



**INSIDE: GEOFF JOHNS TALKS WRITING!**

**DANNY FINGEROTH'S**

# **WRITE Now!**

**MAGAZINE**

**#9**

Feb  
2005

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In the USA

## **NEAL ADAMS: WRITER!**



**MICHAEL  
OEMING**

**BATTON  
LASH**

**PITCHING SECRETS**

Neal Adams' Monsters ©2005 Neal Adams

**THE MAGAZINE ABOUT WRITING FOR COMICS, ANIMATION, AND SCI-FI**

DANNY FINGEROTH'S  
**WRITE Now!**  
 MAGAZINE

Issue #9

February 2005

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[Neal Adams Monsters ©2005 Neal Adams]

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# READ Now!

Message from **Danny Fingeroth**, Editor-in-Chief

**W**elcome back, everybody. After the awesome response we had to the *Write Now-Draw crossover* (and the incredible sales and word-of-mouth on the *How to Draw A Comic From Script to Print DVD*), we weren't sure we'd be able to meet our own high standards. But we may come close with the issue you're holding in your hand.

Here, in *Write Now!* #9, is the long-awaited **Neal Adams** interview. In it, we see a side of Neal that isn't often focused on. It's Neal as writer or co-writer. While the interview is every bit as subjective and opinionated as you'd expect, it's also chock-full of practical tips about the comics business, the creative life, writing and art (hey—did you think he wouldn't talk about art?), and even the creation of the very planet we live on. And Neal was kind enough to provide us with amazing samples of his art from the time he was a teenager to today. Speaking of which, his all-new cover for this issue, featuring his versions of Frankenstein, Dracula and the Wolf-Man—stars of **Neal Adams' Monsters**—is rather amazing, don't you think?

But, as always, there're even more information, instruction, and insights awaiting in the issue.

There are few comics writers hotter than **Green Lantern: Rebirth's Geoff Johns** right now. So, naturally, we had to get Geoff to tell us how he does what he does. And, boy, does he tell us. If you want a blueprint for a writer's life, it's in this interview.

Want to get some idea of what it's like to write, draw and self-publish your own creation for more than ten years? Then the **Batton Lash** interview is for you! **Batton** has been putting out *Supernatural Law* for over a decade and the series' freshness shows no signs of abating. How does he do it? Read all about it here!

Then, acclaimed screenwriter **Christos N. Gage** tells how he made the leap into the world of comics and got DC to buy and publish his *Deadshot* proposal. Chris's insightful article tells you how he got the powers-that-be to take a chance on him and his ideas.

As far as **Nuts & Bolts** this issue, we've got scripts and art from **Green Lantern: Rebirth**, **Teen Titans**, **Deadshot**, and **Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill**. Creative lights including **Geoff**, **Chris**, **Batton**, as well as **Michael Avon Oeming**, **Daniel Berman** and **Andrea DiVito** show you how they ply their trades.

In coming issues, be on the lookout for interviews with and/or how-to's by **Dwayne McDuffie**, **James Robinson**, **Paul**

**Benjamin, Brian Pullido, Robert Tinnell, Neal Vokes, Gerry Conway** and **Steve Englehart**, among other folks with information you just have to know!



## SHAMELESS PLUG DEPARTMENT:

The *How To Draw Comics From Script to Print DVD* is still available at comics shops or from the TwoMorrows website, and selling like hotcakes. While it focuses mostly on art, coloring, and lettering, a large section of it is devoted to teaching the tricks of the comics writers' trade. We've had nothing but enthusiastic feedback on it from folks who have seen it.

Once again in the spring, I'll be teaching three courses at New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. I'll be teaching Writing for Comics and Graphic Novels, as well as a Level Two Intensive: Writing for Comics and Graphic Novels. In the latter course, over a period of one week—four nights and two full weekend days—you will write a comics script. In addition, I'll again be organizing and moderating a lecture series (through NYU, but given at the **Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art—MoCCA**—in Soho), called Inside The Comics Creators' Studio, in which eclectic combinations of writers and artists discuss their work. The spring semester's guest list includes **Tom DeFalco, Joe Quesada, Bill Sienkiewicz**, and **Mike Oeming**. (Last semester we had **Dennis O'Neil, Mike Mignola, R. Sikoryak, J.M. DeMatteis, Jimmy Palmiotti, Amanda Conner, Charlie Kochman, Jim Salicrup**, and **Stefan Petrucha**.) You can go to NYU's website ([www.scps.nyu.edu](http://www.scps.nyu.edu)) for more details about the courses and the seminar. (And special guests always show up in my writing classes, too.)

Also, my book *Superman On the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* is still exciting a lot of attention! You might want to check it out.

That's it from me for now. Go forth and enjoy the issue!

Write Away!

DANNY

Danny Fingeroth

THE  
END

# On Writing and Life:

# The Neal Adams Interview

Conducted 9/03/04 and 9/10/04 at Continuity Studios by **Danny Fingeroth**  
Transcribed by **Steven Tice**/Edited by **Danny Fingeroth**  
Copy-edited by **Danny Fingeroth** and **Neal Adams**

**N**eal Adams is legendary as a comics creator, artist, writer and activist. From *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* to *Batman* to *Superman/Muhammed Ali* and his current *Monsters* graphic novel, he's known for the boldness of his drawings and his opinions. But Neal thinks of himself as a storyteller more than as simply an illustrator of other people's stories. As such, writing and art are inseparable for him. As creative force behind Continuity Studios, including their Continuity Comics line, Neal's sensibilities and ideas mold the entire operation. When the opportunity to talk with him about his thoughts on writing in general and as they apply to his past, present and upcoming projects presented itself, I leaped at it. What resulted is this interview that documents Neal's very personal reflections on the state of comics storytelling, comics writing, and various and sundry related topics. Hang on tight and enjoy the ride! -DF



[Interview © 2005 Neal Adams.]



A teenaged Neal Adams did this sample piece of art. [Silent Knight™ & ©2005 DC Comics. Art ©2005 Neal Adams.]

**DANNY**

**FINGEROTH:** You were a professional from a very young age. The impression that most people have is that you didn't spend a lot of time looking in as an aspiring professional writer and artist. How accurate is that impression?

**NEAL ADAMS:** Well, it seems like that. But it's sort of like asking an actor, "It seems like you just showed up one day, and you were acting." And then you'll see that look on their face that says, "Noooo, I was pounding on the door for a very long time." Well, first of all, one of the things you don't know about me is that I come from a very—I don't like to say "poor" background, but I didn't go to college because I couldn't afford to go to college.

**DF:** You're a New York native, right?

**NA:** Sort of. I was an Army brat, so I got to move around a lot. And my father wasn't that good to the family, so things weren't that good. I couldn't really go to college. I was interested in engineering, science, and art. I thought, if I'm going to study art, I have to be able to make a living, so I studied art from the point of view of learning to draw really, really, really well and trying to get into comics, which was totally stupid. Now, you have to remember, I graduated high school in 1959. A long time ago, but the important thing about 1959 is that in 1953 comic books died, and they didn't revive until 1963 or later. Which meant that I was really in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**DF:** They weren't hiring?

**NA:** No, they didn't hire anybody new for years, and they didn't hire anybody new after that for years. There's nobody that I know in comics who's within five years of my age on either end. It may be seven years. I don't really know for sure, but my guess would be seven years.

**DF:** Maybe Archie Goodwin?

**NA:** Well, the thing you have to remember about Archie Goodwin and Denny O'Neil and even Jim Steranko is that none of these guys was aiming for comics. Roy Thomas, for example, was an English teacher. Denny O'Neil was a reporter and a writer. He wasn't intending to get into comics at all—he fell into it. Anybody

who's my age is essentially a writer, and they did something else, and then they came to comics. So I'm making that small distinction. And all of them are writers except Jim Steranko, who was a magician, and I don't think he intended to get into comics, either. He was a magician for a while, and then, in the Sixties, suddenly he veered into comics. So he may have had intentions. And whatever his instincts were at the time, they were probably right. Do magic, not comics. So I don't have contemporaries. I have Steranko as a contemporary, but he got in in a different way. When I got out of high school, my intention was to do comic books. And I went up to DC Comics and tried to show my portfolio to this older man—I believe his name was Bill Perry—who was nice enough to come out into the lobby and tell me why he wasn't going to take me inside, even though my artwork was quite excellent. If I saw that portfolio today, I'd hire the artist.

**DF:** You went to the High School of Art and Design?

**NA:** But it was called The School of Industrial Arts at the time. Probably created during the Depression to make art valid as a tool for an economy coming out of the depression. "Industrial art." I tried to get work at Archie Comics working for Jack Kirby and Joe Simon on *The Fly* and those various characters. And Joe Simon was nice enough to tell me, in a classic phone call, that he thought my work was good, and he otherwise would hire me, but he knew it would be doing me a disservice, so he would do me the biggest favor anybody could do me at that time, and that was to turn me down. So he did. Which I thanked him for, stunned. The Archie guys felt so sorry for me that they let me bring in samples of Archie pages. So I brought in samples for three weeks, and they kept on picking at them and saying it was wrong.



More of Neal's self-education as a comics artist. [©2005 Neal Adams]

In the end, I copied the great Dan DeCarlo and they gave me **Archie's Joke Book** pages to do. I wrote, penciled, inked and lettered pages for \$32.50 a page and I was glad to get the work.

Howard Nostrand, who was doing a comic strip, needed a "kid" to do backgrounds. It was a Western comic strip based on the **Bat Masterson** TV series. Somehow I heard that he needed somebody. So I went to visit him, and I worked on **Bat Masterson**. After a while, he let me do things he probably shouldn't have let me do. I did backgrounds and penciled and laid out strips. Did whole towns in one panel. Wonderful stuff. I got to work really hard, which was fine for me. Also, I got to do some of his advertising work.

**DF:** Was that your first advertising work?

**NA:** Yes. And I learned things I'd never learned anyplace else. I must have worked there all of three months, but I got three years' worth of education, because there were other artists in the studio apartment, really good artists doing illustration, retouching and advertising comic strips in the Fifties. I learned a lot of stuff from Howard "Red" Sudik and "Red" Wexler. I learned a lot of discipline. Discipline from Red Wexler—just incredible. He came in at eight o'clock in the morning and left at four, didn't draw anymore the rest of the day. There's something very important about that. Of course, I didn't learn that. But I respected it.

**DF:** He worked the whole time he was at the desk?

**NA:** He worked the whole time. So if I went over and talked to him, he'd look at his work and say, "You're talking to me." And I'd go, "Yeah." He'd say, "But I'm working." "Oh. Sorry." And I'd walk away. And I got that. That was good. And I would go and talk to Howard, and Howard would have some music on. "Neal, this is the Newport Jazz Concert in '57! It's the greatest! Sit down! Listen to this!" I'd say: "I gotta do backgrounds." "No, sit down! Don't go in the next room! Listen to this! Do you want a beer?" "No, I don't want a beer, Howard."

**DF:** So that was a different style.

**NA:** A different style, that probably wasn't good, but still, I'd work around the clock.

**DF:** What kind of jobs were you doing with these guys? These were advertising jobs?

**NA:** Industrial slide films, stuff like that. An incredible variety of jobs. Around the clock, and I'm watching Wexler in the next room. Four o'clock, and he's out. And he makes more money than Howard, y'know? Wexler told me a story one time on one of the few breaks. "I'm making coffee, so I'll tell you a story. When I finish the coffee, that's the end of the story." He said, "I have this friend I take the train with every day, and we read the paper, and we talk. And he lives not too far from me, and every once in a while we get together. Not a lot, but I consider him a friend. So he got on the train one day, and he said, 'I think I have a job that's perfect for you. I think I have good money for it. It's just a wonderful job. Everything you've told me, I can't imagine that this wouldn't be the greatest job in the world for you, so I'd like to shove it your way.'" And Wexler said no. The guy said, "Why? I don't believe it. I talk to you every day. This is a good job, I'm telling you!" And Wexler said, "You and I are friends. We know each other; we socialize together. When you work for somebody, you're not friends anymore. Something will happen—could be anything—and suddenly we won't be friends. I'd rather have you as a friend."

**DF:** That's a valuable story.

**NA:** A valuable story. And then I go into the next room, and the Newport Jazz Festival's on, and Howard's smoking and drinking beer.

**DF:** So you had the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other.

**NA:** Exactly. So I learned from Wexler, and I learned from Howard. The things I learned from Howard are, yeah, you can work around the clock, but at some point you have to sleep, and the world has to make sense. You have to be healthy; you have to go to the gym. You can't smoke them cigarettes and drink that beer.

**DF:** So from there you somehow ended up on **Ben Casey**, where you did your first writing?

**NA:** No. The first comics writing I did was in high school. Now, when I was in high school, and even in junior high school, I wanted to write and draw comics. And the question was, how do you do it? How do you learn, and how do you do it?

**DF:** Did you have friends who were into it, too, or it was just you?

**NA:** In the world I knew there weren't people who wanted to do comic books the way I did. Maybe on another planet, but—

**DF:** But none of your high school buddies.

**NA:** No, not the same. So I was by myself. I'd go out and buy my oaktag. I would steal oaktag from the local supermarket dumpster, where in-between the egg cartons they'd have oaktag. So I found out about the size of comics art pages. I learned they were twice as big as they're printed, so I just ruled them twice as big. Then I started to write my own stories. The only good comic books around in those days were war stories, and I hate to say that to anybody else who reads comic books. Those people who are fans of comic books from those days—I'm sure they think there were other good books. But in the war stories—you had Joe Kubert, you had Russ Heath.

**DF:** Who was writing them, Bob Kanigher?

**NA:** Kanigher. His short stories were dynamic. I would study the editors. I would study Julie Schwartz, and I would study Bob Kanigher, because they were, as far as I was concerned, the best editors. And I figured

out how they worked. So I would write a story like a Julie Schwartz story, or I'd write a Bob Kanigher story. Bob Kanigher's stories were easier. I figured out the key to Julie Schwartz when I was about seventeen, and it was that Julie Schwartz was in love with a new idea. In other words, all you had to do was find the new idea.

**DF:** Hence, as he famously used to say: "Be original"?

**NA:** Hence "be original." If you found a new idea—something he didn't know or something that intrigued him—then you could wrap any story around it. He'd buy the rest of the story just for that one new idea. So what you would do is, feed him ideas and then feed him this one idea that he would like, and then you'd wrap a story around it. That's how you got past Julie.

Julie asked me one time when he was my editor, "How come you get stories past me so easy?" I said, "Because, Julie, I've got you figured out." Julie said, "Nobody's got me figured out." And I said, "No, I've got you figured out. You buy that little idea. It's a little scientific thing."

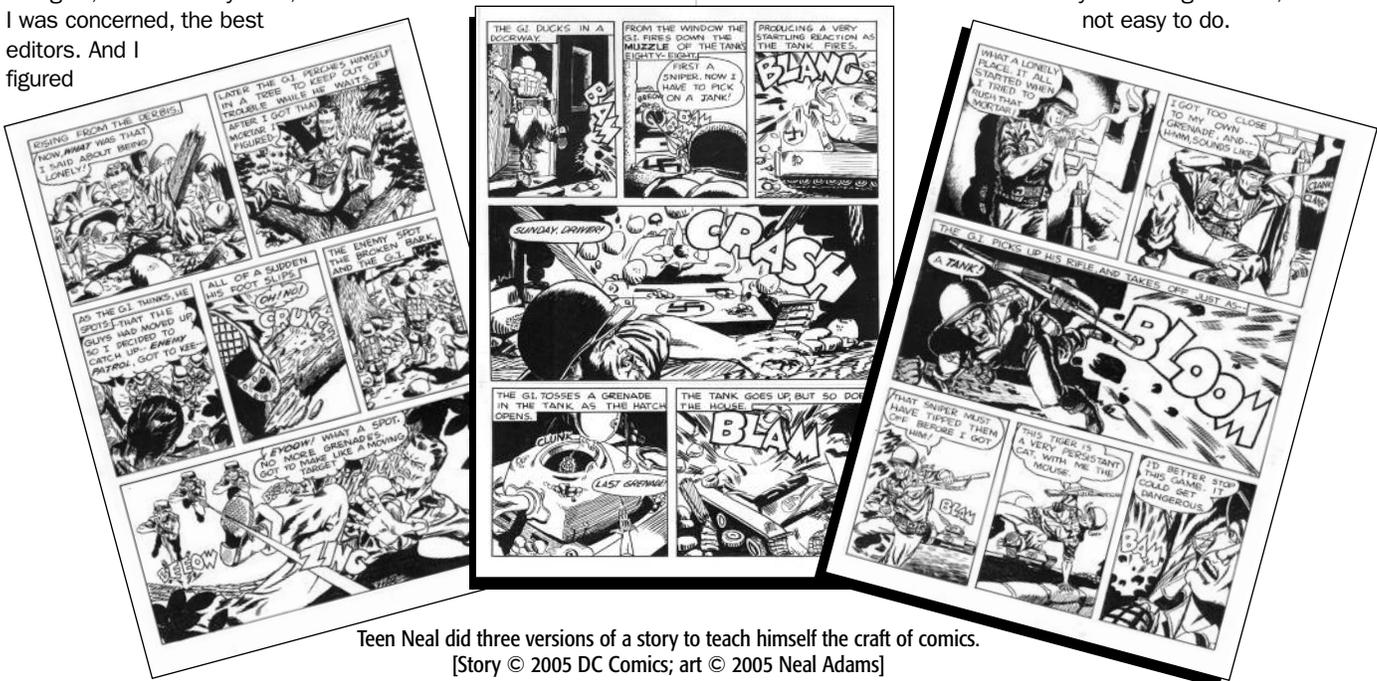
At times I would write my own Kanigher-type stories but then I would take a Bob Kanigher story that was, say, drawn by Jerry Grandenetti, and I would draw it in another style—my style, or an imitation of Joe Kubert's style, or whatever I happened to be into at the time. I would draw the same story to see how I would interpret that story that somebody else did. And then I would come back to it, after I had gotten recognizably better, so that I could see that I had gotten better, and I would take the same story, and draw it again in the "new, improved" Neal Adams style to see whatever my improvement was. There was one Bob Kanigher story, I believe, that I did two and a half times, just to see what the improvement was.

**DF:** Would you change the number of panels or the dialogue or anything?

**NA:** No, I would avoid doing that, because I didn't want to make the change arbitrary. I'd try to think out solutions in a better way.

**DF:** So you taught yourself storytelling, essentially.

**NA:** All of this was experimental and part of a process. And it was a heavy process because I was trying to jam ten years of education into two or three years of high school, which is not easy to do.



Teen Neal did three versions of a story to teach himself the craft of comics.  
[Story © 2005 DC Comics; art © 2005 Neal Adams]



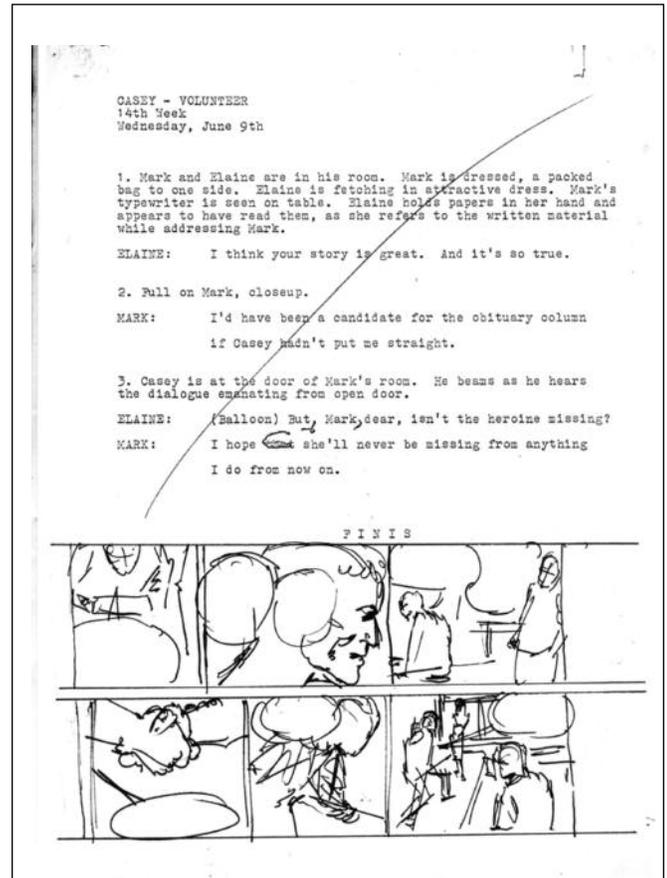
How do you get past Julie Schwartz? Find the "new idea." [© 2005 Neal Adams.]

**DF:** Were your teachers at all encouraging, or did they tell you that you were wasting your time?

**NA:** They all thought I was crazy. To give you an example, in my next-to-last year in this cartooning class, a group of us had forced the school to teach comic books. They didn't want to teach. We didn't hit them or anything, but we really kind of leaned on them, and the teachers got behind it, and they even hired a new teacher to teach us cartooning—a comic book-related thing. Anyway, the ringleader was Charles Allen. Charles Allen is one of the heroes of my life. He's the guy who told me that I was crazy to do comics. Mr. Allen knew I was serious. He got it. So he would try to talk me out of it. I remember one day I had a conversation with him, and he said, "Look, Neal, you can't do this. It's not going to happen." I said, "Mr. Allen, you did a syndicated strip." He had taken it over from the guy who originally created it. I had read it when I was a kid, and then he took it over, and his style was slightly different, but he got to do it. And I said, "Mr. Allen, I've never really seen an article, a news article or anything in the Cartoonists Society newsletter on you." And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Because you're black." And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "And you're telling me it's impossible?" And he said, "No. Nothing's impossible." So I said, "Okay, I'm going to do it."

So we were supposed to hand in ten assignments at the end of the school year—either a comic strip, a comic book page, or a cartoon if you were taking cartooning. I brought my portfolio in at the end of the year, and it was 110 pages. Now, people ask me how I got good, and I try to tell them, "Look, it has nothing to do with intelligence, it has nothing to do with ability, because when I was in school, there were people who were better than

me. If you're real with yourself, first you have to admit that you're not the smartest person in the world. Then you have to admit that you're not the most talented person in the world. But there is one thing you can control, and that's the amount of work you do." So everybody else came in with their portfolio with their ten pieces. I came in with my portfolio with 110 pieces. I was better than anybody in my class, not because I was a better artist, but because I had done 110 pieces. Mr. Allen gave me a B+. "Mr. Allen, why a B+?" He said, "Well, not all of these are on assignment. You can do better than that."



A page of Neal's script and thumbnail sketches for a *Ben Casey* comic strip. [© 2005 NEA - Bing Crosby Productions.]

**DF:** So you taught yourself storytelling and writing. You wrote dialogue for your comics?

**NA:** Yeah. People think that dialogue is writing.

**DF:** No, dialogue is dialogue.

**NA:** You have to separate writing into prose, dialogue, and storytelling. Prose isn't always storytelling. It is when you talk about books, but when you talk about film, or you talk about comic books, the way you tell the story is storytelling, and it's a kind of writing. If you're smart enough to put good dialogue in there, well, that's all the better. But it's very, very hard to create a story if you don't have a good storyteller. Sort of like a movie writer who gives their script to a bad director, and it just turns into crap.

The Father's Test Ben Casey

One of the problems is getting Casey assuming a new batch of patients and giving one of the famous well-known episodes which he writes to the class of the class of the class with a few of the other people head of the class who he is interested about 40 years old we believe that has more like 48. After that the return to the past the gentleman (Dr. C) and confirms the fact that he is a professional writer. Inward with curiosity, Casey invites for coffee and a talk on the subject of healing the mind, matter, enough not to expect a curative as professional treatment.

This is Ben's story. Casey young man who goes to medical school, then the war came so he joined up and became a medic. When the war he had made some valuable business contacts and after the war had gone into the business of designing and producing medical supplies and instruments. His business prospered for a while, and now an unqualified doctor business world he was still disappointed with life. His disappointment and ambition to find a cure for the work and he himself had cut throat type of competition, another man found he had less than a competent business man himself. He has two children, but they are growing and have a world of their own. He decided to take up medicine again. Ben Casey time goes by Casey finds him a suitable companion and has to be avoided giving some professional treatment as a patient. Instead he gets some to explain function of the machine used in the hospital some of which he has designed and produced himself. He also discovers that Ben Casey a different teaching problem than the other since he was a medic during the war he has tendency to resort to what he learned and emergency conditions and must be broken. He is like a good doctor. People: during

DF: Comics is a collaborative medium.

NA: No, it's not a collaborative medium. It would be nice if it were a collaborative medium. It's hard to make it a collaborative medium. When I was a teenager, I was invited to the Cartoonists Society a number of times, and I went a number of times. One of

the things that I observed, almost consistently, is that every comic strip artist I talked to privately hated their writer, thought he was an ass\*le, resented how much money he'd make, because he'd make 50% of the money. And then they would tell you they could do the same thing, they could do it the same way, no problem, so why is this guy getting all this money? These were the strip guys. Well, there weren't many comic book guys to talk to. I'm sure that the

ADAMS

CASEY (DAILY) THE ANNE PALMER STORY  
Fifth Book  
Monday, Jan. 11, 1965  
(Strip for this week due Nov. 30.)

1--The scenes change from previous but they are still on campus. Ben stares straight ahead slightly disturbed.

CASEY: That's quite a charge you've made, Anne...Dr. Harvey Lanier prejudiced against women medical students!

(DITO SC)

You're sure you want to let it stand as stated?

2--She looks at him pleadingly.

ANNE: But it's true! You might not be aware of it, because you're just a part-time lecturer on his staff--

3--Now she grabs his arm in her intensity.

ANNE: --But ask anyone in the administration--if you can get them to talk! And particularly ask any of the women med students!



Neal's creative process in plotting, scripting, thumbnailing, and drawing the *Ben Casey* strip.  
[© 2005 NEA - Bing Crosby Productions.]

comic book guys felt the same way, but they were like prisoners in jail. "Don't open your mouth, whatever the problem is. Shut Up. You've got a job, pal, that's all that matters."

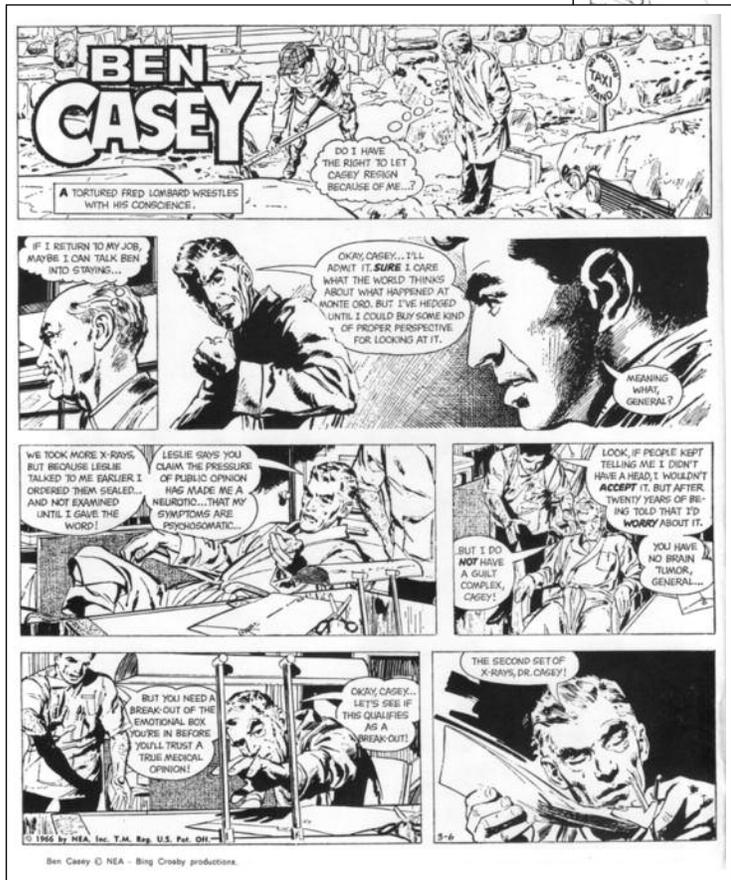
DF: So the writers would bitch about the artists, and the artists would bitch about the writers?

NA: No, the writers never bitched, they lived in this rose-colored world. They wrote comic strips, and they made tremendously good money. They made half the money. So what did they have to complain about?

DF: You often get the impression with strips that the same person is doing the writing and the art.

NA: At least half, but the "little foot" stuff—the realistic stuff—got written and drawn by two different guys. The cartoony stuff, you know, it's guys making up gags. Gag writers are gag writers. You don't have a guy writing gags and a guy drawing gags. But realistic stuff went the other way, except in certain cases like Milton Caniff and Hal Foster and people like that who did the writing and the art.

The lesson that I learned from those guys was that the



**BEN CASEY**

A TORTURED FRED LOWBARD WRESTLES WITH HIS CONSCIENCE.

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO LET CASEY RESIGN BECAUSE OF ME?

IF I RETURN TO MY JOB, MAYBE I CAN TALK BEN INTO STAYING...

OKAY, CASEY... I'LL ADMIT IT. SURE I CARE WHAT THE WORLD THINKS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT MONTE CARO. BUT I'VE HEDGED UNTIL I COULD BUY SOME KIND OF PROPER PERSPECTIVE FOR LOOKING AT IT.

MEANING WHAT, GENERAL?

WE TOOK MORE X-RAYS BUT BECAUSE LESBIE CLAIMED THE PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION ORDERED THEM SEALED... AND NOT EXAMINED UNTIL I GAVE THE WORD!

LESBIE SAID YOU CLAIM THE PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION HAS MADE ME A NEUROTIC... THAT MY SYMPTOMS ARE PSYCHOSOMATIC...

LOOK, IF PEOPLE KEEP TELLING ME I DIDN'T HAVE A HEAD, I WOULDN'T ACCEPT IT. BUT AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF BEING TOLD THAT I'D WORRY ABOUT IT.

BUT I DO NOT HAVE A GUILT COMPLEX, CASEY!

YOU HAVE NO BRAIN, GENERAL!

BUT YOU NEED A BREAK-OUT OF THE EMOTIONAL BOX YOU'RE IN BEFORE YOU'LL TRUST A TRUE MEDICAL OPINION!

OKAY, CASEY... LET'S SEE IF THIS QUALIFIES AS A BREAK-OUT!

THE SECOND SET OF X-RAYS, DR. CASEY!

Ben Casey © NEA - Bing Crosby productions.

# Master of the Universes

# The Geoff Johns Interview

Interview conducted via e-mail  
by **Danny Fingeroth**, November, 2004

**G**eoﬀ Johns was born in Detroit, Michigan January 25th, 1973. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Anissa, as a writer for both comic books and television. He's currently working on **Green Lantern: Rebirth**, **Teen Titans**, **The Flash** and **JSA** for DC Comics, where he's happily under contract and able to work with, in his words, "the best people and characters in the business."

**DANNY FINGEROTH:** Talk about your background, Geoff. Where'd you grow up? Where'd you go to school?

**GEOFF JOHNS:** I was born in Detroit, proud of it. Some of the most real and hard-working people in America. And passionate about their sports. The Red Wings, the Pistons, the Tigers and now the Lions are turning it around. When I turned 12 we moved up towards Pontiac, where the Lions used to play, to a city called Clarkston. I graduated from Clarkston High in '91, went to Michigan State University. There I majored in Media Arts and Film.

Michigan State is a huge school, over

35,000 students, and the largest non-military cafeteria in the country.

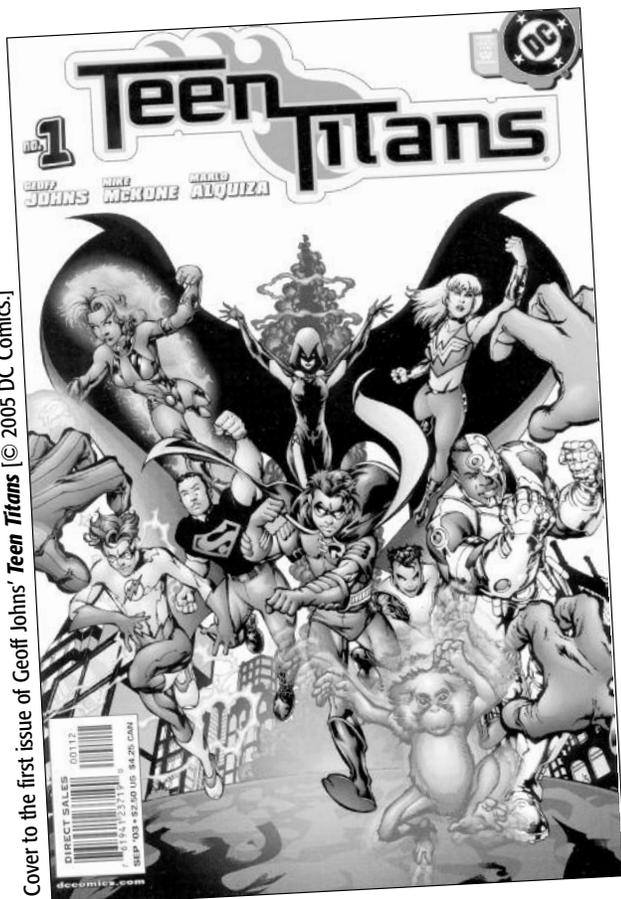
Unfortunately, I had the pleasure of working a morning shift in the cafeteria in school. I once made over 1,000 silver dollar pancakes in one morning and my other fun fact was when I burned my arm to a 3rd degree on an oven door. Ah, those were the days. MSU is massive, there's even a vast empty field about a third of a mile long called "the tundra" in the winter. Walking across it, wind chill once got to like 40 below. They cancelled class for the first time in something like 60 years, but I had to work anyway. MSU does have a great screenwriting program, media arts program, and an undying spirit.



**DF:** How old were you when you started reading comics? What were your favorites at different stages in your life?

**GJ:** I read comics, mostly my uncle's old ones, in my grandmother's attic, but I didn't really get into them until late in 1984 when I was about 11 or so. The first comic I really remember picking up was **Batman and the Outsiders #13**. It was a great stand-alone story, to me at least, focusing on all these weird characters helping Batman by acting out his origin. I knew who Batman was, had no idea who anyone else was, but that was part of the fun—discovering these other characters Batman shared his world with. Metamorpho, Black Lightning, and Katana? No idea who they were, but I liked them. After that, believe it or not, the next book I remember buying was **Crisis On Infinite Earths #3**. That's what hooked me. A huge universe of super-heroes, massive events, twists and turns and shocks as **Crisis** went on. The death of my favorite hero from the cartoons, Flash. The death of Supergirl. And the realignment of history. I had no clue what the real story was, but I followed it enough to start getting into different books. **Justice League**, **Green Lantern**, **Superman**, **Titans**. I also got into **Hulk**, **Captain America** and **The Avengers**. And I bought back issues of **The Flash**. He died, but he died a hero, and I was just interested in reading more about him. Those were some of my favorite comics. I didn't really follow writers until I was in high school. I remember **Animal Man** coming out and really loving that. And Mark Waid took over **The Flash** soon after.

**DF:** Aside from the uncle who gave you the comics, were there



Cover to the first issue of Geoff Johns' *Teen Titans* [© 2005 DC Comics.]

family members or friends who were involved in creative endeavors and/or who encouraged you in that direction?

**GJ:** My grandmother on my Mom's side was always making things and writing, as was my Mom. She actually wrote a book. I guess that's where I got my interest from. My brother, Jeremy, was into comics like I was and we'd play War for comics, trade them, talk about them and beg our Mom to drive us to the only comic shop in the area. I used to visit my best friend, Paul, in Detroit every summer and he was really into Marvel and I was into DC, though he got me into X-Men during the Mutant Massacre. There was a store literally across the street where we'd buy old comics. The guy that ran it told us to just look up the prices in the guide and tell him. Talk about the honor system.

**DF:** What movies, TV shows, books did you love and influenced you?

**GJ:** From television and film I grew up on **Hulk**, **Greatest American Hero**, **Back to the Future**, **Raiders of the Lost Ark** and **Star Wars**. With books, I was fortunate enough to have an amazing teacher in junior high that introduced me to **Lord of the Flies**, **Animal Farm**, **Brave New World**, Mark Twain and dozens of others I'd never heard of previously.

**DF:** Were you writing from an early age? If so, what kinds of stuff?

**GJ:** I started writing in junior high, just stories for class and creating comic books for school projects. Typical teenage stuff,

though I've used a lot of my characters in comics: Plunder, Tar Pit, Girder and a bunch of others.

**DF:** You made that famous "lucky" phone call to director Richard Donner's office that resulted in your becoming his assistant. But in most cases, "luck" has to do with being prepared for opportunity. What do you think you did to prepare you for the opportunities that presented themselves to you?

**GJ:** I work hard. I always have. I don't know anyone who hasn't that made it. You've got to want it bad enough that when you do get the chance, when it comes along, you work your ass off and you don't even question it. When Donner asked me to be his assistant, it wasn't like "Hey, I made it." It was like "NOW the work starts." And it did. I worked 90-plus hours a week, from the set to watching dailies and everything in between. It was never easy. I got more comfortable with my duties, but it was still work. And I did that for two years, then wrote **Stars and S.T.R.I.P.E.** and co-wrote **Justice Society of America** for another year at the same time. That took up my nights and weekends. Then **Flash** came along and David Goyer took time off of **JSA**. It was getting busy. When some other opportunities, both in and out of comics came up, it was time to move on. But I did it with confidence, and left Donner on a high note. We still talk a lot, I see him a lot and I'm working with him on some projects.

The thing is, when you get that chance you have to take the



**Teen Titans/Legion of Super Heroes** crossover. Geoff wrote the **Titans** half and shared scripting duties on the **Legion** half with Mark Waid. Art on the left by Mike McKone and Marlo Alquiza, on the right by Ivan Reis and Marc Campos. [© 2005 DC Comics.]

TEEN TITANS #17  
 Titans Tomorrow Part I of III  
 "Big Brothers and Sisters"  
 Geoff Johns  
 REVISED 8/18/04

REFERENCE:

- The Joker's Daughter (see the original design from the 60's Titans issues – you can get some good reference at [www.titanstower.com](http://www.titanstower.com))
- Aquaman #16, 17, 18 (current)
- Max Mercury
- Current Aquaman
- Geo-Force
- Current Black Lightning (classic costume as seen in Outsiders)
- Classic Metamorpho
- Current Green Arrow
- Classic Silver Age Robotman from original Doom Patrol
- Grace from the Outsiders
- Female Dove
- Bumblebee

PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

Top third of the page. An establishing shot of Gotham City, ten years from now. And it looks slightly darker, the large metal spirals of the gothic city beginning to bend. The building before us: WAYNE ENTERPRISES, has been empty for a few years now.

The twenty-foot sign on the roof – WAYNE – is falling apart.

Along the bottom of the sign is a group of cops, led by Commissioner Montoya and retired Commissioner Gordon. Montoya is older, obviously, but still in good shape. Gordon hanging on as best he can. They all have guns drawn.

1. CAPTION: Gotham City.

2. CAPTION: ...Ten years from now.

3. MONTOYA: I want this roof covered TOP to BOTTOM.

PANEL TWO.

Closer on Gordon and Montoya. Montoya looking over at her senior as the other cops fan out.

4. MONTOYA: I appreciate your help locating this one, Gordon. I know you're officially retired but –

(CONTINUED)  
 PAGE ONE CONTINUED.

5. GORDON: Save it, Montoya.

6. GORDON: I heard what this lunatic did to ALLEN and JOSIE last week.

7. GORDON: She's JUST like her father.

PANEL THREE.  
 Tight on Montoya.

8. MONTOYA: She's WORSE.

PANEL FOUR.

On the group of uniformed cops, a tall and lanky cop with black hair bends down, examining a package wrapped up in a bow. Montoya cries out to them.

9. IVES: Hey, Commish. Think she left another one of her RIDDLE-ME-THIS notes. Just like her Dad. The LOON.

10. IVES: I can hear it. Probably a set of CHATTERING TEETH like the last –

11. MONTOYA: Ives! NO!

PANEL FIVE.

Pull back a bit, as the box explodes and takes several of the uniformed cops with it.

SFX: BOOOOMM!!

PANEL SIX.

Montoya and Gordon are on the ground, blown back by the explosion. Other cops are around, wounded or worse. Montoya struggles to push herself up.

SFX: AHAHAHAHAHA!

12. JOKER'S DAUGHTER (OFF-PANEL): Commissioner and...COMMISSIONER.



Pages from **Teen Titans #17**, "Big Brothers and Sisters," written by Geoff Johns, with art by Mike McKone and Marlo Alquiza.

Notice how Geoff's script tells editor and penciler what character reference they'll need for the story. [© 2005 DC Comics.]

**Teen Titans #17 – Geoff Johns**

PAGE TWO.

PANEL ONE.

Large introduction shot of the JOKER'S DAUGHTER. She walks across the ledge, heel to toe with a smile on her face. In her hands a Joker-in-the-box pops up. A hose in the center of its smile, as if it is about to spray laughing gas at them.

Her costume should be a new design of her original, but let's keep the same color schematic. Purple, green and the black and white diamonds. (www.titanstower.com has some great pictures of her)

Duela should be sexy and lethal.

1. JOKER'S DAUGHTER: Let's turn those FROWNS –

SFX: BOINGGG

2. JOKER'S DAUGHTER: – upside DOWN!

3. TITLE: TITANS TOMORROW PART I

4. TITLE: BIG BROTHERS AND SISTERS

5. CREDITS:

6. TEEN TITANS ORIGIN BOX: What do teenage superheroes do on the Weekends? They hang with the TEEN TITANS! Superboy – Conner Kent. Cloned from the World's Greatest Hero, Superman and the World's Greatest Villain, Lex Luthor. Wonder Girl – Cassie Sandsmark. Blessed with the powers of the Greek Gods. Beast Boy – Garfield Logan. Animal shape-shifter. Robin – Tim Drake. Detective Protégé of Batman. Cyborg – Victor Stone. Half-man, half-machine. Raven – Empathic daughter of the demon Trigon. Kid Flash – Bart Allen. The latest super-speedster following the legacy of the Flash. Starfire – Koriand'r. Alien Warrior Princess.

PANEL TWO.

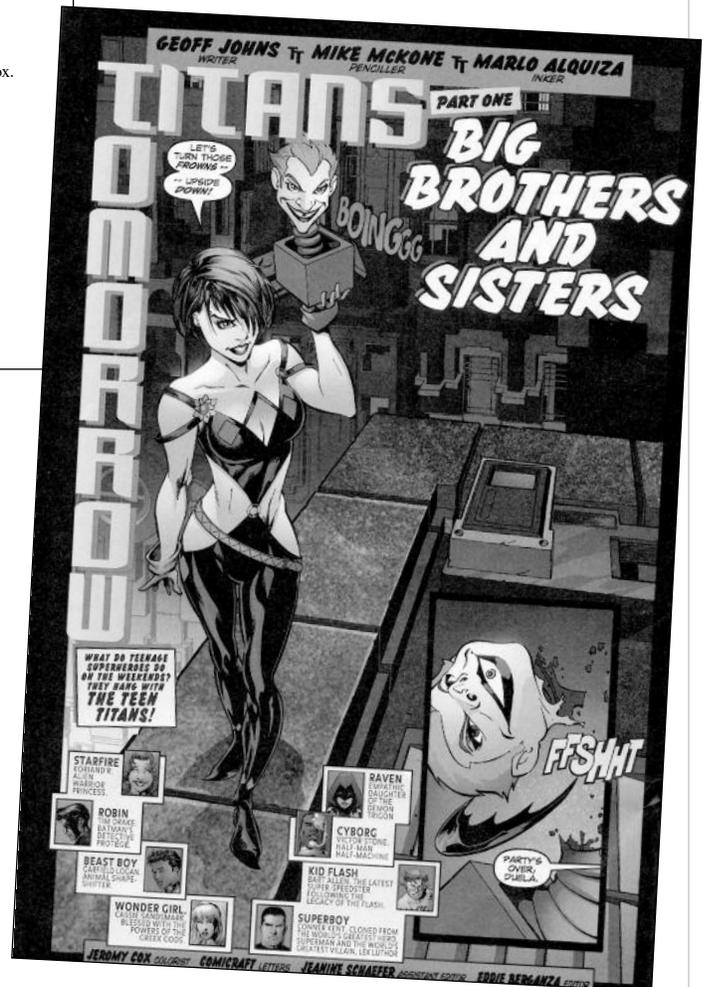
Suddenly, a razor-sharp batarang flies through the air, cutting the head off of the Joker-in-the-box. Joker's Daughter turns around, grinning.

SFX: ffsht!

7. BATMAN (OFF-PANEL): Party's over, Duela.

Geoff works full-script, giving the panel breakdowns and the dialogue and captions in the script that goes to the artist.

[© 2005 DC Comics.]



Pages from the history-making **Green Lantern: Rebirth #1**, written by Geoff, with art by Ethan Van Sciver.  
 [© 2005 DC Comics.]

**Green Lantern: Rebirth #1 – Geoff Johns**

“Blackest Night”  
 Geoff Johns

REVISED 6/15/04

REFERENCE:

- The sun: [http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov/data/realtime/cit\\_304/512/](http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov/data/realtime/cit_304/512/)
- Another pic of the sun: <http://www.solarviews.com/raw/sun/sun.jpg>
- Area 51/Surrounding desert: <http://www.ufomind.com/area51/photos/>
- Tikaboo Peak: <http://www.serve.com/mahood/nellis/gallery/gallery.htm>
- Yankees Stadium: <http://www.baseball-statistics.com/Ballparks/NYY/>
- Aerial Platform: [http://www.cherrypicker.ie/product/category\\_view.asp?JSID=71](http://www.cherrypicker.ie/product/category_view.asp?JSID=71)

COMIC REFERENCE:

- Showcase #22 Green Lantern Archives #1 – Abin Sur’s ship
- Guy Gardner: Warrior #0 (Vuldarian Version of Warrior)
- Guy Gardner: Warrior #29 (Warrior’s Bar, Exterior and Interior)
- Green Arrow #20 (current series, Ferris Aircraft)
- Spectre #1 (Hal Jordan, Carol Ferris)
- Black Hand (Who’s Who)
- Warden John Economos of Belle Reve, Belle Reve Prison (Suicide Squad #1)
- Hector Hammond (Who’s Who)
- Emerald Twilight – Green Lantern #48, #49 and #50

**Green Lantern: Rebirth #1 – Geoff Johns**

“Blackest Night”  
 Geoff Johns

REVISED 6/15/04

PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

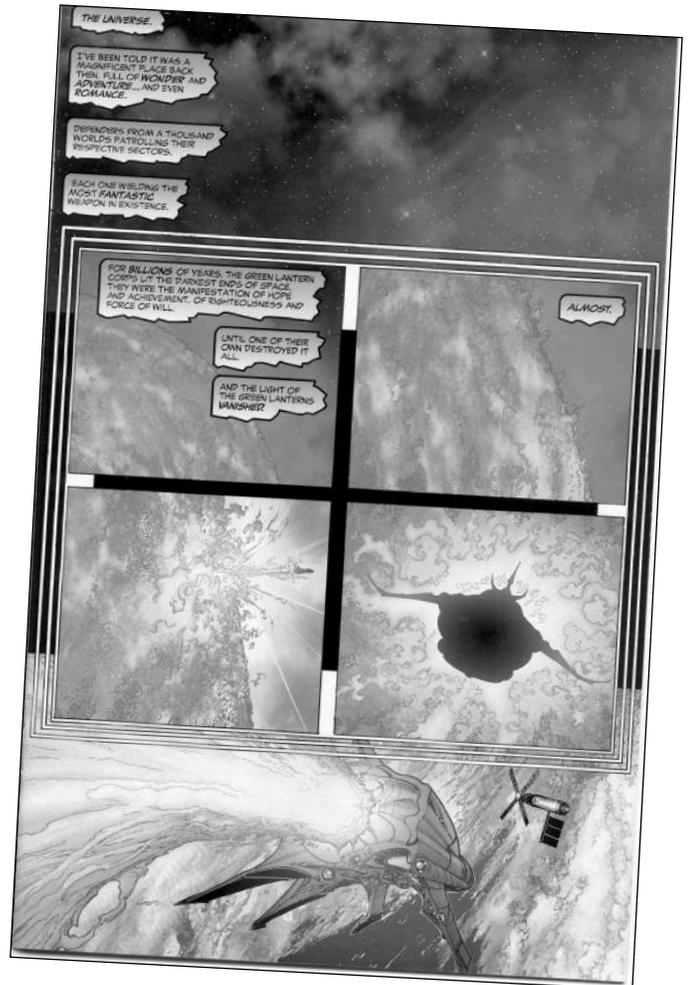
Across the top of the page, we’re looking out at space. Stars glittering, if we look close we can see the Big Dipper, but it’s slightly angled.

- \*1. CAPTION (KYLE): The Universe.
  - \*Kyle’s captions should be black on green, and ripped as if it were from a page in a book. In a journal he might be keeping. It’s print though, not script.
  - 2. CAPTION (KYLE): I’ve been told it was a magnificent place back then. Full of WONDER and ADVENTURE...and even ROMANCE.
  - 3. CAPTION (KYLE): Defenders from a thousand worlds patrolling their respective sectors.
  - 4. CAPTION (KYLE): Each one wielding the most FANTASTIC weapon in existence.
- PANEL TWO.
- We tilt down now, our sun entering into frame. We’re close to it, and from here it’s like one of those telescopic photos. The sun glows brilliantly, flames thousands of miles high rippling across the outer edge. (See reference, websites listed above)
- 5. CAPTION (KYLE): For BILLIONS of years, the Green Lantern Corps lit the darkest ends of space. They were the manifestation of hope and achievement. Of righteousness and force of will.
  - 7. CAPTION (KYLE): Until one of their own destroyed it all.
  - 8. CAPTION (KYLE): And the light of the Green Lanterns VANISHED.

PANEL THREE.

Another angle on the sun. A small green spark, barely visible, is on the surface.

- 9. CAPTION (KYLE): ALMOST.



**Green Lantern: Rebirth #1 – Geoff Johns**

(CONTINUED)  
 PAGE ONE CONTINUED.  
 PANEL FOUR.

Profile shot of the sun as a silver spaceship blasts out of it. The sun is on the left of the panel here, flames dancing around, the spaceship shooting out of it left to right at incredible force. Green flames come from the engines.

The ship looks similar to the one Abin Sur first crashed on Earth, though with a slightly more modern design. (See reference, Showcase #22)

[NO DIALOGUE.]

PANEL FIVE.

And now the spaceship flies past us through space. Flames lingering on it, evaporating as the ship escapes the sun’s immense gravity and enters the cold vacuum. Its thrusters working overtime, again with green flames. The ship flies, arcing through space, slightly out of control. It’s obviously been banged up, the driver is not a master pilot.

[NO DIALOGUE.]

PANEL SIX.

The ship heads away from us, fire burning in its jets. Towards the looming planet filling up the background.

[NO DIALOGUE.]

# Counselor of the Macabre

# The Batton Lash Interview

Conducted via e-mail November, 2004  
By **Danny Fingeroth**

**B**atton Lash studied cartooning and graphic arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York, where his instructors included Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman.

After graduating, he took on various art-related jobs, including doing pasteups for an ad agency and being comic book writer-artist Howard Chaykin's first assistant. As a freelance illustrator, Lash did drawings for **Garbage** magazine, a children's workbook, the book **Rock 'n' Roll Confidential**, the Murder to Go participatory theater group, a reconstructive surgery firm, and other projects.

In 1979, Brooklyn Paper Publications asked Lash to create a comic strip and he came up with "**Wolff & Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre**," which ran in **The Brooklyn Paper** until 1996 and in **The National Law Journal** from 1983 to 1997.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Lash drew **W&B** stories for such publications as TSR's **Polyhedron**, **American Fantasy**, and **Monster Scene**. Original Wolff & Byrd stories also appeared in a number of comic books and anthologies, including **Satan's Six**, **Mr. Monster**, **Munden's Bar**, **Frankie's Freightmare**, **Crack-a-Boom**, **The Big Bigfoot Book**, and **Murder by Crowquill**.

Since May, 1994, Wolff & Byrd have held court in **Supernatural Law**, their own comic book series from Exhibit A Press, which Lash established with his wife, Jackie Estrada. Exhibit A has published several collections of the comic book issues (most recently **Mr. Negativity And Other Tales of Supernatural Law**) and two collections of the weekly comic strips, as well as four specials featuring Mavis, W&B's intrepid secretary. The comic book is currently under option by Stampede Entertainment, which is developing it as major live-action film.

Lash's non W&B work has included art for Hamilton Comics' short-lived horror line (**Grave Tales**, **Dread of Night**, etc.); **The Big Book of Death**, **The Big Book of Weirdos**, **The Big Book of Urban Legends**, and the **Big Book of Thugs** for Paradox Press; and **Aesop's Desecrated Fables** for Rip Off Press. He also wrote the notorious **Archie Meets the Punisher**, the 1994 crossover between Archie Comics and Marvel Comics. As writer for the **Radioactive Man** series for Bongo Comics, he shared in the Eisner 2002 Best Humor Title honors. He was nominated for two Harvey Awards in 2003 and for three Harveys in 2004.

**DANNY FINGEROTH:** Where'd you grow up, Batton? Where'd you go to school?

**BATTON LASH:** I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. I attended a parochial grammar school and James Madison High School, whose alumni included EC publisher Bill Gaines and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, for what's that's worth!



Batton Lash and Jackie Estrada at WonderCon 2004.

**DF:** Were you writing and drawing in elementary or high school?

**BL:** Oh yeah—I don't remember a time when I wasn't writing and drawing. I'd do lousy in school, but I always got an "A" for compositions. My father would give me scratchpads when I was a kid and I'd make my own comics (he would staple them for me). In high school, I "graduated" to drawing on Bristol with pen and ink. I was always doing cartoons for friends and family.

**DF:** Was there anybody in your early life that inspired or encouraged you in creative directions?

**BL:** I had an aunt who was my biggest supporter, booster, and cheerleader when I was a kid. It wasn't that my parents weren't interested in my creative endeavors, but I had four siblings, so they had their hands full! My Aunt Ann worked in Manhattan—the proverbial single career woman. She went to museums, the theatre, and art galleries. She would often take me along, introducing me to New York and its culture. For a kid who only knew Brooklyn, it was very exciting to go to the "city"! My aunt would always ask me what I was working on, read my little homemade comics, and encouraged me to be creative. And she still does! I was very fortunate I had someone like that in my life.

**DF:** How'd you end up going to SVA?

**BL:** I would read bios of cartoonists and most of them would say they attended the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. When I decided that I wanted to have a career in comics, I figured that was the place to go!

**DF:** Was SVA a good experience?

**BL:** Yes it was. I met a lot of great people. In my second year, I was in the right place at the right time when Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman became instructors at SVA. Ironically, although I went there to get into comics, I was discouraged from doing so! Will and Harvey were both very generous to me, but they didn't think I had "it." So I had to expand my horizons. During my years there, I stopped reading comics for



Cover to *Supernatural Law* #40 [©2005 Batton Lash.]

the first time in my life and went cold turkey. I believe that was the best thing that could've happened to me.

**DF:** Really? After a lifetime of reading comics, didn't you suffer from withdrawal?

**BL:** Not necessarily. At the time—this would be 1974—I was getting pretty disenchanted with comic books. I still liked comics; I didn't like what was happening to comics. Maybe I was just outgrowing them, but I thought the wild creative streak of only a few years earlier was missing. I sensed a mean-spiritedness was creeping into the stories. Everything was so cynical—or maybe I was just more knowledgeable about how the business operated. Nevertheless, I believed there was a malaise in the industry that was filtered through fanzines, convention panels, and finally, the comic books themselves. In fact, whenever Eisner and Kurtzman had a “pro” come in to lecture, almost all of them would warn us that there would be no comics industry by 1980! Not very

encouraging. Recalling all this now, brings to mind Eisner's recent observation about the state of the business: “I've seen this industry die five times already!” Somehow, the medium rises anew again and again—despite atrocious business decisions! (By the way, my interest in comic books was rekindled in the early '80s. There were exciting and interesting titles like *Love & Rockets*, *American Flagg*, *Cerebus*, *Zot!*, and many others. It was a veritable Golden Age for the independents!)

**DF:** What did you learn at SVA that you've carried along with you since then, especially from Kurtzman and Eisner?

**BL:** Both of them stressed that there was more to comics than Marvel and DC. I especially remember Harvey saying that to do comics, you've got to get away from comics. I didn't quite understand that at the time, but he was absolutely right. It's important to have a commitment, but sometimes a person can get too close to their passion and lose sight of the bigger picture. Both Kurtzman and Eisner were very critical of my work back then and rightfully so. Now, I say this all in hindsight, because at the time I was crushed. But I did appreciate their honesty. Like I said, I needed to broaden my horizons. I began to read voraciously—anything but comics. It's a big, wonderful, interesting world out there with all sorts of great, inspiring things in the culture (plus, getting some life experiences under your belt doesn't hurt, either!). I'd like to think that it paid off, because years later, both Will and Harvey were very supportive and complimentary of my comic *Wolff & Byrd*.

**DF:** Any other teachers there who affected you?

**BL:** Too many to go into detail here! But a few stand out: There was a copywriting teacher, Regina Ovesey, who I learned a great deal from. Although her course was generally about creating ad copy, she taught the basic fundamentals about writing, which I thought was invaluable. There was also a playwriting teacher, Bob Auletta, who was very encouraging; I learned a lot about structure from his class. Two drawing teachers, James Kearns and Jerry Moriarty, were terrific. The administrator of the SVA Alumni Society at the time, Tom Gill (probably best known for drawing *The Lone Ranger*), was the first pro I ever got to know. He was incredibly patient and encouraging with all the aspiring comic book students.

**DF:** Who else went to school with you that we may have heard of?

**BL:** I was in “foundation” class (first year) with cartoonist and *Punk* Magazine founder John Holmstrom; animators Russell Calabrese, Tom Sito, and Yvette Kaplan; Bob Wiacek, who became a popular inker for Marvel and DC; and Peter Zeremba, who was a painter in school but went on to form the band The Fleshtones. When I was in my last year at SVA, Joey Cavalieri and Mike Carlin (now editors at DC Comics) were in their foundation years. Apparently, Peter Bagge was attending SVA the same time I was, but I didn't know him.

**DF:** Have you ever thought about actually becoming a lawyer?

**BL:** No. I always wanted to be a writer and/or artist when I grew up, preferably both!

**DF:** What was your fallback plan if art and writing didn't happen for you?

# A Decent Proposal

## And Other Tricks of the Trade

WRITE Now!

by **Christos N. Gage**

**C**hristos N. Gage grew up outside Worcester, Massachusetts, except for five years spent living in Athens, Greece. He speaks, reads and writes Greek fluently. His father is bestselling author Nicholas Gage (**Eleni**), a former New York Times reporter who covered the Mafia in the 1970s. Chris attended college at Brown University, after which he earned a Master's Degree in Screenwriting at the American Film Institute (AFI). It was there he met his wife and frequent writing partner, Ruth. Currently, they live in Los Angeles, where they pursue their screenwriting careers.

Chris and Ruth have been working screenwriters and members of the Writer's Guild of America, West, since shortly after graduating AFI, when they sold a sci-fi pitch to Warner Brothers. They have written screenplays for such actors as George Clooney, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Morgan Freeman, as well as studios from Sony to Universal to HBO. Their produced films include **The Breed**, starring Adrian Paul (**Highlander**) and Bai Ling (**Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow**) and **Teenage Caveman**, directed by Larry Clark (**Kids**), on which Chris is also credited as Associate Producer. In television, they have written episodes of the top-rated NBC series **Law & Order: Special Victims Unit**. Their Season Four episode, "Mercy," was nominated for a SHINE Award for outstanding depictions of sexual health issues in media.

In comics, Chris is writing the DC Comics mini-series **Deadshot**, illustrated by Steven Cummings and Jimmy Palmiotti, and an upcoming 3-part story in **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight**.

The Gages have served as lecturers on the subject of writing at UCLA, AFI, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**W**hen I told an old friend I'd begun writing comics in addition to my screenwriting work, he asked a question that hadn't occurred to me: "Why'd you go into screenwriting instead of comics in the first place?" After all, I'd always loved comics as much as film and TV (more, to be honest), so why pick one over the other? The answer was simple: there were schools where I could learn screenwriting, and none (that I knew of) for comics.

Today there are far more resources for aspiring comics scribes than when I entered film school ten years ago. Venerable institutions like NYU offer classes on the subject (taught by some guy named Fingeroth). There are books like Denny O'Neil's excellent **DC Guide To Writing Comics**, one of my two bibles (the other you hold in your hands) when I was scripting my comics debut, DC's **Deadshot** #1. Add the Internet to the mix, and there's no shortage of places to learn the craft these days.

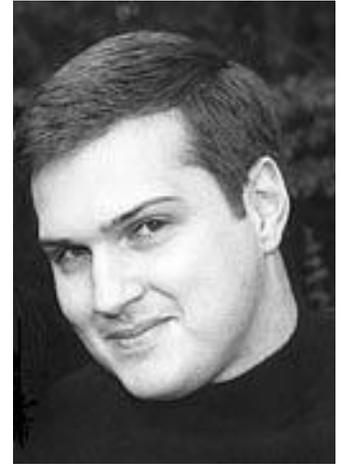
What remains elusive is workable advice on how to get to the point where you can use those scripting skills professionally. This might be because breaking in is like the Humpty Dance; no two people will do it the same. Still, I've found other writers' stories can provide helpful insights, if not a road map.

For me, the transition to pro began in film school. A family friend, who was a producer, read my thesis script and passed it on to an agent she knew, saying he should look at it. The agent trusted her opinion, read the script, liked it, and signed me. Six months later I sold a pitch to Warner Brothers. Boy, it sounds easy just writing it down like that! (And it was—sustaining a career is harder than breaking in, but one step at a time.) Now, believe it or not, there are things about this most boring of True Hollywood Stories that can apply to the aspiring comics writer.

One enduring lesson I've learned is that the best way to get your stuff read by those in a position to hire you is through a recommendation from someone the employer trusts. Such a referral got me my first agent. My first job at **Law & Order: SVU** (with my wife and frequent writing partner Ruth) came after my cousin provided an introduction to the show's head writer. When I got into comics, I'm sure my screenwriting helped give me credibility, but it was at the urging of **Hawkman** writer Jimmy Palmiotti that Dan DiDio at DC listened to my ideas. Okay, let's say you don't know anyone in comics. Get to know people, by hook or by crook. Jimmy's writing partner, Justin Gray, started as an intern at Marvel Knights. Peter David worked in marketing at Marvel before he began writing for them. Find ways into that world.

Here's another tip: go to a major convention, like San Diego. Be friendly. Meet people. I know many writers aren't social by nature; I'm not. But you and these folks have a common interest: comics. Who doesn't love talking comics? At the major publishers' booths, you'll notice people in headsets who cap the line for Jim Lee's autograph two seconds before you get there. These are employees of the company; many are the editors of tomorrow. Introduce yourself. Get to know them, ask their advice, and stay in touch. (Not long ago, Ben Abernathy at WildStorm was doing that job, and now he's editing Garth Ennis and Brian Vaughan.) The more people you know in the industry, the better your access.

But a recommendation alone won't get you work. You have to seal the deal yourself. In film, you can write a spec script and



Christos N. Gage's script and Steven Cummings' pencils for the first few pages of **Deadshot #1**. Jimmy Pamiotti did the inks. [© 2005 DC Comics.]

DEADSHOT: URBAN RENEWAL  
 Issue #1: "Strings" – REVISED 3/25/04  
 by Christos N. Gage

PAGE 1:

PANEL ONE: In the background, a window in a skyscraper. The blinds are closed. It's two to three blocks away from our POV. The light in the room is on.

In the foreground is a feminine hand (belonging to KILLER FROST), pointing at the lit window. Steam rises off the hand to indicate her body is ice cold on a warm night.

1) KILLER FROST (op): Four floors down, two windows in. Light's on.

PANEL TWO: Pull back to see we're on a rooftop. Killer Frost is standing there, along with three others. THE CLOSER is a huge, hulking figure who exudes power and arrogance. (NOTE: This is a new character. He's at least twice as big and thick as a normal man. As far as a costume, I'm inclined against it, but he should have a distinctive look; I kind of like the idea of a dark suit and tie, like a Mafia stooge or Secret Service agent – sharp threads on a big, dumb mass of muscle.) FIREBUG paces impatiently, eager to burn something up already. DEADSHOT, helmet on, high-powered rifle in one hand, leans against the door that provides access into this building.

2) CLOSER: Blinds're closed.

3) KILLER FROST: No kidding, genius. Target's Russian mob, ex-KGB, you think he's gonna make it easy for us?

PANEL THREE: Killer Frost unrolls a blueprint. The others gather around, except Deadshot, who walks to the edge of the roof and looks at the lit window in the distance.

4) KILLER FROST: This schematic shows their security. Motion detectors, laser arrays, any room can be flooded with nerve gas.

5) KILLER FROST: Then there's the half-dozen bodyguards in black market battle armor.

6) FIREBUG: It'll all burn.

7) KILLER FROST: What won't is the fireproof panic room with its own power, air supply, and enough food to last a nuclear winter.

8) KILLER FROST (To The Closer): Four foot thick titanium steel walls. Can you break through?



PAGE 1 CONTINUED:

PANEL FOUR: We see the lit window through Deadshot's helmet-mounted gunsight. The view is magnified, infrared, with a targeting sight in the center. The blurry shadow of a man can just barely be glimpsed behind the closed blinds.

9) THE CLOSER (op): Hey, babe, I want a guy dead, nothing stops me. That's why they call me The Closer.

10) KILLER FROST (op): Oh, there's a "C"?

11) THE CLOSER (op): Huh?

PANEL FIVE: Killer Frost, Firebug and The Closer turn their heads from the blueprint to the edge of the roof, where Deadshot is firing his rifle at the distant window.

12) KILLER FROST: Nothing. Look, this is gonna be tough and we've got to move fast, so –

13) SFX (Deadshot's silenced gun): PHUT

PANEL SIX: Deadshot turns back to the others. Behind him, in the distance, their target's limp, dead body tumbles through the shattered window and plunges downward.

14) DEADSHOT: Let's go.



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# STORMBREAKER: THE SAGA OF BETA RAY BILL #1

STORMBREAKER: THE SAGA OF BETA RAY BILL #1

Fallout  
 By Oeming and Berman

**PAGE 1**

GENERAL NOTE TO ANDREA- some pages are tight with action and word balloons- always measure your space for word balloon placement so your amazing art isn't covered!  
 Panel 1- Large panel. Two men of Bill's race Stand before a council. The council is made up of military people. On a level above the council, surrounding the room sit the priesthood. Take all your design cues from Walt Simonson, but make it your own. The head Priest, Rogotta, wears a long robe that is covered in what look like TV. vacuum tubes. These tubes contain the souls of past head Priests. His body dissipates into nothing before his feet touch the ground. See the sketch I've provided. The priests wear the same style of robe, but with less tubes. In front of the group of military council, one man stands above the rest, looking up at the priest. He has his own stand and speaks for the military council. He is called the General. Bill's people are a warrior people with deep religious beliefs. They created Bill who was chosen through Gladiator like death matches and made him a new battle body. These beings are fighters... Behind the priest is a vast screen with an image of their original world exploding as they fly away in great ships. The shapes of dog-demons from Simonson's run follow them.

ROGOTTA

We gather now, warriors and priests, we who have been tested by the Gods and chased by Demons!

ROGOTTA

We whose home planet was crushed by the Dogs of Hell. We who have searched for a new home for generations.

ROGOTTA

We who built our own savior to fulfill prophecy. We who escaped the Caldron and the Axi-Tum. We gather now in Council.

ROGOTTA

We mastered the art of merging souls with machines, and from that time came our savior, our protector, BETA RAY BILL!

Panel 2- Closer on Rogotta, an Image of BILL is on the screen behind him.

ROGOTTA

It was Bill who found us a home and defeated our enemies. He fulfilled the prophecy and now Bill has moved on and so must we!

ROGOTTA

We want Beta Ray Bill back, we still need a protector. I agree, we need a champion, but I say Beta Ray Bill has become too powerful!

Our people look to him for leadership instead of to us or the Gods. He has usurped the power of the Priesthood and of the Council!

Panel 3- Close on Rogotta

ROGOTTA

Now, our scientists tell us, we face another trial. Ashta, the fallen God, the world ravager, he who smites entire realms, threatens our adopted home, where we have lived for such a short time. From deepest space it comes, relentless and unstoppable to punish us for our blasphemy!

ROGOTTA

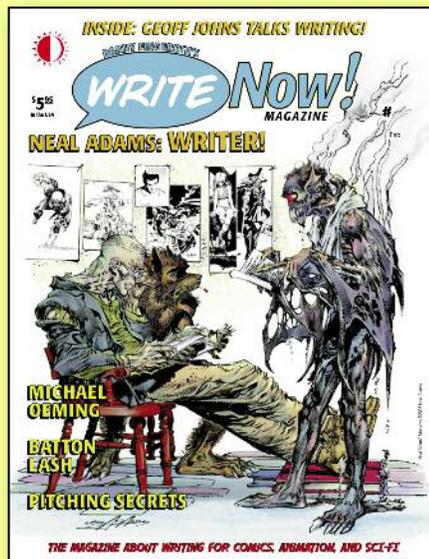
We need a savior now. Our greatest peril is at hand!

We were lucky enough to get some script and art pages of the current *Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill*. It's written by Michael Oeming and Dan Berman, and the art is by Andrea DiVito. You know Michael from his great art on *Powers*, but he's a writer, too. Here's some of his work in partnership with Dan Berman. They're working full-script. [© 2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



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