GREG HILDEBRANDT
LEGENDARY FANTASY/ SCI-FI ILLUSTRATOR

BRAD WALKER
MAKING A SPLASH WITH AQUAMAN

REGULAR COLUMNISTS
JERRY ORDWAY & JAMAR NICHOLAS

Plus MIKE MANLEY & BRET BLEVINS' COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

DRAW!

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

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GREG HILDEBRANDT

Making Art for the People

DRAW!: Are you still painting your giant Kingpin?

GREG HILDEBRANDT: Kingpin giving Daredevil a wallop, yep.

DRAW!: Is that a cover or a commission?

GH: It's a cover for Marvel—one of their variant covers. I've been doing a lot of stuff for them over the last year or more. I must have done 20 covers for them now.

DRAW!: You did a series of trading cards for them back in the day.

GH: Yeah, that was with my brother back in the '90s. That was 1994, I think. There were 150 cards in the first set, then we did a bunch of partial sets, posters, covers—tons of stuff. Then I dropped off from that and went on to do other stuff. But now I'm back, and it's a lot of fun. It's the first time I'm doing it without my brother.

DRAW!: Is that different for you? How is your workflow different? Would he lay out stuff, or would you lay out stuff?

GH: Yeah, it's a different gig. There wasn't one specific thing that one of us did over the other. It depended on who was doing what at any given time. One of us would start a layout for one image, and the other would start a layout for another image. Tim preferred me to do more of the rough layouts. He enjoyed doing the finished painting more than starting from scratch, even though he did do that. I was always the one who was more enthusiastic about that, as I am now.

DRAW!: I noticed your original is gigantic. I'm used to seeing the typical 11" x 17", but yours can't be scanned. You have to get that shot, right?

GH: No, we can scan it. Jean's [Scrocco, Greg's art rep] been working with a guy for years. He can scan a 60' painting.

DRAW!: Wow! How does he do that?

GH: I don't know. I've never been there, but he's got a great big scanner. He'll scan the painting in sections and then
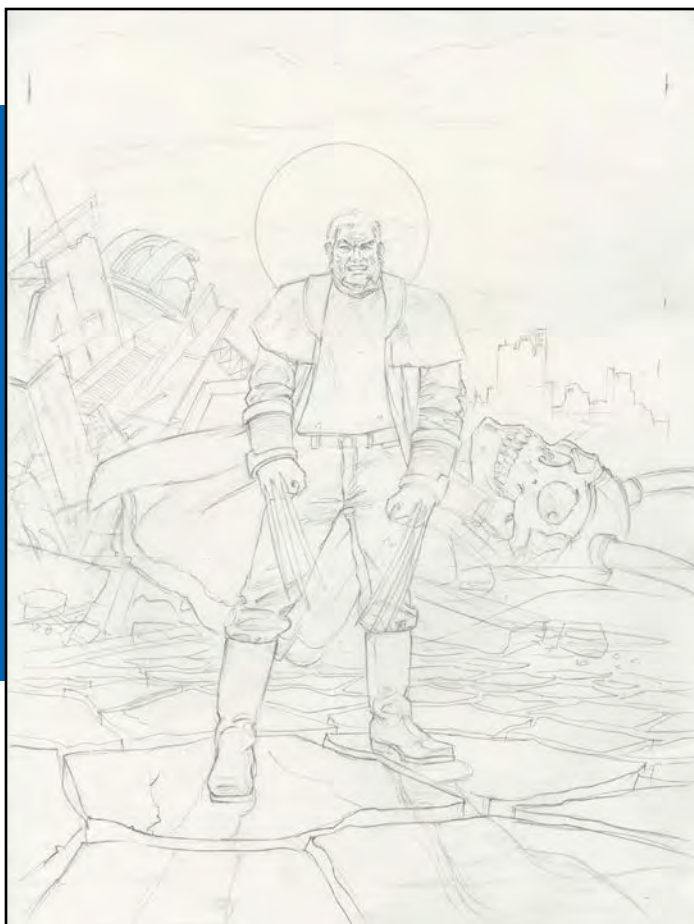
The final sketch for a variant cover of Marvel's *Old Man Logan* #5. Old Man Logan © Marvel Characters, Inc.

assemble it. I'm not sure how he does it, but you can give him anything, and he does a fantastic job.

Jean doesn't trust it to only a digital file, so she has that scan sent off to someone who makes an 8" x 10" sheet of film out of it. When that proverbial asteroid goes by and everything goes down, we'll still have all my artwork on film. [*laughter*]

DRAW!: You'll be able to trade your film negatives for hamburgers. [*laughter*]

GH: Exactly. But I like painting big because the movements are bigger, as opposed to small and picky. I work all kinds of ways, but when it comes to these kinds of things, I like a bigger, broader approach, which happens when you paint bigger. It's just an automatic. Your brushstrokes are larger, and you have a tendency to be more physical with it and painterly, for lack of a better term. I don't paint super-tight; it's kind of loose. This is almost four times up from the size it will be reproduced. Once it's reduced, it will get tightened up.

Joe Kubert always said that your artwork should always been blown up huge from your original or reduced huge from your original. It looks really neat when you blow up a sketch and you can see the pencil work increased in size.

DRAW!: I think that's very true. That's what the pop artists realized: When you take a Jack Kirby panel or a Russ Heath panel, and you blow it up 5000%, it looks really awesome.

GH: Exactly. So I like to paint big. N. C. Wyeth painted large for all of his illustrations, and I guess I took a cue from that.

DRAW!: I was just out at the Brandywine a few weeks back with some students. And there was the World War I show at the Academy up until last month. There was this huge 20' painting by John Singer Sargent there.
GH: Whoa!

DRAW!: What was really impressive about that painting, besides just the massive scale of it, was that the calligraphy of his brushstroke was very similar to his smaller paintings. He was somehow able to recreate that at a massive scale.
GH: He worked at that. He worked for that painfully broad look, and if he wasn't getting it, he'd scrape it all off and start again. It didn't just happen. It looks very spontaneous, but it's extremely studied.

DRAW!: It was the same with Nicolai Fechin. His work looks like he did it in five minutes, like it was done in great haste. But that was the illusion—that it was done with this verve and gusto—that they worked hard to create.
GH: And that always surprised me. As far as line treatment goes, you look at Al Hirschfeld's work, that sweeping, beautiful art deco linework, it's done with a scratchy crow quill pen, slowly building it up. It isn't just a "whoosh" of a brush, like I thought it was. No, it was scratched out and built up slowly.

DRAW!: That's something I've come to learn studying painters like Sargent and [Anders] Zorn and Fechin, and their influence on people like Andrew Loomis, who then influenced you and me and everybody else. That illusion is what they were going for, and how they got there wasn't necessarily as important.

Several years ago right after I moved to Philadelphia, there was a gallery that was showing your work, and Moebius' work, and a couple of others' work. They had one of the paintings you and your brother did for *Lord of the Rings*. It was huge. It was one of the ones towards the end of the story where they're all dressed in white.
GH: "At the Grey Havens" probably? The really wide one.

DRAW!: You and your brother must have been influenced by seeing the work of N. C. Wyeth.
GH: Oh God, yes. We grew up on N. C. Wyeth. Our parents had *Treasure Island*, *Robin Hood*, and all those books, so I saw that stuff as a little kid. I was always an N. C. Wyeth fan, going way, way back. I didn't know anything about how he worked or anything, because nobody talked about that stuff back then, but he was always a huge influence. But many people were.

My first main influences were the comic strips, because that's the first art I can remember seeing. The newspaper was there every day, and when it got to the Sundays, oh geez. Hal Foster and *Prince Valiant*—I'd be copying that stuff, and *Terry and the Pirates*. Alex Raymond wasn't doing *Flash Gordon* at that time, because he was in the Marines when I started reading the paper.

The painting in progress. Greg has a reference photo taped to his board as he paints the skull (left), and a shot with his palette for the painting prominently featured in the foreground (right).

Old Man Logan © Marvel Characters, Inc.

DRAW!: It was Austin Briggs.

GH: Right! I read later that he hated doing it.

DRAW!: Yes. In the old days, the fine artist was at the top. The fine artist looked down on the illustrator, the illustrator looked down on the cartoonist, and the guys who drew the strips looked down on the guys who drew the comic books. The guys in the comic books wanted to be in the strips, because then at least you were "legit".

GH: Yep. What a terrible conversation that was. I was never aware of that as a young kid. It wasn't until much later that most of the comic book artists would admit they drew comic books. "I'm an illustrator." Whew! Thank God I was never aware of that stuff and never got sucked into that conversation of elitism. It's ridiculous to me, the whole conversation.

DRAW!: They had a painting at the Brandywine the last time I went there by N. C. Wyeth, which I had not seen. It was one of those weird, ugly paintings he did at the end of his career when he was having that crisis of confidence. I love his stuff so much, and it was so horrible compared to what he could do.

GH: There was a biography on him about 15 years ago that really gets into that whole psyching out of him and [Howard] Pyle—the grandfather of illustration and the father of American illustration. These are the guys that basically create the conversation of, how they put it, picture-making—that's illustration—and gallery work. The distinction of fine art and commercial art, in a sense, starts with these two masters. "Oh, that's merely an illustration." And Wyeth tore himself up over that. When you read his letters, he's in agony all the time over this. He would try to do those still lifes, which were beautifully done, but when you see his *Boy's King Arthur*, that's the stuff that makes me shout.

DRAW!: His best *Treasure Island* paintings—I always remember the one where they're playing dice or cards—.

GH: With the lighting.

DRAW!: With the little parrot. The last time I saw the painting, I actually counted the strokes. He did that parrot inside of the cage in 27 paint strokes.

GH: What a genius. Andrew [Wyeth] had his studio below
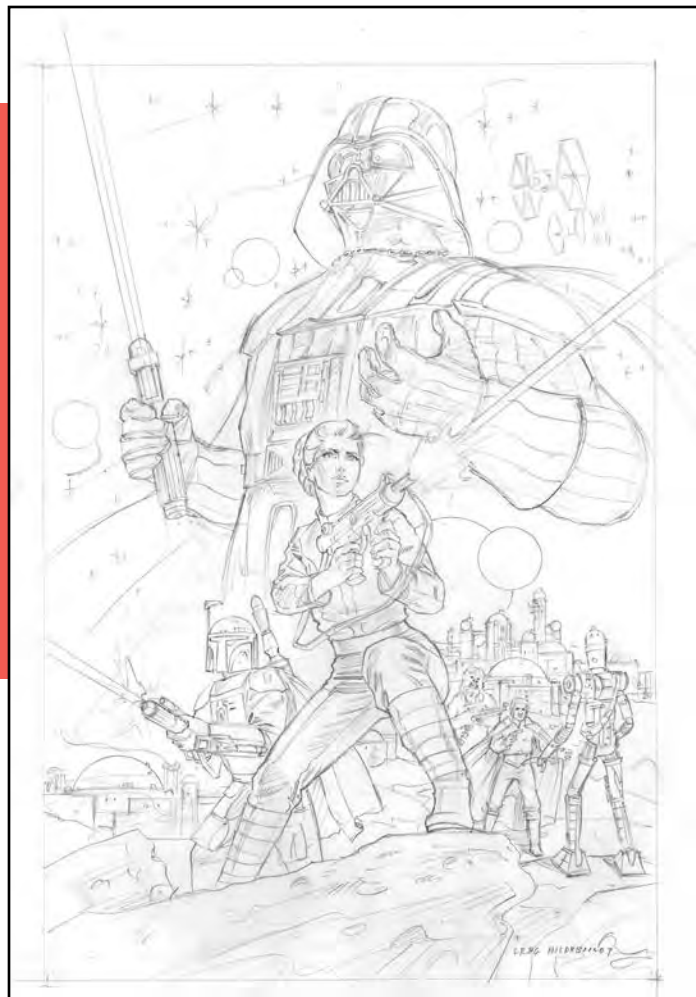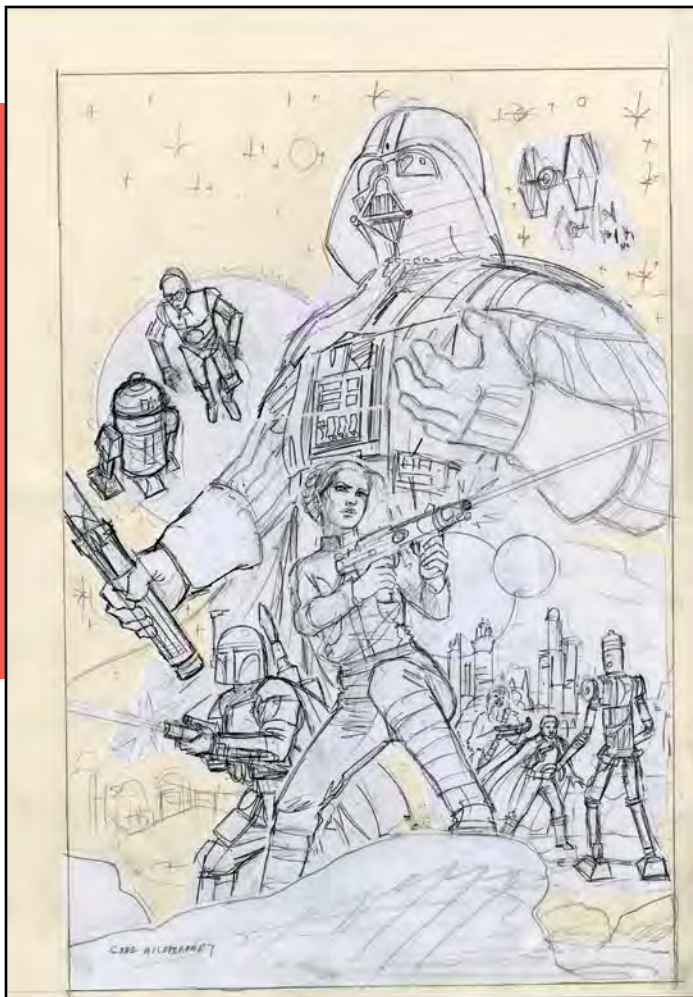
Rough sketch (left) and finished sketch (right) for a direct market variant cover to the *Star Wars: The Original Marvel Years* omnibus, vol. 2. Star Wars and all related characters © LucasFilm LLC. Sketches © Greg Hildebrandt.

any of the three calendars. I was doing them because I wanted to do them, and I wanted to make myself happy with them. But we were both always hypercritical of ourselves. You're always harder on yourself than anyone else can be.

DRAW!: I teach illustration to young people in their teens, and I always explain to them how much easier it is to find reference now. You can type in "old scientist's laboratory", and there will be 500 pictures on Google.
GH: If you want it backlit, rim lighting, you can find it. Back then you had to go to the library and search. Half your life was spent trying to find reference.

DRAW!: How much of your production time for your first calendar would you say was spent either shooting or finding reference?
GH: At least a third.

DRAW!: The interiors of the cottages were based on English-style medieval architecture. Did you go to England or do any travel to look for reference?
GH: No, we never travelled at all. We had tons of books. Tim had a bunch, I had a bunch; we'd accumulated them over the years. And if we couldn't find what we needed, we'd go to the library. But mostly we had enough books, and photos we'd taken from here and there. Costume-wise, we were inventing based on medieval tunics, and faking it as we went.

DRAW!: And that's where your experience from model making and costume making as a kid comes into play.
GH: Totally. Tim and I made tons of costumes from the time we were little kids. Masks, make-up—everything from a Tyrannosaurus costume, to Superman, to a clown—Lou Jacobs was the archetype for that. We'd spend six months working on our Halloween costumes. That, and the miniatures set building, and the photography all came together with illustration.

DRAW!: Now there are hundreds of companies that make capes and swords and all that.
GH: Oh, my God! There are zillions of them. We had to fake it all.

So the first calendar came out and we got our first taste of fandom. Then the second calendar sold more. I think one of the calendars even outsold [actress/model] Farrah Fawcett. [*laughter*] When the third calendar came out, bookstores would have three-foot stacks of them set up by the cash register. That's how well they sold. They were the biggest selling calendars in history.

DRAW!: Did you make royalties?

GH: Oh, yeah. Very miniscule. They wanted originally to own all the paintings and just give us a flat rate. Tim and I had no business manager or agent back then. This was long before Jean. I wish I'd had Jean back then, but I didn't. But at least we stuck by our guns with the first calendar and said, "No, we own the paintings, and we want a royalty." Finally they said okay. It was a very, very small royalty, but at least we owned the paintings.

DRAW!: That ties in to how you painted but lost the original to the *Star Wars* poster.

GH: Yeah. Vinny Di Fate was starting to get people together for artists' rights, but I knew nothing about that stuff back then. All I knew was that when you finished a job, you took it in to the art director, you went home, and then they'd send you a check. Nobody ever said, "We own this," you just kind of assumed they did, even though there was no contract that said, "We own the original." With *Star Wars* we didn't know. We just went home and they finally paid us the $4,000.

DRAW!: And you had no way of knowing what *Star Wars* would be when you did it.

GH: No. The agency that was handling Fox, they didn't know. It was a little agency in Manhattan, and they called us in out of desperation because we had come through overnight with that *Young Frankenstein* picture three years before. The painting we did never got used, but they remembered the fact that we painted a picture overnight. Plus we'd gotten famous for *Lord of the Rings*, and they put that together and said, "Hey, we've got this science-fiction film here, and you guys work fast." That's how we got the job, and we banged it out in 36 hours.

DRAW!: I still have mine. When I see you at Illuxcon this year, I'll bring my dog-eared original 1977 *Star Wars* poster for you to sign. [*laughter*]

GH: Okay! So that put us on the map a little more.

DRAW!: As a fan of *Star Wars*, it really captured the feeling and the myth of the film. How did you come up with the lightsaber over the head?

GH: We worked that out with the guys at the ad agency.

DRAW!: Did they have a layout there?

GH: They had something we looked at, and we talked about it, and went home and painted it. We did our thing with it, but it was pretty much defined by the agency. When we asked what they wanted, they said the directive they got was to make it look comic book-y. That was the only directive we got from Lucas. We never met Lucas. I still haven't met Lucas. We went to the ranch and got the grand tour when we worked on another project for them. We met everybody down to his right-hand man. We were there for the whole day, and at the end they asked, "Is there anything else you'd like?" I said, "Yeah, I'd like to meet George," and everybody in the room froze and looked at each other. "Well, he's not here right now." It was kind of like, [deep, stentorian voice] "No one gets in to see the great and powerful Oz." [*laughter*] So I never met the guy. It doesn't matter.

That *Star Wars* poster—and I'm eternally grateful I did it—was a job I did. I'm glad I did it, but it was just a job because we were work-

Since the background will be predominantly black, Greg transfers the finished sketch onto a black scratchboard.

Star Wars and all related characters © LucasFilm LLC. Sketches © Greg Hildebrandt.

Starting with the background, Greg makes progress on the cover painting for the *Star Wars: The Original Marvel Years* omnibus, vol. 2. Star Wars and all related characters © LucasFilm LLC. Sketches © Greg Hildebrandt.

ing on our own thing, our *Urshurak* novel. That's all I cared about at that moment.

DRAW!: How much reference did they give you?

GH: A whole bunch of stuff—the close-up of Darth Vader and the actors. They said, "Don't worry about likenesses, because nobody knows who they are"—the two principles. You know how it is trying to get a good reference shot. There's always light coming from the top of their heads or something. All the shots of Fisher and Hamill were at different angles with either flat frontal light or diffused light. I didn't know these people. I couldn't fake that. I made it up to sort of look like them, but you had a couple of hours to do it, and they didn't care. We brought it in, and they used it.

DRAW!: Were you painting on one side of it while Tim was painting on the other side?

GH: We generally did that with the *Lord of the Rings* stuff, but with this one the picture was big, but not that big. We worked out the sketch with them, then added some detail on the train coming back to Jersey. Then we grabbed a couple of people and shot Polaroids for the two figures with an old bathrobe and a negligee I threw on my first wife. I still have the Polaroid. Then we did a sketch and a layout. I think it was one in the morning at that point, and I laid down and took a nap

while Tim started painting. He woke me up about three hours later, and I started painting while he went to sleep. We did that for several turns, and then we stayed up together to finish it. It took us about 36, 36-and-a-half hours to do.

DRAW!: Did you project your layout onto the final board?

GH: No, we did a light sketch to size of the picture. I didn't have a projector or anything like that back then—no Xerox machine. I can't live without it now. All I had was a pencil, a piece of paper, and a drawing board.

DRAW!: You were a caveman! How did you live! [*laughter*]

GH: I prided myself that my studio was the pencil in my hand and a pad of paper. "I can work anywhere." I kind of like that idea. I don't know what I would do without my copy machine now. I'm constantly using it to blow up, reduce, flop stuff…

But we did the sketch. Took a piece of gessoed Masonite, sanded it down, and transferred the sketch with a piece of graphite paper and a ball point pen, and started painting. When we were done we went back to our novel. After the William Morris agency fell apart, Tim and I split. He went his way, and I went my way. We'd worked together so much, we wondered if we could function on our own. We didn't work together again for about ten years. We got back together on the Marvel trading cards in the '90s.

DRAW!: Just to go back a second, when did you see *Star Wars* and realize how big it was?

GH: They gave us tickets to go to the New York premiere, but I couldn't because the *Urshurak* story was so close. This is the irony of ironies. We were working on it for about a year, and had defined these characters. Ailwon wears a short tunic, clad all in white, carries a magic sword, and has blond hair, albeit long blond hair. Hugh is the male archer, the predominant masculine figure. Then we had the gwarpie, who ended up being a two-foot tall guy, but in the original story he was a hairy, seven-foot tall Sasquatch derivative. [*laughter*] This was a year before we did *Star Wars*. Then there are our main evil antagonists—Torgon, the Death Lord of Golgorath. What is Torgon? He's an ancient relative of Ailwon, our hero—an ancestor turned evil. There's no Dark Side, but he's gone to the side of evil. And he is a seven-foot tall, black mailed, black helmeted—you never see his face—black gauntleted, mace wielding villain.

I go to pick up the *Star Wars* poster, and I see Darth Vader, and I say, "What in the world is this? And who is this eight-foot hairy guy?" It was totally a synchronistic event of co-creation with about 20 different parallels to *Star Wars*, only it wasn't technology-based, it was magic-based. I freaked out. I got home and painted the picture, and Torgon was still in my mind. I'd just painted a big picture of him. We were getting ready to pitch our story to all these publishers with our new agent. Ian Summers had quit Ballantine and was now our rep, and he was going to start pitching it. When the movie came out, I couldn't go see it. I was too freaked out. "It won't last. It will disappear."

But it didn't disappear. My brother went and saw the premiere, and he said, "You won't believe it. It's our Torgon. It's exactly the same character." So I had to reduce the size of the gwarpie, and take the helmet off Torgon, because everyone would have said, "You copied *Star Wars*." That really scuttled me. I couldn't go see the movie for eight, nine months after that. But we had to finish the book off, and I had to get the enthusiasm to pitch it to the William Morris Agency, and go through all that stress that I did until the thing collapsed. Nobody wanted to try fantasy. They were shooting *Conan* at that time with [Arnold]

More progress on the cover painting with Greg's reference taped to his easel.
Star Wars and all related characters © LucasFilm LLC.

Schwarzenegger, and everybody wanted to see what that was going to do before they would commit to a fantasy film.

DRAW!: It's interesting to see the lengths you guys went to with the *Lord of the Rings* stuff compared to what [Frank] Frazetta did with *Conan*. I love Frazetta, but he was never a research guy.

GH: Right. He did that thing that he did very well. I liked Frank. Did you ever meet him?

DRAW!: I never met him.

GH: We knew him, and we would go out to his compound a lot. He was a nice guy. I liked Frank a lot. He always played it kind of cool. "Oh, I really want to be a baseball player. This is all just something I do on the side." [*laughter*]

THE RIGHT WaY, THE WRONG WaY, aND THE ORDWaY!

MaSSaGE THE COLLaGE
by JERRY ORDWAY

Hey, everyone. I recently completed a custom drawing for a client, and wanted to use this space to write a bit about the process. A horizontal composition, with collage elements, can be a challenge to pull off. The buyer had a short list of elements he wanted to include, with the over-all theme meant to convey a retro-origin of Batman. I'm often asked to draw retro versions of characters, I suppose due to my having drawn the DC Comics title *All Star Squadron* early in my career, which was set in 1941.

To evoke any era, it's always good to gather some specific-period comic book reference. In the 1940s, Batman had short cowl-ears and a very square jaw, while Robin of the early days had a very round face! The Joker in his initial appearances still showed his inspirations, one of which was the actor Conrad Veidt from the movie, *The Man Who Laughed*. I took the extra step of digitally flipping the splash image I sourced, to make sure I didn't lose his heavy eye-lidded look for my piece (see left).

Batman and related characters © DC Comics

The layout I produced as a first stage, on a sheet of 8½" x 11" copy paper, incorporates the main elements asked for. Around the larger figures of Batman and Robin we see (clockwise) Bruce Wayne's parents killed, an older Bruce inspired to become Batman by the bat that flies through his window, the Bat-Signal in the skies over Gotham, a flashback to the Wayne parents dressed for a costume party, the Batmobile in the Batcave, Catwoman "taming" our heroes in a circus setting, and finally, the iconic image of the Joker holding playing cards. These were all sourced from the reference with little changes. The Joker cover image facing the left edge of the paper looked better to my eye. It is also more effective to overlap the Catwoman image over the Joker's back, than if he was facing the same way as she is.

As to the swinging main figures, I struggled mightily trying to get Batman to look correct. I sketched, I erased, over and over again. This was the first thing I drew on the paper, and it was fighting me. The client specifically requested the "swinging on ropes" pose, and I couldn't get what was in my head onto the paper. Batman and Robin needed to be done first, as they dictate the amount of space left for the background elements. After a day of struggling I decided to commit the flawed pose to marker, and then I drew in Robin without any problem. Now I was able to lay out the surrounding elements, knowing that I could edit the vexing Batman figure in Photoshop later. I made the decision to forge ahead rather than continue to struggle with a single pose, because I know from experience that you sometimes have to climb over the obstacle in the road to complete the journey!

An aside, but I love editing in Photoshop! In days past, my layouts might be covered in whiteout and/or cut-and-pasted elements if I was doing any second guessing. Digital erasing and editing is cleaner, and offers a lot of options! For the Batman figure, I reduced or enlarged various elements, and corrected the flaws in the pose by tilting his torso, tilting his head, and moving his legs forward. When I was satisfied, I printed the file to finished art size in halves, and taped them together for light-boxing onto Strathmore 3-ply Bristol board.

I cut the paper at 12" x 18" for this, placed the corrected layout underneath on my light-box, and proceeded to lightly pencil, then ink the Batmobile in the Batcave portion (see fig. 1).

I used my handy Pitt brand brush-pen to render the stalactites and sta-lagmites to create some texture and depth. The arched shapes serve to delineate the element shape, so that the Costume party sequence can butt up against it without confusion.

Next I trace and then ink the cos-tume party image above the Batcave, and make a note to leave enough space for the cape of the larger swinging Batman, as it overlaps a bit (see fig. 2).

I have lightly traced the main swinging figures in the center of the paper, so I can proceed with the other surrounding elements (see fig. 3). I prefer working "piecemeal" like this, rather than tracing down the entire composition in pencils, and then inking. Inking this way gives me a sense of instant accomplishment that penciling an entire image wouldn't. I know it goes against the grain, but I always preach that you have to find your own methods, and ways to keep yourself inspired throughout the process. Because the large Batman and Robin poses are the most important elements in the composition, I am building up my confidence before I ink them. Even after 30-plus years of comic illustration I still get nervous!
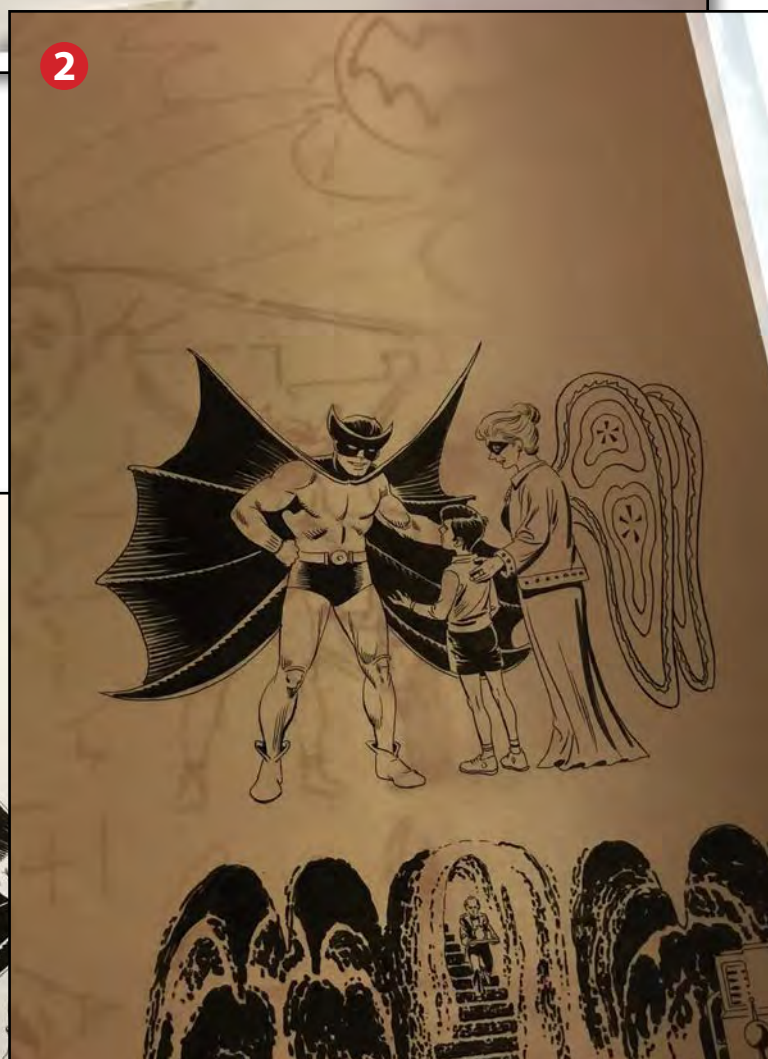
Batman and related characters © DC Comics

shinging the
light on

BRAD WALKER

interview by
Mike Manley

transcribed by
Steven Tice

DRAW!: So you have your new dog. Is that interrupting your schedule?

BRAD WALKER: It is, yeah. [*laughs*] Yeah, it's been really difficult. I mean, I figured it would be difficult, but we got her at three months, a little under three months, maybe, and I kind of figured, "I'm home, I can take her out every two hours. That seems totally reasonable." [*laughs*] But I figured that would just give me finite blocks of time where I knew, "All right, I have to get this far on the page," for example, "in two hours," and it would sort of like motivate me to push, whereas when you just have all day, and you have a whole page or whatever you're trying to get done, you can lollygag a little bit. I kind of figured this would be a good motivator. And I got her about halfway through an issue or towards the end of an issue, and it was pretty hectic, but I made that deadline. And since then, it's not every two hours. She can fall asleep during the day for three hours, four hours and hold it, and then in the evening she'll need to go, like, every 30 minutes. So we've gotten her on a more regimented schedule, and it's helped me a little bit, but it's still kind of difficult for me to sleep in. I'm working on layouts right now, and I'm trying to switch to doing layouts on my iPad, so that's sort of an uncomfortable new process anyway.

DRAW!: So you're switching from doing traditional layouts to doing digital layouts?

BW: I'm trying. I'm not loving it so far. It could just be having to get used to the feel of no grit underneath the pencil. It's certainly going to be possible, and I did it on my last cover, but, you know, covers and interiors are very different, so we'll see. If I get in a time crunch before I need to get the layout done and move the pages, I may just switch over to what's comfortable and go back to traditional penciling them small. Because for years I've done it, I'll do the layouts, like, 3" x 2", and then I'll just blow them up and trace them. And I'm trying to kind of skip a step—the blowing it up and tracing—by doing digital. But that feeling of going from a pencil on paper to an Apple pencil on glass is really different.

DRAW!: Oh, yeah, yeah. What program are you using?

BW: I'm using Procreate on the iPad.

DRAW!: And do you have a template that you created, or are you using a DC template?

BW: I traced the lines off the DC boards and reduced them 25%, and I've always used those. So I just scanned that, and imported the scan [into Procreate], so I'm just using what I've always done my layouts on. The size of it, for whatever reason I'm not tech-savvy enough to know what I've done with the sizing, and the dimensions I blow it up to. The physical pages,

Brad's pencils for the cover of *Green Lanterns* #30, which was later inked by Andrew Hennessy, and colored by Jason Wright (see previous page).
Green Lantern © DC Comics

also suddenly were expected to clean up their own artwork, scan it, template it, all that, which was never to be compensated.

DRAW!: Yeah, yeah. That's something I was talking to some students about recently, that my career, because I'm not one of the old school Silver Age/Golden Age guys—I came just at the end of that—so I was forced to transition from just taking a piece of paper and a pencil and ink and doing stuff traditionally, to now I have to have high-speed internet, I have to have a computer, I have to have Photoshop. You literally have thousands of dollars of expenses now just to get started.

BW: I kind of feel the same way even though I started several years after you. It's probably just my own sensibilities that don't really lean towards loving to figure out a new process, and I keep it as analog as possible. I have resisted inking myself partially because my inker will do all the scanning, cleaning, and templating, and I know if I inked myself, I would have to do that. [*Mike laughs*] But, yeah, I definitely feel like, at least in my heart, I lean towards the generation where you started that didn't do any of that, and I'm resistant and hesitant to get into any of these modern processes. For me to invest in getting a Cintiq or Manga Studio, all that, that's thousands of dollars to learn to do something that I don't really want to have to learn anyway. At least when I got an iPad Pro, and I can tinker on it in Procreate and gradually adjust to some aspects of working digital, at least it's on a machine that I can do other stuff with also, if that makes sense. It's not just a whole work commitment of thousands of dollars. An iPad Pro is about a grand, and you can use it for lots of different things, so I feel a little bit more like I'm putting my toe in the water that I don't want to swim in anyway, rather than just having to go all in, monetarily and work-wise.

DRAW!: Right. And I guess, for me, I actually like having a physical original—

BW: Yeah!

DRAW!: —because my physical original does not have to be backed up, and I can sell my physical origi-

nal, which is always going to have some value to it, especially in the future. I mean, if everything keeps flipping to where it's all digital, I mean, you see the prices going up for pretty crappy '70s-era and '80s-era stuff—not even the top-level stuff, the prices are going up. So I figure, add 20 years onto that, and the stuff that people are making now will be worth more, especially if more and more people are not drawing their comics on paper.

BW: Yeah, that's the part that really still surprises me that so many people are transitioning, is that that many people were

Brad's pencils for the cover of *Aquaman* #13.
Aquaman, Justice League © DC Comics

The cover of *Aquaman* #13—inks by Andrew Hennessy and colors by Gabe Eltaeb.

Aquaman, Justice League © DC Comics

okay to give up the original art aspect, because there's really nothing to sell otherwise. I guess people are making good money at shows doing commissions and sketches, and I guess, in fairness, original page sales, probably because fewer people are putting them out, they are slow. But when I sell some, that's a good chunk of money. And a job like *Aquaman*, for example, where the schedule was so insane that I wasn't able to do as many issues as I had hoped to, financially I got by for a year on selling covers, and it really kind of balanced things out so that I could afford to stay on that book with its crazy schedule. The people who are working all digital, that's a huge aspect of the business that they're giving up, which does surprise me.

DRAW!: Yeah. A lot of people assume that, because you're working digitally, you can work faster. But I think that's just an illusion, because you have to interface with the computer to translate your organic process, trying to get the computer to do whatever you would do traditionally. I mean, you have key commands and all that stuff, but I've done some strips traditionally, and I've done some strips digitally, and I'm still faster traditionally. Now, maybe if I spent ten years working digitally, I would compensate and I would maybe somehow get faster, but I don't know. It's a personal choice, and it depends upon the job. I did this series of *Star Wars* books, and everything had to be inked digitally, because that way they could make a bajillion changes, and lift this out, put that in. So I think we're lucky with comics in that it's still at the level of it being your personal choice rather than it being the company saying, "Well, if you want to work here, this is the only way you can work."

BW: Yeah. And I almost feel like part of my motivation to try and stretch myself a little bit was because I feel like the day will come when you will sort of be side-eyed a little bit for wanting to still work traditionally at the very least, if not they'll out-and-out expect you to work digitally, whether it's in comics or in a different medium that I get into. But, yeah, I agree. I feel like a lot of people have started working digitally because they like it, even if it doesn't really seem to be benefiting them deadline-wise at all, and I can't tell if that's because it really is just as slow, or for every minute that they shave off the drawing that they were doing, they've also facilitated doing more themselves. For example, if you shave time off your penciling, well, now that you're adept digitally, you're able to ink and color yourself. So then you're adding that much more time to get the completed art out. I really wonder—and I don't know if anybody would really know for sure; it's not like art's something you can accurately cost yourself—but I would be interested in asking people who have transitioned recently if they really think that they saved themselves that much more time, or if they just gave themselves more to do, and how it's worked out.

DRAW!: Right. I was talking to my assistant the other day about this type of thing, and I was explaining to her how comics are literally going to the printer the day, or just a few hours before it has to be shipped. It's being sent digitally, it's being printed, and it's in the store, like, the next week. And what technology has done over the course of the last 30 years is it has allowed people to get later and later, and the deadline to get tighter and tighter, right down to literally they're printing these things within hours of you giving them the pages.

The last time I worked regularly at DC on a monthly book was '96, when we had the "hot list". You had twelve weeks. If you fell off twelve
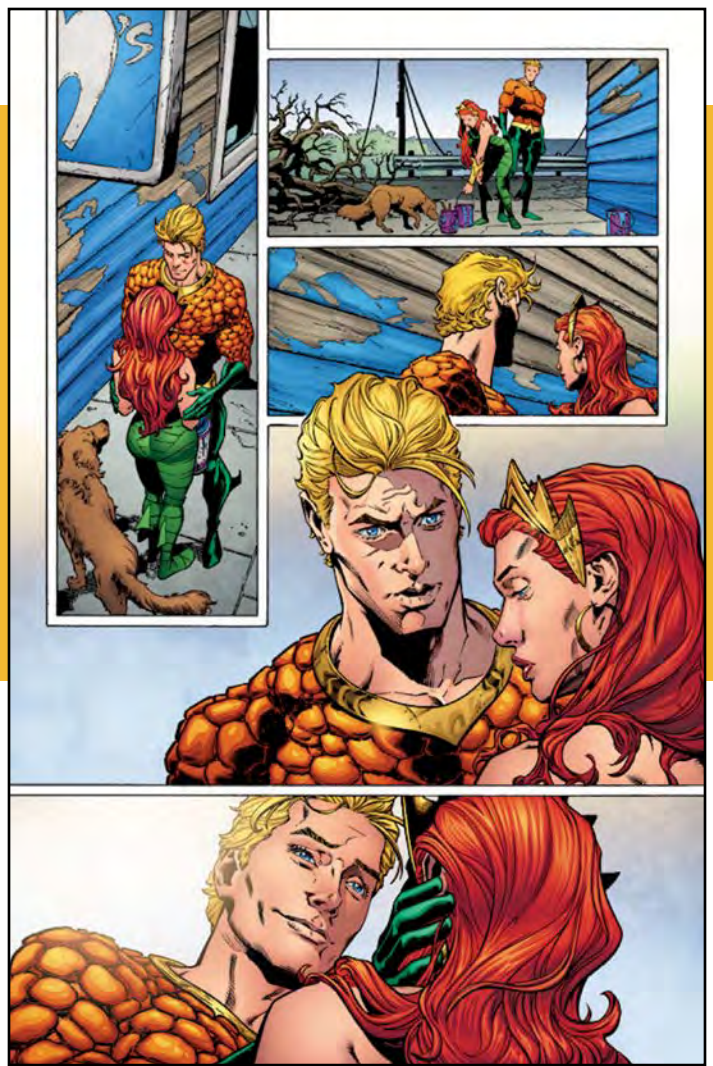
(left) Brad's pencils for *Aquaman* #16, page 11, and (right) the finished page, inked by Andrew Hennessy and colored by Gabe Eltaeb.
Aquaman, Mera © DC Comics

done. It isn't sketchy, so they can read that. But a lot of times, yeah, if you take something that is a thumbnail and you blow it up, if you don't have the language to read it, then it's like, "Well, I don't know, can you move that arm or move that leg?" And it's like, "But it's not that definite yet."

BW: Yeah. There are so many times when I submit layouts, they'll send a note back, and I'll have to say, "Yeah, I had no intention of leaving that like this, but I just have to get something out to work from." Which is not really a concept that an editor would understand or should understand, but we've wasted the time having this dialogue about this insignificant aspect that I knew in my head what I was going to do. "I had to do the preliminary to get there. You wanted to see the preliminary. I kind of expressed that it wasn't a great idea, anyway." And I hate that I sound like a prima donna to say it this way, but really there are parts of the process that—it's like when I'm doing a commission for a fan or something, and they'll ask, "Can I get a preview?" I don't want to show preliminary stuff. I don't want to show anything before it's done because that's not the point, and it's not meant to be seen, and you're not meant to understand it yet. And I think editors understandably have an instinct to control the process and to head off problems at the pass, but

I also have an instinct of how to get around problems with my process, and I end up explaining that to them on a daily basis throughout the course of a project because there's no way that they would know that, and they want to see all the stuff.

At Marvel it became a thing where time was an issue, but control was also an issue, and one was undermining the other, and I think when I went back to DC, I took away some bad habits that I had formed in laying out on the fly, both laying out one to four pages at a time rather than a whole issue, which I don't think is a great way to work, and also laying out right on the boards. On recent projects I've been producing slower. I assessed some of these problems and traced them back to that period of time when I was submitting layouts every couple days just to have the pencils, and laying out straight to boards just to save myself the time of blowing stuff up and tracing it. There's no justifiable reason that I need to be that much under the gun that I'm laying out on the board just to save myself ten minutes of blowing up and tracing. If it's undermining the layouts, there's no reason to save that amount of time. These are all things that I've become acutely aware of just in recent years, as I've been trying to speed back up and figure out where I slowed down.

COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

TIPS for the YOUNG & the YOUNG at ART

Welcome to Comic Art Bootcamp. This time, instead of just Bret and myself giving forth on a particular subject as in past articles, I thought we'd try something different and turn the mic over to a big group of artists I know to get a broader selection of answers to the question: **What advice would you give to the student or young artist working on their craft?**

As you will find out in reading the following answers, there is a wealth of great information from this large and varied group of long-time professionals, who between them have tackled just about every problem an artist can have cross their drawing tables and imaginations.

PATRICK OLLIFFE

Always paying attention to the basics of your craft is a no brainer, anatomy, perspective, page and panel layout and design, storytelling choices, that's all important, but the difference maker is training yourself to sit down in the studio and do the work, even if you're not "into it" on that day. Set schedules and reduce distractions. A career is a marathon not a sprint. Once you decide to do this professionally you have left your hobby days behind you.

Mighty Samson #1, page 22, penciled and inked by Pat Olliffe.

Mighty Samson © Random House, Inc.

MIKE DECARLO

Construct, construct, construct! And visualize the scene as solidly in your mind as possible before beginning.

Bret Blevins' rough layout and finished pencils from *Harley Quinn* #18.
Batman, Harley Quinn, Joker © DC Comics

BRET BLEVINS

The difficulty in offering a general bit of good advice is the possibility that the recipient has completely different goals or taste, and the variety of successful art styles seen everywhere make a one-size-fits-all tip elusive. But I think it's safe to assume that each artist reading this wants their work to be understood, not confusing or unintelligible. Clarity can only be an asset in any entertainment field, because commercial art exists to communicate. So my tip is this:

<p style="text-align:center">BE CLEAR</p>

Clarity in artwork is harder to achieve than it would seem. There are so many elements to consider, understand, and master before they can be consistently applied with confidence.

It's so tempting to dive right into a piece when your enthusiasm is hot and the idea is fresh, but the discipline to plan at the conception stage pays great dividends. My advice is to put serious thinking time in before beginning to draw. Make sure you know what it is you want to show/express. Every storytelling image has a point, whether it's a single illustration, a panel among hundreds in a comic book, or a frame among thousands in a storyboard.

Decide on the point of the drawing, then arrange the content of shapes, planes, dark and light, forms, edges, tone, and/or color into a design that explains your intent clearly. This is your composition, the most important part of picture making, and everything should begin here. No amount of virtuoso drawing or painting can make a poorly composed image more clear.

Make as many small initial studies as necessary until you find solutions for all your major decisions. At conventions, I even do small studies on a pad of yellow stickies before I begin a commission sketch. I like to know what I'm up against before I start the final drawing—it's so much easier and quicker to work out the problems ahead of time in small doodles than it is to correct a nearly finished drawing when something unexpected has gone wrong. If the trouble is really serious, the artwork may not be salvageable. We all want to avoid that!

Concentrate on the big shapes, arranging them for the strongest visual clarity. Don't get sidetracked with details of any kind until the large overall design of your image is clean and easy to "read". A good composition can be rendered with almost any level of detail and still work effectively.

Jerry's rough and finished i... ...bove), and a preliminary sketch for a Superman poster (below).
Archie © Archie Comic Publica...

JERRY ORDWAY

If you have to draw any v... cle on a regular basis, b... scale model, so you can r... and draw from any ang... learned this as an inker o... *Star Squadron* with planes especially, because the penciller just drew different planes to match his storytelling, and I had to make them into Curtiss P-40 Warhawks! A photo only goes so far, and you can't see detail in the shadows!