

# PRISM

COMICS

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## YOUR GUIDE

TO EVERYTHING  
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL  
AND TRANSGENDERED  
IN COMICS

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*Godwin '09  
(after Lopez)*



# Jane's World

Vol. 9

THE QUEST FOR LOVE



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**PRISM**  
COMICS



# PRESIDENTS' NOTES

WE'RE HERE. WE'RE QUEER.  
THEY'RE USED TO US.



**P** Prism is a completely volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to the promotion of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) talent, issues, themes and readers in the field of comics. We're a young organization, about seven years old, still finding needs we can meet and how best to meet them. Let's take a look at some of it here; you can learn more about us as we get to know one another better.

Our website ([www.prismcomics.org](http://www.prismcomics.org)) is the best place to start. It's a lively source of information, profiles, web comics, contact info, reference material, and more. It has grown as we have and will continue to evolve. Our most frequent discussions involve what we can do to better use the site as a resource for comics specialty retailers, small book sellers, event organizers, librarians, educators, and, in particular, LGBT comics fans — our core volunteers.

The other critical resource is in your hand: The Prism Guide has gone through a few incarnations as your demands and, quite frankly, your budgets have changed. We're particularly proud of this issue; we hope you find it both informative and entertaining. Over the past few years, we've had a lot of questions about our organization and the LGBT in comics, so we decided to go back to basics and answer some of those questions. "Who are you?" "How can I help?" "Is there an artist my this project?" "Do you have a good person to speak to the press about this issue?" "If I want to stock comics and graphic novels for my LGBT customers, where do I begin?"

We can get that information to you, or at least get you started. Place this Guide with your other reference books. Bookmark our site and allow us to welcome you.

Among our top priorities each year is to have a presence at Comic-Con International: San Diego every year. We hit a lot of other stops along the comics con road (as you'll see inside,) but the booth at San Diego

is like a birthday party and class reunion all rolled into one. At any moment, a volunteer is selling a stack of books to a regular visitor who then winds his or her way to the end of the booth and starts a series of non-denominational hugs and kisses. Pick up our "Queer Agenda" right away; see where the panels and parties will be. Don't miss the Prism Mixer and Silent Auction. Wear sensible shoes and don't forget to breathe. Then all that emailing and conference calling and late-night ranting begins to make sense. We're here. We're queer. They're used to us.

Our search for candidates for Prism's Queer Press Grant begins at the booth every year. Information and limited portfolio reviews by some of the field's best artists are available. This year's recipient, Pam Harrison, whose work is *HOUSE OF THE MUSES*, found us and was encouraged to enter her work. A Facebook Causes Page increased our fundraising. The Grant might someday stand as the cornerstone of our accomplishments.

Yes, there are miles to go before we sleep and our work only touches on that of LGBT activists whose work touches all LGBT lives. We hope someday to sponsor and/or attend more regional events. We'd dearly love to start a mentoring program. We'd like to build a stronger bridge to the consumers of LGBT work and to those that bring it to them. We'd like to initiate a small series of awards to celebrate our history and encourage our future. We'd like to connect in a more direct way with the scores of you bloggers out there who help us spread our message. We want to grow our international participation.

And we have a lot more to do than we have people to do it! So join with us as we discover new projects, new talent, new ways we can participate in making the LGBT life more accessible because it is so ingrained in a most lively branch of popular culture: comics.

**PATRICIA JERES & DAVID STANLEY, CO-PRESIDENTS**



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## INSPIRATION FOR THE COVER

Prism asked for a cover celebrating same-sex marriage. What better inspiration than the iconic ACTION COMICS #484, the 40th Anniversary issue featuring "Superman Takes a Wife"?



# ON THE COVER

## COVER BY STEPHEN SADOWSKI

Born and raised in British Columbia, Canada, Stephen Sadowski grew up collecting everything comic-related he could. He has been publicly "out" for about 20 years or so, and realized his boyhood dream of working for DC Comics, as penciller for one of DC's biggest successes, JSA (collected in JSA: Fair Play, JSA: Justice Be Done, and JSA: Return of Hawkman).

Steve's work includes Malibu Comics' Firearm 13 (10 pages un-credited), Jestercrow 1 from Castle Rain, Bob Burden's Mystery Men 1 and 2 from Dark Horse, and for DC, Starman 56 and Starman 80-Page Giant, Smash Comics 1, All Star Comics 2, JSA Secret Files, Paradise X: Devils, Power Company, JLA/JSA Secret Files, JSA All Stars: Doctor Midnite, The Avengers and Wonder Woman.

His recent work includes Dynamite's PROJECT: SUPERPOWERS and AVERNGERS/INVADERS from Marvel/Dynamite.

He has also worked doing storyboards for motion pictures, video games and commercials.



# CREDITS



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m4m cover

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**SHANE ROOKS**, colors

w4w cover

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# PRISM'S READING LIST

I would totally, fer shure, recommend Michael Troy's HIGH-Larious comic **THE BLONDE SQUAD**. It's witty, it's silly, it's totally gay, it's totally campy, and it's just plain fun. A lot of comics today are missing the "fun", they're all just so serious and overly dramatic. But **THE BLOND SQUAD** brings in the good times and mo-mo-more.

- **Brian Andersen** writes and draws *SO SUPER DUPER* and the webcomic *UNABASHEDLY BILLIE*.

**STUCK RUBBER BABY** by Howard Cruse discusses what it was like to be a gay man in the South during the civil rights era. It's also one of my favorite all-time comics!

- **Liz Baillie** is the creator of the minicomic *MY BRAIN HURTS*, the first five issues of which have been collected into a book.

**TALES OF THE CLOSET** by Ivan Velez, Jr. is a brilliant combination of realistic characters and consummate story telling. Like a queer telenovela, this is an addictive series that follows the adventures of a diverse group of gay kids in a Queens high school. It's got everything — humor, melodrama, hot sex, teen angst, wrestlers and chihuahuas.

- **Jennifer Camper** is the editor of *JUICY MOTHER*, and the cartoonist of *subGURLZ* and *RUDE GIRLS AND DANGEROUS WOMEN*.

CHECK OUT MORE RECOMMENDATIONS

PAGES 18, 38, 60

We asked creators, librarians, journalists and fans:

“ What comics or graphic novels would you recommend to LGBT teens? ” Here are some of their answers -- with choices that are great for LGBT teens -- or anyone at all. ”

**POTENTIAL, LIKEWISE, AWKWARD, and DEFINITION**, the high school comics of Ariel Schrag - For slice-of-life "there are other people out there like you" familiarity.

Alison Bechdel's **THE ESSENTIAL DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR** - For a demonstration of the variety of people who make up the queer community. Great soap opera!

**MAX & LILY, GRACE, and EVERY PART OF YOU IS FAMILIAR TO ME**, by Kris Dresen - For poetic, lovely, thought-provoking art.

**FUN HOME** by Alison Bechdel - For something that combines all of the above in the story of one particular troubled family.

- **Johanna Draper Carlson** publishes *Comics Worth Reading* ([www.comicsworthreading.com](http://www.comicsworthreading.com)), where she reviews, er, comics worth reading.

I've given away dozens of copies of **PEDRO & ME** by Judd Winick to LGBT youth I've worked with. Even if the MTV references are a bit dated, they love the story.

- **Brian Chase** is an LGBT rights activist and attorney, and is a former board member of Prism Comics.

I recommend Andy Hartzell's **FOX BUNNY FUNNY**. The art is wonderful, and the story is a touching and poignant tale of feeling like an outsider, longing to find a place you belong. I was pleasantly surprised at how the book encapsulates the feeling I grew up with, and imagine most every young LGBT comic reader grows up with.

- **Dave Davenport** is the writer/artist of *DOGSPUNK COMIX* and is co-creator (with Justin Hall and others) of *HARD TO SWALLOW*, works not (officially) recommended for LGBT teens.



# QUEER

# IN

by pka

# REVIEW

**i**n past years we've likened the Queer Year in Review to a barometer of GLBT acceptance in mainstream comics, and with every year we've seen the number of gay-friendly comics grow and grow. More and more we've seen that mainstream comics are slowly starting to catch up with their unfettered independent counterparts—and 2008 was no different.



# YEAR



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## 52 Aftermath—Crime Bible: The Five Lessons of Blood

4.0

It will come to pass...

This five-part series was every bit as interesting as first predicted, but we were sad to see that our new favorite dynamic duo, Renee Montoya and Kate Kane (better known by some as The Question and Batwoman), were no longer a couple. Instead, Renee seemed to have her eye on a new woman named Elicia, whom she met in a brothel while she did some undercover work in an attempt to unlock the secrets of the Crime Bible.

As the series went on, we discovered during the lesson of Greed that Renee was slowly becoming very enamored with the teachings of the Crime Bible despite her strong convictions against what it stood for and what it ultimately meant for her former girlfriend's fate. After she spoke with Maggie Sawyer and was offered her old job back by Commissioner Gordon (Yay! and Yay!), Renee took a detour to Hub City, the old home of the first Question. She hoped to stop a cop-killer who had already murdered seventeen cops in a three-week time frame. Once there in Hub City, she finally met with Flay, the man she had been after since the mini series began.

In the end, she defeated her adversary, but she was left with the responsibility of leading his order into the New Darkness, a prospect that was left to be seen.



## Annihilation: Conquest

2.0

Run for your life!! The Phalanx is coming!!

Like with 2007's Annihilation title, this series spotlighted the cosmic characters of the Marvel Universe. Also like that year's Annihilation title, this one had more crossovers and one-shots tying into it than you could shake a stick at.

Unfortunately, this is the type of series where one had to read a few of the crossovers to even figure out what was going on, though probably the best of the prerequisite titles was Annihilation Conquest: Quasar. The four-part tie-in featured the ever-lovable lesbian couple of Phyla-Vell and Moondragon on a quest to find a mysterious savior of the Kree after the Phalanx set up shop in the Kree Empire. That series also culminated in Phyla-Vell's girlfriend transforming into a dragon (Yikes!).

As that story continued in Annihilation Conquest, the mysterious Kree savior was discovered to be a reborn and re-powered Adam Warlock. With some of Marvel's heavy hitters like Adam Warlock, Phyla-Vell (now Quasar), the High Evolutionary, Nova, Ultron, and Rocket Raccoon, this title almost delivered a satisfying read. Tragically though, Moondragon was punched through the chest and killed in issue #2, which left the rest of the series nearly devoid of gay content (and Phyla-Vell in mourning).

Overall, it was a decent read and a nice prelude to the new Guardians of the Galaxy title, where we hope to see the return of Moondragon.

## The Authority

5.0

Amazing.

Probably the best take on the Authority in years, the first few issues of this series were part of a Wildstorm event called "World's End." An apocalyptic incident brought humanity to its knees and humbled the once mighty Authority, forcing them to act like responsible superheroes. Their headquarters, the Carrier, crashed into London and warped and reshaped the city, which created Unlondon. This doomsday scenario was complete with roving armies of killers, a plague virus that turned people into super-powered and disease spreading "Incubites", a total failure of all electronic devices, and a thick blanket of smoke in the atmosphere that blocked the sun.

Because of these threats the team became separated, all doing what they could to help gather survivors as well as supplies to what remained of the Carrier. Swift acted as their official means of communication, Midnighter went out on search-and-rescue missions, the powerless Engineer did what she could, and Apollo was left to stay above the smog as a look out, as he could no longer stay on the ground without risking both his powers and his health.

The emotional draw here was that with all that had happened Midnighter and his husband Apollo were forced to live apart, as the condition of the sky obscured the sun, which Apollo needs to survive. The two arranged a meeting spot in the upper echelons of the misshapen Carrier above the smog blanket. To signal a rendezvous, Midnighter released a balloon into the sky. Unfortunately, this middle ground for the couple was so highly elevated that Midnighter had to bring his own oxygen, and so the meetings could not occur regularly.

This melancholy story was a sharp contrast to many of the previous Authority titles that we've read: the characters ditched the caustic attitudes and abrasive ways and took part in an Authority story with a little more heart.



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## The Authority: Prime

3.0

The series read pretty well, but it was real borderline.

A good way to summarize the events of this six-part Authority series is to use the old adage, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em". A better way to summarize the series is with the more abstruse (and made-up) adage: "If you can't beat 'em, molest them, join them, and then try to kill them".

The story pitted the Authority against Stormwatch in a brawl to take possession of the possibly dangerous (and possibly beneficial) technology in the bunker of the late Henry Bendix, the mad-man who was responsible for most of the teams' creation as well as existing problems.

On the positive, this series had Midnighter and Apollo and the typical banter/pillowtalk that we've come to expect from the couple. On the negative, this series featured Rose Tattoo, the living embodiment of death, who had a habit of molesting opponents during team battles such as this one involving Stormwatch. Not a very likable character to begin with, she was manipulated into becoming the team's nemesis once again. The title did salvage itself a little when she was killed off in the end.



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## Batman and the Outsiders

5.0

Black Lightning is the coolest dad ever!!!

The year 2007 saw Batman once again taking the helm of the Outsiders. While the series didn't quite have the same line-up as it did back in the day, it did manage to capture a similar spirit. The current incarnation of the Outsiders was the result of an "audition" process that Batman required everyone to do before the heroes earned a position on the team. The only two given the boot were Captain Boomerang and Thunder. Thunder, less than pleased with the decision, tried to weasel her way back onto the team so that she could be with her girlfriend Grace, who passed the trial with no problem. Thunder even began staying at their headquarters. She eventually forced her way into active duty as she rescued Grace, Green Arrow, and Katana after they failed in their attempt to commandeer a Chinese rocket. Batman reluctantly acceded, but was still concerned that being on a team that wasn't above spying and breaking and entering would sully Thunder's reputation as a trusted hero.

In the final issue of 2008, Thunder was injured in an explosion, which left Grace devastated. As she and Black Lightning sat by Thunder's side at the hospital, he consoled her with a hug. Until this point, nothing had ever been mentioned about Black Lightning's feelings about his daughter and her relationship with Grace. His acceptance is exactly the thing we'd expect from the always-cool Black Lightning.

In recap this was a very interesting modern age take on a Silver Age gem. The only disappointment lay towards the end of 2008, when the story seemed to get derailed by Batman's apparent demise.

## Checkmate

3.0

Who says Tommy Jagger won't be the next Judo Master?

There is nothing we like more than seeing a strong gay comic character. We are always thrilled to see when one is able to defy convention and stereotypes, and though Checkmate wasn't laden with gay content, the title did manage to show Tommy Jagger kicking ass again in 2008. Just on sheer principle, we should give this book a solid five triangles, even if only for the two pages in issue twenty where Jagger beat the hell out of Count Vertigo -- but we know that wouldn't follow Mr. Terrific's "Fair Play" credo. So, to be completely fair, we made a compromise at three triangles. Sadly, though, this may be the last we see of the White Knight, as Checkmate ended in December with issue thirty-one.

## Countdown

4.5

Granny Goodness: Super Pimp

It seemed that all roads led to Apokolips for the characters in Countdown.

Hartley Robert Rathaway may have come very close to "paying the piper," as the saying goes, but after several issues with him absent we saw he was somehow able to escape back to Gotham from his short stay with Desaad on Apokolips. While on Apokolips, Desaad anxiously tried to coax Piper into channeling the Anti-Life Equation. Before that, Piper was chained by the wrist to a dead man (James Jesse, The Trickster) who had been killed by Deadshot earlier in the series.

Also, seen in Countdown was Catwoman's once temporary replacement, Holly Robinson. In 2007 she left Gotham and headed to Metropolis, where she found sanctuary at a women's shelter that claimed it was sponsored by the Amazons of Themyscira. While there, Holly met and befriended Harley Quinn. 2008 showed however, after the two Amazons-in-training discovered Hippolyta hiding out in a cave on the island, that the shelter was all just a ploy to recruit more Female Furies for Granny Goodness. We may be taking a leap here, but isn't that what job fairs are for?

In all seriousness, though, DC really needs more of these weekly apocalyptic comics that we've grown so accustomed to. The last few pages showed that Holly, too, was back in Gotham where we saw her rooming with Harley.





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## Dreamwar

Think "Marvel vs. DC", only bloodier.

1.5

While it had its moments, the series may have been more about shock than substance -- the shock being a bloodthirsty, classic DCU lineup who trumped Wildstorm's best before they returned to their senses to aid the Wildstorm contingent as they fought a common enemy. Midnighter and Apollo showed up in this series too, and surprisingly, no slurs were thrown their way regarding their homosexuality, even when the Joker got involved in the fight. In fact, what the Joker said sounded more like flirtation than an insult. . . .

## Final Crisis

Crisis? What Crisis?

2.0

Well, except for the "gay" comment that Human Flame made to Libra in issue two, the first five issues of Final Crisis were pretty good. Not quite what we were expecting but still really good. We do have to wonder about Mister Miracle and Sonny Sumo, though. With it established that the souls of the New Gods have returned to inhabit persons on Earth, we feel that Mister Miracle (who inhabited the body of stage performer Shilo Norman) took such an interest in Sonny because he was the one who happened to end up with the soul of his wife, Big Barda. Though we may be wrong, if this is ever acknowledged, the two could possibly become a gay couple (or at the very least perhaps even leave Sonny/Barda a sort of transgendered character) -- unless, of course, their original forms are ever returned or reborn. Renee Montoya played a role in things too, but was not often seen.

## Final Crisis: Revelations

Holy crap!

3.5

Those first couple of pages -- where Dr. Light tried to rape everyone -- were just scary! We had absolutely no idea what the hell was going on! We actually had to stop reading and go pick up what we had of Final Crisis because we thought we had missed something. We hadn't, of course, which made the sight all the more frightening. Luckily the Spectre showed up just in time, but still that was just so wrong.

Unlike Final Crisis, Revelations had much more involvement with The Question, as the Spectre was sent to exact God's vengeance on her, since the blood spilled by the cult she is now supposed to lead is on her hands. Renee's life was spared after God's spirit of mercy appeared before her and the Spectre. Soon afterward, the three were forced to flee from the Gothamites who were controlled by the Anti-Life Equation. Amongst those affected were Maggie Sawyer and Batwoman -- which at this rate, we imagine, means that Renee may quite possibly be the only gay character left to carry on the (rainbow) flag for the GLBT community of Gotham.





## JSA

2.0

### Gog reflex?

Contrary to popular belief, this series did feature a gay character. Obsidian, the son of Green Lantern, continued to work the security detail at the JSA headquarters. He wasn't shown much unless their base came under attack, which actually happened in 2008 when Gog came gunning for the team. During the fight, Obsidian forced himself down Gog's throat to see if he could combat his near-invulnerable body from the inside. There's a tasteless joke we could make, but we think DC already beat us to the punch line.

A few issues later, Obsidian encountered the Earth-2 version of himself as a member of Justice Society Infinity, along with his late sister, Jade. It was a bittersweet moment, as Jade seemed frightened by the appearance of Obsidian's Earth-1 counterpart.

This was an excellently characterized title with interesting stories. We only wish we could have seen more of Obsidian. We'd like to think that he's kept in the background so much because he's more like the team's secret weapon, and whenever they all get captured by some nefarious villain, it'll be Obsidian who comes to the rescue and saves them all. Perhaps that'll be something we'll see in 2009.



## Final Crisis: Rogues' Revenge

2.0

### These ain't your daddy's rogues!

Fresh off the Boom Tube from their trip to Salvation Run's "Hell World", the blue-collar Flash villains of Mirror Master, Heatwave, Captain Cold, and Weather Wizard were in bad spirits. They've returned to Keystone City with a score to settle with Inertia, the evil clone of the late Bart Allen. As they all drudged on, now accompanied by Axel Walker (the other Trickster), the Rogues were stalked by the mysterious Libra and his henchmen, who decided that the Rogues must join Libra's evil cult of evil-doers.

Piper showed up here and there in the series, but his role wasn't really that clear to us. Perhaps if the series had ran an issue or so longer, his involvement would have been better explained. He turned himself in at the end after he inadvertently helped the Rogues kill Inertia by stopping him in his tracks.

Come to think of it, the Rogues didn't seem as goofy as we remember; their characters were much more full of depth and seriousness than before—maybe due to their experiences over the past year. Either way, we liked the series and thought it did a good job conveying things like the determination the Rogues had to regain something they felt they had lost. We would have liked to see more gay content, though we completely understand that would not have been delivered easily in a story that's half conspiracy and half revenge.

## Manhunter

1.0

### Kate, so glad to see you back! Sit down, take a load off, we've got lots to catch up on.

Back on duty and breaking borders, Kate Spencer (better known as Manhunter), made her triumphant return this summer with issue 31. We really liked how the comic began with a neat little recap of things—always a must when a title returns from hiatus. It was really well done and did a great job of catching us back up on the events that had previously occurred throughout the series. We could go on and on about how wonderful the series and story were, and how much we loved seeing more of Kate's family (Phantom Lady and Iron Munro) as well as appearances by the Birds of Prey and the Suicide Squad. Not to mention the near treacherous scuffle with El Paso's number one super-hero, Blue Beetle—which, by the way, would have been super-interesting had the Darkstar/Scarab thing been further explored. However, when it came down to gay content, we have to say it wasn't as inclusive as usual—though that isn't to say what was there was bad—it's just we're so used to seeing so much more.



## Moon Knight

Marvel's other Punisher.

3.5

Gay content was definitely delivered in this title -- though it came in a rather bloody package. The third volume of Moon Knight is a throwback to the classic title of the 70's. The stories took place mostly on the gritty streets of New York City, where justice is often a luxury. Moon Knight entered this scene as the avatar of vengeance, and delivered punishment on the lawless streets with an outrageous dose of violence.

It was this kind of violence that slowly but surely crept its way back into the life of Marc's former sidekick (and we say "sidekick" instead of "partner" to avoid confusion, although the status of this may someday change), Jean-Paul "Frenchie" DuChamp, as he was once again under attack by homophobic lowlives. Frenchie, refused to be a victim in his own restaurant, and went ape-shit after his boyfriend Rob (who has been helping Marc Spector train despite DuChamp's objections) was attacked in front of him.

We were glad to see Frenchie's former mercenary background come into play, as he didn't hesitate to take a knife after the fools. Even after the attackers left, Frenchie wasn't done fighting, and sought further retribution by pursuing them to their hide-out. Once there he encountered Moon Knight, the very person he tried so diligently to push out of his life (as he felt it was no coincidence that people started getting hurt whenever his former friend was around). And as we've seen, these feelings towards Marc have often kept Rob and Frenchie at odds, as Rob had a tendency to have romantic ideas about crime fighting as opposed to Jean-Paul's "been there, done that" attitude. With that said, Frenchie's short team-up with Moon Knight may be just the thing to end his and Rob's constant bickering.



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## Midnighter

4.5

Hey, that guy has a name, buddy, and it ain't Lucas Trent!

Well, ok, it kinda was, but not really. In short form, Midnighter's daughter Jenny Quarx felt that she could help dear old dad overcome his feelings of self-doubt and created an identity for him in the small town of Harmony, Indiana. Midnighter's true identity is a mystery, even to himself, and Jenny felt that giving him a false identity for him to discover would ensure that he wouldn't find out who he really used to be. She felt it was for his own good – but as the story went on we learned from Midnighter that the “trouble with good intentions is that it's always about the doer”.

Our feelings about this title are still really mixed. While 2007's issues totally won us over, 2008's lot left us wondering what could have been had the series continued. Unfortunately, we will probably never know, as it ended in August with issue twenty.

The stuff about Anthem and the Eight Generations of Assassins was interesting, and we liked how Mindy was portrayed more as something of a side-kick, though Midnighter insisted that she wasn't. Still, we felt the series was missing something during its 2008 run. Certainly not blood, violence, and brutality, as all of these things were there -- from Midnighter throwing off his attackers by switching places with a man he had just killed (by wearing his clothes and scalp) to Mindy taking a bat to an Anthem member in an alley way (in hopes of gaining closure). So no, it wasn't that at all. And it wasn't Apollo, because he had never played a huge role in the series anyway. So maybe it was the little things, like when Midnighter rescued that dog earlier in the series who had been experimented on and when he brought him to the Carrier he peed all over Jack Hawksmoor. We know Midnighter isn't known for his kindness and humanity -- but it was still nice to see.



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## New X-Men

1.5

What a way to go.

2008 brought the end of yet another title that featured a gay character. The New X-Men series ended with issue 46. Anole's solid standing seemed to carry over from 2007's arc when the team went to Limbo, but with 2008's entanglement in the Messiah Complex story that crossed over into several different X-titles, we had lots of trouble keeping up. Probably the only thing we caught was what transpired with Mystique and Rogue in the last issue, as anything with Raven Darkholme talking about her fallen love Destiny is always sure to pique our interest.

## Runaways

4.5

Still wonderful!!

Well before things got screwed up and the series ended and was restarted, it was established during an argument with Karolina that Xavin's true form was female. Xavin, distracted, lost control while she fought with her betrothed and reverted back into a girl. And though we have certain issues with aspects of the book after Brian K. Vaughan's departure, we really appreciated the effort made to establish Xavin's true gender, as we could never quite figure out if Xavin's ever constant shift between male and female was Marvel's way of skirting the issue of the lesbian relationship with Karolina -- or if it was Marvel's way of trying to add a transgendered spin to the character.

With volume three of the series at hand, Karolina once again found herself in trouble for her parents' actions as the last remaining survivors from her home world of Majesdane came to bring her in for the murder of everyone on the planet. When Karolina's parents were still alive, they sold very valuable information to the Skrulls, who used it to devastate Majesdane. Nico was able to use a spell to divide the would-be-captors, but the spell also worked on the team, which kept everyone from reaching a reasonable and cohesive decision on what should have been done to help their friend.



## Salvation Run

Why DC, why?!

0.5

Salvation Run was a seven-parter that featured a vast array of DCU villains, which included none other than our favorite monkey-and-brain-in-a-jar, Monsieur Mallah and Brain. We've never been able to dig the relationship between these two although they were damn cute in *Tiny Titans*, beret and all! Regardless this series put an end to their romance, as the two were murdered in issue four by Gorilla Grodd. Even though our fondness for the pair is far from great, we still felt really bad seeing them die.

We feel a crack about P.E.T.A. is in order, but to be honest, we were actually pretty uncomfortable reading about one monkey beating the holy hell out of another monkey, as to us, it wasn't so much a gay couple being killed, but a poor animal and his baby doll or kitten, or what Brain could be compared to as a safety blanket. It was just very troubling, and we weren't very sure what purpose it served.

Overall, we found the series to be a fantastic read, as this was something that definitely could have continued to stand alone as more of a long-running title. The story and idea behind it were nice and complex, and had lots of really good beats. Community-wise, however, it did absolutely nothing.



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## The Order

OMG! NOT THE ZOBOS!!!

2.5

The Fifty States Initiative was an event in the Marvel Universe that put a government-sponsored superhero team in every state. California got a team called *The Order*, a group of regular men and women whom were given powers by "the man" to help defend their state. We really hate for this to sound like we're attacking the actual comic, but we just happen to feel that the niche this title was aimed for has already been filled by titles like *Thunderbolts* and *New Avengers*. The series actually reminded us a bit of a DC series from a while back called *The Power Company*—but without the likable characters and charm. *The Order* promptly ended after ten issues.

Perhaps the best thing about the series was the Black Dahlia girl gang, of which *Order* team member *Mulholland Black* had formerly been a part of. In issue #5 it was explained that she was kicked out of the Dahlias after she cheated on her girlfriend, the gang's leader. We feel that this title would have been much more interesting if it was exclusively about the Black Dahlia gang, as they added a good splash of imagination to the short-lived series. Things just don't always work out the way you want them to, though.

We'd like to think that some people tried their best to make something good with this title, but we personally just didn't like it. There was no hook to draw us into the story, and the characters, with the exception of *Anthem* (Tony Stark's old drinking buddy who convinced him to sober up), had little ties to the rest of the Marvel U.

Considering how much gay content was in the series with respect to its length, we reluctantly give this title a solid 2.5 triangles. At the very least, *The Order* introduced us to the zobo-zobo being short for zombie hobo—which we're sure will show up someday in *Marvel Zombies*.



## Ultimate X-Men

The X-Men are on drugs everybody!

5.0

After all the craziness that went on in prior arcs about Apocalypse and Cable, it was really nice to kinda get back to the basics as things started to focus on the X-Men again and who they were and where they came from. With that said, we were very interested in the glimpse into Colossus' life before he joined the team, especially since we weren't sure how much we'd see of him or Northstar again after they moved in together in 2007.

The story that started in issue 94 really had a lot of stuff going on. There were flashbacks of Colossus's past that included a moment in time when his father caught him in bed with another young man, and rumors began circulating about a new drug on the street called Banshee that could enhance the powers of mutants to extraordinary heights. The drug would quickly turn into the focal point of the story, as Colossus had been relying on it for years to help him with the strain that his metal exterior put upon him.

Ultimate Alpha Flight was also introduced in this story as well, and boy, were they scary! After they kidnapped Northstar, Colossus—who was willing to do anything for his boyfriend—rounded up a few of his team mates (all of whom were hopped up on Colossus' stash of Banshee) and they left the school to search for him. By the time they found him, so much of the drug had been pumped into Northstar's system that he overdosed, which left the reader at the end of issue 95 to believe that Northstar had just died in Peter's arms. Needless to say, it was with great relief that we saw later on before the "Ultimatum" story arc ended that Northstar was in fact still alive—the ordeal left him in a wheel chair, paralyzed from the waist down, but at least he was still alive.



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## X-Factor

What? So now Longshot can do it?

0.5

X-factor has never been a gay title per se, but has always been pretty good about having a dash of content here and there—whether it was remarks about Rictor's feelings for male and female acquaintances and team mates or just pokes in general about Multiple Man, who seemed to find one of his dupes in the closet from time to time. 2008 was no different. After Longshot appeared, it was learned that his ability actually worked in a similar way to Siryn's, as he too could induce a feeling of adoration with in people. This was later seen when a detective spoke to him about a case and ended up handing him his number.



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## Young Avengers Presents

5.0

This is exactly why the series needs to return!!

Young Avengers was probably Marvel's most promising title by far that has come out in recent years. With unique character portrayals and original stories, we're sad that the series has yet to return as an ongoing publication. Young Avengers Presents was a nice attempt, though, and just like with the original series, the young gay couple of Wiccan and Hulkling were incredibly well-written.

The limited run featured six issues, each of which dealt with a Young Avenger (or two) and another Marvel Hero as the main focal point, as shown on the covers. Each story was poignant and really resonated with us, especially issues two and three. While Billy and Teddy appeared in more than just those two, it was there that we saw how important family really was to them.

Issue two dealt with Hulkling and how he finally managed to finally speak with his dad, the late Captain Marvel. We found that the story was really sad, as the initial meeting with his father didn't go as well as Teddy had hoped. He was eventually able to tell Mar-Vell about being his son, but because of the complications that surrounded Mar-Vell's mysterious return to Earth, the two were not able to talk for long before he again had to leave.

Not nearly as sad, issue three did have its moments as Wiccan and his twin brother Speed went off in search of their mother, Wanda Maximoff, known in the Marvel U as the Scarlet Witch. Fueled by Billy's nightmares, the two ventured to various locations looking for a woman they weren't sure was still alive. In the end they were able to find some insight, though very little, from Pandemonium, who had been squatting in Wanda's old New Jersey home. The lesson they learned was to enjoy the life they currently have, which sounds like sound advice to us.



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## X-Men: Divided We Stand

0.5

No, that is not how it would happen.

In issue one of the two-part set, there were a few pages dedicated to Anole and the difficulties he experienced while trying to regain some semblance of a normal life after he was forced to move back home when Xavier's School for the Gifted was shut down. Northstar came looking for him when Anole tried to run away, despite how happy everyone in town was that he was back home.

Victor's story was really sad, and you felt for what he was going through, as he was no longer able to function properly with his family due to an acute case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was also extremely behind with his education. His struggles were completely overshadowed, though, by Northstar's dialogue and poor representation.

Northstar has always had a certain air about him and we just didn't see it here at all. The line about how Anole's arm wouldn't get him any dates was really out of place and just plain wrong. Northstar isn't a bumbling idiot—if he wants to insult you he will and do so with great skill and intention. Here, though, he was just being a complete jerk, which made the punch to his face at the end rightly deserved.

With that said, Anole's character was portrayed fairly well—but considering how he wound up in Young X-Men after all the things he said here almost made the story pointless.



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## Young Avengers/Runaways Secret Invasion

4.0

Xavin to the rescue!!

This crossover was a lot better than the one from a few years ago. Unlike the last time the Young Avengers and Runaways got together, none of the gay characters ended up captured and tortured nearly to death. Also, Xavin's neck didn't get broken, which if you ask us (or Xavin) is always a plus. Instead, the story's focus was Hulking (or perhaps we should say Dorrek) and how his existence threatened the religious beliefs of a rogue Skrull group. When Xavin found out what was going on, she desperately tried to get Teddy to safety. Xavin did have help from Teddy's boyfriend (and Wiccan's twin brother Speed) but ultimately it was she who saved the day.



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## Young X-Men

2.0

We don't know, this kind of thing seems to be getting kinda old.

For all intents and purposes, this was New X-Men -- same characters, similar dynamic, just with a different prefix. We cut it some slack though because it really wasn't too bad. The main point we want to remark upon is that this title was much more self contained than what we saw in the later part of New X-Men's ongoing run. This fact gave the stories that have been seen so far better cohesion and a sense of direction. When Anole showed up in issue six, the title also officially gained gay content. Unfortunately, not much more can be said beyond that.

**i**n retrospect, during the first year that we were lucky enough to have contributed to the Queer Year in Review it felt like we were looking for a needle in a haystack just to find non-indy material with gay content to review. Now we're amazed at how far companies like DC and Marvel have come to encompass stories that not only include GLBT characters but also, for the most part, embrace them. Much has changed in just four short years.



# LIBRARIAN'S CORNER

RECOMMENDATIONS BY  
ROBIN BRENNER



**LESBIAN** Sadly I feel like there's a distinct lack of lesbian characters that actually resonate, but one I thought of that is not as well known is *RICA 'TTE KANJI!?* by Rica Takashima. Japanese manga is, of course, very popular with teenagers and especially teenage girls, but at the same time manga's representation of LGBT characters is very different (and potentially offputting) to US readers. *Rica 'tte Kanji!?*, a charming fictionalized memoir of Rica's venturing from home to live openly as a lesbian in Nichome, Tokyo's gay district. The book avoids all of potential pitfalls, and though Rica is just out of teenhood and therefore this would likely appeal to older teens, and it makes you laugh, commiserate, and feel the flush of first love right alongside Rica. And it is adorably happy!

**GAY** There are a great many gay characters in comics (and how nice is that!) but it's tough to find gay teens who are great characters, have romances, and feel true. My instinct is to go with *YOUNG AVENGERS* (published by Marvel Comics), which combines traditional superheroics with a pair of out gay teens dealing with their powers AND their romance at the same time. However, if you want a slow simmering, character driven romance (that draws inspiration from manga but clearly reflects US sensibilities) check out Jen Lee Quick's first two volumes of *OFF\*BEAT*. (Please, someone, publish the third and concluding volume! My teens will thank you!). What I appreciate most about this comic is that so much is beautifully portrayed through facial expressions and potent silences, showing these young men as awkward, tentative, and full of feeling, like many teens I know when it comes to matters of the heart.

**BISEXUAL** Bisexuality is probably the least visible of all of the letters in comics (and, well, media in general.) In fact, I've been hard pressed to think of any bisexual teen characters in comics, period. And that's just a sad state of affairs (although there are few enough bisexual characters in teen novels, at this point...) So, I concede defeat on this one. There are a few manga characters acknowledged to be bi (see romantic lead George from *PARADISE KISS*, which I discuss below) but they are rarely shown to be so, just mentioned in passing.

**TRANSEXUAL** Trans characters are few and far between that aren't magical, super-powered, or comic relief, but I recommend the short series *PARADISE KISS* by Ai Yazawa, for one of my favorite trans characters in manga. Isabella, best friend of romantic lead George, presents as a girl and has become the confidante and mother hen of this motley group of teen fashion designers. George was the first to recognize and accept Isabella for what she was (he gave her a magnificent first dress), and everyone else followed suit. She's also distinctly not a drag queen, a character type often used for comic relief in manga, as her elaborate outfits are no more remarkable than her fashion-designing cohorts. Isabella's not the lead character, but her characterization is excellent: never a caricature, always a lady.

**ROBIN BRENNER** is resident comics and graphic novel enthusiast at No Flying, No Tights ([www.noflyingnotights.com](http://www.noflyingnotights.com)), a graphic novel review site for teens, and is the Teen Librarian at the Brookline Public Library in Brookline, Massachusetts.



# BEHIND THE SCENES



## WITH COMICS “FAMILY”

**W**hen you visit the Prism Comics booth at cons or look at [www.prismcomics.org](http://www.prismcomics.org), you see many talented LGBT writers, artists and editors and their work. But it should come as no surprise that “we are everywhere” in the process that takes comics from the seed of an idea to your hands. In this Guide, we talk with a collections editor, marketing manager, sales representative, and retailers about what they do and how comics make their way to your hands.



# ANTON KAWASAKI COLLECTIONS EDITOR

**Q** *I've heard a few readers express the opinion that editing reprint collections couldn't be hard -- after all, it's all written and drawn already. But that's not the whole story. What are some of the challenges you face in putting together a reprint collection?*

Well first I want to point out that it's not always just "already reprinted" material that you'll find in a collection. For many of them we need to commission brand new covers, introductions, and other supplemental material. Once in a while we even commission new story pages that were not featured in the original issues -- although that's very rare, and we've been shying away from that recently, as we don't want the buyers of the original comics to feel like they've been deprived of anything. However, I've always seen it like a "special edition DVD" with deleted scenes -- it's just an extra bonus that's not super important, but still cool to include.

Beyond that, editing collections requires "mapping out" where everything goes and making sure no spreads are getting broken (not as easy as you'd think -- especially for larger collections of variably-sized stories), proofing thousands of pages every month (more than even our regular editors have to deal with -- and don't even get me started on SHOWCASE books!), writing up any text needed (back cover, flap copy, any character profiles, "story so far" text, etc.), making any corrections, approving design...did I mention proofing thousands of pages?

Plus, there's figuring out exactly WHAT to reprint. For most collections, it's pretty easy -- there's usually an "arc" of 5-6 issues that's ready-made

for collections. For other anthology-type books, it's much harder. There's a lot of research that goes into choosing exactly what stories are best for whatever theme that we're doing. It's not as easy as it seems, and sometimes it can take several days just to figure out the contents of a single book -- especially for something like our GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD volumes. Everyone has a different idea of what a character's "greatest" stories are, so it can be quite a challenge putting out a collection that's going to please most people. (Forget about trying to please everyone -- it's impossible).

**Q** *What are the extra issues that reprints of very old materials, like the ARCHIVES, raise?*

ARCHIVES, and other collections that reprint material from the "Golden Age," have a unique set of circumstances -- as there is typically no film available for them. So basically we have to meticulously reconstruct the art from scratch. This process can be done various ways, and we have a number of talented artists and production houses we use that painstakingly reproduce the blackline of the art, then faithfully recolor it all to match the tones of what we approximate the original comic to have looked like. It's a long (and expensive) process, but we strive to be as authentic to the original as possible.

**EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT IDEA OF WHAT A CHARACTER'S "GREATEST" STORIES ARE. FORGET ABOUT TRYING TO PLEASE EVERYONE -- IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.**

Lately we've also introduced a method of scanning old comics (from the absolute best copies we can find), and then cleaning up and tweaking the scans. It's a new process that we're still perfecting, and it will only be used in very select cases -- but it allows us to finally collect some material that was otherwise deemed too costly to reconstruct through other means.

**Q** *I've commented to you before that the design decisions on books you've edited have been stunningly good. What sort of things do you have to consider?*



**WORKING WITH DARWYN COOKE ON THAT WAS A BLAST... IT'S THAT COMMITMENT TO DETAIL THAT MADE IT EARN AN EISNER AWARD.**

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**ABSOLUTE DC: THE NEW FRONTIER**

Thanks! Though most of the credit for the design goes to our amazing design department, headed by Georg Brewer (VP-Design & DC Direct Creative -- who also oversees Collected Editions), and Robbin Brosterman (Design Director-Books). Of course, the Collected Edition editors have input too, and that is actually one of my favorite aspects of the job. I'm especially proud of the upscale collections we do, like the Absolutes, the Deluxe Editions, the Omnibuses and the Classic Library titles. A LOT of thought and consideration goes into the design of each book, and how we can make them unique, reflect the tone of the project it's reprinting, really stand out on the shelves, and also be objects of "art" themselves. Whenever possible, we often consult with the original art-

ists for their input as well. I'm quite happy with how ABSOLUTE DC: THE NEW FRONTIER turned out, for example. Working with Darwyn Cooke on that was a blast, and I think it's that commitment to detail that made it earn an Eisner Award. Right now one of the books I'm working on is ABSOLUTE JUSTICE, and I'm collaborating with Alex Ross and the book's designer on everything from the slipcase art and how all the sketches will be displayed in the back, to what kind of endpapers we'll use and the color of the tassel. There's no design detail that isn't thoroughly scrutinized!

**Q Do you think there's any sort of "gay sensibility" that affects the work you do?**

Hah! I don't know...maybe? The politically-correct part of me would like to say that being gay shouldn't affect how I approach my work at all. But the practical part of me knows that being gay has had an influence -- whether subtle or major -- in almost everything I do. I couldn't help it even if I wanted to.

Going back to design choices, I think whatever "gay sensibility" I have is probably most evident there. I trust our designers with most things, but once in a while I'll have to say something like "That character shot is just not flattering at all! Please use this glamour shot instead!" [laughs]

**Q What materials do you wish you were able to reprint?**

DC's been pretty good about getting the best of their publishing history into print already (or we plan to, in the coming years). And my biggest collection wish -- the complete James Robinson STARMAN in hardcover -- finally came true, after lobbying for it for years. But there are still some major works that have yet to be reprinted. On top of that wish list is definitely the complete Paul Levitz LEGION OF SUPERHEROES. We're finally collecting some of the Baxter run now, but I would have loved to have started even earlier, and collect it ALL. Hopefully we'll get around to it someday.

And while most of it's been collected already, I would love, love, LOVE to repackage all of the Marv Wolfman/George Pérez run of NEW TEEN TITANS as super-thick Omnibuses (ala STARMAN). Right now the first half is in our Archives format, and the second-half is mostly in trades -- with a couple of random issues still missing here and there. I truly feel that run redefined



super-hero teams in the '80s, and was a HUGE influence on all team books from then on. I think it deserves really special (and consistent) treatment, but there's also concern about repackaging the same material too many times -- which I completely understand. Still, I truly believe people would buy Omnibuses. And I'm hoping everyone that reads this will write in and ask for them! [hint hint]

After that, I wouldn't mind seeing the rest of the Keith Giffen JUSTICE LEAGUE at some point...and maybe even the original INFINITY, INC.

**Q How did you make your way to this job?**

I tried to break into DC for years, applying for every assistant editor position that came up -- and I came VERY close to getting chosen a couple of times, but always came up short. And then a friend of mine was selling his comic book store in Pleasantville, NY -- and just out of curiosity, I asked him how much. When he told me, I was surprised that it was an amount that I could actually (somewhat) afford! So without ever considering being a comics retailer before, I suddenly became one overnight. I ran the store by myself for about 18 months, doing a reverse commute out of NYC, until one day my buddy Phil Jimenez informed me of a job opening in DC's Direct Sales department. It was for writing the DC section of the Previews catalog, which was something I knew I could do. So I had an interview with then-Manager of DC Communications (now PRISM Co-President) Patty Jeres, and we really hit it off. I got the job, and wrote sales copy for about 2 1/2 years, before I was approached about joining the Collected Editions group as an editor -- which I've been doing ever since.

**Q Putting your history together, can you explain the role the trade collection backlist plays in the economics of a comics shop?**

Collections have a VERY big role in comic shops, and that role is gaining importance every day. I can actually name a few shops that do MOST of their business with trades, rather than monthlies. And the presence in chain bookstores has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years too.

What's not to love about collections? Like their cousin, the graphic novel, they are complete stories presented with no ads in an attractive and affordable package! So it's no surprise that their appeal has grown considerably over the years.

I don't think their charm will ever surpass the immediacy that monthlies bring, though. There's no denying the excitement there is from going into your local comics shop every Wednesday for new stuff. But for those people who don't have the time, or can wait, or prefer a more "complete" reading experience, collections are ideal. And they're definitely a great way to attract NEW customers to the medium. In my opinion, the smartest retailers are the ones that know the true value of the trade backlist...

## THE SMARTEST RETAILERS ARE THE ONES THAT KNOW THE TRUE VALUE OF THE TRADE BACKLIST

**Q As a PRISM founder, what was on your mind when starting the organization? And what do you think of where it's come?**

When PRISM started, it took a while for us to figure out what the organization was really about, and what was needed to make it something worthwhile. We all had our heart in the right place, but we also had other jobs that prevented us from giving PRISM our full attention. Non-profits are VERY difficult to get off the ground -- especially when all the members are scattered in different cities. To be honest, I don't think PRISM really gelled until it got some fresh blood, after a few other members (including myself) left due to other commitments. It's the kind of organization that needs super dedicated people to run it, and right now I think it's very strong. I'm always impressed by PRISM's presence at cons, and I think the annual Queer Press Grant is a fantastic idea that I'm glad finally got off the ground. I know a lot of LGBT fans (including myself) who have been able to find a lot of great material that they wouldn't have known about, thanks to PRISM. I look forward to seeing where the organization grows from here!



# JIM McCANN MARKETING MANAGER

**Q** *What are some of the things that go into marketing comics? I know there's no such thing as a typical day, but if there were, what would it look like?*

Honestly, you are right, there is no typical day. Just as every comic is different, marketing them is different. I have taken on more of a consulting role this past year so I can have time to write as well, so I am dealing mainly with storylines, events, and issues that could get mainstream media attention. We take a look at what we have coming up, who would be the most interested in it, and I work with our PR firm to pitch the coverage to the outlet best suited to cover the story. Once they are interested, I make sure they get the best interviews and art assets to really make the story attractive to the audience outside the regular Wednesday buyer, in hopes of converting them to frequent their local comic shops more.

I write a number of our trailer scripts, house ads, as well as a lot of copy and proposals that fans don't see to help market and increase the brand of Marvel.

Also, now that it is convention season, I work on our panels, announcements, and getting our talent in front of cameras and reporters to keep momentum going on Marvel's popularity. So, take a healthy dose of all three of those, shake, pour over a surprise job duty that may fall into my lap for the first time, and serve. That's my day!

**Q** *How did you get started at Marvel?*

I've been at Marvel for 5 years now, but my journey here started 10 years before that. I was a host at Hard Rock Café in Nashville, TN, where I met Marvel's then-President Terry Stewart. I asked him how I could work at Marvel. He told me to finish college, get as much experience as I could in my field of marketing as well as writing, and when I felt I was ready, move to New York and knock on editorial's door. I took that advice to heart and within 5 years I had graduated and



McCann has branched out with his first extended writing assignment, the **NEW AVENGERS: THE REUNION** limited series.

was in the ABC Daytime Writer Development Program, writing scripts for *One Life to Live*. I worked in film & TV as well as DVD and book distribution. I got the life experience and found an opportunity to move to New York from Nashville with the goal of either working for *One Life to Live* full-time or my life-long goal of a staff job at Marvel. I set an alert on Monster.com for "Marvel Entertainment" and within 2 months had found a job in Operations that I was qualified for. I applied, interviewed and got the job in a whirlwind of surreal moments and before I could even let it sink in, I was clocking in for my first day at Marvel, achieving a dream I had set 20 years earlier when I started reading comics.

**Q** *Your career's been branching out into writing too, most recently with the **NEW AVENGERS: THE REUNION** limited series. Do you think your experience in marketing has informed your writing, and if so, how?*

I've been incredibly lucky to be able to stay at Marvel in a consultant capacity and still be able to write. Marvel is a second home for me (just ask my partner! But he's a comic fan so he



doesn't mind when home & work blur a bit), and I always want to have a place there. Fortunately, they feel the same and are letting me pursue my true passion of writing. But passion alone doesn't make a great comic- you have to know and understand the business and the process of making comics. My experience in marketing and operations as well as getting to know the incredible editors and talent we have here at Marvel has definitely helped in my making good, if not yet great, comics. I'm just starting to get my career as a creator started, but I feel that I've an invaluable foundation thanks to the 5 years I have under my belt working in the industry first.

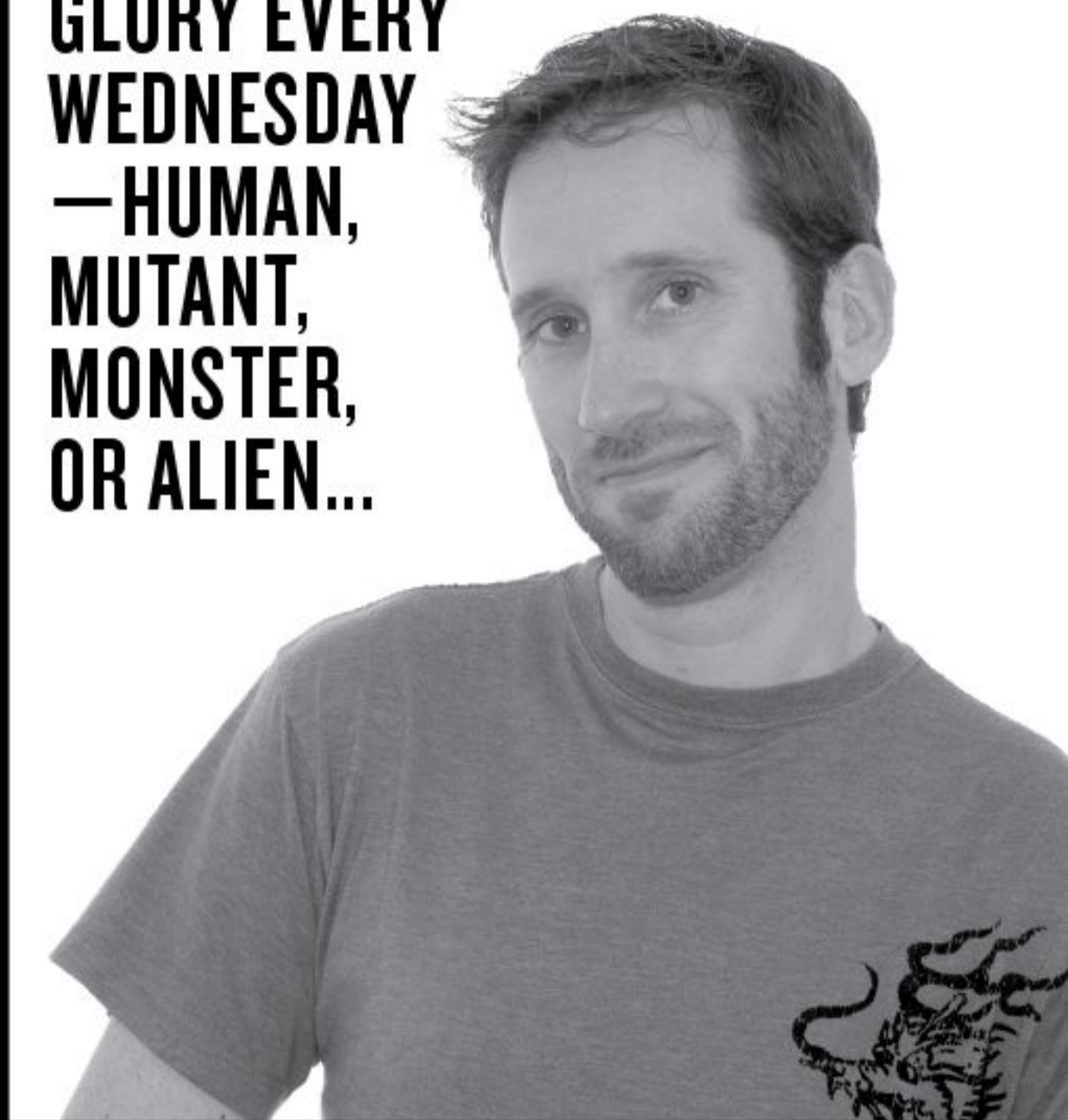
**Q What's the best part of your job?**

The sheer joy it brings me. I always say that my real job, regardless of if I am at a convention, at my desk writing ad copy, or at home wrestling with that line of dialogue to get it to sound just right, my ultimate goal is to get people as excited about our comics as I am.

**Q How has being gay affected your experiences in comics -- as a reader, as a marketer, as a writer?**

This is a really interesting question. Honestly, only in two of the three, has it barely affected. As a writer, my being gay is no different than my being a hunt & peck typist or having green eyes. It's just a part of me. At most, it's influenced the stories I want to tell- which are strong female leads or complex relationships, but that could have come from the types of TV shows, books, and films I like, and is not exclusive to being gay. As a marketer, it hasn't affected my experience beyond the frustration I feel when I see some people think that there is an anti-gay bias in mainstream comics. That couldn't be further from the truth. The Northstar storyline in particular stands out to everyone who is gay and in comics, and I think the fans really reacted in a way that no one expected. It was always the plan of Mark Millar (who I am happy to call my friend and who loves his gay fans) to "kill" Northstar and bring him back the next issue as a mind-wiped assassin and then follow the redemption and struggle Jean-Paul would go through so the character would be left with a new and complex status quo by the end of the story- an internal struggle as a hero regardless of sexuality. Orientation never came into play, just as heterosexuality rarely comes into any straight

## COMICS CELEBRATE DIVERSITY IN FOUR-COLOR GLORY EVERY WEDNESDAY — HUMAN, MUTANT, MONSTER, OR ALIEN...



character's storyline. Honestly, until that point, all Northstar had going for himself was that he was the gay X-Man. That storyline was to give him more to work with from an internal motivation, which is always best for any character. Unfortunately, some people immediately jumped on to an anti-gay belief because they thought his story ended when he was "killed", unaware of the full arc he was about to undertake. It was frustrating seeing that knee-jerk reaction, knowing what was to come.

As a reader, I am thrilled to see more and more gay characters in books like YOUNG AVENGERS and RUNAWAYS. It's like when Ellen came out on her show- suddenly there were characters I could fully relate to in an aspect of their life I hadn't been able to with any other characters. And it started a movement. That movement is finally just beginning in comics. We've been seen as a "kids" publication industry for so long that people were afraid to tell LGBT stories, but not so much anymore. I think we're seeing a lot more LGBT characters in comics today and there will be more to come, which makes this a truly exciting time to be a reader!

Photo by Jeremy Brody.



# TONY SHENTON SALES REPRESENTATIVE

**Q Here's your soapbox -- not as a writer, not as a marketing guy, but as Jim. You have the ear of thousands of LGBT comics fans. What would you like to tell them?**

Wow, no pressure here, huh? I would like to shatter the perceived myth of a "Pink Ceiling" in comics. There are LGBT people working at every level in every capacity in comics today. So if you are a fan of comics who wants to work in comics, do *not* let your orientation keep you from achieving that goal. I am living my dream and it kills me to think that there are those out there who may be paralyzed by fear or feel disenfranchised or discriminated because of who they love. You are not only gay, you are *you*, and what you bring to the industry is what's important. When I first started out, I was terrified to come out, not because of anything I had experienced, but because I had come from the very repressed South. When I did, it was a non-issue, but it was personally liberating. I have incredible friends in the industry who welcome me and my partner (who is amazing and I am so lucky to have in my life) with open arms and the subject of my sexuality is not even a passing thought. I am myself and judged on the merits of my job and character, not on being gay. The only restraints we as people who are LGBT have are the ones we place on ourselves. Comics celebrate diversity in four-color glory every Wednesday- human, mutant, monster, or alien. And every day, behind the scenes, the world of making comics is just as diverse- be it creed, race, gender, or orientation. Never stop dreaming and working towards your goal of being in comics- there's a place for all of us in this amazing industry!

**Q How would you describe your job, exactly?**

I'm a pusher. I push mostly small press comics to shops and tell them how good they are. "Just a taste. This is good stuff. It'll sell. Trust me." My official career is "sales representative."

**Q How long have you been doing it?**

I started working freelance for NBM Publishing, Inc., in 1993, and branched out a few years later.

**Q What changes in the industry have affected how you do your job?**

The PC revolution has made it easier for shops to track inventory, and easier for me to send out covers and interior art, not to mention links, so buyers can have an idea of the interiors of the books I am trying to sell. The continual changes in the distribution field, from the collapse of local distributors to the rise of Diamond, to the attempts of new distributors to establish themselves in the market, to the recent internal changes at Diamond -- all tend to affect the number of publishers who approach me, and the number of orders I take. The comic book industry is supposed to be recession-proof, but not this time. This recession has been going on for years and it has been devastating. It was a slow decline until September or so, then steep one. Working on commission only made autumn and early winter very scary indeed.

**Q What LGBT material do you handle?**

Flaming Artist, JUMBLY JUNKERY, Secret Acres, Poison Press, Drawn, Out Press, Erika Moen's comics and book, T-GINA, DEMONIC SEX,, EyeRocket, Class Comics, All Thumbs Press, Cavities Comics, Aquaboy Art & Design, Liz Baillie's MY BRAIN HURTS, CBG Comics, Abby Denson's minicomics, Feeping Creatures & Studio NDR (on hiatus), Cheryl Gladstone's minis, any queer material Last Gasp may carry, such as Tom Of Finland comics and books, and the same can be said about Microcosm Press, PM Press' F-WORD, and Prism Comics' annual Guides. I don't discriminate. I work for plenty of folks whose sexuality is unknown to me, and for confirmed heterosexuals as well.

**Q How do you feel your experience as a retailer affects how you do your job now?**

As a manager/buyer, I looked at what might sell, and determined quantities to buy. For the most part, my decisions were on the money. Now I look at what may sell to retailers and to consumers. It's trickier, but I can use the same skills.



**Q How do you see the state of LGBT comics projects today?**

Bearing in mind that the relatively inexpensive cost of self-publishing is driving a lot of wonderful new talent into the market, I am slightly disappointed at the lack of new voices in LGBT comics. One would think we'd see more autobiography, more alternative stories with gay characters, and more acceptance of LGBT comics in shops around the country. However, I think the previous Federal administration scared a lot of retailers from carrying anything gay-related in their shops, especially if it had anything to do with real life and sex. Perhaps the lack of gay products that actually sell in these shops has discouraged new talent. Or perhaps it's just that the creators don't label themselves with their sexuality.

**Q What are a few of your current favorites -- including materials you handle and those you don't?**

HARD TO SWALLOW #3 contains a real good erotic story that I return to from time to time. Belasco. I enjoy the soap-opera in SO SUPER DUPER, and would have loved to handle FUN HOME. Alison Bechdel is a favorite from long ago. I used to tear the comics pages out of the ADVOCATE and any LGBT newspapers

I'd find. I never dreamed there would be so many collections. I don't think we see enough from Howard Cruse or Tim Barela. I also like some classics, including work like SALOME and STANLEY AND THE MASK OF MYSTERY by UK artist David Shenton (no relation), and TALES OF THE CLOSET by Ivan Velez. There are many erotic artists whose work is handled by the Tom Of Finland Foundation whose works I wish were in book format as well. For the sexually ambiguous, there's the kinky bondage and discipline work of Michael Manning. Who can say who is doing what to whom? I have to say that just as a fan, I find my tastes may lead me in any direction but I am less likely to read trans/bi/lesbian stories with explicit sex than I am to seek out homostories, but on a professional basis, I look for accomplished art and good storytelling. Sometimes all a client needs is one, and not the other.

**Q What are some of the difficulties in dealing with publishers, especially new publishers, or what would you suggest to folks considering jumping into print?**

Folks, the first thing you should do, providing you have the talent, is research. Find out how much it costs to print a book before you set prices. Learn how the industry works. First think, then print. I can't tell you how many folks use Print-on-Demand services that are way too expensive and mean your price per unit will be twice as much, or even higher, than your competition in the market. You may be able to sell your book at conventions and to stores yourself, but you will have placed yourself out of commercial distribution. Start small. No 500 page graphic novels. Use web-comics services to build fans and demand for your printed book, and drive sales with your mailing list after. Network. And if your first book fails, at least you have boxes of unsold books for furniture... but try again in a different format at a different price. Look at how many titles fail at large publishers each year! You're in good company. If you have artistic talent, and if you can tell a story, that does not automatically mean you can package and present a good looking book! Please talk to folks, take a course or two in publishing, learn what cover images and colors may work to sell more copies of your book, and always keep your mind open to advance your artistic style and your writing skills. Look at Jeff Smith. BONE wasn't built in a day!

**JUST A TASTE.  
THIS IS GOOD STUFF.  
IT'LL SELL. TRUST ME.**





GET YOUR GEEK ON AT  
**WHATEVER...**  
548 CASTRO ST. SAN FRANCISCO

## RICH AND COUGAR VAN PATTERSON PATTON RETAILERS

The owners of **WHATEVER...** (548 Castro Street, San Francisco, CA 94114) have gone where few have gone before, bringing the local comic shop to the Castro.

**Q How long have you been involved in comics retailing? What led you to open the shop?**

We have just celebrated three years and are very excited going into our fourth. As to why we opened the store: a dream and a love of comics.

**Q There are other LGBT retailers, of course, but you have the distinction of being located at what some people call "The Center of the Gay Universe" – less than a block from Harvey Milk's camera store in the heart of the Castro in San Francisco. How do you think that affects your business? Does the Castro find comics an unlikely offering?**

Some store owners felt that our type of store did not belong here; we were not the typical "gay" store. We don't sell video porn or poppers or even gay tchotchkes -- but what we do offer is more than that. We have a safe space in which you can be you. It doesn't matter who you are or how you identify -- you are welcome in our store (as long as you're gay friendly).

Oh, and gay people are just like straight people when it comes to doing things like walking, eating and reading comics. (When I opened I had people ask if gay people read comic books, and that was my answer to them.)

**Q One factor of being on the Castro retail stroll is that you probably get more drop-ins than many shops in more suburban areas. What do you recommend for the adult gay, lesbian, bi or trans comics newbie?**

The same as I would anyone else. Good reading. We talk to the first time comic reader about what their interests are. Trying to match a book with

what they might like. Comics are universal - they help people escape from the every-day grind. When it comes down to it, gay or straight, they just want a good story.

**Q What is Free Comic book Day like in the Castro?**

Lots of people wanting free stuff. Next question...

**Q Do you think your relationship with distributors, publishers, and other retailers is in any way easier, harder, or different because of your location, audience, and identity?**

No, once again, we are a business doing business with people. Money is what they care about, not what I do when I go home. Also, I make it a policy not to do business with, oh, say, Fox News.

**Q What about LGBT creators? Any in-store appearances, favorite materials, etc.?**

My dream would be to have Marc Andreyko do an in-store appearance. But right now we do have some local up-and-coming creators that I am proud to support. For example, Brian Andersen, who does SO SUPER DUPER, is an amazingly talented guy and I can't wait to read his first Marvel or DC book someday. I believe strongly in supporting our own. They are the future writers and artists and will be the "gays" in the big leagues. We need more of them.

**Q Do you handle subscriptions, or pull boxes, or pre-orders, or the like?**

If someone wants to join our Stash Program they just fill out a list of pull titles, and we start the following week. Simple and painless.

**Q Is there anything you'd like to tell our readers in general about retailers and local comic shops in general, and yours in particular?**

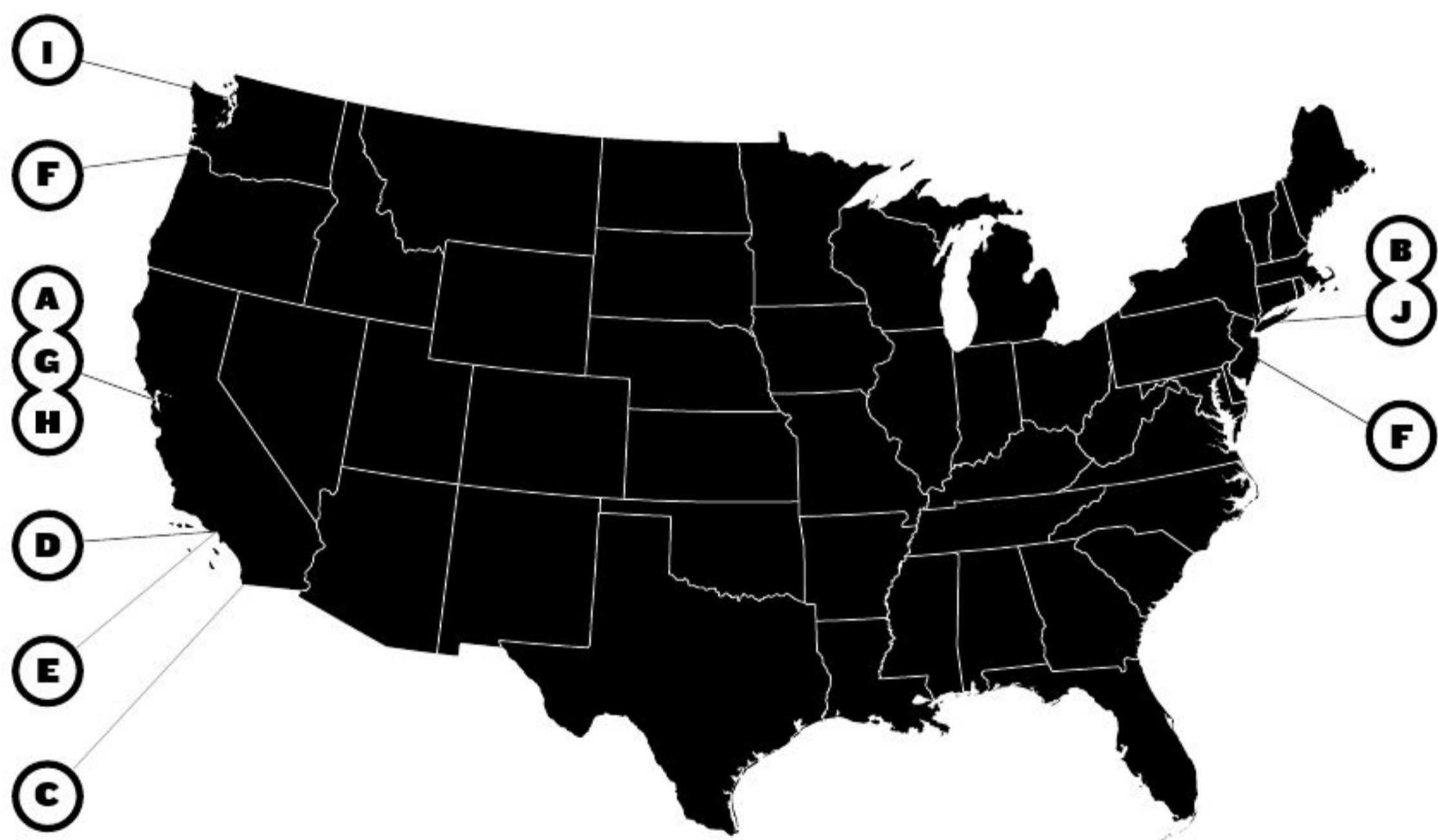
Just that if you want local gay owned shops around, you have to support them. Walking in and saying, "great -- you're here" doesn't pay the bills. In this economic and political time, supporting your own is a great way to keep money in the family. When it comes down to it, we only have each other.

We love what we do. We have some great supporters who have been with us from the beginning. Our thanks to them and the many people who make it a point to visit us when they're in town. If you're ever in SF, stop by!



# [ WHERE ]

IN THE WORLD IS  
PRISM COMICS



It's been about a year we last told you "Where in The World is Prism Comics". A lot has happened in that year: a new president (of the United States – as well as new co-presidents of Prism Comics), the campaign to legalize gay marriage... even a gay American Idol finalist! And Prism Comics forged new frontiers on the campaign trail for diversity in comics from one coast to the other.

**BY TED ABENHEIM**



PATTY JERES, PERRY MOORE, STAN "THE MAN" LEE

A

## WONDERCON 2008

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

FEB  
22  
TO  
24

Prism started 2008 with an ambitious agenda of panels and a very entertaining "Queer Comics Reading" organized by Justin Hall (now a Prism board member) and Tommy Roddy with readings by Brian Andersen, Paige Braddock, Justin Hall, Andy Hartzell, Mari Naomi and Tommy Roddy.

B

## MoCCA 2008

NEW YORK, NY

Prism went east to Manhattan's trendiest, East Village-iest alternative comics fair run by the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art (MoCCA). Headed by Prism board member (and now co-president) David Stanley, Prism's booth was graced by Abbey Denson, Erica Friedman, JD Glass, Rachel Nabors, Ivan Velez, Jr. and Allan Neuwirth.

JUN  
06  
TO  
07



C

## SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON 2008

SAN DIEGO, CA

JUL  
24  
TO  
27

2008 was our sixth year at Comic-Con, and our first year with a double-sized booth. We doubled our pleasure and doubled our fun, welcoming Prism board member Charles "Zan" Christensen, Dave Davenport, Steve MacIsaac, Tommy Roddy, Sam Saturday, Sean Platter, Joe Phillips and Sean-Z as booth partners, plus a host of other creators signing and talking to fans.

We tripled our panel presentations at Comic-Con in 2008. Legions of Legion of Super Heroes fans turned out for our "Queer Legion Fandom" panel with Prism past president and current board member Roger Klorese, Chris Companik, Denise Sudell, Tom & Mary Bierbaum and Dave McFaddin. Our "Emerging LGBT Voices" panel presented Brian Andersen, Zan Christensen, Joveth Gonzalez, Mari Morimoto, Tommy Roddy and Ariel Schrag. And our "LGBT Portrayals in Comics" panel boasted Perry Moore (author of the Lambda Literary award-winning book HERO) Axel Alonso, Marc Andreyko, Bob Schreck, Gail Simone, Judd Winick and Prism board member (and now co-president) Patty Jeres. Fans cheered as Perry welcomed special surprise guest Stan "The Man" Lee, with whom Perry is working on a special project based on his book. This was truly an historic moment for LGBT fans at the Con – to have Stan Lee appear at an LGBT panel.

2008 also marked our first year of Portfolio Review, where up-and-coming creators had their work critiqued by pros Phil Jimenez, Bob Schreck and Terrance Griep.





WINNERS OF THE HARD HEROES COSTUME CONTEST

D

## HARD HEROES 5

LOS ANGELES, CA

Squads of LA guys (and a few gals) shed their secret identities and donned their hero costumes for LA's annual Super Hero AIDS/HIV fundraiser run by Ted Abenheim and the Los Angeles Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. The event raised almost \$2,000 for Being Alive and included face and body painting, a hero/villain smackdown, and appearances by LGBT artists Aman Chaudhary, Brad Rader, Mike Derry, Sean-Z and Michael Troy. The costume contest was won by Red Arrow and Black Adam, who happen to be a couple – who knew?!?

AUG  
10

E

## WEST HOLLYWOOD BOOK FAIR

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA

SEP  
28

Prism represented in the LGBT community of WeHo at the annual West Hollywood Book Fair with signings by Lynx Delirium, Michael Derry, Glen Hanson, Jeff Krell, Brad Rader, Tommy Roddy, Ariel Schrag, and Eric Schlegel, and put on a panel on "The Rise of LGBT Graphic Novels".

F

## WONDER WOMAN DAY III

PORTLAND, OR & FLEMINGTON, NJ

Prism advisory board member Andy Mangels and America's most famous super-heroine helped raise a record \$26,600 for protective shelters and crisis hot lines for women and children at two "Wonder Woman Day" events held concurrently on October 26th at Excalibur Comics in Oregon and Comic Fusion in New Jersey. Both events included famous comic book creators such as Adam Hughes, Gail Simone and Aaron Lopresti signing comics and sketching, as well as a silent art auction with over 150 of the world's top artists contributing original art, plus raffles, costumes, rare memorabilia, and more. The Mayor of Portland, Oregon even declared it to be "Wonder Woman Day" in the city!

OCT  
26





MARK PADILLA & JOHNNY NOLAN

## ALTERNATIVE PRESS EXPO (APE) 2008

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

We had a blast at APE, the hip baby brother to Comic-Con that features independent and small press comics and creators. The Alternative Press Expo brings together a great community of LBGT and LBGT-friendly creators and fans. Brian Andersen, Mark Padilla, Johnny Nolen, Jeff Krell, Zan Christensen, Tristan Crane, Sam Saturday, Tommy Roddy, and others appeared at the Prism Booth, and Justin Hall moderated a lively panel on "Queer Cartoonists" with Jennifer Camper, Ed Luce, Joan Hilty, Erika Moen, Tommy Roddy and Joey Alison Sayers. Prism also applauded advisory board member Paige Braddock, who was a special guest of honor at APE.

G

NOV 01 TO 02

## WONDERCON 2009

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

We were back in San Francisco for WonderCon 2009 presenting three exciting, well-attended panels. Our panel on "The Birth of Gay Comix" explored the pioneering beginnings of GAY COMIX, one of the first regularly published LBGT comic books, with Bay Area creators Robert Triptow, Burton Clarke, Vaughn Frick, Jeff Krell, Prism advisory board member Lee Marrs, Trina Robbins, and Mary Wings. We looked at "Queer Women in Comics" with Paige Braddock, Greta Christina, Joey Alison Sayers, and Leia Weathington. And at our "Self-Publishing Queer Comics" panel with Brian Andersen, Justin Hall, Johnny Nolen, Zan Christensen, Paige Braddock and Andy Hartzell, Prism announced the winner of the 2009 Queer Press Grant: Pam Harrison, for her HOUSE OF THE MUSES: THE LATTER DAYS OF SAPPHO OF LESBOS, a 3-D computer-generated comic book series based on the writings of Sappho and Alkaios.

H

FEB 27 TO MAR 01



TRINA ROBBINS AT WONDERCON

## EMERALD CITY COMICON 2009

SEATTLE, WA

Zan Christensen once again helmed the Prism Booth at the Northwest's largest comic convention, with many Prism creators in attendance.

E

APR 04 TO 05

## MoCCA 2009

NEW YORK, NY

We came full circle back to New York to start the Summer 2009 con season with a great turnout at MoCCA 2009.

J

JUN 07

And as we go to press, we're already gearing up for Comic-Con 2009 in San Diego. In a year when LBGT voices need to be heard in all media including comics, the campaign marches on!



# QUEER EYE ON COMICS!

BY DAVID STANLEY

## [ A 5 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE ]

The Prism Comics website has included a humor feature, "Queer Eye on Comics!" for the past five years. We have satirized and ridiculed a full range of comic book characters, writers, artists, and politicians -- check out the goof on "Mitt Romney, Robot Fighter" ([www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1520](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1520)) to hilarious effect.

As Editor of the series for these five years, I've had the privilege of reading these reviews as they come in, before the general public gets to see them, often laughing out loud and having to explain my outbursts to my boyfriend. I love my writers and deeply respect their talents. To that end, I'd like to give excerpts from some of my favorite Queer Eye articles (although I have to admit that they're all my favorites).

**DAVID STANLEY**, co-president of Prism Comics, also edits the humor section of the website, "Queer Eye on Comics!" He reviews some of the highlights of the past five years, and presents a few of the best for your enjoyment, whether for the first time or as a remembered pleasure.



# FLY ME TO THE MOON

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1564](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1564)

First up is **Ed Natcher** with his article, "Fly Me to the Moon" which honors comic book artist, Ruben Moreira, who had a particular talent for drawing backsides. As Ed explains it, "I'm an ass man." Here he describes Ruben's work on Rocketman from 1946:

*The comic book Rocketman was a sleek bubble butted hotty in an orange leotard with red accessories. Unlike most heroes of the day, he didn't wear trunks over his tights, thus obscuring the 'view'. Rather, his suit clung so tightly to his chiseled cheeks that I fantasized that he was actually nude with a particularly 'bronze' tan. Unfortunately, there was one panel which showed him from the front, destroying my dream by displaying his covered crotch. But, for the rest of the story, when shown full figure, he was pictured from the side or (gulp!) from behind.*

*I've since learned that the artist on the story was Ruben Moreira, who, in the forties, fifties and early sixties, did work for every major comics publisher, including a long run on the "Roy Raymond" feature for DC. Now, I have no reason to think that Mr. Moreira was gay. In fact, in the two other Rocketman stories drawn by him that I've been able to track down, The Doughtily Delicious Derriere is rarely shown from the rear. But, for whatever reason, in the tale that fed my fevered youthful fantasies, Ruben cooked up a yummy beefcake sandwich of ravishing rump.*



© 1946 Dynamic Publications



© 1989 DC COMICS

# A HOUSE IS NOT A HERO

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1610](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1610)

**Mark Phillips** (who can be reached at [comix-bear@charter.net](mailto:comix-bear@charter.net)) offered this review, "A House is Not a Hero" detailing the secret origin of the Legion headquarters. The building was actually one of the Legion rejects, called Fortress Lad.:

*For those of you not in the know, Fortress Lad's first (and only) appearance was in SECRET ORIGINS v2 #46 back in 1989, where they proved that they were running out of ideas by spending the entire*

*issue showcasing the headquarters of various super-teams. (There was a rumor that the cancellation of the comic stopped an issue showing the origins of Batman's boxers, Superman's jockstrap and Wonder Woman's bra, but that's unconfirmed at this time.)*

*The story ends up with Mnemonic Kid dead from her own bomb, and Fortress Lad is forever the famous building we all know and love. But now he doesn't have any thoughts and is basically a vegetable and no one remembers him.*

*Again...Eew!*

*Besides the whole crazy building-being-a-living-being bit, let's think on this. With the headquarters now being alive, every time someone walks in the door it's a bizarre form of anal sex! If you take a shower...It's watersports time! (I keep imagining Timber Wolf asking if there's rust in the pipes, since the water is always yellow!) And there's always that "I feel like someone is watching us!" impression during sex! I don't know about you, but I'm just as happy that MY home can't spread any of the tales of what's happened within its walls!*

*But, all of that said, we have to salute Fortress Lad and wish him a long and happy life. And FL? If you are really good, tonight I'll give you a paint job!*





# TOP 10 THINGS HAWKMAN DOESN'T NEED

Next, **Scott Anderson** starts his review of Jim Starlin's recent **HAWKMAN SPECIAL #1** with a list of the "top ten things that Hawkman doesn't need:

© 2007 DC COMICS

10  
SHIRTS.

9  
BIRDMAN LUNCHBOX.

8  
COCK-BLOCKING  
GIRLFRIEND OR WIFE WHO  
DOESN'T UNDERSTAND  
MY HIS NEEDS.

7  
WISECRACKING PARROT  
SIDEKICK WITH SPEECH  
IMPEDIMENT NAMED  
"LITHPY."

6  
I SAID "SHIRTS" ALREADY,  
RIGHT?

*(Although, a sweaty tank top ...)*

## DUDITY IN COMICS: COULD 2009 BE OUR YEAR?

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1672](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1672)

Kyle Minor explains in his article, "Dudity in Comics: Could 2009 Be Our Year?", a new phenomenon with the younger set:

*Dudity is that casual 'Hey... here is my penis!' kind of nudity that so many guys seem to toss off with regularity.*

*Suddenly, I am only slightly regretting that phrasing.*

*It's your hot neighbor dropping trou in the driveway to take a leak during a picnic. It's the sailors on shore leave during Fleet Week getting a little overly excited. It's your rugby coach changing on the side of the field after a tough game. Yeah... it's definitely that.*

*Sorry... where was I? Oh yes! Comics. The way I see it, comics are poised to be the next venue for casual looks at the family jewels. Now I'm not talking about porn comics like **HARD TO SWALLOW** or **TRUE ADULT FANTASY** or the work of Patrick Fillion. I'm talking about the matter-of-fact*

*sexuality that female characters in comics have been exhibiting since William Moulton Marston first tied up Princess Diana to a tree trunk in her bustier. Boys... it is time we get equal treatment! Where is our Tony Stark tied to a tree in a jock strap! And don't tell me to Google it, because believe me... I have!*

Kyle gives us some examples of dudity in comics but finds an absolute whopper from Ed McGuinness.

Wow! Who knew? Okay, well, we suspected/fantasized. Find out more about Kyle Minor on his blog, "Kyle Minor Blogs So You Don't Have To" (<http://kyleminor.vox.com/>).

## UNLIKELY ORIGINS

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1688](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1688)

Terrance Griep, a Renaissance Man (comic book writer, journalist and fearsome pro wrestler--no lie!) if there ever was one, can be counted on to provide political analysis of current day events and people in his articles through the "Prism" of classic comic book stories.



5  
ANYTHING PROMOTED  
BY BILLY MAYS.

*(Although, Billy Mays and  
Hawkman together ...)*

4  
THE HAWK MOBILE.

3  
A SEASON ON "CELEBRITY  
MOLE: NEWARK."

2  
YEAH, I SAID "SHIRTS,  
" BUT LET'S ADD "PANTS."  
HE HAS KNEE PADS,  
WHICH ARE SUFFICIENT.

1  
ANOTHER GODDAMN  
ORIGIN!

He goes on to explain:

*Dr. Strange became a popular character before he was given an origin story. Wolverine went for decades without disclosing his origin, and it seems to have worked just fine. So the next time someone wants to write a 'Who Is Donna Troy?' story, I suggest that we change the title of the story to "Who Gives a Rat's Ass Who Donna Troy Is?" Because the acceptable answer is always 'She's Wonder Girl.'*

*And something similar might be said about Hawkman. If you want to make me interested in his comic, give him exciting adventures in the present; don't screw around with his adventures in the past. If you want me to buy his comic, give him a villain who is fascinating, put him in situations that are compelling, and finally—I say this as an ornithologist, not as a homosexual—follow in the footsteps of other famous bird-themed comic characters like Donald and Howard the Duck, and draw him without pants. Although Hawkman is arguably already half-naked, history clearly shows it is the wrong half.*

Could you just picture it?

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1622](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1622)

Here, he's come up with a look at "Unlikely Origins" in the debut issue of CRACK COMICS (no lie!) from 1941, where he recounts an adventure of The Black Condor, where FDR has been replaced with a Nazi imposter! As Terrance explains it:

*The reviewed story opens with the President saying something outrageous. No, it's not the recently-deposed chimp declaring himself the decider or sympathizing with the travails of putting food on our families or verbally birthing some other vocal gem that would make an entire nation shift uncomfortably from buttcheek to buttcheek--rather, it's then-current Commander-in-Chief FDR speechifying into one of those cool round radio mics: "I have ordered all further assistance to any foreign nations halted!! All army encampments will be disbanded!!" Or, "disbanded," as 43 might have put it.*

**Of course, the Black Condor sees through but then, they kidnap his beard, err, fiancée and he must give chase. Terrance continues:**

*Naturally, when Our Hero catches up, he finds that the ruthless, secretly-blackshirted agents haven't killed FDR or Whatzername but have instead spirited them from the capital to—you*

*guessed it—the Gulf of Mexico. That's pretty dumb, of course, but, fortunately for the sake of the story's page count, the Black Condor is just as bird-brained, tailing the villains "for many hours" rather than just zapping them with his Black Ray Gun at the intersection of Pennsylvania and 11th. Suffice it say, after a torturous, tortuous pursuance, the Black Condor rescues the girl, saves the President, defeats the Nazis, cures cancer, and whitens everyone's teeth, ultimately receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor and leaving the reader with an ending nearly as happy as if he'd met a pretty girl-vulture and settled down for a Happily Ever After in Mongolia.*

*If it seems unlikely that a boy raised by vultures would grow up to become a U. S. Senator and snatch the Presidency from the sharp and gaping jaws of fascism in a time of war and economic turmoil...welp, it's only slightly more unlikely than a self-described "skinny kid with a funny name" would do the same in our modern era. The Golden Age's citizens were rescued by, or at least inspired by, their Black Condor. Here's hoping that Barak Obama, in one way or another, proves to be ours.*

**'xactly! Find out more about Terrance Griep on his website ([www.terrancegriep.com](http://www.terrancegriep.com)).**



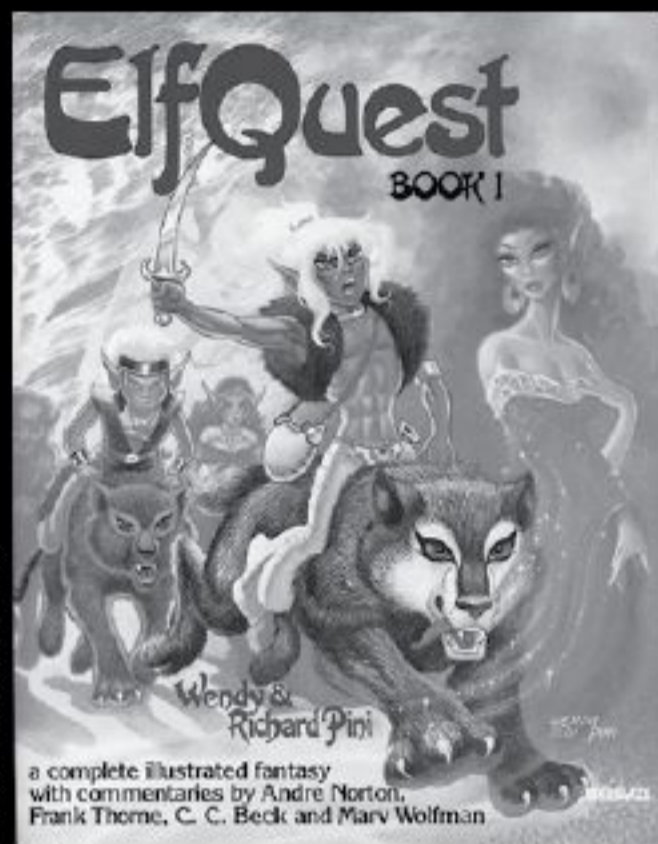
# FIRE AND FLIGHT

Finally, Edward Beekman-Myers (author of the new novel, *THE TOTALLY GNARLY ADVENTURES OF THE GALACTICALLY BITCHIN' COMET SWEAT* -- check it out!) contributed this heartfelt piece:

*On the afternoon of the day this review is posted, I will be attending a very special event. It is a benefit to raise funds for an individual stricken with that seemingly invincible bane of human health, cancer. I know, I know...these days, it seems like you can't turn a corner without coming across a benefit of some sort—whether or not it's truly justified. So what makes this one so special?*

*Well, this benefit happens to be in honor of one of my very best friends. In fact, Jason is more than just a friend—he's like a brother. Ever since I've known him, he's always been there for me and for everyone else privileged to have been close to him. I can talk to him about anything and everything, no matter how insignificant, and he never fails to respond with a compassionate ear, along with caring and logical advice that almost always leads to the best solution. Jason was the one I ran to after I experienced my very first breakup. The relationship itself was incredibly short-lived, but nevertheless the pain stung deep. When I showed up at his work, tears pouring down my face, he opened his arms and allowed me to cry on his shoulder. And after I let it all out, he took the time to listen to my pitiful woes and rants.*

Edward goes on to explain how Jason's favorite all-time comic book is *ELFQUEST*. Ed had never read *ELFQUEST* but recently picked it up:



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[www.prismcomics.org/  
display.php?id=1652](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1652)

## FALL OF A HERO

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1468](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1468)

Speaking of shirtless, Chris Sims mined a bit of gold from a more “innocent” time, where *Rawhide Kid* could act really really gay yet still seem straight. But of course, at one time, Liberace sued and won when a newspaper claimed he was gay.

“In the grand list of comic book characters with suggestive names, even *GI Joe*’s much-maligned (and chronically useless) *Snowjob* takes a back seat to Marvel’s *Rawhide Kid*. With the former, at least, the creators had to know what they were getting into, but for the kid, it’s more a matter of the fifty-two years since his creation, wherein Westerns have fallen out of favor in pop culture and left leather straps to a whole new connotation.

This is probably why Marvel picked the Kid for a 2003 revamp called *SLAP LEATHER*, where he was “turned gay” by Ron Zimmerman and veteran penciller John Severin in a story that drummed up a fair amount of controversy, despite being—and we’re being pretty charitable here—not very good. The whole thing was at best an embarrassing eye-roller right from the start, like a Western “*Will & Grace*,” and at worst, it was downright offensive, with a scene where a group of kids end up at the Kid’s campfire played like *SNL*’s *Canteen Boy* skit, but without the laughs.”



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© 1966 MARVEL COMICS



*I have to say, though, after reading the first issue, I can see how Jason could fall in love with the series. Richard Pini's writing is as smooth as his wife's artwork is rough, and he deftly crafts a wholesome, captivating story from the opening prologue to the ending cliffhanger. The elves—the so-called Wolfriders—are presented as living in a carefree community based on love and equality, and dissension among their ranks is practically unheard of. However, when a threat to their communal peace and harmony arises, they waste no time defending their sanctity. And when one of their own is treated unkindly, they're quick to avenge his honor.*

*The way Wendy and Richard Pini's elves support one another mirrors the relationship I have shared with my friend, Jason. No matter what life throws at us, we know we can always count on each other to do whatever it takes to fight back. And even though we're currently facing our toughest battle yet, I am confident that our friendship will triumph—and it will continue to triumph for a very, very long time.*

Chris goes on to unearth the opening from 1966's RAWHIDE KID #56...

*where the Kid runs afoul of a shirtless ranch-hand for a throwdown that may actually be the most homoerotic fight scene of all time. And yes, that includes 300.*

*To be fair, it might not have the same ring to it without the Zimmerman story to contextualize it, but the dialogue alone cracks me up every time:*

*'I'm not so new that I haven't pegged you, Burke!'*

*'Front or back—it don't make no nevermind to me!'*

*And my personal favorite (and quite possibly my favorite piece of dialogue ever):*

*'Okay, we've tried it with bare fists and hot lead! What's next, Burke?'*

*Normally, this is where I'd be writing a joke, but come on: Do I really need to?*

Check out Chris Sims's blog, "Chris's Invincible Super-Blog ([www.the-isb.com](http://www.the-isb.com)), for more.

## THE STRAIGHTENING MYSTERY

[www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1213](http://www.prismcomics.org/display.php?id=1213)

Next up, I've got one of my own "Queer Eye" articles. I usually use my columns to rant about something—as if I'm the only comic book queen with an opinion. But occasionally I find a juicy comic book to actually review. Here, we get down the bottom of "The Straightening Mystery" from RICHIE RICH BANK BOOKS #21 (1976). Here's my intro:

*I wasn't conscious of it, of course, but Richie Rich was a gay role model. Always impeccably dressed, he was the perfect well-mannered child—everything a mother wanted while also being everything a father would send his kid to military school to grow out of (hoping to stop his routine of getting his manis, pedis, facials, and hair blown out in the morning before emerging for brunch with mom and her country club matron friends—god, I wanted to be just like him).*

The story itself describes a horrifying phenomenon that afflicts everything in the Richie Rich estate. He first discovers it when a pretzel suddenly goes "Zwack!" and straightens out. Then Cadbury, his trusty butler, nearly gets penetrated by an erect clock spring that has sprung from a grandfather clock. Both Richie and Cadbury become quite vexed at all this straightening and decide to get to the bottom of it. However, it only gets worse. All manner of queer, I mean "bent," things are straightened out including fishing hooks, a rake, a hoe, Momma Rich's "Blondie and Dagwood" hair, and even an entire creek. Eventually, like a good gay warrior, Richie finds the source of this straightening and stops it.

I conclude:

*Sigh, if only I'd read this story as a child and had been warned of the dangers of "straightening", things might've turned out much differently. I might've started a gay-gay alliance, taken a boyfriend to the prom, and realized that I wanted to be Olivia Newton-John rather than date her. But sometimes you have to learn the hard way.*

**As you can see, we have a great crew here at Queer Eye. Here's hoping for many more years of deliciously bent and sometimes deeply felt articles to come!**



# PRISM'S READING LIST

**CHELSEA BOYS** by Glen Hanson and Allan Neuwirth - This is a no-brainer for me. It is the champion of gay comics. Hanson and Neuwirth honed their craft in television before bringing **CHELSEA BOYS** to life. These skills served them well, as Hanson's bold, confident drawings leap off the page and paint a picture of a community that teens will aspire to join. Neuwirth's clean writing allows **CHELSEA BOYS** to tell interesting stories with fully fleshed out characters in just a few panels. Although the strip itself is no longer being produced, it has been collected into two books: **CHELSEA BOYS** and **CHELSEA BOYS STEPPING OUT**.

- *Chris DeCarlo is the creator of the webcomic IT'S THE MICHAELS and the strip PARTY CHASERS.*

**LOVE AND ROCKETS** by Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, especially Jaime's teen Maggie and Hopey stories. Essential comics reading for everybody!

**SKIM** by Jillian and Mariko Tamaki. The story is engrossing and the art beautiful, an overall stunning book.

**MY BRAIN HURTS** by Liz Baillie. Captures queer teen punk angst in NYC, at turns funny and tragic.

**SO SUPER DUPER** by Brian Anderson. Just plain fun!

**TALES OF THE CLOSET** by Ivan Velez. Heartfelt tales of NYC gay teens coming out.

**POTENTIAL, AWKWARD, DEFINITION, and LIKEWISE** by Ariel Schrag. Charmingly awkward autobio tales of Ariel coming out as a teenager in CA.

- *Abby Denson is the Lulu Award winning cartoonist of TOUGH LOVE; she also scripts licensed comics.*

**MANHUNTER** (published by DC Comics, created by Marc Andreyko): **MANHUNTER** wasn't gay. The series wasn't about gay people. It didn't have a gay protagonist. But the diverse supporting cast included a gay colleague who ultimately ended up partnered with Obsidian, the son of the Golden Age Green Lantern. And the final issue coda, which looks into the future for Manhunter and her cast, has a surprising but not unbelievable revelation that an original cast member in the book is gay. It wasn't a high profile book and being gay was never treated as a high profile personality trait -- it just was.

- *Barry Freiman is Assistant Editor of the Superman Homepage (www.supermanhomepage.com), the #1 ranked Superman website in the world.*

**KASHIMASHI - GIRL MEETS GIRL** by Satoru Akahori and Yukimaru Katsura: The plot setup is silly, but at the end of the day, it's about two girls and what their love for a third girl means to all of them.

**HAYATE X BLADE** by Shizuru Hayashiya - It's not "lesbian" but it is chock-full of incredibly strong characters that are nonetheless a raucous laff riot. Funny, action-filled, with a light lesbian frosting.

- *Erica Friedman is the Publisher at ALC Publishing - where the girl always gets the girl.*

**SIMPLY SARAH** by Sarah Skye is an excellent webcomic. Semi-autobiographical, it appeals to teens without being patronizing, dealing with heavy issues without being depressing. It follows the life of Sarah, a high school student, as she comes out, starts dating a girl, deals with the backlash of that. While this could easily fall into the "high school secret lesbian romance story" cliché, Simply Sarah avoids that by creating fresh, well-rounded characters and situations.

**RED STRING** by Gina Biggs is not primarily a lesbian webcomic, but it is a comic about love



in all its forms, and Biggs doesn't forget about us. Taking place in a Japanese high school, one of the characters finds herself falling for another girl. And the other main characters are supportive of her. While her story is not one of the main arcs as that character moved to another town, the character is not forgotten, and snippets of her story are continuously posted.

**STEADY BEAT** by Rivkah is excellent. A high school girl finds a love note addressed to her sister, and signed by a girl. As she tries to figure out what's going on with her sister's love life, she begins to fall in love herself. While the main character is not a lesbian, it's still very much a lesbian comic. It's interesting to see a coming out story from the point of view of a family member, rather than the person doing the actual coming out. While done in a manga style, this is an American comic, both in art and story.

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- **Megan Rose Gedris** is creator of the high school lesbian dreamscape manga *YU+ME: DREAM* and is a past winner of the Queer Press Grant.

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**SO SUPER DUPER** by Brian Andersen is a lighthearted look at a quirky little superhero who doesn't even realize he's gay. The cartooning style of Andersen's work is very much reminiscent of junior high teens but has a seasoned style that is developing in leaps and bounds. The comic's humor is also cute, quirky and sometimes slapstick....just to die for. Highly recommended for teens.

- **Pam Harrison** is the current winner of the Queer Press Grant for her series *HOUSE OF MUSES*, which is reviewed and about which she is interviewed in this issue of the Guide.

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For young females, in particular, I recommend without hesitation **JANE'S WORLD** by out lesbian (and Prism Comics advisory board member) Paige Braddock. You'll likely find yourself identifying with the lives of the characters. You may find you'll discover a lot about yourself along with Jane and even envy her community of friends who are as close as family. You'll live with their reactions to the ride of fun and poignant situations. of life. Braddock gives you an inspired sense of what your newly life could turn out to be.

For young males and others who tend to read mainly superhero comics, I recommend the entire run (all collected) of **MANHUNTER** by

out-gay man Marc Andreyko, Jesus Saiz, and others. In no time at all. while you're following the action, you'll be drawn into the continuing backstory of Obsidian -- Todd Rice -- as he finds both himself and true love. **MANHUNTER** has a strong sense of community among Kate Spencer's staff, so Obsidian's coming-out story affects the whole group, one person in particular -- Ryan Matthews, for whom it leads to love. Andreyko deftly weaves the story of Ted's and Damon's romance, sweet and real, without sacrificing the action expected from a super hero comic. You'll laugh, you'll cry ... oh, it's all Andreyko's fault (and to his credit.) And **MANHUNTER** continues as the co-feature in DC Comics' **BATMAN: STREETS OF GOTHAM**.

- **Patricia Jeres** is co-president of Prism Comics and is a long-time marketing professional in the comics industry.

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**LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN: CENTURY 1910**, by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill: Surrounded by barely suppressed prejudice, anger and jealousy from his/her teammates, in a time that would probably have this individual shot for simply existing, this version of Orlando is a marvelous, self-confident polygender/sexual/indeterminate but very determinate individual. Who happens to be right about every single thing. The character is interpreted from the Virginia Woolf novel, itself a hidden lesbian story, using the narrative trick of having the character change genders to pursue another. The League interpretation gives the character even more bravado, taking in other legends and characters into this amalgamation. Especially for those still coming to terms with their sexuality, Orlando is a refreshingly self-accepting and inspirational individual. Even if he or she is rather annoying in the process. What's not to love?

- **Rich Johnston** is lead writer of *Bleeding Cool* ([www.bleedingcool.com](http://www.bleedingcool.com)), which features "Comic book industry news, gossip, rumour, reviews, previews, features, interviews and general tomfoolery."

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**JANE'S WORLD** by Paige Braddock. Its "hero" is a "real" person full of insecurities and awkward moments, the stories are really well-written & involving, and it's FUNNY as all get-out!

- **Henry Kujawa** is the creator of *STORMBOY* and has contributed to Prism Comics' adult anthology *UNSAFE FOR ALL AGES*.



[QPG]





# ONE-ON-ONE: QUEER PRESS GRANT

WINNERS **PAM HARRISON AND TOMMY RODDY**

**Tommy Roddy**, last year's co-recipient of the Grant for his PRIDE HIGH series, talks to this year's winner, Pam Harrison, about her work, the QPG, and more.

**TR:** *What sparked your interest in Ancient Greece?*

**PH:** I first studied toward a Fine Arts degree at Western Kentucky University because in those days there were no degrees involving comic art, and the Joe Kubert School of Comic Art was far out of my reach. Life became more unpredictable and turbulent for me in my early 20s, so it would not be until 2006 that I finally achieved my college degree. The circumstances that sparked my interest in Ancient Greece were accidental. From childhood I'd owned, believe it or not, a 1920 edition of My Book House fairy tales, which had excerpts from Midsummer Night's Dream and countless others. I loved the artwork and the stories but never dreamed they'd be a springboard.

At any rate, as a storyteller I'm a jack of all languages, master of none. I fully intended to study languages while I was in college. I studied languages through high school, and all Western offered was Greek and Latin...so my decision to take Greek was a fateful one.

**TR:** *PRIDE HIGH started out as a collection of short stories and novellas written for friends. How was HOUSE OF THE MUSES originally conceived?*

**PH:** HOUSE OF THE MUSES was originally conceived, front to back, in prose. It was quite

a chunk of a novel. I was having trouble getting my legs under me, though, and went to Writer's Digest School in 2001 with the thing hoping to learn enough to help me rewrite it. When I went back to school to Louisville Technical Institute and learned 3D, I began creating the characters in 3D thinking I'd use these first tentative renders to illustrate the book. My partner and a friend of mine suggested I try doing a graphic novel. Amazingly, it fell together.

**TR:** *I think the biggest hurdle for me was just getting started. I didn't know many comics creators personally and self-publishing was completely new to me. Even before receiving my grant, just the presence of Prism Comics helped inspire me. What was it like for you when HOUSE OF THE MUSES was just taking shape?*

**PH:** It was hard. I felt like I was doing it just for myself, at first. I'd offered it up to a couple of lesbian forums I was frequenting and with a handful of exceptions, it was not well-received. The very idea that I was doing the Sappho story in a Teen+ format, and not the accepted and preferred Mature Audiences version--! I've taken some criticism and jeers. I've had a suggestion or two that I should include more pornographic scenes. I've been told I illustrate in 3D because I can't draw (false). I ignored them all. In April 2008 I discovered DrunkDuck.com, and before joining I complained to one of the moderators that they didn't have a Gay/Lesbian category at DD. She told me, "That's because we don't differentiate here. Now, if the story's action, adventure, romance, comedy or what, then bring it on."

I said, "Whoa!" And I joined. I now have the most awesome fanbase of readers!!!



**TR:** Now that you're an established comics creator, what's your writing and illustrating schedule like? What's your personal remedy for writer's block?

**PH:** I work a 40 hour a week job for a newspaper, and I commute home each day, plop down in my chair, take a few deep breaths, then I fire up my computer and work on House of the Muses all evening. :P As for writer's block, fortunately my series is already outlined front to back. If I have to rewrite a scene or something's not working for me I go sit outside and think for awhile. It clears the head.

**TR:** What are some of your favorite comics?

**PH:** I'm very old school. Back in my youth my favorites were SUPERGIRL, SUPERMAN, WONDER WOMAN, X-MEN, (I straddled as neatly as I could between Marvel and DC), SPIDER-MAN, and so on. Current faves are a couple webcomics like THE VILLAIN NEXT DOOR and GHOST-RUNNER, and the creator of VND, Roy Duncan, recently turned me on to Eric Shanower's AGE OF BRONZE series. It's fantastic.

**TR:** Are there any creators out there who have served as mentors either directly or indirectly?

**PH:** Outside of my wonderful gradeschool/ high school art teacher, and later Dick Giordano from DC Comics looking me in the eye back in 1987 and telling me, "These pencils look great. Send a portfolio to DC." I have never had the honor and the privilege of having a mentor. I've had a lot of fellow artists I admired and imitated, particularly Mike Grell. I had some help from the writers at Writer's Digest School, but Fate has had me pretty much slogging along on my own.

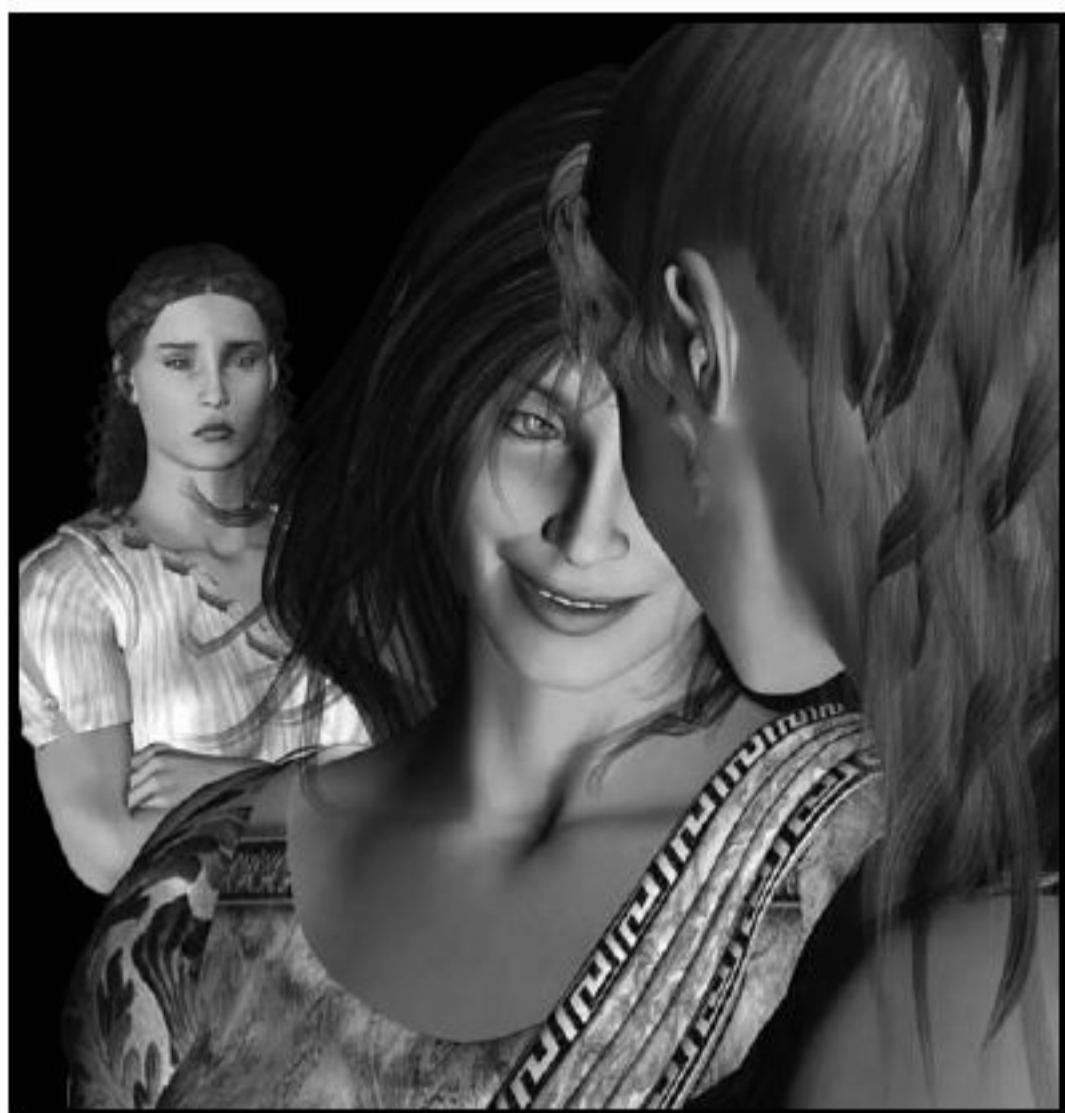
**TR:** Where were you when you first found out about winning the grant? What was your reaction?

**PH:** I was at work. Patty Jeres had been on the phone with me several times throughout the week because I'd had some questions for her pertaining to some other project I wanted to do, and I got the Prism announcement email asking for a quote. I gave them one, and it appeared on the official press release: 'Harrison, reacting to the news, said, "When I heard the news this afternoon I was overjoyed and ecstatic. As Sappho herself might have put it, 'I was giddy, overjoyed; I felt myself go hot and cold all over'. With all its romance, adventure, humor and pathos, its Teen+ rating and diverse LGBT-straight readership, HOUSE OF THE



© 2008 Pam Harrison





MUSES advances the dream of pushing LGBT comics into the mainstream.” What a fabulous day that was!

**TR:** *The Queer Press Grant was certainly a financial boon for PRIDE HIGH, but the grant’s influence also went beyond pure dollars. There was a definite bump in interest after the announcement. How has it been for HOUSE OF THE MUSES?*

**PH:** I’m now on sale worldwide through Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com. No, I’m not kidding. I’ve been finding and receiving book reviews for HOUSE OF THE MUSES, solicited and unsolicited, as far away as New Zealand, Brazil, Germany, and a devoted group of fans in the Netherlands is presently trying to convince Bol.com (their version of Amazon.com) to carry my series. When the economy perks up and interest continues to peak, we might be looking at translations of the series into several languages.

**TR:** *That’s great news! Congratulations on receiving the grant and thanks for taking the time to chat!*

**MEGAN ROSE GEDRIS** is a webcomic artist and creator of YU+ME and LESBIAN PIRATES FROM OUTER SPACE!!!. To keep herself from living in a cardboard box, she also works as a graphic designer for WXMI in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Review © 2008 Megan Rose Gedris.

## HOUSE OF THE MUSES: THE LATTER DAYS OF SAPPHO OF LESBOS

Reviewed by Megan Rose Gedris

*Some say the Muses are nine: how careless!  
Look, there’s Sappho too, from Lesbos, the tenth.*

-From an epigram attributed to Plato

In today’s society, the word “lesbian” is synonymous with a woman who loves women. But HOUSE OF THE MUSES: THE LATTER DAYS OF SAPPHO OF LESBOS takes us back, thousands of years, to when “Lesbian” included all the inhabitants of the large Greek island of Lesbos. This is where Sappho lived.

The first book of six does not feature Sappho at all. We follow the story of Mnasidika of Sparta, a girl with a stolen destiny, and how she made her journey to Lesbos. We hear the tale told from her perspective, through flashbacks of her life. This is Dika’s journey from being a slave girl in Sparta to her adoption into the house of Athenaios to become an upper class woman with a slave of her own.

She is betrothed to Euripates (a man), but finds the fair Timas of Phokaia to be far more in her taste. This is not a story that merely hints at lesbianism. Dika has had previous relationships with women, and takes action to make Timas her own.

The author and illustrator, Pam Harrison, has had this in the works for over 20 years. It is obvious that this story means a lot to her. A lot of time has gone into both the writing and art for this comic, and her efforts were well noticed!

This isn’t the kind of comic book that you read at the end of a long day, half-awake and looking for something simple to read with lots of pretty pictures. There is a lot of story here. As is the case with many first books, the story gets a little wordy at times as it tries to tell us the entire history of this character. And I was very glad I knew my ancient Greek history. But I have high hopes that, with the history established, the next books will feature more dialog and interaction between the characters, which is this book’s strong suit.

The art is absolutely remarkable. I’ve seen CG rendered 3-dimensional comics before, but they usually end up looking like someone took some screenshots while playing a game of “The Sims”. Pam Harrison is skilled in CG, and her characters are all gorgeous (my only criticism is that they are, perhaps, too pretty). The characters are all designed with different features, making it easy to recognize them as individuals.

For anyone who is a fan of historical drama, lesbian romance, and gorgeously rendered CG art, this story was made for you. This is a book that demands your full attention.



WHERE AM I?



THE LIGHT OF HELIOS, THE GOD OF THE SUN, IS BLINDING.



ALL I CAN FEEL IS PAIN.

I AM A SLAVE AGAIN. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?



WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER?

I AM DYING--I CAN FEEL IT. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN HERE--

POSEIDON!  
⇒ SOB! ⇐



DELIVER ME!

--AND NO ONE IS LIKELY TO RESCUE ME THIS TIME.

I RESIGNED MYSELF TO MY FATE; TOO WEAK TO CLING TO WRECKAGE ANY LONGER....



I RELEASED A FINAL WEARY SIGH, SOBBED ...AND LET GO.

AND THAT'S WHEN I STARTED HALLUCINATING.

I HAVE HEARD THY PRAYER, CHILD OF SPARTA.



1





THOU HAST FACED THE **DARK-EST** ASPECTS OF THY SOUL....

--AND THOU ART FOUND **SORELY** WANTING!

WHATEVER HE WAS TALKING ABOUT, HIS TONE FRIGHTENED ME.



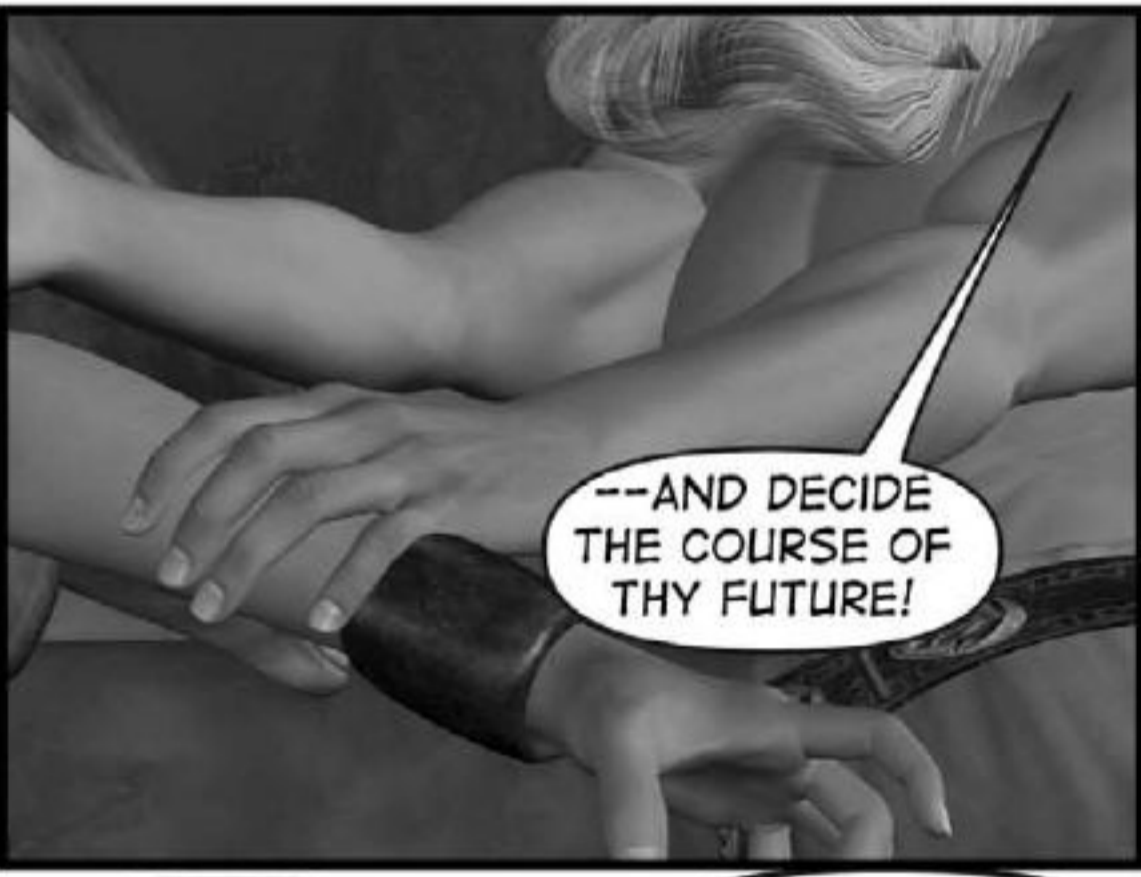
MY OUTSTRETCHED HANDS RELAXED AND I WENT NUMB AT THE WORDS,

FOR I THOUGHT THIS WAS HIS FINAL JUDGMENT--



--THAT HE MEANT I DESERVED NO SALVATION.

THE FATES HAVE SET THEE UPON A COURSE OF UPHEAVAL THAT WILL TEST THY SPIRIT--



--AND DECIDE THE COURSE OF THY FUTURE!

THOUGH YOU ARE FEARLESS IN THE FACE OF CHANGE,

YOU MUST SEEK THE INNER BALANCE THAT YOU LACK.



I RELEASE THEE FROM THIS FATE. FACE UP TO THE BURDENS IN THY HEART--



**--AND BEGIN ANEW!!**



# HOWARD CRUISE:



# A LIFE IN GAY COMICS

[ AND GAY COMIX ]



Prism Guide Editor **Roger Klorese** chats with Howard Cruse about his new book, the past thirty years, and the future.

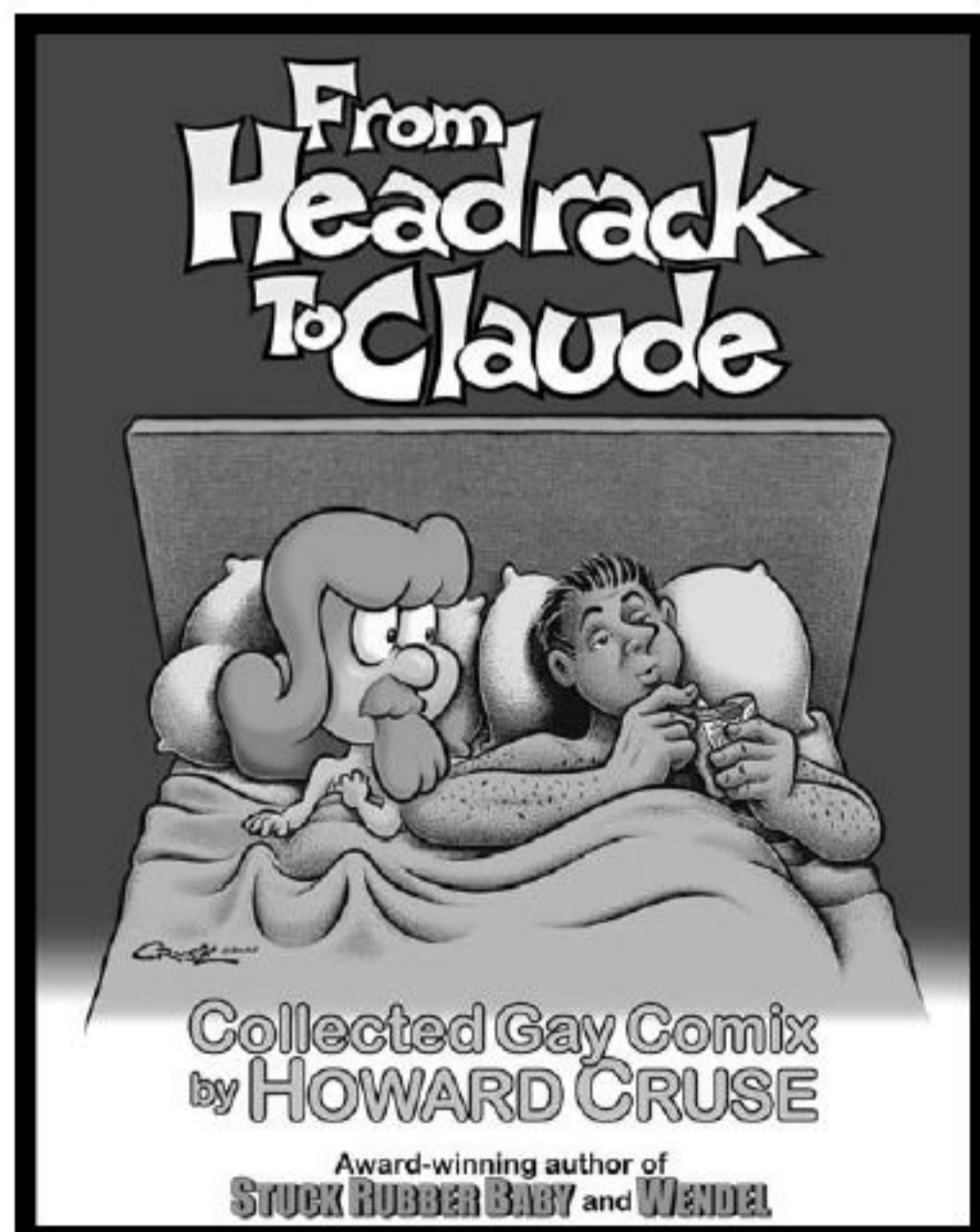
**RK:** *It's always great to talk to you -- even if not face-to-face this time. It's hard to believe we've known each other for almost thirty years -- I remember meeting at New York's Gay Pride March in 1980!*

**HC:** Yeah. It's hard to believe how much has happened since then, isn't it?

**RK:** *I'm thrilled to see you have a new book coming out that spans your work over an even longer period. Tell our readers a little about it.*

**HC:** I've been rankled for a while over the fact that so many of my better-known gay strips and stories have been unavailable to new readers since my 1987 St. Martin's Press collection *DANCIN' NEKKID WITH THE ANGELS* went out of print in the '90s. The Kitchen Sink limited-edition hardcover version of that same book lasted a little longer, but it's been gone for quite a while now, too. Meanwhile, there were a number of gay-related strips that were drawn too late to be included in *DANCIN' NEKKID*, pieces that were scattered among publications that a lot of comics readers probably never saw.

Now that it's inexpensive to self-publish books using print-on-demand technology, I figured I might as well publish a book myself that in-



cludes everything of a gay nature that I've done between 1976 and last year—not including the *WENDEL* series or *STUCK RUBBER BABY*, of course, since they still have books or their own. I won't make much money on this kind of thing, but I won't lose much either, and it'll feel good to have this stuff out in the world in a single package.

I'm calling the new book *FROM HEADRACK TO CLAUDE* to indicate the span of time the book covers. The first gay-themed story I ever published was "Gravy On Gay," which appeared in the second issue of *BAREFOOTZ FUNNIES* in 1976 and which starred Barefootz's artist pal Headrack. The new book will close with my single-pager "Then There Was Claude," which was in last year's *BORN TO TROUBLE: BOOK OF BOY TROUBLE VOLUME 2*. Headrack and Claude make good bookends for the collection, and I like the way they look in bed together in my cover drawing!

**HEADRACK AND CLAUDE  
MAKE GOOD BOOKENDS  
FOR THE COLLECTION,  
AND I LIKE THE WAY THEY  
LOOK IN BED TOGETHER.**

**RK:** *Headrack was your first gay character. Did you know his story from his first appearance, or did you decide to define him as gay as he developed?*

In the beginning he was just a secondary character in the *BAREFOOTZ* series, a frustrated-artist-guy that I created to channel my own artistic anxieties. Then as the 1970s wore on I became more politically invested in the post-Stonewall Gay Liberation Movement, even though I was living down South, a long way away from where the action was. I was like Headrack in the opening panel of "Gravy On Gay," reading about activism and yearning to take part in it. I decided early on that I would be uncloseted in my work eventually, and once I was clear with myself about that I took a fresh look at this Headrack guy. He already had a lot in common with me; why not go all the way and let him also be gay like me?

**RK:** *Barefootz and friends appeared in COMIX BOOK, the unlikely collaboration between Marvel and Denis Kitchen. Did Headrack's queerness figure in any of your plans there?*



**HC:** There was nothing in the COMIX BOOK stories about his sexual orientation. I wanted to first establish Headrack as a continuing character before bringing in the gay angle. In a parallel way, I also wanted to establish my own identity as a reasonably interesting underground cartoonist before coming out professionally. Maybe I was just postponing making a scary move that had career ramifications, but I was also afraid that I'd be seen as hitching my wagon to the Gay Lib Movement as an attention-getting gimmick. I wanted to prove to myself and others that I could be funny about a whole range of issues, not just gay ones. I definitely didn't want to be pigeonholed as a movement propagandist.

By 1976, though, I felt ready to take the plunge with "Gravy On Gay." I guess I had built up more of a head of steam than I realized, since it's an uncommonly rude story for the generally gentle BAREFOOTZ universe. A friend told me she had never seen such an angry story from me. But there was a lot of homophobia in the air around then, and I was pissed about it.

**THERE WAS A LOT OF  
HOMOPHOBIA IN THE AIR  
AROUND THEN, & I WAS  
PISSSED ABOUT IT.**

I was testing the waters with "Gravy On Gay" and anybody with a head on his shoulders would figure out that a gay person had drawn it. But I wasn't yet unequivocally announcing for all to hear that I was gay myself. My big step out of the closet professionally, in terms of declaring my sexuality within the underground comix world, came when Denis Kitchen and I announced that I was going to edit GAY COMIX. And soon after that I came out in the wider world by drawing "Sometimes I Get So Mad" for the VILLAGE VOICE.

I was holding my breath when that issue of the VOICE went on sale to see whether my mainstream illustration clients like AMERICAN HEALTH and BANANAS were gonna back away from hiring me now that I had spilled the beans. Happily, most of them never missed a beat and my phone continued to ring. The cartoon editor at PLAYBOY was the only one who lost interest in me once I came out, and PLAYBOY and I had never been that great a fit.

**RK:** "Safe Sex" (and the previously-unseen-in-America "1986: An Interim Epilogue") come from a time and place very different from our lives today. I was at a performance of RENT last night, and I had two realizations: one, that more than half of the audience grew up with the show, possibly as their best-known musical besides the Disney cartoons, and two, that when the pill timers of two of the characters went off and a crowd cried "AZT Break!" most of the audience probably had no idea what they were talking about, or certainly, what it was like.

**HC:** Yeah. There's so much about the way the AIDS epidemic bent our lives out of shape when it first emerged in the gay world that must be hard for young LGBT folks today to imagine. It was like an invisible serial killer had popped up out of the blue and started slaughtering your friends right and left. And since in the beginning there was no way to take a blood test and see whether or not you were infected, you had no way of knowing whether you were already marked for death. Every time you thought you had dodged the bullet, some researcher would announce that the disease's incubation period was even longer than previously thought, so you still weren't in the clear.

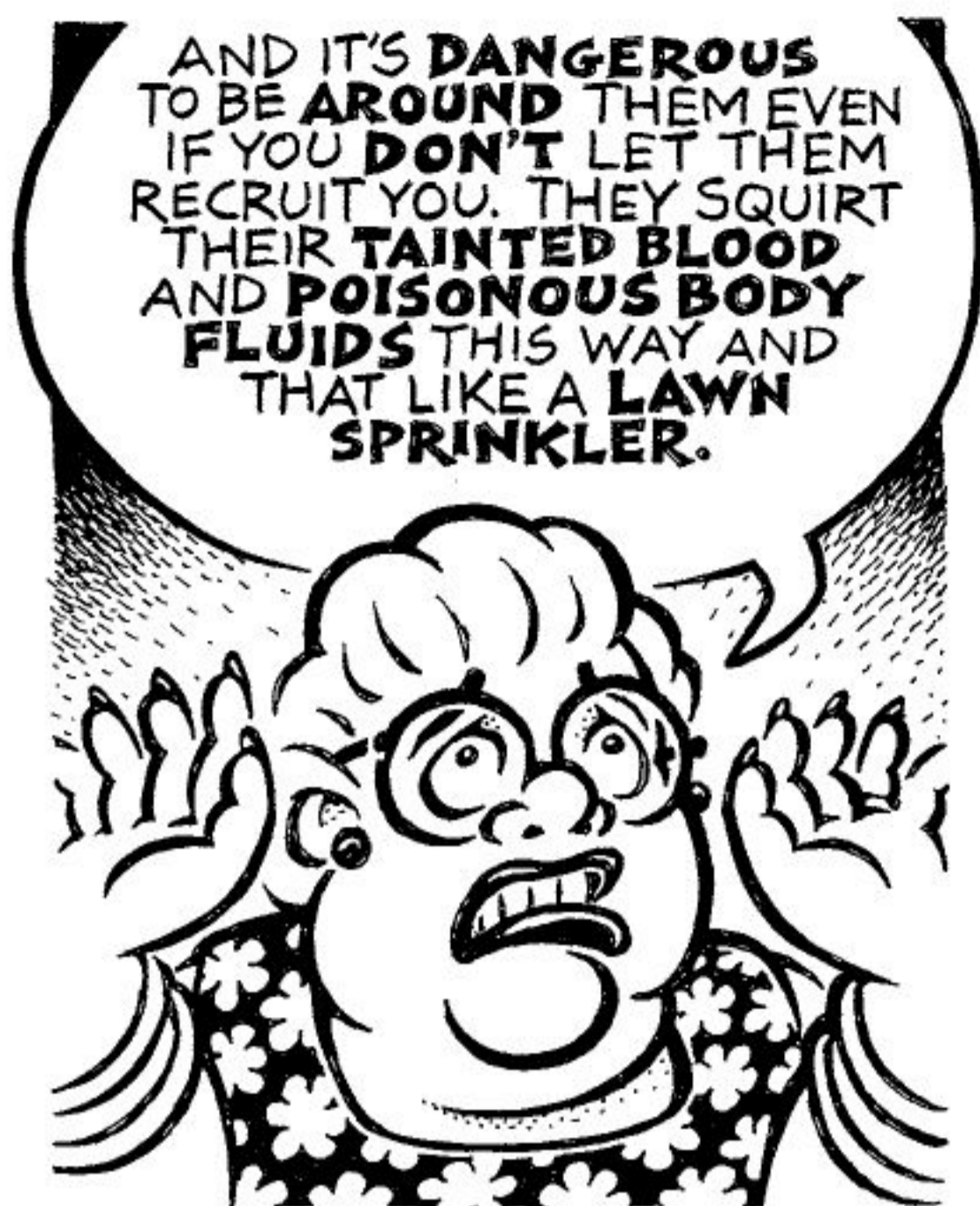
You and I remember all of this because we were there. You remember how awful it was to read all the obituaries of people no older than us, or to watch gay men in their early twenties hobbling along New York streets with canes; or to run into old friends who suddenly looked like concentration camp inmates. The worst of those experiences seem distant now because of the improved drug cocktails that help more people to stay relatively healthy, but that worries me because it encourages complacency about safe sex practices. Retroviruses can mutate and drugs can lose their effectiveness, after all.

Anyway, it's mainly by the luck of the draw that I survived. Plenty of people I knew weren't that lucky, including the great gay cartoonist Jerry Mills, whose POPPERS strips were reprinted in several issues of GAY COMIX.

**RK:** How do you feel your work reflects where we've been in terms of HIV, and where we are now?

**HC:** I haven't had occasion to do anything topical about AIDS in recent years, not having had a regular platform for commenting on current issues since the WENDEL series ended in 1989. STUCK RUBBER BABY's storyline took place decades before anyone had ever heard of AIDS. And now that I live in a relatively rural area of





Massachusetts with no organized LGBT community close at hand and few HIV-positive friends to share their war stories with me, I'm too out of the loop to have anything useful to say about the experiences that young gay people are having with the epidemic today. I just worry from afar that they'll let their guard down and end up going through what we went through.

When the epidemic slammed into the New York gay scene in '81, I wasn't sure how anyone could incorporate it into cartoons without trivializing the horrors that real-life flesh-and-blood gay comics-readers of my comics were dealing with. It seemed way too facile to go the Love Story route and create characters just so they could die tragically in the end. Still, I could only avoid the subject for so long, since it was everywhere in gay people's lives and I wanted GAY COMIX to mirror the experiences that real LGBT people were having. So I drew "Safe Sex" for the fourth issue of GAY COMIX in 1983. It was a collage built out of the feelings and crosscurrents that were running through the gay community at that particular point in the epidemic. Lots of the details in "Safe Sex" are dated by now, of course, like that reference to AZT that you noticed in RENT. But maybe it'll be useful to readers to young to remember the 1980s as a snapshot of the emotions and uncertainties that were swamping so many of us back then.

**RK:** *It's likely that even the most diligent follower of published comics hasn't seen some of the work in this book, because it was either*

*published outside the comics press, or never published at all. Talk about some of those.*

**HC:** There was a period in the 1980s when the VILLAGE VOICE in New York would hit me up fairly frequently for topical comics about LGBT issues, particularly when they were preparing their annual Gay Pride Issues. Sometimes they'd ask for a strip to serve as counterpoint to some big essay they were planning to run on subjects like the ethics of outing celebrities or theories about homosexual behavior in animals. In general I was given total freedom in those strips to present my own perspective as I saw fit. Non-New Yorkers probably won't have seen those strips unless they have been longtime subscribers to the VOICE by mail. A couple of strips in the book were planned with the Voice in mind but never saw print. And it would be easy for people to have missed political strips like "Homoeroticism Blues," which was my reaction to the furor over a Robert Mapplethorpe photography exhibit that was slated for funding by the National Endowment for the Arts until Senator Jesse Helms blew a gasket and got it cancelled. That one appeared in ARTFORUM INTERNATIONAL. And I grew a couple of strips about a school board president's homophobic campaign against a proposed gay-inclusive education curriculum in Queens, one of which ran in a special edition of Boston's GAY COMMUNITY NEWS that was handed out at the 1993 March on Washington.

And there were contributions of mine in benefit anthologies like STRIP AIDS USA and AARGH. The title "AARGH" stood Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia; that book was raising money to combat Clause 28 in England.

You get the idea. In general, readers who bought DANCIN' NEKKID when it was around or who kept up with the early issues of GAY COMIX will have seen a whole bunch of what's in FROM HEADRACK TO CLAUDE, but it's unlikely that even they will have seen everything.

**RK:** *When you started publishing in under-grounds, that was pretty much the only place one could find LGBT characters and stories. Now, it seems we are represented, for better or worse, across the medium, even in superhero books such as YOUNG AVENGERS and THE AUTHORITY. What do you see as the "better" and what as the "worse"?*

**HC:** I'm pretty useless when it comes to commenting on gay characters in mainstream superhero comics. I hear about these things through the grapevine, and I'm pleased that mainstream comics have figured out better things to do with



And now let's dip  
a toe into the  
**GAY SUBCULTURE**

with  
Barefootz's  
good buddy

# Headtrack



gays than have them try to rape Bruce Banner in the shower. But I haven't had the time or money to keep up with gay visibility in alternative comics even, much less in the various superhero universes.

**RK:** *We surveyed creators and readers about works they'd recommend to LGBT teens, and your STUCK RUBBER BABY was at the top of the list. Its creation was a major effort, to say the least. What was the process like for you, and what would you like readers to know about it beyond its own covers?*

**HC:** Drawing STUCK RUBBER BABY amounted to such a mixture of creative exhilaration and financial panic, stretched over four years of finger-numbing crosshatching, that it's hard to talk about it without yammering on way too long and boringly. It wore me out and scared me silly. But it was a thrilling challenge to wrestle with, and I'm hugely glad I hung in there with it to the end.

Tackling the graphic novel form gave me the kind of large canvas I needed to address big themes like the ugliness and heroism I watched duke it out in my hometown of Birmingham



during the early 1960s, while I was in high school and college. STUCK RUBBER BABY let me try and look past the media's stereotypes of villainous white bigots and saintly Civil Rights activists that left a lot of people with an oversimplified idea of what it was like—for me, at least—to be a Southerner during that period of history, not to mention what it was like to be gay in the Bible belt years before the Stonewall riots expanded everyone's ideas about what might be possible if we stood up for ourselves. Also, it let me pay homage to some everyday foot soldiers and local leaders of the Civil Rights Movement and to contrast their idealism to the cynicism and greed that took over America once Ronald Reagan became president.

DC's decision to let me write and draw STUCK RUBBER BABY with almost as much creative freedom as I had had in underground comix was a major opportunity for me, and it's been cool to see it spreading around the world as much as it has.

**RK:** *Who are some of the LGBT writers and artists whose work you find most interesting today? If you could recommend three "desert island" LGBT comics works, what would they be?*

**HC:** I'm lousy at answering desert-island-book-choice questions, Roger. Can I please have a sea-going bookmobile that stops by regularly? Besides, I don't want something to read if I'm stuck on a desert island; I want something to draw with. And when I'm not drawing I want good friends to talk to. Loads of my friends would make great company under a coconut tree in moonlight; I'd hate having to choose among them. I'd need to have Eddie nearby, of course, and our desert island social circle couldn't be limited to LGBT comics creators—or to cartoonists in general—or Eddie would go nuts. Eddie appreciates my comics and some comics by others, but there's only so much cartooning shop talk that he can take!

**RK:** *Speaking of your husband Ed Sedarbaum: after many years in New York City, you and he are now living in rural Massachusetts. (I can use the word "husband" because of your state's laws -- just as my husband and I married in Canada.)*

**HC:** Yeah, we both loved the excitement of living in New York City during the 25 years we were together there, but this is a good time of life for both of us to spend time in quieter surroundings. We have a great dog, a great back yard, and good new friends. I was worried that living in the country would make me feel detached from civilization and unable to get cartooning gigs, and

that would have been true if the Internet hadn't arrived. But most of my contacts with art directors and clients had begun happening by phone and email even before we left New York, and as long as I can have my drawing tools and files and computer stuff nearby, being a cartoonist in North Adams hasn't turned out to be much different from being a cartoonist in Jackson Heights.

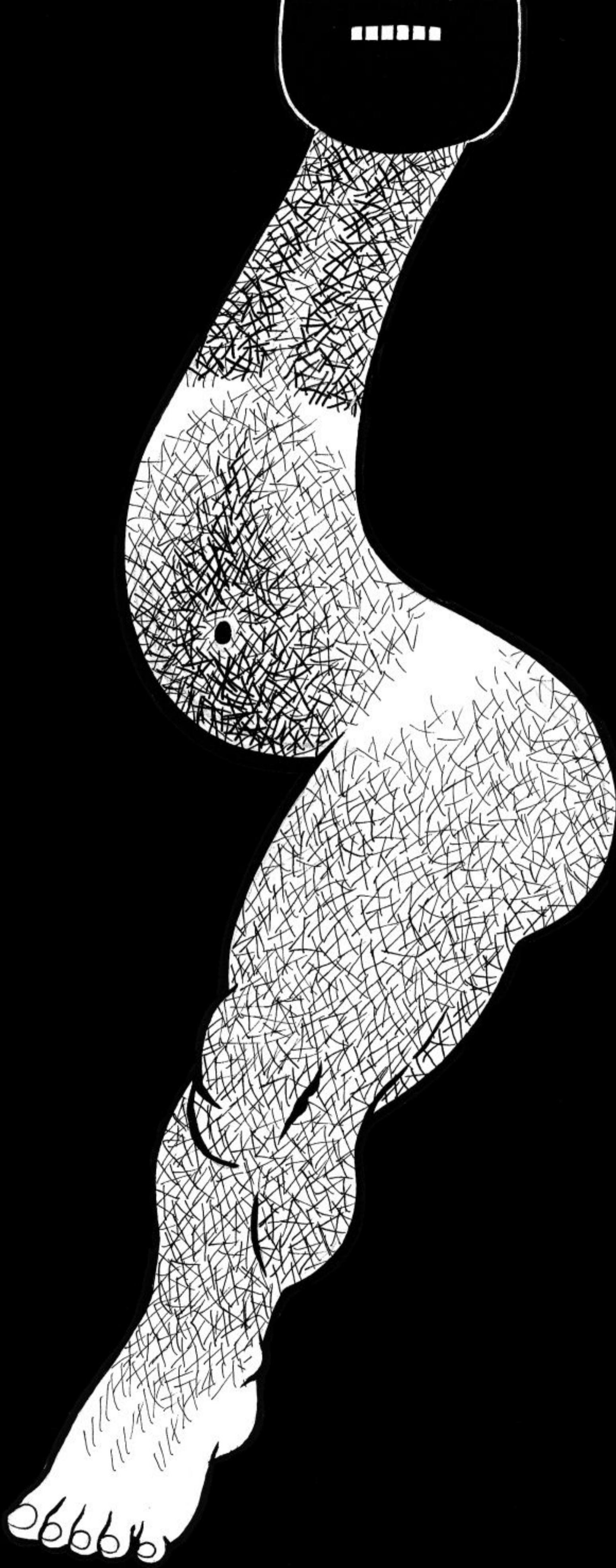
**RK:** *Has the change in locale affected your work any? What are you working on or thinking about?*

**HC:** It's hard to say how much the change of locale is affecting my work right now because of how many other factors are changing it. I mean, I'm a married 65-year-old who gets Social Security payments every month and just signed up for Medicare; plus, I live a long way away from any urban gay community now. You can bet that makes a difference in what kind of art I'm likely to make. It's the young folks who're better suited than me at this point to draw comics about what it's like to be young and horny and insurgent.

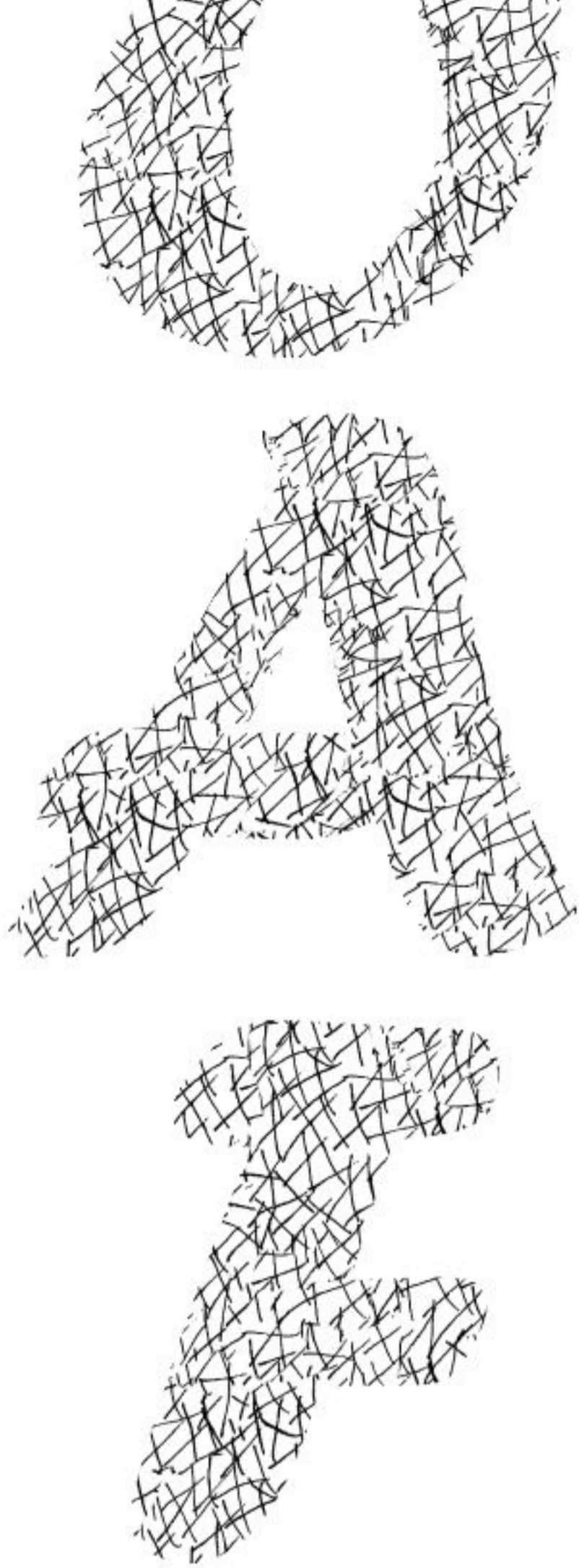
**IT'S THE YOUNG FOLKS WHO'RE BETTER SUITED THAN ME AT THIS POINT TO DRAW COMICS ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE YOUNG AND HORNY AND INSURGENT**

This happens to be a turning point for me because I've just completed my last semester of college teaching. I've been clearing away as many distractions as I can so I can do some creative "research and development." My first order of business is to figure out who I am now—at this time in history and at this point in my own life span. Then I have to figure out what the answer tells me about what kind of new comics—or other forms of art—I need to embark on. It remains to be seen what will really get my creative juices going once I've finished tying up my past work with a bow by publishing FROM HEADRACK TO CLAUDE. Rest assured, I've got a few germinal notions bouncing around in my skull; we'll see where they lead.









# **Wuvable Wevolutionary**

**By Matt Johnson**

There comes a time in the life cycle of every queer subculture (usually around the time its first lifestyle magazines begin to appear) when self-importance achieves a precipitous threshold, ready to be undercut by its evil but funnier twin, self-deprecation. Happily for bear culture, that moment has arrived in the person of Ed Luce's WUVABLE OAF.

It's not a coincidence that Oaf's adventures play out in a city that looks suspiciously like San Francisco, and not simply because his creator hails from there. San Francisco is the foremost bastion of late-stage beardom. Everyone there is either a bear, an aspiring bear, or a friend of bears, and the riper the subculture, the easier the plucking. Luce and co-writer Matt Wobensmith are deft hands at this cultural demolition work, weaving in enough detail of local bearish excess and general loopiness to both beggar belief and convince absolutely. No small part of OAF's fandom derives from its readership's ability to recognize their tricks, their friends, and yes, even themselves in the background of its pages.

It may seem paradoxical in a comic designed (at least partly) to take the piss out of bear identity that Oaf and his buddies are the beariest exponents of the bunch. Perhaps only insiders can savage a subculture with such affection – or so cleverly reveal the limitations of insider status. For WUVABLE OAF is not so much an assault on bears *per se* as it is an attack on the orthodoxy which inevitably seems to grow up around sexual subcultures – one which insists on conformity to particular body types, desires, habits and interests.



WUVABLE OAF #2 PREVIEW! BY ED LUCE



CATCH THE REST IN WUVABLE OAF #2...FALL '09!





While Oaf's size and hirsuteness afford him insider status, in very nearly every other respect he fails the Bear Test. In a social world which places a premium on the trappings of masculine authority, Oaf epitomizes the cult of cute as much as does Hello Kitty. He runs a home for wayward kitties, in fact, supported by sales of his handmade kewpie dolls (stuffed with his own body hair).

### Ed Luce



**MATT JOHNSON** is a writer and librarian whose friends keep giving him comics to read. He lives with his post-bear boyfriend north of Boston.

Even Oaf's more superficially manly traits are perhaps not superficial *enough*. He's a little *too* large, a little *too* furry, a little *too* smelly. His frat-boy-cum-IT-nerd diet of monochromatic junk foodstuffs keeps his eyes and teeth an unhealthy shade of fluorescent pink. Perhaps worst of all, he's a little *too* coy, oblivious to others' sexual attentions and shy about expressing his own. (Despite poking fun at one subculture's sexual stylings, Oaf and his friends' adventures are strictly PG-rated.)

In short, Oaf is a lot like the vast majority of us whose inner qualities don't necessarily jibe with our outer attributes in the ways that others expect. Unlike the guys he encounters online, he fits a stereotype that he doesn't care much about and – naively, refreshingly, even heroically – he invests no effort in keeping up appearances.

Of course, the most efficient way to take the sting out of satire is to embrace it wholeheartedly. It's hard to know how much or how little irony to read into the proliferation of Oaf T-shirts in photos on cele-bear-ty blogs or in the crowd milling around the deck of San Francisco's Lone Star Saloon. Are these guys standing in solidarity with our iconic hero or merely appropriating his radically nonconformist chic? Is Oaf the next Che or Obama? Only time will tell what will become of his creation, but of one thing you can be sure: Ed Luce is keeping it real. Um, *weal*.



# THE INVINCIBLE IRON TRANNY!

by Justin Hall

PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK: GLAMAZONIA, HOW ARE YOU SO FABULOUS?

WELL, DAHLINGS, HAVING AWESOME POWERS LIKE MINE ISN'T ALL THERE IS TO BEING A SUPERHEROINE! NO, HEROISM COMES FROM WITHIN... LET ME TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT HOW I SAVED THE WORLD WITH NO POWERS AT ALL!

A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO, I FELL IN LOVE WITH A HANDSOME ARABIAN PRINCE...

HE WAS EVERYTHING I COULD HAVE HOPED FOR, WITH A LOVE OF ROMANCE, A PROFOUND GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT, AND A DICK THE SIZE OF AN ELEPHANT TRUNK!

AH, I WAS GIDDY AS A SCHOOLGIRL THEN! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT COULDN'T LAST...

GLAMAZONIA, HABIBI... I NEVER WANT THIS TO END.



PRINCE AHMED! NO LONGER WILL YOU RESIST THE WARLORD!

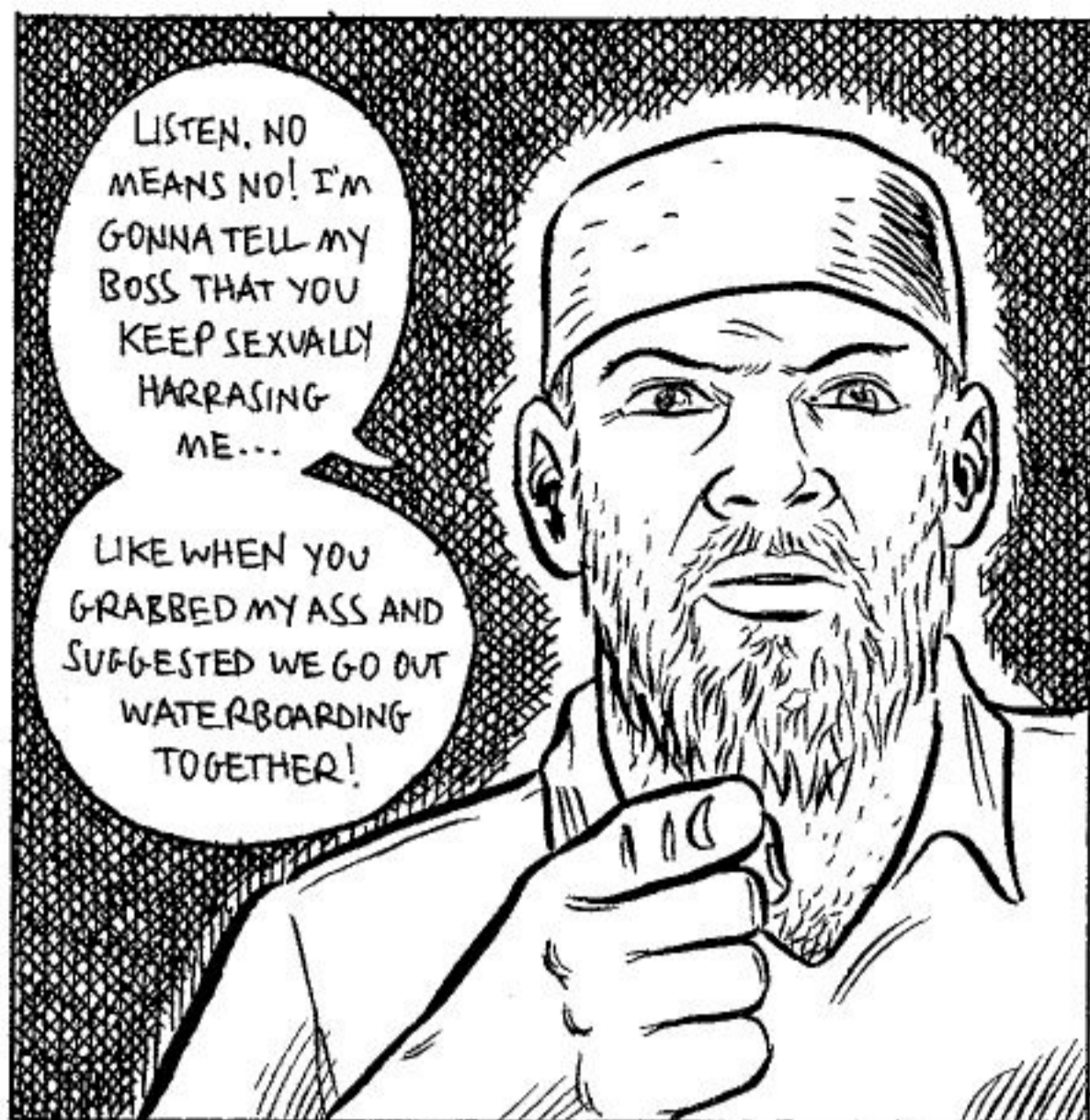
QUICK! THAT COW WITH HIM IS AN AMERICAN SUPERHERO!

USE THE POWER-DAMPENING TRANQUILIZER MIST!









LISTEN, NO MEANS NO! I'M GONNA TELL MY BOSS THAT YOU KEEP SEXUALLY HARRASING ME...

LIKE WHEN YOU GRABBED MY ASS AND SUGGESTED WE GO OUT WATERBOARDING TOGETHER!



I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT MADE YOU SO NERVOUS, DAHLING!

I MEAN, IT'S NOT EVEN CONSIDERED TORTURE THESE DAYS!

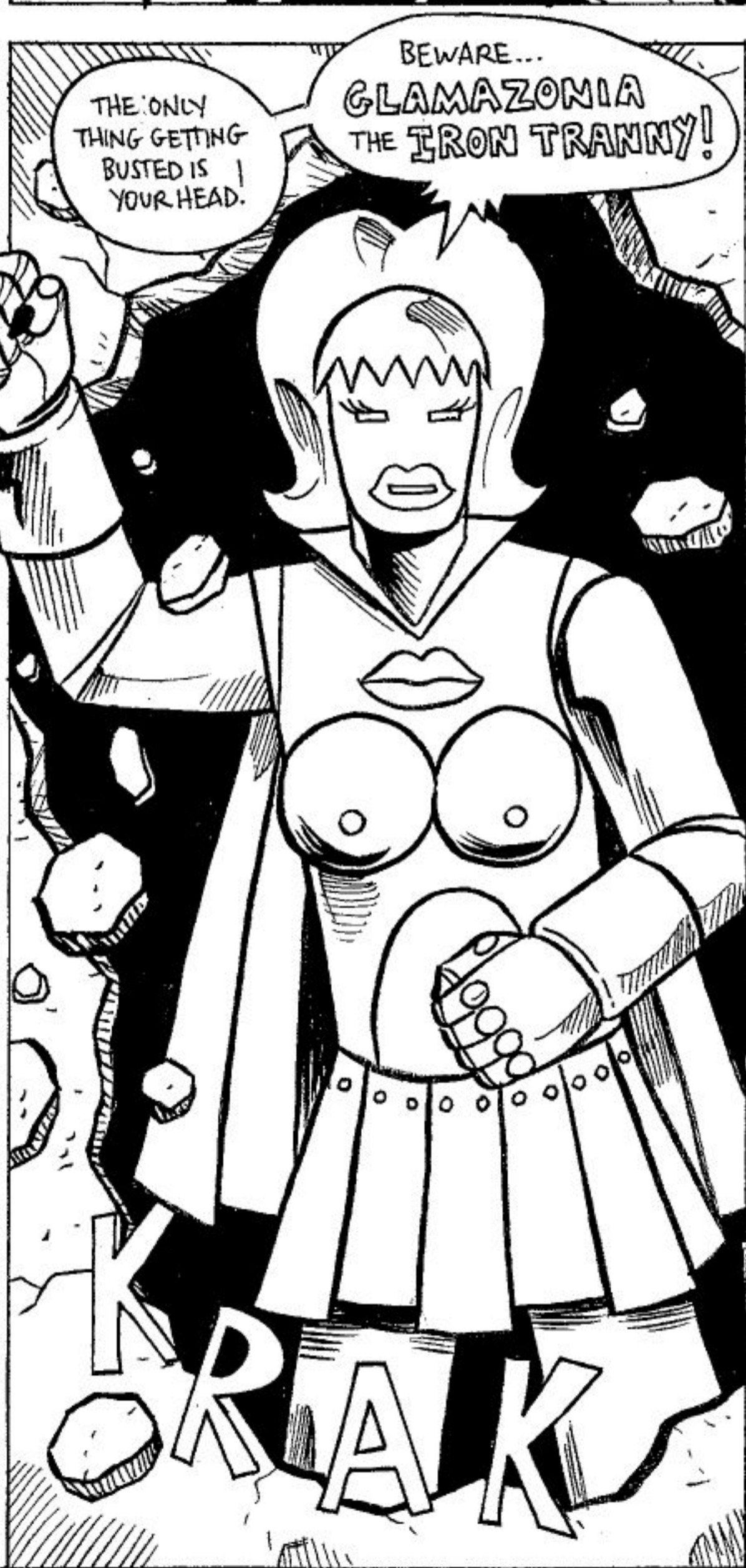


FINALLY MY SUIT WAS READY! AND JUST IN TIME, AS THE TERRORISTS WERE INSISTING ON A DEMO OF THE RAY GUN.

WHERE IS GLAMAZONIA? IT IS TIME FOR HER TO SHOW US HOW TO USE THIS WEAPON TO CRUSH THE AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS!

SHE'S IN THE LADIES ROOM, SIR... SHE SAYS SHE'S STILL PRIMING FOR THE MAIN EVENT.

ALLAH! SHE'S WORSE THAN A REAL WOMAN! JUST BUST DOWN THE DOOR AND DRAG HER OUT!



THE ONLY THING GETTING BUSTED IS YOUR HEAD.

BEWARE...  
**GLAMAZONIA**  
THE **IRON TRANNY!**

**KRAK**







# PRISM'S READING LIST

**THE LEGEND OF HEDGEHOG BOY** by Rene Capone. Rene captures the voice of a young troubled person who is trying to find their way and discover their identity.

- **Jon Macy** has drawn gay erotic comics, and has recently adapted *TELENY AND CAMILLE*, the anonymous Victorian novel of gay love attributed to Oscar Wilde and circle.

**YOUNG AVENGERS PRESENTS** (available in trade paperback, published by Marvel Comics). Not only does this collection celebrate the incredibly diverse cast of characters created by Allan Heinberg, but it features some truly great moments with gay characters Wiccan & Hulkling, written by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. That story in particular shows the relationship between these teenaged heroes take the next step forward in a very real way that many can relate to!

- **Jim McCann** is marketing manager at Marvel Comics, as well as writer of *NEW AVENGERS: THE REUNION* and other comics.

The first 2 trade paperback collections of the Mark Waid/Barry Kitson run on **LEGION OF SUPER HEROES** (published by DC Comics). Not a lot of gay characters in it -- in fact, there is only one and it's a minor one to be generous -- but I find the themes of youth struggling for acceptance and the old guard vs. new guard dichotomy speaks very well to what is going on right now in the Gay Community and the struggle for civil rights.

- **Darren Nowell** is a longtime science fiction fan living in the Atlanta area, and is a member of the Atlanta

I highly, HIGHLY recommend the super cute teen romance comic, **TOUGH LOVE: HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL** by Abby Denson. I first read it back in the Nineties in XY Magazine. Even though I came out in high school, I still had some lingering issues with my sexuality. Abby Denson's gay teen love story helped me push past that internalized homophobia.

- **Tommy Roddy** is the creator/writer/publisher of *PRIDE HIGH* and a past recipient of the Queer Press Grant.

Some older teens may be ready for Erika Moen's minicomics including **I LIKE GIRLS**. And some folks who like frilly and light tales may enjoy Erin Griffin's **RAMONA AND IMOGENE** series of minis, about two female mice who adventure together and sleep together. It might be tough to call them "lesbian" mice, though! These, by the way, are handmade minis.

**ADAM AND ANDY** by James Asal Jr. is a good collection of webcomics, more like a sitcom, and safe for teens, as is Alison Bechdel's **DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR** and Greg Fox's **KYLE'S BED AND BREAKFAST**.

- **Gina Kamentsky** has trans-related cartoons (*T-GINA*) that should be accessible and read by all.

For some of the usual, but bizarre superhero stuff, read **DOOM PATROL** (published by the Vertigo imprint of DC Comics, with the most interesting runs written by Grant Morrison and Rachel Pollack).

- **Tony Shenton** is the sales representative for many independent publishers, a former retailer, and a long-time comics fan.

**SO SUPER DUPER** by Brian Andersen -- The artwork is primitive, but the story is sweet and juggles many issues within a superhero comic framework. Psyche wants to be special and wants to fit in, but also wants to be appreciated for who he is, a conflict that many teens (LGBT or not) can identify with. And the elder superheroes around him often seem condescending and baffling, which is totally relatable (adults often seem clueless and weird).

- **Andrea Speed** is the editor-in-chief, reviewer, occasional gag writer and bottle washer for Comixtreme ([www.comixtreme.com](http://www.comixtreme.com)), a comics website, "the little comic site that could," and author of serial fiction as well



**HONOUR AMONG PUNKS: The Complete Baker Street Graphic Novel** by Guy Davis and Gary Reed (published by IBooks) -- Mystery. A punk, female Sherlock Homes in an alternate reality, post-Victorian London. Deals excellently with transgender issues, and includes characters who embody gender itself in non-traditional ways. Shows a consistency of strength through anger, confusion and opposition. Gritty and honest, with wonderful 'real' looking characters and body-types that we see far too little of in most comics.

**WET MOON** graphic novels, volumes 1 - 3 by Ross Campbell (published by Oni Press) -- Mystery with a little bit of horror. Nicely blends gay, bi and straight girls and boys together as friends and lovers. Modern and relatable, with girls of all sizes (skinny, curvy and full-figured), and a fun emphasis on college-aged dialogue and subculture. Also shows groups of friends of different races, which is nice to see.

- **Rosemary Van Deuren** is the author of the fantasy novel *BASAJAUN*.

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**SKIM** by Jillian and Mariko Tamaki: A touching, intimate coming of age story stupendously illustrated by one of today's brightest stars in the world of illustration.

- **José Villarrubia** is an educator and a painter/photographer/digital artist; his works include *The MIRROR OF LOVE* and *VEILS*, as well as painted/digital coloring on many popular series.

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Rica Takashima was tired of the mournful melodrama she found in most comics about lesbian romance, so she took matters into her own hands and created **RICA 'TTE KANJI!?'**, which has been published in English by ALC. The book follows a young girl moving to the big city, thrilled to explore its gay community and finding romance along the way. It's a great look at a young adult starting a new life on her own terms, and the relationship between Rica and art-student Miho is sweet, sunny and fun.

Ai Yazawa isn't gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, to my knowledge, but she creates diverse casts and touches on a lot of themes that really resonate. In **PARADISE KISS**, published by Tokyopop, she basically tells a coming-out story, though it's about a straight girl. Drab Yukari goes from duckling to swan when she agrees to model for a group of fashion de-

sign students. She falls for lead designer (and bisexual) George and bonds with the rest of the crew, including the warmly regal (and transgender) Isabella. It's a gorgeous book, and it's packed with all of the real emotions that come with finding yourself.

- **David Welsh** writes about comics at his blog, *Precocious Curmudgeon* (<http://precur.wordpress.com/>), and writes about manga in a weekly column, "Flipped," at *The Comics Reporter* (<http://www.comicsreporter.com/>).

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I can't recommend Tommy Roddy's **PRIDE HIGH** highly enough. While it succeeds as an action/adventure superhero story, its themes of friendship, loyalty and the power and value of diversity make it a surprisingly complex and poignant read. I've given it to teen readers, both gay and straight, without hesitation, and it's always garnered enthusiastic responses. While **PRIDE HIGH** may not save the world single-handedly, it's definitely a step in the right direction.

- **Chance Whitmire** is owner of the website *Fanboys of the Universe* ([www.FanboysoftheUniverse.com](http://www.FanboysoftheUniverse.com)).



lipped Chief of Staff, Peyton Riley, announced a concerted... ke. you take away

**THE GOTHAM GAZETTE:**  
**STAKES RAISED**  
**RIDDLER JOINS**  
**SUPER-STRIKE**

**The Forces Advocating a Controversial Proposition Suffer Major, Uh, Blow**

An Investigative Report by Vicki Vale  
with Additional Writing by Terrance Griep

**July 3, 2009** — Gotham City, New Jersey — Eddie Nashton — better known by his nom-de-criminalité, The Riddler — has joined the United Guild of Habilitate Supervillains (UGHS) in striking Gotham City. During an exclusive interview, the Riddler told the Gotham Gazette, “From now on, I’m only giving out answers. ‘To get to the other side.’ ‘Because it was an apple turnover.’ ‘Unidentified frying object.’ You see how dull, how uncommercial that is? I wonder what Whale will do with that!”

The “Whale” to which Mister Nashton refers, of course, is Tobias Whale, the victor of the gang war recently waged in Gotham, popularly known as “Gotham Underground.” After emerging triumphant, Whale famously seized more traditional, aboveground, political power, installing himself as Mayor-For-Life of Gotham and seceding from the United States in a move reminiscent of the “No Man’s Land” event.

With this latest Draconian edict specific to the newest version of Gotham City, Mayor Whale announced the implementation of Prop 8B, which forbids supervillains from getting married. Mayor Office spokesperson William Parker said, “We have evidence that a dearth of supervillain marriages translates to a dearth of supervillain babies. And a dearth of supervillain babies translates to less competition in the future. And we plan on being here for a while--capice?”

But this measure proved to be a political miscalculation, as it inspired a vitriolic reaction from the members of the Supervillain Guild. UGHS President, Scarface, accompanied by his stiff-lipped Chief of Staff, Peyton Riley, announced a concerted supervillain strike. “You take away da Hawk, and what does Chicago have, hah?” the xyloid mobster asked rhetorically. “It gots a Windy City wit’out da wind.

Well, ya take da supervillainy outta Gotham, ya gots pretty much da same t’ing. What do da tourists come here ta sees? Da Cyrus Pinkney architecture? Nah. Dey comes ta sees us.”

The so-called Super-Strike has taken on several bizarre manifestations over the last few months--bizarre even by Gotham City standards. For example, a Crime Alley homeless shelter was invaded by a host of unionized evildoers, with unlikely results: Mister Freeze delivered wool blankets; Poison Ivy bestowed a crate of calamine lotion; the Penguin dispensed free umbrellas; the Firefly brought extinguishers; and, perhaps most weirdly, the Scarecrow offered free counseling. “Their, um, attack couldn’t have gone more smoothly,” one shelter volunteer recounted. “Say what you want about supervillains, but they make splendid community organizers...wuh, when they’re not killing people for fun and profit.”

By most accounts, the Super-Strike has been a shot-in-the-arm for local business. “It’s like I died and went to Heaven,” reports Lyle Foccart, owner of Beans and Weans, a donut shop frequented by Gotham’s Finest. “Without the--what’re they called?--the, eh, über bad guys to keep my clientele running in circles, they’ve come here to sustain themselves. I just wish I were getting a royalty from the newspaper machine.” The Chamber of Commerce, however, has just released figures indicating that tourist traffic has dropped 60% when compared to June of last year.

Despite the consequences of the evil stoppage, the mayor’s office has not wavered in its position. “Prop 8B represents the will of Gotham’s Citizens, as implemented by their dear leader,” Spokesperson Parker insisted, “and we will not cave in to, to reverse-terrorism. Or extortion. Or whatever the [expletive deleted] this is. This new wrinkle doesn’t hurt us. Gotham doesn’t need the Riddler--it never did. For instance, um--how many chucks would a wood chuck chuck if a wood chuck could chuck wood? Insert maniacal laughter here. See? Riddling is easy.”

“Oh, that’s an easy one,” The Riddler giggled at the interview’s conclusion. “How much wood would, I mean. I specialize in things that go chuck, y’see. Now that I’m in the answering business, I’ll tell you the solution that riddle. In fact, if you give me a wooden club, I’ll be happy to show you.”

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Article © and TM Terrance Griep



# ON THE COVER



## INSPIRATION FOR THE COVER

Prism Comics needed a picture for the cover of their 2009 Guide, and they wanted something related to current events (either gay marriage, "Don't Ask Don't Tell," or the recession). Gay marriage and DADT seemed too... obvious, so I went for recession.

I've never been a big fan of superhero comics. I like indie stuff. Subcultural girls. So I wanted to draw that. And I wanted to show two women in love. This was the logical product of all of that.

## COVER BY MEGAN GEDRIS

Megan Rose Gedris describes herself and her cover for this Guide in her own words:

Megan Rose Gedris discovered webcomics in 2002, and immediately started her own. Not yet out of the closet, she wrote under the alias "Anonymous Manga" doing gay boy comics to really throw people off the trail.

But she couldn't help but notice a very unequal balance between gay boy comics and lesbian comics. Where were the comics she could relate to?

So she started writing lesbians. The first one, YU+ME: DREAM, has been going strong for five years on the web, and in 2006, she won Prism Comics' Queer Press Grant. Three volumes of her comics are available, with three more to be out in the next couple of years.

In 2006, she entered Platinum Studios' first annual Comic Book Challenge, where she didn't win, but got a publishing deal anyways. Her story, I WAS KIDNAPPED BY LESBIAN PIRATES FROM OUTER SPACE!!!, has been running on the web and taking comic stores by storm.

Masochistic tendencies made Megan decide to start her own publishing company, so now she runs Rosalarian Publishing, which focuses on helping LGBT- and female-friendly comics see the light of day.

Occasionally, she sleeps. She lives with her girlfriend and some cats. The number of cats is in a constant state of flux.





# EDITOR'S NOTE

**W**elcome to the 2009-2010 issue of PRISM COMICS – your guide to what’s gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender in comics. We’ve worked to bring you interesting resources in the printed book to help you learn more about what’s going on, and a sampler of the latest in LGBT comics as well as some more info about Prism and how we got here in a new online Prism Guide EXTRA prepared specially for you.

We look back at 2008 with our regular *Year in Review* feature, and focus on cons and other events in *Where in the World is Prism Comics?* And we take a longer view, over the past five years, at *Queer Eye for the Comics Guy!*, the popular humor feature at our website, [www.prismcomics.org](http://www.prismcomics.org).

Like most of the other comics press, we often focus on the work of writers, artists, and editors. So this issue we talk to some of the folks who play behind-the-scenes roles in getting comics to you and find that the LGBT crowd is everywhere – in comics as well as throughout our lives.

Pioneer gay cartoonist (and Prism advisory board member) Howard Cruse has a new book, *FROM HEAD-RACK TO CLAUDE*, surveying his gay work over the past thirty years. I spoke to him about those thirty years in comics and beyond.

We take a closer view of two other (and very different) comics projects. This year’s Queer Press Grant recipient, Pam Harrison, is interviewed by last year’s co-recipient, Tommy Roddy, about her computer-generated Lesbian-with-a-capital-L epic *HOUSE OF THE MUSES*, while Matt Johnson reflects on the post-bear glory that is Ed Luce’s *WUVABLE OAF*.



Roger and Grah-am  
the Kryptonian Super-Fox-Terrier.

The exception to the “no comics pages” rule, for tradition’s sake, is the inclusion of another adventure of new Prism board member Justin Hall’s *GLAMAZONIA* – our super-tranny seems to be an iron-clad wonder this time out.

Perhaps most important to new readers and resource centers is our inclusion of several pages of answers to the question, “What comics or graphic novels would you recommend to LGBT teens?” You old hands will probably find some new work to explore too.

Of course, if you started reading the Guide with the same-sex-marriage inspired cover by Stephen Sadowski, you probably know this already. But if Megan Rose Gedris’ beautiful cover about love in hard times caught you first, I think you’ll flip over the Guide’s contents – so flip it and start reading!

**ROGER KLORESE, EDITOR**

**PS**

You’ll find the online EXTRA with more articles and lots of comics pages to sample at [www.prismcomics.org/extra\\_2009.pdf](http://www.prismcomics.org/extra_2009.pdf) -- the password you’ll need to open it is `patty&david`.



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