

COMICS & POP CULTURE

WRITING SAMPLES

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Friday, June 14, 2013

MAN OF STEEL (review)



Review by Clay N Ferno

Produced by Christopher Nolan, Charles Roven, Emma Thomas, Deborah Snyder
 Screenplay by David S. Goyer
 Story by Christopher Nolan, David S. Goyer
 Based on Superman by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster
 Directed by Zack Snyder
 Starring Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Michael Shannon, Diane Lane, Kevin Costner, Laurence Fishburne, Antje Traue, Ayelet Zurer, Russell Crowe

Warner Bros. / PG-13

Superman, though not in the title, and only spoken once in the movie has returned in *Man of Steel*.

Starring Henry Cavill as Clark/Kal/Superman, Amy Adams as a smart and engaging Lois Lane and Michael Shannon as our villain, last seen in the comics or *Superman II*, General Zod of Krypton.

Kevin Costner is an earnest, sensitive and sensible Jonathan Kent, Kal's adoptive father with Diane Lane as Martha Kent by his side. Laurence Fishburne stars as the *Daily Planet's* Chief, Perry White.

The film opens on doomed planet Krypton, Russell Crowe as Jor-El helps deliver his son to Lara Lor-Van played by Ayelet Zurer.

With a cast like this, we can't go wrong, right?

I tend to love almost everything superhero related and this movie was no exception. After cramming in a *Dark Knight* trilogy over the weekend, I was well prepared for this *Man of Steel* screening. To be honest, I thought the bridge would be there for me like the Timmverse versions of the characters. Batman first. Superman second. One dark. One light. Similar vibe. I was happy to be half correct in that assumption. This is a modern looking film, and perfect for our time. Snyder and Nolan are different stylistically, and I appreciate that.

Having Christopher Nolan as a producer did inform the look of Metropolis somewhat, and the collective success of *Dark Knight* did get the wheels turning for Superman. I'm happy this all worked out the way it did.

They tell a different sort of origin story with pacing, flashbacks and nonlinear jumps in *Man of Steel*. Breaking the predictable pattern was welcome, and allowed for more time spent on the story of Krypton as a planet and it's fate. Zod and Jor-El open the movie fighting and it is this fight over the fate of Kryptonians and their last son that drives the plot.

Krypton is an organic alien planet filled with strange rounded spaceships, elaborate birdcage steampunk costumes, and Giger-esque (or, more recently and to the point, Prometheus) settings and ships. The time we spend on Krypton is delightful, and much different from the crystalline palace of Brando's Jor-El.

They're doing it right with the Houses of Krypton and the General Zod-ness of Krypton just before the explosion. The "S" seal of the House of El is in tact and standing for "hope" in Kryptonian ('borrowed' from Mark Waid's Superman: Birthright). Zod seems to have another pentagon-shaped sigil on his chest, not exactly a "Z", more of a horseshoe tilted 45 degrees. Heck, I'm no translator! The Kryptonian letters are also different from that of Smallville and comics versions. Spend half a day over at Kryptonian.info if you are curious.

It couldn't be Zod without The Phantom Zone exile, The Phantom (Zone) Projector and some bitter allies. He's got that in a bad-ass Faora (sorry, Ursa fans, a new/old girl is in town—and she can fight!).

On Earth, as Clark grows up he's initially freaked out by his powers until he grows older and starts to roam the world, TV-*Hulk* style (or JMS: *Grounded* style, for the snarky). All the while he chooses to do good, save people and shun bullies.

Ma and Pa Kent do their best to protect the young boy Clark from revealing his secret before the world is ready and there are great moments of father son bonding between Jonathan and

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young Clark (Dylan Sprayberry). Jonathan assures Clark that people are afraid of what they don't understand.

Missing Smallville pals? Don't worry, you've got Pete Ross and Lana Lang keeping Clark company...and perhaps his secrets? You know Pete is always gonna keep his lips tight. Smallville varsity football kids even pick on Clark with the traditional maroon and yellow jackets. Go Crows!

Slight spoilers, though don't expect many from this review. Lois has figured out Clark's secret before she's even met him through the doors of the *Daily Planet*. He saves her as they both are investigating an ancient Kryptonian scout ship on the North Pole (Fortress of Solitude?). It's a different Lois, and as I think she also likes pink very much, Amy Adams brings an intelligence and powerful female to her performance. Lois is in the middle of the action and helps take down the baddies in the end. We don't get the feeling that she's putting herself in harms way to bait Superman's enemies or to be saved. Lois is willing and able to fight with her wits against a Kryptonian army, and that's respectable.

Origins of Kryptonian births, and how Krypton found Earth are revealed by Jor-El's consciousness projection when near Kryptonian tech. Much more than the ghost head of Jor-El in the Reeve films, this Jor-El walks and talks and interacts with both Kal and Lois. He's not alive...but his spirit or memory or virtual reality is very much a real being. This expansion of the relationship Jor-El gets to have with Kal makes it more direct than previous 'man behind the curtain' interactions (*Smallville*, *Superman I, II*).

After donning the costume (sorry ladies, no red undies!) Jor-El coaches Kal on flying, or at least using his powers to the full potential. It's tough not to recall both *Spider-Man* movie versions as Superman first takes flight like a klutz and crashes through a mountaintop.

The flight? Just right. Hovers? Perfect. Floating parallel to the ground? OK, never seen that before, so you must be doing it right. Our imagination leaping from the comic page and the recollection of blue screen Christopher Reeve on a glass cube days are long gone. I would say a huge selling point to comic fans is that the powers are right. The Powers are Right. THE POWERS ARE RIGHT! Heat vision, X-ray vision, impervious to bullets (and anything else) coupled with flight makes for great superhero moviemaking. Batman was all about the Tumbler and The Bat and Bat-Pod. Here, we can believe a man can fly...finally! Sonic BOOM!

Speaking of *Spider-Man* (both versions) Ma Kent and Aunt May have a lot in common. Probably hard to separate thinking about the history of other superhero movies while watching this one. Diane Lane is fantastic, and does not dote over Clark. She encourages him to reveal himself when the time is right.

Zod's motivation is to take over the Earth and repopulate Krypton with stored DNA from a Krypton artifact. In the process he'd terraform and kill all humans. This is a standard story for a bad guy but the buildup from the opening sequence was way more satisfying compared to Nero's motivations in the first *Star Trek* (2009).

As a Superman fan, and one that doesn't wish to spoil anything more than necessary for the purposes of this review, I have both praise and criticisms.

I applaud every effort to include major and minor fan service moments, characters, re-imaginings (Jenny Olsen instead of Jimmy, Kryptonian atmosphere affecting Kal instead of Kryptonite proper), LexCorp trucks and Wayne Enterprises artifacts. Digging deep into the history of Superman by keeping true to the main players is important and approachable. The new tone of the movie (a darker palette in set design and for mood) is a welcome update as well.

Let Donner be Donner. Let *Smallville* and Geoff Johns comics be those things. This is a new thing. Were this movie to take major liberties with Krypton, Kal and the Ma and Pa Kent dynamic I would be offended. Even Nolan's Batman trilogy, a masterwork in my opinion, felt at times too based in reality.

Man of Steel scratches the itch of a sci-fi fan in a modern film context while inserting the aesthetic of a news camera crew or reality show when appropriate. Big action here. Elaborate ships and Kryptonian armor texture the movie with fantasy. *Inception* and *Avengers* style of building destruction shows us just how real and elaborate CGI has become. Do I need to mention that the Hans Zimmer score is amazing? Though I wish I could have the movie at home now so that I can mash up the John Williams score with 10 minutes of Cavill flying scenes....for my own use!

On to the criticisms of the film, from a fan of Superman in all forms. I could have used a bit more brightness on the camera settings. Though not every shot, I'm disappointed in the use of filters on some of the film processing. Hey, I'm no expert but my untrained eye was put off by the "Instagramification" of some scenes in the film.

Maybe this is the trend, a stylistic choice by Snyder, or something beyond my comprehension. To contradict an earlier statement somewhat, Nolan's lens is more clean, crisp and cinematic. Some emotional scenes in this film were given a post production filter to break the scene visually from the action, but it took me out a bit. A small complaint on my part, really. Overall with visual effects and CGI, I still would give this movie 5 stars.

Superman doesn't exactly stand for truth, justice, and the American way in 2013. In *Man of Steel*, Clark stands for what's right, his family, and believing in himself to do good. I might be missing something in there but that's the general idea. He's only on his first 'missions' as a superhero, so he has growing up to do. My major (and for some, the make it or break it) opinion about his victory over Zod in the end had me asking these questions. What exactly does a 75 year-old hero mean in a modern context. Were curveballs thrown at the audience

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to see how much they can take? Is the world seen through "Instagram X-Pro II" colored glasses? I just don't have the answer to that, except that for just 5 minutes of the film, I wanted a Christopher Reeve to be there in his red undies instead of the equally handsome Henry Cavill fighting off Zod's newfound Earth-based uncontrolled heat vision.

This is Superman. You must see this movie in the theatre and enjoy an HD copy at home when the time comes. Just imagine the binge you can have with a *Dark Knight* Trilogy and *Man of Steel* marathon. I may sidestep sleep and any social engagements to do just that again this weekend. If there is any doubt in your mind, Henry Cavill is Superman, he deserves the cape for the DC Cinematic Universe and fan drawings on Tumblr. I believe he can fly. Michael Shannon's Zod is an assertive villain and worth watching every moment he is on the screen.

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EARTH PRIME TIME: INTERVIEW WITH J.H. WILLIAMS III (PART ONE)

Wednesday, November 28, 2012 at 2:28PM

Clay N. Ferno in Apocryphon, J.H. Williams III, batwoman, comics, comics, concert, digboston, earth prime time, jhwilliams, neil gaiman, sandman, the sword



When we can open our eyes and see the connections between people, places, and things as more than just coincidence, but rather as a web stretching across the universe and back home to Earth, great discoveries happen on a spiritual level. Metal band The Sword thinks about these ethereal associations and tapped modern comic book maestro J.H. Williams III (*Batwoman*, *Promethea*, *Chase*) to create the artwork for Apocryphon. Following a sold out show at The Middle East

Downstairs last week, we talked to the artist about his craft and the collaboration that brought the band back to Earth after spending some time in outer space.

DIGBOSTON: Thanks for taking the time with us, J.H.! Can you let us know what kind of direction you were given by the band for the artwork? We've been listening to ***Apocryphon*** by **The Sword** non-stop since their show last week.

J.H. WILLIAMS III: It was kind of an organic process. Ultimately it was born of having conversations with the singer John [D. Cronise]. For something like this to be really successful from my point of view, as someone who is creating visuals for someone else's artistic endeavors, I feel like I need to get inside their head a little bit. We started talking about what the new music sounds like and they had sent me over some demos. We started talking about what some of the lyrical content was going to be like and what the overall feeling of the album would be. When he told me the meaning of the title, that word means secret writing. This led into a whole esoteric conversation about mysticism, a little bit about the occult, and more esoteric ideas. As we would talk, different things would come into my head, and I would sketch or think about some ideas and send those things over.

The biggest thing we were wanting to convey was a lot of symbolic imagery without it typically being just symbols. We ended up using some rune-like symbols, and overall the rest of the imagery needed to feel symbolic of different things. Some were purposeful, others were random and organic, more metaphoric in a sense.

That definitely fits into what I know of your art in the comics. You can get into some abstract symbols and symbolism. I was thinking about the runes and I meant to ask because everyone goes back to the Led Zeppelin IV — where everybody 'has their own symbol.' I feel like what the band was trying to do with the record and the overall look of your awesome artwork was that there are symbols people can relate to, but don't exactly know why. I also know from their website that John did a lot of research on his own to get inspired for this new record. It is a great fit.

I think so, too; one of the things I was trying to convey visually was that with their previous albums, there is a great sense of story to their stuff. I wanted to keep that going, so that when you look at the artwork there is a great sense of story to it. A lot of it is more metaphoric, symbolic images that represent other things. The sense of story comes out through the use of those images.

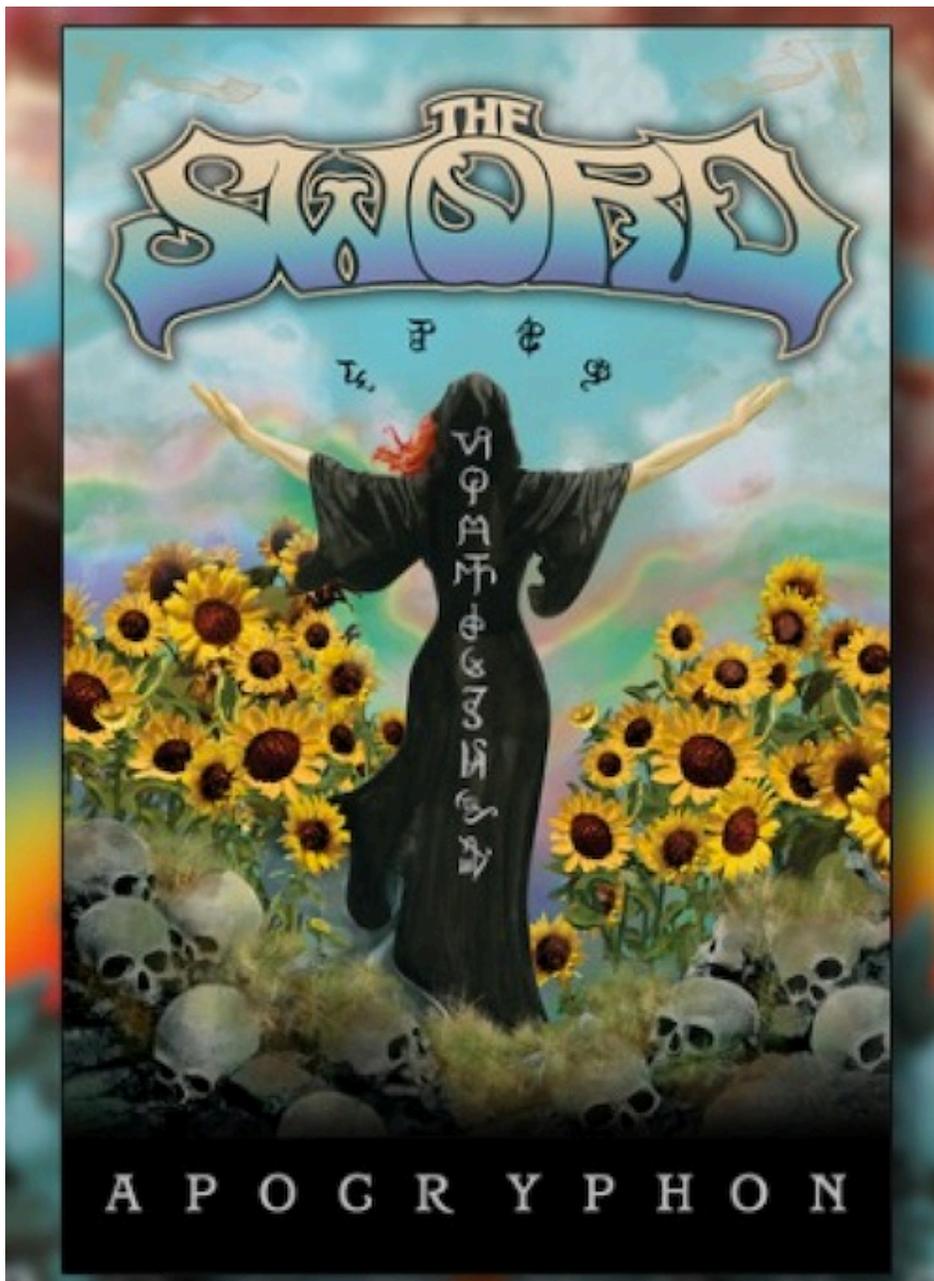
The idea of the runes is like creating a sense of story that has mystery to it.

You aren't going to get necessarily all of the answers concretely, or some of the stuff might make you feel something in particular, or make you think of something subliminally so that it becomes more interpretational.

When you are listening to the record and letting the art wash over you, you are filling in the gaps with your imagination, like in between pages or panels in a comic book, in a way.

Yeah, exactly. The only thing I was really concrete about wanting to convey was that the previous album, *Warp Riders*, was a far out, space, sci-fi fantasy epic thing. This record, the first thing that came to my mind when John was talking to me was that even though the lyrics are metaphorical, this is a much more personal record for him than *Warp Riders* was. When you look at the first image, I wanted you to have a sense of the cosmic-ness at the top, but [also the sense that] you are returning to a planetary body. In doing so, we wanted to show that a planetary body at first seems like a dead-looking planet. But there is a piece carved out, where there is still fire inside of it.

So the band is returning to a personal place to rebirth this fuel inside themselves, therefore re-birthing vitality in a way.



The whole symbol of the planet being dead there, and then you turn the cover over to the back and you see life growing from death. This becomes rich, and has almost a summer kind of feel to it or a spring kind of feel. At the bottom you can see the skulls and the sunflowers rising up from that. To me that was symbolizing the idea of being out in space and returning to someplace deeper and personal.

I see the contrast of reaching out to a big fantasy world of spaceships and sci-fi mysteries out there with the mysteries grounded by bringing it back to the Earth on a personal level best illustrated by your image of a sword cracking though the crust of the Earth on the back of the jewel case.

By returning to Earth and getting more personal, you are invigorating new life, and seeing things from a different point of view than you were before. That's why we used the diagram aspect of the sword penetrating the planet. We wanted to follow through with another diagram of the human cell. That round shape of the human cell correlates to the round shape of the planet.

The planet itself is a symbol of life in a way, and the basic biology of small cell life builds up us, just as the planets build up the cosmos.

What I think is great about this is that other bands might be trying to go for this type of thing, but this is a whole package. A lot of thought and care went into this. And it is not just that they hired an illustrator to draw something cool for the record cover.

I was super stoked to do it, I was a huge fan of the band prior to getting to know them a little bit. At the same time, I was trepidatious because John was telling me he was a huge fan of my work. The first thing I thought of was "Please don't tell me you want something that looks like Batwoman on the cover". (Laughs) John said such a nice thing, that they were coming to you because of what they saw in my comics work. My comics work hits them at such a level that they trusted me to do whatever I wanted as far as visuals I could bring to the table as far as open and far reaching.

I think it's also very cool that you guys are super big fans of each other! That's the best.

Ha ha, yeah, they're a killer band! Coming back to the runes, and the idea of secret writing having to do with metaphysics, there is a metaphysical bent to some of John's lyrics and the name of the album, *Apocryphon*, when I did my research on what that word meant, I found two things. One was secret writings, two was about how things were very personal.

Even though they are conveying music to an audience, personal can also mean very personal secrets or privacy.

I was thinking about this thing called the alphabet of desire. This is a ritualistic technique developed by occultist Austin Osman Spare. You think of something you desire to have in your life, a personal mantra about how you want to live or something you need to accomplish in your life. You write down a sentence on what that is, and you take the first letter of each word and create a sigil from that. Then you would meditate on the idea. There are a couple of different interpretations. In one, you would burn the

original sentence, or you would burn the sigil for yourself. No one else knows what this means. This becomes highly personal. When I explained this to John, he loved that idea. Since he loved it, I insisted his band to do it, and just tell me the letters and I would design sigils for the band. By just telling me the letters, that retains the power of the secret message. We created those, and I thought it would be interesting to make runes out of the titles of the songs as well.

For that, did you reach for comic book letterer Todd Klein's assistance?

No, I designed all the runes and the book myself, where Todd comes in, was figuring out some of the technical aspects. We were under the gun to get this done in time and I couldn't do all the lettering myself. So I went to the best guy there is! He designed all the text lettering for the credits and the song lyrics. Another cool element that was very concrete in the artwork was the use of the winged serpent, an interpretation of Quetzalcoatl. Here the band was returning to a personal place in the year 2012, looking for renewal and change.

Everyone is talking about how the world and society needs to renew and change as well. The Mayan 2012 stuff is a bunch of junk, but it got me thinking about the real meaning of apocalypse isn't destruction, it is change from what we know.

Musicians constantly need to be reinventing themselves, selling records, but also bands don't want to be stuck in the same place. Some bands get ethereally abstract about that, but Kyle (Shutt, guitar) was saying "We're Not Making a Conscious Decision To Do Anything But Be Awesome". The sound on this record is not a huge departure but it is more grounded as you said, so thank you for sharing this with us!

It was super exciting to do, and it seems like we enjoyed the collaboration enough that I'm hoping that we will be able to do more things in the future. I've expressed interest to them that I'd be game to be involved in other releases or however else they would like to join forces.

J.H.** was awesome enough to let me keep him on the phone to talk about Batwoman, The New 52, his upcoming Sandman book with Neil Gaiman. Stay tuned for Part Two of our interview next week! **EDIT: Here it is!

[READ MORE AT [DIGBOSTON.COM](http://www.digboston.com)]

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EARTH PRIME TIME: INTERVIEW WITH J.H. WILLIAMS III (PART TWO)

Wednesday, December 5, 2012 at 11:42AM

Clay N. Ferno in Greg Rucka, J.H. Williams III, Trevor McCarthy, batwoman, comics, comics, digboston, earth prime time, leaguepodcast, neil gaiman, sandman



Last week, in

Part One, we revealed the cryptic mystic secrets of a metal band called **The Sword** and their collaboration with artist **J.H. Williams III** (**Batwoman**, **Promethea**, **Chase**) to create the artwork for **Apocryphon**. This week, we continue our talk with J.H. on such varied topics as **Batwoman**, **The Sandman** and about the process of writing comics for other artists to draw.

DIGBOSTON: Let's get into this and talk about **Batwoman**! Issue **#14** is out, with **#15** hitting

right before Christmas. We're in the middle of the arc with Wonder Woman. Your run on this book in the New 52 is existing comfortably in the spot where the Morrison comics are, where they are not really affected by the change in the New 52. You've taken over writing from your partnership with Greg Rucka. Now you are working with W. Haden Blackman and Amy Reeder. How much can you tell us about being able to stay off in your own little world? J.H. WILLIAMS III: I don't know how it happened actually. In my conversations with DC, they've always been supportive of what I want to do, and they instinctively knew the book had to be not isolated but needed to be doing it's own thing for a while. The stuff I did with Greg was significant, and at the same time there was still so much more to explore. Those stories were still relatively new when the New 52 shift occurred. We had already been working on Batwoman: The Series before the New 52 happened. Instead of trying to reconfigure everything, they just let us run with it.

Batwoman was so new, that to reboot the character would be nonsense.

The stuff that Greg and I did, as far as her origin, her sister the psychotic Alice, the fallout with her father...It would have been insane to throw that all away. It had to remain as canon. It seemed like a very natural thing for them to accept it. **Very cool. How are you enjoying being on the writing side and giving some issues over to other artists?** It's really an interesting process, actually. In enjoy it a lot, seeing how other people interpret the scripts. What I find the most interesting on a creative process level is that when I'm writing for myself, I'm writing the same as if I write for someone else in sense of detail.

Writing for myself, it's not as though I cut corners on my scripts. "OK, I'm in writer's mode, I'm wearing my writer's hat, so I'm going to write".

Almost like, if something were to happen in the middle of writing and drawing, you'd be able to hand off the script to someone else. (Laughs) Yeah, and it's just good practice anyway, if I'm going to pursue being a writer, I need to know what the hell I'm doing and write things fully fleshed out. The fun part for me is seeing what someone when Trevor McCarthy comes in with his interpretations of what we're writing and run with it as well. I'm really happy to be working with him, he is an open minded artist willing to try different things and puts a lot of thought into what he is doing. It is super exciting to be writing for other people, it is not my first experience doing that, a long time ago, I had co-written a book called Chase for DC. It was short-lived, but then we did a lot of short stories based on the concept for DC Secret Files where other artists got to draw those. I also co-wrote a five part Batman story called Snow that another artist drew. I found the whole thing interesting, how another artist would interpret how I see things.

When I write, I'm very descriptive and try to convey visuals with words. Seeing how someone else would interpret how I know I would interpret the script is very fascinating.



You've introduced a new vocabulary into page layout, and your panel shapes. I think you've got some imitators out there now as well. There may not be much for you to say about your process but I wanted to compliment you on our page layouts because they are really amazing, and sort of changed the game a little bit.

Thank you, I appreciate that you feel that way. When people talk about my work in that regard, I feel

like I'm cheating. In all honesty, some of the things I'm doing aren't all that new! People like **Jim Steranko** and **Jim Starlin** to name a couple were doing this in the 60s and 70s, to name a couple who pushed the boundaries of what a page can do. I feel like all I'm really doing is trying to expand on that. I gravitated to that stuff when I saw it.

It seeped into my head and I can't help but think in those terms now.

You could be introducing that to a whole new generation of artists that never have seen the 70s Steranko. Exactly, and to me on a personal creative level, I can't settle on doing things the traditional expected way. Certainly there is a place for that and there are times where I do that myself, even in **Batwoman** when we go highly traditional. But when I'm doing it, it now has a different meaning because of the way it is being used in relation to the more wilder stuff.

If I had to draw just the way that people superficially expect comics to look, I probably would be pretty bored. That sounds like a terrible thing to say in some ways because I love comics and I read lots of comics that are very traditional. For myself, I'm compelled to just push it.

After a year of the New 52, we get a "0" Origin issue of Batwoman. The 0 Issue reveal was spectacular. With the training, it was everything you want out of a new Batman origin, except for here it is, Batwoman.

Thanks, that was a tricky issue for us to write because we knew what was going to remain canon and not canon from Greg and I's run, that with my partner Haden, it would be a disservice to deviate from that at all. When the whole Zero issue thing came up and DC wanted an origin story it was a challenge because we felt all that ground had been covered already, and relatively recently from one of the best writers there is! It was very tough for us to figure out how to retell that story but bring something new to it at the same time without deviating from what was there. We had to treat this as more of an expansion. What solidified the issue and what makes it stand out in comparison to what came before with Greg's story, was for the first time, we are getting to see these events from **Kate Kane's** inner point of view. We get to see her looking at that stuff in hindsight.

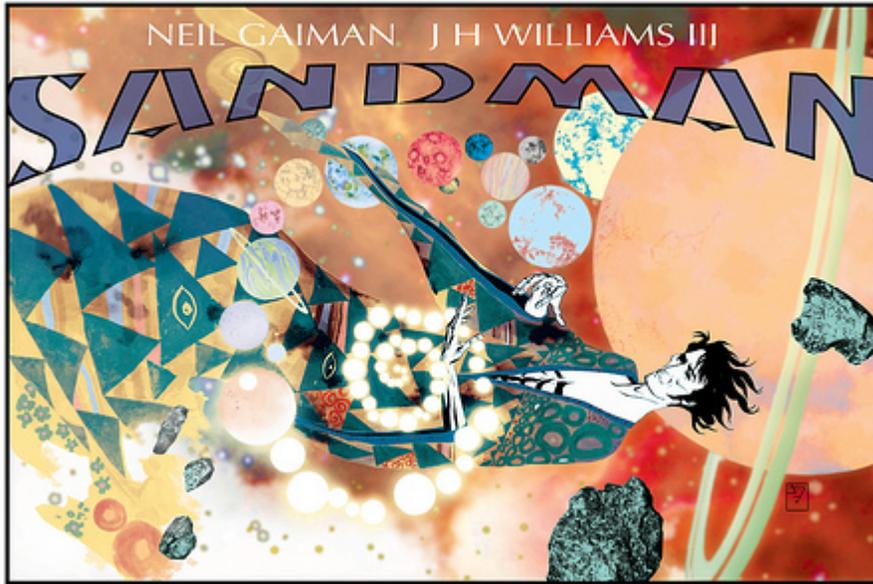
This brought out new emotional revelations for the character that aren't necessarily evident from the stuff Greg and I got to work on together. I thought in that regard it was really successful.

It was great and it was Year One in 22 pages. Very cool. We all heard at San Diego Comic Con this year about the 2013 Sandman Comic with Neil Gaiman. Are you excited about the fan feedback that you've heard so far?

Oh yeah, people are so excited for it. I had art collectors pinging me about being on a list to get pages,

before anything had even been drawn yet. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GndnR7oSYyk> A funny thing about announcing projects, is that sometimes the audience thinks that it must have been worked on already! I think the fans are really excited, and that excitement is really going to ramp up the closer we get to it actually coming out, especially when we are able to show people what we are going to do. I can't wait to do it.

Honestly, I can't wait to see it either! It is going to be so amazing.



We have to know, though, what is your preferred format for The Sword Apocryphon? Are you going to get the cassette version as well? Yeah, I have the cassette version, that was part of the deal I made with them — they had to send me a copy of everything they do! For one, I want to have a copy for my own personal archives, and also I want to physically see it so I can go, “Ooh, look at this, isn't that cool”! But I have to say, I'm stoked with all the different vinyl versions that are coming out, that are amazing. I just heard from Napalm Records, the label responsible for some of the overseas stuff are going back to print on some of the vinyl with even more variations.

Something about seeing it in vinyl is so much more powerful to me on a visual level than the CD version. It is just really cool.

It is an amazing record with amazing artwork, it has been a pleasure to talk to you, J.H.! Part One of this interview can be found here: EARTH PRIME TIME: INTERVIEW WITH J.H. WILLIAMS III (PART ONE).

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ROBOT 6

UNCATEGORIZED

Comics A.M. | Tezuka Productions and Diamond ink distribution deal

by [Brigid Alverson](#) | December 6, 2012 @ 6:55 AM | 1 Comment | [Like](#) 19 | [Tweet](#) 28

Creators | In the conclusion of a two-part interview, J.H. Williams III discusses his work on DC Comics' *Batwoman*, including his page layouts: "When people talk about my work in that regard, I feel like I'm cheating. In all honesty, some of the things I'm doing aren't all that new! People like Jim Sterenko and Jim Starlin to name a couple were doing this in the '60s and '70s, to name a couple who pushed the boundaries of what a page can do. I feel like all I'm really doing is trying to expand on that. I gravitated to that stuff when I saw it." [[Dig Boston](#)]

Creators | *Tails* creator Ethan Young addresses the persistent question: "Wait, Ethan is supposed to be Asian?" and concludes, "I'm not the first creator who's tried to craft a post-racial comic, and I won't be the last. But with my own little webcomic, I think I've managed to talk about race without actually talking about race." [[Booklife Now](#)]



Batwoman #15

[Quoted on [ROBOT 6](#)]

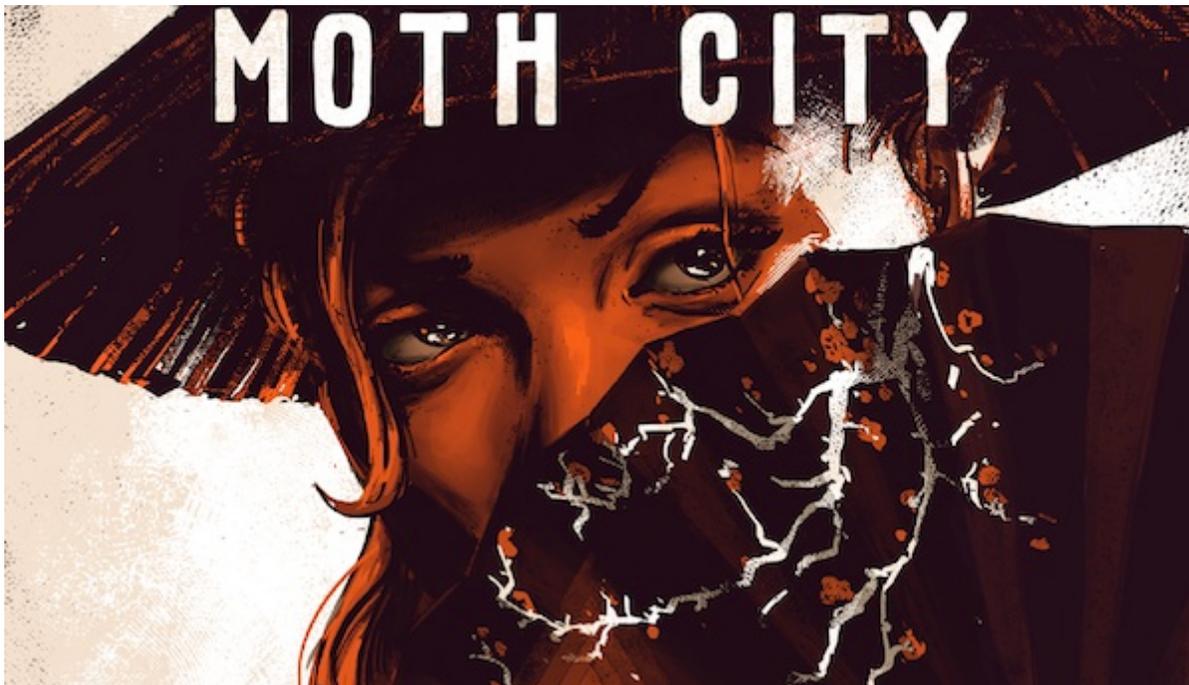
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EARTH PRIME TIME: MOTH CITY INTERVIEW WITH TIM GIBSON

Wednesday, June 12, 2013 at 1:46PM

Clay N. Ferno in Alex de Campi, Avatar, Creative New Zealand, Dan Goldman, action, cartoon, comic market, comics, comics, comics code, comixology, cott McCloud, dark horse comics, digboston, earth prime time



Tim Gibson, a New Zealand based artist and writer is taking full advantage of genre, digital comics on devices and innovating how a reader participates in the comic reading experience with his debut graphic novel *Moth City*. Mainstream and back catalogs of comics have been available on computers and other devices via [ComiXology](#) since 2009. Webcomics themselves are nearly 30 years old. Gibson is transforming the page and webpage with panel layers and acting to give a more full reading experience. *Moth City #3* is available today on [ComiXology](#). We talk with Tim about process and the importance of word of mouth support for independent comics.

***DIGBOSTON:* Tim, thanks so much for taking the time today to tell us about *Moth City*! We're here to talk about comics, mind telling the fans out there some of the projects you've worked on in the past? Your name probably scrolled by them at some point.**

***TIM GIBSON:* *Moth City* is actually my debut comic, I've mainly worked as an illustrator and concept designer in the Film and TV industry. The closet I've come to working in comics before this was being a designer on *The Adventures of Tintin* film and some coloring work on *The Red Star* (Image Comics) when I was working at [Weta Workshop](#) (*Lord the of Rings Trilogy*, *The Hobbit*, *King Kong*, *Avatar*, *District 9*).**

How long has this idea been growing? Are all art projects eligible for funding in New Zealand?

The idea of an entire island under the rule of one damaged man has been with me for a while. There is just something about the isolation of an island that makes bad stuff happening so much worse. It's been with me for many years, but it was really the [Creative New Zealand](#) grant that enabled me to dedicate myself the massive amount kind of time needed to translate ideas into comics.

Completing a graphic novel has got to be one of the hardest things I've ever done.

There's so much work when it's a solo venture, and the things you can't do (copy editing, websites etc.) you have to convince talented friends/family to help for the lowest wages (i.e. nil) that they've ever worked for.



The funding is really the only reason that Moth City exists in the way that it does. It's not easy funding to get, there's a lot of competition for it.

You put forth the strongest case possible, because you're competing with published authors, people with track records and whole institutions who look to Arts Funding to do their work.

It's probably safe to say that this book takes place in an alternate history, around the 1930s, on an island in China. There's always been cowboys and rich tycoons wearing cowboy hats around the world, such as your Governor McCaw. He's there to weaponize the Chinese army for profit. What else can you tell us about the city?

The island of Moth City shares a lot of features with Hong Kong; it has a highly condensed city center, a towering peak for the elite and scattered fishing villages and docks. There are influences from both Hong Kong's history, as well as Singapore's.

New Zealanders, as (still) a part of the British Empire are obsessed with colonization and imperialism. McCaw's place at the head of his little empire is a part of that.

The populace certainly doesn't want him there, but they were effectively sold to him as indentured labour along with the island itself.



This isn't strictly a military or political thriller set in the past, we're also dealing with murder set in on a noir backdrop. Do the multiple genres come from you trying to build this world from the ground up?

I think there's a genre-freedom with indie graphic novels that you don't get with most mainstream continuity work. There's this great history of genre work in comics, obviously Wertham and the Comic Code did a lot to hamper that diversity, but looking around at great modern titles like *Walking Dead*, *Saga*, *Fatale* or *Skullkickers* you can see a strong resurgence. I think it's what we need if we're ever going to entice new readers into comic book shops. I didn't plan it, but the four seasons of *Moth City* break down into genres surprisingly cleanly.

Season One is largely political thriller and mystery, Two moves into detective and noir, Three has some horror and kung fu and Four is balls-to-the-wall action and conflict.



The artwork is amazing, from the character designs to the architecture and coloring. I compare the art to my friends as that ‘inky’ line, such as your contemporaries Paul Pope and Ming Doyle. I also see the Mazzucchelli influence a bit, please take these as compliments — I’d hate to have you walk away from this interview at the beginning! The book is unique in that way, especially with you being the writer and the artist. Where do you start with the artwork, are you storyboarding the comic as you go?

Oh that’s very generous of you to say so, I certainly don’t mind being included in such fine company. I feel like I’m still finding my feet with inking – most of my illustration work is full color painting where the whole goal is to kill ‘outlines,’ not showcase them. I had to spend a long time, and produce a lot of test art and pages, to find that ‘voice’ when it comes to the inks and the colors.

This being my first comic I went about it all in an odd way. I actually wrote the whole thing as a straight narrative piece, like a novel. No page breaks, no panels.

It meant I could easily give it to people for story feedback and they could respond readily without having to learn to read a new format. When I was happy with that, I went through and picked my page breaks and then figured what I could fit into panels.

Of course, with the way my digital formatting works, I often do one and a half pages of illustration to make up one page of comic.

What makes *Moth City* so incredible, and the reason I wanted to talk to you was the way you are formatting the book digitally. You are using ComiXology to its fullest potential by animating transitions, pacing, dialogue and more. Much the way a director or editor can cut a film, you are

curating the way we see the book. Panel transitions are ‘faux’ animated, layers are revealed in *Moth City*. Could you tell this story on a 9 panel printed page?

Yes and no. Yes in that I create a ‘print page’ of each digital page sequence. I make a decision on the optimal static version of that scene or sequence. I might break a panel that has two digital states into two smaller, static, panels side by side. Or, I might find that one state can carry the story. What the digital form gives you as a creator is more control of the timing of events, like you point out, it gives you the added control of a film editor, and I would also add actor. So much is conveyed in film with a lingering look, or a character who smiles, and within that same shot you see their demeanor crack and show their inner turmoil for a split second.

To tell that in print comics, you either need to use a lot of ‘voice over’ type, or a lot of panels.

Digital gives us that opportunity. Of course, I still have to draw all those extra moments.

Many, including Mark Waid, whom I respect for his Thrillbent digital comics experimentation are praising your innovation in the digital comics space. What more can you tell us about your motivations? I find your approach to be not only unique but innovative in an instinctual way. There’s some programming involved, too, right?

Moth City is the world’s most elaborate, time-intensive Power Point slide show.

My Web guys did some amazing work with mothcity.com in streamlining what is essentially a slide show of more than a thousand images, but you can read *Moth City* in a PDF and it works the same way.



The main motivation for doing Moth City as a digital comic was an honest analysis of my chances as a debut creator, with no comic credits, getting a publishing deal with someone like Image, IDW, Dark Horse or Oni without bringing an audience to the table. I felt I had to earn a print run.

Once I made that decision I spent a lot of time looking at what I felt was broken in the presentation of long-form webcomics, and started to explore what I could do with the digital medium. I did a lot of research. A lot. Some of my experiments were happening at the same time as Yves “Balak” Bigerel, Dan Goldman and then Thrillbent’s.

I was borrowing stuff from everywhere and anywhere.

Moth City not only defies genre and moves us away from caped superheroes in the comic book medium, but does so in such an intuitive and familiar way, it outshines panel-to-panel digital

comics and makes them look not fully developed comparison.

Thanks, I attribute that to our ability as readers to understand genres and tropes which give creators a certain shorthand when we create stories.

It feels familiar because it is, but where we go once you're comfortable is a different story.

Issue 3 - or Season 2, part 1 is at the [ComiXology store](#) today. The price of entry for all three issues is almost the price of one regular priced comic. What can we tell people to go get all three today?

Oh geez... It's awesome? It's awesome and affordable? It's awesome and affordable and I need a new pair of shoes?

***Moth City* already twisted my head around and shocked me in different ways at the ends of issues #2 and #3. Do you like to end on cliffhangers? If so, you're really pushing this to the top of my recommended comics of the year.**

Yeah, I'm really happy with the twists and turns in *Moth City*. The world is filled with great endings, what I've tried to do, and I think it works because I have this 8 issue arc all mapped out, is make sure those endings have an impact on the following issues.

There's nothing worse than being left on the edge of your seat, only to come back next time and that problem/drama/twist is resolved in moments as though it never really mattered.

Of your influences, who in your opinion has changed the way we think of the comic book printed page?

Alex de Campi, Dan Goldman, Yves "Balak" Bigerel, Mark Waid and the whole [Thrillbent.com](#) family, Scott McCloud, Kurt Christenson and Reilly Brown and the entire world of Webcomics.

Where can we find you and *Moth City* online?

If you want to read *Moth City* in nice, shiny HD then you can grab it from [Comixology](#), and you can read it online and check out videos and blog posts over at my site [mothcity.com](#) as well as its second home at [thrillbent.com](#).

[READ MORE at [DIGBOSTON.COM](#)]

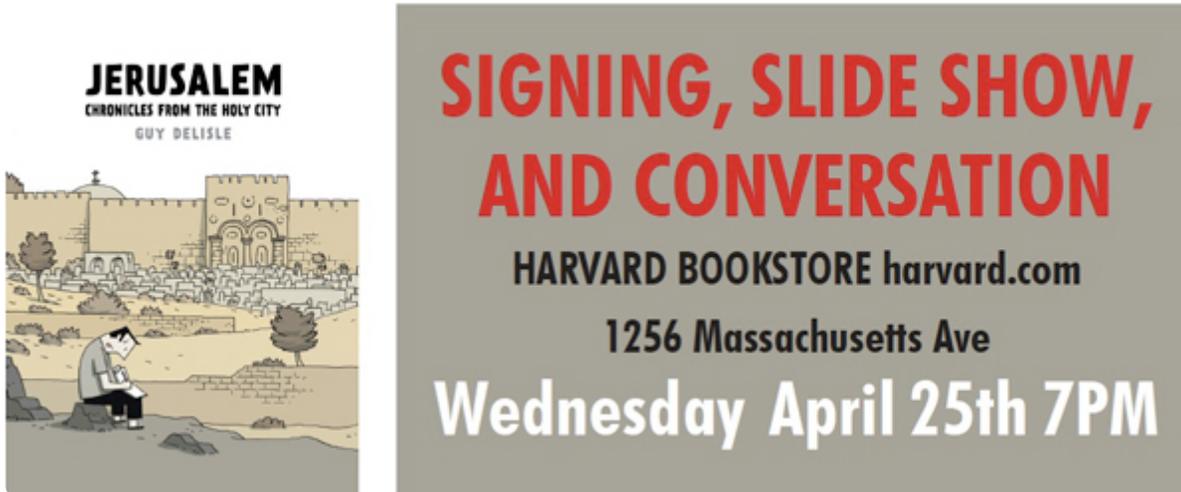
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EARTH PRIME TIME: GUY DELISLE - JERUSALEM: CHRONICLES FROM THE HOLY CITY

Thursday, April 26, 2012 at 4:09AM

Clay N. Ferno in Guy Delisle, comics, digboston, digboston, drawn and quarterly, earth prime time, jerusalem, leaguepodcast



Guy Delisle will be at Harvard Book Store tonight at 7pm for a free signing and discussion of his travel journal from Jerusalem entitled, **Jerusalem: Chronicles From the Holy City**.

Canadian born cartoonist and animator **Guy Delisle** lived in the Holy City of Jerusalem for a year with his wife and two young children. His wife worked for **Doctors Without Borders** as an administrator as Guy settled in to raise his children, find a studio, sketch constantly and teach cartooning when called upon.

***Drawn and Quarterly** debuts his hardcover graphic novel this month, and Guy joins us in the States from his permanent home in the South of France to promote his book with a slide show and discussion about his experiences in one of the oldest cities in the world.*

I was immediately intimidated by this assignment. How can I do the work justice when I know absolutely nothing about the politics of the Holy Land? My base understanding is that the place is to be revered as the birthplace of civilization and of Western religion. I'm uneducated on even current events or recent conflicts in the region. I expected to come out of this review feeling dumb.



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Thankfully, Guy's book was a travel journal of his life there as someone with knowledge on par with mine. Delisle's cartooning and illustrations of the intensely complex subsections of the city throughout the book transformed my vague conceptions of the West Bank into realized maps.

There is the culture built upon conflict. Conflict begets villages, towns and separation. Checkpoints and automatic weapons meld seamlessly with the scenes of vendors selling fruit in the market.

At least six major religions have a righteous stronghold and ancient holy buildings in the Old City. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4RNcIjW1-k> I have the utmost respect for the work that Doctors Without Borders does and learned for the first time how difficult it must be to travel in the region on such a mission. All vehicles are subject to search. Bombings, shootings and violence are daily occurrences.

I imagined myself in Guy's shoes adjusting and exploring all the old world had to offer.



The book illustrates the logistics of living in the city as a foreigner and seeing the place for the first time. He was responsible for getting his kids to school and finding places for play. There is so much honest exploration and learning exposed in this book.

Guy is a curious explorer, hopping into the Arab minibuses with a backpack to check out the city, draw and ask questions.

Chapters are broken up by months, and high holiday celebrations of the major religions are highlighted with an observant eye. There is a humorous reveal about the author's spiritual beliefs that I identified with about halfway through the book. To be a non-believer in the Holy Land you are on the surface neutral, and at the same time without allies in conflict. Guy shows that it is best to keep your atheist or agnostic beliefs to yourself and blend in wherever possible. My original expectations were surpassed by a desire to travel more and carry a sketch book with me more often. The humorous human element of

tense political and religious contexts in real situations brought me genuine happiness and joy. The illustrative maps and symbols in the work gave me a better understanding of the Middle Eastern region than all of my education and news input combined.

Guy Delisle has given us the history of the world told through the eyes of an outsider. He tells the story of how an artist and his family can integrate into a cultural mix thousands of years in the making.

GUY DELISLE PRESENTS JERUSALEM: CHRONICLES FROM THE HOLY CITY WED 4.25.12 HARVARD BOOK STORE 1256 MASS AVE. CAMBRIDGE (617) 661-1515 7PM/ FREE @HARVARDBOOKS HARVARD.COM



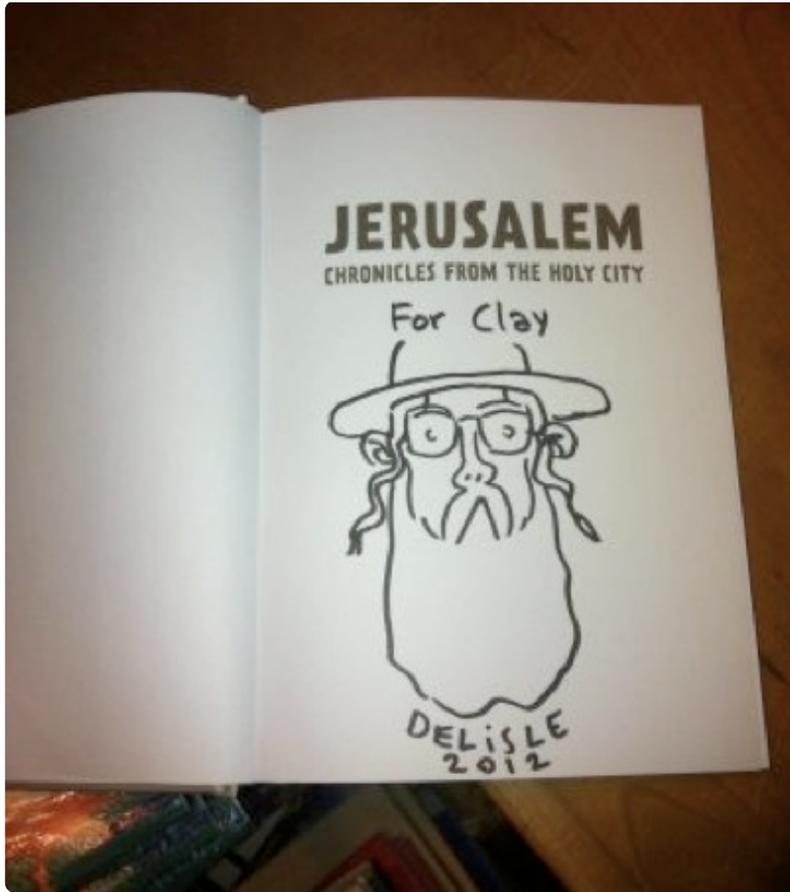
EARTH PRIME TIME: GUY DELISLE SIGNING FOR 'JERUSALEM' AT HARVARD BOOK STORE by [clay-fernal](http://clay-fernal.com)

[[READ MORE](#) at DIGBOSTON.COM]

OK so this review was a preview of Guy's signing. I went, got some pictures and asked about process. Guy uses photo references, his own sketches and google image search for his drawings. The clerk actually quoted me in his intro!

Guy Delisle has given us the history of the world told through the eyes of an outsider. He tells the story of how an artist and his family can integrate into a cultural mix thousands of years in the making.





Personalized Sketch!

Article originally appeared on Clay N. Ferno (<http://www.claynferno.com/>).

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EARTH PRIME TIME: INTERVIEW: NEW YORKER COVER ARTIST ADRIAN TOMINE SIGNS ‘NEW YORK DRAWINGS’ AT HARVARD BOOK STORE

Wednesday, October 3, 2012 at 1:17PM

Clay N. Ferno in adrian tomine, boing boing, comics, comics, digboston, digboston, drawn and quarterly, earth prime time, earth prime time, harvard book store, leaguepodcast, new york drawings, optic nerve, scenes from an impending marriage, shortcomings



Contemporary comic book artist, writer, cartoonist and *New Yorker* cover artist **Adrian Tomine** signs his most current **Drawn and Quarterly** hardcover **at Harvard Book Store tomorrow**. *New York Drawings* is an anthology of *New Yorker* covers, record covers, and character sketches from in and around New York City. Adrian spend most of his life on the West Coast, cultivating a cult following for his *Optic Nerve* mini-comic. Here is an exclusive interview with Adrian touching upon his successes, the comic market, and insight into the process behind his signature clean line style.

Thanks for taking the time with us today, Adrian. The preface to *New York Drawings* is a short autobiographical strip wherein you find yourself at a *New Yorker* Christmas Party. Like a true artist, you find yourself full of self doubt, even at a point where you can be proud of your successes. Is there a lesson in humility there or was this a passing observation?

Well, I didn't intend for it to be didactic, but I suppose if someone is putting together a book of all their work for *The New Yorker*, it wouldn't hurt to add a drop or two of humility. Basically, it's just a little story I've had in the back of my mind for a while now, but didn't know what to do with.

I initially sat down to write a more traditional prose introduction for the book, and then it just seemed like it would be more interesting to do it as a comic.

Optic Nerve had its origins as a self-published mini-comic. Do you feel like the kind of success you had at an early age in comics could be duplicated in the market today?

I think the market has changed so much since then that what was considered “success” for me at an early age wouldn’t really register now. I was elated when five copies of my mini-comic sold at the local comic shop—now people can track the number of “hits” to their website, they get big advances for their first book, etc.

If I was any kind of success back then, it was mainly because the stakes were so low!



Was the leap from autobiographical comics to more in-depth stories about other characters a natural move? In other words, how were you able to start writing more complex stories and building your ‘world’? Did your English education at UC Berkeley drive your creative writing?

My college classes certainly exposed me to a lot of literature that would’ve been too intimidating for me to tackle on my own, but I don’t know that that had a direct influence on my comics. I mean, if you look at the stuff I was doing back then and then you look at the books I was reading for school, it would

be pretty hard to find any kind of direct correlation.

I was reading the best literature ever created and I was drawing the worst comics of my career.

I think that progression towards longer, more fictionalized stories is really the result of a rather embarrassing competitive streak. I was watching a lot of other cartoonists achieve great success and acclaim with ambitious “graphic novels,” and I felt like I needed to try to at least get in the race. And now I’ve reverted back to short stories, so I guess we know now how that all played out.

Were you the first of your friends to get published and get attention for your work? Optic Nerve put you on the map as a young man.

You assume that I had friends! I actually started doing Optic Nerve in response to being an unlikeable teenage loner, so it wasn’t like I was part of some cartooning community then. And when I did eventually make some friends in the comics world, they were basically already seasoned veterans, so any little accomplishment I might’ve experienced wasn’t anything new to them.

You are also known for multiple record covers, illustrations, and your famous *New Yorker* covers. *New York Drawings* is a hardcover book composed of many of these covers, skits, and sketches. Even your sketches are of high quality and have a clean line. Are you still thrilled when you see *The New Yorker* on the newsstand with the logo typeset over your art?

I don’t think that drawing a cover for *The New Yorker* is the kind of job I can ever take for granted or become blasé about, mainly because of all the work I do, it’s the thing that still garners the biggest response by a wide margin.

If I told some in-law that I got nominated for a Harvey Award or whatever, they would have no idea what I was talking about.

But especially around here, *The New Yorker* is a big part of people’s everyday life.



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You capture people in these little ‘moments’ that life sets us up with. Does the young man help the struggling mom with a baby carriage? He seems like he wants to, but doesn’t want to miss the train. Two readers are sharing the experience of reading the same book, stuck between stations, pausing for just a moment as their two trains are aside each other for a tiny second. These are moments that will make you feel alive and connected for a second, especially in a big city. Do you feel like an outsider in New York City? You appear to feel very at home after your transplant

there.

Like most cartoonists, I think I'm kind of an observer no matter where I go. Even after living in Berkeley for fifteen years, I still felt like someone who had moved there from Sacramento. And it's the same thing here in New York.

I've lived here since 2004 and I still feel like the typical West Coast transplant who complains about the weather and the bad burritos.

Recently I've come across two of your books, *Scenes from an Impending Marriage* and *Shortcomings*. *Impending Marriage* was a short and fun read about you and your wife Sarah preparing your wedding. This honest and fun book gave nods to *Family Circus* and *Peanuts* while being set in the very real world nightmare of picking guests and a DJ for the wedding. In stark contrast, *Shortcomings* was the story of a man sorting out why his relationships suffer. In *Shortcomings*, there is humor, but the laughs are more subtle and conversational. Also, race, gender, and sexuality play a huge part in Ben Tanaka's biases in the book. Does your writing and planning process change to adapt to the kind of book you are working on?

Of course, yeah. When I was writing *Shortcomings*, I went out of my way to block out thoughts of how it would be received. I knew it was the kind of book that would suffer the more I worried about a hypothetical audience's reaction. Whereas with the wedding book, I had a very specific target audience (the guests at our wedding) in mind completely, and I was basically trying to create something they'd enjoy.



Do you draw digitally or with pen and ink?

I do all my drawing with ink on paper, and just use computers to color the artwork.

Many will continue to aspire to reach some of the creative milestones you have under your belt, Adrian. Please continue to inspire. In what ways do you see challenging yourself next? Do you have any book projects coming up?

I'm working on a book of short stories in comics form, and I'm challenging myself to approach each story in some different way.

I chose this format mainly because I have a two-year-old daughter at home now, and getting any kind of work done is something of a challenge.

But I think it will be a useful book for me because in a lot of ways, I'm still trying to figure out what my own style is, and it's nice to not feel locked into one big story for the next five years.



ADRIAN TOMINE DISCUSSES *NEW YORK DRAWINGS* THU 10.4.12 HARVARD BOOK STORE CAMBRIDGE 617.661.1515 7PM/ FREE @HARVARDBOOKS

[READ MORE AT [DIGBOSTON.COM](http://digboston.com)]

Article originally appeared on Clay N. Ferno (<http://www.claynferno.com/>).

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EARTH PRIME TIME: TALES OF THE BUDDHA WITH WRITER ALAN GRANT

Wednesday, August 8, 2012 at 9:47AM

Clay N. Ferno in Renegade Art Entertainment, alan grant, buddha, comics, digboston, earth prime time, jon haward, leaguepodcast, meditation



I needed a break from my summer reading list of [Osamu Tezuka's Buddha](#). To be honest, this eight volume tome might take me all the way through the winter. The Bob Marley "Whoa-Oh-Oh" [positive vibrations](#) put me in a mood to take my time with these accurate, if not anachronistic, retelling of the Buddha's origin. Blammo—halfway through the summer, [Renegade Arts & Entertainment](#) drops a "What If...?" story of Buddha from one of my favorite comic writers, Alan Grant — [Tales of the Buddha Before He Got Enlightened](#).

Alan, thanks so much for taking the time with us today! We last reviewed your [Loxleys and the War of 1812](#) Graphic Novel from Renegade. [Tales of the Buddha Before He Got Enlightened](#) is a bit less serious than that book, is that safe to say?

Alan: [Tales of the Buddha](#) is a bit less serious than just about any book you care to mention, Clay. But The [1812 War](#) was written as a tragedy, with not a lot of space for humor, while [Tales of the Buddha Before He Got Enlightened](#) is more ... Chaos. Absurdity. Sex, drugs and rock & roll.

When I was a teenager I was a big fan of Robert Crumb and Gilbert Sheldon and I always wanted to do something

as totally off the wall as they did.



What was your inspiration for this take on the Buddha?

I was looking to create a 3-panel gag-strip for the Glasgow “alternative humor” comic “Northern Lightz”. I had imagined each 3-panel strip appearing every 3rd or 4th page. But when I saw the published version, the editors had run all 8 strips together, as if they were a story. I saw the possibilities, and the rest is history (of a low-key kind).

I was also highly impressed with Jon Haward’s artwork, and thought it would be a shame not to see if we could it further with the character.

You’ll have to forgive that I wasn’t aware of your penchant for silliness, and Bizarro drug references. You know how people are always on about “Tom Baker, that’s MY Doctor”? In many ways I feel that way about your Batman. MY Batman is Alan Grant and Norm Breyfogle’s Batman from Detective Comics. Is this your first comedic series?

Thanks for the Batman compliment. Buddha is far from my first comedic series. I started co-writing comics around 1980, with John Wagner (creator of Judge Dredd). Much of our work was comedy-based - Ace Garp SpaceTrucker, Sam Slade RoboHunter, Judge Dredd himself (all for the sci-fi comic 2000AD). We also wrote Joe Soap (a hapless private detective) and Doomlord (alien comes to Earth to judge mankind, and moves in with a seaside resort landlady’s family) for the comic Eagle, and “The 13th Floor”, which was a mix of horror and humor for the weekly comic Scream!. Even our first outing for DC Comics was largely humor-based—did you ever see Outcasts? And I wouldn’t have been able to write Lobo and The Demon if I hadn’t been allowed to make the characters humorous. For a couple of years I wrote 3-panel gag strips and one-off jokes for a variety of magazines like

(believe it our not) *Forest Machine Journal* and *VW Camper Monthly*. Wagner and I also wrote *The Bogie Man*, whose hero is insane and believes that his life is taking place inside a Humphrey Bogard movie. It remains Scotland’s best-selling independent comic ever, and was made into a TV one-off starring Robbie Coltrane (of Harry Potter movie fame) and Midge Ure (ex-*Ultravox* frontman). We wrote three follow-ups: “ChinaToon”, “The Manhattan Project” and a third whose title I can’t remember!

So I have a long association with funny material!

Describing the book to my friends, I call this R. Crumb mixed with Don Martin and Bill Maher. It’s just too fun to see this wayward Buddha smoking joints and partying with Jesus. Man, my twenties were a party, but I was getting tired just reading about how much Buddha raged here. In Volume 2 will Buddha go 12-step or head to rehab? I hope not, he’s fun this way!

In volume 2 I’ll do a few stories about returning Buddha to the 8-fold path...or at least trying to. But he’s still at the stage of ordinary consciousness where sex, drugs, rock & roll and violence have first claim on his sensibilities. I’ve already got ideas for a dozen new stories, some of which have been suggested by my 13-year-old heavy metal grandson (who shouldn’t even be reading *Tales of the Buddha!*).



What has been the reaction from some of your pals to the book?

Reaction has been unanimously favorable. However, I’m constantly looking behind me to see if some fundamental Christian is stalking me with a big knife, or a sincere Buddhist is about to pull a hunger strike on me.

My daughter loves it, my wife loves it, my friend’s 16-year-old daughter loves it...hopefully we’ll get more

women reading comic books.

We love the Jon Haward art. Have you worked with him in the past? I hope he doesn't mind me referencing Crumb or Martin. Both of your are filthy, by the way. And we don't like it ... we love it!

Jon Haward is a friend from way back, though we've only worked together a few times. We did a painted fantasy story for Frank Frazetta's short-lived comic magazine, we created a character called "True Brit" (never published) and we did comedy stories like "Robin Head and the Outlaws of Sherweed Forest" for Northern Lightz's successor, Wasted.

Unfortunately, Her Majesty's Tax Inspectors closed us down last year, claiming we owed tens of thousands of pounds in unpaid taxes and fines. Weird, as we never made a profit. Maybe some of them were Christians or disgruntled Buddhists looking to get their own back.

Your Buddha literally travels the world and encounters all of the major religions. Like Buddhism itself, Buddha gets along with different ideologies and — dare I say it — gets along with most. While you are being silly with the guy, there is a truth to that sentiment for sure. Do you practice sitting yourself?

I practiced meditation daily for about 10 years. Then I got a flotation tank, which seemed to do the same job - emptying the mind, or alternately allowing one to focus intently - much more easily. The tank sprang a leak a few years ago, and shorted out all the electronics; the manufacturer had closed down, and there were no others in the UK., so I couldn't get it fixed. I've read a hundred books on Buddhism, so I have an okay grounding in the philosophy. Nowadays, since I moved to a beautiful part of Scotland, I like to spend time sitting on hilltops or by rivers.

I've mediated in some of the most ancient places in Britain - Maes Howe on Orkney, the Ring of Brodgar, the Stenness Standing Stones etc. But I'm still an asshole.

What is it like working at a company like Renegade Arts & Entertainment, a relative newcomer to the industry? The comic market is growing, and Renegade is assuredly pushing digital sales. Do you have any opinion on the digital comic market?

Alexander, who runs **Renegade**, is a good friend. So working for Renegade is very relaxed and easy, compared with some other publishers.

I wasn't actually a fan of digital comics until my wife downloaded the Buddha book and showed me it on her big iMac screen. It was so beautiful to look at...I'm a big convert now.



We're just about out of time because we want to be like your Buddha and chill under the tree. Hey, what else do you have coming down the pike?

I'm working on more Judge Dredd stories at the moment, as well as some **Judge Anderson** (Dredd's psychic colleague). There's a new **Dredd** movie coming out in September. I've just finished a project for a government Social Services department, creating a comic book starring a (real) autistic teenager who lives near Edinburgh. Look out for "Scott vs. Zombies" where Scotland's capital comes under attack from the Undead. I'm also working with Jon Haward on a new fantasy series, which will be presented as a weekly web comic. And I'm working with my writer/artist daughter - who's just had her first children's book published - on some stories I wrote for her 30 years ago, when she was still in kindergarten.

Wow! That's a ton. We'll get back at you to talk Dredd, that's going to be a great one. Thanks so much, Alan. It's an honor to chat with you!

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