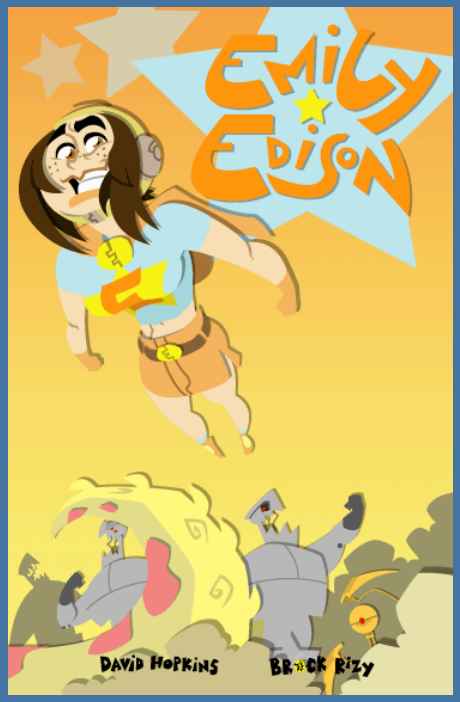
Workshop schedule

20 minutes	How comics operate as a form of visual storytelling
20 minutes	Working with artists, script formats, tips and suggestions
30 minutes	Scripting exercises: Be prepared to write!
10 minutes	Getting published

The value of this workshop

- For comic book writers: Learn the basics of comic book scripting, tips and suggestions
- Storytellers in any medium: Understand how visual narratives operate and affect an audience
- Writers and teachers: Use the exercises to challenge your ability to translate images into words.

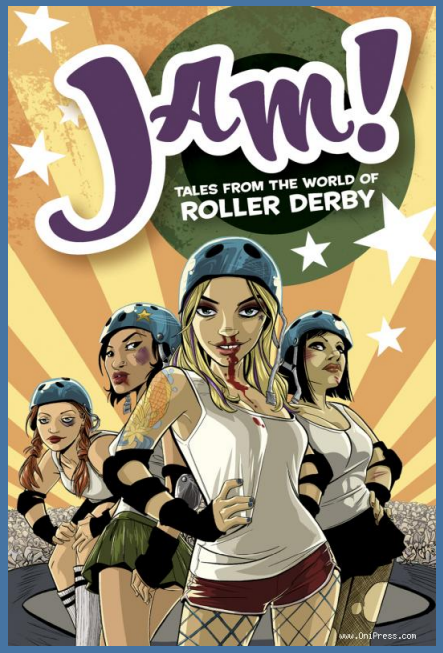
David Hopkins & Brent Schoonover
Astronaut Dad
VOL. 1

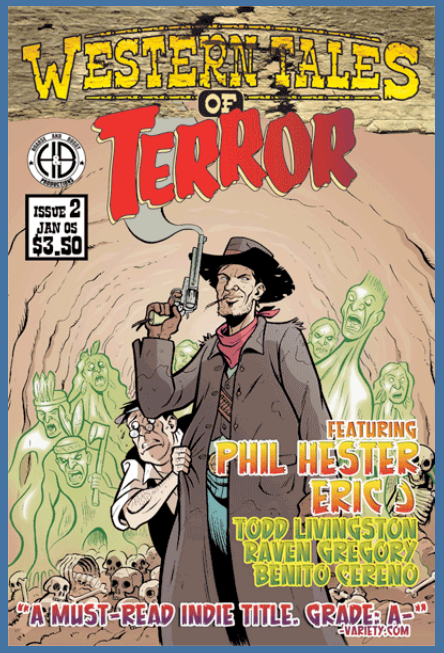

Emily Edison
DAVID HOPKINS
BROCK RIZY

popgun
volume three

KARMA INCORPORATED
issue three
hopkins • kurzanski • hall

the Tick


Jam!
TALES FROM THE WORLD OF
ROLLER DERBY


WESTERN TALES OF TERROR
ISSUE 2
JAN 05
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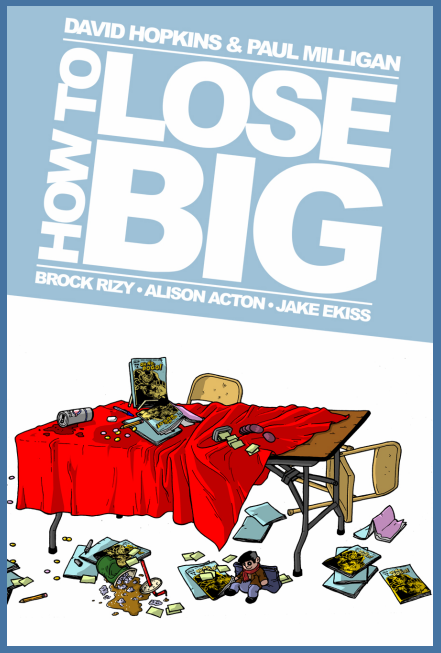
FEATURING
PHIL HESTER
ERIC J
TODD LIVINGSTON
RAVEN GREGORY
BENITO CERENO
"A MUST-READ INDIE TITLE. GRADE: A-"
-VARIETY.COM


DAVID HOPKINS & PAUL MILLIGAN
HOW TO LOSE BIG
BROCK RIZY • ALISON ACTON • JAKE EKISS

How comics operate as a form of visual storytelling

"It's easy to joke and say that part of the reason visual storytelling is such a trendy thing is that people are becoming less and less literate. That might be true in a very strict sense, but the way people process information is constantly evolving, and comics is a language whose expressive potential has only begun to be tapped."

Alison Bechdel, writer/artist of *Fun Home*

How comics operate?

- Images and words in a sequence to tell a story
- Hierarchy: The image *is* more important.
- Scott McCloud: Reality-Meaning Spectrum
- The Medium: Certain power in how we transfer information, e.g. film, theater, novels.

What do comics do well?

- Reader controls the pace of the experience, an active experience.
  - life in the gutter
- Purely visual
- Primarily sequential
- Author to Reader experience is unambiguous.
- No budget on an author's imagination.

What do comics NOT do well?

- Reader controls the pace of the experience.
- Purely visual: Sound is problematic.
- Purely static: Motion is problematic.
- Complex moments are problematic.
- Subtlety is problematic.
- “The World’s Slowest Typewriter”
- At the mercy of artistic limitations

Just tell good stories

- An art form with limitless potential to convey all the ideas inherent in good storytelling
- There is no specific genre that is “good for comics,” and no genre that is “bad for comics.” Write what you want to write!
- We need better writers, and a market that will allow for diversity.
  - Done with X vs Y formula

Working with Artists

It’s a relationship.

- First and foremost, comic books scripts are a correspondence between you and the artist.
- Finding an artist: “Art Love Magic”
- Know the artist’s limits. The more talented, the less I think about them.
- Start with small commitments.
- Encourage. Don’t be an asshole.

Script Formats

"Writers simply develop a format that works for them… it's a method of storytelling that conveys to the artist what the writer wants on the page with maximum clarity and minimal chance of misinterpretation."

-- Peter David

Who needs a standard format?

- There is no standard comic book script format. That's how we like it. Don't trust anyone who says otherwise.
- The goal is clarity.
- Your format should cater to your strengths.

Format examples

- Traditional Full Script
- Marvel Method
- Alan Moore Method
- Screenplay Method
- Modified Screenplay Method

I prefer the traditional full script.

PAGE #. PANEL #.

DESCRIPTION.

DIALOGUE.

from Karma Incorporated

PAGE 2. PANEL 1. Terry sits on the edge of his bed, having a quiet moment before he has to get ready for the day. He’s wearing nice silk pajama pants and matching silk pajama button-up shirt. His loft is immaculately clean and rather spare.

CAPTION: Terry

TERRY

PAGE 2. PANEL 2. Art is face down on top of a messy bed. He never made it under the covers, still wearing clothes from last night. The alarm continues to beep.

CAPTION: Art

ART: Uhhh….

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
ART
uhhhh...

PAGE 2. PANEL 3. Susan’s hand comes out from under a mound of blankets and pillows to hit the alarm’s snooze button. Her room is a tribute to the “Hello Kitty” –type character. Her laptop computer placed on desk area in her bedroom. Lots of books, scattered here and there.

CAPTION: Susan

SFX: Wack!

SUSAN
WHACK

PAGE 2. PANEL 4. Malcolm sits up in his bed. No shirt. Wide-eyed early morning shock. His room is very swanky cool, tasteful bachelor pad for a father.

CAPTION: Malcolm

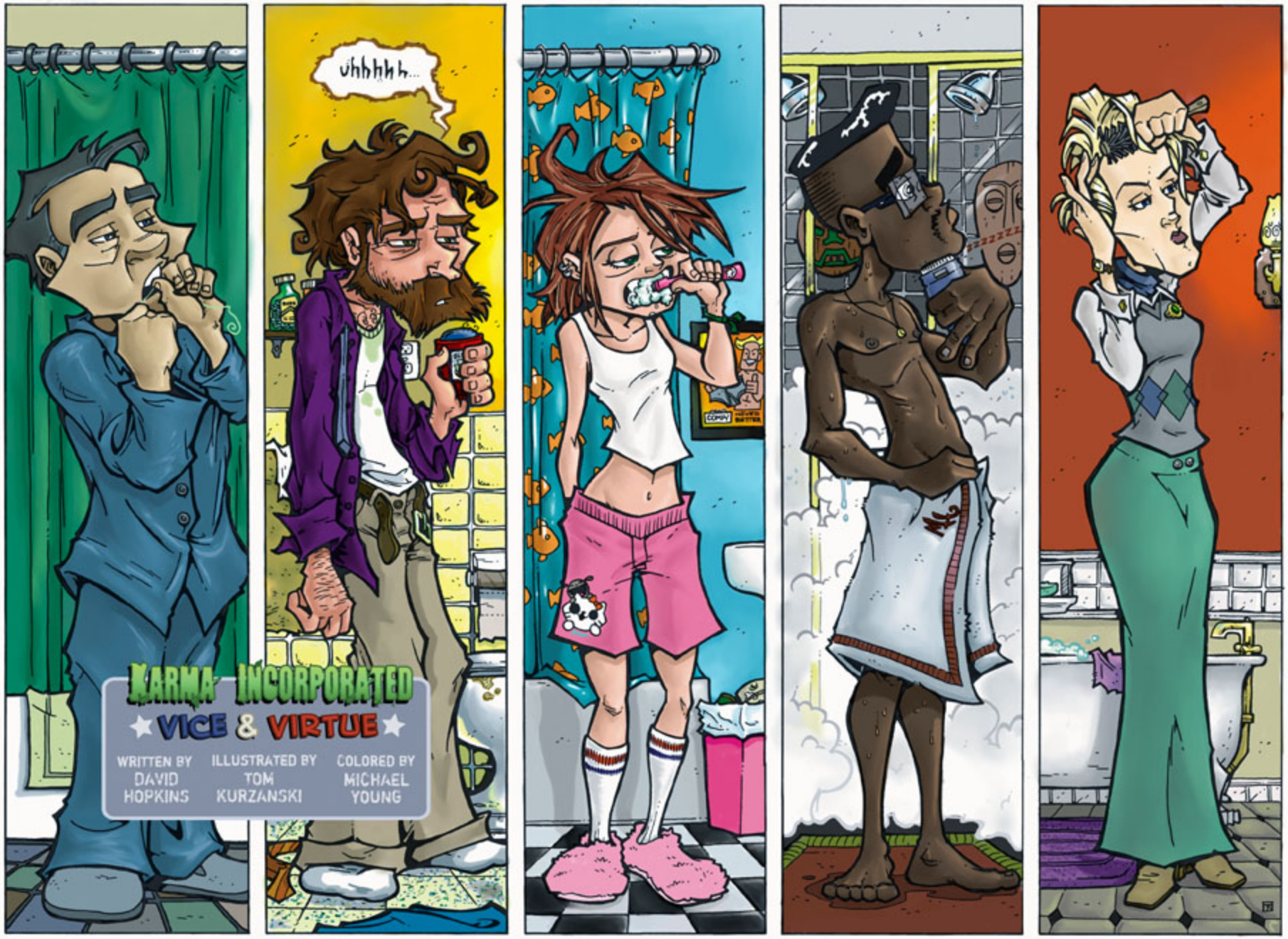
MALCOLM

PAGE 2. PANEL 5. Marsha’s bed is a mess and unoccupied. The TV in her bedroom is on. She’s walking back into the room, while reading a newspaper. She’s wearing a classic-styled long nightgown and robe. Like her office, there are unpacked boxes in her bedroom and a slight mess. More movie posters?

CAPTION: Marsha

MARSHA

TERRY
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
ART
uhhhh...
WHACK
SUSAN
MALCOLM
MARSHA


uhhhhh...
KARMA INCORPORATED
VICE & VIRTUE
WRITTEN BY DAVID HOPKINS
ILLUSTRATED BY TOM KURZANSKI
COLORED BY MICHAEL YOUNG

Tips and Suggestions

- Learn the terms: wide panel, two page spread, full page panel, inset panel, same panel versus same shot, splash page, off panel, no pointer, caption, SFX
- Working knowledge of screenplay terms: POV, two shot, low angle, high angle, over the shoulder
- Study the theories of montage (Sergei Eisenstein).
- Know the difference between a column and a row, and how to use space effectively.

- Write a detailed synopsis before you script.
- Leave plenty of room in the margins.
- Make the page/panel distinction clear.
- Put specific layout notes at the top.
- Be careful of adverbs. (What does “nervously” look like?)
- One actionable moment per panel.

For any story, please consider

- All characters want something.
- There are no small roles.
- Do not fear subplots.
- Do not rush.
- Become a master of the *O.S. Moment*.
- Write for yourself. Edit for the audience.

Scripting Exercises

Exercise #1

Script a one pager from this finished page.

Exercise #2

Script a one pager from this animated gif.

Exercise #3

Script a story.
Use this magazine cover as inspiration.

Getting Published

Doing it for Money.

- Work hard. Be wise. Be lucky.
- Keep producing.
- Neil Gaiman's Two out of Three
  - watch this video: vimeo.com/42372767
- Breaking In: The Five Levels
- Leap Frogging
- The distribution channels are changing.