

ISSUE 19
FALL 2026

FREE!

THE COLUMBUS Cribbler

CELEBRATING THE
COMICS, CARTOONS
AND CREATORS OF
CENTRAL OHIO



A MESSAGE FROM THE SCRIBBLER

Welcome to the 19th issue of the *Columbus Scribbler*! We have another stacked issue for you, exploring—among other things—the connection between music and comics. And what would a good music-themed issue be without a jam? We'd like to thank all the cartoonists who participated in our music festival jam cover at SPACE back in March. We'd also like to thank all of our local cartoonists who have contributed their talents to this issue, many of whose work can be found at your local comic store.

We'd now like to take a moment to remember Gib Bickel, co-founder and manager of the Laughing Ogre, who passed away in April of this year. It's fitting that we're talking about him in this issue, as music is an art of collaboration and community, and Gib was very much a person who brought people together. When the *Scribbler* was still in its infancy, Gib was the person we turned to for advice. His support and guidance were crucial in making the *Scribbler* what it is today.

On a personal note, Gib was the first comic store owner to take an interest in my art. When I was 18 years old and self-published my first comic, he didn't just buy copies—he put them on the new comics shelf the following Wednesday, right next to mainstream titles like *X-Men* and *Spider-Man*. It was a kindness I'll always cherish. He was a trusted advisor, confidant, and an amazing friend. He will be missed dearly. It goes without saying that the comic world has lost one of its great advocates.

With that, we'd like to remind you all that the *Columbus Scribbler* is made possible by you, the readers. You have the power to help keep the scribbles coming by becoming a patron of the arts for as little as \$1 per month. Donate via our Patreon account or through PayPal on our website (columbuscribbler.com) today, and help the *Columbus Scribbler* continue to inspire the future of comics.

Scribble on!

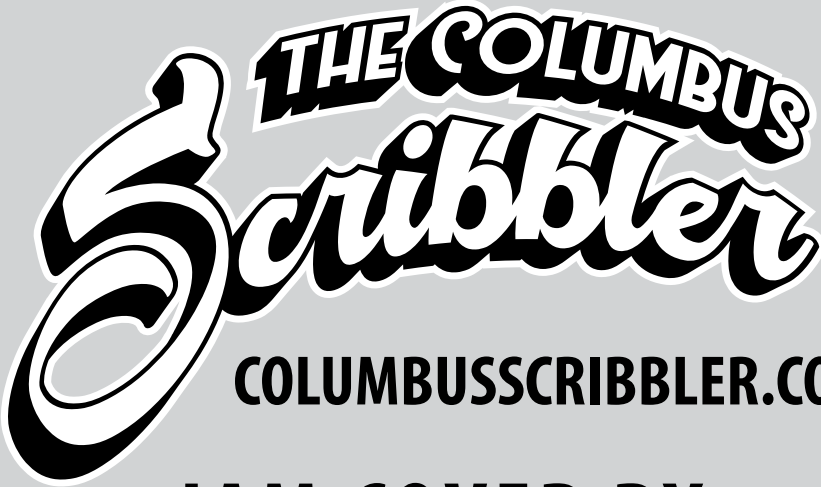
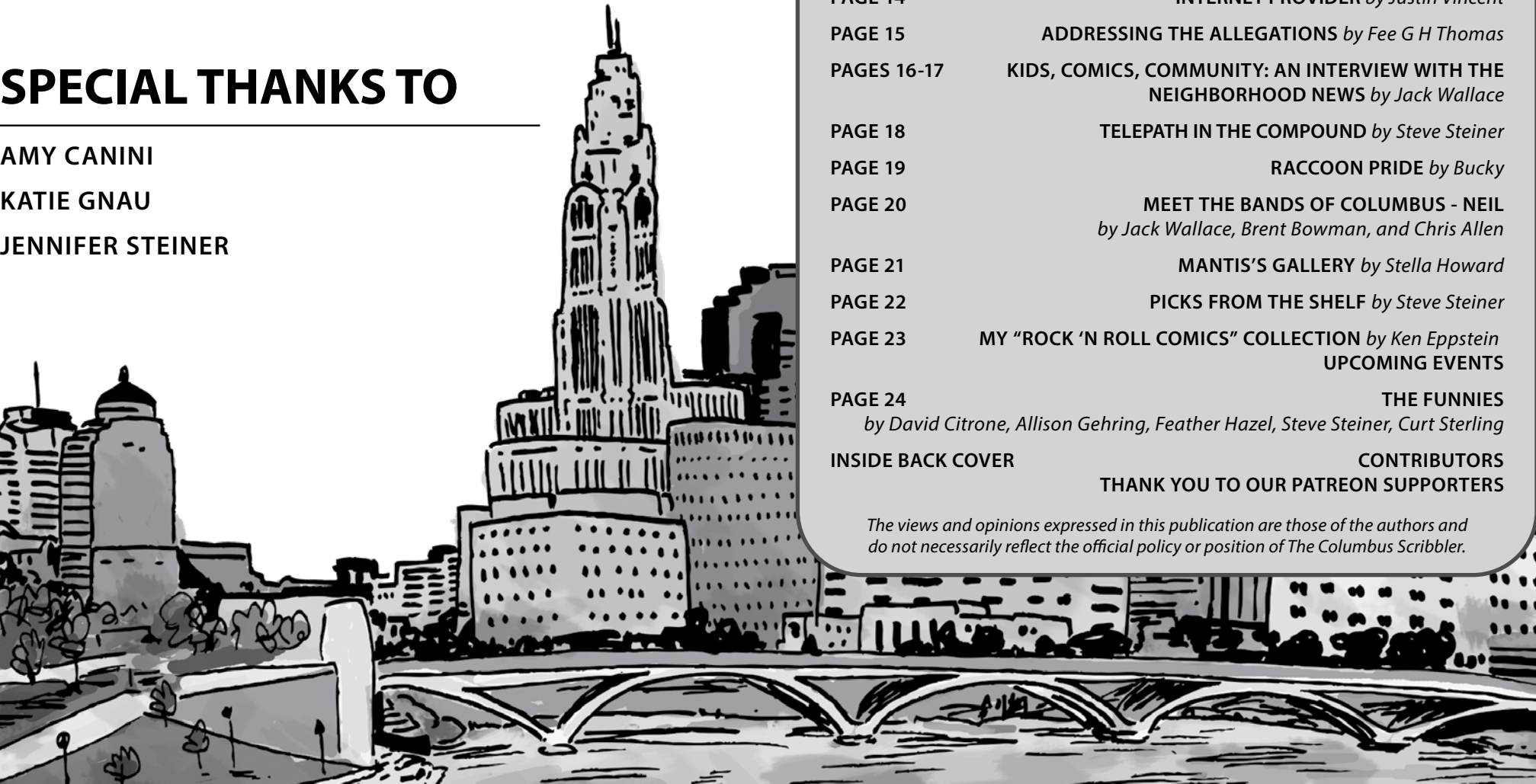
— Brian Canini

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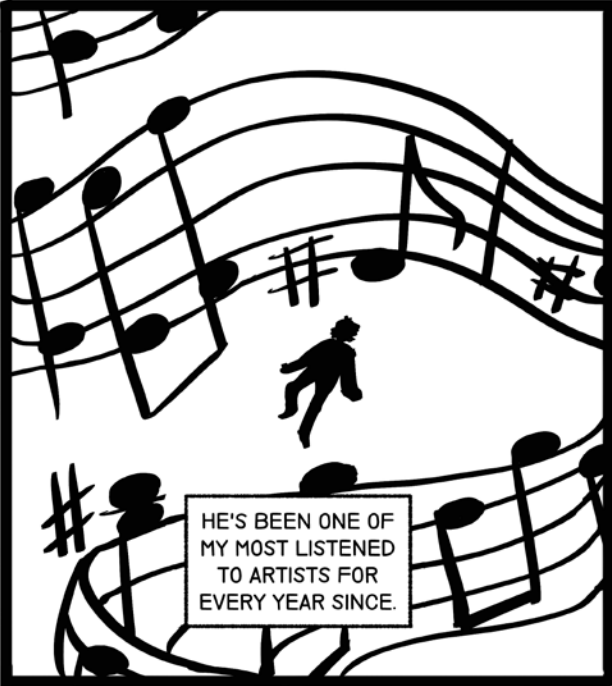
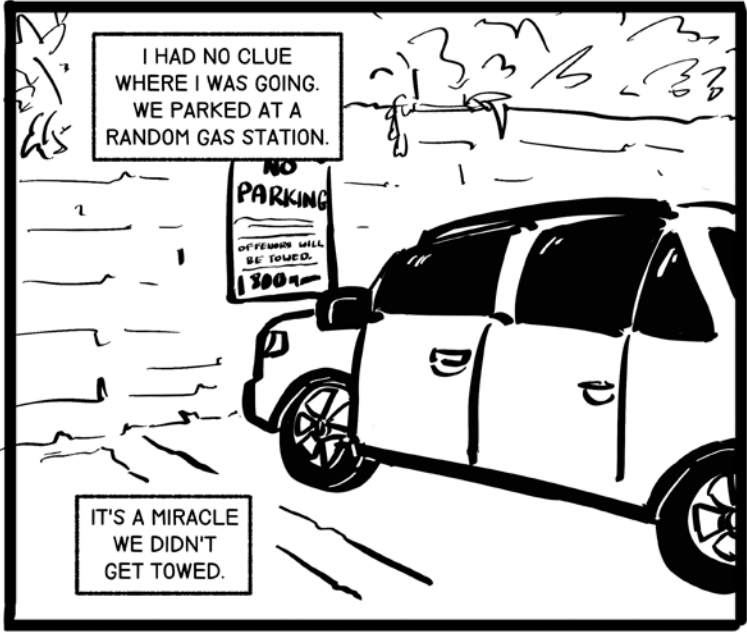
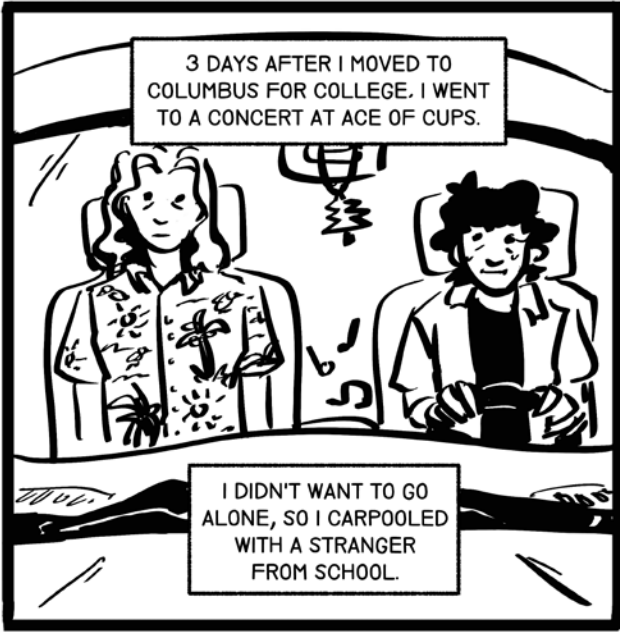
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BY JACK WALLACE

Music and comics have a long and intertwined history that often goes overlooked. It's a strange phenomenon: you can't hear music in comics as you do in films, yet the relationship between the two runs deep and true. We're here to take a brief look at a long history, including famous album covers by comic artists, comics about musicians (both authorized and unauthorized), comics by musicians, and more.



COMIC ARTISTS AND ALBUM COVERS

Jack Davis had been freelancing in the 1950's for horror comics such as *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *The Haunt of Fear*. When Harvey Kurtzman launched *Mad Magazine*, Jack appeared from 1952 to 2016 and arguably became the magazine's definitive art style.

In 1966, Johnny Cash was about to release his jaw-dropping twenty-third album, *Everybody Loves A Nut* (Image 1). This album was mostly a large selection of novelty songs, including tracks such as "Dirty Old Egg-Sucking Dog." Jack Davis had worked on the cover art for The New Christy Minstrels album for Columbia Records and for comedy albums from Homer and Jethro or Sheb Woole.

Thanks to the connection from Columbia Records, Jack was able to take Cash's songs and visually show them to hilarious effect, including Cash with one foot in a snake from the song "Boa Constrictor."

Perhaps the most famous album cover by a cartoonist is Robert Crumb's cover of *Cheap Thrills* by Big Brother and the Holding Company, featuring famed lead singer Janis Joplin (Image 2).

"The next weekend, Crumb came to our show at The Carousel Ballroom, sat on the floor in our backstage dressing room, and observed. He really wasn't into our music, but it didn't matter. It was maybe one or two days later, Crumb called Janis to come and pick up what he'd done." - BBHC drummer Dave Getz on the *Cheap Thrills* artwork.

According to Far Out Magazine, "Columbia Records' art director of the time noted: 'Joplin commissioned it, and she delivered *Cheap Thrills* to me personally in the office. There were no changes with R. Crumb. He refused to be paid, saying, 'I don't want Columbia's filthy lucre.'"

The original cover for the album was supposed to be the back cover, but Janis liked it so much she asked for a swap. Ironically, Crumb was known for hating the hippie movement and was quoted as saying, "I had no patience for any of that psychedelic pop music or crap that came in the 60s: The Grateful Dead, Jim Morrison, The Doors, The Beatles, Bob Dylan. I had little or no interest in any of that. I thought I had found some music that was much more real, that came from the heart of people's culture but had been wiped out by mass media and commercialism."

In the 1980's, Crumb would continue to immortalize his love of Blues musicians by creating "R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country." The work included his illustrations, biographies, and an accompanying 21-track CD of original recordings.

Lesser-known but no less influential was Charles Burns's album cover for Iggy Pop's *Brick by Brick* (Image 3). It was Iggy's ninth solo album, and Iggy was now clean and sober. The cassette tape was delivered to Burns, who had only a short time to produce the cover with no sketches or mock-ups. He used the lyrics from many of the songs as his muse and drew the characters you meet in them.

Commissioned by the art director at Virgin Records, Burns had never heard of Iggy Pop. When finished, he said, "I'm worried about my mom hearing this. There's a lot of swear words."

The only change came with the spectacled man in the middle. "In the original version, he had black hair, and they thought it looked too much like Roy Orbison," Burns said. Label mate Orbison had recently died, and this seemed disrespectful.

BIOGRAPHICAL COMICS ABOUT REAL MUSICIANS

Comic artists have long been fascinated by musicians. There have been countless music biographies in which cartoonists used musicians as their muses, some authorized by the musicians, but most were underground.

In 1962, Dell Comics published *Brenda Lee's Life Story* about the famed starlet Brenda Lee (Image 4). You would probably recognize her powerful voice from "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree." The comic reads like an issue of *Tiger Beat*, highlighting young life from European tours to the excursions riding dog sleds. It's likely that many of these had some truth to them, but were exaggerated to garner interest and sell more albums. It's safe to assume that Brenda had little to no say over the publication of this comic.

Published by Fantagraphics in 2015, *Hip Hop Family Tree* (Image 5) by Ed Piskor told the story of how hip hop went from a little-known art form in the South Bronx to taking the world over. Piskor cited Crumb's "Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country" trading cards as an inspiration.

Originally posted weekly on the comics website Boing Boing, the collection was picked up by Fantagraphics in 2016 and would run for an impressive four volumes. Each volume covered a new segment

of hip hop's evolution from 1971 to 2016 and featured more artists than we can list in our short discussion. It reached #7 on the *New York Times Best Selling Paperback Graphic Books* and was listed on the *Washington Post's Top 10 graphic novels of 2013*. In 2015, the second collection even won an Eisner for Best Reality-Based Work.

Perhaps the most interesting in the genre are the *Rock 'N' Roll Comics* (Image 6) published by Revolutionary Comics from 1989 to 1993. Todd Loren went by Steve Shapiro in the early 80's and started out by doing small-press conventions in Detroit, MI. His company, Musicade, specialized in Rock N' Roll memorabilia, which sold cheaply made band merch.

Rock N' Roll Comics started as just another product for Todd to sell. He would write biographies of bands at the pivotal points in their career and include as many salacious details as he could. The quality of art changed from artist to artist. Rarely did a professional artist take on these roles, as the page rates were low and Todd held the copyright of each issue. However, Stuart Immonen (a Canadian comics artist best known for his work on Marvel Comics) and Terry Dodson (an American comic book artist and penciller) both completed one-shot issues.

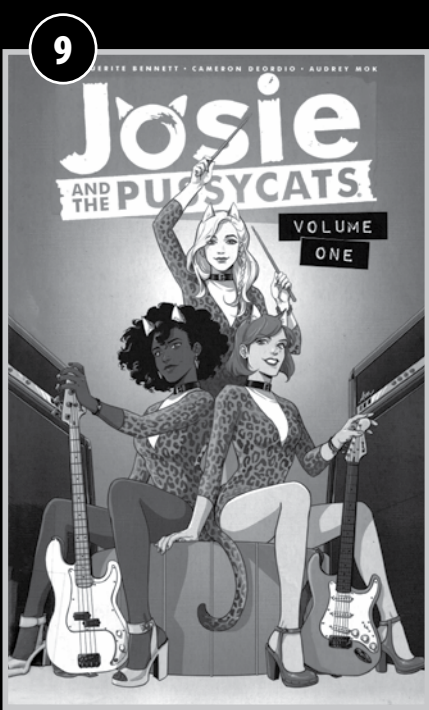
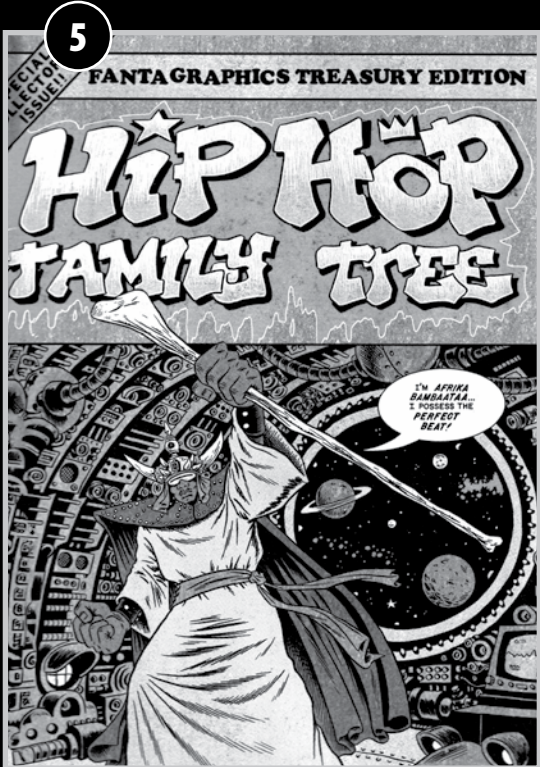
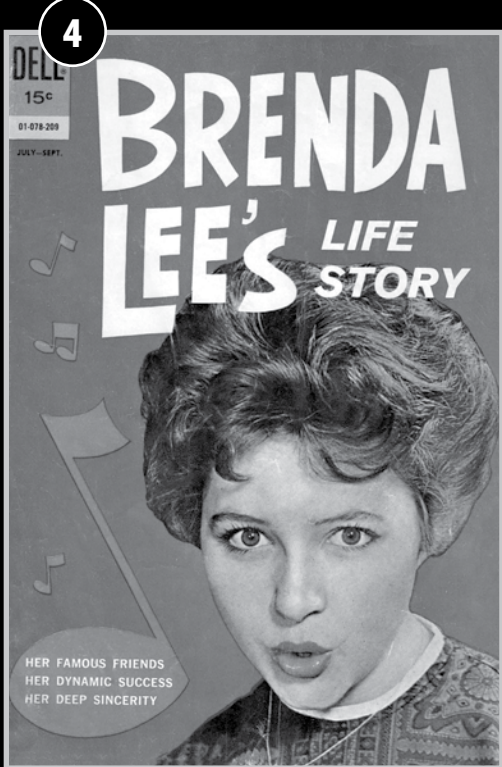
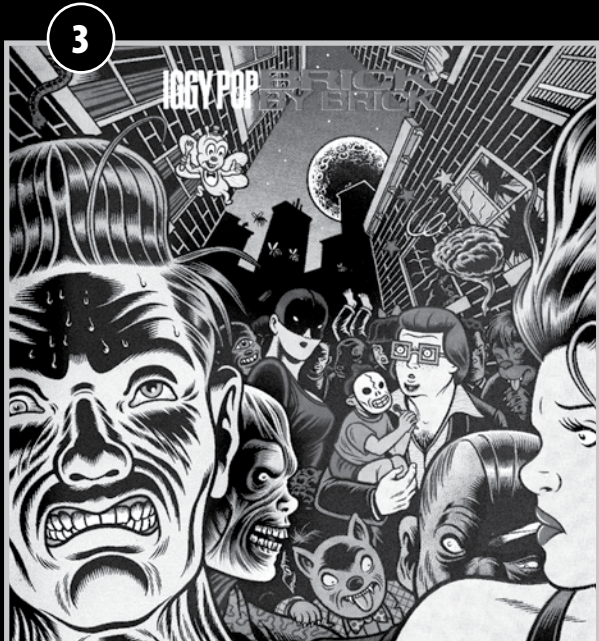
Todd had battled various legal issues involving *Rock N' Roll Comics*, whose subjects often complained about their depiction. These comics were considered legally permissible because they were deemed parodies and had the term "unauthorized" clearly written on the cover. In 1991, Revolutionary Comics (*Rock N' Roll Comics'* parent company) lost a lawsuit against the New Kids On The Block for trademark infringement. The life stories may be up for artistic interpretation, but trademarks were not.

At the beginning of the nineties, many comic book publishers were struggling, and Revolutionary Comics was no different. The move to color and placement on newspaper stands decreased the already thin profit margins. Todd Loren was murdered in his condo in 1992, and that crime has never been solved. *Rock N' Roll Comics* ended in 1993, leaving several artists unpaid for their work.

FICTIONAL COMICS ABOUT REAL MUSICIANS

Some artists have moved away from reality and placed their musical heroes in plain fantasy, as seen in *Henry and Glenn Forever & Ever* (Image 7). In this anthology-style book, Henry Rollins, lead singer of the famed punk band Black Flag, and Glenn Danzig, singer for the goth punk band The Misfits, are in a loving and committed relationship. There are a number of cameos as well. Their neighbors, Daryl Hall and John Oates (of Hall & Oates), are Satanists. Even a Sluggo version of Ian McKaye (lead singer of Fugazi and Minor Threat) makes an appearance as a local bully. The book even has a foreword by Rob Halford (lead singer of Judas Priest), for goodness' sake.

Tom Neely, over drinks at a bar, started this joke



that would not end with three other members of the art collective, Igloo Tornado. Since its inception, over 50 different artists have contributed to the multiple anthologies about Henry and Glenn. Neither the real-life Henry nor Glenn has confessed to reading the book. In an interview with *Reglar Wiglar Magazine*, “we actually showed it to Henry at San Diego Comic Con, and he signed a couple of them while saying, ‘Has Glenn seen this? Trust me, he would not be amused.’ Which became the blurb on the back of the book.”

Mass Appeal, the independent record label owned by Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones (better known as the rapper Nas), partnered with Marvel Comics to produce a series of comics called “*Legend Has It*” (Image 8). These professionally made comics feature the artists on the Mass Appeal label, including De La Soul, Big L, Mobb Deep, Nas, DJ Premier, Raekwon, and Slick Rick.

Meant to be sold as promotional companions to the vinyl albums and sold for \$50 a pop on the Mass Appeal website. The series premiered on October 10th, 2025, at New York Comic Con.

Written by Brandon Thomas (*Black Lightning*) and drawn by Sanford Greene (*Doom, Bitter Root*), the plotlines span multiple timelines and mix mythology with superheroes, creating a narrative that proves

rappers are there to help people through troubling times.

COMICS ABOUT FICTIONAL MUSICIANS

Josie and the Pussycats (Image 9) was first published in 1963 and ran for 19 years. Dan DeCarlo, who would later become most well known for his work on Archie Comics, originally pitched a comic titled “Josie” to Publishers Syndicate, but it was declined. The series was picked up by Archie Comics, where it stayed. In 1970, Hanna-Barbera turned it into the Saturday Morning Cartoon that most people know it as. Josie was the short-haired, redheaded lead singer, with her two friends, the vivacious blond Melody Valentine on drums and the dark-haired, multi-instrumental Valerie Brown.

The women deal with a variety of issues, like an inept, shifty manager whose twin sister often steals the show and sometimes the boyfriends, or crashing their mobile camper near a secret government test site that uses robotic monsters to simulate the potential hazards of space travel. You know, typical band stuff. The series became incredibly popular, including becoming a feature-length film in 2001.

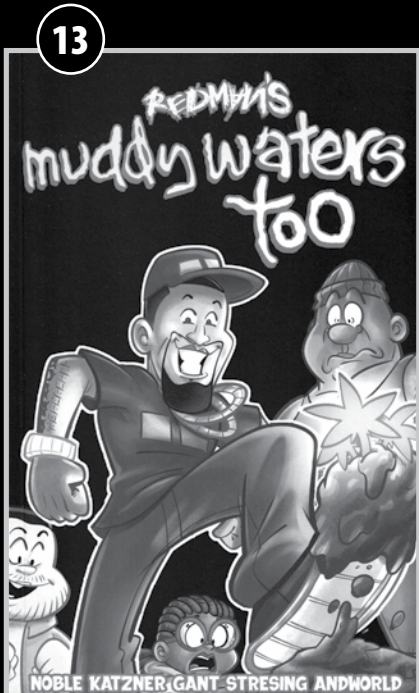
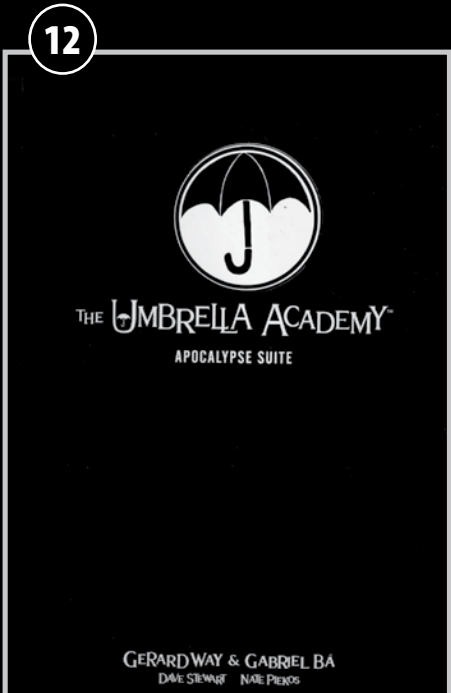
From Athens, Georgia, Abby Kacen created her own fictional band, Sid & the Sickos. Set during the pandemic, her band, consisting of a Martian, ghost, skeleton, and bat, goes viral. The unresolved personal issues make for a sticky band dynamic. She premiered her latest graphic novel, *We Are The Sickos* (Image 10), at CXC in 2025.

From right here in Columbus, you can check out Mel Sealy’s *Read All Over* (Image 11). Zoe is on a mission to create an indie music review zine in the Congo. Mel does a masterful job of including both the light-hearted fun and the meaningful. The anthropomorphic bands adapt the true love of the indie music scene to the page.

COMICS BY MUSICIANS

There have been several musicians who tried their hand at the wide world of comics, typically neither as writers nor artists, but as story developers.

Perhaps the most famous of those transitions has come from Gerard Way, lead vocalist of the band My Chemical Romance. His stunning comic, *The Umbrella Academy* (Image 12), with Brazilian artist Gabriel Bá, was adapted into a Netflix series. Gerard created his



first comic (a two-parter, in fact) in high school called “On Raven’s Wings.” Gerard graduated from the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York City in 1999 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and applied to both DC and Cartoon Network.

In an interview in 2019 with *Rolling Stone*, Way said, “In comics, I didn’t see anything like *The Umbrella Academy*. I saw a lot of things that were beholden to continuity that had been going on for 50 years and stories that have continued that long, but I didn’t see anything that threw the reader in the deep end and just got them into the good stuff right away.”

Vault Comics recently released a new comic, *Muddy Waters Too* (Image 13), from the mind of Reginald Noble, better known as the rapper Redman. The story revolves around a man named Doc who creates a new type of soil that allows plants to grow hyper-fast when the right music is played. True to form, the soil is used to grow marijuana. Once stolen, Doc and his crew have to tangle with angry ex-girlfriends and a man with terrible gingivitis.

The comic was named after Redman’s 1998 album of the same name. In an interview with *The Source*, Redman stated, “This comic book is dedicated to the Redman fans that love the Muddy Waters Movement. It was only right that I write a comic book to complement the album. It’s a great story—great graphics and a piece of me that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. My fans know I’m a good storyteller, and I wrote this comic thinking of them. Thank you, guys, for the years of support.”

Tori Amos took a slightly different approach in her book *Comic Book Tattoo* (Image 14). Instead of writing her own story, Tori allowed her songs to be used as the creative framework for a series of stories. Each artist contributed a fresh new story using the characters that Tori sang about. The book was organized by Rantz Hoseley of Image Comics and featured work by Kelly Sue DeConnick, David Mack, Columbus Native Tom Williams, and Laurenn McCubbin, former chair of the Department of Comics & Narrative Practice at CCAD.

From an interview with CBR, Tori said, “Creatively, I don’t want any censorship. Normally, when you turn in work as a musician, the powers that be say you have to change this or that. I don’t want there to be powers that be.” When asked about the role of female creators in the book, Amos stated, “I was happy that more women were involved. Rantz and I talked about that. We made sure there were women approached for this.”

Gene Simmons, lead singer of one of the most famous Rock and Roll groups of all time, Kiss, even developed a series of stories into a comic called *Dominatrix*. The story revolves around a dominatrix whose client has just revealed top-secret information during a session, and now she has to save the country. Gene refers to it as CIA meets T&A. The series had a successful 13-issue run at IDW Publishing before being picked up by Opus.

“I wasn’t born in America, and comics were my outlet. They visually told me stories about characters I’d never come in contact with in classical literature. Comics enveloped me in ways no other form of literature had. It’s quite gratifying to see how us fanboy comic book

geeks, who were once made fun of, literally rule pop culture...with the biggest movies of all time. We win!” - Gene Simmons from an interview with *Medium*.

We won’t go through each of them individually, but if you are still interested, check out these titles:

Tom Morello, the famous guitarist from Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave, created the comic book series *Orchid*, published by Dark Horse Comics, a political sci-fi story about an eco-revolutionary fighting a powerful corporation in a future world.

The Amory Wars was created by American musician and author Claudio Sanchez—best known as the frontman of Coheed and Cambria—alongside his wife, Chondra Echert, and other collaborators. Published by Evil Ink Comics, the title refers not only to the collection of works but also to the central intergalactic conflict that drives the narrative. This storyline unfolds across the books and comics and also serves as the thematic foundation for much of Coheed and Cambria’s music.

Superstar musician Scott “Kid Cudi” Mescudi makes his comic-book debut with *Moon Man*, created in partnership with Eisner Award-nominated co-writer Kyle Higgins (Radiant Black) and rising artist Marco Locati. After a failed moon mission, Ramon wants nothing more than a peaceful life. However, whatever occurred in the mysterious, unrecorded minutes the cameras missed contains an Earth-shattering secret.

BANDS NAMED AFTER COMIC MATERIAL

LOVE AND ROCKETS - Named after the famous comics by the Hernandez brothers, Love and Rockets was best known for their 1989 hit “So Alive.”

THOMPSON TWINS - If you’ve ever listened to a “Hits from the ‘80s” collection, you’ve heard “Hold Me Now” from the Thompson Twins, who got their name from the two bumbling detectives from the *Tintin* comics.

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES - A deep cut from the early 80’s pop scene, they took their name from a simple caption from *Daredevil* #77.

There are several instances of rappers using famous comic names, including Method Man (Johnny Blaze), Ghostface Killah (Iron Man), and MF Doom (Viktor Vaughn).

SONGS ABOUT COMIC CHARACTERS

“SPIDER-MAN THEME” / RAMONES - In 1995, the Saturday Morning: Cartoon’s Greatest Hits album had a slew of famous bands sing songs from their favorite shows, including Butthole Surfers, Liz Phair, and Collective Soul. The Ramones’ cover of the Spider-Man theme was easily the most memorable.

“MAMBO SUN” / T. REX - Glam rock hall of famer T. Rex had comic references all over his lyrics, including “I’m Dr. Strange for you” from Mambo Sun and “Silver Surfer and the Ragged Kid / Are all sad and rusted boy, they don’t have a gig.” from “Whatever Happened to the

Teenage Dream.’

“BATDANCE” / PRINCE - Originally, Prince was supposed to contribute just a few songs to the 1989 Batman soundtrack, but he created nine songs in six weeks.

“MAGNETO AND TITANIUM MAN” / PAUL MCCARTNEY AND WINGS - In 1975, Paul McCartney and his band Wings put out this little diddy on Venus and Mars about his girlfriend joining forces with Magneto to rob a bank.

“GHOST RIDER” / SUICIDE - The 1977 New York synth punk duo came out of the woodwork to create this love song to the hero with the flaming skull for a head. Speaking of comic references, Henry Rollins’ Band does an excellent cover of the song on the Crow Soundtrack.

“Flash” from Queen is iconic, but it wasn’t based on the Scarlet Speedster; it was Flash Gordon from the 1980 movie, which was based on a comic strip, so we’ll include it.

CLOSE CALLS

“Iron Man” by Black Sabbath is so well known and beloved that it was used in the film, but the lyrics clearly tell the story of a galactic doom warrior coming to destroy Earth.

COMIC CREATORS IN MUSIC

Recently, I was at the Nick Cave Concert at the Palace, famed for his song of doom titled “Red Right Hand.” When Nick went around to introduce the band, the ostracized comic writer Warren Ellis sat behind the piano. To my surprise, Ellis had joined the Bad Seeds in 1995, and they’d been playing music together for decades now. There’s no better proof that comics and music are partnered in a complex relationship we can’t fully explain.



There are so many more examples that we didn’t get time to include. Did you know that New Kids on the Block had their own comic line from Harvey Comics in the early 90’s? Did you enjoy it when Marvel put out a collection of variants for 51 hip hop albums? But I think we’ve proven the case that inspiration can come from anywhere. Though it may be difficult to say what inspires artistic works, we can always see whispers of recognition from one to another. As that relationship continues to grow and evolve, always be on the lookout for connections between the two. If you are bold enough to play an instrument or write a song and are looking for inspiration, you may need to look no further than your local comic shop.

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A Pinwheel Turns Again

Do you feel it in the air?

It's the laughter of our neighbors on their way to the rest of this year.

It's the scent of smoke and dead leaves that tells you and I

that life is changing again

and again

Don't worry too hard, you've been through it before and again

and again

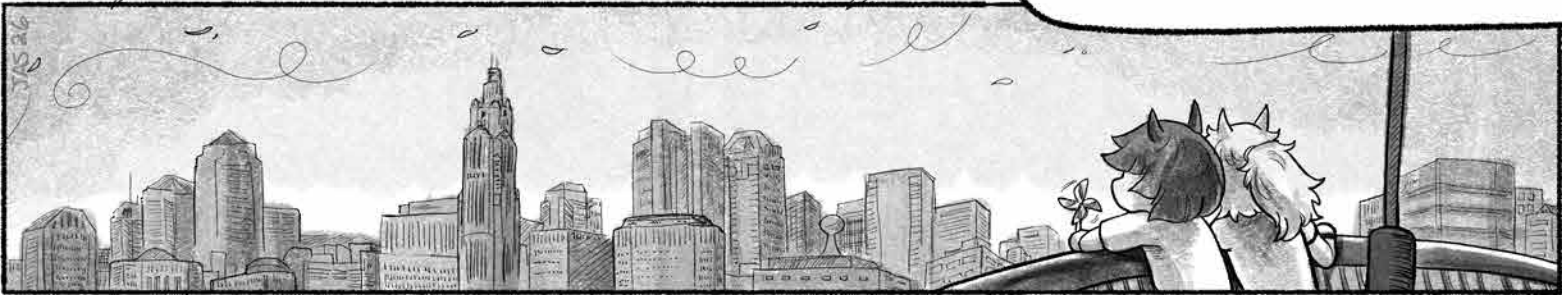
and again

And of course you won't be alone,

as much as I know how the breeze moves through this city every year.

I know you're with me

Let's live another one.



AS A REPTILE KEEPER, I'VE BEEN ASKED, **"WHY?"**

THEY CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK LIKE A DOG.

THEY'RE NOT WRONG. REPTILES CAN'T LOVE LIKE DOGS OR CATS.

BUT, ISN'T IT UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THAT MAKES US NURTURE WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATIONS?

FOR EXAMPLE, A PARENT'S LOVE FOR A CHILD IS CONSIDERED UNCONDITIONAL.

THEY LOVE WITHOUT EXPECTING RECIPROICATION, ESPECIALLY DURING OUR MOST DIFFICULT AGES.

MY TURTLE ALWAYS GREETES ME EXCITEDLY IN THE MORNING, OUR BALL PYTHON ENJOYS OUR BODY WARMTH, AND OUR BEARDED DRAGON ENJOYS SPENDING TIME WITH US OUTSIDE OF HER TANK.

Wiggle Wiggle

YEAH, I SUPPOSE IT'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THAT MAKES REPTILE-KEEPING WORTHWHILE.

THIS COMIC WAS WRITTEN SECONDS BEFORE OUR BEARDED DRAGON POOPED ON MY IPAD.

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by Brian
Canini



I'LL
KILL
'EM!!

Brian Canini 2026

THE SCRIBBLER JAM

By Jack Wallace

In school, there used to be a game called telephone. All the kids would line up. The teacher would whisper a phrase, such as "Billy is wearing green jeans," to the first child. Each kid thereafter would whisper the phrase they heard into another kid's ear. Finally, the kid at the end would proudly proclaim the phrase they heard, which would typically come out as something like "Sally is eating Cream Cheese."

There is a version of that in comics called a "comics jam." The jam starts when one artist creates a panel (or sometimes a full page) that begins a story, and every subsequent cartoonist builds on what's come before.

Jams were originally created as an offshoot of Exquisite corpse (from the original French term cadavre exquis, lit. 'exquisite cadaver'), a parlor game in which surrealist painters would draw pieces of a body, each seeing only the drawing before them, not the project as a whole. In the 1960's, Zap Comix were working on jams as part of their covers. Most of these were not panel-by-panel comics, but more piecemeal illustrations.

Heroes for Hope was another interesting comics assembly of different artists, though it's hard to call it a comic jam in the original sense. In 1985, Marvel produced a new X-Men book as a benefit to assist with the African famine. With a

script from a single writer, each artist would take a new page. The relief and recovery raised \$150,000 for the American Friends Service Committee.

Today, with the internet, contributing to jams has become easier than ever. Take Small Press Heroes, for example. This small organization is currently on page 135 of their "Sunday Jam! Comics," about a boy and his dog. With everyone creating a new page, their website features over 65 creators, including locals like Kel Crum, Maryanne Rose Papke, Steve Steiner, and Bob Corby.

We decided to try our hand at creating our own comic jam for this issue. After finding people who might be interested, I started with a comic panel of my own. To start, I got Bob Corby's permission to use his character, Mike (who belongs to Bob Corby; all rights reserved). Each person was given the dimensions and was given one rule: "Don't kill off the character or blow up the world." There's always one in a group that wants to ruin the party, so we decided to nip that in the bud. Here is the wild and wacky tale of Mike and his walk in the park. No one could have guessed how it would end. A huge thanks to everyone who contributed.

- Surrealist Games by A. Brochie & M. Gooding
- "Comix Jams!" by SalgoodSam.com
- "Marvel Heroes for Hope" by Peter Sanderson; Marvel Age. No. 32
- SmallPressHeroes.com

JAM CONTRIBUTORS



1) JACK WALLACE
disposable
fictioncomics.com



2) BOB CORBY
backporch
comics.com



3) MICHAEL CARROLL
facebook.com/
mackeral1964



4) SYDNEY KIT
sydneykit.com



5) RHEN ROLLINS
instagram.com/
arbitrarily.artt



6) WIDDRSHINS
linktr.ee/
widdrshins



7) CHANDU TENNETY
tennety.art



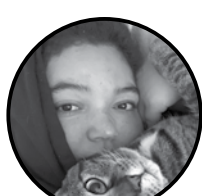
8) MAKAYLA DAVIS
instagram.com/
makayladavis_art



9) BEN WRIGHT-HEUMAN
bwhcomics.com



10) BRENT BOWMAN
facebook/ The-Art
-of-Brent-Bowman



11) MEL SEALY
instagram.com/
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12) HAN HAMPY
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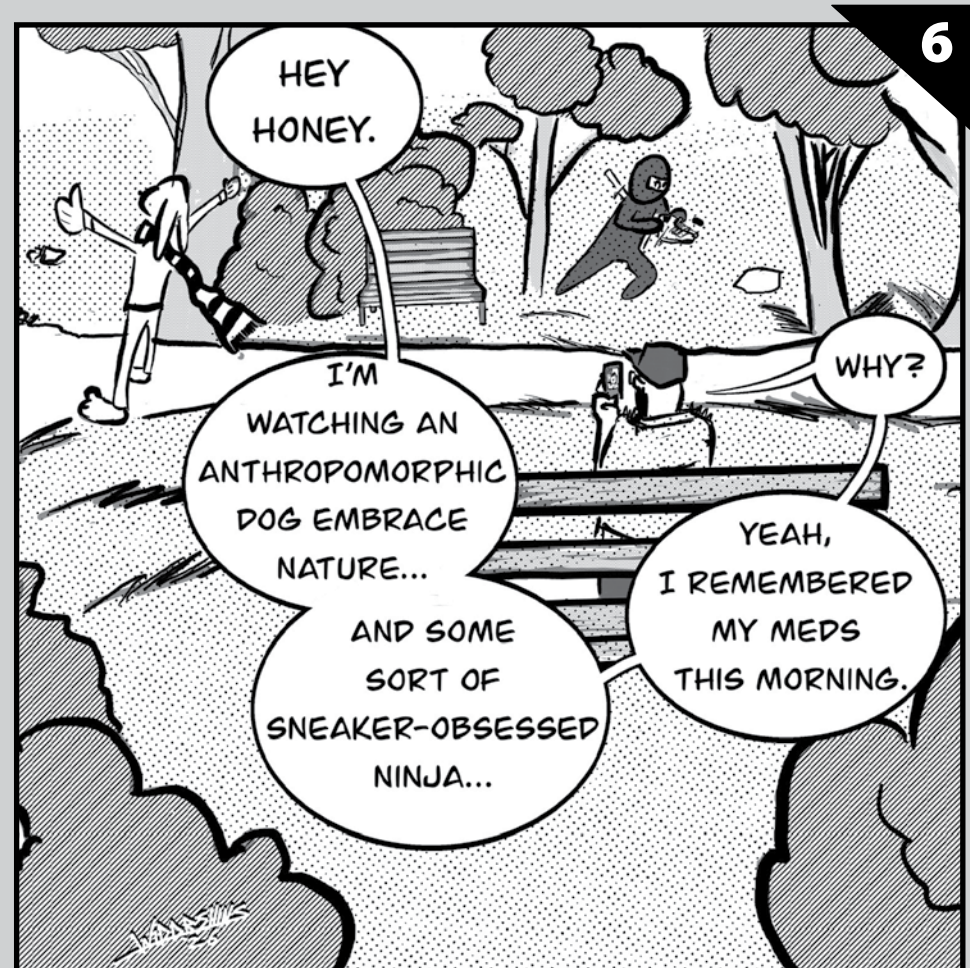
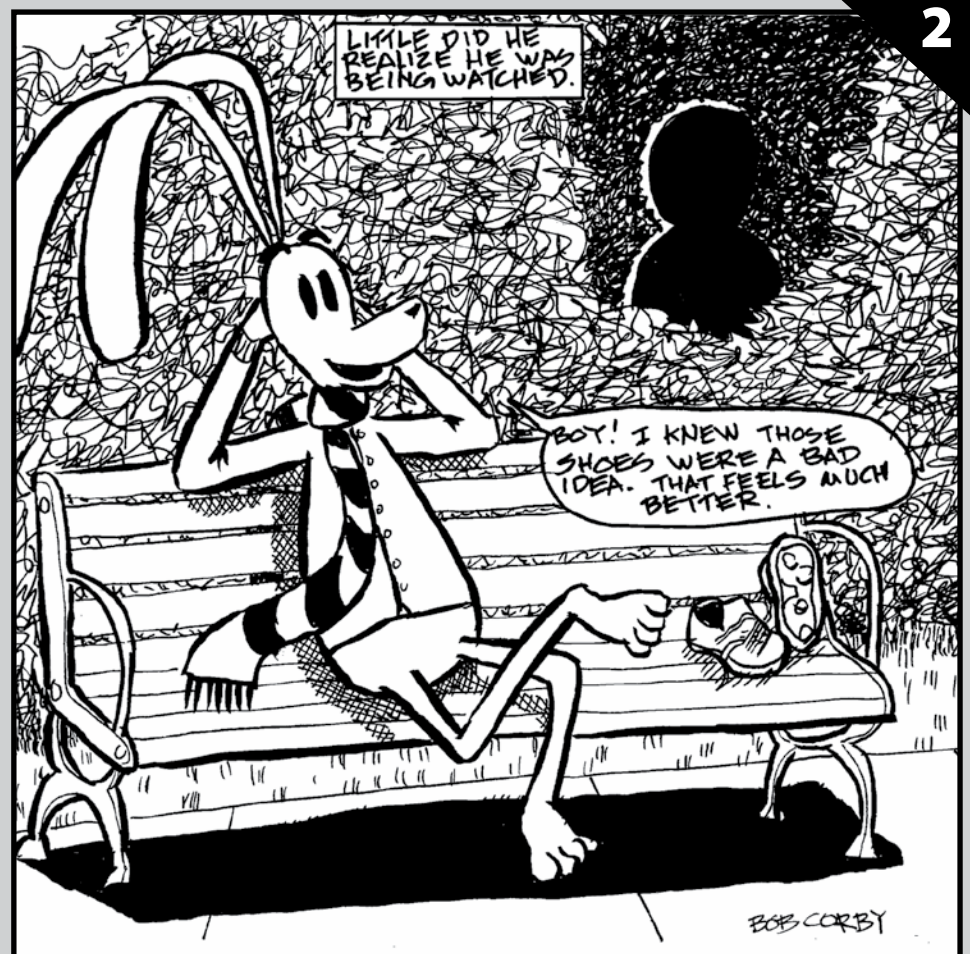
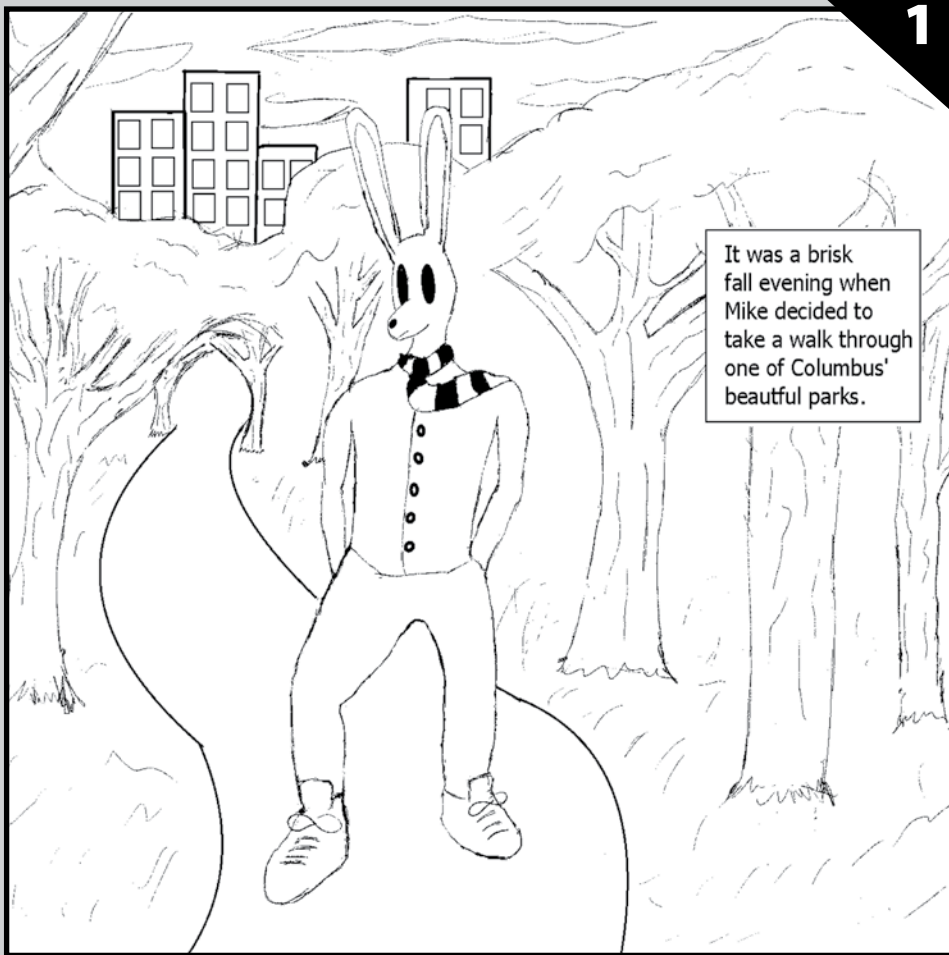


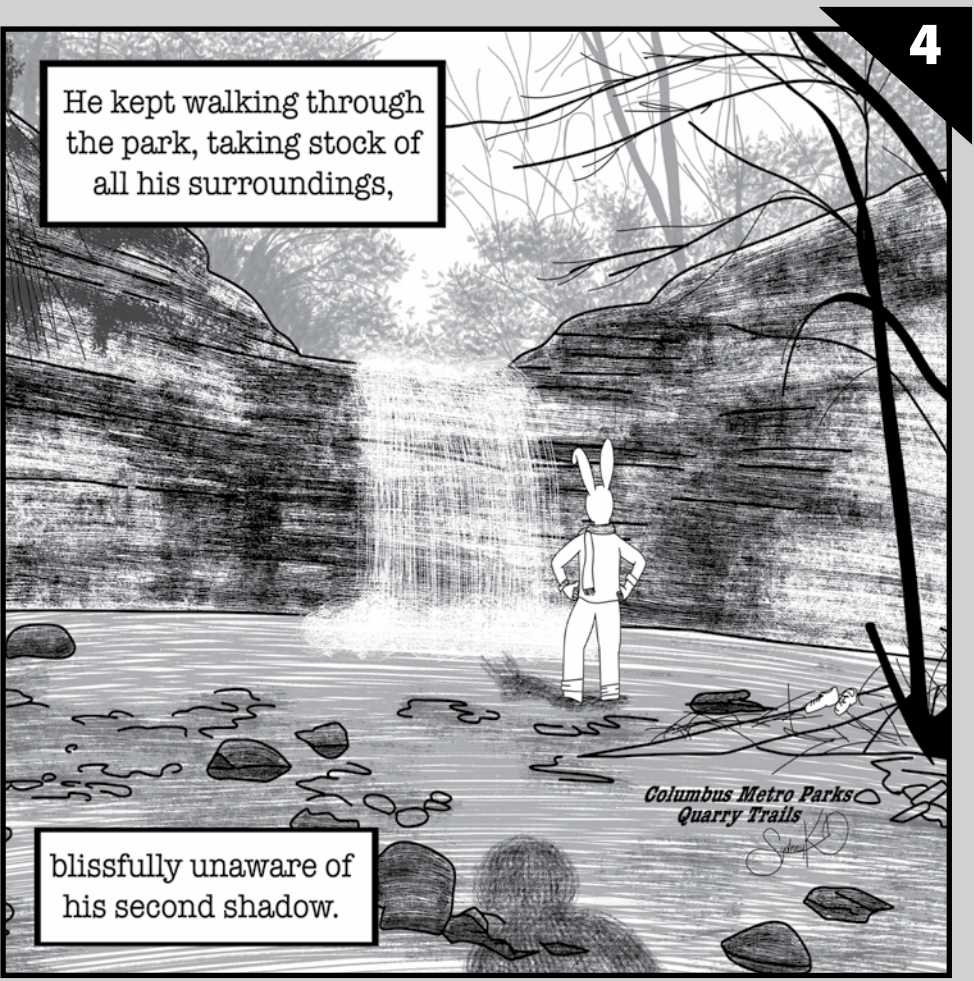
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IN REMEMBRANCE OF *Gib Bickel*

By Lauren McCallister
Laughing Ogre Manager

Gibson Omer Bickel was born on Labor Day in 1961, which I think really set the tone for his sense of humor. He and his sister and cousins were raised by their large family in Greenville, Ohio, where Gib was treasured as the only boy. He originally arrived in Columbus to attend The Ohio State University when a job working at Wendy's led him to meet his friends and eventual Laughing Ogre co-founders Rodney, Daryn, and Steve. Together, the four comic book fans eventually fulfilled their ambition of opening their own shop in October of 1994.

Over the course of the next 31 years, Gib served as the dedicated public face of the store and shared his passion for stories of all types with both comic lovers and people new to the format. He also built a beautiful family with his wife Cindie and children Corwyn, Eric, and Elizabeth—all three of whom were enlisted in their teen years to work the counter at the Laughing Ogre. Over the years, that family has extended to include many more: customers, employees, and strangers all felt the bottomless supply of care that Gib offered to everyone he met. The people whose lives he touched will continue to carry him with us forever.



DOES CHAD
THINK THAT
MAD AT H



I was lucky enough to work with Gib for nearly 14 years, starting when I was only 18 years old and fresh out of high school. I thought I was just looking for an easy job, but instead I found one of the people who would shape my entire adult life. Over the years, he became such a constant in my life that I stopped thinking twice before calling him whenever something went wrong. It never occurred to me that he might not show up, because he always did.

Gib had an almost otherworldly ability to make every person who crossed his path feel seen and heard. Whether you had been reading comics for decades or had never picked one up before, he made you feel like you belonged. A major part of The Laughing Ogre's success is rooted in his personability and his never-ending quest to strengthen the comics community in Columbus.

To me, though, he was also the person who always picked up the phone. He quietly slipped me grocery money when I was too proud to ask for help, listened to every college triumph and frustration, and helped me through car trouble more times than I can count, even sitting with me at the dealership for half a day to help me buy my last car when I was too nervous to go alone. He showed up, over and over again, without hesitation and without ever asking for recognition. He listened to me yap about every detail of my life as if every single thing I said was deeply important to him, whether it was something as significant as family life or petty as fandom drama.

Like so many others, I am better because I knew him. His kindness, generosity, and unwavering support shaped not only The Laughing Ogre, but the lives of countless people fortunate enough to call him a friend.

- Trish Smith
Laughing Ogre Staff

In 2003, when I became a regular at The Laughing Ogre, Gib was the guy who generously hooked me up with a copy of Craig Thompson's *Blankets* at a deep discount, as I must've been radiating poor, recent college grad vibes. By 2013, he'd become the dude I'd gab about our beloved Bengals with on my weekly visits. In 2015, he became my boss, as he extended a helping hand to me at one of the lowest points of my adult life. By 2017, when I had to take another job for family reasons, he had become a mentor of sorts. When he was diagnosed (late '24/ early '25?), he had already cemented his place in the most hallowed halls of my life. In January of this year, when he called me and told me that the end was coming, I wept and cursed the circumstances. When he passed in April, I cried some more. Now, as I write this, with his death a few months in my rearview, I only know this: I miss my friend. If we're lucky in this life, we'll maybe meet a small handful of folks that drastically change our lives for the better. I was lucky to have known Gib Bickel.

- Mike Cavender
Former Laughing Ogre Staff



◀ An excerpt from Steve Hamaker's comic PLOX featuring Gib and The Laughing Ogre



Growing up, I was a voracious reader who spent hours copying Archie comics and hoarding volumes of *Calvin and Hobbes*. I was terrified of going into a comic shop, expecting a “Comic Book Guy” stereotype who would instantly judge me as a philistine for asking for manga.

Instead, I met Gib. He greeted me warmly, shattered my antisocial shyness, and showed me a massive wall of manga. The Ogre quickly became my sanctuary. Gib listened to me, remembered my shifting tastes, and never missed with a recommendation. He could sell you on anything through enthusiasm alone, and the read would always be worth your time. Gib curated a huge part of my childhood, teenhood, and adulthood.

It was The Laughing Ogre that led me to start attending a local cartoonist meet-up, which my mom had to drive me to, ultimately sparking her own massive involvement in the Columbus comics scene.

Even today, stopping by The Ogre feels like coming home. No matter how much time passed, Gib always greeted me the exact same way: “Hey, kiddo!” It’s a soundbite I’ll keep in my head forever, preceding decades of recommendations, gossip, and shared laughter. As I approach 30, there are very few people who could call me “kiddo” without a weird look, but it is a title I wear with honor, bestowed by my favorite comic book guy.

- MJ Damsen
Laughing Ogre Customer

Gib Bickel sold me comics back at the old Wizard of Comics. He turned me on to some great books that are still among my favorites, especially during that experimental B&W era. I still remember I was set up at the old Mid-Ohio Con when he dropped by my table and told me about the opening of his and his partners’, Laughing Ogre. It quickly became my weekly stop.

He was the first person I discussed starting SPACE with in 1999 because he knew the community, and I picked his brain. I think he talked me down a few times when I was about to quit (or at least listened to me vent). Gib and The Laughing Ogre crew were always great sponsors of the show. Not sure if it would have been successful without his help.

Gib and The Ogre got me through the COVID years when I was living alone and didn’t see anybody from day to day. New Comics Day at The Ogre was my only refuge. I knew it was a safe place because of the care I could see was taken there. Always a friendly face behind the mask.

He will leave a big hole in my life, and I’m sure the lives of many others who love comics in this town. Rest in Power, Gib!

- Bob Corby
S.P.A.C.E. Founder/Organizer

Gib was one of the nicest, kindest people I ever met. Not just in comics but anywhere. He was that way to everyone. He loved all comics, the art form of the comic book, the characters and creators, and his customers, the comics readers. His store wasn’t just superheroes, as most stores were back then, he shelved and highlighted indie and alternative comics. He loved them both! It was at his store that I bought my first copies of *Cerebus*, *Love & Rockets*, *Hate*, *Eightball*, *The Comics Journal*, and so much more.

As time went on, The Ogre was sold to a larger group of stores, but Gib became the manager, and the store maintained his veneer and vibe with the help of co-worker Lauren McCallister, who described Gib in an interview a few years ago. “I think he has magical powers,” she said. “I don’t even know how to describe it. He’s like a master salesman, really. He has a way with every single person who comes through the door. Even like the craziest person, he can deal with them so effortlessly. It’s absolutely mind-boggling. Still to this day, I can’t tell you what kind of weird voodoo he’s working.”

Gib Bickel was a community leader in the world of Columbus comics, an advisor to many, including myself, and a good friend. He went too soon. I miss him a lot.

-Jeff Smith
Cartoonist/ Award-Winning
Creator of Bone

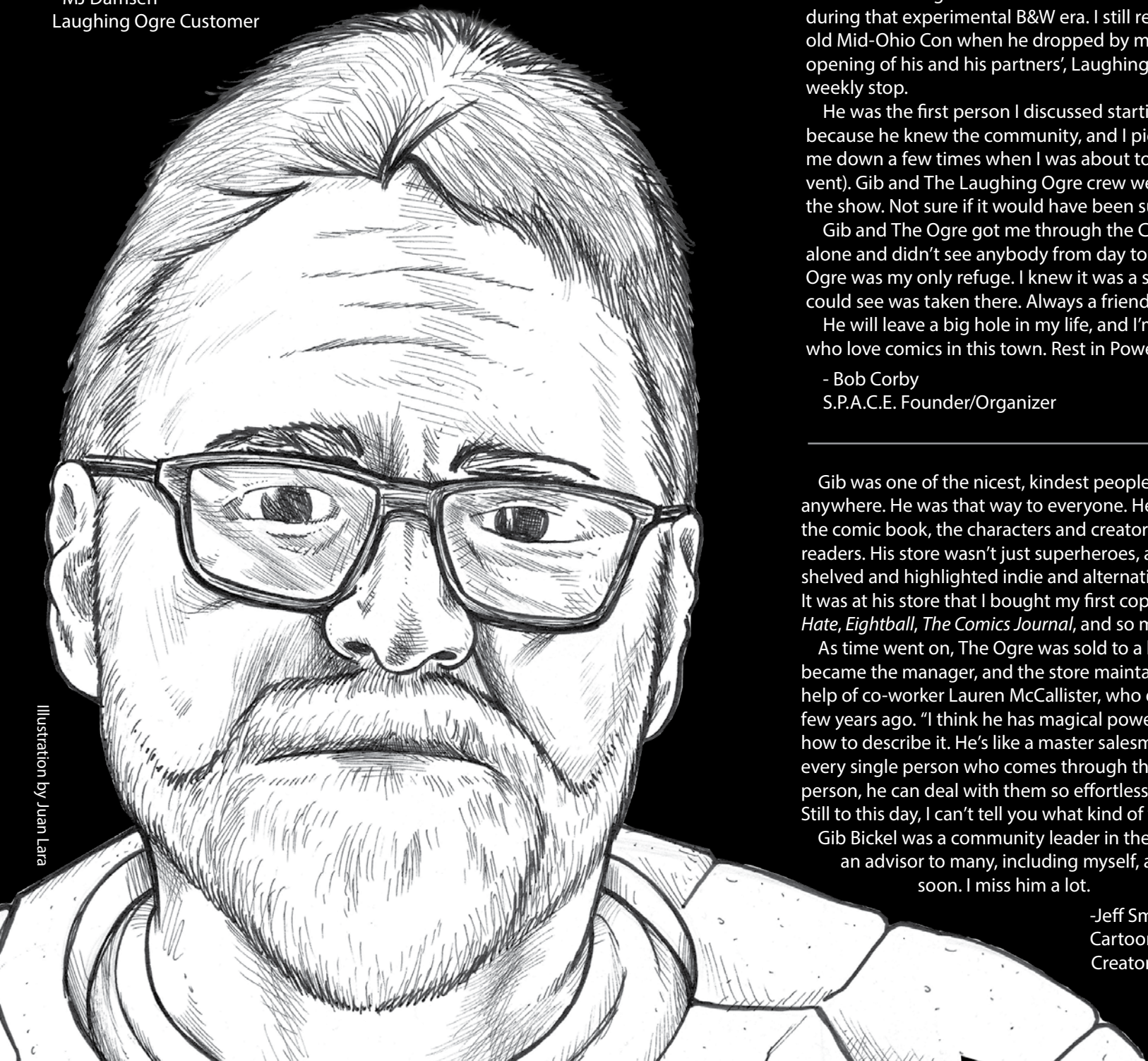
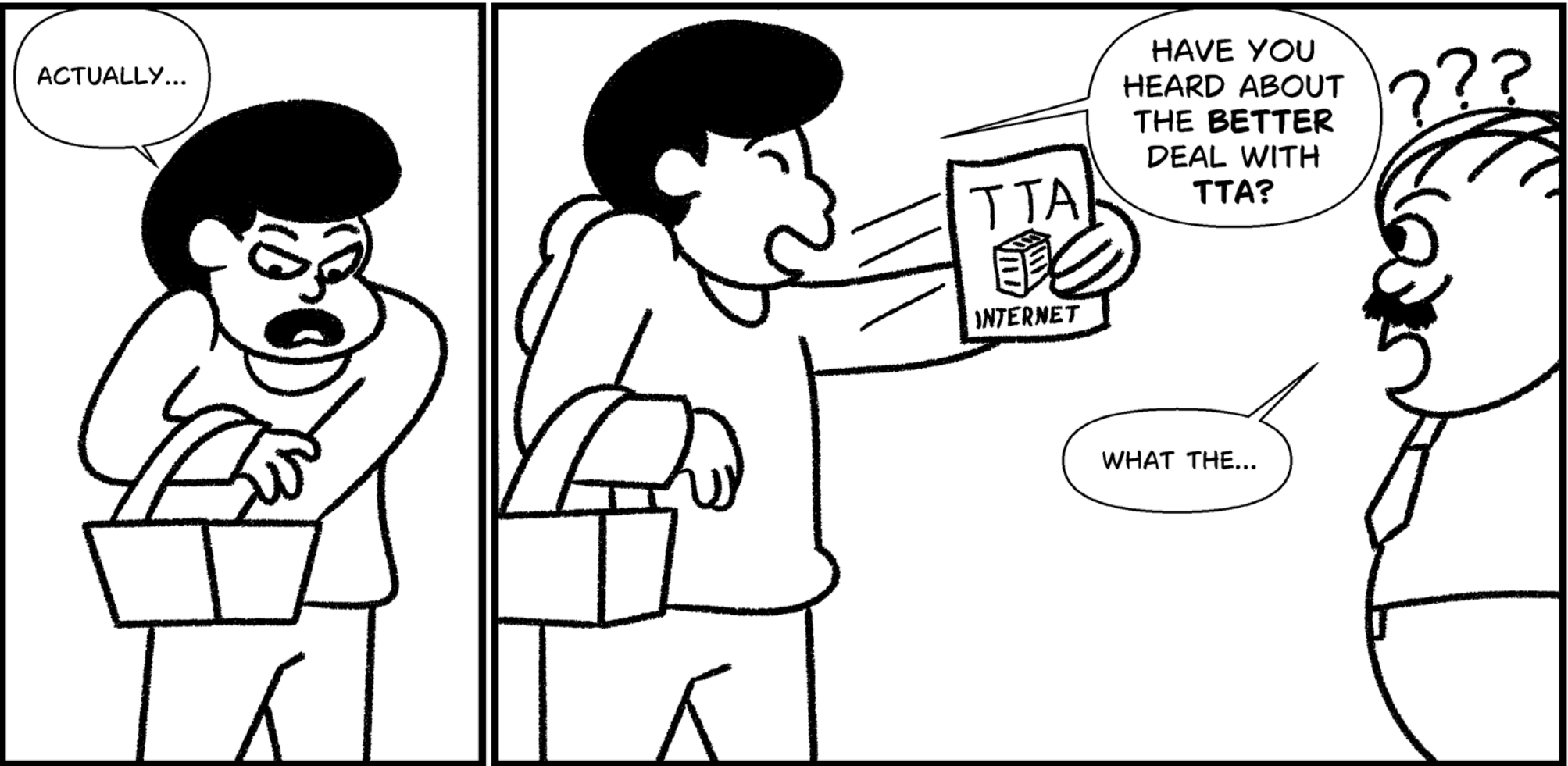
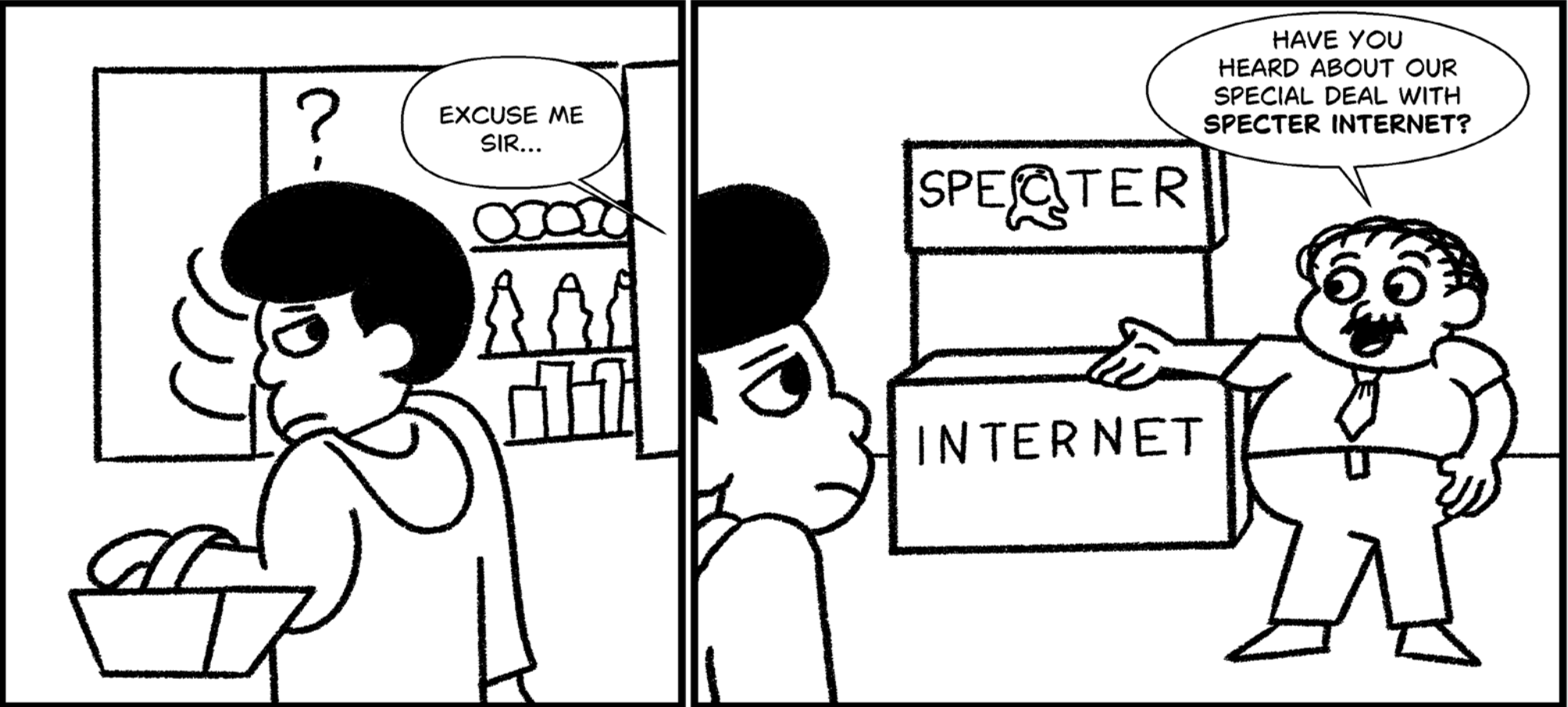
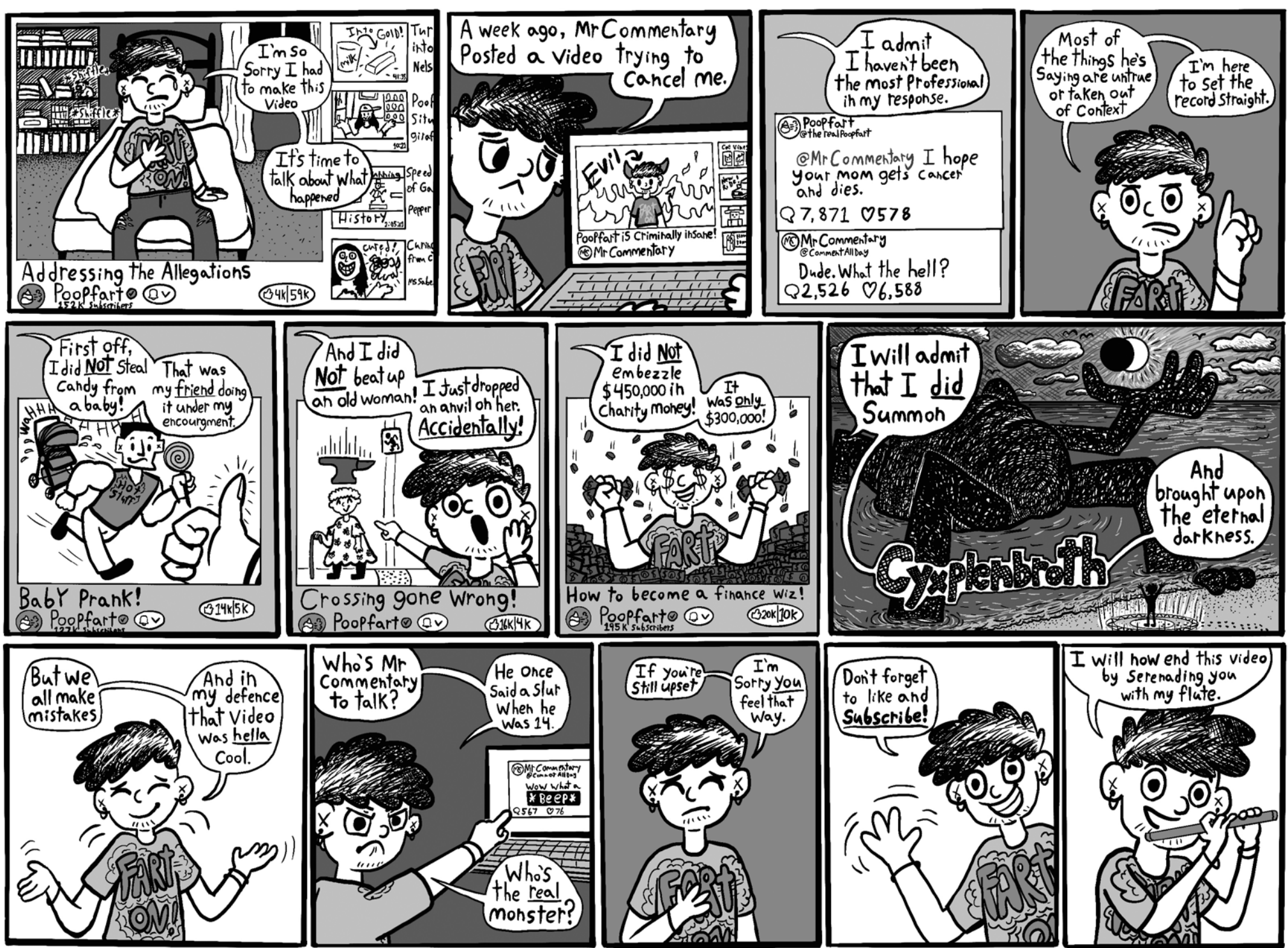


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AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

BY JACK WALLACE

It was a chilly day in March, and I was out distributing issue 18 of the Scribbler. I walked into Ledo's bar to ask the bartender if it was OK to leave copies, when a young woman asked me what I was distributing. I gave her a copy and a brief dialogue ensued. She asked if I had heard about the Neighborhood News. She explained that a comic newsletter was being distributed in Worthington and, if I was lucky, I could still get a copy at Cup O' Joe.

I did get a copy, and I was absolutely floored by the production. Twelve 8x11 pages stapled together with a hand-drawn title of Neighborhood News. The publication was full of comics from mostly kids and one adult father who oversaw the operation, including printing and distribution. I reached out to Jacob Markey (the father in question); we met for coffee, and he agreed to answer some questions along with some of the artists.

In April 2022, Jacob created the first issue of the **Neighborhood News** by taking the comics he and his daughters, Lauren and Caroline, had made that day, copying them onto eight 8.5" x 11" pages, printed on both sides, and putting them in the neighbors' mailboxes. The paper included comics and games across 8.5" x 11" pages, printed double-sided. Dubbed the *Neighborhood News*, the publication now includes comics, activities, and polls. The publication has just released its 54th issue and is now distributed to four coffee shops in the Worthington area. We asked Jacob and his fellow editors about their time with *Neighborhood News*.

How did you start creating comics yourself?

So, when my girls were little, we would play together a lot. Playing with LOL dolls, figurines like Dora and Peppa Pig, and stuffed animals, just riffing and making up silly scenarios. We would have a great time doing oddball stuff and making ourselves laugh. A lot of characters came about over the years of playing like that, like Sheep and Loopy, and the LOL Pranksta. They ended up with really developed personalities as a result of all the time spent playing as them.

We would also do bedtime stories where we would just lie in the dark and make up these crazy situations, usually based on the character Pinkalicious. In the actual books, Pinkalicious is a very wholesome character, and there's always a happy ending to her stories (as there should be), but in our fanfic, something bad or ridiculous would always happen to her. She almost always got the raw end of the deal and would have an unhappy ending.

Anyway, somewhere along the way, I started thinking we were making some really funny stuff, and I should write it down just in case I could use it in the future, or just for the memories. When the kids started making the newspaper, I realized I could contribute, so I started mining the old materials I had saved. At first, I could barely draw a stick person, but I figured that as long as I could get the story and humor across, it didn't need to be perfect. I think that was true. People are happy if you just put your stuff out there. As the years went on, we just kept making more issues, and my drawing skills gradually improved.

How and why did you start the Neighborhood News?

There was a very lively and creative cluster of kids on our block. They would play and create every day, sometimes with sidewalk chalk, performing little skits, or just regular pretend play. One weekend, they decided to start making a little newspaper where every kid would make a page, maybe a weather report, or announce a lost toy, or a story about the local deer population, or something. I thought the issues were really cool and cute, so I started making a few copies and putting them in the neighbors' mailboxes on our street.

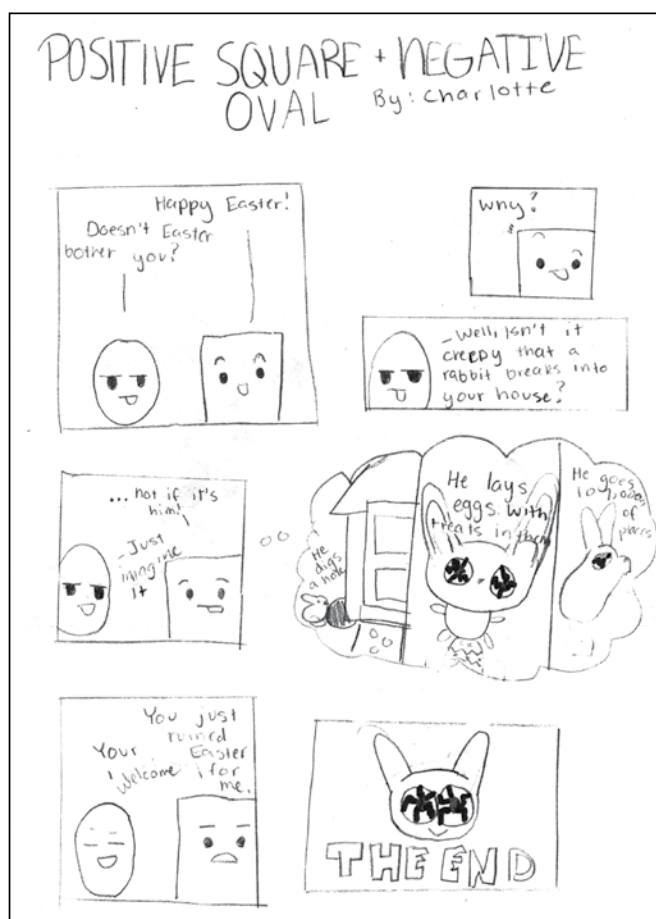
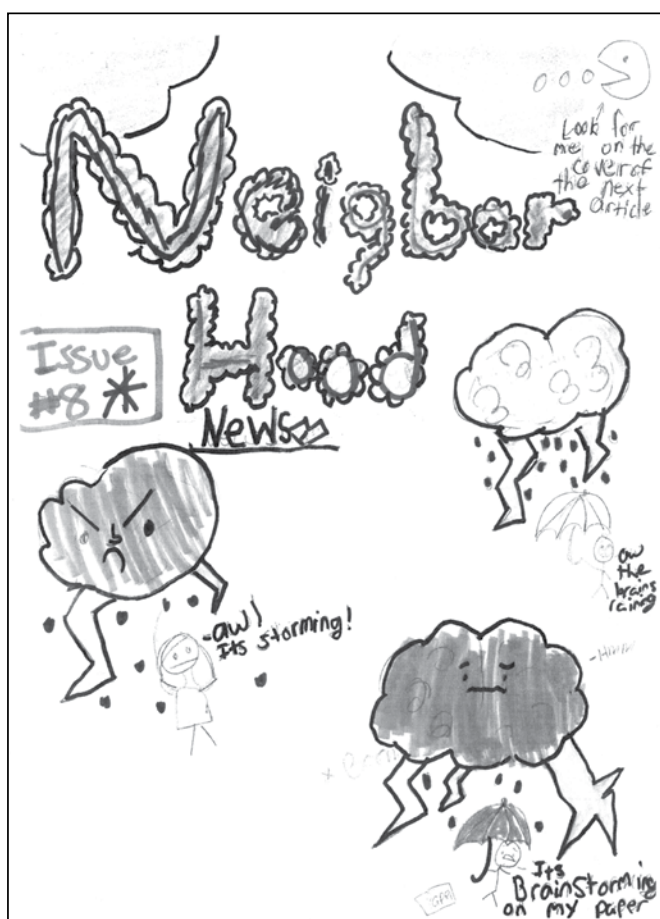
The kids kept enjoying being reporters and making newspapers. So, after the third or fourth issue, I had the idea to print a few more copies and start taking them up to our local coffee shop, called Highline Coffee at the time (now Kittie's), and letting the community see them. I thought it would be something that the whole neighborhood could have fun with. The content definitely made me smile, and I figured that at least some community members would get a kick out of it.

I put my phone number and e-mail on the back to see if anyone would message us, and immediately started getting all sorts of happy responses from the public. That support gave us the inspiration to keep going and to become bolder and more creative with our stories over time.

What has been the hardest part of creating the periodical? What has been the most rewarding?

I'll start with what's easy. The kids really help as they're never short of ideas. I still marvel at the way they create so freely, coming up with entire scenarios whole cloth and turning a random idea into a cool page within minutes. And they just express themselves, with no concern for being good or for what other people might think. They're really great inspiration in that way. They help to keep the paper fun and carefree, the way it should be.

As for myself and my own comic-making and storytelling, I've been struggling with the flow of a longer comic. And then as time goes on, I think I start to hold myself to a higher standard and try too hard to be "good". It's hard to keep that carefree kid spirit and balance it with some polish, because I like the polish too. All the things I've learned along the way and the ways I've improved are great, but they can also get in the way. Maybe that's one of those artistic conundrums that never become fully resolved, and never should be resolved. I'm sure it's a challenge that all artists face.



What’s the most rewarding? When you finish a project you’ve worked so hard on for weeks and see it sitting there, printed and ready to put on the shelves. You know you put everything you had into it, and it shares a story that you and your kids created; it really expresses the joy and fun you had playing with them. That feels awesome.

I also love all the little creative discoveries we make along the way. Like when you collage a cover for an issue together, and it comes out looking great, and it feels like a new creative door has been opened. We just did a two-pager called Haiku Cat about a cat’s trip to a coffee shop. All the dialogue is in poetry. My 11-year-old and I riffed on the poems together, and she watercolored over my sketches.

It felt like a really fun way to mix up kid and adult sensibilities.

There’s something about kids’ art that I really love and appreciate, but can’t put into words. It’s more than just “cute.” Sometimes it has a raw beauty that I can’t describe. It’s so free, and maybe you would say it contains “errors” or is unpolished, but the imperfection and wildness are exactly what make it so interesting. I love working with that. It’s a curiosity that keeps opening up further and further.

What has been the neighborhood’s response to the publication? How can people help?

From the start, we’ve gotten great feedback from the community. Early on, it was mostly texts and emails, and then somehow word spread—10TV even reached out to interview us not long after we began. As the years have passed, we continue to get kind messages here and there, sometimes from surprising places. We’ve had people from LA, New York City, and even Australia message us. A third-grade teacher from the Pittsburgh area found our paper, started making a similar version with her kids, and shared it with her community. The fact that she liked what we do enough to make her own version is really exciting to see! And it’s a little gratifying that people like what we do enough to emulate it.

How can people help? If I had a wish list, unlimited access to free color printing would be nice. I love taking copies of new issues and old favorites to random coffee shops and leaving them behind, but cobbling together enough color

copies without spending an unreasonable amount of money is tough and very time-consuming. A while back, I added my Venmo to the back of the issues so people could chip in for toner and paper costs. We do get some nice donations from that. That said, I hate to ask for money. The whole point of the paper is that it’s a free gift to the community. It’s meant to be something you just come across and enjoy, without being asked for anything in return. And it’s also meant to be a refuge for myself, the kids, and the readers from any concerns about profit or success. It’s just having fun for the sake of it.

Why do you think it’s important for kids to express themselves through comics?

Well, kids don’t need our help to express themselves through comics or other art forms. They’re always doing it. The important thing might be that someone notices and takes it seriously.

I have the impression that kids are often told what to make in school art class, or, even worse, what not to make. I mean, kids know what response they’ll get if they make a comic about poop and farts, or about some controversial topic, so they don’t even try.

I like to give the kids free rein to do whatever they want. So we’ve had some pretty wild stuff. The movie review and poster for “The Island that was a Butt” comes to mind. And, of course, the sequel, “The Island that was a Butt 2”. There was a comic called “Jake’s Dead” about me being dead in the future. In the comic, the kids are celebrating our 100th issue sometime in the year 2050. Someone asks me if I’m excited, and instead of me responding, it just shows my tombstone. Then the kid says, “Oh yeah, Jake’s dead.” Lol.

So yeah, I like exploring what kids come up with when they feel truly free. They face many challenges at home and at school, and they certainly get into some odd and funny situations. What’s their take on it all? What’s it like to be playing pretend again? I want to know. What’s it like to live on a block with a kid you don’t like? What’s their take on teacher’s pet-ism? Or what if your sister got slightly more cake than you, and it’s happened five times in a row? There are a thousand perspectives like that. I want to know their views firsthand.

QUICK QUESTIONS WITH A FEW NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS CONTRIBUTORS

CAROLINE / AGE: 14

What’s your favorite part of working on the Neighborhood News?
Going to Cohatch, eating all their Reese’s, and hanging out with other people!

Why do you like making comics?
I usually don’t make comics, but the people who do make them are super good and funny.

What is it like seeing Neighborhood News sitting out in public places?
Nice, because people like to read your comic and the pages you make.

What’s the funniest or strangest idea that ever made it into print?
Some of the Pinkalicious stories because they are original.

What superpower would you most like to have?
Time travel, because I could never go to school ever again and skip long car/plane rides!

LAUREN / AGE: 11

What’s your favorite part of working on the Neighborhood News?
I like when we have our meetings and everyone else is there, and we get to talk and do our stuff.

Why do you like making comics?
I don’t make comics. I make activity pages, cover art, and opinions. I like doing that stuff because it’s fun and I get to do it with a lot of other people.

3. What is it like seeing Neighborhood News sitting out in public places?
It feels weird and cool because people are reading it and seeing stuff that we make.

What’s the funniest or strangest idea that ever made it into print?
The Pinkalicious story about the pee egg. (Her Dad makes an Easter Egg hunt, but instead of having candy inside the eggs, they’re full of his pee.)

What superpower would you most like to have?
Teleportation, because I could just teleport anywhere I wanted in one second, and it wouldn’t take so long to go on vacation and go to different places.

KEEGAN / AGE: 11

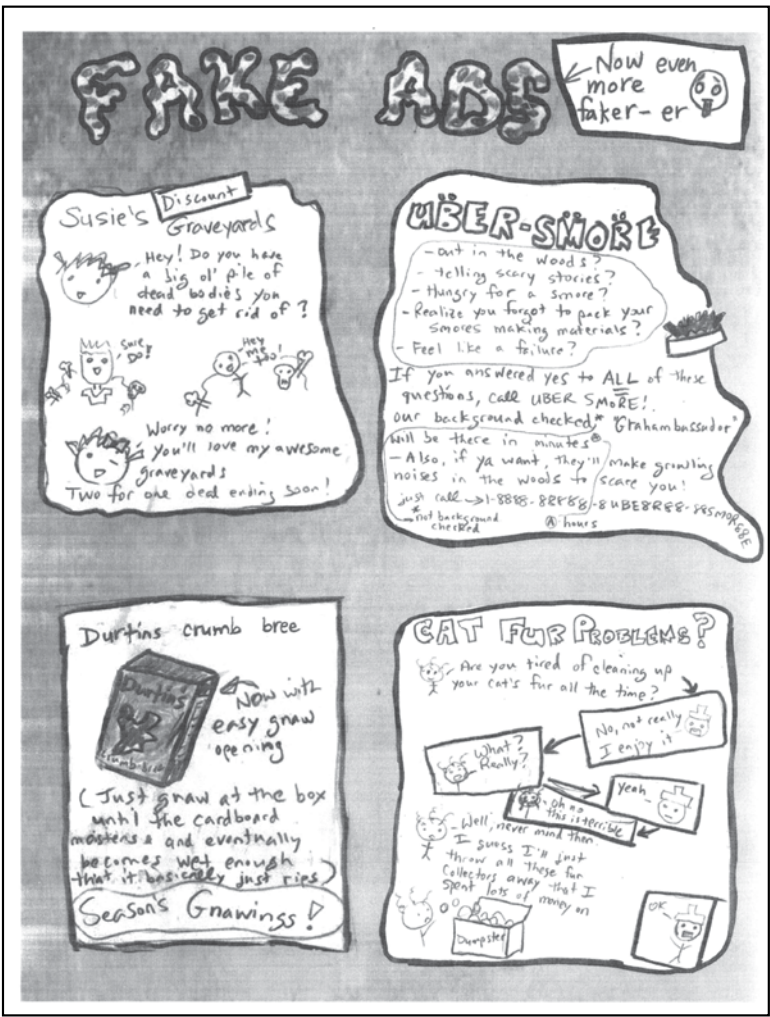
What’s your favorite part of working on the Neighborhood News?
I get to make comics and share my creativity.

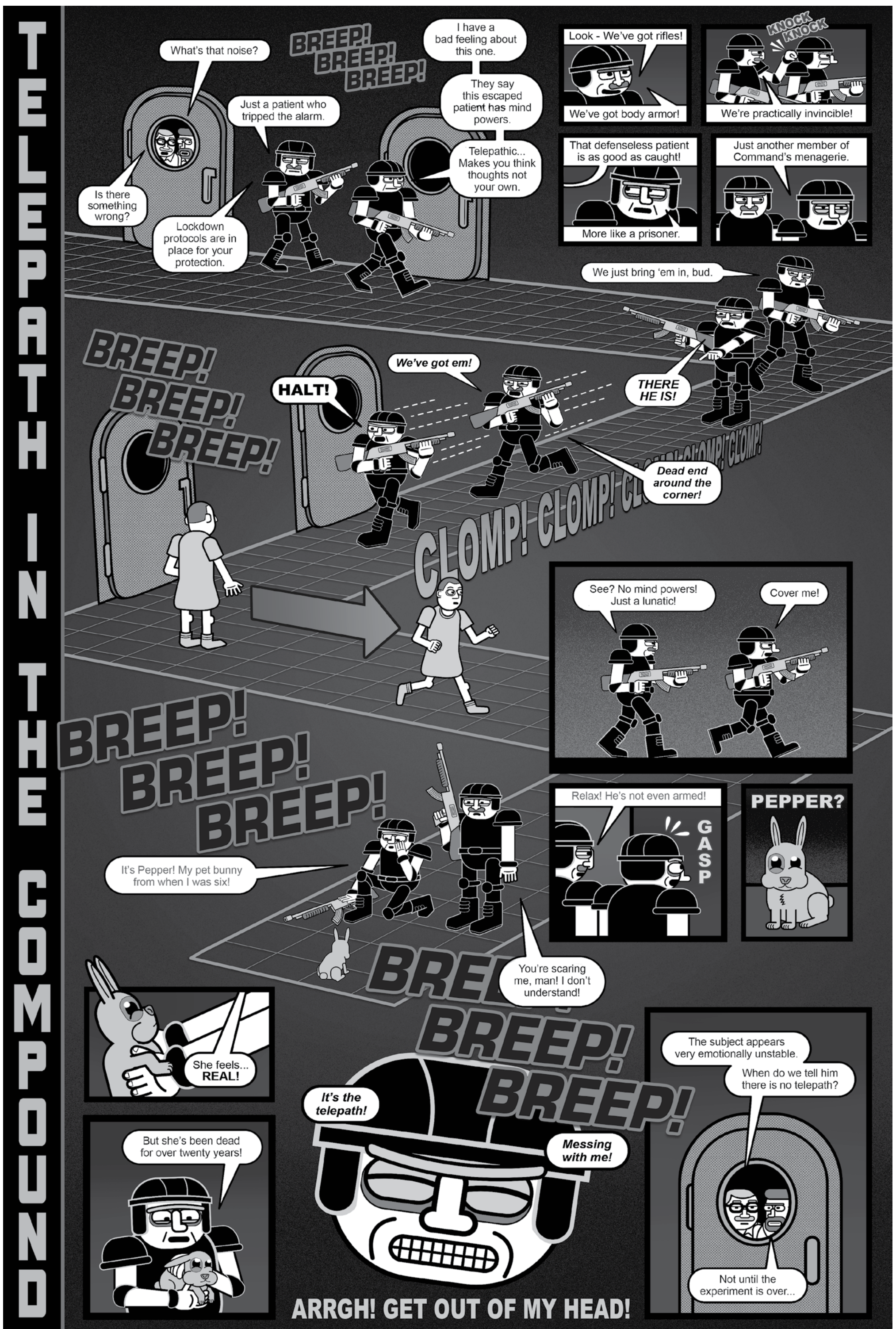
Why do you like making comics?
Because they bring joy to me.

What is it like seeing Neighborhood News sitting out in public places?
I like seeing something that I partially made - and that’s exciting to see that something I made is out in the public for people to read and look at.

What’s the funniest or strangest idea that ever made it into print?
I’m not sure - I’ve made so many comics. (I tried) ;)

What superpower would you most like to have?
I would love to have the ability to disappear—I could hide from something or someone.







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MEET THE ~~PEOPLE~~ BANDS OF COLUMBUS: NEIL

RAISED IN YOUNGSTOWN, BELLA ATTENDED CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND TOOK PIANO LESSONS UNTIL AGE ELEVEN, UNTIL HER TEACHER REFUSED TO LET HER LEARN A SONG FROM THE "TWILIGHT" SOUNDTRACK. IN HIGH SCHOOL, SHE JOINED THEATER. ONCE IN 2015, WHILE PLAYING A TIGER IN ALADDIN, SHE MADE HER OWN FACE PAINT AND COSTUME.



DID YOU MAKE THIS? IT'S AMAZING!

AT 16, SHE STARTED A BAND WITH FRIENDS IN HIGH SCHOOL CALLED THE "HEY HEY MAMAS." WITH BOTH FRIENDS PLAYING GUITAR AND BASS, BELLA TOOK UP DRUM LESSONS AND STARTED SINGING. THEY LEARNED TWO COVERS. THE BAND BROKE UP DUE TO A LACK OF DIRECTION AND SHE'S HAPPY THERE ARE NO RECORDINGS.



EYES THAT SHINE BURNING RED, DREAMS OF YOU ALL THROUGH MY HEAD.

BELLA MOVED TO COLUMBUS TO GO TO CCAD FOR ILLUSTRATION. FOR A SCHOOL PROJECT, SHE CREATED BAND POSTERS FOR FICTIONAL BANDS BASED ON THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS. AFTER GRADUATING, SHE STARTED TO MAKE BAND POSTERS FOR FRIENDS' BANDS, WHICH HELPED INTRODUCE HER TO THE LOCAL MUSIC SCENE.



FOR THE SIXTH PIECE OF THE INSTALLATION, I WANTED TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF WRATH IF IT WERE A BAND.

DURING THE PANDEMIC OF 2020, BELLA SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN HER PARENTS' TOOL SHED CREATING HER OWN MUSIC. TO TEACH HERSELF HOW TO PLAY, SHE WOULD RECORD A VIDEO OF HER FINGERS MOVING ON THE FRETS. SHE FELT A COMPULSION TO CREATE MUSIC BUT WAS TERRIFIED TO SHOW HER WORK TO ANYONE BECAUSE OF HER LACK OF CONFIDENCE.



DO YOU WANT TO COME INSIDE FOR A WHILE?

NO, I'M GOOD.

BELLA EVENTUALLY CONQUERED HER FEAR AND INVITED HER FRIEND MOLLY BROWN TO JAM. TOGETHER, THEY RESTRUCTURED THE SONG, AND WITH DRUMMER ETHAN ROUNDING OUT THE TRIO, THEY FINISHED THEIR FIRST SONG. IN NOVEMBER OF 2023, THEY BEGAN PRACTICING IN EARNEST, AND WHEN REGINA SQUERI JOINED ON BASS, THE BAND NEIL WAS FORMED.



YOU'VE GOT 80% OF THE SONG.

YOU JUST NEED TO MOVE THE CHORUS AND CHANGE THAT MIDDLE PIECE TO THE END.

OH MY GOD! YOU'RE SO SMART!!

IN 2024, MOLLY LEFT NEIL TO PURSUE THEIR OWN PROJECTS, AND MAE FERRIS JOINED AS LEAD GUITARIST. BELLA HAD ALWAYS ENVISIONED A FEM-FACING BAND, TO MAKE A SPACE WHERE WOMEN FELT CREATIVELY SAFE AND SEEN-BUT SHE WELCOMED ETHAN FOR HIS TALENT AND HIS BOND WITH THE GROUP.



THAT PRACTICE WAS GREAT. WELCOME TO NEIL.

I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ONLY WOMEN. HOW DID ETHAN JOIN?

HE AGREED TO PLAY IN A WIG.

WHILE HER BANDMATES HAD PRIOR STAGE EXPERIENCE, BELLA FELT SHE NEEDED TO EARN IT. OVER THE NEXT YEAR, THEY PLAYED AN IMPRESSIVE 30 SHOWS ACROSS PHILADELPHIA, WASHINGTON D.C., AND NEW YORK, STARTING WITH THEIR FIRST AT SPACE BAR IN COLUMBUS IN MARCH 2024.



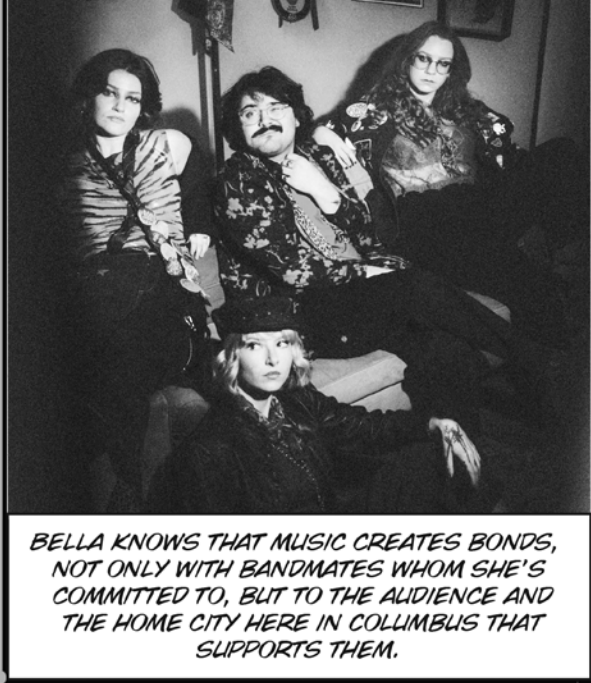
WATER IN MY HANDS, WHAT A MAN, I'LL BLEED YOU OUT.

IN EARLY 2025, NEIL RECORDED THEIR FIRST EP. CONSTRICTED BY BUDGET AND TIME, THEY PLAYED TOGETHER RATHER THAN INDIVIDUALLY TRACKING EACH INSTRUMENT. THANKS TO THEIR YEAR OF HEAVY GIGGING, THEY WERE ABLE TO RECORD ALL FIVE SONGS TOGETHER IN JUST FOUR HOURS. IN OCTOBER OF 2025, THEY RELEASED THEIR FIRST MUSIC VIDEO, FEATURING A GIANT DEVIL HEAD BELLA HAD BUILT AT HOME.

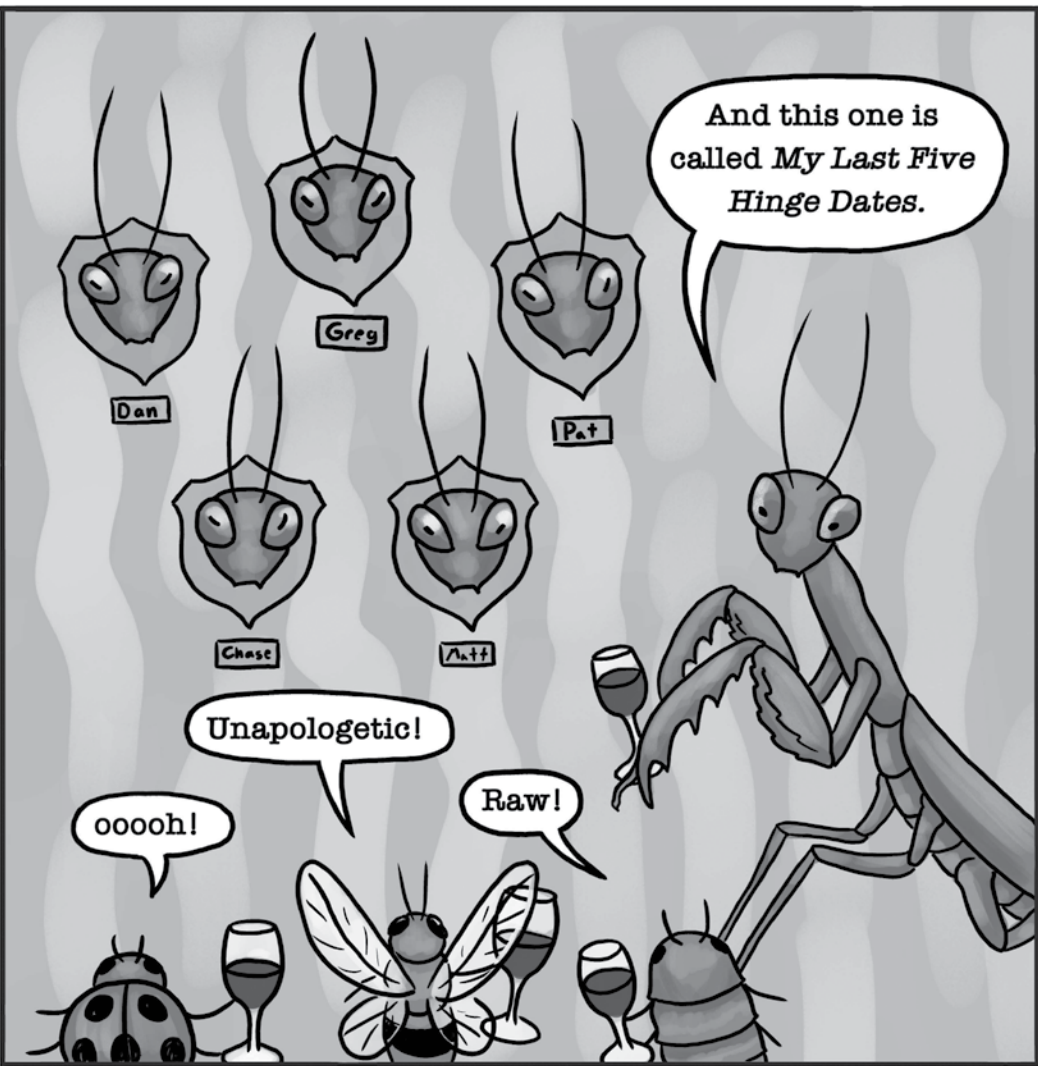
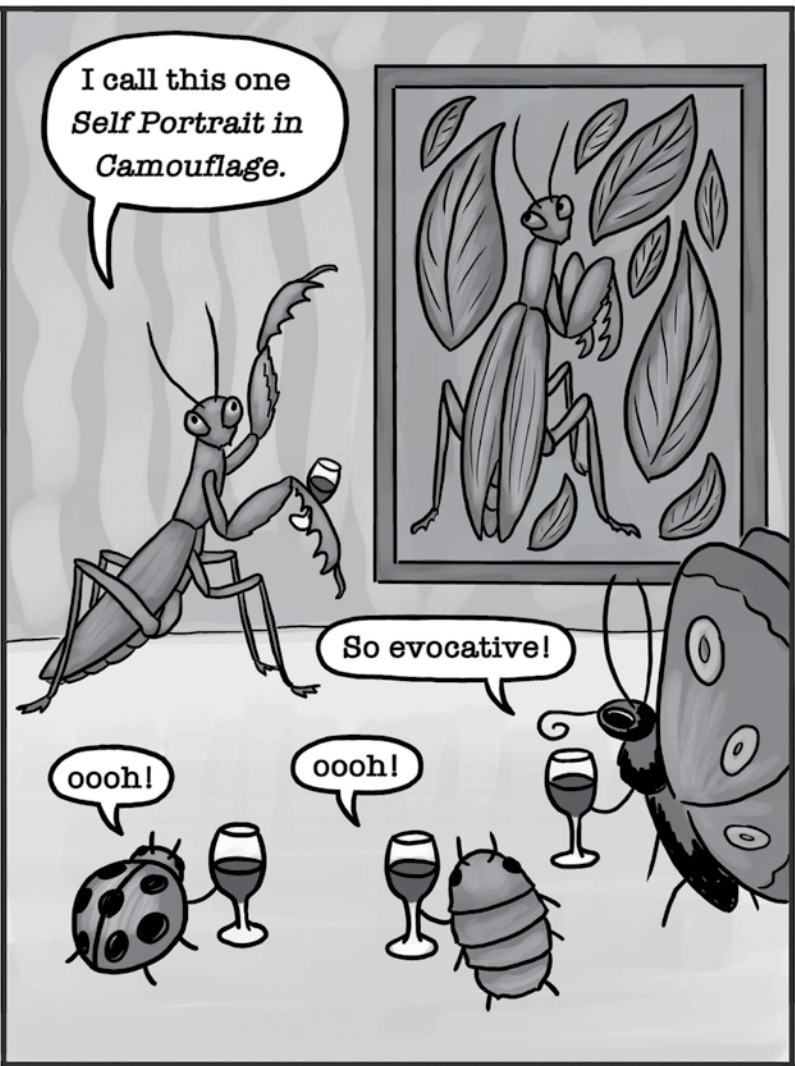
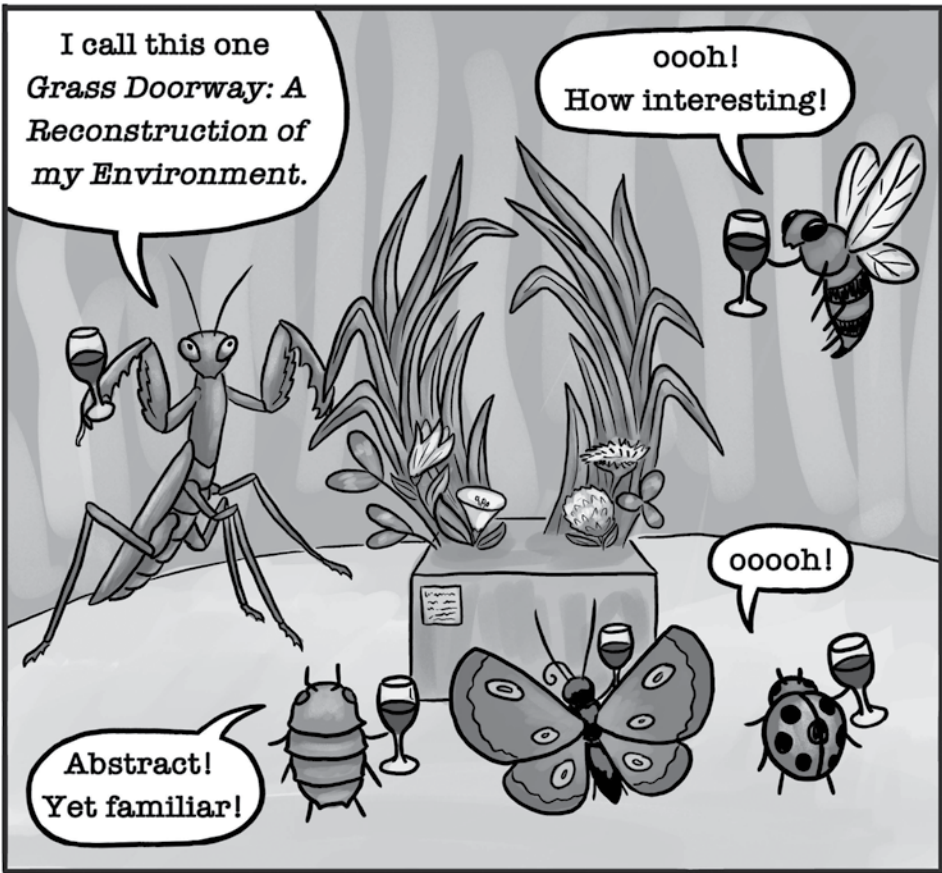
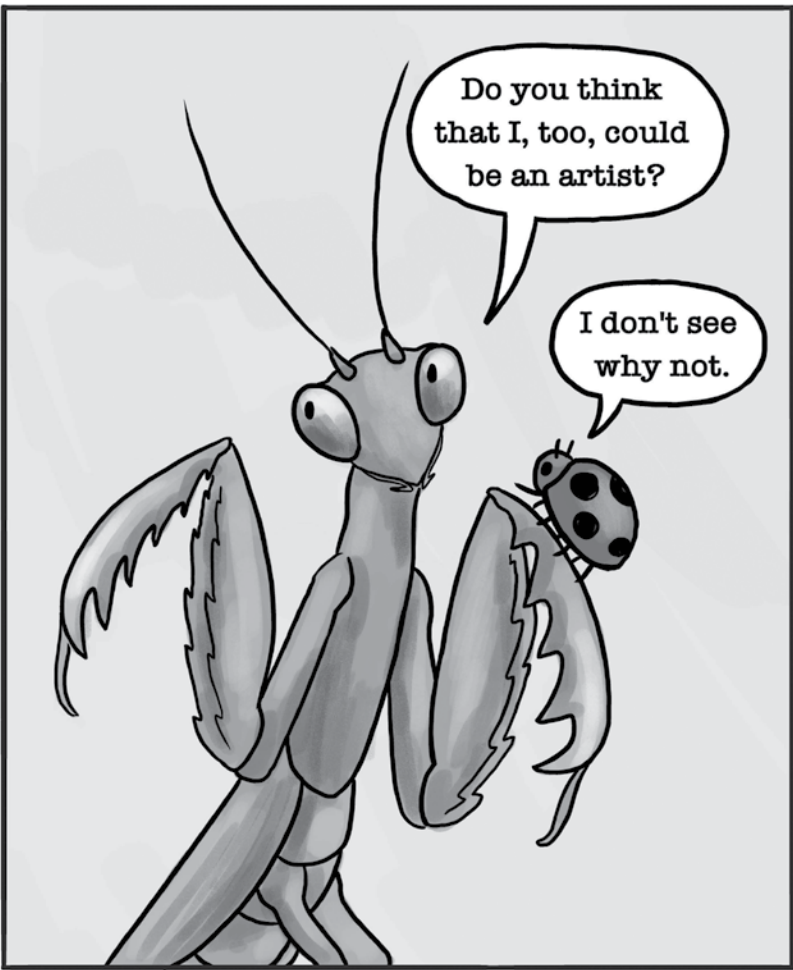
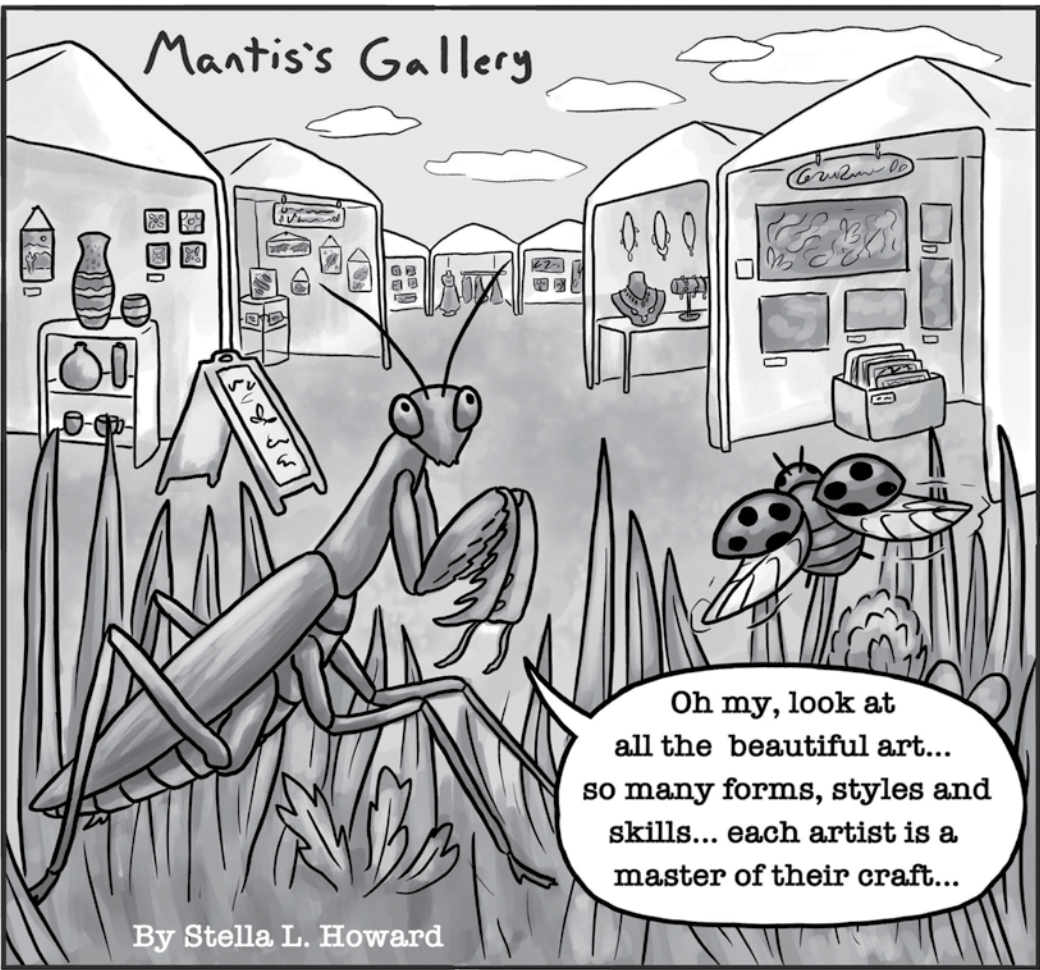


WANT YOU

NEIL SYMBOLIZES A LOT OF WHAT MAKES MUSIC SO SPECIAL. OVERCOMING ALL THE ANXIETIES OF NOT FEELING GOOD ENOUGH AND HOLDING YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS.



BELLA KNOWS THAT MUSIC CREATES BONDS, NOT ONLY WITH BANDMATES WHOM SHE'S COMMITTED TO, BUT TO THE AUDIENCE AND THE HOME CITY HERE IN COLUMBUS THAT SUPPORTS THEM.



PICKS FROM THE SHELF

Comic Reviews by Steve Steiner

MURDER FALCON

by Daniel Warren Johnson

ARE YOU READY TO ROCK? Earth is under attack from Magnum Khaos, the king of all hatred and fear. He has unleashed his monstrous horde, the Veldar, on the world to enslave us all. The only force that stands in their way is former musician and down-on-his-luck schlub, Jake. Jake's life is changed forever when interdimensional badass Murder Falcon appears in his apartment. He gifts Jake a legendary guitar that, when played, becomes a conduit to a plane known as the Heavy. It's the source of all of Murder Falcon's epic powers. As they are linked together, the more Jake shreds, the stronger Murder Falcon becomes. Energized, Jake quickly learns how to power up Murder Falcon to mow down the Veldar.

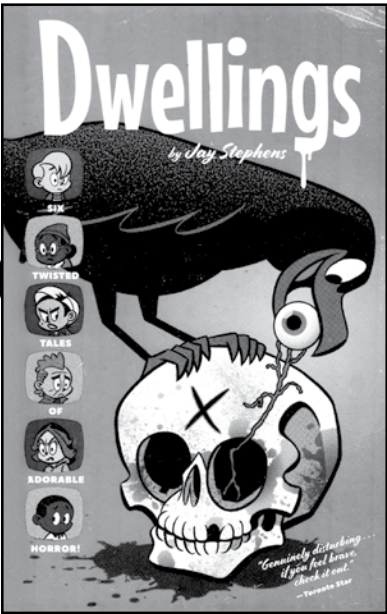
Even with their extreme might, it still isn't enough to defeat Magnum Khaos on their own. To stand a chance, the duo must recruit Jake's former band Brooticus for help. Johann on bass and Jimi on drums are each granted their own mystical instruments that summon champions fueled by the Heavy. Together, the group fights Magnum Khaos and the Veldar around the world, gathering more allies as they go. Along the way, Jake reconciles with his girlfriend Anne, and eventually overcomes his own fears, the last obstacle to defeating Magnum Khaos forever.

Every time I see a book from Daniel Warren Johnson, it's almost like I have to flip through it. His kinetic artwork, whether it's his more mainstream work like Marvel's *Beta Ray Bill: Argent Star* and DC's *Wonder Woman: Dead Earth*, or creator-owned like *Murder Falcon*, is some of the best in the industry. In this case, Johnson seems to have a lot of fun popping in more and more monsters and heroes as the climax builds to the final battle. In particular, I got the sense he loved drawing the character of Murder Falcon, especially as he incorporated new weapons like shoulder-mounted Gatling guns and wings. It's almost disappointing that some of that creativity doesn't carry over more into the other side heroes of the Heavy, with most of them resembling simple animals that look plain in comparison.

There's a level of self-aware campiness Johnson weaves in throughout the book that I can only compare to the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. I sense a familiar formula: A group with extraordinary weapons who level up their abilities while continually battling an evil cosmic villain. And just like the Power Rangers, there are tons of cheesy lines of dialogue peppered in. For instance: "*I can feel the SHRED powering me!*" And this gem after an early victory: "*Don't thank me, ma'am. Thank Metal!*"

While the premise of saving the world with heavy metal is a bit eye-rolling, Daniel Warren Johnson writes and illustrates this action fest with a lot of heart. As Johnson notes in his introduction to the trade paperback: "*Murder Falcon has everything I love in it. Heavy metal, old vans, beer, whammy bars. But it's also about being brave.*"

I think that's a good way to sum up *Murder Falcon*. It's a story that is unapologetically fun, taking itself seriously only when it has to.



DWELLINGS

by Jay Stephens

The town of Elwich seems to be the epicenter for some sort of supernatural evil. Its very founding in 1827 was met with tragedy, with the settlement named by a man taking his last breath after succumbing to injuries from a fallen tree. Today, the community is beset by demonic graffiti, flocks of ravenous crows, ghosts, deranged murderers, and perhaps even worse living in the woods.

Like my review of *Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees* (from issue #17), *Dwellings* is another horror comic that subverts the genre by using an unexpected art style. Canadian creator Jay Stephens, a veteran of the animation industry with credits including Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, draws on a big-head cartoon aesthetic that hearkens back to such classic Harvey Comics characters as Richie Rich and Casper the Friendly Ghost. In a nod to his inspiration, Stephens even includes satirical vintage advertisements reminiscent of Harvey's 1960s heyday. Like *Beneath the Trees*, there's a charm to the whole package, with the style aptly described as "adorable horror." Yet, don't let the cheery-eyed character designs fool you. Even with his deceptively simple art, Stephens doesn't shy away from depicting unflinching violence. I'd personally classify *Dwellings* as adult material fit for an "R" rating.

Dwellings is an anthology, a collection of six self-contained stories that star their own unique cast of characters, all taking place in Elwich. These stories offer an array of supernatural frights and Stephens makes sure we know right away that no one is guaranteed to survive. My favorite of the six, entitled "Second Tongue," features a psychology student named Dawn who arrives in Elwich to investigate a case of Foreign Accent Syndrome, a rare neurological condition in which a person suddenly develops a new accent or starts speaking a new language. Dawn is in for more than she bargained for as she starts to believe the subject of her research is actually possessed by a member of a demon-worshiping cult. There's not too much more I can divulge without ruining the great twist ending.

Perhaps the creepiest of the stories is "Quiet, Suki." A woman named Charlie is alarmed to find her grandmother isn't in her room at her nursing home when she arrives for a visit. After a brief scuffle with the staff, she is urged to flee by her grandmother's discarded hand puppet named Suki (see illustration above). It talks to her, imparting enigmatic wisdom to Charlie as it guides her through the eerie wilderness. Again, I won't ruin anything more about their mind-bending journey as Charlie loses track of what's real and what's imaginary.

Although each story stands on its own, Stephens cleverly carries some elements from one to the other, such as newspaperman Hamilton "Ham" Keeling and Elwich Detective Sarah Royster, who pop up more than once. He also does a great job of adding in "Easter eggs" throughout that had me searching the backgrounds of pages, looking to find any secret connections between the tales. Even if I failed to find any deeper message, that extra effort made Elwich feel more grounded, a character unto itself. With that sound foundation of world building, it softened the learning curve of warming up to a new cast for each story, and when they meet their untimely demise, you're assured that there are more than enough interesting characters populating Elwich. As of this writing, I was unable to find any information if Stephens planned any additional *Dwellings* stories, but I hope he does.

With the Halloween season around the corner, and a thirst for the macabre in the air, *Dwellings* is the perfect comic to curl up with.

THE MAXX

by Sam Kieth

With the space I have left, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Sam Kieth, who passed away this past March. Sure, the highly influential artist, known for shredding his heroes' costumes into his signature "telephone cord" tatters, worked on iconic characters like Wolverine and Batman, but his most well-known creation is, of course, the Maxx.

Like many, my sister and I were introduced to the Maxx by the animated MTV program *Oddities*, a rare treat since we didn't have cable at home. It prompted us both to start picking up the comic. It was like nothing we had ever read. The story oscillated between the real world and that of the Outback, a fantastical dream realm ruled by the Jungle Queen, the alter ego of Julie Winters, the book's main protagonist. The Maxx is her protector, who spends most of the series defending her from the villain Mr. Gone and his Isz army. The Isz are small, vicious creatures native to the Outback. They become corrupted when they enter our world and are a constant thorn in the sides of Maxx and Julie.

First published in 1993, *The Maxx* is by far the most interesting, and perhaps ambitious, book of the early Image Comics days. While his peers, like Jim Lee and Dale Keown, were drawing gritty muscle-bound anti-heroes, Kieth went down a different path. He crafted his own offbeat superhero story filled with themes of childhood trauma and that particular brand of 1990s angst. From the outset, Kieth pushes the art with a bombastic, expressionist style that evolves as the series progresses. His chaotic, jagged, and experimental panel compositions serve to reflect the characters' mental state.

Cartoony, yet dramatic, surreal, yet grounded in humanity, *The Maxx* is the seminal work of one of comics' most unique voices, never to be duplicated. Whether you read it back in the day or are now just hearing about it, do yourself a favor and pick up *The Maxx*.

MY “ROCK ‘N ROLL COMICS” COLLECTION

By Ken Eppstein

I’m a comics nerd, and I’m a punk rock guy. By associative pop-culture osmosis, I’m a punk-rock-comic nerd. Those are labels I’ve accepted, but ultimately I’ve had to self-define for my own sanity. Gotta love and hate subjective terms and fake science, am I right!?

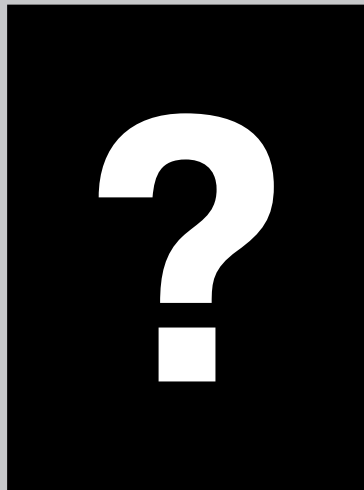
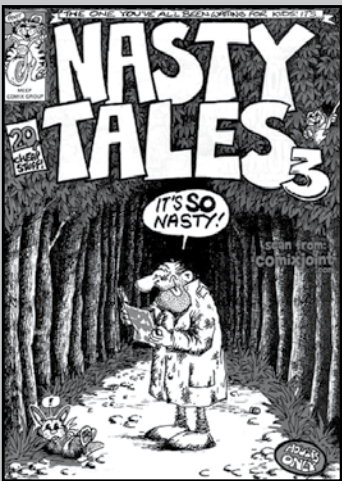
As a punk-rock-comic nerd, I keep a small collection of “rock n roll comics.” These are comics about (or by) people who listen to records, go to concerts, or are part of the rock music community. Yes, this is an admittedly broad definition with thin boundaries. It makes the content of my collection run from mundane to rare. Note: I’m using rare in the sense that the comics are hard to find “in the wild” and for cheap. I don’t usually spring for expensive rarities online. I like the hunt.

So, FWIW, here are some rock ‘n roll comics that I am on the hunt for:



PUNK MAGAZINE #15: The Mutant Beach Party issue. The entire issue was a fumetti (photo comic) starring local New York punk rockers. The main characters in this B-Movie horror spoof were portrayed by Joey Ramone and Deborah Harry! I actually used to have a copy of this book that I bought at a Billy Ireland book sale. It was Jay Lynch’s copy originally, with a subscription label to prove it. I ended up selling it in my short-lived Nix Comics flagship store. My reasoning was that I have the story in the collected *Punk Magazine* book. I have seller’s remorse, though, and want another copy of the full-sized, self-contained mag.

NASTY TALES: *Nasty Tales* was a British Underground comics anthology similar to *Zap* in the States. It lasted seven issues, but folded due to obscenity charges, which led in turn to an attrition of advertising revenue. What’s the rock ‘n roll connection? One of the primary creative forces behind *Nasty Tales* was Mick Farren, of Mick Farren and the Deviants. Farren was a prolific artist, musician, and most prolifically a writer. Artists like the New York Dolls, T-Rex, Bowie, and the Velvets get the credit for being the forerunners of punk, but I’d submit that without the dabbling writers and artists like Mick Farren, John Holmstrom, and Lester Bangs, punk would never have had a spine. Never seen a copy of *Nasty Tales* in person, and I’m fascinated to see how Farren’s writing translates into comics.



FLAMIN’ GROOVIES COMIC?: I think maybe this isn’t actually a thing. Maybe I imagined it. I swear that I once read a zine interview with Cyril Jordan of the Flamin’ Groovies wherein he said that they self-published a comic book. Jordan, in addition to being in one of my favorite bands, is a very good cartoonist, so a full comic book seems plausible. Thing is, I can’t remember where I read that interview. I also can’t find any reference to the comic online. (It’s actually a tough search; you pull up a lot of references to “Slow Death,” which lifted its title from a Groovies song.) So this comic is a phantom. A mirage. A possible Mandela Effect. AND I WANT IT!!

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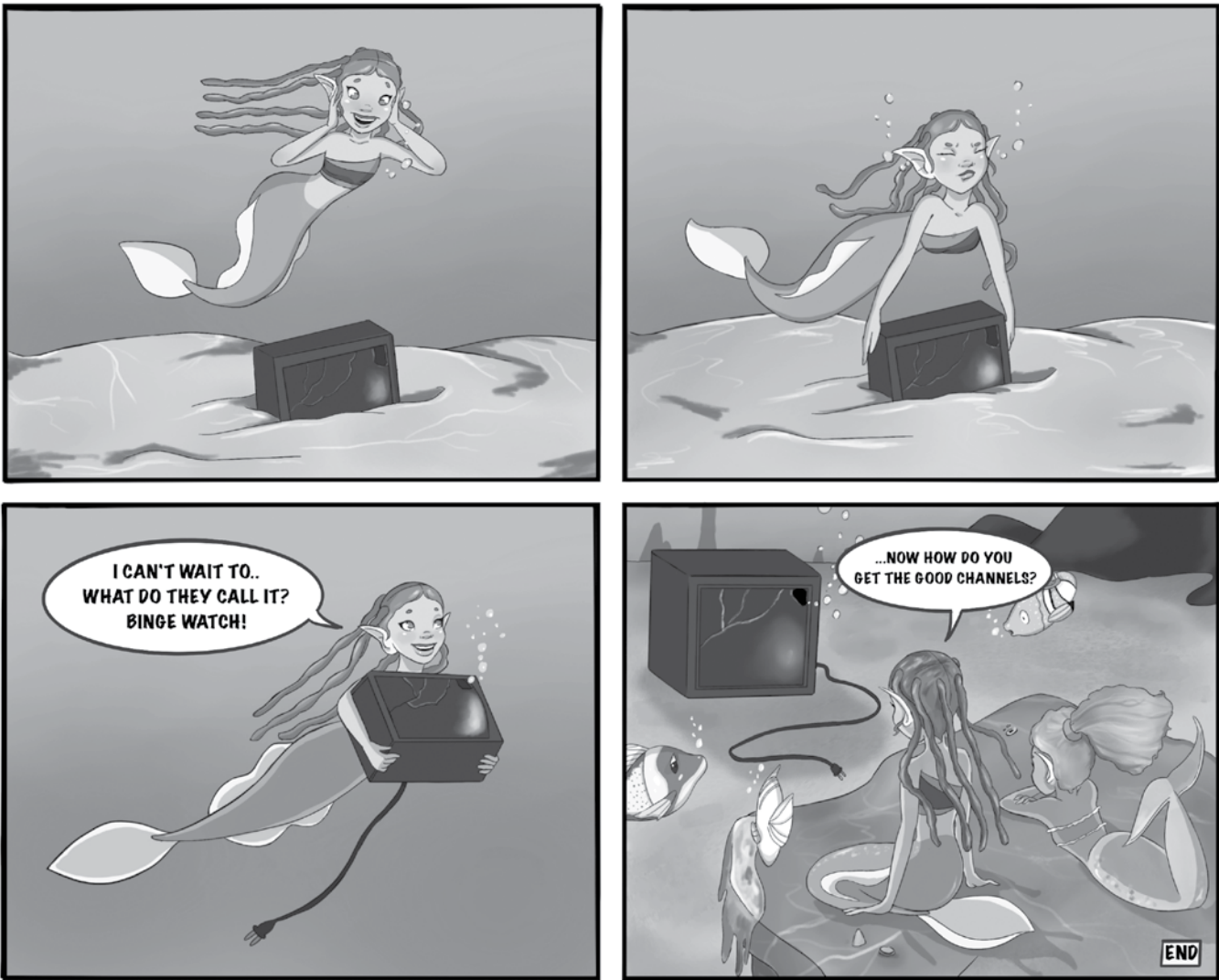
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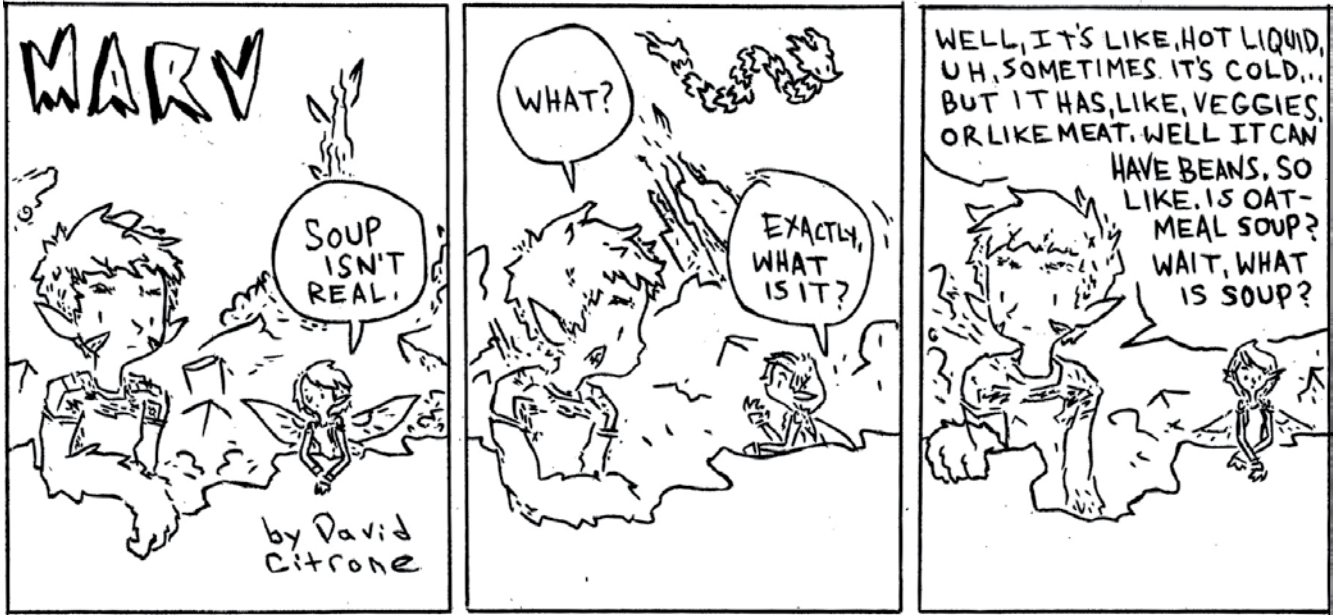
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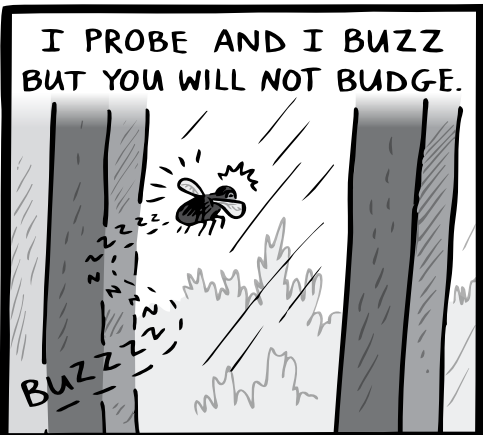
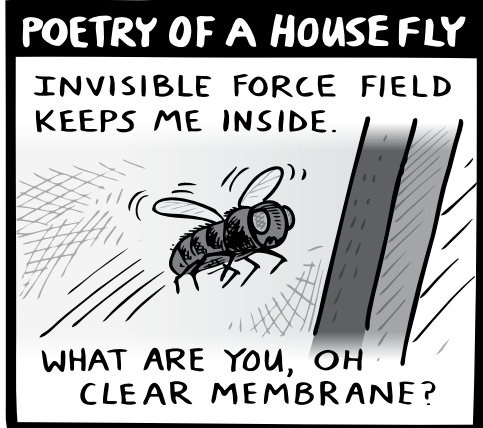
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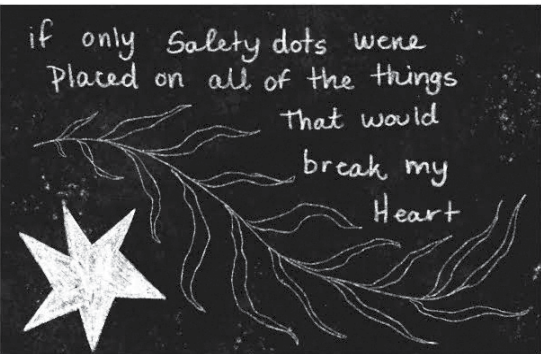
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