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The Drama King
P. CRAIG RUSSELL

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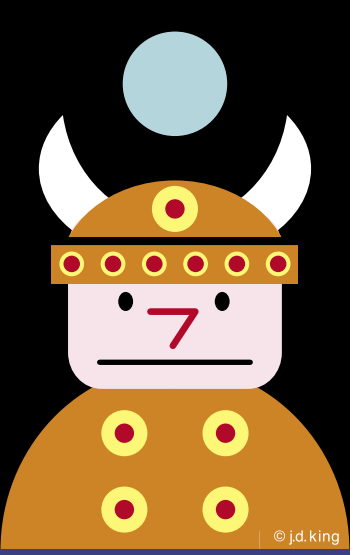


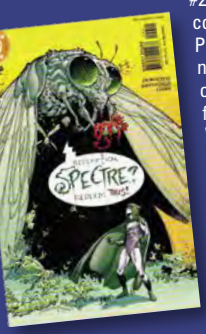
OPERATIC WOODY
CBC mascot by **J.D. KING**

About Our Cover

Art and Colors by
P. CRAIG RUSSELL

The Spectre TM & © DC Comics.

Above: P. CRAIG RUSSELL's spectacular cover featuring DC Comics' "Avenging Wrath of God" character is actually a recent recreation of *The Spectre* #26 [April 2003] cover art by PCR, one of a nine-issue run of his covers for the title. With thanks to Wayne Arnold Harold for his assist. Colors on the original version by Lovern Kindzierski.



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comic book CREATOR™

Winter 2020 • The Lyrical Art of P. Craig Russell • Number 22

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Right: *Detail of P. Craig Russell's depiction of Neil Gaiman's Sandman.* Sandman TM & © DC Comics.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our mailbox is **EMPTY!** No letters column this ish. Please write us **LOCs!** Alas, because **CRAIG YOE** is so busy with his book imprint and possible move to Europe, we have to postpone the second part of his interview (hopefully until next issue). Plus, because I had to cut the Ohio trip short, a promised piece on visiting **CAROL TYLER** does not appear herein.

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Sunday with Sinnott

Visiting the great Joseph Leonard Sinnott on his home turf of Saugerties, New York!

Conducted by JON B. COOKE

[*For years I've been promising Joe Sinnott and his son Mark that I'd drop by the Hudson River Valley town of Saugerties, New York, for a Sunday visit. And, finally, on the second day of fall last year, I made good on that vow. Mostly I wanted to just hang with friends and chat about Joe's 1960s work outside Marvel Comics, when he did great stuff as penciler and inker for* Treasure Chest *and Dell Comics (where he produced a memorable comic book on The Beatles during the height of their fame). I'm glad my stopover was delayed as a few weeks prior to my arrival, the local historical society had hosted a reception and exhibit opening honoring its native son entitled, "Celebrating the Retirement of Joe 'Joltin' Sinnott." My appearance gave Joe and Mark a chance to share in person about the experience (which you'll find discussed in the sidebar). Plus it gave me the opportunity to see just how my 93-year-old pal was faring, and while I found him a tiny bit slower and tad easier to tire, Joe was overall as sharp and keen as ever. This conversation was transcribed by Steven "Flash" Thompson. —* **JBC**]

Comic Book Creator: *It's Sunday, September 22nd. We're at Mark Sinnott's house to talk with his dad, with Mark joining in the conversation.* [to Joe] *I'm finally here! I've been talking about coming here for a long time, Joe.*
Joe Sinnott: You said you'd say that, Jon.
CBC: *Well, first up, I just found out that you're Irish, so should I assume that you're Catholic?*
Joe: Yes, and my mother was Irish, too. Her name was McGraw. She was related to John McGraw, the old manager of the New York Giants baseball team. They all came from the middle part of the state, and they were all working in railroads. They were conductors…I remember my grandmother on my mother's side, she used to get free tickets because her husband worked on the railroad, you know? So, she used to come down from Albany and we'd pick her up. She traveled *free!* Those were the days. That was back in the 1930s and we always used to love to see her come because she always brought us peanut butter in the little white containers with the metal handle.
CBC: *Like a little bucket?*
Joe: Yes. They used to deliver ice cream that way years ago, too. I don't know whether you knew that.
CBC: *What, door to door?* [Interviewer's note: Ice cream sold door-to-door? I'm obviously a knucklehead.]
Joe: No, no. If you went in the store, you could've bought a quart of ice cream and they would've put it in this little container with a wire handle, and that was your quart of ice cream. [*chuckles*]
Mark Sinnott: Like Chinese food?
Joe: Yeah. Right.
CBC: *So, did the Sinnotts come over because of the Potato Famine?*
Joe: Yes, to begin with. 1840. Thomas Sinnott. There were five brothers who came over all at once and they split up. One came up to Hudson Valley, one went to Chicago, one stayed in New York, one went to Canada, and I think the other one went to California. But, in any case, the one that went to Canada…His name was Michael Sinnott. He moved to Connecticut and he got into the theater and he went out to Hollywood. He made it big out there and he changed his name from Sinnott…
CBC: [Realizing Joe's revelation] *No way!*
Joe: To Sennett! S-E-N-N-E-T-T.
CBC: *Mack Sennett?!*
Joe: Mack Sennett.
CBC: *Are you serious?* The *Mack Sennett?*
Joe: Yeah.
CBC: *He was* huge!
Joe: In comedy. Yeah, he discovered Bing Crosby and a lot of people who are well-known today. And Michael Sinnott was his real name. He thought Sennett would look better up on the marquee.
CBC: *Was he thinking of Irish prejudice or something?*
Joe: [*Laughs*] No, he just thought it would look better. So that was the early '10s.
CBC: *So is there an Irish contingent up here in Saugerties? Is there a community?*
Joe: Well, actually, there's a great story: This area was founded by the Dutch years ago, when New York City was called New Amsterdam. When the British took over, they changed it to New York. Same way with Albany, which used to be called Fort Orange. In any case, right down here you pass through Glenerie, and, of course, that's an Irish name. When the Irish came over from Ireland and they went through Ellis Island, they didn't know anything about New York or the United States. So they asked them, "Where should we go?" And they were told there was an Irish community up near Saugerties, called Ulster. That was way back in the early 1800s. So the Irish came up here automatically because they knew that there were people like themselves, their churches.
Mark: So they all settled here and they called it Glenerie, which is an Irish name, because it was an Irish community.
Joe: And there was a lead mill down here near Glenerie,

Above: *Selfie by Ye Ed of himself, Joe Sinnott (center), and Joe's son Mark, taken during the September interview.* **Below:** *Joe's relative, Hollywood's "King of Comedy," Mack Sennett.*

Above: *Joe Sinnott in his Saugerties High School s enior portrait, circa 1944.*

so most of 'em were told they could get a job at the lead mill. My great-grandfather was Thomas Sinnott and he took a job there. He died at 39. A lot of the workers used to get lead poisoning because they didn't realize the danger, which was very prevalent. Great little community. It's about three miles from Saugerties.

Mark: Just down the road.

Joe: They had no church in Glenerie so they used to hitchhike or ride into Saugerties, Saint Mary's, for going to church on Sundays. It was amazing in the wintertime. If they couldn't get a ride, they would walk the three miles! But they had their soccer games. They had the Irish style of living.

Mark: And cabbage. [*laughs*]

Joe: Sure. That was a great time in their lives, actually. They didn't live long because of the lead mill, really. The women did, but not the men. Like I said, it was a great story.

CBC: *Did you go to Catholic school?*

Joe: Yeah, I went to St. Mary School. We had a school that went from first to the eighth grade. We had no high school and after you graduated from St. Mary's, you went over to Saugerties High School. In fact, they just closed the St. Mary's grade school. My father even went to that school when he was young.

Mark: Me and my brothers and sisters went there. They just closed it a couple years ago. The school. You know, the classroom that used to have had maybe 40 in it, then it went down to 20, then to five. That's the way it's goin'.

Joe: Anyway, when you go back, there's a great history. You had the nuns. They were the Sisters of Charity. They were situated across the river.

Mark: [*Whispers*] They were brutal.

Joe: And, in the wintertime, they used to walk across the [Hudson] river on the ice, to teach! At St. Mary's. Can you imagine? I mean, you've got women—probably in their 50s and 60s—and they crossed the river on the ice to teach.

CBC: *Were the nuns tough?*

Joe: Oh! Sister Agnes, she had an 18-inch green ruler, about that thick, and if you did something wrong, you had to go up by the desk, hold your hands out and she'd hit you over the knuckles with this green ruler… hard! And we had a kid in the class and he was always in trouble. Bill Wurzel. He went up there one day—he was doing something wrong in class—and she made him put his hands and she took the ruler and went to hit 'em and he pulled his hands back and she hit the desk! That ruler went into a hundred pieces.

CBC: *Then she* beat *the hell out of him!* [laughter]

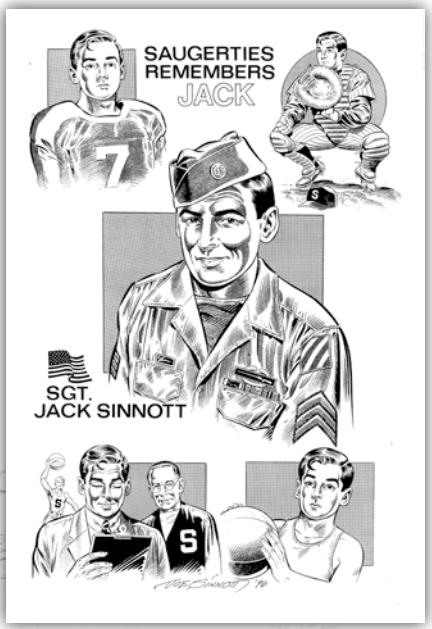
Joe: Everybody remembers Sister Agnes. She would hit you for practically nothing', y'know? But they were tough in those days. There were a couple that wouldn't hit you, but just as many would hit you, y'know? St. Mary's was a tough place to grow up. It really was! I've got so many stories I could tell you about St. Mary's! It was an old… I don't wanna say it was a barn, where the school was held, but it had… [*counting*] one, two, three, four… four rooms. First and second grade were together, the third and the fourth, then the fifth and sixth. The seventh was separate and so was the eighth grade. Of course, down through the years, they slowly were replaced by lay-teachers but *we* had all Sisters. I graduated in 1941 from St. Mary's.

Mark: Then he went to high school. There was no Catholic school after eighth grade in the area. There was years later.

Joe: Coleman High. It was a beautiful school, too. They just closed that.

Mark: They just closed that this year. When I went to school, I graduated from St. Mary's, in '75. We had the lay-people *and* nuns. And it wasn't just St. Mary's. I think, in general, the nuns were just strict!

Joe: They weren't *all* like that.



Mark: Yeah, there were exceptions. Sister Elaine was a sweetheart! She was the exception.

CBC: *Were you happy to move on to a regular school secular school?*

Joe: Well, we looked forward to it. It had a lot of things going for it that St. Mary's certainly didn't. It had a sports program, 'cause, you know, most of us were into sports. And it had art classes, which they didn't have at St. Mary's. In fact, if you were caught drawing, that was… that was…

Mark: Grounds for the ruler! [*laughter*]

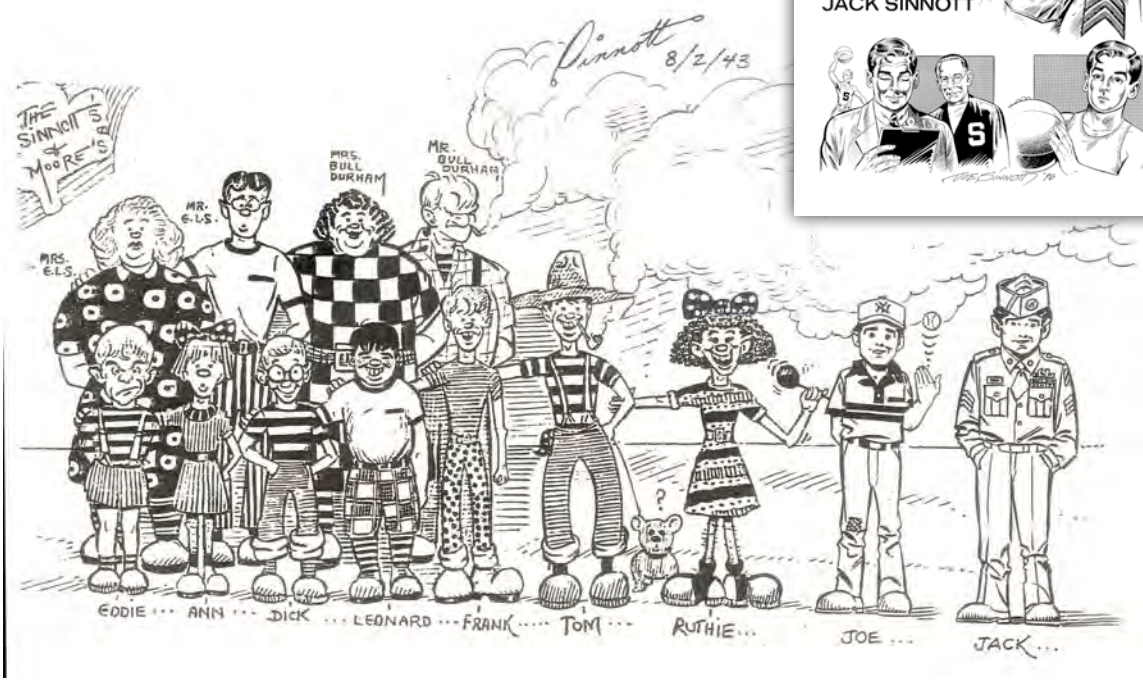
CBC: *Did you get whacked for it?*

Joe: I got whacked quite a bit. [*Mark laughs*]

CBC: *But somehow you survived!*

Joe: I've got a pretty good memory. I can remember I got a zero one time on a math test. I lived right up the street from the school, so Sister said, "You take this home." She drew a great big zero up on top of the page. She said, "I want you to

Below: *From 1943, these caricatures of the Sinnott and Moore families included young Joe Sinnott, at the far right, with his brother, Jack, who would be killed in action a year later, in combat during World War II, leaving Joe as the oldest living son.* **Inset right:** *Joe remembers his beloved older brother in this 1996 memorial piece by Joe.*



Saugerties Celebrates Joltin' Joe Sinnott Day

On Saturday, Aug. 31, 2019, the small Hudson Valley town of Saugerties, New York, honored a beloved and devoted native son, Joseph Leonard Sinnott, by bestowing upon him the "Pride of Ulster County" award and declaring that late summer Saturday as a "Day of Recognition" for the legendary Marvel Comics artist. The occasion was hosted by the Saugerties Historical Society, which featured an exhibition of Joltin' Joe's artwork and artifacts of his charmed life, as well as opening its grounds for a gathering of friends, neighbors, and fellow comics professionals from the region. The recent passing of Stan Lee and subsequent cancellation of his syndicated *Amazing Spider-Man* newspaper comic strip, which Joe had inked since 1992—never mind 69 years as a comics pro!—was reason enough to declare the date an "official" retirement party for the now 93-year-old veteran.

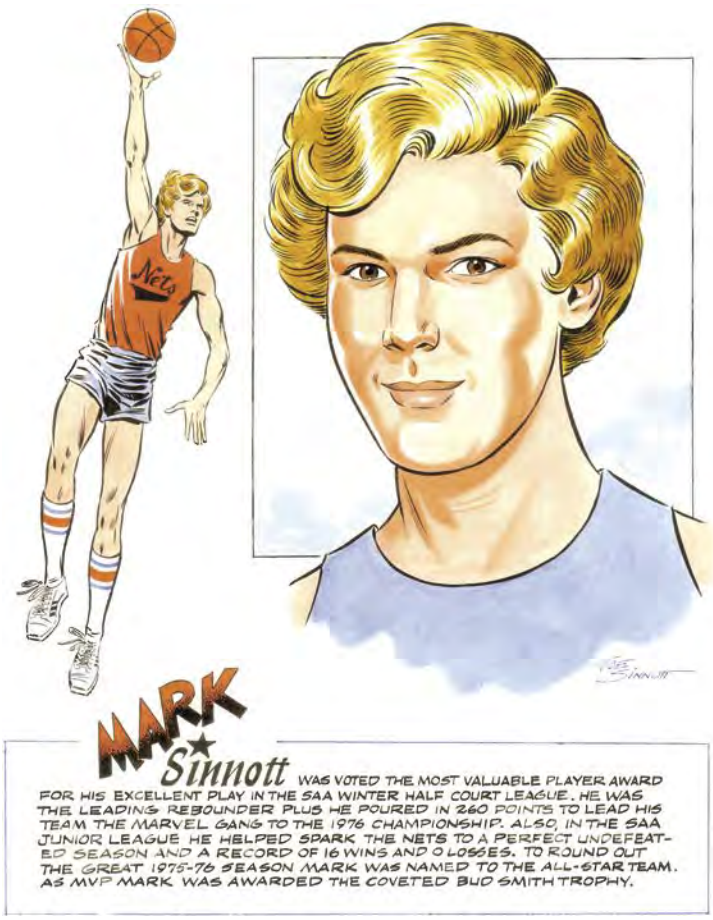
"For the first time in my life," son Mark Sinnott said, "my father would not have to get up each morning to start each day by drawing. Now, Joe still draws each day, but only if he feels up to it, and nowadays it's with no more deadlines or commitments." Mark explained that the Saugerties Historical Society had long hoped to host a Joe Sinnott event and, he said, "They felt that now, more than ever, was the perfect time to do a retirement celebration. And, once underway, it began a summer-long endeavor to get over 80 pieces of art and memorabilia of Joe's to adorn the walls and be placed in display cases."

The Kiersted House Museum, an 18th century stone building located on Main Street in Saugerties, devoted three rooms to the Joe Sinnott display, which included his many Bing Crosby album covers he had illustrated, various books and DVDs about Joe's life, plus trading cards, puzzles, figurines, and a large collection of comic books adorning the large main exhibit room. The middle room featured various banners from conventions he attended and posters the artist has illustrated. The Saugerties Room at the entrance featured items which, Mark shares, "My dad is probably the most proud of, as it's filled with numerous drawings he had done for local people in town, some for contributions to and accomplishments in the community. Even his high school yearbooks, complete with his cartoons, are proudly on display. Also featured is the logo he designed for the local fire department which adorns their fire truck, the official 'Village of Saugerties' logo, Joe's U.S. Navy Seabee uniform from World War II, as well as many photos from his childhood, sports participation, local accomplishments, and his comics career." The exhibit remained open to the public throughout September.

According to Mark, when Joe got his first look at this enormous display, "My dad was totally blown away! We have had different art gallery-type shows through the years, but they all paled in comparison to this museum-type presentation. Hundreds of people showed up for this event to celebrate the life, art and retirement of Joe, including Saugerties residents, friends, family, and a very large representation from the comic book community." Indeed, comic-book luminaries, including Barry Windsor-Smith, Terry Austin, Janice Chang, Joe Jusko, Fred Hembeck, and others, were among the attendees. Mark said, "My father was very grateful, humbled, and honored by the large outpouring of people that came out for his day to wish him the best in his 'retirement.'" Doubtless, the culmination of the day's events was when an official stood before the crowd to proclaim that the Town of Saugerties, Ulster County Legislature, Ulster County Executive, and 115th Congress of the United States of America all respectively declared that Saturday, August 31, 2019, would be known to all as "Joe Sinnott Day."

Inset top: *Program book made available at the Saugerties Historical Society event.*
Bottom: *Top row: Joe Sinnott and Fred Hembeck. Joe and Joe Jusko. Joe and Ron Marz. Bottom row: Barry Windsor-Smith and Joe; Terry Austin and Joe; Joe and Janice Chiang; and the Mark Sinnott clan with Joe — Top row: Belinda and Mark; bottom row: Trevor, Joe, and Dorian Jack Sinnott.*

All photos courtesy of Mark Sinnott. With thanks to Janice Chiang.



Mark: They constantly gave you work. You never had to call them and say, "Are there any jobs for me to do?"
Joe: Oh, no. No.
CBC: *Did you just wince a little? I said "loyal" and you went, "Eh."*
Joe: They knew what I could do. That's why they always gave me the stories where likenesses had to be shown.
CBC: *You had some really nice stuff. I'm really glad I saw that high school work of yours. You were really good at likenesses right from the word go.* [Looking at index entry] *What was "Archaeology, the Greatest Detective Story"? Was that just vignettes?*
Joe: That was about the findings in the pyramids.
Mark: Like hieroglyphics and stuff like that.
CBC: *So it was pretty much a documentary, not a story.*
Mark: Right. He did a few of those. There's one there called Canyon Lands which is all about out West. Monument Valley and all that.
CBC: *On "Pettigrew," did it feel like it was important? Or even now, in retrospect?*
Joe: I would have thought so.
CBC: *So it's "Bishop Walsh of Maryknoll"! Now* ["Red Victim"] *makes sense.* [Mark laughs] *And Berry was writing this, so he was doing research, too, when he was down there. So, in the school year '64-'65, you just did one-shot stories and no serials.* [to Mark, indicating index] *Is this based on the issues you have?*
Mark: Based on his ledger and the issues I have. That's complete. There's nothing missing there as far as *Treasure Chest* work. If there's some issues missing, he didn't do that issue.
CBC: *It's just curious. In 1963, he did every single issue.*
Mark: Yeah, but if you think, in '63, he didn't do a lot for Marvel. He was doing more for Dell. [*to Joe*] I don't know when you did *The Beatles*. You probably started that in '63. May have been '64, I don't know.
CBC: *To the kids at home: Joe is penciling* and *inking these while he was doing the most fantastic inking job on Jack Kirby in the '60s. Then you did biographies of Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, de Valera (who was the President of Ireland). And then pretty much one-shot stories. You stayed busy right to the end, What was the end like? Do you remember?*
Mark: The end of *Treasure Chest*. Did you know it was coming to an end?
Joe: Only because they told me.
Mark: When did they tell you? Were you still doing work for them and they said, "Joe, we're probably gonna cease operation in a couple months. Sales aren't good and we don't know how long it's gonna be?"
Joe: It was something like that, but it wasn't exactly that way.
CBC: [To Mark] *Did* you *get* Treasure Chest *in school, Mark?*
Mark: Yeah.
CBC: *So you actually, literally, told classmates, "Hey! My dad is in this!"*
Mark: [*Laughs*] Yeah, they knew.
CBC: *That has got to be one of the coolest feelings in the world.*
Mark: Yep. The coolest feeling in the world was going to art class as a junior or senior and they wanted to know how comic books were made and I had to give the whole lecture on that and bring in the *Fantastic Four* #200 cover that he did with Kirby. And you know, we had the original cover and we had the comic book. We don't have the original cover anymore because [nods toward his dad] *someone* must have sold that for five bucks. But you know, giving that talk was really cool.
CBC: *Mark just gave a stink-eye to his dad, folks.* [laughter]
Mark: When I got married and I'd come back home, I was, "Dad, where are all those covers?" "Oh, I sold those at some shows." Because I wasn't doing the shows with him in the '80s. Mom and he were doing 'em. Five dollar Buscema pages were going out the door. But, hey, y'know, that was probably good money back in 1980.
CBC: *So, Mark, what other freelance assignments were there?*
Mark: He did Archie. Archie Comics. For…
Joe: Jon D'Agostino.
Mark: He was ghosting for Jon. You were doing the inks, right? Jon was penciling and then you were doing the inks. And then I think you were leaving the heads for Jon to ink.
Joe: I don't remember.
Mark: But like Tom Gill, he ended up eventually doing all of it.
CBC: *What year?*
Mark: Well, you've got the Charlton, which was…
CBC: *Around 1962–63.*
Mark: A bunch of Charlton. Okay, here's Archie. Archie Comics. Now, here's the thing. He was not credited for these. However, now when they do *Archie Digest*s and they do reprints, he's starting to get credit 'cause now they've found out. Back in the day, unless you were DeCarlo, you weren't signing stuff. There's his Archie stuff. And the next page. Early 1970s.
CBC: *What else?*
Mark: ACG. He did "John Force, Magic Agent."
CBC: *Let me ask you about Jon D'Agostino. Did he live in the area?*
Joe: No.
CBC: *So you would mail him. Did the lettering pages for* Treasure Chest *come to you or did they go to him?*
Mark: Jon used to come up to the house.
CBC: *So you* did *meet him?*
Mark: Jon D'Agostino, Dad. He used to come up to the house.
Joe: Once in a while.
Mark: He would drop stuff off and pick stuff up.
Joe: Yeah.
CBC: *What was he like?*
Mark: Oh, he was great. Jon was great. He stuttered.
Joe: Jon stuttered, yeah. He couldn't talk. Nicest guy you'd ever wanna meet, though.
Mark: And then there was a New York Comic Con. I'm gonna say… 2012. They got together again for the first time in 40 years and then Jon died maybe six months later. It was neat that they got back together. Yeah, Jon used to come up. I'm not sayin' all the time, but he was up quite a bit.
CBC: *Why would he come up?*
Mark: I think to drop off the art. A lot of times it wasn't mailed. He would drop it off, maybe come back the following week and pick it up. He probably just liked to get out and drive.
CBC: *Were they lettered pages first or were lettered after being inked?*
Mark: Oh, that I don't know. I believe everything was lettered. I believe everything was done and penciled. Because Jon was the letterer, the penciler, and the inker.
CBC: *That was for the Archie stuff. But* this *stuff?*
Mark: Oh. [*to Joe*] For *Treasure Chest*, Dad. When you did a *Treasure Chest,* when was the lettering added? Before or after you did the art?
Joe: Usually before.
CBC: *Isn't that kind of stifling?*
Joe: No. I'd rather have the lettering done beforehand, Jon. That way you know just how much room you're gonna have. No, I'd rather have the lettering done.

What If You Knew Her?

Backderf talks about his new "documentary comic," *Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio*

Above: *Cover of May 18, 1970, edition of* Newsweek*, featuring John Filo's Pulitzer Prize-winning photo which instantly became the most iconic image of the Kent State shootings.* **Inset right:** *Derf Backderf's cover art for his latest effort,* Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio, *coming from Abrams ComicArts, in April.* **Below:** *Derf and his renowned graphic memoir,* My Friend Dahmer *(2013).*

by JON B. COOKE

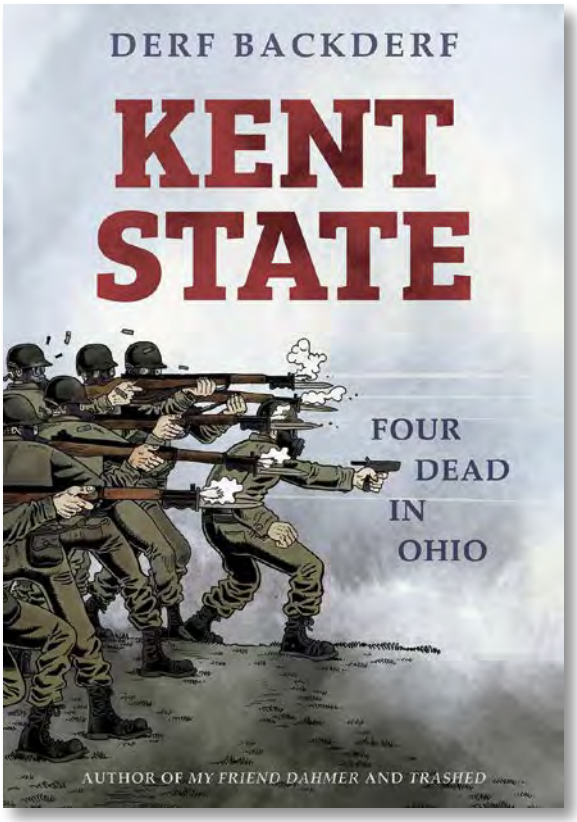
Maybe it should come as no surprise that Derf Backderf, author of the 2012 graphic memoir, *My Friend Dahmer*, uses the iconic image of the Kent State University shootings — the moment teenager Mary Ann Vecchio, arms outstretched, wails in horror over the murdered body of Jeffrey Miller — to bring his latest effort to a dramatic crescendo. That second, of course, was immortalized in the Pulitzer Prize-winning photo seen the world over, and yet, even though I was braced for Derf's version, I was still surprised and rendered nearly breathless by the cartoonist's expert storytelling and breakneck pacing in his epic new telling of that pivotal event in American history.

The Kent State massacre was arguably a turning point in the U.S., when, on May 4, 1970, during a campus demonstration protesting the Vietnam War, four students were shot dead and nine wounded by the Ohio National Guard. Just days before, President Richard Nixon, who won office promising to end the war, announced he was now escalating the Southeast Asian conflict, informing the public during a televised address that American forces were invading the sovereign nation of Cambodia. (Though, truth be told, over a year before the TV speech about the "Cambodian incursion," on a Sunday after church, Nixon had ordered "Operation Menu," the covert — and devastating — carpet-bombing of that neutral country.)

It was soon learned that all four of the Kent State dead were students, two merely bystanders simply walking between classes. Over a span of 13 seconds, 28 National Guardsmen fired almost 70 rounds. Of the wounded, two of the nine were crippled for life. All of the students were unarmed.

It was a radicalizing moment for many, and outrage was the response from college kids of the era, with some 450 campuses going on strike and a massive demonstration in D.C. the following weekend. When a banner was unfurled that spring at Columbia University which declared, "They Can't Kill Us All," young Americans showed their fury at soldiers shooting students just like them. In an email to NPR, one shared, "Up until that incident, I was a pretty conventional young person. I was 20. But when I saw my government killing innocent students who were just walking to class, I was radicalized, totally radicalized."

Less than three weeks after the tragedy, Neil Young recorded the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young protest song, "Ohio," which included the refrain, "Four dead in Ohio," and declared, "Soldiers are cutting us down." Thus, the fury had its own theme song.



Derf Backderf captures the era and the event itself in his latest, *Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio*, a 288-page graphic "novel" about the shootings. In our interview, I began with a query about whether his 10-year-old self in 1970, growing up in Richfield, Ohio — 20 miles or so from Kent State — had any personal connection with the incident.

"The book opens with the National Guard occupying my hometown," he explained. "There was a big trucker strike at the depots near the turnpike exit and the Guard was dispatched by the governor to crush it. Once that was accomplished, the Guard packed up and raced off to Kent. Some of those same soldiers opened fire on campus a few days later."

Indeed, in the book's first pages, Derf depicts himself as a kid "shaken and disturbed" by the armed presence in his hometown. He is shown, *MAD* magazine in hand, as a passenger in his mom's car as she drives past a phalanx of National Guardsmen armed with M1 carbines.

"I was living this carefree kid life and then suddenly my town is under military occupation. The Guard camped right across the street from our grade school. All day long, I stared out my classroom window as jeeps and trucks roared past, filled with soldiers. When kids took the school bus home, if the route went by the Guard and the strikers, the bus driver would make the kids lie on the floor of the bus! The strikers were men I knew. They were the fathers of my friends and classmates, my Little League coaches and Cub Scout leaders, and here are soldiers pointing guns at them. It was as if that entire contentious era came rushing in to my sleepy, little town all at once. It really freaked me

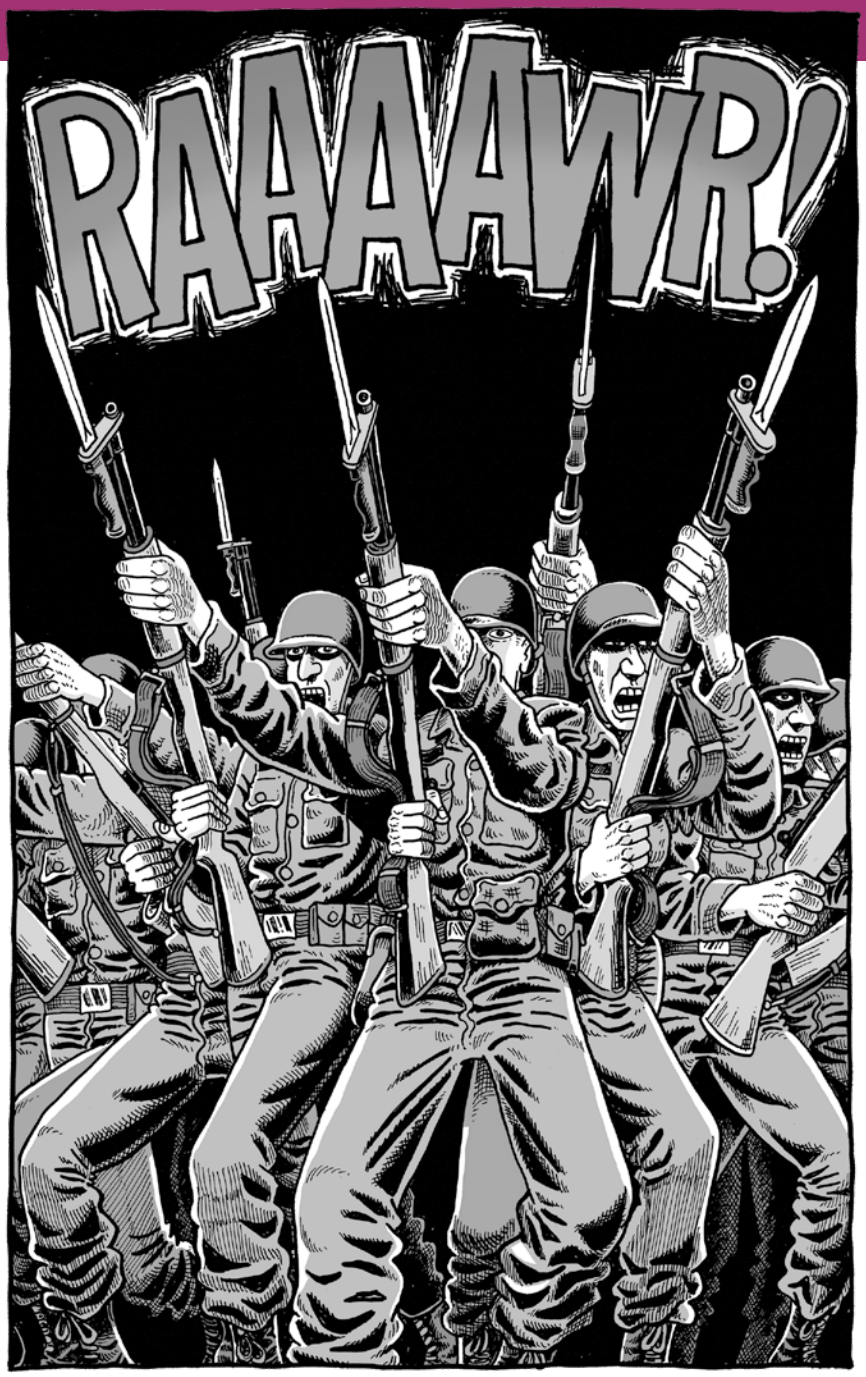
out. Then the shootings happened. Many kids from my town, and some of my relatives, attended Kent State.

Also, I was a paperboy, so I was more clued in to the news than most kids my age. That was my entry job into the newspaper business, where I would have a long career. Picking up those papers that day and seeing the headline, 'Four Dead'… and then discovering it was the same Guard unit that had been in Richfield, that really shook me. So, that is my connection to May 4, which is not the strongest one, to be sure, as there were hundreds of people getting fired at on campus who were a *lot* more affected by it. I know people who had bullets whiz over their heads! But that's how great history works. It reverberates through society, even filtering down to young rubes like me."

From then on, Derf proceeded to take an interest in the greater world. "I started to read the paper in earnest," he said. "That sounds obnoxiously precocious, I know, but I went on to become a journalism major, so news was something I was interested in early on. Sure, I won't say that, at age 10, I wasn't turning to the comics section first, but I would also read the news pages, and try to figure out the political cartoons on the editorial page."

Indeed, Derf would go on to devote a good portion of his career to the newspaper trade. He produced *The City,* which, according to *Gocomics.com*, with its "tortured perspective, gritty realism, and outlandish urban humor," the weekly comic strip "kept an outsider's beat on current events, trends, and out-there aspects of contemporary culture." The feature, which ended in 2014, appeared in some 150 publications and Derf estimates he produced over 1,500 strips. In 2006, *The City* was honored with a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for political cartooning. Then, in 2012, Derf expanded on a 24-page comic book he had self-published in 2002 to produce the full-length graphic memoir, *My Friend Dahmer,* about Derf's high school friendship with serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. Later made into an acclaimed movie, Derf's book received the "Revelation Award" for best debut graphic novel at the Angoulême International Comics Festival.

Ten-year-old Derf kept abreast of current events, but he didn't feel any direct impact from the Vietnam War. "For kids my age," he explained, "the war wasn't as scary as it was for college kids, because we weren't in immediate danger of being dragged off to the jungle. They had seen the war take shape and grow out of control. From my perspective, there'd *always* been a Vietnam War. There'd *always* been civil unrest. There'd *always* been riots in cities. It was so commonplace in our lives, we kids didn't even notice these events. Kent State was different. It hit home."



Above: *Full-page splash from Derf Backderf's Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio, the cartoonist's 288-page depiction of the May 4, 1970, shootings at Kent State University, which left four dead and nine wounded when Ohio National Guardsmen shot into a crowd of protesters.*


THE PLAIN DEALER

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

CLEVELAND, TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1970

Terror at KSU

4 DEAD, 10 HURT AT KSU

250,000 Due at Polls Here

Campus Is Evacuated

Campus War

Cleveland Plain Dealer © Forest City Publishing Company. *Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio* © John Backderf.

Inset left: *Front page of the May 5, 1970, Cleveland Plain Dealer, reporting on the tragedy at Kent State the previous day. When all the facts were in, it was nine who were injured, two permanently.*

Prior to talking with Derf, I had, at his suggestion, visited the site of the shooting, guided by artist and Kent resident P. Craig Russell (this issue's cover-featured creator) who graciously took me on a tour. I visited the markers in the parking lot that commemorate where each of the four had fallen on that day in May, 1970. Most profound was to encounter the metal sculpture on the grounds of Taylor Hall known as "Solar Totem #1," a towering abstract piece made of half-inch thick steel plates. On that notorious mid-spring Monday almost 50 years ago, when only three years had passed since its installation and located midway between the Guardsmen and the protesters, the sculpture was pierced by an M1 carbine bullet, leaving a hole that today remains testament to the lives lost at Kent State.

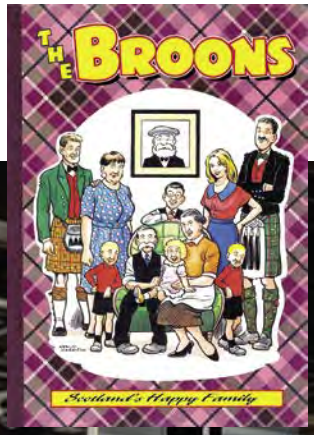
Of the four dead and nine wounded, Derf said, "Frankly, it was a miracle that there weren't more killed. Twenty-eight Guardsmen fired their weapons, but most shot into the air or at the ground. It was only eight to ten soldiers who, for

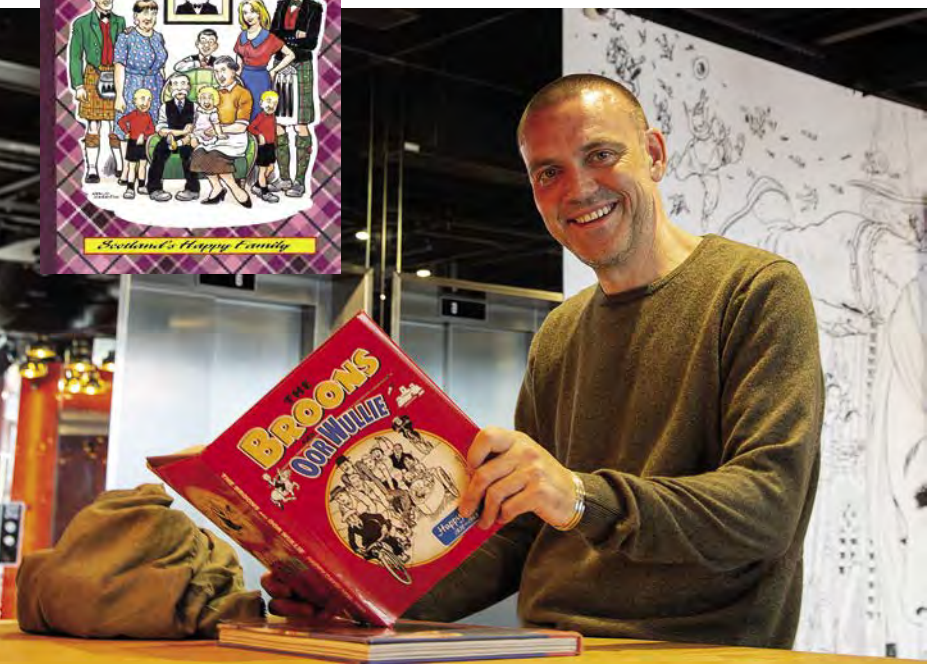
Painting the Hotel 'RED'

Frank Quitely's artwork shows up in a most unexpected place: a big city hotel!

Above: *Frank Quitely's first work appeared in the Glasgow alternative comic book,* Electric Soup*, which featured his irreverent parody of the long-running Scottish newspaper comic strip,* The Broons.

Below: *Cover of a* Broons *collection. Quitely posing with* The Broons and Oor Wullie, Happy Days 1936-1969 *[2008] in the Radisson RED hotel lobby.*





by ROBERT MENZIES

[*Our U.K. correspondent, Robert Menzies, has interspersed his narrative article with quotes from his interviews with Frank Quitely and associates, as well as some of the interviewer's questions.* — **Y.E.**]

There's something rather wonderful knowing that, when the Radisson Hotel Group were designing their newest boutique property, they head-hunted an artist best known for Superman, Batman, and Judge Dredd. This unexpected project — bringing together a terrific comic book artist with, of all things, a big city hotel — resulted in some incredible art that has, to my continuing astonishment, been little reported, and never in any detail.

Branding the Hotel

According to the hotel's own website, the Radisson Hotel Group's RED hotels are designed to offer guests a "playful twist on conventional hotel stays, offering hangouts with a casual feel, buzzing social scenes and [a] bold design personality."

Color theory is central to their branding. Red is not only a warm color, but also a symbol of passion and love. It is bold, stimulating, and matches the hotel's stated ambition to establish an assertive and confident branding image consciously targeted at millennials (generally those born between the early 1980s and mid-'90s), although, in practice, the demographic of the hotel patrons is far broader.

The Glasgow, Scotland, establishment is one of five RED hotels and it first welcomed guests in Spring, 2018, and is a £40 million ($51¼ million U.S.), ten-story, newly built hotel located on the north bank of the River Clyde. Hotel "curator" at the time of my visit Michael Weston said, "Glasgow has such a vibrant music, art, and fashion scene. With everything that is going on, and the evolution of the city, really, it was the ideal choice to place it here."

Interestingly, art is professed to be integral to the RED experience. Each hotel has been designed to have its own unique artistic personality. Rooms are referred to as studios, the general manager is known as curator, and the hotel blog has an "artist of the month" feature. It is that appeal that connects the Glasgow's Radisson RED to one of the city's foremost artists: Frank Quitely.

The heART of Frank Quitely

Born in early 1968, Quitely is a native of Rutherglen, a town about four miles southeast of Glasgow's city center. While on paper Quitely is ironically too old to fall within the hotel's main target demographic, he doesn't at all look anything like his 50 years. Slim with closely cropped dark hair, he has avoided all the curses of middle-age with the minor concession of his stubble sporting some gray about the chin. His clothing is anonymous: jeans and a plain, unbranded jumper. Throughout our interactions I got the strong impression that he is a glass half full type of person.

Quitely was once Vincent Deighan, and is still known to his family and friends as Vinnie or Vin. As a child and teenager, he wasn't immersed in super-hero comics or British weekly *2000AD*, which came to him relatively late. What he did get his attention at a young age was *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie* (that's "The Browns" and "Our Willie," with a Scottish accent), iconic *Sunday Post* newspaper comic strips continuously published since 1936. Both popular features were co-created and drawn by legendary cartoonist Dudley D. Watkins [1907–69].

Quitely: Watkins died around the time I was born, but it took DC Thomson years to find a replacement for him. So, for seven years, they just used reprints of Watkins' material and I grew up reading [that] stuff. I loved the way he did pensioners [seniors], whether they were posh old ladies or hard old men.

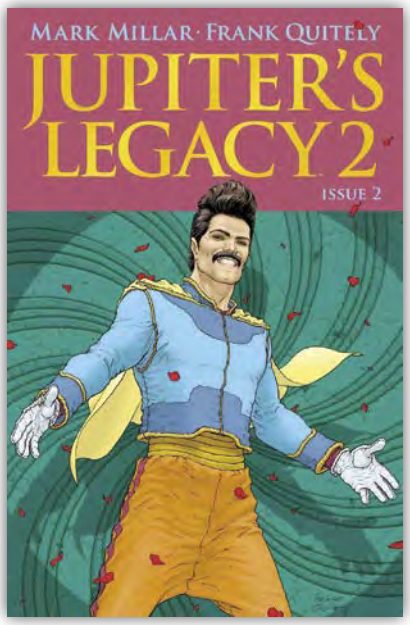
In the 1980s, Quitely attended the world-famous Glasgow School of Art (as did Watkins) and cut his teeth on *Electric Soup* — subtitled "Scotland's Adult Humour Comic" — an anarchic Scotch version of England's *Viz* comic, infamous for its vulgarity and satirical, taboo-busting humor. It was here, drawing a spoof of *The Broons* called "The Greens," where Deighan became Frank Quitely, a play on the phrase, "Quite frankly, this is rude." While the pseudonym was partly to avoid endangering his unemployment benefit payments, it was mainly a ploy to avoid upsetting his family, his mum especially, lest they see the adult material he was creating and appearing therein.

Jump forward to the 1990s and '00s, and Quitely is now landing plum gigs illustrating some of mainstream comics heavy hitters – Superman, Batman, the X-Men, and Judge Dredd. And yet, regardless of the fantastical settings, there's always a tangible verisimilitude to his work: his characters exude gravity, his buildings cast shadows. His art is so detailed and intricate that when it was enlarged to garage door-sized dimensions for his expansive 2017 exhibition in Glasgow's beloved Kelvingrove Art Gallery and

Museum, it looked like it had been created to be viewed at that size.

Success has not severed, or even loosened, his ties to home: he still lives in Glasgow's suburbs, and works from a city centre studio a couple of minutes from the old *Electric Soup* HQ. His most regular and successful collaborations have been with fellow Glaswegians Mark Millar and Grant Morrison. Quitely's roots here are deep and the suggestion that he'll ever leave the city seems a laughable fantasy. I wonder if it's even occurred to him.

There has been surprisingly little reporting of this ambitious hotel art project, even in the U.K., where Quitely has, for a comic book artist, a relatively high profile, so this is the first in-depth look at this delightful project. Photographer Mike Best and I spoke with both Quitely and former curator Michael Weston in the hotel's ground floor restaurant before we took a tour.



Menzies: *Frank, I'd like to know how and why you were approached for this project. In a press interview you said that Jim Hamilton of Graven Images, Radisson RED's local design contractor, saw your work at the Kelvingrove exhibition. Was that his first exposure to your art or did he attend already considering you for this project?*

Quitely: As far as I remember, Jim had seen the *What Do Artists Do All Day?* program on the BBC [first broadcast March 2014] and he thought, "I could use that guy for something at some point". I don't know if I crossed his mind again until the exhibition came up, but he goes to a lot… and he went to my Kelvingrove exhibition with his son, who's really into comics, and he saw my work again….

When Jim approached me, I was interested immediately. We had a talk about the fact there were only four RED hotels so far. We looked at them online, and we talked about the pattern where in each city they use a local artist or artists to decorate their hotel. I wasn't territorial about it being a Glaswegian who did it; it was just "I'm from here, somebody is building a hotel here..."

In the past Quitely had decorated restaurants with murals, but this was on an entirely different scale and much more complicated. The hotel has 174 "studios"— i.e., hotel rooms — albeit with repeating imagery. I wondered if that had been intimidating and how the timing was for him workwise.

Quitely: It was a big project. As is quite common for me, I underestimated the amount of work that would be involved. [*laughs*]

Weston: While it looks like a relatively uniform building from the outside, the room types vary. Where a wardrobe is placed could affect whether one room has a very long wall. There are effectively 11 different styles of room that had to be accommodated.

Quitely: The way I went about that was after submitting roughs and having conversations with Jim at Graven Images, I made a [virtual canvas] that was about 11 meters [36 feet] long. I worked the background out digitally and then I decided I would keep the background, mid-ground, foreground, and extreme foreground characters in separate layers, so I drew out my rough under drawing, printed out on sheets of A3 [11" x 16.5" sheets] in cyan, and then did all the line work on that. I then scanned all the drawings in and built a file that was effectively 11 meters long with all the different people in different layers. Which meant that if I had a four meters [13 feet] long wall and the door is on the left and the mirror is on the right, you can rearrange elements…

I gave Graven Images an open file with all the images. I set the composition up based on how I thought it's going to work in the room, and left the layers open, so they could move things slightly if they had a mirror which previously hadn't been on the design. For the ground level, we have an L-shaped wall at the elevators, a long wall with the booths, and a frieze around the top of the deli bar. Like with the rooms, I was given the architect's plans but, in a way, although there was more drawing for the downstairs area, it was actually easier insofar as I supplied it flat, in one layer. There were several different files for each of the areas but in a way it was a slightly simpler process.

Above: *In 2017, the art of Frank Quitely was exhibited at Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Because a design contractor had seen the Scot artist's work here, Frank was hired to produce illustrations for the Radisson hotel's interior design.*

Below and inset left: *While his exhibit was on display at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, in 2017, artist Frank Quitely was striving to finish the artwork on writer Mark Millar and his* Jupiter's Legacy 2 *mini-series. A Netflix adaptation of the creator-owned concept is set to stream this year.*

The Dra

Wherein Virtuoso Artist P. Craig Russell Discusses

It was a bright, brisk Sunday in mid-November when I visited Philip Craig Russell's charming and cozy home in Kent, Ohio, an abode smack-dab up against the town's fabled campus. His looked to be the only house on Craig's side of the street, testament, he subsequently confessed, of his refusal to sell the place to an ever-expanding Kent State University as had so many neighbors. Decades ago, the artist had come to town to teach a class and still he remains determined as ever to keep that stay permanent, living alone in the gorgeously-sunlit domicile (as much an art gallery as home). But, by all indications, Craig doesn't appear lonely, as, for one, he regularly hosts dinner parties — there was one planned for me as honored guest that very evening —

P. Craig Russell portrait © Greg Preston.

Interview Conducted by Jon B. Cooke

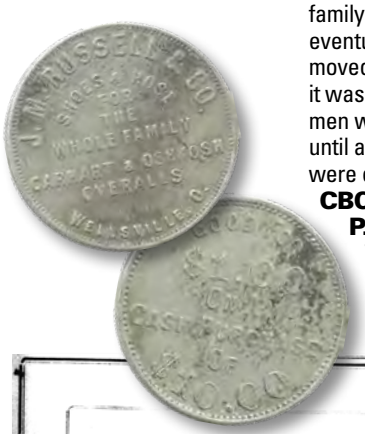
making

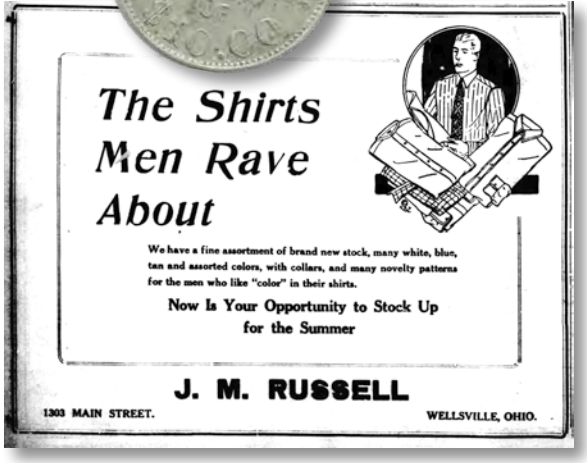
His Stunning Achievements in American Comics

plus he has a regular crew of pals working on his comics, some who were invited to the repast. I had long wanted to interview Craig in his environs, hugely impressed as I have been with his phenomenal growth as an artist and by the utterly unique trail he has blazed as a comics pro. Starting off as a Marvel artist in the early '70s, Craig soon refined his work well beyond superheroes to focus on, of all things, comic-book adaptations of the world's greatest operas, as well as the works of Wilde and Kipling. Today he is recognized for multiple collaborations with Neil Gaiman — notably on what Craig considers his most renowned work, *Sandman* #50 — and the artist recently saw published his comics version of the renowned young adult novel, *The Giver.*

Transcription by Rose Rummel-Fury • Portrait by Greg Preston

Above: *Looking to be from the late 1940s/early '50s, a postcard of Main Street, in Wellsville, Ohio, where P. Craig Russell's family clothing store was located. J.M. Russell and Co. was established in 1892.* **Previous spread:** *Greg Preston's great portrait of P. Craig Russell at his drawing table, in Kent, Ohio, was taken on July 14, 2014, and it appeared in Greg's book,* The Artist Within: Book 2. **Inset above:** *Map and call-out indicating P. Craig Russell's hometown, located near the border connecting Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.* **Below:** *Discount tokens and a newspaper display ad from the* East Liverpool Evening Review *newspaper, June 25, 1926, promoting J.M. Russell and Co. clothing store, Wellsville, Ohio.*





Comic Book Creator: *You're originally from Ohio, Craig?*

P. Craig Russell: Yes, the upper Ohio River Valley, right across from the tip of the panhandle of West Virginia, so in the tri-state area of Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

CBC: *Was it rural?*

P. Craig: Well, it was both. When you get in the Ohio River Valley, it was very industrial. There were steel mills and potteries, but now those are all gone. It's a very depressed area now, but it was a busy small town with 5,000 people or so, and it was a long stretch, about three miles long and six blocks wide, so it was a narrow town. There was the river, the railroad, the town, and the hills. The houses are built right next to each other like a lot of towns there. Just like Pittsburgh.

CBC: *Did you live downtown?*

P. Craig: No, it was a neighborhood area. Downtown was just one street, Main Street. That was uptown. Downtown was where you lived in the residences and it was more exciting for you to go uptown, where everything was happening.

CBC: *What did your dad do?*

P. Craig: He had a clothing store that had been in our family since 1892, called J. M. Russell and Company, and eventually it became my father's store and he eventually moved it uptown, which was a big deal in the '20s, because it was right across from the railroad yards and all those men would come across for shoes and clothes. He had that until around 1980, and my mom worked there too, after we were out of grade school.

CBC: *Do you have any siblings?*

P. Craig: An older brother by four years. He lives in Virginia Beach and was in radio and TV, and worked down in Steubenville, Ohio, for a number of years, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and ended up in Virginia Beach, working for Pat Robertson. Regent University, *700 Club*…

CBC: *Is he evangelical?*

P. Craig: I don't know that you'd call him evangelical. Christian certainly, very involved in that, although he said when he'd see Pat Robertson coming down the hall, he'd dart into another room.

CBC: *Why?*

P. Craig: He's kind of a scary guy! [*Jon chuckles*] I got inside on a Sunday afternoon when the place was deserted, back sometime in the '80s or '90s and I was in the inner sanctum of Pat Robertson, and there was Gilbert Stuart painting of George Washington.

CBC: *An original?*

P. Craig: There were a couple. There was money, a *lot* of money. That was the difference between him and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker: Jim and Tammy Faye would have a painting of the Last Supper on black velvet. Robertson had incredible art around there. You could smell the money. He had some taste.

CBC: *Your brother had kids?*

P. Craig: Yes, two girls and a boy.

CBC: *What were your mom's interests?*

P. Craig: Before she met my dad, she was an executive secretary, someone who knew where everything was and was one of the most *efficient* women in the world! She worked for a Mr. Wells, who was big money in the Newell, West Virginia/East Liverpool, Ohio area. They had bridges and potteries, and all that. She was his secretary. He wrote a letter to my father after World War II, when they got married, and sort of congratulated him, but said, "You've taken the best secretary I've ever had, you dog!" [*laughter*] Almost like 19th century grace.

CBC: *He saved the letter?*

P. Craig: My mom did. I don't where it is now. I remember reading it. Then she was a '50s housewife raising the kids.

CBC: *Middle class?*

P. Craig: For Wellsville, we were middle class. There was a time when it was really hand-to-mouth for a few years. Everything had changed, so the old Russell store was going out of business, because it was in a rough section of Main Street, and there was nothing going on there anymore. He moved it uptown and cut it down to a shoe store. It wasn't enough. It was about four years he had that little store.

CBC: *When was that?*

P. Craig: Early '60s. My brother and I had savings accounts. If you got $5 from your grandma at Christmas, it went into the savings account. I had about $105 and my brother, being older, had about $140 or something like that. My father took us aside once and said, "Boys, I'm going to have to use that money from your savings accounts." Each account was in my name and my brother's name, respectively, but also in our father's name, though it wasn't like he was didn't trust us and thought we would raid our accounts! We would have to have dad with us to withdraw. He was right up front about it. He said he would lay awake at night wondering how he was going to pay the bills. He had to buy the shoes before he could sell them.

CBC: *He was that candid with you?*

P. Craig: Oh, yeah. He was always candid. When he'd

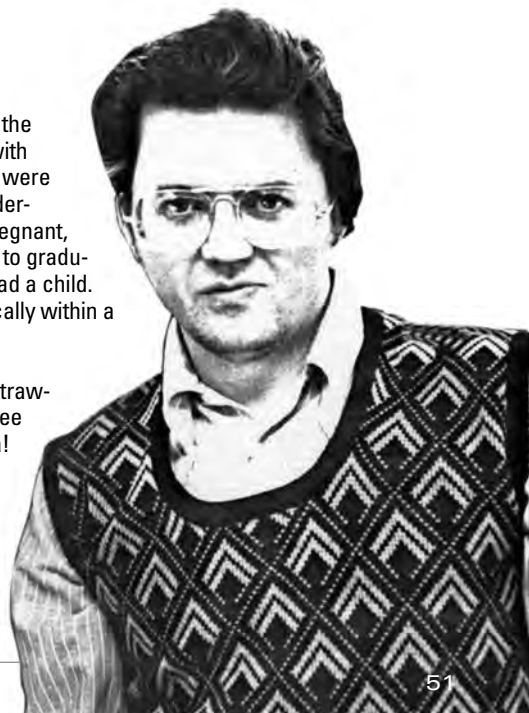
to this day?
P. Craig: Well, I'm talking about it, aren't I? [*chuckles*] So, yeah.
CBC: *"He says with a laugh." Wow. Was it a happy household?*
P. Craig: It was. I had a friend across the street, Cheryl, and I never knew a time when she wasn't there. She was always at the house and she said, "We thought of your parents as Ozzie and Harriet." My mom kept a meticulous house — always clean and neat — and dinner at 5:30 every day when my dad got home. It was very Norman Rockwell from the looks of it, although Rockwell was more upper class in his paintings and ours was more like *A Christmas Story* set in the '30s. We look at that movie and say, "That's our carpet!" Our house was like that, though a little more modern. I would call it a happy house.
CBC: *I've never asked you this — and correct me if I'm wrong — you're gay?*
P. Craig: Yes.
CBC: *Did your parents have any reaction when they found out? Was it a revelation for you?*
P. Craig: No. It wasn't a revelation.
CBC: *You always knew it?*
P. Craig: Yes.
CBC: *Did you have to announce it?*
P. Craig: No, no. It was just never discussed. Once my mom was going through jewelry and had some nice rings, one was from my dad's mother when she died. She had some big piece of ice and they drew lots between the aunts. She got it and she had some nice rings. She had her daughter-in-law and the granddaughters. She was going through them with me and said, "I guess you're never going to need any of these." I said, "No."
CBC: *How old were you?*
P. Craig: I was in my 20s. Maybe I was 30 or something. I said, "No, give them to the girls," her grandchildren. She did give me her father's diamond tie-pin though. So I was covered.
CBC: *Was it a small town you wanted to get out of?*
P. Craig: Not really. I had such a good time there in my last years of high school. I was so busy. Once I got to college, it was, "Great!" This was a new thing and I was happy to move on. My junior and senior years in high school sort of laid the groundwork for everything because I was asked to be the chairman of the decorating committee for the prom and post-prom when I was a junior. From that, I became the class artist, who did the illustrations for the yearbook, the newspaper, all the set designs for the plays — the giant backdrop paintings for all the dances. I had people working for me showing up at the house every night.

We had a large house because it was a duplex. When I was a child, the upstairs was rented out to others, but once we got the big store, then we took over the whole house and I lived upstairs. I had those rooms, all like art rooms, with a dozen kids coming in with paintings hanging all over the walls. I was *busy!* I was doing all this stuff and was delegating people to paint parts of stuff. That's why I decided to go to college in art rather than in music. I was as busy doing recitals as I was drawing pictures. I had to finally come to a decision. I thought this was so much fun because of all of this social activity. Then I get this career where I spent 98% of my time at the drawing board by myself, which is the most unsocial thing possible! But I think it was that social play that helped me decide to go into art.
CBC: *How big was your class?*
P. Craig: Graduating was about 125.
CBC: *Everyone knew about your art?*
P. Craig: Oh, yeah. I was class artist. The index in the yearbook had the clubs that everyone belonged to. My resume was like half the page, by far the longest one. I had a great time. Before that, junior high was horrible and freshman and sophomore years weren't much better, but once I found my art, it was so *much* better. I had so many friends.

CBC: *What about your sexual identity in a solidly heterosexual environment?*
P. Craig: It wasn't even a question. I had girlfriends and dates.
CBC: *So you went through the motions?*
P. Craig: You know, I had a girlfriend for a couple of years and had a sexual relationship… more than one. Then you think, "Marriage?" Then, it would be, "Uh, no." Then you get to college and the world opens up and you're not just cluelessly following the river's flow.
CBC: *Right. Did you go back to high school reunions?*
P. Craig: Oh yes. I was just at our 50th reunion last summer and I go every five years. Wellsville has a five-year reunion and, no matter what year you graduated, you are welcomed back. The town is packed and they have parades that last all week. I maintained contact with my friends through all the years and now there's Facebook. We're connecting almost every day.
CBC: *So, you are fondly recalled?*
P. Craig: Yeah.
CBC: *No bullying, no jocks.*
P. Craig: No. There were cliques, but, at the end of high school, everyone sort of fit in with everyone. I didn't see bullying and, if there were drugs (and there was a little), it was so underground. This was an era that if a girl got pregnant, she just disappeared. You weren't allowed to graduate with the class if you were married or had a child. I graduated in 1969. It changed pretty radically within a couple of years.
CBC: *A seismic change!*
P. Craig: Our theme for the prom was "Strawberry Fields Forever," and we did these three giant paintings that were pure psychedelia! The adults thought it was cute.
CBC: *Peter Max.*
P. Craig: I loved Peter Max and I was doing posters in the style of that.
CBC: *"Sock it to me!"*
P. Craig: One thing had "sock it to me" on it!

Above: *Young P. Craig Russell circa 1976. Photographer Sam Maronie says these were taken either at the Creation Con or Marvel convention that year.*

Below: *Dan Adkins, who took on P. Craig Russell as a protégé in the early 1970s, when the Western Pennsylvanian artist has his own shop catering to Marvel. During that period, Paul Gulacy and Val Mayerik were a part of the team.*



Above: *Craig penciled the lead story in* Chamber of Chills *#1 [Nov. 1972], where he audaciously ignored the writer's directive. Inks by Dan Adkins.* **Below:** *Detail of* Amazing Adventures *#30 cover.* **Inset right:** *Panel from PCR's* Marvel Feature *#10 [July '73] work.*

CBC: *"Flower power."*

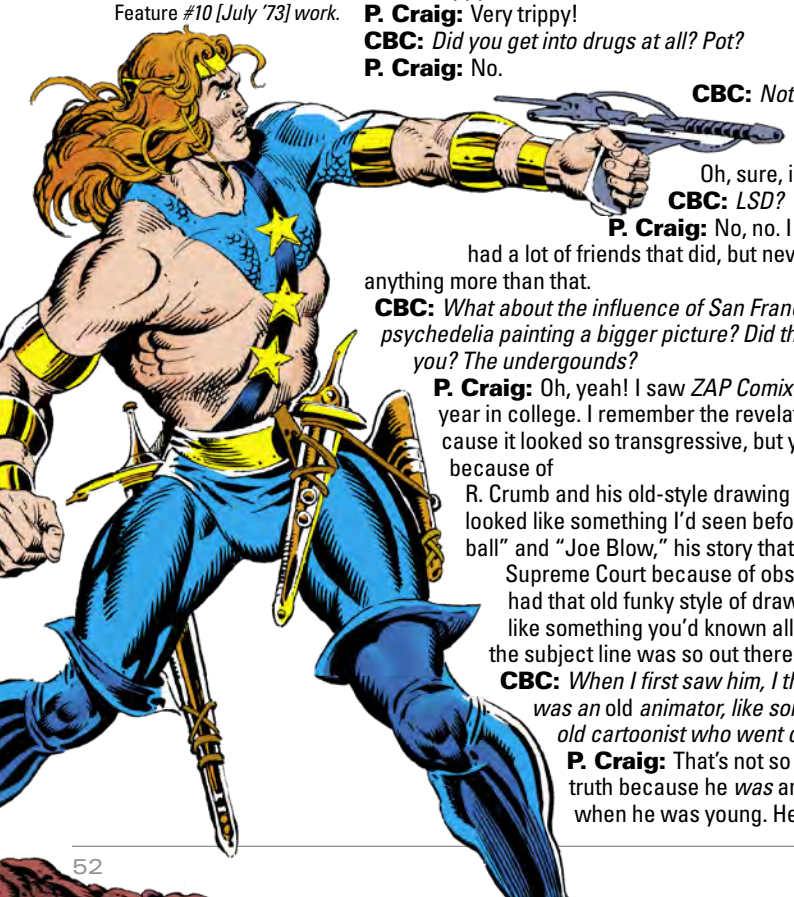
P. Craig: And one had "flower power." We had hundreds of giant flowers cut out and pasted all over the gym and little red footprints ... I remember Jonie Trainer, who I took to the prom both years, cutting out these little feet from construction paper and we pasted these little feet all over the entire gym, across the paintings and up the walls.

CBC: *Trippy!*

P. Craig: Very trippy!

CBC: *Did you get into drugs at all? Pot?*

P. Craig: No.



CBC: *Not even in college?*

P. Craig: Oh, sure, in college.

CBC: *LSD?*

P. Craig: No, no. I certainly had a lot of friends that did, but never went into anything more than that.

CBC: *What about the influence of San Francisco and psychedelia painting a bigger picture? Did that appeal to you? The undergounds?*

P. Craig: Oh, yeah! I saw *ZAP Comix* my freshman year in college. I remember the revelation of it because it looked so transgressive, but yet so familiar, because of R. Crumb and his old-style drawing influences. It looked like something I'd seen before: "Meatball" and "Joe Blow," his story that went to the Supreme Court because of obscenity. He had that old funky style of drawing. It looked like something you'd known all your life, yet the subject line was so out there.

CBC: *When I first saw him, I thought he was an* old *animator, like some 60-year old cartoonist who went off the rails…*

P. Craig: That's not so far from the truth because he *was* an old man when he was young. He didn't identify with the hippies at all, from what I know. They adored him. But, like Woody Allen, he was very much into the '20s and '30s. He didn't like rock 'n' roll or any of that.

CBC: *There were major things going on in the music world — huge changes between 1962 to 1970, for instance. What was music like for you?*

P. Craig: I was there for The Beatles and loved them.

CBC: *Did you see them on* The Ed Sullivan Show*?*

P. Craig: Oh, yeah! I remember going to school the next day and everyone was talking about it. I was in the seventh grade. Everybody had seen it and was talking about it. The Stones were too rough for me, but I loved The Beatles, and Peter, Paul, and Mary, and Simon & Garfunkel. I wasn't into heavy metal or anything like that. I got to college and was exposed to a lot more. I love all of that from the '60s, '70s, and into the '80s, and then I fell off, but that was secondary.

It was all about classical music for me since I was a little kid. I had this little yellow record that had four songs on it. They were children's songs, but set to classical music: Offenbach's "Barcarolle," Dvorak's "Humoresques"… different pieces like that. *The Tortoise and the Hare* was set to "Humoresques." There is music that goes into a major to a minor key — and I didn't know "major" or "minor" keys, but when it happened, I thought, "Oh, this is scary. I like it." It was like seeing a Disney villain. I liked seeing the scary parts. That minor key and how it made it more dramatic and then went into a major key for a happy resolution. So, I had an ear for that and started taking piano lessons in the fifth grade and would make Beethoven recordings for Christmas presents.

CBC: *You were taking lessons and excited about it?*

P. Craig: Oh, yeah.

CBC: [Chuckles] *Oh, you were the one.*

P. Craig: I started in February and the recital was in May and I hadn't progressed enough to be in the recital and was so disappointed and had to wait until sixth grade the next year. Jean Fogo Campbell had a shtick. She had old lady blue hair, chiffon scarves, and she called her piano, "My house," and my piano, "Your house." She'd say, "Now go to your house and play this." She was a hoot. She would always have a theme. This year, she gave everyone a piece of Manila paper and you had to draw an interpretation of the piece you were playing. My piece was called "Rhapsody in Scale." I drew a picture of a man sitting at a piano like this. [*gestures image*] That's what my picture was all about: me playing it! [*laughter*]

CBC: *I never knew this about you. You had a performer in you always?*

P. Craig: You didn't have to ask me to play twice! I wasn't the shy kid who didn't want to. Yeah, I was a performer. My brother was very quiet and a dry sense of humor, but I was the one that was the yacky-yacky-yacka.

CBC: *Did you go to church?*

P. Craig: Oh, yeah. Every Sunday.

CBC: *Were you involved in Christmas pageants?*

"Moon of Madness, Moon of Fear," Killraven, Ant-Man, and Wasp TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

CBC: *Where were you living?*
P. Craig: Nowhere! I'd been out beyond Flatbush with Duffy Vohland, where you had to a bus to get to the subway, and then I moved into a sublet from Alan Kupperberg in Brooklyn, then into Manhattan Spanish Harlem. I remember drawing part of it in a loft down in SoHo, in a loft of a guy who taught at Cincinnati. I was living out of a suitcase for a while until I found an apartment. I was drawing "Morbius, the Living Vampire." When you're starting, you do whatever they tell you. They said, "Do you want to do 'War of the Worlds'? Here it is if you want it." "Well, yeah." That's when I met Don and we just clicked. I wanted to work with someone who really wanted to *do* something and none of the writers… I just wasn't getting that feeling from it. It was just sort of journeyman work. There wasn't this personal connection. With Don, there was just a connection. It wasn't our personalities — I was very quiet, shy almost.
CBC: *I remember you from the conventions being shy.*
P. Craig: Which ones?
CBC: *Phil Seuling's New York Comic Art Conventions.*
P. Craig: So Don was really running interference.
CBC: *He was* not *shy!*
P. Craig: No, he was *not*. Any problems we had always had to do with the subject matter and the writing, that's where all the fighting took place — not the art.
CBC: *Describe the fights.*
P. Craig: I don't recall. From Don describing it to them saying, "You can't do that," for different things. He'd be the one to ask.
CBC: *Oh, you mean the fights with editorial. Not with you two, but the bullpen?*
P. Craig: Oh, no! With us it was smooth sailing. No problem at all.
CBC: *Did you have affection for him?*
P. Craig: Oh, sure. Yeah! Don was a great friend and the *energy* of this man… we really clicked with yin/yang sort of way. At that early stage, yes, you need criticism, but you also need affirmation. I would bring in stuff and he'd start bouncing up and down in his chair at an expression I did, "This is just *great!* This is just *Wow! Wow!*" That makes you want to do better next time, "Wait until you see what I do next!" He would point to an expression on Old Skull's face and just be gleeful. It was so rewarding.
CBC: *How did he handle if he needed something changed? Was he gentle about that?*
P. Craig: I don't think he ever asked for any changes.
CBC: *Did you ever work with Archie Goodwin at all?*
P. Craig: Yes, but, not in a creative way. He was editor at Epic, so there was that interaction there. Actually, the one page in the "Death in the Family" where the rocks slide and I told you we worked Marvel style — he gave me a synopsis, not the final script — he wrote the final script after I drew the pages, he looked at this and it was a multi-panel page of ten or twelve panels, going in a rhythm from very small panels to larger, to larger as this giant rock slides on the Grok and the Indian, and ends with a third of a page of pile of rocks with smoke and dust. He looked at that and said, "It doesn't need any words," and Don McGregor left a silent page.
CBC: *For those of you at home: Don McGregor is known to be verbose and somewhat liberal with his words!*
P. Craig: I labored on that page and the storytelling. Don and I went to a lot of movies together. I didn't hang out with a lot of them like a lot of them do on a regular basis. I had a whole circle of friends from Julliard School of Music. Everyone I lived with were musicians and a lot of avant-garde, modern classical musicians. That was sort of my social circle. Though I did interact with a few, like John David

The Drinking Song of Earth's Sorrow
Night Music #1

The Insomniac
Night Music #2

Unto this World
Night Music #1

Jungle Book: The King's Ankus
Night Music #3

Eine Heldentraum
Epic Illustrated #33

P. Craig: On the phone, when he called me about *Sandman* #50. I don't recall exactly our first meeting. He was living out in the country in Minnesota in this huge, old Victorian farmhouse and I spent a weekend up there.

CBC: *What did you think of him?*

P. Craig: One of the nicest guys you've ever meet. Sweet, unassuming. Then, we were on that Comics Defense Legal Fund cruise with Will Eisner, Neal Adams, Jill Thompson, Jeff Smith, Gary Groth, Evan Dorkin, Neal, Frank Miller… a lot of us, down to Puerto Vallarta, and a hundred fans who booked to be on the cruise. A comic convention on the high seas.

CBC: *Did you click? Is he a genuine friend?*

P. Craig: Yes. I still have a number of recordings because he said he could never seem to get me on the phone. We would talk on the phone. This was when I had an answering machine. I have several years of tapes, of conversations, or just messages.

CBC: *Monologues…*

P. Craig: Yes, and if you don't pick up quick enough, it would just click on. I have conversations with my parents who have both passed on now and different people. He left so many messages, I thought, "Jeez, I could put these on a single disc and sell them at comic book conventions — Messages from Chairman Neil." [*chuckles*]

CBC: *What is it about his writing that separates him?*

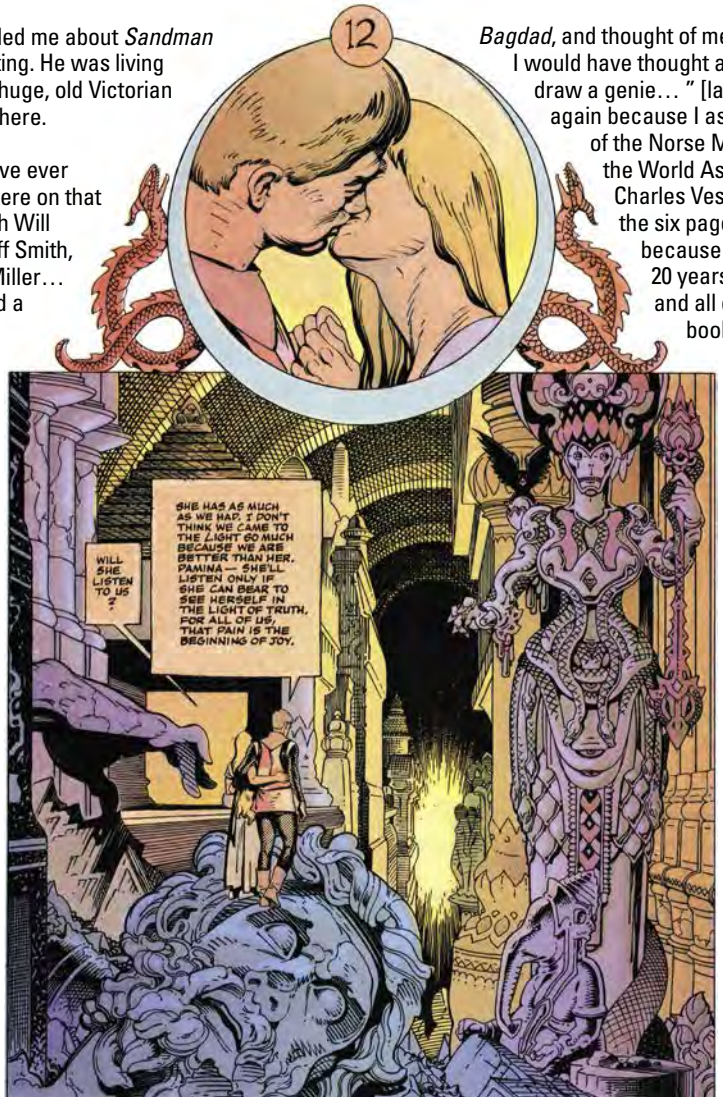
P. Craig: From what?

CBC: *The other comic book writers.*

P. Craig: It's so damn good, that's all. They're wonderful stories, compelling, the subject matter appeals to me, at least the stories I've done with him. There have been a couple modern, *Murder Mysteries,* one-half was set in Los Angeles and the other half in heaven, the origin of the universe. *One Life, Furnished in Early Moorcock,* a fairly modern piece, a thinly veiled story of his school days and reading Michael Moorcock as a 12-year-old and devouring that stuff — a writer writing about a writer. Most of it has been mythological — *Dream Hunters.* No, *Coraline* was very much in the modern world — appliances in the kitchen and cars and streets. There was more difficult in a way for me to draw. How many ways can you do a refrigerator? She's actually looking into the refrigerator — it's part of the story, and that's not a lot of fun to draw. It's a lot of fun to tell the story and lay it out.

CBC: *Does he write to you? "I'm writing a Craig Russell story he will draw."*

P. Craig: Only for *Sandman* #50. When we were on the phone, he talks about "casting." He thinks about the best artist for the job. He saw *Thief of Bagdad*, and thought of me. He said, "Now, if I'd had a genie, I would have thought about Charles Vess. I thought, "I can draw a genie… " [laughter] Charles Vess sort of came up again because I asked him if he'd do the first six pages of the Norse Mythology book because it opens with the World Ash Tree and who does trees best but Charles Vess? So, he considered it. I sent him the six pages of layouts and then he demurred because he'd done almost the same scene 20 years ago with the norns and the trees and all of this. I offered it to Kaluta, who was booked, so I decided to do it myself. I had the shadow of Charles Vess hanging over me every time I worked on this tree, which… if you'll hold for a second… [*retrieves original art page*] there's the tree. That's actually the second time I've had to draw that tree, because the first scene of *The Ring of the Nibelung* opens with the Ash Tree and the three norns. So I had to come up with a completely kind of tree and completely different kind of norns.



CBC: *You had your own kind of challenge. Have you ever worked with Alan Moore?*

P. Craig: No, there was talk of working on *Promethea* and I was approached through an intermediary. I actually sent him a box of books I had done in case he hadn't seen everything. I wasn't really interested in doing *Promethea*. But, I would like to do something like a Doctor Strange character.

In retrospect, as great a respect as I have for his writing, I also know his scripts. I think it would've taken all the fun out of it for me. You've seen the great details for every panel and the minutiae describing everything that's in it… that would take all the fun because I like telling the story. He's done everything but draw the pictures. I don't think it would have been a happy marriage.

Neil has written two stories for me: *Sandman* and then "Death and Venice." All original scripts. All the other projects… almost a dozen, I get to work with his prose and write the script and decide what the pictures are and how many panels on the page and that's what I really like doing. I'm meticulously faithful to the author — the themes, the ideas, the dialogue — once in a while because I've chopped out things — I have to write some original dialogue, but it's only three or four words, because I don't want to jeopardize his writing, but sometimes I have to do some connective tissue.

To get back to the quality of his writing: it's so lovely and the stories are so good, it's hard to decide what to cut, because you don't want to. I tend to put too much in and want to put everything in. And I could, if I had a thousand pages to do it. I've found, not just with Neil but with other writers, they'll have enough in a panel or a short paragraph like the last paragraph

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Norse Mythology #1–18

leave me to do it.
CBC: *You understand Gil Kane. A lot of people don't "get" Gil, but you do. You took a nice lesson from him, in a sense. I love his stuff, but he didn't love his stuff enough. He always thought he was limited.*
P. Craig: We all are in certain ways. I wish he had more of a *poet* in him. There was a Conan story or something where there was a rose at the center of the universe and it was just a rose with a bunch of curvy, crackling energy around it and you think what Windsor-Smith or Charlie Vess would do with a rose at the center of the universe.
CBC: *This is beautiful! Nice.*
P. Craig: This is the story that has the front porch that Tom Batiuk swiped…
CBC: Funky Winkerbean! *Good storytelling. Who's the model?*
P. Craig: Chucky Powell. He was my model for this and the first Siegfried story I did. He's been in a bunch of things.
CBC: *He's a beautiful boy.*
P. Craig: He doesn't look like that now!
CBC: *Yeah, well, none of us do. We were all cute once. I'm looking for the porch, where is it? Steranko there.*
P. Craig: There it is. Tom did a much simplified version, but even then, my dad could recognize it. [*pulls out another Art Edition*] There's the Salomé. Wayne is in the process of scanning everything I've ever done and it's really changed my career. With these Crowdfunding things, one premium, or whatever, is a full illustration for $1,000. I bring out my Sunday best drawings for those and I've done a couple dozen drawings I'd never done if isn't wasn't for the goal of doing this. [*points to a piece*] This one was in *The Comics Journal* music issue. It's the story of Eric Wolfgang Korngold. That was nominated for best original short story, but I was beat out by Katie Mignola for that Hellboy story.
CBC: *Oh, yeah! That was in the early '00s, right? That was a cute little story. Wow, beautiful.*
P. Craig: This we put in because everything is in color and I wanted to show a comparison of this is a two-color book. There's no blue plate, it's all red-and-yellow and no one noticed… partly because you put yellow with gray, it looks green and it's not. Because it was drawn in blue and gray pencil that gives it kind of a bluish sheen to things.
CBC: [Indicates the yellow and brown color motif of P. Craig's living room] *That's your color scheme!*
P. Craig: Oh, yeah! [*chuckles*] It was NBM and they said they didn't have the budget for full color, so I took it as a challenge. "Let's do it in two-color." That's one project you work on and think you've just thrown it down a well. I don't know if anyone saw it much, but maybe because of that, it's one of my favorites, but....

Have you ever seen *Godfather III*? That final 20 minutes I think are prime… I just think they're terrific. That's the golden nugget in that movie. You're watching a production of *Cavalleria rusticana* as he's carrying out this vendetta. You're in the opera box watching as his son is singing and then you're out… that whole thing is almost about the birth of the Mafia. It takes place in Sicily on Easter Day and they — "they," kill Turiddu and throw him down the stairs. It's great in the opera house — so much blood and thunder. You sit there waiting and it's hot and he's crossed them in some way. At the moment the red wine drops, he's murdered behind the wall. You hear a scream off stage and she comes running — they kill Turiddu and they throw him down the steps. She's the fallen woman and the church has turned their backs on her and as the bells ring, she runs to the church and the church closes its doors against her.
CBC: *It's like… well, the drama's in the work, right?*
P. Craig: I suppose!
CBC: *You know. In a way, as a storyteller, which I am in my own way, I'm looking for conflict in the lives of people. I'm not sensing much conflict in your life, for better or worse. Are you happy?*
P. Craig: Yeah, I guess. Depends on what day it is. Some days I am and some I'm not.
CBC: *Are you content?*
P. Craig: I don't know. I really don't. My friend Pat Mason, who I grew up with, he's the happiest person I know, and he was on the faculty at Boulder, Colorado, and said out loud, "You know, I'm a happy man." One of his colleagues sent him a note, "I was *flabbergasted* to hear you say that!" That anyone would say such a thing. But he said, "I'm just happy. I'm a happy man." It's like a shocking thing to say.
CBC: *It is what it is.*
P. Craig: Come out in the kitchen, Jon, and hang out while I prepare dinner.

fin

This page: *Clockwise from top left: PCR and Ye Ed; PCR in his art gallery room; PCR photobombs Michael T. Gilbert and Y.E.; PCR and his extensive Fiesta dinnerware collection; PCR in his wonderfully sunlit dining room; Wayne Alan Harold (left), Y.E., and Gaelin Showman.*

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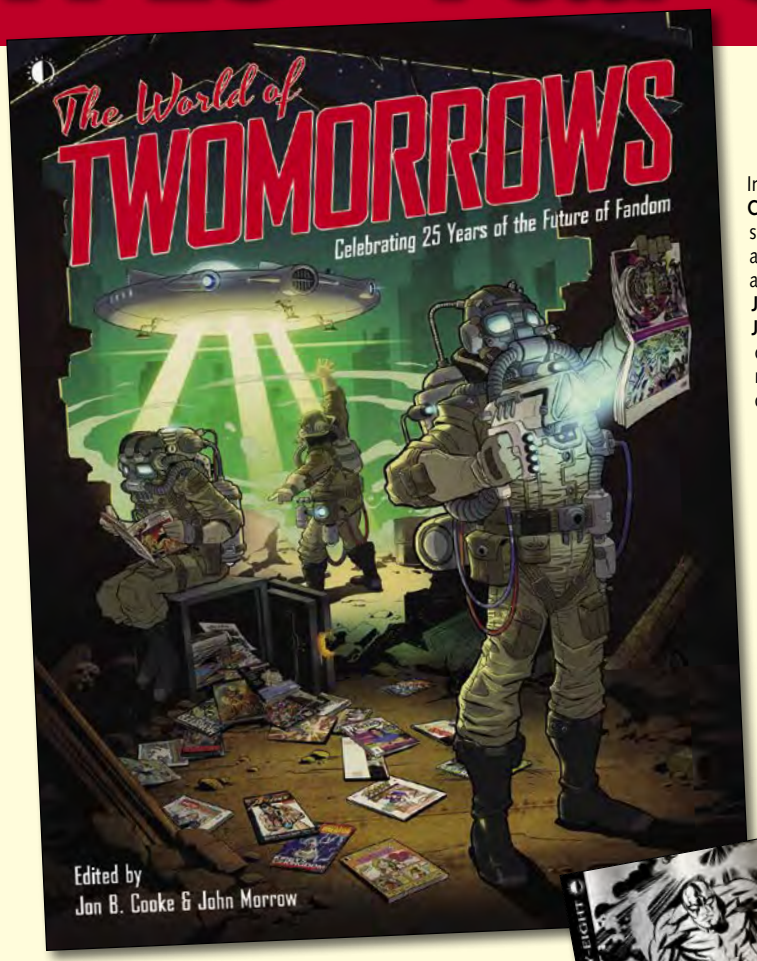

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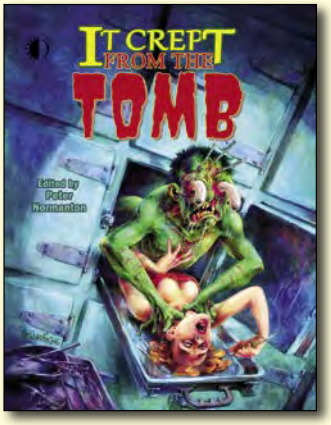

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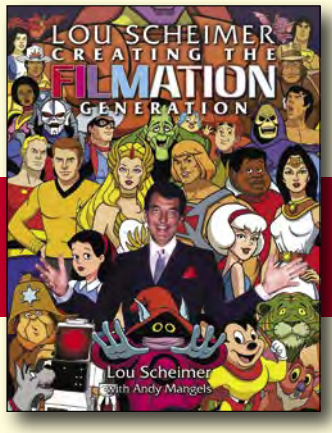

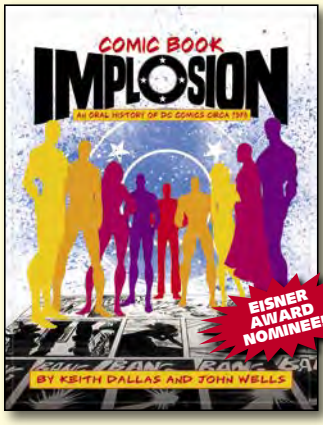

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If you love Pop Culture of the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties, editor MICHAEL EURY's latest magazine is just for you!

RETROFAN #9 (NOW BI-MONTHLY!)

RETROFAN #9 features interviews with two TV superheroes, Seventies' Captain America **REB BROWN**... and Captain Nice (and *Knight Rider*'s KITT) **WILLIAM DANIELS** with wife **BONNIE BARTLETT!** Plus: remembering the Captain Nice TV series, the Wonderful World of Coloring Books, star-studded Fall Previews for Saturday morning cartoons, an eyewitness account of The Cyclops movie, the actors behind your favorite TV commercial characters, Benny Hill's invasion of America, a trip to the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention, 8-track tapes, and more fun, fab features! Featuring columns by **ERNEST FARINO, ANDY MANGELS, SCOTT SAAVEDRA,** and **SCOTT SHAW!** Edited by **MICHAEL EURY.**

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Interviews with MeTV's crazy creepster **SVENGOOLIE** and Eddie Munster himself, **BUTCH PATRICK!** Call on the original Saturday Morning **GHOST BUSTERS**, with **BOB BURNS!** Uncover the nutty **NAUGAS!** Plus: "My Life in the Twilight Zone," "I Was a Teenage James Bond," "My Letters to Famous People," the **ARCHIE-DOBIE GILLIS** connection, Pinball Hall of Fame, Alien action figures, Rubik's Cube & more!

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THE CRAZY, COOL CULTURE WE GREW UP WITH! LOU FERRIGNO interview, **The Phantom** in Hollywood, Filmation's **Star Trek cartoon**, "How I Met **Lon Chaney, Jr.**", goofy comic **Zody the Mod Rob**, Mego's rare **Elastic Hulk** toy, RetroTravel to Mount Airy, NC (the real-life Mayberry), interview with **BETTY LYNN** ("Thelma Lou" of **The Andy Griffith Show**), **TOM STEWART's** eclectic House of Collectibles, and **Mr. Microphone!**

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