DRAW!

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LEE WEEKS
INTERVIEW & DEMO

DC'S RISING STAR
YILDIRAY ÇINAR

INKING LEGEND
JOE RUBINSTEIN

ROUGH STUFF'S
BOB MCLEOD
CRITIQUES A NEWCOMER'S WORK

PLUS MIKE MANLEY AND BRET BLEVINS'
COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

DRAW!

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

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LEE WEEKS

THE ART OF DISCOVERY

Interview conducted by Mike Manley on Feb. 24, 2013
and transcribed by Eric Nolen-Weathington

Lee's thumbnail rough and finished pencils for the cover of *Hulk Smash Avengers* #2.
Hulk, Iron Man © Marvel Characters, Inc.

DRAW!: So you're getting ready to go to Toronto?
LEE WEEKS: Going to Toronto in a little less than two weeks.

DRAW!: I know they have two shows up there. Which one are you going to?
LW: Apparently, they're run by the same people. They have a big three-day show and a two-day show. I'm going to the two-day one, which he claims is about a 20,000-person attendance. Apparently that three-day one is pretty big. I don't know if he's exaggerating; a lot of times those guys will pad the numbers to get you to come. I went to Heroes Con for the first time last year, and that was about 20,000, maybe a little less. I thought that was a perfect show—the best show I've ever been to.

DRAW!: I've been to the Heroes Con before myself, and it reminded me of what conventions used to be like, where it wasn't about all the celebrities or whatever. It was about people who liked comic books and wanted to come talk to people who draw and write comic books, and have that experience. You go to most of the other shows now and if you're a comic guy, you're in the ghetto. You're way in the back, and it's all about the guy on whatever TV show—*The Walking Dead* or whatever show is hot now.
LW: Yeah, you seed the show, you grow the show, now we'll move in and push you to the back of the bus and take over the show.

DRAW!: You're back working on *Daredevil* now?
LW: Yeah, actually a small story arc I've been working on way too long. It's the kind of thing where I work on it a little bit, then I step away from it for a few weeks at a time. It's actually a story I came up with about five years ago, and it sat in a drawer a couple of years before somebody approved it. They told me to do it the way I wanted to do it. It's a weird situation, but they

let me go away into my corner and do it the way I wanted. I've been doing a lot of stuff on the side—commissions, more convention appearances. It's been a strange decade.

DRAW!: You've been posting some of the commissions on Facebook, and they look great. It's not like the con head sketch, quick with a Sharpie before you go out the door. These are really nice, nice drawings.

LW: Thank you very much. It's always my goal to make sure they get more than what they pay for. Honestly, I don't remember when I've had as much fun drawing, so it's very easy to put more time into these. Something's happened in the past year. A lot of it has to do with connecting on Facebook, which I used to despise the idea of, but I signed up a year ago this month, and started stepping back into the convention scene a little bit. I'd been away mostly for nearly a decade, and totally away for about five years. I try to do the New York show each year. And then I added another one, and then last year was the most I've ever done in one year. I did six.

A Rocketeer convention commission piece.
Rocketeer © The Estate of Dave Stevens.

DRAW!: The last time that I saw you might have been the last New York show I did, which might have been four or five years ago. I stopped going myself. I just kind of got burnt out on having to haul all my stuff with me and everything. I did a little show up near Allentown back in August, and that was fun. The people were very nice and everything. But doing the whole self-publishing thing and the magazine, you would drag your comics, and drag all your artwork, and drag all your back issues, and set everything up, I found it became a diminishing return for my effort. And the part that I liked the most was seeing guys like you and other friends I wouldn't see very often. So I said, "I can sell my pages on eBay. I don't need to pull all that stuff with me." I find the social aspect of the show much more enjoyable.

LW: Yeah, at the show itself, I always promise myself that—there are all these great giants. We're losing a few every year. I promise myself to get over there, but invariably I can't get away from the table, and I leave the show with at least one or two regrets. "Oh man. I didn't get over to see Jerry Robinson. I've never met Jerry"—or whoever it was that particular year. But I like connecting with the fans. I feel like I was too isolated for a few years.

DRAW!: I know there are a lot of negative things about Facebook, but I find as an artist it's a great way to reach out to people and to stay connected to people. Blevins started doing that. He has a fan page, and he's really been posting a lot the past month or two, and he's getting a lot of great responses and feedback. Because that's where everybody is. Everybody is on Facebook, and I really enjoy it for that aspect. I'm sure in five years it'll be how MySpace used to be. As soon as Facebook came along, everyone said, "See you, MySpace!"

LW: I was waiting for Yogi Berra there. "Nobody goes to the beach anymore; it's too crowded." [*laughter*] "Nobody goes to Facebook anymore; it's too crowded." But for right now, gosh, I didn't realize how much I appreciated the direct feedback. When you take a long time on a job, it's a weird way to wait month to month to month to get feedback on something.

DRAW!: You and I were cutting our teeth around the same time. We both worked on that Remo Williams, *The Destroyer* comic.

LW: Yours was good! Yours was good!

DRAW!: You're being far too kind.

LW: That underwater stuff. I remember that; that was beautiful.

DRAW!: The nice part of that was I got Al Williamson to ink some of that. But that was one of those five pages a day kind of things. But I really liked yours. Even though I've always admired your drawing, because you draw beautifully, the thing I always admire the most about your work—that's gotten even better—is your storytelling.

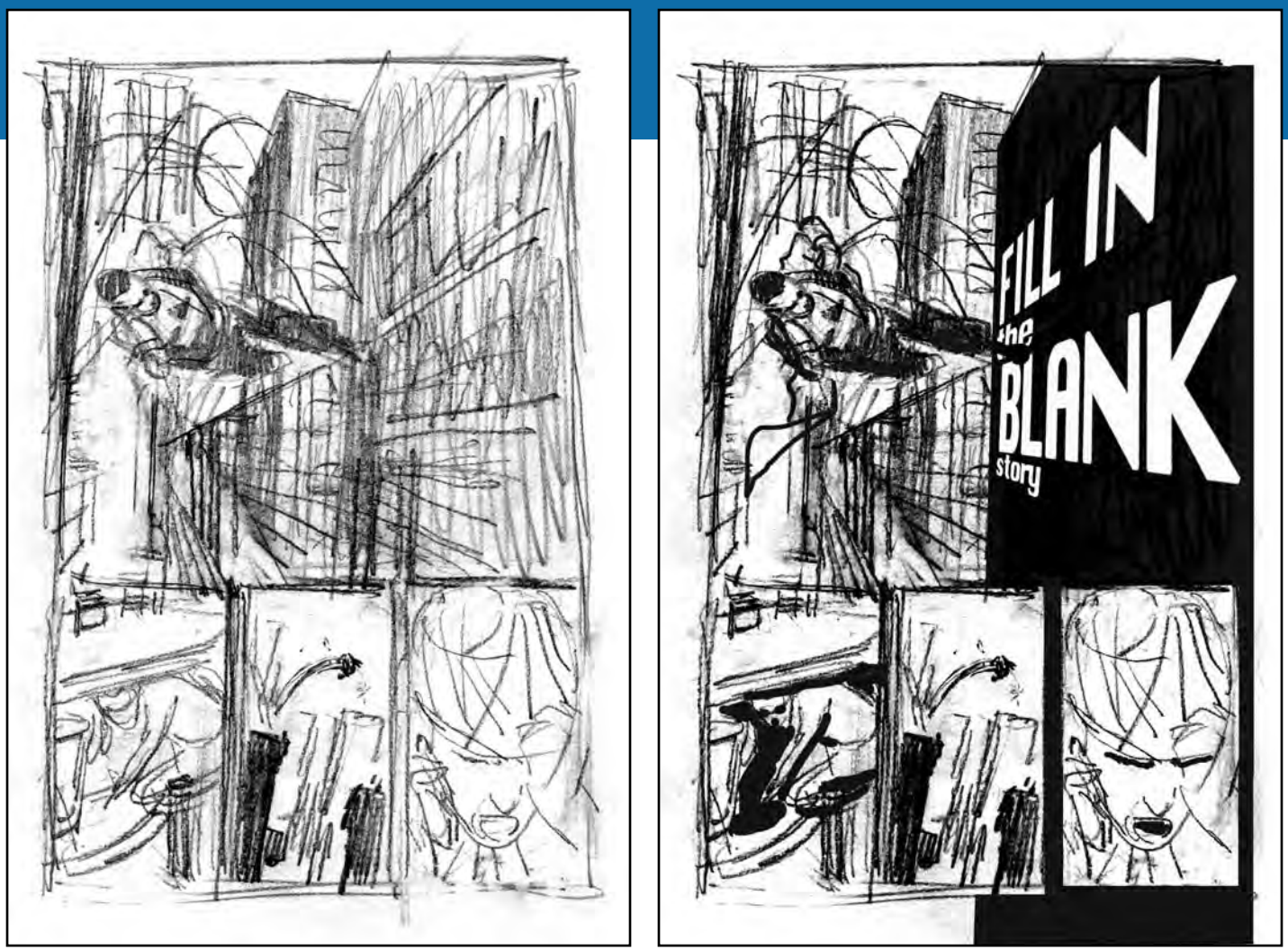
LW: It was drilled into me that that was the most important thing. I always listen to my elders—try to listen to my elders. [*laughter*] I was only one year into Kubert School, but that was the thing that I remembered, that it doesn't matter how

The finished piece was done in pencil, marker, and ink wash.
Batman © DC Comics

DRAW!: I agree with you that the foundation for everything is strong abstract compositions, no matter how you tend to go and render it, whether you want to make it super-realistic or keep it very abstract. And that's the thing that's inexhaustible. You can never exhaust having good compositions, especially when you're telling a story. I call it the emotional composition. That's what holds the whole thing together. When you're younger, you're very conscious of trying to juggle all the different balls. "I want to do this, and I want to show how I can do this, and I need to do this." And I think it's a natural path that as artists get older, they tend to work in a broader, or looser, or bolder way, so maybe that's where you're going if you say you're working more from the gut. Kubert was a guy who worked very much from the gut. You could see he used his intellect as far as the layout and the design. And Kirby, obviously, was a guy that was all gut. Everything was gut—the way he drew fingers, the doorknobs, everything.

LW: Even somebody like Frazetta, who knew so much about the figure, but that's gut. I mean, he's just ripping it. They both have to be present. I find a great analogy in—I'm a big student of the Bible—this idea of living by the law in the Old Testament and there's some talk of living by the spirit in the New Testament. And it's kind of like those two art school experiences, with the abstract and this more of a feeling thing, but you can't do it apart from the rules and the law. It's just that the rules and the law have to be so beat into your heart and your head that they're part of the gut experience, so it's not ungrounded.

As I'm drawing, I'll be intending one thing as I'm beginning, but I'll see it in another way as I'm drawing, and I have to make these split-second decisions. "Oh, it's over here. The head's over here." Whenever I get the chance to teach, the first thing I say is that drawing is more about seeing than it is about how dexterous your hands are. It's about



For this *Amazing Spider-Man* page, Lee scanned in his rough and digitally added the black and the text .

Spider-Man © Marvel Characters, Inc.

and work from that. When I say "tighter," something John Buscema used to say was, "At each stage, you've got to leave yourself something to do." If I'm just tracking what I did, it's life-sucking; it's just going to take the life right out of the drawing. He had a similar process, but he did it full-sized and worked on newsprint to do the scribbly structures, then he put it on a lightbox to tighten it up.

DRAW!: Yeah, I own some of those, and I love them because there's the story. You see everything there. He can make it prettier, but if it's going to work, it's going to work at that stage. They're just beautiful, loose, gestural drawings.
LW: The lines that move through the page. You saw *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* years ago?

DRAW!: Yeah, I got that for Christmas when it came out.
LW: I had been out of comics when that came out. I got back in—five years as a kid is like forever—in '79, around 17, I got reintroduced to comics and got so excited. Within that year I got that book. I remember going to the back where John talks about composition—it was kind of like abstract art which you and I talked about earlier. That tripped me out. "You've got to think about this stuff? You've got to think about lines of action?" [*laughter*] I just started to feel stupid. "I don't know how to do this." What I didn't realize is a lot of that is afterthought stuff. I don't consciously sit there and go, "Okay, I've got to have this line move through the page in this direction so it goes left to right, and I've got to make sure that that lynch is laid through the panel so that—". I don't think that, but it happens. If you don't do it, it feels like someone's dragging their fingers across a chalkboard. It's that gut thing. It's coming from a rule, but it's not a Bible rule.

DRAW!: So you take your little rough and you blow it up. Do you print it out in non-photo blue?
LW: No, I just print it out on copy paper in two pieces. Actually, what I'll do often is—they're like mannequins, but they're very loose mannequins. Some of them have more than that. It's very fluid. I'll print them out at 90%, 100%, and 110%, because invariably there will be a close-up I didn't do big enough, or something I drew too small, or a place where I need more room for copy. So I try to give myself a few options that way, but it's still very fluid because there's still a lot of drawing left to do on the finished board.

DRAW!: Do you trace them off on a lightbox?
LW: I get that down on the lightbox, and I take them a step further on the lightbox than what's on the Xerox rough. Then I bring them over to the other drawing table and finish them from there.

DRAW!: How much has your work process changed from when you first started 15, 20 years ago?
LW: I've done it a few different ways. I used to change my method more often. I'd do it one way for a while and then just mix it up just to try something different.

I remember that John Buscema method. I did that—I can't believe they didn't call it this. They should have called it The Busceminar. [*laughter*] Did you ever go to one of those?

Lee then blew up the thumbnail and used a lightbox to get his pencils down.
Spider-Man © Marvel Characters, Inc.

DRAW!: No, I was never fortunate enough to attend one of his chalk talks.
LW: I don't know if they did this every year, or if I just happened to be coming in the years that he did it, but it was a great idea, and I wish they would do stuff like that now because it was tremendous.

DRAW!: You'll have to be the guy to do it now, Lee. You'll have to be the guy coming in to coach the troops.
LW: Well, as long as they have another guy coming in to coach the deadline portion. [*laughter*] With John you got the whole package.

DRAW!: Deadlines don't matter anymore, because everybody's late all the time. People are turning things in two weeks from shipping. It used to be you were afraid to be late or you wouldn't get the next job. Now everybody's late.
LW: Yeah, it's interesting how it's changed. In some ways—I'm not talking about quality of craft—there's a greater degree of expectation of what's on the page from the penciler. It was simpler before. It was more of a deadline mentality 40, 50 years ago. I wish it was a little more like that today. I feel the expectation that there's got to be a certain amount on the page. I like doing it the way I'm doing it, so I'm not complaining, but in some ways it's not stuff that advances the story. It's just detail or the amount of tightness or whatever.

I remember when we were kids, there were certain guys who were the butts of the jokes—the guys my friends used to call hacks. I think some of those journeymen were so far superior to a lot of the stuff we're doing today.

DRAW!: One of the things I always say when I talk to younger artists is, in the old days, you had to be able to draw everything. Because you'd go in to deliver pages, and the next thing would be, "Okay, we don't have any more of this, but we have a western." "Okay." And people were making, what, 35, 40 dollars a page? They weren't making 500, 600 dollars a page like some top guys are making today. There was nowhere near that amount of money to be made, so they had to make it like Kirby or Ditko or Kane. They could do anything. They could do a western, or a romance, or a sci-fi. They just had to be more well rounded as artists in order to be able to function in the business.
LW: And they did it without the help of Google image search and Sketch Up.

DRAW!: That's true. Coming from comics and going into fine art, the fact you have to draw on so much stored information, so much stuff that's in your head—even in storyboarding or whatever—comics is a great training ground for that, because you have to be able to draw so many different types of situations and scenarios and solve so many different problems. Some people make careers out of doing one thing, and that's great if it can happen for you, but it hasn't been my experience. I've had to do a lot of different things.

A few years ago you were starting to get into the computer stuff. Are you venturing forth with that, like Manga Studio or anything like that?

LW: No, the only area where I use the computer more is for certain effects on my pages. Like in my story there's a blizzard and I want to do some really dense snow, and I don't want to make the colorist's life miserable, so I'll do that on my end—stuff like that.

Also, I'm just catching up to a lot of things. I do feel like I've been kind of in a state of semi-retirement, so I feel like I'm relearning and learning anew a lot of things about what my capabilities are right now. Just recently I wanted so badly to put some gray wash on some pages, and I remember it being drilled into us that if you've got a black line, every pixel has got to be black—it has to be a bitmap. But that's no longer the case, I'm learning. It is new to see how much possibility there is within a page than I realized. There are more things to do and to try.

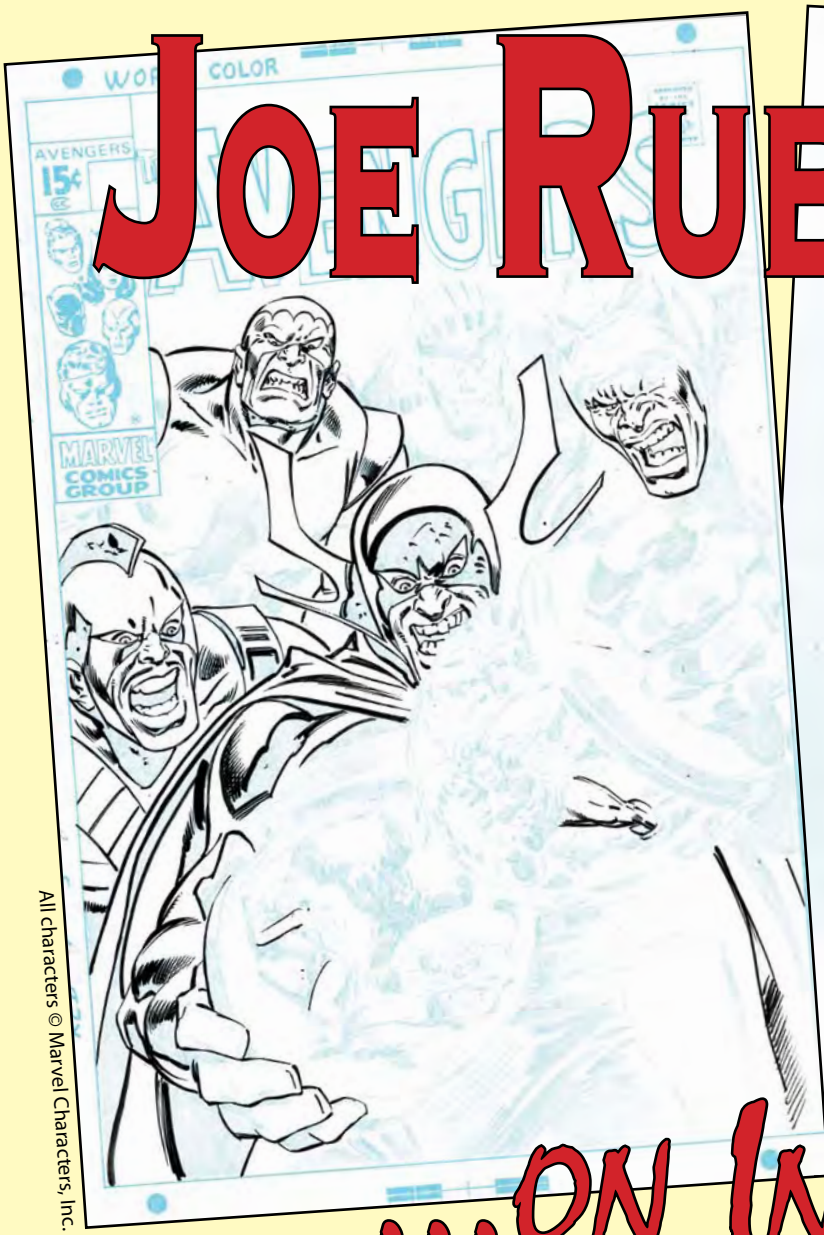
Lee's finished inks.
Spider-Man © Marvel Characters, Inc.

DRAW!: That's the real upside of digital technology. It used to be, if something was going to be black, it had to be at least 40% gray for it to read black. There were certain colors you couldn't use on certain books unless they had the K-tones. None of that matters now. You can draw with a crayon on a 2" x 4". As long as you can scan it, they can print it. It's funny because I came across my old color charts the other day—the 64 colors plus the K-tones, so you could code it. Now the computer separates all that stuff out. You don't have to do your color guide then go back and code it.

LW: Amazing, too, some of the great coloring jobs done with such a small palette. Now the computers are made to color, but unfortunately, some guys feel they have to use every color.

DRAW!: I think it's great you're getting to work with a really good colorist, because we've both had the experience of setting up the page to create a certain tone or atmosphere, and then the colorist comes along and seems to work 100%

Joe Rubinstein



All characters © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Wolverine © Marvel Characters, Inc.

...on Inking

Inking is the act of applying ink over someone else's or your own pencils/graphite drawings with brush, pen, marker, fingers—even digitally—so the drawing becomes dark enough to reproduced. While modern printing can and does more and more often reproduce directly from the pencils, I feel there is something desirable missing (but then again, I would).

Inking is not tracing, but like an actor with dialogue, or a musician with composed lines not of his own making, an inker has to make an art of interpreting the penciled lines very well, or at the very least do no harm.

Inking can be a lot of fun and also very boring. Fun and exciting because I've gotten to work with artists who were childhood heroes of mine, and also to work with some new, hot artist who's making a splash in the industry at the moment. Exciting when I have to rise to the challenge of finding a new way to work. Boring when it's the same old style and the same old characters with the same old tools.

My mentor Dick Giordano taught me that it's important to respect the penciler whom you are inking over and to change your approach to accommodate their philosophies and thinking while doing what you can to amplify that approach. Give them the respect you'd want from an inker. Not every inker is right for every penciler, and not every job is right for the tools that you may always use. I can use as many as four different kinds of pen nibs during a job and as many as two to three different size brushes. The pens can go from small and flexible to large and stiff.

I whittle the back tip of my brushes down and jam the barrel-shaped points on them or tape the other shaped points on to it. That causes a firm hold and a natural grip for me. I use thinner ink for pen and thicker for brush work, never mixing them up.

My approach is to draw with the ink using pen or brush to establish the shapes (muscles, noses, shoes, etc.), then the light source with the shadows, and then find the rendering (how to make hair, skin, and textures convincing). I can ink an entire job with just one brush or with just one pen, but there are some things that are just plain easier to do with the pen and others that are easier to do with the brush.

Batman © DC Comics

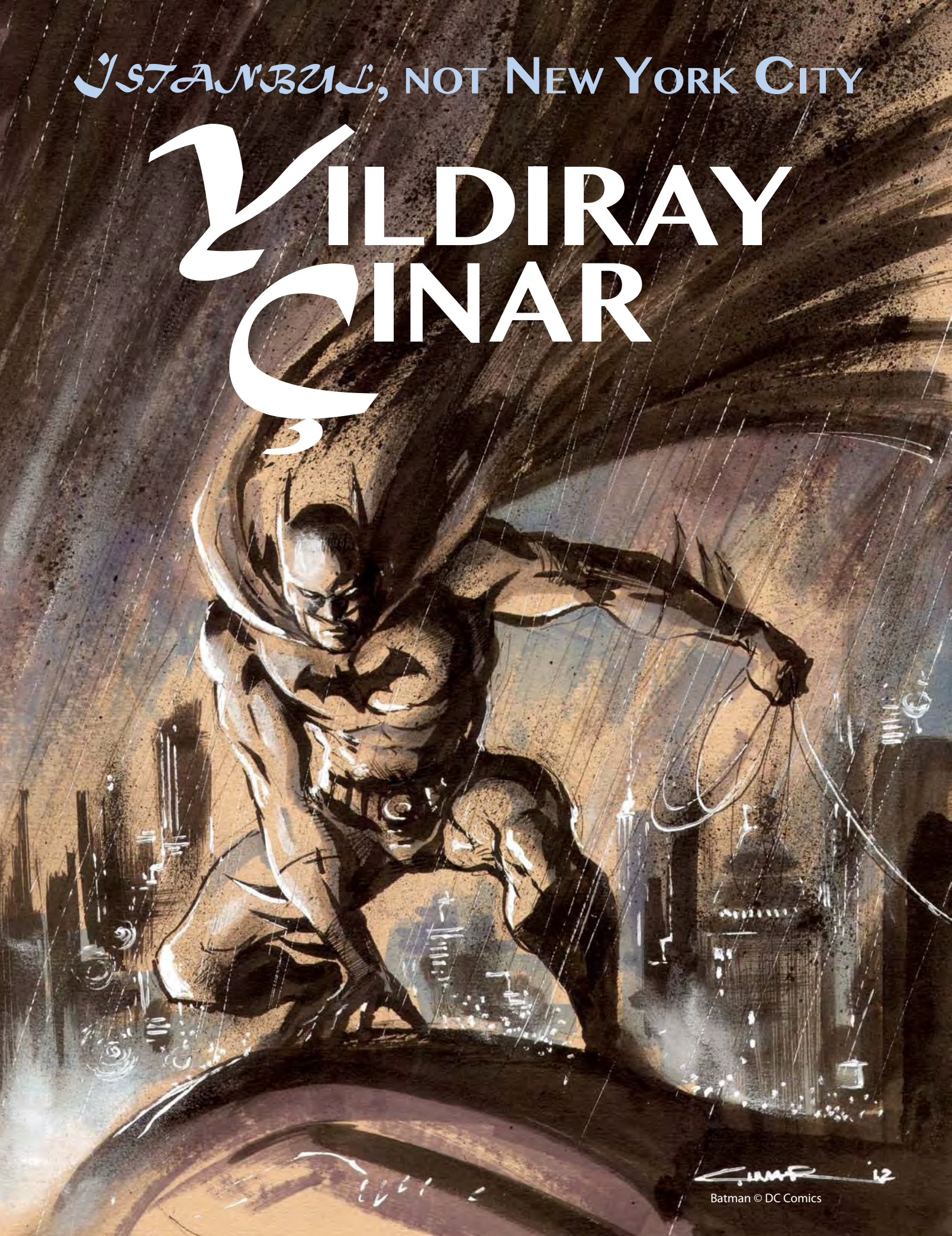
STEP 1—INKING WITH PEN: **This Batman piece by the late Al Rio was about 75% pen work because I wanted a harder, clean kind of line to get the subtleties of Al's work.**

Batman © DC Comics

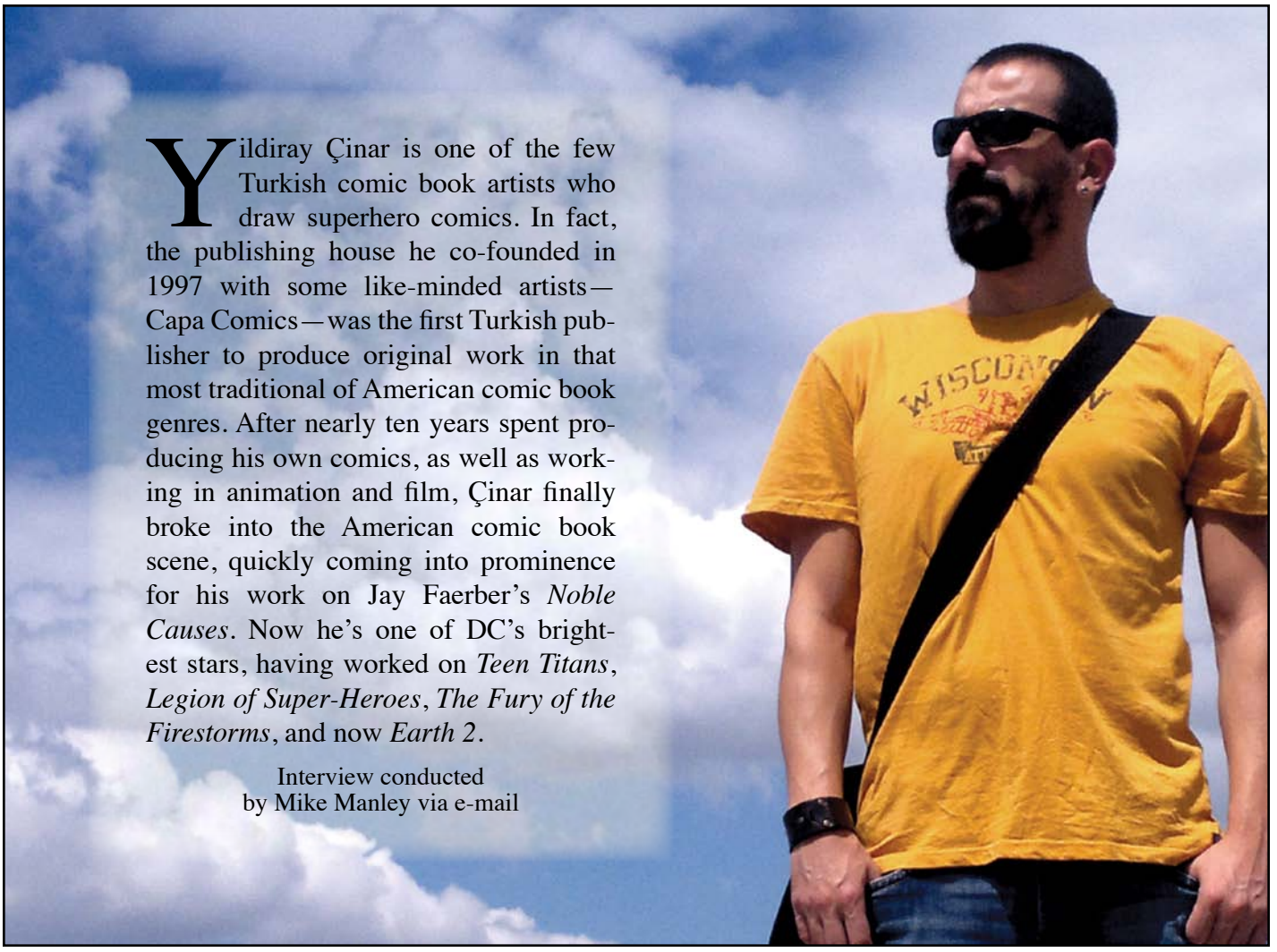
STEP 2—INKING WITH BRUSH: I used the brush to get the long, sweeping lines of the cape, which would've been far more difficult to do using the pen.

Istanbul, not New York City

Yildiray Cinar



Batman © DC Comics



Yildiray Çinar is one of the few Turkish comic book artists who draw superhero comics. In fact, the publishing house he co-founded in 1997 with some like-minded artists—Capa Comics—was the first Turkish publisher to produce original work in that most traditional of American comic book genres. After nearly ten years spent producing his own comics, as well as working in animation and film, Çinar finally broke into the American comic book scene, quickly coming into prominence for his work on Jay Faerber's *Noble Causes*. Now he's one of DC's brightest stars, having worked on *Teen Titans*, *Legion of Super-Heroes*, *The Fury of the Firestorms*, and now *Earth 2*.

Interview conducted
by Mike Manley via e-mail

DRAW!: Tell me about what you are working on now.
YILDIRAY ÇINAR: I am working on *Earth 2* #13 right now. I did a couple of fill-ins on this book, and my new ongoing will be starting after I finish this issue.

DRAW!: How involved are you in the storyline, or are you more of a hired gun on this project?
YÇ: I'd say I am a hired gun for this book.

DRAW!: Does that have any effect on how you feel about a project? I know sometimes in my case working as a hired gun can be a little difficult if I don't have any affinity for the character. There are money jobs, or the jobs you do because you want work, and then the jobs that are passions and you do them for that first and pay secondary. I did layouts last year on a project that had the Teen Titans in it, and I have no "feeling" for them as opposed to the Fantastic Four, who exist as fully fleshed personalities in my imagination. Does this happen to you at all?
YÇ: The situation is a little bit different on this one. On my *Earth 2* fill-ins, I draw single-character issues. It is still the same storyline, but about introducing a new character for the readers. I got to draw Wonder Woman's daughter Fury and Captain Steel's DC New 52 versions. It is new world-building in this book, so I feel lucky.

DRAW!: How do you go about working with new characters? Do you do a bunch of sketches to work with them and get a feel for them before you start drawing them?
YÇ: Definitely. It is so hard to get yourself into the story if you don't study the character. I usually try to start sketching as soon as the script arrives. You should be consistent with characters in an ongoing book.

DRAW!: There has been a fairly long history of artists from Asia working in comics since the early '70s, and in those cases they were recruited by DC Comics and also Warren. Were you aware of that? Did that have an impact on you at all in wanting to work for American companies?
YÇ: Honestly, no. When I started reading comics in the early '80s, I wasn't aware of who is who in comics, mostly because the credits sections didn't exist in the Turkish editions. As for wanting to work for American publishers, I was in love with superheroes, and it came out naturally with time. There is no way you can do this for a living here producing superhero comic books [only for the Turkish market].

DRAW!: So you were reading American comics in Turkish reprints? Were they mostly Marvel or DC? Did you later find out who the artists were that you liked? I assume you also had

access to work produced in Europe, like the graphic albums, etc. What about manga, did you get that as well?

YÇ: Yes, mostly. They were Marvels and DCs all printed in black-and-white and in smaller sizes. My first book was a *Conan* drawn by Gil Kane. In the late '80s, most of the publishers were printing the credits, and I started to learn who was drawing, writing, etc.

We had *Tintin*, *Asterix*, and some other European stuff printed here and there as well. For example, *Thorgal* did see print as a serial in a weekly children's magazine.

Other than cartoons, there was no manga. Actually, mangas started to see print just in the past couple of years here.

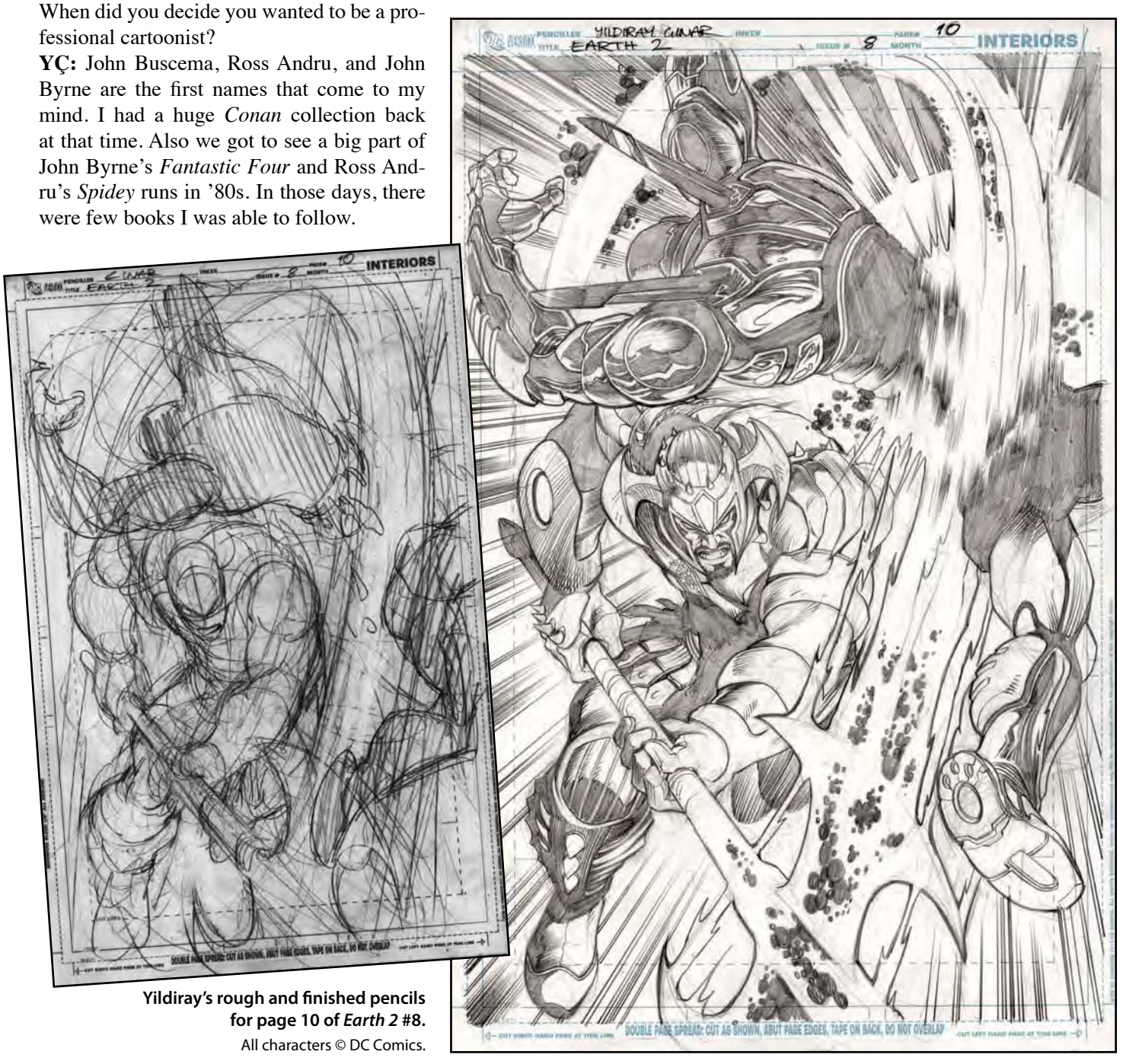
DRAW!: Did you have favorite artists that were your "school"—your favorites that you studied and emulated? When did you decide you wanted to be a professional cartoonist?

YÇ: John Buscema, Ross Andru, and John Byrne are the first names that come to my mind. I had a huge *Conan* collection back at that time. Also we got to see a big part of John Byrne's *Fantastic Four* and Ross Andru's *Spidey* runs in '80s. In those days, there were few books I was able to follow.

DRAW!: I think Ross Andru is one of the more underrated artists of the past 40 years. His work was always so good, and the layouts and storytelling top notch. José García-López told me Andru was a big influence on him, and you can tell that if you look at some of the figure posing and especially his layouts.

YÇ: I agree. Andru is great. His *Spider-Man* was something else. I loved his extreme angles and his use of backgrounds. He used to rotate backgrounds so they were opposed to Spidey's poses, which gave the character swinging from the tops of buildings a fresh look.

I was always drawing and attached to comic book art. My world turned 180 degrees when my art teacher in 8th grade did something very important for my life. Here is the story:



Yildiray's rough and finished pencils for page 10 of *Earth 2* #8.

All characters © DC Comics.

I like keeping the art fresh. Going back is not a good option in my book. I'm always trying to look forward. If I am working on a creator-owned story, I go straight on the page after I do a tiny, two- to three-minute thumbnail. Because I am inking it, I don't need to tighten the pencils.

DRAW!: So if you are doing all the art, you have the ability to alter it, but otherwise you have to keep to what you sent in and was approved?

YÇ: Yes, and the approval process does not depend on one person usually, so I have to be sure of what I send them. But like I said, I catch my mistakes after some time and decide to change things.

DRAW!: How does working long distance affect you? Are you sending scans of the pencils and inks, or sending the actual artwork? Does DC send you their paper to work on, or do you make up your own?

YÇ: With the Internet, it is not hard anymore. I send my scans, and inkers use blueline prints. Actually, I would like to send the originals to the people I work with, but the schedule doesn't allow that to happen. I've tried to ink blueline print myself, and I have to say it is tough. I have huge respect for the inkers who work that way. Last year I had a chance to work with Dan Green, and I sent him the original pencils. We had time to do that. I wish I could always send the inkers original boards.

DC sends me artboards. They have good quality for pencils. But in first issues of *Fury of Firestorm*, I inked my own work. I used markers and ink washes for that, so I did pick blank art boards that had more quality.

In the early issues of *The Fury of the Firestorms*, Yildiray inked his pencils himself.
Firestorm © DC Comic

DRAW!: Do you prefer doing all of the art yourself? Do you have a preference for plots versus full scripts?

YÇ: Like most artists, yes. Inking is a tough job, but when you let yourself in, it is getting better. Also, there are some nice accidents and textures that you can't get with penciling. People often ask me why my usual monthly work is not as dynamic as my personal stuff. This is why. Penciling has limits. Also, you should be tight for the inker. During that progression, the drawing loses some dynamism. In my personal drawings, I use lots of material from old brushes to toothbrushes… I let myself go.

I've worked with a lot of great writers in the time I've been in the industry. The plot/ full script choice depends on the collaboration you are doing. If you have a good match with the writer, you trust each other. For example, when I was working with Jay Faerber on *Noble Causes*, he let me do the action and fight scenes. We tried plot-style on the fourth issue of *Firestorm* with Ethan Van Sciver and Gail Simone. I think it worked pretty well. In the end, to be honest, I prefer plots which gives the artist more freedom.

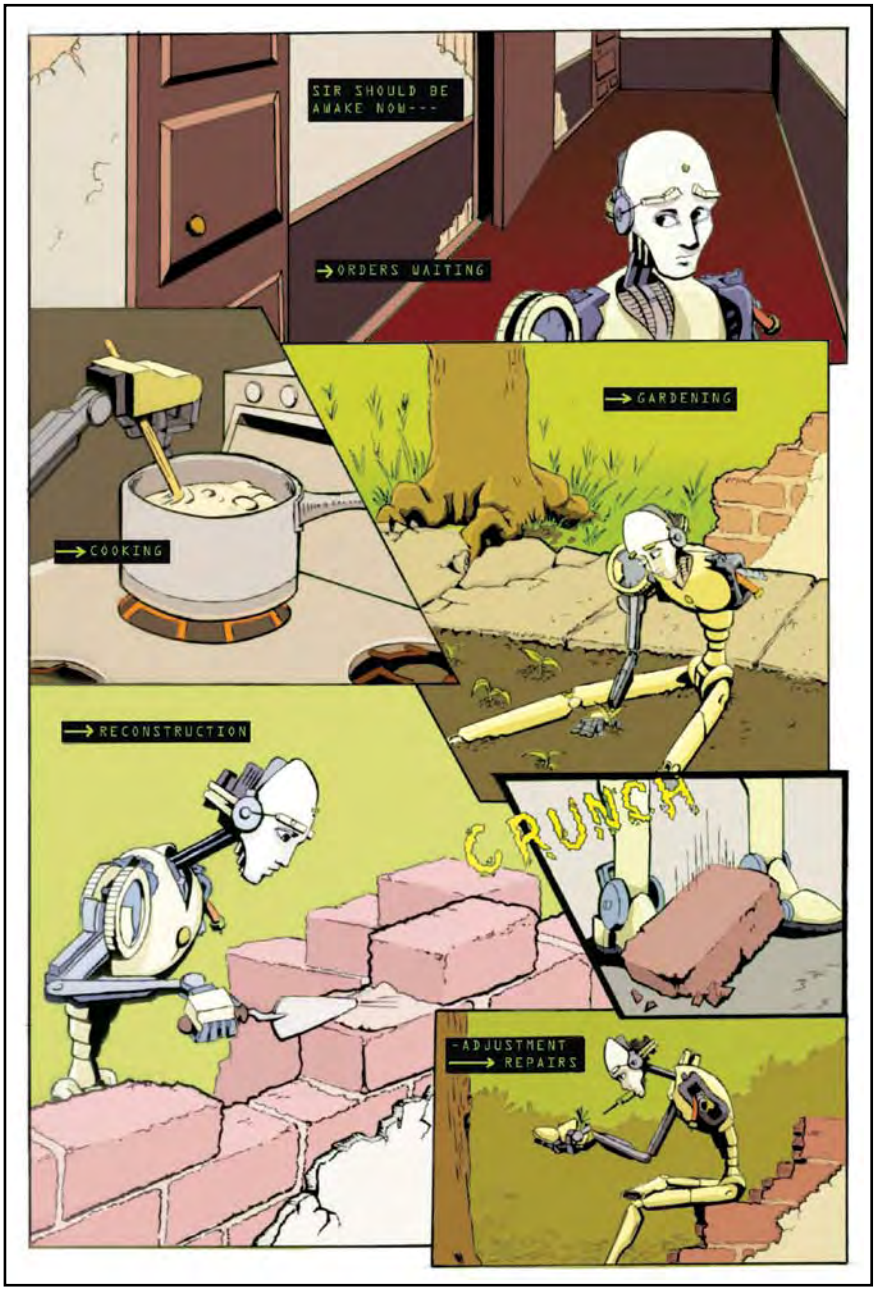
ROUGH Critique

constructive ANALYSIS & CRITICISM of a newcomer's work

by **BOB McLEOD**

What I usually try to do in this column is to try to help some aspiring comic book artist improve his samples enough to get a job drawing comics. That's a tall order, of course, but I believe that if we're able to look objectively at our art, we can take constructive criticism and make adjustments to what we're doing. Very often, adjustments are all that's necessary. People who can't draw don't usually take the time and trouble to do sample pages, so talent is a given, and it's just a matter of using that talent productively rather than expending energy in the wrong areas, and learning what *not* to do, as much as what *to* do.

This issue, however, I'm critiquing a page done by one of my students last year in my Sequential Art class at the Pennsylvania College of Art & Design in Lancaster, where I teach part-time. Andrew McKinney is an excellent artist, and it's been very interesting to watch him improve his skills over the last couple of years. But comic art is neither his main interest nor his strong suit, and I don't think he has any plans to work in comic books. He had several other core class assignments to do at the same time as this elective assignment, so I doubt he was able to put as much time into it as he would have liked (but, hey, I could say that about practically every job of my career). I already critiqued this page in class when he submitted it (although not this extensively), so this critique is not so much for him, but for you. I'm using it here with his permission. Many of the problems he's struggling with here are probably the same problems you struggle with in your pages, and by seeing how his page can be improved, you should be able to apply the same lessons to your own art.

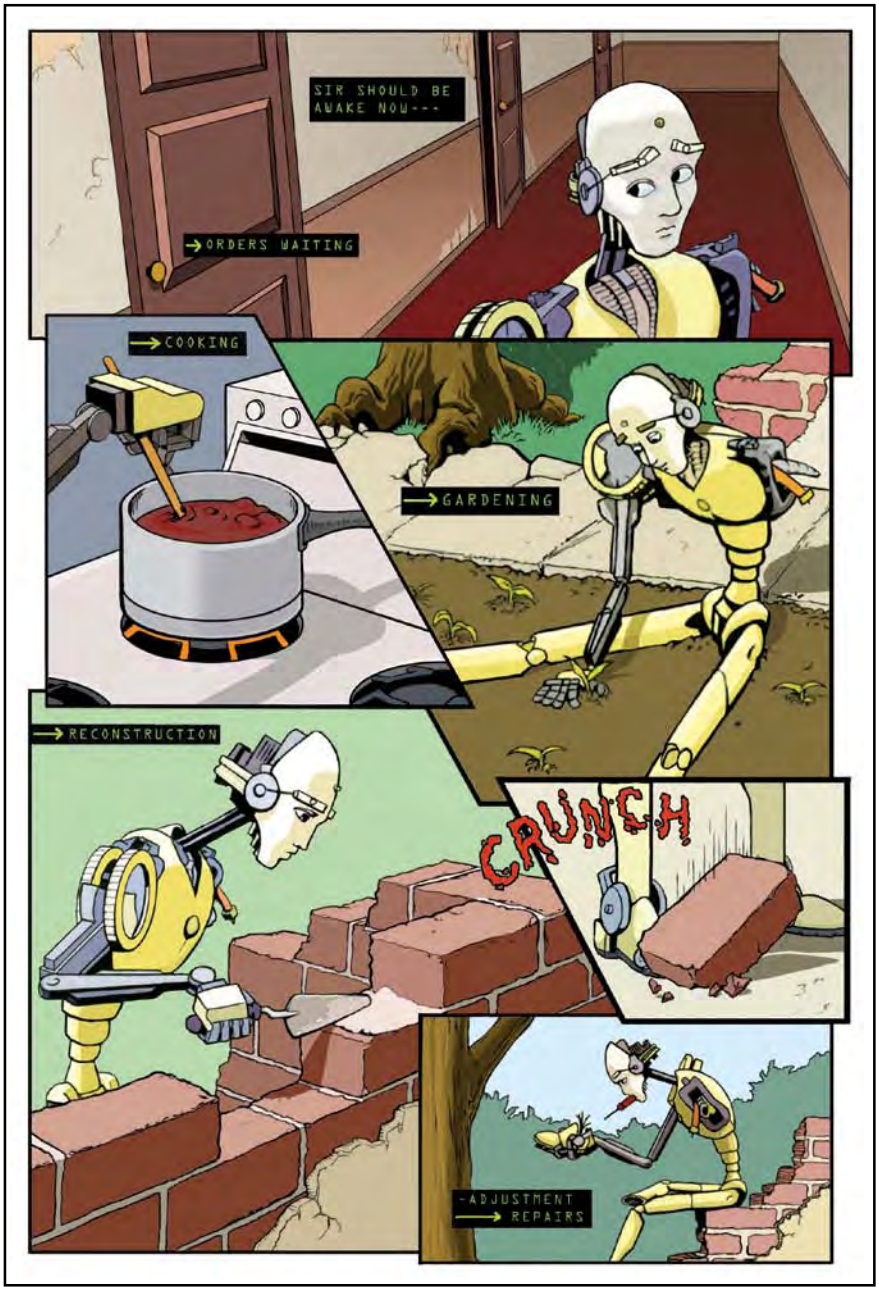


Andrew McKinney's sample page.

First, let's look at what McKinney did well. He opened with a good establishing shot, shown from an interesting viewpoint, and fairly well composed. His storytelling is clear and easy to follow with or without text. He moved the camera around very well, and made good use of close-ups in panels 2 and 5. He was creative in his panel shapes and placed his centers of interest to lead the eye from panel to panel. He put in interesting backgrounds. These are all very important, so I think he did very well given his limited experience.

The most obvious difference between McKinney's version and mine is probably the coloring, so let's talk about that first. Just as when composing a page you don't want to have anything competing with your center of interest, when choosing colors you want to complement your center of interest to make it stand out, not choose similar colors that blend in with it. Andrew chose yellow for his center of interest, the robot. Putting a dark red carpet behind the light yellow robot in panel 1 works very well, and the light colored walls help "frame" him, directing the viewer's eye first to the robot, and then to the near door. This is a very good start, but the dark paneling is too similar in value to the floor, flattening the depth above the robot's head. Lighter paneling gives a little more clarity and better frames the robot.

For panel 2, why choose a brown background? I think there are far too many drab browns overall. The robot hand is yellow, so a contrasting color like blue is better. Blue also contrasts better against the reddish-brown door above it in panel 1. Why have a yellow spoon with a yellow hand, and why have yellow food in the pot? Reddish food balances well against the red carpet in panel 1, and a cooler, whiter stove leaves the hand the only yellow in the panel, and spotlights it much better. See how the overall cool bluish coloring in my panel 2 focuses the eye on the warm center of attention, the hand stirring the food, while in McKinney's the orange burner grabs the eye more than anything. His brown burner in the lower right corner flattens into the brown dirt in panel 3, as well.



Bob's revision of the page.

In panel 3, the robot should again be the only yellow, and the background colors should be cooler colors to keep them in the background. So we need a cool, greenish brown for the tree rather than a warm yellowish brown, and cool blue-green grass rather than warm yellow-green grass. The sidewalk, too, should be a cool color, not a warm color, and certainly not another yellowish brown.

In panel 4, a cool blue-green background contrasts better with the yellow robot and red bricks than a warm yellow-green. Making the bricks darker and redder balances with the red carpet of panel 1, and adds needed visual weight to the lower left corner of the page. More value contrast on the bricks also adds depth and form, where McKinney's close-in-value pink ones look fairly flat.

Panel 5's sound effect should be anything *but* yellow, for goodness' sake. I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that yellow is McKinney's favorite color. Making the sound effect red helps balance against the reds in panels 1 and 2, and really jumps out from all the pale colors behind it. And panel 6 once again needs cool colors behind the robot, not warm colors. A blue sky balances well with the blue tones I used in panel 2 and really helps his head pop out. A dark on the side of the tree comes forward away from the distant trees better, and adds needed visual weight.

So to sum up, remember cool colors recede, warm colors come forward, and you should usually use contrasting colors around your

COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

COLOR *tells the* STORY

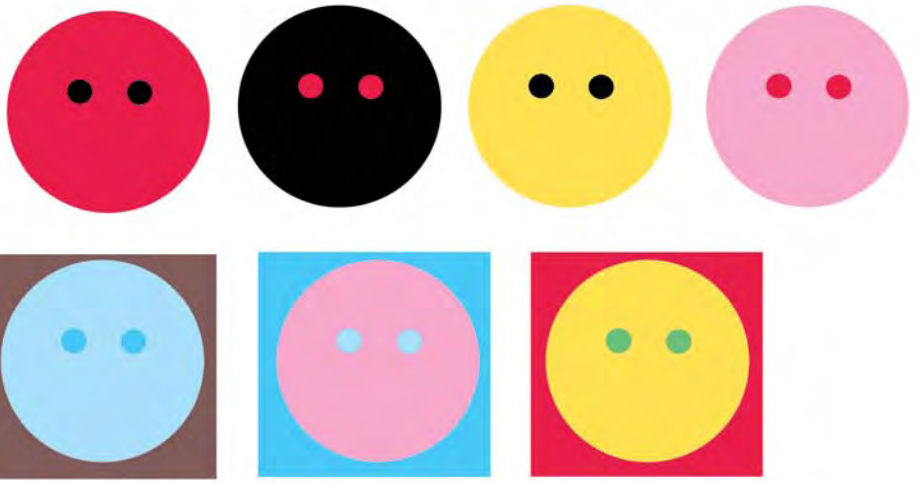
There is one thing I have observed over the years working in comics and animation—everybody thinks they are good at coloring.

Maybe it comes from the fact we all colored in coloring books or used vast amounts of finger paints as kids, broadly splashing bright colors across the paper. It was a happy time, and we were all nothing but encouraged for our creative efforts—our artwork was taped up all over the classroom as well as mom and grandma's refrigerators. My grandma even made an ashtray with one of my drawings on it of a train as a kid. Children work on instinct and emotion in their color choices, which can lead to amazing and unconventional results. I think color is primal. It's emotional, and while color theory can be taught—and is in art schools as students diligently mix little swatches of color and make charts galore—in the end I think it still comes down to an artist's emotional instinct when it comes to color. Some artists seem to have better instincts than others, and that will remain one of the many mysteries of art.

As we grow as artists and become much harsher critics of the world, and the world a harsher critic of our efforts as artists, most give up on drawing, but many still feel they can get in there and color with the best of us. My thinking on coloring in regards to comics and illustration have changed in recent years as the computer and modern printing has allowed a much wider range of formats, colors, and techniques than undreamed of even ten years ago and certainly back in the old days of color coding and hand separations. Looking back at how the best colorists of the past often worked with a big handicap compared to what we have today as a result of the computer and the revolution in the printing process, I still think that often the older colorists and artists were more effective than most modern colorists because they understood the emotional impact of coloring. And because they had to work with those older limitations, they were more creative; coloring was more of an actual handmade craft. Craftsmanship cannot be won as easily on a computer. Too many modern colorists use too much rendering and modeling and garish coloring which competes and often overpowers the drawing. It does the worst thing—it makes the storytelling and drawing often less clear.

Below is a simple set of basic colors, similar to the Crayola box of eight crayons we all spent a lot of time with as kids. Each one of these colors tend to automatically have a "feeling" or "mood" attached to them. Sunny, violent, happy, love, death, sad, etc.

If we start to make even the simplest pictures—such as the icons to the right—the simple variation of colors starts to give us a specific emotional response or feeling with the specific color combinations.



The set of illustrations at the bottom of the page shows how we can carry this idea a bit further and explore the emotional and expressive psychological power of these color combinations. With this in mind it is easy to build much more complex pictures that cast a clear emotional impact or feeling.

Below is a study I did a few years back in gauche on cardboard. By playing around with the colors here, each version of this piece now gives you a different emotional feeling about the piece. Certain color combinations really give us a certain emotional feeling because we have been so socially conditioned to read certain colors as good or evil, friend or foe, sexy or sinful, delightful or healthy. This gives us as artists a lot of ammunition to play with the emotions we want to convey in the work or manipulate in the viewer.

As much as the story, the drawing, inking, lettering, and balloon placement have on the reader's emotional reaction to a comic or a cover, the coloring in a comic has sometimes just as much or more of an emotional impact on the viewer. The color pulls the eye, sets the mood, or greatly helps support it, and a bad colorist of can ruin the emotional impact of a panel, a page, or sequence.

In my experience, the colorist is like the anchor of a relay race team; they are often the one who must race from behind and make up the time lost by the rest of the team in order to win the race against the deadline. This often leads, I'm sure, to very rushed choices that don't always help the look of the art. Comic colorists have a much wider selection of colors today than the old basic 64 colors (plus what were called K-tones, which were the colors mixed with a percentage of blacks). K-tones were something I noticed right away with certain artists like Neal Adams who used them to great effect as seen in this classic *Detective* cover featuring Batman versus Man-Bat.

Batman, Man-Bat © DC Comics

Here is a little checklist of questions I ask myself when coloring any piece of art:

1) What is the mood—happy, sad, scary, romantic, etc.?

2) What is the light source—the sun, the moon, interior, exterior, artificial, multiple light sources, etc.?

3) What is the media: print or the Internet? The colors that work great in an online illustration or comic cannot exactly be reproduced in the four-color world of traditional print media. I deal with this with the coloring on the *Judge Parker* Sunday strips which I color. The strip appears in color in both the print and web versions, so I can't use colors that will work in only the online and not the print version. The web version looks better because it's pure light—the light of the computer screen—so it's much more vibrant and truer to the version I color on my Mac. The print version is reproduced smaller and on newsprint, which dulls everything down. My default is to make the web version look great, as that is the area growing in readership, but I know to not oversaturate the colors so the print version will look okay. I can easily see if any color is not going to work in print with a quick check in Photoshop with the sliders set to CMYK; if I see a little "!" warning, I know that color will not print accurately in print.

4) Keep it simple! Limit the coloring to two to four main values to start, and then work out from the strong base block-in and change temperature or value. I also make up a quick color chart for the main characters' colors that I can use to Paint Bucket the block-ins to keep the colors consistent and make the job a bit easier.

This is a commission I colored as an example of the emotional impact coloring can have on a piece of art:

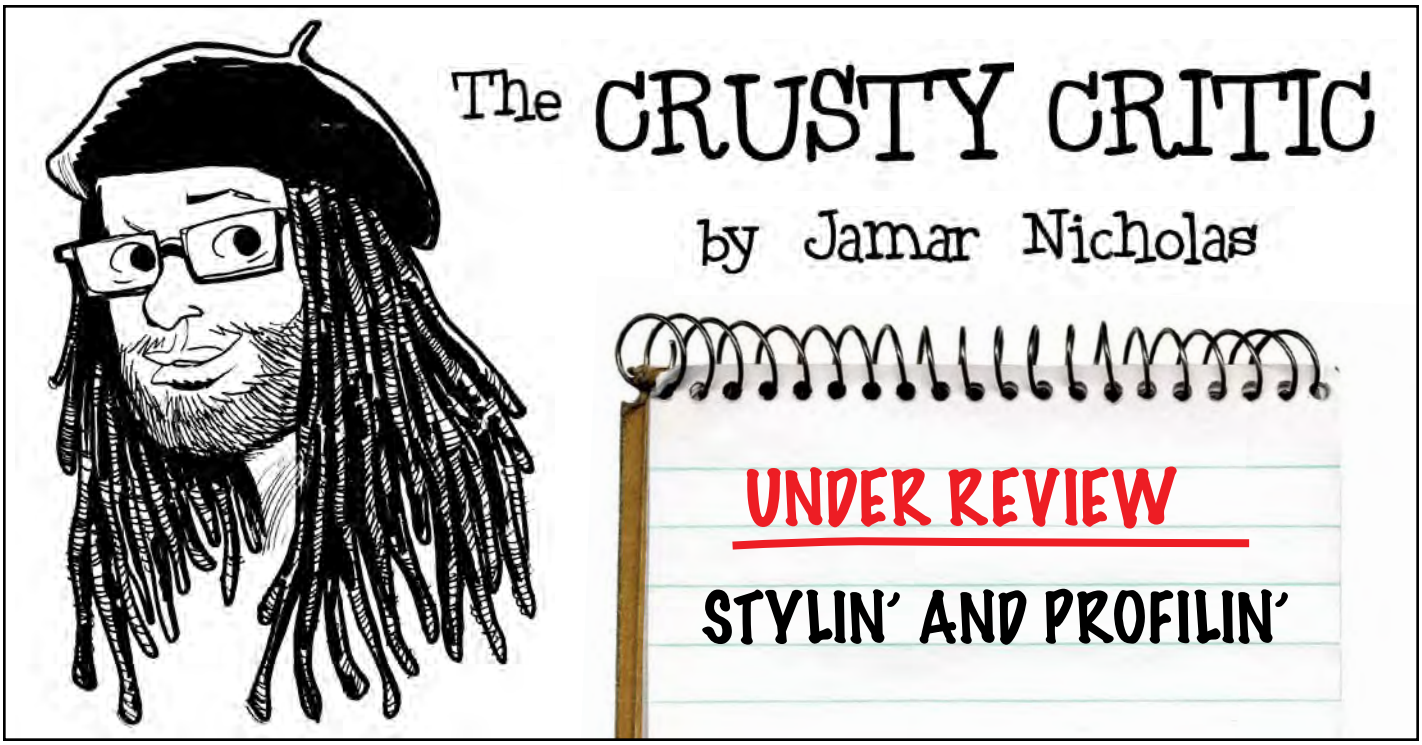
Azrael, Batman © DC Comics

Employing the basic colors as simple block-in masses, I can establish the hierarchies within the piece: the figures versus the background, the foreground versus the background, and the emotional range of the colors, which of course take into account the colors of the costumes of the figures and what the environment might be. All the small modulations of color come later; the big masses come first.

(above) Two color comps with only the large masses blocked in. This allows us to see the hierarchies clearly and more easily determine the best path to take.
(right) Choosing the first comp as the basis of the coloring, the palettes can then be modulated for lighting, emotional impact, etc.
Azrael, Batman © DC Comics

Now that I have an idea of how I want the piece to head in a specific direction, I block in the main figures and the basic colors of the background. I decide since this was a fight, or the end of a fight, that coloring the sky red even though it's night will give the emotional feeling I want. The complement to red is green, so casting the building in a greenish color which is slightly neutral will make the figures stand out.

On the next page is the final piece. I worked back and forth on the figures and the background to harmonize the colors, and often worked with a lowered opacity with the pencil or brush too to let colors bleed through to warm something up or cool something down. I think you'll see that sometimes making an unconventional choice, like the red sky, makes the emotional impact stronger than a more literal choice, in this case a night sky blue, would.



Through the art store fog-of-war comes a shadow through the smoke—a hero sent to you in your moment of need with a medical supply kit full of information, a tourniquet for your wallet, bandages for your bucks, and morphine to stop the pain—the Crusty Critic has returned! My mission is simple—to help you, the time-strapped, cash-strapped, quality-starved artist save more coin by reviewing creative supplies and other tools so you don't have to take art shrapnel out in the trenches. Man down! Medic!

So hold onto my hand, soldier; it's going to be alright. The Crusty Critic is going to help you through this.

As many cartoonists have made jumps into working digitally, it's hard to find any artists working in the field that don't do *something* digitally, be it coloring in Photoshop or lettering in Illustrator. For the longest time, these tasks were relegated to a desktop computer, but as technology creates things smaller, lighter, and easier to work with, we're now at a point where the same exact job it took a big honking desktop tower to do can now be completed on a laptop. That old Mac G5 tower in your studio that you couldn't live without is now outpaced by computers that can fit inside a zipped jacket, and which are powerful enough to complete complicated projects from the living room couch. And as artists become more mobile, they crave the same creature-comforts of the studio on the go. The modern tablet is precisely what the digital-doctor ordered.

After you've found the perfect tablet art program (of which there are several, which I'll address in a future Crusty column), the next question is: How am I going to draw on this thing? The digital stylus, which seems counter-productive after the producers of the iPads and Kindles and Nooks and Crannies of the world spent all this time making touch-capacitive devices, have been in high demand by artists. Most styli are the same in theory—a ed-ball teracts ty. Not orks—tch the li over differ- ou can the $5 npulse t coun- scount (espe- ptions, r-ness. ush for the tablet/smart

In this entry, sh and Stylus (for Tou brush. com for more d