

ISSUE 13
FALL 2023

FREE!

THE COLUMBUS Scribbler

CELEBRATING THE
COMICS, CARTOONS
AND CREATORS OF
CENTRAL OHIO



COVER ILLUSTRATION BY THOM GLICK

THE COLUMBUS Scribbler

COLUMBUSSCRIBBLER.COM

Cover illustration by Thom Glick
instagram.com/thomglick



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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of The Columbus Scribbler.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

AMY CANINI

KATIE GNAU

JENNIFER STEINER

A MESSAGE FROM THE SCRIBBLER

Welcome to the 13th issue of the *Columbus Scribbler*! We have another exciting issue in store for you. As always, we'd like to thank all of our local cartoonists who have contributed work to this issue. We'd also like to thank Ben Towle for taking the time to talk with us and Thom Glick for creating this issue's doggone amazing cover.

This issue marks a special milestone for us, the five-year anniversary of the *Columbus Scribbler*. We started this paper with some lofty goals. We wanted to utilize the *Scribbler* to introduce and educate the people of Columbus on the vibrant comics scene surrounding them and to help foster a love and deeper appreciation for the comics medium as a whole. We wanted to be a place people could look to for news on local comic events such as book signings, readings, conventions, or festivals. We wanted to be a resource for people to learn about the history of comics, explore and become familiar with local comic creators, and even inspire others to create their own comics and stories.

To date, our accomplishments include the distribution of over 15,000 copies of the *Scribbler* around central Ohio and beyond. We have also paid and printed the works of over 100 cartoonists, giving local creators a platform to tell their stories and see their work in print, some for their very first time. We've had the pleasure of interviewing comic legends like Jeff Smith and Darryl Banks, along with rising stars like Gabby Metzler and Victoria Douglas. We've had the honor of being nominated twice for an Eisner Award, the comic industry's equivalent to the Oscars, in 2019 and 2022. This has been an exciting five years. We look forward to continuing to showcase the talented folks within our city and being a welcoming platform to those with an inquisitiveness toward this fantastic art form.

The *Columbus Scribbler* is only made possible by readers like you. You have the power to help keep the scribbles coming by becoming an active ally of the arts for as little as \$1 per month. Donate to our Patreon Account or by PayPal on our website (columbuscribbler.com) today and help make the next five years of the *Columbus Scribbler* possible.

Scribble on!

- Brian Canini



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THE MINDS BEHIND THE COLUMBUS SCRIBBLER



**BRIAN
CANINI**

briancanini.com

Brian Canini is a cartoonist that lives with his significantly better half, Amy, and his three amazing kiddos in Sunbury, Ohio. Through his efforts in self-publishing, he has created the award-winning autobio graphic novels *Fear of Flying* and *The Big Year*, the critically acclaimed sci-fi comic *Plastic People*, and the critically acclaimed solo anthology *Airbag*.



**STEVE
STEINER**

mulletturtle.com

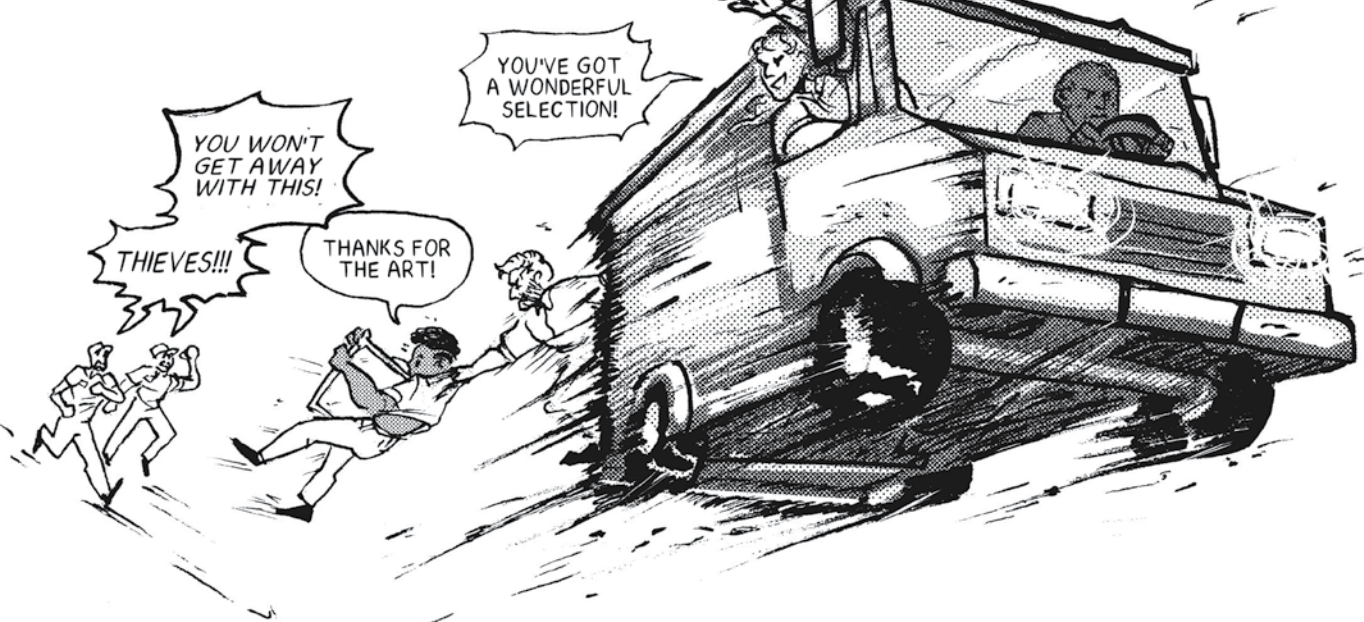
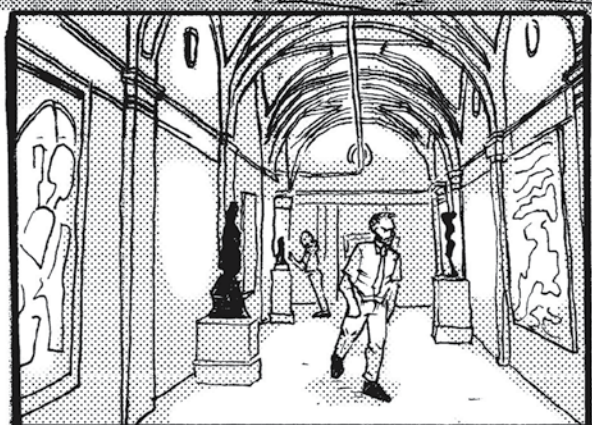
Steve Steiner is a graphic designer and cartoonist who lives in Groveport, Ohio with his wife, Jennifer. He has created numerous mini-comics, zines, and books including *Straight into the Trash*, *Odd Clods*, *Nobody Can Eat 50 Eggs*, and *Danger Stranger*. Go to mulletturtle.com to see more of his work.



**JACK
WALLACE**

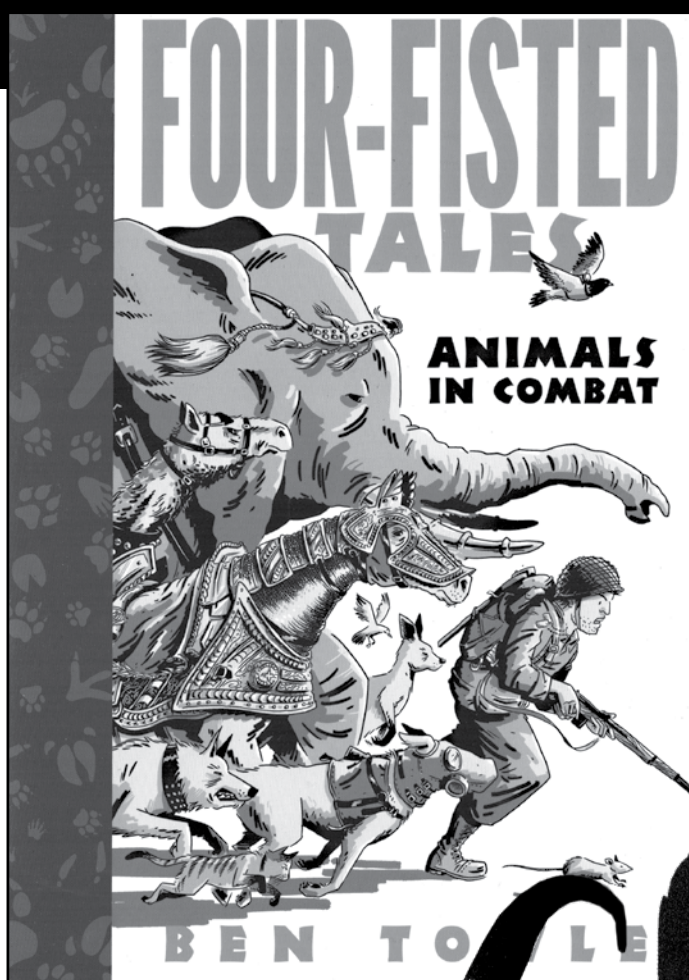
disposable
fictioncomics.com

Jack Wallace is a writer from the south side of Columbus where he lives with his wife, Katie. Disposable Fiction Comics developed from a group of short stories into a website and small press. His work includes the graphic novels *Frankenstein for Mayor* and *Chimera*. Jack currently works as a script writer for two animation studios, Essence Cartoon and Ownage Animation.



10 QUESTIONS WITH BEN TOWLE

Ben Towle is a five-time Eisner Award nominated cartoonist with a lengthy bibliography. His first book, *Midnight Sun*, was published by SLG Publishing in 2007 and is a historical fiction tale inspired by the real-life crash of an airship expedition in 1928. *Amelia Earhart: This Broad Ocean* is also a work of historical fiction. Published by Disney/Hyperion Books in 2010, it features the famous aviator and her quest to fly across the Atlantic. *Oyster War*, published in 2015 by Oni Press, is a nautical fantasy about dastardly pirates looting the seas and the pragmatic Commander and crew hired to stop them. Ben's latest book, *Four-Fisted Tales: Animals in Combat*, published by Dead Reckoning in 2021, shares stories of animals that have fought alongside soldiers throughout the centuries. Ben currently serves as a professor of Illustration at the Columbus College of Art and Design.



1) From cats and dogs to dolphins and bears, *Four-Fisted Tales* tells the stories of animals' various roles in war. What drew you to this material, and why did you decide to tell these animals' amazing stories?

I've always been an animal lover, but the idea behind what would eventually become *Four-Fisted Tales* was pretty random. I was looking for something online (I can't remember exactly what) and just stumbled on a Wikipedia page that was a list of animals that had played significant roles in various historical military conflicts. I did a quick read-over of the list and immediately thought, "This would make a great comics anthology!"

Initially, I'd imagined the project as exactly that: a big anthology where a bunch of cartoonists (or cartoonist/writer teams) would each select some animal war story and do a short comic about it. I had a few back-and-forths with publishers about this model, but I could never get anything worked out with a decent page rate for contributors. The version that finally came together, obviously, was all me!

2) Most artists dread drawing animals, but you've made an entire book about heroic animals on the front lines. How did you become interested in this subject? Is there an animal you hate to draw? Do you have a favorite?

As mentioned above, there was a fair amount of sheer chance involved, but I have an interest in history, and military history in particular, so the subject matter was a good fit! I feel like every artist probably has the same answer to the "animal you hate to draw" question: %&^\$in' horses, man! They're weird-looking creatures with peculiar anatomy. My beat-up copy of Jack Hamm's *How to Draw Animals* really came in handy. I feel like I'm... OK(?) at drawing horses now, though. Favorite animals? Probably birds. I don't think I'm a ton better at drawing them than other animals, but they're really fun to draw, especially pelicans (my favorite bird), which I drew a lot of for *Oyster War*, but, well, they're not really known for their combat abilities, so not so much pelican-drawing in *Four-Fisted Tales*.

3) You clearly do copious amounts of research before diving into the time period of the books you've worked on. How has that research translated to the page? What advice would you give to someone attempting the historical fiction genre? Is there a time period you enjoy more than others?

I'm probably not as rigorous as I should be about being true-to-history with my books. Whenever it comes down to historical accuracy vs. a good story, I'm always gonna favor the latter. I think I gravitated toward history and historical fiction (and folktales before that) because I'm weaker at writing than drawing. Working in these genres allows me to start with something rather than coming up with an original narrative from whole cloth.

I don't really have a favorite era, but I like drawing sailing ships and flying vehicles like old planes and airships, so the period after air travel was possible, but before commercial airlines became ubiquitous is kind of my sweet spot.

As far as advice goes, I'd mainly say (and this goes for other types of reality-based narrative, like memoir, for example) that just because you're dealing with something that actually happened, you shouldn't just throw things like character development, story structure, etc. out the window. It's still your job to tell a good, well-structured story, and if you don't, no one is going to want to read it. True story or not, it's your job to put together a compelling visual narrative.

4) Many of your books are created single-handedly. What is your process like? How does it compare to partnering with a writer as you did with the *Amelia Earhart* book?

The *Amelia Earhart* book is the exception to the rule; all my other books are me solo. Honestly, my process changes with pretty much every book I do. The one thing that does remain pretty much consistent through all of my books, though, is that I avoid any part of the process that separates the words and the pictures. Those two things operating together are what comics is, so it makes no sense to me (in a work you're doing entirely yourself) to pry those things apart and do a movie-style "script" and then later have to smush those words back together with pictures to make the comic itself.

Towle's *Four-Fisted Tales* was nominated for a 2022 Eisner Award for Best Publication for Kids (ages 9-12) and tells true stories of animals in combat. Learn about the brave dogs, cats, horses, and even slugs who fought alongside soldiers in conflicts throughout history.



I have, though, enjoyed working collaboratively on things, such as with Sarah Stewart Taylor and Jason Lutes on the Amelia book, or Alex de Campi on a story we did for *Creepy*. You get an interesting insight into how other people visualize narrative on the page. Alex, for example, has a much more film-like conceptualization of comics than I do. Her panel descriptions almost always describe things in terms of a physical space, what's in the foreground, middle-ground, and background. I have a much more diagrammatic concept of comics—probably from reading a lot of early 20th century newspaper comics.

5) All of your books are of various sizes ranging from *Midnight Sun* being a mere 5.5" x 6.5" to the massive 9.5" x 12.25" *Oyster War*. How much do you take size in to consideration when you are creating a new work? How do you think size affects the reader?

Size is pretty much the most important practical consideration for me when I start making a book. The trim size of the book in conjunction with the fact that the lettering has to be a certain size to be legible means that the size of the book dictates how many panels can be on each page and how much of each of those panels is available for drawings vs. lettering.

Midnight Sun was designed, drawn, and lettered to be bigger than it was actually published. If I ever get it reprinted, I'll make sure it's done bigger, at the correct size. *Oyster War* was deliberately made at the same trim size as European albums like the *Tintin* books, a deliberate reflection of its visual influences.

So, the size has a design-based effect on the reader, but it also affects its feel as an object. A book should be comfortable in the hand to read. I love those huge artists' editions—and the whole point of them is to reproduce original art at size—but they're not very pleasant to hold and flip through. I think something between a standard US trade paperback and a European album is the ideal size feel-wise for a longform comic.

6) Many of your books were either black and white or monochrome, as opposed to *Oyster War*, which is richly colored. Why did you make that departure? At what point in production do you decide on coloring?

You absolutely need to make a decision about coloring before you start drawing. The style of rendering you use for a project needs to account for whether there will eventually be color involved. If color will be there to do things like indicate light source, delineate different objects via value, etc, then you don't need your linework to do those things. This is why comics that were intended to be black and white rarely work well when color is added later. (Notable exceptions are things like *Bone* and *The Babysitters Club*, which look great both in black and white and in color.)

With *Oyster War*, I went with full color because, at that time, I was getting interested in color as a storytelling tool. Most comics coloring isn't particularly interesting to me since it's usually not adding a whole lot of new information. Adding red to a line drawing of an apple isn't really doing anything story-wise. But I was, at the time, reading a French comic, a Western called *Gus*, that was colored (mostly) by the colorist Walter, and he was emulating a lot of the flat color of an older comic, *Lucky Luke* (also a French Western). He was using a lot of non-literal color, color to indicate a character's emotional state, a character's thoughts, to differentiate between flashbacks and real-time, etc. That got me interested in coloring my work fully, as I did in *Oyster War*, and that's also why there are a lot of odd color choices in the book.

7) You recently posted on your website about Steve Ditko's influence on the work of creators such as Charles Burns, Gilbert Hernandez, and Dan Clowes. Has Ditko influenced your own style? Is there anyone else that stands out as an influence?

I'm more of an appreciator of Ditko than someone who's really influenced by him. My biggest influences are a lot of old newspaper cartoonists, people like Roy Crane (*Captain Easy*), E.C. Segar (*Thimble Theater/Popeye*), and Hank Ketcham (*Dennis the Menace*). I also love a lot of French cartoonists. My favorites are Jacques Tardi, Christophe Blain, Hugo Pratt, and Jean-Claude Mézières.

8) What is the most important lesson that you tell the students of your illustration class? What visual elements do you try to display when designing a character for the first time?

I teach several different illustration classes, but I guess the one underlying thing I try to get across to all of my students is that usually the difference between a really successful project and one that's bad isn't a matter of skill; it's a matter of effort. Do you have to have basic drawing/drafting skills? Yes, of course. But when I see work that's sub-par, 99% of the time, it's just that the artist wasn't willing to sit down, dig in, and put in the time and effort to make it as good as it needs to be.

With character design in particular, I hope the main things that my students take away is that all the decisions you make about how a character looks are design decisions, and everything that's designed is communicating something.

9) You presented the "Principles of Page and Panel Layout" panel at 2022's Cartoon Crossroads Columbus. What do you think is the most important takeaway from that lesson? Are you planning any other panels in the future?

Yeah, that talk seems to be strangely popular. I think it's creeping up toward 400 views on YouTube! The main takeaway, hopefully, is just that panel layout is really, really important to putting together a comic. You can have the best drawing chops in the world, but if you can't put drawings together into a sequence that clearly conveys a story, you won't be a successful cartoonist.

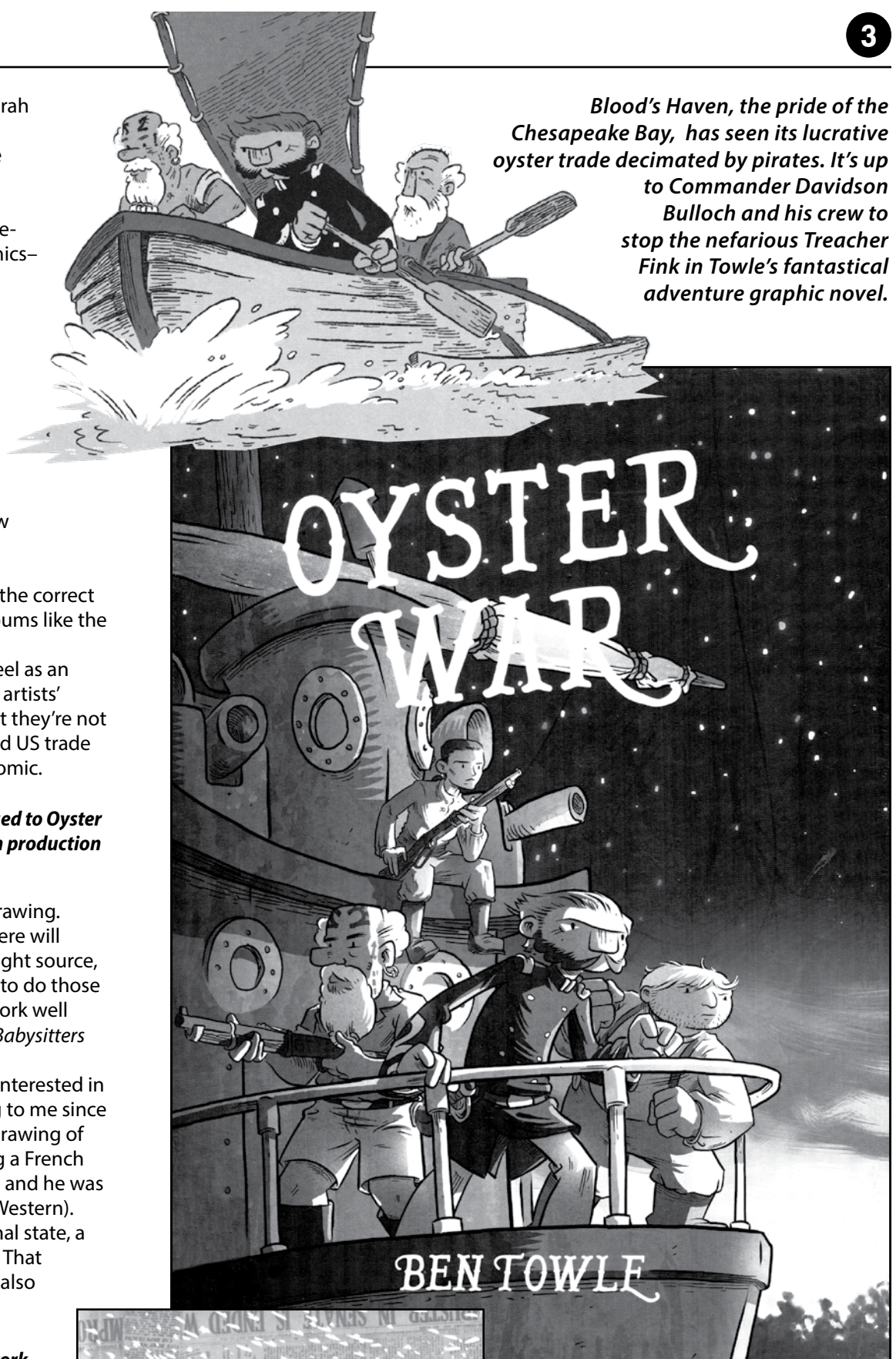
That talk was part of the Thursday and Friday "Talk and Teach" events at Cartoon Crossroads Columbus, which I do some volunteer programming work for. If there's a hole we need to fill in the schedule, sure, I'll jump in and do something, but the way the 2023 festival is shaping up, if anything, I think we'll have too many good talks by guests to fit in the available slots!

I'd given some thought to doing a series of talks like that and just putting them on YouTube, but I've got limited time, and I need to focus on getting my next book done.

10) If you were a soldier during wartime, pinned down in a foxhole by enemy fire, what famed cartoon animal would you most like to have by your side?

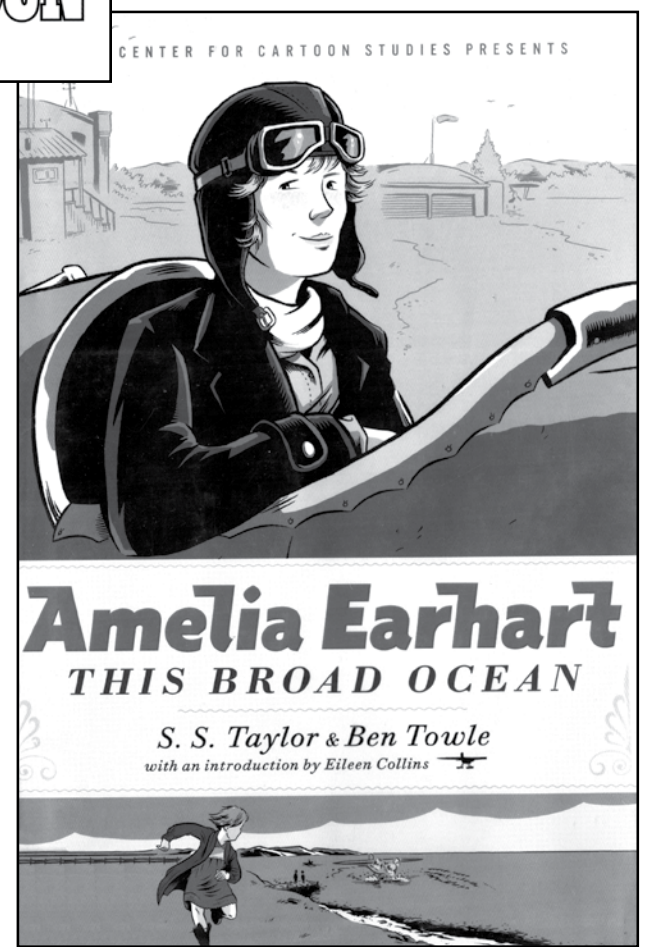
Hmmm... I guess my answer depends on whether I'm going on the offensive or whether I'm just gonna hunker down and try to stay alive. If the former, my choice is Mighty Mouse, who's essentially an animal version of Superman, but without any sort of Kryptonite/Achilles' heel. If the latter, I'd pick Bernice the Whiffle Hen from *Thimble Theater/Popeye*. She's a magical creature that gives anyone who rubs her head amazing good luck. Sounds like I'd need it.

Blood's Haven, the pride of the Chesapeake Bay, has seen its lucrative oyster trade decimated by pirates. It's up to Commander Davidson Bulloch and his crew to stop the nefarious Treacher Fink in Towle's fantastical adventure graphic novel.



(Left) Towle's first graphic novel, *Midnight Sun*, was inspired by the real-life 1928 wreck of the airship *Itali*. With its propellers covered in ice and unable to fight against the polar winds, the dirigible crash landed into an Arctic ice flow.

(Bottom) Another work inspired by real historical events, Towle and writer S.S. Taylor chronicle the life and times of Amelia Earhart.



MEET THE PEOPLE OF COLUMBUS: NIKKI McQUEARY

NIKKI McQUEARY GREW UP IN REYNOLDSBURG UNTIL HER FATHER DIED WHEN SHE WAS ELEVEN. SHE MOVED WITH HER MOTHER AND TWO OLDER SIBLINGS TO THE EAST SIDE TO BE CLOSER TO HER GRANDMOTHER. THERE WAS SOUTHERN COOKING, CHURCH, AND MUCH LOVE IN THOSE EARLY DAYS. THOUGH HER MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER TOOK GREAT CARE, NIKKI GREW UP IN A NEIGHBORHOOD SURROUNDED BY DRUGS AND VIOLENCE AND WANTED TO AVOID THAT LIFE FOR HER KIDS.



NIKKI CARED FOR HER DISABLED MOTHER AND SPENT THE EARLY NINETIES RAISING HER CHILDREN, A SON AND TWO DAUGHTERS. SHE WOULD WATCH "UNSOLVED MYSTERIES" WITH HER MOM AND WHEN THE "FIRST 48" SERIES BEGAN, NIKKI KNEW SHE WAS A TRUE CRIME FAN. SHE WOULD OCCASIONALLY GO ON THE LOCAL ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SITE LOOKING UP LOCAL CRIMES.



NIKKI HAD SEEN MANY OF HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY PASS, SOMETIMES VIOLENTLY. IT WAS A HEAVY BURDEN BUT OFTEN DISMISSED AS A BLACK-ON-BLACK CRIME OR OMITTED FROM THE LOCAL NEWS ALTOGETHER. MANY OF THE CRIMES THAT AFFECTED HER PERSONALLY REMAIN UNSOLVED BY THE COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

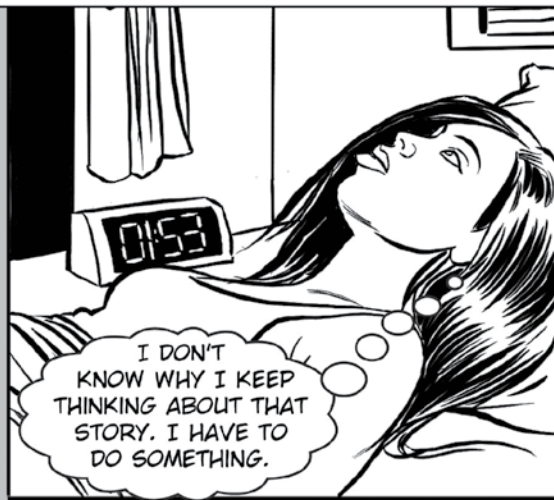


SHE STARTED A FACEBOOK PAGE CALLED "THE VIVID FACES OF THE VANISHED" AND BEGAN CATALOGING THE UNSOLVED CRIMES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VICTIMS. HER POSTS FOLLOWED BOTH CURRENT AND COLD CASES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, HELPING PLACE MISSING VICTIMS IN THE PUBLIC EYE, AND INCREASE PRESSURE ON POLICE DEPARTMENTS TO FIND VICTIMS.



ONE CASE SHE'D READ ABOUT YEARS AGO ALWAYS STUCK WITH NIKKI. IT WAS ABOUT A MISSING WOMAN WHOSE BODY WAS FOUND NEAR JACKSON PIKE. SHE WROTE ON FACEBOOK FROM THE WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE AND INCLUDED PHOTOS FROM THE CORONER'S OFFICE RATHER THAN THE RECREATION THE POLICE HAD BEEN USING.

THE POST WENT VIRAL WITH THOUSANDS OF VIEWS, AND WITHIN 60 DAYS, A FAMILY MEMBER SAW THE POST AND IDENTIFIED TURINA JEFFRIES ALMOST 20 YEARS AFTER HER BODY WAS FOUND.



A WOMAN CONTACTED NIKKI ASKING THAT SHE POST A STORY ABOUT HER MISSING MOTHER WHO LIVED IN FLORIDA. SHE ASKED HER FOLLOWERS FOR HELP, AND ONE VOLUNTEER WENT TO THE MISSING PERSON'S HOME, TOOK PHOTOS, AND TALKED TO NEIGHBORS, EVENTUALLY FINDING THE WOMAN'S MOTHER.



NIKKI ONCE ORGANIZED A SEARCH PARTY FOR A MISSING TEENAGER NEAR THE WEDGEWOOD APARTMENTS, WHICH WERE KNOWN TO BE DANGEROUS. THEY HANDED OUT FLYERS LOOKING FOR THE TEEN, AND THE SEARCH PARTY WAS ABLE TO LOCATE THE MISSING TEENAGER.



MOST RECENTLY, NIKKI ESTABLISHED "THE VIVID FACES OF THE VANISHED" AS A 501(C)3 NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. SHE HOPES TO DEVELOP A FOUNDATION TO RAISE FUNDS FOR PRINTING FLYERS, HOLD RALLIES FOR MISSING PEOPLE, CONTACT LARGER NEWS ORGANIZATIONS, AND HIRE PRIVATE DETECTIVES TO FIND MISSING PEOPLE.

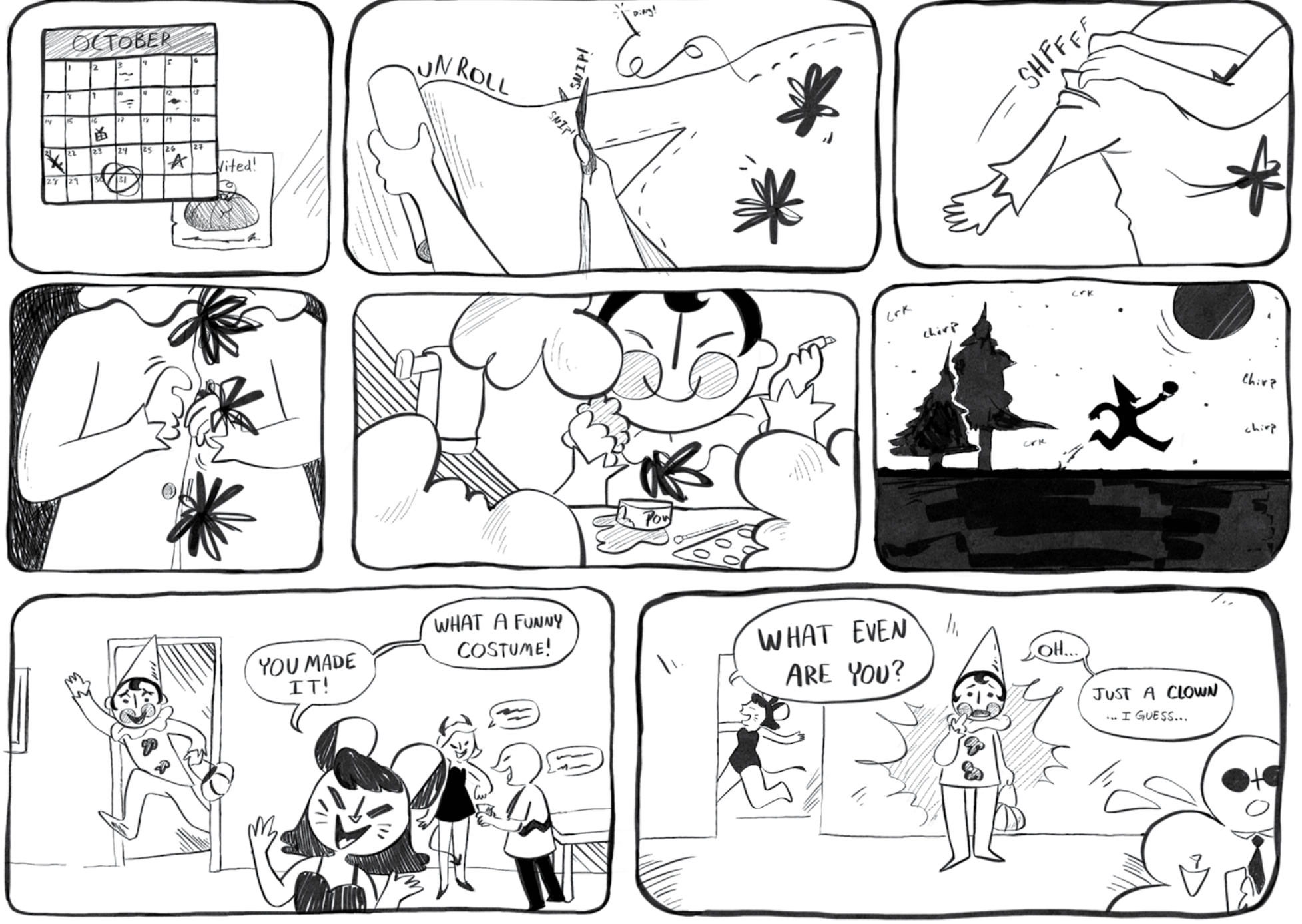


NIKKI McQUEARY HAS BEEN THREATENED ONLINE FOR HER WORK. SHE'S WORKED WITH, AND SOMETIMES IN SPITE OF, DETECTIVES. SHE'S SPENT HER MONEY AND TIME DOING EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO BRING JUSTICE TO THOSE WHO CANNOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES AND HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED BY OUR SOCIETY. WE ARE FORTUNATE AND THANKFUL SHE HEDED THE CALL TO ACTION.



FOLLOW THE VIVID FACES OF THE VANISHED AT [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/THEVIVIDFACESOFTHEVANISHED](https://www.facebook.com/thevividfacesofthevanished)

Pierrot's Halloween



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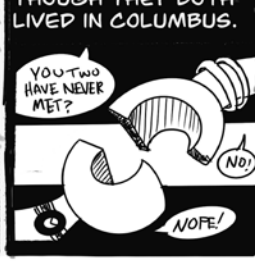
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O

I USED TO DRIVE IN SIX HOURS TO DO SHOWS LIKE: SPACE, SOL-CON, AND CXC.



I THOUGHT IT ODD THAT I'D INTRO OTHER CREATORS TO ONE ANOTHER, EVEN THOUGH THEY BOTH LIVED IN COLUMBUS.



I ORIGINALLY MOVED TO COLUMBUS UNDER THE PRETENSE OF JOINING A LARGE COMICS COMMUNITY. I MEAN YOU COULD THROW A ROCK AND EASILY HIT A CARTOONIST!



THAT.... DIDN'T QUITE HAPPEN... NOT ORIGINALLY AT LEAST.



I WAS ADVISED TO MANAGE MY EXPECTATIONS. IT'S NOT ALWAYS ROSES AND CUCUMBERS BY ALL, AND THAT PARTIES TEND TO STAY TO THEMSELVES.



SO AFTER THE MYSTIQUE WORE OFF I WENT BACK TO CALI A FEW TIMES. I EVEN PICKED UP AN MFA IN COMICS!



I STARTED TO ASK, WAS COLUMBUS THE RIGHT PLACE FOR MY FAMILY, FOR ME?



WHILE OBSTACLES DO EXIST, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT SOME MORE RECENT EXPERIENCES... SOME REVELATIONS



SO HAVE I FOUND MY CALLING HERE? MANY TIMES YOU HAVE TO PLAY THE GAME, AND MOST TIMES THE GAME PLAYS YOU.

BUT RATHER THAN BE DISILLUSIONED BY, NOT SO CANDYLAND"...

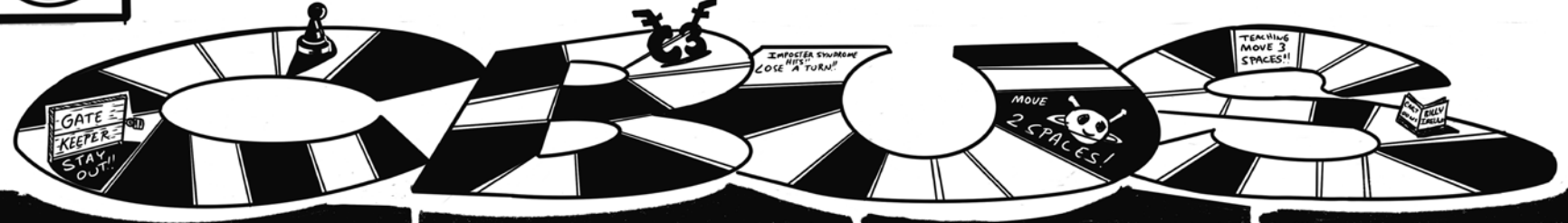
MY OLDEST HAS FOUND FRIENDS AND A PLACE HERE.

ROOTS ARE FINALLY HAPPENING!

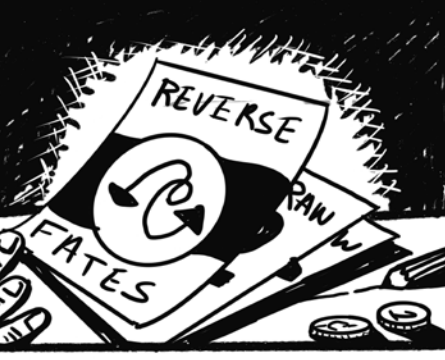
SO RATHER THAN WISH I WAS ELSEWHERE,

I FOUND OTHERS OF SIMILAR MINDS AND WANTS.

NO MORE LAST PICKS, OR NOT RIGHT FOR THE CLICKS,



I PREFER A GAME OF UNO INSTEAD! REVERSE, DRAW TWO, FOUR EVEN! YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR FATE WITH ONE CARD SOMETIMES.



AS ART & COMICS TEACHER I SAW MANY ARTISTS/PEOPLE INCLUDING UNDER SERVED COMMUNITIES THAT HAD THEIR OWN IDEAS AND CONCEPTS.



IF COMPELLED, THEY TOO DESERVED A SPACE TO BE ABLE TO TELL THOSE STORIES EVEN IF THEY KEEP IT TO THEMSELVES.

IF THERE'S A WAY I COULD HELP THEM, OR CONNECT THEM TO ANOTHER THAT COULD...IT'S WORTHWHILE RIGHT?



"CONNECTIVE TISSUE", IF THERE WAS ANYWAY I COULD BE OF SERVICE I NOW KNOW THAT THE BURDEN OF EMPATHY SOMETIMES TAKES AWHILE TO DRAW OTHERS CLOSE TO YOU. I HOPE I'M LISTENING WHEN THAT CALL RINGS. - Hunter 2023



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TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

By Brian Canini

Over the last decade, I've gone from producing one or two comics a year to producing over a dozen comics yearly, along with webcomics, short stories in anthologies, a few graphic novels, and helping produce the very newspaper you hold in your hands. On top of all that, I'm also happily married, a father of three wonderful children, and work a full-time non-comics related job. Before you ask, no, there's not two of me. In fact, I accomplished this level of productivity by making a few simple changes in my life.

THE COMIC-MAKING TIME

I've been making comics for pretty much my entire life. However, by 2016, I was burnt out. My wife, Amy, and I had just had our second kid. Trying to squeeze in anything extra with a baby is hard, let alone time to make comics. My routine at the time was that I'd get a broken night of sleep, being woken up every few hours by a baby, officially "wake up" with my alarm around 7AM, get our two kids breakfast, see our oldest off to the school bus, drive our youngest to daycare, spend the next 9 hours at my day job, drive home, make dinner, hangout with the family, put the kids to bed, hang out with Amy until she needed to go to sleep, and then, around 11PM, sit down at my drawing board and try desperately to stay awake long enough to draw a little bit of a comic before the whole process started over again. Most nights, I'd be too fried to even string two thoughts together, let alone tell a story with words and pictures. I needed a change.

I decided that I'd give waking up early a try. So I started waking up two hours before everyone else in my house at 5AM. I've never been a morning person, but I did find that a benefit to waking up early is that the house is quiet. This allowed me to completely focus on my project. The other huge benefit is that I was able to



start every day off as a cartoonist. I'm no longer yearning for the drawing board throughout the day. I've already been there and can give my full attention to the other aspects of my life.

Now, 5AM worked for me, but it may not be for everyone. The important thing to keep in mind here is that you need to form a routine. Set aside a designated time every day where your only focus will be working on comics. It doesn't have to be long, it can be an hour or just 30 minutes, it just has to be consistent.

Remember this is a time for you to focus so that means no distractions, be it phone, television, internet, or social media. Give yourself time with just you and whatever project you want to work on. It'll help if it's not a time you're completely burnt out from the day. If you can keep a consistent time every day, you'll find that you'll train your brain to be ready for comics at that time, which will make staring down a blank page that much easier.

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL TRAP

Everyone has their epic 400-page graphic novel in their head, and there's nothing wrong with that. However, it shouldn't be the first thing you try to tackle. Consider this, if your goal was to run a marathon and you've never run before, it would be unwise to wake up one day and try to run a marathon. A better first step would probably be something like waking up and taking a run around your neighborhood. Point being, start off small.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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TOP FIVE



with **Maggie Dahlstrom**

What are your top 5 comics EVER?

Maggie Dahlstrom is a trans woman, queer-comics researcher, and lapsed cartoonist. She lives in Columbus with her fiancé Max. Check out her research project at go.osu.edu/teachingqueercomics

4). KISS NUMBER 8

*Colleen Venable and Ellen Crenshaw
First Second / 2019*

This is a story of a Catholic queer teen finding herself in the early 2000's and it represents the nostalgia I crave. The story is really tight and it doesn't pull punches. It has a great twist and its just a lot of fun.

3). BONE - OLD MAN'S CAVE

*Jeff Smith
Cartoon Books / 1999*

Bone was my intro to comics, but *Old Man's Cave*, in my mind, is the story at its best. Tying together the mythology of the previous five volumes, it's the moment where the characters really come into their own. Rose and Briar finally meeting face to face, the villagers having to exist in a broader societal context, THE VENU... Every part of this book hits, really capturing what I love about the broader series.

2). ANYAS GHOST

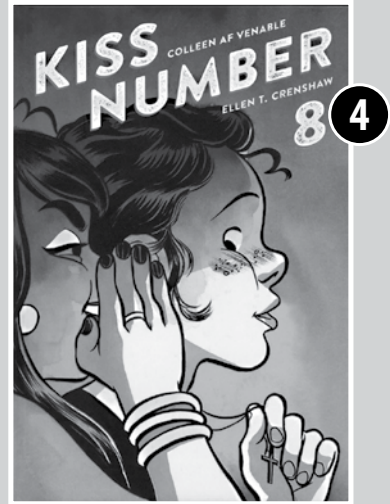
*Vera Brosgol, First Second, 2011, Vera Brosgol
First Second / 2011*

I've read this book so many times and it still gives me the chills. It's a ghost story perfected. On top of being beautifully drawn and masterfully crafted, narratively, I couldn't ask for anything more. The themes that Brosgol juggles of the immigrant experience, growth and change in puberty, and how high school makes people just kind of awful is everything to me.

1). SNAPDRAGON

*Kat Leyh
First Second / 2020*

This is a comic I wish I had written. Or like, it feels like a comic I wrote for myself without actually having to put in all the work and just getting to be pleasantly surprised at the results. It's queer, it's witchy, it's incredibly drawn and colored, it speaks to the unnatural natural. The characters are so strong and human, and it creates a world you can't wait to go back to. There are comics that are "better," but this comic is my favorite.

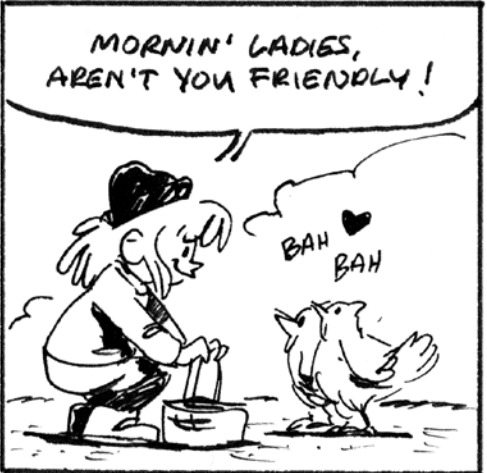
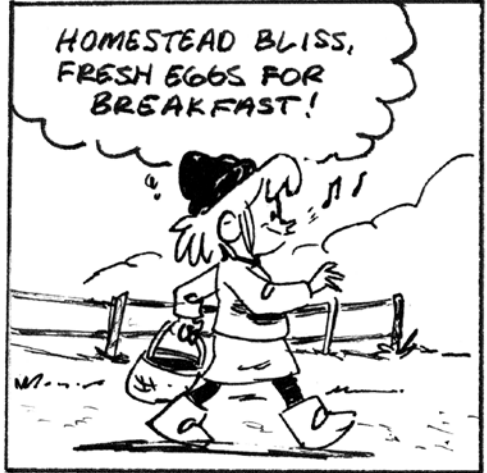


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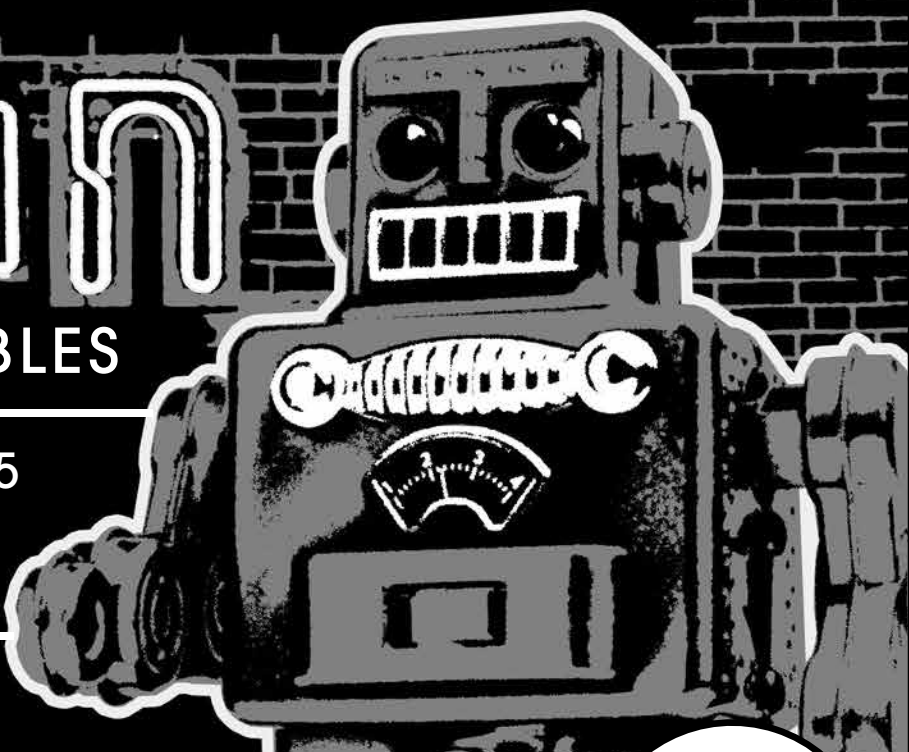
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CANINES IN COMICS

Man's best friends have long inspired cartoonists and comic creators. Whether they are sidekicks to the hero or the main characters in their own right, here is a sampling of some of the most recognizable and celebrated canines in comics.

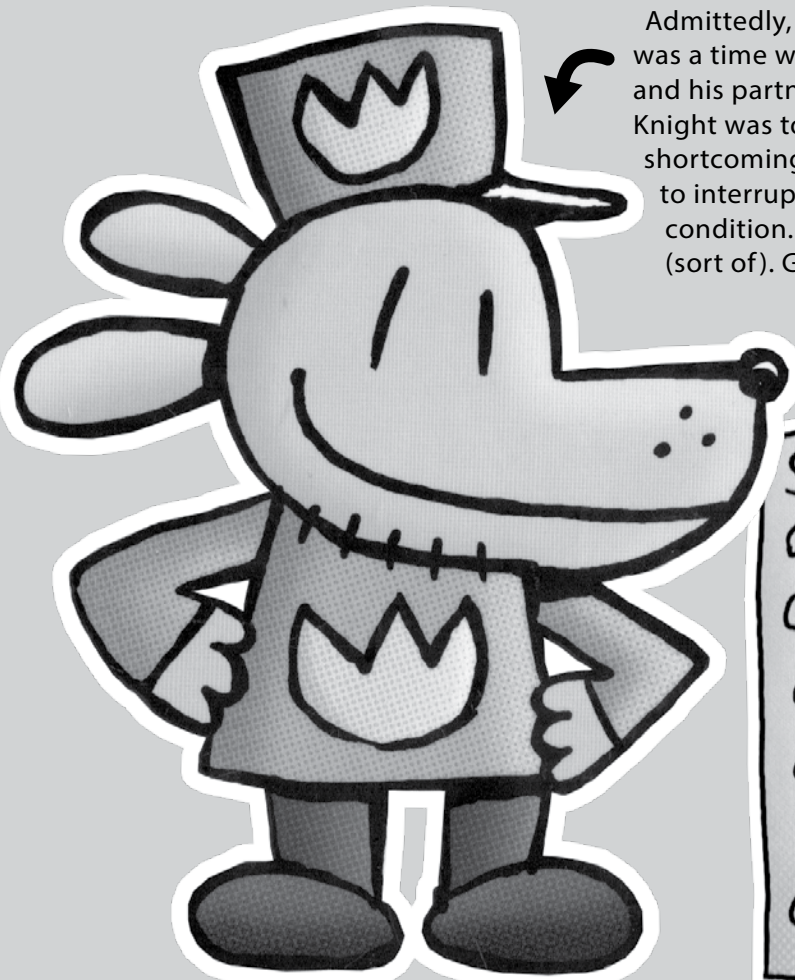


MARMADUKE

This enduring Great Dane has graced newspapers since his creation by cartoonist Brad Anderson in 1954. Anderson continued to churn out Marmaduke's daily misadventures until his death in 2015 at the age of 91. Today, his son Paul has taken over the reins of the strip.

BEASTS OF BURDEN

It's up to this team of dogs (and one cat) to investigate the paranormal mysteries besieging their town of Burden Hill. They tackle a pack of zombie canines, demonic frogs, a secret rat society, and other bizarre happenings humans seem to not even be aware of. Produced by writer Evan Dorkin and artist Jill Thompson, *Beasts of Burden* has been published by Dark Horse Comics since their first appearance in 2003.



DOG MAN

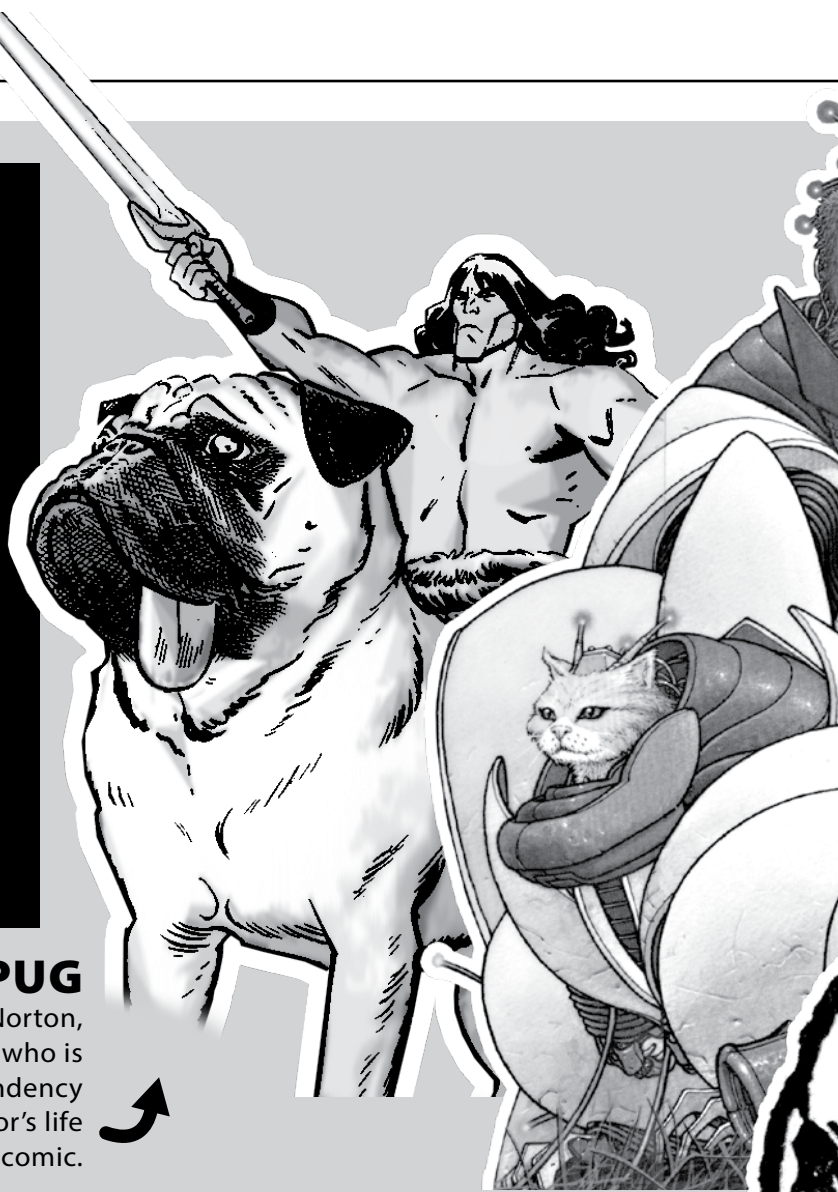
Admittedly, cartoonist Dav Pilkey's Dog Man is only half canine, yet there was a time when he was just a dog named Greg. You see, Officer Knight and his partner Greg weren't the greatest the police force had to offer. Knight was tough yet dumb, while Greg was smart but weak. Despite their shortcomings, evil feline Petey wasn't going to give them the chance to interrupt his schemes. He blew the duo up and left them in critical condition. It was only after a bizarre surgery that their lives were saved (sort of). Greg's head was transplanted onto Officer Knight's body; thus he became the tough AND brilliant super cop Dog Man! Like Pilkey's other creation, *Captain Underpants*, Dog Man has been a wild success with kids ever since.

So they had a big operation. The doctor cut off Greg's head and sewed it onto cop's body.



BATTLEPUG

Originally begun as a serialized webcomic by creator Mike Norton, Battlepug is a giant Pug who acts as the steed for a barbarian, who is known only as the "Warrior." Despite his dimwitted nature and tendency to drool everywhere, Battlepug manages to save the Warrior's life more often than not in this humorous fantasy comic.

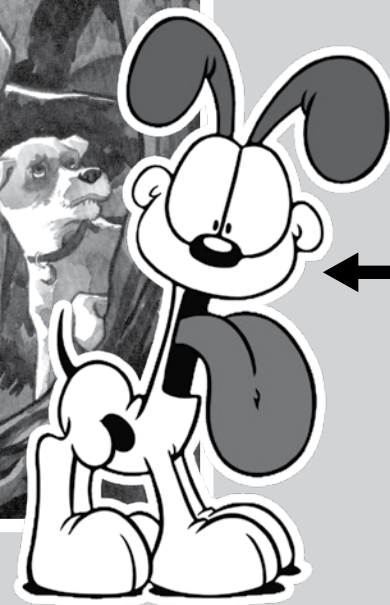


SNOOPY

A good case can be made that Snoopy is the most famous cartoon dog to ever exist. Charles Schulz's iconic comic strip *Beagle* is, of course, the free-spirited pet of *Peanuts* star Charlie Brown. Even after his creator's passing in 2000, Snoopy remains a vital pop culture icon.

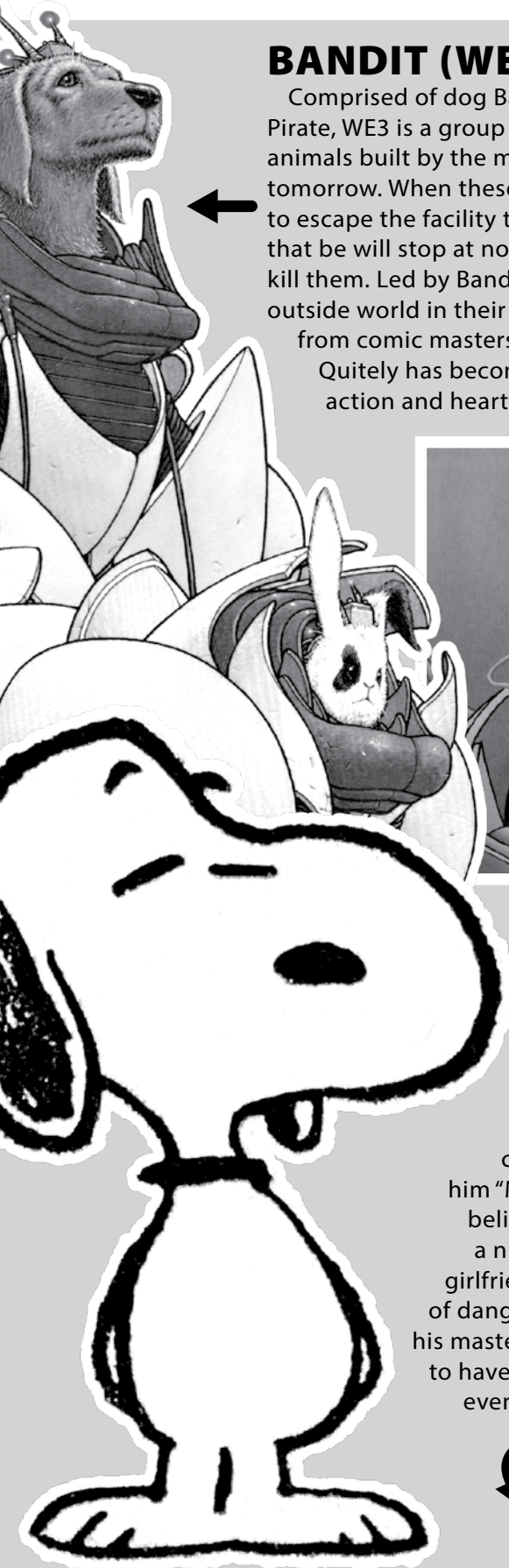
ODIE

The good-natured foil to grumpy cat Garfield, Odie has blossomed into a star in his own right. Appearing in 1978 with the initial launch of the *Garfield* comic strip, the slobbering mutt was originally going to be called "Spot." Creator Jim Davis instead changed his name to "Odie" after a car dealership commercial he wrote featuring "Odie the Village Idiot."



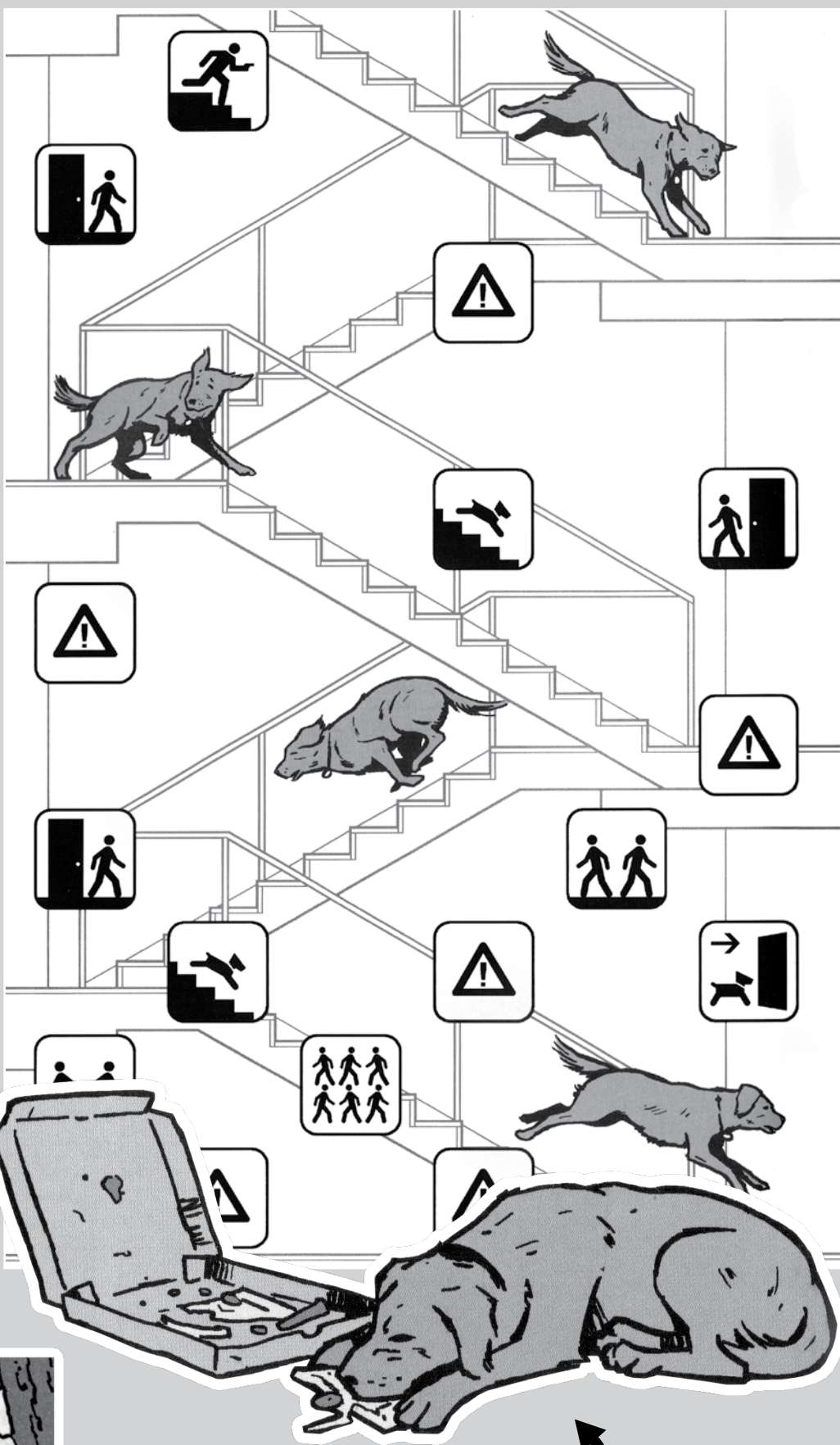
BANDIT (WE3)

Comprised of dog Bandit, cat Tinker, and bunny Pirate, WE3 is a group of cybernetically enhanced animals built by the military to fight the wars of tomorrow. When these prototype weapons manage to escape the facility they were held in, the powers that be will stop at nothing to either apprehend or kill them. Led by Bandit, the trio traverses the hostile outside world in their quest to find "home." This work from comic masters Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely has become a modern classic full of action and heart-wrenching moments.



SNOWY

This Fox Terrier has been a constant companion to Tintin since the star's comic debuted in 1929. Though he is named "Snowy" in English adaptations, Belgian creator Hergé originally named him "Milou" in his native French. It is believed the name is derived from a nickname Hergé had for his first girlfriend. Snowy is brave in the face of danger and always ready to defend his master from harm. He is also known to have a weakness for bones and has even been shown eagerly drinking whiskey at times.



LUCKY (AKA PIZZA DOG)

Affectionately known as "Pizza Dog" after sharing a slice with Avengers member Hawkeye, Lucky turned out to be a super dog despite not having any unique powers. He was once owned by a member of the Tracksuit Mafia street gang, but he turned on his own thuggish master to save Hawkeye from being gunned down.

Perhaps Lucky's most well-known moment, however, came in *Hawkeye* #11. Written by Matt Fraction with art by David Aja, the entire issue was portrayed from his uniquely canine point of view. His thoughts are illustrated as pictogram icons, while any dialogue from human characters is displayed in whatever broken English Lucky understands. Published in 2012, it is still heralded by critics, with CBR.com saying it is "considered one of the greatest single comic book issues of all time."

SAM (SAM & MAX)

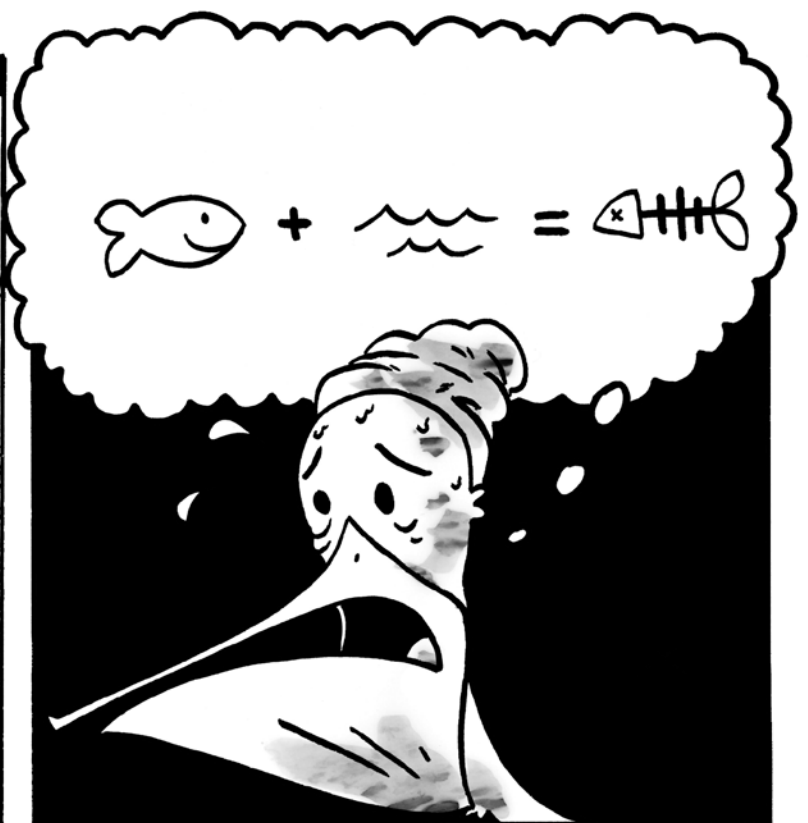
Steve Purcell's anthropomorphic dog Sam and his "rabbity-thing" partner Max are Freelance Police. Manic, morally ambiguous, and full of parodies of American culture, the offbeat duo gained a cult following with their first appearance in a 1987 comic published by Fishwrap Productions. They subsequently hit the mainstream in the 1990s with their own video game and animated series.



KRYPTO & ACE

In the case of DC Comics' Krypto the Superdog and Ace the Bat-Hound, sometimes old dogs can learn new tricks. Both of their origins harken back to 1955, with Ace being the canine companion of Batman and Krypto for Superman. Each has been featured off and on in the comic book series of their respective counterparts in the decades since, but chances for either to shine on their own have been few and far between. Recently, that was remedied with the premiere of the 2022 animated movie *DC League of Super-Pets*, where Krypto was voiced by Dwayne Johnson and Ace by Kevin Hart.





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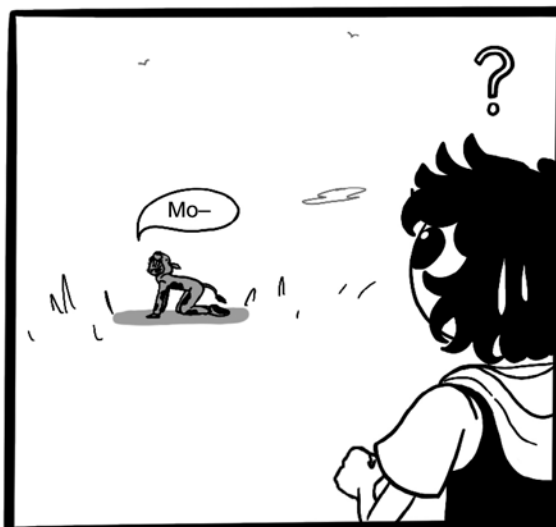
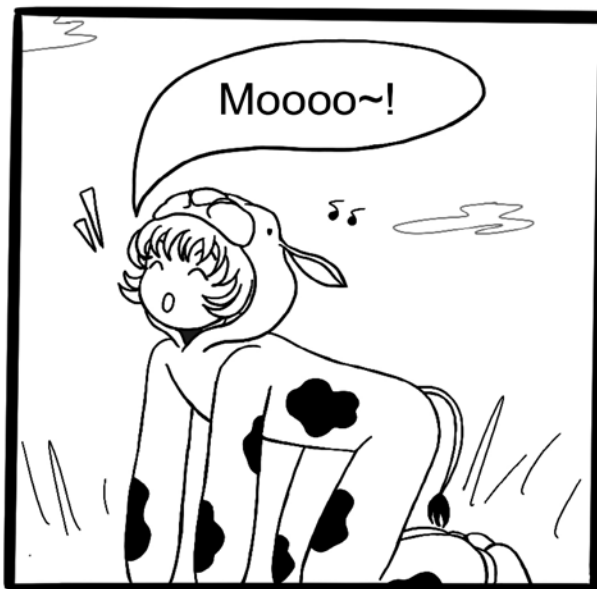
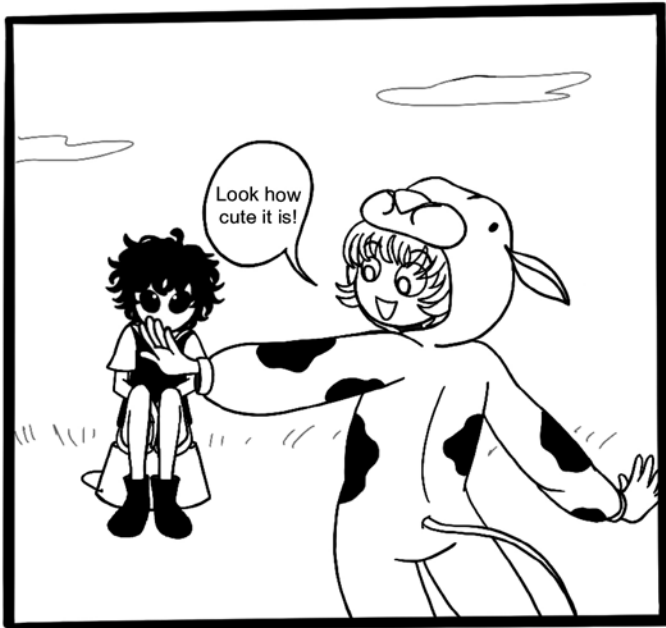
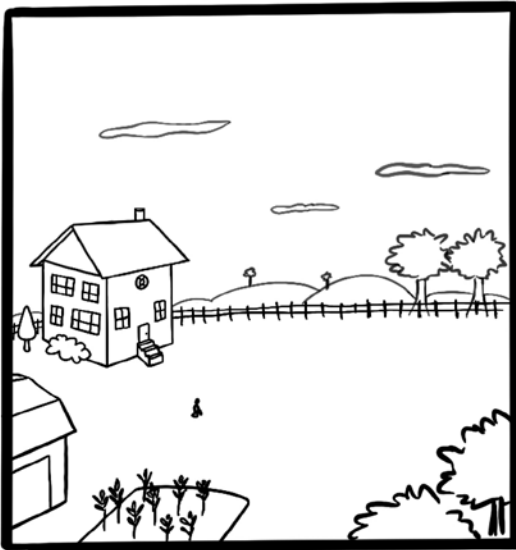


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ZÉ AND THOMAS IN "THE COW GOES MOO"

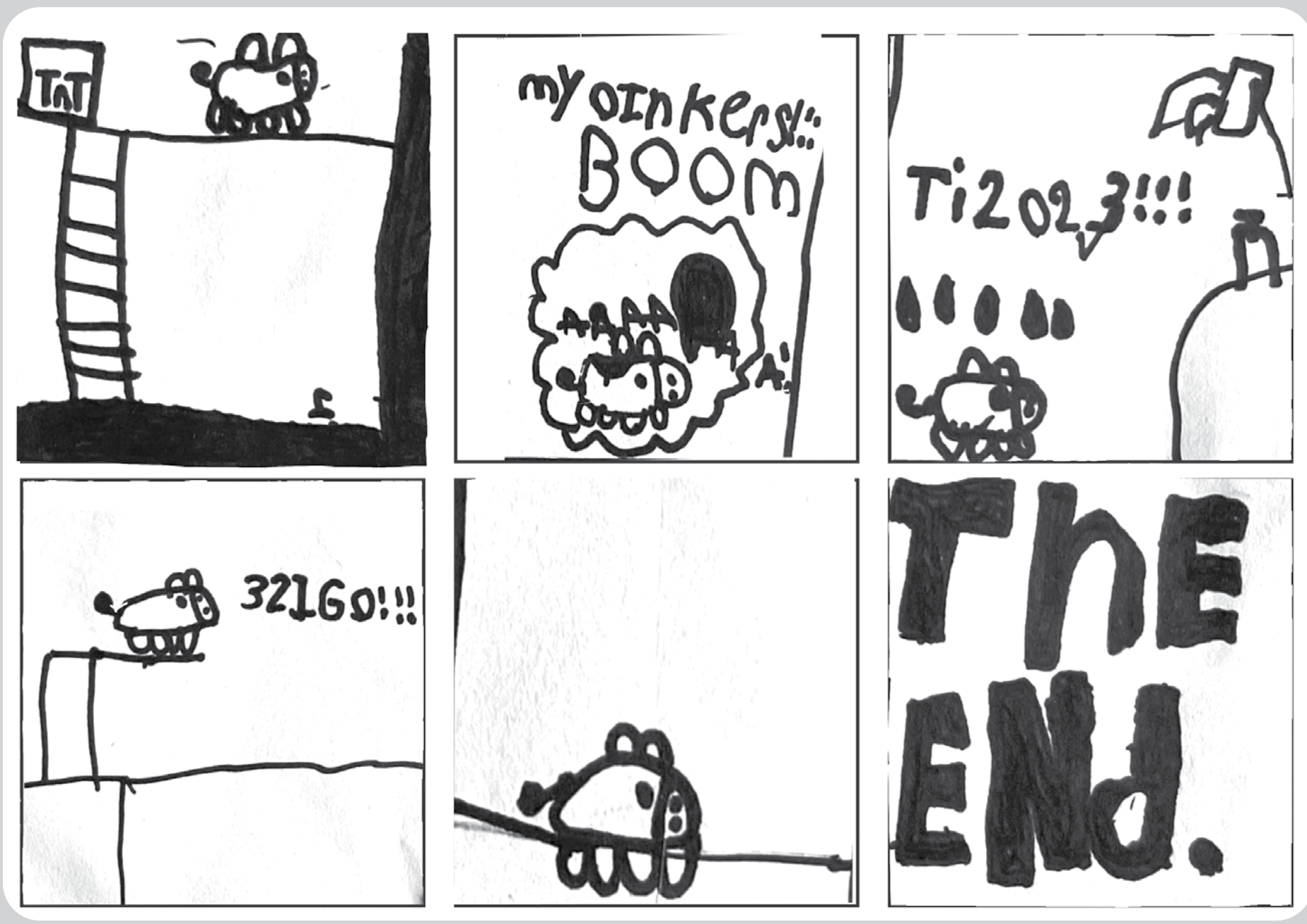
BY: JORDAN SWINT



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KID'S KORNER

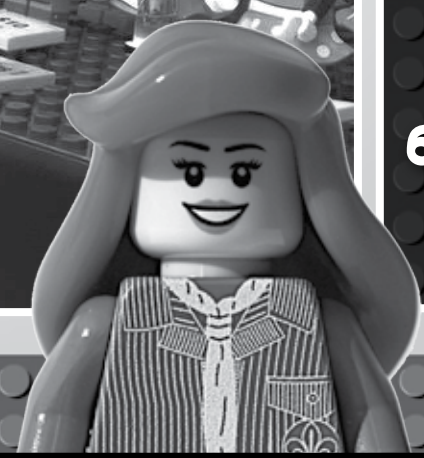
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ARTIFICIAL COMICS

A first-hand exploration of AI art and its viability in comics.

By Steve Steiner

Well, those Silicon Valley eggheads finally went and did it. They made artists obsolete, kaput, completely and utterly unnecessary. AI art has come to replace us all. Or has it?

The visual arts have long evolved hand-in-hand with technological advancements. The printing press, the camera, and the personal computer are all inventions artists have embraced and used for new avenues of creative expression. Can AI art provide those same opportunities? Or are we all doomed to bow down to a machine? Those are the questions I asked myself as I began to investigate several AI art applications to see just what I could get them to produce. What follows are my personal thoughts on AI art after spending hours prompting, experimenting, studying, and, yes, even incorporating some of it into my own comics and zines.



What is AI Art?

While such technology has been developed for decades and taken many forms, recently easy-to-use AI art applications have become more accessible to the general public. They are text-to-image models, meaning you type in a prompt, and, once you hit "return," an image, or collection of images are produced. In addition to the described subject matter, a user can include a variety of details to flush out their images, such as descriptive adjectives, illustrative or photographic styles, lighting direction, aspect ratio, scenery, periods in time, and even include artists for it to mimic. That last option is one of the main points of contention that has AI art in hot water.

Currently, a trio of artists have initiated a class action lawsuit against businesses Stability AI, Deviantart, and Midjourney. They argue that these companies used millions, perhaps even billions, of images obtained from the web to train their systems without compensating nor asking permission from their original human artists. Furthermore, these ill-gotten images can be used to replicate and mimic a particular artist's work, thus costing them jobs and revenue. Stock image giant Getty Images has also filed its own lawsuit, claiming these applications have infringed on their copyrights as well.

On the other hand, the companies in question claim

their actions fall under fair use. They defend AI art as being more than mere engines that collage together images on command. On the contrary, AI art runs on algorithms and builds completely original imagery from scratch based on mathematical representations of the data they have collected. Despite this, it should be noted that many AI art applications have implemented "opt-out" options for concerned artists that promise to restrict images from being implemented in future AI training. Critics say those measures are still not enough.

Whatever the outcome, it will take years to reach an answer to these legal and ethical questions. To make matters even more complicated, copyright and fair use laws differ from country to country, so AI art could become more restricted in some parts of the world over others. If you're curious, you can read more about the lawsuit at stablediffusionlitigation.com.

For those of you concerned, aside from a handful of attempts to test AI art's ability to replicate the work of some comic book greats (like the facsimile of Jack Kirby's Thor below), I mostly avoided using any specific artists in my prompts. While I have no doubt AI art can competently replicate the work of many artists, the results I received when trying this were less than stellar.



Of the AI art applications I experimented with, Midjourney proved to be head and shoulders above the rest. It consistently gave me polished-looking results and will be the main program of interest for this article. Midjourney is a pay site, however, with the lowest tier being \$10, so if you are interested in dipping your toe into AI art, I'd recommend starting with a free site, like Hugging Face Stable Diffusion (huggingface.co/spaces/stabilityai/stable-diffusion). You will receive poorer-quality imagery based on your prompts, but it's a good initial testing ground.

What AI Art is good at

Simply put, AI art is capable of producing high-quality, professional-looking imagery with nothing more than a user's imagination and an internet connection. It is the very definition of instant gratification, taking only minutes to spit out illustrations that would take the human hand hours of labor and practice. AI art has already been utilized in magazines such as *Vogue Italia*,



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIDJOURNEY

Photo, and *Cosmopolitan*, though one could argue this was done more as entertaining a new fad than using AI for its artistic merit. Judges at the Colorado State Fair even declared a piece mainly comprised of AI art a first-place winner in an art competition last year.



Upon first using Midjourney, I was immediately impressed with the slick, detailed work it produced. Its default style appears to be a painterly photo-illustrated look that offers an aesthetic that's sure to satisfy the vast majority of users. Celebrity likenesses and portraits are an especial strength, as well as fashion and clothing. Perhaps not so strangely, I also noticed all AI art applications I tried were very good at creating interesting robots. Color usage is another strong point that they were all good at across the board.

What I personally like the most about AI art is seeing how the programs interpret my odd prompts. Subjects I have input include a claymation insect beauty pageant, an avant-garde editorial layout for a lunchmeat magazine, elaborate geometric 1950s Jello molds, a vintage Cthulhu Sears catalog ad, and cereal box art created by famous artist Joan Miró (see opposite page for some of the examples). Results were mixed, but it was fun to see what possibilities the machine would spit out.

Beyond just typing in prompts, users can also upload their own images to use as reference. These images can be stylized or even combined using Midjourney's "blend" command. Both of these features offer artists opportunities to see their own work in a new light and can provide them with inspiration or new possibilities to explore they hadn't thought of. I like to think of this as a glorified magic sketchbook, able to provoke new perspectives.

Overall, I found if one has no preconceived notions, the AI results were usually at least interesting to look at. It was only when I had something specific in mind, more complex, that the programs became frustrating.



While many legal matters have yet to be addressed, a situation recently played out that might set a precedent for the future. According to an article published by theverge.com in February of this year, the U.S. Copyright Office denied partial copyright to a comic illustrated with Midjourney entitled *Zarya of the Dawn*, stating it included “non-human authorship.” The writer, Kristina Kashtanova, claims her direction of the AI algorithm and arrangement of the images into sequential form should constitute the work as her intellectual property. Her lawyer adds, “AI-assisted art is going to need to be treated like photography. It is just a matter of time.” The Copyright Office also ruled against the AI itself having the authority to hold copyrights on work it generates, comparing it to the famous “Monkey Selfie Dispute,” where it was deemed non-human actors are not legally entitled to copyright claims. These rulings appear to not necessarily preclude work with an element of AI art from being copyrightable, just those without the appropriate input of a human hand.



The AI applications themselves also have their own sets of rules when it comes to this issue. I’m unfamiliar with the terms and conditions of all platforms, but in the case of Midjourney it is stipulated that you can use imagery generated for commercial use (provided you follow certain standard guidelines), yet you have no exclusive ownership over the images you create with their service. Additionally, since they operate using public Discord servers, any user can snag the work generated by another user for their own purposes. The “sharable” nature of Midjourney is actually a feature they advertise, as you can search through reams of user-generated art once you make an account.

Moving on, I tried to put some characters into an action scene, especially those you might see in a comic. Throwing a punch, shooting a gun, someone reeling in pain, and even something I thought would be simple, like a woman slapping another woman, took a slew of tries without many results I was happy with. Introducing more than one figure into the mix, like two people in a struggle, never quite seemed to work out either. To make matters even more difficult, sometimes the wording of these prompts were on the program’s list of banned words. More than once, a warning message popped up that my entire account could get suspended if I continued, forcing me to carefully reword my prompts. The reasoning behind such a measure is obvious, as I’m sure bad actors can think up all sorts of sick fantasies to illustrate with this technology. It’s a safeguard I don’t disagree with, but it solidifies my experiences that getting it to generate a solid PG-13 rated fight scene is tough.

Getting Midjourney to create anything with words in it is also nigh impossible. You might manage to get something short, like “Stop” or “Go.” Anything else will appear as an alien language or even be simplified down to marks that resemble a bar code. For now, at least, human letterers are irreplaceable by the machine.



The stuff AI Art isn’t that great at

Let’s start with an obvious one. The most well-known failing of AI art is its often inability to create believable human anatomy. I’ve witnessed all manner of grotesque monstrosities with arms and legs contorted, multiplied, or merged in horrifying ways. These bold and strange freak shows were actually what first attracted me to experiment with AI art. There’s nothing inherently wrong about enjoying these images for what they are, but if your ultimate goal is to illustrate a particular scene or idea, these oddities distract from the overall message. Hands especially have become a meme at this point for the downright mind-blowing mutations the AI generates. In all my attempts to have it create a believable handshake, none came close. In general, it seems AI art does well at creating stoic humans cropped just above the waist that passively look straight ahead for the camera. Getting a figure in any action pose, such as running, grabbing, holding an object, swimming, etc, is a gamble, with nearly all of my attempts deemed unsatisfactory.

The glossy, digital veneer most Midjourney images have that I mentioned earlier probably appeals to most people, but the more I used it, the more stale it became. For me, there’s an unnatural quality about it that’s inhuman in how ideal it is. Even as I tried to get it to express other, more photographic and realistic styles, the plastic artificialness would consistently creep back in.

On the more practical side, resolution can be another issue for anyone who would like their work to be printed. Since these are being produced on the web, the files are typically 72 dpi (dots per inch), whereas a good target for print quality art is 300 dpi. Midjourney does offer an “upscale” option that helps alleviate the problem by increasing the file sizes to 1024 x 1024 pixels (roughly 3.4” x 3.4” at 300 dpi). According to one source, Midjourney can scale images up to a maximum of 1792x1024 pixels (or about the equivalent of 8” x 10”), but I have yet to progress to that level. There are also methods using third-party programs Photoshop and Lightroom that promise to get even bigger print-ready images with minimal pixelation.

Beyond these creative and technical shortcomings, ownership of AI imagery is also another drawback.

Can AI Art be used to make comics?

While there’s no doubt AI art can create pretty pictures en masse, there’s more to making comics than that. As I delved deeper into testing Midjourney’s capabilities, I found getting it to create images that tell a story to be very difficult. Foremost, creating consistent characters in a variety of poses was an overall failure. Even when uploading reference images, Midjourney would add subtle changes, such as altering the hairstyle or clothing. Sometimes it would do it slightly. Other times it would completely change major features in an undesired direction. Capturing the same character from different camera angles was another challenge I stumbled into. Straight ahead, profile, and three-quarters shots worked out okay, but Midjourney would usually only generate these figures cropped at the waist. Getting it to give me a variety of angles showing a full-bodied character never happened, no matter how many alternate ways I input the prompts. You can see some of what I’m talking about in the images to the right.

I also attempted to get the same face to express a range of emotions from happiness, to rage, to surprise, to sadness. Midjourney can nail the smiling part. The others may or may not come through. Many times, it generated faces that appeared smushed, contorted, and confused. Perhaps those are fitting representations from a machine that has never known emotions.



With my results less than stellar, I decided to look at some other creatives that have managed to make comics using AI art. After a quick Google search, I found campfirenyc.com and downloaded some free PDFs of a couple of their most recent AI-produced comics, *The Bestiary Chronicles*. Written by Steve Coulson with art generated by Midjourney, this multi-issue comic series has great colors with pleasing illustrative styles. Coulson managed to keep the overall look cohesive throughout. More importantly, I found he had unlocked some secrets that allowed him to get more consistent characters in his work. Based on these qualities, I felt these comics were fitting benchmarks to examine.

As I looked closer, however, I immediately spotted that he encountered some of the same problems I did. For instance in issue #3, “The Lesson,” the main character is a blond woman wearing a blue jacket. She remains identifiable due to these traits, but her features, like her hair and clothing, varied on almost every page. There is

also a lack of variety of poses, with zero full-body shots of her. She never performed any action of any sort, more or less just acting as a mouthpiece explaining a story to a class of children, and never once did Coulson show her hands in 52 pages. The storytelling reads more like a collection of images stuck in a sequence rather than an actual comic.

The characters are much better in issue #4, "The Letter Home," with more variety of poses, and even some good hands are shown. One impressive image Coulson did get was a soldier believably holding a baby, something that gave me strange anatomical mutations when I tried it. On the downside, the issue again misses those vital storytelling elements that make an exciting comic. It read like separate images stacked in order and lacked an interesting flow. The action is still missing, especially in the war scenes. Soldiers mainly stand statically still with their backs to the camera. Giant kaiju monsters are attacking them in the jungle, and no one is running in terror, no one is trying to escape, and no one is even firing their weapon.

Do these shortcomings even matter to most publishers, though? In an article published by cnet.com, Coulson comments, "By the new year (meaning 2023), even the trained eye probably won't be able to perceive an AI-generation from any other. It's exciting and terrifying at the same time. But you can't put the genie back in the bottle, so we're embracing the future as fast as we can."

Putting AI to the test

With all of this being said, I decided to see just what kind of comic I could make using nothing but AI. Not only would I use Midjourney, the writing, too, would be

AI-generated with Chat GPT handling the script. You can check out the results on the opposite page and judge its aesthetic and entertainment value for yourself. Personally, I found the experience to be extraordinarily frustrating.

Aside from the disembodied hand in panel 2, everything started off well enough. By the time I reached panel 4, however, I was already forced to ignore details in the script, such as Dr. Sandy wearing sunglasses. When prompted, Midjourney would put sunglasses on all the characters, no matter how many ways I phrased it.

In panel 5, Dr. Sandy was to point at the sneezing man. Midjourney instead initially gave me a serious long-haired man that resembled David Carradine for some reason. No pointing anywhere to be found. I eventually had to compromise and put the two doctor characters off-panel to get a semi-believable sneeze.

The troubles only continued into panel 6. Chat GPT's script called for a person acting like a seagull, but I had no idea how to word that to Midjourney. Instead, I thought the joke might be funnier and simpler to illustrate with a real seagull. Midjourney still gave me weird results. Doves instead of seagulls, seagulls with multiple heads, seagulls with three legs, and seagulls standing in midair instead of flying were all images produced by the AI.

Panel 8 was nearly my breaking point. It made the seagull fiasco feel like a walk in the park. In the script, Chat GPT directed: **[Dr. Sandy and Missy approach a beach umbrella where Dr. Waves, a doctor in swim trunks and a Hawaiian shirt, treats a woman with a snorkel.]**

This is when I found out Midjourney has no idea what a snorkel is. Prompt after prompt, it just got worse. When

I gave up on a believable snorkel, it became apparent Midjourney wanted the beach umbrella to be the star of the show. Then there was an odd cameo from a Rosie O'Donnell lookalike. After that, I think Midjourney got fed up as well and started giving me weird sci-fi art. After spending about 45 minutes on it, I picked the only usable image and declared it "good enough." See below for some of the rejects that had my blood boiling.



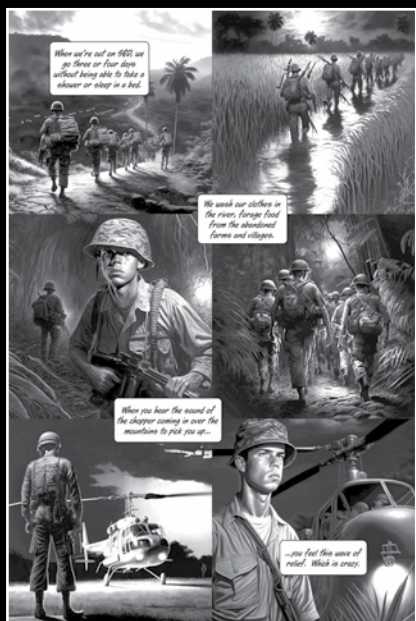
(RIGHT) Some excerpts from *The Bestiary Chronicles #3* demonstrating a selection of the static and repetitive character poses. If you look closely, you can also see the various irregularities in the character's clothing and hairstyle.

(BELOW) These pages from *The Bestiary Chronicles #4* are an improvement and even show the character holding a piece of paper. The page on the right is, in my opinion, the most successful example of storytelling I found in the book.

(BELOW LEFT) More pages from issue #4, the imagery lacks any feeling of movement. Characters' backs are to the reader, further creating an emotional divide.

(BELOW MIDDLE) A soldier holding a baby in a believable way. In my experiments, results like this were few and far between.

(BELOW RIGHT) This monster reveal lacks punch and is an emotional let down due to the stagnant foreground character. Besides the oddly constructed tank, it also appears the author attempted to hide the odd rifle and hand of the soldier with a strategically placed caption.



The final panel was another head-scratcher, as the script called for Dr. Waves to reappear with the two lady doctors. For all my efforts, Midjourney was determined to make him the star of the show. It would not put him in the background so Missy could get the final word. As you can see, my solution was just to omit him altogether. Another funny tidbit was the AI attempting to give everyone mustaches to match Dr. Waves' look.

Overall, I had Midjourney produce about 350 images total, of which I narrowed those down to the twelve that made the final cut of *Beach Doctors*. Based on this exercise, I do not feel AI art demonstrated the ability to be a serviceable comic-making tool on its own.

Final Thoughts

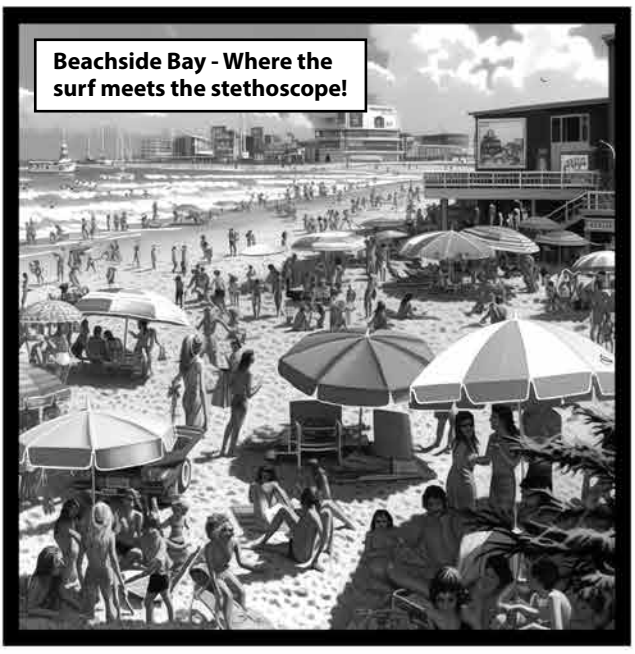
As I was preparing for this article, I was reminded of a conversation I had with my roommate over 20 years ago when I was a freshman in college. He was excited about the release of *Final Fantasy: Spirits Within*, a computer animated movie based in part on the video game. While the film seems to be forgotten by the public today, at the time, critics and fans praised it for the photorealism of the characters. Remember, this was in 2001 and CGI was still new and exciting.

My roommate proudly proclaimed that this film was so brilliant, it was the harbinger of the end of human actors. They were now all replaceable by technology. Never a fan of my roommate's dumb opinions, I disagreed and pointed out he was discounting the contributions of the voice actors in the film, as well as others who were no doubt used as reference by the animators. Additionally, I argued audiences will never want to see fake people all the time, especially those who enjoy the theater and other live performances. Upon reflection, that kind of sums up how I feel about AI art.

Like all great technological advances, AI art is here to stay and will keep improving, further blurring the line between human and machine. That future may feel foreboding to some, certainly to myself and the other artists among us. We naturally worry about the added competition from a program that can do what we do in an instant, negating the skills we have put so much time and effort into honing. In the long run, though, I hardly feel AI art is a suitable usurper for the nuances and expressiveness of human art, especially when it comes to storytelling. Like all creatives, we will learn to adapt. Remember that CGI has not replaced the actor, the computer has not replaced the designer, and the camera has not replaced the painter.

Beach Doctors

PROMPT: Please write a 1 page comic script entitled Beach Doctors about the doctors that provide lifesaving medical procedures on patients that fall ill at the beach. It stars Missy Marie Higgins. She comes from a small town and is having a hard time adjusting to life on the bustling beach. It's her first day on the job and she's anxious, but excited. The other doctors on the beach will need to show her the ropes so she can succeed. The style should be absurd, humorous, and campy. Full of jokes.



Beachside Bay - Where the surf meets the stethoscope!



First day on the job... I hope I can keep up!



Hey there, Missy! Ready to dive into the world of beachside medicine?

I... I think so. But I'm not sure what to expect!



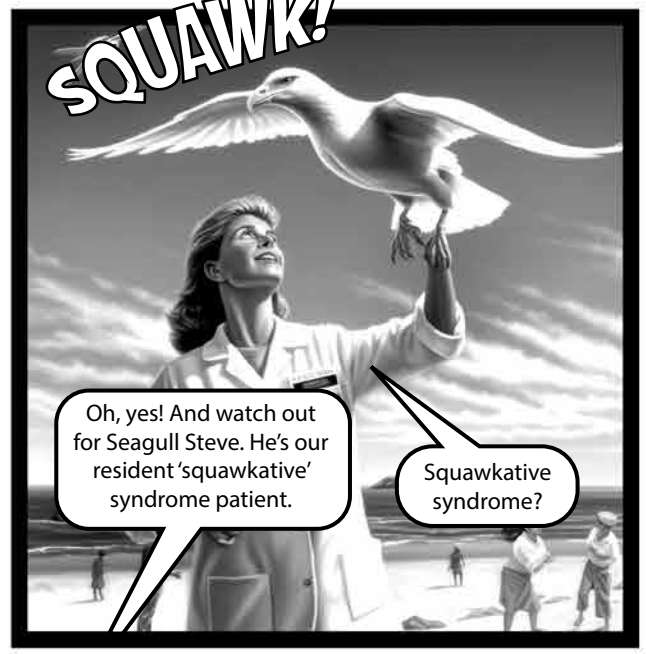
Well, Missy, here at Beachside Bay, we have our own unique set of ailments.



Meet Sandy Sam, the sand allergy king!

ACHOO!

Sand allergy? That's a thing?



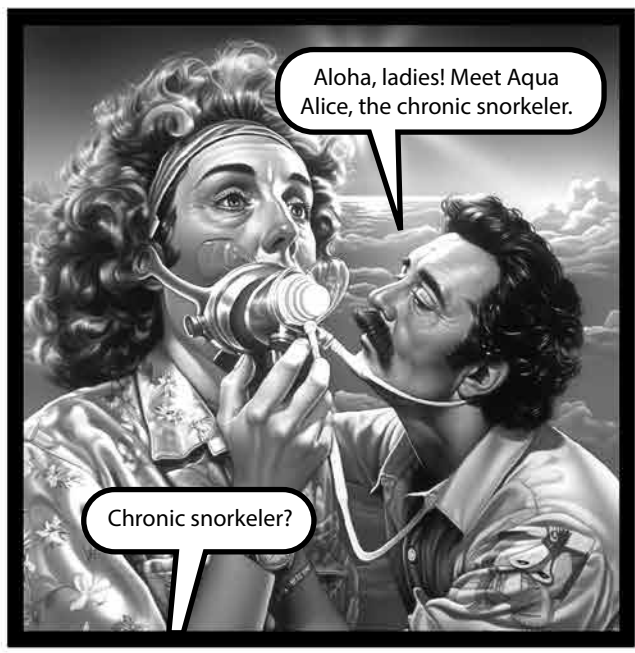
SQUAWK!

Oh, yes! And watch out for Seagull Steve. He's our resident 'squawkative' syndrome patient.

Squawkative syndrome?



It's like a never-ending seagull impersonation!



Aloha, ladies! Meet Aqua Alice, the chronic snorkeler.

Chronic snorkeler?



She refuses to take off her snorkel, even at dinner!

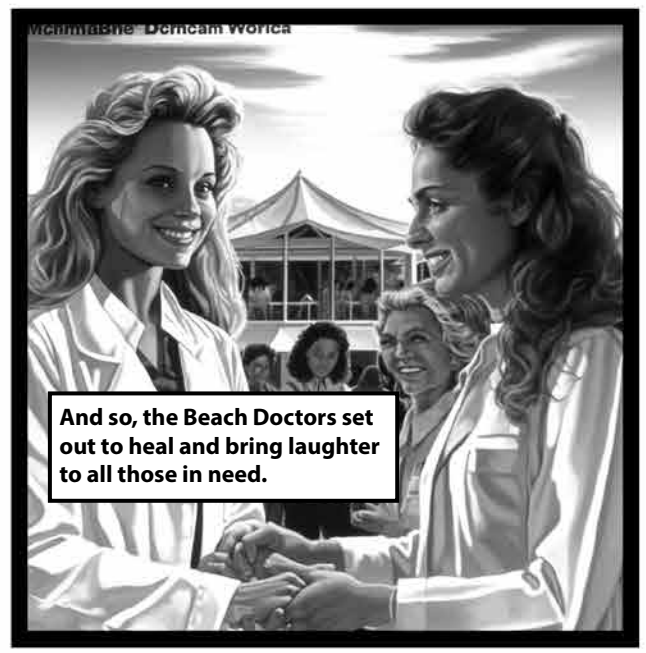
Wow, this place is... different.



Don't worry, Missy. We're here to help these beach-loving patients, no matter how peculiar their ailments.



You're right, Dr. Sandy! Let's dive in and make Beachside Bay the healthiest and happiest beach on the planet!



And so, the Beach Doctors set out to heal and bring laughter to all those in need.



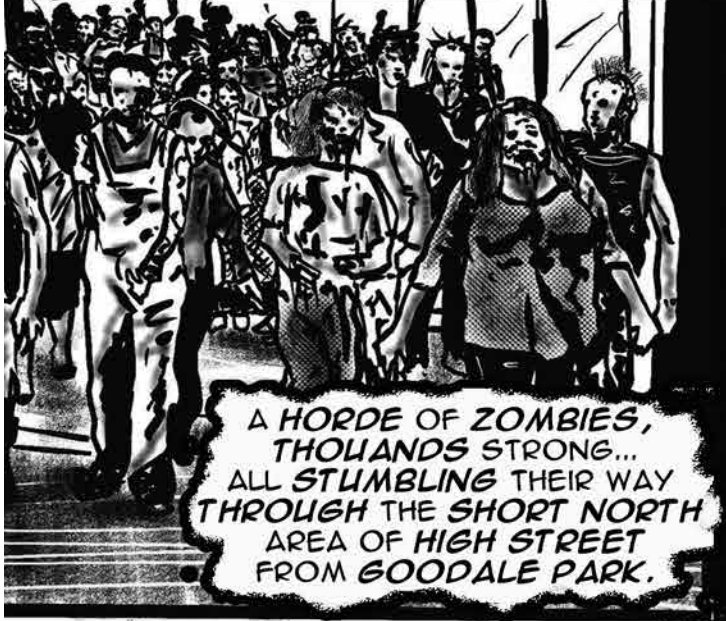
THE DEAD... WE USED TO WALK HERE ONCE A YEAR WHEN THE WEATHER BECAME WARM...



WE ROSE, THEN WE THE DEAD BEGAN TO FEED THE LIVING!



TONS OF CANNED FOOD WAS BROUGHT FROM THE GRAVE TO DONATE TO THE MID OHIO FOOD BANK



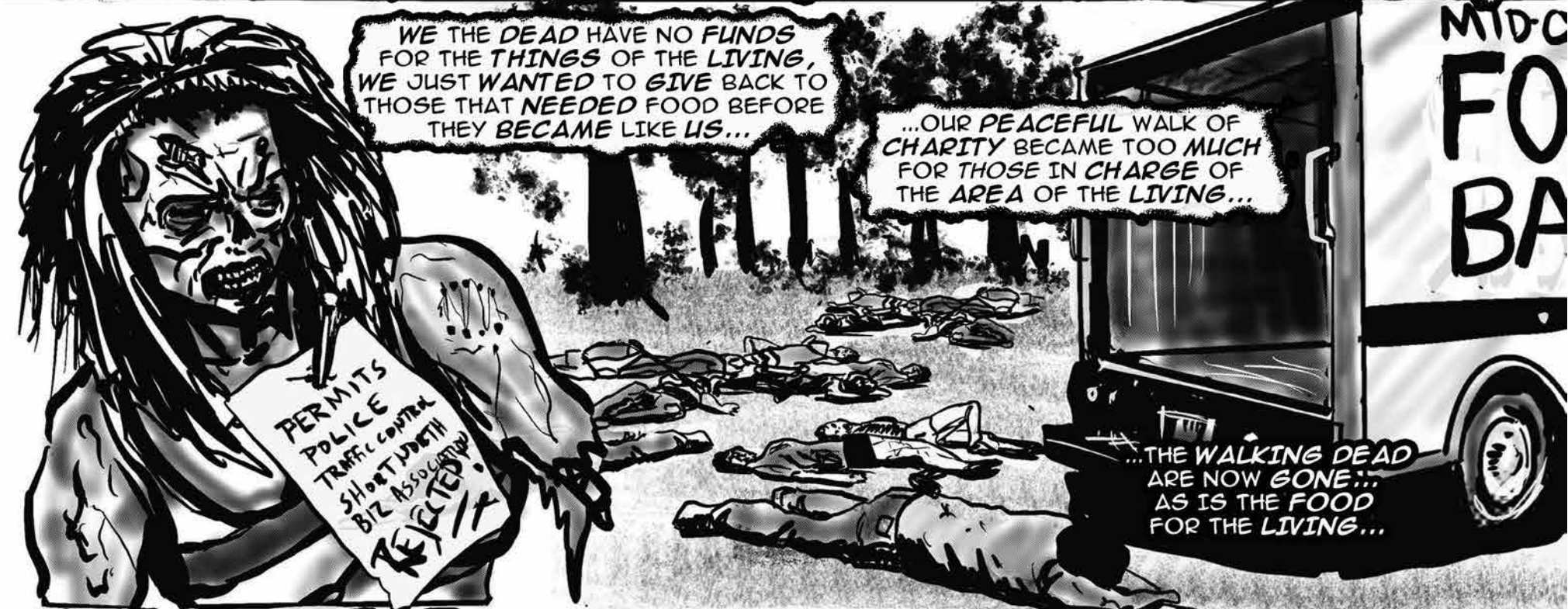
A HORDE OF ZOMBIES, THOLIANDS STRONG... ALL STUMBLING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE SHORT NORTH AREA OF HIGH STREET FROM GOODALE PARK.



BRINGING A MESSAGE OF PEACE & GIVING BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.



BUT AFTER YEARS OF PEACE, GREED TOOK OVER SOME OF THE LIVING CAUSING OUR END.



WE THE DEAD HAVE NO FUNDS FOR THE THINGS OF THE LIVING, WE JUST WANTED TO GIVE BACK TO THOSE THAT NEEDED FOOD BEFORE THEY BECAME LIKE US...

...OUR PEACEFUL WALK OF CHARITY BECAME TOO MUCH FOR THOSE IN CHARGE OF THE AREA OF THE LIVING...

PERMITS
POLICE
TRAFFIC CONTROL
SHORT NORTH
BIZ ASSOCIATION
REJECTED

...THE WALKING DEAD ARE NOW GONE... AS IS THE FOOD FOR THE LIVING...



THE STREETS HAVE NOW BEEN RETURNED TO THE GREED OF THE LIVING... BUT US...

BUT WE, THE...



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WOULD YOU ROLL ON OVER OR GIVE A GOOD FIGHT?			
EVERY DAY EVERY DAY EVERY DAY EVERY DAY EVERY DAY EVERY DAY			

Mortimer Foster ... @bacteriumbug

EVERY DAY IS THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE is a song by artist Rio Romeo

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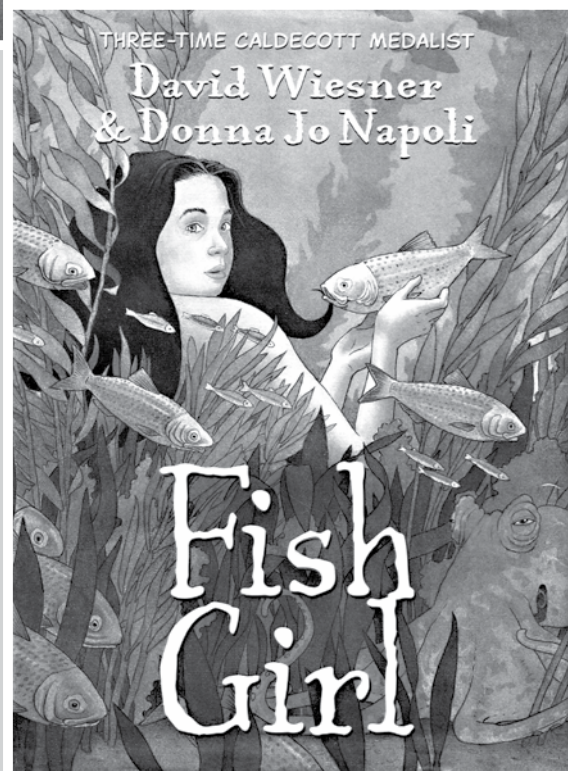
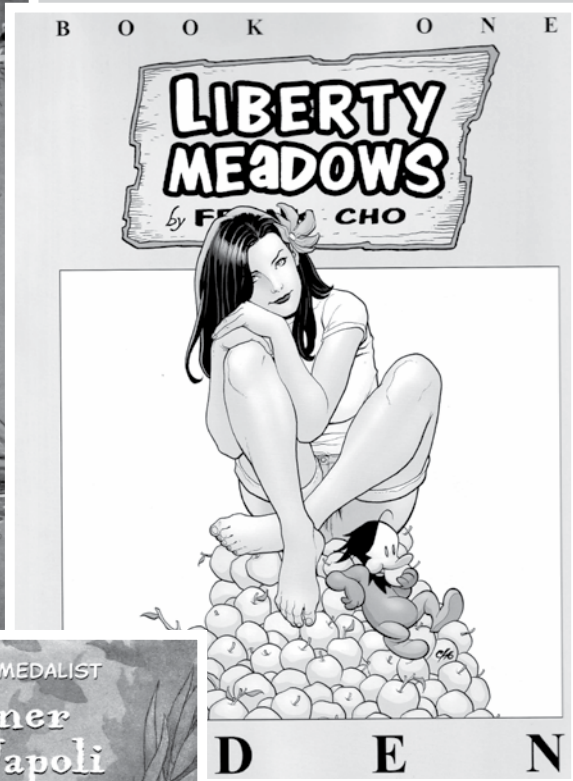
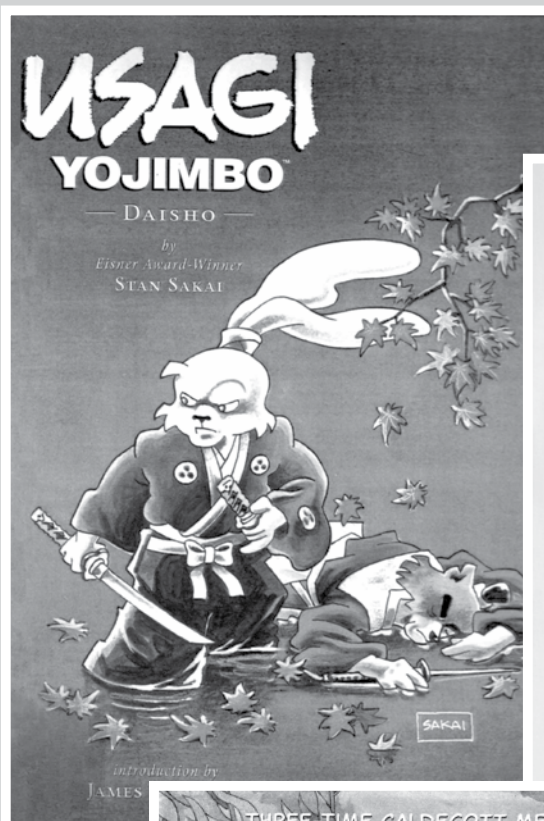
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COMIC REVIEWS

BY JACK WALLACE



USAGI YOJIMBO by Stan Sakai

Were you ever reading *Lone Wolf and Cub* and thought, "You know, this would be better if we lost the cub and made everyone an anthropomorphic animal?" Well, you're in luck. Usagi Yojimbo slices his way across the page in this collection from the long-running series. Samurai legends are always good fodder for comics, but Stan Sakai deserves every bit of praise for creating something niche (what if the samurai was a rabbit) and turning it into a fan favorite. Follow Usagi as he fights slavers to free a village, hunts alongside bounty hunters, and falls in love with an escaped princess. The black and white pages and simple panel construction make this book feel like the manga of old while the stories remain timeless. Published in 1998 by Dark Horse Comics, the series is a must-read for anyone craving the need to carry the blade of a samurai.

LIBERTY MEADOWS: EDEN by Frank Cho

Published by Image Comics in 2010, Frank Cho presents *Liberty Meadows: Eden*. Brandy Carter is a beautiful animal psychiatrist working with nerdy veterinarian, Frank Melisch. The two are subject to a barrage of funny animal friends. Raph, a small bear who likes to make dangerous gadgets, and his friend Leslie, a hypochondriac frog, are the main characters of this outlandish animal sanctuary. The black-and-white comics were originally syndicated and appeared in a variety of newspapers. The simple four-panel format gives you the feeling of reading the Sunday funnies, while Frank's expressive style and humor give him a seat at the table of great cartoonists.

FISH GIRL by David Wiesner & Donna Napoli

Clarion Books released *Fish Girl* in 2017, and the book went on to become a three-time Caldecott Medalist. Visit a boardwalk aquarium and you might just get a glimpse of the mermaid hiding behind the kelp. She's unable to speak or leave, but seems content to live with her master, Poseidon. That is, until she learns he's a simple fisherman that has been lying to her since birth. Goaded by the help of a young human outsider, Fish Girl learns she has legs on dry land and step-by-step, plots an escape with her giant octopus friend. The story is simple and follows just a couple of characters, and the panels are masterfully contemplated, breaking the tension in all the right places. The watercolor palettes help define a unique vision. We root for the fish girl as we follow her on her path to becoming a human. We may not like, but eventually come to understand the contentious and confused fisherman. It's a book worth reading the next time you come up for air.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY / CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

A graphic novel can be a challenging task and can take a long time to finish. There are also many points in the process where it can feel like it will never be done. The heftier the page count, the more daunting it can feel. Build yourself up to it.

Success builds off success. There is nothing more motivating than holding a finished book in your hands. With that thought process in mind, I decided that the best way to keep myself excited was to keep page counts down so that when I started to feel the lag of a project, I would be in a place where the project was almost done. To that end, the 8-page mini-comic was the perfect format for me. It has offered me a page count that isn't overwhelming and an opportunity to serialize my longer stories in more manageable chunks. Best of all, by having a shorter page count, I'm constantly completing comics which in turn has kept me motivated to make more.

DON'T BE PRECIOUS

When I was in art school, my teachers engrained in our heads the saying "Be neat, clean, and perfect." It was something that would echo through my brain whenever I sat down to draw. It haunted me and eventually locked me up completely for a while. I would fret and second-guess over every line I put down on paper. It got so bad at one point that after five years, I had only 28 pages of progress to show for it.

Here's the thing, perfection is a lie. Perfection assumes that there is an ideal. Drawing, however, is more like handwriting, everyone's different. That's what makes art interesting. Don't be afraid to show your true self on the page.

At the end of the day, it's better to have a completed comic than to continually work on something until it's "perfect." Everyone is constantly growing and changing and the only way to truly grow as a storyteller is to finish projects. Don't give yourself excuses to not complete things.

CHANGE IT UP

An excited, engaged cartoonist is also a productive one. Bristol board is not the only way, you can and should make comics on anything. There is nothing more draining than facing the same old blank paper with the same old tools to do yet another comic. If you find yourself constantly making comics on an 11 x 17 piece

of bristol board, change it. Do a comic in a 8 x 10 sketchbook. If you're always using nibs, switch up your tools. Make a comic on the computer or with a brush or a micron pen or even a crayon. If you're always on a computer, do something on paper. If you're always drawing in a hyper-detailed style, challenge yourself to do a comic in a minimalist style. If you're always drawing at a desk, grab a sketchbook and make a comic outside at a park.

On a similar note, there comes a time in every project's development where you're going to get tired of working on it. This is why it's important to work on multiple projects at the same time. This will enable you to always have something else to work on if you happen to not be in the mood to work on your main project that day.

Even more crucial, make sure that the other project is far removed from your main project. In other words, if you're working on an epic sci-fi geo-political drama that's realistically rendered and in full-color, make your other project a short, cartoony, black and white affair. The goal behind multiple projects is to give yourself a break while still moving things forward.

By challenging yourself and constantly shifting your approach to how you make comics you will not only be more engaged with your work, but you'll also grow as an artist. Add new tools to your artistic toolbox and get excited. Watch as projects you never thought you'd get around to are moved over the finish line. Embrace the new and get re-inspired. You may surprise yourself with what you produce.

TIME AWAY

It took me years to figure this one out, but you will actually be more productive if you give yourself time away from the drawing board. The reality is that no matter how much you want to be drawing 24/7, it's not healthy to do that. Making comics can be a punishing labor. Your body and brain need time to rest, recover, and recharge. It's okay to take a little breather. Don't beat yourself up about it.

Take a walk. Read a book. Get re-inspired. Relax. What you'll discover is that when you spend some time away, the next time you sit down at the drawing board, you'll be ready to work and things won't feel as hard. We only have one life to live, don't forget spend some time to live yours.

SCRIBBLER SHOUT-OUTS

A rundown of some current work by area creators you should check out!



THE SECRET HISTORY OF BLACK PUNK

Raeghan Buchanan

By Columbus artist and musician Raeghan Buchanan, *The Secret History of Black Punk: Record Zero* offers an illustrated primer on some of the forgotten bands from the music underground. Beginning in the 1940s with Rosetta Tharpe and what some consider the first rock 'n roll song ever, Buchanan chronicles Black punk, post-punk, hardcore and others through the decades. Published by Silver Sprocket, you can pick up a copy direct from their website at silversprocket.net.



SWORD SPLITTER

Max Schaller

And so it came to pass that the ancient sword born of blood and pain was shattered and scattered throughout the solar system. Now, factions vie to possess the fragments and wield the ultimate weapon in Max Schaller's heavy metal romp *Sword Splitter*. Check out the bloodshed and betrayal in this ongoing series at maxschallerart.bigcartel.com.



SCARLET HUNTRESS: RECKONING

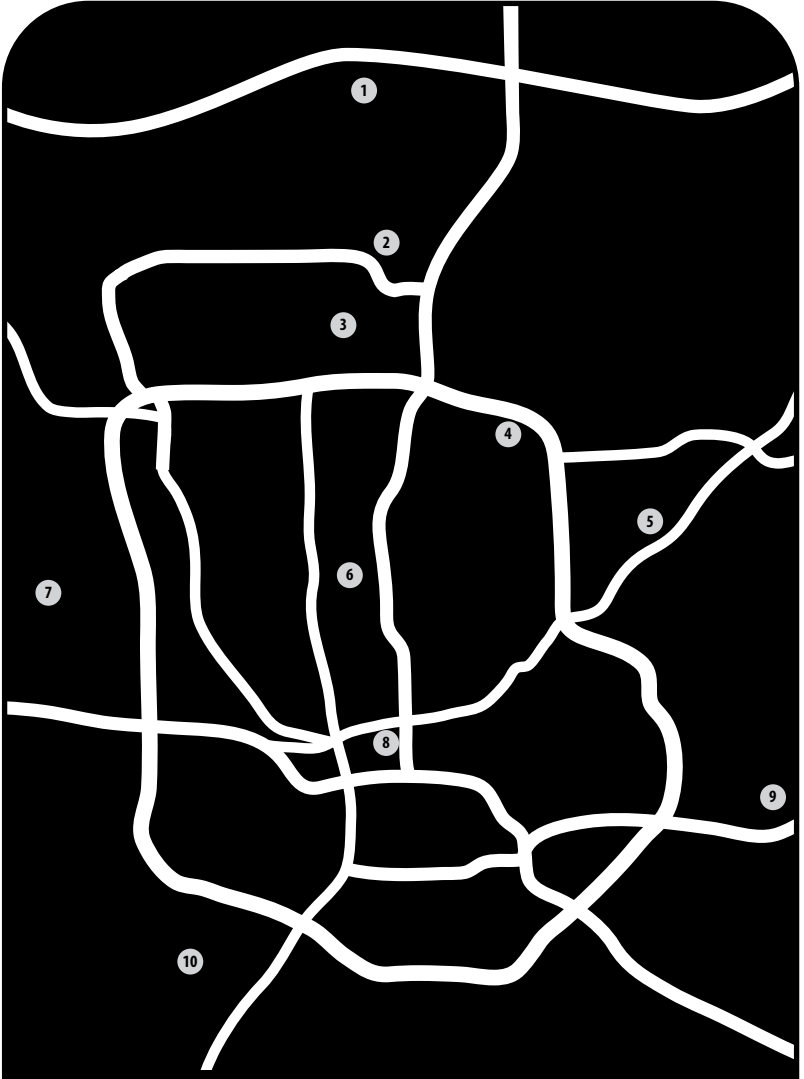
Sean & Stephanie Forney

From the husband and wife creative team of Sean and Stephanie Forney comes the culmination of the Scarlet Huntress's quest to avenge her mother's death. The modern day descendant of Red Riding Hood is killing werewolves and seeking vengeance as she and her team battle the villainous Malakov. You can get this, the newest release, or catch up from issue one at seanforneyart.square.site.

SMART PHONY - A CORNELIA STORY

Kel Crum / Yellow Sign Studios

Cartoonist and long time *Scribbler* contributor Kel Crum's signature character Cornelia has made the leap from the page to the screen. She is now the star of her very own YouTube video. Written and directed by Kel and with actress Ilana Jordan playing Cornelia, you can watch her first comedy short on the Yellow Sign Studios channel on youtube.com.



LOCAL COMIC BOOK STORES

- 1 FLYING MONKEY COMICS AND GAMES
- 2 DRAGON'S LAIR COMICS AND FANTASY
- 3 COMIC TOWN
- 4 WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS
- 5 KRAZZY COMICS
- 6 LAUGHING OGRE
- 7 PACKRAT COMICS
- 8 HEROES AND GAMES
- 9 CAPITAL CITY COMICS
- 10 SKYLARK TOYS AND COMICS

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

JIM & DAN COMIC & TOY SHOW

Sunday, September 17
Wright State University Student Union
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, Dayton

CINCINNATI COMIC EXPO

Friday, September 22 - Sunday, September 24
Duke Energy Convention Center
525 Elm St, Cincinnati

CARTOON CROSSROADS COLUMBUS (CXC)

Thursday, September 27 - Sunday, October 1
Check out cartooncrossroadscolumbus.org for a full list of events

HALL OF FAME CITY COMIC CON

Saturday, September 30
Canton Memorial Civic Center
1101 Market Ave N, Canton

THE AKRON COMICON

Saturday, November 4 - Sunday, November 5
Emidio & Sons Banquet Center
48 E Bath Rd, Cuyahoga Falls

TOLEDO COMIC ARTS FESTIVAL

Saturday, November 4
Toledo Lucas County Public Library
325 N Michigan St, Toledo

GENGHIS CON

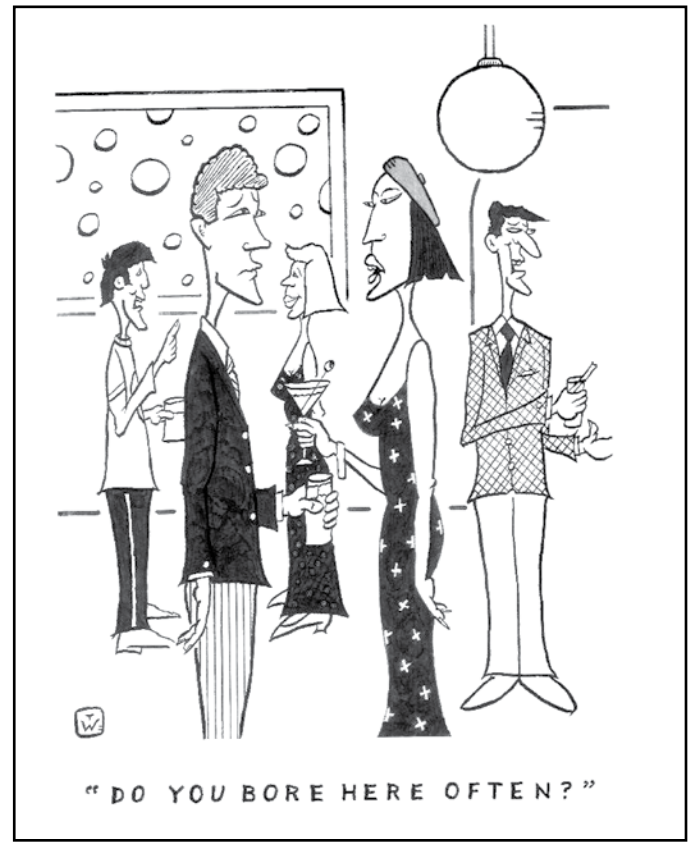
Sunday, November 26
The Pivot art center
2937 W 25th St, Cleveland, OH

GALAXYCON

Friday, December 1 - Sunday, December 3
Greater Columbus Convention Center
400 N High St, Columbus

THE FUNNIES

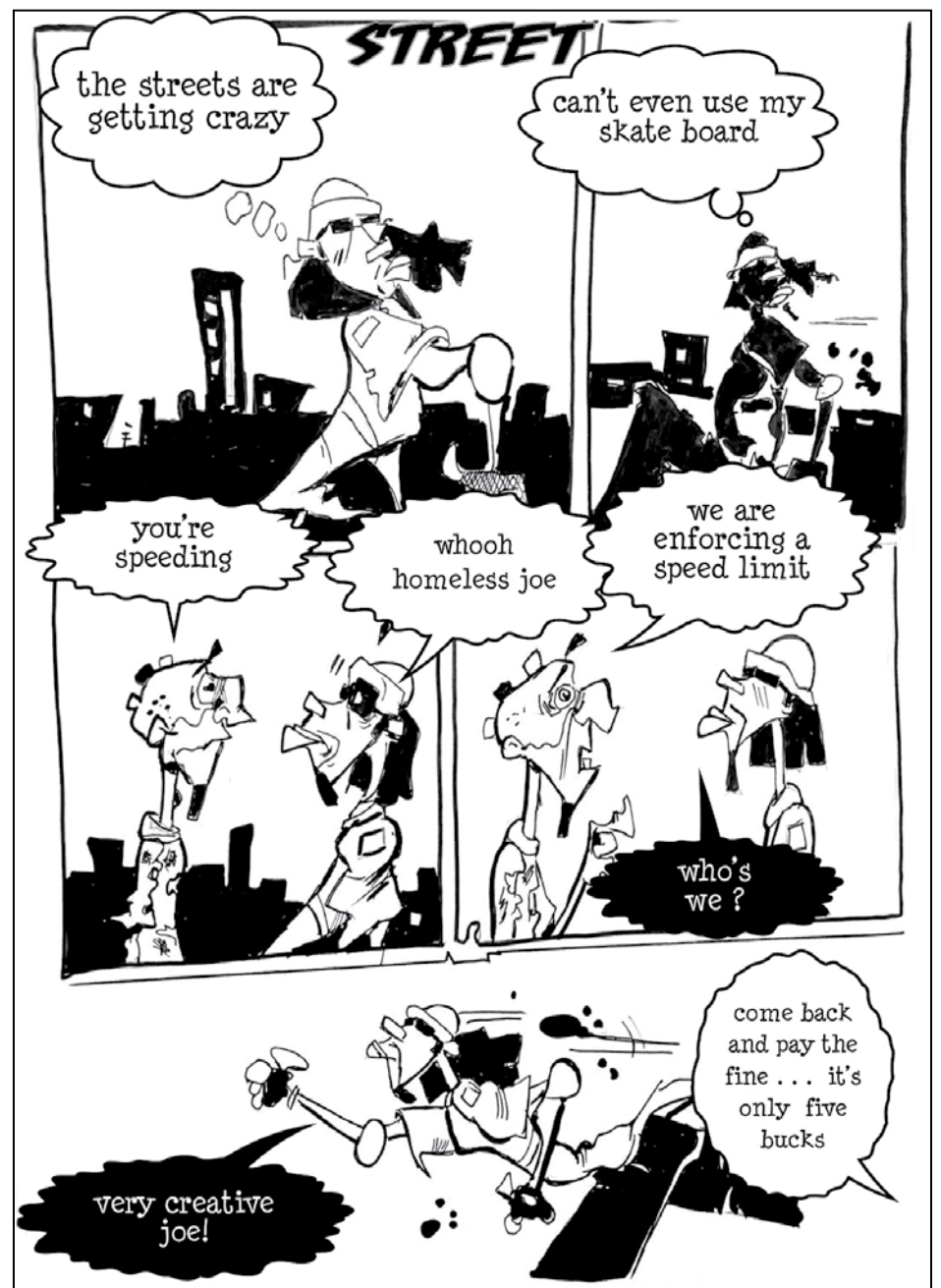
JAY B. KALAGAYAN, CLINT BASINGER & GEOFF RAKER



DOUGLAS CUEVA



JOHN BRADY



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Daniel Clowes (*Patience, Ghost World*)

Keito Gaku (*Boys Run the Riot*)

Jeff Smith (*Bone, Tuki, RASL*)

P. Craig Russell (*The Sandman, Elric, Coraline*)

Brenda Chapman (*The Prince of Egypt, Brave*)

Derf Backderf (*Kent State, My Friend Dahmer*)

Denis Kitchen (*Kitchen Sink Press*)

Shelly Bond (*Vertigo Comics*)

Ray Billingsley (*Curtis*)

Raeghan Buchanan (*The Secret History of Black Punk*)

Jessica Campbell (*Rave*)

Nicole Goux (*Shadow of the Batgirl, Pet Peeves*)

M.S. Harkness (*Desperate Pleasures, Cinderella*)

Mars Heyward (*Ride or Die*)

Jannie Ho (*Bear and Chicken, Fry Guys*)

John Jennings (*Megascope, My Super Hero is Black*)

Calvin Reid (*Publisher's Weekly*)

Chase Schulte (*NBCUniversal*)

Chris Sprouse (*Tom Strong, Star Wars comics*)



Scan for more info

September 27-October 1

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