in Santa Cruz that's published his own comic book. It's called *Advent* and his name's Gary Winnick and he's got an article in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* about his comic book and it was a big deal for somebody to publish their own comic book in a small town like Santa Cruz." So we contacted Gary and became friends and we decided to do more fanzines. And Gary says, "Well, I have a second issue of my *Advent* coming out." So Frank and I were going, "Oh, maybe we should publish a comic, too, because there's lots of fanzines out there, so we should publish our own." So one thing led to another and Gary, Frank, and I joined forces and produced five issues of *Venture* between 1971 and '76.

CBC: *During high school, did your family move at all?*

Brent: The high school was the first school I had ever attended where I was there three years in a row. I had never gone to any school longer than two years.

CBC: *Well, it's important to have that continuity.*

Brent: Well, it was, and it was crucial at the time to be surrounding myself with Frank and other creative people who were at the school. And Frank and I were in charge of doing all the illustrations for the literary magazine, *Labyrinth,* one year at Branham High School. I did probably a couple of dozen spot illustrations. Frank and I, at that point, had been publishing *Venture*, selling copies to our friends. Frank was the business guy between the two of us and he did better on that than I did. So, right in the middle of the *Venture* run, I wanted to publish my own fanzine and I published one issue of a mini fanzine. It was 8½" x 5½" called *MindWorks*, and I introduced a character I had been drawing in other fanzines and did stuff that I wanted to do just for me. I did one issue, which didn't sell because there was no way to advertise it and I couldn't really sell it anywhere.

CBC: *To use the vernacular of the day, did the chicks dig that you were an artist?*

Brent: Actually, they did. I was sweet on a number of girls that I wish they had been interested, at least as interested in me in having a relationship as they were in being amazed by my drawing. I could do a likeness of them, and they were, like, "Oh, this is beautiful." I said, "Yeah, is it beautiful enough to sleep with me?" But it never was. [*laughter*]

CBC: *So were you able to not overdo it with drinking and with the accouterments of the day?*

Brent: I did have some experience, but I was not really into the partying scene. But since most of my friends were interested in drinking and smoking dope – getting into all

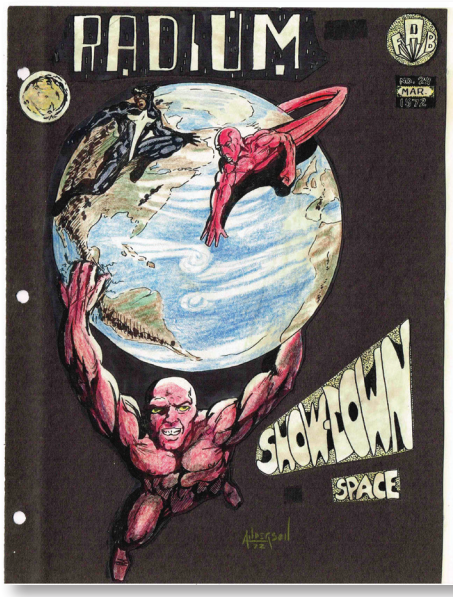


Above: *Splash page for Brent's* Radium *#7 [May '69], the plot of which was shamelessly swiped from an* Astro Boy *episode – to be precise: episode 20, televised on January 10, 1964, alternately titled "Gaseous Beings," "Toxor, the Mist Man," and "Kitai Ningen."*

Below: *Screen grab from that very same* Astro Boy *episode.*



Below: *Note the artistic progression made by the time Brent finished his* Radium *series, with #29 [Mar. '72] cover and splash..*



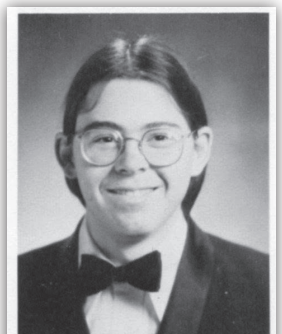


Radium TM & © Brent Anderson. *Astro Boy* TM & © Kabushiki Kaisha Tezuka Production. All courtesy of Brent Anderson.





Above: *Among Brent's earliest fanzine work was in Frank Cirocco's Venture #1 ['72]. Above is Cirocco's cover and the splash page of Brent's contribution.* **Inset right:** *Note the reporter byline on this* San Jose Sentinel *article from Mar. 20, 1972, which led to his friendship with Gary Winnick.* **Below:** *Brent's high school portrait.*



Brent Anderson
General Activities

that stuff, as teenage kids generally do – I sort of went along with the crowd. And my first experience with overdoing the beer was right in the middle of my martial arts training and I started drinking beers to see how many beers would it take for me not to be able to do a "kip-up" from the floor? Do you know what a "kip-up" is, Jon?

CBC: *No.*

Brent: Well, you lie on your back and you bend your knees, then you put your hands behind your head and then you draw your legs up and you throw your legs forward and push off with your hands and jump to a standing position from lying on your back. That's called a kip-up. And so I drank a beer, did a kit-up, drank two beers, did a kip-up. I went through like six or seven beers and I could still do a kip-up, but once I did the kip-up, I couldn't stand up. And I realized this was probably not the best test for being too inebriated because, not long after that, I threw it all up. But that was my cure for beer… [*Brent relates various drinking and pot episodes, and hallucinating on mushrooms.*]… I was just watching the walls move into the ceiling and I thought, "Ah, I don't think I want to do mushrooms anymore." So I drew this self-portrait of me as my Yantze character with mushrooms growing out of his head. I had this look on my face in the cartoon that Frank just said, "Oh, that's great. Can I have that? " I think he still has that drawing somewhere.

CBC: *Your friend who suggested mushrooms said you were a natural kind of guy. Were you?*

Brent: Yeah, I was Mr. Kwai Chang Caine [*from the TV series,* Kung Fu]!

CBC: *A real hippie?*

Brent: Oh, yeah! That started between junior high and high school. I started letting my hair grow out and was a big fan of the *Kung Fu* TV series with David Carradine. So I used to fantasize about walking barefoot around in school, but they wouldn't let you do that. I tried to go to graduation barefoot, but they wouldn't let me. I had to walk all the way back home and get shoes for graduation.

CBC: *What did your mother think of you as an artist and as this "Caine walking the Earth" kind of person? Was she concerned?*

Brent: She was no more concerned than anybody having a kid with that kind of imagination and determined to just be who I wanted to be…

CBC: *Did undergrounds comix come into play for you?*

Brent: I didn't start buying underground comix until I was in high school, and we would go downtown San Jose and visit Bob Sidebottom's Comics Collector Shop, on East San Fernando Street. It was around the corner that Dick Swan had originated Comics & Comix, with Bud Plant, Bob Beerbohm, and John Barrett. So we started buying undergrounds. It was supposed to be 18 or older to buy them, but when it came to money, Bob Sidebottom let us buy them; he'd sell those undergrounds to anybody. So we were buying *Harold Head* and *ZAP* and the range of well-drawn undergrounds, particularly the Richard Corben.

CBC: *I was going to ask about Corben.*

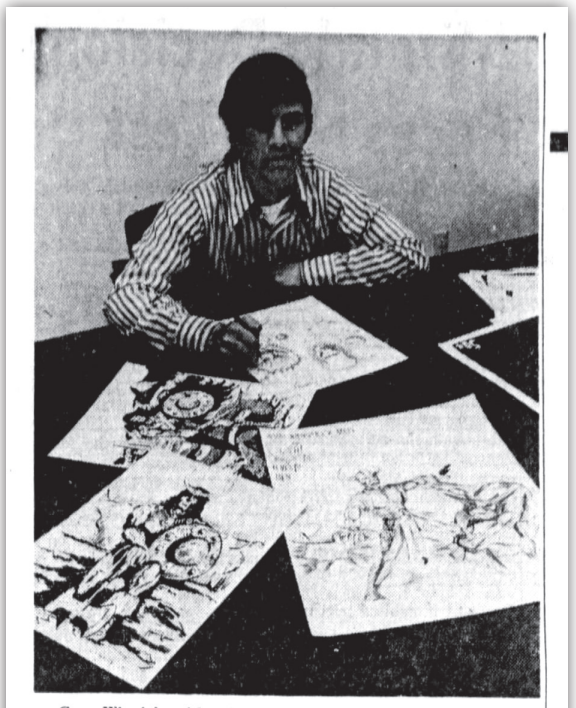
Brent: Oh, yeah! Corben was like a god as far as we were concerned!

CBC: *Did you go into the city or into Berkeley much?*

Brent: We went into Berkeley occasionally. San Francisco was a bit different. I think we went to San Francisco once just to check out the Summer of Love, the Haight-Asbury scene, but, by that point, it had pretty much degraded to a lot of drug addicts and the bloom was off the Summer of Love at that point.

CBC: *You were a little too young for the draft or right on the edge?*

Brent: I was right on the edge, because the year I turned 17 was, I think, the final year of the draft, and my birthdate, June 15, 1955, came up number eight in the lottery. And, when that happened, that was one of the first serious discussions my mom and I had about the outside world and the effects on me growing into being an adult because she said,



Gary Winnick, with a few of his original drawings for his "Fanzine" comic book called "Advent I." Winnick drew the first issue, had it printed, and on sale while he works at the second and third issues. The Santa Cruz High School student said he plans to become a comic book artist. He arrives at a time when comic books are undergoing a strong popular revival among young people.

Youth Helps Spur Revival Of Comics

By WALLACE WOOD
Sentinel Staff Writer

Comics today are the art form of the young.

Older types may boggle at the [illegible] adventures of dirty comics, such as "Fritz the Cat" a reflection of the Filthy Speech and Free Sex movements of the 1960s.

The younger intelligensia [illegible] Natural," and his related friends drawn by R. Crumb

"The Incident" TM & © Brent Anderson. *Venture* TM & © the respective copyright holder and courtesy of Ken Meyer, Jr.

"Did you happen to notice that your birth date was #8 in the lottery?" And I looked at that and went, "Holy crap." I said, "If I was 18 this year, they're going to be carting my ass off to Vietnam." And I'd always said, "Me and the Army will not get along. They can draft me and I'll suffer any consequences, but I am not going to Vietnam. I am not going to shoot anybody. I am not going to be involved in their war." And I had said this enough times that my mom took me aside and said, "If this war is still going on next year and your number comes up and it looks like you're going to get drafted, if you want to go to Canada, I'll help you, whatever it takes." Because she had friends that had citizenship in Canada and I said, "Thanks, Mom."

CBC: *Did you have a tight relationship with your mom through your life?*

Brent: I did. My mom and I were friends going way back. During high school, we were friends, but I was doing my rebellious thing, wanting to get away from the family situation, being raised by a single mom, and never having any money, and I just needed to get out. And that was sort of my attitude, but my mom understood all that. So it was quite nice to know I had a mom like that.

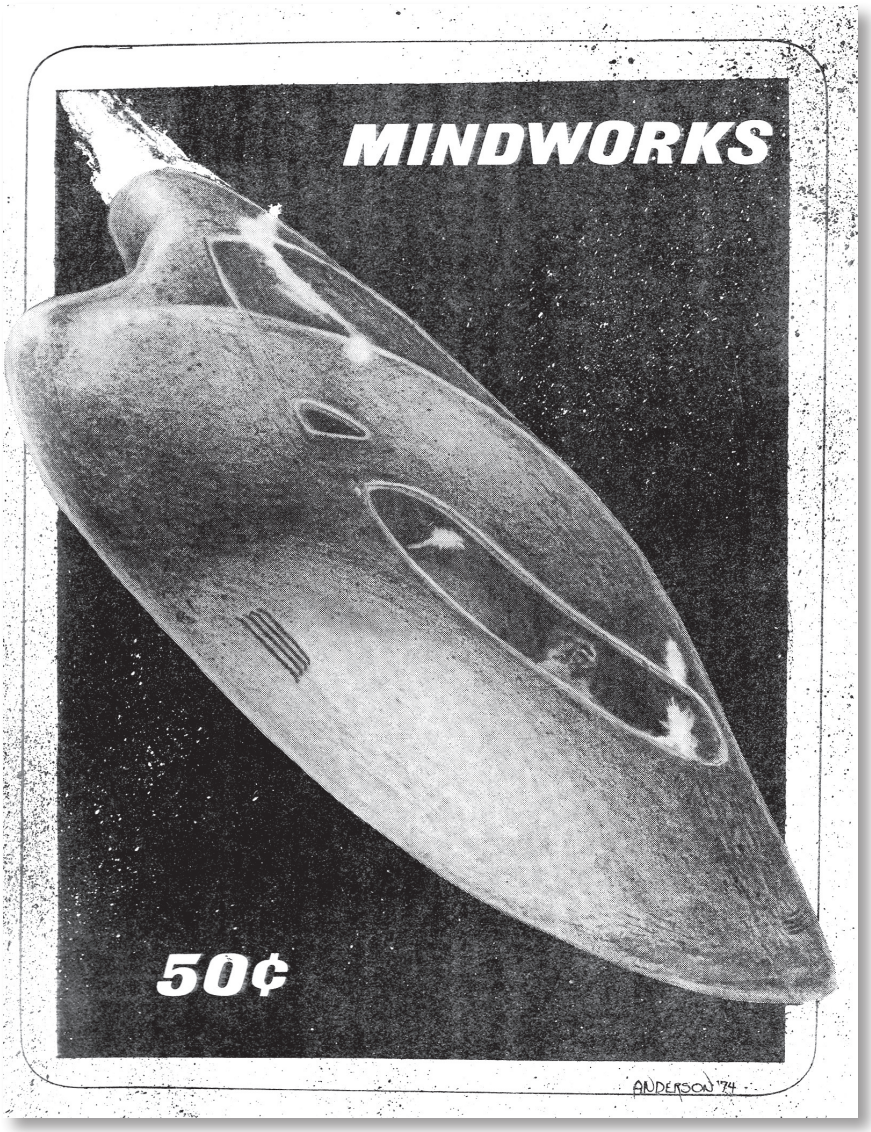
CBC: *Can you tell me what the first New York trip was about? Why were you going to go?*

Brent: Sure. In 1975, we had just met [artist] Tony Salmons at Comic-Con the year before, and Tony moved up to San Jose, and, at that time, I was living in the back upstairs apartment of Comics & Comix, where they had some empty offices back there that weren't being used. So I set up my studio and was living down there. Tony came and he lived there, too. So the two of us were talking about comics and going to New York to get into the business, and developing characters and trying to sell them. Maybe we'd go to Charlton Comics to try to get some new books out. And we were just kind of bullsh*tting with each other about what we're going to do with our lives as comic book people. So this was in '75, starting in the spring and summer. We just started making noise about going to New York, saving up our money, and how we were going to get there, and what we were going to do when we got there, and all that.

Word got around to Frank and Gary, because Tony and I had decided that we were going to leave in the springtime of '76. Frank and Gary thought, "Well, they're not doing anything. We've been doing the fanzine stuff, but we're not publishers really. We'd like to maybe go out and do that, too, go to New York and see what we could do." So one thing led to another, and the four of us decided that we were going to go to New York in June of '76. In the previous year, I was producing sample pages and mailing them off to New York, to Marvel, to see if I could, in advance, have them be aware of me before I showed up. And, during that time, we were trying to figure out how we were going to do it. Well, Frank was looking into it and he contacted a company called Auto Driveaway.

I don't know if they're still around, but Auto Driveaway is a company where, if somebody had a vehicle that needed to be moved across the country, Auto Driveaway would find a driver to deliver the car. So we found a station wagon that could easily hold four guys and our luggage and we actually left the morning after my 21st birthday, in 1976, and drove this car across country. There's a more long involved story, but I'll just tell you that we had some adventures across the country.

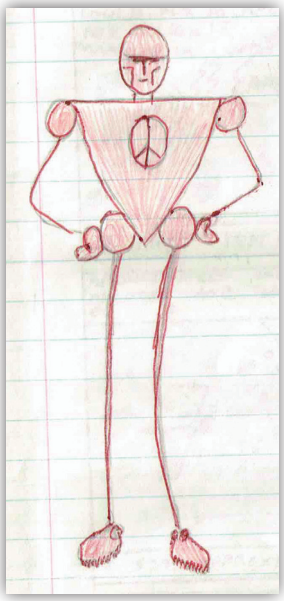
We took turns driving and it took us three-and-a-half





Above: Mindworks *['74], Brent's one-shot fanzine.* **Below:** *Caricatures of (l–r Gary Winnick, Frank Cirocco, and place mat artist, Brent..*

All © and courtesy of Brent Anderson.



Above: *Stick-figure design for Brent's first comics creation, Radium.* **Inset right:** *Dynamite "Saddletales" full-pager by Brent (nice horse rendering, partner!), a regular gig the cartoonist scored between '77–78, for* Horse Lover's National Magazine, *an assignment that helped lift him out of a depression during those years.* **Below:** *Can you guess the* Green Lantern/Green Arrow *page by Neal Adams Brent swiped from for his "Animas Slayman" story in* Mindworks *['74]? And what '70s action star inspired the character design?*

days to drive and we only stopped at one motel on the entire trip. We met Jesus in the middle of Iowa early one morning. I mean, there's lots of interesting stories… These things are going to be in my autobiographical graphic novel at some point because they're just too precious, these stories. [*Interview session ends and the following one begins.*]

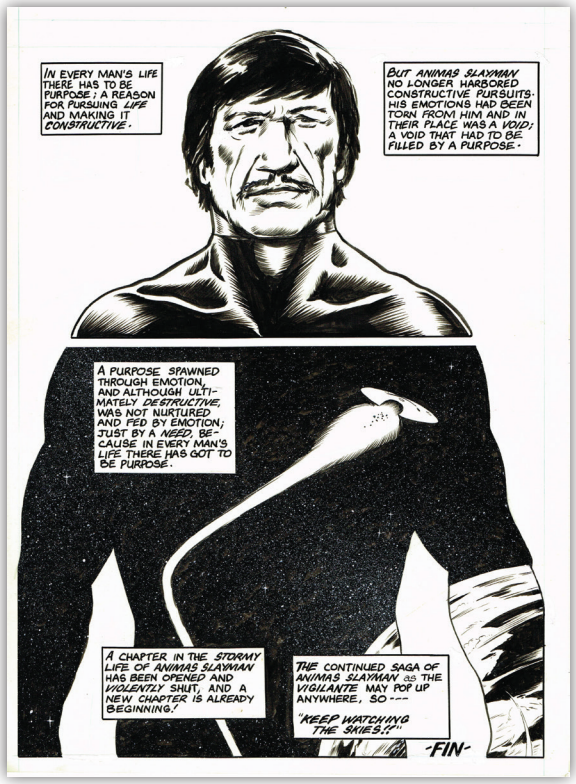
CBC: *Can you talk about your fanzine work? I have* Graphic Story Guild, Homestead Press, Magic Carpet, *all in the '70s. So you were just constantly making up samples? How were you trying to break in?*

Brent: Between 1970–74, I was writing and drawing my own comics on binder paper with ballpoint pens and colored pencils and that kind of thing. And, by the time I got done with that, in '73 or '74, the year I graduated high school, I had met Frank Cirocco and Gary Winnick and the three of us started publishing our fanzines.

CBC: *The content of those stories, were they all super-hero stories? Were they knockoffs?*

Brent: No, they were sort of based on super-heroes because I had just recently been exposed to Marvel Comics, so I became a Marvel comics freak – Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Silver Surfer, Captain Marvel, Daredevil, The Avengers… all those Marvel super-hero mainstays. The same people who introduced me to Marvel Comics were my friends George Chelemedos and Stephen R. Johnson, who was a comic book collector. George was that guy who introduced me to actually writing and drawing my own comics in junior high school. So, from a very early age, I wanted to draw comics even when my mom didn't allow comics to be in the house.

I even tried to make a comic book out of *Fantastic Voyage,* the movie. Based on viewing it once, I went home and started trying to draw it from memory. I got to a page and a panel, the opening sequence where Benes coming in on the airplane and going into the hospital. And I realized just how difficult that was, at that point. But I always wanted to create comics or animation in my early years.



I was a big fan of Norman Rockwell art, his artwork. I loved his artwork. And my first Disney film that I saw was *The Jungle Book,* in 1967. I can't explain this, but I had it in my head that one day I wanted to draw comics that looked like a cross between Walt Disney and Norman Rockwell. And I never achieved that – but Alex Ross did.

CBC: *Your associate in* Astro City, *Alex Ross!*

Brent: Right! But, as far as the kind of comics that I was doing, I did all kinds of comics. My early *Radium,* the robot comics, he was my first character, basically a stick-figured triangle robot with a peace sign on his chest, had a couple of powers of a robot. That character, I was trying to create stories for it and I was a big fan of the *Astro Boy* manga series, the first manga series that came out in the 1960s in English form. So I ripped off about three or four of the plot lines from *Astro Boy* just to do a single 10-page *Radium* comics. But I also was a big fan of *The Outer Limits* and *Twilight Zone,* and the other one that was called *Journey to the Unknown*. I was a real fan of those short, little, twisty stories. So I adapted a couple of those. I actually adapted the *War of the Worlds* movie from memory. So I was doing a lot of different things. I had a character named Francis Drake, U.S.S.S. (United States Super Service). He was a secret agent, kind of like Nick Fury, the way that Steranko had done him. So I had to create my own character to do that. And I was just all over the place.



CBC: *Radium had a peace symbol on his chest. Did you put in lefty kind of attitudes in your stories at all? Was there a political subtext to your juvenile work?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. I mean, I grew up in the '60s during the Vietnam War. I was in keeping with the peace movement – peace, love, no war, and all that kind of stuff – so I was really caught up in that. So, of course, that would be reflected. But the fact that *Radium* had a peace symbol on his chest was because he was a hero who fought for peace. That was the whole simple idea that I had for that character.

CBC: *So did you miss the relevant comics of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams, with* Green Lantern and Green Arrow?

Brent: No, I was totally Marvel. No DC. Jack Kirby and Stan Lee were my creative fathers. I had seen that Neal Adams "Deadman" story in *Strange Adventures,* but it was when I discovered Neal's *X-Men*, when I was even more impressed, because now he's doing a Marvel book…

All TM & © and courtesy of Brent Anderson.



So that's how I made the connection between what turned out to be my three creative fathers, which was Stan and Jack at Marvel and then Neal Adams just as an independent creator and artist.

CBC: *So you'd agree that Neal had a direct influence on your art, right?*

Brent: Oh, yes, he definitely did. At some point, John Buscema and Neal Adams took over as my biggest influences and Jim Steranko to a smaller extent as far as storytelling goes, my aping period. I was aping styles and trying to copy them.

CBC: *Getting back to the later '70s, where were you? I know you made the trip to New York. You were trying to break into mainstream. Did you go to Marvel? Did you follow up after mailing in samples?*

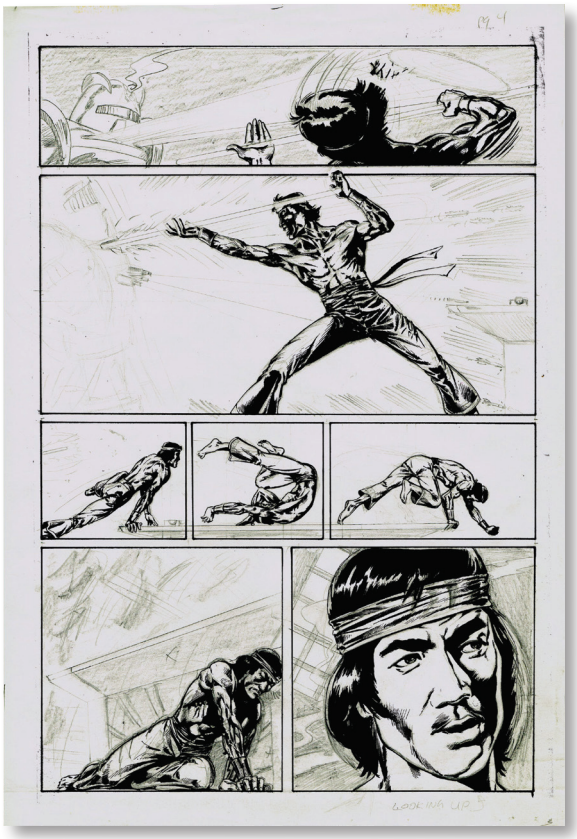
Brent: Oh, yes. I went up to Marvel in 1976, just after my 21st birthday. So anyway, that was the start of my professional career. When I got there, I made an appointment to see John Romita, Sr., because I had sent him those samples. And he remembered me and went to Archie Goodwin, who was the editor-in-chief at the time. John said, "Do you have any work for this guy?" Archie looked at the work and he goes, "Yeah, I think he could handle something." So that was



when I got that five-page "Angel" back-up feature ["Joyride Into Jeopardy," *Marvel Treasury Edition* #27, June '80]. But in the meantime… Let's see. Am I getting ahead of myself…? I'm trying to think here.

CBC: *Well, when you came to New York, did you attend the Seuling Con, on July 4th, in New York? That was the U.S. bicentennial, so that might be memorable.*

Brent: Yeah, we did go. And, man, that was quite an experience. I didn't really know who Phil Seuling was except by reputation. And, by that point, I had attended several conventions in San Diego. By then, we were in touch with Neal Adams and Continuity Studios through Carl Potts. Carl had gone out to New York the year before that, in 1975, and we knew Carl and he was insisting that, "If you want to get into comics, you better come out here because you're not going to be able to do it from California." So Carl was real good about getting us in touch with Neal. And so, our first trip into Manhattan, we went up to Continuity at midnight and the guys up there let us in.



Above: *On his first Marvel visit, Brent vied for the Master of Kung Fu assignment.* **Inset left & below:** *Neal Adams helped Brent refine figures for his "Angel" story.*



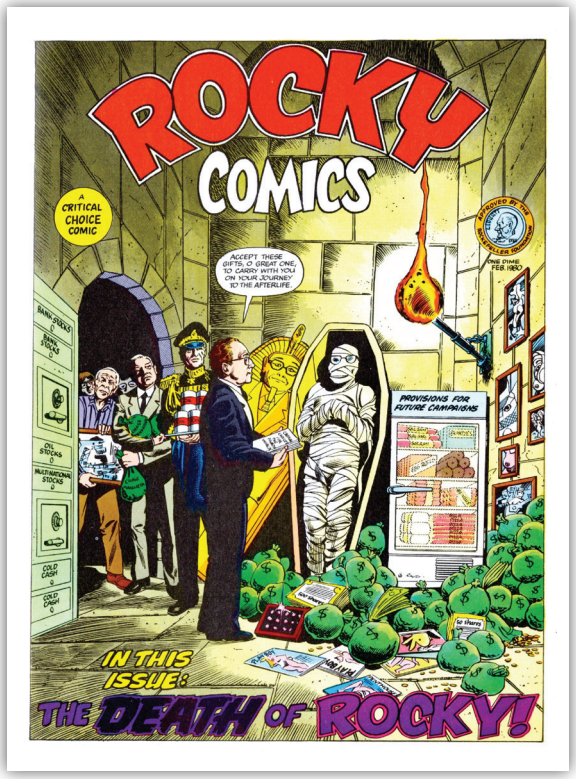
CBC: *Who was there?*

Brent: Let's see… Joe Brozowski, Mike Hinge, the late night guys. Mike was actually living there. He was living in the back, sleeping on a couch. Joe Rubinstein wasn't there that night and neither was Neal. See, these guys weren't supposed to open the doors after hours. Pat Bastienne was the person in charge of making sure the studio ran like a professional place.

CBC: *So this is right at the end of Dick's association with Continuity?*

Brent: Towards the end. He was still there when I went back in '79, I think… (Or maybe he wasn't there, at that point; maybe he was doing [his freelance studio] Dik-Art, I think, up in Connecticut, at that point.) But anyway, we called Carl from

The Angel, Shang Chi TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Shang Chi, Angel tutorial, and dealer badge courtesy of Brent Anderson.



Above: *Though Brent's recollection had it that Neal Adams had withheld credit for penciler Brent and inker Joe Rubinstein, the pair were cited on the faux "splash page" of* Rocky Comics, *in* National Lampoon *[Feb. '80]. But, truth be told, Adams was the credited name in that issue's table of contents. Here's Brent and Joe's fake cover from that same ish of the nationally distributed newsstand humor magazine. The two were recruited for the lucrative gig as associates of Continuity Studios because Neal was simply too busy to draw his assigned version of the* Rocky Comics *six-pager.*

a phone booth on the street corner. We could see the lighted windows in the third floor of the building. We got buzzed in and that was one of the coolest things that I had ever done in my life.

CBC: *Now, when was the first time you met Neal?*

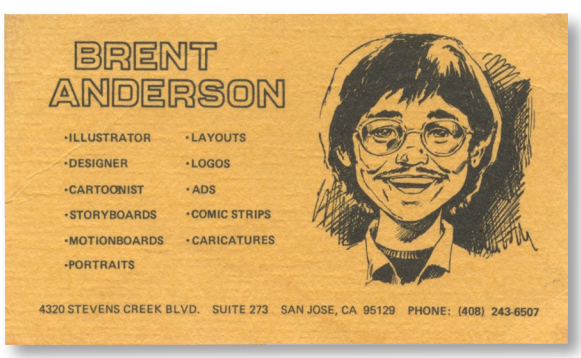
Brent: I had actually met Neal at Comic-Con in 1973, where Frank Cirocco and I basically stalked him through the convention. Every time Neal would come out of someplace like the coffee shop or he'd have breakfast or something, Frank would go, "Hey, Neal, can I get a picture? " Neal goes, "All right." So he poses for the picture. Frank was using a flash camera to get a good picture. Then Frank did it the next day and flashes him in his face again. And Neal says to Frank, "That's two, you flashed me twice. That's all you get: you get two." Then Frank wanted interview Neal for our *Venture* fanzine, but he couldn't quite get him apart from his fans. Then we noticed Neal headed towards the hotel and we started following him, with Frank hoping to ask him a question. But Neal kept looking over his shoulder at these two guys and he's acting like we're stalking him, which we were, of course.

Flash forward years later: Frank and I had been working for Neal and became friends, and we got to talking about that show in 1973, and we apologized for following him around. And he goes, "Oh my God! That wasn't you guys, was it? " I don't think he wanted to believe that we were that fannish to do something like that, but we were. [*laughs*]

CBC: *When did Neal see your work? Would you have considered yourself back then kind of an Adams clone, like Bill Sienkiewicz?*

Brent: Absolutely. And there was one of the samples that I took in to New York, I don't know if it was the first time. No, I think it was the second time. Yeah. I had done a character in the fanzines called "Animus Slayman," who looked like Charles Bronson, and I had done this page that was totally lifted from *Green Lantern and Green Arrow*. I used that page as one of my samples.

Below: *Brent's early 1980s business card featured a cheerful self-caricature of the artist.*



I was very callow, very naive. So when Neal was going through my portfolio, he wasn't really commenting much. Then, when he saw that page, he goes, "Hey, nice design." I said, "Oh, thank you. I got it from you." And he goes, "Oh, you think? " He was flattered, but he was also teaching me something about my work. He told me this later, "Don't use swipes, particularly with the artists that you're swiping from and hoping to get work. Don't use swipes." I said, "Well, that's how I was learning." And Neal goes, "I know, but you learn on your own time, not mine." Then I thought, "Ahh, I'm getting an inkling of just what professionalism means."

Neal was quite the mentor for me, both personally and artistically. So, going back to your asking me what kind of an influence was Neal: I mean, he was even more so than Stan or Jack as far as I was concerned, on a personal level.

CBC: *I didn't know you worked for him. Tell me about it.*

Brent: Well, Neal was always looking for new guys to pencil motion boards and storyboard layouts for advertising agencies and that kind of thing. That was the mainstay of his work. Comics were just something he did because he loved it, not because he was making much money at it. And so, in order for him to free up time to do comics, he got his new guys to pencil out storyboards. And then he could instruct them on storytelling as well as get something he can show clients that he would finish in his own style and fix the drawings when he did the finals for the storyboards work. He wanted to hire me to do storyboards, but I had no interest whatsoever in doing storyboards; I wanted to do comics.

So Neal seldom asked me to do storyboard work, but he was doing some comics for *National Lampoon* and there was a parody story about Nelson Rockefeller called "Rocky Comics." Neal's credited with that issue, but I penciled it and Joe Rubinstein inked it, because Neal didn't have time to do that book. And he needed somebody with the chops to be able to approximate his drawing style or at least his layout style for this project that *National Lampoon* was paying him big bucks to do this comic, though he paid me very well to pencil and he paid Joe really well to ink. So that was the kind of work that I was doing for Neal. Though I was hoping he would size me up to do some of his Continuity Comics characters. One in particular I really was interested in doing was *Crazy Man*. I thought that would have been a fun book to do, but it never went beyond the anticipation stage.

CBC: *Where did you stay in New York?*

Brent: Well, the first trip, in '76, I was only there about five-and-a-half months. I didn't live in the city except for two weeks. We were in this decrepit, transient hotel downtown near the old Algonquin Hotel, down on 31st Street, something like that. The four of us – Gary, Frank, Tony, and I – lived there and it was really cheap. They didn't care how many guys were living in this two-bedroom apartment. Remember the apartment in *The Blues Brothers* in Chicago? That's what this place was like. We wound up renting the second floor of a two-story house in Clifton, New Jersey. So we all moved there after two weeks in Manhattan.

CBC: *Then you went back to California after five months?*

Brent: I think we were back in time for Thanksgiving. Frank and I were, anyway. Actually Tony left first because he wasn't getting enough work to be able to pay even the quarter rent that we were footing him in Clifton… Then Gary was having the same situation where he wasn't getting a whole lot of work except working for Neal. And he didn't want to spend his life working for Neal and not getting comics work. So he and Frank made the decision that they were going to bail from New York and go back to San Jose and start a

"Creepy Fan Club" TM & © New Comic Company, LLC. Iron Man, *Tales of Suspense* TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

commercial art studio there along the same lines as what they were doing for Neal in New York… So Gary went back ahead and started scoping out places where they could rent and get the studio going. And then Frank and I flew back in probably the third week of November.

CBC: *But did you go back East again?*

Brent: Yes, I actually went back. I did my "Failure Years," as I called them, which was 1976–'78 leading into '79. Though things started to look up quite a bit in '77, '78. I was getting commercial work out of Horizon Zero Graphics, the studio that Frank and Gary had started in San Jose. And so I was renting a table there and working there and doing odds and ends. I did storyboards for a local Stanley Steemer carpet cleaning branch. I did little spot illustrations for local ads for things that people were trying to sell their products and I was doing drawings of those and all that. But I really didn't like the work at all. I had picked up an inking job from



Pacific Comics down in San Diego for a one-shot publication they made called *One*.

CBC: *That was Pacific's first comic.*

Brent: David Cody Weiss was the penciler on this story ["Operation Changeling"]. David Weiss really liked my sample pages and he got the Schanes boys to hire me to ink that comic for him. I had fun doing that while I was in the studio in San Jose. A lot more fun than doing the commercial art.

I was also working for a graphics house called Quantic Graphic Arts. A friend of the studio's owner was publishing *Horse Lover's National Magazine,* which had a kid's page where he would invite kids to send in drawings of horses and whatever they wanted to do. But he wanted something a little more, so I heard through my boss at Quantic that he was looking for an artist to do a comic strip. So I did up a sample page and he liked my sample, so I did 16 strips called *Saddletales*. And so that and this *One* project really got me through late '77 and early '78, easing my depression over having failed in '76 to do any serious work.

By the time we hit 1979, I was rooming with Frank Cirocco in a San Jose apartment, and then he and his sister bought a duplex house. [Artist] Joe Chiodo, who I had met several years earlier, was looking to go to New York and do paperback book paintings, and things like that. So, long story short, Joe took Frank's place for about three months, maybe four, crossing from 1978 to '79, in the springtime.

And Joe and I had made plans to go back to New York, me a second time. So that's what led to me going back to New York because I was missing it. I really wanted to go back. I'll tell you a little bit about Neal regarding this and the seriousness of him being a personal mentor.



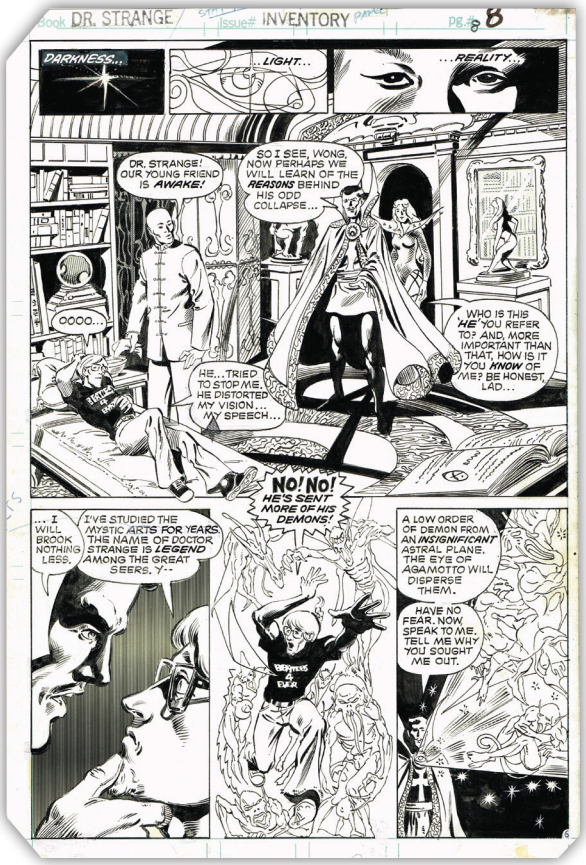
Above: *Neal Adams inked Gary Winnick's pencils on the cover of* Venture *#5 ['76].* **Inset left:** *Ironically, Brent produced this Ka-Zar try-out page in 1975.* **Below:** *Brent's art for* Venture *#5.*

When I left New York just before Thanksgiving in '76, I got back to San Jose and I was depressed and I was trying to get commercial work and all that. Well, Neal owed me some money for some work I had done. And Kris, his daughter, called me at my mom's place and said, "Well, we have this check to send to you. " I said, "Oh, okay. Just send it to this address." And she goes, "Before you go, Neal wants to talk to you." So Neal gets on the phone. He goes, "So what's up, Ace? What are you doing? What are you working on?" I said, "Well, I'm just getting back into it here and I've I got some leads on doing some things."

Through a friend, I got a lead to do little illustrations for matchbook covers from the Monarch Match Company, which would hire cartoonists to do matchbook cover art. And they were paying them like $10 or $20 apiece for them. I didn't want to sound like a failure, so I told Neal, "I'm looking to maybe get some work doing that."



Venture TM & © Gary Winnick and Frank Cirocco. Ka-Zar TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. "War Affair" © Eric Toye & Brent Anderson. All courtesy of Brent Anderson.



Above: *While hoping to score a regular assignment at Marvel, Brent drew a fill-in issue of* Doctor Strange, *pages which impressed Louise Simonson when she considered Brent for* Ka-Zar the Savage.

Below: *Another fill-in job for Brent was* Battlestar Galactica *#21 [Nov. '80], one of the last of the Marvel series and inked by Klaus Janson. Here's a double-page spread from that self same issue.*

Neal goes, "Oh, is that really what you want to do?" I said, "Well, no, but it's the work that's available here." He said, "So you coming back to New York?" I said, "I don't know, Neal. I really don't know. " And he goes, "Well, if you come back, I know I can get you work, but it's your life, Ace." And that's an exact quote: he says, "It's your life, Ace." And this was in early 1977. And, when he said that, I was bound and determined I'm going back to New York and I'm going to make a success out of something I though I had failed at in 1976.

And, sure enough, Joe and I went back and I got to play big brother for Joe and teach him the ropes as I had learned on my first trip out. And so I kind of mentored Joe the same way that Neal had mentored me. And Joe and I are just fast friends. He's my little brother by another mother.

CBC: *So you're on the cusp of getting your first real assignment, right?*

Brent: Yes.

CBC: *The first time in New York, in '76, you had been over to see Romita at Marvel but when you were there the second time, Romita was off doing the* Spider-Man *strip, right? Was he doing that in the office?*

Brent: Oh yeah, but he was still the art director. And, actually, when I went out there the next time, he said something that Neal didn't say, but had implied. Romita says, "I knew I'd see you again." He knew my enthusiasm, he recognized my interest from the very beginning, when I was sending him stuff from California as an amateur. He says, "I knew I'd see you again." And so, the first day I walked in there, he goes, "Okay, let's get you some work." So that was when I took home the assignment. I took home the *Battlestar Galactica* [#21, Nov. '80] assignment.

CBC: *You mentioned the "Angel" back-up…*

Brent: The story behind that is the only reason they were giving out these little five-page back-ups is because they had tried an experiment publishing comics at 17 pages to save money. And the fans hated it. They reduced the book to 17 pages while it was still, I think, 20¢. It's a 32-page book, so one page over half the book. But, on top of that, at that point, Marvel had started increasing the price by a nickel. So they played this trick on the fans, reducing the page count from 20 to 17 pages while it was still 20¢. And then, only a few months after, they increased the price to 25¢, but they didn't increase the page count. So the fans just got irate, absolutely irate. "We're paying more for less pages. You guys are pulling something over on us." Fans *hated* it. So the reaction that Marvel had was, "We've got to fill out these books to 22 pages again, because we planned to raise the price to 30¢ next year." So they were commissioning these filler stories from new guys or old guys who had time to work on them.

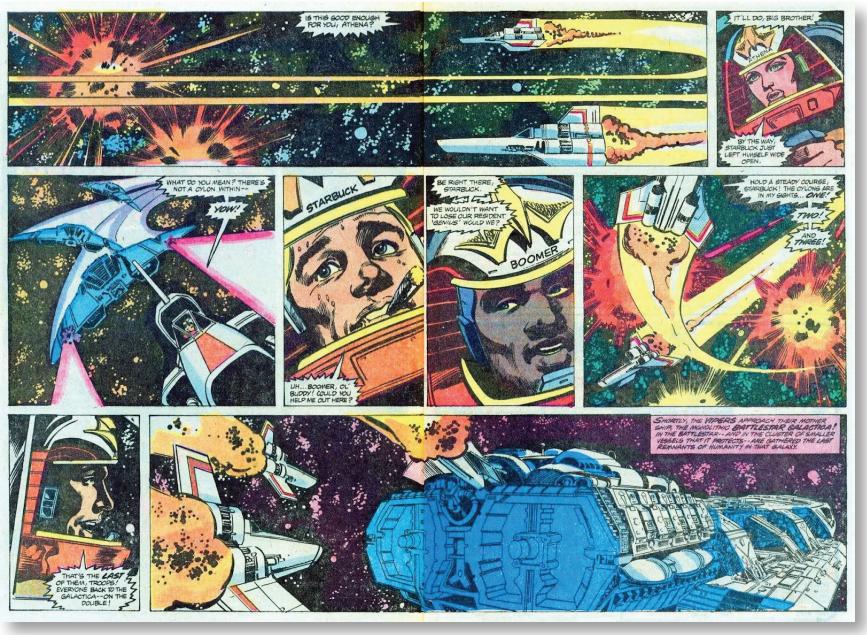
In these little five-page stories, they would test out new writers and artists. And that's what this "Angel" story fit in. But, by the time we were finished with it, the books had already increased to 22 pages of new material and they didn't need the five-page back-ups at that point. So they put it in the inventory drawer and it didn't show up until the next year (I think) in the *Marvel Treasury.*

CBC: *So how did* Ka-Zar *come about?*

Brent: So I did *Battlestar Galactica*. It was edited by Louise Jones… Louise Simonson… We'll just call her Weezy and it was drawn by Walt Simonson, so they needed a fill-in on *Battlestar Galactica*. So that's how I came to the attention of Weezy was through that. And then right on the heels of that fill-in, Roger Stern needed to fill in on *Doctor Strange*. And Roger really liked my work, too. So he said, "Well, why don't we ask Brent if he could do this *Doctor Strange*?" So, while I was working on both of those books, word came down that Marvel needed to put out a new *Ka-Zar* book because the licensing and trademark was expiring. And they had to get Ka-Zar's name and image on the cover of a comic book because it was like approaching the seven-year span of the trademark protection. So the decision was made to get this book out, but they needed to find an artist and a writer.

Well, Doug Moench was tapped to write this new *Ka-Zar* book for however many issues they needed to do to protect the trademark. And then they were looking around for an artist. The perfect artist for it was John Buscema, because he was quick and fast and he could do breakdowns or layouts so fast that another artist could finish quite easily. But John wasn't available because he was booked to the gills. He just couldn't handle another book, a monthly book.

So Weezy was to be the editor of it, and so she had wanted to bring Bruce Jones over from Warren where Weezy had been working because Bruce wasn't getting the work from Jim Warren that he had come to expect either. Plus,



Doctor Strange TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. *Battlestar Galactica* TM & © Universal City Studios, LLC. Original art courtesy of Brent Anderson.

it was so hard for Bruce to draw, because despite his art being beautiful, it took him forever to draw his stories. So he wanted to do something different and do something that was easier: just write.

And Weezy says, "Why don't you come over and write *Ka-Zar*? It'll be a lark for you. You like Edgar Rice Burroughs. You love that stuff. And so just write whatever you want. We don't care what you do with the book because it's just for trademark protection. That's all we're doing. We just need to get something published." Bruce goes, "Sure, you pay me to do it. You pay my rate. I'll do it. " And so then she said, "Well, we can't get John, so who can we get to draw it? " And Weezy decided, "Well, Brent's pretty good. That issue of *Battlestar* was popular, people like that issue. And the *Doctor Strange* was beautiful. So let's see if Brent's interested in *Ka-Zar*."

But I have to tell you, I didn't feel I was ready for a monthly book at that point. I was just not that interested in it. So after Weezy approached me, I go, "Oh man, I don't know. I'm going to have to think about this. " And she goes, "Well, don't think about it too long because we got to get this book in production." And I went, "Okay, okay. Pressure, pressure, pressure." So one evening – I don't know what day of the week it was – I happened to be up at Marvel talking to Weezy and she laid this down for me. And for some reason, [editor-in-chief] Jim Shooter was feeling generous. He was going to take a bunch of Marvel people out for dinner that night. And he used to like to do these dinner parties where he'd get about a dozen people, writers, artists, production people, and take them out to dinner on Marvel's tab.

Ostensibly, the dinners were to talk comics. So we wound up going to this restaurant and Alan Weiss was with us and I had known Alan from meeting him at the comic book store signing in 1975 and also at conventions. We hung out a lot together at Comic-Con together. So he just happened to be in town and was going out to dinner. So I started chatting him up, saying, "Louise just offered me this *Ka-Zar* thing." He goes, "You going to take it?" I said, "I don't know." And he goes, "Oh man, why not? That's great. That's perfect. I mean, look what you get to draw, man. You get to draw a 'flesh hero.'" (That's what he called the non-super-hero characters: a "flesh hero" like Tarzan, Conan, those kind of guys.) "You get to draw a flesh hero with lots of anatomy and you do great anatomy. So you get to draw anatomy all day. I mean, that's cool. Plus you get to draw Shanna, the She Devil – a jungle girl! You get a pretty girl, a flesh hero, and you get to draw f*cking dinosaurs, man! I mean, what's there *not* to like?" I said, "I don't know if I can make the deadlines."

Then Alan said, "Okay, now you got me there because the last person in the world they would ask to do a book on the deadline would be Alan Weiss." That's right. And he goes, "But look, all right, let me put it to you this way. If you could commit to six issues, Shooter is paying a six-month bonus of $500, so you'll get a bonus prize. Why don't you commit to six issues? Just six issues and get the bonus and then you can get out. And you have six issues of flesh hero, sexy girl, and sabre-tooth cat night as [portfolio] art." With that, he sold me.

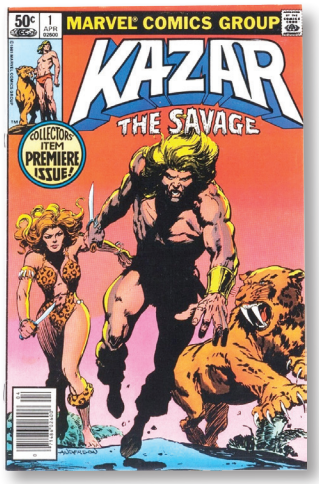
I spent the weekend thinking about what Alan had said. And then I started drawing preliminary stuff, looking up some old Buscema *Ka-Zar* comics, drawing the character and his sabre-tooth cat. And then, on Monday, I called Weezy first thing and I said, "Okay, I'm in." She goes, "Great. That's wonderful. What changed your mind?" I said, "Alan Weiss." And she laughed. I asked, "Did you put him up to it?" And she goes, "No, I didn't, but that's just like Alan." Because she had asked Alan if *he* wanted to do it and Alan couldn't because he couldn't make deadlines and didn't want the pressure. So here's Alan flacking for Weezy to make himself feel good about having turned down the assignment. That's a funny little story. And to this day, I just love Alan Weiss to death for that experience.



CBC: *That's great. So you did how many issues of* Ka-Zar [the Savage]*? Something like 20…?*

Brent: Well, I did the run until issue, let's see… #21, I think it was. But I got behind on the last issue that I was working on to get the bonus, #6. That was a push to get that issue out, so I could get the bonus and not have to forfeit it. And then, with #7, there was a fill-in pencil job that had been drawn by Jerry Bingham, pulled out of the inventory drawer and lightly redrawn to accommodate a fun story that Bruce had written around that existing work. So anyway, they did

Above: *Brent created a six-plate Ka-Zar portfolio in 1982, which (of course) included his* Ka-Zar the Savage *co-stars Zabu and Shanna, the She-Devil!* **Below:** *Brent's cover,* Ka-Zar the Savage *#1 [Apr. '81].*



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Above: *Sweet* Ka-Zar the Savage *#18 [Sept. '82] wraparound cover by Brent. The series, written by former Warren Publications powerhouse writer (and himself a talented artist, to boot) Bruce Jones truly put Brent on the map for comics fans in the early to mid-'80s.* **Below:** *Still, Brent had his struggles keeping up with the monthly deadlines and, to his everlasting disappointment, he was unable to do the art for #17 [Aug. '82], Jones's "Tag You're It" tale.*



a fill-in that I did some minimal touch ups on the pencil art, which gave me a little bit of time to start working on #8 and then that issue put me behind.

Number nine is the one that I'll point out where I have the distinction of having broken what has been established as the Kirby Barrier. And there was a point in time when Jack Kirby was penciling an entire issue of a comic book or doing semi-tight layouts or whatever of a comic. He could do 22 pages. He was doing 22 pages in a weekend, in two, two-and-a-half days, three days. So that was euphemistically referred to as the Kirby Barrier. And, on the weekend, I was behind on #9. Weezy didn't even have time to get a fill-in artist to do a filler issue. She said, "Brent, I don't care." And she got pretty stern with me. She goes, "I don't care what's going on with you at this point. If you don't have this book into me on Monday afternoon at the latest, that's just not being professional. You are not being professional by promising to do something and then not doing it. " And there's no better attitude adjustment than being nicely dressed down by one of the best editors that ever came down the comic book business: Weezy Simonson.

So I went home Friday afternoon and I spent all weekend drawing 22 pages of *Ka-Zar* #9. And it looks it. And I felt so awful that I had put myself in this position and everything. So, Monday afternoon, I took the pages down to Weezy and turned them in. I was disgusted with myself. It was terrible. I just felt awful. I put the pages on her desk and she goes, "You did it." I went, "Yeah, such as it is. " And she goes, "Well, let me take a look." And she looks through it. She looked at each page. She turned them over. With her eye as an editor, she's looking over each one and she gets to the last page and she goes, "All right, go put in your voucher." And I went, "No comments?" She goes, "No, it's all here." I said, "But it's awful. It's terrible, Weezy." But she goes, "It is not awful and terrible. Everything I needed out of this story is right here."

I still didn't feel all that good about the work, but I took her point. I got my voucher and, to this day, that was one of those moments when I knew I had made it. So my intention for going in 1976 had been fulfilled.

CBC: *Ace did good.*

Brent: Yeah. Now, it didn't improve my track record for the book after that because I did #10 and 11, #12 was a double-size issue, and #13, I think, might've been a fill-in. There were a couple of fill-ins there. And I was behind on #15. So they got a fill-in artist for #16. Then Bruce turned in his script for what was to be the 17th issue, a story called, "Tag You're It." That was the "Ka-Zar the Detective" cover. And, when I read it, I was completely deflated because that script needed to go to the fill-in artist, who was Ron Frenz, who had done #16, the issue before, to give me time so that I could start working on #18, so we could get the book back on schedule.

"Tag You're It" was the script I had been waiting for from Bruce to draw, but I wasn't able to draw it, and I was just totally demoralized at that point. So I eked out another couple of issues; #18, 19, and #20, and I did what was going to be a poster or a cover for a future story about young Ka-Zar that was done as a pin-up, I think, in #21. And that was the end of my *Ka-Zar* business.

But there's a nice little coda to this story and it'll take a little bit of time to tell. (I'll try to keep it within five minutes, if I can.) So I had been telling this story about the missed opportunity with "Tag You're It" to fanzines in interviews when people would ask about *Ka-Zar*. I said, "This was the story I really wanted to do, to show what the kind of book *Ka-Zar* really is. It's not about a guy in the jungle; it's about Ka-Zar and Shanna's relationship and his relationship to the world, to himself, and all that. It's just a wonderful story. But I wasn't able to do that. And I had such ideas in mind for what I would do with the storytelling. And I was never able to do it. Ron Frenz did a great job, but it was just a traditional fill-in comic book, at that point."

So I had been saying this to enough fanzines that, about five years ago, a *Ka-Zar* fan contacted me and said, "I've been reading about 'Tag You're It,' how you wanted to do your ver-

Ka-Zar the Savage TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

sion. What would it take for you to draw that story for me, so I could sit down and read it like a comic book?" And I went, "It would take paying me my page rate and me actually have the time and energy to work on a property that I couldn't do anything else with because I don't own the rights to it. And I would actually be violating the copyright by actually doing the project, let alone try to benefit from it." He goes, "So it's just not doable, but I appreciate your interest."

Then I got to thinking about it and I'm going, "Well, what if I was to do 'Tag You're It,' the basic storyline, but create my own characters instead of Ka-Zar, Shanna, and Zabu and just do kind of a parallel story with my characters and do it for this guy. If he was willing to pay for it, then I'm creating characters of my own. I have a property that I can then sell or publish or do whatever I want to with it."

I presented this idea to him and he goes," Yeah, that would be fine." I said, "I make $450 a page doing pencils and inks on *Astro City*. That's my rate. If I'm going to do something like this, that would be my rate to produce it, 22 times $450 a page." The understanding was that it would be done as an art commission and he would pay me my page rate to produce 22 pages of comic art that he would then own as original art, but couldn't publish it because I would own the rights to my new characters.

But I had to rethink everything because I was committing to something pretty substantial here. And it wasn't just the money. It was like I had to think about all these other options. And, the more I considered it, I got back to my client and said, "Now, I've decided that I will do it as Ka-Zar, Shanna, and Zabu, but you have to understand that you can't even display this artwork without getting Marvel's permission. Do you understand that? You can't sell this artwork for publication. You don't have the publication rights." He goes, "No, I have no intention of doing that."

And I pitched the editor-in-chief at Marvel three times. I sent him letters, I sent him samples of the comic. I said, "Can we do this maybe as a one-shot *Ka-Zar* special or something like that?" But I never heard from him. It wound up being 29 pages. I wrote and drew 29 pages of new material for this adaptation of this story that appeared in *Ka-Zar* #17 years ago. The original artwork all is in the hands of the client, but I have these scans of this job with no place really to publish it.

CBC: *You got paid, right?*

Brent: I did get paid. So, once again, it was one of those little dreams that I had where I thought I was never going to be able to do that story the way I wanted to do it, but I got a chance to do it because a fan made it possible.

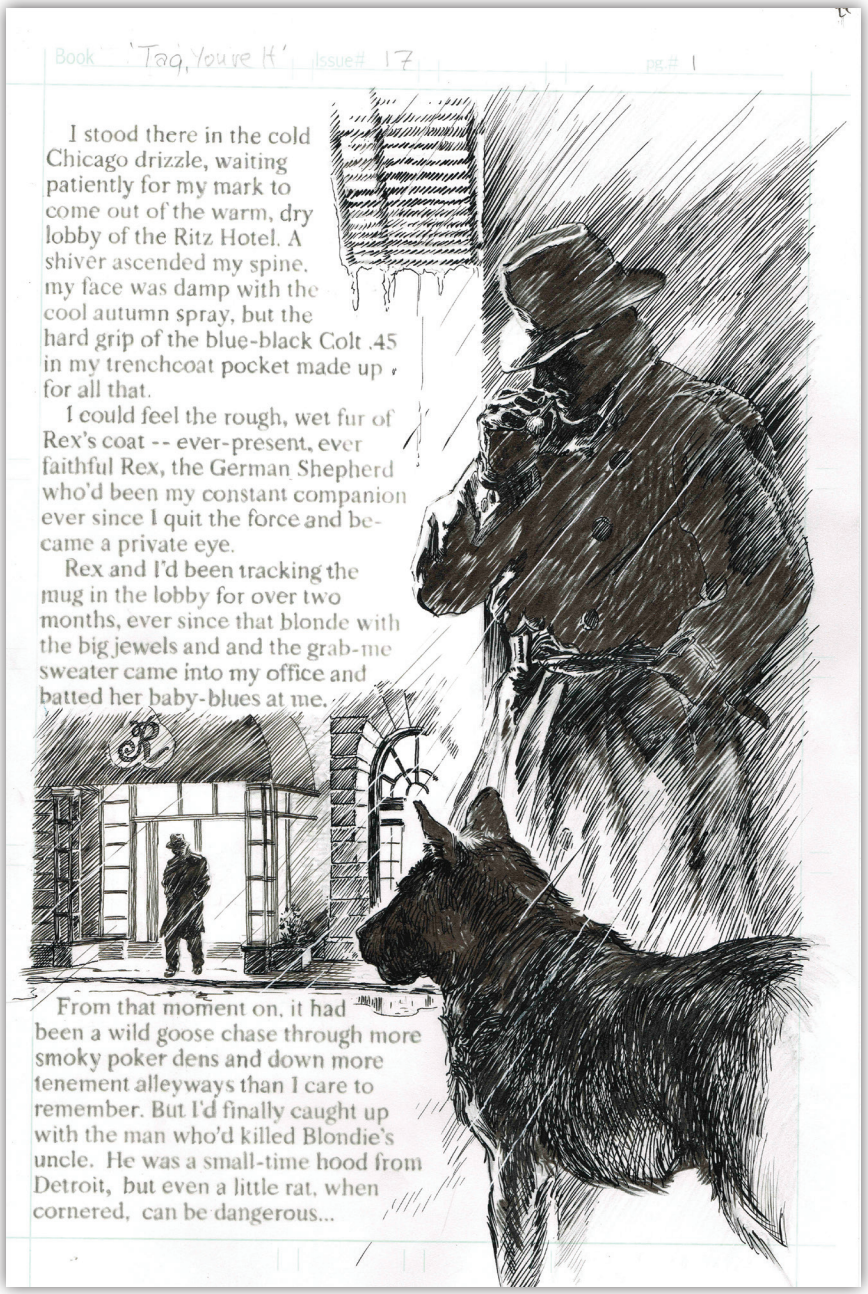
CBC: *Nice. So you had some encounters with* The X-Men*, right? You did some work with Claremont on D'Spayre* [*#144, Apr. '81*]*, right? And you did an annual?*

Brent: Yes. I did *X-Men Annual* #5 ['81], I believe it was, with the Fantastic Four.

CBC: *Did that lead directly into* God Loves, Man Kills*?*

Brent: Yes. The short version is that the day I went in to quit *Ka-Zar,* because I just was feeling so terrible about having unable to do "Tag You're It," Weezy was trying to talk me off the ledge. So I was sitting there and she was giving me a good pep talk about, "I think you should probably stick with it." Then Chris Claremont comes waltzing in and he had just been talking to Shooter about the fact that Dave Cockrum wanted to quit the book that second time. It was getting to be too much, but Cockrum didn't want to leave people in the lurch without an artist. So he told Chris, "I'm good for the next several issues, but if you could be looking around for somebody to replace me, I'd appreciate it. " So Chris had just talked to Shooter about that. Weezy says, "Well, Brent just quit *Ka-Zar*." And I had already done a fill-in or two on *X-Men*. And he asks me, "You want to draw *The X-Men*?" Just like that. [*laughs*] He goes, "Cockrum's leaving and you have some lead time because it's due in three months."

I look at Chris and I look at Weezy and they're both looking at me expectantly. I said, "Chris, goddamn it, don't do this to me. I just quit a book that I didn't feel I could make the deadlines on that only has three main characters in it. And you want me to take on a book like *X-Men* that has seven?… I'll put *The X-Men* into jeopardy by agreeing to do the book and then falling behind like I was on *Ka-Zar*. I can't, in all good conscience, accept that offer." He goes,



Above: *You'll have to read the interview to hear the happy ending regarding the "Ka-Zar the Detective" yarn born of Brent's regret over not drawing the "Tag You're It" story by Bruce Jones in* Ka-Zar the Savage *#17. Though now featuring characters* inspired *by Ka-Zar and Zabu, Brent created his own version of the adventure, an almost 30-page version that was bankrolled by an avid Brent Anderson fan in recent years. The artist has tried to persuade Marvel Comics to publish a one-shot special ish of his "Tag You're It," but so far to no avail. Here's hoping his heartfelt rendition sees the light of day for all of us fans to behold.*

Art © and courtesy of Brent Anderson.



Above: *Brent benefited greatly from the arrangement for producing art for* Marvel Graphic Novel #5 – The X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills *[Mar. '83], written by Chris Claremont.* **Below:** *In 2022, a fan commissioned Brent to render this piece based on the graphic novel.*

"Okay, I understand." He says, "Well, I just found out that Neal Adams won't do the *X-Men* graphic novel I've been working on because he won't sign the work made for hire contract."

I asked, "You want me to draw the graphic novel?" He said, "There's a long lead time. It's scheduled for one of the Marvel graphic novels later in the year. There's lots of lead time. It's only 62 pages and we'll get you a good inker." I said, "If I was to do this *X-Men* book, it's very different than the comic, right?" He goes, "Oh, yes. It's completely different. It's something that Shooter would not allow me to publish in the regular book. So I have to do it as a standalone for the Marvel graphic novel run." I said, "Okay, but I want to ink it. " And he goes, "You've got the lead time to do that. If you think you can make it then, yeah, I'd like you to do the book." And that was how I got the *X-Men* graphic novel.

[*Off the record talk about Neal Adams' unhappiness with Brent taking the assignment.*]

CBC: *In my second issue of* Comic Book Artist*, I printed pages from Neal's penciled pages…*

Brent: Right, and I got to see the originals of those pages as well as a lot of the other originals he had in his files up there. That was so much fun to look at those.

CBC: *Let's talk about* Somerset Holmes. *So you stayed friendly with Bruce?*

Brent: Oh yeah. Bruce and I are fast friends. Bruce, April [Campbell], and I, we're sort of like Ka-Zar, Shanna, and Zabu. I'm Zabu! I'm the one they always leave behind and always have to come back in some way. [*laughter*] Bruce and April are dear, dear friends.

Somerset Holmes was fun but challenging because Bruce, April, and I went into the series with very different goals in mind. I was talking to Bruce about my love for the *Modesty Blaise* comic strip. I would love to have drawn *Modesty Blaise*; it would have been a fun project to do. But barring that, I was talking to Bruce about his love of *Modesty Blaise*. "Let's create a character who's kind of like her, but who is kind of a mystery. A mystery character just like Modesty was. Where'd she come from and how did she appear as to who she was?" So Bruce was thinking about writing this character who has amnesia, so we bantered it back and forth, and we started working on the book, but Bruce and April, they hadn't thought out what Somerset's backstory was until they were actually working on it.

So Bruce and April were working their character toward the direction they wanted to go in, but without sharing it with me. So I was drawing the book as if it's going in one direction and they were writing it as I was turning in the pages in another direction. And, at the turning point at issue #4, I think it was, I finally realized that they're taking the



X-Men TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



character not into an international espionage world-building direction, a James Bondian adventure or whatever it was. They were directing it towards making a sale in Hollywood as a TV series or as a movie. And they were working on screenplays for a film development for *Somerset Holmes* by the time we got to the end of #4.

But they hadn't told me any of this until they said, "Hey, *Entertainment Tonight*'s going to be coming down to San Diego." By this point, the three of us were living in San Diego. And they said, "They're coming down to interview us about licensing or auctioning *Somerset Holmes* as a TV series or a movie. So do you want to be involved in the interview as the artist of the comic book series?" I said, "Well, sure." But this was all news to me, at the time.

I thought, "Oh, *now* I see what you guys are doing with *Somerset Holmes.* And it's nothing like what I thought I we were doing." And, in the business, Pacific Comics was having conflicts with Marvel as a distributor of Marvel Comics, and all that was competing with their comics division. There was a lot of politics going on at the time. So books weren't coming out on time for *Somerset Holmes* and that created a momentary rift between Bruce and I about getting the series done and finished.

So I sort of lost interest after we finished #4; #5 and 6 were done very, very quickly and didn't really go in the direction I really wanted to see the series go. So I lost a lot of juice in the last two issues of *Somerset Holmes.* But overall, I've gone back and reread the series. I think it holds up very well.

It's an open-ended series that doesn't have any resolution, which has led me to an interest in possibly reprinting *Somerset Holmes* with new material. Put in about 10, 15, 20 new pages of material to do a framing story around Brian looking for her and finding out whatever happened to Somerset Holmes. I think that would be a cool book to do.

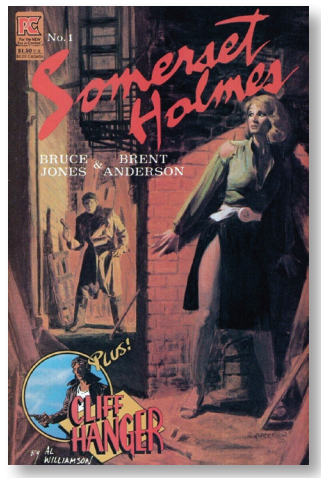
CBC: *Oh, yeah. Definitely. Were royalties in place for the Marvel graphic novels or was that prior? Do you get a piece of* God Loves, Man Kills*?*

Brent: Oh, yeah! Well, the initial print run, my royalty check was based on 7¼% of covered price, my percentage that I was to receive being the penciler and the inker on the book. And my first check on the sale of that book was $16,381.21, I think. That was the biggest check I had ever received.

CBC: *Holy sh*t! And that's 1982 dollars? That could be well over $50,000 in today's money!* [I was close: $16,381 in 1982 equals $57,196(!) in 2026 dollars. – **Ye Ed.**]

Brent: Well, it was nothing as compared to the stuff that Jim Lee and those guys were getting later on at Image. But, as far as at that period, that was amazing. About the reprints, though: Marvel changed up their incentive program. They did a little creative work on the original contract and the dispensation of percentages would not translate from format to format, which is why they stopped publishing that graphic novel format in that size and they reprinted that stuff at comic-book size. Re-sizing it changed the incentive share to their comic-book share instead of their graphic novel share.

My first check was in '82 and I used that money to move to San Diego in 1983. About every six months, every pay period, I would make about anywhere from $3,500 to $5,500 on the original graphic novel. But, as soon as that went out of print, the incentives weren't quite that high. I started making on that first reprint that has the Bill Sienkiewicz



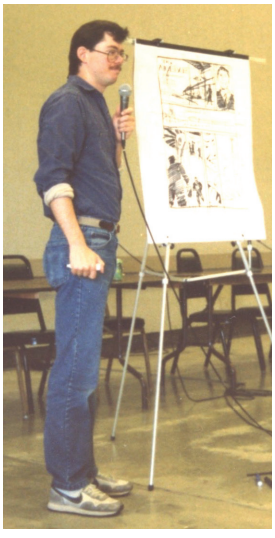
This page: *Brent was jazzed about taking on the* Somerset Holmes *assignment because he hoped he could declare his love for British comic strip character Modesty Blaise (inset pin-up from U.K. Heroines Showcase #2 ['79]. Above is his cover painting for #1[Sept. '83]. Below is Brent's inscribed Somerset Holmes sketch from 1983.*



Modesty Blaise TM & © Modesty Blaise Limited. Modesty Blaise pin-up courtesy of Ken Meyer, Jr. *Somerset Holmes* TM & © Bruce Jones & April Campbell.



Above: *Autobio strip Brent did for* Ka-Zar the Savage *#10 [Jan. '82].*



cover ['94], the comic-book size reprint, something between $1,500 to $2,200 per incentives period. And this went on for 10 years, 12 years. So it was just nice little shot in the arm from this one book that I had done a long time ago. And the most recent edition, that oversized Artist Edition thing that they did in hardcover, I think it had a print run of about 6,000 copies. And I got their standard book royalty on that. And that did me pretty well. I think I made… I did 10 pages of new material at my regular rate. And then, in addition to that, the sales on the book came in, I don't know, I think I got a check for about $13,000.

[*Second interview session concludes and third one commences.*]

CBC: *I want to talk about* Strikeforce: Morituri. *What your involvement other than the obvious in that? Were you a part of the concept at all?*

Brent: Oh yeah, absolutely. Early in the '80s, when I was working on some other things and living in San Diego, I flew out to New York looking for a gig. And, while I was out there, Jim Shooter approached me about this comic book line that would be a standalone series away from the Marvel universe he called the New Universe,

CBC: *Right.*

Brent: They were doing this New Universe thing, and Peter B. Gillis came into the offices one day and Shooter hit him up for doing one of the New Universe characters. But Peter wasn't really into doing that, but he had this idea for this mortal super-hero group ultimately called Strikeforce: Morituri, which was deflecting alien invasions. But it had to be a standalone because of the premise. You couldn't have them be additional heroes from the Marvel universe and then introduce the threat because it would be like, "Well, why aren't the other heroes jumping in to save the Earth or whatnot?" So in order to get Peter on board to develop a series that could be included in the New Universe, they were looking for an artist. This happened just days before or maybe even the same day that I arrived on my visit and Shooter pitched me this idea.

And I looked at it and I went, "Well, I am looking for something different. And I like to jump from thing to thing without much continuity. I like to do all kinds of different things." And it really tickled me. So I had lunch with Peter and his enthusiasm for this book was just incredible. The more we talked about it, the more I realized that here was an opportunity for me to work with another creator, a very good writer, and not to mention a genius-level guy. But for him and I to do kind of like what Stan Lee and Jack Kirby did, and create our own new universe of characters that would be we who guided them, we would develop them and finish and conclude them within the scope of the series. And at that point, Peter wasn't sure if he wanted to do it as a graphic novel, a one-shot, or a series. But, since Shooter was enthusiastic about a series, even though it was standalone away from the New Universe, and I was keen on drawing it, Peter said, "Yeah, let's go for a series on this book."

CBC: *What's the pitch? Generally, what's the story about?*

Brent: The Earth in the near future, maybe 100, 150 years in the future from 1984 (or '85, '86, or '87, whenever we started it) is being invaded by space aliens, which are essentially insectoid locusts. They travel from world to world in their huge motherships. And then they find a suitable world and then they attack it and stay for however long it takes for them to deplete the resources of the planet. Then they move on to the next system, and they chance upon Earth. And the Earth people really have no real defense against their higher technology or anything. So this guy named Tuolema develops this thing called the Morituri process, which cannot be used on all humans.

There are certain humans that are prone to having super-powers kind of tickled out of them with the process. But the downside is, after a few experiments, the powers themselves – and the human – they would self-destruct. Sometimes it was like minutes after the process and sometimes it was as much as a week, but no one ever lived longer than a year. So the big sacrificial recruitment was to recruit human beings who were adaptable or appropriate for the process, but they knew they were giving up their lives and they didn't know when they were going.

CBC: *Were there any continuing characters at all?*

"In the Beginning…" TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Art and "Drawing Needle Comics 1987" photo courtesy of Brent Anderson.

Brent: Well, there were later, but the whole premise is what killed it as a regular series: nobody had lived longer than a year. But the overall overarching story – and Peter wanted this series to go to at least 50 issues – and in that final 50th issue, it would be revealed that one of the characters, because she had gotten pregnant, had survived the Morituri effect. And she was tortured by, "Do I bring this baby to term and then just die from the Morituri effect and orphan it? Or what happens to a baby that's born to a Morituri?" There was all these really cool questions that were going to be coming up later on. But no, the initial group and then the replacements all had termination dates and nobody knew when those dates were. That add to the drama and that was a wonderful idea for an ongoing series of characters that would be interchangeable.

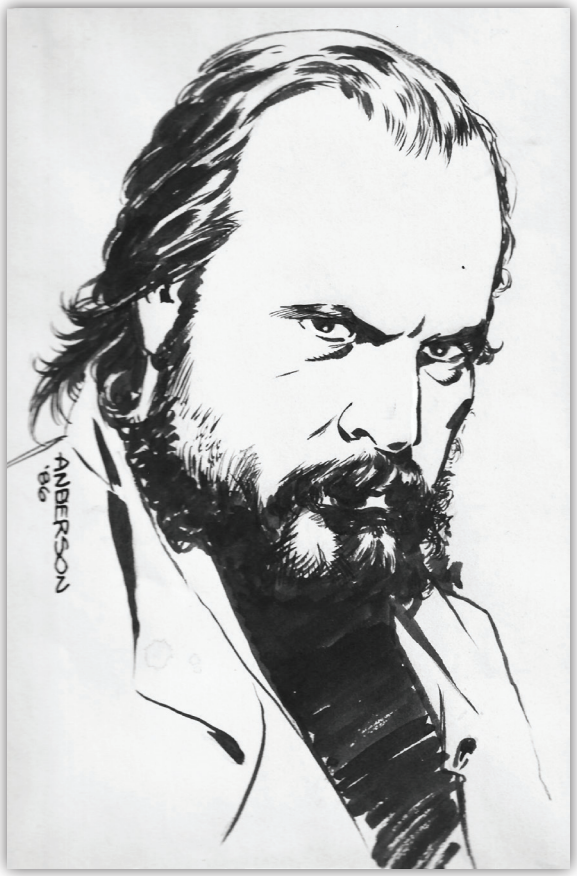
Unfortunately, Marvel fans, comic book fans, they don't like their favorite characters to die. So the series for the first six issues got tremendous response and people were following them. And then, for the next six issues, as the main cast started dying off, one by one, and being replaced by other characters that were not [readers'] favorites, the sales on the book dropped precipitously. And it was kind of disappointing for Peter and I. And he said, "Yeah, I think I made a mistake." And I said, "Well, what was your mistake?" He goes, "Not doing it as a graphic novel. We needed to do it as a good long graphic novel, so I could tell the whole story in one shot and have the same audience at the end that I had at the beginning."

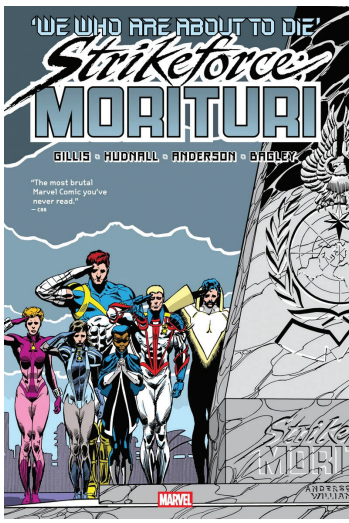
CBC: *It seems like that concept has legs, beyond a regular Marvel comic, but could be done in television.*

Brent: Well, actually it was. *Strikeforce: Morituri* was optioned, but unfortunately, at the time that *Morituri* was being created, I was under contract for a year as an employee of Marvel and I had signed a work-made-for-hire agreement that anything I did for Marvel that was under their auspices would belong to them. And I wasn't thinking about anything about that at the time, because Peter had never signed the work made for hire agreement and refused to sign the backs of the checks when Marvel tried to get them to prove that we had signed it off (even though it was not legal to put it on the back of a check that was paying you). Anyway, it was a big convoluted thing about work made for hire and ownership of properties. And, when the series failed in the sales, Marvel decided to revamp it. And Peter wrote it for a little while with new artists, but then Jim Hudnall started doing it and they changed the title to *Strikeforce Morituri: Electric Undertow.* It was under Carl Potts's editorialship – Carl was editor from the beginning.

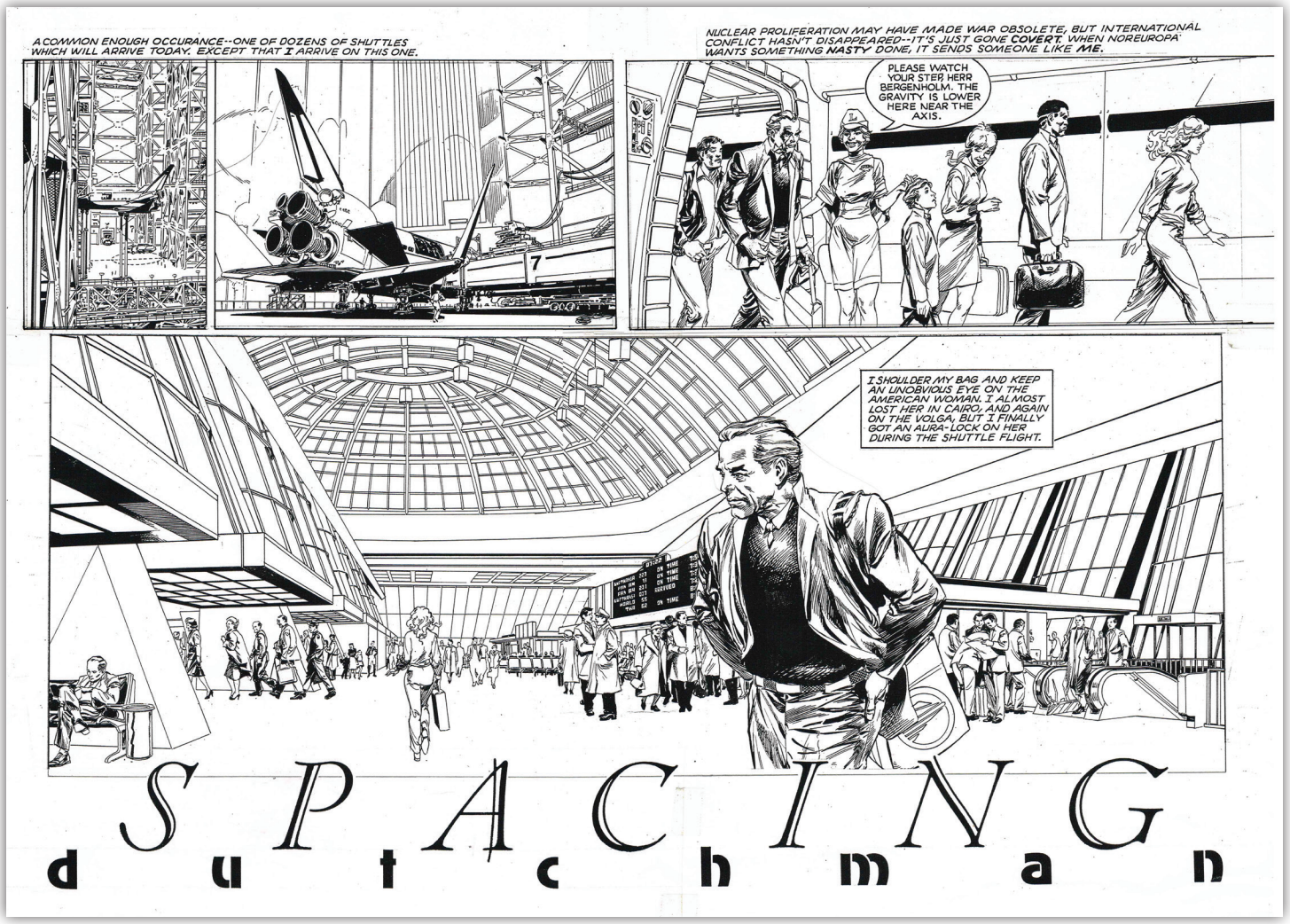


Above: Strikeforce: Morituri *was a clever concept developed by writer Peter B. Gillis that was originally intended to fit into the New Universe being developed by Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter in the later '80s, but was instead placed in its own realm. Brent illustrated the series for some 20 issues, along with this #1 [Dec. '86] cover.* **Inset left:** *Brent's portrait of his late friend Gillis rendered in 1986.* **Below:** Strikeforce: Morituri Omnibus *cover by Brent published by Marvel in 2025.*





Strikeforce: Morituri TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Peter B. Gillis portrait © Brent Anderson.



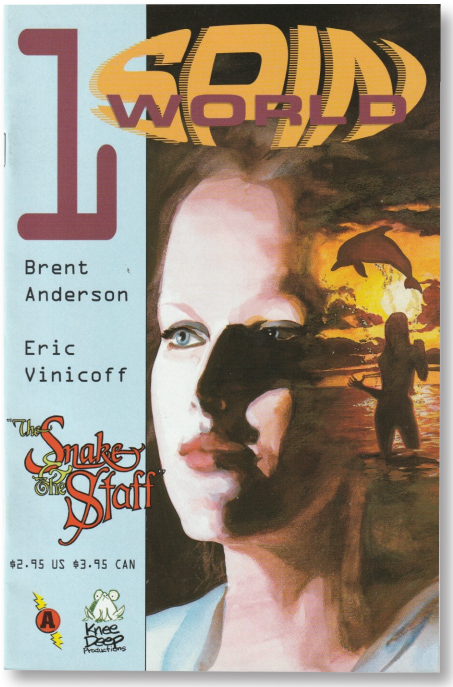
was at my discretion to produce for you. It wasn't at your discretion to allow me to do it." So it just sort of went on and on for a bunch of years and just died away.

CBC: *How do you cash a check if you don't endorse it?*

Brent: Oh, you can deposit it. Al Gordon used to do that. He'd just write "for deposit only" on the back and sign it, then just drop it into his account so long as he could prove who he was and the name on the account was the same. The bank would take checks. I don't know if that's the same way today or not, but that was a pretty common practice.

And when Marvel tried this little sleight of hand by printing on the back that the recipient of this check agrees that it's a work-made-for-hire work that's being paid for and all rights belong to Marvel, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. And then anticipating that those artists who signed or those writers and artists that signed that back of that check, it could be held up in court that it was a legitimate thing to do to maintain ownership of the properties.

The first person who went to court, they just threw it out and said, "No, no signing the back of a check is not signing a contract. I'm sorry." So Marvel didn't get their way that way. But, in the meantime, because I had signed the work made for hire agreement, that meant that all the imagery I made Marvel considered to belong to Marvel, all the artwork and everything, even if the concept and the property itself belonged to Peter. And since he wasn't trying to take the property to another company as a comic book and have me draw those characters for another comic book company, Marvel would have put the its name on that. He would have had to hire another artist or create a whole new set of characters, which he was doing anyway. So anyway, long story short, when all that fell apart, it didn't look like it was going to go anywhere and we weren't going to get *Morituri* into other media.



Peter and I had talked about going back and repairing the mistake he had made by not making it a graphic novel. And we were going to do a new graphic novel version of *Strikeforce: Morituri,* though it wouldn't be called that, so there's no copyright infringement. We would not be using any of the characters that were designed for Marvel for the comic book series. And Peter wanted to call it *Divine Wind* after the Kamikaze pilots in Japanese World War II. And it would be a more adult take than the Marvel super-hero approach that he took on the comic book series. And he and I talked about it a little bit. I went on to other things, he went on to other things. Peter's later years were not very happy because of his conflicts with Marvel and in the industry in general creatively about copyrights and stuff like that.

He was basically excommunicated from the

"Spacing Dutchman," *Spinworld* TM & © Eric Vinicoff and Brent Anderson.

comics industry. But he did a few independent comics here and there, like *Tailgunner Jo*, and whatnot. But he and I started talking again long after, just a couple of years before he passed. And I was starting to talk to him about doing *Divine Wind*.

CBC: *So how'd you feel about Marvel in the later '80s? Obviously Shooter had his comeuppance, I guess. He was shown the door. How did you feel?*

Brent: Well, I should preface this by saying that I never had any problem with Jim Shooter in all the relations that I had with him regarding the projects and the works that I was doing for them. But it was pretty piecemeal; I had a spotty relationship as far as with Marvel in general. But, with Shooter principally, I never had any problem with Jim on a personal level nor on a professional one, because he always followed through on everything that I had agreed to do and he never had any problem with me. But, as far as the work made for hire, that set up a lot of problems for me on a personal level at times. No serious problems, but it was still a problem. And the major one was the fact that I drew the graphic novel for *The X-Men* simply because Neal had refused to sign the work made for hire agreement.

And I saw [*God Loves, Man Kills*] as my opportunity to do something other than a regular comic series, which I was not able to meet the deadlines on. And it was a prime opportunity for me to do a good project. But I was also, at the time, working on a project for Neal at Continuity that was a creator-owned property and it wasn't subject to work made for hire. And I had already signed the work made for hire for Marvel. So I didn't see any problem with that. Well, I started working on *The X-Men* graphic novel and not working on the project I was supposed to be working on with Neal to promote in Europe. And Neal, he didn't take that well. I mean, he was very polite and everything, but he was pretty angry at me. And so we sort of worked through it.

CBC: *What was the project?*

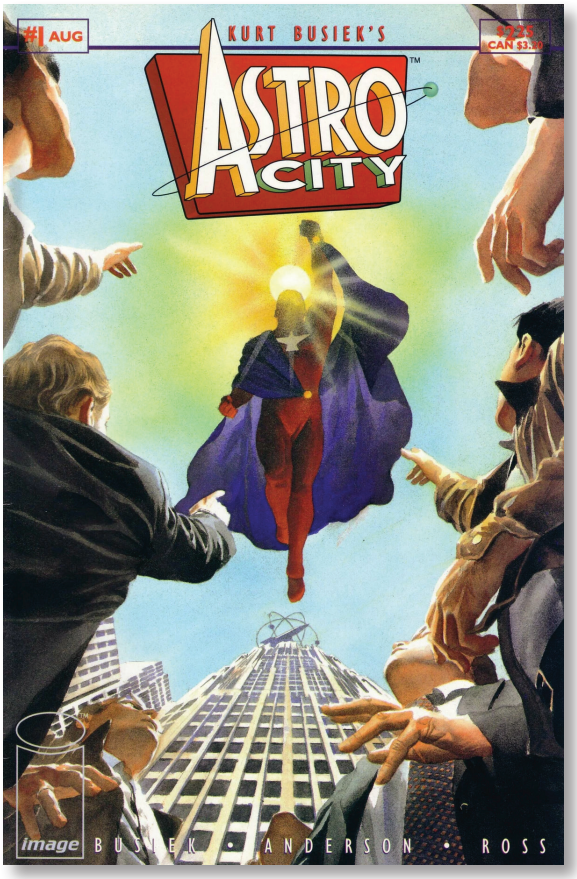
Brent: It was called *Spinworld*, a four-issue mini-series that consisted of three related stories. The opening story was called "The Snake and the Staff," and the two middle issues of the series was "Spacing Dutchman," which was the original graphic novel that I was working on for Neal. Then the final issue was an extra-long issue called "Politics of Plenty."

CBC: *Did you write it?*

Brent: No, it was written by a fellow named Eric Vinicoff, a science fiction writer who wrote short stories back in the '70s and '80s. His writing partner was Marcia Martin, and the two of them had written this novella called *Spacing Dutchman*, for which I had done six illustrations, after Eric approached me because he liked my work in an art show. Then Mike Friedrich suggested we make a comic book to be published by his Star*Reach Productions in his title, *Imagine*, as a double-sized issue, something like 48 pages, with "Spacing Dutchman" as the centerpiece. But then Mike's publishing went under, but he promised to find a home for "Spacing Dutchman," and briefly got interest from Fantagraphics, which fell through. Then Neal was interested in picking it up to pitch it as a graphic novel for the European markets, so I started redrawing it. Then Continuity dropped out and DC, with Dick Giordano championing it, picked up the project that suddenly expanded to a much bigger book, with two other Vinicoff/Martin short stories filling in pages. Then, after two years, DC lost interest, and Mike negotiated the rights back to us. The whole magilla was finally published as *Spinworld* by Slave Labor Graphics, in 1997.

It's been an interesting trip. Oh, I should mention that the original novella of *Spacing Dutchman* had a Frank Brunner cover painting on it. It's kind of interesting.



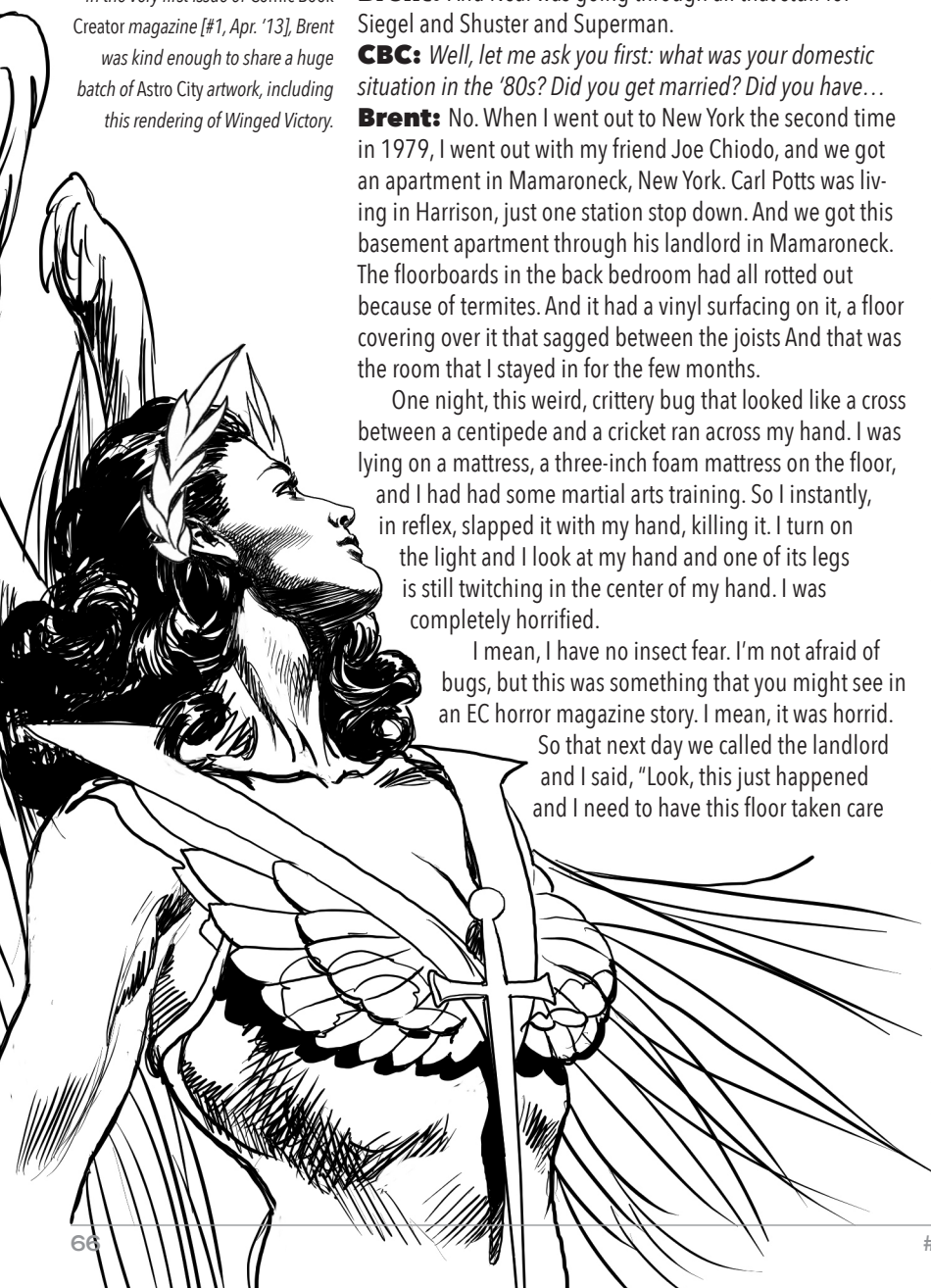


Above: *Brent in his studio, 1989. Photo by Dave Gatley.* **Previous page:** *Beautiful Spacing Dutchman spread by Brent and cover for* Spinworld *#1 [July '97].* **Below:** Kurt Busiek's Astro City *#1 [Aug. '95], cover art by Alex Ross.*

Photo © Dave Gatley and courtesy of Brent Anderson. *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* TM & © Juke Box Productions.



Above: *Brent and writer Kurt Busiek some years back, signing at a convention.* **Below:** *For Busiek's feature in the very first issue of* Comic Book Creator *magazine [#1, Apr. '13], Brent was kind enough to share a huge batch of* Astro City *artwork, including this rendering of Winged Victory.*



CBC: *So how did things look in the late '80s for you? I mean, Kirby was going through his super-hassles with Marvel.*

Brent: And Neal was going through all that stuff for Siegel and Shuster and Superman.

CBC: *Well, let me ask you first: what was your domestic situation in the '80s? Did you get married? Did you have…*

Brent: No. When I went out to New York the second time in 1979, I went out with my friend Joe Chiodo, and we got an apartment in Mamaroneck, New York. Carl Potts was living in Harrison, just one station stop down. And we got this basement apartment through his landlord in Mamaroneck. The floorboards in the back bedroom had all rotted out because of termites. And it had a vinyl surfacing on it, a floor covering over it that sagged between the joists And that was the room that I stayed in for the few months.

One night, this weird, crittery bug that looked like a cross between a centipede and a cricket ran across my hand. I was lying on a mattress, a three-inch foam mattress on the floor, and I had had some martial arts training. So I instantly, in reflex, slapped it with my hand, killing it. I turn on the light and I look at my hand and one of its legs is still twitching in the center of my hand. I was completely horrified.

I mean, I have no insect fear. I'm not afraid of bugs, but this was something that you might see in an EC horror magazine story. I mean, it was horrid.

So that next day we called the landlord and I said, "Look, this just happened and I need to have this floor taken care of." Well, he was a slumlord and a half, so his response was to smear this black and tarry stuff all along the baseboard and all around the room. I can't prove it, but I suspect that the stuff he was using was old pesticides, probably laced with DDT.

And, anyway, I went back and I lived in that room for several months, but the damage had been done. I had been highly exposed to chemical pesticides that were in addition to the chemical pesticides I grew up as a kid in the United States with chemical pesticides like DDT and all that stuff being just indiscriminately spread through the food chain. So I already had DDT metabolite in my system. So flash-forward to me moving and living in San Diego between 1983–89, I got increasingly sicker. My mental acuity failed. I was prone to environmental pesticide challenges, things in the environment that would test my immune system. My immune system was just destroying itself, trying to protect me from all these allergic reactions and everything.

I finally went to a detox program in 1988, a natural detoxification program, and spent 21 days in a dry sauna cleansing my system out. And, ultimately, it took me about 15 years after that to fully heal my nervous system and everything else. So that's a long answer to a short question, which is what was my domestic situation in those years.

CBC: *So you remained a bachelor?*

Brent: Yes. I had lots of wonderful girlfriends, very creative people, wacky people, in my life and most all of them are still friends. Then I got an opportunity to move up to California wine country area, south of Santa Rosa and I had a couple of friends, Ken Macklin and Lila Dowling, who were married at the time. Then I came up and I lived in a house that Ken had built, so he was renting that to me in 1990… what was the original question?

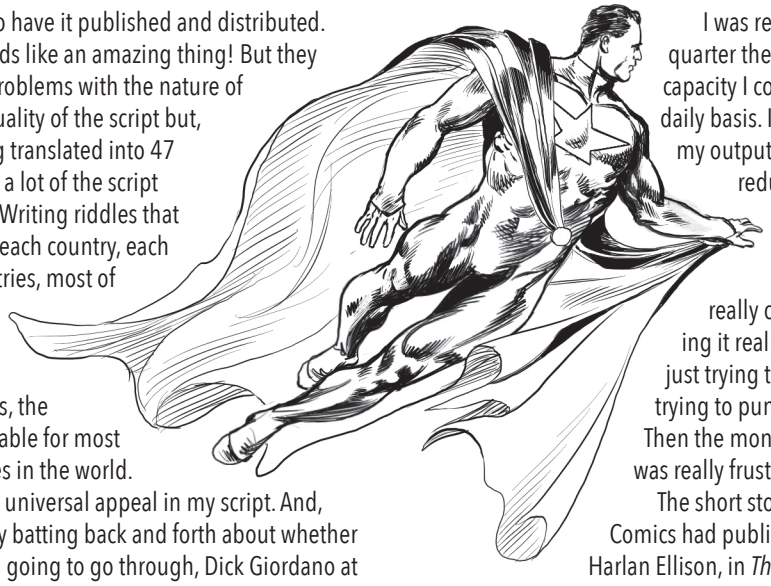
CBC: *Being a bachelor.*

Brent: Right, so I had been out of comics because I was so sick and I was working on two big projects vying for my attention regarding a deadline. One was the *Spacing Dutchman* I was desperately trying to finish to fulfill my contract with DC. And the other project that came up was the Cousteau Society approached me about wanting to do an international comic book about the health of the Earth and the ecological damage humans were doing to it. They needed a story written and drawn as a graphic novel about how six children from different countries in the world would team up with Jacques Cousteau and his son, Jean-Michel. They running this idea through the people that were working for the Cousteau Society down in San Diego, at that time. So they approached me about doing this graphic novel, a 64-page book. And I was deeply working on it. I wrote the script for it, laying it out, doing everything on this book. And the Cousteau Society was supporting me, paying me different pay levels for finish. So I was working on those two projects. And when the time came for me, I had to decide which project to finish first.

It came down to *Spacing Dutchman* because the Cousteaus were taking my script and layouts around to the different environmental and social institutions around the world that would be publishing this book in as many as 47 different languages. And they were trying to guide it through UNESCO to get funding for this in all these

Winged Victory TM & © Juke Box Productions. Photo and art courtesy of Brent Anderson.

different countries to have it published and distributed. And, man, that sounds like an amazing thing! But they were running into problems with the nature of the script. Not the quality of the script but, because it was being translated into 47 different languages, a lot of the script relied upon riddles. Writing riddles that the kids being from each country, each of six different countries, most of them English-speaking or at least half English-speaking. The riddles, the writing, was not suitable for most of the other countries in the world.



So there was not universal appeal in my script. And, while they were busy batting back and forth about whether the project was even going to go through, Dick Giordano at DC got back to me and said, "Well, we need *Dutchman* by a certain date and you've agreed to color it. " So the black-&-white art had been virtually finished for a while, but I was sick. I wasn't able to really do anything on that book. So I started trying to finish up the *Dutchman* on the b-&-w art as soon as I possibly could and then get to the coloring. I was just way behind on the deadline.

And then the Cousteau project fell through because they couldn't get past this translation issue. So I had these two failed projects that represented a huge chunk of my non-Marvel, non-DC comic-book career. So I've been out of the business for a while. So, once I realized that I needed to find new work, I started looking for new work in the early '90s. And, at the same time, I got introduced to a local writer's group where Ken Macklin was contributing a piece of artwork for. So I got to meet this group called the Spellbinders Writers Group, and I met my future wife, Shirley, at one of those meetings, at one of the first meetings I went to.

CBC: *That answers that question, Brent.* [chuckles] *Did you periodically go work with Weezy? I see you did work on* Power Pack *and* Superman. *Could you call her up in a pinch?*

Brent: No, actually she would call *me* in a pinch. The *Power Pack*s came about the same kind of way that I needed fill-ins on *Ka-Zar*. Well, June Brigman needed fill-ins on *Power Pack*, because she's a meticulous artist and extremely talented, but she just wasn't able to hit the deadlines in the same fashion that I was. So I penciled *Power Pack* #9 [Apr. '85], 10, and 13, before doing layouts for Scott Williams on issues #18 and 19, and full pencils on #21 [Apr. '86], "The Great Goo-Gam Treasure Hunt," my favorite *Power Pack* issue, written and inked by Terry Austin.

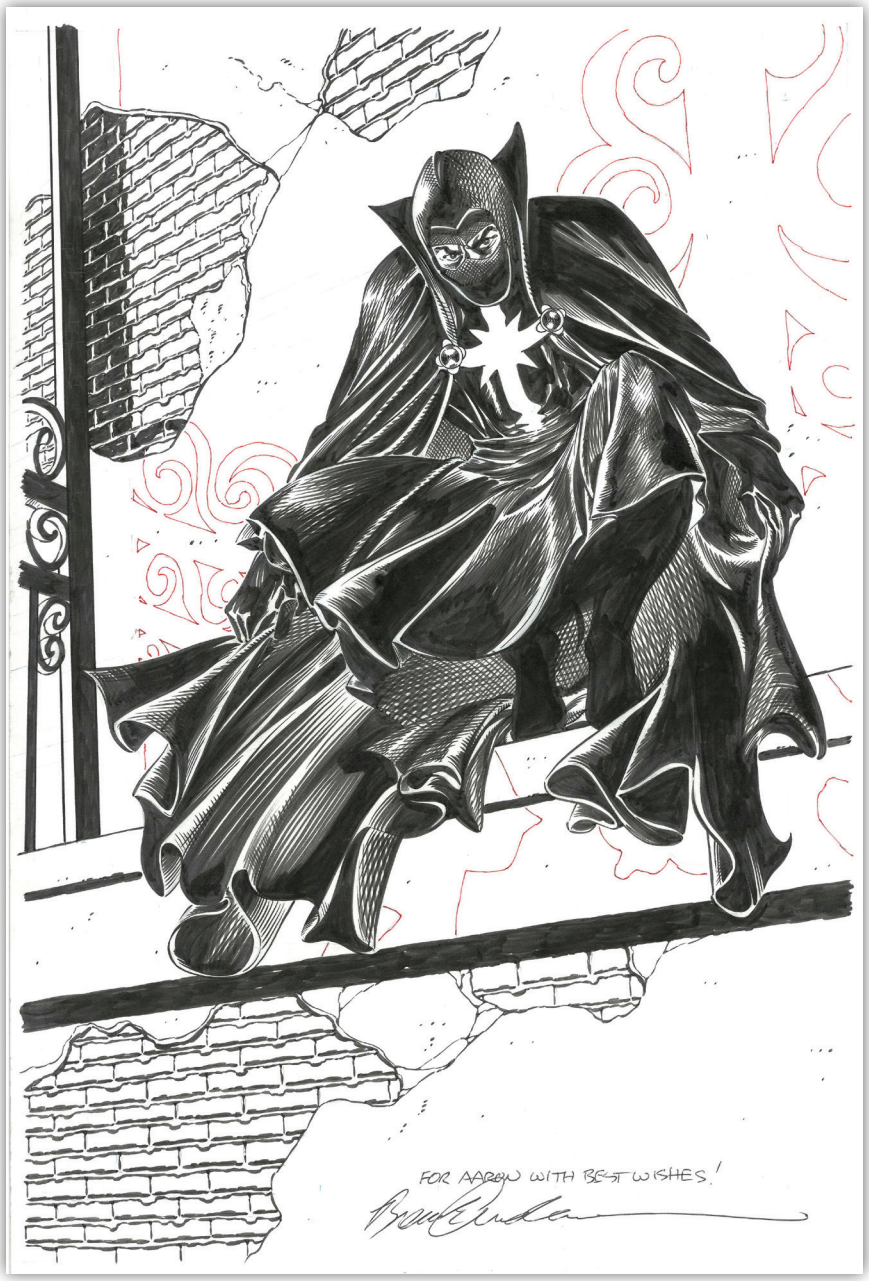
CBC: *You also worked for Now Comics? How long did that last and how'd that come about?*

Brent: That was an abortive situation, unfortunately. I was supposed to do *Kato of the Green Hornet*, a four-issue mini-series, and I only wound up penciling and inking the first one and penciling the second one. The short story is that, when I was working on the second issue and finished inking the first one, Now Comics stopped paying me for the ink work I had already done. They kept putting me off, putting me off, and putting me off. And you have to realize that while doing that, I was still recovering from my sickness.

I was reduced to like one-quarter the amount of work capacity I could handle on a daily basis. I was at 25% of my output, what it had been reduced to. And the quality of the work was so… I was in a fog. I couldn't really concentrate on making it really good, so I was just trying to do it for the bucks, trying to pump the money out. Then the money stopped and I was really frustrated.

The short story is that Now Comics had published some works of Harlan Ellison, in *The Twilight Zone*. And so, because I had connections with Neal

Left inset: *At left is a Samaritan figure by Brent, shared with CBC back in 2013.* **Below:** *Aaron Lipson kindly shared a high-resolution scan of this page from* Kurt Busiek's Astro City *V2 #4 [Dec. '96], which introduced The Confessor. Of course, we used the same art for this issue's cover! Art by Brent (pencils) and Will Blyberg (inks).*



Samaritan, The Confessor TM & © Juke Box Productions. Samaritan courtesy of Brent Anderson. Confessor art courtesy of Aaron Lipson.

personally, as well as professionally, and with Harlan personally, I contacted Harlan and told him the situation. And he goes, "Well, that's weird. The owner of that company, he and I are tight. I've never had any problem getting paid by him." I said, "Well, you're Harlan Ellison. You don't have any problem getting paid." And he goes, "Let me look into it for you." So he did. And I guess he threw his weight around with the publisher. But, by that point, I had just sort of lost interest in even working for Now Comics at all. And just because they were going to start paying me didn't mean I was going to finish penciling and inking the book. I felt real bad for [writer] Mike Baron who had brought me in on it because he knew what a big Bruce Lee fan I was. And to get me to do this mini-series with *Kato of the Green Hornet* starring Bruce Lee and we had the rights to be able to use the likeness. I thought this was great. I was going to do my Bruce Lee story. So that's what I meant by abortive. It didn't turn out that way, unfortunately.



CBC: Hardcase *for Malibu…?*

Brent: Like I said, I've been out of the industry for a while, so I was trying to pick up new work back in the industry. I did two *Superman* books that both were inked by Joe Rubinstein, #90 and 91, and that was my re-introduction to super-heroes again. And then I did *Anima* #7 because, whoever was editing it, I guess, they needed a fill-in and knew I was looking for work, so they just dropped me in right in the middle of this thing. I didn't understand it at all, but it was very well described, as far as what I needed to draw, and the imagery was fun. It makes no sense, but I love the issue. I mean, you have Humphrey Bogart pitching balls as a baseball player and Stevie Ray Vaughn is a super-hero guy flying around with his guitar. I mean, it's great! It was really fun to draw, but I had no clue what was going on with that series. It had to do with demons and imagery and planting thoughts in your head and stuff. I don't know what it was about. But, boy, the imagery was great.

CBC: *And then you did some work for Valiant?*

Brent: *Bloodshot*? That was another thing that was kind of fun. I don't recall how I got that work or why I was approached to do it. But that was good for me to get back into my drawing skills again because of the neurological damage that had been done. I had a shake in my hand, so it was very difficult to do a nice crisp Neal Adams-type line, which I was striving to do before I got sick and I never quite got there. I was really shaky and unsure. So I took the opportunity with *Bloodshot* to just draw it as much in ink over really sketchy layouts as I could and do it as quickly as I could. And I wound up selling my

Astro City TM & © Juke Box Productions. *Bloodshot* TM & © Valiant Entertainment LLC.

money shots in *Bloodshot* for $20 a page. But, man, it was a fun job to do. I did two full issues and two covers. All my [pencils and inks] art, though not the color.

CBC: *Nice. Did you ever rely on the computer?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. I actually went almost all-digital about 2010. If you want a little backstory on that, I can skip a little bit ahead past *Astro City*, I guess, because it was during *Astro City* when I switched over to digital. So we can either save that for the *Astro City* talk or I can talk about it now.

CBC: *Well, I think we've led up to* Astro City. *So it's 1995. How did that gig fall into your lap?*

Brent: Well, Kurt [Busiek] threw it into my lap. As I said, I had moved up to Cotati, California. I met my future wife. We got engaged, married, and she got pregnant. We bought a house in 1994. My son, Bryce, was born in April of 1995. After we had gotten engaged, but we hadn't set a wedding date, which would have been the next year. Shirley had been invited as a guest to Worldcon, in San Francisco, that year. She was on a panel with two other writers that they had collaborated on a piece of work that was popular. And they were looking to fill up their panels with panel discussions about interesting science fiction/fantasy material. So I hadn't been to a convention in quite a while, at that point, in several years because I was not going down to San Diego because I was sick. So I skipped a few shows during the early '90s. And I didn't know what was going on in the comics industry, by that point. I'd been out since '87 or something when *Strikeforce* ended and I was getting sicker and sicker and not being able to produce much good work. I was bad off.

So I thought, "Well, I'm going to go to the Worldcon with my fiancée and just see where the fantasy-science fiction conventions are at. But also they had a comics [portion]. They had one comics thread that ran through the convention. On the Sunday we were planning to go there, there was a panel to talk about comics with two people on the panel with a moderator. One of them I knew, Marv Wolfman. I wound up doing *Night Force* with him, but I think that was after this Worldcon.

There were probably a half-dozen people in this huge room scattered throughout the room at this comics panel. And I came in for the last half-hour, and I sat in the back and I was just watching Marv and the other guy, his name was Kurt Busiek, struggling with answering a couple of questions that were coming from the audience or the moderator just to stretch out the time on the panel so it would end. And I'm seeing them struggle back there and I'm going, "I think I need to help them out a little bit." So, at some point in the conversation, I raised my hand and asked a question about what was going on with this or that. And Marv knew who I was.

And he said, "Oh, hi," and he waved at me. So I asked a couple of questions that dragged the time out with their answers to end the panel. So then they closed the panel and I waited until the other people left the room. And then Shirley and I walked up to say hi to Marv.

Then I got introduced to Kurt and he said he liked my work and all that. Then he was telling me about this book, *Marvels,* that were being very well received and it was all that. But I hadn't heard of *Marvels*. I was that out of the industry, and I told that to Kurt. But, when he mentioned that his opus, his Marvel thing – *Marvels* – I go, "I don't know what that is. What is that?" He goes, "You haven't heard of *Marvels*?" He looked at me like, "Where have you been? Under some rock somewhere?" And I had to answer him honestly, yes, I guess I had been under a rock somewhere!

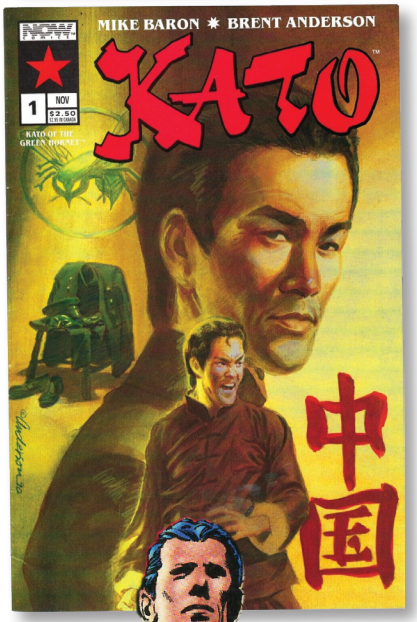
So anyway, Kurt and I just hit it off instantly. Talking to him was like talking to an old pal that I had grown up in junior high school with and talked Marvel Comics. And the way he talked about comics was the way I used to talk about comics and I loved it. Fortunately for him, he had brought his proposal for *Astro City* that he was trying to fish around. And it was going to be published by Image or Homage, but his idea for the mini-series was to have a selected artist, a top A-list artist for each of the six different stories that he wanted to write. And he had no one for the first one. He wanted to get Neal Adams to do the first one, I think (which is kind of ironic).

But because Neal was doing other things and Kurt wasn't demanding that somebody sign a work made for hire agreement but he wanted agreements for his artists that were everything *but* called "work made for hire." That he would retain all control and rights over anything that we produced, and he'd compensate us well for it because he could afford to with *Marvels*. So he was hoping to get six top-tier artists to work on the first six issues. And when Neal wasn't going to work out and Kurt met me at that show, he suggested that I do the first issue, the dream story about the Superman archetype about enjoying his ability to fly because, during the day, he could not enjoy it. And when Kurt outlined the story for me, I thought, "God, that's great! Those are the kind of stories I love doing in comics!"

Then Kurt started telling me the plots for the other issues. The second issue was the one about the shark, the subway, and the reporter back in the 1950s. And I thought, "Well, that's cool." And he said, "Yeah, I have somebody in mind for that one and an artist in mind for this one." And then the third one was the Jack-in-the-Box story.

And he had Michael Golden pegged for that one. And then the fourth issue was the Marta story. I can't remem-







This page: *From top is Brent's cover for* Rising Stars *#18 [Apr. '02], a title he worked on for a batch of issues; Brent completed only two issues of the* Kato of the Green Hornet *mini-series due to payment issues with Now Comics; Kurt Busiek's Superman stand-in, Samaritan, nicknamed "Big Red," with this panel detail illustrated by (you guessed it) Brent Anderson.* **Previous page:** *Spread from* Astro City *by Brent and his cover for* Bloodshot *#36 [Oct. '95].*

Rising Stars TM & © J. Michael Straczynski. *Kato of the Green Hornet TM &* © The Green Hornet, Inc. Bruce Lee TM & © Bruce Lee Enterprises, Inc.



Above: *Page of original art from* Kurt Busiek's Astro City *#13 [Feb. '98], with pencils by Brent and inks by Will Blyberg, an issue starring animated cartoon character brought to life Loony Leo, a toon lost in Hollywood.*

ber who he had lined up for that – maybe José Garcia Lopez – but, anyway, he was really going for the top talent at the time. And the more he talked, the more I wanted to do this first issue. And we talked on the phone and he sent me the scripts and we talk on the phone about this and that. And it was terrific, really terrific.

The longer story is that Kurt had difficulty herding the cats (as we put it) with opening the time schedules for these A-grade artists to each do a 24-page one-shot. So he was having a hell of a time corralling anybody to do it. While he was still trying to do that, he told me about his Confessor storyline. That would be the first six-issue follow up if the mini-series did well. He wanted to follow up with a single story over six issues and put that forward.

He said, "Well, depending on what happens with this mini-series," he said, "And if I decide to do that, would you be interested in drawing that Confessor storyline?" He was calling the character, "Vesper," at that time. And, after he outlined, "Oh, he's this fallen Catholic priest who, back in the 19th century, was turned into a vampire, but he only sucks the blood out of bad guys." And I went, "Oh man, I have *got* to draw that." He said it was basically the Batman and Robin archetypes, but just transferred into the *Astro City* weirdness universe. And I said, "Yeah! If this mini-series is successful, I'd like to start working on that six-issue series." So then I was working through penciling and inking the first issue of the first mini-series, and I was actually inking page four of that story the day that my wife's water broke and my son was born. So that would have been April 9th, 1995. So my son is exactly the same age as *Astro City!*

CBC: *How cool is that? So how did that lead into being the lone penciler on the series? He had a hard time with the herding cats and then you said, "Hey, why don't I do the series"?*

Brent: Well, as I was finishing up the first issue, he really liked it. It was funny because Homage wanted, even though I had this track record, it wasn't a *recent* track record for my work. So they very politely asked Kurt to ask me very politely if I wouldn't mind doing four or five test pages so they could see what the whole book was going to look like. And ultimately, if we did the Confessor storyline, how a whole series was going to look. And I didn't begrudge them asking for that at all because I wasn't feeling up to snuff at that point. I was still healing from those problems and I'm sure people could judge for themselves when they saw my work that I had done where I was trying to get back into the industry.

They were saying, "Yeah, this stuff's good. It's not as good as this *Ka-Zar* stuff or his *X-Men* graphic novel"… or blah-blah-blah. So I didn't begrudge them that. So I turned it in and those pages and, by that point, they said, "Yeah, Brent can go ahead with this and he can do that series for The Confessor." At that point, Kurt had pretty much given up on trying to corral in the other artists. I think he got one out of the five to agree to it and had to go back to them afterwards and say, "I changed my mind. It was not working out the way I wanted it to. So I'm going to have Brent do those five issues. Then I had a gig. All I had to do was finish out "In Dreams" [#1]. So I knew I had a gig after *Astro City* #1 was finished.

Kurt was fond of saying in interviews, when asked how Brent became the artist for *Astro City* exclusively, he goes, "Well, Brent was a real hard sell. I asked him to do one issue and he said, 'Yes.' Then I asked him if he would do the first story arc of The Confessor, and he said, 'Okay, sure. Yeah, I'll do that.' And then, when things worked out with the mini-series, I asked him, 'Would you like to be the regular artist on the book?' And he said, 'Yeah, sure.' So he was a hard sell."

CBC: *Did you have any dealings with Alex* [*Ross*] *at all?*

Brent: Oh, yeah. Actually, I had to work closely with Alex through the whole run, but I worked closely with him in the mini-series simply because he was doing these incredible covers. And, by that point, I had found out what *Marvels* was and I was just so totally blown away that Alex Ross had done what I wanted to do when I was 10 or 11 years old, when I was thinking about liking Disney movies and Norman Rockwell paintings. Those parts of me that were an artist before I became one, really. I was an artist at heart, I guess. And I used to love looking at the picture books of famous masters of illustrators. So I was really akin to that.

Kurt Busiek's Astro City TM & © Juke Box Productions.



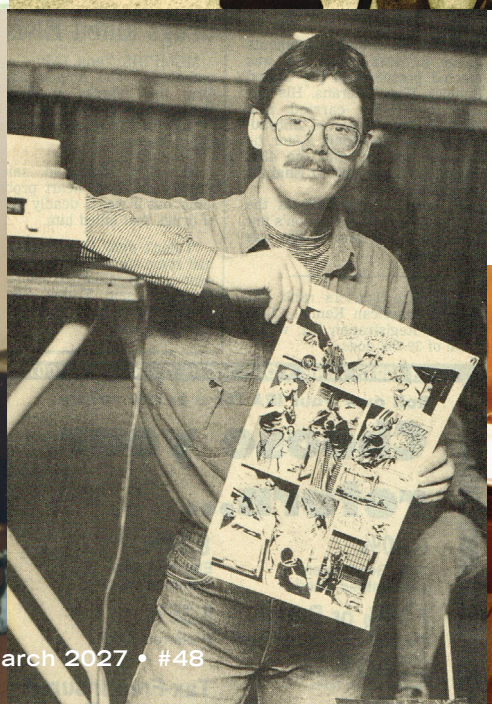












This page: *Photo gallery of Brent Eric Anderson photographs. From top right (counterclockwise), a pic labeled "stumped," taken in 1982 by Rebecca Salame; another pic used in* Comics Interview *#30 of Brent searching his files; circa '83; a self-caricature; gag pic of Brent painting the* Somerset Holmes *#1 cover, snapped by Bill Sienkiewicz; drawing Conan in '83; at a public library seminar; being interviewed by the TV show,* Entertainment Tonight *in '84; and a pic labeled "Brent the caricaturist" by Karen Perez.*



All courtesy of Brent Anderson.





This page: *For the "New 52" run of comics launched by DC in 2012, Brent did pencils on* The Phantom Stranger *#0–5, with inks by Philip Tan and Rob Hunter. Penciled page by Brent from #5 [Apr. '13].*

When Richard Corben's work started coming out, I'm going, "Yes! *This* is what I want to do. I want to do highly stylized, realistic painting type work like Norman Rockwell." So if you combined Disney with Norman Rockwell or with Richard Corben in comics, who do you get? You get Alex Ross! So, yeah, I really wanted to work closely with Alex in the beginning and I did.

Alex was very commendable and there was a comment he made on that fourth page that I had finished before Bryce was born. There's a panel of Samaritan using his powers to keep a tsunami from crashing onto Manila Bay and it's a long shot. The figure of Samaritan is just very, very tiny in the panel. I remember, when I turned that page in with the other sample pages, Alex commented on it. He said, "I don't know how you did that. Because this is a new character that I designed with that weird cape, and all that. And you did a drawing of that character doing a super-heroic thing in the distance and you can tell it's Samaritan by the shape of the cape, where it is, his actions, his body, and the power that you show in that wave being stopped by him. I don't know how you did that." He was completely amazed by that. And I said, "Well, I don't know how I did it either!"

CBC: *"It's my job, Alex."* [laughs]

Brent: Yeah. And so I did work closely with Alex on those characters he was painting on the covers. Kurt had me design everything else. But if there was ever a character that Alex wanted to design specifically for the covers, then I had to defer the interior art to his cover art, the design of whatever was on the cover. And that was fine because I got this little lesson in how to do that kind of comics from the master himself.

There was one other time when Alex made a suggestion. It was on page five of that original sequence that I did. And it's the famous shot now of the Samaritan after putting on his costume and he's bolting out of his apartment. He's blasting out away from his apartment to go do his duty as a super-hero. And I had trouble with that cape over his shoulder design. It was not the normal Superman type cape.

It was an odd design and I had given Samaritan a little hunched back. The anatomy underneath made it look like he had a hunchback instead of a normal Superman type back. And Alex was looking at the pages and he goes, "This stuff is great, particularly where he's putting on his costume and he's standing there in the room, and that's great." He says, "But I just have one little comment to make about the reveal. This is the first time the audience is seeing this character inside the book and it bothers me that he's got this little hunched back." And this was key. He said, "But I don't want to tell you to redraw it." And I said, "Well, if it needs to be redrawn, just tell me what you want to do. " He goes, "No, I can't tell Brent Anderson how to draw." And it was at that moment I went, "What is he *talking* about? 'I can't tell Brent Anderson how to draw'?" He goes, "I don't feel comfortable telling Brent Anderson how to draw." And I go, "Alex, Brent Anderson is just like you." I mean, I just laughed because I was in such awe of Alex's talent that I had forgotten he was of the next generation [that came up] behind me.

I didn't realize, at that point, the kind of esteem that people like Alex Ross and Kurt Busiek held me in, because I'd been out of the industry and I had left it at a time when I really wasn't being… What's the word…? You know how the superstars in the industry, they make themselves available. When you're Frank Miller and you're very, very popular with the work you're doing, you go to shows, you let people show their appreciation. And it builds from there and you keep building on it.

Well, at just the wrong time in my career, where I could have built on that by taking on *The X-Men* when I declined to do it or following up on the *X-Men* graphic novel with something other than *Somerset Holmes* and *Strikeforce: Morituri*. Those were too different from the stuff people were starting to recognize me for up at Marvel. So I'd sort of dropped away and they'd go follow somebody else on *The X-Men* or somebody else on a different project. And I was constantly having to build my audience with each new project I was working on. And each one was very different from the one before it. So I never really catered to the being curried by the fan press or by all that. I was just pursuing the work when I could do it, when I wasn't sick.

So, to hear, after the fact, when I was getting back into

The Phantom Stranger TM & © DC Comics.

the industry to have someone like Kurt present something like *Astro City* to me and then it working out so that I could stay with that book 'til its very end and produce the amount of work that I've done… I was, like, "Yes, right!" But Alex, you can tell Brent Anderson how to draw *anything anytime* you'd like. It's no problem. [*laughter*]

CBC: *You sound easy to work with. Are you?*

Brent: I am easy to work with? I think so, although you probably have to ask Kurt that question! But, creatively, I don't know… Well, let's see. It's kind of a complicated question because, professionally, I feel that, when I go into collaboration with somebody that brings a project to me and wants to develop a project, I will defer to the originator of the concept before I'll start putting in my contribution to it.

It was with when I worked on *Rising Stars* for Top Cow, I was collaborating with J. Michael Straczynski. Joe personally asked for me because of some of the other work that I had done and he was familiar enough to ask me to do a couple of fill-ins on that book because he was not happy with the artwork on the book and the storytelling.

I had been working with Kurt on *Astro City* and Kurt just loves collaboration. He loves to talk for hours about characters and stories and the things he wants to do and the current work and how to make it better, etc., etc. Joe Straczynski's the exact opposite. So, when I started working on *Rising Stars*, I asked Joe at the very beginning, "So how much collaboration do you want to do between your script, me getting your script, and my final layouts or finishes for each issue?" We were communicating via email and he sent me back three words: "I trust you." That was it!

I followed up with a phone call and said, "Well, what do you mean you trust me?" He goes, "Your track record. Look, I come from episodic television. When my script is done, I hand it over to the director who then directs the actors. I have nothing to say about the actors who are chosen. I'm writing to the actors that are already there. And, as far as changes to the script, don't mess with my words. If you want to change the script, then yes, I will have an issue. But if you draw in the way that you draw (which is very well) what's in the script," he says, "I'll trust you." So I had no collaboration, which was kind of sad because I like Joe and I would love to pick his brain on his creative process and all that in writing the material that he wrote. But I didn't have that opportunity because he was onto other things.





CBC: *So is Kurt your best collaborator?*

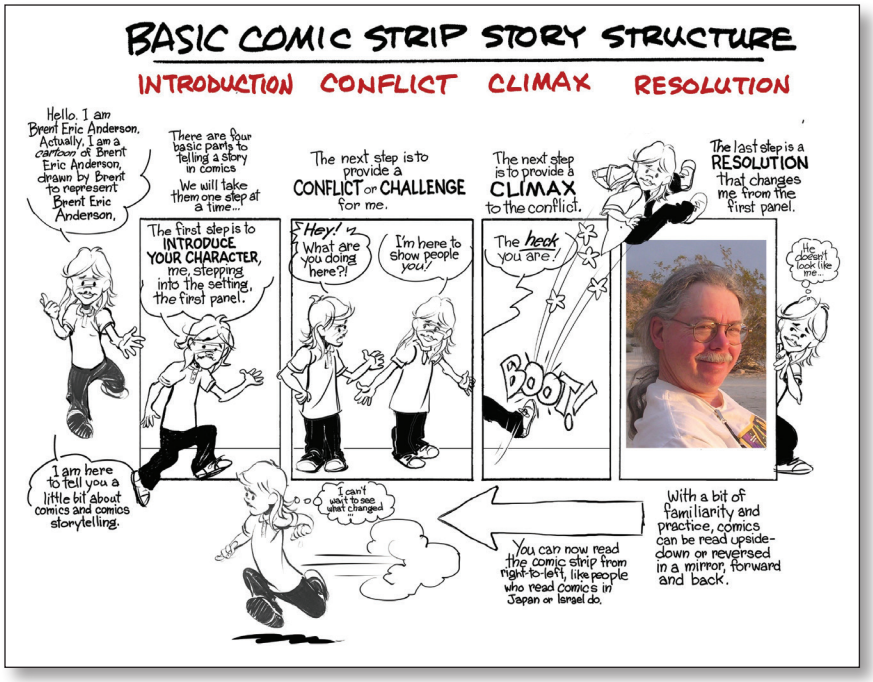
Brent: I've had good collaborations with just about everybody. And I'm not going to point out the ones that I didn't have because then it comes down to personal professional styles and I don't resort to that. But I would say that I had mostly positive collaboration with all of the writers that I have worked with, starting with Bruce Jones with my first series. We went on to do *Somerset Holmes* and a couple of things for his *Alien Worlds* thing. And Chris Claremont, of course, on *The X-Men*. And then Peter B. Gillis, who was a gift from the gods. I mean, working with Peter was just, that was the most fun I've ever had in jointly creating a work. He didn't bring that work to me and say, "This is the way I want you to do it." He brought the idea to me and he said, "Now, how shall we do this? How can we do this? " And I felt like Stan and Jack all over again. And he and I actually joked about that, about wanting to be the new Stan and Jack and create the *Morituri* universe for Marvel. So that was quite a successful collaboration.

The one-shots, I worked with various, like Steven Grant on my first *Battlestar Galactica*. But let's see… on the one-shot things like *Bloodshot*, there really was no collaboration. It was just, here's the script, draw it the way you think it's best and that. And that's exactly what Straczynski did with *Rising Stars*. And the only reason I stayed with *Rising Stars* was I got to pencil and ink the book, all the finishes on it – the last 12 issues, anyway – and penciled two before that. And I just loved Straczynski's scripts. I mean… the stories, the characters… they're very much like *Astro City* type approach, but with no collaboration.

So that was the difference between *Rising Stars* and *Astro City* was that there was just no collaboration whatsoever with Straczynski. And I kind of missed that. But then again, I appreciate Straczynski's faith in me as a comic book creator. And then *Astro City*, of course… *Astro City*, the collaboration I established well on in the early days. I told Kurt, I said, "Your vision for this series, as open-ended as it is, and your stories of the things that you want to do with this, precludes me contributing anything of a conceptual nature to this because you're doing everything that I could possibly come up with and more on my own. So I'm just going to sit back and I'll take the scripts and I will literally translate them into good, strong visual storytelling – dynamic storytelling – like what Jack Kirby used to do with the plot outlines that either he would come up with in their collaboration or that Stan would come up with.

But the advantage to *Astro City* was that Kurt was delivering me full

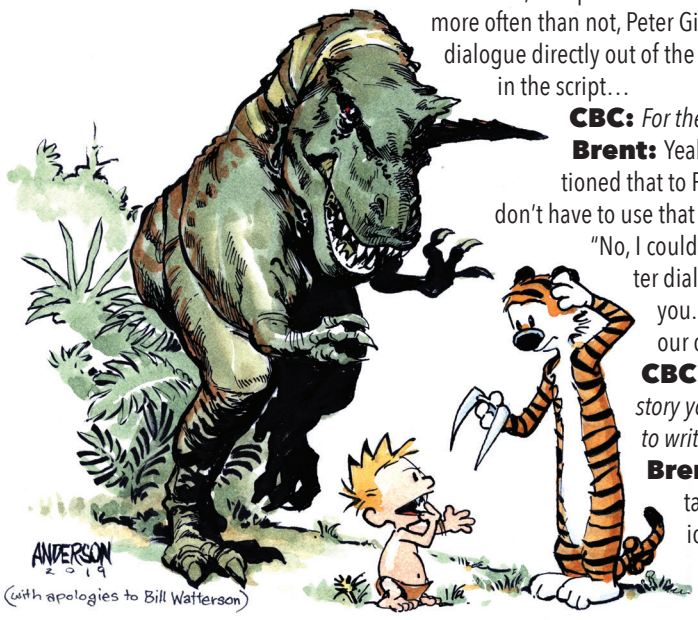
The Gods on Sunday Morning TM & © Juke Bo Productions.



Above: *Brent's instructional piece regarding the dynamics of comic strip exposition.* **Previous page:** *Remaining in limbo is Busiek/Anderson/Ross collaboration,* The Gods on Sunday, *as it awaits final dialoguing by the scribe.* **Inset right:** *Pin-up Brent drew of The Spirit, channeling his inner Will Eisner, the comics great Brent had the opportunity to chat with during a signing event.* **Below:** *Cute pastiche of a certain comic strip, this starring "Kelvin & Zobbes," making believe they're Ka-Zar and Zabu!* **Next page:** *Ken Meyer Jr.'s portrait of our man of the issue along with a snapshot of the clan Anderson – from left to right: Bryce, Shirley, and Brent – posing in the Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, in 2014.*

scripts. He asked me early on, he said, "So, do you want to work Marvel-style over plots?" Because Kurt had a lot of experience with that. And I had a lot of experience working over Marvel plots. "Or would you rather work full script?" And I said, "At this point, Kurt, I think I want a full script." And he goes, "Okay, we'll split the difference. I'll give you a plot outline with dialogue. How is that?" And I said, "Well, that's as good a definition of a script as anything. So, yes, plot outline with dialogue. Let's go with that." And I joked with him, I said, "Then I won't have to write the dialogue in the margins like I did with *Strikeforce: Morituri*." Because Peter had some dialogue, but not a lot. So I was writing dialogue in the margins, just like Jack Kirby or John Buscema used to do, but it wasn't full-on dialogue. It was just indications of he said this and she said that. Well, I elaborated a little bit more, let's put it that way. And more often than not, Peter Gillis lifted my dialogue directly out of the margins and put it in the script…





CBC: *For the letterer?*

Brent: Yeah, at times. I mentioned that to Peter and I said, "You don't have to use that dialogue." He goes, "No, I couldn't come up with better dialogue for that. Thank you. I take that as a gift of our collaboration."

CBC: *Now, do you have a story yourself that you want to write and draw?*

Brent: Well, are you talking about specifically for *Astro City* or…?

CBC: *No, just on the bucket list.*

Brent: Yes! I'm actually working on a project like that. I think I mentioned it earlier in the interview. It was a property that Tony Salmons and I were talking about doing back in 1975 and presenting it to Charlton Comics when we went to New York. Nothing really came of it from then, but I never let go of the idea. And so I picked it up again a couple of years ago and I started laying it out and planning to do it called It's *Force 5ive*.

CBC: *And it's an adventure?*

Brent: It's kind of a tribute to Jack Kirby and Stan Lee's *Fantastic Four* comics – *Force Five*: *Fantastic Four* – I mean, that's where I got the title from. But the thing I liked about the Fantastic Four was that it was four disparate characters with a family relationship with each other that was independent of and actually resulting from their gaining super-powers. And they were a family exposed to this thing that created the powers within them. And then they had to come to terms with with their past relationships, as they faced a new future, now having super-powers and the attending responsibilities. And that just really, really suited me for doing my own series. So, in a nutshell, *Force 5ive* is a collection of people who have been inadvertently uplifted by the fourth dimensional energies. And they have found a way to tap those energies from there and how they affect the third dimension. And it includes the introduction of this God character who was here to witness the anomaly from the fourth dimension that we see as space-time. It's a little bubble in the fourth dimension that has causality and all that. And it gets really scientific and all that kind of science fictioning. But the idea was that the Earth appears to be threatened by this godlike being from another dimension and it's creating havoc on the earth. And at the same time, these five characters… Well, actually, it's five characters are imbued with the energies in different ways. They manifest themselves in different ways, these energies from the fourth dimension and how they influence the third dimension. So they're learning about their powers. They're trying to save the world from this threat. They realize that the threat is not from the god from another dimension. It's ourselves in our war and all that kind of stuff. It's just a lot of fun. If you can imagine the Fantastic Four meets *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and Arthur C. Clarke's novel, *Childhoods End*. Put those things together and make a comic book out of it. I'm doing it a little bit in reverse.

My original idea was a 150-… Well, let's see what would it be…? About 125- or 135-page graphic novel to start and that would tell the original story. And then do a follow-up mini-series focusing on each of the future histories of the characters before they had powers, while they were developing the powers and then what happens to them after the climax of the graphic novel. So it's a sprawling epic kind of thing. But it's right up my alley all these years that I have been collaborating with others to create whole universes of characters and then tell a few stories from those universes to

"Basic Comic Strip Story Structure," all art © and courtesy of Brent Anderson. The Spirit TM & © Will Eisner Studios, Inc. Calvin and Hobbes TM & © Andrews McMeel Universal.

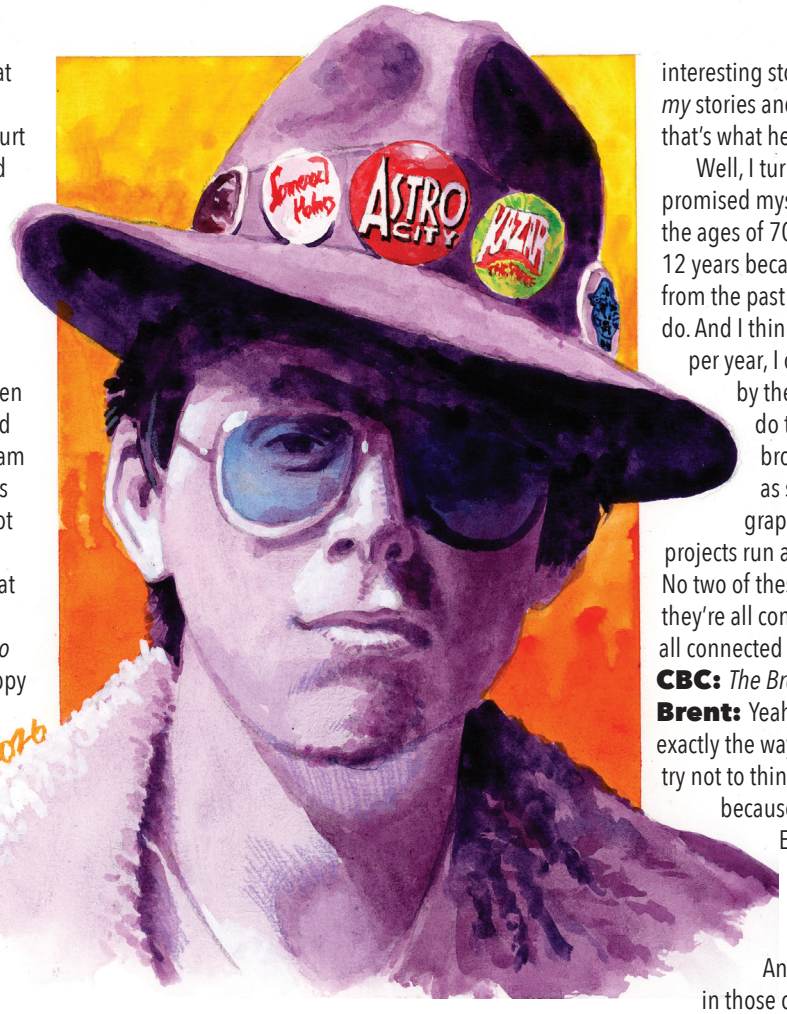
good effect. And I feel that I was given that opportunity twice, first with Peter B. Gillis and *Strikeforce: Morituri*, and then with Kurt Busiek and *Astro City*. And now I'm retired from collaborating with others. I still want to create my own universe. I pretty much have, just nobody's seen most of it, so I'm going to show some of it.

CBC: *So do you have any kind of rough timing on this?*

Brent: I guess I can put it this way: when I contemplated retirement, when it looked like *Astro City* was going to run out of steam or Kurt got tired of it or he ran out of ideas and essentially what happened was he got his perpetual headache and he's had his health problems, which put the end to that series. As he said afterwards, we tied up all the loose ends with the last of the *Astro* books and he's happy with it, and I'm happy with it, too. But I was starting to think about, "Okay, now what do I want to do in going into retirement?" And I seriously wanted to go back to all those things that I had left open in 1975 before I went to New York and started my professional career and then got distracted from my work by doing work for other people in collaboration for other companies.

And, as I got closer to last year, I was planning to retire last year and then my mom got sick. And so last year was mom's cancer year for me. She passed away. And that will be a chapter in my autobiography when I wind up getting to that chapter. But this year I picked up almost exactly a year to the day and started what I'm calling my transitional year into retirement. And my basic outline was I was looking at the success of Will Eisner and the "father of the American graphic novel" and he was doing work that was being published right up until just a couple of months before he died. I think he finished his last work just three months before he died. And he was 87 years old!

I had met Will at Comic-Con and we signed *Spirit Jams* together and he paid me some wonderful compliments on my version of The Spirit as they were seen in the books. But I always looked up to Will's philosophy about doing his graphic novels, about what he wanted to do because there were parts of him. There were stories he wanted to tell from his childhood about growing up because other people who may or may not have grown up that way might find that of interest because they're interesting stories, and I feel that about *my* stories and that's what I want to do. So that's what he did.



Well, I turned 71 this year and I promised myself last year that, between the ages of 70 and 82, I figured let's do 12 years because I have about 12 projects from the past that I have always wanted to do. And I think, if I work really hard, one per year, I can probably get all 12 done by the time I'm 82. And, if I can do that, I'll feel like I will have broken the Eisner barrier as far as self-creation and creating graphic novels. Those 12 specific projects run a gamut of different material. No two of these projects are the same, but they're all connected. In some way they're all connected to each other ultimately.

CBC: *The Brentverse?*

Brent: Yeah, the Brentverse! That's exactly the way I'm thinking about it. And I try not to think about it too much that way because it sounds so egotistical. Everything's coming together. It's related to Christmas cards and stuff I did for my family when I was younger. And my caricature has changed in those cards over the years. I've always depicted myself with a little cartoon face in my work. I'm working on a daily comic strip style comic strip called *Yantze Street*, me with that name my dad invented, Yantze. But I'm doing this comic strip, which is essentially just a gag a day comic strip with characters that are all based on my family and people I've known in my life, and I'm having a ball. That's what I'm working on right now.



Just to look a little bit forward, but also a little bit back, I didn't mention the interim graphic novel that Kurt wrote and that I drew. Between the time that *Astro City* ended and before Kurt started having his health issues, he wrote what could be an *Astro City* story, but he couldn't write it as such because we had to wait 18 months after terminating the book with DC/Vertigo by contract. They had to be allowed to sell their back product and not be in competition.

So, in those 18 months, Kurt wrote this graphic novel called, *The Gods on Sunday Morning*, which is drawn but pending the scripting being completed. And that was the third of three projects that I was working on since before the pandemic, since before 2019, none of which have seen print, which is why I've been so out of the industry for so long a period of time.

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Brent Anderson portrait © Ken Meyer, Jr. Used with permission. Photo courtesy of Brent Anderson.

TwoMorrows Ad

TwoMorrows Ad

Forty Years of Dark Horse Comics

With Dark Horse founder Mike Richardson having recently stepped down from his role as CEO of the company, our convention photographer looks back at some of the imprint's long list of creators.



A triptych of Mike Richardson photos, with the publisher handing out free comics to fans at New York Comic Con 2014 (center), bracketed by himself at the 2014 San Diego Comic-Con.

All photos © Kendall Whitehouse.



Hellboy *creator Mike Mignola at San Diego Comic-Con 2013.*



Usagi Yojimbo *creator Stan Sakai at the San Diego Comic-Con 2018 Eisner Awards.*



Frank Miller gives the "Frank Miller look" at a DH signing session during NYCC 2016.



Monkeyman & O'Brien *creator Arthur Adams at Baltimore Comic-Con 2023.*



Jeff Lemire accepting his trophy for "Best New Series" at the 2017 Eisner Awards.



J.M. DeMatteis, Karen Berger (whose Berger Books is a Dark Horse imprint), and Dave Gibbons before a signing session in the Dark Horse booth at New York Comic Con 2018.



Grendel *creator Matt Wagner at Baltimore Comic-Con 2014.*

Photography by Kendall Whitehouse

The Cal Ripken of Colorists!

Glenn Whitmore, CBC *colormeister, on his super-journey into the comics profession*

As I grew up a stone's throw away from the Kubert School, when I was 10, Mom signed me up for Saturday sketch classes. Joe Kubert himself gave the first lesson and it was there that my journey into the comics profession was cemented.

I graduated from JKS in 1987. But, during my third year, the school opened a door to a part-time job for a local newspaper. The paper's gimmick was color on the daily comic strips. This was my first hands-on experience on how color for comics was created.

Next, I pursued coloring gigs at DC. Production manager Bob Rozakis showed me the ropes as to coloring guides and color codes. Eventually, I landed the assignment to color the *Hawk & Dove* mini-series; pencilled by some guy named Liefeld. *Hawk & Dove* editor Mike Carlin offered me a one month fill-in on the *Superman* titles. If it worked out, I could have the job permanently. I jumped at the chance.

Over the next decade, the *Superman* titles grew from two to four a month; and I colored *all of them*. I fancied myself as the "Cal Ripken of colorists." The "triangle years" provided legendary, memorable storylines such as "The Death/Return of Superman," the wedding issue, and "Superman Red/Blue." You can blame me for the last one.



Eventually, coloring guides gave way to digital color. After my run at DC ended, I worked on my Photoshop skills. My initial assignments came from Steve Rude, TwoMorrows, and Archie Comics. At Archie, I had the good fortune to color the wedding(s) and death issues of their red-headed teen.

At TwoMorrows, I have the rewarding experience of coloring covers for *Back Issue!, Comic Book Creator, Alter-Ego,* and *The Jack Kirby Collector,* and taking on various assignments when needed.

Nowadays, my comic convention appearances are filled with gratitude; especially when fans tell me how "The Death Of Superman" got them into comics or brought them back to the field. In closing, it has been a blessing to serve through a vocation and an industry I've longed to be a part of for four decades.

– Glenn Whitmore

coming attractions: in may, cbc honors a legend

The Masterful Artistry of Al Williamson



Celebrating **AL WILLIAMSON** is the spotlight of *CBC* #49, where **GREG BIGA** talks with the wonderful fantasy/adventure artist's peers and prodigies about his South American upbringing, emergence as a Fleagle Boy with Frazetta, Torres, and company, collaborations with Roy Krenkel and Archie Goodwin, comic strip art on *Secret Agent Corrigan* and *Star Wars*, and *Flash Gordon* obsession! We also talk with **BRUCE CHRISLIP** about the **MINI COMICS REVOLUTION** and its impact on the comics world, and there's part one of a behind-the-scenes look at the '60s/'70s Marvel Bullpen courtesy of **STU SCHWARTZBERG**, the writer/cartoonist and "Stat-Man Extraordinaire"! And, speaking of bullpens, **KEN GALE** showcases the inside baseball story of the **FANDOM FIREBALLS**, the greatest softball team in the history of the comics industry! In addition, **EDMUND TRUEMAN** explores the **CONGOLESE COMICS** scene and the brilliant work appearing in that African country, and we examine the lives of the husband-&-wife Golden Age comics creator team of **BURTON & RUTH GELLER**, who had their own E.C. Comics title and worked, often under pen-name **RUTH BURTON**, on children's comics for decades. And **HEMBECK** is in here, you bet!

Full-color, 84 pages, $10.95

from the archives of Tom Ziuko



I was asked to collaborate with one of my favorite artists – Bo Hampton – on a series of posters, and this is my digital coloring of his vision of an intriguing crossover – Batman of Barsoom –imagining the Dark Knight detective transplanted into the Martian world of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Much thanks to Bo for both artistic and life lessons along the way…

– TZ

Batman TM & © DC Comics.
Art © Bo Hampton.