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DRAW!

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

GLEN ORBIK
DEMOS HIS NOIR PAINTING TECHNIQUE

ROBERT VALLEY
INTERVIEW WITH THE ANIMATOR OF TRON: UPRISING & "THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND"

BOB McLEOD
CRITIQUES A NEWCOMER'S WORK

PLUS: MIKE MANLEY AND BRET BLEVINS'

COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

Contains nudity for figure drawing instruction
•
Mature Readers Only

DRAW!

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

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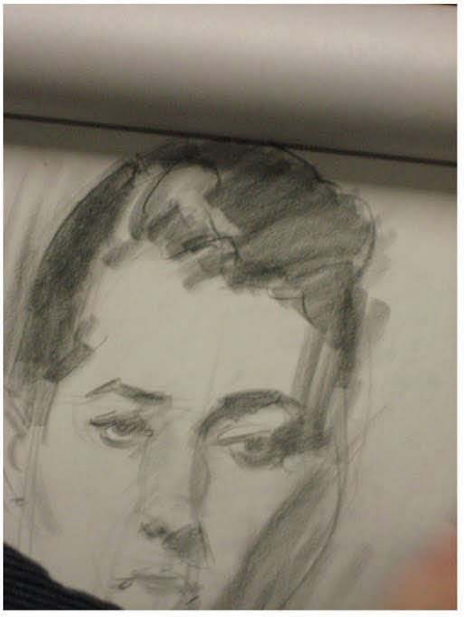
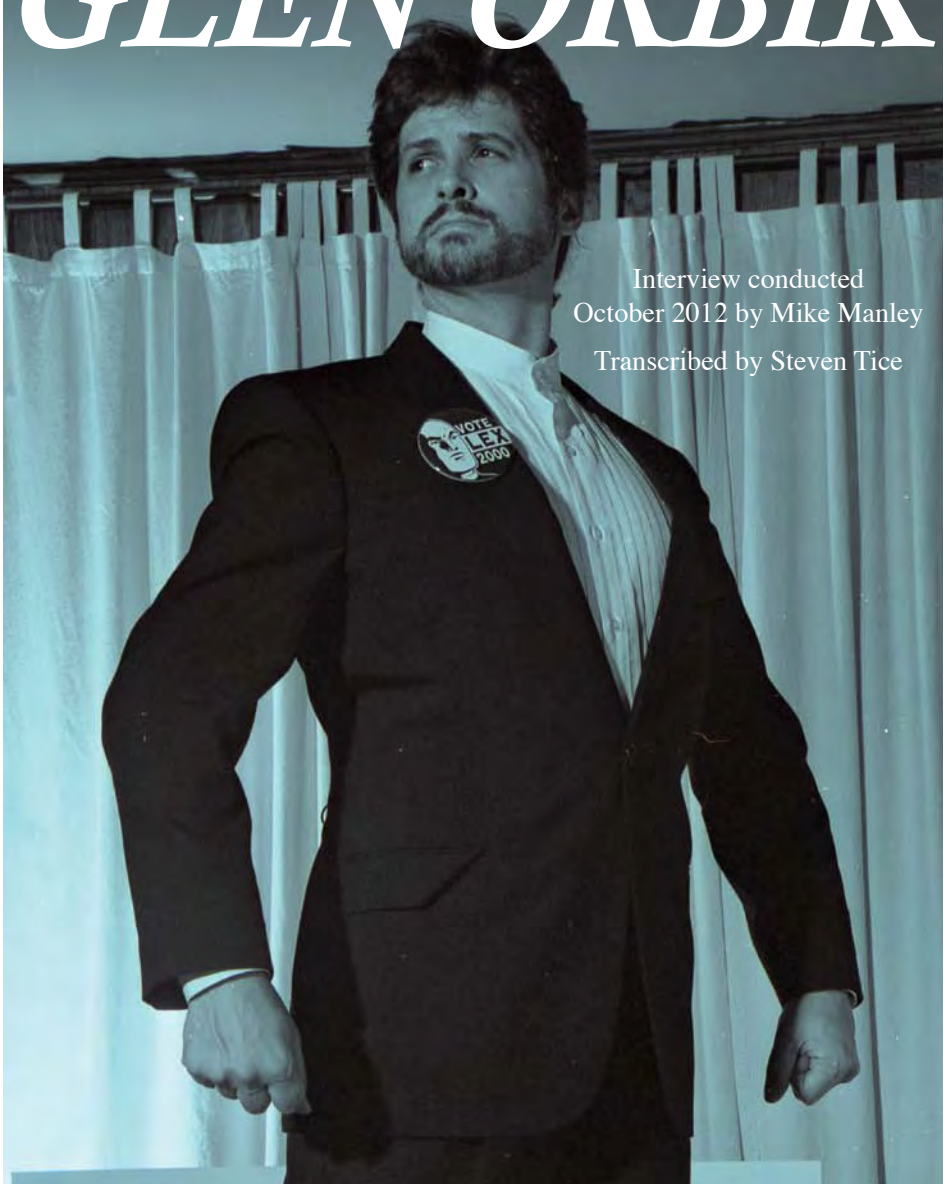


UNDER the COVERS

GLEN ORBIK



Interview conducted
October 2012 by Mike Manley

Transcribed by Steven Tice

DRAW!: You're from what I seen via Facebook, you're mostly a night owl?
GLEN ORBIK: Yeah, yeah, if I had my choice, such as it is.

DRAW!: And you're also teaching now, right?
GO: Yeah, usually I teach the later-in-the-day classes. One of them is in the afternoon, but most of them are evening classes.

DRAW!: Where are you teaching now?
GO: Right now it's basically the current version of the school that our teacher Fred Fixler started, the California Art Institute in Calabasas, which is about 20 miles west of us, and then on the weekends we go to Pasadena, which is, like, 20 miles in the other direction. Right now it's just the two schools within that range. Last year I was flying up to San Francisco every week to try that for a while, but the traveling was too much of a pain in the ass.

Glen Orbik at work on a painting.

DRAW!: Have you ever taught at the Los Angeles Figurative Academy?
GO: No.

DRAW!: Okay, so you're working at the place in Calabasas.
GO: Yeah, Calabasas—Thousand Oaks, actually—is the California Art Institute. It's the one that Fred started when he separated from the school he was teaching at in the '80s.

DRAW!: I seem to remember Steve Rude took some classes there.
GO: Yes. Steve likes to go anywhere in the world, though, that has Andrew Loomis' name mentioned frequently.

DRAW!: [*laughs*] How long have you been doing this?
GO: I started taking classes in '84 and started teaching in '86.

DRAW!: I think I became aware of your work when you started doing the covers for *American Century*, which was done by Howard Chaykin.
GO: Yeah, *American Century*. That was '99, 2000—somewhere in there. That was after we [*Glen and his partner, Laurel Blechman*] got to do a bunch of Batman covers, and DC did a line of pulp superhero annuals for the summer, and that's kind of when we started with that.

DRAW!: Was that for the Warner Brothers store?
GO: No, no, no. The one at the store was later. That was actually supposed to be a cool deal where we were going to get in with them and do a bunch of artwork, and they were going to fly us to Chicago to the WB store and do a big opening. And then the Time Warner/AOL merger happened and everything kind of stopped. Our big flight and big to-do turned into a half-hour drive south to Torrence to the last remaining WB store at the time.

DRAW!: Were you into comics as a kid?
GO: Oh yeah. Would anybody else choose to go into comics? I mean, if there was not some sort of childhood fantasy in there to…. No, actually, I started collecting comics in the mid-'70s, and Laurel was collecting from the mid-'60s, so our two collections kind of butt up against each other. We went on purpose to do the comics stuff.

DRAW!: Have you ever done any interiors?
GO: No, I'm just too slow.

DRAW!: Would that be something you'd like to do, maybe as a long-term project?
GO: Yeah, I wouldn't mind; it would be fun. It's just the reality of trying to pay some bills and things. When we were doing the painted covers about 15 years ago, we had several different people from DC and Marvel ask us if we would do painted books, and I said, "Well, we would, but we're really slow." And they're like, "Oh, it's okay, take four years." I can't really afford to take four years. It doesn't really work that way. You can't get 400 bucks for something you spent six months on.

DRAW!: What do you spend most of your time doing?
GO: Right now it's mostly paperbacks, doing a lot more of the detective sort of things. The Hard Case Crime covers are

supposed to be covers that look like they were done 50 years ago and forgotten about. Basically, whenever it's supposed to look like it was done a long time ago, they call us.

DRAW!: And then you can hire models that look like Steve Holland that everybody used to hire in the old days?
GO: Yeah, that would be great. We have a couple of people that we've used, or when we get into a pinch, we use ourselves, but, yeah, we're usually trying to push them to look like Holland or whoever would fit the bill. Actually, when we did the *American Century* covers, we used the same two models. There were, like, a dozen covers, and we used the same girl for all but two of them, I think, just different wigs and things.

DRAW!: Back in the Golden Age, the agencies used to do things like hire the models, or pay for the models, and do all that to help the illustrator. You have to do all that yourself now, right, wrangle all the models?
GO: Yeah, those days are done. We sort of got in during the tail end of that when we started doing paperbacks in the early '90s, and some of the companies basically would reimburse for a few of those things, but that didn't last long. That's ancient history. Now it's just part of the fee, I guess.
DRAW!: When you're going to do a cover, do you have models in mind? How do you go about getting them? I suppose it's easier in L.A. because it's like central casting out there. You can probably get a guy that looks like a pirate, or a guy that looks like a judge, crook, etc.
GO: Well, yeah, that's the cool thing about teaching is that you've got quite a few models and students who could make good pirate models or cowboy models. So that's one good thing about it. I stopped teaching for about four years, I don't know, twelve years ago, and it was a lot easier if I kept my fingers in the pie to keep aware of who was out there. When you've had some models work for you in school, you get to see if they're good at doing action poses, or heroic poses, or whatever kind of poses. Or, if they're really stiff but they have a good face, you kind of keep it in mind where you can get away with it.

DRAW!: I bought the book *Rockwell behind the Camera*, which was great to really see the amazing depth that he went to get his reference.
GO: Yeah.

DRAW!: Do you do sort of the same thing? You try to get people to ham it up or push their poses?
GO: That book literally was the idea of what we were shooting for, no pun intended. But very abbreviated, not quite that elaborate, just because there isn't that much time or money. I mean, they don't pay you what they paid back in the glory days, when illustration was a huge moneymaker.

DRAW!: What I've heard is that basically the rates have stayed the same for a long while, so if you got $1,500 for doing a cover in 1985, you pretty much get $1,500 for doing a cover in 2012.

Glen's photo shoot and final cover to *American Century* #27.
American Century ™ and © Howard Chaykin, Inc. and DC Comics.

(far left) Glen's rough sketch for the box art for ComicBase 7, a program for organizing a comic book collection.
(left) Glen's value comp of the proposed box art.
Artwork © Human Computing.

GO: Yeah, but the problem is that the [*Saturday Evening*] *Post* was paying $3,000 to $3,500 per cover in the '30s, and my grandparents spent $3,200 on their first house in the '30s. So Rockwell was making enough to buy a house six times a month. So, yeah, we're getting similar to the $1,500, $2,000 that we were getting 20, 30 years ago, but it's worth less than it was then, and insanely less than it was when they were paying that in the '40s and '50s.

DRAW!: I guess by going into comics and things like that, you have really branched out. It seems to be the way it goes, because editorial has sort of died out. I just read the other day that *Newsweek*'s going to stop printing newsstand editions. I guess they're going online.
GO: Yeah, that's what they say. Well, most of the artwork done for finished illustrations seems to have less and less opportunities to be seen. It used to be that the artwork would be used to sell everything, and now they can use a lot of different ways to get an image on something, and they don't really care whether it's artwork or not, so the artwork has basically stuck around in the places where they do care if it's artwork, like comics or fantasy or westerns, or a few genres where they actually view it as part of the package. But for a lot of other covers, or anything in general, now if they use a painted image, it's more for the retro effect than because they need a painted image, usually.

DRAW!: I've been going, I guess the last four years, to the Illuxx Con here in Pennsylvania, which is a great convention because you get to meet all the top-flight artists and talk to them, and it's a really small, very intimate convention. It seems like a lot of people are really having to branch out, and that the biggest haul for illustrators is the whole pre-visual thing, pre-vis for movies, or games, or whatever.

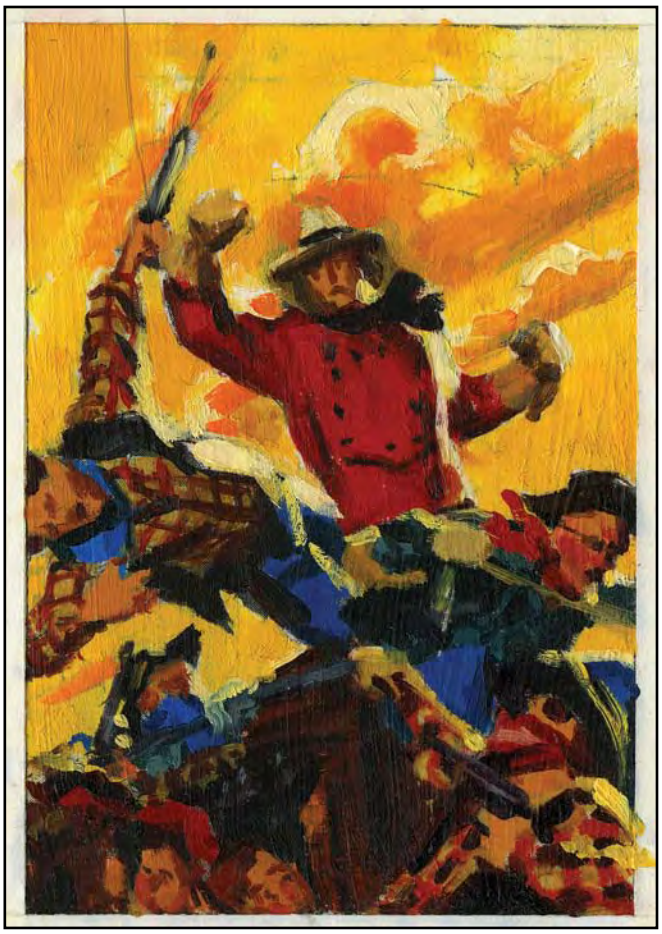
GO: Yeah, it's all on the concept end of it. There is a lot less of the finished illustration out there. I mean, it was in its heyday at the turn of the last century, when magazine publishing got to a point where it was king, and there was a large audience that knew how to read, and had a day off a week, and had a little bit of spending money, and there were no movies or TV or radio. Magazines were everything. It's always been evolving, but we're at the point where there's a lot less of the finished stuff just because they've gone on to other things now.

DRAW!: The interesting thing is, as the market is shrinking, you have these smaller vanity press operations, like the one that you're doing, the retro private eye—
GO: Yeah, that's the deal with Hard Case Crime. They realized that the artwork was part of the packaging. They realized that when people buy the detective books and the Carter Browns and things, it's because they like the whole package: the artwork, and the story, and the small paperback, you know, "I can carry it around in my pocket," whole thing. They realized that the cover is one of the selling points, so that's why that is part of the deal.

DRAW!: How much of your time is spent looking for work as opposed to working? Do you have an agent, or do you not have an agent? A lot of people used to have agents, and now I don't know whether it pays to have an agent.
GO: It paid us in the beginning mostly because the agents, if they're decent, it's their full-time jobs. They know how often to bug the publishers, and how to bug them.

We went to New York in the late '80s and contacted a bunch of publishers, and even the ones that really liked our work and wanted us to bug them said, "If we don't call back in a couple weeks, then you call back in a couple weeks." And they'd say, "Oh, call back in a couple weeks." And it would

Glen takes multiple shots of his models to get different expressions and poses for reference when it comes time to paint.



(left) Glen's underdrawing, which he will paint over.
(above) Glen's 3" x 5" color comp.
ComicBase © Human Computing.

get to the point where you felt like you were bugging them. It's like, "Well, you told me to call."

The decent agents were there in town where the art directors were, and they knew how often to bug them and what was expected. So, no, it was actually really helpful in the beginning. I don't know if it's as much of a thing now, with the Internet and how easy it is to get your artwork in front of somebody, but it probably is a similar situation as far as, "How often do you bug them?" Some of it's timing, being there in the Rolodex when the job comes in that they think about you.

It's a little different now, and that's part of the thing with the teaching is that the teaching keeps things consistent. That way, when everybody calls all at once, we have to do a little juggling, but when everybody stops calling at once, then we can focus on the teaching 100%. That's the exciting thing about freelance is it's not overly consistent. It kind of goes in waves.

DRAW!: The other thing I find about teaching is that it keeps you actively engaged when you're having to help students. You do two things: you re-teach yourself principles, and you keep the mind sharp for having to solve problems, because that's what the illustrator is doing is solving problems. I find that you're constantly solving a problem, maybe the same problem but from different angles, because everybody has different issues with drawing.

GO: Yeah, I think that that's really the secret to the good illustrators, the good artists; it's not the ability to draw or paint, it's the problem-solving part of it. What worked on somebody else's piece, and what am I trying to get across, and how do I do that… it's a little bit more cause-and-effect than people think that art is. They think of it as something you're born with or not born with instead of a skill. You go to a cabinet maker who makes cabinets because they have a craft for it, and they've worked at it.

DRAW!: People just think it's like you were born with some magical ability where you just, ding, touch your finger and magic comes out and the job's all done.
GO: I know. It's insane. I mean, we all know how to read and write—well, most of us—and we assume we have to go to school to learn how to do that, or at least get training somehow, but somehow the artwork is considered as, "You were born with it, or you were not born with it," and I don't understand where this came from.

DRAW!: We were talking about how things have really changed.
GO: When I think about things changing, the one thing that I always remind myself is that Norman Rockwell used to talk about the fact he felt that the Golden Age of Illustration was done and over by 1923. [*Mike laughs*] So, yeah, that's always

the GLEN ORBIK *Workshop*

*Glen Orbik has produced several covers for the Hard Case Crime line of novels—hardboiled detective stories that harken back to pulp traditions of the 1940s and '50s when illustration still reigned supreme. Glen was kind enough to take us step by step through the creation process of one such cover—*Songs of Innocence*—and provide us with further insight into his work.*

For this client—the Hard Case Crime book series—looking for the pretty girl in the story to feature goes without saying. Our heroine is a fairy princess for FAO Schwartz in the morning, a college student by day, and a sensual masseuse by night. We were aiming for an image that gave the feel of the book but didn't actually need to be a scene from the story itself. Ironically, the author liked our idea well enough that he added a scene into the story which matched the one from our cover.

STEP 1

We drew up three ideas for this assignment, little more than stick figures. My partner, Laurel, and I will sometimes shoot a few Polaroids to try out some pose possibilities. Of these three, they went with the third one, but they liked the first one well enough to consider using it for another book.

STEP 2

We shot photos of our model in the pose we had plans for. Then, since we had the model, camera, props, costumes, and lighting worked out, we asked the model to try some variations: head up, head down, arm over, etc. A good model often suggests better ideas than we do. You never know what is going to look the best, so an extra five minutes and 30 pictures is a good investment.

Get Your Swerve On With Robert Valley

Interview conducted on October 2012 by Mike Manley
Transcribed by Steven Tice

DRAW!: How did you come about working on the *Tron* project?
ROBERT VALLEY: I kind of wonder, myself. I think that a couple of different things came together. One was Alberto Mielgo and myself worked on that *Beatles: Rock Band* cinematic in London, and Charlie Bean, who's directing *Tron*, was in London at the same time, so there's an obvious connection between the three of us knowing each other. And the other connection I think comes through Titmouse because those guys asked me to do some designs for *Motorcity* a couple of years ago, and that kind of put me on the Disney radar. And so, when Charlie started to staff up on *Tron*, I guess my name came up again, and it just seemed to be a bunch of happy coincidences.

DRAW!: And you were the main character designer, right?
RV: I was, yeah.

DRAW!: I know that they're doing it in a 3-D program. It looks like they're taking your designs and then basically building 3-D characters and then doing some form of cel shading on them. Were there any issues with that from your side as a designer?
RV: You know, we came up with some pretty specific designs, and I wanted to introduce some gradients on the characters to specifically soften some of the shadows around the eyes, or add wrinkles on some of the male characters, or create something that looked like mascara or kind of like a smoky eyes look on some of the girls. So some of that stuff is actually painted right into the 3-D model. And then the incidental shadows that you're talking about, with the Toon Shader, that's more on the Polygon side of things.

DRAW!: So it's a real combination of the surface texture versus the lighting?
RV: Yeah, the way we sort of referred to it was that there were shadows that were baked in, and then there were shadows that were specific to the lighting of whatever scene. Those were just incidental shadows. Charlie, Alberto, Polygon, and I, we looked at some different Toon Shaders, and some of them looked too liquidy, and some of them weren't quite right, so there was a bit of back and forth on that kind of stuff.

DRAW!: Are these plug-ins or different programs? What's the program that you guys are rendering everything on?
RV: You mean the 3-D stuff?

DRAW!: Yeah, the 3-D stuff.
RV: Oh, I don't know any of that.

DRAW!: So you don't know if they're using Maya, or Lightwave, or whatever?
RV: No, I don't know any of that. It shows up and it's like magic.

(above) Traditional 2-D pencil design work for *The Beatles: Rock Band* video game.
(below) A page from Robert Valley's "Junk."
The Beatles ™ Apple Corps Ltd. Rock Band © Harmonix Music Systems, Inc.
Junk © Robert Valley.

DRAW!: [*laughs*] How was that different—or was it different—than designing the *Rock Band* stuff, or working on the Gorillaz videos? Is there a different set of overall design criteria or problems that make things easier or more difficult for you when you are going between projects like this?
RV: I think, going back to the Gorillaz stuff, the dynamic there was Jamie [Hewlett] would show up with a storyboard and the character models, the design pack, which is basically the way he wanted to draw the characters. And what they were wearing. You know, he was really specific about the kind of groovy details that the characters were wearing. And from there we would go on to a paper-drawn methodology or pipeline, and that was kind of a similar thing with the *Beatles: Rock Band* except, instead of getting designs and storyboards from Jamie, I was doing the designs and the storyboards. And then, again, we would go on to a traditional 2-D pipeline.

The difference with the *Tron* stuff was because it was set in the digital world, and Charlie said, "Let's do it all on the Cintiq. Let's keep it all digital." This goes back about two years, I guess. I got a Cintiq, and started drawing everything in Photoshop.

DRAW!: So this was all digital, just like the movie? There was no paper process on the *Tron* work?
RV: There might have been really early on, when I was waiting for my Cintiq to arrive. There was about a six-week wait for them to get more in stock, so in the meantime I was doing what I usually do: drawing on paper, scanning it, putting it into Photoshop, cleaning it up, and then sending it to Charlie. Then I got my Cintiq, and everything went digital; I was drawing right in Photoshop, and that really lends itself to more of a… I don't know, a slicker look, less chalky-looking than with the linework, and that was starting to integrate better with Alberto's stuff. You know, it's just the way it went. Now I've totally fallen in love with my Cintiq.

DRAW!: I always like to talk to artists about that because I see people who work digitally because the demand of the job says, "We need it digitally," but who prefer to work traditionally. There are people who like working back and forth between both—the virtual world and the meat world, as I call them.

Going into your graphic novel, are you doing that traditionally, or is it a combination, or are you also doing that all digitally?

Scenes from Robert's graphic novel, *Pear Cider and Cigarettes*.
Pear Cider and Cigarettes ™ and © Robert Valley.

RV: Well, I was just all in as far as the digital stuff on *Tron*, so I put my paper and pencils away for, like, a year-and-a-half, and then I sort of transitioned from that kind of mindset right into my first *Pear Cider* book, and kept all that digital. I launched the book with an art show in France, and I didn't have any original artwork. It was all digital, so I made prints.

Afterwards, once the book was released and I started to promote it, I realized that what people really wanted was the tangible, 2-D, paper artwork. And I thought, "Wow, that makes sense. Now I get it." So with the second book, the one that I just finished, I did all of the planning, the thumbnails, and the rough drawings on paper, and then I scanned that in and used that as the first step. Once it was all digital, then it was all Photoshop after that, but at least there's some aspect of the pipeline that's analog.

DRAW!: So you were doing that for the people coming to the show. Do you find that doing it that way also adds something to your process as an artist?

RV: It does. I find, while I'm doing some storyboards this morning—I'm just starting a new project—that the very initial ideas, where you're just kind of conjuring up ideas in your head, and you want to get them out real fast? For me there's no better way to do that than with thumbnails, pens, and paper, and I just record those first nuggets of ideas as quickly as possible. It seems like trying to do that on the Cintiq, there's a bit more of a delay time, it takes a bit longer, and it's not quite as immediate, especially with what I'm doing right now, because those flocks of ideas are so fleeting. They just come and go so quickly that it's a really delicate time. [*laughs*]

DRAW!: In a way it's sort of like when you have a dream, and when you wake up from your dream, if you don't write it down, you start to forget it really quickly as the rest of the day creeps into your memory banks. Then, later on, you're like, "Wow, was that in my dream, or was that part of another dream?"

It sort of reinforces what I was saying to some of my students the other day; I was saying that, like you were talking about,

ROUGH Critique

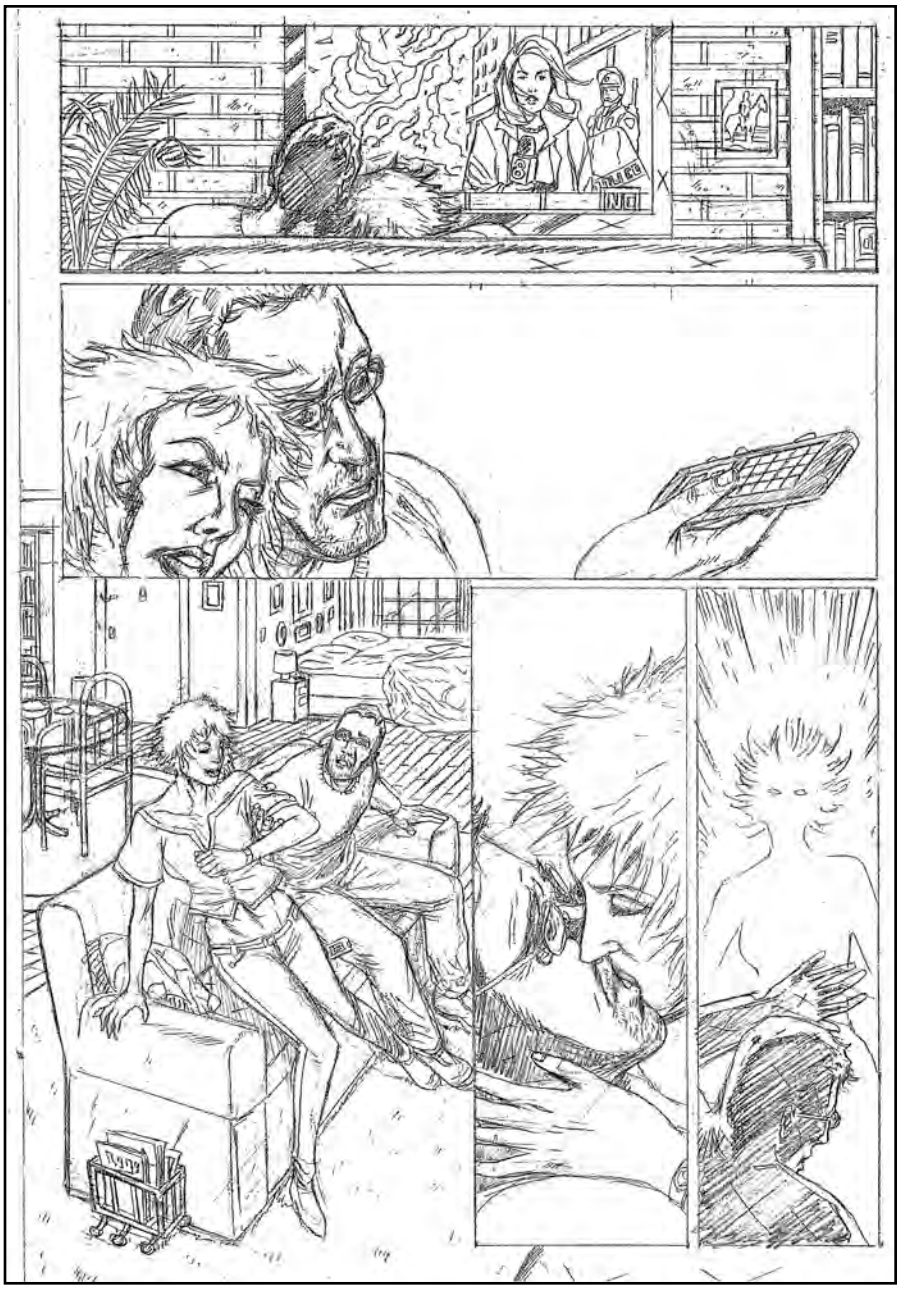
constructive ANALYSIS & CRITICISM of a newcomer's work

by BOB McLEOD

What exactly makes a comic page professional? What separates the struggling amateur artists from the pro artists working for the big publishers? Other than their bank accounts and their egos, I mean. Is it figure drawing? Composition? Storytelling? Perspective? Technique? Well, it can be all of those things, or not really any of them in particular. It's usually a combination of things, and they can often be relatively minor.

What I try to do in this column is puzzle out what those main stumbling blocks are for an artist trying to break into comics. It almost always comes down to the fundamentals of art; those things I mentioned above. But it can also be something more elusive, such as style. Comics are fun to draw, and learning the fundamentals is hard, so many artists try to skip all that studying and rely on raw talent and an excess of busy line work to cover up their faults.

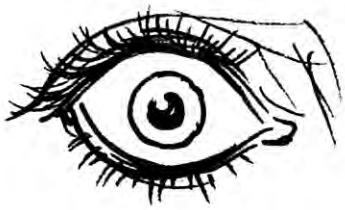
This issue, we have a very nice sample page submitted for a critique by the talented Antonio Rodriguez, and he's not one of those guys. It's rare that I see a sample page with this much going for it. Antonio has obviously been doing his homework and is working hard. His page is extremely well composed, with good camera movement, nice backgrounds that show some understanding of perspective, clear storytelling, and even some fairly good figure drawing! He's really choosing his shots well to tell the story in the most interesting way, and he's expertly leading the reader's eye from panel to panel by placing the center of attention in each panel to create a C formation on the overall page.



Artwork ©2013 Antonio Rodriguez.

COMIC ART BOOTCAMP

SEEING TO



BY
BRET BLEVINS AND
MIKE MANLEY

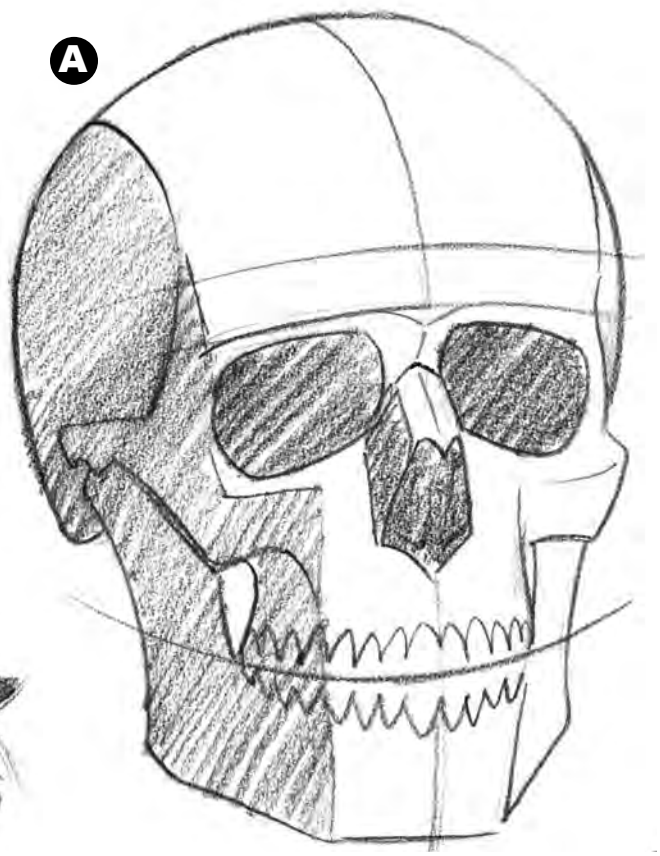
Welcome to another installment of Comic Book Bootcamp. This time around we are going to cover the eye, which poets have called "the window to the soul." The human eye is the first thing we look at when looking at someone's face, being it a drawing or in life. We "look people in the eye" and are suspicious of people who don't look at us back in the eye. It's the key for expressions, and emotional attitude, and acting, especially for the artist.

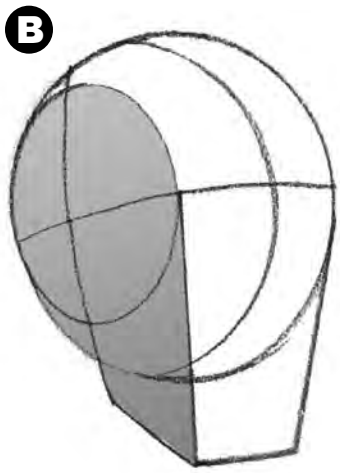
As a result the eye is probably the feature that is drawn more often than any other by artists from antiquity to the present because it is our window to the world, our focus or portal, the view both inward to the psyche and outward. The eye is also a feature than many artists struggle to draw—along with the human face—to get the expression and position in the head just right. One of the most common mistakes in drawing the eye stems from drawing the form of the head as an egg, which it is not.

If we were to draw the head as an egg and then try and fit the eyes on, we would end up with a very strange and alien looking creature.

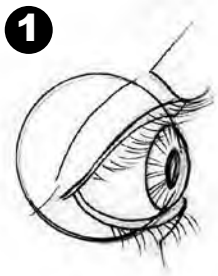
The only part of the head that is "round" is the cranium. The rest of the head is comprised of a series of blocks and planes.

One of the most common mistakes artists make in drawing the eyes in the head is that they often draw the eye more as a decal on the face, rather than as an eyeball in its socket within the skull, so the eye lies flat on the surface. This affects the perspective of the face. Most of the times you will be drawing a face, you will be drawing it in perspective, and that will have a crucial effect on the scale and placement of the eyes set into the head.





(Figure A) A drawing of the human skull to show the form of the skull, the orbital fossa, the mandible, etc.
(Figure B) In this simplified drawing of the skull, you can more easily see the blocks, curves, and planes of the form.
(Figure C) A drawing of the human eyeball in its socket.



The form of the eye itself is always the same, with any differences being due to variations in the sex, age, and racial characteristics of the muscles, eye lids, etc.

Important details to remember are:

- The upper lid is thicker than the lower (see **Figure 1**).
- The cornea is slightly raised from the surface of the eyeball in a convex spheroid shape (see **Figure 1**).
- At the outside, the upper lid folds *over* the lower; at the inside, the upper and lower lids are separated by a small triangular pad of flesh (see **Figure 2**). The outer meeting point of the lids is higher than the inner, except in extreme old age, where gravity and a loss of elasticity can cause a dropping fold that is lower on the outside.
- The lashes grow from the farthest protruding edge of the lids; they do not meet or touch the eyeball (see **Figure 2**).
- The eyes curve back around the skull as they approach the side of the head, retreating from the front plane of the face. This allows us to see via a "sidelong" glance, looking to the side without turning the head (see **Figures 3** and **4**).

I've included some life drawings, done very quickly from the living model, to show how the knowledge we've discussed can be utilized in very quick notations and still convey an essence of life and consciousness. The head portion of this figure drawing was literally committed to paper in seconds—it is just a sketch—but my understanding of structure allowed me to convincingly dab and jot a few marks that place conscious eyes in her head, and even suggest her thick but light colored eyelashes.

Very simple indications surely placed will create convincing mass. A close look at the shut eye reveals that I lightly "felt" the curve of the underlying eyeball mass with a light block-in stroke before defining the details of visible form. Knowing structure helps "decode" what you are looking at when drawing from life.