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SAN DIEGO



SOUVENIR BOOK



2024



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2024

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COMIC-CON MUSEUM

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COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL

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# COMIC-CON MUSEUM

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2024

# SOUVENIR BOOK

**JULY 25-28** PREVIEW NIGHT: JULY 24  
SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER

6

8

105

## MISSION STATEMENT

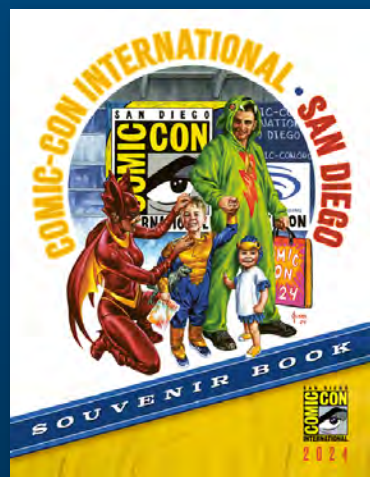
Comic-Con International is a California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation organized for charitable purposes and dedicated to creating the general public's awareness of and appreciation for comics and related popular art forms, including participation in and support of public presentations, conventions, exhibits, museums and other public outreach activities which celebrate the historic and ongoing contribution of comics to art and culture.

## ABOUT THE COVER

Each year one of our invited guests graciously agrees to create artwork for the cover of our *Souvenir Book*. This year we are excited to have Joe Jusko be that artist. Recognized for his fantasy, pin-up, and comics work, Joe, a fan favorite, is a great choice for the 2024 *Souvenir Book*.

His depiction features a family stopping in front of the center to attend to one of their children. The cover is representative of so many that visit the convention in full costume.

Some interesting points to note are that Joe's two grandchildren are featured in his artwork and one is dressed in a Toucan costume replete with its vibrant plumage. The Comic-Con Toucan, introduced in 1982, occasionally served as the mascot in our early years. Recently, however, the Toucan has been featured more prominently. The organization has long joked of having a mascot costume created for promotional appearances. Perhaps now, seeing this iteration, those discussions might gain new consideration.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# WELCOME BACK!



**W**e are thrilled to be able to welcome you all to the 55th Comic-Con! Once again, we are given the opportunity to reunite in person to celebrate the popular arts, with all its diverse interests and fandoms that bring us together in the magic that is this community. We are grateful to be able to share this with all those who attend, you who are at the heart of the event. Thank you for joining us.

Comic-Con has always been as much about the social connections that make up fandom as it is about our many events and exhibits. It is an opportunity to learn new things, discover new fandoms, meet new people, and share stories and experiences with like-minded fans and friends you have yet to meet. Comic-Con has always had the popular arts community at its core. It's a place to renew old friendships and make new ones, a place to meet with others to celebrate the amazing world of fandom. Within this campus, you will find a wide scope of opportunities that cover an amazing diversity of interests...there is truly something for everyone. Comic-Con brings with it the opportunity for fans to once again gather throughout the entire campus of Comic-Con, whether it be attending a panel, taking a workshop, sharing your cosplay with the crowd, donating at the Blood Drive, finding that prized item in the Exhibit Hall, taking a break in the Sails Pavilion, meeting a favorite artist, painting a gaming figure, visiting one of the many activations outside the Center, or simply spending time with friends old and new at the end of each day. We are excited to share in the joy of seeing the many spaces bustling with activity and creativity as we celebrate the community that is Comic-Con.

This year, we are thrilled to be celebrating anniversaries of our own for two of our long-time events, the Masquerade and the Inkpot Awards. 2024 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for each, and we celebrate their long tenure at Comic-Con. You can find articles about their history and relationship to Comic-Con in this very publication, and the theme of our Saturday post-Masquerade Party will celebrate 50 years of this popular event. But with this happiness comes some sadness as we bid a happy retirement to our longest-tenured employee, Executive Director Fae Desmond, who will be retiring after this year's show. We are thankful for her many years of service to this little show we all love, and we hope you join us in congratulating her on this new path.

As we begin this event together, we know that there are many options to choose from, and we are grateful that you have chosen to spend your time with us. This event is only possible because of the dedication of the many volunteers and staff who work year round to make this the best show ever, and we are excited to welcome you into our "village" and share its magic with you. Your loyalty and support are the reason for our longevity and success. We thank you all and hope you have a fantastic Comic-Con 2024.

**Robin Donlan**

President  
San Diego Comic Convention



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AMEND



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BARNES



BRANDON-CROFT



CLIMO



CLOWES

Photo: Brian Molyneaux

## Bill Amend

Bill Amend is the creator of the *FoxTrot* comic strip, syndicated since 1988 by Andrews McMeel Universal. *FoxTrot*'s numerous book collections have combined sales of more than 3.5 million copies. Amend received the 2006 Reuben Award for Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year from the National Cartoonists Society and the Inkpot Award for Comic Arts from Comic-Con in 2012. He has a BA in physics from Amherst College and currently lives in the Midwest.

## Charles Ar dai

Charles Ar dai is the Edgar Award-winning creator of the bestselling *Gun Honey* comics and co-creator of *Hard Case Crime*, whose authors have included Stephen King, Michael Crichton, Brian De Palma, and Ray Bradbury. He was a writer/producer on the TV series *Haven* and authored the novel of Shane Black's movie *The Nice Guys*, as well as *Songs of Innocence*, which won the Shamus Award and was called "an instant classic" by the *Washington Post*. His newest works are the collection *Death Comes Too Late* and *Gun Honey: Collision Course*.

## Rodney Barnes

Rodney Barnes is an award-winning writer,

producer, and comic book creator whose vibrant, emphatic voice has established him as a Hollywood mainstay. Barnes was most recently an executive producer and writer for HBO's *Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty*, chronicling the professional and personal lives of the 1980s Showtime Lakers. His publishing imprint, *Zombie Love Studios*, is dedicated to storytelling through unique BIPOC perspectives, including *Killadelphia* (nominated for a 2023 Eisner Award), *Blacula* (an adaptation of the cult horror classic), and *Monarch*, an apocalyptic sf adventure series following a group of Compton school kids in the midst of an alien invasion.

## Barbara Brandon-Croft

Barbara Brandon-Croft became the nation's first Black woman cartoonist to cross the color line into the mainstream press in 1989 with her cartoon feature *Where I'm Coming From*, which first appeared in the *Detroit Free Press*. In 1991 Universal Press Syndicate began distributing her strip in more than 60 mainstream newspapers internationally. Her syndication ended in 2005. Last year, *Drawn & Quarterly* published a compilation of selected strips along with the backstory of her career.

It won a National Association of Black Journalist Award for Outstanding Book of 2023 and is nominated for a 2024 Eisner Award. Barbara is the daughter of the late pioneering cartoonist Brumsic Brandon, Jr., creator of *Luther*. A traveling exhibition of their work, "STILL . . . Racism in America: A Retrospective in Cartoons," was most recently installed at UC Davis Design Museum.

## Liz Climo

Liz Climo is a cartoonist, animator, and author. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and moved to Los Angeles after college to work as an artist on *The Simpsons*, where she worked for 14 years. She has published 17 books in the U.S., including *Rory the Dinosaur*, *The Little World of Liz Climo*, and *Lobster is the Best Medicine*. Her books have been translated into 14 languages, with millions of copies in print worldwide. Her newest book, *Life in the Present*, will be released this August. Liz lives in Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.

## Daniel Clowes

Daniel Clowes is an acclaimed American cartoonist, illustrator, and screenwriter. He gained fame with his comic book series *Eightball*,

which was notable for its dark humor and commentary on modern culture. Clowes' work often explores themes of social isolation, personal identity, and the complexities of human relationships. His graphic novel *Ghost World* received particular acclaim, becoming a cult classic and later adapted into a feature film. More recently, his books *Patience* and *Monica* have been critically acclaimed, showcasing his continued innovation and depth in graphic storytelling.

### Gerry Conway

Known forever to fandom as "the man who killed Gwen Stacy," Gerry Conway is also the co-creator of The Punisher, Firestorm, Power Girl, Man-Thing, Werewolf-by-Night, The Jackal, Killer Croc, Tombstone, Tarantula, Count Vertigo, Vibe, Vixen, Commander/Citizen Steel, and many other popular (and not so popular) characters for Marvel and DC Comics. Gerry sold his first story to DC editor Murray Boltinoff a few weeks before he turned 16. At 18 he was writing for Marvel full time; by 20, he was scripting Marvel's flagship title, *Amazing Spider-Man*.

### Jo Duffy

Jo Duffy has written comics including *Power Man and Iron Fist*,

*Catwoman, Batman, Wolverine, Fallen Angels, Nestrobber, Glory, Crystar, Elvira, Defenders, Punisher, and Star Wars*, as well as the English-language edition of *Akira*. She has written short stories, essays, the comic book biography of Saint Francis, and an adaptation of Kipling's *Jungle Book*, and is the co-writer of two *Puppet Master* movies. She was managing editor of *Epic* magazine and an editor at Marvel comics, handling such titles as *Elektra, Daredevil, Dreadstar, Groo, Doctor Strange, Hulk*, and *ROM*. She co-edited Bernie Wrightson's *Frankenstein*.

### Mark Evanier

Mark Evanier attended his first San Diego Comic-Con in 1970 and has been to every one of these annual events ever since. He was then an assistant to the great Jack Kirby, whom he wrote about in his book *Kirby, King of Comics*. Mark has also written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows (including various *Garfield* cartoons) and tons of comic books. The comics include working with Sergio Aragonés for over 40 years on *Groo the Wanderer*, and many more. He is also a historian of comic books and animation.

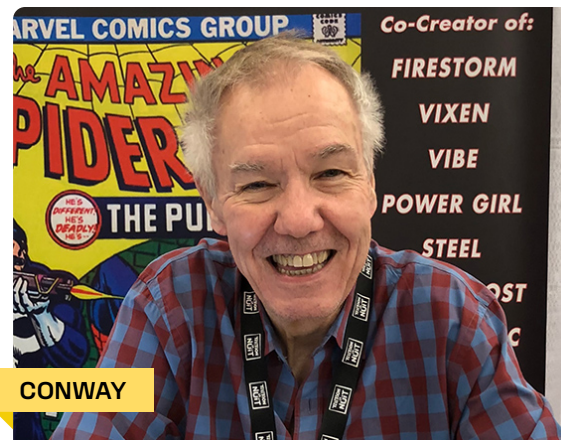
### Mike Friedrich

Mike Friedrich started

writing comics professionally at the age of 18, working for DC (*Justice League, Green Lantern*) and Marvel (*Iron Man, Ka-Zar*). After 8 years of writing, Mike shifted to the business side of comics. He was one of the first alternative publishers (Star\*Reach, 1974–1979), created the Marvel Comics direct sales department (1980–1982), then founded the first business management company for comics artists and writers (Star\*Reach, 1982–2002). The Star\*Reach publishing company featured work by Jim Starlin, Howard Chaykin, Frank Brunner, Lee Marris, Steve Leialoha, Michael T. Gilbert, and many others. The Star\*Reach management company represented Paul Chadwick, P. Craig Russell, Tim Sale, Brent Anderson, and dozens of others. Along the way Mike also co-founded WonderCon, ran retailer trade shows, and even did one television deal (Roberta Gregory's *Bitchy Bitch*, 1998–2000).

### Roberta Gregory

Roberta Gregory grew up with comics; her father was Disney duck artist Bob Gregory. Her earliest work appeared in the 1970s in *Wimmen's Comix, Tits and Clits*, and her self-published *Dynamite Damsels*. Later she was in *Gay Comix* and self-published



CONWAY



DUFFY



EVANIER



FRIEDRICH



GREGORY



GUARNIDO



HARRIS



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HONKUN

*Winging It* and *Sheila and the Unicorn*. In 1991 she began her 40-issue Fantagraphics series *Naughty Bits*, starring *Bitchy Bitch*. During the 1990s, Roberta self-published her *Artistic Licentiousness* series and *Bitchy Strips*. In the 2000s she self-published *True Cat Toons* and *Follow Your Art*. Fantagraphics plans a *Bitchy* collection, and Roberta's attempting prose writing, currently creating a four-book work of fiction, *Mother Mountain*.

### Juanjo Guarnido

Spanish artist Juanjo Guarnido began his career by drawing Marvel Character illustrations published in Spain by Comics Forum. He then moved to animation, mostly working for Disney at the Paris facility (on *The Goofy Movie, Mickey's Runaway Brain, Hercules, The Jungle Book 2*, and others). While still at Disney, he created with scriptwriter Juan Díaz Canales the graphic novel *Blacksad: Somewhere within the Shadows*. Five volumes of *Blacksad* were released between 2000 and 2013, garnering Juanjo two Eisner Awards trophies. He also drew *Sorcelleries* with writer Teresa Valero; directed and animated the music video *Freak of the Week* for the Swedish band *Freak Kitchen*; and drew and watercolored the graphic novel *Les*

*Indes Fourbes*, with script by Alain Ayroles. He recently completed the *Blacksad* adventure *They All Fall Down*, which is nominated for three Eisner Awards this year.

### Jack C. Harris

Upon graduation from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia in 1974, he was hired by DC Comics as part of their "Junior Woodchucks" program, becoming assistant editor to Murray Boltinoff. Within a year, Harris was an editor in his own right, handling such titles as *Kamandi, Blackhawk, Starfire, Warlord, Green Lantern*, and *Secret Society of Super-Heroes*. Among the many other titles he edited were *Challengers of the Unknown, Teen Titans, Shazam, Sgt. Rock, House of Mystery, and Adventure Comics*. Harris handled scripting chores on such varied titles as *Isis, Men of War, Weird War Tales, House of Mystery, Superman Family, Metal Men, and House of Secrets*. In 1985, he left DC for freelance writing. He did work for Marvel, Continuity, Hamilton, Archie, and others. He wrote over a hundred children's titles for Western and other publishers, featuring licensed characters such as *Masters of the Universe, Garfield, and Conan*. In 2023, Harris wrote *Working With Ditko* (TwoMorrows), chronicling his many

collaborations, as both writer and editor, with legendary comic book creator Steve Ditko.

### Lea Seidman Hernandez

Known for her unabashedly feminine art and writing, Lea has a career of firsts: first woman with an original graphic novel at Image (*Cathedral Child*, 1998; *Clockwork Angels*, 1999), first creator to take a comic from print to web (*Rumble Girls*, 2002), and one of the first U.S. comickers publishing in a manga-influenced style. As editor of the website *Girlamatic*, Lea presented then-new comics creators like Raina Telgemeier (*Smile*). Lea gives entertaining drawing demos at conventions and schools, using skills honed as an artist/writer for DC's *Teen Titans Go!* She is launching a line of prints and enamel pins at Comic-Con.

### Honkun

Yuta Honda is a Japanese artist known as Honkun. Having a father who is a sumi-e painter, he learned everything about current expression in life. Sumi-e captures and expresses the world with lines. From 2014 to 2023 Honkun had a shop in Tokyo to spread sumi-e. In 2019, he had a revelation to arrange the character of a cat he drew as a child with

the concept of “sumi-e lines” and matching calligraphy and painting. Since Japanese characters are also made up of drawings, he thought it would be highly compatible with sumi-e. The relaxed and laid-back cat with a message became very popular at his shop. He is at Comic-Con to introduce “Honkun’s Cat” to an American audience.

### Joseph Illidge

Joseph is the writer of the upcoming *Harriet Tubman* graphic novel for Harper Collins and is co-author of the Judge Kim and the Kids’ Court children’s books from Simon and Schuster and the *MPLS Sound* historical fiction graphic novel from Humanoids. With an editorial career in comics ranging from Milestone to DC Comics’ *Batman* to *Heavy Metal*, Joseph is writing new projects for Image Comics, FairSquare Comics, and First Second Books. Joseph is a Board member of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and the recipient of a citation from the New York State Assembly for exemplary community service through career achievement.

### Klaus Janson

Klaus Janson broke into the comic industry in 1974 with the publication of his first professional work, inking Rich Buckler

on Marvel’s *Black Panther*. A great variety of inking projects followed, including *Defenders*, *Deathlok*, *Avengers*, *Howard the Duck*, *Kull*, *Spider-Man*, *Wolverine*, *Daredevil*, *Conan*, *Batman*, and *Dark Knight Returns*. In the 1980s, Klaus began transitioning to penciling and worked on *Gothic* with Grant Morrison, *The Punisher* with Mike Baron, *Daredevil: End of Days* with Brian Bendis and David Mack, *Death and the Maidens* with Greg Rucka, *Sacred Creatures* with Pablo Raimondi, and *The Last Halloween* with Jeph Loeb. In the early 2000s, Klaus wrote two how-to books for DC Comics: *The DC Comics Guide to Penciling Comics* and *The DC Guide to Inking Comics*. Klaus taught at New York’s School of Visual Arts for 30 years and has presented his workshops on storytelling to artists, writers, and editors at every major comics publisher.

### Dave Johnson

Artist Dave Johnson is a 30-year animation and comics veteran. He’s worked for Marvel, DC, Image, Dark Horse, BOOM!, AWA, DSTLRY, and many more. He’s been nominated for multiple Eisner Awards and won once. In comics, he is mainly known for *Superman: Red Son* and as the cover artist for *100 Bullets* and many more.

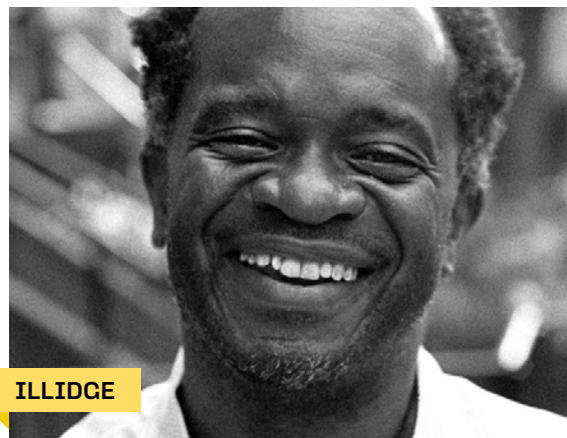
In animation he’s been a designer for such shows as *Batman Beyond*, *Justice League*, and *Venture Bros.* and is the co-creator of the original *Ben 10*.

### Joe Jusko

Joe Jusko’s career as a fantasy, pin-up, and comics artist has spanned over 45 years, starting with the sale of his very first cover for *Heavy Metal* magazine in 1977. Joe has worked for almost every major comic book publisher, producing hundreds of images for both covers and interiors. His work has appeared on paperback book covers, calendars, posters, T-shirts, toy packaging, and innumerable trading cards, most memorably the multi-award-winning 1992 Marvel Masterpieces Trading Cards. His hardcover *Art of Joe Jusko* book was released by Desperado Publishing in 2009. Joe is currently painting new covers for The Edgar Rice Burroughs Authorized Library, a lifelong goal and an endeavor that will make him the first artist to cover every book written by the legendary author.

### Lee Kohse

Lee Kohse co-founded BloodFire Studios in 2003 and created the hit indie comic *Kindergoth*, which led to one of the oddest collaborations in comics with legendary writer Len Wein. After



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spending years helping other creators get published, Lee stepped away from comics and began contributing art to properties such as *Aliens*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Robotech*, *Star Wars*, *H.P. Lovecraft*, and more. As a freelance illustrator, he has worked for Lucasfilm, Dreamworks, Hasbro, H.P. Lovecraft Film Festival, and Columbia Pictures, to name a few. With his background in the U.S. Marine Corps, Lee has created dozens of murals for the U.S. Armed Forces, including several at Camp Pendleton and MCRD San Diego. His original art is held in several major private collections and has been sold in galleries around the world. Recently, Lee returned to his comic roots painting covers for several publishers, working on new *Kindergoth* stories, and collaborating on new comics such as *Nocturnity*.

### Rick Law

Rick Law is an American illustrator and producer whose work spans films, TV, music, theme parks, publishing, toys, and video games, reaching an estimated audience of over a billion people worldwide. Best known for his association with The Walt Disney Company since 1993, Law's contributions to diverse projects include VHS and DVD cover art, toys, products, and leading initiatives such

as Disney English and Shanghai Disneyland. As an independent producer, he has contributed to films including *Drew: The Man Behind The Poster* and *Floyd Norman: An Animated Life*. With a passion for visual storytelling, he continues to explore and create new art.

### Jim Lee

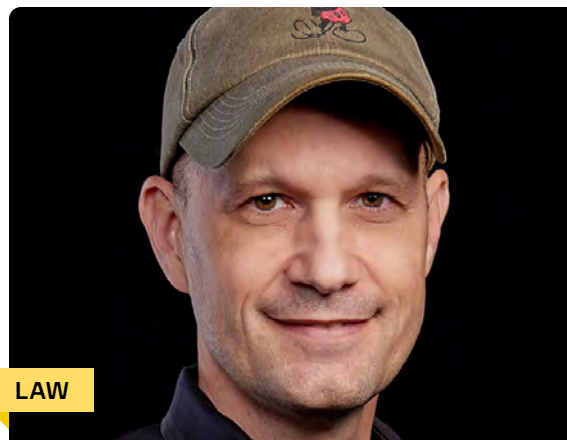
Jim Lee, the world-renowned comic book artist, writer, editor, and publisher, is currently president, publisher, and chief creative officer of DC. He leads creative efforts to integrate DC's publishing portfolio of characters and stories across all media, supporting Warner Bros. Discovery's family of brands and studios. Jim joined DC in 1998 and has overseen many of the company's highly successful publishing programs, including the record-breaking Rebirth line of comics and The New 52 initiative that relaunched the entire line of monthly superhero comic books. Jim was born in Seoul, South Korea, but moved with his family to St. Louis when he was young. He holds a B.A. in psychology from Princeton University and started his professional career at Marvel Comics, where his work on the X-Men continues to hold the all-time sales record for single-issue sales.

### Paul Levitz

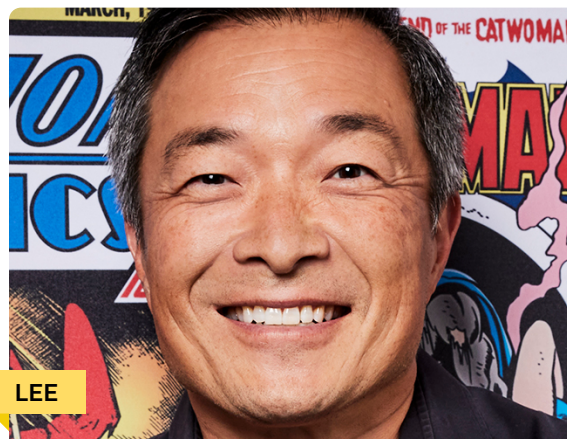
Paul Levitz has been a comic fan (*The Comic Reader*), editor (*Batman*), writer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*), executive (decades at DC Comics, ending as President & Publisher), historian (*Will Eisner: Champion of the Graphic Novel*), and now teaches subjects related to comics and transmedia at Pace University and Columbia University. His *75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking* won an Eisner Award and international awards, and he has been inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame. A new edition of his acclaimed collaboration with Keith Giffen, *Legion of Super-Heroes: The Great Darkness Saga*, is being published by DC in August.

### Rick Marschall

Rick Marschall is a former political cartoonist, comics editor at three newspaper syndicates, editor at Marvel Comics (where he founded *Epic* magazine), and writer for Disney comics. He was VP of Dargaud USA, when that European comics publisher introduced graphic novels to the USA. He founded the comics history magazines *NEMO* and *Hogan's Alley* and has written 75 books, mostly on comics history but also on country, jazz, and Baroque music,



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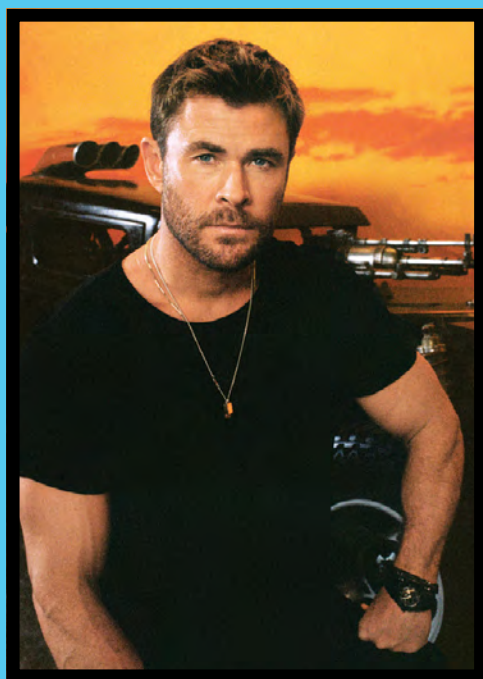
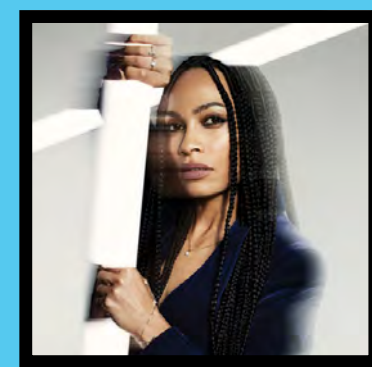
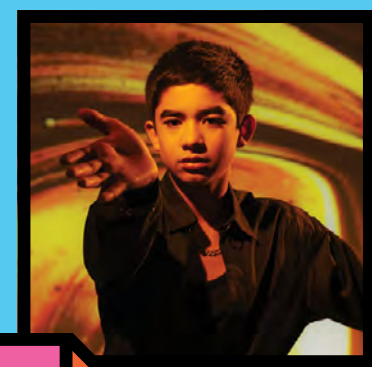
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Photo: Greg Preston.

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HOUSE OF THE DRAGON, AHSOKA: RACHELL SMITH (2); DOCTOR WHO: CHRISTINA EBENEZER; AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER: NICK FANCHER; FURIOSA: MAX MONTGOMERY; DUNE: PART TWO: PETER ASH LEE

politics, and Christian apologetics. Upcoming are the revival of *NEMO* magazine and an anthology of his writing, both from Fantagraphics.

### Patrick McDonnell

Patrick McDonnell's worldwide syndicated comic strip *MUTTS* is celebrating its 30th anniversary. It has received numerous awards for its artistry and animal/environmental themes. Charles Schulz called *MUTTS* "one of the best comics strips of all time." McDonnell's latest graphic novel, *The Super Hero's Journey*, was on 11 "best of the year" lists for 2023. He recently collaborated with the Dalai Lama (*Heart to Heart*). Breaking the *Chain*, a collection of his newsworthy comics about freeing Guard Dog, will be published this fall.

### Don McGregor

Comics writer Don McGregor is a purveyor of firsts: He produced the first interracial romantic kiss in a Comics Code series (1975, Marvel's *Amazing Adventures*); the first multi-issue story arc (Marvel's 13-part "Panther's Rage" in *Jungle Action*); the first graphic novel sold in the direct market (Eclipse Enterprises' *Sabre*); and the first gay male couple in mainstream comics (Eclipse's *Sabre* series).

Today, his acclaimed Marvel features "Black Panther" and "Killraven" and DC's *Nathaniel Dusk* are considered among the medium's finest. A winner of the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing and lifetime achievement awards by Madrid Hero Con and by ECBAACC, he helped trailblaze the modern graphic novel and independent comics.

### Katsuji Mori

Katsuji Mori, has had a long career as a Japanese voice actor, spanning over 50 years with hundreds of voice credits to his name. His most notable role was the lead character Ken Washio in *Gatchaman*. Mori has used his talents to voice some of the memorable characters in anime, including Nephrite in *Sailor Moon*, Nail in *Dragon Ball Z*, and Go Mifune in *Speed Racer*. Other credits include Professor Oak in the Pokémon video game, Shu in *Fist of the North Star*, and Garma Zabi in the *Gundam* movie. Courtesy of Mad Cave Studios

### Eric Nakamura

Eric Nakamura founded *Giant Robot* as a photocopied and stapled zine in 1994 and grew the publication until late 2010. The magazine reached a multiracial audience interested in Asian popular culture and became known as

the premier magazine in the field. Nakamura built on the success of *Giant Robot* with stores and galleries in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco and has curated over 300 exhibitions. Currently, Nakamura works in and owns the *Giant Robot* store and GR2 Gallery in Los Angeles, which continues to offer pop culture goods and hold art exhibitions.

### Naomi Novik

Naomi Novik has written the Scholomance trilogy, the novels *Uprooted* and *Spinning Silver*, and the Temeraire series. She is a founder of the Archive of Our Own. Her next book, *Buried Deep and Other Stories*, will be available in September. She is currently working on a project called *Folly*.

### Christopher Paolini

Christopher Paolini is the creator of the *World of Eragon* and the *Fractalverse*. His blockbuster series *The Inheritance Cycle* (*Eragon*, *Eldest*, *Brisinger*, *Inheritance*) has sold more than 40 million copies worldwide. First published at 19, he is the holder of the Guinness World Record for youngest author of a bestselling series. Christopher makes his home in Paradise Valley, Montana, where he



MCDONNELL



MCGREGOR



MORI



NAKAMURA

Photo: Chris Anthony Diaz



NOVIK



PAOLINI

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### Rick Parker

Rick Parker is an artist/writer whose memoir graphic novel *Drafted* is due out from Abrams ComicArts on September 24. It is about his military service during the Vietnam War, the first in a series about his life and work. Rick's comics career started at Marvel where he hand-lettered 30,000+ pages; created/wrote/drew "The Bossmen" cartoon strip in *Marvel Age*; wrote/drew the Bullpen Bullseye cartoon; and drew all 28 issues of MTV's *Beavis and Butt-Head* comic book. Rick has illustrated graphic novels for Papercutz, webcomics for Harvey Pekar, and *The Road to Hell* by Dwayne McDuffie and Matt Wayne.

### Thien Pham

Thien Pham is a graphic novelist and educator based in Oakland, CA. He is the author and illustrator of the graphic novel *Sumo* and the illustrator of the graphic novel *Level Up*. His latest book, *Family Style*, is a memoir about his family's immigration to America told through the lens of food. It has been on numerous best-of lists, including the *Washington Post's* Top Ten Graphic Novels

of 2023 and *Publishers Weekly's* 20 Books We Love. *Family Style* is also a finalist for the ALA Yalsa Excellence in Non-Fiction and the California Young Adult Book Award and is nominated for the Best Graphic Memoir Eisner Award..

### Eric Powell

Eric Powell is an Eisner, Ringo, International Horror Guild, and National Cartoonist Society Award-winning cartoonist. While providing work for every prominent comics publisher in the business, the majority of his career has been focused on creator-owned comics and promoting their validity and importance in the comics industry, most notably with his series *The Goon* and the work through his own publishing imprint, Albatross Funny Books. With the *Goon* celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, Albatross and Dark Horse Comics are currently releasing a new series by Powell: *The Goon: Them That Don't Stay Dead*. Powell is also working on *Dr. Werthless*, a graphic novel that covers the crime cases and life of the notorious psychologist Dr. Fredric Wertham. It is a follow-up to his acclaimed true crime graphic novel *Did You Hear What Eddie Gein Done?* with co-author and prominent true-

crime author Harold Schechter.

### Tim Powers

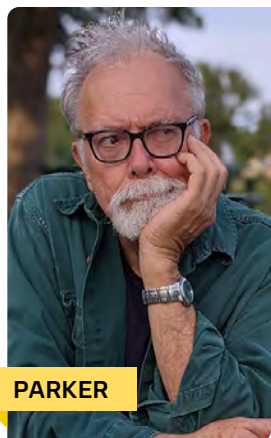
Tim Powers is the author of 18 science fiction and fantasy novels, including *The Anubis Gates*, *My Brother's Keeper*, and *On Stranger Tides*, which was the basis of the fourth *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. His books have been translated into more than a dozen languages and have won the World Fantasy Award, the Philip K. Dick Award, the Prix Apollo (France), and the Gigamesh Award (Spain). Powers lives in San Bernardino, California, with his wife, Serena.

### Meggie Ramm

Meggie Ramm (they/ them) is a nonbinary cartoonist and comics designer. They graduated from California College of the Arts with an MFA in comics and have had work published by *The New Yorker* and *Silver Sprocket*. They are best known for their kids' series *Batcat*, which was recently awarded Best in Children's Fiction in the Excellence in Graphic Literature Awards. *Batcat* has been published in Danish, Spanish, and Catalan. Ramm is currently working on *Batcat* sequels as well as a comic about the Olympics.

### Cecy Robson

Cecy Robson is an award-winning author published by Penguin,



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Random House, and now Entangled Publishing's new imprint, Red Tower Books. Her works include the *Weird Girls* series, the *O'Brian Family* series, and the *Carolina Beach* series. As an immigrant from El Salvador with proud Nahua Pipil indigenous heritage, Cecy became the first college graduate in her family and has worked as a registered nurse for 23 years. In her free time, Cecy creates magical worlds, heart-stopping romance, and young adult adventure.

### Dan Santat

Dan Santat is the Caldecott Medal-winning creator of *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* and the *New York Times* bestselling books *Are We There Yet?* and *After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again)*. He is the author and illustrator of over a hundred books for young people and the creator of the Disney animated series *The Replacements*. His recent graphic memoir, *A First Time for Everything*, is the 2023 National Book Award winner for Young People's Literature and is nominated for a 2024 Will Eisner Comic Industry Award..

### Scott Shaw!

For over 50 years, Scott Shaw! has written and drawn underground comix (*Gory Stories*, *Fear*

and *Laughter*), mainstream comics (*Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew!*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Simpsons Comics*), children's books (the *Marooned Lagoon* series), syndicated strips (*Bugs Bunny*, *Woody Owl*), graphic novels (*Shrek*, *Annoying Orange*), TV cartoons (*Jim Henson's Muppet Babies*, *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley*, *Camp Candy*), toys (McFarlane Toys' Hanna-Barbera and *Simpsons* figures), trading cards (*Garbage Pail Kids*, *Oddball Comics*), advertising (Post Pebbles cereal featuring the *Flintstones*), T-shirts (MeTV's *Svengoolie*), and music album art (The *Monkees' A Barrel Full of Monkees* and *Just Us* and San Diego's *Staring at the Sun* and *Spice Train*). Current projects include Scott's *Kilgore Home Nursing* for David Lloyd's *Aces Weekly*, *Scott Shaw!s Comix & Stories* (a collection of early material) and Image's *Li'l Dragon*, his spinoff of Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*. For TwoMorrows, Scott writes a regular column for *Retrofan magazine* and is finishing his 200-page *Oddball Comics* book. Scott has received Emmys, an Eisner Award, and a Humanitas Award for his work.

### Tom Sito

Tom Sito is an animator and animation historian.

He teaches animation at the University of Southern California. He has lectured on animation around the world and served as president of The Animation Guild Local 839 Hollywood. His movie credits include Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Aladdin* (1992); Dreamworks' *Shrek* and *The Prince of Egypt*; and Warner Bros.' *Osmosis Jones*. His TV credits include *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *She-Ra Princess of Power*, and *The Superfriends*. His books include *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson*; *Moving Innovation: A History of Computer Animation*; and *Eat, Drink, Animate, An Animator's Cookbook*.

### Ken Steacy

Ken's visual storytelling career spans a half century, as a writer, artist, art director, editor, and publisher. He has chronicled the exploits of *Astro Boy*, *Iron Man*, *Harry Potter*, and the *Star Wars* gang; and, in addition to producing his own IP, he has collaborated with Margaret Atwood, Harlan Ellison, and Trina Robbins. The recipient of an Eisner Award and an Inkpot Award, in 2009



SANTAT



SHAW!



SITO



STEACY

Art: Ed Wexler



PAULA HSU



E. J. SU

# TAIWAN ARTISTS

JULY 25 [THU] – 28 [SUN] @SDCC 2024

### BOOTH 5524

BIRD ERA 鳥時代  
IG @bird\_era

SHAOGAO 囍搞  
IG @shaohao

PAULA HSU  
IG @paulahsuart

10:30 AM – 12:00 AM

01:00 PM – 02:30 PM

02:30 PM – 04:00 PM

### PANEL [ROOM 9] 7/27 [SAT]

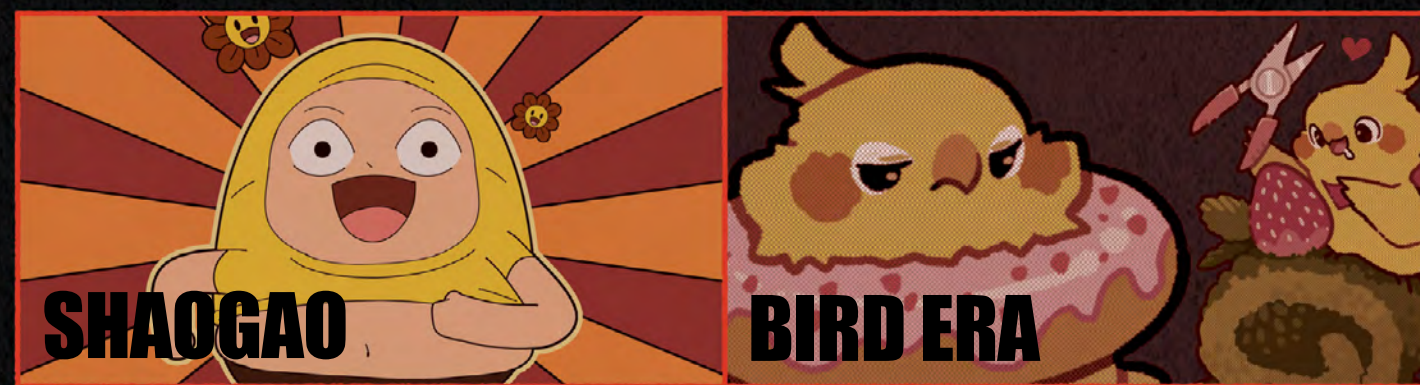
Connecting Eastern and Western Market with Character IP Licensing

5:00PM - 6:00PM at Room 9

### ARTIST ALLEY HH-19

E. J. SU 蘇義傑  
IG @ejsu28

[ All the events are subject to change. ]



SHAOGAO

BIRD ERA

Ken was inducted into the Joe Shuster Canadian Comic Book Hall of Fame, a lifetime achievement award for contributions to the industry. He's currently working on a graphic novel that explores the invisible subculture of military brats.

### William Stout

Artist William Stout has worked with Russ Manning, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder, Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, and Al Williamson. His studiomates included Dave Stevens and Paul Chadwick. Bill co-founded the Comic Art Professional Society and was their tenth president. In film, Stout created the iconic *Wizards* poster, then worked on over 70 movies, including *Return of the Living Dead* and *Masters of the Universe*. He helped *Pan's Labyrinth* win two Oscars. Michael Crichton claimed Stout's dinosaur reconstructions inspired *Jurassic Park*. Bill's 50-year career overview, *Fantastic Worlds: The Art of William Stout* (2018), precedes a Flesk Publications box set collecting Stout's comics work.

### J. Michael Straczynski

J. Michael Straczynski currently writes *Captain*

*America* for Marvel Comics and is creating original comics for Dark Horse, original audio dramas for Penguin-Random House, and original sin whenever the opportunity arises. JMS is the creator of *Babylon 5*, co-creator for *SENSE8*, and writer of *Changeling*, *Thor*, and *WWZ*. He has received Hugo, Saturn, Ray Bradbury, Eisner, Icon, and Inkpot Awards. As director of the Harlan and Susan Ellison Foundation, he has overseen the publication of *Harlan Ellison's Greatest Hits*, the relaunch of the first two *Dangerous Visions* anthologies, and, coming in October, the debut of *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

### Linda Sunshine

Linda Sunshine is the author of more than 70 books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Plain Jane Works Out*. Many of her other books are about the making of such movies as *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Hulk*. As a young editor in New York, she was responsible for the first publication of hardcover anthologies of Superman, Batman, and Shazam! Along with Michael Uslan, she published several anthologies of DC Comics. Most recently, Linda has written three books about wine.

Her true-life Holocaust screenplay is currently in preproduction in Hungary.

### Bryan Talbot

Multiple award-winner Bryan Talbot has written and drawn comics and graphic novels for nearly 50 years, including *Judge Dredd*, *Batman*, *Sandman*, *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*, *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, *Alice in Sunderland*, *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* (with Mary Talbot), and his Grandville series of steampunk detective thrillers. Bryan was awarded a Doctorate in Arts and another in Letters and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He is currently drawing the 172-page Grandville prequel *The Casebook of Stamford Hawksmoor*. Bryan is being inducted into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame at this year's Comic-Con.

### Mariko Tamaki

Mariko Tamaki is the co-creator of Eisner Award-winning books *This One Summer* (with Jillian Tamaki) and *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* (with Rosemary Valero-O'Connell). Her latest collaboration with Jillian, the graphic novel *Roaming*, has been nominated for three 2024 Eisner Awards, including Best Writer. Mariko has written superhero stories for DC Comics



STOUT



STRACZYNSKI



SUNSHINE



TALBOT



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Image: *Star Punch Girl* © Sphinx Scribble. *Asian Comics: Evolution of an Art Form* is organized by the Barbican Centre with contributions from Bowers Museum

and Marvel, including a run on *Batman: Dark Detective*. She is the curator of Abrams's LGBTQIA imprint, Surely Books.

### Maggie Thompson

When she was 4 years old, Maggie's parents encouraged her to love and collect comic books. Years later, she met another pop culture fan, and she and Don Thompson were soon collecting, writing, and editing comics-connected material together. Thirty years after Don's death, she describes herself as a "celebrity-adjacent award-winning pop culture nerd" with a career that includes early comics fanzine publishing and 30 years as editor of *Comics Buyer's Guide*. These days, she provides a weekly post for Gemstone Publishing's Scoop newsletter and information for Fantagraphics' Pogo reprints. She was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame in 2020. She encourages kids to enjoy comics old and new!

### Zoe Thorogood

Zoe Thorogood is the creator of the Eisner Award-nominated *It's Lonely at the Centre of the Earth* and *The Impending*

*Blindness of Billie Scott*. She also illustrated Joe Hill's *Rain*, for which she earned an Eisner Award nomination. Her latest projects are *Hack/Slash: Back to School* and *Life Is Strange: Forget-Me-Not*. She is currently working on a new graphic novel titled *I Think I Might Be Evil*. Zoe received Comic-Con's Russ Manning Promising Newcomer Award in 2023.

### Julia Wertz

Julia Wertz is a cartoonist, urban explorer, and amateur historian. Her graphic novels include *Museum of Mistakes*, *Drinking at the Movies*, *The Infinite Wait*, *Tenements*, *Towers, & Trash*, and *Impossible People*. She does regular short story comics for *The New Yorker*. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, she spent a decade in New York City before settling in Sonoma County, CA, where she lives with her partner and son. She's currently working on the graphic novel *Bury Me Already (It's Nice Down Here)* to be released in 2025.

**Appearing Friday through Sunday.**

### Kiersten White

Kiersten White is the *New York Times* bestselling, Bram Stoker Award-winning, and critically acclaimed author of

many books for readers of all ages, including the *And I Darken* trilogy, the *Sinister Summer* series, the *Camelot Rising* trilogy, *Star Wars: Padawan*, the *Buffyverse Slayer* series, *Hide*, *Mister Magic*, and *Lucy Undying: A Dracula Novel*. Her books have been published in over 20 territories and sold more than a million copies worldwide. *Hide* is currently in development with Universal Television and was recently adapted as a graphic novel with Scott Peterson, Veronica Fish, and Andy Fish.



THOMPSON



THOROGOOD



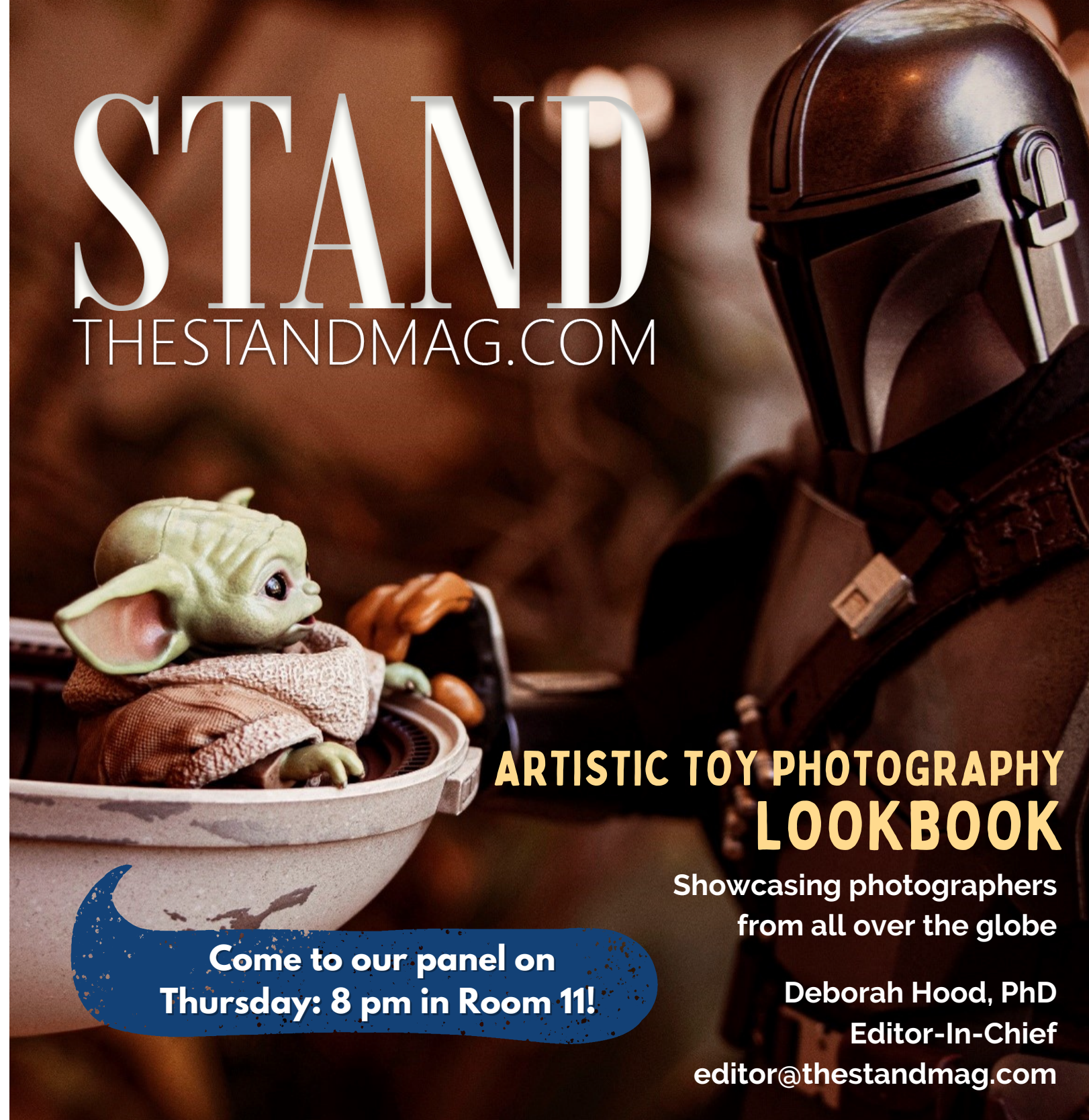
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# THE GOON



by MICHAEL W. CONRAD

I got into punk rock well before the internet was widely available. Nowadays you kids have it pretty easy. You'll see the iconic Crimson Skull on a tee shirt and before you know it you have the entirety of The Misfits catalog available to you, including the B-Sides that evaded even the most dedicated among their early fandom. Bands like The Misfits had a mystique; we would create entire mythologies about them based on the few images found in their liner notes, and the great game of telephone that would happen when an older fan would share stories about seeing them live years prior. It was a special time, and while I prefer the idea of easy access to such delights for the younger generations, I've come to romanticize efforts of tracking down the things that I would come to love.

Massachusetts to get to a comic shop that would carry the deep cuts, the future tentpoles of the industry in their infancy; the kinds of subversive material too dangerous or odd for the big two. Such trips were rare, requiring not only a functional vehicle, but also gas money, expendable cash for the coveted books, and a willingness to take a shot on things that had been ignored by the mainstream press.

Every now and then you'd get a taste, just a lil' lick really, and it would create a madness that most can identify with to some degree, but for real comic heads, it's all too familiar. Maybe you'd see an image in *Wizard* magazine, or more likely, (as such things were polybagged and like, \$5) maybe like me you saw a tiny black and white thumbnail in the deep recesses of *Previews*. Some of you remember that feeling. It was special.

I grew up in southern New Hampshire. It would often require a drive to the neighboring state of





But there it was, a Crimson Skull, or rather the comics analog, *The Goon*! It lit my mind on fire. Who is this muscle-bound freak, and what (or more appropriately, who) exactly does he intend to smash with that balled-up Christmas ham of a fist? Through the rudimentary smudge of ink on the pulpy page of the catalog I could see spectral whispers of others around him, only adding to the mystery... What the hell is this and how do I get a copy?

I failed to find one. I would have shame in saying that, I would even lie and claim to have been there from the jump. But I'm now comfortable to report that while the spirit was there, my access was not. I was without *The Goon*, and so the internal mythology was my first relationship with the character, and the world he inhabits.

*The Goon* haunted me for years. Oddly, volumes of *The Goon* in its multitudinous collections found their way onto the shelves of damn near every scenester I



knew when I moved to Boston. I remained, as I had always been, a huge comics fan, but I lacked the money to maintain the habit.

"You can borrow that, it's rad, the main character—" I would cut them off, claiming to have read it. Nowadays I'd just say I don't want it spoiled. I'd never borrow the books because I knew myself too well... I'd love it, and I'd never return it.

When I moved to California years later for stronger employment I started to buy comics regularly again. I spent years catching up with my old four-color friends, as well as picking up stuff I had been told I have to read. Financially I was in a slightly better place, but by then *The Goon* had already amassed a stunning library of collected trades. I was overwhelmed... Meanwhile, somewhere on the other side of the country, a strange cartoonist sat with an already aching back and cramped hands at a drawing board.

Like all good comic fans, I would encourage my friends to read the stuff I loved most. It was rare to convert new fans at the time, with the MCU several years away, comics remained a ghettoized fascination, one marked by judgment, ridicule, and disdain from the mainstream. Comics were kid stuff, even by the standards of many of my countercultural peers. I was left to enjoy these works on my own, with few willing to give them a shot. But every now and then I would manage to hook someone.

My buddy Richard gave it a swing. He really enjoyed some of the more brutal Batman stories, as well as some of the zombie comics that were becoming all the rage at the time. I was pleased to have someone along for the ride with me,

even if he couldn't keep up with my dedication to the medium that only continued to grow.

"You ever read *The Goon*?" He asked, out of the blue one sunny day as we sat on his porch, listening to Jesus Lizard and working on polishing off a twelve-pack of adult beverages. "It looks cool."

"Yeah, that comic kicks ass." "Oh? Lindsey has a bunch of 'em." He replied. "I didn't know she liked comics?" "She doesn't, she likes *The Goon*."

I gotta qualify this, I was a full-grown adult at the time of this brief interaction, I had no business claiming to have read *The Goon* for clout, but I also knew that *The Goon* did kick ass, or at least what I knew of it, or imagined it to be... Hell, it HAD TO be good, I had seen the covers, flipped through, it was tailor-made for people like us!

I was dumbfounded that Lindsey was into *The Goon*. She had never expressed any interest in comics, much less this now celebrated, but cultish book that had managed to evade me for over a decade. She was too cool for comics, covered in tattoos, pretty, had things like friends and hobbies to occupy her time... How did *The Goon* of all things find its way into her life?

It turns out that's part of the magic of what Eric Powell has been doing for 25 years now.





of them, but really, it's no longer a marker of my ability to sniff out the best things in a sea of offerings, I just had to follow the lead of all these other cool people before me.

Over a year ago Becky Cloonan and I found ourselves in Austin with the house we rented being sold out from under us. After scrambling we landed on a move to Portland, OR, in pursuit of cooler temperatures, and a robust community of creators to spend time with. With limited time we popped onto Zillow and found a good-looking spot within our price range and texted a good friend in PDX, asking about the neighborhood. The friend in question happened to be Tim Wiesch, co-writer of the fantastic *Big Man Plans* with *The Goon* himself, Eric Powell. Tim responded by saying "It's a fine neighborhood, some undesirable folks out in that area though..." Only to text again moments later with a video of him and his partner standing outside of the place that we now live, serendipity was afoot, we were going to be neighbors!

Tim ended up picking us up from the airport, and helping us set up while we waited for our moving pods to arrive. We all thought it would be a good idea to hit the local dive bar and blow off some steam in the interim... There we met another neighbor.

Eric Powell.

Nowadays we see Eric and his amazing partner Andrea routinely, and spend almost every major holiday together. Becky and Eric share a studio, and nearly every day she returns home with an anecdote about something funny Eric said. We connect frequently, and I value his friendship deeply. I almost never bring up *The Goon*, it would get weird.

The first time I read *The Goon* was shortly after that conversation with Richard. I picked up a couple trades and devoured them in short order. Richard hadn't gotten around to reading them yet, but I remember having great conversations with his partner Lindsey about some of our favorite moments. I think this made Richard jealous, so days later he and I had a similar conversation. Those two ended up getting married, and now have two kids, so I think there's an argument to be made that Powell's funnybook might have played a role in those nuptials.

The thing that struck me most, when I finally cracked the spine of those books, was how roundly incorrect my mythology had been. I imagined something transgressive, dumb, and lunkish. I mean none of those descriptors to be pejorative, rather, I expected to be delighted by such elements in the same way Troma films often scratch a hard-to-reach itch. What I found instead was far greater in scope, imagination, and depth. The stories told in the pages

of *The Goon* are populated by complex characters, a moral ambiguity, and a command of storytelling and art that few in this medium can come close to approximating. I've never been left wanting for violence and mayhem, but I'm always served a story with unexpected turns, insight, and philosophical elements baked to perfection, without detracting from the raw delights of the narrative itself.

There's something in *The Goon* for everyone, and plenty of material to get through. I'm as jealous of those who have yet to jump in as I am those who have carried these stories with them through longer portions of their lives. My relationship to the stories and characters has changed, favorites have shifted, my interpretations have evolved through the seasons of my life and my lived experiences, both good and bad. I suspect that this will continue to be the case moving forward.

Powell has consistently evolved too. In knowing Eric, I have a really cool keyhole through which I can examine the stories and imagine what was going on in his life when he was putting his hand to each arc. I've seen the lines change from afar, the techniques applied alter and shift, the cadence of the language, the focus of the stories panning from one center to the next, and it's fascinating. Even from afar one can achieve this appreciation, it's simple, albeit unbelievable. Allow me to illustrate how one might do so...

Understand the following: *The Goon* has largely been the product of a person, not entirely like you, but someone with similar concerns, fears, and

passions. Others have contributed to this work, but *The Goon* is well over two decades of material through which we are allowed access to a human heart. Sometimes that heart is full of spite, at others it is mournfully longing, it's a heart filled with rage, depression, hope, and mystery... *The Goon* contains multitudes. If you haven't jumped in yet, do so, the water's fine. If it is already on your shelf... You know... May we all be blessed with many more adventures to come.



**“WHEN YOU DIED I KNEW THERE WAS ONE LESS PERSON IN THE WORLD THAT REALLY LOVED ME.”**



# 100 BULLETS BY WILL DENNIS

The moral of this story is that it always pays to hang out in dive bars and don't let anyone tell you otherwise...

SO IN THE SUMMER OF 1999, I WAS STILL A "CIVILIAN" AND GETTING MY COMICS AT A GREAT SHOP IN CHELSEA, NYC, CALLED COSMIC COMICS. That was a tough era—post the big '90s boom, Marvel bankruptcy, etc.—and pickings were pretty slim. Until I spotted the cover to *100 BULLETS* #1 and immediately grabbed it.

I'd been a fan of Vertigo since the beginning but they were still mostly doing dark fantasy and some sci-fi stuff...so to see this amazing Dave Johnson cover that was clearly a mash-up of '70s Blaxploitation posters and the great Saul Bass, just blew me away and I immediately bought it and LOVED it. A killer high concept, cool art and my favorite but oft overlooked genre...crime.



**“100 BULLETS was a pure street level, vernacular crime book”**



**C**UT TO: October of that same year and suddenly I'm WORKING at Vertigo. Crazy... I was Shelly Bond's (then Roebeg) assistant working on *The Dreaming*, *Lucifer* and a number of other titles, and my office was right across the hall from Axel Alonso, editor of *Preacher*, *Hellblazer* and, most incredibly, *100 BULLETS*. A surreal feeling to say the least.

Two weeks into the new job, Axel tells me that the writer of *100 BULLETS*, Brian Azzarello, was coming to town and did I know any places (places = bars) that he could take this rather taciturn, baseball & WWE-loving, crime fiction writer that would "impress" him. "I don't know about impress but if he's anything like his writing, I know the perfect place." (Anyone who knows me knows that my memoir is going to be called "I KNOW A PLACE." It's my mutant superpower.)

The "perfect place" was the eternal dive bar Milano's on Houston Street in NYC and Brian immediately fell in love. It's narrow, dark, filled with misfits and drunks and the sort of place you could end up leaving headed to the altar or headed to the morgue. In short, the perfect location for an issue of *100 BULLETS*.

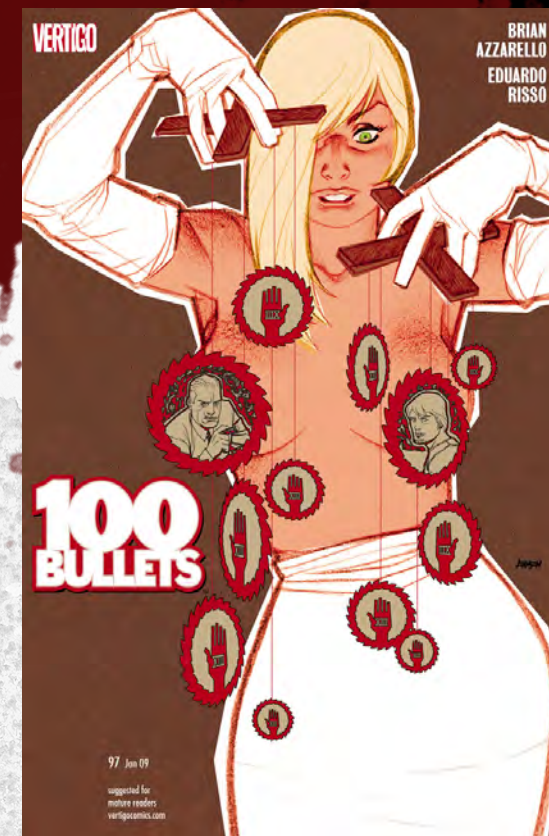
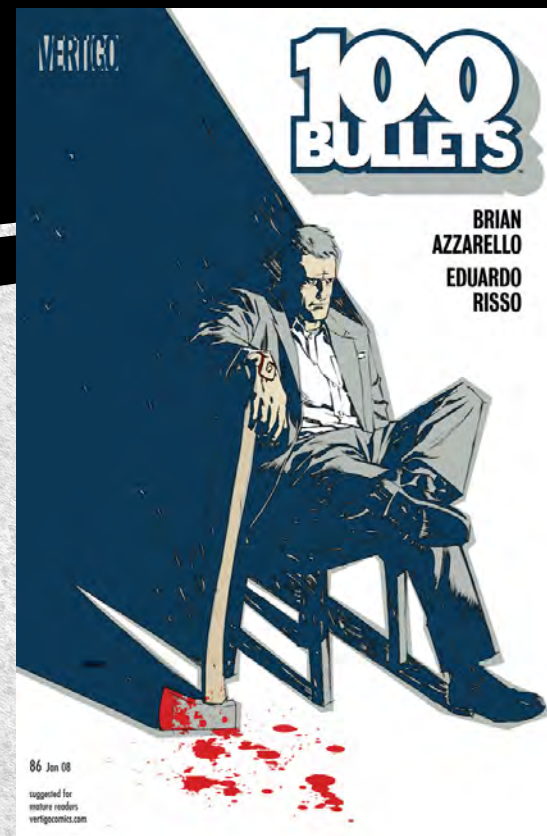
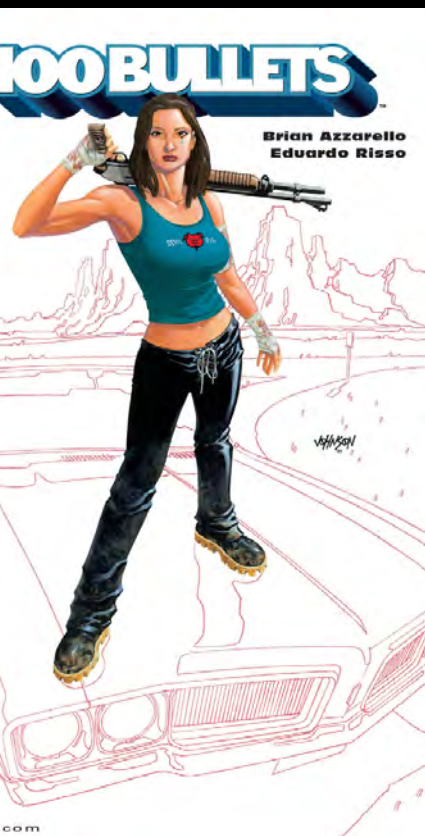
A year into *100 BULLETS* and it was clear it was a groundbreaking book. By the late '90s, Vertigo had

begun to branch out from the original dark fantasy books with titles like *Preacher* and *Transmetropolitan* but *100 BULLETS* was a pure street level, vernacular crime book. Not only did it read completely differently, it didn't look, or more importantly feel, like any other book out there. And that's down to the incredible team that Axel had assembled and I would later inherit.

**BRIAN AZZARELLO**, Writer/Co-Creator: Brian can write in almost any voice you can imagine and his comics always read to me like the best stage dramas. He took what could have been a simple high concept—100 bullet filled briefcase of the month—and spun it into 100 issues and a huge bloody tapestry. He had a road map but it was always a loose one. And the biggest mistake he ever made was announcing publicly that the series would only last 100 issues. The one time the guy talks in public and he shot himself in the foot. I think we might still be doing the book today if not for that. Maybe the best pure writer working in comics—he could write for any medium, lucky for us he chooses comics.



**“...not only did it read completely differently, it didn't look, or more importantly feel, like any other book out there..”**



**EDUARDO RISSO**, Artist/Co-Creator: Eduardo is the best pure storyteller of this generation and it's criminal that he hasn't won all the awards, every year. He can take any conversation and make a visual feast...and camera shots that no one else would dare. Through the hole in someone's head, up through the brackish harbor water or, my personal favorite up at the face of someone playing pinball from the POV of one of the balls under the glass! A true master. He loves to travel and has the most infectious laugh. I learned this the hard way when visiting his studio in Rosario, Argentina. He pulled out the first fax (yes, FAX) I had ever sent him and proceeded to do a fantastic impression of me being my most earnest self. I was equally mortified and knew that I had finally arrived. The Lionel Messi of comics.

**DAVE JOHNSON**, Cover Artist: Hire Dave to do your cover and you immediately set the expectation of the reader. Graphic, sophisticated and, above all, cool. Dave is the most consistently great cover artist working over the last 25 years. He's pulling from so many influences that half the time I'm not convinced he knows where it comes from. As stated above, Saul Bass and '70s grindhouse posters, but so much more... classic illustrators like JC Leyendecker, Ace sci-fi books from the '60s, Blue Note Jazz album covers and even the greats of comics like Eisner, Kirby and Michael Golden (his personal favorite). I would argue he's the most influential cover artist of the last quarter century but that implies you can copy him, which I don't think you can.

**PATRICIA MULVIHILL**, Colorist: While the first year was colored by Grant Goleash and was very solid, the book really started to shine (I mean LITERALLY) when Trish took over the coloring. She soaked the pages in neon and made color choices that no one saw coming. In the early days, we still did everything on paper, so when an issue was ready, I would shoot two copies on linen paper so she could hand color them with inks, call her to come pick them up (she lives in Soho) and she would bring in the previous month's issue and go through all the things I had screwed up when communicating with the color separators... haha! I looked forward to those sessions as I learned so much about what she was trying to do and that coloring needn't just be literal — that in the proper hands, it could be as big a piece of the storytelling as the words or pictures. A true masterclass and kept my ever-growing ego in check.

**CLEM ROBINS**, Letterer: Clem's clean and perfect lettering I would put against anyone in the history of this business. My personal feeling is that lettering should not distract...that it should be clear, readable and, if done well, nearly invisible. Which is tough on the ego of a letterer but it's what immerses the reader in the experience. They aren't distracted by crazy tails, a million typefaces, and sound effects that give you a headache. Clem's SFX are my all time favorite... no one does BLAM with such sharp lines. Of course, this book gave him a lot of practice!

And special shout outs to two of the heads on my personal Mount Rushmore of comics: Karen Berger and Jenette Kahn. Both women came into comics at a time it was a *Mad Men*-esque boys' club (some would argue it still is) and revolutionized the industry. Karen being the architect of Vertigo and Jenette the long serving President of DC during the era of transitioning to the direct market and seeing the value of publishing trade paperbacks and original graphic novels years before anyone else. Without them, not only would *100 BULLETS* not exist, nearly all the best mainstream comics of the last 50 years wouldn't either.

“...making this book, it was always organic....  
like watching a jazz combo who were really tight.”



But comics is the ultimate team sport so I would be remiss if I didn't thank all the amazing assistants, production people, marketing and sales folks, convention organizers, retailers and above all the readers who made this book as big as it was for as long as it was.

But let's bring it back to my favorite subject...ME. I could get into tons of specifics about my favorite issue or scene but it's impossible to choose. Do you have a favorite child? Exactly. I will say that making this book, it was always organic...like watching a jazz combo who were really tight. Everyone had

their own times to shine but it always came back to the melody, the song...the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Being the editor was really a piece of cake...like owning a club where the house band was the best in the business. Just stay out of the way and bask in the glory.

And while I can't pick only one favorite storyline or character, I will say that there's a page that's stayed with me to this day. It's the storyline of one of the Minutemen, Wylie Times (ok, he IS my favorite character!), set down in New Orleans. Wylie is there to do a hit and the original arc was only meant to be four issues but ended up being seven. Like I said, sometimes the jazz solos go on. Anyway, the page where Wylie finally has to do what he doesn't want to do is heartbreaking, but it's NOT the best scene

for me. That happens midway through the arc when Wylie has to help end the life of the poor beaten down trumpeter named Gabriel. It's the most heartbreaking and amazing page and completely captures the essence of the creators and this series. To steal from Paul Westerberg, it's sadly beautiful. And when you see it, you will know exactly what I mean.

"But Will you said that hanging out in dive bars was a good idea..." Let me tell you why.

Through another series of unfortunate events, by November of 2000, *100 BULLETS* was left without an editor and Azzarello asked Karen if "that guy who took us to the dive bar last year" was available to edit. Now I was only an assistant but as I was the last fork in the drawer, Karen took a chance on me and gave me the book to edit. I jumped at it, soon got promoted based on not screwing it up and have gone on to a career I never dreamed of, all because I knew a divey bar in downtown NYC. And because I was smart enough not to put my fingerprints all over the perfect Ferrari that this team had built. Too many editors make the mistake of needing to put their heavy stamp on things when the good ones (and yes, I'm counting myself among them) know to get out of the way and let the pros be pros.

I often think about where I would be if I had just gone home that night...I wouldn't have had the amazing career I've been so lucky to have. All the great books, stories, travel and above all friends I've made in the last 25 years. It all started one night in the Milano's — the greatest bar in the world (and one that's thankfully still there)!

So, let that be a lesson to all you kids out there. If you ever get a chance to hit some sketchy bar...or better yet, if a shadowy figure offers you a briefcase with a 100 untraceable bullets in it...never, ever pass it up. You just don't know where it might lead.



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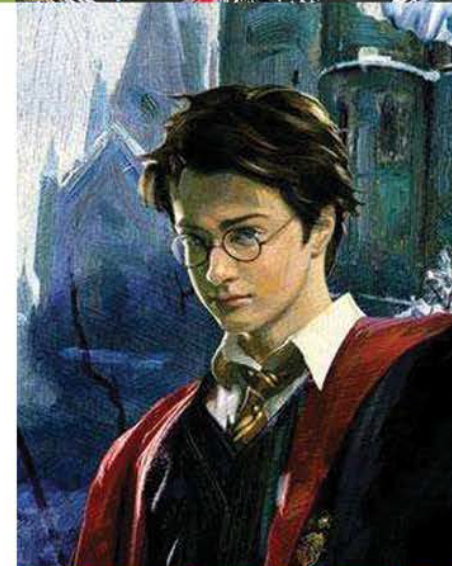
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Meet the Artists!

**Kevin Altieri** - Artist and Director of *Batman: The Animated Series*.

**Tom Ruegger** - Artist and Creator of *Animaniacs*, *Pinky & The Brain*, *Tiny Toons*

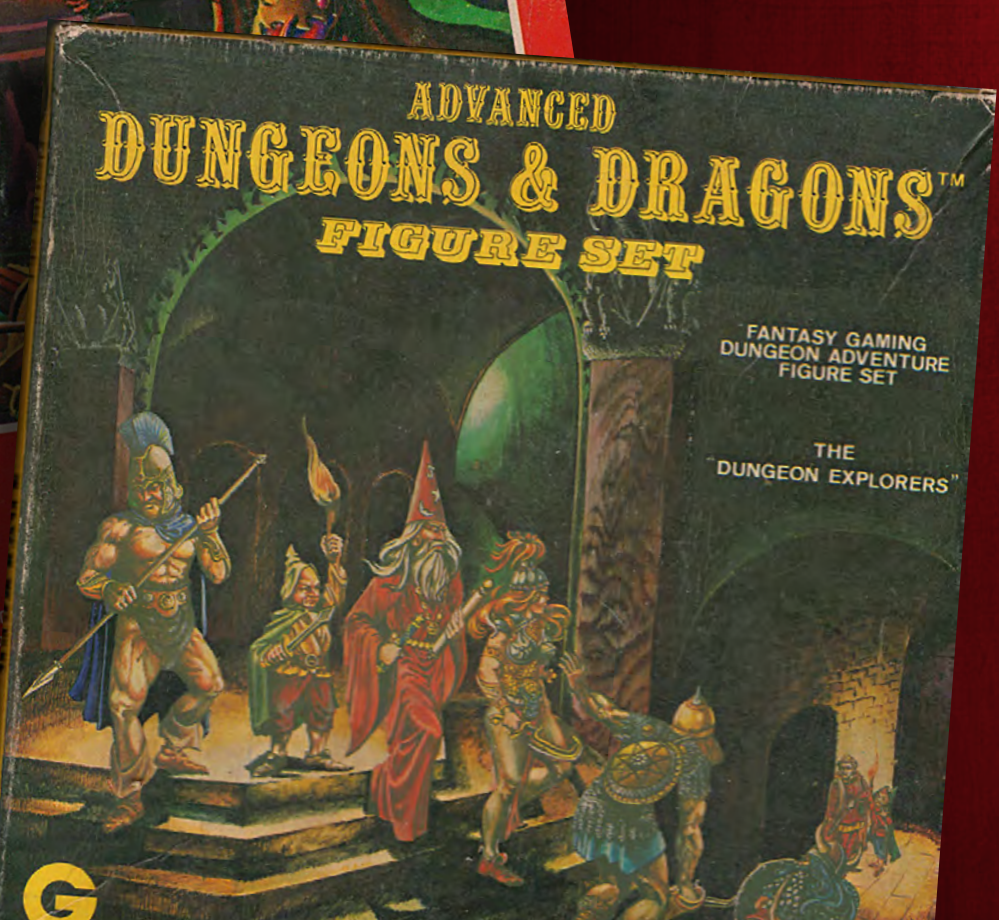
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# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

FANTASY ADVENTURE GAME  
BASIC RULEBOOK

## A BRIEF HISTORY



**“GYGAX AND ARNESON PUBLISHED THE FIRST EDITION OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS IN 1974 THROUGH GYGAX’S COMPANY TACTICAL STUDIES RULES (TSR).”**

Since its inception 50 years ago, Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) has been a cornerstone in the role-playing games (RPGs) field. Starting from the simple box set and then evolving through multiple editions up to the current 5th edition (and soon to come 2024 edition), it’s hard to imagine how many multiple millions of players and creators have rolled uncountable numbers of dice, slain monsters, disarmed traps and just had fun.

### THE ORIGIN

Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson are the co-creators of D&D. Arneson was a member of the Twin Cities wargaming community in Minnesota and was known for his games that broke away from the more traditional formats and instead emphasized more character background and development and narrative storytelling elements. Gygax hailed from Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and was deeply involved in miniature wargaming that were more focused on historical battles. Additionally, Gygax was one of the people who were instrumental in organizing the Lake Geneva Wargames Convention in 1968 which is now known as GenCon.

In 1971, Arneson ran a game called “Blackmoor” that blended a wargaming rules system that Gygax had created called “Chainmail” with some of his own ideas. Instead of focusing on recreating historic battles and controlling entire armies, Blackmoor focused on creating individual characters and emphasized role playing those same characters. It added exploration, dungeons and fantastic monsters. This is what caught Gygax’s eye, and the two soon began collaborating.

### THE INCEPTION

Gygax and Arneson published the first edition of Dungeons & Dragons in 1974 through Gygax’s company Tactical Studies Rules (TSR). Now known as Original D&D (OD&D) it was composed of three booklets and a set of dice packaged in a white box set, Underworld & Wilderness Adventures, Men and Magic, and Monsters and Treasure. It was a new blend of role-playing storytelling and wargaming structured mechanics that

established the foundation for all modern roleplaying games that followed. People who were used to playing board games and rolling six sided dice were introduced to 4, 8, 10 and 20 sided dice for the first time.

OD&D was a hit in the gaming community, but was still being predominantly played by wargaming hobbyists who enjoyed the creative freedom and the almost unlimited options provided by the games fantasy setting.

In response to OD&D’s initial success, TSR released the “Basic Set” in 1977. The Basic Set was edited by J. Eric Holmes and was meant to be a more accessible version of the game with simplified rules. Also, in 1977 TSR released Gygax’s first edition of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (AD&D).

AD&D was a significantly more comprehensive system that consisted of three main rulebooks: the Player’s Handbook, the Dungeons Master’s Guide, and the Monster Manual. With AD&D TSR introduced more detailed rules about character classes, combat and magic which quickly became the standard for serious and experienced players.

The popularity of the game soared throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. This success brought about numerous supplements, predefined gaming storylines called “modules” and spin-offs which substantially expanded the universe of AD&D and its lore. Early modules such as “The Temple of Elemental Evil” and the “Cave of the Frost Dragon” became the basis for many gaming groups.

### THE PANIC

The 1980’s were the golden age of AD&D. As TSR continued to expand its product line with settings like “Greyhawk”, “Dragonlance” and “Forgotten Realms” the game gained mainstream recognition and integration into popular culture with references to the game becoming common and a popular cartoon series. The cartoon was a collaboration between TSR, Marvel and Toei Animation and ran for three years on CBS with 27 episodes. Additionally, the Dragonlance novels were hugely popular at this time which eventually consisted of over 190 novels.



This successful period however also brought controversy. The games core concepts around magic, gods and fantasy brought criticism from conservative and religious groups and was one of the factors leading to the so-called "Satanic Panic" of the mid to late 80's. Parents groups, religious organizations and various media outlets made unfounded allegations that D&D promoted occult worship, anti-social behaviors and was harmful to children and society. TSR responded by enacting various measures including disclaimers and making changes to its artwork and terminology. This did little however to stunt the games continued explosive growth.

## THE SECOND EDITION

In 1989, TSR released an updated version of AD&D called "Second Edition". It streamlined and revised the rule set taking into account feedback from players and creators gathered over years of gameplay. It focused on accessibility and expansion while removing some of the more controversial elements of the game like removing all references to "demons and devils". Second Edition was well received and TSR built on the success continuing to publish supplements like "The World Builder's Guidebook" and "The Complete Thief's Handbook" and modules including "Dragon Mountain" and "Queen of the Spiders"

Despite this success, TST began to experience financial difficulties in the mid 90's. Alleged mismanagement, overproduction of products, and multiple legal issues put a severe strain on the company. By the end of the decade, TSR was on the brink of bankruptcy and its future was looking bleak.

## THE ACQUISITION

Wizards of the Coast (WotC), best known for the game "Magic: The Gathering" acquired TSR in 1997 and took over publication of D&D. Two years later, Hasbro acquired WoTC.

In 2000, WotC released the "Third Edition" of D&D. Third Edition was a major revamp of the game

and introduced the d20 system. The d20 system standardized the gameplay mechanics making it easier for players to understand and at the same time for designers to create content for the system. Third Edition also emphasized the customization of characters and streamlined many of the complex rules.

Third Edition and the 3.5 Edition released a few years later in 2003 were successful and well received and helped revitalize the D&D community. More importantly however, was the introduction of WotC's open gaming license (OGL) which allowed third party publishers to create and sell their own content using the d20 system. The OGL resulted in an explosion of vibrant and diverse content to support the continuing expansion of D&D.

## THE DIVISION

In 2008, WotC released the "Fourth Edition" of D&D. It introduced significant changes to many of the games core mechanics which many thought changed the games focus into more of a miniatures battle game as opposed to a traditional RPG by over-emphasizing tactical combat and balance. While popular with some, the majority of players seemed to think it caused the game to deviate too strongly from the "traditional" D&D experience they enjoyed.

The division and general mixed acceptance created by Fourth Edition created schism in the general gaming community. While some embraced the new system, others turned back to earlier versions of the game creating the "Old School Renaissance" movement that celebrated the previous version of gameplay.

## THE FIFTH

Recognizing the need to reunite the gaming community, WotC developed the "Fifth Edition" of D&D. Released in 2014 its main intent was to balance accessibility, story and lore depth, and return to the game's classic roots. Like with the third edition, WotC incorporated feedback from players and creators, resulting in a recommitted focus on storytelling, character development and a balanced rule set.

Fifth Edition has been a resounding success for WotC. It's brought new gamers into the community

while at the same time satisfying long time players. Fifth Edition has invigorated the game and its popularity is again surging. Bolstered by popular live-streaming games like "Critical Role", "High Rollers" and "Acquisitions Incorporated" the visibility of RPGS and tabletop gaming is higher than ever.

Fifth Edition's success, combined with social media and live streaming has invigorated the global gaming community. Players around the world and from all walks of life are discovering and sharing their passion for the game and their own unique creations and adventures making D&D more inclusive and diverse than ever before.

## THE NOW

Today, Dungeons and Dragons continues to enjoy significant growth and evolution. WotC continues to release sourcebooks, supplements, miniatures and modules which serve to expand the games rich lore and gaming mechanics. Digital tools like D&D Beyond make character creation and collaboration easier than before and allow more time to focus on gameplay and story. Popular television shows like "Stranger Things" where D&D is played by the kids in the show also contribute to the current surge in popularity. Tabletop platforms are also expanding, allowing players and creators to connect and play together from anywhere in the world.

The Dungeons and Dragons of today is no longer limited to the tabletop. The game, and its creators and players, have inspired video games, novels, movies and TV shows becoming a major cultural touchstone while also fostering a community and creativity.

Personally, as someone who has been playing the game for the majority of these fifty years, I can testify to the transformative power of Dungeons and Dragons. Not just the creativity and imagination the game fosters, but the lifelong friendships forged have been a huge influence in my life. From early games in Junior High and High School, to all the various video games, books, comics, movies etc. I've enjoyed since, they're all part of not just the foundation of my life, but my current one too. Shout out to my current gaming group of Bill, John, Heather, Shane and MaryElizabeth. I look forward to those games more than you know.

**"THE DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS OF TODAY IS NO LONGER LIMITED TO THE TABLETOP.**

**THE GAME, AND ITS CREATORS AND PLAYERS, HAVE INSPIRED VIDEO GAMES, NOVELS, MOVIES AND TV SHOWS BECOMING A MAJOR CULTURAL TOUCHSTONE WHILE ALSO FOSTERING A COMMUNITY AND CREATIVITY."**



# 50 YEARS OF

# WOLVERINE

**M**ost of the best-known comics characters are fully realized the first time they show up on the page—we understand everything about Spider-Man and Popeye and Charlie Brown and Asterix pretty much immediately. Wolverine, though, is an enormous exception to that rule. This summer marks fifty years since he pounced onto the final page of *The Incredible Hulk* #180, and no superhero created since then has made as much of an impact as he has; he's appeared in well over 3000 comics and a dozen films, and every comic book reader knows what the sound effect "snikt" means. Almost everything about him was a mystery at the beginning, though, and it took decades and the efforts of a legion of writers and artists to tease it out.

Even his creation was a team effort. The story, as writer Len Wein often told it, is that Roy Thomas, who was then Marvel's editor-in-chief, liked the Jamaican and Haitian accents Wein was giving characters in the "Brother Voodoo" feature in *Strange Tales*, and wanted to see what he might do with a character who had a Canadian accent. Thomas noted that he "considered either Badger or Wolverine as names, decided on the latter, and told Len over lunch that I'd like a Canadian hero with that name."

"It was actually the easiest character I ever created," Wein said at a convention in New York in

2014. "I researched wolverines, and ended up discovering that wolverines were short, hairy, nasty little creatures with razor-sharp claws, and they would take on guys ten times their size. They were fearless." John Romita, Sr., who was then Marvel Comics' art director, designed the character and his costume. "ONLY 5 feet 5 inches tall," Romita's model sheet for him notes. (That was later revised downward.)

Wolverine's initial appearance, interceding in a fight between the Hulk and Wendigo in *Incredible Hulk* #180-182, was written by Wein and drawn by Herb Trimpe; his pose in the first panel in which he appears is directly based on one of Romita's sketches. (As Trimpe put it, "Romita and Len Wein sewed the monster together and I shocked it to life.") When he introduces himself in #181, he announces that "moving is the thing I do best," and explains that he's got claws made of adamantium—a super-strong metal that Thomas had named five years earlier in *Avengers* #66.



OPPOSITE:  
First appearance of Wolverine  
*Incredible Hulk* #181





ABOVE:  
Notable Wolverine cover  
The Uncanny X-Men #141

That's about all we learn about him in that story, other than that he's a mutant and that the Royal Canadian Air Force refers to him as "Weapon X"; we don't know his real name, what he looks like behind his mask, or any of his history. Wein and Romita, in fact, were working from the assumption that Wolverine was in his teens or twenties, and that the claws were part of his gloves.

then Claremont informed him that he planned to write Wolverine out of the series. "I stamped my little foot," recalled Byrne (who had spent much of his life in Canada), "and said there is no way you're writing out the only Canadian character. And so I made him mine."

Over the next few years, as Byrne began to co-plot *X-Men* with Claremont, Wolverine's presence within the series steadily grew, and bits of information about

Wein subsequently wrote 1975's *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, which introduced a new, international team of mutants, including Wolverine. Gil Kane, who drew its cover, changed and simplified his mask to the design that interior artist Dave Cockrum ended up using. Cockrum was also the first to draw Wolverine's full face and distinctive hair, in *X-Men* #98—and, later in the same issue, drew him with his claws coming directly out of his hands for the first time.

By then, Chris Claremont was writing *X-Men*; he and Cockrum briefly intended to reveal that Wolverine was an actual wolverine who had been mutated by the High Evolutionary. The artist John Byrne, who was working on *Iron Fist* with Claremont around that time, designed a possible face for Wolverine, only to learn that Cockrum had already shown it; Byrne ended up using that face for Sabretooth, who would go on to become Wolverine's most significant adversary.

Wolverine still didn't have any sort of civilian name until *X-Men* #103, in which a leprechaun calls him "Mr. Logan"—it may have been a coincidence that Mount Logan is the tallest mountain in Canada. (None of the X-Men even learned that name for almost another four years, amazingly.) Byrne took over drawing *X-Men* with 1977's issue #108, and around

# "I'M THE BEST THERE IS AT WHAT I DO, BUT WHAT I DO BEST ISN'T VERY NICE"

him trickled out: that he could "heal real fast" and had unbreakable bones (#116), that he was fluent in Japanese (#118), that his entire skeleton (rather than just his claws) was adamantium (#126). (Byrne has noted that "that's perhaps the most important thing about the character, that we know nothing about him.") He got a few big moments in the spotlight, like his frequently homaged "now it's my turn!" threat at the end of #132 (indeed, the next issue was the first time he'd been the only X-Man on the front cover), but he wasn't quite the star of the show yet.

That changed in 1982, with the four-issue *Wolverine* miniseries written by Claremont and drawn by Frank Miller and Joe Rubinstein—Marvel's second limited series, and the first to focus on a specific character. It was set in Japan, with which both Claremont and Miller were fascinated. Miller, who was also writing and drawing *Daredevil* at the time, gave himself the challenge of laying out each issue of *Wolverine* in a week; the negative space he left open on each page may have been, in part, a labor-saving trick, but it also hinted at Japanese design traditions, and gave the story a distinctive look. And the story itself focused on Logan's struggle to overcome his reflexive violence and find honor. Its opening line—"I'm the best there is at what I do, but what I do best isn't very nice"—became a catchphrase for him.

After that, Wolverine took on a larger role in *X-Men* comics, and a *Kitty Pryde* and *Wolverine* limited series appeared in 1984. By 1986, he was the only X-Man on the cover of five out of that year's twelve issues of *Uncanny X-Men*. Claremont initially resisted the idea of a Wolverine solo series, but when it became clear that there was going to be one—or, rather, two—he ended up writing them at first.

The long-running biweekly anthology series *Marvel Comics Presents* began in May, 1988, with Wolverine as its cover star for the first ten issues (and frequently thereafter, including issues #39-142); a monthly *Wolverine* solo comic book began two months later. At first, both were written by Claremont and drawn by John Buscema, and they had a very different vibe from *X-Men*; they were mostly set in the fictional East Asian country Madripoor, with Logan often out of costume

and "disguising" himself with an eyepatch. (In a 2004 interview with Peter Sanderson, Claremont said he'd told Buscema he wanted to do "a Milton Caniff-classic *Terry and the Pirates*-Warner Bros. 1930s backlot" hybrid, with a touch of *Modesty Blaise* and Howard Hawks.)

As more pages opened up to explore his character, Wolverine as we understand him now took shape. He's a hard-living brawler, prone to murderous rages, but fights to control and overcome them. He's killed thousands of people, mostly one at a time and hand-to-hand, but his violence is, in its way, protective—he's willing to do the dirty work not just to keep the innocent safe but so that other people don't have to do it. He's a grizzled romantic, sustained by unrequited love for women who are forever out of his grasp; he's also an entirely platonic mentor to a string of teenage girls. His "healing factor" means that he can bounce back from virtually any injury. But it's his mind that sustains damage: his memories have been erased and rewritten again and again by people who have made him kill for them.

The next big development for Wolverine came in early 1991, with the "Weapon X" serial that Barry Windsor-Smith wrote and drew in *Marvel Comics Presents*. Readers had seen flashes of his past before, including a memorable *X-Men* story that teamed him up with Captain America during World War II and hinted that he'd been around for a while even then. "Weapon X," though, was the first extended look at a turning point in his history: the brutal experiments in which he was brainwashed and had adamantium fused to his bones.

Over the course of the 1990s, Wolverine became one of Marvel's signature characters, turning up in his own series, other X-Men-related titles, innumerable guest appearances and one-shots and miniseries, and, of course, the *X-Men* animated TV show, with Cal Dodd voicing him as a raspy-voiced tough guy. In 2000, when Fox's *X-Men* film series began, the Australian actor Hugh Jackman was cast as Wolverine.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE:  
Notable Wolverine covers  
The Uncanny X-Men #211  
and X-Men #205

# “WOLVERINE’S DEATH WAS FOLLOWED BY A CLUSTER OF MINISERIES ABOUT HIS LEGACY AND HEIRS”

He absolutely embodies Logan, and has played him in a string of films since then, including this year’s *Deadpool & Wolverine*. (Jackman is also 6 feet 3 inches tall, which has necessitated some trickery to make him look shorter than other actors.)

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wolverine was when the fog of mystery around him started to blow away. Joe Quesada and Bill Jemas, respectively Marvel’s editor-in-chief and president of publishing, devised the idea for a story that would focus on his early life in 19th-century Canada. The six-issue miniseries *Origin*, co-plotted by the two of them with scripter Paul Jenkins, and drawn by Andy Kubert and Richard Isanove, ended decades of speculation about whether “Logan” was his first or last name. (Neither: it turns out to be a nickname for the man who was born James Howlett.) A sequel, *Origin II*, appeared in 2013; both involved him running with a pack of wolves, which are more visually impressive than wolverines (and wolverines don’t usually congregate, anyway).

After *Origin*, the floodgates opened. The Wolverine series was relaunched in 2003, initially with writer Greg Rucka and artist Darick Robertson; a companion series launched in 2006, *Wolverine: Origins*, was devoted to his quest for the secrets of his past, and introduced his son Daken. For a character who was once a loner, Logan had become a heck of a team player: there was a period

in the 2000s when he was simultaneously a member of the X-Men, X-Force and the Avengers, and often appeared in more than a dozen comics each month. (His record was January 2009, when he turned up in 24 different issues.) And Jackman portrayed him in three solo movies: 2009’s *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, 2013’s

*The Wolverine* and 2017’s *Logan*.

A 2009 animated series, *Wolverine and the X-Men*, depicted him as the team’s new leader. After another relaunch of his solo comic book in 2010, Logan also starred in a *Wolverine and the X-Men* comics series, in which a schism within the mutant community leads to him starting his own school. Two more relaunched, more-frequent-than-monthly *Wolverine* series, in 2013 and 2014, led into *Death of Wolverine* in the fall of 2014; characteristically, he dies saving people from being used as weapons the same way he was.

Wolverine’s death was followed by a cluster of miniseries about his legacy and heirs—as with Batman or Spider-Man, he’s psychologically unique enough that there’s a lot of story potential in seeing what someone else would do in his position. A pair of not-the-old-Wolverine ongoing series appeared in early 2016: *All-New Wolverine* (starring Laura Kinney, an apparent female clone of Logan, who had come to comics by way of the *X-Men: Evolution* animated series) and *Old Man Logan* (a broken, embittered version from a dystopian future, who had first appeared in a 2008 storyline).

The original one was resurrected in 2018’s *Return of Wolverine* miniseries (with a new power that didn’t stick around long: superheating his claws). The “Krakoa” sequence of X-Men comics that ran from 2019 to earlier this year mostly positioned Laura Kinney as the Wolverine who got to be a superhero in public. Meanwhile, writer Ben Percy’s take on Logan, in the solo *Wolverine* series and in *X-Force*, showed him finally having found an environment that felt like a real home to him, immediately being pulled into its violent defense, then being mind-controlled into murder once again, and ultimately leaving the mutant nation out of disgust with its government.

Logan is last seen in the final issue of the Percy-written *Wolverine* series walking into a bar and popping his claws; in two other comics published that week and the next, he’s *first* seen doing the same. What makes him so durable as a character? In part, it’s

his physical durability and psychological vulnerability: he’s capable of taking limitless amounts of damage, so any kind of physical challenge will both test him *and* be something he can get through, but he’s got a long lifetime’s worth of pain in his head. He’s been around long enough that he can appear in stories set at virtually any time in the past century. He’s surrounded by allies, but also ungovernable; he’s a hardened killer whose central motivations are hope and compassion. And if he’s no longer the compelling enigma he was when nobody, not even his creators, knew his real name, he’s replaced that with a complicated, tragic history.



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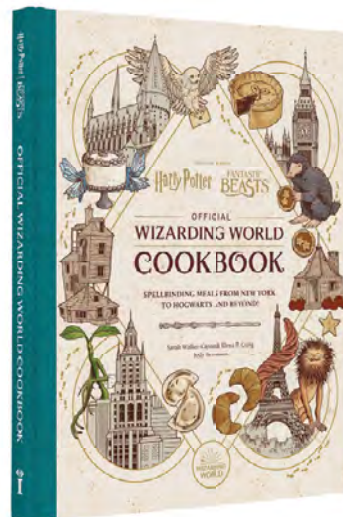
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# Inkpot Awards

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



by  
**GARY  
SASSAMAN**

Inkpot Awards 50th Anniversary Article © 2024 Gary Sassaman

THE MOVIE INDUSTRY HAS THE ACADEMY AWARDS, TELEVISION, THE EMMYS, AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, THE GRAMMYS. AND OF COURSE, COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL IS THE HOME OF THE WILL EISNER COMIC INDUSTRY AWARDS SINCE IT STARTED UNDER THE EVENT'S AUSPICES IN 1991 (THERE WERE TWO EARLIER YEARS OF EISNER AWARDS IN 1988 AND 1989). BUT COMIC-CON'S FIRST AWARDS PROGRAM, THE INKPOT AWARDS, WAS STARTED 50 YEARS AGO, IN 1974. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW THEY BEGAN AND EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS.

### IN THE BEGINNING...

The Inkpot Awards were created by Comic-Con Founder Shel Dorf, board Vice President Richard Butner, and event Co-Chair William Lund in 1974, the fifth year of Comic-Con. As Butner explained in a 1979 article, the award was designed to be a "special award for achievement," and—according to Butner—it quickly became "a traditional and important aspect of convention activities." The awards ceremony included a banquet (\$7.50 got you the meal in 1974, which may or may not have been "Chicken Diane").

The Inkpots were not an award decided by voting like the Eisners. The recipients were decided by Comic-Con committee members based on their individual merits and achievements in the following original categories:

- Comic Arts
- Animation Arts
- Cinematic Arts
- Science Fiction and Fantasy
- Fandom Projects and Services

These morphed over the years into their current incarnations: Comic Arts, Animation, Film and TV, Science Fiction and Fantasy, and Fandom Service. A Pop Culture category was also added in later years.

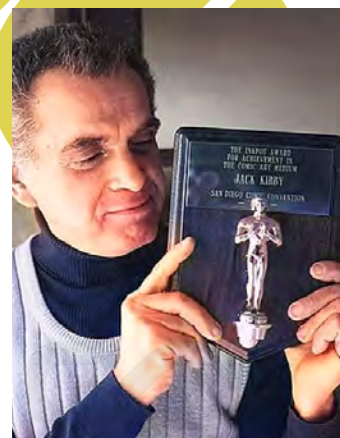
The Fandom Service award is usually given to a volunteer or staff member of Comic-Con who has had a long-term impact on the event. The majority of the awards over the years were given to creative people who were special guests at Comic-Con, a consideration that's still in effect to this day. And just so we're clear, that "Comic Arts" category is not limited to just comic book artists; writers, inkers, letterers, colorists—even editors and publishers—have all won Inkpot Awards. "Comic Arts" is just the catch-all term for recipients who work in the comics industry.



**BELOW:** The first Inkpot Awards banquet was held in 1974 and included guests (and Inkpot recipients, l to r) Russell Myers, Charles M. Schulz, Russ Manning, Roy Thomas, and Milton Caniff.



INKPOT AWARDS



## THE RECIPIENTS...

Over the years, the Inkpot Awards recipient list reads like a who's who of comics books. That first year, Jack Kirby, Russ Manning, and Roy Thomas were recipients from comic books, alongside *Famous Monsters* editor Forrest J Ackerman, actors Kirk Alyn and June Foray, authors Ray Bradbury and Bjo Trimble, animation director Bob Clampett, syndicated

newspaper cartoonists Milton Caniff, Russell Myers, and Charles M. Schulz, and comics convention pioneer and direct market creator Phil Seuling. Famed movie director Frank Capra (*It's A Wonderful Life*) was also a Comic-Con guest that year, and as co-chair William Lund recalled in an essay for Comic-Con's 40th anniversary *Souvenir Book* in 2009, "Frank Capra and his wife decided to retire to their room early ... Shel Dorf came up to me and said we were to get up to their room so we could present the award ... when we arrived, though, both were already dressed in their pajamas," thus marking possibly the one and only time the Inkpot was awarded to someone in their PJs.

The list of Inkpot Award-winning comic creators is legendary, right up there with the Will Eisner Hall of Fame. Unfortunately, space considerations won't allow every recipient to be mentioned in this article, but suffice it to say the list runs the gamut of comic artists from Jack Kirby (1974) to Moebius (1986), from Rumiko Takahashi (1994) to Jeff Smith (2001), and from Joe Quesada (2014) to Raina Telgemeier just last year, in 2023. (A complete alphabetical listing of every Inkpot Award recipient to-date is available on the Comic-Con website at [www.comic-con.org/awards/inkpot/](http://www.comic-con.org/awards/inkpot/))

Accentuating the international aspect of the event, manga superstars that were recipients of the Inkpot Award include Osamu Tezuka (1980), Monkey Punch (1981), Kazuo Koike, Yoshihiro Tatsumi (both 2006), Tite Kubo (2008), Moto Hagio (2010), Kazuki Takahashi (2015), and Junji Ito (2023).

In addition to the world of comics, many awards were also given to luminaries from the movie and TV industries. The above-mentioned director, Frank



**“ In addition to the world of comics, many awards were also given to luminaries from the movie and TV industries ”**



**ABOVE:** Jack Kirby was among the first group of Inkpot Award recipients in 1974, seen here with his award in a photo taken by Shel Dorf.

# “ The Inkpot Awards quickly became a mainstay of the event ”

Capra, was the first movie person to receive the award, but over the years, producers and directors like George Pal (1975), George Lucas (1977), Steven Spielberg (1982, with the award given to him in 2014, his first in-person appearance at the event), Jim Henson (1990), Ray Harryhausen, Francis Ford Coppola (both 1992), Sam Raimi (2014), and Marvel Studios head Kevin Feige (2017). Animation greats include Jay Ward (1977), Ralph Bakshi, Floyd Norman (both in 2008), Hayao Miyazaki (2009), Lou Scheimer (2012), and Bruce Timm (2013).

Genre movie and TV actors like Kirk Alyn (the first Superman, awarded in 1974), *Star Trek's* Walter Koenig (1982) and Nichelle Nichols (2018), *Star Wars's* Mark Hamill (2004), *Batman* TV show stars Adam West (1980), Burt Ward, and Julie Newmar, alongside West (2014), Arnold Schwarzenegger (2012), and voice actors such as Daws Butler (1975), Mel Blanc (1976), and Clarence Nash (1978). My two personal TV favorites that I was honored to give Inkpot Awards to were *Adventures of Superman* actors Noel Neill (2008) and Jack Larson (2013), two fondly remembered stars from my childhood.

Prose author recipients—primarily of science

fiction, fantasy, and horror books—including the above-mentioned Ray Bradbury among the first group of Inkpot winners in 1974, Robert A. Heinlein (1977), Larry Niven (1979), Douglas Adams (1983), Poul Anderson (1986), George R. R. Martin (1988), Roger Zelazny (1993), Michael Moorcock (1997), Samuel R. Delaney (1999), Connie Willis (2008), R. L. Stine (2017), and Cory Doctorow (2018).

## THE CEREMONY...

The Inkpot Awards quickly became a mainstay of the event, with the banquet and the awards ceremony becoming a yearly highlight. Masters of Ceremonies over the years have included cartoonist Russell Myers (1976), Sergio Aragonés (1977), and Jim Steranko (1978). In the early 1980s, Shel Dorf gave out the Inkpots with Sergio drawing lightning-fast caricatures of the recipients as they came to the stage to accept their awards, with audience laughter over the world's fastest cartoonist's quick-draw sketches often drowning out Shel's list of each winner's achievements. Other hosts in the 1980s included cartoonists Jack Katz (1980) and Bil Keane (1981), and a pre-Eisner

Awards Jackie Estrada (1989). In 1995, the Inkpots were combined with the Eisner Awards, and the banquet—Chicken Diane and all—went away. Cartoonist and Comic-Con founding committee member Scott Shaw! MC'ed the Inkpots portion of the awards ceremony through 2002.

In 2003, the decision was made to split off the Inkpot Awards from the Eisner Awards. Over the years, the Eisners had evolved and more categories were added to the ceremony, making the event longer. It was decided that the Inkpots would instead be given out in the spotlight panels that were scheduled for special guests. I was director of programming for Comic-Con from 2000 through 2007, and it became my job, for the most part, to give out the Inkpots, something I continued to do after I became Comic-Con's Director of Publications, up until 2019, with the help of the programming department staff. The decision to give out the awards in a panel dedicated to the recipient was a good one: If you were a fan of a particular creator, you got to see this memorable moment in person at an event dedicated to them, and many people were thrilled to see one of their favorite creators receive this special

recognition. Sometimes, if a guest declined a solo panel and appeared instead on another panel, the Inkpot would be given to them at that event. And in some rare occasions, Inkpot Awards were given out to people at their booths or Artists' Alley tables in the Exhibit Hall.

Recipients weren't told in advance that they would be receiving an award, which sometimes made giving them the actual statue a bit difficult to accomplish. We usually contacted the recipient in advance, and if they were a special guest, we told them it was a convention policy for someone from Comic-Con to introduce them at the beginning of their spotlight panel. If their only appearance at Comic-Con was part of a larger panel, we would contact the moderator of that panel and tell them Comic-Con wanted to give someone on the panel an Inkpot Award, and we'd need a few minutes at the beginning of the program. Most of the recipients were shocked, pleased, surprised, and very, very happy and honored. I will confess I made a few grown people cry, but in a good way. The physical appearance of the statue from 2008 on made people pretty excited once they saw it, especially with their name on it. Oh, and about that redesign...



Photo: Jackie Estrada



Photo: Jackie Estrada

RIGHT:

In the early 1983, Comic-Con co-founder Shel Dorf (far right) presented the Inkpot Awards while cartoonist Sergio Aragonés drew a quick and often hilarious caricature of each recipient as they accepted their award, including artist Robert Williams.

LEFT:

Legendary comic book editor Julius Schwartz (far right) was presented with an Inkpot Award for Achievement in Comic Arts in 1976 by authors Ray Bradbury and Harlan Ellison, the latter of which also gave Schwartz a long-overdue *Batman* story.



# “ Here’s to 50 more years of Inkpot Awards, recognizing countless more creative people who deserve their moment in the spotlight. ”

the bottom of the inkpot, the cocky attitude of the figure’s stance—which gave the award a lot of character. The resulting statue floored people when they received it (not to mention the weight of it—it’s a heavy trophy), and if there were other people present on the panel—particularly previous Inkpot Award winners—often times they remarked, “I have an Inkpot, but I want one of THOSE.” Geary’s design and the subsequent statue impressed everyone who saw it. The new Inkpot Award debuted at Comic-Con in 2008...

## THE IMPACT...

In my personal experience in giving out Inkpot Awards from 2003 through 2019, these awards really meant something to a lot of people, most of whom had received very little recognition for their work, let alone any kind of actual, physical award.

But in the very beginning, the Inkpot Awards had a bit of a perception problem. As long-time Comic-Con panel moderator Mark Evanier wrote on his blog (newsfromme.com) in 2012: “There was a point where I thought the Inkpots were kinda silly. ... a lot of my friends and I made jokes about them. One was that the people at the front table would welcome you by saying, ‘Here’s your badge ... here’s your program book ... and here’s your Inkpot Award.’” But Evanier changed his mind when he presented an award to Golden Age comics artist Fred Guardineer, best known for his creation of Zatara, the magician father of Zatanna, originally a feature in DC’s Action Comics in the 1940s. Guardineer was a guest in 1998, one of many comic creators who received acknowledgement for their work at the event decades after they originally produced it. As Evanier recalled, “Fred was in a wheelchair. As the crowd clapped, he started to struggle out of it to get to the podium ... I whispered to Fred, ‘You don’t have to get up.’ He whispered back to me, ‘No, this is the first time I ever got an award and I’m going to stand for it.’ ... He made it to the lectern mike to say thanks and I was

holding him up by the back of his pants. He was crying and I could look out and see his family—a daughter, a son-in-law, and some grandkids, I think—and they were crying. He later told me it was the greatest moment of his life.

“I have about twenty-five very special Comic-Con memories I will never forget. One was standing there, holding Fred Guardineer up by the back of his trousers while he made this wonderful speech for the greatest moment of his life. It was one of several moments where I decided that maybe awards like the Inkpot weren’t such dumb ideas after all.”

They weren’t. This small bit of recognition for creators like Fred Guardineer, the likes of which entertained millions of comics fans dating back to the beginning of comic books, the industry that spawned Comic-Con—not to mention movie, TV, science fiction & fantasy, and pop culture fans around the world—was the capstone of some of their careers, which often times was spent working alone and in relative obscurity. Over 760 Inkpots have been given out since 1974, a phenomenal amount of awards to bestow on any group of creative people.

Here’s to 50 more years of Inkpot Awards, recognizing countless more creative people who deserve their moment in the spotlight.

**Gary Sassaman is the 2017 recipient of the Inkpot Award for Fandom Services and the former director of programming and publications for Comic-Con. These days he can be found on YouTube @TalesFromMySpinnerRack talking about the Silver Age of Comics.**



## THE REDESIGN...

The original design of the Inkpot Award was a fairly generic one: A simple plaque with a gold statue attached to it, something that could possibly be purchased from a retailer that specialized in award plaques and such. In 2003, Jackie Estrada, the administrator of the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards, had that event’s award redesigned, with input from Will Eisner himself, who suggested adapting a globe pictured in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*, to accentuate the worldwide appeal of comics. Comic-Con Executive

Director Fae Desmond was impressed with that redesign and a few years later, in 2007, decided that it was time to upgrade the Inkpot Awards, too. She contacted cartoonist Rick Geary, a longtime friend and guest of the convention who created the Toucan mascot for the event, and asked him to redesign the award. He submitted a number of sketches, but the one that really stood out was a little Inkpot figurine that held a gold-tipped artist’s pen in his hand. Fae stood her ground with the sculptor when they removed a lot of the charming little details that Geary had added in his sketch—the curve at

### TOP LEFT CORNER:

This was the design of the Inkpot Awards through the 1990s until 2007; this award was given in 1996 to Comic-Con’s then director marketing and public relations, David Glanzer for Fandom Services...

### ABOVE:

In 2008, Comic-Con executive director Fae Desmond commissioned cartoonist Rick Geary, a fixture at the event, to redesign the Inkpot Award. This is Geary’s original sketch.

### ABOVE:

Cartoonist Scott Shaw! MC-ed the Inkpot Awards for many years when it was part of the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards. This cartoon by Shaw! was part of a 30th anniversary tribute to Comic-Con published in the 1999 Souvenir Book. Art © Scott Shaw!



1974-2024

# COMIC-CON REFLECTS BACK AT ITS 50 YEARS OF MASQUERADES

By Martin Jaquish, Masquerade Coordinator





## Comic-Con's first Masquerade began in a very modest-sized meeting room on the main floor of the 1920s-era El Cortez.

San Diego *Star Trek* club discovered the convention. So, Comic-Con #5, now with over 1,900 attendees and staged at San Diego's El Cortez Hotel, premiered its first Masquerade event on August 2, 1974.

In a sense, the origin of costume contests at sci-fi, comics, and other fan conventions dates back to the year 1940 and the second World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) in Chicago, where their costume contest started a tradition that continues to this day. That first year, they called it a "Science Fiction Masquerade Party," with an emcee and prizes, and featured costumes inspired mostly by the heroes and villains of *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* (who started out as comic strip characters, by the way), along with costumes from 1930's movie characters and a few literary-inspired ones (Wikipedia). By the time Comic-Con created its own Masquerade, such convention contests had stopped being called parties decades earlier and were on-stage events of considerable popularity, often with the convention guests of honor serving as emcee or judges or both.

Comic-Con's first Masquerade began in a very modest-sized meeting room on the main floor of the 1920s-era El Cortez. There were perhaps about two hundred in the audience if my memory as a young teenager in attendance hasn't become muddled by time. The emcee was the famous cartoon voice actress and radio personality June Foray, positioned at a small lectern at the side of the stage. Most of the costumes presented tended towards spandex-clothed superheroes and villains, plus a few *Star Trek* costumes and a classic movie monster or two, each having their turn on a small stage with two portable lights set before it. The top winner, interestingly enough, was Charlene Brinkman, AKA actress Brinke Stevens, future wife of *The Rocketeer* creator Dave Stevens. Afterwards she ran

the Masquerades for several years, drawing a larger crowd each time. Surely a surprise to attendees today, the Masquerade was a Friday night event until 1986, when it moved to Saturday.

Later Comic-Con Masquerades enjoyed a better venue as the El Cortez Hotel owners added a much newer building across the street behind it as a conference center, the bottom floor filled with all the vendor tables, and the second floor holding a ballroom which served as the Masquerade's home. A popular recurring emcee was local radio disc jockey Gabriel Wisdom, who donned a winged helmet and wig and brought a large hammer prop made of rectangular mirrors. He thus became the character of The Mighty Thor and hosted the show mostly in character, assuming you can accept Thor as the jovial host for an amateur costume contest. He was usually lit with a spotlight from the back of the audience, and when anyone was misbehaving due to someone staying on stage far too long, he would hold the flat front of his mirrored hammer forward, reflecting the spotlight brightly back towards the person or persons in the audience responsible for the noise, and humorously chide them with a Thor-worthy threat. It was not exactly a lightning bolt, but it did the trick. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* movie was at the top of its popularity, and entries based on it were in abundance during those years, so the song *Let's Do The Time Warp Again* lived up to its name as it was sometimes heard three or even four times during the show. There was always a considerably long audience line vying for a good seat, or at least to secure one before the chairs filled up. For the judging intermissions, there were assorted entertainments, often rock bands, occasionally belly dancers, Celtic musicians, a comedy act, or simply the showing of old 16mm film movie trailers.

A very questionable costume choice one year by a contestant, who was also a pro, was to cover himself entirely with peanut butter so as to simulate a bird dropping. Yes, ugh! But it was quite warm backstage, and that heat, plus the heat of his own body, made the peanut butter smell horribly rancid for the rest of the night. Following that regrettably infamous incident, Comic-Con and many other conventions

that heard about it adopted what became known as the "No Peanut Butter and Jelly Rule," regarding the unwise use of food products as a costume. To this day, I believe a few masquerades (or as often called now, cosplay contests) still mention this rule for which they can thank Comic-Con.

Another famous show moment came in 1989 when contestant Allen Lavigne crafted an impressive Hawkman costume along with a large hollowed-out boulder to be perched on. With his wife hidden inside to crawl it out onto center stage, he was carried out to where he hopped off it, wings majestically spread, to the middle of the big Civic Theatre stage, gained



**T**he remarkable convention we now know as Comic-Con International started in 1970 in the basement of San Diego's U.S. Grant Hotel, with a 300-person attendance that was actually more than the organizers expected. Their primary motivation in creating the convention event was to celebrate comics, film, and science fiction/fantasy but also as a way to meet their favorite writers and artists, and share that love with others. There was initially no costume contest, but costumes were indeed seen over the next few years, including *Star Trek* ones, as the local

## The exact place and year when contestants started bringing music with them seems to have been lost to history, but in the early '70s, it was already common...

applause, then exited. As the clapping faded, his wife, alone and unsure what to do, hesitated several moments in the stage lights, then very slowly turned and crawled the boulder towards the stage exit. Partway there, the voices of a few in the audience rose with chants of "Rock...Rock... Rock!" and then were joined by most of the audience. For many Comic-Cons after that the refrain would spontaneously rise up from the audience at least once or twice per show. To this day, most of us with the convention are convinced the "Rock...Rock...Rock" scene in the movie *Galaxy Quest* was inspired by this, as surely some of the pros at the convention had witnessed it or at least been told of it.

The exact place and year when contestants started bringing music with them seems to have been lost to history, but in the early '70s, it was already common. Audio cassettes used in the '70s and early '80s, being not great quality to begin with, the home-made ones often sounded poor, each recorded at a different level of loudness and were occasionally miscued or played for the wrong entry. But such was the adventurous world of live volunteer-run shows where rehearsals or run-throughs were quite rare. Then, as now, the "Big Room" of the convention has always been needed for other programs during the day, to the chagrin of all who run Masquerades. It was very easy to enter the contest; you simply walked up to a table in the afternoon, glanced at the page of rules, and signed up. One year, some friends drafted me into a large *Elfquest* comics costume group, which won Best In Show, fitting as the Guests of Honor were its creators, Wendy and Richard Pini. Years later, I would end up in a *Star Blazers* group

entry, a popular Japanese animated show at the time.

In 1979, the convention moved to the San Diego Concourse (known as the Convention and Performing Arts Center at the time) with the Masquerade in Golden Hall. Comic-Con had to move back to the El Cortez briefly in 1981, and the Masquerade was set again at the El Cortez in 1982. It was in 1986 that I had my first volunteer position with the Masquerade, arranging for and running a photo area with color-corrected lights and backdrop, the first time for such a set-up, and from then forward, the photo area became a popular place for hobbyist photographers to get their glamour shots of costumes. One year, the studio that had just finished the *Stargate* movie brought down several impressive costumes from the film and displayed them on manikins just outside the Masquerade. We had no idea at the time, of course, the huge franchise that *Stargate* would eventually become.

Depending on what rooms were needed for other convention events and which venues were available for us to rent, the Masquerade in the '80s bounced around between Golden Hall, the El Cortez, the Civic Theatre, and Symphony Hall. For the latter venue, large buses were arranged to make shuttle trips for about 1,700 attendees and contestants from the Concourse to Symphony Hall and then back again. In those summers, you rented Symphony Hall minus any lighting and audio equipment, as the orchestra uninstalled and took it with them to use at their bayside stage, so we had to rent all that, with union stagehands climbing around the vaudeville-era theater to install it for us, then hang a background curtain, that taking all of Saturday morning through half the afternoon, then after the show it all had to be packed up again. Those were my first two years as Coordinator, and it nearly made me never do it again. Some of the VHS videotapes of the 1980s and '90s shows still exist in our archives, and for a few years, the show was closed-circuit—carried to nearby convention hotels by our "Comic-Con CCTV" for attendees to watch the next day in their rooms. Emcees often changed year by year, with too many interesting ones to mention here, and Masquerade showrunners also changed every couple of years, with an especially

dedicated showrunner in 1986 who eventually went on to become the convention's current president.

While Golden Hall worked well enough, and we experimented with a couple of unique stage designs, the professionally equipped Civic Theatre was naturally easier for us and the contestants, and we used the theater even after the rest of the convention outgrew the Concourse and moved into a section of the then-new San Diego Convention Center. Again, buses were needed for an even farther trip to the theater, but the contestants and audience came despite the extra time and trouble.

The next year, as Comic-Con expanded into more sections of the Center, the Masquerade was able to say farewell to being an offsite event, and the center's Ballroom 6ABCF—yes, it was all one room then—became its new home for a few years. To improve viewing at the back of the long room, the facility brought in the large wooden seating risers left over from the 1996 Republican National Convention. Sections of those risers are still used today to build our special wide backstage "stairs" that allow large or unwieldy costumes to safely go up and down from stage level to floor. They store those platforms in the basement just for Comic-Con's Masquerade use! It was that year that we got our first truly huge audience line, the largest one they had ever seen for anything at Comic-Con or at the Convention Center itself. Even the Center's event coordinator was grimly sure we were going to run out of seats and have a frustrated crowd, but the room managed to squeeze everyone in. It was in the '90s that Phil and Kaja Foglio became our regular emcees, occasionally missing a year due to scheduling conflicts.

A few years later, the second half of the Center was completed, and the newly built Ballroom 20 became the Masquerade's 7th and current home. For many years now, to handle our always-long line, we've distributed advance free tickets as a favor to our attendees so they don't have to spend long hours in line to assure they have a seat. So too did the Hollywood professionals discover us, and in our audience every year now are award-winning costume designers, costume fabricators, art directors,



...the Masquerade has grown, evolved, and showcased an estimated two thousand costumes during its long run.



educational professionals, and more. They enjoy our show because we love the same thing they do, great costumes, and they donate many generous prizes. One of the very popular emcees was actor Robert Englund, AKA Freddy Krueger. I was actually worried because, before the show, he was very subdued and quiet, bland even, and I wondered if his studio contract forced him to be there and he hated it. But once on stage, he was a fully happy and energized murderous Freddy, minus the makeup. The crowd loved him, and he even pretended to bite my throat open to kill me. Or maybe that was his way of hoping the show would be a short one.

Through all those decades, our technology has continually improved, of course. The box of 30–40 audio cassettes carefully placed in order had evolved into a box of compact discs, eventually becoming USBs. The black or gray curtain that was the usual stage backdrop of early years was replaced by a white curtain designed for the projection of colors and moving patterns. Of course, the music is digital now, the lighting effects state of the art, the professional cameras and projection all high definition, and it

takes three venues here at the Center to hold the 5,000+ audience. During our difficult two-year COVID shut-down, our Board of Directors deemed there should never be a Comic-Con without a Masquerade, so even during our two online virtual Comic-Cons, there were still Masquerades, still hosted by the Foglios, and with amazing costumes from a dozen different countries. Of course, the Masquerades cost a considerable amount to stage, in tech crew wages, security costs, staff costs, enhanced lighting and camera equipment, fees to be able to play copyrighted music to an audience, and much more. Comic-Con could save a lot of money by just showing a movie Saturday night or simply closing up the

ballroom that evening, but we love our event, and so obviously do our attendees and pros, and fortunately, from time to time, we get a sponsor that covers some of the hefty expenses of the show.

So now, 50 years from the very first one, the Masquerade has grown, evolved, and showcased an estimated two thousand costumes during its long run, some of those created specifically for the event and that otherwise might never have been made. It has demonstrated, hopefully, that each of us surely has some kind of talent within us, some gift of creativity, and that we should not just be audiences of other people's art but also be art makers ourselves. As I am sure it was back at the Masquerade of the 1974 convention, everyone with Comic-Con is very happy to be able to showcase the talents, dedication, and creativity of our attendees, to celebrate the very old but still evolving art of costuming, and to bring a lot of smiles and fun doing it. To you cosplayers, please keep dressing to impress, and the stage will always be there for you!

A big thanks to Comic-Con's Jackie Estrada and her very helpful summary of every Comic-Con as printed in the 2019 Souvenir Book.



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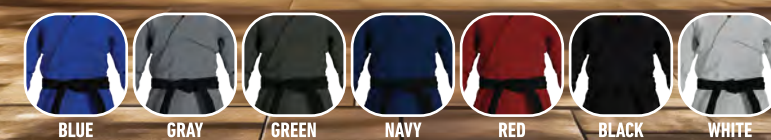
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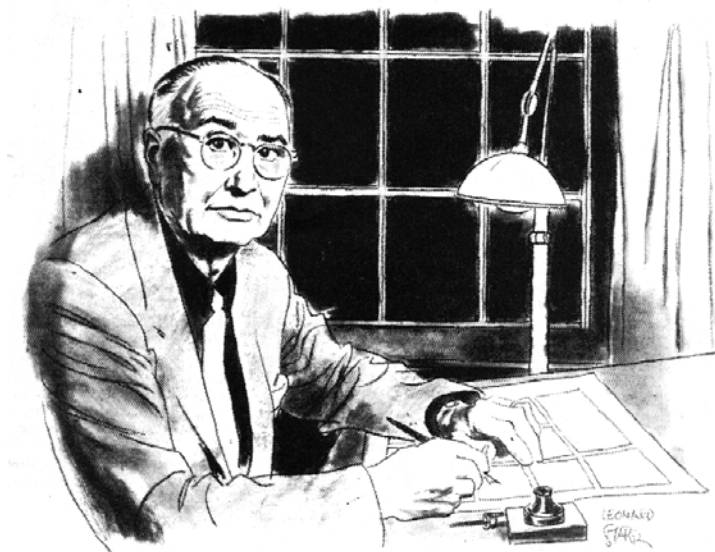
# Little Orphan Annie

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BY  
AMBROSE WYRICK



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## THAT GIRL IN THE RED DRESS TURNS 100

by Rick Marschall

**W**e recognize the fecund year of 1924 as the centennial of seminal comic strips and the period when the "story strip" asserted itself.

Continuity in strips was not unknown previous to 1924; and before the decade ended many fine-tuned categories developed. But a hundred years ago the narrative, sequential, day-to-day (even "cliff-hanger" mode) comic strip became a staple of daily newspapers. The actual centennial is worth noting, because daily strips—"story strips," as designated by the National Cartoonists Society, and in the public's perception—are virtually synonymous with the art form itself: "To Be Continued," or in the French, "À suivre..."

We recognize the legendary comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, whose significance of course extended beyond the comics page to broader popular culture, merchandise, movies, Broadway, songs,

politics, and influentially, America's cultural consciousness. No less we praise her remarkable creator Harold Gray.

Prior to 1924, the newspaper comic strip largely was a Sunday product. There had been comics in daily papers, but with some exceptions they generally consisted of random gags, revolving characters, and expanded panel-cartoon formats. Sunday pages almost obligated cartoonists to design episodes rather than continuities; daily strips begged for longer narratives, even if last-panel gags were payoffs. Daily strips also brought readers back to the funny pages every day, surely a commercial imperative. An unwritten role of the colored comic supplement had been to appeal to children, but the black-and-white inner pages of newspapers were instead the domain of adult readers. And it is interesting that only by 1924, humor—let us specify the slapstick humor of comics' first 25 years—finally



**PREVIOUS PAGE (LEFT):**  
The first sheet music featuring Little Orphan Annie, published months after the strip's debut.

**PREVIOUS PAGE (RIGHT):**  
Portrait of Harold Gray by his successor Leonard Starr (Collection of Rick Marschall)

**ABOVE:**  
Several times a year Harold Gray and his wife Winifred traversed the continent, meeting plain people and gathering story ideas. In 1955 he limned the trails taken over the years... and this was still more than a decade before the demise of the strip and its creator.

shared its spotlight with melodrama, family strips, working-women themes, sports, and other thematic preoccupations.

Heiress to all these developments in 1924 was *Little Orphan Annie* by Harold Gray. The "little girl with auburn locks" gathered, codified, and built upon these trends. She is significant, more than various precursors, for after Annie took America by storm, certain flood-gates opened. For instance, only a year later cartoonist George Storm and writer Edwin Alger (whose name evoked Horatio Alger) drew from the well of boys' weekly papers and dime novels and created *Phil Hardy/Bobby Thatcher*; other strips soon followed: pastiches of humor, pathos, adventure, mystery, and suspense (and essential appeals to younger readers, at least initially). *Little Pathfinder Annie!*

Cartoonist Harold Lincoln Gray married twice and never had any children... except for Annie. He was born on his parents' farm in Kankakee IL in 1894; was

graduated from Purdue University in Indiana and served as a bayonet instructor in the Great War; and secured a position with the *Chicago Tribune*, eventually as an assistant to Sidney Smith on *The Gumps*. This strip careened between humor and melodrama; it was a family strip with vaudeville gags when humor was the objective; otherwise, human-interest fare. Domestic crises were frequent and of such narrative interest (ghost-written by a Chicago jeweler named Sol Hess) that *The Gumps* became a sensation, first in the Midwest, then nationwide.

Harold Gray's period on the strip was marked by artwork clumsier than Smith's own, and bad lettering of the strip's heavy dialog. Whether it was Gray's creative urges, or his notice of Smith's sudden, magnificent income, he became determined to produce his own strip. As legend has it, he drew samples of a strip based on a street gamin named Otto, and showed them to the *Tribune's* publisher "Colonel" Robert

McCormick (or his cousin, "Captain" Joseph Patterson of the *New York Daily News*) and was told about Otto, "He looks like a pansy. Put skirts on the kid." Renamed to evoke James Whitcomb Riley's poem about Little Orphan Annie, an American icon was born.

If there was a story-strip pioneer that staked a claim before *Little Orphan Annie* it was *The Gumps* itself. Historians have not noted the fact that Gray's initial premise was a loose approximation of Sidney Smith's strip. It was perhaps not a mistake that *Little Orphan Annie* loosely was a junior version of the strip on which Gray assisted: self-contained Sunday humor; a loose daily storyline (Annie found herself in the household of characters not meant to carry over to the next episode—a shrewish wife and a rich war profiteer named Warbucks); domestic disputes and resolutions; lectures and prolix monologues.

If this premise and setting doesn't sound especially grabbing, many readers might have agreed, so adjustments were made. Annie embraced a doll named Emily Marie, to whom she confided—soon to be succeeded by the more attentive dog named Sandy. To the extent that Warbucks was henpecked in his own house, the billionaire and his ward bonded; and he became "Daddy." Annie eventually ran away from that home, to a next adventure. But as we know, "Daddy" remained as a character and frequent (though never legal) guardian; Mrs Warbucks disappeared from the strip altogether; and month by month Annie began to be adopted, as it were, by the reading public.

Gray's strip grew in popularity. Through the '20s the premises lurched from adventures (haunted houses) to locales (desert islands) to children's domains (circus settings). Annie was both vulnerable—her inexplicable, and unexplained, lone status guaranteed that—but fiercely independent. She asserted doses of justice for bullied kids, with a strong right hook when needed, and with stern lectures for good measure. By the end of the 1920s there were Orphan Annie dolls, toys, games, reprint books, songs, and all sorts of clothes and merchandise.

By the end of the decade Gray's art, too, evolved to a passable level of attraction. For a strip that skirted

with realism, even hard reality, *Little Orphan Annie* spent years ensconced in a world of humor-strip architectonics. Details were few; Gray never learned to draw his characters running in realistic fashion, for instance; props and background elements were scarce. And one of his artistic clichés was baked-in from the start: characters with empty ovals instead of eyes. Perhaps Gray was inspired by comics' other parvenu (like Warbucks) in *Bringing Up Father* by George McManus. Readers seldom remarked about the eyes of Jiggs, Maggie, and company. In *Annie*, it became a matter of chatter. Historian Coulton Waugh wondered whether Gray

“  
**Gray's strip grew in popularity. Through the '20s the premises lurched from adventures (haunted houses) to locales (desert islands) to children's domains (circus settings).**  
”

intentionally sublimated the emotion conveyed by eyes so that readers would supply their own feelings.

There was nobody in America who benefited more from the Great Depression that struck in October, 1929, than Harold Gray—or, let us say, Annie herself. With hard times came a transformation in *Little Orphan Annie* that far outpaced new sets of premises and dramatic opportunities. The vicissitudes of life during the Depression became a virtual character itself—a *motif*.

Suddenly the poor girl was plausibly poor indeed; and millions of readers identified ever more keenly with her vulnerability. Annie discovered, defended, and assisted the destitute and desperate. Harold Gray revealed himself as a champion of President Hoover's Rugged Individualism. She preached, through marvelously crafted stories beyond mere perorations and dialog, the virtues of self-reliance



**ABOVE:**  
In 1928, Irving Berlin published a second Little Orphan Annie song.

**RIGHT:**  
The most famous of Annie's songs, sponsored by Ovaltine, sponsor of the radio show. "Who's that little chatterbox, the one with pretty auburn locks—Who do you see? It's Little Orphan Annie!"

and integrity. Annie took on schoolyard bullies, crooked businessmen, corrupt politicians, and odious union leaders. She lectured the lazy and encouraged the dispirited. In story after story she became an inspiration for millions who endured privation during those crushing hard times.

Reflecting (or encouraging) the editorials in her home papers, the *Tribune* and *News*, Annie spoke for the "ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed" but resolutely rejected the new occupant of the White House who coined that phrase. Franklin Roosevelt had no bitterer opponents (and perhaps none more effective) than Gray and Annie...which bothered millions of her fans not at all. *Little Orphan Annie* became a cultural colossus during the Depression, with movie serials, a popular radio show (sponsored by Ovaltine and its iconic decoder-ring promotion) and an ever-expanding plethora of toys, games, books, and licensed items.

Gray's art took a quantum leap during the 1930s too. It coincided with the addition of his cousin Ed Leffingwell (and later Ed's brother Robert) as assistant. It might be assumed, because their biographical details are sparse, that Ed was responsible for a remarkable improvement in *Annie's* graphic maturity, but a consideration of facts suggest otherwise, except perhaps for improving the strip's lettering. The excellence in layouts, panel composition, shading, and visual details occurred in *Annie* before either Leffingwell's employment; and lasted beyond them. And such qualities existed in *Little Joe*—a Western strip that remains a mystery in strip history. Well drawn and

written, it differed (other than setting and characters) not at all from *Little Orphan Annie*. Premises, outlines, dialogue, character portrayals, politics, and artwork all surely were by the same hand that produced Annie's adventures. However...signed "Leffingwell." Strange, a major cartoonist ghosting a separate, minor, strip; but evidently part of his cousins' compensation.

Matching the transformed artwork in *Annie* was a major advancement in character delineations and mature plots. In addition to his stock players of *petite bourgeoisie* and corrupt bureaucrats, Gray hearkened to the siren-calls of 1930s fantasy themes: "Daddy" Warbucks recruited a cast of allies with mysterious and sometimes supernatural powers. Punjab, a vaguely Sikh giant; the Asp, a deadly Asian; and Mr Am—plausibly a representation of Divinity, a white-bearded man "who had lived forever" and exercised amazing powers—were among little Annie's new friends.

More than an interesting cast, Harold Gray invested extraordinary literary devices into his plot construction. He named many of his characters by the



tool of "personification," the method used by writers like John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Like Dickens also, when he named characters Warbucks, Fred Free, Mr Pinchpenny, and Mrs Bleating-Hart, he was being clear, not bankrupt. In a unique way we find parallels between *Little Orphan Annie* and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*—Huck's river, as a nonliteral metaphor, found life in Annie's omnipresent roads...to the inevitable next town.

Further—in one of comics' most remarkable feats of creativity—Gray took upon himself, for years, the device of having *every day's strip represent a different day's action*. In Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs / Captain Easy*, sometimes a brawl extended over a whole week. When I was a syndicate comics editor, I frequently counseled against a writer having *one phone conversation* in a strip last more than three days of "action" in the daily paper. But Gray managed to have every day in *Little Orphan Annie* represent a separate day in the narrative. Not easy; try it!

Another technique Gray mastered was seldom attempted by contemporary masters of continuity strips Raymond, Foster, Gould, or Caniff, beyond their occasional use of the universal "Meanwhiles." In *Little Orphan Annie* stories, Gray often showed an occurrence that became the crux of a sequence, a mystery to be solved, a secret to be revealed. Largely through soliloquies and exchanged dialogues, he offered readers the multiple viewpoints of multiple characters...not "versions" of the truth, but insights into characters' motivations. Gray's stories were layered, rich, complex.

The pervasive mood in *Little Orphan Annie* was one of solitude if not loneliness. Annie was, essentially, a loner; and her world was filled with empty rooms, deserted streets, and lonely streets. Often at nighttime. Gray made readers aware of corners, dark shadows, and ceilings—almost metaphorically oppressive. Contextually, his figures, as Al Capp once described to me, had "all the vitality of Easter Island statues." No mistake or shortcoming, however: Gray knew the world he constructed. Substituting narrative for action—there fewer fights in *Little Orphan Annie*

**Gray & Gray**  
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE  
31 March, 1952

Dear Al;

Thanks a lot for your wire. It was most thoughtful of you; both the wire and especially your wonderfully nice comment in your article in LIFE. Anyway, you sure tried. I always said you are a scholar and a gentleman--- and a dam nice guy, too.

That whole LIFE package, cover, strips and article, was a corking job in every way.

Since even the harmless old platitudes concerning honesty, virtue and hard work have become political dynamite, you are about the only comic artist left with the guts and setup to say anything in the strip. They sure as hell have me hog-tied now, but good. And now any suggestion of violence in a strip seems to be good for suspension, if not a cancellation, with most of our new breed of prissy editors. Soon I presume it will be illegal to print even reports of murders, or crimes of any sort, in a newspaper.

Sometimes I get disgusted with the whole dam business. But it's a living, eh?

Thanks again, Al. Power to you and the best of luck and good fortune always.

Sincerely,

*Harold Gray*  
Harold Gray,  
Southport,  
Connecticut.

than in almost any other story strip—readers were treated to soliloquies—"internal monologues," in literary terminology. By this technique Gray identified with Hugo, Pirandello, and, especially when the personalities were sympathetic, Goethe.

The little orphan in the iconic red dress who began her career as a waif vaguely resembling Mary Pickford had become a monumental avatar, an American symbol. When the European war raged in 1939, Gray, like his editors and 80 per cent of Americans, opposed American intervention; and in their view, the despised Franklin Roosevelt was scheming to involve the United States. But when war was declared, Annie "enlisted." Gray had her form the Junior Commandos, doing volunteer service and war work. He constructed a sequence where a Black kid suffered prejudice but—with Annie's lecture on tolerance—he was welcomed into the club.

**ABOVE:**  
In 1952, at the height of the "Red Scare," Harold Gray wrote this note in response to public compliments he received from America's most prominent liberal cartoonist (at the time), Al Capp.



By that point, however, the liberal establishment in American press and politics had grown to despise Annie and her creator. Because the Junior Commandos wore JC armbands in their war-work, critics called Gray a crypto-Nazi. A popular magazine profiled *Little Orphan Annie* in an article called "Fascism in the Funnies." The opprobrium of Gray as a right-winger became as common as jokes about her red dress or blank eyes.

Harold Gray and Annie powered on. The cartoonist's politics, if anything, grew more strident in the post-War years, and

when Communists were being exposed by Washington hearings and in the new medium of television. Annie's "physical" world yet evolved—darker than ever it was: Gray substituted solid blacks for his trademark cross-hatch shading. Until self-conscious graphic-novel artists in our day, Harold Gray drew comics closer to *film noir* sensibilities than any artist of his time. Alex Raymond was a Romantic (in the glory years of *Flash Gordon*); Milton Caniff was an Impressionist in *Terry*; and Chester Gould was comics' Expressionist in *Dick Tracy*. Harold Gray? In his last phase, the 1950s and '60s (he died on May 9, 1968) he produced *comics noire*. (I

would add that Roy Crane, in his *Wash Tubbs/Captain Easy*, was master of the swashbuckling picaresque in comics. His strip's centennial is also this year, and unfortunately Comic-Con chose to bypass that recognition.)

*Little Orphan Annie* was not created in an ivory tower. Harold Gray loved the people he depicted and defended. He and his wife Winifred drove round-trip every year between their homes in Westport CT and La Jolla CA. He talked to people and took notes (I curated an exhibition related to the debut of the *Annie* movie, for which I was obliged to research Gray's archives in the Mugar Library at Boston University. The amazing Gray had retained virtually every original, and all notes, maybe even random receipts, from his long career).

It is supposed that when Harold Gray died, he intended that *Little Orphan Annie* die with him; perhaps Warbucks himself was meant to die. Despite the fact that the strip had slipped in circulation during the turbulent 1960s, it was a valuable property the syndicate would not allow to die. As syndicates often do, the Tribune-News Syndicate shamefully botched Annie's afterlife. A succession of amateurs and miscast professional cartoonists abused her (even I auditioned at one point, trying my best to evoke Gray's 1930s look, and revive his worldview; mercifully my work was declined). Eventually and ironically I became Comics Editor of the syndicate, by which time they had accepted my advice, and re-ran sequences from the real 1930s.

All to no avail, commercially. When the "property" was licensed for a Broadway musical, an unconscious parody found favor with a 1970s public. Harold Gray might have spun in his grave into low-earth orbit, however. At that point the great Leonard Starr, whose *On Stage* had run its course, was hired to produce the *Annie* strip. Starring characters that resembled the originals (can I say "50 shades of Gray"?), he produced a fine strip that was, however, *Annie*; not *Little Orphan Annie*. Despite the fact that they had lived only miles apart in Westport, my friend Leonard ironically had never met Harold Gray.

**Little Orphan Annie was not created in an ivory tower. Harold Gray loved the people he depicted and defended.**



**ABOVE:** In 1995 the US Postal Service celebrated the Centennial of the Comic Strip. Rick Marshall was the project's Consultant, and (of course) *Little Orphan Annie* was among the 20 strips in the series. We chose San Diego, and Comic-Con's blessing, to participate in the debut.

**ABOVE:** When Rick Marshall was a boy he wrote a fan letter to Harold Gray; received an original drawing; and became a recipient of annual color Christmas cards. Gray produced them only for family and friends, not for commercial sale. Two examples here, 1955 (right) and 1960.

It is a shame that many Americans have not met Harold Gray, so to speak, or his iconic masterpiece *Little Orphan Annie*. I devoted an issue of my old *NEMO* Magazine to the strip, and I kicked off a reprint series for Fantagraphics. Arlington House and IDW are publishers that similarly assembled anthologies.

The viewpoints of Harold Gray—personal and political—and the immense craft he brought to *Little Orphan Annie*, are irretrievably bonded. In this Centennial year, it is just that they properly find their places with the greatest of American creators and creations in any genres.



**ABOVE:**  
This giant portrait by Harold Gray of his main characters hung in the syndicate offices in New York.

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# The Secret Thoughts OF AN UNDERGRADUATE

I'll never be ready for the exam... Wish I was sound asleep.

Wish there was an easy way to absorb facts.

I can't memorize all this stuff... My head's splitting.

What good'll this education do me when I'm out of school and start working!

Here I am beating my brains out while everyone's out having fun!

If I could make myself invisible I could copy answers easy.

Maybe I could have an accident and get excused from class.

After studying all night, I'll probably fall dead asleep at the test tomorrow.

## THE NIGHT BEFORE EXAMS

Continuing his excursion through the booby-traps and pitfalls of the subconscious of the American college male—which he began in our last issue—artist Harvey Harmon snuck up on this specimen hard at work preparing for a mid-term exam in Organic Chemistry. The scene was a tiny cubicle in the men's dorm at Appalachian U., at two a.m., and Harvey reports that the floor was littered with empty coffee containers and shattered hopes. Adjusting the special bi-focals which give him an x-ray view of the patient's skull, Harvey made notes which he developed into the pathetic picture-story above. And how's your subconscious doing these days, chum?

# HARVEY KURTZMAN

## CENTENNIAL REMEMBRANCE

By Denis Kitchen

2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Harvey Kurtzman, a cartoonist, writer, editor, and visionary whose influences remain deep and profound. With *MAD* alone, his position in comics and the cultural pantheon is secure. As his protégé Art Spiegelman has noted, "Kurtzman's *MAD* held a mirror up to American society, exposing the hypocrisies and distortions of mass media with jazzy grace and elegance. He's our first post-modern humorist, laying the groundwork for such contemporary humor and satire as *Saturday Night Live*, Monty Python, and *Naked Gun*."

In *MAD* and all his subsequent ventures, Kurtzman drew a bead on the phony aspects and idiosyncrasies of modern commercial culture—from advertising to film to comic-book clichés. He took on Senator Joseph McCarthy as surely and seriously in the pages of *MAD* as Edward R. Murrow did on television. Kurtzman also took on comic art censorship, which was then sweeping across the profession. And he did it all with a laugh.

But there was much more to Harvey Kurtzman than *MAD*. He edited, wrote, laid out, and sometimes drew the stories for EC's *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*, offering searing insights into the cruelties

and ironies of warfare, from ancient times to modern. No comics, and scarcely any art, had ever been so scrupulously researched and meticulously drawn as this subject was in his hands, which until then had typically been romanticized, glamorized, and jingoistic in popular art.

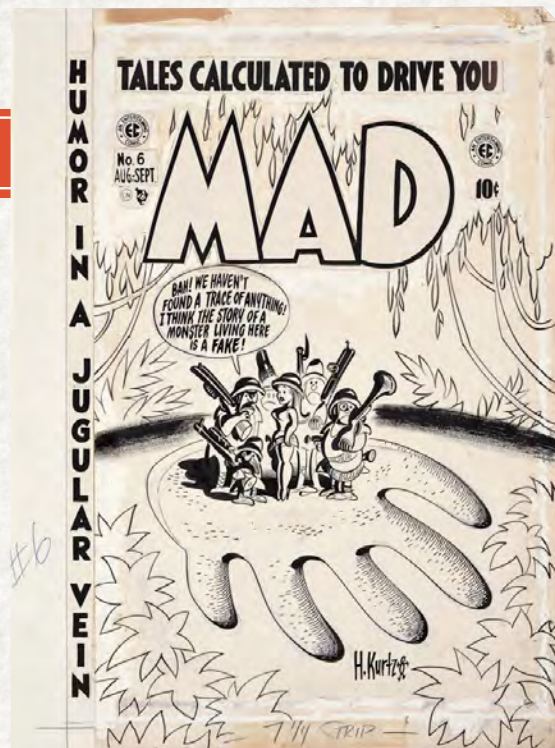
Kurtzman was not only the twentieth century's most influential editor of both serious-minded comics and comics with a sense of humor, he was also an important artist in his own right. There are many who wish economic and publishing circumstances had permitted Kurtzman to focus entirely on his magnificent solo creations. But, as both an editor and creator, his influence on his own and subsequent generations of cartoonists and writers was—and is—incalculable. The respect and loyalty that top collaborators like Will Elder, Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Al Jaffee, Arnold Roth, Russ Heath, and others had for Kurtzman was best demonstrated by a not-so-

simple gesture—they followed him from magazine to magazine, with all doing their very best work under his often-stern direction.

Kurtzman also had a remarkable gift for discovering and nurturing talent. His first young editorial assistant at *Help!* magazine in 1960 was no less than later



“CRUMB CALLS KURTZMAN, HIS MENTOR, ‘AS GOOD AS ANY CARTOONIST IN HISTORY,’ AND HAS OFTEN DECLARED THAT THE EARLY MAD AND HUMBUG COMICS ‘FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED HIS LIFE.’”



celebrity feminist Gloria Steinem, whom Harvey ironically tried to set up on a blind date with his friend, *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner. When Steinem moved on, Kurtzman replaced her with another fresh unknown, Terry Gilliam, who developed his directing chops producing photo novellas known as *fumetti* for *Help!* And when Kurtzman hired a virtually unknown off-Broadway actor named John Cleese in 1964 to play the lead in a Gilliam-scripted *fumetti* about a man who harbors unhealthy desires for Barbie dolls, Kurtzman literally set in motion the subsequent formation of Monty Python several years later.

In the early 1960s, Kurtzman discovered and gave the first national exposure to young cartoonists such as Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson, and Joel Beck—all rabid fans of Kurtzman’s *MAD*, *Humbug* and *Jungle Book*, and soon key members of America’s counter-culture. Their professional debuts in *Help!* proved direct precursors to *Zap*, *Bijou Funnies*, *Freak Brothers*, and the other underground comix that blossomed not long after *Help!*’s demise.

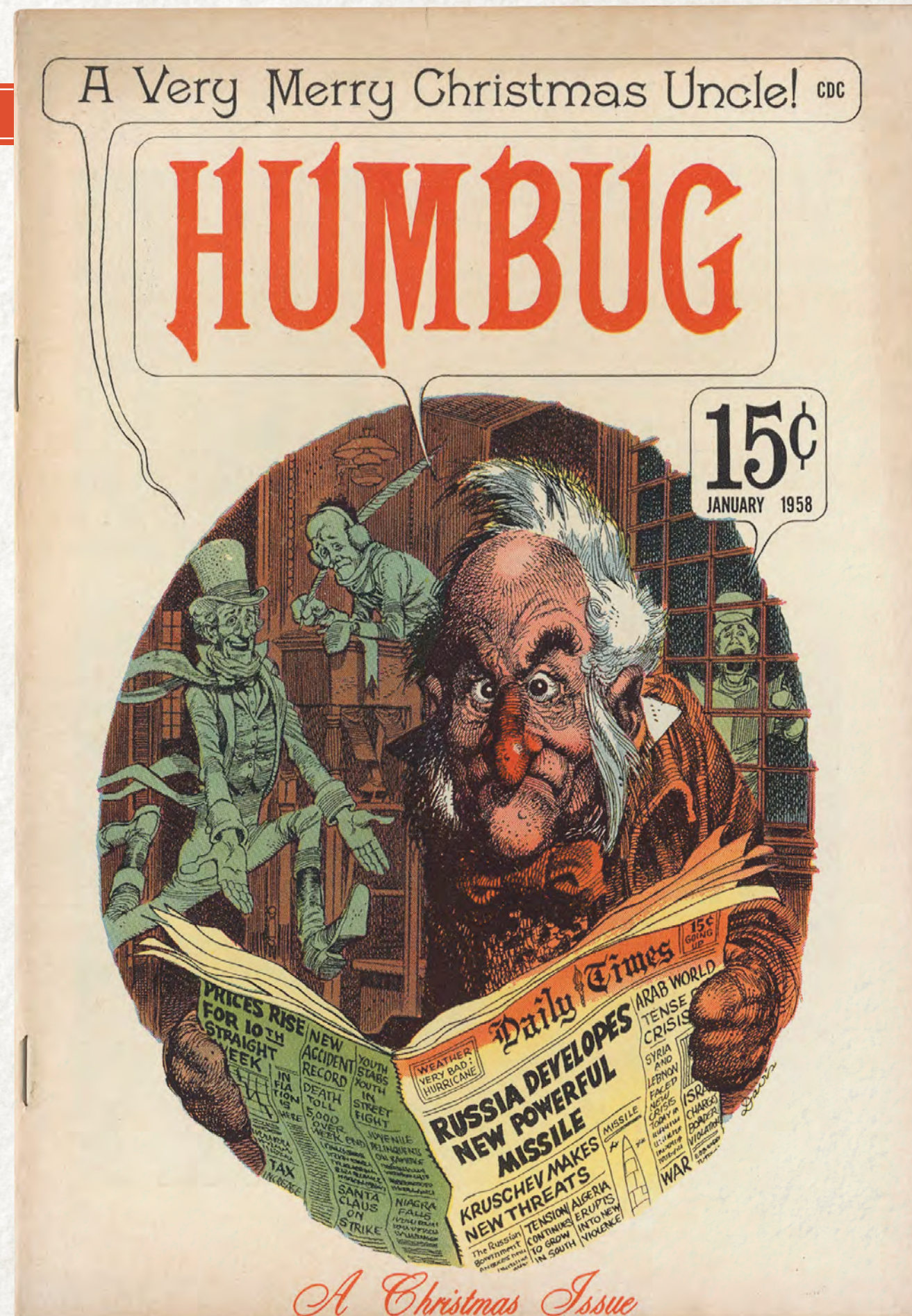
Crumb calls Kurtzman, his mentor, “as good as any cartoonist in history,” and has often declared that the early *MAD* and *Humbug* comics fundamentally changed his life. Virtually every other underground cartoonist has likewise acknowledged Kurtzman’s influence and expressed respect and affection. Harvey, in turn, would reciprocate that respect and affection. Often called the father of underground comix, Kurtzman himself used a funnier term, the “father-in-law.”

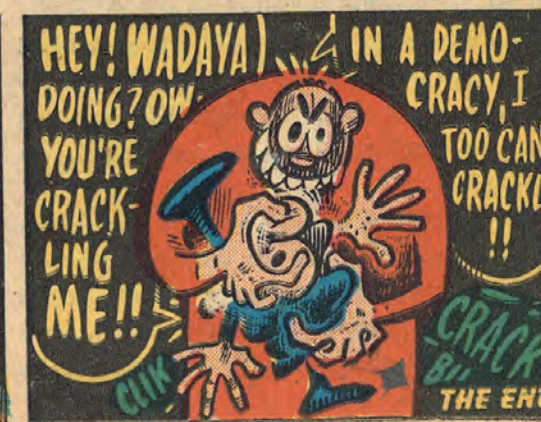
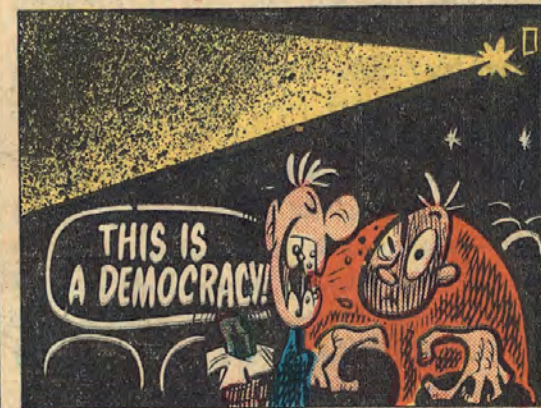
If he had a Midas touch for talent, Kurtzman had a reverse Midas touch for business, never his strong suit. His biggest gambles—leaving his successful brainchild *MAD* for the Hefner-sponsored *Trump*, and starting the self-financed *Humbug*—proved disastrous. His best-known creations and successes—*MAD* and “Little Annie Fanny”—contributed heavily to the fortunes of others, but were not owned or controlled by him. Harvey’s friend Will Eisner was the rare comics artist who also excelled at business and owned the majority of his prodigious output. However, as Kurtzman’s widow Adele once lamented, “Harvey repeatedly asked Will for advice. But he never took it.”

It’s tempting to reduce Kurtzman’s career into neat categories: “before *MAD*” and “after *MAD*.” In fact, those categories do correspond with his greatest public triumph and his most influential moment in mass media. Kurtzman’s story, however, follows a more complex path, through the underbrush of American popular culture and politics. Arising out of the Great Depression, ten-cent comic books were the newest of the mass arts, appearing on the market after network radio and before television, and they were uniquely monopolized by youngsters (including young soldiers at home and overseas). They were generally viewed by the middle classes and the aspiring upper class as pulp trash. That comics should become an “art form” was a notion that seems to have developed only from the inside, and only in the minds of a handful of innovators.

While virtually no one in the infancy of comic books was pretentious enough to think they could be more than cheap childish entertainment (Will Eisner was the sole exception), Kurtzman was among a handful of crucial innovators in the artistic maturation and achievement in the mass, million-selling, commercially fertile field. But his innate genius naturally required some years of development.

Following his graduation from New York City’s High School of Music and Art in 1941—cartoonists Will Elder, Al Jaffee, Al Feldstein, and John Severin were also alums—Kurtzman found entry-level work on the margins of the comic book industry, creating nothing particularly memorable before inevitably being drafted in 1943 while World War II raged. Though trained in the infantry, he never went overseas, but his cre-





ative talent was not wasted. He illustrated instructional manuals and military posters and had gag strips in *Yank*, the widely read Army weekly.

Back to civilian life, he got a foot in the door at Timely (later Marvel) Comics, initially creating crossword puzzles for Martin Goodman's "schlock" publishing house. "The Organization Man in the Grey Flannel Executive Suite" in *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book* (1959), satirizes publishing ethics in general but is to a large degree a roman à clef of Timely. A distant Goodman relative, Stan Lee (nee Stanley Lieber), was the editor of the comic book division. In early 1946, both Lee and Kurtzman were essentially unknown comics industry drones. The big difference was that Lee, at twenty-three, had been on his relative's payroll for half a dozen years and wielded some power, while Kurtzman, at twenty-one, was barely eking out a freelance living.

"Stan wanted to give me something to do. He liked my work [but] he didn't have anything for me," Kurtzman recalled of that lean period. Fortunately for the struggling artist, "They had this problem of getting fillers." Periodicals need single-page and partial-page "filler" material on hand to fill open pages that develop near press time when editorial material doesn't neatly mesh with paid advertising space. So, in an industry that was already regarded as the lowest form of art and entertainment, comic book fillers represented the lowest of the low. But Kurtzman was desperate for work and gratefully accepted the assignment.

The result, "Hey Look!", regularly tested his ingenuity and steadily sharpened his innate skills. From 1946 through 1949, he created slightly over 150 pages, roughly one per week. The earliest pages, in Kurtzman's own harsh assessment, were "real ugly stuff," but as he gained confidence and hit his stride the pages became genuine cartooning gems. With little or no meddling from Lee, Kurtzman was able to engage in whatever quirky, self-referential, or surreal style of humor he wished, and over the three years his drawing and compositions noticeably improved, not to mention his confidence. As comics historian John Benson noted, "Kurtzman's time on 'Hey Look!' was crucial to the flowering of his talent. It was a virtual three-year training ground for every aspect of his storytelling,

art style, and form of humor."

During this period Kurtzman also contributed short features and illustrations to *Varsity: A Young Man's Magazine*, essentially done in his "Hey Look!" style, but addressing a more sophisticated college audience. He also picked up illustration jobs from *Parents Magazine* and developed several innovative children's books for Kunen Books, including four in collaboration with his impoverished studio mate and close friend René Goscinny. When the children's books flopped, Goscinny moved to France where before long he found fame and fortune with *Lucky Luke* and *Astérix*.

Though we associate him with comic books and magazines, Kurtzman's lifelong dream was to do newspaper comic strips, and he very briefly succeeded with a short-lived Sunday experiment, "Silver Linings." It, too, was "filler," but instead of appearing in low-rent children's comics, the Sunday color strips graced the prestigious *New York Herald Tribune*. Only nine "Silver Lining" strips ultimately ran between March and June 1948, but they demonstrated that Kurtzman's unique brand of humor could make the jump from a distinct juvenile market to a mass market. His career was showing signs of breaking out.

As the decade closed, Kurtzman took his portfolio to the offices of Educational Comics, thinking they actually published "educational" comics. There, fatefully, he met William M. Gaines, who a short time earlier had inherited E.C. Comics from his father, Max. But Bill Gaines was not interested in maintaining E.C. titles such as *Picture Stories from the Bible*. He was transforming Educational Comics into Entertaining Comics, with new titles in the science fiction, horror, and romance genres.

Gaines looked at Kurtzman's portfolio and laughed uproariously at the "Hey Look!" samples, but he had no immediate need for his skills. Neither one of them suspected that Gaines and E.C. Comics would be the catalyst for much bigger things to come. Kurtzman's later contributions to E.C. Comics's "New Trend" titles themselves earned him a considerable niche in American popular culture history. But his creation and the spectacular rise of *MAD*, as comic book-turned-magazine, placed him in a very different category, threatening to overshadow everything else in his life. How could it have happened in such a whirl—

**"KURTZMAN'S TIME ON 'HEY LOOK!' WAS CRUCIAL TO THE FLOWERING OF HIS TALENT. IT WAS A VIRTUAL THREE-YEAR TRAINING GROUND FOR EVERY ASPECT OF HIS STORYTELLING, ART STYLE, AND FORM OF HUMOR."**

“THE METEORIC RISE OF MAD WAS ROUGHLY PARALLELED BY ANOTHER AMERICAN MAGAZINE PHENOMENON, PLAYBOY, AND THE RESPECTIVE EDITORS WERE FAST MUTUAL ADMIRERS.”

only three years—and how was it over for him so fast?

The meteoric rise of *MAD* was roughly paralleled by another American magazine phenomenon, *Playboy*, and the respective editors were fast mutual admirers. In 1956 Hugh Hefner, famously seductive, wooed Kurtzman, promising what Gaines could not: a full-color magazine on slick paper, complete editorial control, and an unlimited budget. Before accepting Hefner's offer, Kurtzman conveyed to Gaines that he would stay with *MAD* if he had 51% of it. The proud and fiscally conservative publisher naturally balked, but, desperate to keep the man who saved his floundering company, countered with ten per cent. When Kurtzman would not budge, the two parted with acrimony.

Kurtzman then joined forces with Hefner, but the resulting magazine, called *Trump*, for complicated reasons, lasted only two issues, though its demise is perhaps best summarized by Hefner's later comment, "I gave Harvey Kurtzman an unlimited budget and he exceeded it."

There is a final ironic footnote to *Trump's* fast failure, which sent Kurtzman into a financial free fall. Gaines confided to Al Jaffee that he would have given as much as 49% to Kurtzman to retain him. Five years after their split, in 1961, Gaines sold *MAD* for a reported \$5 million. Had Kurtzman negotiated and received 49% to stay with *MAD*, he would have received nearly two and a half million 1961 dollars, far more than he earned his entire career. It was, sadly, symbolic of the artist's dubious business choices.

In 1957, following the unexpected and quick collapse of *Trump*, Kurtzman and his still-loyal core (Will Elder, Al Jaffee, Arnold Roth, and production hand Harry Chester) pooled their limited savings and, with non-investor Jack Davis, formed *Humbug*, the first artist-owned comics publication. Plagued by poor distribution (via Charlton) *Humbug* lasted only eleven issues. Switching from a comic book format to a magazine with issue #10 did not deliver the sales boost accompanying *MAD's* format switch a short time earlier.

Another period of freelancing followed, highlighted by delightful solo comics features in *Esquire*, and the commercially unsuccessful but highly influential original paperback, *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book*, one of the very earliest graphic novels. The

demoralized but stubborn Kurtzman then launched a final satire magazine, *Help!*, in partnership with publisher Jim Warren in 1960. With a limited editorial budget, and despite the collective efforts of talents like Steinem, Gilliam, Elder, Davis, Roth, and Crumb, and with frequent celebrity covers, *Help!* struggled. The magazine's most popular periodic feature was Kurtzman and Elder's brilliant "Goodman Beaver" comic section. The naïve hero Goodman, a modern day *Candide*, served as a foil to satirize subjects from Superman, TV shows, and Americans' love affair with guns. The series culminated with a story satirizing *Playboy* magazine, in which the devil corrupts Goodman and teen-agers, represented by the cast of *Archie* comics.

The humor-impaired owners of *Archie* (still annoyed by Kurtzman's "Starchie" parody in *MAD*) went after *Help!* with a lawsuit threat. Warren quickly capitulated, even agreeing to include an apology in *Help!* Ironically, Hefner, the actual target of the satire, loved the piece and his subsequent correspondence with Kurtzman led to Goodman's effective "sex change" and the 1962 debut of "Little Annie Fanny" in *Playboy*. Kurtzman wrote and meticulously laid out each story, painted by Elder, with occasional help from the likes of Frank Frazetta, William Stout, Davis, Jaffee, and Heath.

Kurtzman spent most of the final three decades of his career producing the risqué satire, where he found his largest audience: as many as seven million *Playboy* readers every month would see each lavishly rendered "Annie." Chafing under restrictive creative direction and increasingly taking heat even from his admirers for Annie's overt sexism—and/or for wasting his considerable talent—Kurtzman stuck with it, financially dependent on Hefner. Experiencing declining health and skills, his later years were not his best, and he eventually succumbed in 1993 to Parkinson's and cancer. But, in the closing decade of the twentieth century, he witnessed that the best of comics had begun to be accorded Art status. Kurtzman's own best work had pointed the way decades earlier, and those creations will stand as trailblazing landmarks going forward.

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Artist - Tirso Llaneta  
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# ROD SERLING

by  
Mare Scott  
Zicree

at  
100

**“The good writing—like wine—  
has to age well with the years.  
And my stuff is momentarily adequate.”**

**T**he man who said those words would have been astonished to learn that 100 years after his birth, the pinnacle of his artistic output had been judged not only adequate, but perhaps the finest work ever created for television.

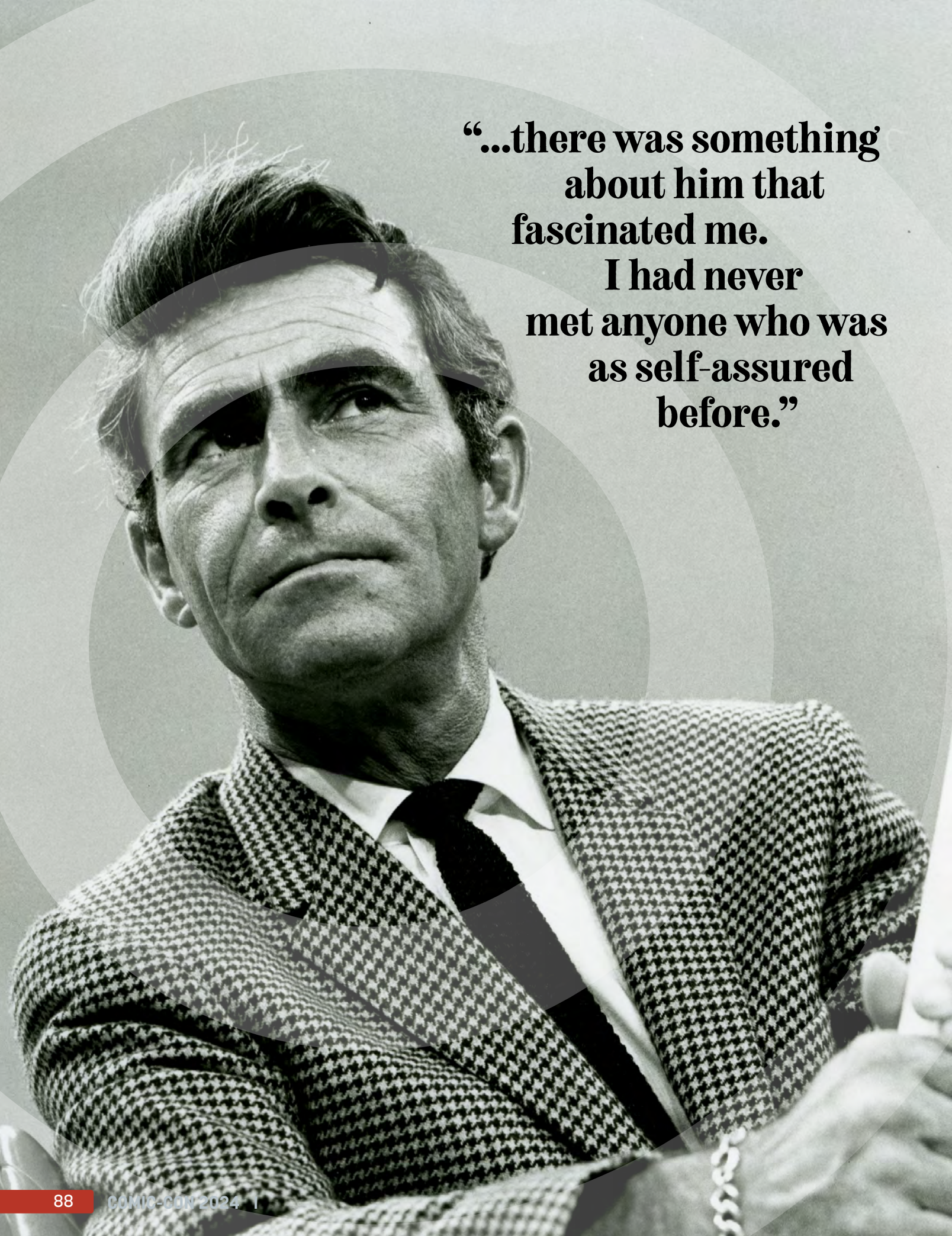
That man of course is Rod Serling, and the show *The Twilight Zone*.

December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will mark Rod’s one-hundredth birthday (Serling used to joke that he was “a Christmas present that was delivered unwrapped”).

Sadly, Rod only got half that span, dying at age 50 following open-heart surgery. But in that time, he managed to live a joyously full life and craft a phenomenal output of teleplays, screenplays, stage plays, short stories and books.

A case can be made that Rod is probably the greatest science fiction, fantasy and horror writer to ever work in television. But surprisingly, that was never what he aspired to be.

Rodman Edward Serling was born in Syracuse, New



**“...there was something about him that fascinated me. I had never met anyone who was as self-assured before.”**

York, and grew up in Binghamton (remarkably, his childhood home is still there, virtually unchanged, as is the bucolic park with band concert shell and carousel that inspired the classic episode “Walking Distance”). His was a close Jewish family, consisting of father Sam, a wholesale meat distributor, mother Esther, a homemaker, and brother Bob, seven years Rod’s senior.

Despite the age difference, Bob and Rod were fast friends and playmates, acting out favorite movies, poring over pulp magazines like *Amazing Stories*, and idolizing all things aeronautical (Bob would grow up to serve as editor on *Aviation Weekly*, write the bestseller *The President’s Plane is Missing*, and serve as aviation consultant on Rod’s script for *Twilight Zone*’s “The Odyssey of Flight 33”).

As a child, Rod was a ball-of-energy, nonstop talker chock full of ideas. A good-looking, popular kid, he served as editor of the school paper, participated in the debate club, and hammed it up in stage theatricals.

All of this took a sudden turn with the advent of World War II. Upon graduating high-school, Rod signed up as a paratrooper with the 11th Airborne Division. Although only 5 foot 4 1/2, Rod proved a dedicated soldier, and even boxed while in the service, winning seventeen of eighteen bouts.

As with many of his generation, combat quickly matured Serling. Fighting in the jungles of the Philippines, Rod saw suffering and death up close. At one point, a Japanese soldier leaped from cover only feet from Serling, rifle aimed at Rod’s chest. With no time to respond, Rod knew he was done for. Fortunately, an American G.I. behind Serling—who had been unaware of his presence—shot the enemy soldier before he could kill Rod. But Rod truly felt he had seen his own death.

Not long after, Rod was severely wounded by shrapnel and hospitalized. By the time he was up and about, Truman had dropped two atom bombs on Japan and the war was over—a huge relief for all the soldiers who had contemplated having to invade the big island.

While they were mopping things up, Rod got the news that his father had died suddenly of a heart attack at age 52. He pleaded for a leave to go home for the funeral but was denied.

Serling eventually got back to the States, attending

Antioch College in Ohio on full scholarship from the G.I. Bill of Rights. There he turned to writing as a catharsis. “I was bitter about everything and at loose ends when I got out of the service,” Serling later commented. “I think I turned to writing to get it off my chest.”



Today we’d say Rod had PTSD, and in fact nightmares of being back in combat haunted him the rest of his life. Even so, Rod was charismatic, funny—and ambitious.

“He struck me as being very intelligent, with a wonderful sense of humor,” noted fellow student Carolyn Kramer. “And there was something about him that fascinated me. I had never met anyone who was as self-assured before.”

Carol was that very specific mix of beauty, class, wit and brains that back then would have been called a bombshell. In 1948, Rod and Carol were married, and made a spectacular-looking couple.

During this time, Serling was writing scripts for the college radio station, which he sent out unsuccessfully to the national shows. But finally he struck pay dirt, winning a radio writing contest by the *Dr. Christian Show*, starring Jean Hersholt (an actor primarily known today for the Jean Hersholt Award, given out every year at the Oscars). The prize included a trip to New

**OPPOSITE**  
Rod Serling

**ABOVE:**  
The Odyssey of Flight 33

# “It was not an easy sell. Rod ended up writing four entirely different *Twilight Zone* pilot scripts before the final one, “Where Is Everybody?” sold the show to dubious network execs and sponsors who definitely were not fans of the outre.”

York to see his script performed, which led the college paper to proclaim, “Serling Goes to Christian Reward!”

Out of college, Rod landed a job at WLW radio, writing on-air copy and commercials. Nights he was writing script after script, and sending them out to radio shows. Multiple rejections followed, to the point that Rod was able to wallpaper his bathroom with the rejection slips. Slowly but surely, however, he started selling scripts. “I didn’t embrace it,” Rod noted. “I succumbed to it.” He quit his job at WLW and embarked on a full-time freelance writing career.

Rod was truly on his way, the sales piling up, some to radio, but the lion’s share to the new medium of live television. Some of these were on local Ohio stations, such as the numerous scripts Rod wrote for *The Storm*, but more and more were to national networks, the heavy hitters—CBS, NBC, ABC and DuMont.

This was not only the Golden Age of Television, it was an era where anthologies proliferated (a term different from today; modern anthologies like *True Detective*, *American Horror Story* and *The Feud* tell a different story each season; in the Fifties, anthologies told a different story each *episode*). If one show rejected Rod’s script, he could submit it unchanged to another. Best of all, Rod was honing his craft, learning to tell myriad powerful stories at the half-hour, hour and ninety-minute length.

**A**t this point, Rod was a successful journeyman writer, earning enough to support his wife and two young daughters, Jodi and Anne. All that changed in 1955 with “Patterns” on *Kraft Television Theater*, about an ambitious young man on the rise—not unlike Serling himself—who has to decide where to draw the line in compromising his ethics in exchange for success. Rod won the Emmy for this, the first of six he would ultimately receive in his career. Best of all, he was now on the world stage as a brilliant new voice, someone to watch. Rod’s ambition was to become the Arthur Miller of television, a playwright crafting meaningful, lasting drama for the multitudes.

More successes quickly followed, “Requiem for a

Heavyweight” and “The Comedian,” both on CBS’s prestigious *Playhouse 90* and both Emmy winners. *Patterns* and *Requiem* were adapted by Serling into feature films, and the offers kept coming. Soon Rod was the highest-paid, most lauded writer in TV. As live television evolved into filmed series for greater financial return, the locus of TV production relocated from Manhattan to Hollywood. Serling and family moved from Connecticut to Los Angeles, the affluent Pacific Palisades area, an impressive landscaped home with curving driveway, guest house (which Rod would turn into his office) and Olympic-sized pool.

For all the trappings of Hollywood success, which Rod detailed rather caustically in his confessional *Playhouse 90*, “The Velvet Alley,” there was a fly in the ointment. Television was a *mass* medium, which the networks—and especially the sponsors, who paid the bills—interpreted as meaning a mass in which no individual could possibly be offended by anything the networks broadcast.

As a result, whenever Serling wanted to comment on the burning issues of the day, he was heavily censored. This came to a head with the murder of Emmett Till, a black Chicago teenager horribly mutilated by racist thugs in Mississippi, who were acquitted at trial. Serling tried twice to write about this in a network drama, first in “Noon on Doomsday” and again in “A Town Has Turned to Dust.” The censors insisted that no mention of race be made and even stipulated that bottles of Coca-Cola be removed from shelves on the set, so it wouldn’t be construed as “too Southern.”

“They chopped it up like a roomful of butchers at work on a steer,” Rod complained bitterly. Naturally, all of this wore Serling down, and in an interview with Mike Wallace at the time he referred to himself as “not a conformist, but rather a tired non-conformist.”

Rod didn’t want to fight anymore—but he still wanted to get his point across.

Now, it’s a seemingly-paradoxical truth that sometimes the worst things that happen to us result in the best outcomes.

Had Rod Serling not been censored, he would most likely be a footnote today, largely forgotten, as are his contemporaries who shined equally bright in live television drama: Paddy Chayefsky, Reginald Rose, Tad Mosel.

But it was at this turning point that Rod Serling—who very much did not intend to be a science fiction writer—had his great inspiration.

Regarding “The Arena,” a TV play he’d written set in the United States Congress, in which he wasn’t able to mention any real-life bill or even the terms Democrat or Republican, Rod concluded, “In retrospect, I probably would have had a much more adult play had I made it science fiction, set it in the year 2057 and peopled the Senate with robots.”

It was a staggering epiphany: by removing his stories from the specifics of the moment, Serling could say anything he wanted to and slip it right by the censors. There was an additional bonus Rod would only realize later, that by commenting on the larger issues (such as mob hysteria in “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” or conformity in “The Obsolete Man”) his stories would be rendered as timeless and relevant to any era.

So on a particularly-propitious day in 1957, Rod sat down at a typewriter and wrote the title for a proposed new TV series: *The Twilight Zone*.

It was not an easy sell. Rod ended up writing four entirely different *Twilight Zone* pilot scripts before the final one, “Where Is Everybody?” sold the show to dubious network execs and sponsors who definitely were not fans of the outre.

(For the record, the other three—all hour-length scripts—were “The Time Element,” about a time traveler trying to avert the attack on Pearl Harbor, later made as an episode of *Desilu Playhouse*; “The Happy Place,” about a dystopic future where people are euthanized at age sixty; and “I Shot an Arrow Into the Air,” about an alien’s tumultuous arrival on Earth, which Rod later borrowed the title for an entirely different episode and cannibalized the plot for the half-hour episode, “The Gift.”)



**“Rod wrote 92 of 156 episodes, and most of these were of the highest quality, dazzlingly original, polished gems.”**

By this time, there were only three major networks, DuMont having departed the field, so audiences for any given show were far more massive than today. It was common for *Twilight Zone* to have over forty million viewers per week—and that only grew once it hit syndication. (There’s an interesting theory that Rod Serling was responsible for the Hippies, as they were all kids who grew up watching *The Twilight Zone* and had their minds warped—or one might more charitably say, *expanded*—by the show.)

Now that the series was greenlit, it was contractually agreed that Serling would write the majority of the episodes—to an astonishing degree. Over its five-year run, Rod wrote 92 of 156 episodes, and most of these were of the highest quality, dazzlingly original, polished gems. And this wasn’t Rod’s only output. During this period, he also managed to write the screenplay for *Seven Days in May*, adapt his *Twilight Zone* scripts into short-story anthologies, and take on a variety of other projects.

Part of what made this possible was that Rod dictated his scripts into a recorder, which his secretary would then transcribe for Rod to hand-edit. He’d made this a practice shortly after writing “Patterns” and maintained it until his death. Mornings he would lounge by the pool, recorder in hand, playing all the characters, describing all the settings and camera moves. (This led Rod to joke that he was the only writer who could pound out a script and get a tan at the same time.)

**“One other aspect of *Twilight Zone* proved a surprise even to Serling. When he’d conceived of the show, he knew there would be a host, but he never intended it to be himself...”**

This ability allowed Serling to craft scripts much faster than the average writer. In fact, he confessed that he adapted Lucille Fletcher’s haunting radio play, “The Hitch-Hiker,” into a *Twilight Zone* script in just eight hours.

(It was a singular talent. Fellow *Twilight Zone* writer Richard Matheson confided to me he’d tried once to emulate Serling by dictating a script, “but I couldn’t do it.”)

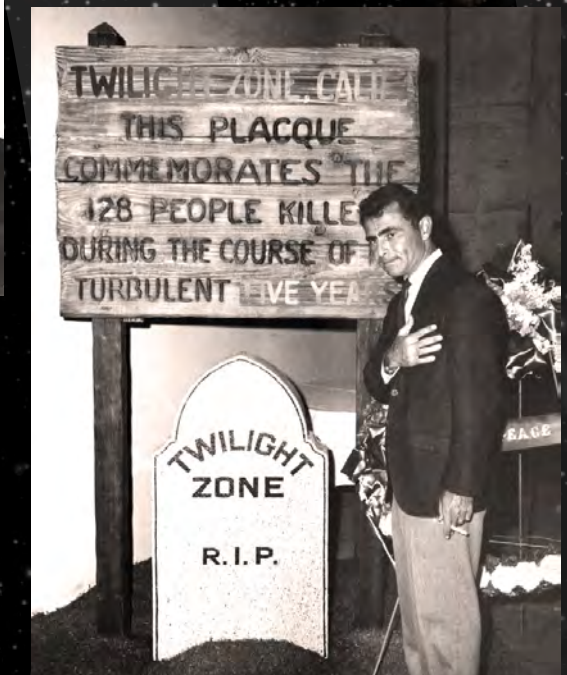
Most of Rod’s *Twilight Zone* teleplays were original stories, with others adaptations of short stories by masters the likes of Damon Knight (“To Serve Man”), Jerome Bixby (“It’s a Good Life”), and husband-and-wife team Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore (“What You Need”). (Interestingly, three of the stories Serling wanted to adapt but was unable to secure the rights for were Philip K. Dick’s “Imposter,” Robert A. Heinlein’s “Life-Line,” and Arthur C. Clarke’s “The Nine Billion Names of God.”)

Some of Serling’s *Twilight Zone* scripts were clearly autobiographical, like “Walking Distance,” where he finally got to say farewell to his father, or “The Purple Testament,” one of the most visceral depictions of combat ever, or “In Praise of Pip,” where he got to explore the depths of his love for his children (in her excellent memoir, *As I Knew Him: My Father, Rod Serling*, Anne Serling recalled that Rod would often prompt her with, “Who’s your best buddy?” to which she’d reply, “You’re my best buddy, Pop.”). Others, while further removed from Serling’s personal experiences,

displayed great compassion and empathy for everyday characters, as in Burgess Meredith’s beleaguered bookworm in “Time Enough at Last,” or Anne Francis’s perplexed shopper in “The After Hours,” or most touchingly the desperate, disfigured woman wrapped in bandages waiting to see if the final surgery has at last made her look normal in “The Eye of the Beholder” (played by Maxine Stuart under bandages and Donna Douglas, later Ellie Mae on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, without bandages).

With the advice of sci-fi legend Ray Bradbury (who sadly only wrote one *Twilight Zone* episode, “I Sing the Body Electric”), Rod hired three of Bradbury’s proteges, Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont and George Clayton Johnson to write most of the remaining episodes. Earl Hamner, whom Serling met in New York when both won the *Dr. Christian* contest and who later would create *The Waltons* and *Falcon Crest*, rounded out the group.

One other aspect of *Twilight Zone* proved a surprise even to Serling. When he’d conceived of the show, he knew there would be a host, but he never intended it to be himself; in fact, he hadn’t acted since high school. But when Westbrook Van Voorhis, narrator of the *March of Time* newsreels, proved too pompous-sounding with the pilot and Orson Welles was deemed too expensive, Rod suggested himself—and everyone fell out of their chairs. But Rod got the nod and proved the ideal choice.



From then on, Rod was a TV star. This was sometimes resented by his daughters, as when he took them to Disneyland and was mobbed by admirers. “I wanted him to myself,” noted Jodi.

*Twilight Zone* debuted October 2, 1959, and ran five seasons, the fourth consisting of eighteen hour-length episodes (including such classics as Matheson’s “Death Ship,” Beaumont’s “Miniature,” Hamner’s “Jess-Belle,” and Serling’s tragic and unforgettable “On Thursday We Leave For Home”).

When *Twilight Zone* ended in 1964, Rod Serling had only eleven years left to live. Several biographies have opined that Serling’s life was a tragedy, that at the end Rod lived in a dark depression, certain he had been nothing more than a failure.

That’s bullshit. To the end of his days, Rod was full of good humor and passion, teaching thousands of students at Antioch, Ithaca and Sherwood Oaks Experimental Colleges, appearing on game shows, narrating TV specials and commercials (for which he’d get paid

UPPER LEFT  
“Eye of the Beholder”

UPPER RIGHT  
Anne Francis in  
“After Hours”



## FEATURE NEWS

**“No other show has touched it in terms of variety, quality, artistry. From the first moment it aired to the moment you’re reading this, it has entertained, ennobled, enriched, inspired and moved anyone with a heart, a soul, a brain.”**



more than for writing a script for *Playhouse 90*, serving as President of the Television Academy, loving his family and friends deeply, speaking out against the Vietnam War and in favor of civil rights, playing tennis and board games, boating on Cayuga Lake, building model kits of classic airplanes.

And most of all, writing.

In the last decade of his life, Rod created numerous TV series, including *The Loner* and

*Night Gallery*, for which he wrote dozens of scripts. He also wrote scores of screenplays, including *Planet of the Apes*, and numerous movies-of-the-week, among them *The Man* (about the first black President of the United States) and *The Doomsday Flight*. His stage plays included *A Storm in Summer*—also done as a TV special—and *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, which would only be staged after his death. Published books including *Rod Serling’s Triple W*, *The Season to be Wary*, and two adaptations of *Night Gallery* stories. And more.

For any other writer, these credits alone would represent a hugely successful career. But Rod was always his own worst critic, downplaying the importance and impact of his work, endlessly modest about his gifts. But in truth, if Rod’s career at the end was diminished, it was only in comparison to the heights he had reached in previous decades: Live Television’s Golden Boy, Mr. *Twilight Zone*.

Until his final breath on Earth Rod was famous, rich, beloved.

And now here we are, fifty years removed from Rod’s

fiftieth and last year. And what can we surmise from this distance?

Firstly, that Rod himself has become one of the visual icons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, like Elvis, Marilyn, Bogie, James Dean. Immediately recognizable, one of a kind, without peer.

And what of *Twilight Zone* itself?

After 65 years, why is it still popular?

Seemingly, it has many strikes against it for modern audiences: it’s in black-and-white; most of the actors are forgotten names of the past; the clothes, telephones, cars and manners of speech are outdated, dusty antiques. Top that off with the twist endings that are a surprise only once, and it seems questionable why anyone would watch an episode more than once... or even once.

I was going to write a long exploration of this, but I realize I don’t have to. You know the answer as well as I do.

*Twilight Zone* has lasted because it is great.

No other show has touched it in terms of variety, quality, artistry. From the first moment it aired to the moment you’re reading this, it has entertained, ennobled, enriched, inspired and moved anyone with a heart, a soul, a brain.

And it will continue to do so when I write the 150th birthday installment, and the 200th (by then I’ll be a brain in a tank fed by nutrients, but that’s another conversation).

When he won his first Emmy for *Twilight Zone*, Rod Serling said, “I don’t know how deserving I am, but I do know how grateful I am.”

Well, we know how deserving you were, Rod... and it’s all of us who will be forever grateful.

Marc Scott Zicree is the author of the bestselling *Twilight Zone Companion* and producer of the Rondo and Saturn Award-winning *Twilight Zone* Blu-ray set. You can check out his latest work—including his new series *Space Command*—on his popular Mr. Sci-Fi YouTube Channel.

## MI666: The Next BIG Thing in IP

In the competitive entertainment world, the quest for the next big intellectual property (IP) is relentless. Studios and networks seek captivating stories that offer spin-offs, merchandise, and immersive experiences. Enter MI666, a provocative new project promising innovation and potential.

In 1937, with the Nazi threat looming, Winston Churchill establishes a covert British Intelligence Agency. His secret weapon? The infamous satanist Aleister Crowley, ‘The Wickedest Man Alive,’ along with descendants of Houdini and Van Helsing. They infiltrate Nazi Occultist Secret Societies, using dark arts and the supernatural to combat evil on its own terms.

***It is a tantalizing, dark tale that blurs the lines between reality and the mystical.***

This narrative transcends historical fiction; it is a tantalizing, dark tale that blurs the lines between reality and the mystical. A network executive noted, “The time is right for a story like MI666. This will appeal to an audience of mid-twenties to

boomers who were around in Crowley’s day and may have explored these themes themselves.”

MI666 is a complex, dark tale that draws viewers into its world, keeping them on the edge of their seats. Visionary writer and creator Craig Goodwill, known for MI666 and *Patch Town*, is celebrated for forging new worlds with depth and imagination. His previous works, including the Director’s Guild Award-winning film *Patch Town*, highlight his talent for merging the fantastical with the relatable, crafting stories that resonate on multiple levels.

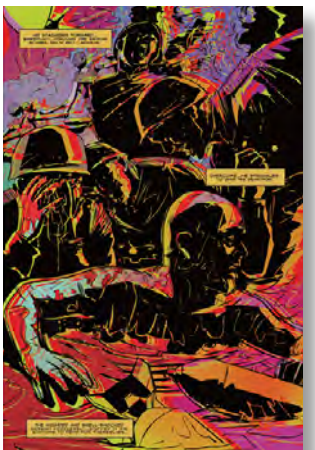
Goodwill didn’t initially set out to create an expansive world of sex, drugs, and intrigue. “I was fascinated by Crowley, his world, and the conspiracy theories surrounding him and his work with British intelligence. From the research, my imagination exploded, and a clear arc for this anti-hero was born. Crowley would have loved all the attention!”

Collaborating with Goodwill, artist Alex Cormack (Future Proof and Weed Magic) brings MI666 to life with distinctive and evocative illustrations. Publisher Brian Phillipson at Bliss on Tap (Hardcore Henry and Ugly Dolls) ensures the project reaches its audience while maintaining high standards of quality and innovation.

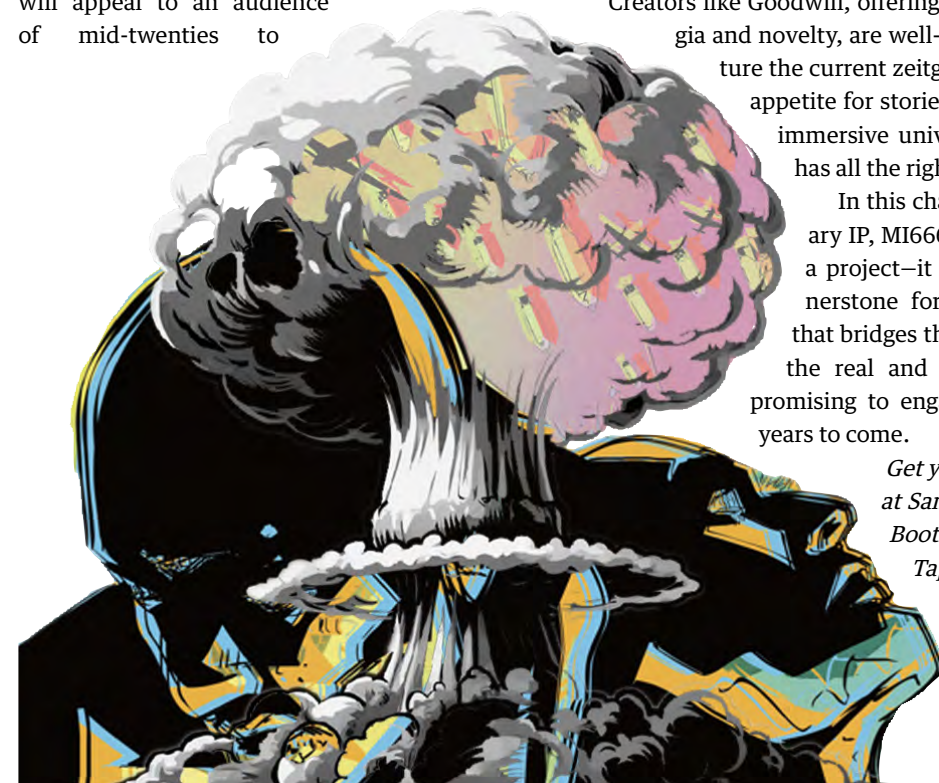
As Hollywood continues its search for groundbreaking content, MI666 emerges as a prime candidate. Its fusion of historical context, supernatural intrigue, and richly developed characters offers a fresh twist on the spy genre, ripe for expansion into various media and merchandising avenues. Creators like Goodwill, offering a blend of nostalgia and novelty, are well-positioned to capture the current zeitgeist. There’s a real appetite for stories that expand into immersive universes, and MI666 has all the right ingredients.

In this chase for revolutionary IP, MI666 is more than just a project—it is a potential cornerstone for new storytelling that bridges the past and future, the real and the supernatural, promising to engage audiences for years to come.

Get your exclusive copy at San Diego Comic Con Booth 5533 Bliss on Tap July 26-28, by visiting your local comic store, or by scanning the below QR code



Purchase MI666 Comic today  
Paid Post





# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## NOMINATIONS | 2024

### Best Short Story

- "Friendship Is Forever," by Sam Maggs and Keisha Okafor, in *My Little Pony 40th Celebration* (IDW)
- "The Kelpie," by Becky Cloonan, in *Four Gathered on Christmas Eve* (Dark Horse)
- "The Lady of the Lake," by Joe S. Farrar and Guilherme Grandizolli, in *BUMP: A Horror Anthology #3* (BUMP)
- "Talking to a Hill," by Larry Hancock and Michael Cherkas, in *Comics for Ukraine* (Zoop)
- "World's Finest, Part 1," by Tom King and Belen Ortega, in *Wonder Woman #3* (DC)

### Best Single Issue/One-Shot

- *Horologist*, by Jared Lee and Cross (Grim Film)
- *Nightwing #105*, by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)
- *Star Trek: Day of Blood—Shax's Best Day*, by Ryan North and Derek Charm (IDW)
- *Superman 2023 Annual*, by Joshua Williamson and others (DC)
- *Sweet Paprika: Black, White, & Pink*, by Mirka Andolfo and others (Image)

### Best Continuing Series

- *Birds of Prey*, by Kelly Thompson and Leonardo Basto Romero (DC)
- *Nightwing*, by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC Comics)

- *Shazam!*, by Mark Waid and Dan Mora (DC)
- *Transformers*, by Daniel Warren Johnson (Image Skybound)
- *Wonder Woman*, by Tom King and Daniel Sampere (DC)

### Best Limited Series

- *The Cull*, by Kelly Thompson and Mattia De Iulio (Image)
- *Godzilla: Here There Be Dragons*, by Frank Tieri and Inaki Miranda (IDW)
- *Kill Your Darlings*, by Ethan S. Parker, Griffin Sheridan, and Robert Quinn (Image)
- *PeePee PooPoo*, by Caroline Cash (Silver Sprocket)
- *Superman: Lost*, by Christopher Priest and Carlo Pagulayan (DC)

### Best New Series

- *Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees*, by Patrick Horvath (IDW)
- *Black Cloak*, by Kelly Thompson and Meredith McClaren (Image)
- *Local Man*, by Tim Seeley and Tony Fleecs (Image)
- *Phantom Road*, by Jeff Lemire and Gabriel Hernández Walta (Image)
- *Somna: A Bedtime Story*, by Becky Cloonan and Tula Lotay (DSTLRY)

### Best Publication for Early Readers (up to age 8)

- *Bigfoot and Nessie: The Art of Getting Noticed*, by Chelsea M. Campbell and Laura Knetzger

- (Penguin Workshop/Penguin Random House)
- *Burt the Beetle Lives Here!* by Ashley Spires (Kids Can Press)
- *Go-Go Guys*, by Rowboat Watkins (Chronicle Books)
- *The Light Inside*, by Dan Misdea (Penguin Workshop/Penguin Random House)
- *Milk and Mocha: Our Little Happiness*, by Melani Sie (Andrews McMeel)
- *Tacos Today: El Toro & Friends*, by Raúl the Third (HarperCollins/Versify)

### Best Publication for Kids (ages 9-12)

- *Buzzing*, by Samuel Sattin and Rye Hickman (Little, Brown Ink)
- *Mabuhay!*, by Zachary Sterling (Scholastic Graphix)
- *Mexikid: A Graphic Memoir*, by Pedro Martín (Dial Books for Young Readers/Penguin Young Readers)
- *Missing You*, by Phellip Willian and Melissa Garabeli. translation by Fabio Ramos (Oni Press)
- *Saving Sunshine*, by Saadia Faruqi and Shazleen Khan (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Publication for Teens (ages 13-17)

- *Blackward*, by Lawrence Lindell (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Danger and Other Unknown Risks*, by Ryan North and Erica Henderson (Penguin Workshop/Penguin Random House)

- *Frontera*, by Julio Anta and Jacoby Salcedo (HarperAlley)
- *Lights*, by Brenna Thummler (Oni Press)
- *Monstrous: A Transracial Adoption Story*, by Sarah Myer (First Second/Macmillan)
- *My Girlfriend's Child*, vol. 1, by Mamoru Aoi, translation by Hana Allen (Seven Seas)

### Best Humor Publication

- *How to Love: A Guide to Feelings & Relationships for Everyone*, by Alex Norris (Candlewick/Walker Books)
- *I Was a Teenage Michael Jackson Impersonator, and Other Musical Meanderings*, by Keith Knight (Keith Knight Press)
- *It's Jeff: The Jeff-Verse #1*, by Kelly Thompson and Gurihiru (Marvel)
- *Macanudo: Optimism Is for the Brave*, by Liniers (Fantagraphics)
- *The Yakuza's Bias*, by Teki Yatsuda. Translation by Max Greenway (Kodansha)

### Best Anthology

- *Comics for Ukraine*, edited by Scott Dunbier (Zoop)
- *Deep Cuts*, by Kyle Higgins, Joe Clark, Danilo Beyruth, and others (Image)
- *The Devil's Cut*, edited by Will Dennis (DSTLRY)
- *Marvel Age #1000*, edited by Tom Brevoort (Marvel)
- *The Out Side: Trans & Nonbinary*

- Comics*, edited by The Kao, Min Christensen, and David Daneman (Andrews McMeel)
- *Swan Songs*, by W. Maxwell Prince and others (Image)

### Best Reality-Based Work

- *Are You Willing to Die for the Cause?*, by Chris Oliveros (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Last on His Feet: Jack Johnson and the Battle of the Century*, by Adrian Matejka and Youssef Daoudi (Liveright)
- *Messenger: The Legend of Muhammad Ali*, by Marc Bernardin and Ron Salas (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Thing: Inside the Struggle for Animal Personhood*, by Samuel Machado and Cynthia Sousa Machado with Steven M. Wise (Island Press)
- *Three Rocks: The Story of Ernie Bushmiller: The Man Who Created Nancy*, by Bill Griffith (Abrams ComicArts)

### Best Graphic Memoir

- *Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam*, by Thien Pham (First Second/Macmillan)
- *A First Time for Everything*, by Dan Santat (First Second/Macmillan)
- *In Limbo*, by Deb JJ Lee (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Memento Mori*, by Tiitu Takalo, translation by Maria Schroderus (Oni Press)

- *Sunshine: How One Camp Taught Me About Life, Death, and Hope*, by Jarrett J. Krosoczka (Scholastic Graphix)
- *The Talk*, by Darrin Bell (Henry Holt)

### Best Graphic Album—New

- *Ashes*, by Álvaro Ortiz, translation by Eva Ibarzabal (Top Shelf/IDW)
- *Eden II*, by K. Wroten (Fantagraphics)
- *A Guest in the House*, by Emily Carroll (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Parasocial*, by Alex De Campi and Erica Henderson (Image)
- *Roaming*, by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Graphic Album—Reprint

- *Doctor Strange: Fall Sunrise Treasury Edition*, by Tradd Moore (Marvel)
- *The Good Asian*, by Pornsak Pichetshote and Alexandre Tefenkgi (Image)
- *Hip Hop Family Tree: The Omnibus*, by Ed Piskor (Fantagraphics)
- *Orange Complete Series Box Set*, by Ichigo Takano, translation by Amber Tamosaitis (Seven Seas)
- *Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons*, by Kelly Sue DeConnick, Phil Jimenez, Gene Ha, and Nicola Scott (DC)

### Best Adaptation from Another Medium

- *Bea Wolf*, adapted by Zach Weinersmith and Boulet (First Second/Macmillan)
- *#DRCL midnight children*, vol. 1, based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, by Shin'ichi Sakamoto, translation by Caleb Cook (VIZ Media)
- *H.P. Lovecraft's The Shadow over Innsmouth*, adapted by Gou Tanabe, translation by Zack Davisson (Dark Horse Manga)
- *The Monkey King: The Complete Odyssey*, adapted by Chaiko, translation by Dan Christensen (Magnetic)
- *Watership Down*, by Richard Adams, adapted by James Sturm and Joe Sutphin (Ten Speed Graphic)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material

- *Ashes*, by Álvaro Ortiz, translation by Eva Ibarzabal (Top Shelf/IDW)
- *Blacksad, Vol 7: They All Fall Down, Part 2*, by Juan Díaz Canales and Juanjo Guarnido, translation by Diana Schutz and Brandon Kander (Europe Comics)
- *A Boy Named Rose*, by Gaëlle Geniller, translation by Fabrice Sapolsky (Fairsquare Comics)
- *The Great Beyond*, by Léa Murawiec, translation by Aleshia Jensen (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Shubeik Lubeik*, by Deena

- Mohamed (Pantheon Books/Penguin Random House)
- *Spa*, by Erik Svetoft, translation by Melissa Bowers (Fantagraphics)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

- *#DRCL midnight children*, vol. 1, based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, by Shin'ichi Sakamoto, translation by Caleb Cook (VIZ Media)
- *Goodbye, Eri*, by Tatsuki Fujimoto, translation by Amanda Haley (VIZ Media)
- *The Horizon*, vol. 1, by JH, translation by ULTRAMEDIA Co. Ltd. (Yen/Ize Press)
- *My Picture Diary*, by Fujiwara Maki, translation by Ryan Holmberg (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *River's Edge*, by Kyoko Okazaki, translation by Alexa Frank (Kodansha)
- *The Summer Hikaru Died*, vol. 1, by Mokumokuren, translation by Ajani Oloye (Yen Press)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

- *Dauntless Dames: High-Heeled Heroes of the Comic Strips*, edited by Peter Maresca and Trina Robbins (Sunday Press/Fantagraphics)
- *David Wright's Carol Day*: Lance Hallam, edited by Roger Clark, Chris Killackey, and Guy Mills (Slingsby Bros, Ink!)



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## NOMINATIONS | 2024

- *Popeye Sundays Vol 3: The Sea Hag and Alice the Goon*, by E.C. Segar, edited by Conrad Groth and Gary Groth (Fantagraphics)
- *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies 1932-1935: Starring Bucky Bug and Donald Duck and Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies 1935-1939: Starring Donald Duck and Big Bad Wolf*, edited by David Gerstein (Fantagraphics)
- *Where I'm Coming From*, by Barbara Brandon-Croft, edited by Peggy Burns and Tracy Hurren (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

- *Adventures Into Terror: The Atlas Comics Library*, vol. 1, edited by Michael J. Vassallo (Fantagraphics)
- *All-Negro Comics 75th Anniversary Edition*, edited by Chris Robinson (Very GOOD Books)
- *The Ballad of Halo Jones Full Colour Omnibus*, by Alan Moore and Ian Gibson, edited by Olivia Hicks (2000AD/Rebellion)
- *The John Severin Westerns Featuring American Eagle*, edited by Michael Dean (Fantagraphics)
- *Michael Golden's Marvel Stories Artist's Edition*, edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)

### Best Writer

- Stephen Graham Jones, *Earthdivers* (IDW)

- Mariko Tamaki, *Roaming* (Drawn & Quarterly)
- Tom Taylor, *Nightwing, Titans* (DC)
- Kelly Thompson, *Birds of Prey, Harley Quinn, Black White and Redder* (DC); *Black Cloak*, *The Cull* (Image); *It's Jeff, Captain Marvel* (Marvel)
- Mark Waid, *Batman/Superman: World's Finest, Shazam!, World's Finest: Teen Titans* (DC)
- G. Willow Wilson, *Poison Ivy* (DC); *Hunger and the Dusk* (IDW)

### Best Writer/Artist

- Emily Carroll, *A Guest in the House* (First Second/Macmillan)
- Bill Griffith, *Three Rocks* (Abrams ComicArts)
- Daniel Warren Johnson, *Transformers* (Image Skybound)
- Mokumokuren, *The Summer Hikaru Died*, vol. 1 (Yen Press)
- Zoe Thorogood, *Hack/Slash: Back To School* (Image)
- Tillie Walden, *Clementine Book Two* (Image Skybound)

### Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

- Jason Shawn Alexander, *Detective Comics* (DC); *Killadelphia*, with Germán Erramouspe (Image)
- Tula Lotay, *Barnstormers: A Ballad of Love and Murder* (Comixology Originals/Best Jackett)

- Inaki Miranda, *Godzilla: Here There Be Dragons* (IDW)
- Dan Mora, *Batman/Superman: World's Finest, Shazam!* (DC)
- Chris Samnee, *Fire Power* (Image Skybound)
- Jillian Tamaki, *Roaming* (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art)

- Jason Shawn Alexander, *Blacula: Return of the King* (Zombie Love Studios)
- Chaiko, *The Monkey King* (Magnetic)
- Juanjo Guarnido, *Blacksad, Vol 7: They All Fall Down, Part 2* (Europe Comics)
- Liam Sharp, *Nocterra: Nemesis Special* (Best Jackett); *Starhenge: The Dragon and the Boar* (Image)
- Martin Simmonds, *Universal Monsters: Dracula* (Image Skybound)
- Sana Takeda, *The Night Eaters: Her Little Reapers* (Abrams ComicArts); *Monstress* (Image)

### Best Cover Artist (for multiple covers)

- Jen Bartel, *DC Pride 2023, Fire & Ice: Welcome to Smallville* #1 (DC); *Captain Marvel: Dark Tempest* #1, *Demon Wars: Scarlet Sin* #1, *Scarlet Witch* #9, *Sensational She-Hulk* (Marvel)
- Evan Cagle, *Detective Comics* (DC)
- Jenny Frison, *Alice Never After* #1, *BRZRKR: Fallen Empire* #1,

- and other alternate covers (BOOM! Studios); *Knight Terrors: Harley Quinn* #1–2, *Poison Ivy* #8, #12 (DC)
- E. M. Gist, *Expanse Dragon Tooth* #1, *Something Is Killing the Children* #28 & #34, *Wild's End*, vol 2 #4 and other alternate covers (BOOM! Studios); *Amazing Spider-Man* #23, *Doctor Aphra* #36, *Moon Knight* #3, *Nightcrawlers* #1, *Wolverine* #38 (Marvel)
- Peach Momoko, *Demon Wars: Scarlet Sin*, various alternate covers (Marvel)
- Dan Mora, *Coda* #3, *Damn Them All* #4, *MMPR 30th Anniversary Special* #1, *Rare Flavours* #3 and other alternate covers (BOOM! Studios); *Batman/Superman: World's Finest, Outsiders* #1, *Poison Ivy* #9, *Shazam!, Titans* #1 (DC)

### Best Coloring

- Jordie Bellaire, *Batman, Birds of Prey* (DC); *Dark Spaces: Hollywood Special* (IDW)
- Matt Hollingsworth, *Captain America, Doctor Strange, Guardians of the Galaxy, Punisher* (Marvel)
- Lee Loughridge, *Red Zone* (AWA); *Edgeworld, Grammaton Punch, Nostalgia* (Comixology Originals); *The Devil's Cut, Gone, Somna* (DSTLRY); *Star Trek* (IDW); *Killadelphia* (Image); *Hunt. Kill. Repeat.* (Mad Cave)
- Dave McCaig, *The Sacrificers*

- (Image), *The Walking Dead Deluxe* (Image Skybound)
- Dean White, *Conan the Barbarian* (Titan Comics)

### Best Lettering

- Emily Carroll, *A Guest in the House* (First Second/Macmillan)
- Benoit Dahan and Lauren Bowes, *Inside the Mind of Sherlock Holmes* (Titan Comics)
- Bill Griffith, *Three Rocks* (Abrams ComicArts)
- Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou, *The Unlikely Story of Felix and Macabber, The Witcher: Wild Animals*, and others (Dark Horse); *Batman: City of Madness, The Flash, Poison Ivy*, and others (DC); *Black Cat Social Club* (Humanoids); *Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees* (IDW); *The Cull*, (Image); and others
- Richard Starkings, *Barnstormers: A Ballad of Love and Murder, Canary* (Comixology Originals/Best Jackett); *Parliament of Rooks* (Comixology); *Astro City, Battle Chasers* (Image); *Conan the Barbarian* (Titan Comics)
- Rus Wooton, *Monstress, The Sacrificers* (Image); *Fire Power, Kroma, Transformers, The Walking Dead Deluxe, Universal Monsters: Dracula, Void Rivals* (Image Skybound); *Hunt. Kill. Repeat., A Legacy of Violence, Nature's Labyrinth* (Mad Cave)

### Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

- *The Comics Journal* #309; edited by Gary Groth, Kristy Valenti, and Austin English (Fantagraphics)
- "The Indirect Market," by Brandon Schatz and Danica LeBlanc, comicsbeat.com
- Rob Salkowitz, for *Forbes*, ICv2.com, *Publishers Weekly*
- SKTCHD, by David Harper, www.sktchd.com
- SOLRAD: The Online Literary Magazine for Comics, www.solrad.co (Fieldmouse Press)

### Best Comics-Related Book

- *Bryan Talbot: Father of the British Graphic Novel*, by J. D. Harlock and Bryan Talbot (Brainstorm Studios)
- *Confabulation: An Anecdotal Autobiography*, by Dave Gibbons (Dark Horse)
- *Flamed Out: The Underground Adventures and Comix Genius of Willy Murphy*, by Nicki Michaels, Ted Richards, and Mark Burstein (Fantagraphics)
- *I Am the Law: How Judge Dredd Predicted Our Future*, by Michael Molcher (Rebellion)
- *The Pacific Comics Companion*, by Stephan Friedt and Jon B. Cooke (TwoMorrows)
- *Thalamus: The Art of Dave McKean* (Dark Horse)

### Best Academic/Scholarly Work

- *Asian Political Cartoons*, by John A. Lent (University Press of Mississippi)
- *The Claremont Run: Subverting Gender in the X-Men*, by J. Andrew Deman (University of Texas Press)
- *Desegregating Comics: Debating Blackness in the Golden Age of American Comics*, edited by Qiana Whitted (Rutgers University Press)
- *If Shehrazad Drew: Critical Writings on Arab Comics*, by George Khoury-Jad (Sawaf Center for Arab Comics Studies and American University of Beirut Press)
- *In Visible Archives: Queer and Feminist Visual Culture in the 1980s*, by Margaret Galvan (University of Minnesota Press)
- *Super Bodies: Comic Book Illustration, Artistic Styles, and Narrative Impact*, by Jeffrey A. Brown (University of Texas Press)

### Best Publication Design

- *Bram Stoker's Dracula and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* boxed set, designed by Mike Kennedy (Magnetic)
- *Gratuitous Ninja*, by Ronald Wimberly, designed by Chloe Scheffe (Beehive Books)
- *Inside the Mind of Sherlock Holmes*, designed by Benoit Dahan and Donna Askem

- (Titan Comics)
- *Iron Maiden: Piece of Mind*, designed by Josh Bernstein and Rob Schwager (Z2)
- *Toilet-bound Hanako-kun First Stall Box Set*, designed by Wendy Chan (Yen Press)

### Best Webcomic

- Asturias: The Origin of a Flag, by Javi de Castro [HERE](#)
- Daughter of a Thousand Faces, by Vel (Velinx), [HERE](#) (Tapas)
- Lore Olympus, by Rachel Smythe, [HERE](#) (WEBTOON)
- Matchmaker, vol. 6, by Cam Marshall at [HERE](#) (Silver Sprocket)
- 3rd Voice, by Evan Dahm, [HERE](#) (WEBTOON)
- Unfamiliar, by Haley Newsome: [HERE](#) (Tapas)

### Best Digital Comic

- *Blacksad, Vol 7: They All Fall Down, Part 2*. by Juan Díaz Canales and Juanjo Guarnido, translation by Diana Schutz and Brandon Kander (Europe Comics)
- *Friday*, by Ed Brubaker and Marcos Martin, vols. 7–8 (Panel Syndicate)
- *Parliament of Rooks*, by Abigail Jill Harding (Comixology Originals)
- *Practical Defense Against Piracy*, by Tony Cliff (delilahdirk.com)
- *A Witch's Guide to Burning*, by Aminder Dhaliwal (Instagram.com/aminder\_d)



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## HALL OF FAME | 2024

The following 19 people are being inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame, as chosen by this year's judges.

### Kim Deitch (1944-)

Pioneer underground cartoonist Kim Deitch's best-known character is Waldo the Cat, a fictional 1930s-era animated cat who stars in the seminal *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*, *Shroud of Waldo*, *Alias the Cat*, and various other strips and books. Kim's other works include *Shadowlands*, *Reincarnation Stories*, *Beyond the Pale*, and *Deitch's Pictorama*, a collaboration with brothers Simon and Seth. Art Spiegelman has called Deitch "the best kept secret in American comics." Deitch was co-founder of the Cartoonists Co-op Press (1973–1974) and has taught at the School for Visual Arts in New York. He received Comic-Con's Inkpot Award in 2008.

### Creig Flessel (1912–2008)

Creig Flessel drew the covers of many of the first American comic books, including the pre-Batman *Detective Comics* #2–#17 (1937–1938). As a writer/artist, Flessel created the DC character the Shining Knight, in *Adventure Comics* #66 (Sept. 1941). He drew many early adventures of the Golden Age Sandman and has sometimes been credited as the character's co-creator. When editor Vin Sullivan left DC Comics and formed his own comic book publishing company, Magazine Enterprises, Flessel signed on as

associate editor. He continued to draw comics, often uncredited, through the 1950s, including Superboy stories in both that character's namesake title and in *Adventure Comics*, and anthological mystery and suspense tales in American Comics Group's (AGC's) *Adventures into the Unknown*.

### A. B. Frost (1851–1928)

The work of illustrator/cartoonist Arthur Frost was published in three albums: *Stuff and Nonsense* (1884), *The Bull Calf and Other Tales* (1892), and *Carlo* (1913). Because of his skills in depicting motion and sequence, Frost was a great influence on such early American newspaper comics artists as Richard Outcault, Rudolph Dirks, Jimmy Swinnerton, and Fred Opper. His work appeared in magazines such as *Harper's Weekly* and *Punch*.

### Billy Graham (1935–1997)

Billy Graham was an African American comic book artist whose earliest work appeared in Warren's *Vampirella* magazine in 1969. He eventually became art director at Warren, then in 1972 he moved over to Marvel, where he helped create *Luke Cage*, *Hero for Hire* with John Romita Sr. and George Tuska. From 1973 to 1976, he worked with writer Don McGregor on "Black Panther" in

*Jungle Action*. During the 1980s, he worked with McGregor on the *Sabre* title at Eclipse Comics.

### Gary Groth (1954–)

Gary Groth co-founded Fantagraphics Books in 1976 with the publication of *The Comics Journal*, and he was the driving force behind the magazine's advocacy of comics as an artform. *TJ* became known, loved, and hated for its advocacy journalism, high-falutin' criticism, and long-form interviews by Groth with a vast array of artists from Jack Kirby to R. Crumb to Roz Chast. At a time when comics were an object of scorn in mainstream culture, Fantagraphics was preserving and contextualizing the work of historically and aesthetically significant classic cartoonists—republishing George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, Charles Schulz's *Peanuts*, Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, and Carl Barks' Disney Duck stories—as well as publishing the early work of "literary" cartoonists as diverse as the Hernandez Brothers, Daniel Clowes, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Jim Woodring, Carol Lay, and Joe Sacco. Groth continues to publish a new generation of auteurist cartoonists."

### Albert Kanter (1897–1973)

Albert Lewis Kanter began producing *Classic Comics* for

Elliot Publishing Company (later the Gilberton Company) with *The Three Musketeers* in October 1941. *Classic Comics* became *Classics Illustrated* in 1947. Kanter believed he could use the burgeoning medium to introduce young and reluctant readers to "great literature." In addition to *Classics Illustrated*, Kanter presided over its spin-offs *Classics Illustrated Junior*, *Specials*, and *The World Around Us*. Between 1941 and 1962, sales totaled 200 million.

### Warren Kremer (1921–2003)

Warren Kremer studied at New York's School of Industrial Arts and went straight into print services, working for pulp magazines. He gradually took on more comics work in Ace Publications, his first title being *Hap Hazard*. In 1948 Kremer began working for Harvey Comics, where he stayed for 35 years, creating such popular characters as Casper and Richie Rich and working on titles including *Little Max*, *Joe Palooka*, *Stumbo the Giant*, *Hot Stuff*, and *Little Audrey*. In the 1980s, Kremer worked for Star Comics, Marvel's kids imprint, and contributed to titles like *Top Dog*, *Ewoks*, *Royal Roy*, *Planet Terry*, and *Count Duckula*.

### Oskar Lebeck (1903–1966)

Oskar Lebeck was a stage

designer and an illustrator, writer, and editor (mostly of children's literature) who is best known for his role in establishing Dell Comics during the 1930s and 1940s. Notably, he hired Walt Kelly, who became one of the star creators of the line, best known for originating Pogo while there. Lebeck also selected John Stanley to bring panel cartoon character Little Lulu to comic books. Comic book historian Michael Barrier commented that Dell's fairy tale, nursery rhyme, and similarly themed titles "represented an effort by Lebeck, who had written and drawn children's books in the 1930s, to bring to comic books some of the qualities of traditional children's books, especially through rich and rather old-fashioned illustrations."

### Frans Masereel (1889–1972)

Frans Masereel is one of the most famous Flemish woodcut artists of his time. Like Lynd Ward, Masereel wrote "novels without words" and can be seen as a precursor to current graphic novelists. His first "graphic novel" was *De Stad* (1925), in which he described life in the city in 100 engravings. Other books are *Geschichte Ohne Worte* and *De Idee*, about an idea that's being haunted by the police and justice. It became very popular among anti-Nazis. Masereel

settled in France after World War II and died in 1972.

### Don McGregor (1945–)

Don McGregor began his comics writing career in 1969, writing horror stories for James Warren's *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*. After working as an editor on several of Marvel Comics' B&W line of comics/magazines, in 1973 he was assigned to write the Black Panther in Marvel's *Jungle Action* comics. The "Panther's Rage" series was the first mainstream comic to have an essentially all-black cast of comics. Don also wrote *Killraven*, *Luke Cage*, *Powerman*, and *Morbius*, *The Living Vampire* in that time period. In the middle of the 1970s he created the historically important graphic novel *Sabre*, with art by Billy Graham. During the early 1980s, Don's works included *Detectives Inc.* titles for Eclipse, and he worked with Gene Colan on *Ragamuffins* (Eclipse) *Nathaniel Dusk* (DC), and *Panther's Quest* (Marvel). His 1990s writing included *Zorro* and *Lady Rawhide* for Topps.

### Keiji Nakazawa (1939–2012)

Keiji Nakazawa was born in Hiroshima and was in the city when it was destroyed by a

nuclear weapon in 1945. He settled in Tokyo in 1961 to become a cartoonist. He produced his first manga for anthologies like *Shonen Gaho*, *Shonen King*, and *Bokura*. By 1966, Nakazawa began to express his memories of Hiroshima in his manga, starting with the fictional *Kuroi Ame ni Utarete* (Struck by Black Rain) and the autobiographical story *Ore wa Mita (I Saw It)*. Nakazawa's life work, *Barefoot Gen* (1972), was the first Japanese comic ever to be translated into Western languages. *Barefoot Gen* was adapted into two animated films and a live-action TV drama and has been translated into a dozen languages.

### Noel Sickles (1910–1982)

Noel Sickles became a political cartoonist for the *Ohio State Journal* in the late 1920s. He moved to New York in 1933, where he became a staff artist for Associated Press. Here, he was asked to take over the aviation comic strip *Scorchy Smith*. In that comic, Sickles developed a personal, almost photographic style. His method of drawing became popular among other comic artists and was particularly inspiring to Milton Caniff (*Terry and the Pirates*). Sickles and Caniff started working together closely, assisting each other on their comics.

After AP turned Sickles down for a salary raise, he devoted the rest of his career to magazine illustration.

### Cliff Sterrett (1883–1964)

Cliff Sterrett is one of the great innovators of the comic page and the creator of the first comic strip starring a heroine in the leading role, *Polly and Her Pals*. Between 1904 and 1908, he worked for the *New York Herald*, drawing illustrations and caricatures. He started doing comics when he got the opportunity to draw four daily strips for the *New York Evening Telegram* in 1911. In 1912, Sterrett was hired by William Randolph Hearst, for whom he created *Polly and Her Pals*. The strip was initially published in the daily comic page of the *New York Journal*. A year later, it also became a Sunday page and a four-color supplement to the *New York American*. Starting in the 1920s, Sterrett used cubist, surrealist, and expressionist elements in his artwork. In 1935 he handed over the daily strip to others to concentrate wholly on the Sunday strip, which he drew until his retirement in 1958.

### Elmer C. Stoner (1897–1969)

E. C. Stoner was one of the first

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African American comic book artists. He worked on comics through the Binder, Chesler, and Iger Studios from the late 1930s through the 1940s. For National he drew the "Speed Saunders" story in the first issue of *Detective Comics*. His other credits included "Blackstone" for EC Comics; "Captain Marvel," "Lance O'Casey," and "Spy Smasher" for Fawcett; "Blue Beetle" and "Bouncer" for Fox; "Breeze Barton" and "Flexo" for Timely; and "Doc Savage" and "Iron Munro" for Street & Smith. From 1948 to 1951 he drew a syndicated newspaper comic strip, *Rick Kane, Space Marshal*, which was written by Walter Gibson, magician and famed author of *The Shadow*. Stoner is also believed to have created the iconic Mr. Peanut mascot while he was still a teenager in Pennsylvania.

### Bryan Talbot (1952–)

Bryan Talbot was part of the British underground comix scene starting in the late 1960s, creating *Brain Storm Comix* at Alchemy Press, among other works. In 1978 he began the epic *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* saga, one of the first British graphic novels. Talbot began working for 2000AD in 1983, producing three books of the *Nemesis the Warlock*

series with writer Pat Mills. His 1994 Dark Horse graphic novel *The Tale of One Bad Rat* has won countless prizes. For four years Talbot produced work for DC Comics on titles such as *Hellblazer*, *The Sandman*, *The Dead Boy Detectives*, and *The Nazz* (with Tom Veitch). His other works include the Grandville series of books, the graphic novels *Alice in Sunderland*, *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* (with Mary Talbot), and the autobiography *Bryan Talbot: Father of the British Graphic Novel*.

### Ron Turner (1940–)

Ron Turner founded Last Gasp in 1970: a San Francisco-based book publisher with a lowbrow art and counterculture focus. Over the last 50 years Last Gasp has been a publisher, distributor, and wholesaler of underground comix and books of all types. In addition to publishing notable original titles like *Slow Death*, *Wimmen's Comix*, *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, *Air Pirates*, *It Ain't Me Babe*, and *Weirdo*, it also picked up the publishing reins of important titles—such as *Zap Comix* and *Young Lust*—from rivals that had gone out of business. The company publishes art and photography books, graphic novels, manga translations, fiction, and poetry.

### George Tuska (1916–2009)

George Tuska's first professional work came in 1939, when he became assistant on the *Scorchy Smith* newspaper strip. At the same time, he joined the Iger-Eisner Studio. There he worked on stories for a variety of comic book titles, including *Jungle*, *Wings*, *Planet*, *Wonderworld*, and *Mystery Men*. In the 1940s, as a member of the Harry "A" Chesler Studio, he drew several episodes of *Captain Marvel*, *Golden Arrow*, *Uncle Sam*, and *El Carim*. After the war, he continued in the comics field with memorable stories for Charles Biro's *Crime Does Not Pay*, as well as *Black Terror*, *Crimebuster*, and *Doc Savage*. He also became the main artist on *Scorchy Smith* from 1954 to 1959, when he took over the *Buck Rogers* strip, which he continued until 1967. In the late 1960s, Tuska started working for Marvel, where he contributed to *Ghost Rider*, *Planet of the Apes*, *X-Men*, *Daredevil*, and *Iron Man*. He continued drawing superhero comics for DC, including *Superman*, *Superboy*, and *Challengers of the Unknown*. In 1978, along with José Delbo, Paul Kupperberg, and Martin Pasko, Tuska started a new version of the daily *Superman* comic, which he worked on until 1993.

### Lynn Varley (1958–)

Lynn Varley is an award-winning colorist, notable for her collaborations with her former husband, writer/artist Frank Miller. She provided the coloring for Miller's *Ronin* (1984), an experimental six-issue series from DC Comics, and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), a four-issue miniseries that went on to become a commercial and critical success. Subsequently, Varley colored other Miller books, including *Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again*, *300*, *Elektra Lives Again*, and *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* (with Geoff Darrow).

### James Warren (1930–)

James Warren published *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, a magazine that influenced just about everyone in comics in the 1950s and 1960s, then went on to publish such influential comics magazines as *Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Blazing Combat*, *Vampirella*, and *The Spirit* in the 1960s–1980s. Creators whose work was highlighted in these magazines included Archie Goodwin, Louise Jones (Simonson), Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Bernie Wrightson, Billy Graham, Neal Adams, Wally Wood, Alex Toth, John Severin, and Russ Heath.



### Best Short Story

"Finding Batman" by Kevin Conroy and J. Bone in *DC Pride 2022* (DC)

### Best Single Issue/One-Shot

*Batman: One Bad Day: The Riddler*, by Tom King and Mitch Gerads (DC)

### Best Continuing Series

*Nightwing*, by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)

### Best Limited Series

*The Human Target*, by Tom King and Greg Smallwood (DC)

### Best New Series

*Public Domain*, by Chip Zdarsky (Image)

### Best Publication for Early Readers (up to age 8)

*The Pigeon Will Ride the Roller Coaster!* by Mo Willems (Union Square Kids)

### Best Publication for Kids (ages 9-12)

*Frizzy*, by Claribel A. Ortega and Rose Bousamra (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Publication for Teens (ages 13-17)

*Do a Powerbomb!* by Daniel Warren Johnson (Image)

### Best Humor Publication

*Revenge of the Librarians*, by Tom Gauld (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Anthology

*The Nib Magazine*, edited by Matt Bors (Nib)

### Best Reality-Based Work

*Flung Out of Space*, by Grace Ellis and Hannah Templer (Abrams ComicArts)

### Best Graphic Memoir

*Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands*, by Kate Beaton (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Graphic Album—New

*The Night Eaters, Book 1: She Eats the Night*, by Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda (Abrams ComicArts)

### Best Graphic Album—Reprint

*Parker: The Martini Edition—Last Call*, by Richard Stark, Darwyn Cooke, Ed Brubaker, and Sean Phillips (IDW)

### Best Adaptation from Another Medium

*Chivalry* by Neil Gaiman, adapted by Colleen Doran (Dark Horse)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material

*Blacksad: They All Fall Down Part 1*, by Juan Díaz Canales and Juanjo Guarnido, translation by Diana Schutz and Brandon Kander (Dark Horse)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

*Shuna's Journey*, by Hayao Miyazaki; translation by Alex Dudok de Wit (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

*Come Over Come Over, It's So Magic*, and *My Perfect Life*, by Lynda Barry (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

*The Fantastic Worlds of Frank Frazetta*, edited by Dian Hansen (TASCHEN)

### Best Writer

James Tynion IV, (BOOM! Studios); (DC), (Image)

### Best Writer/Artist

Kate Beaton, *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands* (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

Greg Smallwood, *The Human Target* (DC)

### Best Painter/Multimedia Artist

Sana Takeda, *The Night Eaters: She Eats the Night* (Abrams ComicArts); *Monstress* (Image)

### Best Cover Artist

Bruno Redondo, *Nightwing* (DC)

### Best Coloring

Jordie Bellaire, *The Nice House on the Lake, Suicide Squad: Blaze* (DC); *Antman, Miracleman* by Gaiman & Buckingham: *The Silver Age* (Marvel)

### Best Lettering

Stan Sakai, *Usagi Yojimbo* (IDW)

### Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

*PanelXPanel* magazine, edited by Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou and Tiffany Babb (panelxpanel.com)

### Best Comics-Related Book

*Charles M. Schulz: The Art and Life of the Peanuts Creator in 100 Objects*, by Benjamin L. Clark and Nat Gertler (Schulz Museum)

### Best Academic/Scholarly Work

*The LGBTQ+ Comics Studies Reader: Critical Openings, Future Directions*, edited by Alison Halsall and Jonathan Warren (University Press of Mississippi)

### Best Publication Design

*Parker: The Martini Edition—Last Call*, designed by Sean Phillips (IDW)

### Best Webcomic

Lore Olympus, by Rachel Smythe (WEBTOON)

### Best Digital Comic

*Barnstormers*, by Scott Snyder and Tula Lotay (Comixology Originals)

### Hall of Fame

#### JUDGES' CHOICES:

Jerry Bails, Tony DeZuniga, Justin Green, Bill Griffith, Jay Jackson, Jeffrey Catherine Jones, Jack Katz, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Win Mortimer, Diane Noomin, Gaspar Saladino, Kim Thompson, Garry Trudeau, Mort Walker, Tatjana Wood

#### VOTERS' CHOICES:

Brian Bolland, Anne Nocenti, Tim Sale, Diana Schutz

### Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award:

Beth Accomando, Scott Dunbier

### Russ Manning Promising Newcomer Award:

Zoe Thorogood

### Bill Finger Excellence in Comic Book Writing Award:

Barbara Friedlander, Sam Glanzman

# IN MEMORIAM

## Remembering Those We've Lost

### REMEMBERING TRINA ROBBINS (1938–2024)

by Heidi MacDonald

Trina Robbins loved the San Diego Comic-Con. She never told me that in so many words, but her continued presence there over the years was a testament to that. Most of my first encounters with Trina were at San Diego, probably on one of the Women in Comics panels.

But it seemed that Trina was everywhere at Comic-Con. She was simply a force of nature, a savant about the history of comics, an irresistible visionary as an editor, and a born storyteller in her comics. Her accomplishments are too numerous to mention, but a few will suffice: co-creator of the first all-women comic, *It Ain't Me Babe*; co-editor of *Wimmen's Comix*, the groundbreaking anthology; an activist with Friends of Lulu; an early adopter of the graphic novel format with *Silver Metal Lover*; and a lifelong proponent of comics for girls with *Misty* and *California Girls* . . . she was way ahead of her time on that one.

One of Trina's most powerful qualities was that she didn't believe in the "there can be only one" notion where successful women are concerned. Instead of making sure her position as one of the most famous woman cartoonists ever wasn't threatened, she dedicated decades to not only making sure there were more—encouraging young women in comics to follow their dreams, myself included—but most important, making sure women who had been making comics all along were recognized. I'll never forget attending her slideshow on the history of women in comics for the first time: Far from the traditional story that hopped from Dale Messick (*Brenda Starr*) to Ramona Fradon and Marie Severin and stopped, Trina laid out a rich tapestry of memorable, successful women—some of them among the most famed artists of their day, from Rose O'Neill to Nell Brinkley to Hilda Terry.

It was a shock to realize that these great artists had been there

all along...and even more shocking to realize that their work had been all but forgotten by the traditional history of comics. Trina delighted in finding "lost women cartoonists" - most notably the incredible life story and career of Lily Renée, who fled the Holocaust to find work drawing heroines for Fiction House in the 40s. Her lifelong dedication to promoting the work of the women

who came before her meant that the countless women who came after would have a history and heritage to pave the way instead of having to pull out a bulldozer and make their own road. Of course. If a bulldozer was ever needed, Trina would be behind the wheel.

Trina's many historical panels at Comic-Con were a resource and a treasure, but I couldn't write this without mentioning another one of Trina's favorite SDCC activities: dancing to Seduction of the Innocent. This was an all-star band made up of comics-loving celebrities with Bill Mumy (*Lost in Space*) on guitar, Miguel Ferrer (*Twin Peaks*) on drums, mystery novelist Max Allan Collins on keyboards, and Trina's partner, Steve Leialoha, on bass. This unusual assemblage played late-night parties back when they were manageable affairs, and seeing Trina cutting up on the dancefloor was part of the fun. (Trina and I even crashed the stage at a SoTI show at a WonderCon. Ah, simpler times.)

Trina gave the same energy to everything she undertook, and looking at everything she accomplished, it was a lot of energy. She and Steve were frequent guests at a Sunday night con dinner that I've been organizing for 30 years or so. She won't be at this year's dinner, or any more of them, but I can truly say that her spirit will be there. Trina will be a part of Comic-Con's heritage forever.

Heidi MacDonald is the editor-in-chief of Comics Beat.



Trina won an Eisner Award in 2017.

## SARAH BECKER (1970–2024)

by Jim Lee

I was at dinner with the family when I heard that my friend and former WildStorm editor Sarah Becker, aged 53, had died. Days later I was still struggling to process the finality of her being gone. It's even harder for me to convey the impact she had on so many of us back in the 1990s. As an editor, she was hired for her particular and quirky taste, and that in turn influenced and inspired many a storyline. If you were a reader of our comics back in the day, know that she was a caring soul who took the time to read every bit of fan mail that came in from you all and that she loved responding in kind.

Beyond WildStorm, she was of course on Real World: Miami and then later worked at Disney Publishing. Always a free spirit and fiercely independent, she then went on to work for Brittany Spears, when she was on tour and then did the same as Aaron Carter's tour assistant. After those crazy adventures, she then jumped fearlessly into the world of life coaching and trauma counseling.

A pretty damn eclectic life journey that suited a pretty damn eclectic, special person.

I will always remember and cherish Sarah as the doyenne at the heart of a group of some of the most talented, and unique, young group of artists who really defined the energy, style, and appeal of the mid-1990s WildStorm era.

Many of these artists who Sarah helped discover and nurture have shared their heartfelt, personal stories of the time they spent with her as a friend, confidant and colleague at WildStorm. For me—it's hard to describe those times; in many ways, you had to be there to truly understand. Or maybe it saddens me too much to go

there. I can only offer up some snapshots from back in the day which capture the memory of her and the spirit of the times. Rest in peace, Sarah.

**Jim Lee, the world-renowned comic book artist, writer, editor, and publisher, is currently president, publisher, and chief creative officer of DC.**



## ROBERT BEERBOHM (1952–2024)

by Dr. Michael J. Vassallo

Robert Beerbohm, pioneering comic book retailer, comics history researcher, and long-time friend of the San Diego Comic-Con, was born on June 17, 1952 in Long Beach, California. At age 6 he moved with his family to Saudi Arabia, where he came in contact with his first American comic books, falling in love, among others, with the works of Carl Barks, Hank Ketcham, and Jack Kirby. While a teenager in Nebraska, he started selling comics and other pop culture items through a mail order business and had a booth at his first comic convention in 1967. In 1972 he co-founded (with John Barrett and Bud Plant) Comics and Comix in Berkeley, the first comic book retail chain. In 1976, Bob opened his own store in San Francisco, Best of Two Worlds, a business that would be decimated by a 1986 warehouse flood.

From 1967 to 2011, Beerbohm set-up at thousands of comic book shows all over the country and world, including nearly 45 years in San Diego. But his contributions to the artform and industry go much further. Beerbohm was a comic book archeologist, a Platinum age scholar who, in 1998, took the history of comic books in this country back to 1842, when he discovered a copy of *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* by Rodolphe Töpffer, a supplement to the weekly *Brother Jonathan* (and a reprint of the 1841 London edition).

Beerbohm's magnum opus, unfinished at the time of his death, was his book *Comic Book Store Wars*, a life's work of collating the disparate threads of the business, artistic, retailing, and collector aspects of the industry from the early days of pulp barons breaking into the comic book industry to the rise of the direct market. Speaking and interviewing over the decades to everyone who knew where the bodies were buried, he witnessed, uncovered, and explained the concept of speculator affidavit fraud, leading to the reasons "hot" comic books of the early 1970s exhibited "regional scarcity" and poor sales figures, all while burning up the collector's market as critically acclaimed works of art.

In the last 15 years of his life, Beerbohm overcame severe physical ailments, all while nursing his beloved daughter, Katy, back to health from her own health scares.

Big-hearted, loud, brash, opinionated, and obstinate, a champion of underground comix artists (most notably Rick Griffin), Bob had his detractors and could be infuriating even to his friends. But no more dedicated soul to the industry and the artform existed. His social media presence was enormous; he posted daily all his experience, knowledge and opinions by the thousands, including mere hours before his death.

With his passing, a gaping hole in our shared passion exists that cannot easily be filled.

**Dr. Michael J. Vassallo, a noted Timely/Atlas researcher and historian, is the co-author of *The Secret History of Marvel Comics*, editor of the Eisner Award-nominated *Atlas at War*, and current editor of the *Fantagraphics Atlas Library and Atlas Artist Edition* series.**



Bob at the 1992 Comic-Con, with the special Rick Griffin exhibit he put together.

## MARK D. BRIGHT: A SON OF THE STORYTELLING ARTS (1955–2024) by Joseph Illidge

Mark D. Bright, known also as both "MD Bright" by his fans and affectionately "Doc" by his friends, brought a unique sense of humanity to his stories of fantastical heroes.

My first exposure to Mark's artwork was in the Marvel Comics series *Power Man and Iron Fist*, a comic book about high adventure and racial unity through its pairing of the titular heroes as well as the duo of ex-cop Misty Knight and everyday ronin Colleen Wing, collectively known as The Daughters of the Dragon. Colleen Wing was likely the first biracial hero I ever saw in comics, as she was part Japanese, and while her visual rendition by previous artists did not quite capture Colleen's dual heritage, Mark's version did, with an immediacy that made this extraordinary woman look both

uniquely beautiful and mundanely grounded in our world.

It is the same humanity that he gave to the amazing and spectacular Spider-Man in the seminal one-shot *Spider-Man Versus Wolverine* from 1987, in which the iconic flagship hero of Marvel Comics did the unthinkable and accidentally ended the life of a former spy. At the point of no return in the story and beyond, Spider-Man was traumatized by his actions, and Mark's work brought the unshakeable horror of that event into a crisp, sharp focus.

When a young pilot named Hal Jordan encountered a dying space cop from the multigalactic union of space police called The Green Lantern Corps in a DC Comics miniseries from 1989 called

*Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn*, Hal had the boyish face and charm of a young man who experienced so little of what life on Earth and the universe had to offer, while arrogantly assuming he knew so much. This was not the iconic Green Lantern of the Justice League. It was a young and vulnerable man about to learn the scale of his existence in all of creation, and the noble cause of protecting life everywhere. It was Mark's capacity to artistically walk the line between depicting a young man of heart and a grown man of purpose.

Mark went on to draw various characters known to real deal geeks for decades but only in the last 16 years to people worldwide, such as Tony Stark, the Invincible Iron Man, or Sam Wilson, The Falcon, or Soundwave, the sentient robot from Hasbro's *The Transformers*. But it was the Milestone series Icon that shines brightly as one of his most important bodies of work: a book about the unlikely pairing of an alien living on Earth as a Black man for over 150 years and a young Black girl from the streets with dreams of being the next Toni Morrison. The clash of political and philosophical ideologies, from the ivory towers of metropolitan cities to the urban squalor of underdeveloped neighborhoods, from the lands of our planet to the advanced environments of planets in other galaxies—all were expertly portrayed by Mark with the kind of skill and style that are mostly underappreciated in various comic book industry circles



Artist's portrait from the 2020 digital edition of *Icon: A Hero's Welcome*

but heralded by fellow artists and craftsmen as quintessential storytelling without aesthetic glamour or overindulgence.

Before walking off the stage of North American comics because the work opportunities for him "dried up," as is diplomatically said in the business, Mark's last tour de force was a series called *Quantum and Woody* published by Acclaim Comics, about the world's worst fighting duo, exemplifying the unity of opposites in characters that became a throughline in his career.

Mark would go on to find creative and spiritual exploration in his life through reconnecting with playing music and with his relationship to the church. His final mission in life was taking care of his elderly mother, up until her passing. His own passing came shortly thereafter.

In the aftermath is a legacy of craft without obnoxious hubris, stories without superfluous fluff, and purpose without proportionate thanks.

Until now, because we recognize that Mark D. Bright was a good son to his mother, a son of his Heavenly Father,

and a servant to the human adventure of being a comic book artist.

**Joseph P. Illidge is the writer of the upcoming *Harriet Tubman* graphic novel for Harper Collins, co-author of the *Judge Kim* and the *Kids' Court* children's books from Simon and Schuster, and the *MPLS Sound* historical fiction graphic novel from Humanoids.**

## JOSE DELBO (1933–2024)

by Paul Levitz

It's a truism that every artist's artwork is seen through the lens of their worldview and often is in part a reflection of their own physique, experiences, or fantasies. Gil Kane's heroes were mirrors of his tall, thin figure. Jack Kirby's stories were filled with battles that were extensions of his kid gang fights or infantry days. Walt Simonson closes his eyes and sees...giant frog gods?

And Jose Delbo's career was marked by the fact that he was... nice.

The Argentine-born artist began his comics career at 16, then moved to Brazil and the United States as a young man. As a solid storyteller, he found work at a number of the mainstream newsstand-oriented comics companies, drawing stories that either called on his childhood love of westerns (an even more popular genre in Argentina in those years) or were adapted from the popular culture of his newly adopted country (*The Brady Bunch*,

*The Mod Squad*, *The Monkees*— even the nicest fantasy ever set in a Nazi prisoner of war camp: *Hogan's Heroes*). Oh, he dabbled in scary stories for *Twilight Zone* or DC's mystery titles, but he preferred projects like capturing The Yellow Submarine or even the life of Dwight Eisenhower.

Until he met the nice girl. Jose's name will always be most associated with *Wonder Woman*, whose life he chronicled for over five years. While these were superhero tales, complete with supervillains and their destructive schemes, Jose never lost the ability to have Wonder Woman's essential goodness shine through the adventures. He could draw her in the most complex combats imagined by his writer collaborators, but you never lost the sense that our heroine wanted everything to come out all right.

Over his long career in American comics, Jose had dalliances with most of the major characters, because as an ever-reliable

professional he'd take on whatever his editors requested. But he shined the most when his own character could show through the veneer of the fantasy. *The Transformers* was another long and successful run. Naturally, Jose was perfect to make a multi-ton metallic robot from space a friendly protector of the helpless humans of Earth.

Besides his warm personality showing through in his work, Jose was a dedicated craftsman and master of the form, able to adapt to the stylistic requirements of the several different creative cultures he flourished in. Editors counted on him, writers were rarely disappointed, and readers could gently slide into his stories and curl up with them. The craft he understood so well he passed on, and will live on for generations after him: Jose chose to spend more than a decade teaching budding artists at the Joe Kubert School in New Jersey, giving them insight not only into techniques on the page but for working well with collaborators and editors.

And when that stage of life was over, Jose finished his days creating a Delbo Cartoon Camp for schoolchildren in Florida, where

he moved in retirement. He kept teaching, inspiring, and even experimenting to the very end—becoming one of the first comics artists to publicly transform his work into an NFT.

Not all nice guys finish last, thankfully.

**Paul Levitz has been a comics fan (*The Comic Reader*), writer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*), editor (*Batman*), executive (decades at DC, ending as President & Publisher), historian (*Will Eisner: Champion of the Graphic Novel*), and educator (Columbia and Pace Universities). He is a member of the Eisner Awards Hall of Fame.**



J. Cortes ©2013 SDCC

## MAX FELLWALKER (1966–2024)

by Greg Espinoza

I first met Max Fellwalker at a small, local Bay Area sci-fi convention, Time Con, in 1986. We were bonded by our love for the anime character Captain Harlock, and mutual attraction soon followed. We were both hard-core nerds who loved Star Trek, Doctor Who, anime, and comics. By 1987 we were living together in a Pleasant Hill, CA,



at a home set up as a studio with three other artists. Max began to quickly develop her skills as a watercolorist in the studio. The two of us made our regular pilgrimages to San Diego for Comic-Con each year, with our aspirations of breaking into comics, which we did first with Blackthorne Comics, then Eternity Comics.

She made her mark in the industry creating painted cover art for such books as the original *Aircel Men in Black* comic books, *Shuriken*, *Spicy Tales*, and *Captain Harlock: The Television Scripts* for Eternity Comics. In addition to working for numerous other comics publishers, she created card art for the White Wolf games, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, and *Vampire: The Eternal Struggle*. Max participated in the yearly Comic-Con Benefit Art Auction, doing live painting up on a stage.

Max passed away on March 14th at the age of 57, in L.A., from surgical complications. She had chronic health issues throughout her life. She'd been dealing with increasing arthritic pain over the

years, brought about by what was diagnosed in the mid-1990s as Lyme's disease. Those debilitating issues with pain caused her to stop painting, after which she took up photography and became quite accomplished at it. She is survived by her daughters Rahne and Faye Fellwalker, her mother Virginia Matuziak-Zancanaro, a brother, and three sisters

Once upon a time Max was a significant part of my life. I watched her talent develop as a painter from the start of our relationship. Staying together as a couple wasn't in the stars for us. She was an artist, an outstanding photographer, a craftsperson, and a single mom who took care of her two daughters. Now she's gone back to the universe, and her pain and suffering are gone. If an afterlife exists, I hope she's found her peace. For an all-too-brief span of time, her heart was mine, and mine was hers. I'll miss her and remember the best of her.

In a recent remembrance for Max, no less a personage than Michael Wm. Kaluta opined that Max was like one of the singer Donovan's dark princesses in the song "Celeste," as adapted to an artist as opposed to a songwriter: "Dawn crept in unseen, to find me still awake, A strange young girl showed her art to me, and left 'fore the day was born...this dark princess, with saddening jest, she lowered her eyes of woe...And I felt her sigh, I wouldn't like to try, the changes she's going through...but I hope love comes right through them all with you."

Farewell to my Dark Princess.

**Greg Espinoza is an artist, writer, interviewer, and generally a troublemaker. Working in comics, gaming, animation, and illustration for more than 40 years, he has written for *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and has created art for *Printed In Blood*, and *Image Comics*, among others.**



## JOHN FIELD (1957–2023)

I first met John in the 1980s when he was head film programmer and projectionist for the San Diego Comic-Con.

At first, John was annoyed with this kid, nagging him about where he acquires his films. Thankfully, his annoyance turned into a friendship that lasted nearly 40 years.

Besides being Grand Sheik for our local Laurel and Hardy group in San Diego, John's greatest love was creating film programs and sharing those films with fans attending Comic-Con and other exhibitions. In recognition of his knowledge and talent, John was the recipient of the Comic Con's Inkpot Award, an honor that he always cherished.

In addition to having an encyclopedic knowledge of film and television history, John was a remarkable impressionist and hilariously funny. Besides well-known celebrities, John could impersonate people whom he knew personally and would always leave his friends in stitches.

In the early 2000s, John would occasionally co-host my radio show, *TV Time Machine*. One of the shows for which he was most proud was a Christmas show where he played multiple characters, primarily Ebenezer Scrooge and Bob Cratchit. Some of the show was scripted, but much of it was John doing improv, and he was perfect.

During that period, John and I shared a love for the classic game shows *What's My Line* and *I've Got a Secret*. At the time, The Game Show Network aired both of those shows in the wee hours

of the morning. For over a year, John and I watched, from our respective homes, every episode of both those shows while talking on the phone. John would provide running audio commentary, which was always hilarious.

As all of his friends will attest to, there were few people as generous as John Field. As a friend, John was always there for you, always helpful, and always wanting to share with people what he cherished the most—his love for classic movies and TV shows, especially *Superman*.

John sometimes played the part of the curmudgeon, but everyone who knew him knew that he was truly sensitive and thoughtful and, when it counted the most, very kind-hearted.

He was the best friend a person could have. And for that, I will always thank you, John.

Jim Benson is a television historian who has worked with Universal Studios, CBS, the Mystery Channel and many more.

by Jim Benson



Photo courtesy of David Webb.

## RAMONA FRADON (1926–2024)

by Colleen Doran



Ramona at the 1997 Comic-Con. (Photo by Jackie Estrada)

Ramona Fradon was an artist whose sunny disposition shone right through her art, and her art was everywhere at a time when women comics creators were scarce and women superhero creators were unicorns for rarity.

The daughter of a prominent lettering designer, Ramona graduated from the Parsons School of Design in 1950, shortly thereafter landing a job at DC Comics on the series *Shining Knight*. She moved on to *Adventure Comics* for a popular run featuring Aquaman, a character she admitted she had a crush on, basing his wholesome good looks on actor Troy Donahue. There she co-created the character Aqualad, and then Metamorpho with Bob Haney during her time on *The Brave and the Bold*, followed by stints on *Plastic Man* and *Super Friends*. She also briefly worked at Marvel Comics on *The Cat* and *The Fantastic Four*, hand-picked for the job by Stan Lee, who was hoping to feature more women artists at the company.

Her broad ink strokes and pleasant, attractive drawing style with clear, direct storytelling technique was perfectly suited for the youthful *Super Friends* title, but she was also well received for her work in horror comics, contributing to DC's *House of Secrets*, *House of Mystery*, and *Secrets of Haunted House*.

Ramona spent a significant portion of her career—from 1980 to 1995—working on the comic strip Brenda Starr. Her first love was comic strips, so it was fitting that she found a home there (though it was comic she did not like when she first saw it).

Ramona never felt quite comfortable in the superhero idiom either, even though everyone adored her work on the classic comics for which she is so fondly remembered. But she was a wonderful heir to the Dale Messick creation, and she excelled at the glamorous drama strip style.

I was fortunate to work—briefly—as her assistant on that strip, and there was one memorable San Diego Comic-Con where a small army of comics artists came to Ramona's rescue. In the dark days before the internet and FTP uploads—and when many an artist took the chance of popping those pages off to Federal Express without getting copies made—weeks of *Brenda Starr* strip originals disappeared on the way to the publisher. Dozens of creators worked night and day to re-create the works so Ramona could meet her deadline. That's how much she was loved by all who knew her.

In later years, even as she approached her nineties, she enjoyed going to conventions and continued to work in comics.

Ramona always preferred broad cartooning, humor, and

wacky designs over superheroes, and she was delighted to draw *SpongeBob SquarePants* tales that riffed the Aquaman mythos in stories featuring Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy.

At the time Ramona entered the comics field, she was one of only two women professional artists, the other being the redoubtable Marie Severin. While Marie was a tough customer who battled her way through the bullpen, Ramona was shy and didn't socialize much with the other creators, sometimes hiding behind her portfolio to get in and out of the office unnoticed. She had many a grim tale to share about the unfortunate ways strip cartoonists were treated by the syndicates: "criminals in expensive suits" she called them.

Kind, retiring, and quiet, Ramona's gentle art and spirit deserved much better than the rewards this industry doles out. In later years, with convention appearances and the adulation of adoring fans, she finally came to realize a tiny fraction of just how much she was appreciated.

She is loved. And she is very deeply missed.

Colleen Doran is an award-winning artist who has most notably worked with Neil Gaiman (*The Sandman*, *Chivalry*, *Good Omens*) and on graphic novels for *The Doors*, *Blondie*, *Melissa Etheridge*, and *Tori Amos*.

## IAN GIBSON (1946–2023)

by Steve Morris and Michael Molcher

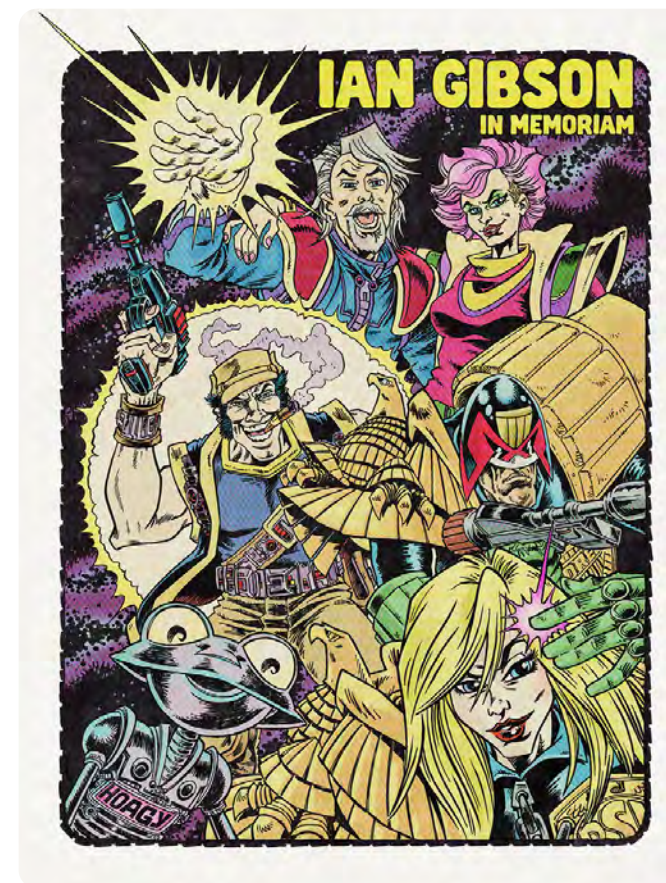
A renowned writer and artist with a career spanning half a century, Ian Gibson was one of the most distinctive and imaginative comics artists Britain ever produced.

Whether on some of 2000 AD's most iconic series—including "The Ballad of Halo Jones" with Alan Moore and "Robo-Hunter" with John Wagner and Alan Grant—or *Mister Miracle* and *Star Wars* for Marvel, Gibson's art is immediately recognizable. He was as at ease in portraying dynamic action as in chronicling character, as comfortable with goofball comedy as with moving pathos.

His endlessly inventive imagination could craft whole worlds that seemed lived-in and real yet fantastical and wondrous—from the mean streets of Mega-City One and the robot world of Verdus to the planets on Halo Jones' galaxy-spanning journey.

Born in 1946, Gibson's first work was on fanzines, but by 1973 his art was appearing in *Pocket Chiller Library*, the *Bionic Woman Annual*, and *House of Hammer* titles. After his "skinny" girls were rejected by editors on IPC's range of girls' comics, he worked with renowned Spanish artist Blas Gallego, who lived in London at the time, with Gallego inking over Gibson's pencils. It was his work on *Death Wish* in 1975 for Valiant that marked the beginning of a decades-long collaboration with writer and editor John Wagner.

After 2000 AD launched in 1977, Gibson contributed a string of work drawing the futuristic lawman, including episodes for the first Judge Dredd epic, "Robot Wars." It was his portrayal



Art by Rufus Dayglo © Rebellion 2000 AD Ltd.

of robots that inspired Wagner to come up with a new series that would suit his talents: "Robo-Hunter." When the long-running series about a weary, wise-cracking bounty hunter called Sam Slade tracking down errant robots began, its first episode was drawn by Spanish artist José Ferrer, but Gibson soon stamped his authority on the character, catapulting him into the pantheon of 2000 AD greats. Gibson brought an anarchic and constantly surprising approach to storytelling, as brilliant at handling the high-stakes action sequences as he was at injecting humor.

In 1981, Gibson worked with rising star Alan Moore on the Tharg's Future Shock story "Grawks Bearing Gifts," and the pair would reunite a few years later for one of the landmark stories in 2000 AD history: "The Ballad of Halo Jones," a powerfully feminist series about a young woman desperate to escape the claustrophobic and dangerous life on a floating housing estate. Gibson and Moore worked together closely to construct a futuristic and yet relatable world. As Halo left Earth and faced betrayal, danger, and heartbreak, Gibson's skill only grew in portraying her evolution from a wide-eyed innocent to a scarred but mature woman. Halo Jones is rightly considered to be one of the classic stories of comics history.

With his 2000 AD catalogue including runs with stories

## KEITH GIFFEN (1952–2023)

by Paul Levitz

Humanity has waited for millennia for a message from the after-life... and Keith Giffen provided it: "I told them I was sick. Anything not to attend New York Comic Con." (Not a shot at Comic-Con's East Coast competitor. Keith wasn't any fonder of coming here, either. Or at least would never have admitted it.)

It was an in-character way to go. Keith cultivated the image of being a curmudgeon, wandering the halls of the field of comics explaining everything was wrong with the content, the business, hell, the world, that day. And volunteering to fix it, if only someone would let him. He'd temper his grumpiness with a tale of his latest life challenge: dying in the cardiologist's office during a stress test



Marvel Database

including "Ace Trucking Co.," "Anderson: Psi Division," and many more, in the late 1980s Gibson moved across the pond to work in America, with a storied career working on comics including *Mister Miracle*, *Star Wars*, the major DC comics event storyline 'Millennium, and *Meta 4* for First Comics. In the 1990s, he designed pre-production visuals and characters for the pioneering CGI-animated TV series *ReBoot*, as well as creating "The Chronicles of Genghis Grimtoad."

Gibson's most recent work saw him return to both Judge Dredd and "Robo-Hunter," teaming up with Alan Grant for a series based around the adventures of Sam Slade's daughter, Samantha. He also celebrated the publication of his long-gestating Lifeboat story, as well as connecting with fans on social media.

Throughout, Gibson never lost his ability to make the fantastical into something that felt relatable, exciting, and real; his gift for humor marks him as one of British comics' most expressive and human artists, who left an indelible mark on the industry.

**Steve Morris is 2000 AD marketing manager as well as the powerhouse behind comic book review site Shelfdust. Michael Molcher is 2000 AD brand manager and author of the Eisner Award-nominated book *I Am The Law: How Judge Dredd Predicted Our Future.***

and being brought back was probably the most vivid.

But what he left was a lifetime of raw creativity, from possibly the most fertile imagination in American mainstream comics since Jack Kirby, one of his idols. He created (or co-created) characters that stretched the bounds of logic, taste, and his collaborators' ability to keep up: Rocket Raccoon, Lobo, Ambush Bug, The Heckler, and so many more. It took him a long time to admit to himself that he was a writer as well as an artist, but his contributions to stories made for memorable runs that might otherwise have been mundane: *Legion of Super-Heroes*, *Defenders*, *Justice League*, *Doctor Fate*—even torturing *Scooby Doo*. His style mutated, from Kirby-esque, to complexly paneled, to feeling the influence of Munoz, and back again. This was a restless man.

Through over a thousand stories, Keith never settled, never was satisfied that he'd done what he could. There was always more to do, a better result to achieve. He'd hit his deadlines, because that was part of being a professional, but his mind was always going on to the next thing. What could he do that would be more of a surprise for the reader?

It was the nature of mainstream comics in Keith's peak years in the field that they were produced rapidly, and only rarely with a thought to creating something lasting. Keith certainly wasn't thinking of the ages. But even working at that speed, under those conditions, he made disproportionately lasting contributions. His raccoon, tossed off in the midst of a story that wasn't scheduled for any subsequent episodes, has already gone on to star in over \$2

billion of film grosses. And speaking personally, *The Great Darkness Saga*, our peak collaboration on *Legion of Super-Heroes*, was not only named one of the best 20 comic stories of the 20th century in one major poll, it is coming out this summer in its fifth edition, over 40 years after we finished it—in an era when there was no reasonable hope of it being collected or remaining in print.

Keith's last words from beyond may have given the Internet of fandom a chuckle or a moment of confusion, but his body of creativity inspired his collaborators enough that the work will live

## DAN GREEN (1952–2023)

by Walter Simonson

Dan Green was one of the first professionals I met when I arrived in New York City at the beginning of August 1972, to try to break into comics. I went to DC Comics to show my portfolio to anyone who would look at it, and after a pair of somewhat discouraging interviews with DC editors, I wandered into the DC coffee room. It was a modest room with plastic tables and chairs scattered about, along with a line of three or four vending machines along one wall. Four young guns were sitting at one of the tables and I introduced myself to Bernie Wrightson, Michael Kaluta, Howard Chaykin, and Dan Green. They invited me to sit with them, and after some conversation, asked to see my portfolio. The short version is that encounter enabled me to get my first professional work in comics. And we all became friends.

Shortly thereafter, I moved into Flatbush, Brooklyn. Dan and his lady, Sandi Zinaman, were living somewhere on the eastern border of Prospect Park. They invited me over for dinner one day, and I was fed a wonderful meal. Dan also introduced me to some serious Kinks music from their then new album, *Everybody's in Show-Biz*. In particular, Dan insisted I listen to the cut, "Celluloid Heroes." I loved it and we bonded over food and music.

Like me, Dan's career was just beginning. The first work of his I became aware of was his art for a backup in DC's Edgar Rice Burroughs book *Tarzan*. It was an adaptation of a rather obscure Burroughs novel, *Beyond the Farthest Star*. The script was written by Marv Wolfman, and Dan penciled and inked the art for three chapters. I don't know if it was Dan's first professional work or not, but it came out about a month before my own first published artwork in a comic.

Dan penciled and inked a few stories, but in time he began to concentrate on finishing (working over layouts) and inking (working over pencils). He was never a fast penciler but found his

on beyond the grave for many, many years, continuing to confound, confuse, and make people contemplate the complex person who could possibly have come up with all these amazing ideas.

**Paul Levitz has been a comics fan (The Comic Reader), writer (Legion of Super-Heroes), editor (Batman), executive (decades at DC, ending as President & Publisher), historian (Will Eisner: Champion of the Graphic Novel), and educator (Columbia and Pace Universities). He is a member of the Eisner Awards Hall of Fame.**

métier in comics with a brush and India ink, working over other people's layouts and pencils.

Lists on the Internet can provide a comprehensive overview of Dan's career, but he inked or finished the work of a number of prominent pencilers in the business, including John Byrne, John Romita Jr., John Buscema, Marc Silvestri, Rick Leonardi, Gene Colan, and Jack Kirby. He was the first inker to bring the X-Men villain Sabertooth to life, inking John Byrne in *Iron Fist* #14.

Although we knew each other during the course of our entire careers, Dan and I only worked together once. He inked *X-Factor* #13 in 1986. Bob Wiacek was the regular inker on the title, but Marvel editorial pulled a stunt switch for a month so that books traded inkers. In my case, it was the *X-Men* inker traded for the *X-Factor* inker. Dan was a little cranky about that trade, because *X-Men* sold better than *X-Factor*. Consequently, the royalty check nine months later was a little smaller. Nevertheless,

he inked my pencils beautifully with a lyricism I can't hope to capture with ink over my own work!

And that brings me to the most important thing I want to say about my friend. He was a wonderful artist. His inking was delicate and graceful. He handled a brush with mastery. He made every penciler he inked look better. He was also a fine painter and draftsman, although such work rarely reached the public eye. I would recommend seeking out a copy of *The Raven & Other Poems and Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe, published by Bulfinch Press. If you like fine drawing, you will not be disappointed.

My deepest condolences to Dan's family and friends and many fans. Godspeed, pal.

**Walter Simonson is an award-winning comics creator perhaps best known for his run on Marvel Comics' *Thor* from 1983 to 1987.**



Dan with his wife, Sandi.

## DÆRICK GRÖSS SR (1947–2023)

by Dærlick W. Gröss

He loved you all.

He loved comics his entire life; he loved everything about the medium and he loved everything you do.

So many of you knew Dærlick Gröss Sr. You knew him as an artist, a creative director, advisor, teacher, mentor, collaborator, creator, cheerleader, and friend. For my mother, my sister and me, our children, and our grandchildren, he was a hero, a model, a guide, an example. He was “Pop” (for Papa). And he is missed. Terribly.

A few of you knew of him before and outside of his professional run in comics. He was nearly 20 years into a career as a commercial illustrator, cartoonist, instructor, creative director, and caricaturist before he entered into the world of creating comics. He was in his early forties when he started working with a martial arts magazine publisher of all things to work on a line of martial arts-themed comic serials. Sure enough,

as he got more involved, he brought in the superheroes. This is where Murciélaga (She-Bat) was born, alongside Sifu and the Reiki Warriors, way back in 1988.

As the 1990s dawned, what followed was a whirlwind for him. Beginning with Innovation Comics' Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*, Dærlick stormed into the mainstream industry and gained notoriety for his fully painted interiors. These included more painted comic adaptations, including *Forbidden Planet* and *Necroscope*, and ultimately led to working with DC on the *Batman: Two-Face Strikes Twice* two-parter with Joe Staton and Mike W. Barr. It was during this period he was awarded the Russ Manning Most Promising Newcomer Award in 1991. This was also when he formed Studio G and started publishing his own characters, initially with Heroic Publishing and eventually independently. To this day Heroic has maintained a decades-long friendship and still carries back issues of *Murciélaga She-Bat*.

Dærlick eventually landed several projects with Marvel in the mid-late 90s, including some work on *Excalibur*, *Captain Marvel*, and a story in an *X-Force/Cable Annual*. All this led to him becoming



Dærlick with his Russ Manning Award at Comic-Con, 1991.

one of the primary artists working on Marvel's CyberComics, an early foray into quasi-animated online comics. While the result was clunky by today's standards, it was an innovative approach to comics at the time, and he was at the forefront of it providing pencils (there were no inks for this) for Spider-Man, Iron Man and Captain America, Daredevil, The X-Men, etc.

Over his career, Dærlick worked with a large number of comic publishers including Heroic, Image, Malibu, Chaos!, DC, Marvel, AK Comics, Charlton Neo, and InDELLible. He worked with so many of you and loved all of your projects and creations. He was a supporter of small press and indie publishers. He was an ardent advocate for LGBTQ+ stories and characters and publications. He attended comic conventions all over, as a guest, exhibitor, panelist, artist, and just as a fan walking the floor and geeking out over everything.

I fondly remember growing up

reading his insanely extensive comic collection: his nearly perfect *Justice League*, *X-Men*, and *Daredevil* collections; his solid DC and Marvel collections that could have filled a Silver Age museum. At one point in the 1980s he even owned his own short-lived comic shop in Chatsworth, CA.

As with many of you, I pursued a career as a professional artist because of him. As with many of you, I would not have had the career I've had without his guidance, support, and prodding to keep going. We worked together on so many projects, both within and outside of comics. It is a bittersweet honor to take all that he has created and believed in and carry that torch forward. Dærlick has left us, but Studio G and his characters will all live on with us. He has left us a legacy that we, his family, are so proud of. Art, illustration, and specifically comics are a lifelong passion that he has passed on to us.

He loved comics.

He loved you all.

Dærlick W. Gröss has been working as a commercial illustrator since 1993 and is head of Studio G.

## ROGER HILL'S LEGACY (1948–2023)

by Nick Caputo

From the beginning of his collecting days, Roger Hill was enamored by the EC comic book line of the 1950s. This translated early on into a passion for studying, collecting, and researching the efforts

of those whose stories and art he admired. The enthusiasm soon led him to contribute to fanzines, most notably *Squa Tront*, a high-quality publication devoted to all-things EC, which was published

by friend and fellow aficionado Jerry Weist. As staff artist, editorial advisor, and writer of numerous articles, Hill would be involved in every issue of the title and soon became known to fandom as a scholar of the company's output. He would attend conventions where he met many of the writers and artists (including publisher Bill Gaines), collecting original artwork and gaining further knowledge of the medium. Throughout it all, he always remained a fan and, by everyone's recollections, an exemplary gentleman.

*Squa Tront* continued sporadically for a staggering 55 years, from 1967 to 2022, with Hill remaining a primary contributor. His last two pieces for the fanzine included a focus on Basil Wolverton—acclaimed for his bizarre renderings, most notably at *Mad*—and a deep dive into Charlton's *Yellowjacket* title. While the EC comics were an ongoing study for Hill, his curiosity went much further, taking him into the rich and far-reaching waters that encompassed the world of sequential art.

Roger was involved in preserving comic book history on multiple levels as a writer, editor and researcher, with a specific skill-set for distinguishing artists' styles. In addition to *Squa Tront* and his own *EC Fan-Addict* fanzine, which ran for 5 issues under his stewardship (with a future sixth issue upcoming), his essays could be found in *Comic Book Marketplace* and *Alter Ego*.

Also worth noting is his contributions to the small-press. As Ray Cuthbert explained:

"The CFA-APA (Comic and Fantasy Art Amateur Press Association) was created in 1985 by Roger Hill. Roger is one of the most active comic art collectors, researchers, and comic art historians in the country. He is one of the consultants for evaluation of original comic art for Sotheby Auctioneers."

From small press to auction houses, Hill's reach ran wide.

## JIM KORKIS (1950–2023)

by Mark Evanier

Cartoons and comics lost a great friend last year when they lost Jim Korkis. From boyhood, he was interested in all of them—especially in the men and women who made them and especially in anything with the name “Disney” anywhere in the title.

Jim was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and grew up in Glendale, California, where he paid his way through college working as a driver and tour guide at the Los Angeles Zoo. After college, he taught drama and English to middle schoolers in San Marino for

And onward he soared. Among some of his most respected achievements are the many books he authored, which spotlighted a quartet of astonishing craftsman: the science fiction illustrations of Wally Wood; acclaimed Quality Comics and *Blackhawk* artist

Reed Crandall; a biography of the superbly talented Mac Raboy; and, his final published project, a study of the life and art of Matt Fox, whose quirky, fantastical and largely forgotten depictions appeared in horror-oriented pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales*, and later in comic books. As always Hill delved into his subject matter with great alacrity and brought this obscure artist to life. According to colleagues, Roger completed one more book he was engrossed in, and that will hopefully see the light of day soon.

Roger Hill's contributions to the world of comic book scholarship in general—and the EC line in particular—span six decades. His relentless love for the subject matter and the creative giants he celebrated made its mark on fandom, and his scholarship speaks for itself. From his earliest fanzine efforts

as a teenager to the latest book project, his focus was always on the creators he covered, and that passion translated to an almost subliminal response from like-minded students of comics.

Perhaps his words say it most eloquently, from a CFA-APA 2019 mailing: “Some of our APA members may not realize it, but through their APA contributions, they are documenting the history of comic art in America. And we've been doing that for 35 years now, which is hard to believe. The passing of time has a way of forgetting history, unless it's written about and published somewhere.”

Roger passed away on December 6, 2023. He was 75 years old.

Nick Caputo is a writer/researcher on comics and has contributed to *75 Years of Marvel: From the Golden Age to the Silver Screen*, *The Stan Lee Story*, *Alter Ego*, and *Marvel's Masterworks and Omnibus* collections.

20 years. During that time, he devoted any moment he wasn't teaching to learning more about the comics and films he loved and especially to interviewing anyone who was involved with their creation. An awful lot of great cartoonists and animators were interviewed only because Jim Korkis tracked them down and interviewed them.

In the mid-1990s, he elected to pursue these interests full-time. He quit teaching and moved to Florida, where he was hired

as a Disney cast member, which is what they call any employee who interacts with the public. He performed roles at Disney World playing Merlin in the “Sword in the Stone” ceremony and Prospector Pat in Frontierland. He also worked in Epcot guest relations, at Pleasure Island, at Disney Institute, and elsewhere throughout that world. And in his spare time—?

In his spare time, he continued researching and writing about Disney history, penning thousands of books and articles, many of them under the pen name “Wade Sampson.” Mr. Sampson impressed the heck out of Walt’s daughter, Diane Disney Miller. In one article, she wrote, “Some years ago, our son Walt brought to my attention an article on the MousePlanet website. It was that rare thing; An honest, well-written piece that was so authentic, so true to my dad’s spirit, so unprejudiced and nonjudgmental that as I read it I could see the twinkle in dad’s eye, hear his laugh.

“I immediately wrote the author Wade Sampson a letter of appreciation. Some weeks later I received a reply and learned that Wade Sampson was actually the pseudonym of Jim Korkis, who worked for the Walt Disney World Company as a coordinator at the Learning Center and was well-known and respected as a Disney historian. Since that time I’ve looked forward eagerly to ‘Wade’s’ ongoing output, learning some things I didn’t



know, but always delighted with what he chose to write about and his obvious understanding and even affection for his subject.”

Wade/Jim continued to write about Disney even after he was laid off during the company’s recessionary cutbacks in 2009. His books included *The Vault of Walt*, *The Revised Vault of Walt*, *Secret Stories of Walt Disney World: Things You Never You Never Knew*, *Who’s Afraid of the Song of the South?* and *Other Forbidden Disney Stories*, and *Secret Stories of Extinct Disneyland: Memories of the Original Park*. There were dozens of others.

Jim left us with all those articles, all those books, and these last words: “There are so many books I wanted to read or re-read, so many movies and television shows I wanted to see or re-see, and more many food treats I wanted to enjoy again like See’s chocolates. I know God loves me and this is part of his plan. Be happy and kind to each other. When you think of me, I hope you smile. I loved you all and appreciated your generosity, support, and hope.”

I probably don’t have to point this out but this was a very nice, wonderful gentleman who was much loved by everyone who was fortunate enough to know him.

**Mark Evanier has written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows (including various *Garfield* cartoons) and tons of comic books.**

## MARTY KROFFT (1937–2023)

by Mark Evanier

As everyone anywhere near my age range is aware, Marty Krofft was 50 percent of that oasis of wild imagination, The World of Sid & Marty Krofft. It started when young Sid Krofft literally ran away from home to join the circus and then mushroomed into a daring ‘n’ different puppet act. Along the way, brother Marty joined the enterprise, and it morphed from “just” a puppet act to a full-service entertainment company filling showrooms, an amusement park, TV and movie screens, the shelves of toy stores, and the fantasies of young and old alike.

Their first big success was in 1957 with *Les Poupées de Paris*, a show for adults featuring sexy marionettes and the recorded voices of some pretty big stars, including Pearl Bailey, Milton Berle, Cyd Charisse, Gene Kelly, Liberace, Jayne Mansfield, Tony Martin, Phil Silvers, Loretta Young, and Mae West. The show toured the country and became a key attraction at the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair, the 1964 New York World’s Fair, and other exhibitions. It led to The Krofft Puppets appearing regularly on *The Dean Martin Show* in 1965 and being involved in the construction and staging of shows for Las Vegas and showrooms across the country.

In 1968, Sid and Marty designed the sets and costumes for

Hanna-Barbera’s *The Banana Splits Adventure Hour*, and soon they took the next inevitable step: producing programs of their own. Often, a Krofft show on Saturday morning kids’ TV was the only program not featuring animation—and also the program that best transported viewers to another world inhabited by unreal beings.

It started with *H.R. Pufnstuf* and proceeded on through *The Bugaloos*, *Lidsville*, *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters*, *Land of the Lost*, *The Lost Saucer*, *Electra Woman and Dyna Girl*, *Wonderbug*, *Bigfoot and Wildboy*, *The Far-Out Space Nuts*, *Magic Mongo*, *Kaptain Kool and the Kongs*, *The Bay City Rollers Show*, *Dr. Shrinker*, *Pryor’s Place*, and others.

They also opened an innovative (though short-lived) amusement park in Atlanta, delved into prime-time TV (*Donny & Marie*, *The Brady Bunch Hour*, *Pink Lady and Jeff*, *Barbara Mandrell* and the *Mandrell Sisters*, *D.C. Follies*, etc.) and even made movies (*Pufnstuf*, *Middle Age Crazy*, *Harry Tracy*, *Land of the Lost: The Movie*)

Marty died last November of kidney failure at the age of 86. Up until that last hospitalization, he was working as hard as he ever had, planning new projects, making deals, stopping every now

and then to be honored, such as with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, for his and Sid’s past achievements. He knew everyone in show business and most of them turned out for the memorial service.

I was asked to write this piece because I was one of the lucky ones who got to visit The World of Sid and Marty Krofft two ways: first as an eager younger viewer, later as an employee. I wrote on a lot of their shows and discovered that the Kroffts really didn’t hire people so much as adopt them. They were fiercely loyal to their people and Marty—who tended to handle the business end of things—was always fair, up front, and honest. That is not something that can be said for every TV or movie producer; maybe not even for most.

If Marty hadn’t left us when he did, he’d be at Comic-Con this weekend, talking with his fans, answering questions, and hearing, over and over, “I grew up on your shows.” He especially loved hearing an adult say something like, “I couldn’t wait to show [name of past Krofft show] to my kids and now they love it just as much as I did back then.”

Parents will continue to introduce their children to Krofft shows and one day, those children will be parents introducing their children to Krofft shows—and this will likely continue forever. I’m sorry Marty isn’t around to hear about it.

**Mark Evanier has written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows (including various *Garfield* cartoons) and tons of comic books.**



## DAVID KUNZLE (1936–2024)

by Ian Gordon

David Kunzle was an internationally renowned early modern art historian and emeritus professor at UCLA, where he taught from 1976 to 2009. For many comics fans Kunzle may best be remembered for



his 1975 translation and introduction to *How to Read Donald Duck*, a volume originally produced in Chile by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart in 1971.

Kunzle had eclectic interests, though. His own scholarship on comics included many books, most notably *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the*

*European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825* (1973); *History of the Comic Strip, Volume II: The Nineteenth Century* (1990); *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer* (2007); and *Rebirth of the English Comic Strip: A Kaleidoscope, 1847–1870* (2021), as well as collected editions of Töpffer, Gustave Doré, and Cham (Charles Amédée de Noé). He published on numerous other subjects, including political imagery and corsetry.

Kunzle was truly a Renaissance man to the extent that for many years he participated as a gymnast and tumbler in the Agoura, California Renaissance Pleasure Faire. Indeed, Kunzle was the British universities gymnast champion in 1961 and 1962.

David traced his interest in comics to a moment when at age eight, and left to his own devices, he discovered a volume of Hogarth’s engravings in a large cupboard at his grandfather’s house. He proceeded to immerse himself in the work for hours at a time. Although he didn’t read comics as a child, his interest in the history of art took him to study for a Ph.D. in London after an undergraduate degree at Cambridge and some time studying in Zurich. While at the Courtauld Institute for the History of Art he received a well-timed push from the distinguished Professor Ernst Gombrich to look at the way picture stories developed from Hogarth to Töpffer.

Kunzle undertook his research in numerous libraries and museums, including the Bode Museum in East Berlin, The British Museum, and the Cabinet des Estampes in Paris. He managed to get special access directly to material in cabinets and shelves, rather than have to go through the normal channels of requesting material to be delivered from storage to a research desk. These occurrences speak to Kunzle's tenacity and charm. Later he put these qualities to good use gaining access to the Disney archives and meeting with Carl Barks in person. Kunzle's charm extended to his generosity to other scholars, encouraging their work and lending or giving them research materials.

David moved to North America after completing his doctorate. He taught first in Toronto before moving to the UC Santa Barbara in 1965. Fired from there in 1973, for political activity against the war in Vietnam, he then taught at the California Institute of the Arts and Immaculate Heart College until winning an unfair dismissal case. He chose to join UCLA rather than go back to Santa Barbara.

## TOM LUTH (1954–2024)

I first remember meeting Tom Luth in our recently opened Cobblestone Gallery in the late summer of 1976. Tom walked into our gallery on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Long Beach fresh from a trip to New York, where he had hoped to get steady work coloring for the big NYC publishers. Anyway, we had already been publishing our own newspapers *Uncle Jam* and *Cobblestone* since 1973, but I told Tom that I was going to start publishing our own comics.

My first graphic album, *Cazco*, appeared in the fall of 1976 with a back cover illustration by Tom and me. He also handcut the color for the front and back of the book. In December of that year Tom became the photo editor of *Cobblestone*, which was our monthly art newspaper serving all of Southern California. One of Tom's first assignments was to go down the coast with me to interview legendary artist Rick Griffin, who graciously agreed to do the cover and also cut his own color separations. My friend Greg Escalante tagged along because he loved Rick's work and hoped to buy an original.

Years later, Greg co-founded *Juxtapoz* magazine with the artist Robert Williams. Tom shot the photos and this issue became an instant classic.

We continued our publishing adventure with a second graphic album called *Jam* in the spring of 1977 with Roberta Gregory, Phred Borrego, myself and others. Tom did an excellent job

In the introduction to his 1973 book Kunzle offered a definition of the comic strip as having four distinctive features: a sequence of images, a preponderance of image over text, appearance in a mass medium, and a topical moral narrative (that is, they had something to say about social issues). Kunzle thought his book would be overlooked and wrote, "It is customary to defend the publication of volumes as large as this one with the claim that they fulfill a long-felt, much declared scholarly need; I do not make any such claim." The need for Kunzle's book may not have been felt 51 years ago, but like so much of his work, the depth of the research and the strength of the arguments showed these books were very necessary to the point that they helped open a field of scholarship that still engages with the issues he raised.

Vale David Kunzle, comics scholar.

Ian Gordon has written broadly on comics; his recent work includes essays on the Puck cartoons of Rose O'Neill and the 1960s Batman TV series.

by Phil Yeh

coloring both the back and front covers. A month later I released one of the first modern graphic novels in America, *Even Cazco Gets the Blues*, and our publishing empire was in full swing, with Tom handling the layouts and colors for our books. That same year, Tom illustrated a cover of Groucho Marx for the ninth issue of *Uncle Jam*, which also had a wonderful logo designed by Alex Niño. Tom cut the color on both.

I guess the point is I was depending on Tom's expertise in the days before computers took over. One day in 1982, Sergio Aragonés was visiting our gallery. He noticed all the *Uncle Jam* covers tacked

up on the wall and asked why we didn't have a cover by him. I knew that I had a perfect story for Sergio to illustrate and the perfect person to color his detailed artwork. Sergio is world famous for his detail, and when we released that issue of *Uncle Jam*, Sergio was amazed at the coloring that Tom did. That started Tom on a long career as the colorist of Sergio's *Groo the Wanderer* series and also for *MAD* magazine. Tom also

colored the covers for Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* for many years.

After decades as a colorist, Tom retired to devote his talents to illustration and music. He also wanted to move from Gardena and I suggested that he come up to Running Springs, where my wife Linda and I live. So, a few years ago, Tom settled into a nice house with his many dogs. Tom loved to explore the many local trails in



Tom Luth with Sergio Aragonés and Phil Yeh.

these mountains. We had great adventures seeking out new paths, with Tom always taking great photos of the rock formations that he loved. He often spoke about his youth traveling all over Europe and told us he could still take trips from the comfort of his home, using Google Earth.

The winters always brought snow to our mountains at 6000 feet, but last winter was unusually tough. Tom was out shoveling snow and suffered a heart attack. The doctors were worried about operating and suggested that he lose some weight first. It had been a year and now they said Tom could have the surgery. He

## JOE MATT (1963–2023)

Joe Matt died in September 2023 of an apparent heart attack. He was one of the pioneers behind the second post-underground wave of autobiographical comics, which significantly shaped nongenre comics storytelling in the 1990s and beyond.

Matt was born and raised in Philadelphia and attended the Philadelphia College of Art in the 1980s. His own early cartooning appeared in periodical and book form from Kitchen Sink during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Joe then became one of the linchpins of Canadian publisher Drawn and Quarterly as it grew to prominence. His work in the periodical *Peepshow*, whose D&Q run lasted 14 issues (from 1992 to 2006), helped define that company's early aesthetic, along with his cartoonist friends Chester Brown and Seth, who also produced comics for the imprint.

Matt turned that real life trio into a wonderfully well-developed set of characters, portraying his friends as comic foils to his own vexing foibles (presented as always with his lacerating honesty about his own flaws). His cartooning was collected in the books *Peepshow* (1992, which, confusing to bibliographers, features his early work that preceded the periodical of that name), *The Poor Bastard*, (1996), *Fair Weather* (2002), and *Spent* (2007). *Peepshow* was nominated for three Eisner Awards in 1993 and one in 2003.

I was a friend of Joe's as well as a fan. His educated enthusiasm helped me see and appreciate the cartooning and comic perfection of characters such as Wimpy from Popeye, Tubby from Little Lulu, and Snoopy from Peanuts—all of whom drew comedy from

didn't make it. On May 23, we found Tom's body at home.

Tom was always great with his time and always helped out with others who sought his advice. He went from hand separations to the world of computer color, but I will remember him for his love of nature, his dogs, music, and art. He will be missed. Rest in Peace, Old Friend.

Phil Yeh is an artist and author who is the founder of *Cartoonists Across America & the World* to promote literacy through comics, murals, and speaking engagements.

by Brian Doherty

an often-selfish willfulness ranging from charmingly ingenuous to studied.

The final issue of *Peepshow* in his lifetime contained a scathing metacritique in which cartoon Joe excoriates the achievements of cartoonist Joe for two pages. (Fantagraphics published a post-



Joe Matt at the 1997 Small Press Expo, (Photo by Jackie Estrada)

humorous issue in July.) But I hope he understood as he continued to encounter fans in life and online over a decade past when he was producing new work that he succeeded in creating two comic archetypes as funny, rich, beloved and lasting as the ones he doted on: first, Joe Matt the obsessive cheapskate, whose often absurd strategies and attitudes toward frugality were unforgettable to decades of fans; then the more tragicomic Joe Matt, the porn and masturbation obsessive, the man who drove himself into loneliness and creative barrenness in pursuit of the blank aftermath of zero emotion in which compulsive self-pleasuring sheltered him. (In between those two versions of adult Joe, his often-neglected *Fair Weather* presents a saga of child Joe Matt that is both charmingly and laceratingly true in delving

deep with his combination of pathos and comedy the mentality of the comic book collector as a young fan.)

His work won him awed fandom from figures ranging from Crumb to Clowes, from Matt Groening to musicians Aimee Mann and Rivers Cuomo. While some of his critics didn't quite get it, as his friend Seth explained in a wildly honest essay on Joe's passing for *The Comics Journal*, if the flaws of the character Joe Matt angered you, you needed to realize "this was a work of art by a very

calculating and smart artist who deliberately made the choices in the book that caused this reaction. Joe knew exactly what he was doing. He didn't paint himself as a creep by accident. That was the point. He did everything on purpose."

Joe didn't care much that more after he stopped working and had become more skeptical or even hostile about white heterosexual men discussing their sexual and relationship issues. As he thought aloud about comics he expected to draw, he was only focused on what was important: how to tell an interesting, engaging story that would capture and move the reader along, how to best essentialize his cartooning for maximum reader understanding of character and story, and how it ought to be

## KENT MELTON (1955–2024)

In animation, a drawing comes to life. This illusion is often given a solid form in a sculpture, known as a maquette, that is used by animators as a reference of a character that can be viewed from any angle. If animation is "the illusion of life," the maquette must also breathe. The personality of the character needs to come through. This kind of creation is a difficult task, and few are able to consistently conjure up that sense of life and personality using a lump of clay. One who not only could, but often did, was sculptor Kent Melton. He was the industry leader, trusted by many studios with their familiar and as-yet-unseen characters.

Born in a rural setting, without access to something like a toy store, Melton began to create his own sculptures of cartoon characters he saw on television, mainly for his own amusement. He realized that he could sculpt without any formal training, and his skill grew with practice. Through a series of coincidences, he found himself in Los Angeles, working as the first-ever sculptor of Hanna-Barbera Studios. This in turn led to being hired as a freelancer by Disney, where he began creating an awesome parade of maquettes for animation production and exquisite collectable figurines of Disney characters.

Fellow sculptor Tony Cipriano, who shared a workspace with Melton early in his career, when Tony was crafting a maquette for

printed, in the precise sizes and designs and layouts he knew were proper.

That Joe did less of what he was brilliant at than he could have often troubled him; and it certainly was a loss for the world of comics as literature that we got less of his mordantly funny explorations of a most peculiar and unique mind and life than we could have.

**Brian Doherty is a senior editor at Reason magazine and author of five books, most recently *Dirty Pictures: How an Underground Network of Nerds, Feminists, Misfits, Geniuses, Bikers, Potheads, Printers, Intellectuals, and Art School Rebels Revolutionized Art and Invented Comix* (Abrams Press).**

by David Scroggy

Mulan and Melton a Hercules maquette, recalls: "I learned more in those few months about sculpting and about the business of art than I did in four years of art school. Kent was completely open and generous with his time. It was crystal clear that he had already achieved legendary status among the Disney animators, even the higher ups. They looked to him for design advice. If he made a suggestion, they took it. I learned a lot from Kent about sculpture, but more importantly, I saw him interact with animators and executives and saw how he conducted himself and dealt with people."

This businesslike, yet sincere, attitude opened many of Hollywood's doors to Melton. He worked for Pixar, Dreamworks, and many others. When Oregon stop-motion animation production studio Laika began making films, they engaged Melton to sculpt characters for their productions *Coraline*, *Paranormal*, and *Box Trolls*. In an interview, Melton observed, "I'll sculpt a maquette in... a moment that personifies who they are to the story.

I try to capture their likeness and essence of personality."

Kent's ability to capture a character's essence was not lost on some of comics' top creators, who sought out Melton for his 3D interpretations of their characters. A standout among these collaborations was Kent's relationship with Dave Stevens, who insisted on Melton for a bronze statuette of his Rocketeer, as well as

persuading the film's executives to use Melton as sculptor for The Rocketeer's helmet for the production.

I was able to get an insight into this first-hand, when I tapped Melton as the only choice to sculpt a collectible statue based on one of Stevens' best-known images, a full-figure portrait of Bettie Page titled "Girl of Our Dreams." I enjoyed an experience that many an art director had: seeing a character in line art come to life in three dimensions at the hand of Kent Melton. When he turned it

## JOSEPH M. MONKS (1968–2023)

by Robert V. Conte

When Joseph M. Monks died, my mind went back to 1989 when I first met him and Joseph Michael Linsner inside a Packaging Plus near where I lived. Store employees Adam Post and Eric Shefferman ran a side company named Excalibur Posters, and I went there to purchase inventory for the comic book store I managed. Adam introduced all of us as "fellow comics creators," as he had written the independent parody *G.I. Jack Rabbits*, my first script for *Rock 'N Roll Comics* was in production, and the two Josephs were self-publishing a horror comic book together named *Cry for Dawn*. When shown "Kids Meal" from their first issue, I was taken aback by how shockingly beautiful it was. With an Introduction by the incomparable Stephen R. Bissette, I was hooked. We were all barely out of our teens and, with our Long Island, NY, origins, we formed an instant camaraderie.

After Monks delivered copies of *Cry for Dawn* #1 to my shop, we conversed about horror movies and our dreams of writing and directing our own films one day. His plans for *Cry for Dawn* were exciting as I prepared to launch my first publishing venture, Utterly Strange Publications. Soon I moved to the residence of *Faust* co-creator David B. Quinn in Greenwich Village. I invited the two Josephs, Adam and Eric (who had launched their Friendly and Personality Comics imprints), and others to a pizza party inside our apartment, proposing plans to take over the comics world—one issue at a time. Although I wished we would have done so together under an independent, mega-publishing arm, it was not meant to be. However, every person who shared the synergy created that night became successful in comics and other media in their own right.

One favorite memory with Monks was when we, accompanied by Linsner and a comics retailer, took a road trip from New York to the Chicago Comicon in 1990. We young kids hoped to make it to the big leagues. My main concern was selling enough comics to pay for my portion of the gas, food, and hotel expenses. Everything worked out, and we realized touring the national convention scene was the key to independent comics triumph.

in—ahead of deadline, by the way—he shared, "I felt like Dave was looking over my shoulder as I sculpted it, and the work just flowed."

Hopefully, it is Kent who is looking over some young sculptor's shoulder today.

**David Scroggy is a retired comics professional. He is former vice president of product development for Dark Horse Comics.**



Joseph M. Monks with his wife Pamela Hazelton, exhibiting at SDCC in 1995, promoting the cover to *Nightcry* #4, painted by Mike Okamoto. (Photo courtesy of P. Hazelton)

At some point, everyone went their separate ways, which, sadly, led to some of us not speaking for years. I had to reinvent myself more than once and learned that Monks did, too. After his co-publishing *Cry for Dawn* with Linsner ended, he launched Creative Forces Design (later named Chanting Monks Studios), publishing *Nightcry* and other titles from various creators.

For the first time in years, I saw Monks, wearing dark glasses, while attending a Chiller Theatre convention. When I said hello, he turned his head toward me and stated, "Hey, I know that voice! Rob Conte?" I realized he had gone blind and felt saddened for not keeping in touch. When asked if there was anything I could do, Monks replied, "Nah, Chief. I'm on the long and winding road toward the new me. The best is yet to come!" He then gave me some of his new publications with works by our childhood heroes including Basil Gogos, Ken Kelly, and Bernie Wrightson.

Monks and I reconnected in 2014 via social media, joking that it had been 25 years since we had first met. We discussed the

shared parallels of our careers, juggling between the creative and business sides of comics, and stumbling over many rocks along the way. Fortunately, we persevered and learned from our mistakes. I admired his courage after learning he made history as the world's first blind film director. Monks did well in his personal life, too—marrying his love, Pamela Hazelton, who supported his professional ventures for almost three decades.

In early 2022, Monks asked me to review his new comic, *Sick 'N Twisted*. I was delighted that he returned to the medium we all started in. We conversed about collaborating on a future publication. Alas, time was not on our side.

## MY FRIEND AND CO-CREATOR DON PERLIN (1929–2024)

by Kevin VanHook

I knew the name Don Perlin from the time I was 9 years old in 1974. He was the man who drew *Werewolf by Night*. As time went by, I saw that he was also drawing *Ghost Rider*. I bet he liked scary stuff, and I did too. I didn't get to buy many comics as a boy, but I bought those when I saw them.

Years passed, and Don showed that he could draw anything from superheroes like

Captain America to licensed characters like Transformers. But I always loved his scary stuff the best, and he delivered in spades.

Don wasn't flashy, but he was a solid storyteller and consistent. A true pro.

The next thing I knew about Don was when he'd joined Valiant Comics on staff, working with Jim Shooter, Bob Layton, and Barry Windsor-Smith. He was editing and penciling. And probably most important, he was mentoring young creators. He'd throw tracing paper over an artist's layouts and make suggestions on anatomy or composition. He had decades of experience, and he gave that knowledge freely to a new generation of artists.

Of course, I had no idea that one day I would join Valiant and that Bob Layton would team Don up with me as we created *Bloodshot* for Valiant Comics in 1993. And what a ride that was.

From Barry Windsor-Smith's eye-catching Chromium cover to Don and Bob Wiacek's beautiful interiors, readers liked what we did—and so did we. When Don finished penciling the double-page spread in the first issue where Bloodshot blew a guy's brains out (my fault—I wrote it), he showed it to me and asked if he'd gone too far. I told him that Bob said we should let loose. This

"Blindness may take your sight, but it cannot take your vision," became Monks' motto until his passing. May your memory inspire those who struggle with disabilities to reach their goals. I hope your unfinished projects come to fruition too, amigo...

**Over the past 37 years, Robert V. Conte has worn almost every hat imaginable in the comic book industry: a writer, editor, publisher, distributor, and retailer. Studio Chikara, a product packaging company Robert founded in 1994, released the 40th Anniversary Edition of Neal Adams' classic horror album and graphic novel, HOUSE OF TERROR, his favorite album of all time from that genre.**

one could be edgy and could push the boundaries. So, he added a little more blood and brain matter to the drawing.

Don I had a bona fide hit on our hands, and I think I was more excited for him than I was for me. We toured, signing comics at shops around the country like rock stars. We even attended the premier comic book convention in North America: the San Diego Comic-Con. Valiant had a two-story booth with signings throughout the convention and we signed multiple times. We had a blast. Don did sketches and commissions, and young fans wanted his

autograph just as much as those of the young hot creators of the day.

And still, he did his page a day, rain or shine. A true pro.

While we were doing a superhero book, you could see Don's horror roots show through from time to time, and I wrote sequences to let them shine, like Bloodshot fighting two similarly powered guys under water, and well...let's just say that things got gruesome.

Sony eventually made a movie based on our character and Don got a kick out of that.

I stayed in touch with him all through the years, and we would

talk about family and the business and how we showed 'em back then. I miss those talks. We even did a new story for a hardback collection back in 2012 and got Bob Wiacek to ink it.

Don Perlin left behind a loving family—and a host of fans and friends who will love and miss him always.

**Kevin VanHook is a Los Angeles-based writer/director/visual effects supervisor for film and television who began his career writing and drawing comic books, where he is best known for co-creating *Bloodshot*.**



Don Perlin and Kevin VanHook, 1994.

## ED PISKOR (1982–2024)

by Bryan Moss

"Read more comics. Make more comics."

These were the lines that Ed Piskor, along with his co-host Jim Rugg, repeated at the end of each installment of their YouTube series Cartoonist Kayfabe. And it is this sentiment, along with his *New York Times* bestselling series of graphic novels, *Hip Hop Family Tree*, for which Piskor, who passed away at age 41 earlier this year, will best be remembered. Across his varied projects, Ed showcased an unrelenting drive to become a better cartoonist and share his love for the comics medium with his readers and viewers, leaving behind a legacy of profound creativity and service to his chosen art.

Growing up in Homestead, PA, just outside Pittsburgh, Piskor discovered comics, in part, thanks to his mother, who often drew with him and read him mainstream titles like Chris Claremont's run on *X-Men*. In the early 2000s, he became a fixture in the indie comics scene with his minicomics *Deviant Funnies* (2004) and *Isolation Chamber* (2004–2005), which earned the notice of Harvey Pekar. The two collaborated on several projects, including *Macedonia* (2007) and *The Beats: A Graphic History* (2009).

Piskor's own work speaks to his near-obsessive chronicling of American subcultures. *Wizywig*, which he serialized between 2008 and 2011 before publishing a collected edition with Top Shelf Productions in 2012, follows the outlaw exploits of a young computer prodigy, detailing an underground of computer hackers and phone phreakers that has all but been forgotten in the age of social media. Similarly, his Eisner Award-winning series *Hip Hop Family Tree* (Fantagraphics, 2013–2021) lovingly documents the rise of hip hop and rap as dominant forces in music, art, and pop culture. In a stint for Marvel, he created three volumes of *X-Men: Grand Design* (2017–2019), which chronicles the history of the X-Men.

In late 2018, Piskor co-founded the Cartoonist Kayfabe, posting daily videos in which he and Rugg began to explore the history

of 1990s-era comics through the lens of *Wizard* magazine. As the channel gained a following, Ed and Jim began to expand their offerings, giving viewers in-depth analyses of the mainstream, alternative, and indie comics they had grown up loving, as well as presenting long-form interviews with iconic figures in the field,

including Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld, David Choe, Shelly Bond, and Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, among many others. As Ed began to make a yearly pilgrimage to Japan, which he referred to as Manga Quest, he began to incorporate interviews with Japanese artists and animators, as well as videos looking at impactful manga series.

Working on Cartoonist Kayfabe did not slow down Ed's pace in his own comics making. He capitalized on his viewership on the channel to promote his next project, *Red Room*, which he began serializing on his Patreon in 2020. *Red Room* finds him once again returning to the dark corners of the Internet, this time to pay homage to the shock and gore B-movie horror films of the 1990s in style and substance. As

collections of *Red Room* were published by Fantagraphics from 2021 to 2024, Ed began working on a daily comic strip, *Switchblade Shorties*, which follows the mallrat/trailer park hijinks of a group of girls in the 1990s. While he sent a drive containing the final files of the strips to friends and colleagues upon his death, the publication of the remaining strips remains to be seen.

Ed was prolific during his two decades in the industry, but those who counted him as friend and family cannot help but wonder at all the comics he had left to draw. Ed was always trying to better himself as a cartoonist, never completely satisfied with his output. But the body of work he leaves behind will continue to stand as a testament to his deep knowledge and love for comics, as well as his mastery of the craft.

**Bryan Christopher Moss is a painter, illustrator, cartoonist, and muralist who illustrated *The Eightfold Path*, written by Steven Barnes and Charles Johnson (Abrams, 2022).**



Photo: Garrett Jones

It is the final poetic plot point that Allen would have appreciated: to pass away ten days after San Diego Comic-Con 2023, his summer “home,” where he was surrounded by his art and his friends and was able to accept an award on behalf of Jeffrey

Catherine Jones, the artist who first lured him into the art and business of comics, and not just the juvenile fun of them. Some people go on vacation; Allen built his year around his cons, his shows, his performances.

Known to many simply as Spiegel, he was, at his core, a collector—of comic books, of art, of stories, of people. He moved from Brooklyn to the relaxed sea air and post-hippy ease of Pacific Grove in the mid-1970s, worked in special education at Monterey Peninsula schools, and became teacher/counsellor/trusted uncle to generations. He couldn’t walk very far from his home without someone from a past classroom thanking him and wishing him well.

But his passion was the world he built around the Allen Spiegel Fine Arts business over 50 years. He often talked about himself as a “connector” or a “facilitator” in the art and publishing world. And though this is certainly true, he had the curiosity, playfulness, and empathy of a creator. I started going to Comic-Con in 1989 and introduced myself to Allen because he looked after all the cool kids—Kent Williams, Jon J. Muth, George Pratt—in what was at the time a revolutionary shift in comics’ perspective, from the inward-looking nostalgia of the previous 50 years to a more open-minded and experimental view, bringing in influences from art, literature, film, the real world. He would add to this family of like-minded, but quite individual, creators over the years, with contributions and projects by Greg Ruth, Scott



Painting by Dave McKean

Morse, Barron Storey, Jamie Tolagson, Phil Hale, Thom Ang, David Mack, Corey Peterschmidt, Bonnie To Yee de Muth, Greg Spalenka, John Van Fleet, and others.

At Comic-Con, nervous greenhorns and tyros would show

Allen their portfolios, and he was endlessly patient, encouraging, and honest, from his perspective in the still-point between practical business acumen and the endless ambition of creativity. We published many books together, cooked up many schemes and stories, visited great restaurants and funky diners, played boules, badminton, and squash, touched nirvana in the streams of Tassajara, and traded hopes and fears in the calm and revolutionary history of Essalen.

One last personal note. A couple (close friends of mine from art school) lost their baby in hospital, two days old. This traumatic event, and the way in which they were able to talk to me about it and how they perceived the world in the years

following, so moved me and filled my head that I had to put those thoughts somewhere. I tried several times without success, before sitting down with Allen to talk about it. He earned his co-writer credit on my film *Luna*, not really by writing anything but by asking all the right questions, provoking me, teasing out details and ideas, and giving his lifetime of observations of the frailties of human life to me in those weeks as the script evolved.

He was a rock, a star, a bear, an owl, and family, and I miss him greatly.

**Dave McKean is an award-winning artist/photographer/filmmaker known for his collaborations with Neil Gaiman (*Violent Cases*, *Sandman*) and such other works as *Arkham Asylum* (with Grant Morrison), *The Wolves in the Walls*, and *Raptor*.**

My beloved husband Paul Tallerday passed away on September 3, 2023.

Paul made a great impact in the comic book field, starting in the 1980s when he was hired to be the art director and production coordinator for San Diego’s Pacific Comics. Prior to Paul’s being hired by Pacific, all comics were printed on newsprint and used a 64-color mechanical color palette. Paul rediscovered and revamped the Grayline system so artists had an almost unlimited color palette. He also went to using a better, whiter paper to print comics. It began an era of comics production innovation and experimentation and using blended colors like comic books had never seen.

We artists were now able to color on photo emulsion paper that came with a black and clear overlay of the ink work. This method was also dimensionally stable so the coloring stayed inside the lines, allowing artists the freedom to use and explore many different methods and materials to color interiors and covers.

All that Paul started within Pacific Comics has carried through to the present day in that comics have kept the polished look and the almost unlimited palette of what we innovators produced using traditional art.



At Pacific Paul also designed and colored comic book covers, penciled several covers for *Stories of the West*, and designed portfolios for many artists’ works to really show off their art.

Paul was one of the main reasons that for a while Pacific Comics was the fastest-growing independent comic book publisher at the time. When Pacific closed, co-owner Steve Schanes started Blackthorne Publishing and took Paul with him as art director and production coordinator. Steve called Paul his “ace.” Paul did a lot of cool, innovative things there as well, such as spectacular 3D effects on titles like *Speed Racer*.

One of our most memorable projects was doing an *Amazing Stories* project for Steven Spielberg. We spent a weekend coloring a 10-page story, “The Greible,” featuring actress Haley Mills, and then Paul had to make it look like a children’s book instead of a comic book for the prop used in the story.

We were also a part of Comic-Con every year since 1981. I was accepted into Artists’ Alley in 2000, and Paul was by my side there for the next two decades. He helped me set up and then talk to people

who visited the table. Before that, he helped Steve Schanes at the Blackthorne booth.

Paul was respected and loved by the artists and the wonderful people in the comic book community. He is greatly missed.

My interest in comic books and their creators, and in magazine and book illustration, has brought me many amazing friends. Some of them date back more than 50 years, to my teenage years beginning in 1965 and 1966. Jim Vadeboncoeur was not only my friend for all of these years, but a mentor, a partner, and a co-publisher. And we shared the passion of finding and appreciating the best in these worlds of art and artists, illustrators, and publishing history.

Jim was raised on the San Francisco peninsula, not very far from my own roots in San Jose. Early on he became part of a web of comic book buddies in the area, gathering at one another’s house to share our finds and enthuse about the latest new books. By this point Jim had moved out of his parents’ house and was living in Palo Alto, already together with his lifelong partner Karen Lane. When we first met, I was about 14, not yet in high school.

Jim was 19, already going to college with a parttime job. But what brought us together was a passionate interest in comics: in the art of Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Wally Wood, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko. Before price guides, before online data sources, we were digging through stacks of comics, flipping through pages looking for hidden gems by our favorite artists.

Jim’s first publishing project was a fanzine with an indecipherable name. We loved the “gobbledegook” lettering that Rick Griffin was doing at the time, so we said let’s make that our fanzine’s name. And we published our first issue, calling ourselves Promethean Enterprises. Promethean, as it came to be called, brought together what we thought was the best and most interesting in modern comics, vintage comics, and underground comix.

We published these from 1969 to 1974, capping things with



the first interview with R. Crumb. And our enthusiasm overcame caution—we printed far too many copies, and that issue remained in print for at least 20 years.

Jim immediately went on to other personal projects. He published *The Movie Cowboy* by Doug Wildey all by himself in 1971. This was possibly a first, an oversized format similar to today's Artist's Editions, showing every detail of the fine movie star portraits Wildey had done for his own personal satisfaction.

Also in 1971, Jim put together *Al Williamson: His Art*, the earliest index of all (at least, all to that date) of Williamson's comics and comic strip contributions that Jim and friends had tracked down.

Jim had gone to work for a printer around this time. He'd gotten a business degree, but telling other people what to do gave him headaches and clearly turned out not to be his forte.

So he decided would only work in jobs where he was his own boss and his work would speak for itself. I started my own business in 1970/71 ("Bud Plant"—no fancy names back then). I was typing up ads and flyers I'd put in with orders. That led to my first elementary catalogs. Jim offered to help and he taught me layout as I watched him come up with an entirely new way of doing catalogs. He also designed the 1973 Berkeley Con program book.

Through all this, Jim was also a hardcore collector. He wanted a LOT of books but didn't have unlimited funds. Fortunately, condition was unimportant to him. He wanted the book strictly for its contents, for what he could learn about the artist-contributors. So he happily bought low-grade books and put them in handy small boxes for quick access. These raw books also became a source of research and reprint material for Jim's friends. He let me go through every book in his collection so I could make notes on ones I'd like to own (with the good artists) and ones I didn't care about. Just in the last few years, Jim was loaning them to at least two online sites for them to smash flat in a scanner so they could upload complete issues for all of us to see on the internet.

Jim also began finding bound volumes of early magazines circa the 1890s to the 1940s, putting together a world class collection packed with artwork never collected elsewhere. Two big events

came out of this interest in magazine illustrators. The first was Jim's and my partnership, for almost 20 years, as Bud Plant Illustrated Books. I got my name in the title since I had pretty good name recognition after years of issuing catalogs, selling online, and doing shows. But Jim was the true heart of the business, with his master-programmer partner Karen Lane, who helped us build a database for selling our duplicates. Later we'd go out on buying trips to score more books to list and sell through our occasional catalogs, at rare convention appearances, and eventually on the internet. For several years, Jim and Karen would set up a 10 X 10 booth of rare illustrated books within my larger display of ten booths at Comic-Con.

Second event: Jim began *Images* magazine. Now that he'd collected all this rare material and learned about the artists, often diving deep

into their careers, he wanted to share it with others. So first he mandated that he would write a new, original biography of an important comics or book illustrator, one each week. He'd post these to our BPIB website, until he had over 100 of them up, complete with full-color artwork and details often previously little known. Next, expanding on these biographies, he started putting together his *Images* magazine—light on text, since it was already on his website, and heavy on artwork. And what artwork. Jim probably did more than just about any other publisher dabbling in this area, because he would carefully, dot by dot, go over each picture and try and restore it to what he felt the illustrator had wanted it to look like. Often his sources could be badly printed early magazines and off register book plates, so it was no easy task to make these look as sharp as they were drawn. He brought to the world rare and superlative work by a host of the finest illustrators, from Howard Pyle, J. C. and Frank Leyendecker, Franklin Booth, and Edmond Dulac to Heinrich Kley, Gustave Dore, and Daniel Vierge.

And finally, he produced his one-and-only full-blown art book: *Everett Raymond Kinstler: The Artist's Journey Through Popular Culture, 1942–1962*. Jim got to be good friends with Kinstler, an artist who had started his career in comics but moved on to

paperback and magazine art and eventually would be doing portraits for sitting presidents. Jim mined this friendship and produced a fine book, including a signed limited edition. Jim arranged for Kinstler to come to Comic-Con as a special guest in 2006.

Jim retired from selling illustrated books with me around 2000 and devoted his time to producing *Images* magazine and improving his website, even as he finally retired from his day job at Hewlett—Packard as a computer service manual designer. When Karen's father passed away, she inherited enough for the two of them to buy a small apartment in Paris, in the 17<sup>th</sup> district. His apartment was always open to friends, boasting a spare

bedroom. We got the guided walks along the Seine, to Notre Dame and the riverside book dealers, the Flea Market, the finest museums and exhibits never far from his apartment.

Lucky me, I was there with Jim from beginning to end; our interests coincided, we both made discoveries we could share with one another, we both were fascinated by the same worlds of comics and illustration. I learned so much from Jim and I will miss his insights and perspective, his kindness and generosity.

**Bud Plant is one of the first comic book shop owners, former West Coast comic book distributor, former co-owner of Comics and Comix, and owner-operator of Bud's Art Books.**



Bud Plant, Craig Yoe, and Jim Vadeboncoeur.

## VERNOR VINCE (1944–2024)

by David Brin

They said it of Moses that he had "lamps on his brows." That he could peer ahead, through the fog of time. That phrase is applied now to the prefrontal lobes, just above the eyes—organs that provide humans our wondrous powers of foresight. Wan . . . except in a few cases, when those lamps blaze! Shining ahead of us, illuminating epochs yet to come.

Alas, such lights eventually dim. And so, it is with sadness, and deep appreciation of my friend and colleague, that I must remark on the passing of Vernor Vinge. A titan in the literary genre that explores a limitless range of potential destinies, Vernor enthralled millions with tales of plausible tomorrows, made all the more vivid by his polymath masteries of language, drama, characters and the implications of science.

Accused by some of a grievous sin—that of "optimism"—Vernor gave us peerless legends that often depicted human success at overcoming problems—those right in front of us—while posing new ones! New dilemmas that may lie just beyond our myopic gaze.

He would often ask: "What if we succeed? Do you think that will be the end of it?"



Vernor's aliens—in classics like *A Deepness in the Sky* and *A Fire upon the Deep*—were fascinating beings, drawing us into different styles of life and paths of consciousness.

His 1981 novella "True Names" was perhaps the first story to present a plausible concept of cyberspace, which would later be central to cyberpunk stories by William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and others. Many innovators of modern industry cite "True Names" as their keystone technological inspiration—though I deem it to have been even more prophetic about the yin/yang tradeoffs of

privacy, transparency and accountability.

Another of the many concepts arising in Vernor's dynamic mind was that of the "technological singularity," a term (and disruptive notion) that has pervaded culture and our thoughts about the looming future.

Rainbow's End expanded these topics to include the vividly multilayered "augmented" reality wherein we all will live, in just a few years from now. It was almost-certainly the most vividly accurate portrayal of how new generations might apply onrushing cybertools, boggling their parents, who will stare at their kids' accomplishments, in wonder. Wonders like a university library building that, during an impromptu rave, stands up and starts to dance!

Vinge was also a long-revered educator and professor of math and computer science at San Diego State University, mentoring generations of practical engineers to also keep a wide stance and open minds.

## MICHAEL ZULLI (1952–2024)

I met Michael Zulli in 1989, at San Diego Comic-Con. I was a huge fan of his *Puma Blues*. Michael mentioned to me that he was being asked to draw animals all the time. I asked if he'd like to draw a historical episode of *Sandman* instead. We bonded as friends and worked together for decades. He had a painter's sensibilities, and trying to reproduce what he drew in delicate pencils in comics panels was difficult. We probably got closest in *Sandman: The Wake* reproducing directly from his pencils.

He loved art. He loved his wife, Karen. He loved ideas.

In recent years he'd had health issues, and it was wanting both to help him and to draw attention to his disparate and beautiful body of work that decided me on the Heritage Auction of original art and other items I did in March to benefit the Hero Initiative and other organizations.

Long ago we started telling our own version of Sweeney Todd for *Taboo*. The magazine finished before we could tell the story, but it was always his dream and mine that we would finish it in our old age. I'm heartbroken that I've lost my friend, sad that we will never work together again.

I was fortunate in speaking to him the day before he died. I wish I had been there in the flesh.

**Neil Gaiman is the bestselling author and comics creator of such works as *Sandman*, *American Gods*, *Good Omens*, and *Coraline*.**

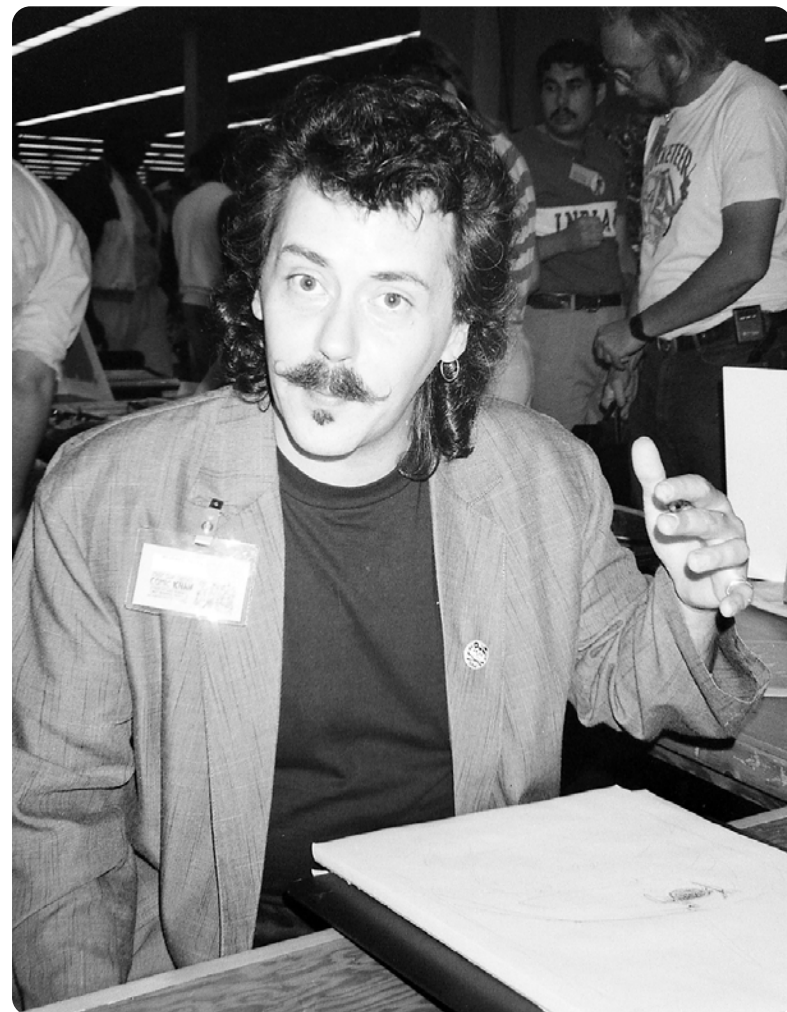


Photo by Jackie Estrada

For years Vernor had been under care for progressive Parkinsons, at a very nice place overlooking the Pacific in La Jolla. As reported by his friend and fellow SDSU professor John Carroll, his decline had steepened since November, but he was relatively comfortable. Up until that point, I had been in contact with Vernor almost weekly, but my friendship pales next to John's devotion, for which I am (and we all should be) deeply grateful.

We had a group of authors who spanned a pretty wide spectrum politically, yet, we KBs (Killer B's) always shared a deep love of our high art—that of gedankenexperimentation, extrapolation into the undiscovered country ahead.

If Vernor's readers continue to be inspired—that country might even feature more solutions than problems. And perhaps copious supplies of hope.

**Author David Brin is best-known for shining light on technology, society, and countless challenges confronting our rambunctious civilization.**

by Neil Gaiman

## Remembering Members of the Comic-Con Family We've Lost

### RICHARD ROWELL (1956–2023)

by Fae Desmond

Richard Rowell was a longtime volunteer for Comic-Con. I don't think I remember when Richard wasn't a volunteer. He won Comic-Con's Inkpot Award for fandom services in 1994, was a committee member for many years, a board member for two years. He was a volunteer for other conventions and fan organizations as well, including S.T.A.R. San Diego.

The Richard I knew and worked with was quiet, very smart, and always ready to help anyone who needed it at a moment's notice. Because he was a quiet person, people often underestimated him, and his humor frequently went over their heads. Richard was dry, witty, and right on target.

He handled his own health crisis with quiet dignity and

humor, as always, but never a complaint. We all come together to put on this now huge event once a year and are so honored to work with people like Richard, who have brought so much happiness into our world.

**Fae Desmond is the executive director of Comic-Con International.**



Eric Hoffman, Richard Rowell, and John Rogers working on the films program at the 1979 San Diego Comic-Con. (Photo by Jackie Estrada)

### JOHN TRIMBLE (1939–2024)

by Lora Boehm and Jenn Jumper



We lost dad suddenly in April of this year. While we didn't have much time to say goodbye, we got to spend his final weeks with him. He smiled as we shared memories from his multitude of friends, and just sat around with him, telling stories and jokes, allowing him to engage

in his favorite activity of "people watching" in his final days.

John Trimble's contributions to science fiction fandom, Star Trek, the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), and his family and friends were broad and deep. He and mom (Bjo) are best known for saving the original Star Trek series. While visiting the set, they heard that there would not be a third season. On the way home, he said, "There must be something we can do about this!" And a letter-writing campaign was born that made NBC concede to fan requests for a third season. This put Star Trek into syndication, which allowed the show to go into decades-long reruns, so the show became the classic it is today.

As one of the major supporters of the SCA, serving two terms on their board of directors, honored with their distinguished service award, acting as a notable herald, and serving as a baron in the Barony of The Angels, his action-oriented viewpoints persisted. Whether it was ensuring that every voice was heard (including

his own as he announced at court) or making sound and ethical decisions as a board member, he knew right from wrong.

John Trimble was also a leader in early science fiction and fantasy fandom. He published fanzines, MC'd costume contests, ran auctions, appeared on panels, co-ran World Cons and Westercons, and was a frequent fan guest of honor with mom at science fiction and Star Trek conventions. He also co-created with mom and ran the World Con art shows for 17 years, co-ran the FilmCon/EquiCon conventions, and was a founder of the Trans Oceanic Fan Fund (TOFF) to bring a valued fan from Japan to the 1968 World Con. He was a part of the Comic-Con family for over six decades, which included co-running the art shows and receiving an Inkpot award.

He was husband, partner, and best friend to our mom; for over 63 years together, they were strong and undivided. When our sister, Kat, was finally diagnosed as mentally challenged, our parents made sure that they met that challenge, ensuring that she was loved and had as many opportunities as she could, given her level of capabilities.

John's can-do attitude extended to family life. While Jenn was not born into the family, as Lora's friend (and now sister), he could see she was in pain and needed a strong family that would support her. He and mom reached out to her parents, and she joined the Trimble family.

Dad's spirit will live on in the hearts of all of those who knew and loved him. We love you, Dad, and miss you every day. Just know that the guidance and love you instilled in us will see us through the best and worst of times. We hope you are enjoying wherever you are, watching people (and other beings) and telling stories.

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