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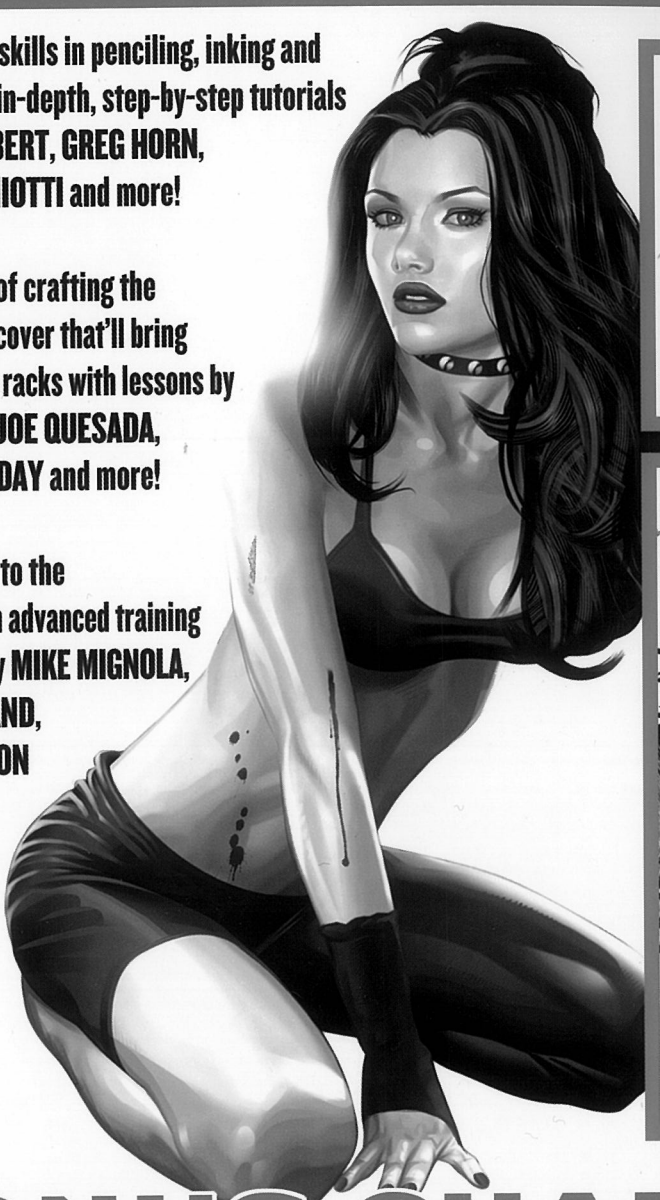

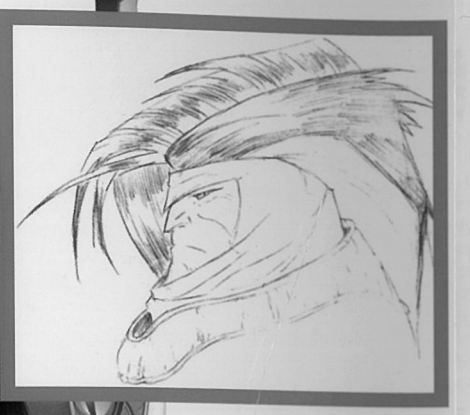

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THE BEST OF WIZARD® BASIC TRAINING

# HOW TO DRAW

## ADVANCED TECHNIQUES



OVER **100** PAGES BY
**FRANK CHO, JOE KUBERT**
**JOHN CASSADAY**
AND MORE!

**ALL-NEW MATERIAL BY**
**BRIAN BOLLAND,**
**GREG HORN**
AND MORE!

INTRODUCTION BY **ANDY KUBERT**

# HOW TO DRAW

## THE BEST OF BASIC TRAINING

## ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

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RD HOW TO DRAW: ADVANCED TECHNIQUES, August 2006. Please direct all editorial-related inquiries to Wizard Editorial Department, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064 (or fax to 845-268-0053).

(ISBN 0-977861 3-0-09) is a special publication of Gareb Shamus Enterprises, Inc., D.B.A. Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

# CONTENTS

# ANDY KUBERT

This volume of *How to Draw* entails "advanced techniques" for covers, inking, coloring, breaking into the biz and a few other points—all of which I've dealt with to some extent or another in my 20-plus (wow!) years of making a living as a comics artist.

The first thing a potential reader sees is the cover. The cover is the first image that the reader connects with, so it should be a striking, simple image. It has to grab that reader enough where he/she decides to pick up the title to flip through it to see if it interests them enough for possible purchase. A good way in making the cover striking is to keep it simple. I try and keep the character count on the cover down to a minimum, one or two, maybe three at the most. Of course, your editor might want the whole JLA or X-Men teams, but I try to keep the body count down.

In my humble opinion, inking is one of the facets of the creative side of the biz that gets the least amount of respect. Plain and simple, an inker is NOT a tracer! An inker is a fellow artist, striving to achieve a common goal, which is to make the stuff look good. The best inkers are good artists; they ADD to the drawing. They add texture, line weight and finish the pencil drawing with contour and form. There are things that you can do with pen, ink and brush that cannot be done with pencils.

It doesn't matter how good the line art is, color makes or breaks the work and one can argue that it's become a bigger part of the finished product than the inking due mostly to the advancement of color via the computer. A good colorist must know basic color theory, and a good dose of drawing knowledge along with composition is more than useful. The color has to complement the drawing; no matter the line art style, a good colorist will adapt his/her style to the penciler. And, of course, it is imperative (a term my dad uses all the time) that the colorist is adept at Photoshop, Illustrator or other painter programs that are available on the computer.

So many up-and-coming artists ask me how difficult it is to break into the comic business. My first answer is usually that if you're any good, you'll get work. If you submit your work and get rejected, that usually means that you have some work to do to get your stuff up to snuff. It's a lot of hard work and practice. There's a ton of competition out there. You will make mistakes. And most importantly, you have to accept criticism.

Once you land your first gigs, you want to hang on and hopefully turn this into a career. Along with doing your finest work, the best way is to conduct yourself in a professional manner. There are a few simple rules that apply and are VERY important:

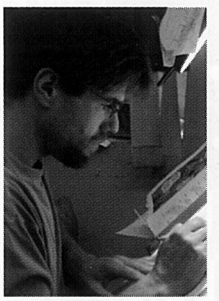
A. Make your deadlines!

B. Return phone calls and e-mails!

C. Listen to your editors! Remember, it's a commercial business.

D. Make your deadlines!

**"Once you land your first gigs, you want to hang on and hopefully turn this into a career. Along with doing your finest work, the best way is to conduct yourself in a professional manner."**



One source of encouragement that I tell my students—I now teach Second Year Narrative Art at my dad's school—is that I didn't start drawing until I attended my dad's school at the age of 19. The idea was for me to go through the school for the first year, and then work in the office in an administrative capacity. I couldn't draw anything...instead of people, I used to draw monsters!

But I got engulfed into the whole world of comics and storytelling. I wound up attending the school all three years. It was a ton of hard work...but I loved it!

And I couldn't have made a better choice.

*Andy Kubert has worked in comics for over 20 years, teaches at the prestigious Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, and is one of the premier artists in comics today, having drawn everything from* Captain America *to* X-Men *to* Batman.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTERIORS

- INKING
- ADVANCED INKING
- POWERFUL INKING
- INKING & RENDERING
- BUILDING A SETTING
- MOOD
- COMPUTERS & COMICS
- LETTERING
- COLORING
- DIGITAL PAINTING

# INKING BY JOE KUBERT

From their inception, cartoons were drawings rendered with black line outlines. The term "line cuts" was used to describe the printing process used for illustrations prepared for newspaper or comic book publication. In earlier times, gray tones were difficult and more expensive than line-cut drawings to reproduce. Pencil lines and photographs have more fluctuations of darkness, and in reproduction and publishing would either darken or break. An ink line printed more clearly than a pencil line.

Over the years, black-line drawings have become the recognized factor in identifying cartoon illustrations. With the advent of computers, printing procedures have improved incredibly. Today's comic books are printed on fine paper stock with a tremendous variety of colors and tone qualities. Comic books today can be fully painted or finished in pencil, dry brush or wash. Nevertheless, the black outline remains the prevailing technique.

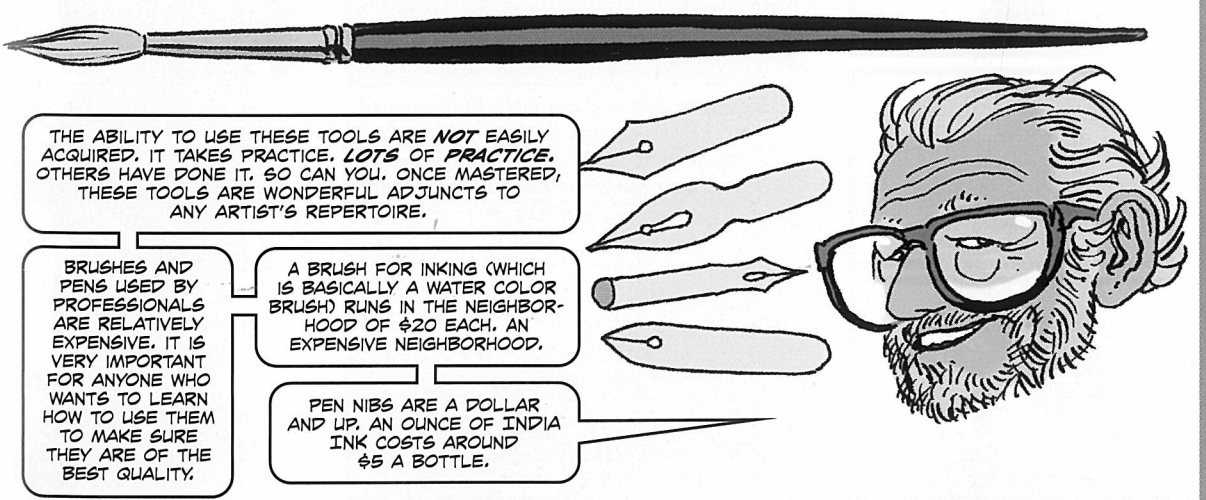
## TOOLSFORINKING

Using good materials is especially important for beginners. A pro can make lesser-grade materials work to some degree. A novice will experience complete frustration.

I use a Raphael No. 3 brush. This brush is part of the materials included with all my correspondence courses. I discovered this brush years ago in Paris, while checking out art materials with Will Eisner. This brush is also used by all my students who attend my full time three-year school.

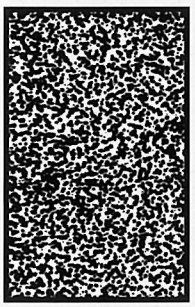
I use a wide variety of pen nibs. Every artist I know is predisposed towards a particular tool or material. Some prefer to use a pen while others use a brush. In all cases, however, these artists have mastered all the tools before deciding which is their favorite.

At this point I should mention paper. The stuff upon which we do our drawings. Unless you have a good board or paper, the best pen, brush and ink will not work. A poor grade of paper will cause your pen line to bleed, or thicken your brush line, or make your pen nib splatter and generally mess up your attempts to ink. Do some test inking on the paper you intend to use before you do any drawing on it. I use Strathmore smooth 2-ply boards.

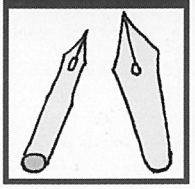



## PENANDBRUSHPRACTICE

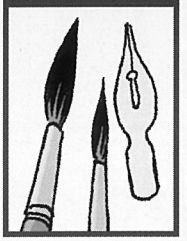
**Practice using your pen and brush to achieve the different effects shown on the chart. Don't push it. Take your time. No one acquires the ability to be a good inker by trying it once or twice. Repeat the practice. Do it over and over. All it takes is time, repetition and perseverance.**

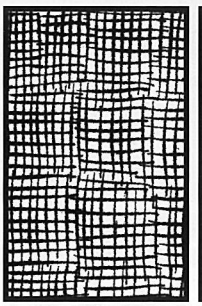


This flat pattern is done with a pen. The same pressure is applied throughout. It teaches you to control the pressure you apply to the pen nib.

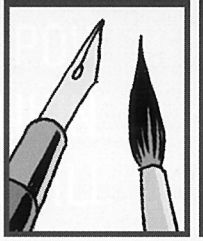


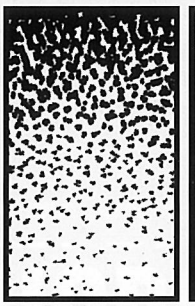
These striations are done with a flexible pen or brush. The trick is not to have the lines touch.



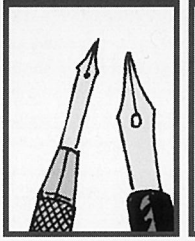


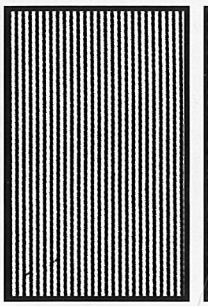
Crosshatch patterns can be done with pen or brush. The patterns should be equal in weight and darkness.



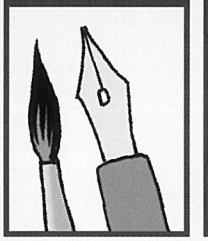


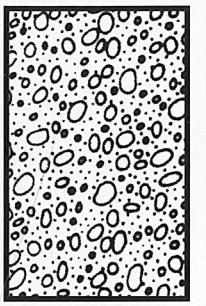
Stipple is created by lessening pressure on the pen and spacing the lighter dots farther apart.



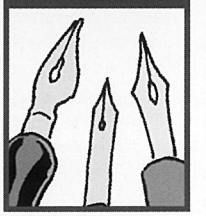


Practicing straight lines of equal thickness helps build control over both pen and brush. Don't use a ruler.

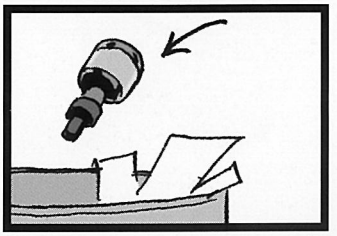




This graphic is rendered with a pen. It combines lines and dots of various sizes and shapes to create a pattern.



## INK

**Use only waterproof India Ink. There are any number of good ink manufacturers. Inks will vary in consistency. Pros tend to select the one that "feels right" for them. Try several to find out which one works best for you.**

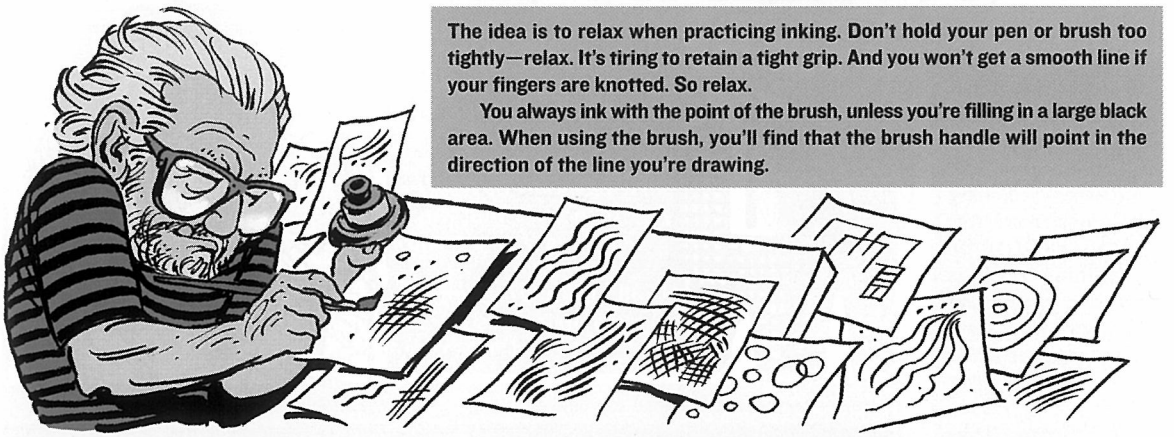
**A) When opening a new bottle of ink for the first time, stir the ink from the bottom. After standing for a while, the liquid and solid parts of ink will have separated. They need to be mixed.**

**B) It's a good idea to gently shake the ink before every use. Make sure the top is securely screwed down. I can't tell you of the numbers of disasters that have occurred when the artist thought the bottle's top was tight—and it wasn't.**

**C) The liquid in the ink will slowly evaporate when the bottle is open. If you find the ink does not come off the brush or pen nib smoothly, this probably means the ink is thickening. Just add a few drops of tap water and stir.**

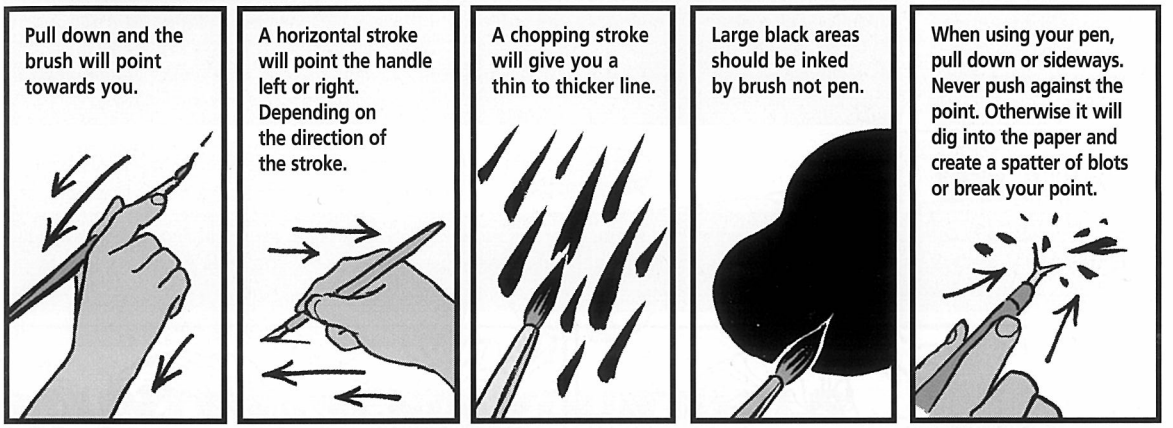
**If the ink continues to be thick or gunky, get rid of it. The ink is stale and you need to get a fresh bottle.**

# GETTHEPOINT?

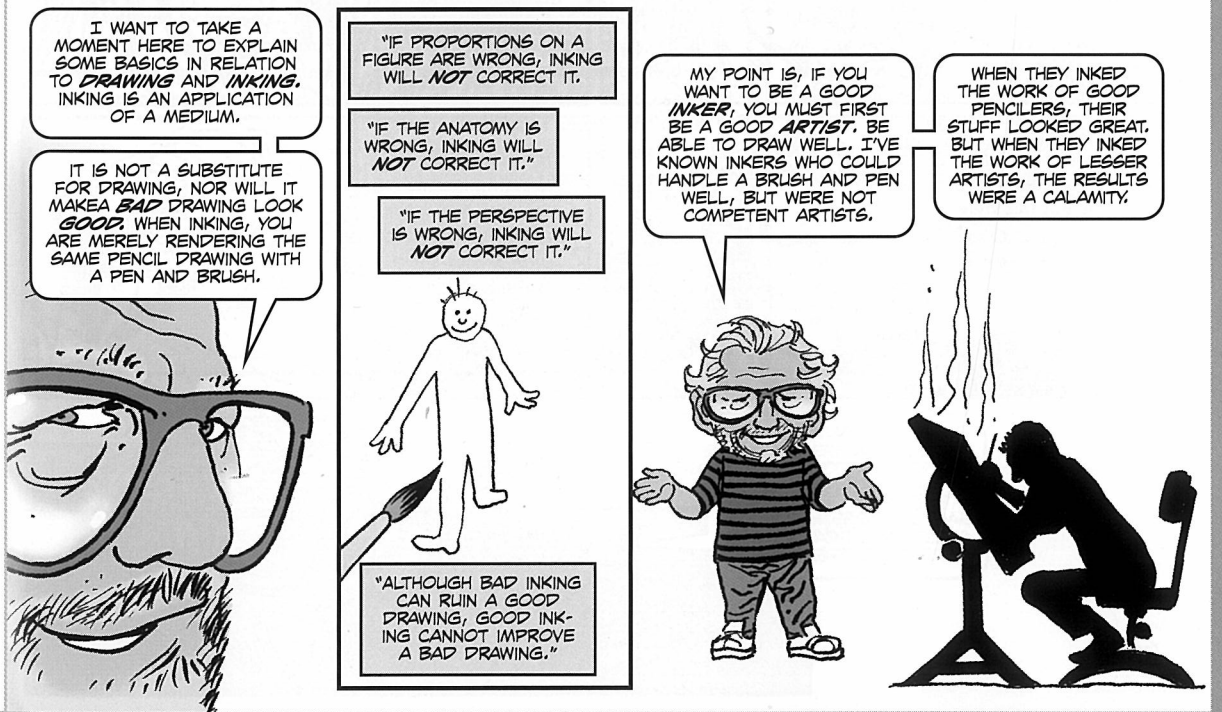


**The idea is to relax when practicing inking. Don't hold your pen or brush too tightly—relax. It's tiring to retain a tight grip. And you won't get a smooth line if your fingers are knotted. So relax.**

**You always ink with the point of the brush, unless you're filling in a large black area. When using the brush, you'll find that the brush handle will point in the direction of the line you're drawing.**




# DRAWINGANDINKING?



## DON'T OVERDO IT

Everyone who draws tries to do the very best they can. It's part of the pleasure (and frustration) of drawing. Pursuing that effort often results in overdoing it. This is especially true in inking. Knowing what to leave out is as important as knowing what to put in.

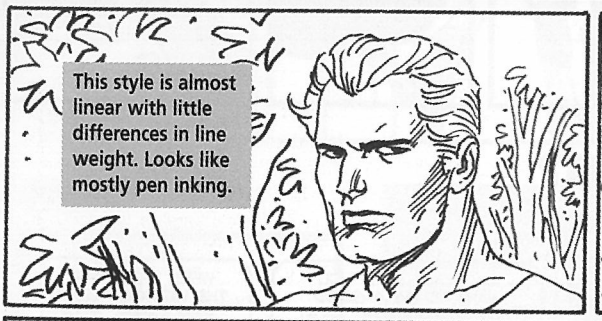
In inking, less is often more. That is, the simpler and cleaner the rendering, the more effective the drawing.

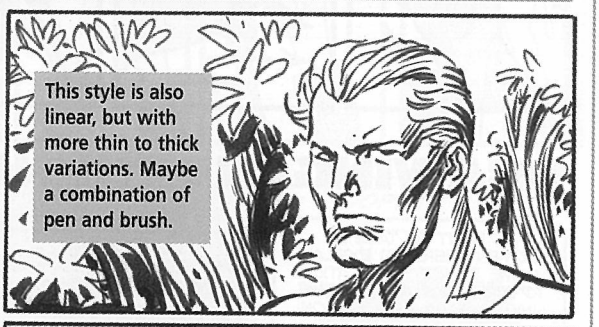
• Humor cartoons are a good example of inking with a minimum of detailed rendering. This style of inking is also used in cinematic animation. Because of the multiple number of drawings used to create motion and smooth transition, simplicity is a requirement.

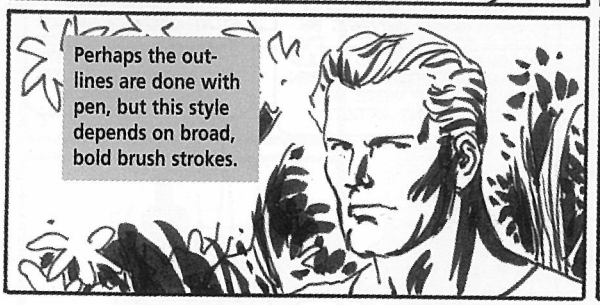
• Many aspiring cartoonists think "simple" means easy. Quite the opposite is true. It's much easier to overly complicate a drawing with too much rendering than it is to know precisely which line is the right line and to leave all the extraneous lines out.

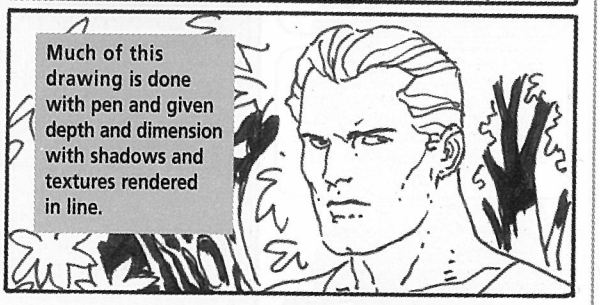
## STYLES

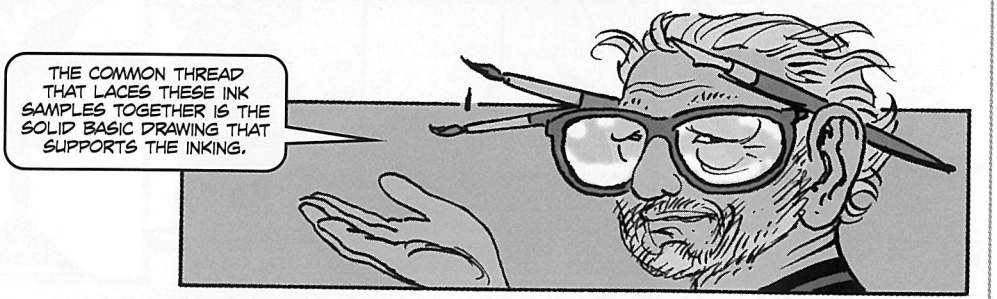
Inking styles are as variable as the artists who draw them. There is no right or wrong style. An artist's style is always in a state of flux; always changing. It is a reflection of his learning process and experience. The style you start with may not be the style with which you end up.



# CORRECTIONS


After inking your artwork, the pencils need to be erased. This must be done with an eraser that will not smear or pick up the ink. I use a Magic Rub eraser. This eraser is also included in the equipment with all my correspondence courses.

Use the eraser gently. Brush off all erasure particles when you're finished.

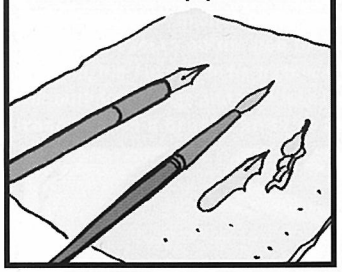
**Pencils have erasers to correct mistakes. Inkers use opaque white paint for that purpose. For corrections, white paint should have the consistency of sour cream. If the paint is too thin or watery, the ink will show through. Sometimes it's necessary to apply two or three coats of paint before the ink is completely covered.**

**One form of white paint is water-soluble. That means you can not ink on top of it, because the ink will flake off or mix with the paint. Another form of white paint is non-soluble. It has a plastic base and ink will not flake off. It's a correction fluid used to correct typing errors and is available in squeeze pens and bottles.**


I THINK IT'S BEST TO MAKE CORRECTIONS AFTER ERASING THE PENCILS, ONCE THE INK IS DRY. THE WHITE TENDS TO GET DIRTY IF YOU MAKE THE CORRECTIONS BEFORE YOU ERASE THE PENCILS.

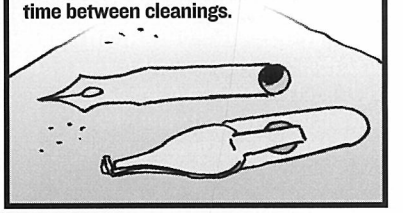
# MAINTENANCE OF YOUR TOOLS

**Artists develop different ways of taking care of their equipment. This is the way I take care of mine. As I've mentioned before, your tools are expensive. I wash my pens and brushes after each use. I dry them with a soft cloth or paper towels.**



**Ink has a tendency to coagulate at the neck of the brush handle. Every once in a while I'll use a mild detergent soap to work out the accumulation of dried ink. After I wash the soap away, I dip my brush into hair conditioner, and let it stay for a few minutes. Then I shake it out in clean water and dry the brush to a point. Never allow a wet brush to dry in a bent shape. That's a perfect way to kill a brush.**

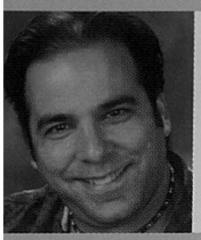
**Pen points should be cleaned after use. If you allow the ink to dry on the nib for a long period of time, two things will happen: A) The ink drying on your nib will cause your pen lines to be thicker, losing the ability to make a fine line. B) Leaving ink on your nib overnight will make it more difficult to clean. Ink adheres more strongly the longer the time between cleanings.**



TO CONCLUDE THIS SESSION, THERE ARE ONLY *THREE* TRIED AND TRUE WAYS TO LEARN TO BE A GOOD INKER: *PRACTICE, PRACTICE* AND *PRACTICE.*

# ADVANCED INKING

BY JIMMY PALMOTTI



Inkers are the enigma of the comic book machine. Writers create worlds with words, and pencilers bring the writer's thoughts to the blank page. What does the inker do? For the longest time, it's been said that inkers just trace the pencil art and don't know how to draw.

But inking isn't tracing. There are unique and diverse styles of inking, and it's good to put your own style on the page, providing you're building upon the penciler's strength. If the penciler's strong point is physical anatomy and musculature, that's where you should concentrate the most. The harmony of the inker's style playing off of the penciler's strengths is what creates the best penciler/inker teams.

## THESTARTINGLINE

Before starting to ink, the first thing I do is tape down the original art page (which is 11-inches by 17-inches) and rule out the borders around panels. To rule your borders, you should use a technical pen (I use a .07 point pen; **see sidebar** on next page for more Tools of the Trade). Then I concentrate on what I'm going to ink first. I take a few minutes to study the page in order to determine its strengths and weaknesses. Don't be intimidated by the page if there are a lot of things going on. Pay attention to the figures first, because a reader's eye goes to them first, not the tree in the background. They're there to put us in a place, and to establish a time of day or a mood.

## CHOOSINGYOUR WEAPONS

**Figure 1** is a penciled headshot of Future Ash by Joe Quesada. The penciling is tight. These are called finished pencils. Different inkers have different preferences as to which tools they use, and I'm gonna give you examples of each.

FIGURE 1

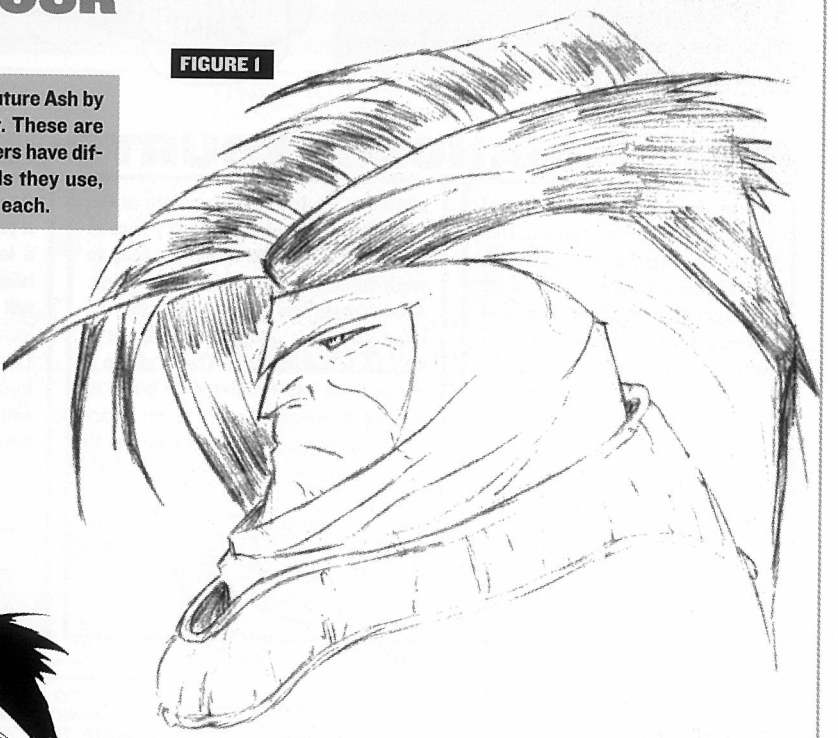


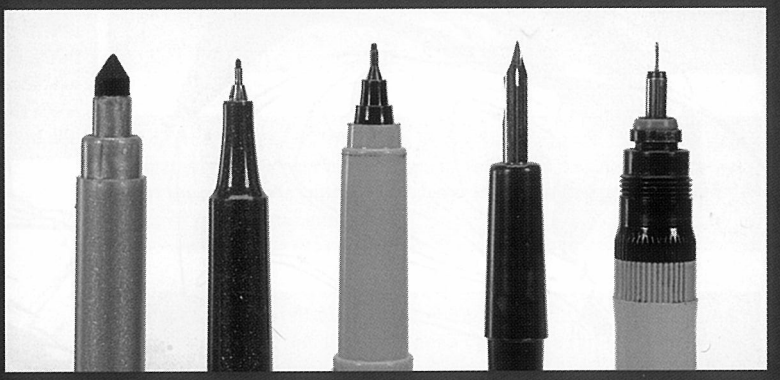
FIGURE 2

**Figure 2** is the inked figure, using a Hunt 102 crow quill only. As you can tell, the lines are sharp and crisp. As we get to the hair area, because of the fine point of the dipping pen, it's tough to fill big solid black areas. The crow quill is a great tool for detail, but not that great for anything featuring long, flowing lines.

PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

# TOOLSOFTHETRADE

You can't build a house with just hammer and nails, and you can't put a page together with a pencil and ballpoint! You can find all the following equipment in a good art supply store:




**JET BLACK INDIA INK** I've been using Faber-Castell's Black Magic brand lately. Ink (not unlike a woman) is very temperamental; you never know what you're getting. Two bottles of the same brand can have completely different consistencies. It's always good to test out a bottle of ink first, and try different brands to see which one you prefer.

**WHITE PAINT** I recommend Pro White and the Pentel Fine Point Correction Pen. These two will handle everything you need to in terms of whiting things out and making corrections.

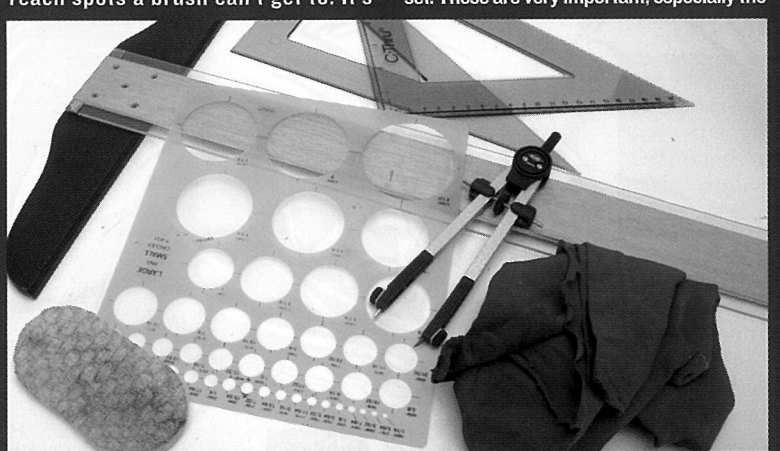
**KNEADED ERASER** This is what you clean your pages with. I recommend, in addition to the kneaded eraser, a Staedtler-Mars brand plastic eraser, which you'll use for stubborn pencil lines.

**BRUSHES** For me, it's a Series 7 Windsor & Newton Finest Sable hair brush. A #3 is my personal preference, but some prefer a #2. The #3 holds more ink, which makes the work go by faster, but some feel that the #2 gives them more control on the page. I DO NOT recommend going to your mom's watercolor set and using the brush in there. Just because a brush comes to a point when you look at it, doesn't necessarily mean it's a good brush. There's a reason the sable brush is used by every inker out there—it's the best. It costs around $25, but it's worth it because these brushes can be used for up to a year. It's made of hair, so I clean it like I clean my hair—I shampoo it.

**CROW QUILLS** These are very important. I use the Hunt 102 crow quill and holder; it costs about $2. This is the dipping pen. It has a wedged tip on it, and it works by putting pressure on the pen to control line weights. I use them for technical lines, for outlining things and for those hard to reach spots a brush can't get to. It's always good to have a lot of the pen nibs on hand, because they always snap.

**TECHNICAL PENS** These are good for ruling lines, especially for beginners, but should not be used on the figures. The pens should be used for oval and circle templates. I recommend either Koh-in-Noor or Faber Castell brands. Pen sizes should be 0 and higher (the 00 and 000 sizes won't reproduce when the page sees print, so don't use them).

**TEMPLATES** Use oval templates, circle templates, triangles and a French curve set. These are very important, especially the ovals. You'll use the oval templates for every tire, kitchen table and speed line. Buy the templates that are raised from the surface, so that the template won't smear the ink you've just put down on the page.



**RULERS** You'll need a raised metal-edged ruler. Like the templates, the ruler should be raised with cork so you can rule lines without sliding the ruler and smearing the lines. Rulers aren't cheap, but they'll last forever.

**THE INKING SURFACE** You'll need an angled drawing surface, such as a drawing board. An angled surface allows you to get a more full-on look at the page. The surface should also be well lit, so a lamp is essential.

**TAPE** A roll of white art tape is necessary to hold down what you're inking, as well as to mask certain areas you're inking off. Also: securely tape your ink bottle to your drawing surface so it doesn't spill.

**MISCELLANEOUS** I keep a little dish with a sponge and water in it, and a paper towel or rag next to my desk. These are used to clean the brush and crow quill while you work.

Now that you've spent your life savings, you're ready to start inking! ■ JP

FIGURE 3

**Figure 3** is the same drawing as in Figure 2. This time, it's inked with only a brush. This drawing has a slicker look to it than the previous one; these differences are very subtle. When a comic page is shot down, you don't tend to notice all the little nuances in the inking. The drawing just seems to register in our brain as "I like it" or "I don't like it." The lines are a little broader with the brush, but I prefer to use both tools, which brings us to...

**Figure 4** is inked with both the crow quill and the brush. I inked the hair with the brush, and most of the details around the face and collar with the crow quill. I prefer to use both tools but it's an individual choice. It's just my interpretation of the lines put down by the penciler. Joe's drawing doesn't have a real light source, other than what's indicated in the hair and the line around the nose and cheek, so I'm not really indicating any heavy lights, darks or shading.

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

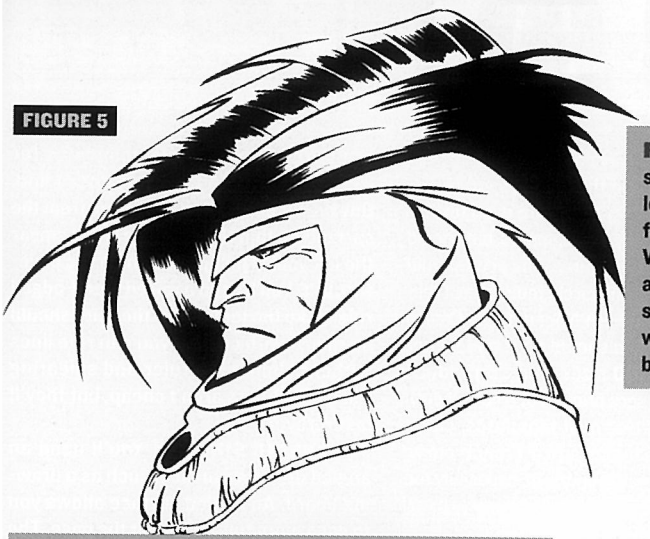


**Figure 5** is done with pen and brush. I gave it a light source (directly above the figure), and gave a different look to the drawing. What I did in this figure is called doing finishes on a piece, but we'll cover doing finishes in a bit. What I'm trying to show is how to take the same drawing, and make it look drastically different. I've made it more sinister looking, by being more creative with the line weights. An inker will really have to know how to draw to be able to do something to a drawing like this.

**Figure 6** is another example using pen and brush, but this time we threw an additional lighting source (from the front of his face) into the mix. This will show texture on the skin and on the shoulder pads. Granted, it's the same drawing, but this time we're giving it a whole new look by adding texture. **HINT:** This technique is not recommended for the beginning inker.

FIGURE 6

**Figures 5 and 6** are just examples. I would not feel free to do this to anybody's work. I get paid to interpret the pencils as close as I can, not to make drastic changes to an artist's pencil work. It's okay if it's a conscious choice you both agree on. Your job as an inker is to interpret the pencils as close as possible. You can follow the examples in Figure 5 and 6, and have a lot of fun inking your first comic...but you'll never get work again.

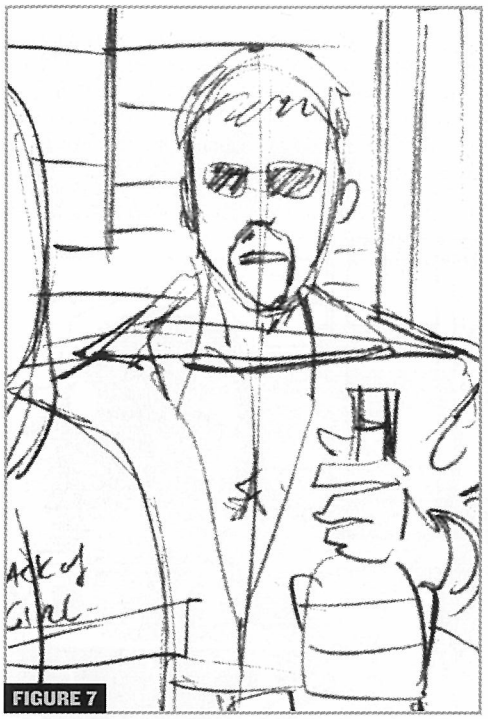


FIGURE 7

## DOINGFINISHES

Inkers do "finishes" when they're presented with pencil layouts, not finished pencils. Inkers will get pencil layouts when the penciler is short on time to do complete pencil art, or when the job is an emergency job (what we term a "Rush Job").

You need to have a firm grasp of drawing in order to do finishes. Usually, when you get handed an assignment to do finishes, it shows that the editor has confidence in your inking, or he was drunk at the time of the assignment.

Breakdowns are unfinished pencils, as shown in **Figures 7** and **8**. This means that the penciler doesn't go in and tighten everything up. There are two kinds of breakdowns: loose breakdowns and tight breakdowns.

The first example **(Figure 7)** is one of loose breakdowns, which indicates a figure holding a bottle in back of a girl. Sometimes the penciler will just write in "back of the girl" right on the drawing to indicate what's going on in the panel. Notice there's no lighting in this piece.

The second example **(Figure 8)** is that of a tighter breakdown, which has all the information you need—though the background isn't ruled out and the tight details aren't being included. Your job as an inker will be to go in and tighten up the pencils so that the piece looks like a slick, finished drawing.

FIGURE 8


**Finishes #1**—This is where I took the tight breakdown, and inked it in. I ruled in the background, and separated the foreground image (the girl) from the background. This means I used a thicker line around the girl, and a thinner line around the guy. I also did some brushwork in the hair. I kept it somewhat simple for the example, but you can see how a drawing ability is necessary here, judging by how I went in and worked on the nose and the cheeks.


**Finishes #2**—On this piece, I used a different technique. I backlit the guy in the background, blackening the male figure. (I did this to insure that the piece looks good in black-and-white before heading off to the colorist. Don't take the colorist for granted—always make sure the figures separate in black-and-white.)


**Finishes #3**—In this example, I blackened the foreground (the girl), as well as dropped out the flowers on her dress. From there, I went dark on the background in order to pop the middle-ground figure (the guy) right out. This gives a different feeling to the male figure as all the attention is directed to him.

## PROINKER HELPFULHINT:

It is not an inker's job to add mood or texture to the page. That's the penciler's job, unless he has any specific directions for the inker. By rights, I have no reason to change the penciler's work. That's why I get a lot of work, and some inkers don't. Your job as an inker is to separate, clarify or correct the artwork (like, for example, if sometimes there's an additional finger).

Unless there's a major problem with a piece of art, I will call my editor, or the penciler, before changing anything. Your penciler and your editor will thank you, with the editor thanking you by giving you more work.

# BACKGROUNDS

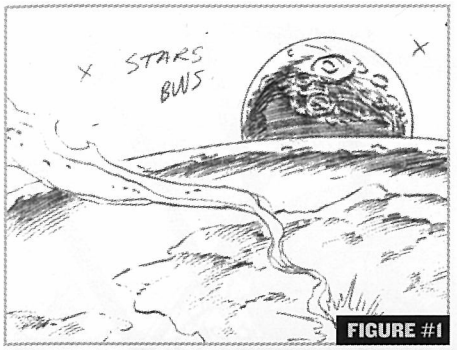
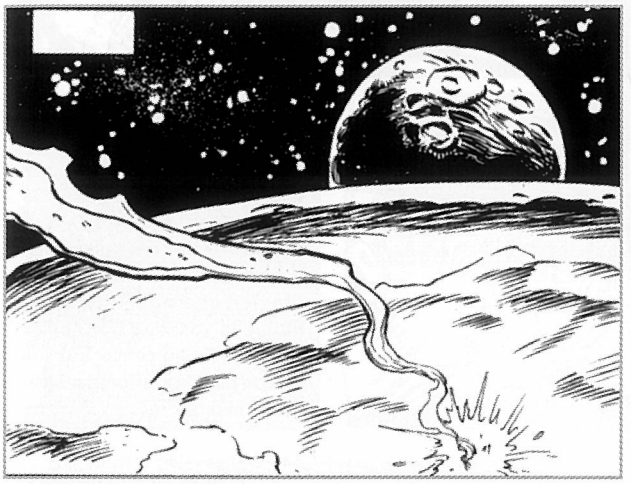


FIGURE #1

In **Figure 1**, I have a penciled panel of a planet, with something crash-landing on said planet. The pencils are tight, and in the background, you can see an "x" (which means a black area) and a "bws" (meaning "black with stars").



Staying true to the pencil work, I've inked everything using a brush. After that, I took a little white paint, put it on the end of a toothbrush, and spritzed the paint on the panel to give the effect of stars. I masked off the area that I didn't want to get hit by white paint, and finished off the white section by using a brush. I use either acetate or paper to mask off the areas I want to leave intact, by cutting a piece to the shape of the masked-off area.

This is a fairly simple shot of machinery. I left this drawing open for color. In the foreground we have this piece of machinery, with the thicker line to indicate the foreground. As we go back in this panel, you'll notice the lines getting thinner and thinner. This gives the illusion of depth. It's a very basic example, but it pops in black-and-white.

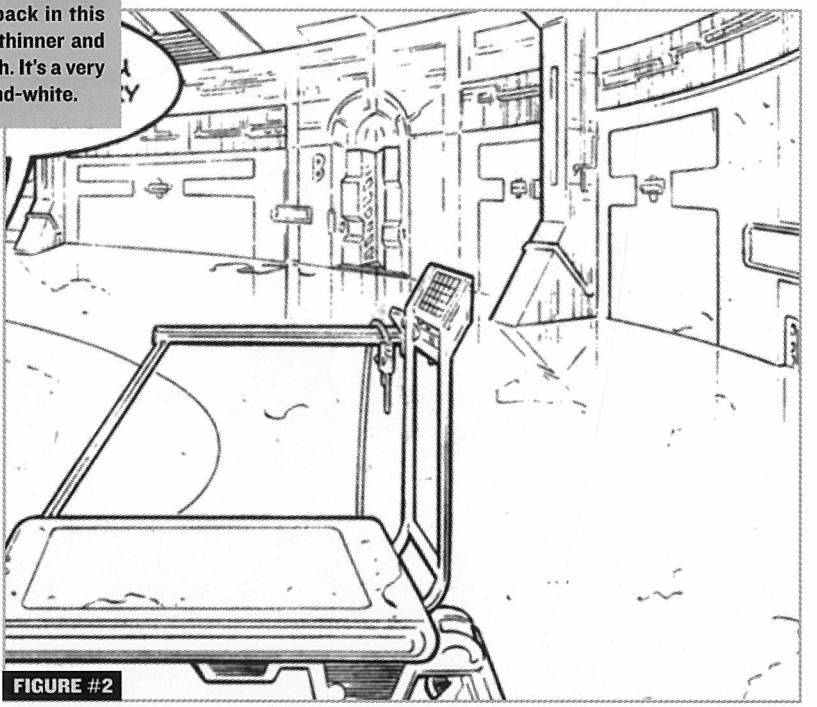


FIGURE #2

FIGURE #3

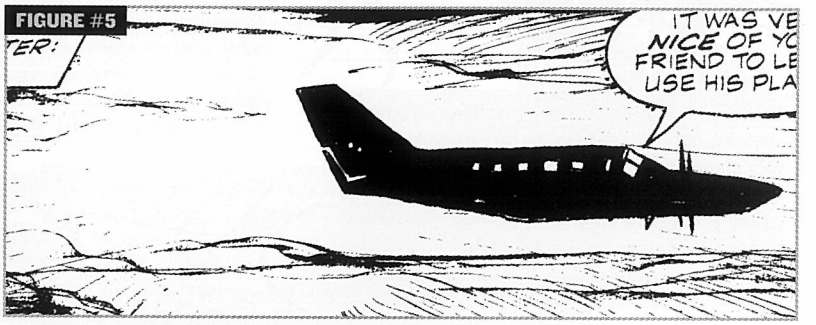

The foreground is a fire escape with a hand on it. As we look down, we can see the car. Because the black in the foreground is right in our face, the simple line weight in the background makes our eye travel to see the car in the background.

FIGURE #4

We have a guy with his hands on a motorcycle; this panel features rich, detailed blacks. As our eye travels to the background, I made the lines thinner and thinner into the background. This gives an illusion of a city. These are nuances you may not notice when reading a comic, but you have to pay close attention when you're inking.

As you can see, this is just a simple silhouette of an airplane. On this example I used a pen, and scribbled in the lines, until I got to where the edge of the moon would be. I used a circle template to outline the moon, put the scribbled lines in, then erased my circle. As a black-and-white piece, it stands out fairly well, and when colored will really pop.

FIGURE #5




# TECHNIQUES ANDTRICKS

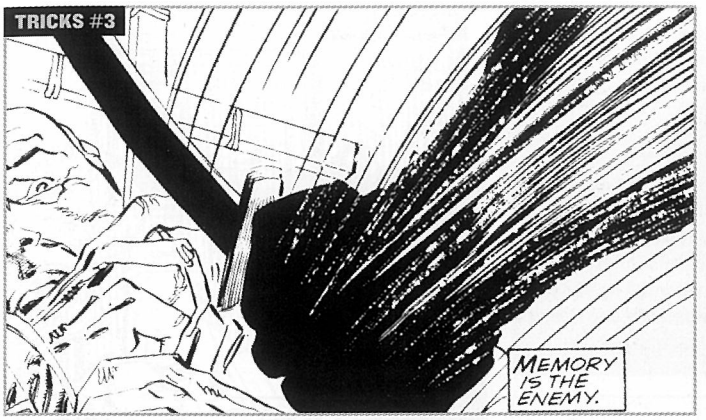
TRICKS #1


TRICKS #2


What I'll show you with these tricks are little details to indicate movement, shadows or textures.

The white paint splatter. Here (#1), we have the head of Vampirella, and with her smashing through the window, I used the white paint to give the effect of more action happening. Just put a dab of white paint on the end of your brush and flick the bristles toward the artwork. You can't control the splatter when you do it, so it creates a very loose, spontaneous effect you can't get from just inking the page normally.

In the background (of #2), I went in with a technical pen and drew the leaves. This separates the tree from the statue in the foreground, just by dropping your line weights as you go back into the panel.




Here (**#3**), we have a hand swinging a sword. In the black part of the hand, in order to show motion, I went in with a utility razor blade and ripped into the paper. I also used some white paint, but I scraped into the paper on an angle. A lot of inkers also use this technique to show rain, particularly on a black background. Before trying the technique on a finished page, you might want to try practicing it on a separate piece of Bristol board that you inked black. This is a very effective technique to show movement. (If you don't have experience handling razor blades, please ask for help from your parents, an older friend or an art teacher.)


This drawing (**#4**) was done on duo-shade paper. The shading around the eyes is done with this special type of paper. This paper is treated with the lines already on it, and they're brought out by using special chemicals. The "A" chemical brings out light lines, and the "B" chemical brings out a darker line. This is an old trick that isn't used as much anymore (this effect can be done with computer coloring, and the paper is hard to find), but if you're doing a black-and-white book (or a comic strip), this is a fun technique to use.

To make the blood on Vampi's face (**#5**) look even more messy, gross and horrific, I used a toothbrush to splatter the ink all over her mouth. I didn't even use a mask here; I just splattered it all over. I also use this trick to show when someone just got hit in the mouth, as well as a texture trick for rocks and trees.



This is Vampirella's hair (**#6**), on which I used a technique called "dry brush." You take your brush and get rid of all the excess fluid, essentially making it pretty dry. Then you use it to give a really soft-looking feeling to the art. This technique is hard to master, but it gives you a really cool out-of-focus look.

# ZIP-A-TONE

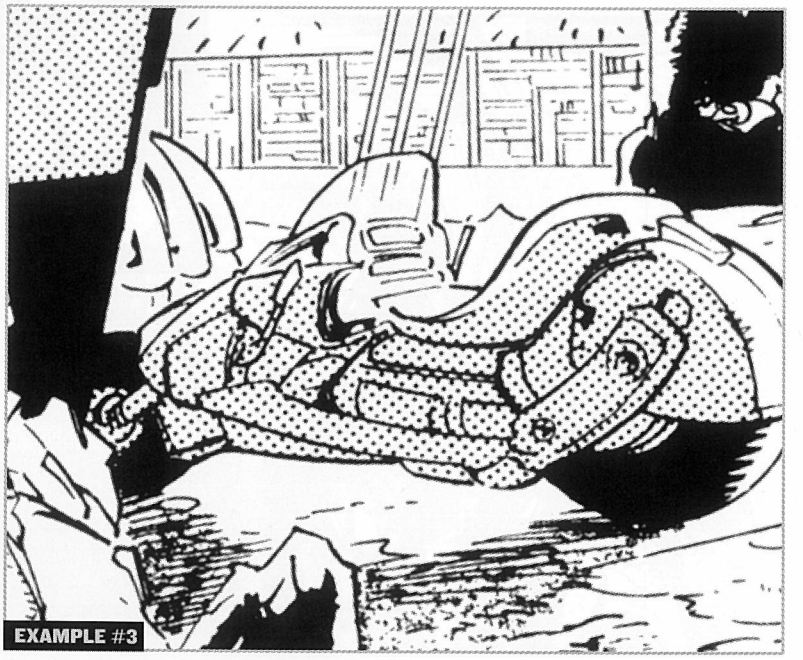
One more technique I'd like to teach you is the use of Zip-a-Tone. Zip-a-Tone isn't really used in comics as much anymore, because computer coloring can duplicate many of the effects. Zip can, however, be an effective tool if you're doing a black-and-white book. There are other techniques like using sponges or different pens, but a lot of the effects are experiments you may want to try on your own. You can lay it down on the actual art, shape it with an X-Acto knife and peel off the excess. (You can even save some of the scrap for use at a later time.) The initial problem with using Zip-a-Tone is that most amateurs use it as a technique to eliminate drawing deficiencies they might have.

EXAMPLE #1

I used a straight line 20 percent Zip-a-Tone on the back wall area (**Example #1**) to pop the figure laying on the couch. I then went in with some white paint to highlight the handles on the door. This is primarily a separation tool, to keep the background to the back of the panel.

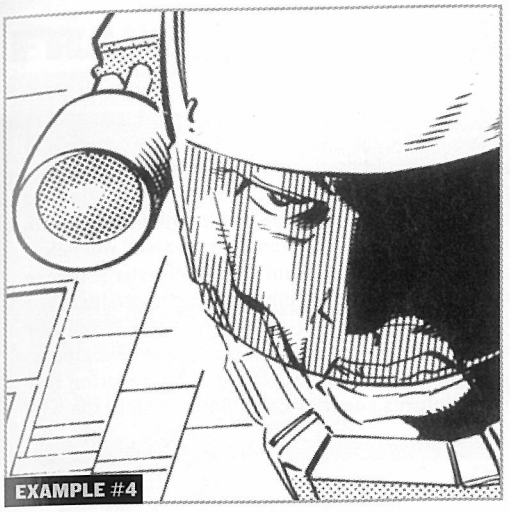
EXAMPLE #2

I used the Zips in this panel (**#2**) to create a separate plane in the back of the van. Again, I used a 20 percent Zip-a-Tone dot sheet, which is the right percentage to use when the art gets shot down for reproduction.



EXAMPLE #3

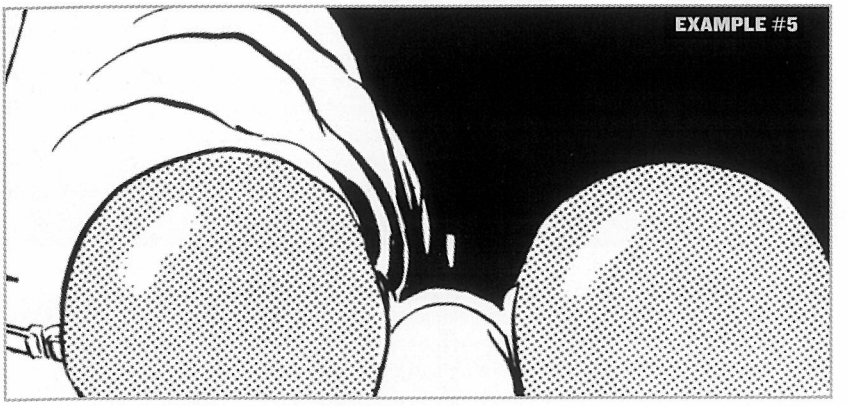
In this example (**#3**), I worked with the Zip to create a light source. I used it to show the light on the bike. Zip-a-Tone always looks cool on mechanical stuff. Also, if you look at the top left of the panel, I also used the Zip-a-Tone as a foreground to separate it from the background.



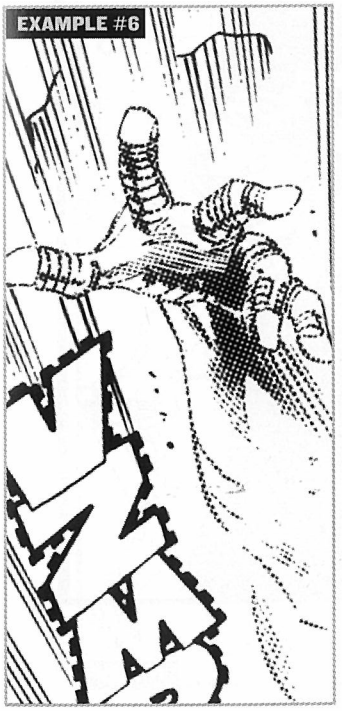
EXAMPLE #4

In this example (#4), I used the Zip-a-Tone on the visor, and then I used an electric eraser to dig into the Zip to create highlights. I also used it on the camera to make it look like there's light coming through it. (Don't push too hard down on the electric eraser—you'll rub through the whole Zip-a-Tone that way.)

I used the 20 percent to produce tint on the glasses (in #5), then went back in with the electric eraser and gave it an effect of light hitting off the glass.



EXAMPLE #5



EXAMPLE #6

I used the white Zip-a-Tone as an effect to show the hand fading away (in #6). I used a 20 percent white Zip right over the inked area, and it gives the effect of the hand disappearing. Some people also use this effect to show someone behind glass.

Inking is a tough creative process to learn and master, but you can get better with practice (and more practice) and acquire a firmer grasp of your abilities. I'm never satisfied with any piece I do, because I always want to improve and expand upon my craft.

As a young aspiring inker, concentrate on improving your drawing skills. Your inking will be a big beneficiary of your drawing ability. I also can't stress enough how important it is to make your deadlines; that's a paramount factor when it comes to getting more work. Inking is a never-ending evolution of your talents, so always strive to go to the next level. If you see me at a convention, feel free to come up to me and let me look at your work. I'd be glad to give you a critique. Until then, keep your nibs wet, and your brush in a safe place.

*Jimmy Palmiotti is a multiple-award winning inker/artist who has been worked for every major publisher, with titles such as* Conan, Batman *and* Daredevil *to his credits.*

# POWERFUL INKING BY STEVE LIEBER

Hi! I'm Steve Lieber. I've been working in comics for about 18 years on projects like *Whiteout, On the Road to Perdition* and *Hellboy: Weird Tales.* I studied at the Joe Kubert School, and my goal as an artist is simple: to tell good stories. One way to do that is by carefully composing black ink on the page, also called "spotting blacks." The careful placement of areas of solid black in a line-art drawing separates a professional job from an amateurish one. Well-placed areas of black make a picture easier to decipher, control the viewer's focus, enhance the illusion of depth, establish the direction of light and make a picture look better. In a color comic, your composition of black will help a good colorist understand your intentions and keep an amateur colorist from screwing up too much. If you're drawing a black-and-white comic, those dark areas are even more important: They're your loudest note and your most reliable tool for ensuring that your pictures communicate what you want them to.

## CONTROLTHEFOCUS

Here's a rule every artist should remember: The eye is drawn to the point of highest contrast. With every picture, you should decide what your point of focus is—where do you want them to look?

Don't say "everywhere," because a comic reader is going to look at your picture out of the corner of his eye while he reads the word balloon and then goes on to the next panel. Your picture may only have a second or two to make its point. Ask yourself what the reader needs to learn from this picture, then make that part of the picture the point of highest contrast—a white object against black, or a black object against white. In **Figure A**, the eye is drawn to the gun. In **Figure B**, the gun is less important than the sign in the window. (By the way, that's Carrie Stetko, the U.S. marshal from *Whiteout* by me and Greg Rucka from Oni Press.)

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

# FRAMED

You may find it helpful to "frame" your important areas, or to arrange your blacks so they surround the important parts of your picture. In **Figure C**, I used black to make a ring around the box in the middle. It's like the center of a bullseye. Also note the same technique in **Figure D**, directing your attention right to Carrie's discovery.

FIGURE D

FIGURE C

# PLANESOFDEPTH

To most eyes, flat pictures are boring. You want to create the illusion of depth, so your characters have a whole world to move in instead of just lying flat on the page. Overlapping objects in your picture is the primary way to do this. See **Figure E**—Carrie and the pole overlap the Quonset hut, which overlaps the square buildings. But you make it a lot easier for your readers to tell what's close and what's far away if you build your pictures out of overlapping planes of light and dark. See how much clearer the depth is in **Figure F**? Imagine your pictures are built with three planes of depth—the close stuff, called "the foreground," the stuff in the middle distance, called (duh) "the middleground," and in the back there's the, uh, "background." Separating them will help your reader sort out what's close and what's far in that second and a half he'll take to look at your masterpiece.

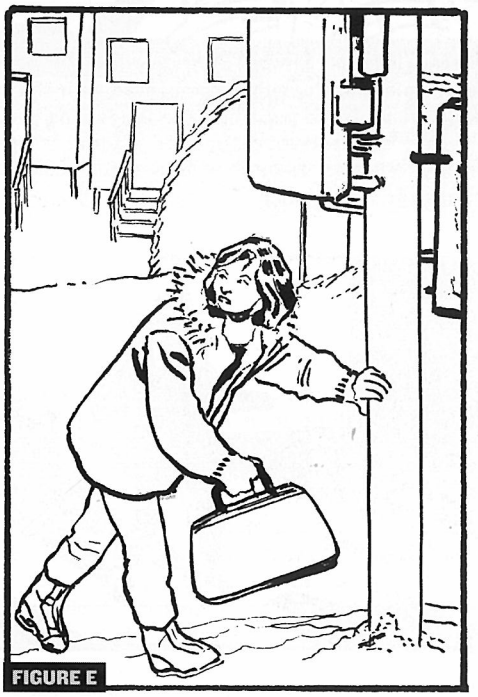


FIGURE E

FIGURE F

## POSEAPATTERN

Use blacks to create patterns. This is pretty basic, but will take some practice: You don't want your panels or pages to look out of balance. Try to arrange areas of black so that they make a pleasing pattern around the panel and throughout the page. **Figure G** isn't bad. **Figure H** is way out of balance.

FIGURE G

FIGURE H

## LETTHELIGHTSHINE

Spotting your blacks where the shadows fall will help keep you from looking amateurish. You'd be amazed how many artists never figure this out. **Figure I** is fine. Don't be the one who draws **Figure J**.

Also, be aware of how powerfully you can set the mood with well-composed areas of black. There's a big difference in feeling between a picture with black spotted all over the place and one that's composed with one or two simple areas. Try to put a name to the feeling you want to evoke: "Excitement." "Danger." "Calm." "Speed." "Dignity." Then try to come up with a composition that emphasizes that feeling.

FIGURE I

FIGURE J

## HIDEANDSEEK

Remember how I said that the eye is attracted to the point of highest contrast? Well, the reverse is also true—readers tend to ignore the point of lowest contrast. If you put a busy texture in front of a busy texture, you create camouflage. Sometimes you'll want to use this to hide less important details, but if you have to show something important for the story, don't camouflage it! Make it pop! In **Figure K**, the boot on the left pops. The boot on the right gets lost.

FIGURE K

## ONATANGENT...

One of the hardest mistakes to avoid is the tangency—the accidental arrangement of stuff on your page so that it flattens the picture or confuses the reader. Try to spot your blacks in a way that makes it clear where one picture ends and another begins. In **Figure L**, I've intentionally included a bunch of tangencies, which are marked in red in **Figure M**.

FIGURE L

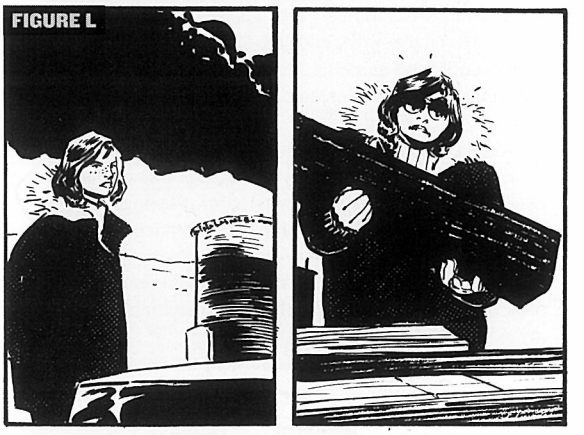
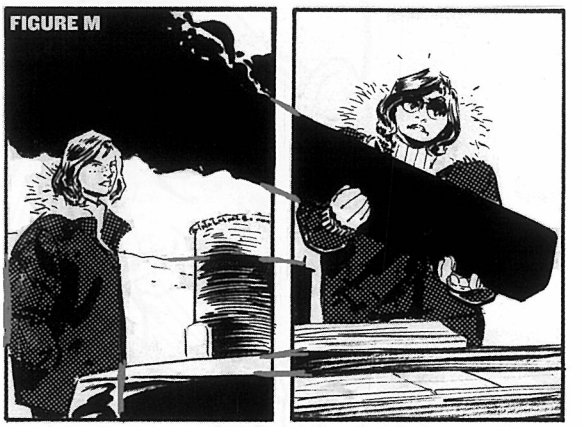


FIGURE M



**SOME TIPS** on getting better: Make reduced copies of your pencils, then get out tracing paper and a big, fat Sharpie marker. Plan out your black areas on the tracing paper. Don't worry about good drawing—just use big, bold strokes. Turn the marker sketch upside-down and see if the black you spotted leads your eye to where it should go. It might help to squint or hold the page at a distance.

Also try sketching from life in soft, black charcoal to get used to composing pictures with a lot of solid black. Study the masters of black-and-white art: Alex Toth (*Zorro*), Milt Caniff (*Terry and the Pirates*), Wally Wood (check out old EC comics), Al Williamson (another EC master), Bernie Wrightson (*Frankenstein*) and others.

When I'm inking, I regularly squint at my pages and hold them up to a mirror to give myself a fresh view. Does the picture have depth? Does my eye go to the most important parts? Do I like the patterns of black? Are there any tangencies messing things up? Am I camouflaging anything important? It takes work to get better at this, but that's true of anything worth learning. Good luck!

*Steve Lieber can do more than just ink powerfully—he also wrote* The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creating a Graphic Novel *for Penguin.*

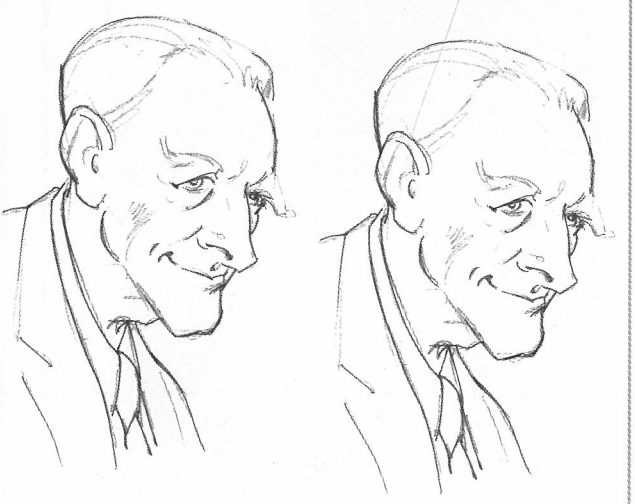
# INKING & RENDERING

BY JOE RUBINSTEIN

In 30-plus years in the industry, there's very few titles or creators that Joe Rubinstein *hasn't* worked with. The early part of his career saw him assisting legends like Wally Wood and Dick Giordano, but he's also worked with John Byrne on *Captain America* and *Infinity Gauntlet* with George Pérez; and most recently, his work has been seen on *Justice League Classified: I Can't Believe it's Not Justice League* with Kevin Maguire and Dark Horse's *ArchEnemies* with Yvel Guiceht.

When confronted with a penciled page to ink, it can seem like a mountain to climb. Where do you start? Most of my career has been spent inking other artists, but the following method also applies to inking your own work. Like politics and religion, there are a great many conflicting opinions, but this method seems the most logical and comfortable for me. Try it for a while and see if it suits you.

A really good inker is as much an artist as the penciler, so don't think of inking as tracing or smoothing over the lines, but as an extension of drawing. I had the honor and education of being Dick Giordano's assistant when I was 13-years-old, and Wally Wood's assistant when I was 15. This method combines both of their advice to me, with my observations and some of my own idiosyncratic touches thrown in.



While thinking about your process, break it down into three steps:

1) Drawing/Outlining
2) Light source (thick and thin lines and shadows)
3) Rendering (speed and method of applying pen and brush strokes)

Let's use the profile of this pretty girl to outline the process, starting with the original penciled piece.

- **Step #1:** When I touch pen to the pretty girl's profile, I'm not "inking" but drawing in ink by establishing the shapes of the nose, lips, ears, chin, etc.
- **Step #2:** Then I darken and thicken the forms that are turned away from the light source and add small and large shadows.
- **Step #3:** I finish with the rendering strokes (the cheek bone) and textures (the hair).

PENCILS

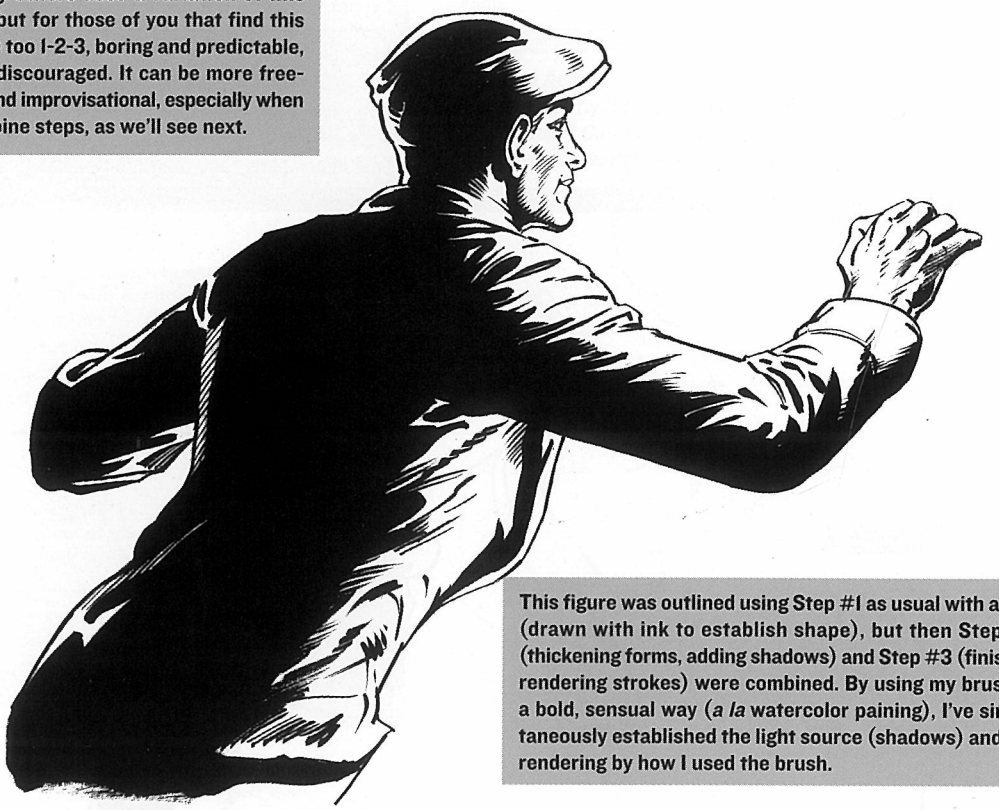
STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

An artist's drawing skills identifies one from another, but another major identifier is the style and way of rendering. Joe Kubert, Giordano, Kevin Nowlan and Klaus Janson are all great and are very different, but all have great confidence in how and what they render.

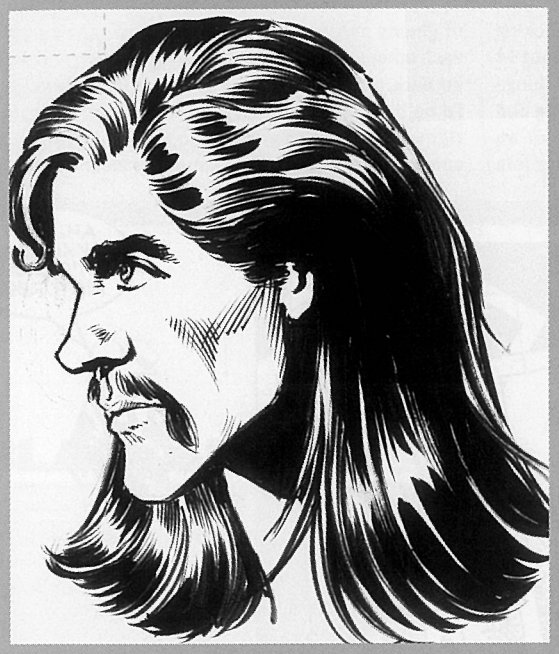
I know that great inkers like Wally Wood, Tony D'Zuniga, Joe Kubert, Alfredo Alcala and many others used a variation of this method, but for those of you that find this approach too 1-2-3, boring and predictable, don't be discouraged. It can be more free-flowing and improvisational, especially when you combine steps, as we'll see next.



This figure was outlined using Step #1 as usual with a pen (drawn with ink to establish shape), but then Step #2 (thickening forms, adding shadows) and Step #3 (finished rendering strokes) were combined. By using my brush in a bold, sensual way (*a la* watercolor paining), I've simultaneously established the light source (shadows) and the rendering by how I used the brush.

The long-haired guy is outlined (Step #1, drawn with ink), but I'm also interjecting some indications of the thick and thin (Step #2, light source) and a touch of Step #3 (rendering), being consistent with the light source. Then I use a brush to further reinforce the darks in the head, and then lastly I use a brush to render (Step #3) but not forgetting to draw (Step #1) as I apply the brush strokes.

Here's another example where combining steps comes into play. This time, when I inked the dark-haired guy, I executed all three steps—drawing, light source, rendering—simultaneously (especially the hair) using 100 percent brush.



While our caped hero's body is outlined in pen, the cape is done using all three steps at once done with a brush: Step #1, shape of the cape; Step #2 darks of cape, combined with Step #3, final rendering with brush strokes.

In this panel drawn by my mentor and friend Dick Giordano, I inked with a brush the folds of the sleeve and the shadow being cast from the arm, simultaneously executing all three steps: shape, light source and final rendering.

**CONCLUSION** Aside from the lesson here, it's important to keep refining and honing your inking and rendering techniques and finding what works best for you. I recommend if you have a copy store near you to make copies of penciled artwork printed in light blue ink on a comic book art board so you can get the full experience of inking a comic page. Good luck and keep practicing!

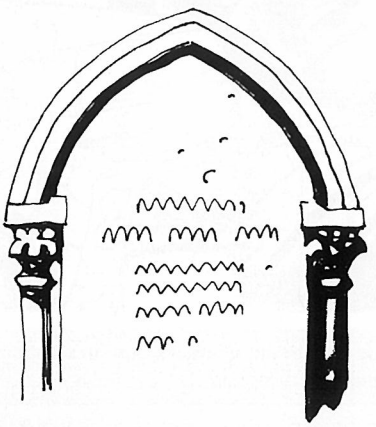
# BUILDING A SETTING

BY MIKE MIGNOLA

Hello, I'm Mike Mignola. I've been knocking around the comics industry for about 14 years now and I've drawn all sorts of things for all sorts of people. Lately, I've been writing and drawing my own book—*Hellboy*. It's sort of an action/adventure/horror/mystery kind of thing; lots of ghosts and monsters flying around banging into each other. Anyway, I've gotten a reputation for drawing dark, moody stuff, so the people at *Wizard* thought I'd be the right guy to teach you about building the right setting for your story, in this case, drawing spooky graveyards as an example of the process.


## NOTSOFAST!

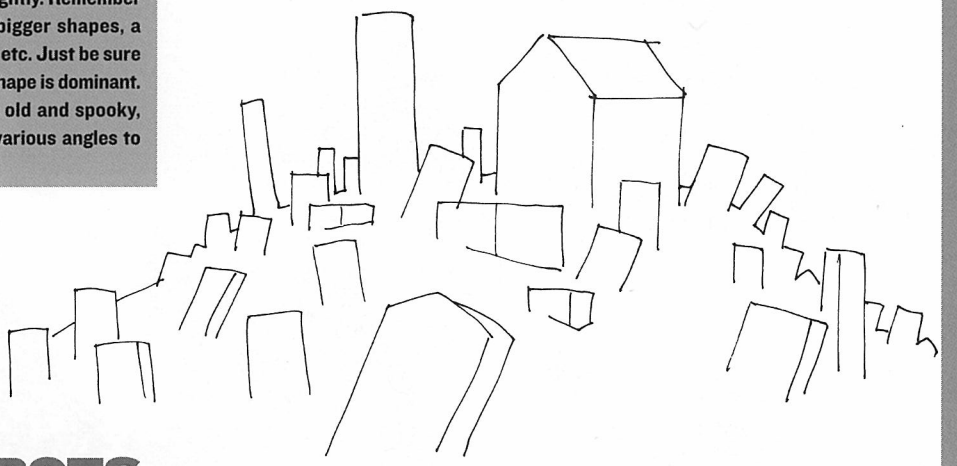
First, I want to talk about reference. (I hear people out there groaning, but please bear with me.) We Americans actually keep most of our dead people, so there's sure to be a cemetery near you. Go look at it. Take pictures. Concentrate on the old section. That's probably where you'll find a greater variety of tombstones, statues, etc.



Now, you want to avoid drawing the cemetery on the right. Boring! Lack of visual information is a clear sign that you made everything up. And that just takes away from the spooky realism. The drawing on the left, however, is based on a real tombstone. Looks better, doesn't it? Okay, down to business: Let's draw a graveyard.

## LAYIN'OUT

Step one: Lay out your rough shapes. You might want to use a non-repro blue pencil for this or just draw very lightly. Remember variety! Use a couple of bigger shapes, a couple of tall shiny things, etc. Just be sure that the basic tombstone shape is dominant. Since a good cemetery is old and spooky, lean your tombstones at various angles to help show its age.



## BLACKSPOTS

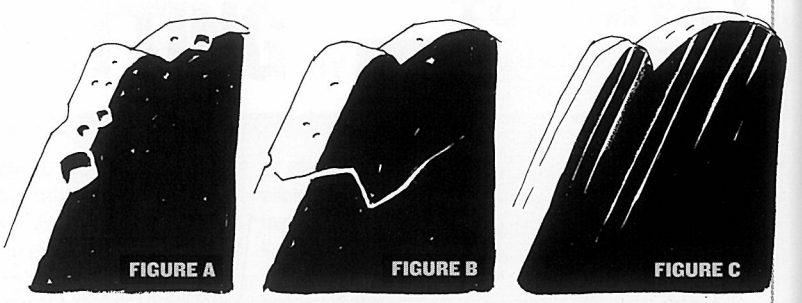
Step two: I know you're dying to go right on to drawing details, but don't. Patience, my children. Instead, throw a piece of tracing paper over your layout. With a big black marker, spot your blacks. (That's a fancy art term for filling in your black areas or adding shadows.) Fool around. Try a bunch of different things till you come up with a black/white pattern you're happy with. Then go ahead and really fill in your shadows on the page.

## THEFINISH

Step three: You've done the hard part; now do the fun part. Using your references, turn those shapes into cemetery objects. You've already set up your dark and light pattern, so finishing should be a snap. Remember, you want this graveyard to look old, so a lot of surface details should be worn off of the tombstones. You don't want any clean, straight lines, either, so **DO NOT** use a ruler or template on anything. Which leads us to...

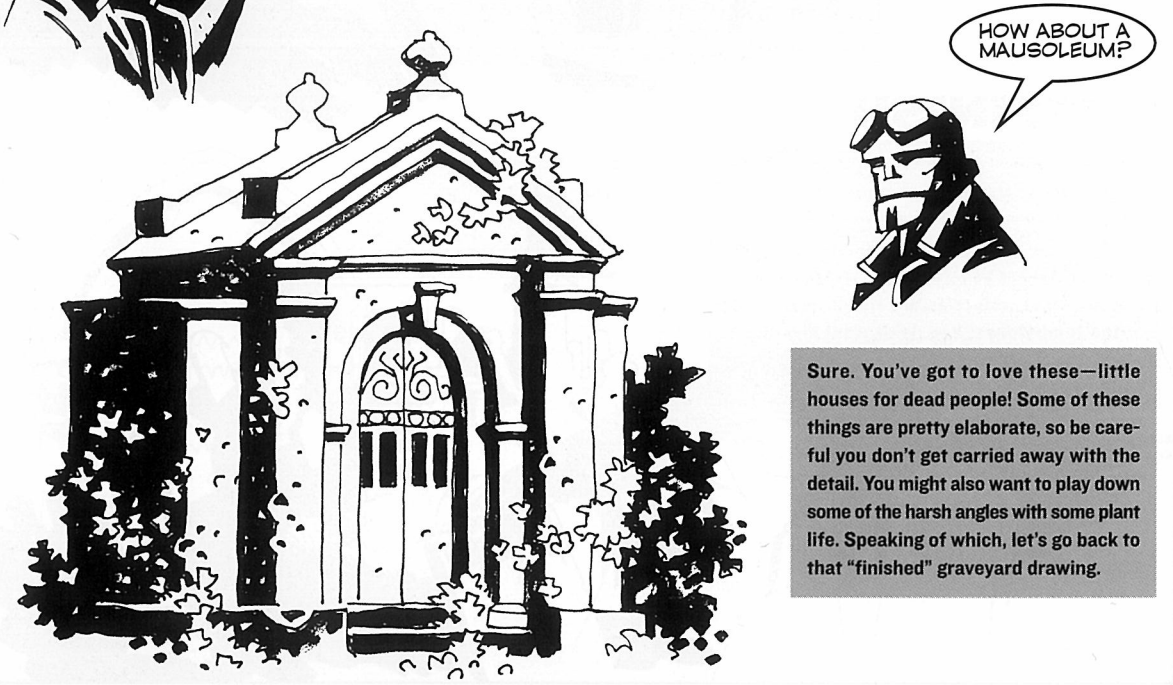
## TEXTURE

When we look at these tombstones up close we want to see that time has not been kind to them. So we need to muck them up a bit. You can do this by chipping the edges (as in example **Figure A**) or cracking them (like example **Figure B**). On wooden markers, however, you can show splitting (make sure you go with the wood grain) by leaving white streaks in your black areas, as I've done in example **Figure C**.





Statues are great. The more you use, the more people will refer to your work as "Gothic." If that's what you're looking for, then go nuts! Treat statues like the tombstones above. Beat them up. Crack them. Lose a limb here and there. And for that extra neglected look, add some ivy.



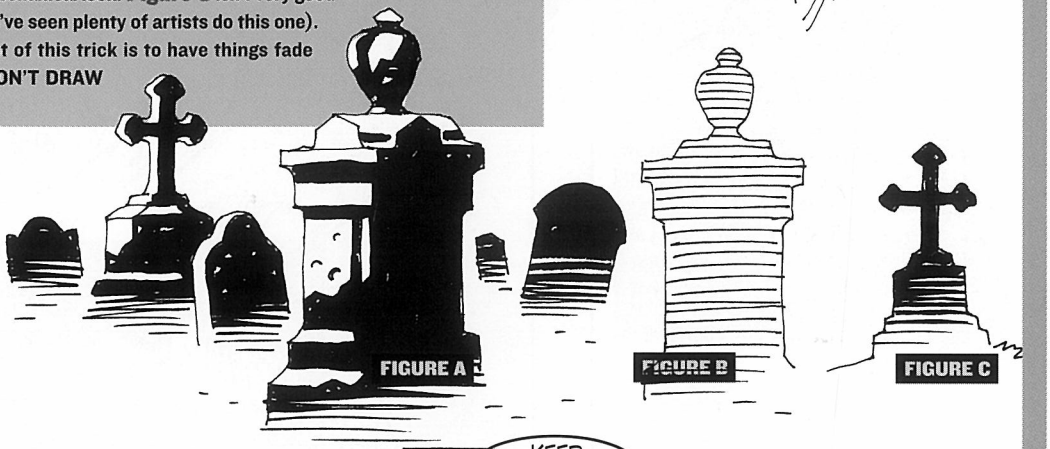

Sure. You've got to love these—little houses for dead people! Some of these things are pretty elaborate, so be careful you don't get carried away with the detail. You might also want to play down some of the harsh angles with some plant life. Speaking of which, let's go back to that "finished" graveyard drawing.

## THEFINALCUT

All right, we're in the home stretch now. Just a few more details and we're done. Start by adding some trees. Trees in the background pop out those white tombstone shapes on the left, while the closer tree near the right softens the shape of the mausoleum. And make the trees gnarled, leafless and unpleasant. Remember, their roots are sucking the juices out of all those buried dead guys...


## PLAYMISTYFORME

Here's a painfully overused technique that's quite effective if done correctly (as seen in **figure A**). Design your tombstones so they're predominantly black, then "fade" the black area into a few horizontal lines. **Figure B** isn't very effective because you don't see the tombstone detail, and all those lines give the drawing a mechanical look. **Figure C** isn't very good either (though I've seen plenty of artists do this one). The whole point of this trick is to have things fade into mist, so **DON'T DRAW THE GROUND!**



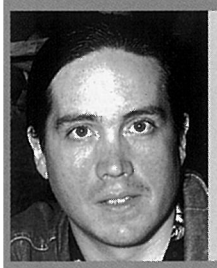


Well, that's about all there is to making your graveyards spookier. Just don't forget the thing about *reference*! Really! Please! A couple hours of picture-taking and you've got great-looking graveyards for the rest of your natural life.

Now go have fun. I'm going back to work. W

# MOOD

BY KELLEY JONES



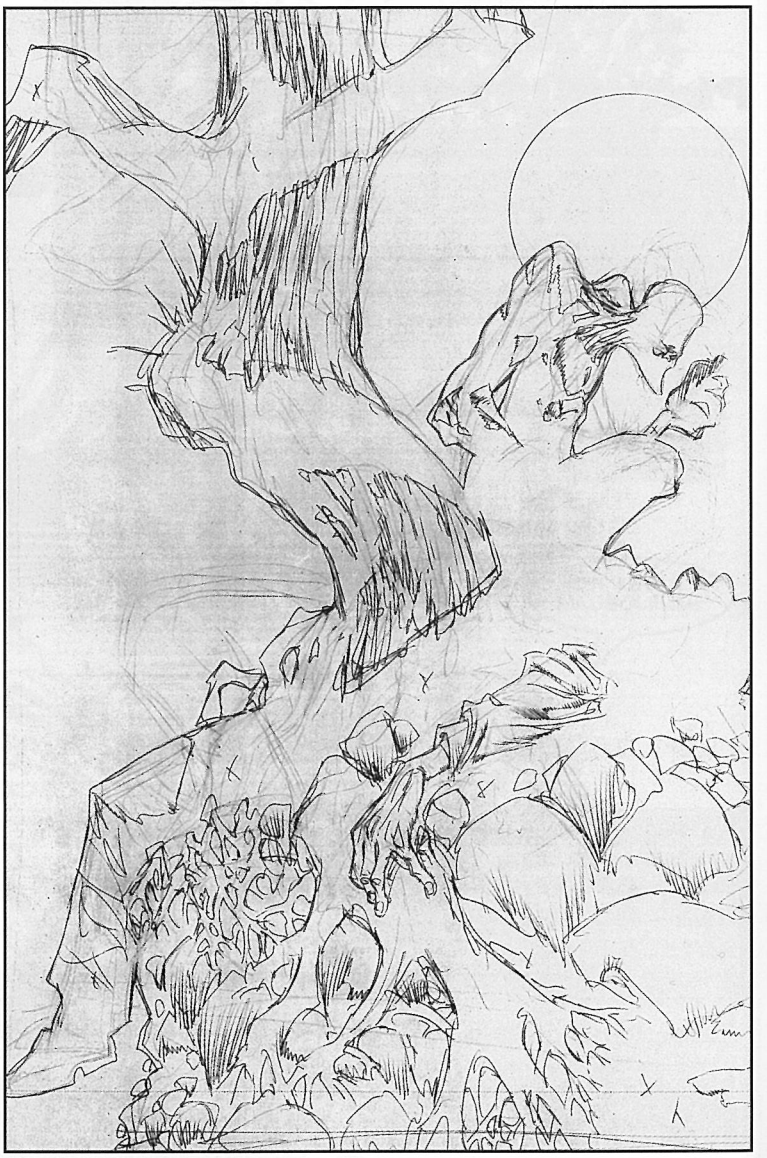
First off, let me say that this little ditty on how to draw horror is simply my own personal way. By no means is this the *only way*. In this column, I'll be emphasizing ideas more than techniques, because that's what horror really is. It's all one big mind game. Don't worry, though—I'll tell you as clearly as I can how to achieve the maximum impact of these ideas in your drawings. As for any prerequisites to successfully establishing a mood in your pieces, I highly recommend taking a number of film appreciation courses. Films and comics are very similar in their frame-to-frame storytelling. These courses will not only teach you about foreshadowing, foreground and other technical aspects, but they'll teach you about how to really look at your work. Okay, that's my little pep talk—now dim the lights and cue the spooky music!

## DARK STORYTELLING

To begin, I loosely sketched out my ideas with a soft blue watercolor pencil. In this example, I haven't erased the unnecessary lines, because I want you to see the construction and the choices I made towards completion.

Now, a horror picture should suggest a story in order to properly attract its viewer. Silhouettes and strong lighting help me guide the viewer to look at the parts of the picture that will do this.

I find that the best results are achieved when I look at something and ask either "What happened?" or "What *will* happen?" Here in this picture, I'm trying to cause revulsion at what occurred as well as tension for what will soon follow.



## PRO TIPS

### OUTFIT ADVICE

"Look at yourself in the mirror. What do your clothes say about your attitude, job, friends? Clothes can speak for a character more than the characters themselves do." —Rags Morales, *Identity Crisis*

## IINK,THEREFOREIAM

Inking this, I only used a No. 3 watercolor brush. You should try inking without worrying too much about any goofs. Staying loose will help you make fewer errors. So attack the pencils and feel free to move the paper around. This lets you "see" the build-up of the line and decide where to place the black areas.

To make the picture atmospheric, I'll use different textures. To do this, I use shorter, thinner strokes on the tree bark, and longer, more rounded strokes on the stones. On the shadow, I try and keep the edges clean so the viewer can tell what the object is.

## MOONOVERMINEENEMY

To emphasize the goblin and add more atmosphere, I added the moon. Rather than draw it, I placed a sheet of tracing paper over the entire picture and taped it into place. I then cut away everywhere the sky was. To achieve the air-brush effect, I used an old toothbrush and applied the ink to the toothbrush with the watercolor brush. About two or three dips on it should do. Then I pulled back on the bristles with my thumb and let 'em snap back. Do this a few inches away from where you want the spray effect and feel free to do it a few times in areas you want darker. To make the moon appear brighter, I didn't outline it in ink. This makes it recede into the background and frame the goblin, as well as make the shadows darker.

## GETTHEWHITEOUT

The final stage is where you want to use white-out. Not only can it clean up your mistakes, but white-out can actually add to you drawing. Notice how the rocks are more rounded out and the roots extend more deeply into the black.

And that's it. See how horror isn't just blood and gore? Through lighting and silhouettes, I can suggest the action. This, to me, is much more effective, because the viewer can use his imagination to fill in the nasty bits better than I could draw them.

## CONFIDENCE GAME

In this sketch, I only partially inked the areas that I'm drawing. You don't always have to pencil every detail if you are going to ink it. This helps to add vitality to the drawing as well as give you confidence in your skills. I also find it fun to do because all kinds of "good" accidents can occur. For example, in this piece, the way the hair curls on top of the water wasn't in the pencils.

## BRUSHWITHEVIL

All of this inking is done with a brush. This helps get across the current and buoyancy of the water. I always try to do my brush work first, because that keeps the drawing fresh and exciting.

On the monster, I emphasized its feet and hand by using as little rendering as possible; I barely outlined them. The monster itself will seem creepier with human appendages, and the decapitated head anchors the bottom of the picture while hinting at the girl's possible fate.

## INKINGTO CROWABOUT

All of the inking at this stage was done with a crowquill pen point. You can find them where calligraphy pens are housed at art stores. They're more flexible than a rapidograph pen (which is normally used for drawing straightedge technical things like buildings and machines), so they take a little more time to learn how to use. They're good for things like the bubbles and wave outlines, because they keep a consistent line thickness. And on the lines leading up to the surface, the pen will "give" a little, so it blends together like a brush.

## TWOTREATSINONE

Using a little white-out on the surface waves and the decapitated head's hair helps to give some definition to both.

This drawing's main interest is that it's two pictures in one. If you cover the top of it and just view the underwater scene, it alone makes an interesting picture. Yet the scene above, with the girl's eyes, lets you know something's not right, even if you don't see why. And the fisherman not responding lets you know it's silent action, which is even spookier.

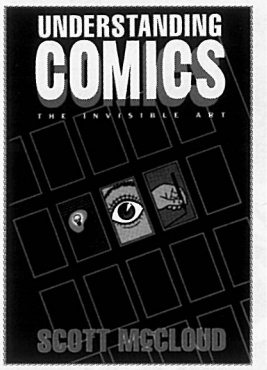
**WELL, HOPEFULLY,** this column has helped to (pardon me) get you in the mood. Anyway, the best advice I can give you is to discipline yourself to sit in a chair and just draw for hours a day. Once you accept the fact that your drawing won't be perfect, you can stop wasting time worrying about it. Also try drawing things you don't like, so you won't be afraid to draw them. When you get those things down, you'll find your time will be much more horribly productive.

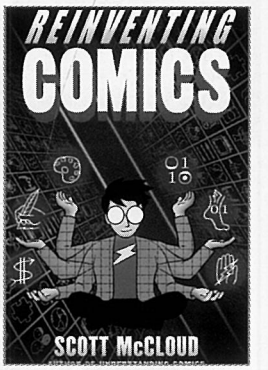
*Kelley Jones has plumbed the depths of horror in books like DC's* Batman/Dracula *and IDW's* Cal McDonald.

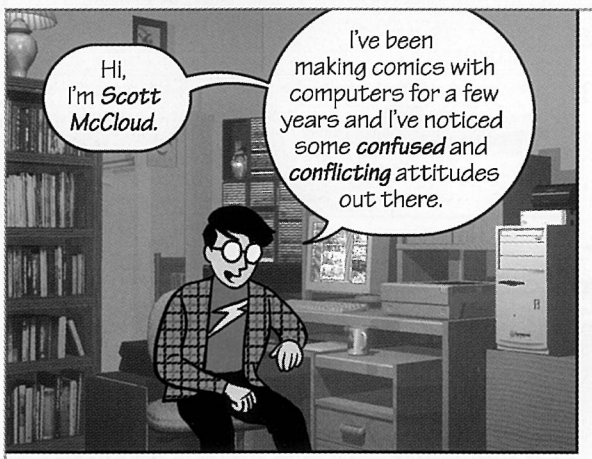
# COMICS & COMPUTERS

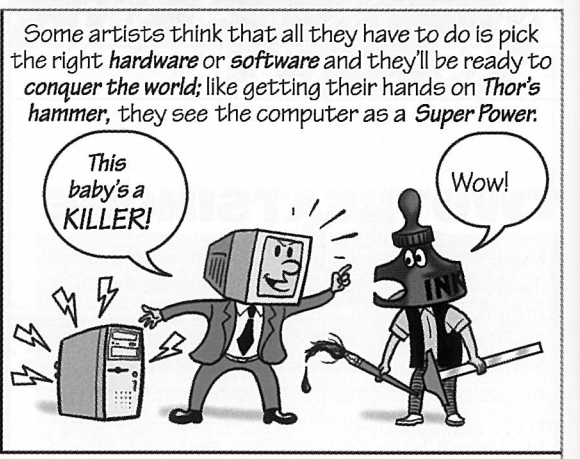
BY SCOTT McCLOUD

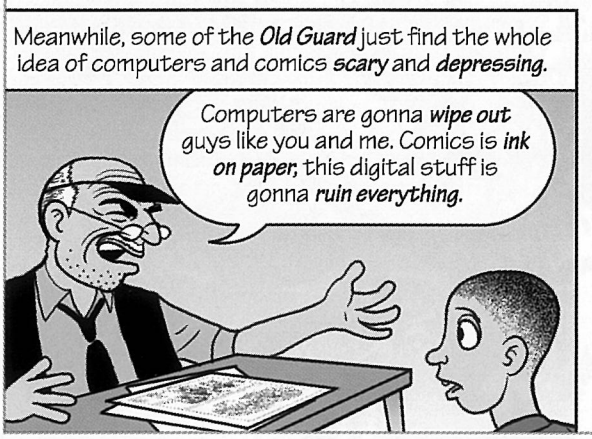
**To say that Scott McCloud is a revolutionary comic book creator would be an understatement. Not only did McCloud create the superhero-tinged alternative series *Zot!* for Eclipse, he went on to write *Understanding Comics*, a critically acclaimed tome deconstructing comics as an art form; *Reinventing Comics*, which foretold the role computers would play in the creation of comics; as well as a host of influential Web comics. Here, McCloud—who has lectured on digital media at M.I.T.'s Media Lab as well as the Smithsonian Institutition, gives prospective artists interested in digital creation a taste of what to expect when comic artists sit down at the mousepad instead of the drawing board.**

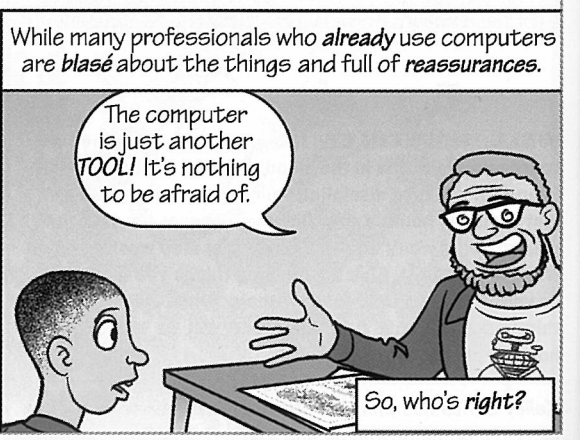



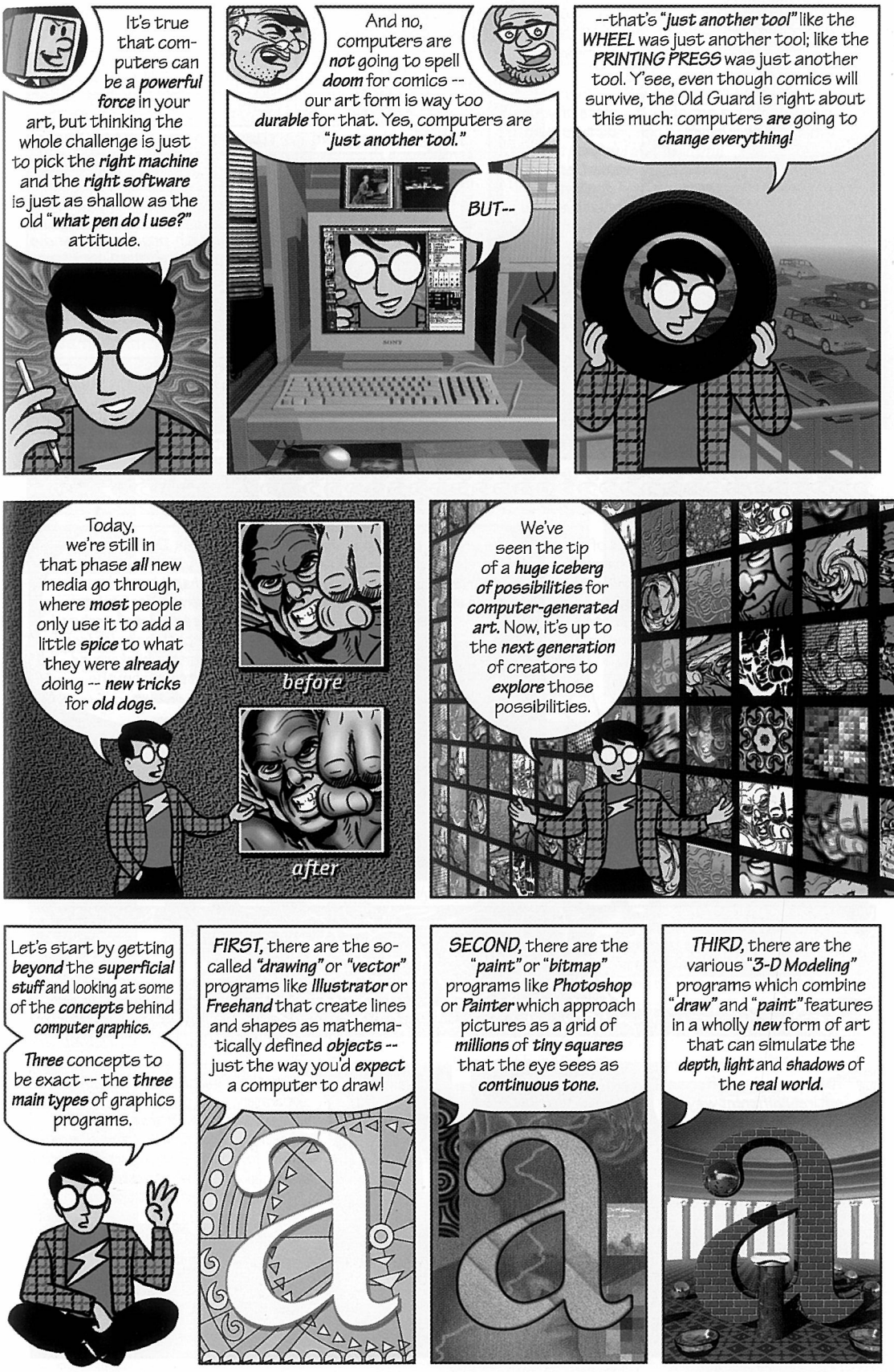



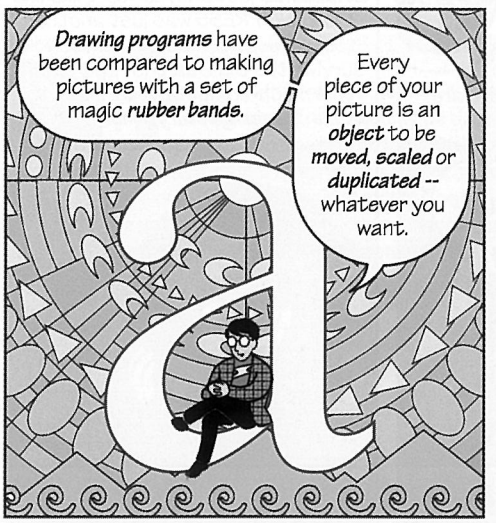



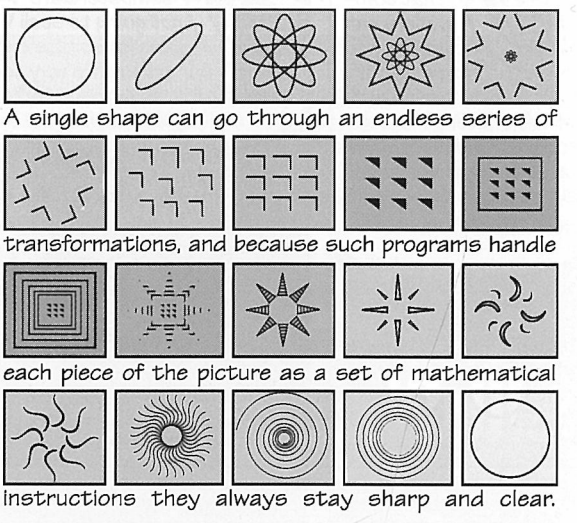



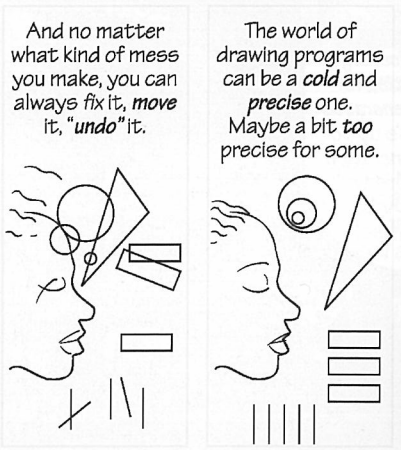



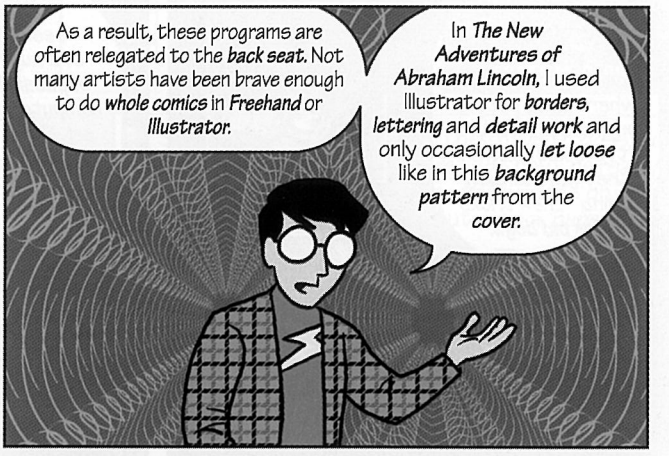




It's true that computers can be a *powerful force* in your art, but thinking the whole challenge is just to pick the *right machine* and the *right software* is just as shallow as the old "*what pen do I use?*" attitude.
And no, computers are *not* going to spell *doom* for comics -- our art form is way too *durable* for that. Yes, computers are "*just another tool.*"
BUT--
--that's "*just another tool*" like the *WHEEL* was just another tool; like the *PRINTING PRESS* was just another tool. Y'see, even though comics will survive, the Old Guard is right about this much: computers *are* going to *change everything!*
Today, we're still in that phase *all* new media go through, where *most* people only use it to add a little *spice* to what they were *already* doing -- *new tricks* for *old dogs.*
*before*
*after*
We've seen the tip of a *huge iceberg of possibilities* for *computer-generated art.* Now, it's up to the *next generation* of creators to *explore* those possibilities.
Let's start by getting *beyond* the *superficial stuff* and looking at some of the *concepts* behind *computer graphics.*
*Three* concepts to be exact -- the *three main types* of graphics programs.
*FIRST,* there are the so-called *"drawing"* or *"vector"* programs like *Illustrator* or *Freehand* that create lines and shapes as mathematically defined *objects* -- just the way you'd *expect* a computer to draw!
*SECOND,* there are the *"paint"* or *"bitmap"* programs like *Photoshop* or *Painter* which approach pictures as a grid of *millions* of *tiny squares* that the eye sees as *continuous tone.*
*THIRD,* there are the various *"3-D Modeling"* programs which combine *"draw"* and *"paint"* features in a wholly *new* form of art that can simulate the *depth, light* and *shadows* of the *real world.*

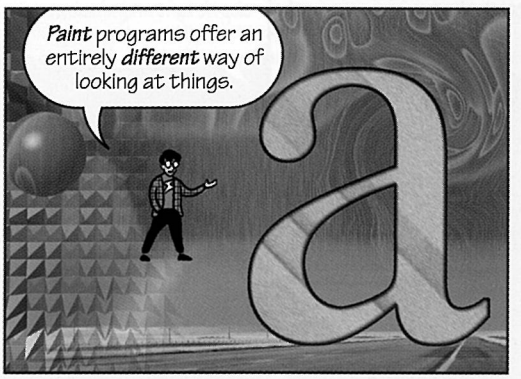

*Drawing programs* have been compared to making pictures with a set of magic *rubber bands.*
Every piece of your picture is an *object* to be *moved, scaled* or *duplicated* -- whatever you want.

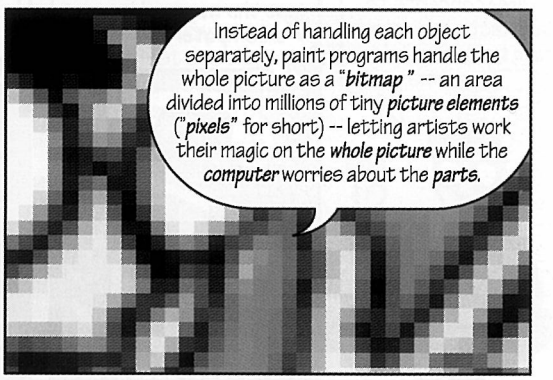

A single shape can go through an endless series of
transformations, and because such programs handle
each piece of the picture as a set of mathematical
instructions they always stay sharp and clear.

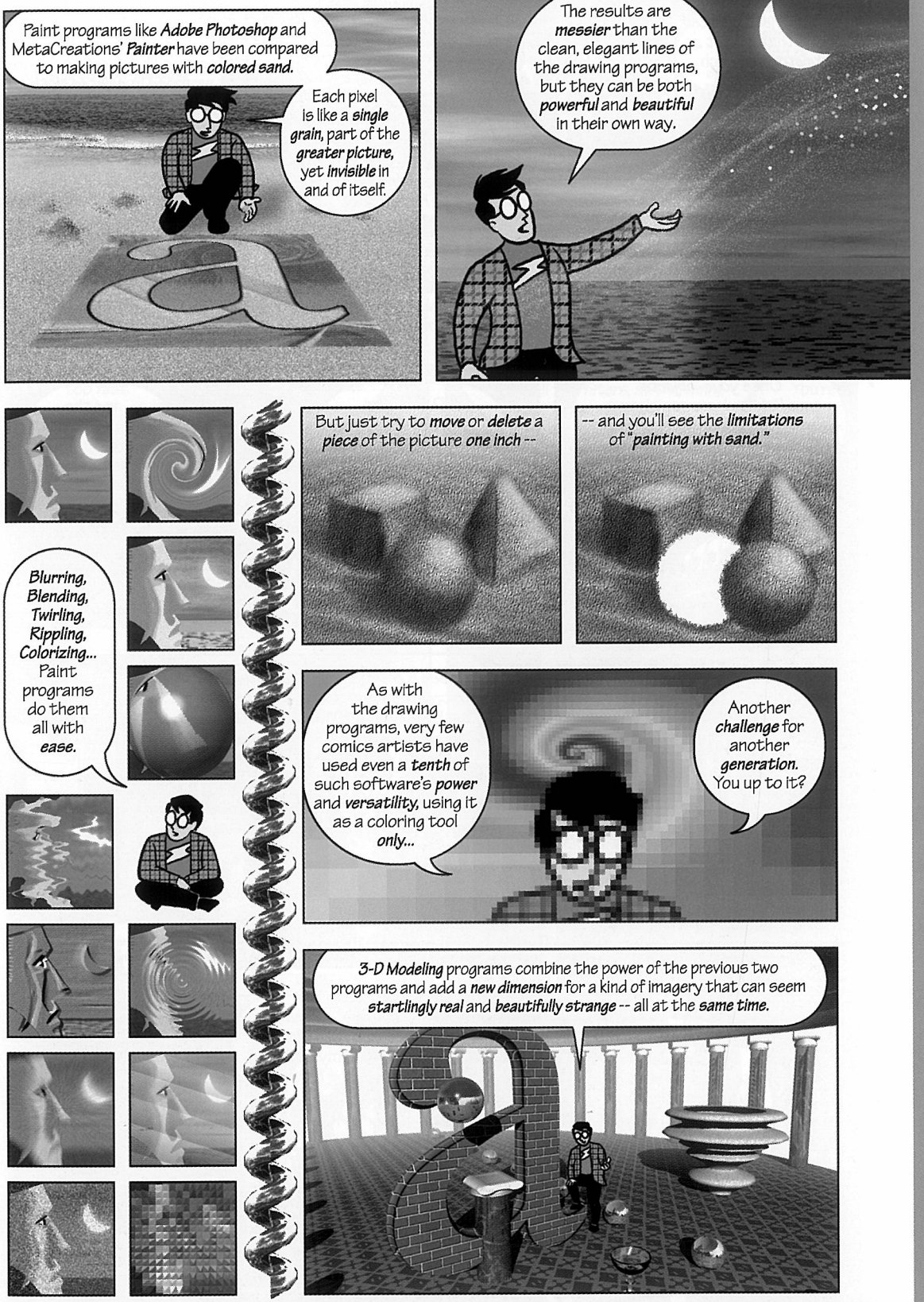

And no matter what kind of mess you make, you can always fix it, *move* it, "*undo*" it.
The world of drawing programs can be a *cold* and *precise* one. Maybe a bit *too* precise for some.


As a result, these programs are often relegated to the *back seat.* Not many artists have been brave enough to do *whole comics* in *Freehand* or *Illustrator.*
In *The New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln,* I used Illustrator for *borders, lettering* and *detail work* and only occasionally *let loose* like in this *background pattern* from the *cover.*

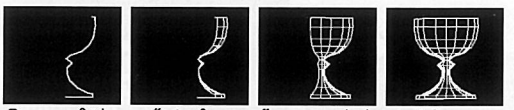

Someday soon, some *young genius* is going to use this kind of software to it's *fullest* and set the comics world *on fire.*
Any *volunteers?*


*Paint* programs offer an entirely *different* way of looking at things.

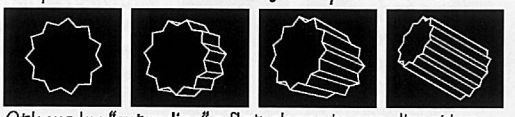

Instead of handling each object separately, paint programs handle the whole picture as a "*bitmap*" -- an area divided into millions of tiny *picture elements* ("*pixels*" for short) -- letting artists work their magic on the *whole picture* while the *computer* worries about the *parts.*


Paint programs like *Adobe Photoshop* and MetaCreations' *Painter* have been compared to making pictures with *colored sand.*
Each pixel is like a *single grain,* part of the *greater picture,* yet *invisible* in and of itself.
The results are *messier* than the clean, elegant lines of the drawing programs, but they can be both *powerful* and *beautiful* in their own way.
*Blurring, Blending, Twirling, Rippling, Colorizing...* Paint programs do them all with *ease.*
But just try to *move* or *delete* a *piece* of the picture *one inch* --
-- and you'll see the *limitations* of "*painting with sand.*"
As with the drawing programs, very few comics artists have used even a *tenth* of such software's *power* and *versatility,* using it as a coloring tool *only...*
Another *challenge* for another *generation.* You up to it?
*3-D Modeling* programs combine the power of the previous two programs and add a *new dimension* for a kind of imagery that can seem *startlingly real* and *beautifully strange* -- all at the *same time.*

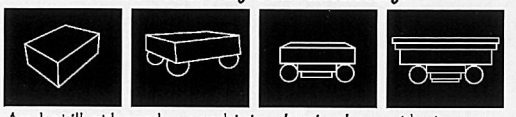
Like *drawing programs*, 3-D involves creating precise, object-oriented *shapes* that will act as *skeletons* for each *3-D object*.



Some of these *"wireframes"* are made by *twirling* a shape around an *axis* like *clay* on a *potter's wheel*.

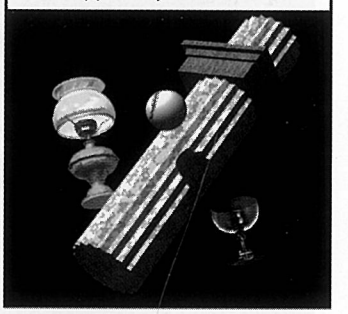


Others by *"extruding"* a flat shape in one direction like a *cookie-cutter* or *Play-Doh Fun Factory*.



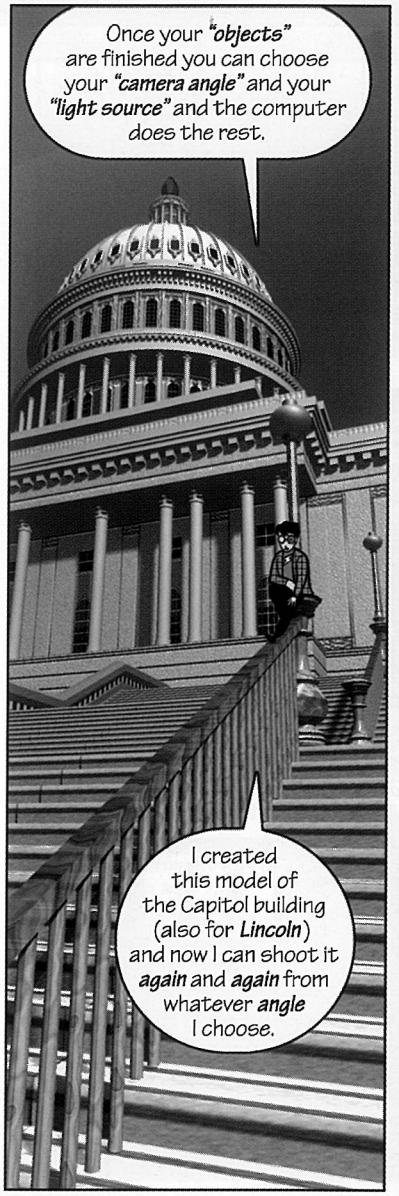
And still others by combining *basic shapes* that come *pre-made*, like *building blocks* or *modular furniture*.

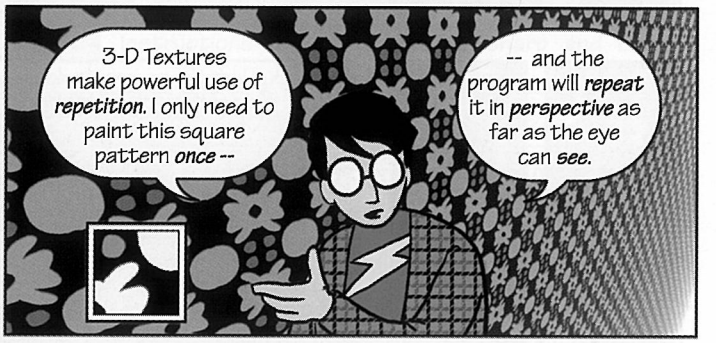
The *wireframe shapes* are now wrapped in *textures* and *patterns* that have been created as *bitmaps* by *paint programs*, like a wire sculpture wrapped in *painted cloth*.

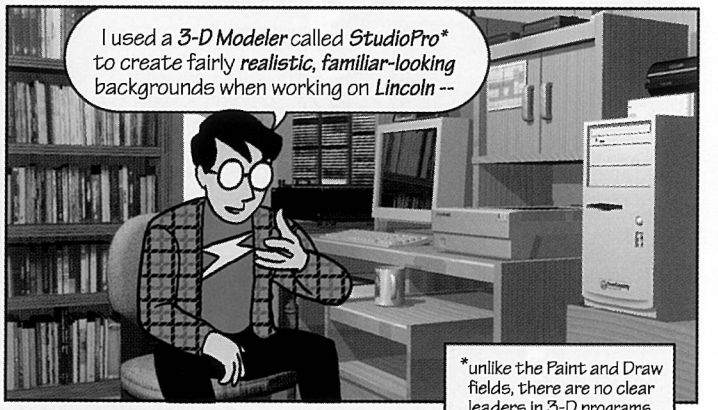


Once your *"objects"* are finished you can choose your *"camera angle"* and your *"light source"* and the computer does the rest.

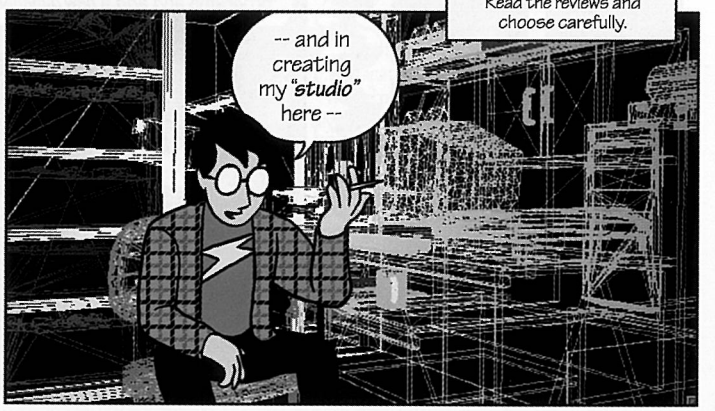
I created this model of the Capitol building (also for *Lincoln*) and now I can shoot it *again* and *again* from whatever *angle* I choose.

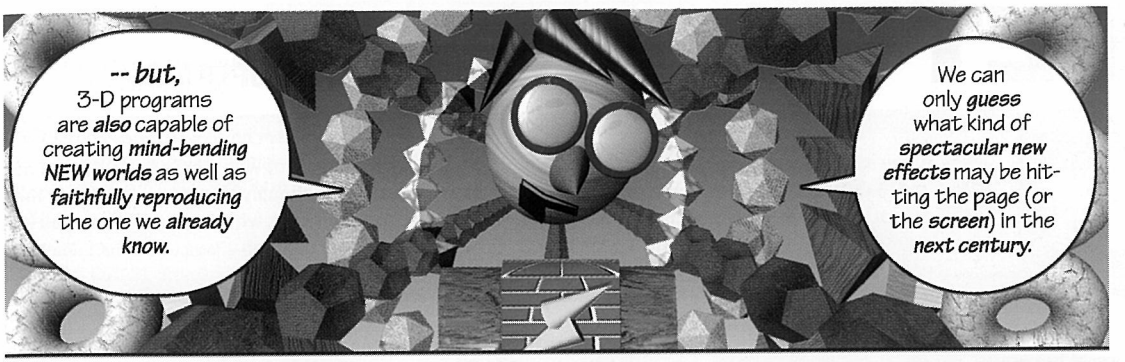


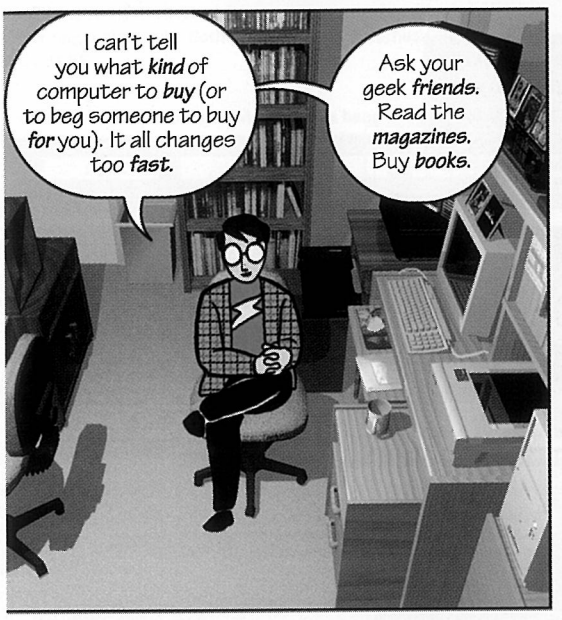



*unlike the Paint and Draw fields, there are no clear leaders in 3-D programs. Read the reviews and choose carefully.




-- but, 3-D programs are also capable of creating mind-bending NEW worlds as well as faithfully reproducing the one we already know.
We can only guess what kind of spectacular new effects may be hitting the page (or the screen) in the next century.


I can't tell you what kind of computer to buy (or to beg someone to buy for you). It all changes too fast.
Ask your geek friends. Read the magazines. Buy books.


But here's a tip you won't find in any book. The first time you get your hands on some great new art software, you're going to want to try anything that looks cool. All the filters, all the weird color effects...
You're going to want to play around.


Later on, you'll figure: Hey, it's time to settle down, time to look for a job, outgrow all those flashy effects, straighten out and get down to business.


DON'T DO IT!
Playing around is a crucial part of understanding the new tools, and it's the one's who really understand this stuff inside out who are going to change comics forever.


Sure, you'll have to know when to rein it in. Sure, there's a subtle side, there are disciplines, there'll be some hard work ahead --

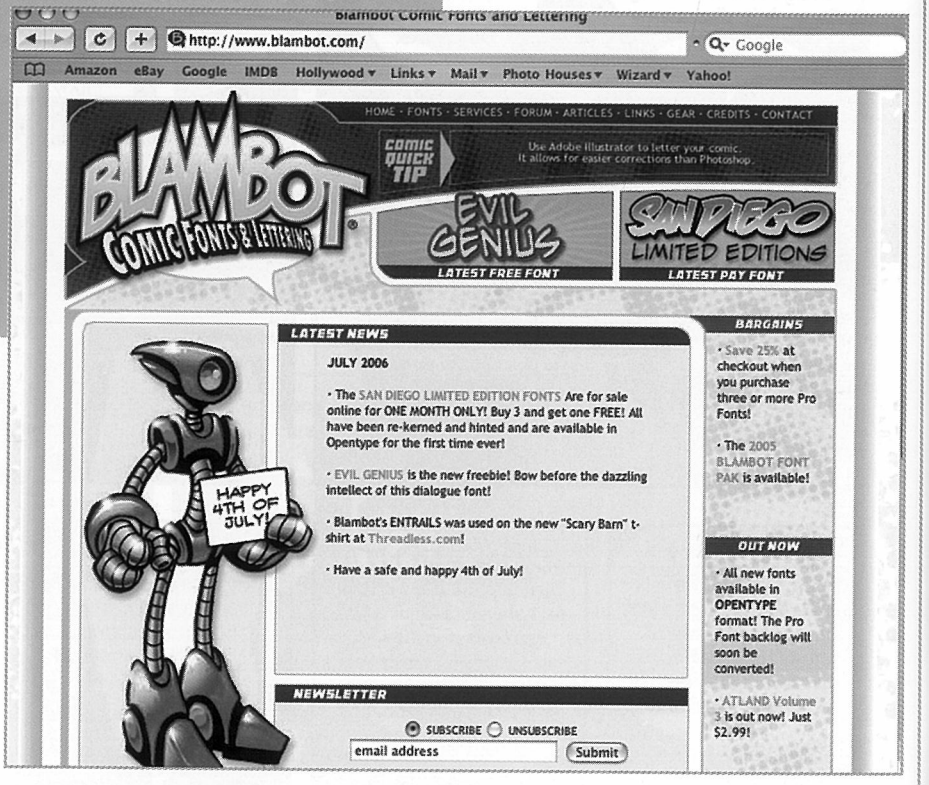

-- but if you can learn it all and still know how to have FUN --
-- you can conquer the world.

# LETTERING BY CHRIS ELIOPOULOS

So, you say you're creating your own comic book, and thanks to the *How to Draw* series, have the artwork ready to go. It's been penciled, inked, colored and scripted—but what about the lettering? It's necessary, sure, but who wants to do it? And how can you get it done cheaply? Do it yourself! Don't think you can? Well, just stick with me and I'll show you how to letter your own comics!

## THEBASICS

Very few comics are lettered by hand these days. It takes time and practice to get really good. So for this exercise I've decided to concentrate on computer lettering. You can, in time, create your own fonts using programs such as Fontographer or Font Lab. I suggest that you start out with buying a comic book font from folks like Active Images or use a free one from Blambot. You'll also need Adobe Illustrator—it's a great program that I do all my lettering in. Read the manual and learn all the functions. Once you have all that, we're ready to begin.




## THETEMPLATE

Always start out by making a template: a page set-up that you can reuse as many times as you like. You should have the book title, issue number and page number on it that can be changed and resaved for each new page. I also make a layer and create a rectangle the size of the actual finished artwork. It's usually 6.875 by 10.5 inches. I give it no fill and no stroke making it invisible, then I lock the layer. I do this so when it comes time to composite the lettering to the artwork, they're both the same size and the lettering lines up properly. You can create a layer and place the artwork there; lock it and letter over it, so you know where to place the balloons.

**ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN SCRIPT • ISSUE THIRTEEN**
**BY BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS**

**MARK-** *A lot is being asked from you for this script. I hope I can rely on you, as I have successfully so far, to make the character acting subtle and warm. "Less is more" will go a long way to sell this puppy. Have fun.*

**PAGE 1-**

**1-** Int. Peter Parker's bedroom- day
HALF PAGE, ESTABLISHING SHOT.
The room of a science nerd in the background. An Einstein poster. See issue one for reference.
Mary Jane and Peter sit at the end of Peter's bed. Nothing inappropriate. Teenage innocence. They are in a whisper huddle, close but not too close. Peter is a little anxious. This is really hard for him.
Both sitting Indian style. Both in casual school clothes.
**MARY JANE**
So?

**2-** Peter wide eyed. Looking at Mary like his head is about to explode from anticipation and excitement.
**PETER**
Yeah.
So, I- uh-

**3-** Mary. Waiting. Patient. But good humored. V

**4-** Peter. Same as two but tighter.
**PETER *(CONT'D)***
I have something to tell you.

**5-** Same as 3.
**MARY JANE**
Okay.

**6-** Peter almost out of breath. Will he pass out
**PETER**
Something- whoo boy-
Something big.

**7-** Same as 2. She waits for it.
**MARY JANE**
Okay.

# THESCRIPT

**The script (Fig. A) is usually done in a word processing program, but Illustrator can open it. Once it's open, you can select all the type and change it to the font and size you like. Usually, at print size, most fonts are good at 6 points with a leading of 6.5 points. Then you can begin cutting and pasting individual balloon dialogue for each page.**

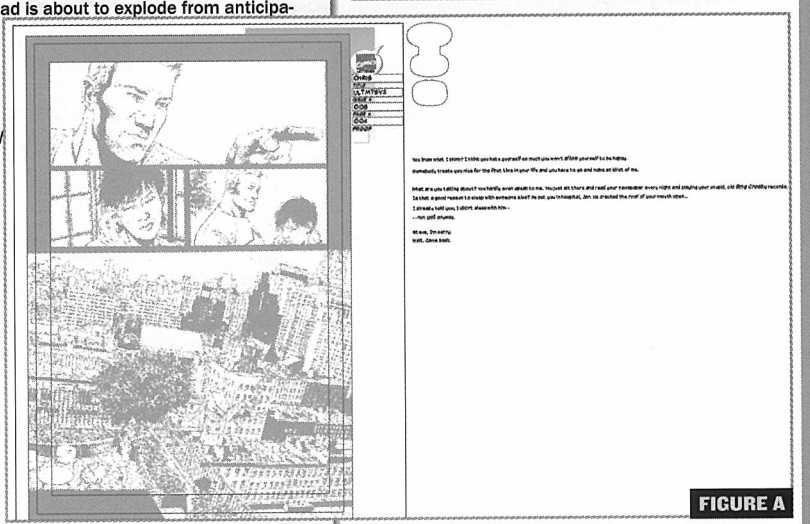


**FIGURE A**

# BREAKING TYPE

**After you have all your balloon text broken up into individual type lines, it's time to break it up into smaller lines that look good in a balloon (Fig. B). I usually leave the type flush left and just insert the type tool and hit return at key spots to make sure that when you are done, there's a slight bow in the middle. After that, just select all and, using the paragraph palette (or Command-Shift-C) center the type (Fig. C).**

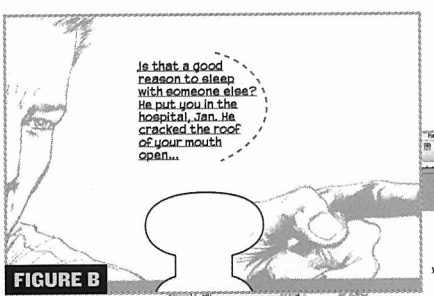



**FIGURE B**

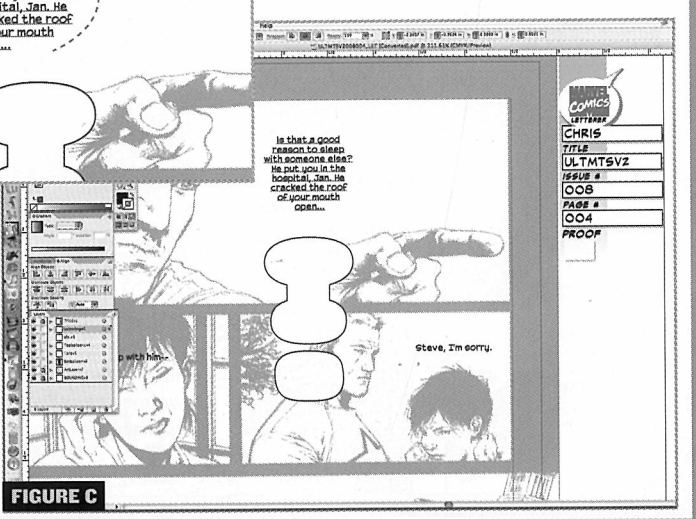


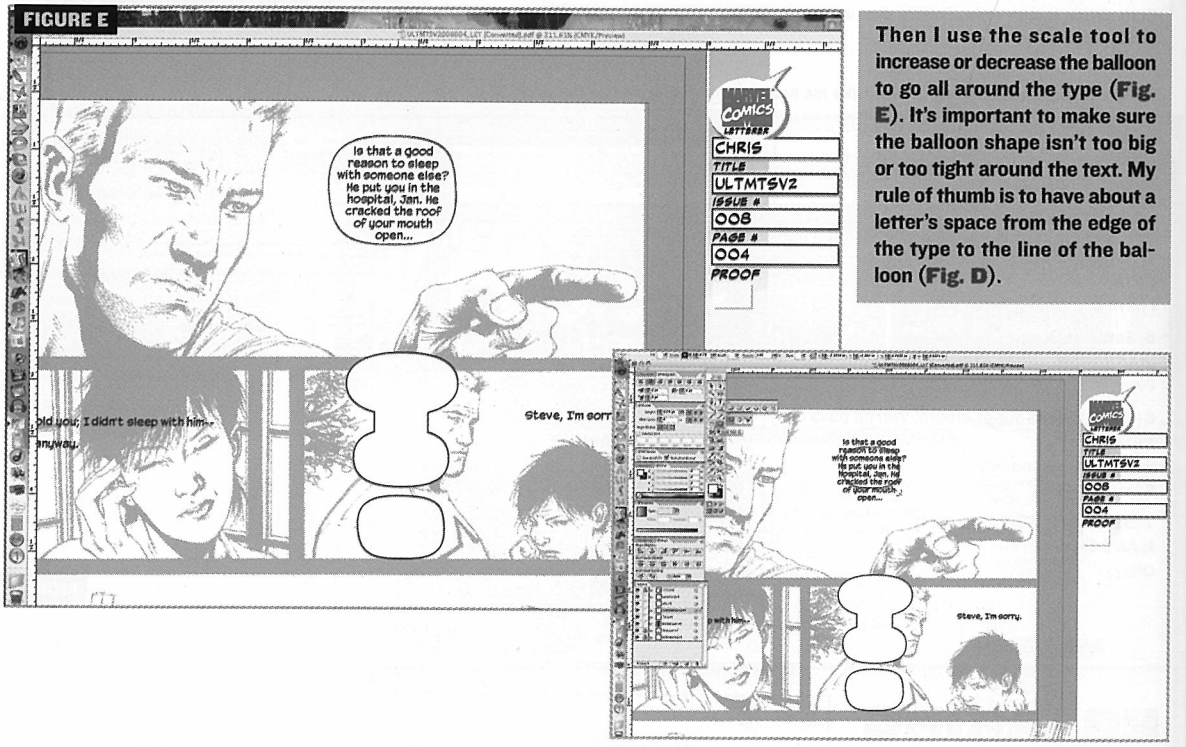

**FIGURE C**

# THEBALLOONS

Now, it's time to put that balloon around the type. To make things simple, make all your balloons with a white fill and a black stroke set at .75 points. You can pre-make a set of balloons, which I have done. They're a little more squat than a pure oval, which I prefer, but you can just go right ahead and use the ellipse tool. I choose among my balloons to find one that I think will fit around the text nicely, leaving as little dead space as possible. I copy it (click and hold down the option key and drag it where you want and release) and drag it centered, approximately, on the type (**Fig. D**).

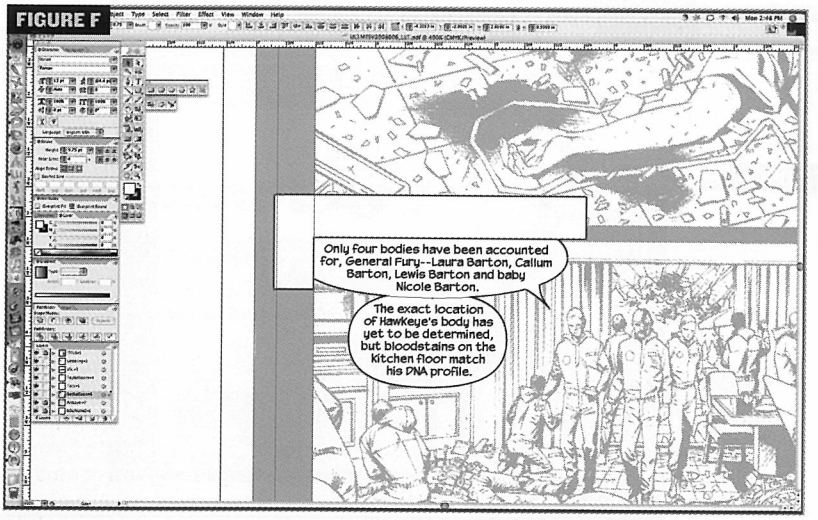

FIGURE D

FIGURE E




Then I use the scale tool to increase or decrease the balloon to go all around the type (**Fig. E**). It's important to make sure the balloon shape isn't too big or too tight around the text. My rule of thumb is to have about a letter's space from the edge of the type to the line of the balloon (**Fig. D**).

FIGURE F




For balloons that butt up against a border, it's a simple method of ensuring that the balloon is more spaced out on that side, make a rectangle along the borderline, select the two objects, and using the pathfinder palette, use minus front (**Fig. A**).

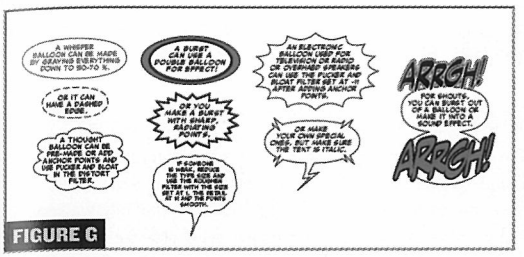


FIGURE G

# STYLIN'

The way you letter your comic and format the word balloons can help convey emotion or a particular feeling to the reader. There are a number of effects you can use to present meaning in context of the story. Keep in mind: The rules still apply in distance and spacing (**Fig. G**).

# THETAILS

Just like creating templates, tails can be pre-made to save time, but I usually do mine for each balloon using the pen tool. Generally, tails should always point at the face of the character that's speaking (and at their mouth specifically). Using the pen tool, you click somewhere inside the balloon, and while still clicking, drag out to another point which aims toward the mouth, and release (**Fig. H**). Then do the same in reverse, trying to give at least a letter's distance from the first point (**Fig. I**). Then select both the balloon and tail, and using the pathfinder palette, unite them (**Fig. J**).

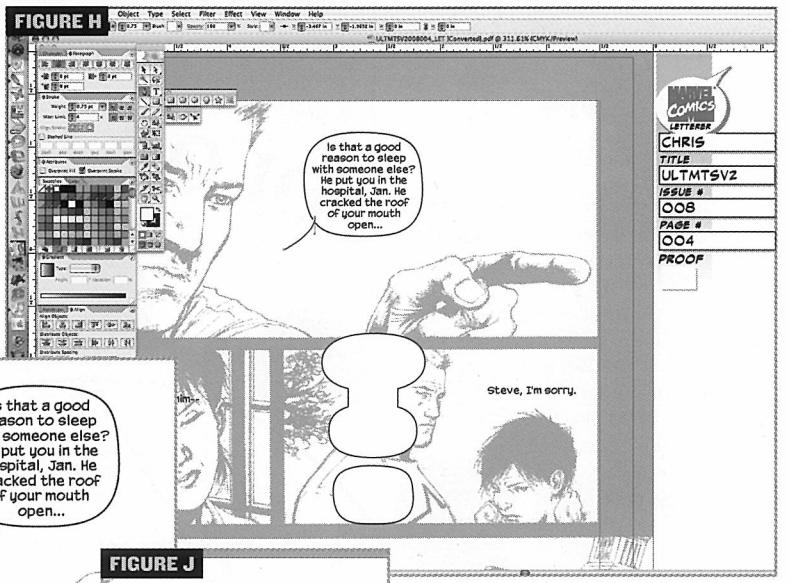


FIGURE H

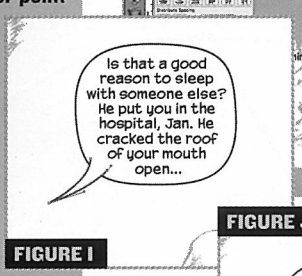


FIGURE I

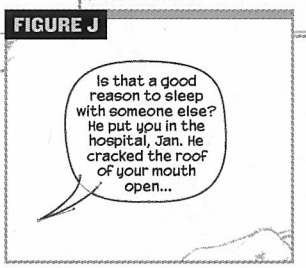


FIGURE J

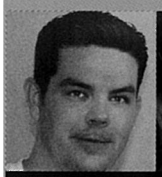
# THESOUNDEFFECTS

Creating sound effects looks complex (**Fig. K**), but you can keep it really simple (plus, it's fun as all get-out!). First, type in the word you want to use: "Baboom!" Then convert it to a sound effect font you own and create outlines and ungroup. Use the skew and scale tools to vary the size of each letter, making sure not to vary TOO much from letter to letter. Then select the sound effect and copy it and paste behind it (Command-B). Then increase the point size to the size that works for you. Pretty simple, eh?

FIGURE K


**CONCLUSION** Well campers, that's the main material on lettering. Obviously there's a lot more we could discuss in lettering and how to do different things, but I believe this can get you on the road to lettering your own book. And, who knows, if you like it enough, you might go on to become a letterer yourself. Good luck!

# COLORING BY LIQUID! GRAPHICS


CHRISTIAN LICHTNER


ARON LUSEN

We know what you're thinking. "Coloring? You've got to be kidding! All these bozos need to do is stay within the lines and they're set." Truth be told, it's impossible to cover such a copious topic as color in one sitting. In this column, we hope to touch on some basic principles of color theory and explain some of the thought processes that go into doing what we do at coloring house Liquid! Graphics. Ultimately, we hope to convince you to go out and upgrade from that box of 64 colors with the sharpener in the back.

You be the judge.

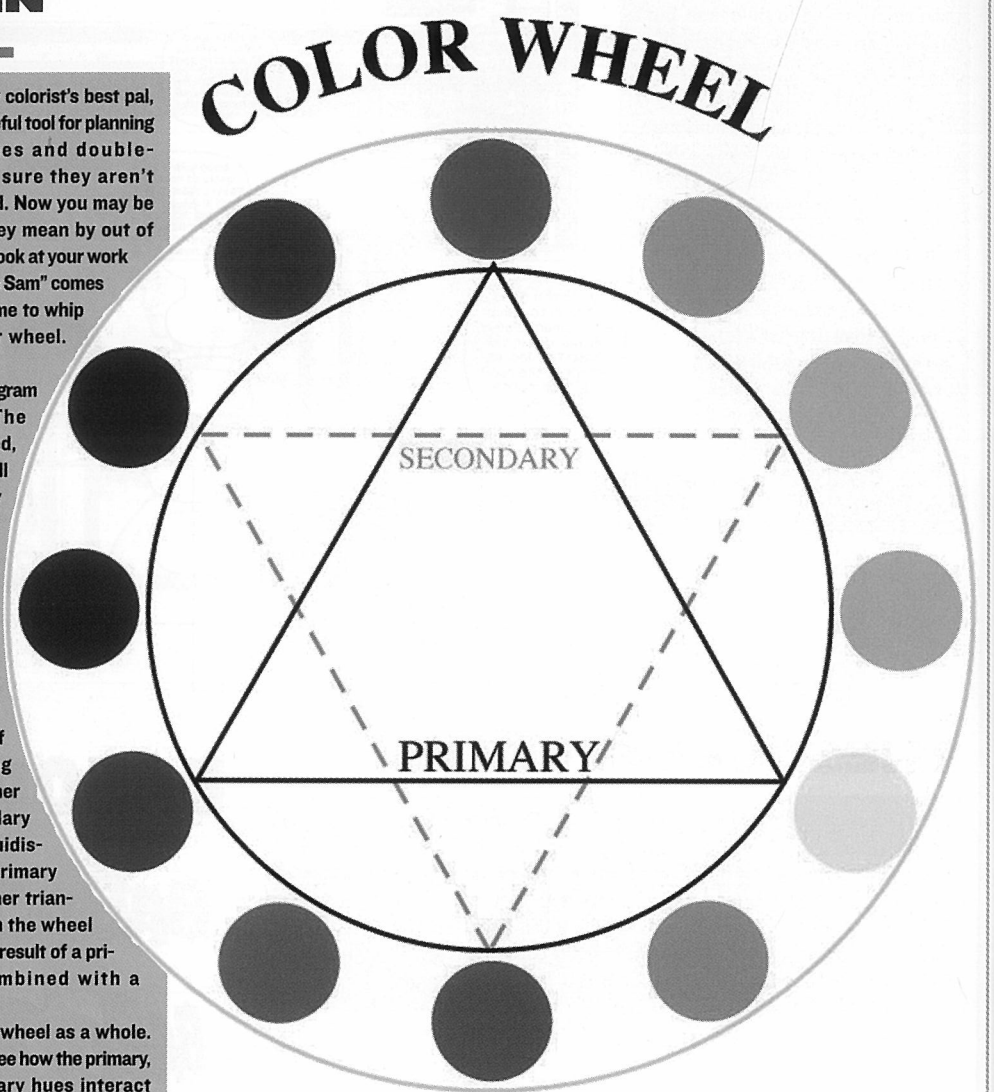
## SPINNIN' WHEEL

Let's talk about every colorist's best pal, the color wheel—a useful tool for planning your color schemes and double-checking to make sure they aren't getting out of control. Now you may be asking, "What do they mean by out of control?" Well, if you look at your work and the name "Toucan Sam" comes to mind, it may be time to whip out that trusty color wheel. Hey, it doesn't lie!

Check out this diagram of a color wheel. The primary hues are red, yellow and blue. You'll notice that the primary colors form an equilateral triangle within the circumference of the wheel.

The three secondary hues are orange, purple and green. Secondary hues are the result of a primary hue being combined with another primary hue. Secondary hues are located equidistantly between the primary hues, forming another triangle. All other colors on the wheel are tertiary hues, the result of a primary hue being combined with a secondary hue.

Review the color wheel as a whole. You should be able to see how the primary, secondary and tertiary hues interact with each other as they progress around the wheel.



# COLORMEBLUE

Have you ever noticed how colors can evoke a certain ambiance? That's all about using color to create mood, baby! When choosing a set of colors to work with, remember that different hues convey distinct feelings.

Check out this image of E.V.E. from our series *E.V.E. Protomecha.* Here we have E.V.E. set on an empty background **(Figure A)**. Now, look at the same figure of E.V.E. on a red background **(Figure B)**. The warmth of the background really kicks up a sense of drama here. Skeptical? Well, let's move on to the next image. Here we have the same figure, but on a cool background **(Figure C)**. There is now a more calming feeling coming from the image, a huge contrast to the previous one with the red background.

Here are some basic moods and the colors that convey them:

Warm Colors (red, orange)—convey heat and energy

Cool Colors (blue, green)—convey cold and calmness

Light Colors (colors with white added to them)—convey lightness and careless freedom

Dark Colors (colors with black added to them)—convey oppressive gloom

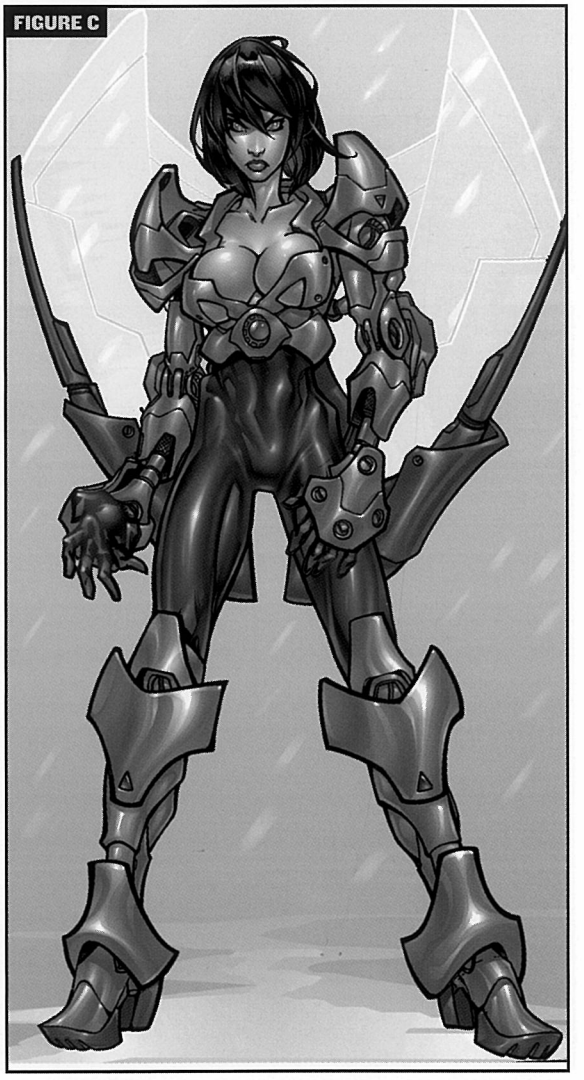
Bright Colors (vivid, colororful hues)—generate excitement!

Why do you think advertisements are usually in bright yellows?!?

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C



# SCHEMESANDDREAMS

Next, let's discuss color schemes. They sound so devious. You can relax, though; they have nothing to do with us plotting our revenge against pencilers who blow their deadlines. A scheme refers to a combination of colors that are used together to elicit an overall mood. Color schemes allow you to follow certain established patterns to make everything work together nicely. Follow these road maps, and they'll take you where you want to go. Let's rattle them off:

**MONOCHROMATIC SCHEMES** This would be the most basic of schemes—schemes that are all done in one color. Another subcategory is achromatic, which are basically schemes with no color. But that's not what this lesson is all about, eh?

FIGURE D

**ANALOGOUS SCHEMES (Figure D)** Schemes made up of any three consecutive colors on the wheel of color. Pick three—any three!

**COMPLEMENTARY SCHEMES (Figure E)** Compositions that rely on a color juxtaposed with one directly opposite it on the almighty color wheel—that is, it's complementary color.

**CLASH SCHEMES** These schemes combine a color with a color to the left or the right of its complement.

FIGURE E

FIGURE F

**NEUTRAL SCHEMES (Figure F)** These are schemes that rely on colors that have been "neutralized" by adding either black or its complement to it. Thus, resulting in colors that are very grayish and, well, neutral.

**PRIMARY SCHEMES** As the name implies, schemes that use the primaries—red, yellow and blue.

**SECONDARY SCHEMES** These are... can you guess? Yes, schemes that use the secondaries—green, violet and orange. Easy, huh?

**TERTIARY TRIAD SCHEMES** Lastly are schemes that use one of two combos. Either red-orange, yellow-green or blue-violet. Or they use blue-green, yellow-orange or red-violet. Note that all of these are equidistant from each other on the color wheel. Cool, huh?

# STYLISTICALLYSPEAKING

So this brings us finally to the most important concept of all—style. Here's where you take the things you've learned from the previous pages and put them all together. Mix them up nicely, add a bit of your own personality and voila, you've got "style"! Style is really the heart of coloring and oftentimes separates what is good from what is great. There are a ton of different styles out there and we dare you to make up your own.

At one end of the spectrum you have flat rendering. This is most often seen in anime and consists of, at its most basic level, a use of a dark and a light color to render your drawings three-dimensionally. Oftentimes that's called two-tone rendering. However, you can easily add more tones to this style of rendering and all of a sudden you could be using three, four or five tones, yet still just be using flat colors (**Figure G**). On the other end of the spectrum, you'd have fully rendered drawings. Here you would attempt to render your drawings as photo-realistically as possible. Oftentimes a colorist will use a very airbrush-oriented style to mimic reality as best as possible (**Figure H**).

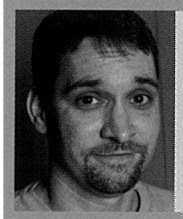
FIGURE G

FIGURE H

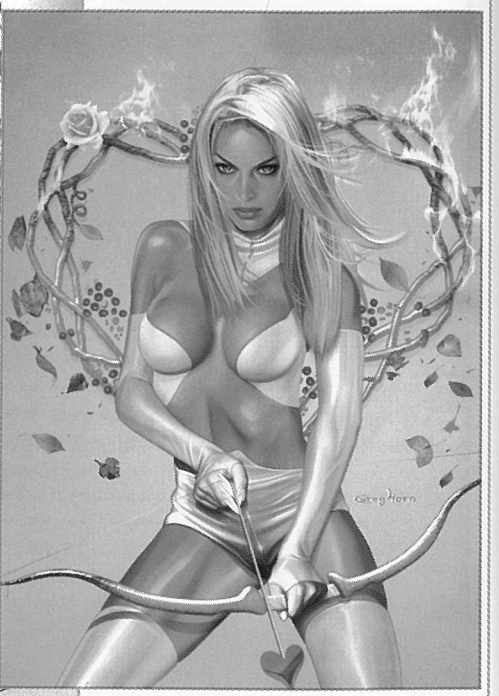
**THAT OUGHT TO DO IT** for this edition of "Chris and Aron spout nonsense." By the way, we know on the outside you're wishing for a penciler, but deep inside that dark heart of yours, in the coldest recesses that you reveal to no one, you're secretly hoping that we'll be back again. Admit it, you love color, you do.

*In addition to the creator-owned* E.V.E. Protomecha, *Christian Lichtner and Aron Lusen's Liquid! Graphics has colored a 64-pack's worth of comics, including* X-Treme X-Men *and* Ultimate Elektra.

# DIGITAL PAINTING BY GREG HORN



Ever found yourself at the comic book rack drooling over a cover featuring Black Widow, Emma Frost or Elektra? It's okay to admit it: *She-Hulk* cover artist Greg Horn's hyper-realistic, digital paintings can stop anyone in their tracks. Excerpted here from *The Art of Greg Horn*, he lays down his steps on how to make a regular sketch pop with digital coloring. But word of note: All of the techniques Horn discusses here are best done using a pen tablet rather than a standard mouse. Many of the techniques needed involve pressure-sensitive movement; mouses can be used, but generally only by the mentally insane. Check out your local computer store for more information.



## BADSKETCH, BADPAINTING

Greg Horn here, folks! First things first: It's best to start with a strong sketch. It doesn't matter if it's fully shaded or a line drawing, but a little shading is always better. The reason: It's a guide for the rest of the process. Scan the image in using greyscales because color tends to tint the pencils.

FIGURE A

## FOCUSONTHEFACE

After scanning in the pencils on any painting, I like to start with the face. It's absolutely the most important element of your painting to illustrate well. Who cares if you draw a nice foot? But in this case, (**Figure A**) I pasted in the cap and hair. It would look goofy if we have a finished painting of the face with no hair around it. It makes sense; you'll see.

FIGURE B

## DARKTOLIGHT

With Elektra, the hair was built from black to the lightest color, and the darkest reds of the bandana were painted with a soft edge brush. The reason is like the idea of darkest to lightest with the colors; go softest to hardest with the brushes. That way, when you use the light colors there is a feeling of more detail in the strands (**Figure B**). Also, keep in mind the little things you want portrayed. I went with thicker lines in the hair because it gives her a wet effect, and the hair curls let you know heat is being applied (flames are providing the light source in the final piece).

## START PAINTING

The techniques I use when doing a digital painting are the same ones I would use if I were doing a traditional airbrush piece. As a disclaimer though, you'll notice all the colors are actually rendered. None of that dropping colors over fully shaded pencils for me. It's overused, and who wants to do what everyone else is doing? My advice is to set yourself apart by doing it the hardest way possible. That said, start by using the lasso tool to select the entire face minus the eyes. Add in basic color bases with a hard-edged brush. This is backwards from the hair, but the softer brushes this time will be used in blending. In **Figure C**, I felt a middle tone would be most prominent so I used it first. It's a medium orange tint, since I was thinking about the fire in the rest of the image.

FIGURE C

## FORGETTHELINES (SORTOF)

Now I start filling in all the basic shadow areas using orange-browns. Stick with the soft edged brushes and vary the colors from oranges to medium red-browns under the brows (**Figure D**). If you paint outside the lines, don't worry about it. I use the eraser tool afterwards to clean things up. Some people use lasso and gradient tools to perform this work, but I think the piece has more personality if there are actual paint strokes and then cut away with the eraser. Add your own personality to the finished piece, because the lasso only adds the computer's personality.

FIGURE D

FIGURE E

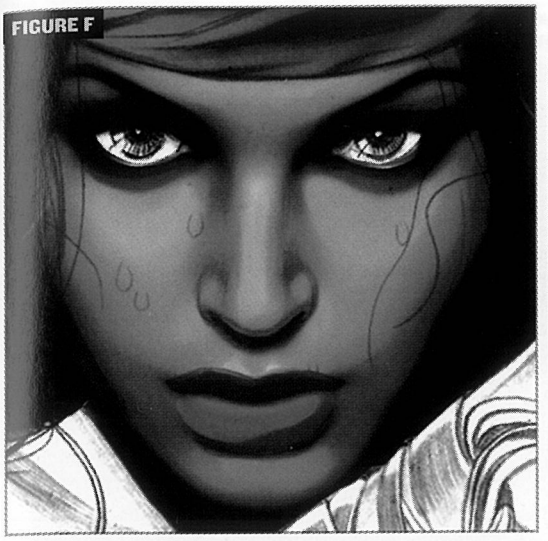
## GETBOLD

Get bold! It's critical to bringing your painting to life. I used very dark brown shadows and medium light highlights to make the colors pop (**Figure E**). I go in and add fat lines where the brows are. To add the hairs, I add little strands of black. Make sure not to press too hard. This is a subtle part amongst the bold. For the highlights, I filled them with pink, which is especially prominent in the middle of the bridge of the nose. To define the darker areas, it's the soft brush again. And to tighten up any sloppy areas or make any edges harder, it's the eraser. I clean out the eyes at this point and make extra sure to keep the shape of the mouth visible. It helps to keep the correct balance of the face in focus.

## REMEMBER THE SURROUNDINGS

As a side note: Normally you'd be using medium pinks in all the redish areas, but keep in mind the fire element in this piece. So try to implement the softest hues of the surroundings into the skin tones (i.e. the raging fire). It really helps to pull the entire painting together. Generally, my paintings have a lighting scheme, and the best part is they generally could never exist. It's art—do whatever you want: realistic style painting, unreal lighting. It's artistic license; use it!

FIGURE F



## CHECKINGUPCLOSE

When I get in close (**Figure F**), it's easy to see the pencil work paying off. Overall, it's showing good texture. I like to drop the pencils even more near the end, because the painting gets a hyper-realistic look that way. But don't overdo it; it's the pencils that create a more organic feel. People (for whatever reason) tend to reject the computerized look, so it's best to avoid it at all costs. Here is where I start on the lips. I painted the shape of the lips with a medium red. The bottom lip is slightly lighter, but has a dark shadow along the bottom edge. Remember, mistakes are okay. That's why there is the eraser tool. Place a black outline around the eyes and move on.

## DOWNTOTHEDETAIL

At this point everything can be added in the minutest detail. For instance, the inner lids are drawn using a salmon color. And I emphasize some extreme highlights for that wet look. The eye base here is solid black (I do this even if the eyes are blue). And this is a good time to draw in her eyelids. And as you can see in **Figure G**, everything starts to come together. Eyeliner is defined by black all around the eyes (no lashes yet). And I top it all off with the largest area of highlight on her lips. Though usually colored pink, the fire on her hot lips (get it?) makes it a light orange here.

FIGURE G

## MOVING OUT

The edges of her hair are already highlighted well, but I decided to strengthen the effect by also adding backlight on her cheeks. Now it's getting dramatic! And once the highlights are looking proper, draw in the strands of hair. Seeing as the overall theme thus far has been a wet look, where once would normally be thin strands of hair across the face, they are clumped, since water makes hair clump.

FIGURE H

## BRINGINGOUT THEEMOTION

To pull emotion out of the eyes, we choose a color. Elektra's eyes are generally very dark, but to define them here I reflected the surroundings in her irises (**Figure H1**). After choosing the color, use a hard brush. In one stroke, I paint the whole thing. I start soft, push harder through the middle and back off again at the end of the stroke. Perfect shape isn't important here because the pupils can be brushed in over the color laid here using a hard black. I added a little more eyeliner and pen FIGURE G ndividual lashes. Everything again was done with a hard-edged brush. Finish it all off with a very intense white highlight to make the eyes really pop!

## FINALFACELIFT

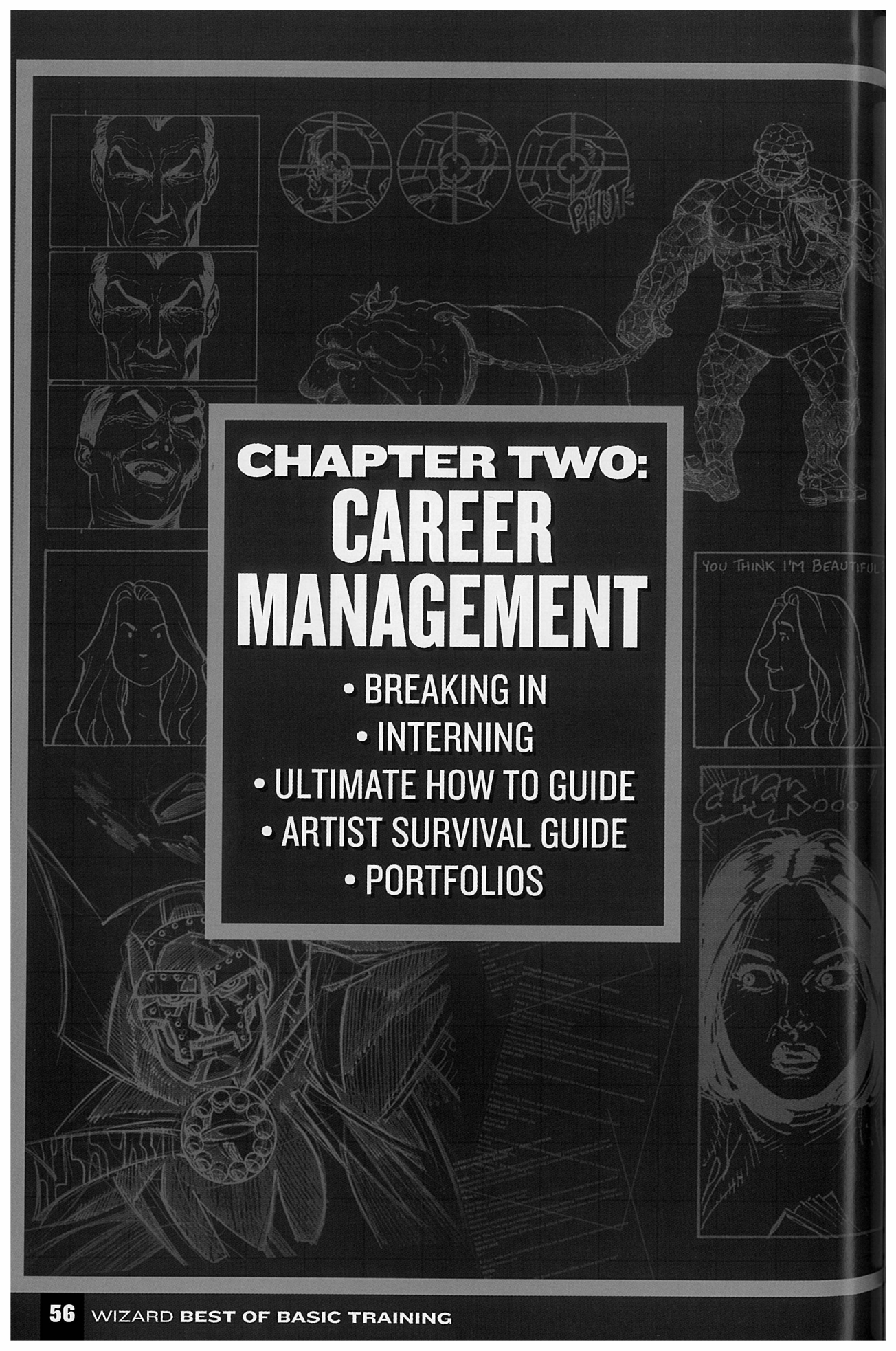
To finish out the face, I hit the lips with the dark colors around the edges and the lights (oranges, reds and whites) to get the glossy look. Then add any middle colors to reflect the surroundings and continue to tie the face into the overall piece. It's all finished off by adding shadows at the corners of the mouth (**Figure H2**). Remember: keeping the edges hard in this step helps create the illusion of moistness.

FIGURE H2

## SEETHEDIFFERENCE


**Here is Elektra split down the middle and colored using digital painting and traditional hand techniques (Figure I). Just repeat the techniques for the rest of her body and you're ready to go. I added a few well-placed beads of sweat and drips to really make it marvy!**

*For a complete look at Greg Horn's body of work, everything from comics to advertising pieces, be sure to pick up a copy of* The Art of Greg Horn, *published by Image Comics.*




# CHAPTER TWO: CAREER MANAGEMENT

- BREAKING IN
- INTERNING
- ULTIMATE HOW TO GUIDE
- ARTIST SURVIVAL GUIDE
- PORTFOLIOS

# BREAKING IN

BY SEAN T. COLLINS

"I can't do this anymore!"

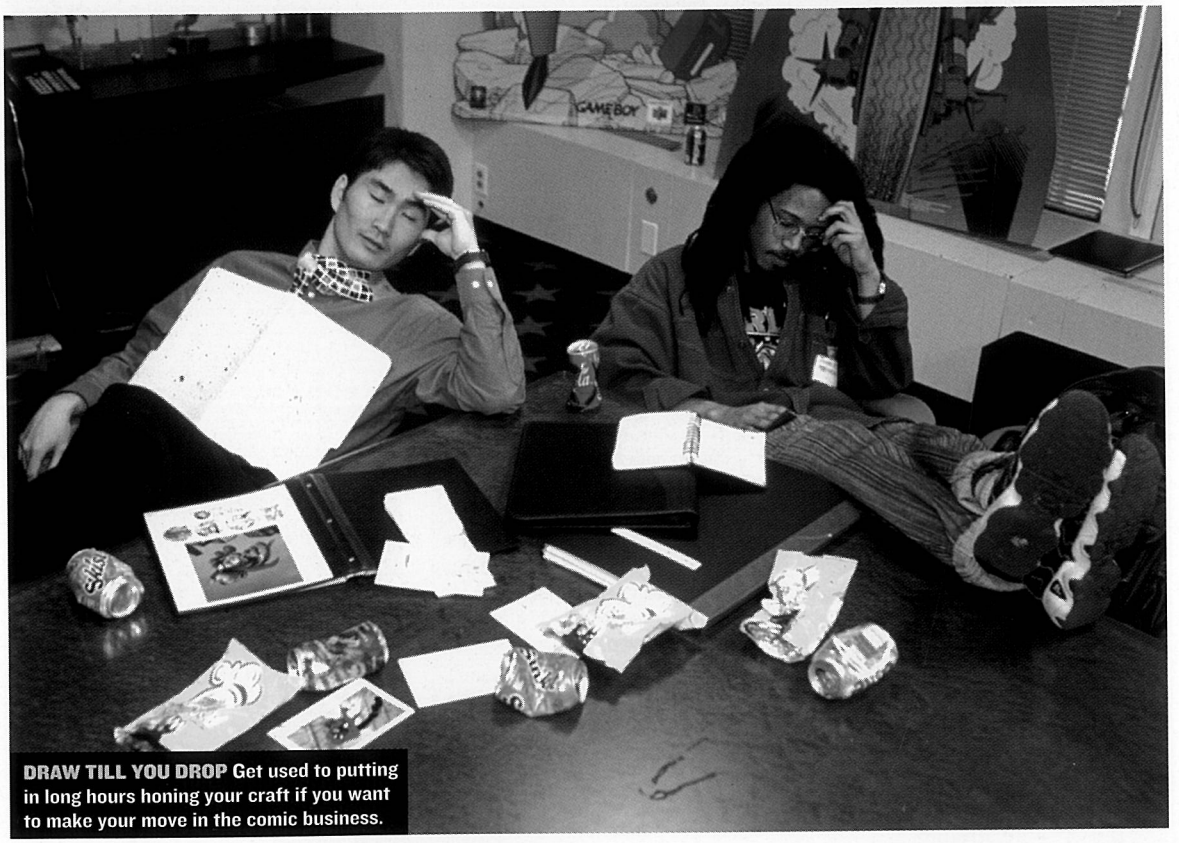
That's what future *Superman/Batman* artist Ed McGuinness said after two weeks in community college. Bitten by the comics bug, he knew he had to become a professional artist—or die trying. "It's that dedication, that determination, that you need," McGuinness says. "You gotta be married to your comics."

So what to do after the honeymoon is over? We've asked some of the industry's top talents for their advice on everything you need in order to break into the comic book biz. From assembling a killer portfolio, to networking at conventions, to dealing with editors and publishers, to avoiding the dreaded siren song of that PlayStation 2, it's all here. With a little luck, a lot of determination and the tips you'll find below, who knows—we may be asking *you* for advice in future *How to Draw* editions!

## SETITUP

Even if you have skills that'd put Michelangelo to shame, it's not going to be easy getting your foot into the door of your favorite publishing house. With a thousand others vying for the same job as you, it all comes down to discipline, good habits and a strong work ethic. Newcomers to the industry often fall victim to the same pitfalls and problems, leaving the sadder but wiser old-timers shaking their heads ruefully about what might have been. "A lot of times guys will run off of raw talent but end up not doing anything with it," says McGuinness of these coulda-been contenders. "Selfishly, I get mad at those guys, because I want to see more of their stuff!"

If you're looking to take a preemptive strike against laziness and lateness, *Green Lantern: Rebirth* artist Ethan Van Sciver has one simple bit of advice for you: "Don't buy a videogame console. You might as well acquire a drug habit. Both would be equally destructive to your goal of getting pages done on time. It's that severe!" Okay, so maybe he's exaggerating a little, but even if *Halo* isn't heroin, it's paramount that you make your art your first priority, even when you're just starting out.



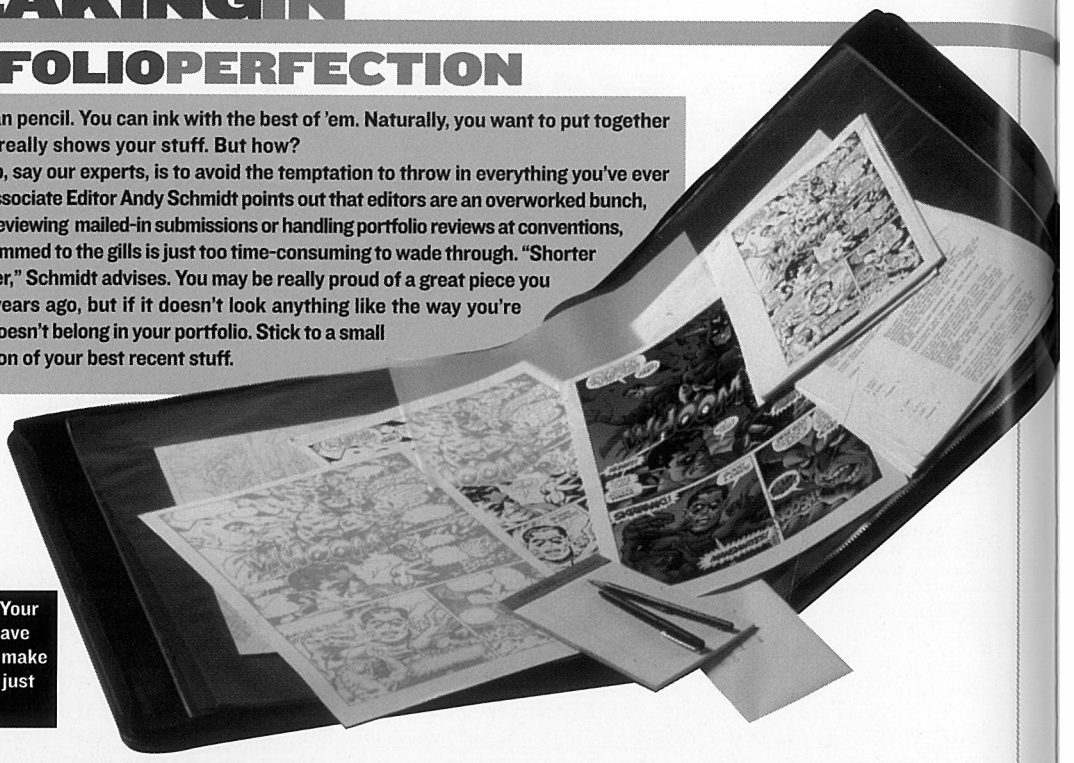

**DRAW TILL YOU DROP** Get used to putting in long hours honing your craft if you want to make your move in the comic business.

# BREAKINGIN

## PORTFOLIOPERFECTION

You swing a mean pencil. You can ink with the best of 'em. Naturally, you want to put together a portfolio that really shows your stuff. But how?

The first step, say our experts, is to avoid the temptation to throw in everything you've ever drawn. Marvel Associate Editor Andy Schmidt points out that editors are an overworked bunch, whether they're reviewing mailed-in submissions or handling portfolio reviews at conventions, so a portfolio crammed to the gills is just too time-consuming to wade through. "Shorter is definitely better," Schmidt advises. You may be really proud of a great piece you did in art class years ago, but if it doesn't look anything like the way you're working now, it doesn't belong in your portfolio. Stick to a small but solid collection of your best recent stuff.



**GREATEST HITS** Your portfolio should have your best art, but make sure that art isn't just fancy pin-ups.

## BACKTOBASICS

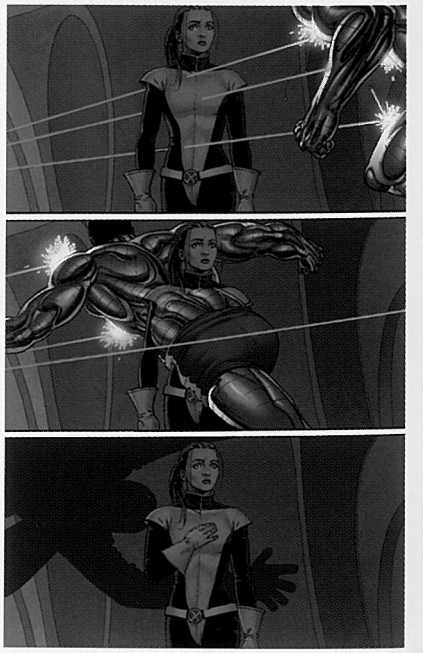
And make sure that art highlights your full range as an artist, too, particularly your ability to tell a story in pictures. "Storytelling is a lost art," muses Frank Cho, artist on *Liberty Meadows* and *Shanna, the She-Devil*. "A lot of the newer artists coming in are neglecting it for more flashy stuff. So don't have a portfolio full of pin-ups, or of two guys punching the crap out of each other." Instead, Cho suggests, "Have a conversation piece where people are sitting around talking, then transition it to a walk in the park. Everyday, mundane stuff shows the editors, the writers and the readers that you can tell a story visually."

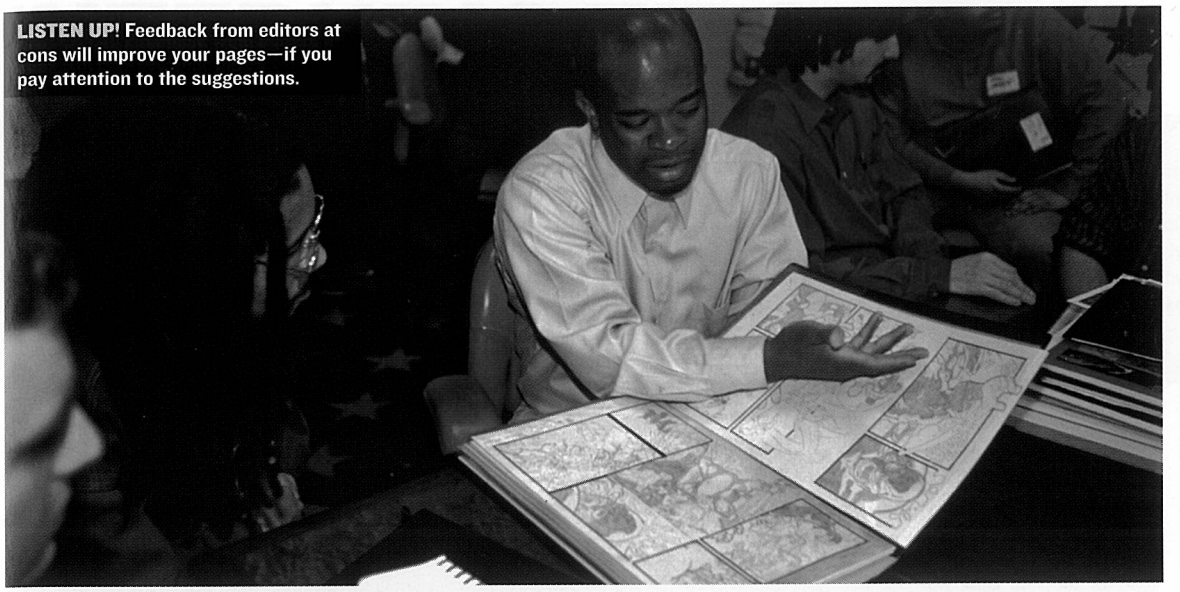
Samples that display your grasp of the basics are key as well. "Every convention I go to there's usually a dozen or so art students who want to break into the industry," Cho says. "But when I look at their portfolios, their anatomy is non-existent and their perspective is flat. Sure, your portfolio may have some weird, crazy, surrealistic images, but you can't use that in a comic book."

**ASTONISH 'EM** To wow editors, develop a unique style like John Cassaday does on his pinups and sequential panels (right).

## BE YOURSELF

Finally, remember that your portfolio should represent *you*, not your love for the hot artist of the day. "Enjoy your influences," says *Astonishing X-Men* artist John Cassaday (whose work is shown here), "but don't let them rule the roost." *Ex Machina*'s Tony Harris warns, "Stay away from aping someone else. Most of the cats working in comics now have got a really specific look to their stuff, and it's so easy to recognize. You don't want to steal someone's thunder by ripping them off." *Nightcrawler* artist Darick Robertson agrees: "My big mistake early on was that I allowed myself to be influenced by trends rather than following my instincts."





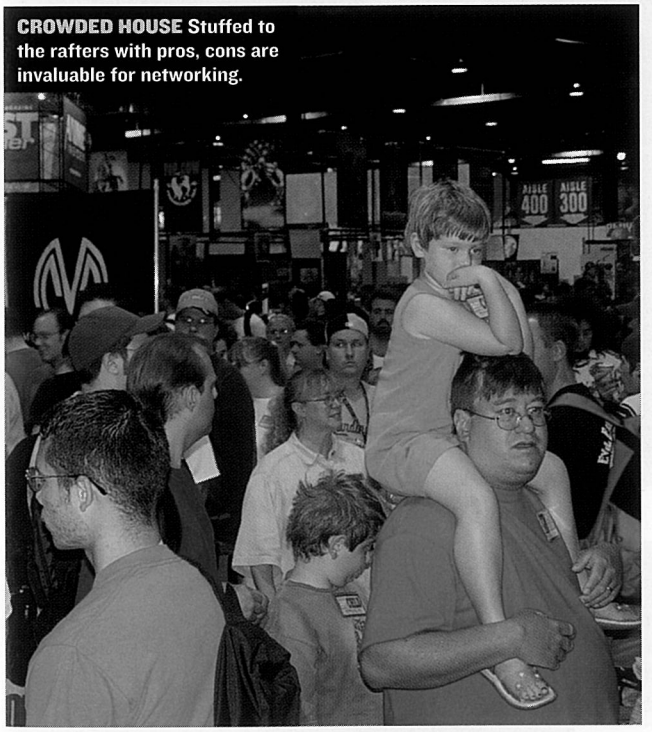
**LISTEN UP!** Feedback from editors at cons will improve your pages—if you pay attention to the suggestions.

## CONWITHTHESHOW

All right, you've assembled a pretty sweet portfolio in which your best work is on display. Now all you need to do is get it in the right hands and in front of the right eyes. The best place to do that, of course, is at a comic book convention, where fans, pros and publishers mix it up more often than the X-Men change outfits.

"I truly think showing your work at a convention is the best way to break in," Cassaday asserts. "It's what I did. More and more, conventions are used as tools in the job of editor to find new talent." Indeed, superstars like Marc Silvestri and Michael Turner landed their first professional gigs at the very first cons they attended.

McGuinness is on the same page when it comes to the personal touch cons provide. "If you can show your portfolio to an editor in person, that's an extra mile that you can't run by e-mail," he says. "You could be the best artist around, but if you're the best guy in an inbox of 100 other submissions, it's probably not going to get seen. But if you're the best guy on line at a convention, you could be the ray of light for that editor on that day, and he's just gonna say 'Wow!'—because you're right there."




**CROWDED HOUSE** Stuffed to the rafters with pros, cons are invaluable for networking.

## MEETANDGREET

*Civil War* artist Steve McNiven preaches the power of cons because of the feedback they can provide. "Go to conventions and show your work to as many people as you can," he says, including editors and any professional artists in attendance. "Get advice, follow through on it and come back next year," McNiven advises. Persistence can pay off.

It also helps to talk to the right people, so while you're there, don't forget to make nice with comics' great gatekeepers, the assistant editors. "Your assistant editor is the person you should be kindest to," insists Robertson. "They have the hardest job and will deal with you more than you deal with an editor. The better you treat them, the easier your job will be. Plus, today's assistant editor is tomorrow's full editor!"

No matter who you shake hands with, remember you can make an impression just by being polite and professional. "Have you SEEN your average comic book artist lately?" jokes cover artist extraordinaire Greg Horn, who says that behaving in a businesslike manner can give you a leg up on the competition and impress the pros you meet. "Be polite, you know?" adds Schmidt.

## INTERNALAFFAIRS

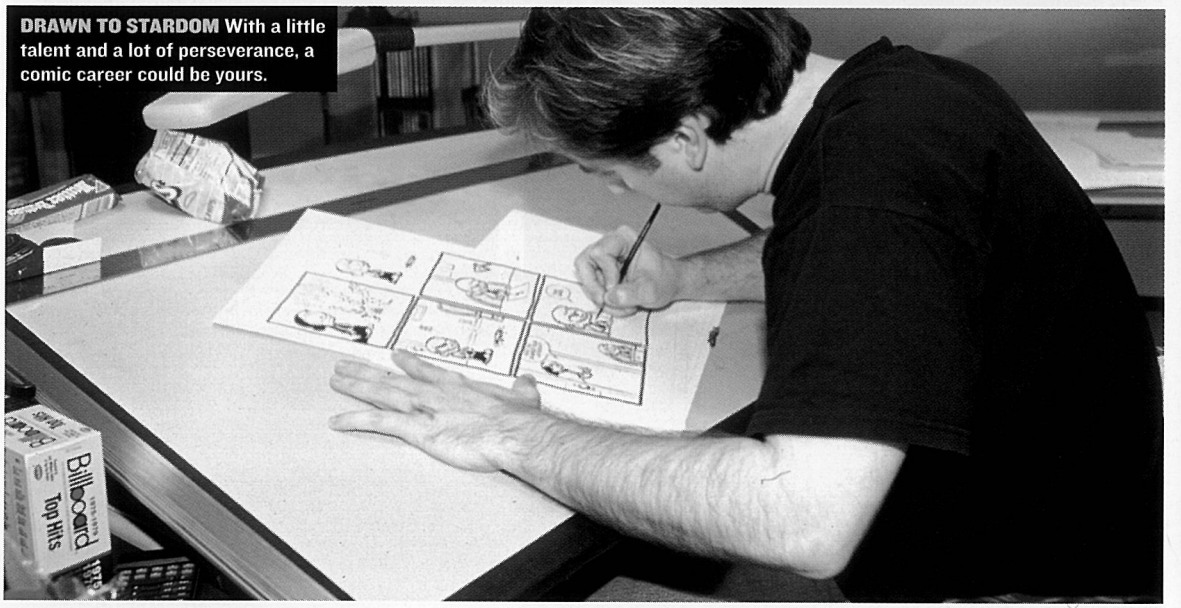
The hubbub of a convention isn't the only way to get your name—and art—in front of the right people. There are many tried-and-true ways to pay your dues in the industry before getting that big break from the Big Two.

One of these is interning at a comics publisher or artist's studio. "If you're lucky enough to become familiar with someone who's a pro, or if you intern with a studio, that's the route to take," says artist Tony Harris. "You're gonna benefit from their experience and their knowledge. It's easier to eventually make the segue into getting your own work." Most publishers and studios post information regarding internship possibilities on their Websites. Check 'em out, learn what they're looking for, follow their guidelines, send in your resume and don't be afraid to follow up (politely, of course) if you don't hear back right away.

**FIRST LIGHT** Joe Linsner's *Dawn* won him industry kudos.

## INDEPENDENTS'DAY

If you're ready to be published right now, though, try the independent comics circuit. Companies like Oni, Slave Labor and Top Shelf are always on the hunt for fresh new voices, many of whom eventually go on to mainstream superstardom like Joe Linsner did with *Dawn* (pictured right). "Work in the independent market, for as long as it takes," says Ethan Van Sciver. "The small press is like playing in your garage when you're in a band, and it requires the same diligence." Submission guidelines are usually found on company Websites, so learn what they want—if they're after already-finished offbeat black-and-white autobio comics, your epic sci-fi series pitch probably won't make the cut. Finally, the Internet presents a variety of affordable self-publishing options.




**DRAWN TO STARDOM** With a little talent and a lot of perseverance, a comic career could be yours.

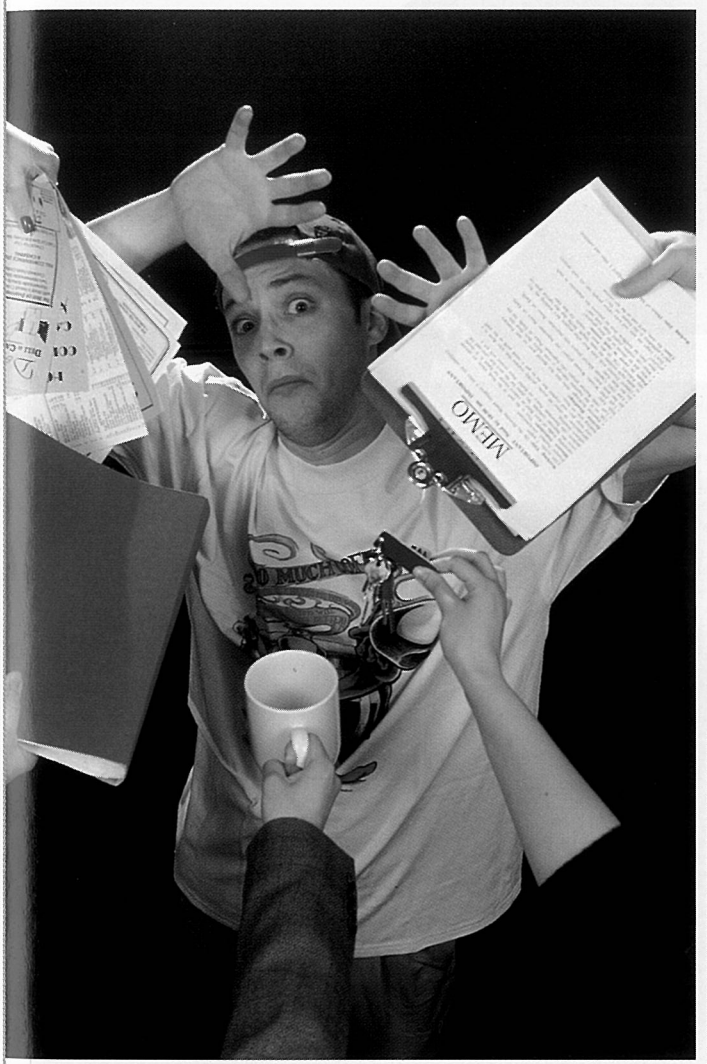
## SUCCESS!

Trying to break in can be long and frustrating, but a career in this incredible medium is well worth the effort.

"Be positive about doing this," Cassaday encourages. "Telling stories and getting paid to do it is as fine of a thing as you could do. There's little else you could ask for in a profession." And the moment you land that internship, get that great portfolio review or publish your first small-press book, you'll realize it, too. "Just think," says Horn, "every time you feel like giving up, a whole mess of other artists also considered...and gave up. So all you have to do is hang in there, and sooner or later, while everyone else is quitting, you'll rise to the top!"

# INTERNING TIPS BY THE *WIZARD* STAFF

So, you want a future in comics? You're not alone. The question is: How do you get the edge over the thousands of other schlubs competing for the same big break in the comics biz as you are? Beat 'em to the punch first. And the best way to do that is to start out as an intern. "You literally have your foot in the door of a comic publisher as an intern," says DC Executive Editor Mike Carlin. "It's a chance to have your work seen and opinion heard...as long as you're professional about presenting it." Working as an intern gives you a leg up on the competition, allows you to learn the business and helps you make contacts you can use throughout your comics career. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, it might be a little harder than you think. That's why we're gonna walk you through the process! So how do you make it as a comic book intern? Glad you asked!




## WHAT IS AN INTERN?

Internships are short-term, generally part-time positions offered by companies, usually either without pay or good for school credit toward a diploma. The bulk of internships offered by comic publishers fall in the editorial and production departments, with other positions available in marketing, sales and promotions. Interns are expected to do general administrative work, such as photocopying penciled and inked boards for books and filing reference material. Duties can range from mailing complementary copies of comics to artists and writers, to processing freelancer's vouchers, to transporting proofs to the printer.

## GATHERING INFORMATION

Most companies and publishers send internship information packages to your school's career center. These releases usually contain the number and duration of internships offered, hiring periods, work description and whether or not payment or school credit is offered. Companies like Marvel also have information on their Website. Depending on its size, a publisher can offer anywhere from one internship per year to two or three per school semester. Large companies such as Marvel and DC tend to have specific recruitment periods. For example, to intern for Marvel in the fall, résumés must sent to the internship coordinator by July. Candidates interested in working for Marvel come spring should have their résumés in by November. And because summer internships are in such high demand, Marvel asks that those interested in working during that period submit applications as early as January.

## PRO TIPS

### GET NOTICED

A great place to start your quest is the convention circuit. Hit the big shows like Wizard World Chicago and the San Diego Comic-Con. Cons are the best place to meet editors and internship coordinators. Try to get to know as many people as possible and let them know you're interested in an internship.

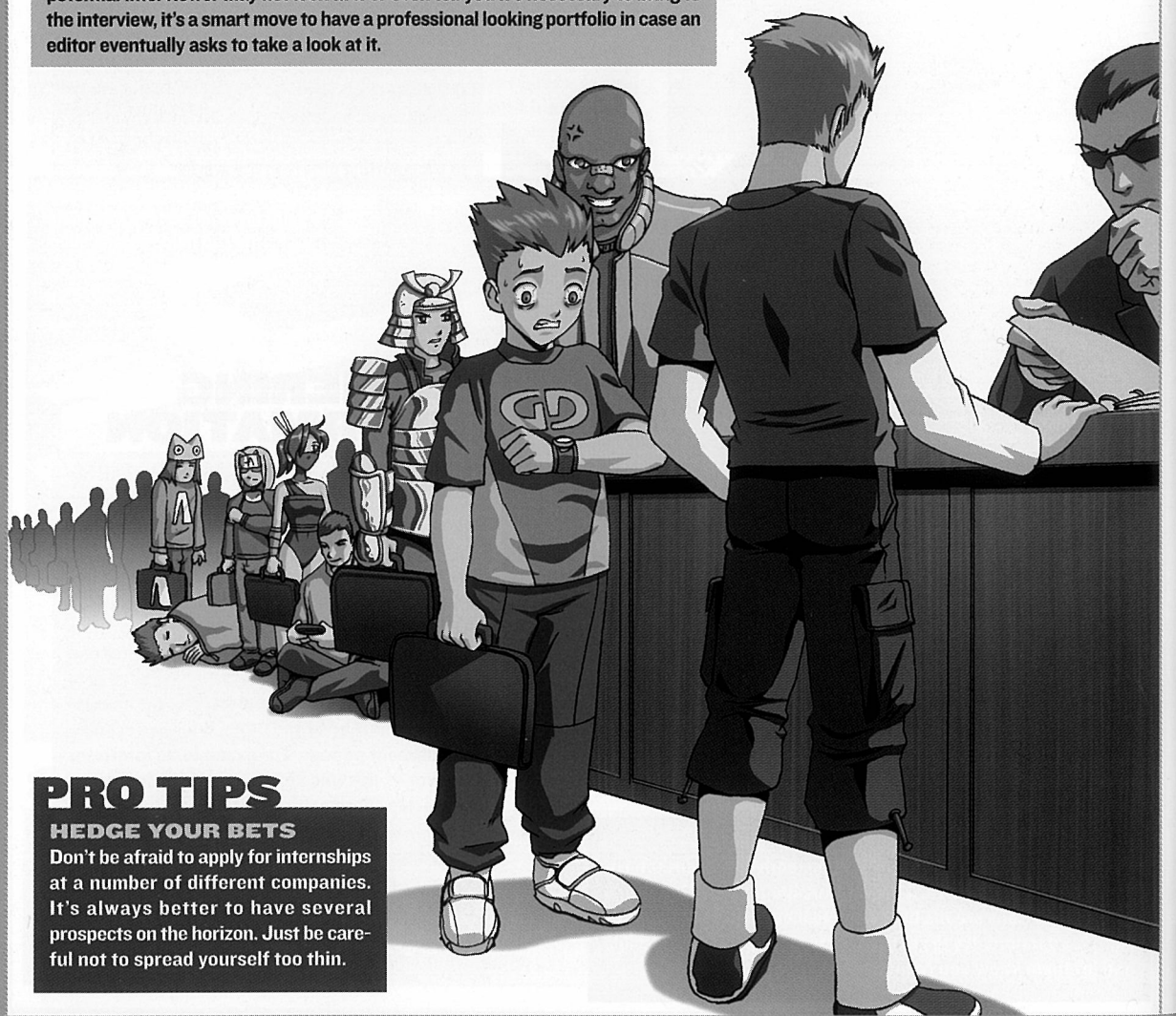
# INTERNINGTIPS

## MAKINGCONTACT

If a particular company isn't listed among your school resources, don't despair; get in touch with them and find out for yourself. Write a short, formal e-mail asking the company for internship information, and make sure that the words "Internship Information" appear in the subject line, so your message can be distinguished from the rest of the fan mail. If you send a letter, address it to the publisher's intern coordinator. And as a general rule, try to avoid calling the company. "If someone calls us," says Sirius Entertainment publisher Robb Horan, "they'll just be told to send us something in writing." Once you've decided on a company to approach for an internship, send a cover letter, résumé, and, if you'd like your work to count toward school credit, a letter from the school authorizing credit for internship work. Including references such as former employers who can be contacted regarding your past work performance isn't mandatory, but it helps. An internship is just like any other job in that there's a competitive application process.

## THINKINGAHEAD

Start taking classes that will further your career goals. Writers should focus on creative writing, journalism and/or literature classes. Prospective pencilers and inkers should take as many art classes as possible, especially those dealing with life drawing or drawing of the human form. Enter competitions, keep journals, or work for your school paper or magazine. If you hope to make a career out of writing, design, penciling or inking, then you should have enough passion to be working and experimenting with your respective interest constantly. Assemble a portfolio of your best, most eye-catching and recent work. Despite the fact that your potential interviewer may not look at it or even tell you it's necessary to bring to the interview, it's a smart move to have a professional looking portfolio in case an editor eventually asks to take a look at it.



### PRO TIPS

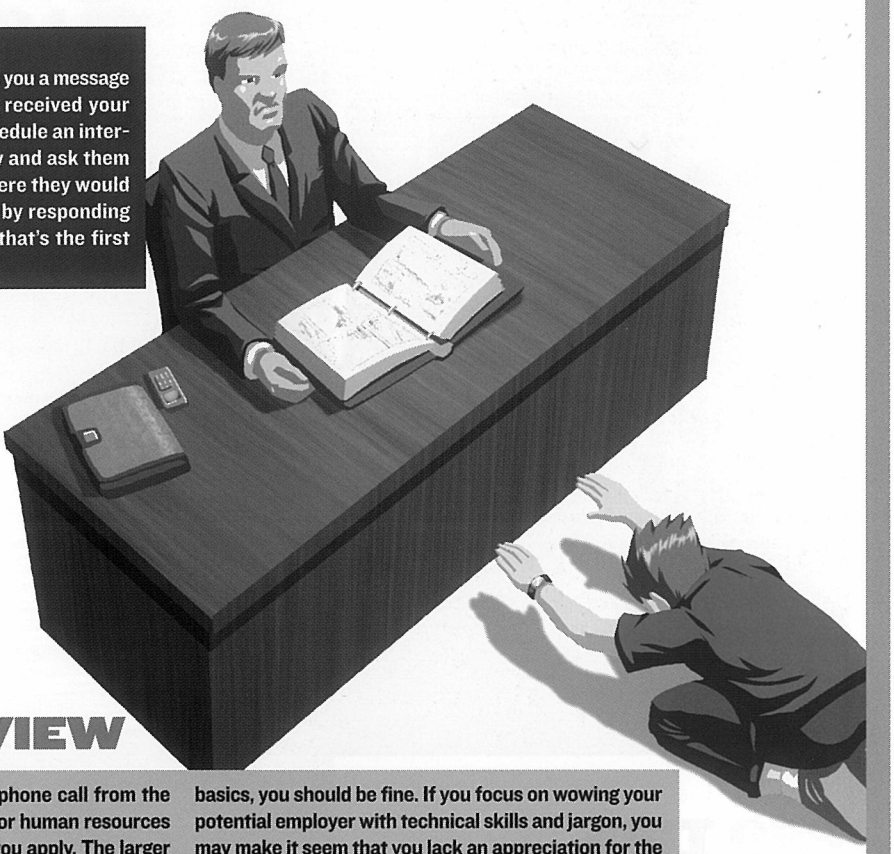
**HEDGE YOUR BETS**

Don't be afraid to apply for internships at a number of different companies. It's always better to have several prospects on the horizon. Just be careful not to spread yourself too thin.

## PRO TIPS

### WASTE NO TIME

If an internship coordinator leaves you a message letting you know that they have received your application and would like to schedule an interview, call them back immediately and ask them for the specifics of when and where they would like to meet you. Show initiative by responding promptly. For some companies, that's the first step to landing the position.

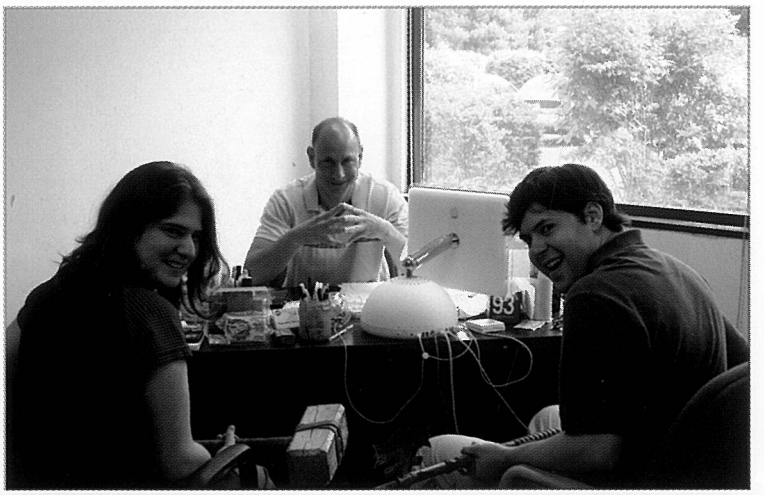


## THE INTERVIEW

With a little luck, you'll receive a phone call from the company's internship coordinator or human resources department a month or two after you apply. The larger publishers may have an intern coordinator conduct a phone interview with a candidate before bringing them in for an interview with an editor. You may also be asked to come to the office directly. On the phone or in person, presence and attitude is everything. Be well spoken and polite during your interview, but don't use a lot of technical jargon or insider lingo—it can only hurt your chances. As long as you have a grasp of the industry basics, you should be fine. If you focus on wowing your potential employer with technical skills and jargon, you may make it seem that you lack an appreciation for the fundamentals. "Try to sell yourself without sounding too cocky or arrogant," explains Joe Yanarella, senior managing editor at Wizard Entertainment. "Focus on your accomplishments to date and the variety of your skills. Don't just say how cool it would be to work in comics and that you would really love to meet Alex Ross because he's the best. We're looking for young publishing professionals, not overzealous fanboys and stalkers."

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Don't bust into an interview wearing a crusty T-shirt and stinky shoes. Generally, business casual is preferred within the hallowed halls of a comic publisher, meaning slacks or neat jeans, good shoes and a button-down shirt. Also, don't wear a tie with a great big picture of Wolverine plastered on it to an interview with, say, DC or Image. Nothing says "unprofessional" like rubbing the competition in a company's face while asking them for work.



## FOLLOWINGUP

So you've had your interview and you're wondering why you haven't heard from the internship coordinator. A company will usually let you know immediately when the position has been filled, so it's probably a good thing that you haven't heard from them. Regardless, if two weeks go by and there's still no response, you may want to give your interviewer a call and politely ask them if they've made a decision concerning the internship position, or if they need additional references. Be professional, polite and laid back. Calling the offices daily will brand you a nuisance. Play it cool. If a publisher likes you, they'll call you, but it may take anywhere from a day to three weeks after your interview.

## PRO TIPS

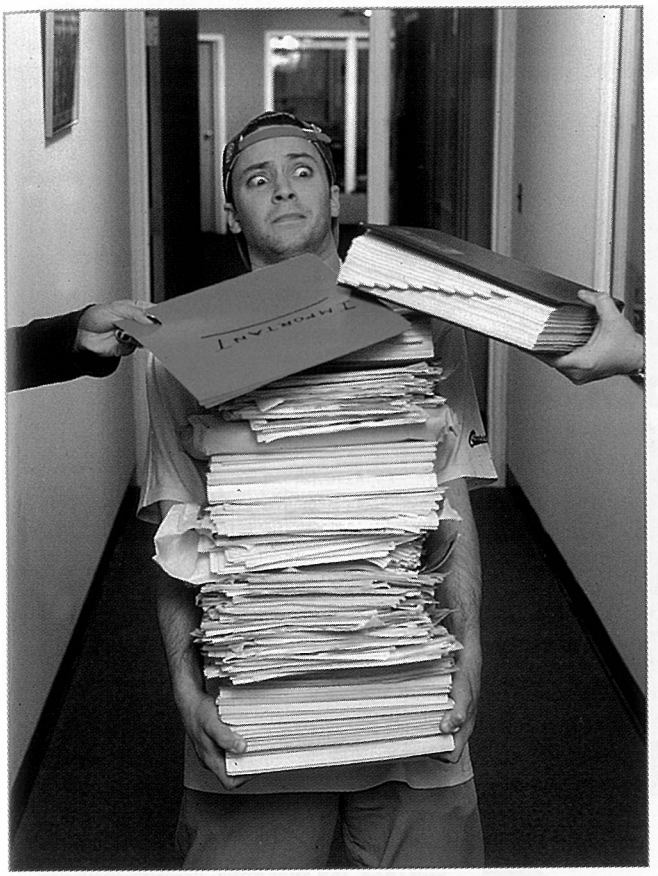
### KEEP IT CLASSY

About a week after your interview, send a brief thank-you note to either the editor or the intern coordinator you spoke with. Regardless of the outcome, it's a classy professional move that will be remembered by prospective employers.

## LEARN TOACCEPT REJECTION

Unfortunately, one of the risks involved in interviewing for a job is rejection. If you don't get that coveted call back, don't get discouraged. Remember that every time you apply for an internship, even if you don't get it, you are getting your name out there and people will eventually remember you. Most importantly, don't take rejection personally. While there's always room for learning and improvement, many times "no" means "not right now." "Sometimes people get turned down for an internship, re-interview at a later date, and *then* get the job," says Maria Campbell, intern coordinator for Marvel.

PHOTO: D. BRUCE.

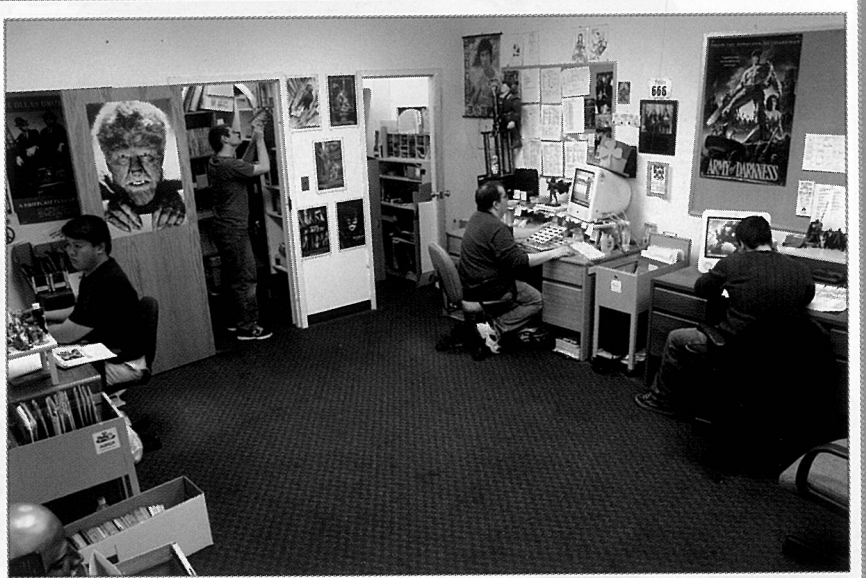


## YOU'REHIRED!

Let's say you've finally been rewarded with an internship of your very own. The question is, now that you've got it, what's the best way of making your limited time at the company count? Sure you're anxious to change the face of comics as we know it, but you've got to know when and where to give your opinion. Don't go running into an editor's office and start rambling about your ideas for the next great epic mini-series, or pile them under mounds of your original pencils on your first day. Build relationships and earn the trust of the editors first, and they'll value what you have to say later. And the best way to earn an editor's trust is volunteering for work at every opportunity. It takes long hours, hard work and a lot of people contributing to produce a comic book, let alone the nearly 100-plus that Marvel and DC respectively publish each month! Volunteering to help an overworked editor without them having to ask speaks volumes about you as a potential employee. And if you have a question about something you're doing, don't hesitate to ask.

## USEYOURTIMEWISELY

It's safe to assume that, as an intern, you probably won't be going directly to work writing or penciling a book. Companies are usually quite comfortable with the professionals they've assigned to do work and aren't too keen on giving those types of responsibilities to someone with no experience. Keep in mind that as an intern you're working closely with the editors and the staff on a daily basis. Try to fit in socially; even the bigger publishers are close-knit operations, so personality goes a long way to determining the success of your internship. On the surface, you may be making copies and delivering mail, but beneath that, you're making friendships and connections that can help you establish your own career in comics.




## PRO TIPS

### STAY IN TOUCH

So, your internship's over and you're back at school or working another gig till your comics career takes off. What do you do in the meantime? Make sure you stay in touch with the editors you worked with; you never know when they might need an assistant or potential freelancer!

TOP PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADE; BOTTOM PHOTO: DYLAN BRUCE

# HOW TO BE A COMIC PRO

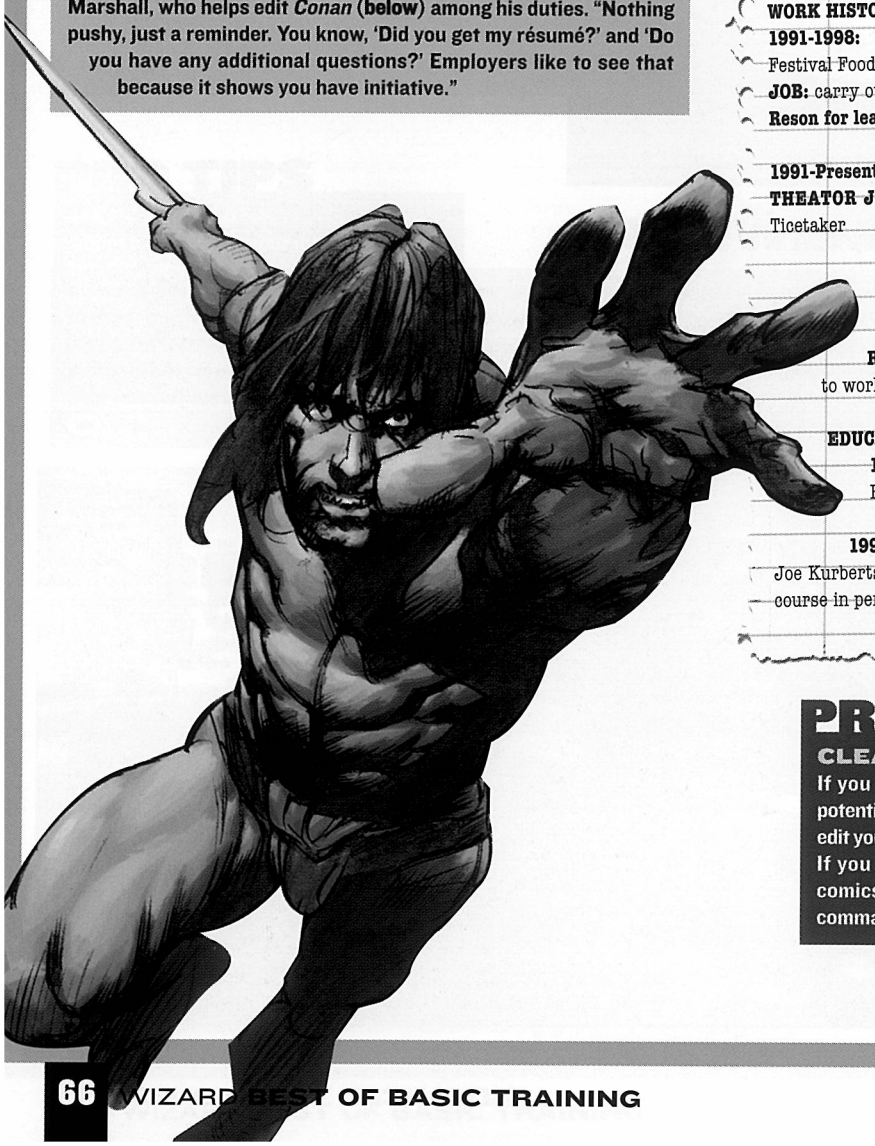
BY CHRIS WARD & THE *WIZARD* STAFF

**Want to make your own comic book? Be discovered by an editor? Option your comic property to a movie studio? Wizard's *How To Draw: Advanced Techniques* tells you everything you need to know to make your dreams of comic stardom a reality! It's time for us to finally break our silence and present you with the most well guarded comic industry tips and helpful instructions ever! Take notes, because this is the ultimate comics career resource you've been waiting for!**

## 1. INTERNSHIPS GET YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR

**If you want to work in comics professionally, start out with an internship at a comics publisher—not only do you gain college credits, you'll get a jump on being seen by prospective comics employers. And treat it like you're applying for a job—send a professional cover letter and résumé. (Spelling and format count! See example at right.)**

**Also, don't forget to follow up; there's nothing wrong with a little persistence and ambition. "It was after the follow-up that I got responses both times with both internships," says former *Wizard* and Dark Horse intern and current Dark Horse Associate Editor Dave Marshall, who helps edit *Conan* (below) among his duties. "Nothing pushy, just a reminder. You know, 'Did you get my résumé?' and 'Do you have any additional questions?' Employers like to see that because it shows you have initiative."**



**A. Nonymous**

**QUALIFICATIONS:**
High school deploma, Over 5 years art school,Over 15 years in the theator bizness,Over 22 time paid published writer/poet and award winner Over 24 paintings and Drawings sold. Also One year editor experience, Also a Multipal award winning Photogerapher

**WORK HISTORY:**
**1991-1998:**
Festival Foods.
**JOB:** carry out, Stalk boy.
**Reson for leaving:** went out of bissness

**1991-Present:**
**THEATOR JOB INCLUDES:** Security, Stalk Boy, Ticetaker

**2000 only**
The Jack Pine Writers Bloc.
**JOB:** Editor
**RESON FOR LEAVEING :** expected me to work for free

**EDUCATION:**
**1980-1996** Nevis High School
High School Diploma

**1999-2002**
Joe Kurberts World of Cartooning Correspondence course in penceling and story Graphics.

### PRO TIPS

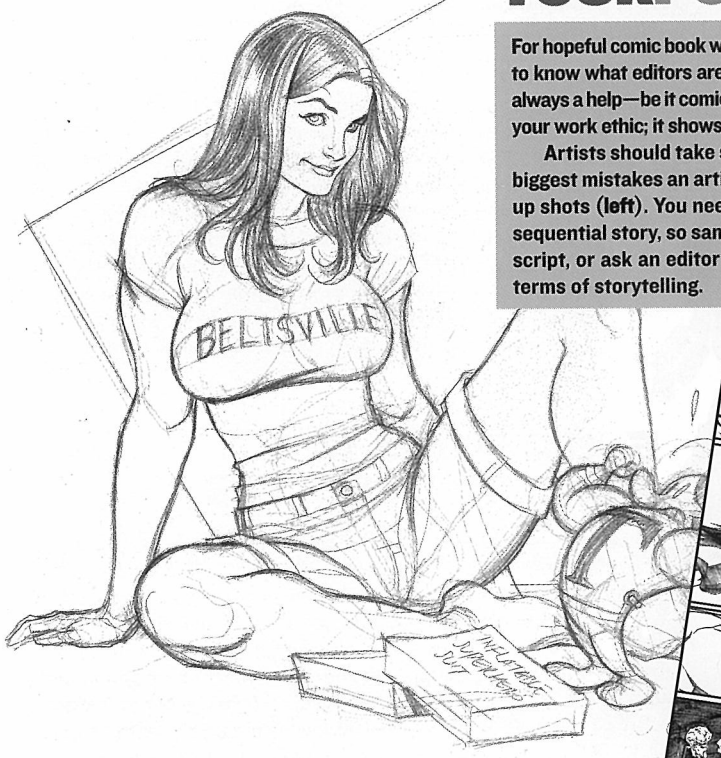
**CLEAN UP YOUR RESUME**

**If you want to be taken seriously by a potential employer, it's a good idea to copy edit your résumé before you send it along. If you want to be a writer or editor in comics, it helps to show that you have command of grammar and spelling.**

## 2. SELL YOURSELF WITH YOUR PORTFOLIO

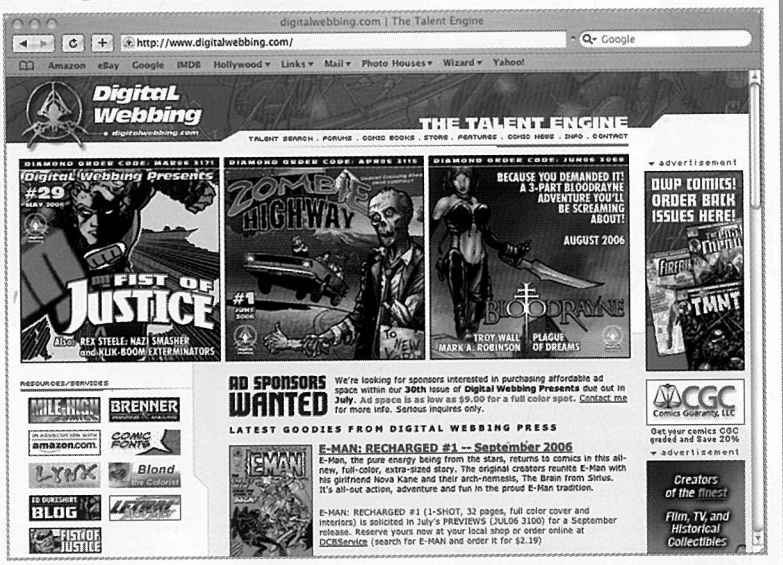
For hopeful comic book writers and artists, the portfolio is key. So it helps to know what editors are looking for. For writers, any published work is always a help—be it comics, novels, short stories or otherwise (and stress your work ethic; it shows you can work on deadline and take criticism).

Artists should take some of the same advice to heart. One of the biggest mistakes an artist can make is filling their portfolio with pin-up shots (**left**). You need to be able to show an editor you can tell a sequential story, so sample pages (**below**) are a must. Find a sample script, or ask an editor for one, and show them what you can do in terms of storytelling.




## 3. USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM

When looking for that perfect creative partner, you can always go the old-fashioned way and turn to a talented friend. If that's not an option, you can turn to the Internet. One extremely helpful resource can be found at www.digitalwebbing.com, an online engine designed specifically to help comic book creators from all walks of life get it together. "[Digital Webbing] has a section called 'The Talent Search,' which is free classified ads for people looking for artists, writers and everything in between," says Ed Dukeshire, publisher/webmaster/owner of Digital Webbing, LLC. "What creators do is post a free ad, sit back and watch the e-mails just flood in. I know there are pros that get on there and check the ads because I've talked to several of them."

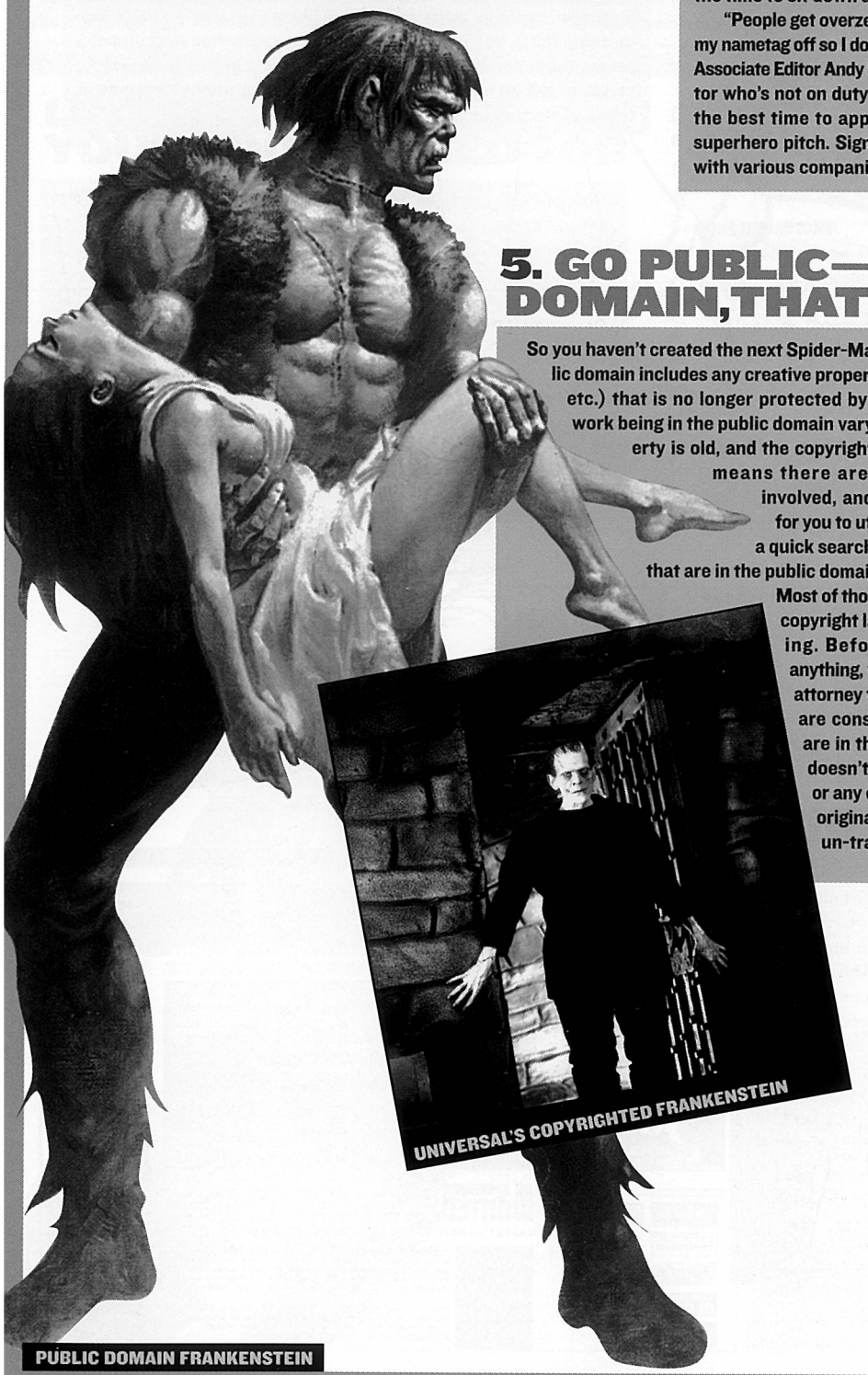


## 4.PITCHYOURGUTSOUT

Let's say you've moved past the samples stage: You have a self-published comic. When hopeful creators attend conventions, there's a huge pressure to successfully pitch their comic to the big brass of the industry in the short span of a con weekend. It can be done, but going about it the right way is key.

When you pitch a project, emphasize what characters you'd love to write, what you like about them and what you would have to say about the character that is new and interesting. Also, keep your pitches short. Many editors simply don't have the time to sit down and review complete scripts.

"People get overzealous at conventions—I take my nametag off so I don't get mobbed," jokes Marvel Associate Editor Andy Schmidt. If you do spot an editor who's not on duty at a booth, it's probably not the best time to approach them with your epic superhero pitch. Signing up for portfolio reviews with various companies is a good route to take.



## 5. GO PUBLIC—DOMAIN,THATIS

So you haven't created the next Spider-Man; don't sweat it. The public domain includes any creative property (comics, movies, music, etc.) that is no longer protected by copyright. Reasons for a work being in the public domain vary, but most likely the property is old, and the copyright has simply expired. This means there are no fees or permission involved, and the rights are fair game for you to utilize. Still, you can't just do a quick search on the Internet for works that are in the public domain and print up your comic. Most of those lists aren't updated, and copyright laws are constantly changing. Before you go forward with anything, you should hire a copyright attorney to research the project you are considering. Many properties are in the public domain, but that doesn't mean likenesses, scripts, or any other properties within the original aren't un-copyrighted or un-trademarked.

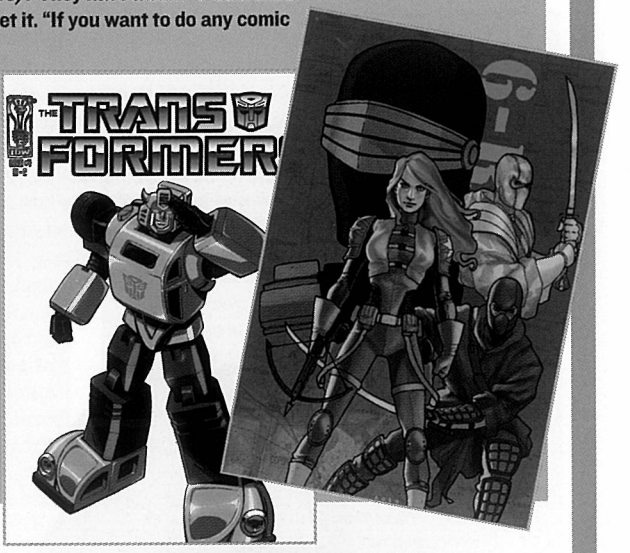


UNIVERSAL'S COPYRIGHTED FRANKENSTEIN

PUBLIC DOMAIN FRANKENSTEIN

## 6. GET A LICENSE TO DRIVE

The great thing about licensed comics (like *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*)? They have a built-in audience who love the property. The downside? You're gonna have to pay to get it. "If you want to do any comic based on any licensed property, you should go through the Consumer Product Department," says Sebastien Clavet, Owner and Publisher of 88 MPH Studios, which licensed the *Ghostbuster* comic. "Sure enough, you have to pay for these [licenses]; they don't pay you," Clavet laughs. "So the risk is entirely on the shoulder of the publisher—or the producer if you publish through someone else. They'll send you a contract, which you have to sign and return with an advance guarantee check—and I myself have never seen [a fee] below $10,000." The "advance guarantee" is an insurance policy, of sorts, for the licensor, ensuring you'll actually be doing something with the property instead of sitting on the rights. From then on, the scripts, art, ink, colors and letters going to press must be approved before delivering the final product. Depending on the company, this process may go smoothly, or you may find yourself dealing with angry retailers when the book is late. Also, remember that a percentage of all the sales will go to the licensor for royalties. For publishing, this averages around 10-15 percent, according to Clavet.





## 7. SHOW THE COPYRIGHT STUFF

As soon as you put pen to paper, you're covered from a copyright standpoint. "By publishing your work, it's automatically copyrighted," says Robert Kirkman, writer and creator of *Invincible* and *Walking Dead* for Image Comics. "A registered trademark is something you actually have to pay for. Back when I was self-publishing, I would run an ad in the back of the book about something I was planning on doing at a later date, and by running that ad it would copyright the thing." The government states that you can't copyright an idea, but the copyright is created when the work is. If you're really skittish, go ahead and register the work as further proof by going to **www.copyright.gov** to get all of your questioned answered.

## 8.GOMININGFORDIAMOND

Diamond Comics' monthly *Previews* catalog is the No. 1 source for comic retailers when they are planning their monthly orders. But how do you compete in such a huge market if you are a small time operation? "*Previews* is packed with a lot of crap, and you have to stand out in the crowd; presentation is everything," says *Dead@17* creator Josh Howard. "[Sending Diamond] a nice package, along with at least the complete first issue, is a must. Also, it helps if you know when you can deliver issue #2, #3 and so on. In other words, deliver your book in a timely and professional manner."

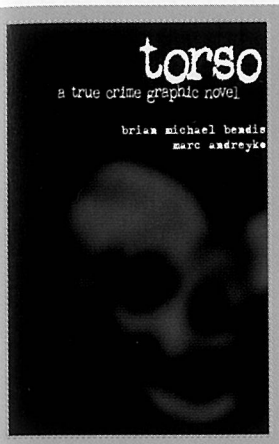
When perusing the catalog before ordering, retailers will be literally judging your book by its cover (and the tiny write-up that goes along with it), so make it count. "One of the things I consciously did with *Dead@17* was to make visually striking covers," says Howard. "So they would not only stand out on the rack, but in *Previews* as well."

And remember that books that are consistently late get a bad reputation. While this may not affect the Big Two comic companies as much, it can be the difference between your lasting success and tear-filled failure.


## 9.USEANA-LIST COVERSTORY

First things first: Money talks. Most comic artists would be cool enough to do your cover for the right price if their schedules allow. Just make sure your desired cover artist isn't exclusive to any comic company (unless a clause in their contract allows them to do specific outside work), and go from there. "The best way to convince a cover artist—or anyone—to help you with your project is to get them interested in the first place," says *She-Hulk* artist cover Greg Horn, who's done *Ezra* covers for small press publisher Arcana Studios. "Put your comic book up on a Website and design a great introduction of the characters with a synopsis of your story. Make it short and easy to understand—because most artists have the attention span of a dead maggot."

## 10. CALL THE OPTION PLAY




"The advantage of comics in trying to sell an option is that you're basically handing the movie people a storyboard," says Steve Niles, who has seen nearly every one of his horror titles, such as IDW's *30 Days of Night* (**below**) and *Wake the Dead*, optioned. "I went out and pitched *30 Days of Night* as a movie for years, but when it came out as a comic, the calls came in because we had something to hand them."

But getting to the pitch is the tough part, and Brian Michael Bendis, writer of *Torso*, has some advice for aspiring comic/movie creators. "Don't go to them; let them come to you," Bendis says. "The nature of the beast is that there are four million producers poring over every single comic book that comes out each week. And they're calling and looking. If you're a comic book creator, Hollywood isn't the goal. It's a cool thing that can also happen and wipe away your student loans immediately, but *do not* chase it. [The movie producers] do come!"

## 11. BRANCH YOURSELF OUT

You don't always have to be a writer or penciler to work in comics. Inkers, letterers and colorists may not have their name in lights, but they still bring home the bacon. "If you break it down by the numbers, inking pays better," says *Ultimate Spider-Man* inker Scott Hanna. "Because the faster you are, the more you get paid."

Before you run to the big companies, many creators do advise you start at a small publisher and hone your skills via an internship or job. This way, you have something to show editors and you can also prove you're dependable and reliable. And, should you really prove yourself, you'll find it's not uncommon for big creators to turn down projects unless you're the one beside them inking, coloring or lettering.

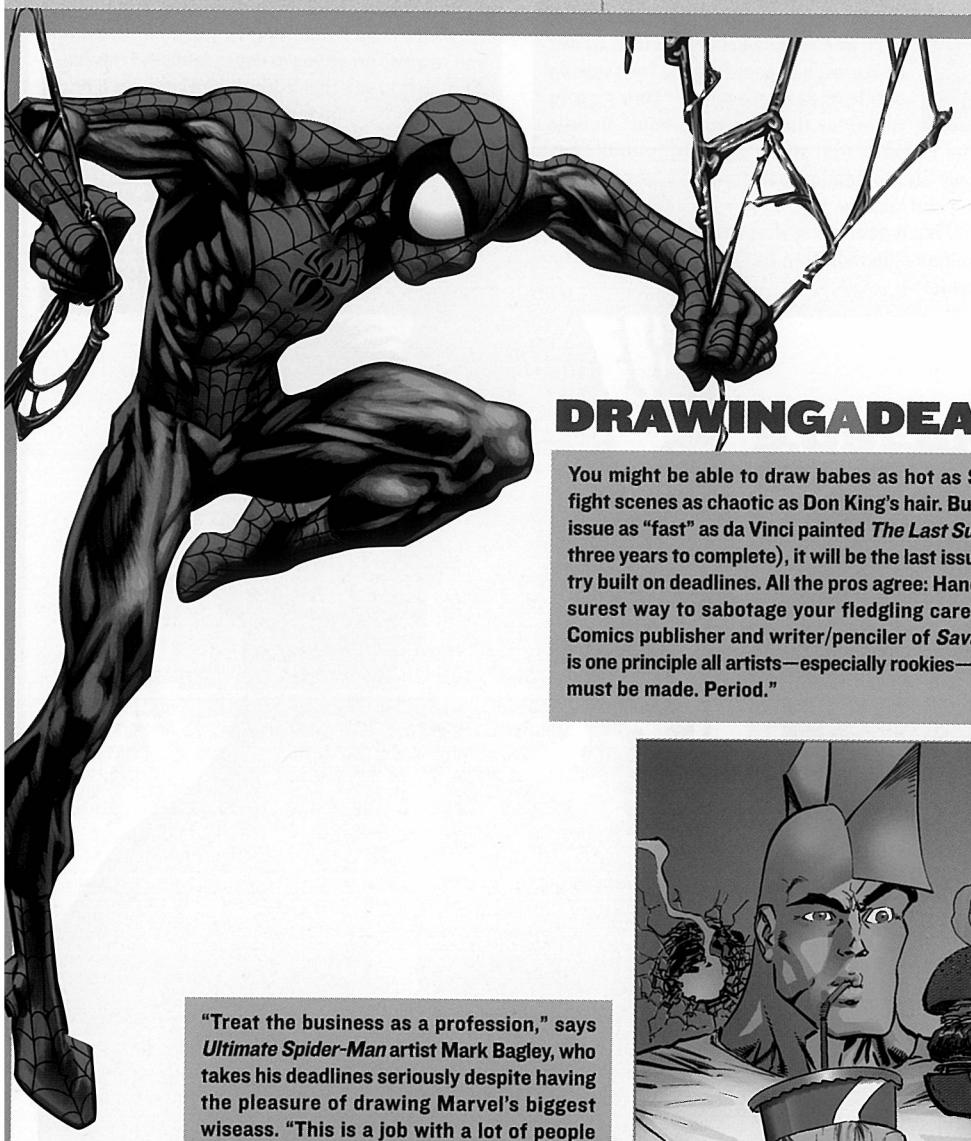
So follow the submission guidelines, submit a professional résumé and cover letter, and don't be afraid to mention that you'd like to give it a shot working in the company's production department!

# ARTIST SURVIVAL GUIDE

BY PATRICK VUONG

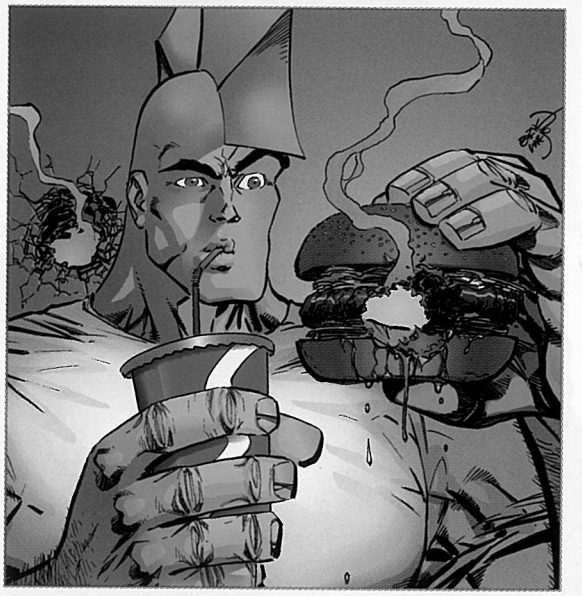
You've trained for countless hours until your fingers bled. You've endured intense, butt-sweating portfolio reviews. And you've mastered the tradecraft so well you've just been hired to draw your first comic book. Congratulations, you've now joined the ranks of an elite group known as professional pencilers. It's a unit so selective, so difficult to join that thousands of wannabes have failed where you have succeeded. But getting in is not even half the battle.

It's just the beginning. So what do you do to survive? We asked some of today's top talent for advice on how to avoid professional landmines and to sustain a long career in comic books. From handling ominous deadlines and collaborating with writers, to surviving germ-infested conventions and disguising as hotel room service to get an assignment—these artists reveal top-secret intel for comics' newest foot soldiers. Consider this your ultimate Artist Survival Guide.



## DRAWINGADEADLINE

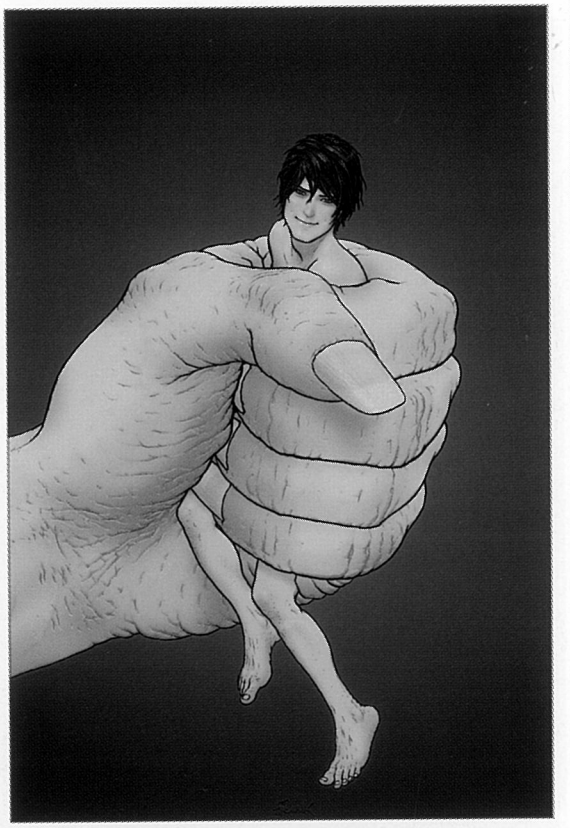
You might be able to draw babes as hot as Salma Hayek and craft fight scenes as chaotic as Don King's hair. But if you pencil your first issue as "fast" as da Vinci painted *The Last Supper* (which took about three years to complete), it will be the last issue you draw in an industry built on deadlines. All the pros agree: Handing in pages late is the surest way to sabotage your fledgling career. Erik Larsen, Image Comics publisher and writer/penciler of *Savage Dragon*, says there is one principle all artists—especially rookies—must live by: "Deadlines must be made. Period."



"Treat the business as a profession," says *Ultimate Spider-Man* artist Mark Bagley, who takes his deadlines seriously despite having the pleasure of drawing Marvel's biggest wiseass. "This is a job with a lot of people depending on me to deliver my end of the bargain. If I don't get my work done, the book is late. If I procrastinate and take too much time, the inker, colorist, letterer, editor and the production guys—none of them will have time to do their jobs properly."

Though most artists receive a script about a month before the pencils are due, every artist will have varying deadlines based on the title and publisher. "It depends on the situation," Larsen says. "I find that work expands to fill the time I have to do it in. If I'm given a deadline of two days, I can get it done in two days. If I'm given two months, I'll take two months. The job done over two months won't necessarily be any better than the job done in two days."

Even in the realm of indie comics, you cannot escape deadlines. "I feel like a maniac," says Becky Cloonan (*American Virgin*, at right), a rising star who concurrently penciled *Demo* from AiT/PlanetLar and *East Coast Rising* (**above**) for Tokyopop. "My schedule allows me two to three weeks to draw 20 to 25 pages. But I will often get the script a month or so in advance, so I know what to expect and have time to do some character designs and research before I start the thumbnails and pages."




## BUYACALENDER

Okay, so you've scratched and clawed for years to finally score your first assignment. What's the best way to make sure you meet your deadline? Decorate your drawing board full of Post-It notes? Create a flow chart? Clone yourself? Unfortunately, most pencilers are known for their artistic talents, not their organizational skills.

"I'll write the deadline on the side of a piece of paper and then lose it in a pile of other things," Larsen says. But don't think the *Savage Dragon* artist slacks off. As creator of one of the longest running independent series, Larsen once completed an entire issue in 24 hours (**left**). His strategy? Very simply, draw.

"Get *something* on the page—even if it sucks. The point is to make the deadline," Larsen urges. "Just because I'm not happy with something doesn't mean my audience will feel that way. I don't ever send out art that I think sucks by any means. But if I waited until I was completely happy with a finished job, I'd never send anything out."

Cloonan uses a calendar—which she calls "365 days of cursed lighthouses"—if sporadically. "I have a habit of jotting my schedule down for the day or week or month on random scraps of paper," she adds. "So it's not uncommon to find 10 different schedules lying around my work area."

On the flipside, Bagley works so steadily ahead of his deadline on *Ultimate Spider-Man* that he doesn't need tingling Spidey Senses to warn him of impending deadlines. "I'm usually not really aware what the actual deadline is for any given project," Bagley says.

As the top dog at Top Cow Comics and co-creator of *Hunter-Killer*, Marc Silvestri says his most effective method of monitoring penciling progress is with weekly page counts: "Most artists aren't anal retentive enough for charts and Post-Its. Heck, some don't have calendars or even watches! My best system is laying out an entire issue on the boards—which would take about 10 days—and then going back and doing the finishes, which would take another two to three weeks. If the [production] schedule—inks, script or colors—needs to be fed, I'll split that in halves so the rest of the team has stuff to do."

## JUGGLING JOBS

As a rookie penciler who just graduated from starving artist to struggling pro status, you might be tempted to snag any and every assignment that comes along. But experienced artists caution to be careful what you wish for. Exhaustion is a real threat to any budding career.

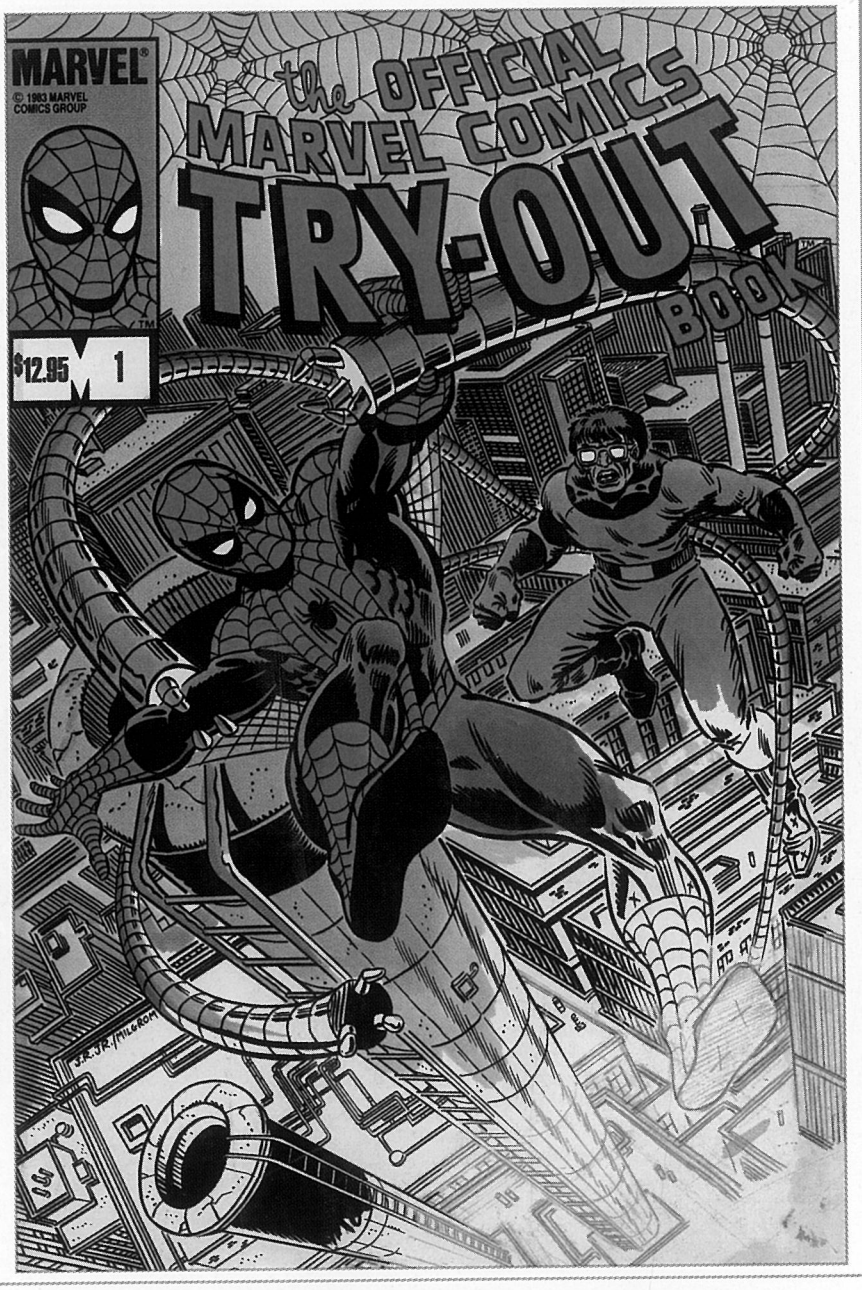
"Don't take on too much work!" implores Cloonan, who dropped commercial illustration gigs, storyboarding assignments and art projects for musicians to focus solely on comics. "I have this problem where I never know when to stop taking work, and I nearly burnt myself out. Lately, I've been enjoying saying no to people. It's just important to stay focused, no matter how much work you have to do."

If you've a mound of scripts piled in your inbox and no completed pencils in your outbox, it can help to find someone kind enough to act as your personal organizer.

"The system I use to prioritize my workload is to have [my editor-in- chief set] at full volume," Silvestri says, tongue firmly in cheek. "But seriously, comic books are a business and livelihood that most people aren't blessed to be part of. When I remind myself of that, it's easy to get the work done. That and doing the difficult pages first. Save the easy ones for when you are at the sleepless end of your deadline."

"When you are just breaking in and trying to establish your career, you definitely are thankful for whatever job comes your way," says Bagley, who broke into the industry by winning Marvel's *Tryout Book* Contest in 1985 and whose career has been built on his reputation of dependability, as he has only once had to nix an assignment. "[Years ago], I had to bail on the *Venom: Lethal Protector* mini-series because I got ill and couldn't do both that and *Amazing Spider-Man* at the same time," he says. "But aside from that, I'm pretty reliable—which is an underappreciated aspect of this business, in my opinion."

But even with Superman's speed, Clark Kent might have missed a deadline or two while saving the universe. If you find yourself in a similar situation (minus the earth-saving heroics), what should you do? Be honest is the rule of thumb, otherwise, word that you're untrustworthy will spread throughout the industry faster than Flash in a footrace. "You let people know beforehand what's going on," Larsen says. "The worst things you can do is to vanish or lie. That trick never works."




## TAG-TEAM ACTION

Some comic pencilers are like Batman—he might be the ultimate loner who works best late into the night with nary a soul nearby, but he still has Robin, Alfred and the Justice League watching his back. Artists are no different. As solitary as drawing might be, you're still part of a team in one of the most collaborative artistic media. And the teammate you'll probably interact most with is the writer.

If you absolutely insist on story changes, the pros suggest treading softly.

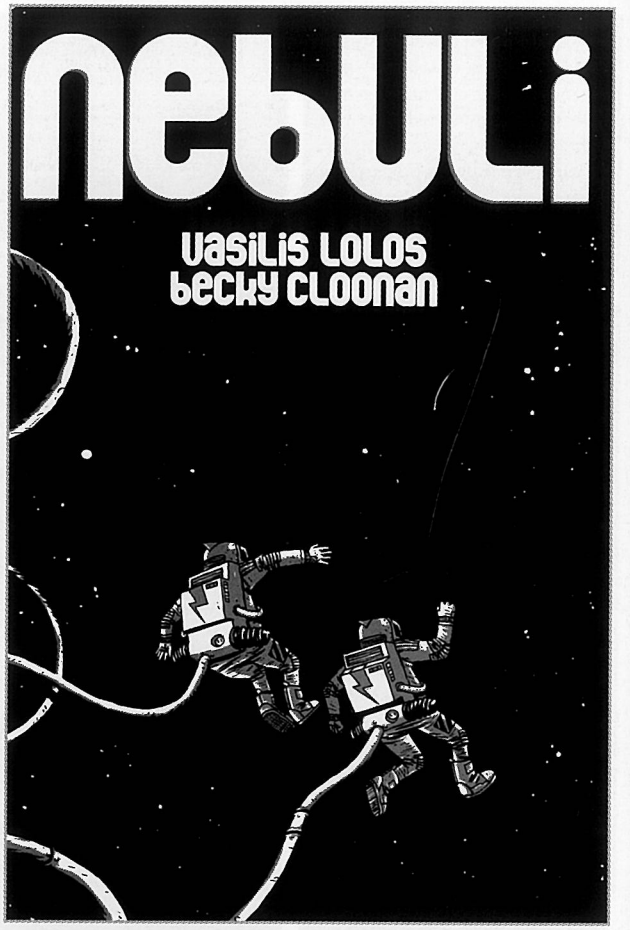
"I'd go through channels. I'd talk to the editor first because that's the story he approved," says Larsen, who lists Dan Jurgens as his favorite scribe because "he gave me enough so that I knew what to do, but not so much that I felt trapped."

But how about a rookie artist's relationship with an editor? Cloonan says editors are essential in approving designs and thumbnails, and to help organize schedules. "The best thing is to stay on top of your work, and keep in touch with your editor," she says. "If there is a problem, that's even *more* reason to keep in touch with them! The longer you sit on a problem without talking to your editor, the bigger it will get."

## TRICKSOF THETRADE

It's happened. You've gone pro. Now the hard part is staying a pro. One tip many artists echo is to hit the convention circuit, not just to develop a fan base, but also to build a Spidey-like web of contacts.

"For my first convention, I didn't have a table," Cloonan says. "I just made 600 copies of my mini comic (**right**) and gave them out to everybody behind a table. I met a lot of people that way, and every convention after that I would have a new mini. After a while, people just started recognizing me and my comics."




Bagley says that aside from bringing deodorant and aspirin, be prepared to contract a little excitement, infection and inebriation. "The worst things about cons are the contagious viruses—we call it 'con cough.' After seeing so many people and shaking so many hands, I almost always get a little sick after a convention. Also, hangovers—I tend to stay out too late and drink a little too much at cons."

Silvestri cautions that there aren't enough tips or gimmicks in the world that can mask mediocrity and amateurism. "Even though I pretended to be room service to get my first gig, I don't recommend it!" Silvestri says. "No tricks or easy solutions really apply in the comics biz—just hard work, a love of comics and a bit of talent."

Bagley agrees. "Be disciplined and treat it like a profession," he says. "I did a few years of manual labor after art school, so I know what *real* hard work is. [**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Does manual labor* (**above**) look *like fun?*] I might work 10 to 12 hours a day, but I'm in my comfortable air-conditioned house getting paid for doing something I love. It don't get much better than that."

# MAKINGCONTACT

So you're the best penciler that ever set graphite to paper. You know anatomy like the back of your hand. You know the anatomy *of* the back of your hand. You've eschewed trends in favor of your own style, you've sweated out page after page, you're ready to send out your samples. So...where do they go?

It's not enough to have great work; you have to make sure the work reaches the right people. Persistence is key. Don't send your samples to one publisher and sit back to wait for the phone call. Find another publisher that accepts submissions, and then another. Don't limit yourself to one publisher just because they put out your favorite books. Make sure to follow submission guidelines, too—many of the following publishers have specific requirements for art submissions, so it's best to check their respective Websites before you submit. Give editors the chance to know your name and associate it with high quality work.

And give this list a try. These publishers accept unsolicited submissions (though many of them will only get back to you if they like your stuff). Be professional and persistent, and maybe you'll be the one handing out advice to aspiring artists!







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4223 Glencoe Ave.
Suite #A200
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292

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**DC COMICS**
DC accepts submissions through its talent search at selected comic conventions. At the con, drop off your submission packet. DC editors will review it and get back to you if they are interested.
**Website:** www.dccomics.com

**FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**
Does not publish mainstream genres such as superhero and sci-fi; requires creators to assemble a full creative team if they cannot multi-task.
**Website:** www.fantagraphics.com
**Address:** Submissions Editor
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7563 Lake City Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115

**IMAGE COMICS**
See Website for complete submissions guidelines; does not specialize in any specific genre or type of comic.
**Website:** www.imagecomics.com
**Address:** Submissions
c/o Image Comics
1942 University Ave.
Suite 305
Berkeley, CA 94704

**MARVEL**
See their Website for complete submissions guidelines.
**Website:** www.marvel.com/company/
**Address:** Submissions
c/o Marvel Entertainment, Inc.
417 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10016

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**E-mail:** submissions@pfpress.com
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Houston, TX 77042

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**Address:** SLG Publishing
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San Jose, CA 95159-6427
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**E-mail:** submissions@topcow.com
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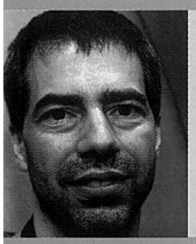
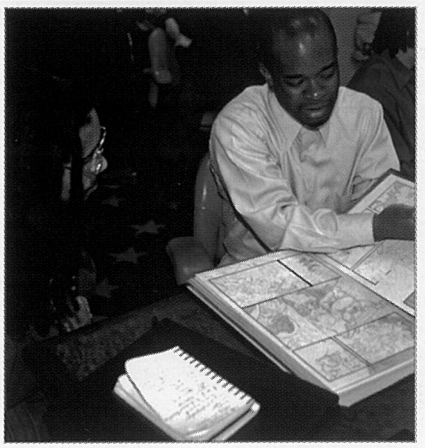
Marietta, GA 30061-1282
OR
Brett Warnock
Top Shelf Productions, Inc.
PO Box 15125
Portland, OR 97293-5125

**VIRGIN COMICS**
Check Website for complete submissions guidelines.
**Website:** www.virgincomics.com

# PORTFOLIOS BY JIM CALAFIORE



A frequent contributor to the *How to Draw* series, artist Jim Calafiore knows from first-hand experience how to work the convention circuit in order to gain work as a freelance comic artist. After his own breaking-in process, Calafiore went on to work on a host of titles for Marvel, including *Deadpool, What If?, X-Men Unlimited, Iron Man, Forces Works* and his most recent assignment, *Exiles*. In this lesson, Calafiore trades in his pencil and Bristol Boards for some words of wisdom on how to organize your portfolio, how to conduct yourself during the editorial review process and tips for maximizing your opportunities to break into comics.



## ANDNOWFORSOMETHING COMPLETELYDIFFERENT...

Stalking the aisles of comic book conventions with your portfolio is tough. When I was a "wannabe" artist, I made a lot of mistakes, mistakes I see aspiring artists repeating now when they ask me to review their portfolios at cons. If only there were some way for me to pass along some tips to avoid those mistakes...something like, *hmmm*...this book!

For aspiring artists, conventions are *the* place to be. Not only do you get to meet artists and writers you admire, you're afforded a chance to see editors and publishers you'd otherwise never get. Unlike other lessons where I've gone over various art techniques, here I'll be talking about promoting your art, maximizing opportunities and capitalizing on the chance that your art might actually lead to a job. Of course, if you think you're the next Alex Ross, and your genius will be recognized no matter the presentation, never mind. Everyone else, let's go.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The first thing an editor sees (besides your face, so please bathe) is the portfolio case you hand them...or lack thereof. Never hand an editor a stack of loose pages. They're awkward to handle. It can be one strike against you right off. Invest in a portfolio that has attached or ring-bound clear pages to hold the art. Office stores sell inexpensive 'folios made of plastic with clear pages attached inside. Portfolios are a clean and easy way to view an artist's work.

## THE BASICS

Make sure you work on the right size board (**at right**). I'm surprised by how many aspiring artists hand me mismatched, odd-sized samples, or worse yet, 8 1/2-by-11-inch, thin white paper that they've drawn on. Comic pages are 11-by-17 inches, 2-ply Bristol Board (rough or smooth, your preference). You can buy pre-printed blue-lined paper, or blank stock from an art store. Either way, it's important that you at least look like you know what you should be working on.


You should have with you packages of samples, reduced copies of what you're showing (**right**). If the editor asks you to leave samples, you should have them handy. But don't leave anything with them unless they ask. They have so much to carry with them already, the chances of unsolicited materials getting lost or left behind are pretty good.

If you ink, be sure to make full-size copies of your pencils and put them in the portfolio, too. Your penciling may be fantastic, but your inking may be the pits. If an editor sees only the finished product, he might only see the pits and not the talent underneath it. The same is true for colored samples.


If the editor does ask for samples, it's not a bad idea to follow up with a second package mailed a week or two later, maybe some new or other samples. Things get misplaced all the time between the con and the hotel/plane/office.

## SIZE MATTERS

A portfolio with too many samples can be an obstacle. Time with an editor is limited, and you don't want him to feel he has to rush. Ten pieces should be the max to shoot for; 15 is doable, but pushing it. If you can't grab an editor's interest with 10 pages, more won't change that. It's about *quality*, not quantity.

## PRO TIPS

### FRONT LOAD YOUR 'FOLIO

"The biggest mistake you can do is bothering to put blank pages before your first page," says Aspen V.P. of Publishing Peter Steigerwald. "And start your portfolio out with your most recent, strongest work, then put your weaker stuff in the back."

If you have trouble editing down your samples, here's a little guide rule: If you have to qualify a piece, it shouldn't be in the 'folio. "That isn't finished." "That one's old." "That one was rushed." I hear these all the time. If you feel the need to make an excuse, it's usually because the sample is weaker than the others. Get it out (like these sketches **above**).

Samples need to show you can tell a story. An editor is looking for panel-to-panel narrative. Try three- to four-page scenes that show flow from page to page. Action is important, but you should have at least one quiet scene in the 'folio. There are more scenes of characters talking than fighting in an average comic book storyarc, and an editor wants to see you can make those just as interesting. As for the rest of the samples, there's a school of thought that pin-ups shouldn't be included. I never agreed with that. A splash (**left**) can break the 'folio up a bit and catch the editor's eye. I wouldn't put in more than two or three, but no portfolio should be all pin-ups.

What should you draw? Especially for superhero work, draw existing characters. Your character, "Broom-man," may look really cool, but an editor needs to see how you interpret the company's characters. Even if you've self-published Broom-man, that comic shouldn't be your only sample. And draw everyday scenes and objects. Most superhero stories take place in the "real world."

Your samples should be tight, and when I say "tight" I mean *tight*. When I first started showing my samples, I generally used Xeroxes of the pages. The copies were good quality, very dark; one editor thought I was showing him copies of the inks. We're talking tight. There are inkers referred to as "finishers" who ink over sketchy pencils and add a lot of work to complete the art. But why make an editor worry about who he could get to ink you? Show him that everything is there already, that he can put any professional inker on your work and it'll look good. Unless it's inherent in your style, try to avoid sketchiness and light indistinct rendering. And stay away from side of the pencil tonal shading that can't be reproduced in ink.

## PRO TIPS

**MIX IT UP!**

"I recommend a variety of subject matter," says Steigerwald. "Show dinosaurs. Show cars. Show cafes. Show space scenes. Show New York City. The more scenes that you have, the more varied the ideas, the better off you'll be."

## TRICKSOFTHETRADE

These are just a few tricks you can include in your samples that might show an editor you already understand some of the conventions of the profession.

Here's an example of one my pages (**right**). It's recent, but my aspiring samples were pretty similar. The page has large areas of solid black. See those little X's? That's actually shorthand from me to the inker. Translation: Please fill this area with solid black. You should still fill in the area of your samples for presentation purposes, but you can also put the little X's in there. In space scenes, you can write "BWS" in the background; this stands for "black with stars." Again, this is shorthand between me and the inker to fill the background with starry space.

Panel 2 looks a little odd, the head being positioned to the right and leaving so much empty space to the left. I did that in anticipation of the dialogue and balloon placement. Leave room for them in speaking panels.

MIKE MARTS *X-Men & Exiles* editor; Wizard World Chicago, Day 1.

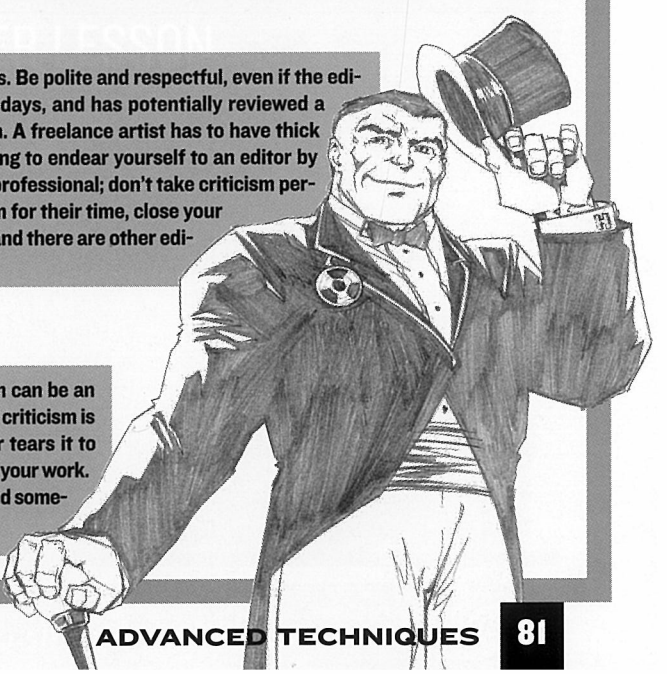
MIKE MARTS *X-Men & Exiles* editor; Wizard World Chicago, Day 3.

## THEREVIEWPROCESS

Okay, you've got your work looking presentable, packaged simply and professionally. Now what? You're ready for one of the most anxiety ridden and potentially humbling experiences for an aspiring artist: showing editors your samples. The first thing to do is identify your market. If your samples consist mainly of zombies, your time isn't best spent seeing the *Superman* editor. (Of course, he may just be looking for talent for his just conceived Superman/zombie miniseries, but I doubt it.) You're better suited to the independent market or an imprint like Vertigo. Your opportunities—and an editor's time—can be limited at a con. Maximize your time and your chances.

## REVIEWETIQUETTE

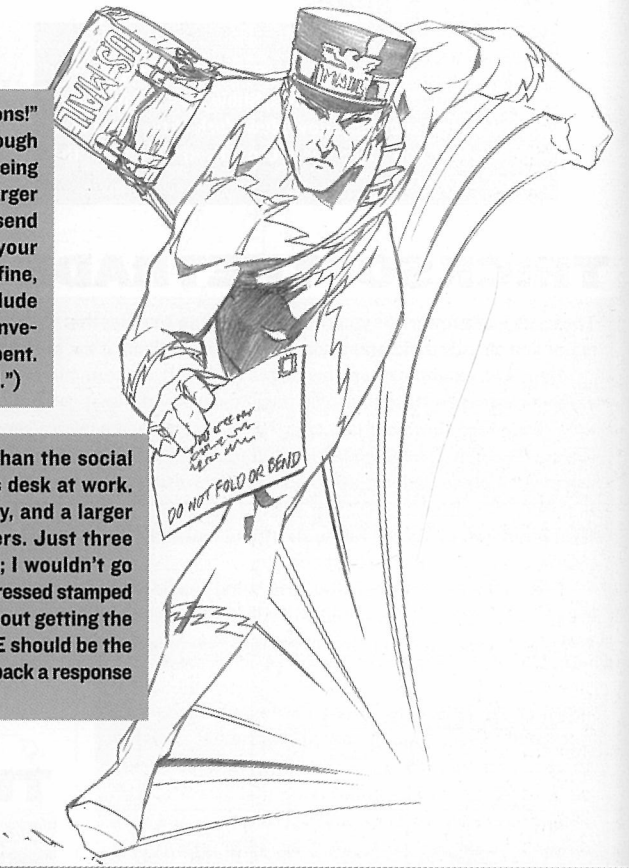
Interacting with editors is not an art, but there are DOs and DON'Ts. Be polite and respectful, even if the editor might not be. He's probably been on his feet for hours, if not days, and has potentially reviewed a hundred portfolios. He might be unintentionally curt or even harsh. A freelance artist has to have thick skin. And we've all seen plenty of bad art in comics. You're not going to endear yourself to an editor by pointing out your stuff is better than some hack he hired once. Be professional; don't take criticism personally. If you think an editor is unfair or way out of line, thank them for their time, close your 'folio and move on. Getting in an argument won't get you anything, and there are other editors in the world.



## KNOWTHYSELF

But be realistic with yourself. You know your weaknesses. Criticism can be an opportunity for improvement, not a roadblock. This doesn't mean all criticism is right. One editor might love this one shot of Spidey, while another tears it to pieces. Who's right? You need to have discerning ears and eyes about your work. A little honesty with yourself will get you a long way. Beyond talent, and sometimes above even that, editors will respond to professionalism.

## CONVENTIONALLY CHALLENGED



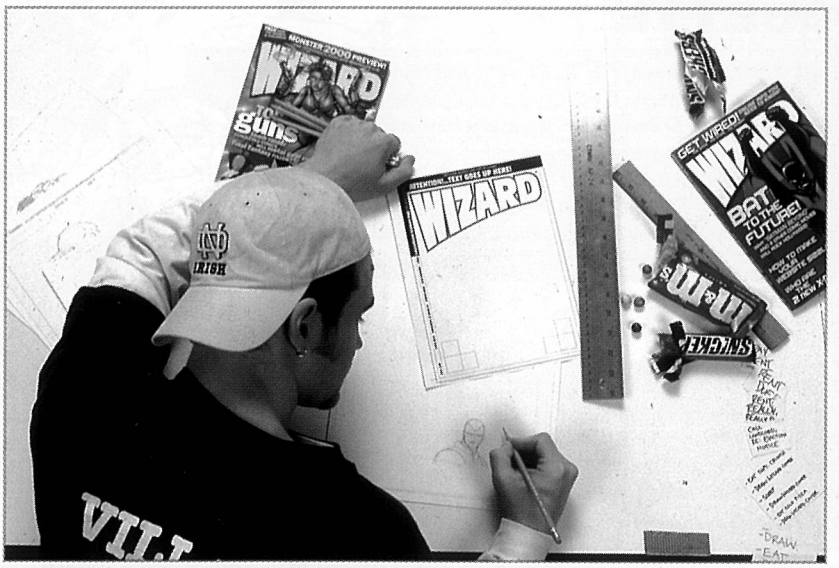

"But wait!" you say, "What about me? I can't go to conventions!"

Unfortunately, you are at a certain disadvantage, although all is not lost. Welcome to the U.S. Mail. It's not as ideal as being face-to-face with an editor, but it's a viable avenue. Most larger publishers have a "submissions editor" to whom you can send a package of samples. In this case, prepare Xeroxes of your pages (**NEVER SEND ORIGINALS!**). 8 1/2-by-11 inches is fine, but again, if you're sending fully inked samples then include copies of the pencils. It's best to send it all flat in a large envelope; throw in a piece of cardboard to keep it from getting bent. (You should even write on the outside "do not fold or bend.")

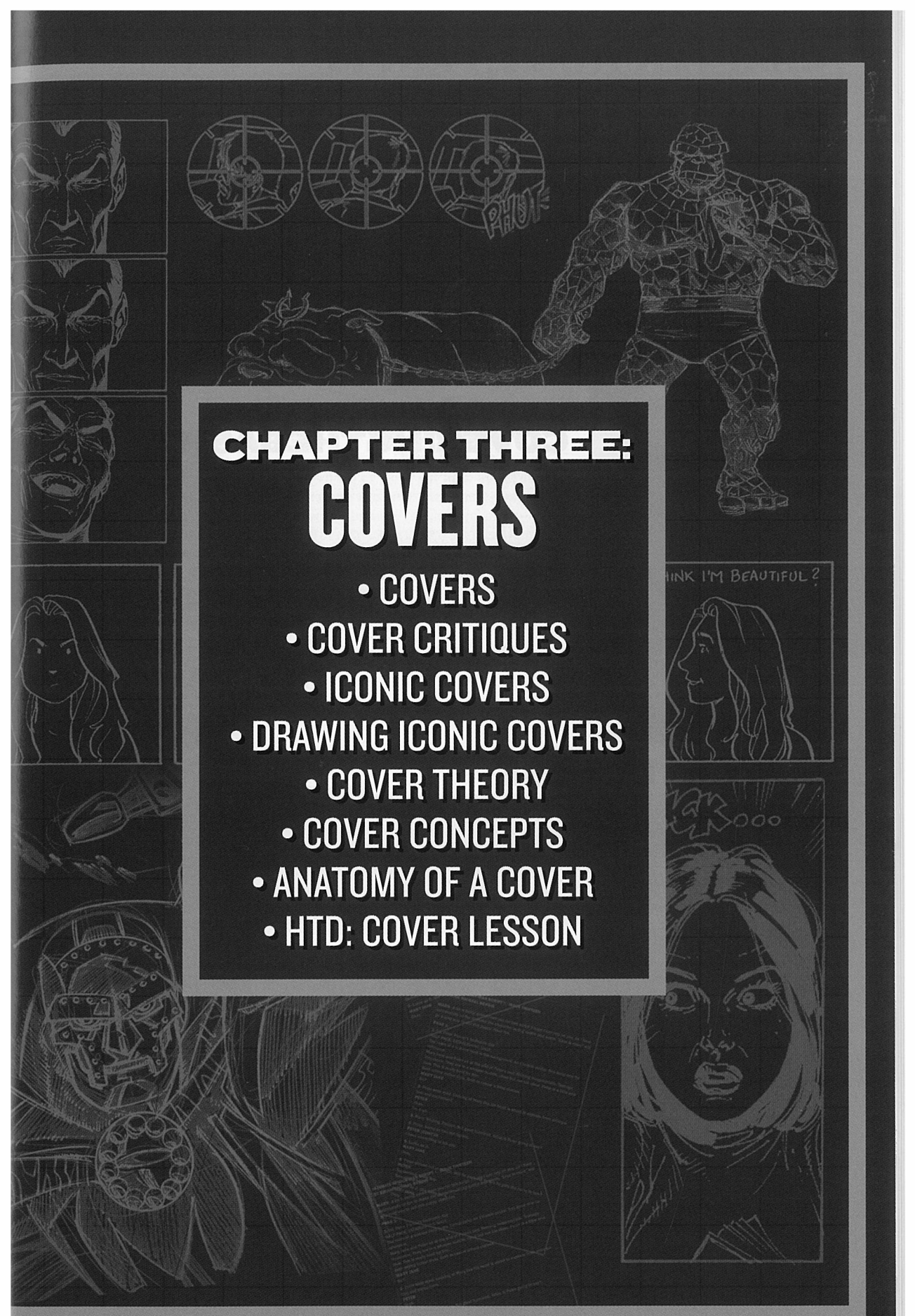
The size of the package you send is important. Rather than the social atmosphere of a con, your samples will cross the editor's desk at work. There are plenty of demands on his time in any given day, and a larger package can often be set aside for more pressing matters. Just three sequential pages can be enough to catch an editor's eye; I wouldn't go more than six or seven sample pages total. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope (**SASE**) with the samples. If you're not worried about getting the samples back, a letter envelope is fine; if you are, the **SASE** should be the same size as the mailed envelope. Editors will generally send back a response if you've gone to the trouble of including an **SASE**.

Lastly, beyond the usual (work on the figure, work on the faces, etc.), here's a bit of general advice I give aspiring artists: practice, practice, practice. I know it can be difficult to find time, but the more pages you can draw each month, the better. Early on, I found that simple repetition of drawing page after page progressed my drawing.

Many aspiring artists will spend a month or two worrying over a few sample pages for an upcoming convention. But can you manage to draw five pages each month? Eight? More? If they're not up to sample quality, tear them up and do some more. You'll be surprised how the repetition will improve your ability. Besides, if you get a gig, you'll have to produce about 22 pages a month. No time like the present to prepare for the future.




I cannot guarantee that these tips will get you a job like mine (as my lawyers recommended I point out), but they should increase your chances. If these pointers help, and you're lucky enough to receive an encouraging response from an editor, congratulations. You've made a connection. Cultivate it. Do more samples and send them in to let them see you progress. Persistence pays off. It took me some time to "break in" to the business, but it was worth it. I can say with all honesty that my job definitely does *not* suck. Now get to work, and I'll see you and your portfolio at the next convention!




# CHAPTER THREE: COVERS

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- ICONIC COVERS
- DRAWING ICONIC COVERS
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# COVERS BY FRANK CHO

Hello everyone! I'm Frank Cho (a.k.a. Monkey Boy), and *Wizard*'s asked me to talk to you about how I do covers, and how you can do it too. Well, overall, know your perspective and anatomy (check out past *How to Draw* volumes to master those two areas), keep it simple, keep it bold and keep that deadline in mind. There! That was easy, wasn't it? Wait, what's that?

You want more? Okay—between books like *Shanna, the She-Devil*, *Marvel Knights Spider-Man* and *Liberty Meadows*, I think I've got this whole "covers" thing pretty much, uh, covered. It's all about creating images that you can see and understand from a distance or at a glance. I even did the cover to the first *How to Draw*, so we'll use that as an example! So here goes!


## COVERINGTHEBASICS

Art directors want the cover to set the tone for the book. Depending on the comic, sometimes that means they want a cover that reflects the story inside. But most of the time—nowadays, anyway—the editors want a nice, generic, *iconic* pose, like this one I did for *Amazing Spider-Man*. For covers like these (and for all covers, really), I approach things the way I would when drawing a poster: It's gotta be something you can see from across the room, something that will jump out at you. Usually, for covers like that, I try to use two or three figures at most, but a single figure works the best.


## MATCHTHEPOSE

It's important that the pose you select for your cover reflects the character you're drawing. For example, you can't have the same pose for Spidey as you would for Superman. Superman is one of the most powerful superhero icons, so he can get away with just standing there looking tough. Spidey can't. He's a very energetic character, so you want to have him bouncing around, like I do here.

## VIVELADIFFERENCE!

You also can't use the same pose for guys and women—and women are much harder to draw covers for. With guys you just have to convey power to make the figure work, while with women, you have to emphasize their, y'know, *curvaceous* nature. It's almost like a swimsuit-issue pose—you have to emphasize their curves, yet at the same time reflect their power as well.

Remember to let the book dictate your cover. If it's a humor book, try to inject humor to the image. If it's an action book, try to have the characters in motion.

FIGURE A

## A STUDY IN SPIDEY

For a Spider-Man cover I was asked to do, the art director wanted to take the iconic approach, with Spider-Man coming out at the viewer. I got his input, and tried out four or five sketches. Again, the cover has to accurately reflect the character. You can't have a Spider-Man figure in a flying pose, because he doesn't fly. So I drew him jumping around, in almost a crouching kind of pose, giving him that certain body language that says "Spidey."

We finally settled on a Spider-Man that best reflected Spider-Man, and at the same time had that iconic quality about him. So that's how we picked the pose you see in **Figure A**.



## GIVE ME LIBERTY

But let's leave superheroes behind for a moment. With books like *Trouble* or *Liberty Meadows*, I'm still doing the same basic "iconic" thing, relatively speaking, but there's more to it. I'm trying to convey an idea behind the cover—it's more a snapshot of a situation, and in the case of a humor book like *Liberty Meadows* it's usually something comedic, like a pratfall. It's almost like one of those beautiful Norman Rockwell covers from *The Saturday Evening Post*. Most of Rockwell's covers have a story behind them—they're more like moments in time than portraits of iconic figures. But I still try to design these kinds of covers like a poster, making the idea as clear as possible.

## TEXTUALHEALING

Which brings us to the cover I did for the first *How to Draw* book. Here are some of the Brandy poses I came up with for it. In one she's leaning, in another she's sitting in a tree, and in the other she's just sitting on the floor.

Why these particular poses? Well, the art director had already laid out the title and the logo and all the other text for the cover, most of which went in the top right-hand corner. So I had to figure out how to fit an image in the allotted space, which is what I tried to do with these figures. Nowadays, with computer technology, it really doesn't matter—the art director can easily manipulate the image to make room for the title, credits or whatever—but I usually try to ease that process by leaving room. (And by making those deadlines!)

FIGURE B

## SKETCHAPPEAL

Drawing a cover is mostly just trying to come up with a strong pose and trying to build upon it. It's kinda hard when you're drawing girls, because you're trying to come up with a very strong, dominant pose, yet at the same time make it very sensual and sexy. I was just playing around with various poses, and for whatever reason none of 'em were sexy enough for me.

Once I got to the sketch in **Figure B**, it still just didn't seem right, but I could tell I was on the right track. Now, I don't know how other artists work, but I basically start doodling until I get the figure that I want. It's a very organic process—more like a gut reaction. And that's what I got when I hit upon this last sketch (**Figure C**)!

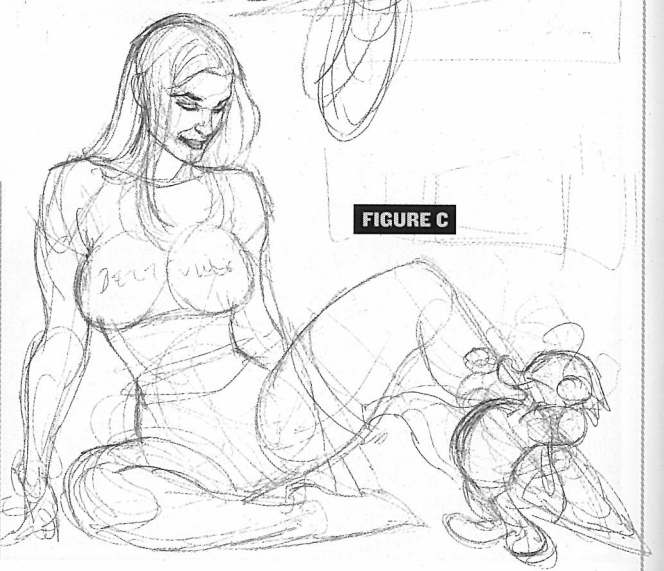


FIGURE C

## THETRUMANSHOW

I try to construct poses that will draw the viewer's eyes into the image's main focal point or the "punchline" of the scene. In this case, Truman the duck trying on the superhero costume. So once I had the Brandy figure down, Truman's superheroic pose came along almost by accident. As I said earlier, in all my *Liberty Meadows* covers I try to tell a little story. Since this is a collection of *Wizard's* "Basic Training" lessons, I thought putting Truman in a superhero costume for the amusement of Brandy was a cute idea that fit the theme. Brandy's sitting pose is very sexy, and Truman in his superhero costume fits the book's theme, and the overall layout fits the logo and text the way it needed to—it all fell together just right!


## PENCILINGPERFECTION

Now that I had the right sketch, I tightened it up, erasing any stray pencil lines. If there are parts that I'm not too happy about, I look for a photo reference to help me correct the pose or body part I'm having trouble with. If that doesn't help, I usually end up posing myself in a mirror and using *me* as a reference.

In most of my work, my pencils are very, very loose, to the point where only I can ink it. I usually do about 60 percent of my drawings in pencil, and do the other 40 percent while I'm inking, still just sort of figuring things out as I go. For this assignment, though, I actually went ahead and did pretty tight pencils—not super-tight, as with artists like Adam Hughes, whose pencils are pretty much finished art—but pretty tight. It was very cool—it's always a fun experience to try something new.


## ANOTHERINKCOMING

I usually ink and pencil at the same time. My inking is all done with a Pigma Micron pen, usually size 02 (.30mm) or size 08 (.50mm). It has a very flexible tip, so when I press down hard on it, it produces a fat line, and if I ease up the pressure, it gets thinner. It can almost act like a brush, and over years of practice my linework has become very similar to brushwork, to the point where many people think that's what I'm using. Because my pencils for this piece were tighter than normal, it was easier and quicker to ink. But the spontaneity of the inking process, where you accidentally hit upon something good, was a bit limited. Normally, I'm still figuring out the small details!

## COLORMEFINISHED

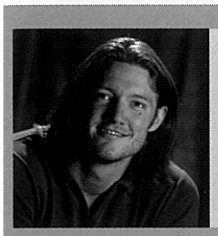
Ta-da! Now, I usually don't color my own stuff. Most of the time I leave it up to the colorist to decide upon the color palette. But sometimes I'll make color notations on the image for the colorist, recommending the colors that I like. I try to keep the color as simple as possible—again, to reflect that poster quality. Note that the colors for this Brandy cover went through one final round of changes to make them really pop.


**A LOT OF PEOPLE**, including myself, fall into traps where you've created an elaborate image with multiple figures and crazy backgrounds. Sometimes I still get carried away like that. But when I actually sit down and start drawing it, going beyond the sketching stage to the actual penciling stage, then I realize that I have to start editing—trimming some of the backgrounds or figure work out—because it will just overwhelm the viewer. When it comes to covers, you just want to keep it simple, clean and bold. That way other people, just at a glance, will get the message.

And if all else fails, draw hot sexy women on your covers, 'cuz kids love them hot sexy women. Hoo-HAH!

*For some eye-popping covers, pick up any of Frank Cho's books, including* Liberty Meadows *from Image and* Shanna, the She-Devil *from Marvel.*

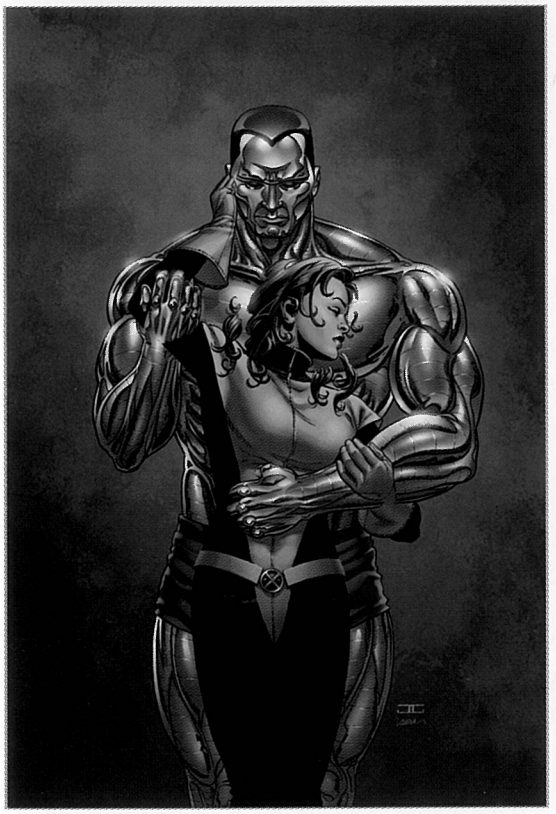
# COVER CRITIQUES BY CRAIG TELLO



Influenced by the industry's most revered artists, phenom John Cassaday has been raising the comic art measuring stick since the late 1990s. From Captain America to the X-Men, Cassaday has drawn almost every facet of the Marvel Universe. Given his experience with Marvel's mightiest, Cassaday consistently produces some of the most riveting art in comics, especially in his cover work. What makes Cassaday one of the most popular artists in the business today? See what he has to say. And keep his thoughts in mind when critiquing your own artwork; step back and take a second look when you've completed a piece!

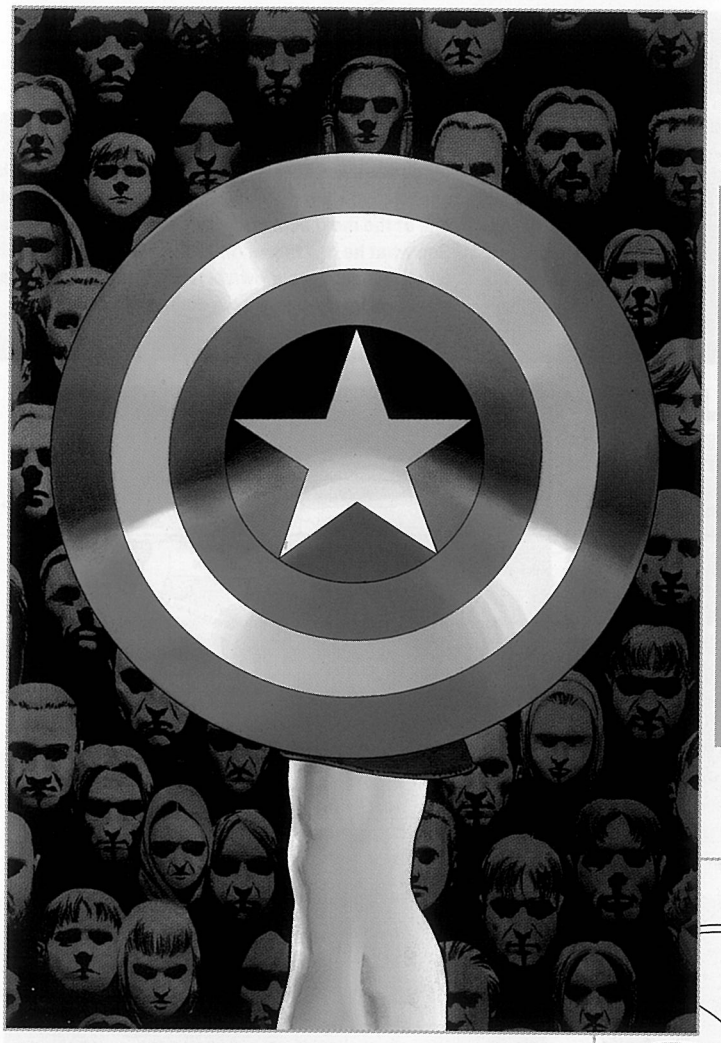
## COVERBAND, COVERARTIST? (*Wizard* #157)

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the complete reproduction of another artist's work is an act of homage. This *Wizard* cover—an ode to the "Days of Future Past" arc by former *Uncanny* artist John Byrne—may not have required much invention, but it certainly wasn't a walk in the park. Given his own innate instinct for depth and perspective, Cassaday says, "It was difficult to render this replica of Byrne's work. I had my own ideas regarding the theme of this cover, and it was a challenge to forge a true copy, all the way down to the glisten in Wolverine's claw." As he worked on this homage piece, he began to understand Byrne's motivation behind key elements within the image. "The further I got into the shot, the more I began to feel the direction behind the original," he says. "At that point, I became conscious of every minute detail."

## TRIPLEX-MEN? (*Astonishing X-Men* #6)

How easy is it to make a 7-foot-tall, cold steel Colossus appear warm and cuddly with his darling Kitty Pryde? Cassaday says it's all in the body language. Just like in reality, comic characters' body language can speak much louder than their words—especially when those words are encapsulated in a white bubble. Nestling Kitty firmly in the midsection of the Soviet behemoth is an effective technique that amplifies the passion between these two enamored mutants. According to Cassaday, "It's the artist's job to identify the inner essence of the characters they are portraying, and then put that onto paper. Posture, positioning and especially facial expressions all contribute to the process of bringing characters and their emotions to life."



## CAPTAINAMERICA THROWSHIS MIGHTY SHEILD!

**(*Captain America* #5)**

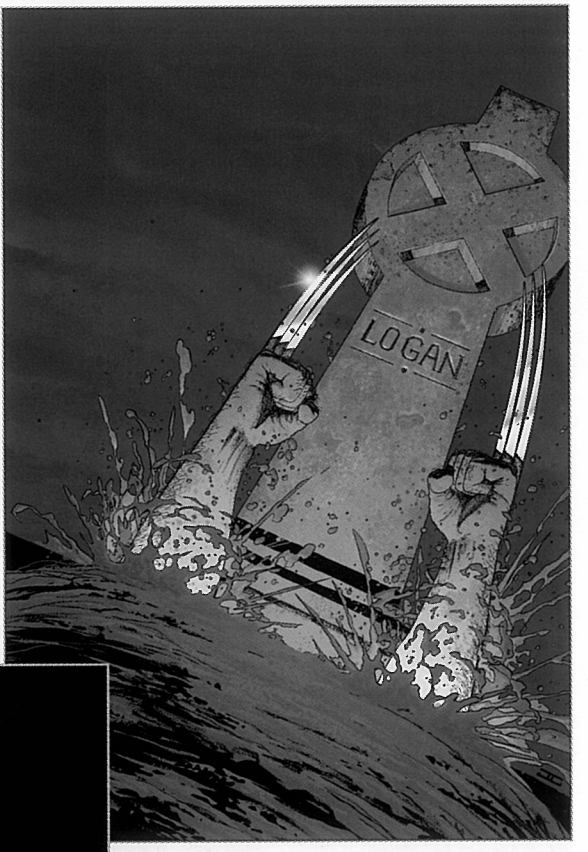
Some of Cassaday's best work relies on a sharp contrast between light and dark. In *Captain America* #5, the contrast of the red-white-and-blue battle shield over the murky grey toned background brings to life the significance of Cap's shield. "Captain America is a stand-up individual who rises above any and all challenges," Cassaday says. "No matter what the situation, Cap has always been a symbol—an icon of hope, courage and the American way." According to Cassaday, his distinct use of color "sets Captain America apart from the shadowy backdrop" and "puts him forth as that symbol." Over the years, the leader of the Avengers has battled the darkest of forces with his star-clad shield. With a crowd of empty faces behind the iconic image, Cassaday said his goal was to position Cap's shield as a "mark of protection for the masses from their fears and angst. It resonates better than a simple full-body pose."

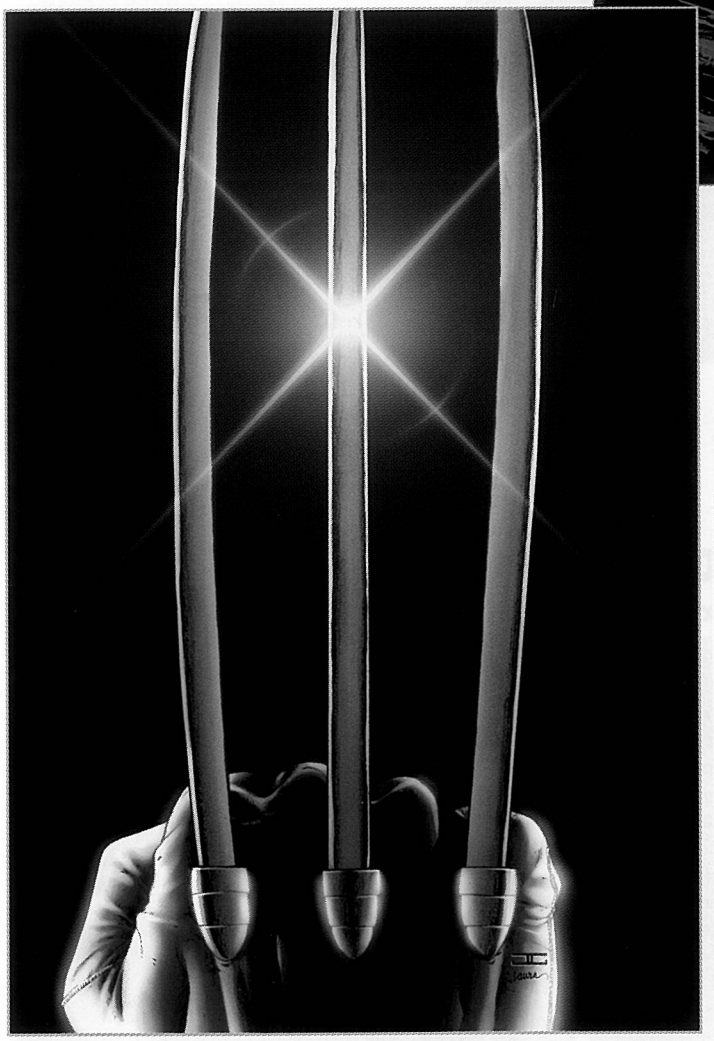
## INTHEMOUTHOF MADNESS (*Black Panther* #4)

There's more to a hero than snug-fit spandex and mini-capes. Beneath the exterior, there's passion, courage, integrity, and in many cases, anxiety. "Black Panther isn't only a hero, he's also royalty—a king responsible for an entire nation. I took a long hard look at his role and sought to illustrate the struggle of his daily existence," Cassaday says. In addition, Cassaday's expressive (and somewhat ironic) image of Black Panther being swallowed by a panther uses a contrasting technique of jet black and stark white to further define the hero. Using detail to highlight and accentuate the depth of Wakanda's trusted protector, Cassaday provides substance to how the Panther's perceived. "You have a colorless panther outline engaging a defined character that has been detailed to full-depth. It's a depiction of the hero's character: robust, full, multi-dimensional."

## CLAWSOFDEATH (*Wizard* #146)

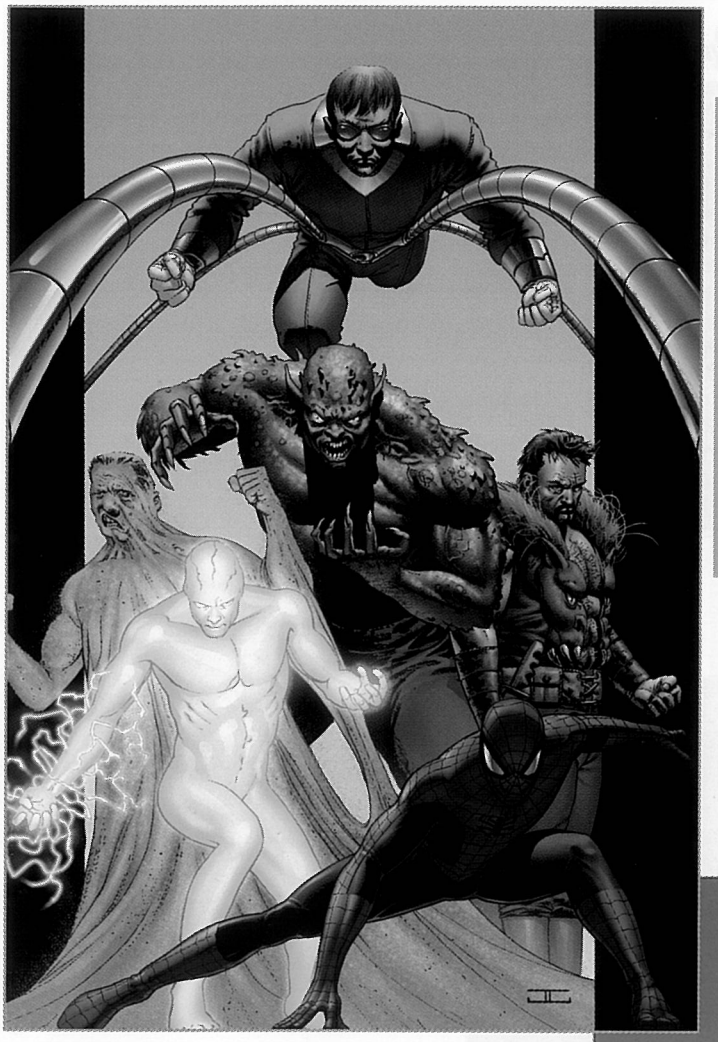
Every artist has his or her own method of presenting a theme—including death. But what about tackling the death of one of comics' most beloved and timeless personalities, Wolverine? In this *Wizard* cover, Cassaday's approach to Wolvie's demise is one that employs very distinct symbols. From the well-carved X-insignia atop the tombstone to the most minimal of epitaphs reading "Logan," Cassaday captures the magnitude of the moment all via a handful of profound images. "You think of death and assign very certain symbols to it—a grave, a headstone. When you think of Wolverine, you think of a character that epitomizes all that is unrelenting. Even death cannot consume him." To illustrate the deed, Cassaday checked his gut, took a deep breath and buried Wolverine...and then had him rip himself right out of that burial turf! "Of course, you can't ever expect Wolverine, of all characters, to remain dead. I mean, c'mon...this *is* comics."



## THREEREASONS TOREAD (*Astonishing X-Men* #1)

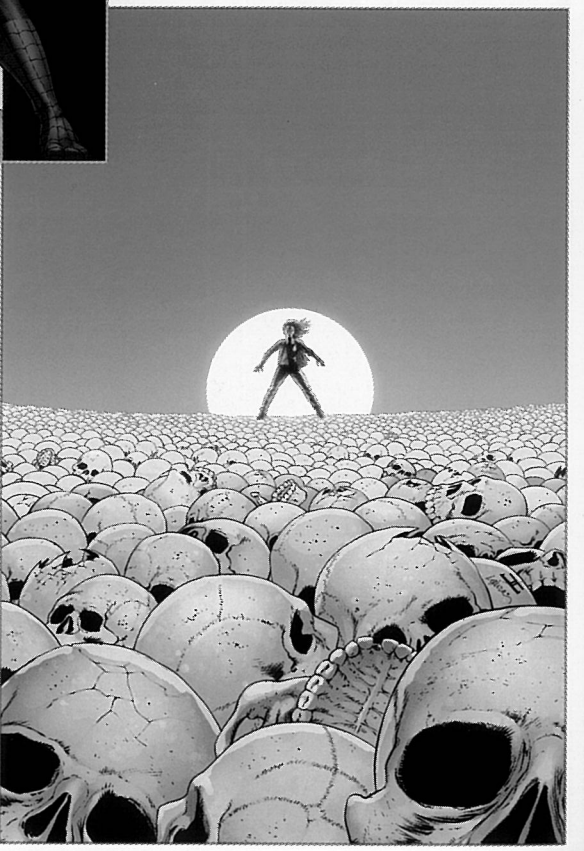
Legacy is what superheroes are built on, and it's also one of the more challenging features that artists must try to capture. So when Cassaday needed to illustrate the legacy of the X-Men in the very first cover of *Astonishing*, he looked for something that defined Marvel's most popular superteam: a trifecta of adamantium blades. "I chose the claws not only because Wolverine is by far the most well known X-Man, but they are the most recognized—and dangerous—weapons in the Marvel Universe." True, Logan's claws are deadly, but they are also an awesome sight to see. They're usually being used in battle, slashing through some villain's hide, so this isn't your typical view of them. "Taking this close-up shot of the claws that make Wolverine so unique is a tribute to the uniqueness of the entire team," Cassaday adds. "You take a recognizable symbol and venerate it."



## SIXBADSEEDS

***(Ultimate Six #7)***

What are the tricks to drawing the dastardly villains of the Marvel Universe? The exact same tricks used to draw the heroes! According to Cassaday, the distinction between heroes and villains is not as black and white as they appear. "Just like with the heroes, the key to drawing villains is realism," he says. Cassaday makes a concerted effort to make villains "not appear overly menacing," but making them believable—exactly how they might look outside the pages of a comic book. With the exception of certain villains' lizard scales, cloaks or robotic armor, Cassaday says, "The truth is that most real villains appear to be just like ordinary people. Drawing their teeth six inches longer isn't always the best technique. You keep them genuine and let their *actions* define how villainous they actually are."



## THELASTX-MANSIONONTHELEFT ***(Astonishing X-Men #9)***

In many cases, comic artists rely on the landscape of an image, not just the characters themselves, to tell a story. In this ominous and downright macabre *Astonishing* cover, Cassaday uses a ghastly horizon of skulls to deliver a torrent of dread to the backbones of True Believers. "The X-Men are always up against the greatest of odds," says Cassaday. "This grisly foreground heightens the sense of calamity and makes readers believe that their favorite mutants are in for a hell of a battle." Be it a lone figure amid a sea of bones or a nautical journey into Juggernaut's bathtub, a unique and well-detailed setting can go a very long way. "The landscape and background are just as important as the characters. It's easy for an artist to forget that sometimes a character's greatest foil is the environment in which they are portrayed," he says.

## CHAINSOFCOMMAND

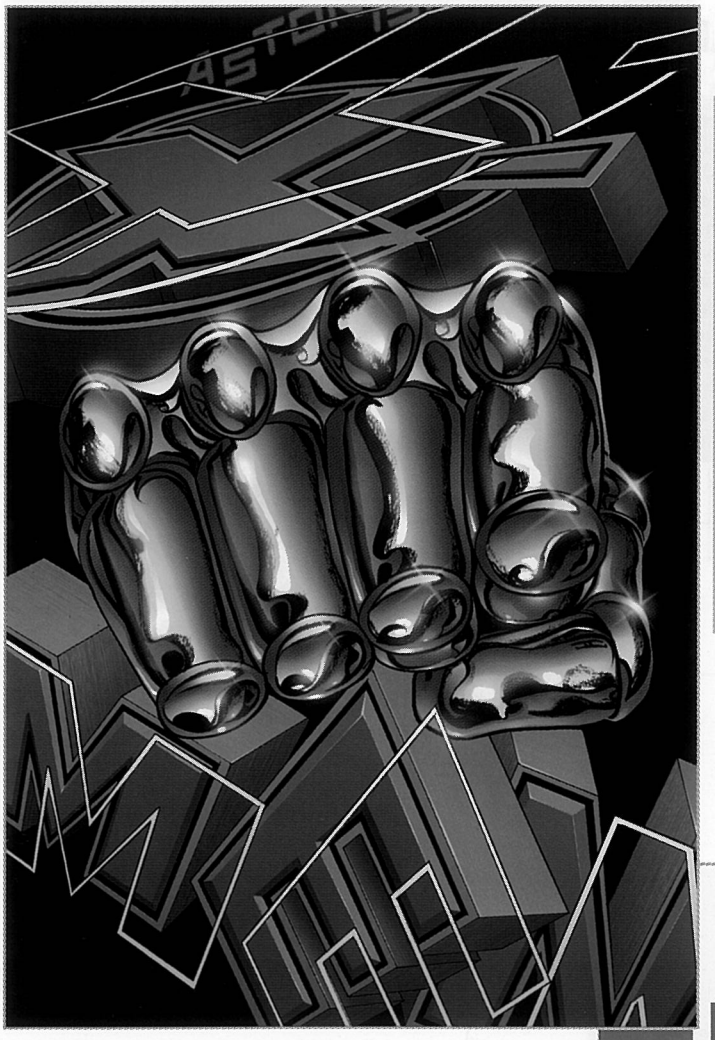
**(*Captain America* #8)**

Sometimes a bit of shock appeal is all you need to get the readers' Spidey-senses tingling. And Cassaday did just that with this *Captain America* cover, which provided more shock than a seat in the electric chair. "Everyone knows that the name Captain America means freedom. So binding him in chains is unimaginable for anyone who knows his legacy." Adding a touch of shadow on the face and body of Cap gives an extra hint of peril as the dark times that Cap's facing truly take shape. Cassaday then substitutes Cap's usual look of confidence with a look of ghastly fear—and the readers' attention has been successfully snared. "Readers are drawn to the unexpected," adds Cassaday. "Especially with this cover, fans definitely didn't expect Captain America to be into bondage."

## ASSEMBLING WITHAUTHORITY

**(*Avengers* #500)**

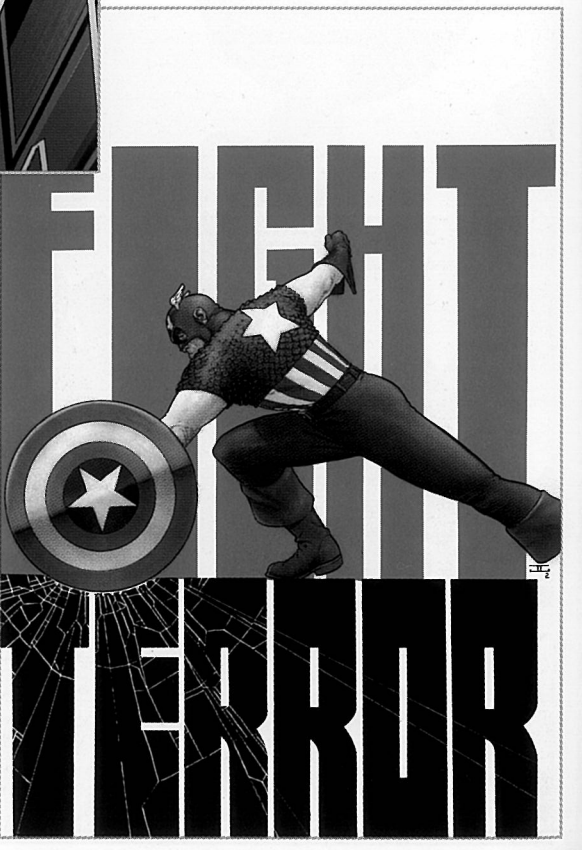
In this classic Cassaday cover, fans find themselves looking up to the greatest superhero team in the Marvel Universe—literally. "It's your typical team pose, but this isn't your typical team—it's the Avengers, superhero legends," Cassaday says. This epic pose comes to life with Cassaday's use of smoke and mirrors, or in this case, shading and angle. The shadows that appear just below the clefts on the chins of Earth's Mightiest Heroes give them the chiseled look of greatness on which their dynamic legacy is built. "By focusing from the bottom upward," Cassaday says, "the characters appear larger than life." Add some well-executed shading and you have a look that Cassaday says, "likens [these heroes] to ancient statues of Grecian gods. This god appeal especially works for Thor—for obvious reasons."



## POW!BOOF!SOCK!

**(*Astonishing X-Men* #5)**

It's not every day at the comic store that you find the clenched paw of a massive metallic Russian walloping the front cover of his own book. Usually, the title and publisher's label need to be taken into account when producing original cover art. Going into the creation of this cover, Cassaday certainly took these elements into account—he just decided to decimate them. "Every now and then, [artists] have the opportunity to break down the constraints of convention. This was one of those occasions," admits Cassaday. Additionally, this type of "interactive" cover is exciting for fans who are impacted and excited by a book that can literally dissolve typical comic standards. "This particular comic line was started to make an impact in each issue. I've ensured that the cover makes a statement that complements the depth that exists within the pages."

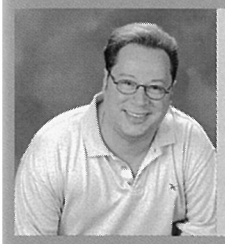



## CAPWANTSYOU!

**(*Captain America* #2)**

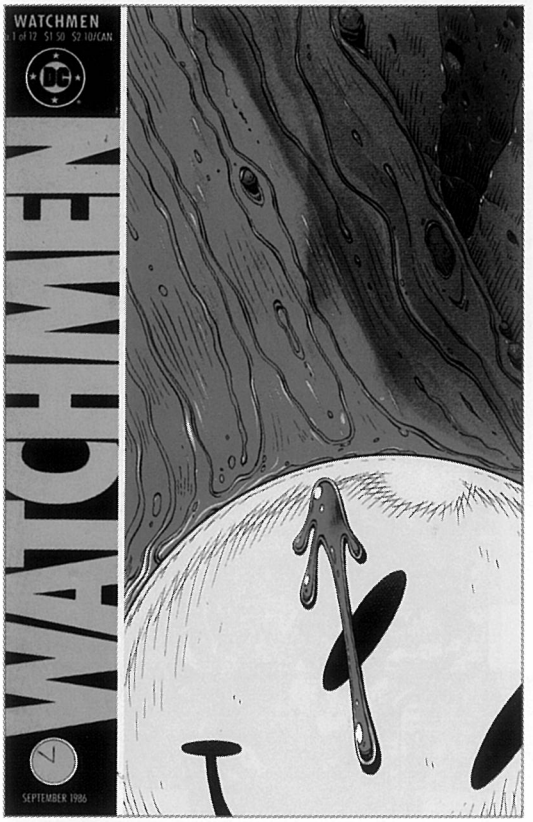
In the fashion of the legendary Will Eisner, Cassaday extends the use of text beyond the usual word balloon with his "Fight Terror" cover. "I've always been enthralled by images that mix great visual detail with powerful words," says Cassaday. Reminiscent of vintage propaganda posters, this is a "direct call to action of sorts—a call to read," he explains. "It's a bold technique that I think complements the intensity of Captain America." Not only are the words themselves bold, but they represent the code by which Cap lives. The words "Fight Terror" highlight and illuminate Captain America's persona and compel the fans. The end result is a radical combination of a poignant statement with a strong image. "With the text, you're challenged to decide which speaks louder: Cap's actions or the large print block words across the front cover," says Cassaday.

# ICONIC COVERS BY JOE QUESADA



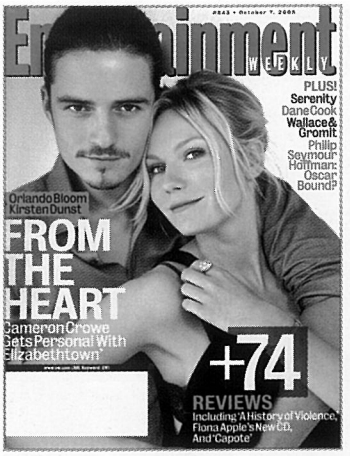
Before he helped spearhead Marvel's success over the last six years as the publisher's editor-in-chief, Joe Quesada was—and still is—a superstar artist and creator of award-winning covers. Here, he talks about not just crafting a cover that sells, but one that has staying power and relevance. In other words, covers which are iconic.

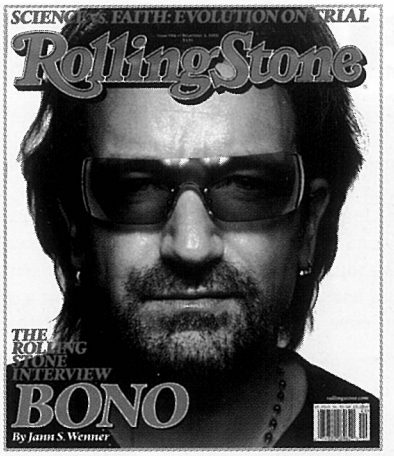
Don't kid yourself—it's the superstars like Brian Michael Bendis and John Romita Jr. that keep you coming back, but whether you're talking about comic books or magazines, the cover sells. When somebody walks into a store, the first thing they see is the cover. When somebody walks past a newsstand, it's the cover that catches their eye. We are constantly judging our books by their covers.




When I went into a comic shop after years and years of not reading comics, there was only one book that caught my eye—and only one book that I bought—*Watchmen*. I didn't know what or who [Alan] Moore and [Dave] Gibbons were, but that cover—WOW! It was so unique for its time. It had that big "Watchmen" running in a band down the left side—it was just so darn unusual compared to everything else on the stands. What made it so captivating, its key to success (at least for me), was its simplicity. Simplicity *sells*.

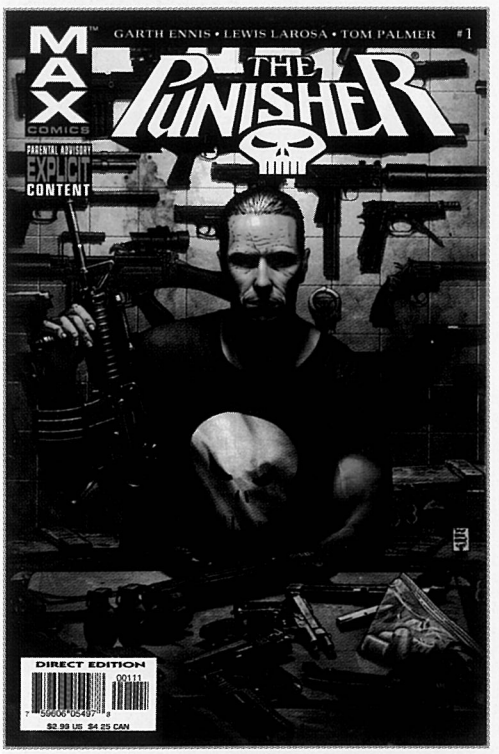

There was a time in this industry when cover blurbs—big, bold graphics stating what was in that issue—were important (like *Avengers* #1, **right**). It was a monthly business on the newsstand, and you wanted people to know the difference between one comic and the next. But most stuff on the newsstand was pretty much the same. Comics were only keeping in step with the modern world. Times changed, but for the longest time, comics refused to.



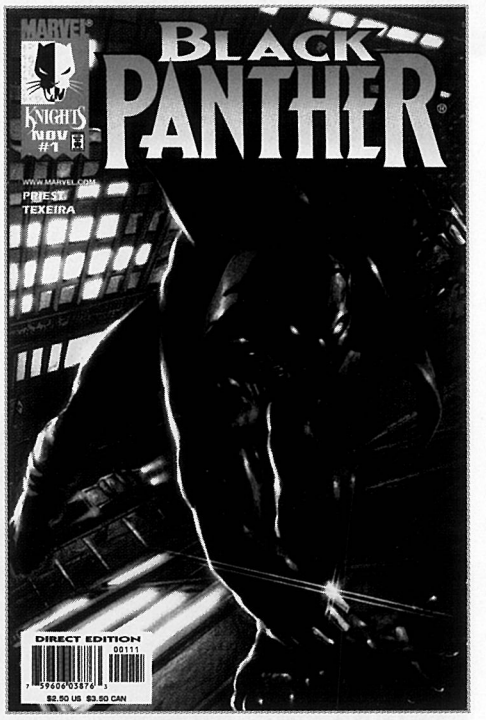

Look at the world of modern-day publishing. Look at what all the major magazine publishers feature on their covers (**left**)—it's usually one very simple, iconic image: a pretty model, a famous athlete, even celebrities can do the trick. You very rarely see a team of people on a cover, unless it has something to do with an ensemble show like "Friends" (and even then, they keep the composition simple). For the most part, it's a single figure or a single, simple, iconic graphic.

From time to time, it's okay to throw in a story cover, but it's not the best way to catch a customer's eye. For example, Marvel used to try and fit every one of the X-Men onto every *X-Men* cover (like *X-Men* #3, **right**). But once you got every X-Man on the cover—each wearing a different color uniform, doing a different action, using a different power and each power with a different color—you ended up with something that looked like a pizza pie with everything on it. People may look at what appears to be a simple cover and think it was a no-brainer and easy to design, but they couldn't be more wrong. It's actually easier to design an image with many elements or characters, but when it comes to covers, quantity doesn't necessarily equate to quality.


Tim Bradstreet's great at creating simple yet effective covers. From a purely graphic perspective, all of his *Punisher* covers (**left**) are kind of the same if you look at the elements: It's the Punisher, standing around holding a gun in one form or fashion, yet Tim takes it to another level. In that respect, he's probably one of the best designers in the history of comics—he's able to take one simple Punisher graphic and, every month, do something with only a few elements to make each cover completely and totally unique.

Alex Ross (**art at left**) gets it. He's always good for a dramatic punch because of his ultra-hyper-realistic style and his sense of drama. If he puts more than one character on a cover, he generally puts them in a nice, stacked one-behind-the-other orderly pose. He'll usually use a kid's-eye perspective to make his characters larger than life, to give us that same sense of wonder we all had when we cracked open our first superhero comic.




Look back at the Marvel Knights relaunch—the first issues for the original four series were all highly calculated. We knew they would be the pieces everyone would be seeing *ad nauseum* until the books were released. With the exception of *Inhumans* (and there's an argument for that one; see Alex Ross), all the images were simple, iconic, single characters standing in full pose. Those covers were memorable. They were seen everywhere, they were used everywhere, because they were so simple. [Even today], this cover to *Black Panther* #1 by Mark Texiera is the greatest piece of Black Panther art EVER!


Then there's *Wizard*. *Wizard*'s covers have come a long way since the magazine began. Back in the early days, *Wizard* was doing things like gatefolds and going for big, splashy action covers. I remember getting cover assignments where they'd say things like, "We want Spider-Man battling the Lizard and the Hobgoblin and..." so on.



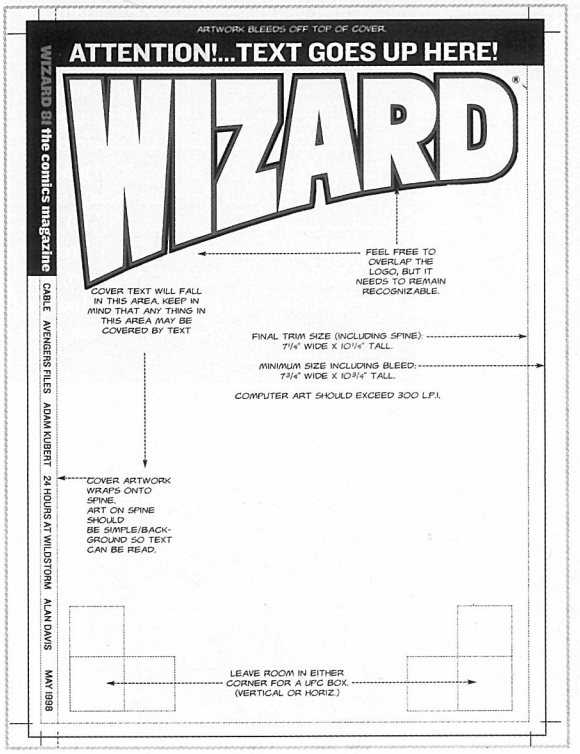


Somewhere down the road, *Wizard* changed its art direction. The mandate matured from "Make 'em big and splashy" to "Keep them iconic and simple." Even if you were using multiple characters, *Wizard* wanted them very simplistically arranged. They wanted to make sure the layout wasn't getting too convoluted and in the way of itself. Ironically, by virtue of making them simple, *Wizard*'s covers actually ended up being bigger and splashier. I'll never forget when they changed gears. I said, "What do you mean I have to shove everything to the right?" (*Wizard* now asks its cover artists to keep their artwork as flush to the right as possible, so they can run their text down the left-hand side of the cover.) Still, being a good boy, I followed instructions (hey, just 'cause I'm E-I-C doesn't mean I get a free ride).

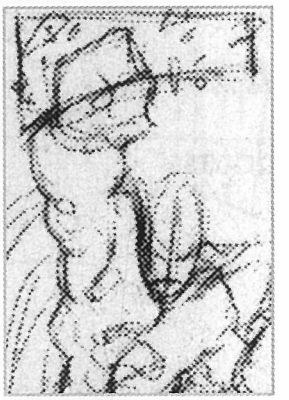
# DRAWING ICONIC COVERS

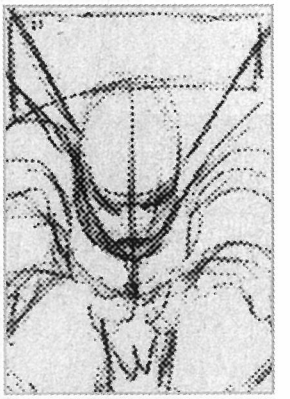
BY JOE QUESADA AND THE *WIZARD* STAFF

To start off, we have the lovely *Wizard* cover template (**below**). Whether you're doing a cover for *Wizard* (or any comic book), you have to take the logo into consideration. There are things that can be done with the logo, in terms of interaction with the character(s), that can make an interesting layout. Some magazines and some editors prefer that the logo remain untouched. I actually like to utilize the logo as a layout element as long as the logo remains recognizable (unless it's a new title, in which case I would steer completely clear of the logo). In *Wizard*'s case, you need to only see a portion of the logo to know that it's *Wizard*. At this point, *Wizard* is essentially an icon logo, so it's fair game for layout manipulation.




How do you make a cover interesting? I start by taking what I call my cover/page sequence "cheat sheet" (**below**). This sheet is comprised of 12 boxes, each of which works out to the proportions of a comic book cover or page. This sheet allows me to work in a "stream of consciousness" approach, which lets me play each idea off of its predecessors, enabling me to get a rhythm of the design established. I took each box and roughed in the little wedge-shaped element, which represents the "wedge o' cheese" shaped-*Wizard* logo. From there, I proceed to rough out 12 different covers based on what I thought might work, leaving myself notes as to the best approaches as I went along.





Let's take a look at the evolution of one of Quesada's iconic covers: *Wizard* #152, which features the Marvel Knights triumvirate of Wolverine, Spider-Man and Daredevil.

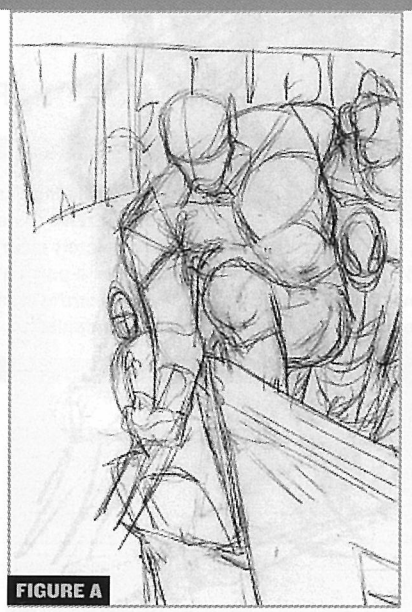


FIGURE A

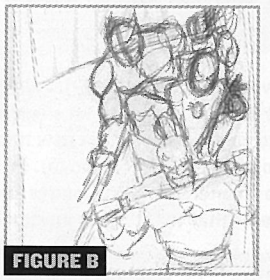


FIGURE B

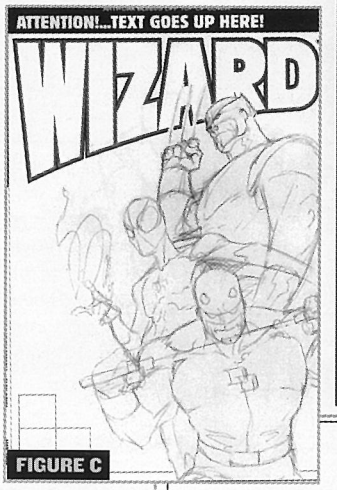



FIGURE C

**1.** After selecting his final sketch to send to Wizard (**Figure A**), Quesada's potential cover is sent around to the editors for feedback.

**2.** The editorial team of Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum, Editor Brian Cunningham and Creative Director Steve Blackwell go over the cover, with Blackwell's counter sketch (**Fig. B**) asking Quesada to rearrange the order of the figures, bringing Spider-Man more into the foreground and dropping DD to eye level.

**3.** After completing a couple more sketches, Quesada sends back this more finished version (**Fig. C**) on a *Wizard* template, in order to give the editors a more fully realized product. DD looks great, but Quesada makes some tweaks with a follow-up sketch (**Fig. D**). This version, with Wolverine crouching in front of the logo (a Quesada staple), has more dramatic punch, playing up Logan's animal nature, while Spidey anchors the piece in classic class cut-up fashion.

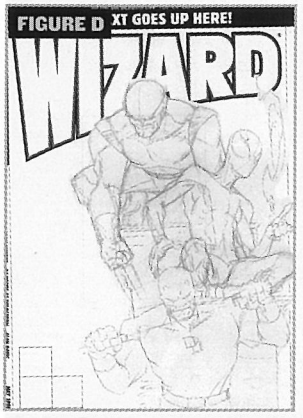



FIGURE D

FIGURE E

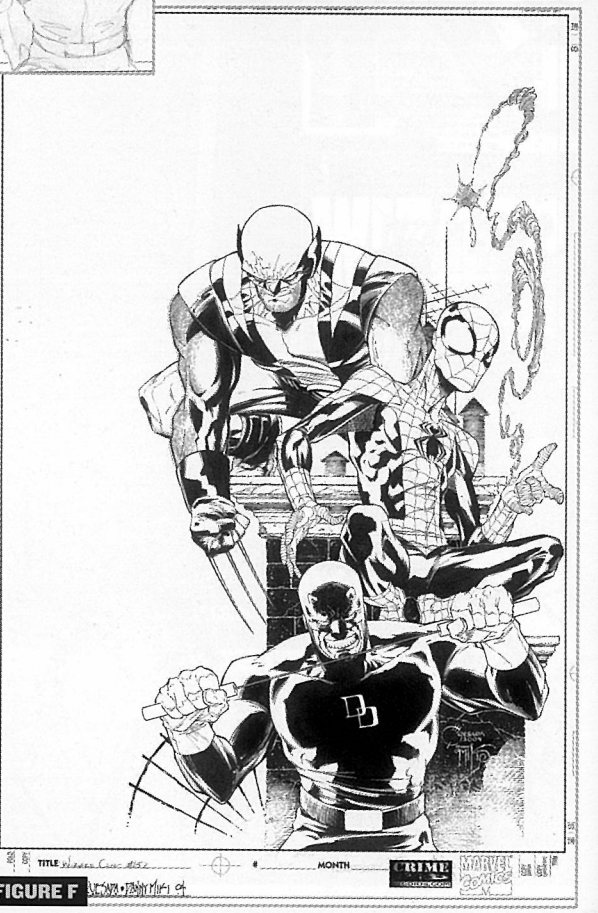



FIGURE F

**4. BAM**—Quesada's detailed pencils explode off the page (**Fig. E**)! Spidey's web looks as if it's about to ensnare you, while Wolverine's bemused smirk drips with pure menace. And you can literally hear the wind whistle from DD's swinging billy club. Hard to think it could get better, but...

**5.** ...Danny Miki's inks (**Fig. F**) really play off light sources to dramatic effect, giving the Marvel Knights trio a look that's both fresh yet realistically gritty, the standard for the MK art style.

In the final colored piece (**Fig. G**), you can see how Richard Isanove's hues bring the artwork to life. The murky, seductive green adds startling contrast to the figures, making them leap off the page. On the next page, you see the finished product (**Fig. H**) and how the Wizard design team integrated the text with the image—and created one of *Wizard*'s most "iconic" covers.

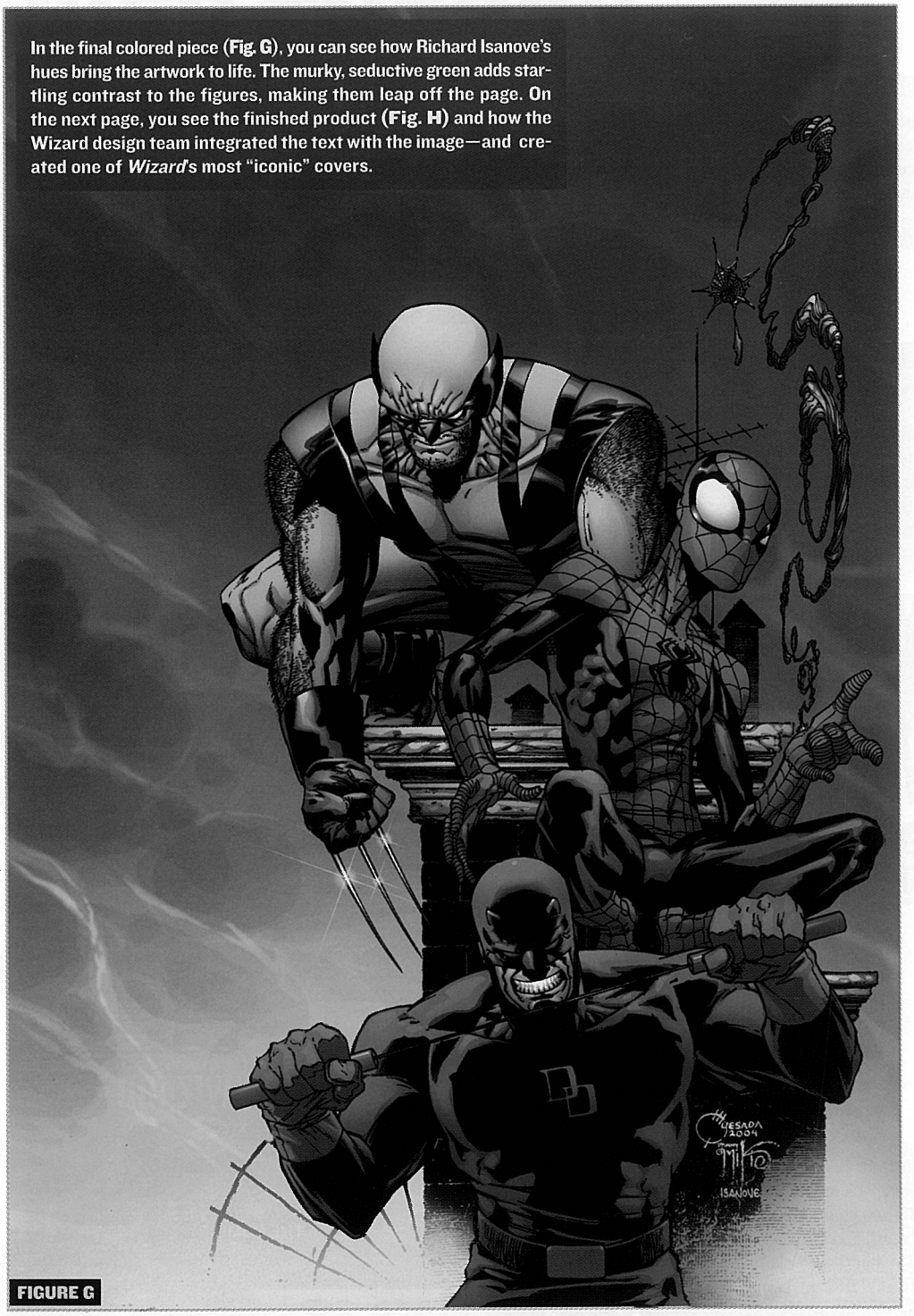
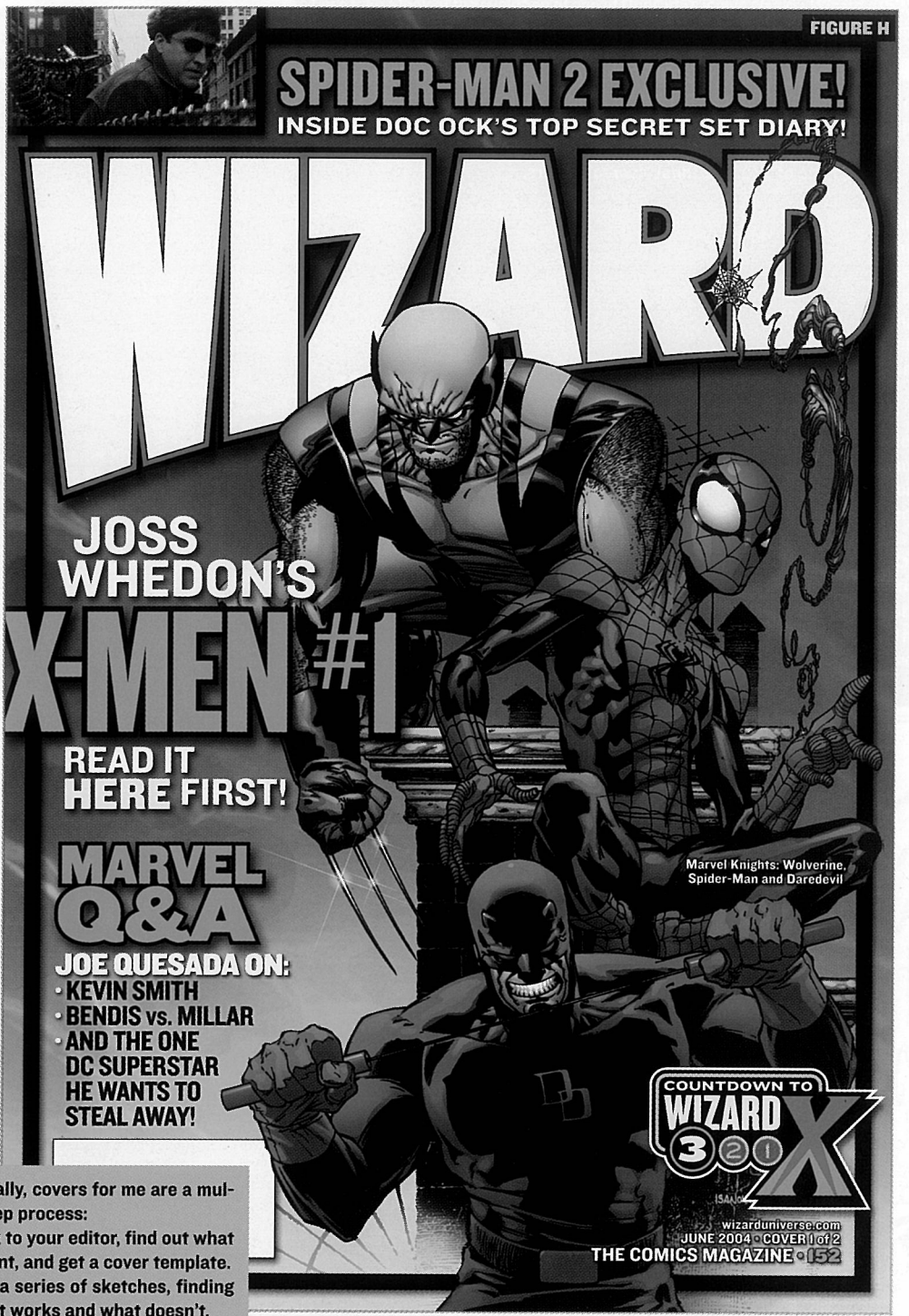



**FIGURE G**

Before I go, let's go over some other simple rules concerning covers. First and most importantly, I listened to the editor. This is crucial because they're the one with final approval, and the idea of what they want you to draw. Don't go off on a creative tangent if it's veering away from the editor's original idea (unless you discuss your ideas with the editor first). You'll just be wasting your time, and getting someone who has the potential to give you more work annoyed at you.

FIGURE H

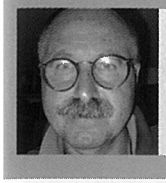



Essentially, covers for me are a multiple-step process:
#1) Talk to your editor, find out what they want, and get a cover template.
#2) Do a series of sketches, finding out what works and what doesn't.
#3) Rough figure drawing.
#4) Using my handy-dandy Xerox machine (you can also use an overhead projector), I zoom up the figures to layout size, form which I do the tight pencil sketch.
#5) The final pencils.
#6) If that doesn't work, see No. 2.

The actual fun of doing covers is the challenge of trying to give the reader a hint of what's going on in the book with one shot. The art of doing a great cover is not just a captivating design, it's a great design that also tells a story in one big picture. Good luck with your future cover endeavors, but remember: When the potential comic buyer is looking at that big pizza pie known as the crowded comic book shelf, you want to make sure it's *your* anchovy they're looking at.

# COVER THEORY

BY BRIAN BOLLAND

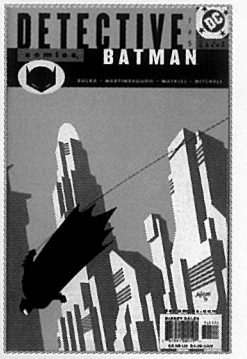


Artists of every stripe hope to provoke emotion with their imagery. Brian Bolland has been making that look easy for the past 20-plus years with his eye-catching compositions on *Judge Dredd, The Invisibles, Flash, Wonder Woman, Animal Man* and of course, his unforgettable cover image for the seminal Batman story, *The Killing Joke*. Here, Bolland discusses his theories on composing a striking cover image.

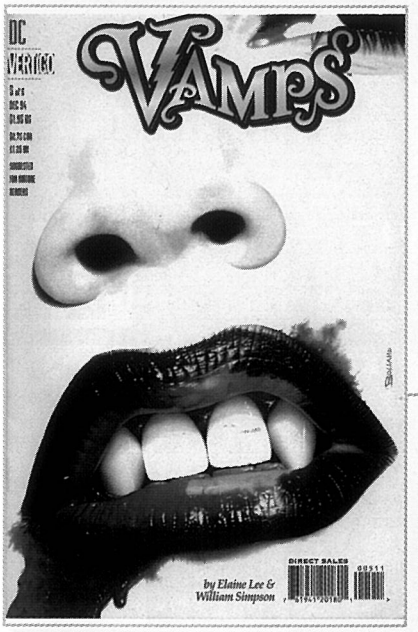

## NORULESOFTHUMB

I'm here under false pretences. The publishers of this book are under the impression that I have some special knowledge about comic book covers that I can pass on to you. Well, don't tell them, but I haven't. I've been thinking about whether it's possible to boil down the business of coming up with a cover to a set of simple universal principles—such as "make it clear what's going on" or "make it colorful" or "make the image jump off the page." But then I remember Dave McKean's subtle and strange *Sandman* covers (**bottom row**) and Dave Johnson's beautifully understated but exquisitely designed covers on *Detective Comics* (**below**) a few years back and any easy set of rules is made redundant.



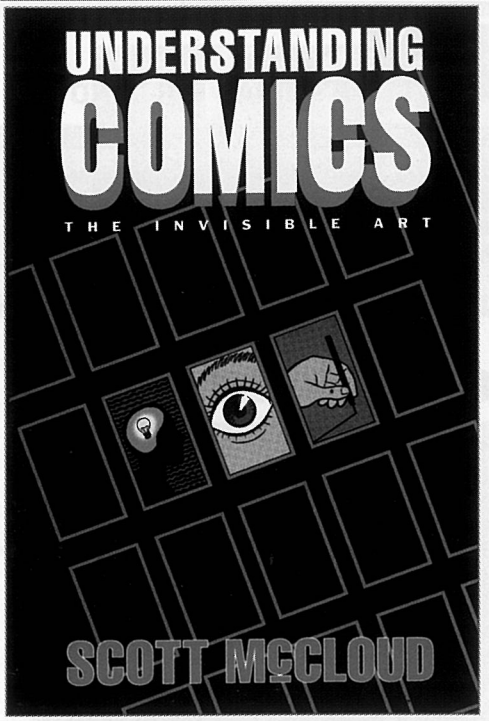





## PLAYTOYOURSTRENGTHS

At the risk of repeating myself, I return to my firm belief that offering up a formula for how to do what we do would inevitably result in formulaic drawing. All I can tell you for sure is how and why I do covers the way I do. One of the main reasons is so that I can draw what I'm good at (**left**) and avoid drawing what I'm not good at.




## BOILITDOWN

According to Scott McLoud's book *Understanding Comics* (left), an artist who just does comic book covers is NOT a comic artist. To be called a comic artist, you have to produce "sequential" art, most likely in the form of a story. A cover artist is something else—an "illustrator" perhaps. He may draw in a style identical to the art on the inside of the book or in a lush painted style or, thanks to Adobe Photoshop, in an amalgam of paint and photography, but he's not producing "sequential" art. He is, though, telling a story. He may not be supplying the beginning or the thrilling end, but he is looking for the single thing in the story that makes it unique, the "hook" of the story—Alfred Hitchcock would have called it "the McGuffin"—and distilling it into a single image that's intriguing enough to catch the eye of the potential buyer.


## KNOWYOUR SUBJECT

In my case, my editor usually shows me a copy of that issue's script, lets me come with an idea myself and he chooses from one or two roughs (some people call them "prelims") that I send him. If he likes one, I turn it into the finished cover. Sometimes he doesn't like any of them and I have to come up with something else. If it's a character I've been drawing for a while, it's easier to tune in to what's required and the ideas just come pouring out. If you and the readers are sufficiently into the story, you can come up with a cover that doesn't even have the character on it.


## LEARNFROMTHEPAST

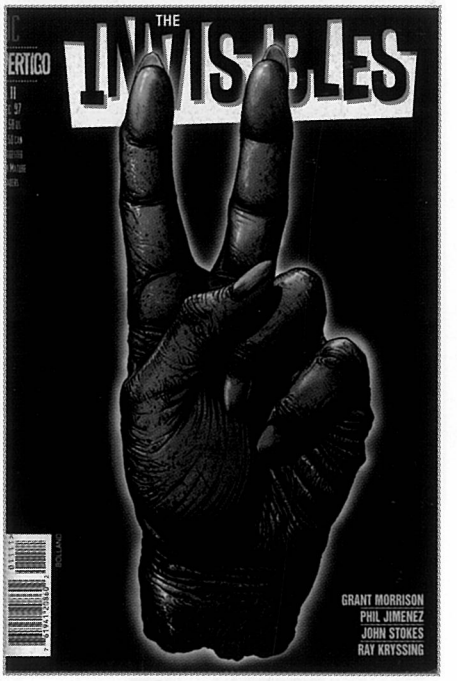
A long-running character like Wolverine, Batman or Flash requires a certain amount of toeing the line. You have to bear in mind all the great covers that previous artists have come up with for these characters. Distill all the best elements of these and try to be as good as them.


## PUSHTHEENVELOPE

Sometimes you're having to think up a cover when the script for that issue hasn't even been written. The prime example of that for me has been on *The Invisibles*. Fortunately, the surreal nature of the stories and the liberal mindedness of everyone concerned allowed me to be as experimental as I've ever been and get away with it. And then there are the times when an editor says, "Just give me an action shot." I'm much happier when I know exactly what a character's *doing* (and who he's doing it to). There are only a limited amount of "action shots" before it looks as if you've seen it before.

## PLAYTOTHEREADER

Imagine a whole wall of the comics on sale that month and somewhere amongst them is your cover and it's crying, "Pick me!" Try to imagine what's likely to be on the other covers and make yours different. Don't be boring. Try to think up an image that will draw the attention of the viewer, make him go "Huh!?" and look again: eyes that follow you around the room; zones of bare female flesh; something terrible or inexplicable happening to a well-loved character; a pastiche of a famous image with a weird twist. Cheap tricks all, but you just have to make people look.


## MAKESPACE ONYOURSHELF...

There's no magic formula for doing it, and most of the time practical considerations prevent you from creating the classic comic cover, but then one day—BINGO! The Eisner and Wizard Fan Awards for Best Cover Artist will be yours!

# COVER CONCEPTS

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

As we've seen throughout the *How to Draw* series, covers are arguably the most important aspect to selling your comic, since it's the first thing a potential reader/buyer sees. There's no hard and fast rule about crafting the perfect cover, but we've broken the process down into five major categories with examples culled from *Wizard*'s "100 Greatest Covers" feature to help you on the road to cover artist *cum* comic superstar!

## SINGLECHARACTERSHOTS

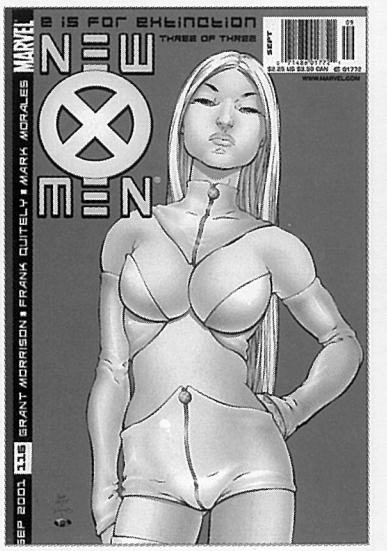
When you tackle just one character on a cover, that amount of white space can be pretty daunting. You can't always reinvent the wheel, but you can make it roll your own way. Take a look at how these masters crafted single-character covers.


### DAREDEVIL #1 (1988)

This dynamic shot of Daredevil somersaulting off a New York City high-rise while engaging his whipsawing billy club makes you realize why fandom calls old Hornhead the Man Without Fear! The dizzying perspective is enough to make Evil Knievel puke, but throw in Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's painstaking backgrounds—you can almost smell the exhaust from the streets below and hear the chatter of New Yorkers on their cell phones—and you know that you're in for a wild ride with this new *DD* launch.

### NEWX-MEN #116 (2001)

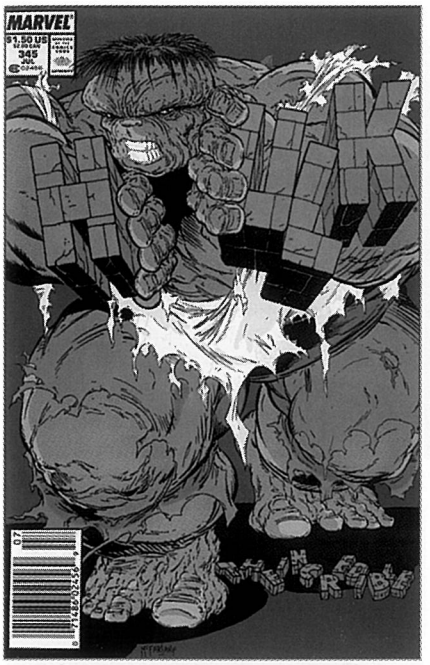
The haughty pose. The pouty face. The hot pink background. The barely there, held-on-by-wishful-thinking costume that looks more like an S&M outfit. It all adds up to one simple idea: S-E-X. Dripping with more sensuality than you'd find on a dozen *Maxim* covers, this image of Emma Frost (a.k.a. the White Queen) was actually modeled after the wife of Frank Quitely, the artist responsible for raising the blood pressure of X-Men readers everywhere. "[The one thing] I don't like about [this cover] is that it doesn't look anything like [my wife]," quips the artist.





### THOR #337 (1983)

It's not easy giving readers something they've never seen before, but when artist Walt Simonson swapped the golden-haired Thunder God for Beta Ray Bill—an alien creature that looks more like some sort of space-horse—fans went berserk. And Simonson manages to "hammer" the point home by having Bill take out the iconic *Thor* logo. "I wanted to get the fans' attention," admits Simonson. "How could Beta Ray Bill not be a bad guy? I played fair but misled fans a bit, and got my message across: This isn't your father's Thor anymore."




## HULK #345 (1988)

There's barely a square inch of space that Todd McFarlane doesn't occupy with this gargantuan image of the Hulk; in fact, he's so dominant, he can't even share the cover with the logo! The Hulk actually lives up to his name in this striking image, with the clever logo interaction further emphasizing the behemoth's lumbering approach. McFarlane, a noted baseball enthusiast, belts a grand slam with this imposing rendition of the Hulk.


## CAPTAINAMERICA #193 (1976)

Leave it to The King to create one of the most indelible images of Marvel history throughout the late '70s and '80s. This famous Cap image by Jack Kirby (ably inked by John Romita Sr.) went on to become THE most licensed Cap graphic of its time (not to mention the overall cover does a great job of capturing inner city turmoil), appearing on everything from beach towels to lunch boxes—and it came about as a happy accident! "It was a demo for a 3-D effect, which never happened. It was never meant to be printed," remembers Romita Sr. "That's why the fist is so big!"


## CAPTAINAMERICA #332 (1987)

Mike Zeck and Klaus Janson managed to pull off a perfect trifecta with this unforgettable image. This seamless blending of the lone Cap figure (head hung low in sorrowful defeat) combined with the striking background and bombastic text adds up to a near perfect graphic representation of what's going on inside the comic: Cap is forced by the U.S. government to hang up his shield (it even brought a tear to Abe Lincoln's eye!). "This cover has everything to do with Cap's feelings about America and the flag," notes Zeck.

# GROUPSHOTS

So you've managed to draw an awesome Spidey or Superman solo shot, but now your editor wants a *JLA* or *Avengers* cover! What do you do when your subjects multiply, but your space stays the same? Check out these examples to capturing the classic group composition.


## AVENGERS #181 (1978)

George Pérez indulged his love of super-detail with this iconic Avengers cover ("Seven of you will remain...the rest of you are out!"), the first time the artist had ever fit this many characters (24) on a cover. But this isn't just some static school yearbook photo; there's drama and tension on the face and in the body language *of every single character*, whether you can see their face or not. Of course, Pérez would go on to become the master at complex group composition, setting a new standard with 562 characters on the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* hardcover!


## X-MEN #1 (1963)

The X-Men had to battle a lot more than just Magneto on this Silver Age classic—they had to fight off their own logo and a ton of cover text as well! Still, Kirby manages to maximize his cover's impact by featuring all five of the X-Men not just attacking, but using their powers to boot (as does the Master of Magnetism). "Do you know how tough it is to do a group shot with everybody using their powers?" poses former *X-Men* artist Jim Lee, a Kirby fanatic. "It's tough to pull off, but Kirby is the old master."


## FANTASTICFOUR #1 (1961)

Jack Kirby heralded the Marvel Age of comics with this cover to the company's first big superhero launch of the early 1960s—not bad considering none of the Fantastic Four are even in their patented costumes. And never a slave to convention, Kirby shows one of his main players—the Thing—from behind. Plus, this image bridges the historical gap between what fans were used to (the giant monster) and what's new and about to make a big splash (the FF, who, in typical Kirby fashion, are all using their powers).

## AVENGERS #4 (1963)

Captain America's return to comics was a two-pronged resurrection: Not only did it return the Sentinel of Liberty to the pages of a Marvel comic after a 10-year hiatus, but it introduced arguably THE most important character in Avengers history as well! Of course, it may not have been so dramatic without Jack Kirby's dynamic, charismatic composition that finds Cap nearly leaping off the cover into the readers' lap. "It's the single-most important return of an icon in comic book history," says one-time *Avengers* writer Geoff Johns. "Powerful, simple and historical."



## GIANT-SIZEX-MEN #1 (1975)

The old saying, "There's a new sheriff in town" takes on a whole new meaning in this cover by Gil Kane and Dave Cockrum, which finds "the all-new, all-different" X-Men literally tearing through the images of the original X-Men in a distinctive passing-of-the-torch moment for Marvel's Merry Mutants. But are the new X-Men tearing their predecessors down, or is the original team haunting them? You've got to flip inside to find out—and that's the mark of a great cover, one that *forces* you to buy the comic and find out.


## JUSTICELEAGUE #1 (1987)

If then-rookie artist Kevin Maguire was looking to make a statement about this new *Justice League* relaunch, it was this: Get ready for plenty of attitude to go with your superheroes. Even Guy Gardner's succinct word balloon—"You wanna make something of it?"—blends perfectly with the tightly huddled pose and intense look on all the Justice Leaguers' faces. In other words, this superteam is pissed. By daring the audience to pick it up, the raw attitude displayed here made this cover one of the most imitated images of the last 15 years.

# STORYTELLING

A picture, or in the case of an illustrated comic book cover, really is worth a thousand words. In some cases, the cover can perfectly capture the essence of the story you're trying to tell inside. If you want to do more than just draw a pretty pin-up, check out how these artists tell a complete story with a single cover image!


## THOR #356 (1985)

Comedy's tough, but there's no task that Thor and Hercules can't perform when they combine talents! Of course, Bob Layton's cover features the book's headliner (Thor) getting the bum's rush from the guest-star (Hercules), and it's that juxtaposition that informs readers they're not in for the typical "Thor-smiting-a-rock-troll" tale. Thor's beaten Frost Giants and Living Planets, but this slapstick cover gets the best of the Thunder God in a brilliantly captured moment that can't help but make you smile.


## IRONMAN #216 (1987)

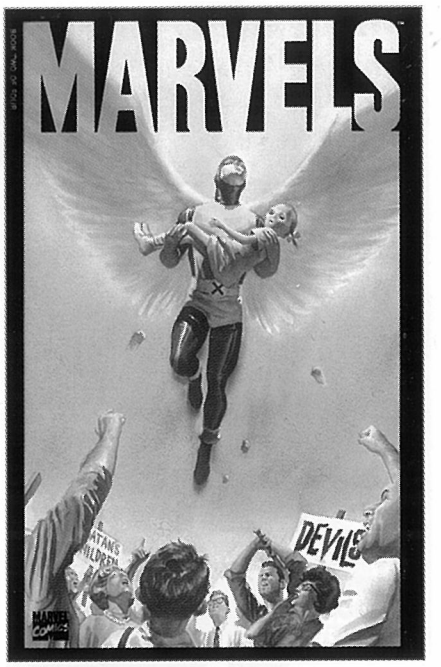
The Iron Man armor may be one of the most powerful weapons on Earth, but in this striking cover image by Mark Bright and Bob Layton, it becomes something far more sinister: a flying, burning coffin! Tony Stark (in the red-and-silver) tries desperately to save the life of his friend Jim Rhodes (in the classic red-and-gold), whose lesser Iron Man armor can't survive the re-entry from outer space. Will Tony lose his best friend because of an inferior suit of armor? That's the predicament expertly rendered on a cover that's so hot, you'll be dialing 9-1-1 while you scurry to learn Jim Rhodes' fate.

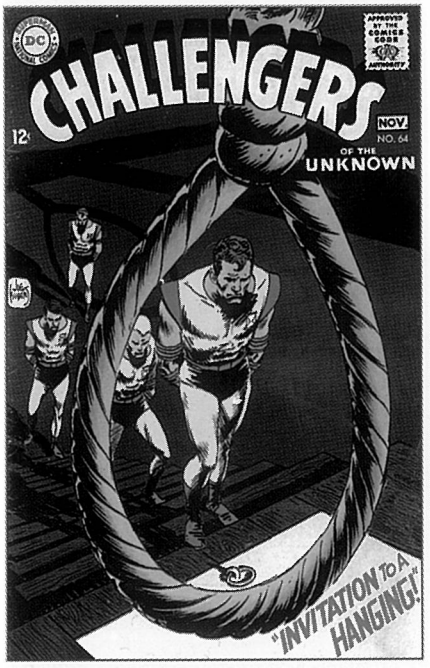

## SUPERMAN #75 (1992)

The Superman shield is an icon of hope, one of the most recognizable symbols on the planet, but seeing it here in tatters distressed millions of Man of Steel fans around the globe. Eschewing the typical "Superman's corpse in someone's arms" approach, artist Dan Jurgens instead focuses on the demise of the symbol rather than the (Super)man, in this haunting cover that gave away the results if not the method of his then-final fight. "We didn't want Doomsday holding his body," explains Jurgens. "I came up with the torn cape fluttering by and hung on a stick—it said 'Death of Superman' more than anything else."

## MARVELS #2 (1993)

The young mutant girl in this seminal Alex Ross cover has her very own guardian Angel (note the symbolism), who just happens to be the X-Man known as Warren Worthington III. Good thing for her, as this image encapsulates the theme of this particular issue of *Marvels*, which focused on humanity's growing fear, paranoia and contempt of mutants. The image resonated so loudly, Marvel used it as a huge promotion poster to hype the mini-series event—while it also helped elevate Ross' name to household status among the fanboy set.




## CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN #64 (1968)

This cover literally grabs you by the throat and doesn't let go. And that's the fate that awaits the Challengers in this striking cover by Joe Kubert, who uses the noose as the focal point to center the readers' attention. But what horrible crime did the Challengers commit that would send them to the gallows? We don't know what these adventurers did to earn an "Invitation to a Hanging," but Kubert's brilliant cover leaves us trembling with anticipation to find out. "Simple, to the point and dramatic," enthuses artist Adam Kubert, Joe's son and a comic book star in his own right. "Classic Papa Joe!"


## AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #50 (1967)

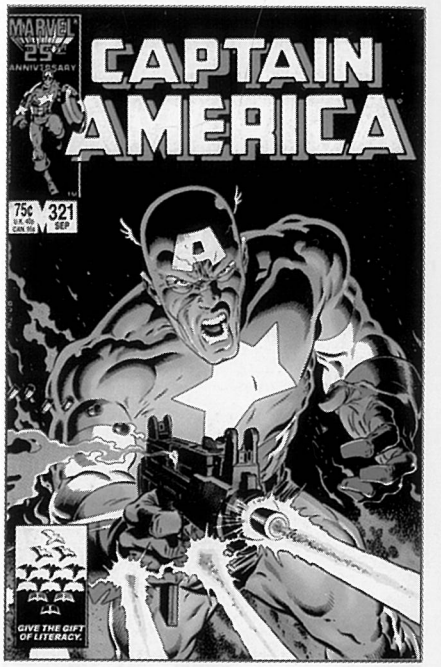
At the time, it seemed perfectly plausible: With his milestone 50th issue, Peter Parker was giving up being Spider-Man. But what tragic event could drive the fun-loving teen superhero to hang up his patented blue-and-red tights for good? It's not readily apparent...but that's the point: a story moment frozen in time and captured by the legendary John Romita Sr. that forces you to pick up the book to find out. "Just the idea of abandoning your superhero identity, the feeling of turning your back on the reader, just has emotional impact," critiques artist George Pérez. "To have Spider-Man say, 'I give up!' is striking. The character's abandoning the reader."

# INTERACTIVE

Some covers hope to hook you with their novelty, their composition, their text blurbs and their gimmicks, but there's another way to immediately hook readers—engage them directly! Long before virtual reality, comic book artists were bringing in readers by involving them with direct character interaction; in other words, they dare you to read the comic!

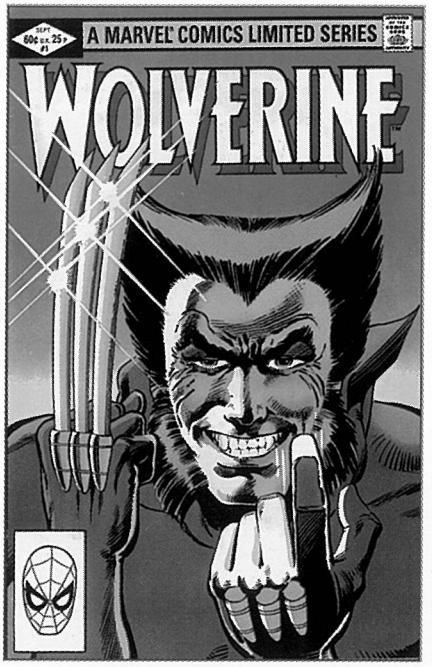

## AVENGERS #223 (1982)

They may be two of Marvel's lesser-powered heroes, but as the cover blurb boldly proclaims, "Somebody's Gonna Get It!" when Ant-Man and Hawkeye team up! And what better way to portray the Avengers' Battling Bowman than by having him point one of his patented arrows—sporting Ant-Man on the head—directly at the reader? Ed Hannigan and Klaus Janson hit the bullseye with this depiction, proving that even two more obscure characters can pack a two-fisted wallop.




## CAPTAIN AMERICA #321 (1986)

Captain America may have started out as a Nazi-killing super-soldier during his World War II days, but in his modern appearances, the Sentinel of Liberty had sworn off killing—until this issue's harrowing tale, summed up to perfection by Mike Zeck in this jarring image of a snarling Cap mowing down someone (in this case, the reader). "Zeck had a great knack for intensity," explains John Romita Sr. "It looked more like a Punisher cover than a Cap cover!"




## WOLVERINE MINI-SERIES #1 (1983)

What's the first thing you want to do when a guy with three, foot-long claws beckons you with a "come hither" motion? Run screaming in the opposite direction—normally. But when Frank Miller crafted this memorable cover, featuring the X-Men's most popular member, it marked the first time the crazy Canucklehead appeared in his own book. Naturally, it was a big deal, so readers scooped it up in droves (without any prompting from Wolverine). "It really shows that badass attitude that Wolverine's become known for," notes Greg Land (*Ultimate Fantastic Four*).

## ACTIONCOMICS #662 (1991)

Fifty-three years in the making, this issue finally reveals how intrepid reporter Lois Lane learns Superman's secret identity. And the way it's portrayed by artist Kerry Gammill—the reflection of Supes' S shield in Clark's glasses as Lois pulls them off is an inspired touch—sent readers to the racks faster than a speeding bullet. "Originally, we had an utterly generic cover," recalls then-*Superman* Editor Mike Carlin, who helped design the cover. "But we hastily redid the concept when we saw the power that real-world interest could have—like when Superman proposed to Lois previous to this."



## AVENGERS #221 (1982)

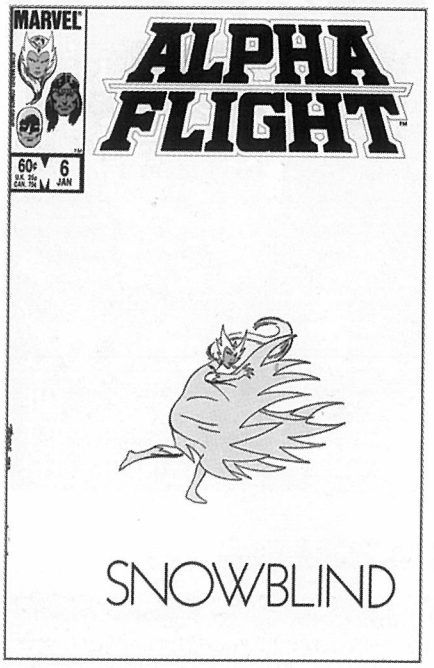
Curiosity killed the cat, but it certainly rakes in readers by the bushel. Rock the Vote didn't even exist when this Bob Hall cover hit stands, but when readers saw the crazy array of heroes who might be joining the Avengers, they went reaching for the phone to lay odds in Vegas. Which pair of this eclectic group will become an Avenger? Spider-Man? Dazzler?!? Invisible Woman? Wait, where'd she go? "I love the fact that there's a blank spot showing [her] invisible!" laughs Aspen head honcho Michael Turner. "It lured me in." (Like any good interactive cover should.)


## DAREDEVIL#184 (1987)

When you talk about an in-your-face cover, you can't omit this entry by Frank Miller and Klaus Janson. The barrel of that .44 Magnum is pointed right between your eyes. The man brandishing the weapon not only looks like he means business, but he's called the Man Without Fear, so he's not afraid to deal in lead. Will he pull the trigger? You've got to read the story to find out, but if there's one hero in the Marvel Universe that you believe could go over the deep end, it's Daredevil. "That's Frank Miller at the height of his Clint Eastwood phase," quips former *Daredevil* writer Brian Michael Bendis. "I love that cover!"

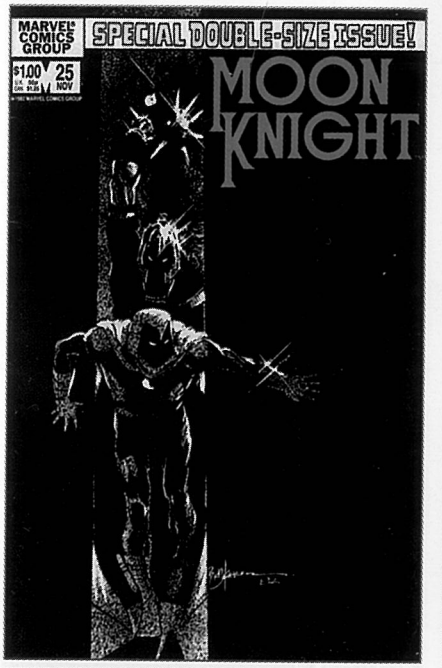
# GRAPHICDESIGNCOVERS

Sometimes a memorable cover relies more on the way it's designed and laid out, rather than the way it's drawn or rendered. Many of the best cover artists working today are brilliant graphic designers in their own right; here's a look at some covers where the design shines as brightly as the artwork.




## ALPHAFLIGHT #6 (1983)

John Byrne's use of negative space adds up to one positively arresting cover. The starkness of a wind-blown Snowbird set against a completely white background, coupled with the tagline "Snowblind" in its stark font, very simply creates the illusion of a snowstorm. There's absolutely no place for the readers' eye to go to but that prostate figure of Snowbird, and the icy isolation she feels actually drops the temperature in the comic shop. With this cover, Byrne found a way to say volumes with minimal effort—and maximum impact.




## MOON KNIGHT #25 (1982)

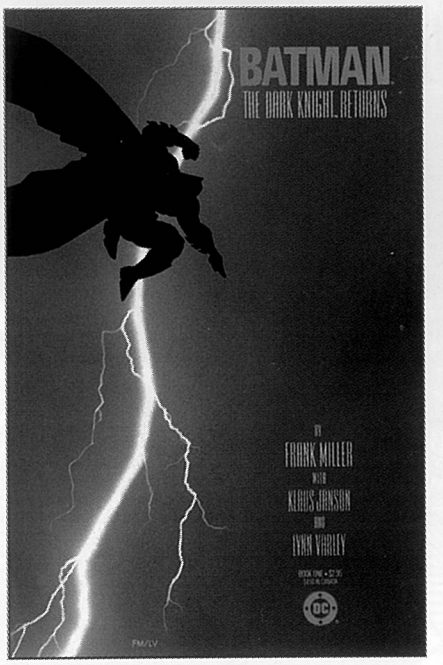
What do you get when you feature the starkly white Moon Knight battling the ebony Black Spectre? A *chiaroscuro* experiment ("highly contrasted" for the uninitiated) that's a moody modern masterpiece. The juxtaposition of white against black by Bill Sienkiewicz not only makes both extremes pop all the more, it creates pure atmosphere and tension as the Black Spectre is about to catch Moon Knight unawares—much like the artist did with readers who spotted the striking cover of this unheralded series.

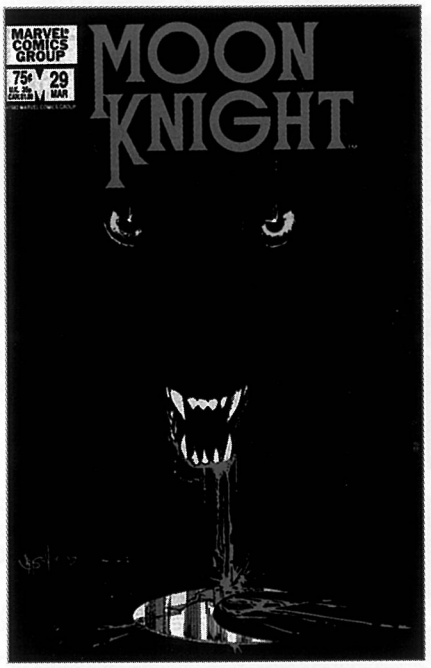

## PETERPARKER: SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #101 (1984)

Much like he did in the earlier *Alpha Flight* entry, John Byrne uses a monochromatic theme to expert effect in this eye-catching Spider-Man image. The Wall-crawler, sporting his spanking new black costume, swings across the pitch-black Manhattan skyline. But where Spidey could have just bled into the background, Byrne beautifully provides just enough light source—thanks to the white highlights in Spidey's costume and the lit windows in the buildings—to show that sometimes artistic excellence is as simple as black and white.

## BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS #1 (1986)

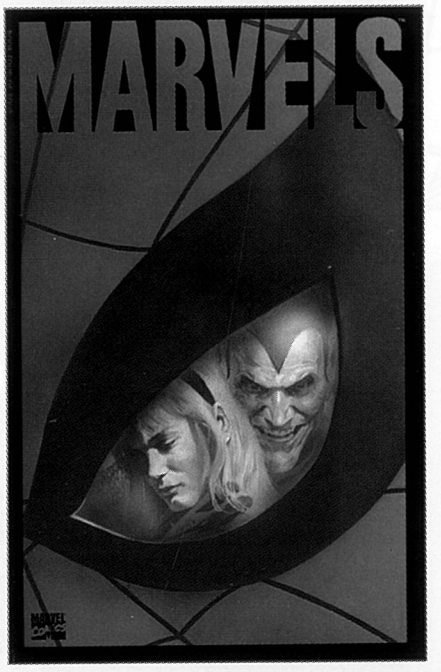
Frank Miller's standing as a comic artist without peer was heralded by this stark, striking image: a brilliant, white-hot lightning bolt silhouetting the classic image of the Caped Crusader. But the credit can't go to Miller alone; his colorist on this piece, Lynn Varley, delivers such a jolt capturing the stormy skies above Gotham that your hair will stand on end from the static electricity. "[That cover] would change the face of Batman and comics," boasts writer Joe Kelly. Or as artist Greg Horn notes, "It could be comics' greatest example of less is more."




## MOONKNIGHT #29 (1982)

Bill Sienkiewicz plays the Big Bad Wolf in this piece, once again disposing of most of his palette for this arresting cover. Like Steven Spielberg's sleight of hand with his malfunctioning shark in "Jaws," Sienkiewicz knows that sometimes the imagination is scarier than the actual object of fear; all he needs to get his point across are a pair of piercing inhuman eyes, a mouthful of flesh-rending fangs...and a fearsome trail of blood across Moon Knight's crescent logo. But the true predator here is Sienkiewicz—he makes both the book's hero *and* the reader his prey.




## MARVELS #4 (1993)

There's no debating Alex Ross' skill as a master draftsman and penciler, but here, he allows readers a peek into the haunting story through the eyes of Spider-Man—literally. This crafty design captured a heart-wrenching moment of Spidey's history, as the reflection of his love Gwen Stacy and his most hated enemy the Green Goblin bodes ill for the Wall-crawler...while establishing a convention regarding Spidey's look. "What's important is the iconography of Spider-Man, to recognize him simply by his eye design," explains Ross. "At that point, I was adamant about removing the large-eye craze that was taking over all of Spider-Man's books."

# ANATOMY OF A COVER BY PAUL SMITH

Paul Smith burst onto the comics scene in the 1980s following the likes of John Byrne and Dave Cockrum on *Uncanny X-Men* (**below**), and wound up becoming way more than just a "fill-in X-artist." Smith cut his own brilliant swath through the X-Universe and is still drawing Marvel's Merry Mutants 20 years later, a testament to his skill and fan following.

## HOOKYOURREADER

The great artist J.C. Leyendecker once said that illustrations make bad covers. Illustrations exist to tell stories; covers exist as icons to grab your eye and sell the book. Talking in terms of the *Saturday Evening Post*, he's correct, but the *Post* contained dozens of stories per book as opposed to the X-Men's one. Also, comic buyers prefer story-based covers as opposed to pin-ups. While the execution may be different for modern comics, his point remains true: grab the eye and sell the book. Provide enough story for context, yet keep it simple enough to be read at a distance. Here, we'll discuss covers using this unpublished X-Men piece (**far right**) to give prospective artists some insight into my process.



**1. CREATE THE CONCEPT** This cover was, unfortunately, done pre-story. Had I drawn the book, I might well have gone with another image. Lacking specifics, the editor and I decided on a stranger-in-a-strange land approach based on the story's location, which centered around the sewers of Paris.

**2. MIND YOUR SURROUNDINGS** Lighting and composition create a sense of claustrophobia, pinning our heroes into a small spotlight circled with death, slime and effluence.

**3. SET THE TONE** The foreground pipe brings the reader into the scene, while perspective forces the characters towards the reader. These combine with the somewhat low horizon to create tension and a sense of impending collision.

**4. COMPARE & CONTRAST** While the setting is designed towards doom and despair, our heroes are not. Alert and wary, they're not frightened; they're *ready*. Whatever they find will probably wish it had stayed hidden.

**5. ASSEMBLE YOUR PLAYERS** While it's convenient when stacking characters to place the smallest up front and the largest in the rear, I've actual reasons for doing so here. Wolverine is not only the most popular X-Man—grab the eye and sell the book!—he's also the finest point man in comics. Of those present, Bishop is best equipped to survive a stab in the back, so he takes the rear. Kurt and Storm are our wingmen, fanning out to the flanks. Kurt is twisted in the corner blending into the shadows like some sort of, well, Nightcrawler, while Storm is the only one to be upright, showcasing her lovely form (grab the eye and sell the book).

**6. LET THE PIECE SPEAK FOR ITSELF** While you want to give your characters all the support you can, the idea is to get out of their way and let them be who they are. At its best, both writer and artist will be reduced to taking dictation.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# COVER LESSON

BY TERRY DODSON & RODOFO MIGLIARI

In this bonus lesson, *How To Draw: Advanced Techniques* tapped Terry Dodson and Rodolfo Migliari—the two artists who collaborated on the cover to this volume, and who happen to be experts in rendering gorgeous women, super and otherwise—for a quick lesson on how a collaborative cover like this gets put together.

FIGURE 1A

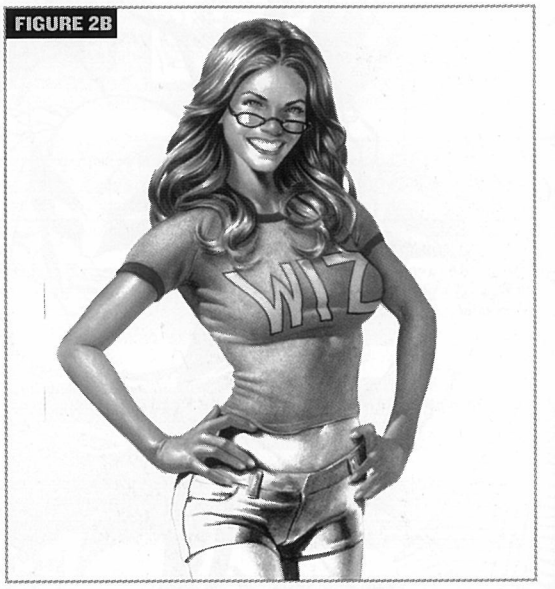
## STEP ONE

From this rough pencil sketch (**inset**), Dodson drafts his first penciled piece (**Fig. 1A**), and it's right on the money. "Sometimes I can do 10 or more sketches, but in this case, I did two but knew that the first one was 'right,' so I sent that one in," says Dodson, who provided the layout using a Staedtler Mars Lead Holder with Staedtler HB lead, a Sanford Col-Erase Light Blue pencil, Staedtler Grande Eraser, a Design Kneaded Eraser and Strathmore 500 Series Rough 2-Ply Bristol Board. "I had Terry's fantastic layout as a guide, so I only did the one sketch," says Migliari, who used an HB pencil on Bristol Board for his initial piece (**Fig. 1B**). One thing to note: In the pencil stage, both artists use reference for the figure—Dodson photos of a live model, Migliari magazine pics.

FIGURE 1B

FIGURE 2A

FIGURE 2B




## STEP TWO

On his portion of the cover, Dodson—after a half-day of penciling—hands the piece off to be inked by his spouse and collaborator Rachel Dodson, who uses a Windsor Newton Series 7 Sable #2 brush, FW Acrylic Artist Ink Black, Pro White and Staedtler Grand Eraser to render the hair, clean up the stray pencil marks and add line weight and contours (**Fig. 2A**). Migliari, more of a painter than a traditional comic artist, actually paints his blacks with black gouache for the shadows, and goes right to a first round of colors (**Fig. 2B**), using a watercolor brush #5, gouache paints and Bristol Board. While the pencils only took Migliari about two hours, the painting takes around a day and a half.

FIGURE 3A

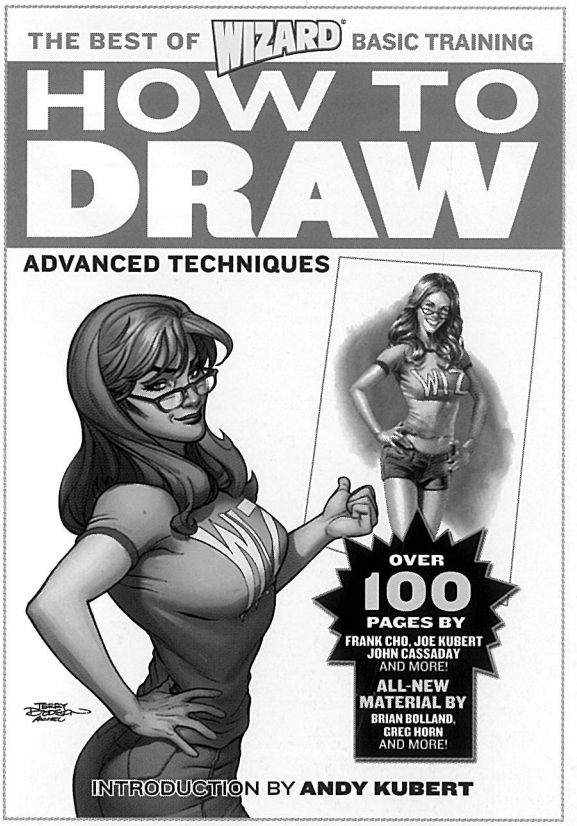
FIGURE 3B


## STEPTHREE

Done with the pencils and inks, the Dodsons send their portion of the cover off to be colored by colorist Jason Keith (**Fig. 3A**), while Migliari touches up the background and adds the last bit of color to our wondrous instructor (**Fig. 3B**). At this point, Migliari scans the piece and uses Photoshop to balance the contrast, saturation, etc.

## THEFINAL COVER

With all the artwork complete, it's then up to the design team at Wizard Entertainment to put the two pieces together (using Photoshop and Illustrator), and make it work while adding important trade elements such as the title, the cover text, the UPC code, etc. As you can see, sometimes two heads are better than one, especially when it comes to crafting eye-catching covers. "I designed the cover in such a way to give [Rodolpho] as much freedom as possible," says Dodson. "It was designed to give the other artist plenty of space to strut his stuff and not interfere with what I did." "The great thing about comics is that almost everyone that woks in the industry is extremely talented," adds Migliari. "So collaborating is always a pleasure. And a learning experience."



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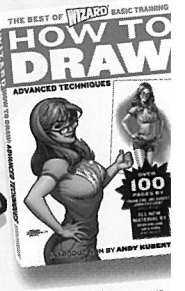


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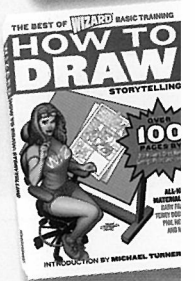


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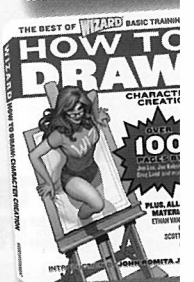


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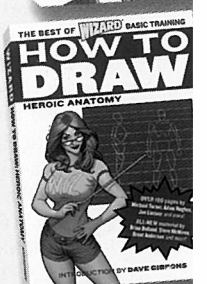


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