

We hope you enjoy this **FREE** **DRAW! #14 PREVIEW!**



Edited by top DC and Marvel Comics artist **MIKE MANLEY**, the Eisner Award-nominated **DRAW!** magazine is the professional "How-To" magazine on comics, cartooning, and animation. Each issue features in-depth interviews and step-by-step demos from top comics pros on all aspects of graphic storytelling, as each artist invites you into their studio to reveal their working methods and tricks of the trade!

Issue #14 features in-depth interviews and demos by DC Comics artist **DOUG MAHNKE** (JLA, Batman, Seven Soldiers: Frankenstein, Superman, Justice League Elite), **OVI NEDELCO** (Pigtale, WB Animation), and **STEVE PURCELL** (Sam and Max). Then, **MIKE MANLEY** and **BRET BLEVINS** bring you Part III of **COMIC ART BOOT CAMP**: "Using Black to Power up Your Pages", covering the best ways to use black placement to enhance and kick up the energy in your pages. Plus, there's a color section, a new **MAHNKE** cover, and more!

(88-page magazine) **SINGLE ISSUES: \$9 US**

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Four issues in the US: \$26 Standard, \$36 First Class (Canada: \$44, Elsewhere: \$60 Surface, \$72 Airmail).

NOTE: Most issues contain nudity for purposes of figure drawing. Intended for Mature Readers.



DRAW! #8

MATT HALEY, TOM BANCROFT & ROB CORLEY, ALBERTO RUIZ



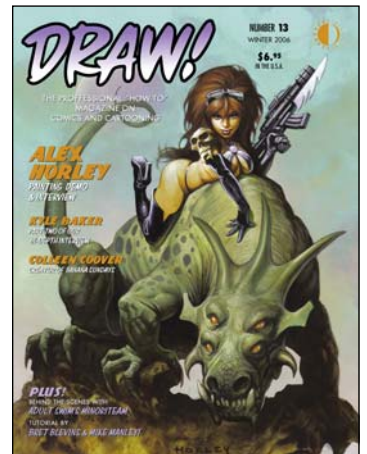
DRAW! #10

RON GARNEY, GRAHAM NOLAN, TODD KLEIN, MARK MCKENNA



DRAW! #11

STEVE RUDE, JIM BORGMAN, ROQUE BALLESTEROS



DRAW! #13

ALEX HORLEY, KYLE BAKER, COLLEEN COOVER, BRET BLEVINS



TwoMorrows. Celebrating The Art & History Of Comics.



TwoMorrows • 10407 Bedfordtown Drive • Raleigh, NC 27614 USA • 919-449-0344 • FAX: 919-449-0327 • E-mail: twomorrow@aol.com • www.twomorrows.com

KICKIN' IT!

WITH DOUG MAHNKE

Conducted by Mike Manley
Transcribed by Steven Tice

Doug Mahnke is an artist's artist. He does all of the hard things well, and makes it look easy. He's one of the rare artists in the medium of comics who can flex between funny, fantastic action and horror. From *Seven Soldiers of Victory: Frankenstein* to *The Mask*, *Major Bummer*, *Superman: Man of Steel* and the *JLA*, Mahnke's powerful figure work has always stood head and shoulders above many other artists working in the field. It's not surprising to find out that the man who draws such powerful and dynamic heroes is also a competitive power lifter. *DRAW!* Editor Mike Manley catches up with this busy artist and father of six from his home studio in Minnesota.



BATMAN™ AND
©2007 DC COMICS

DRAW!: What is your typical workday like?

DOUG MAHNKE: It has varied quite a bit over the years, but I've settled into some fairly regular habits, as it has become obvious to me what gets the job done. I could divide this up into two different days, which is the productive day vs. the unproductive day. They do their best to coexist, although I feel

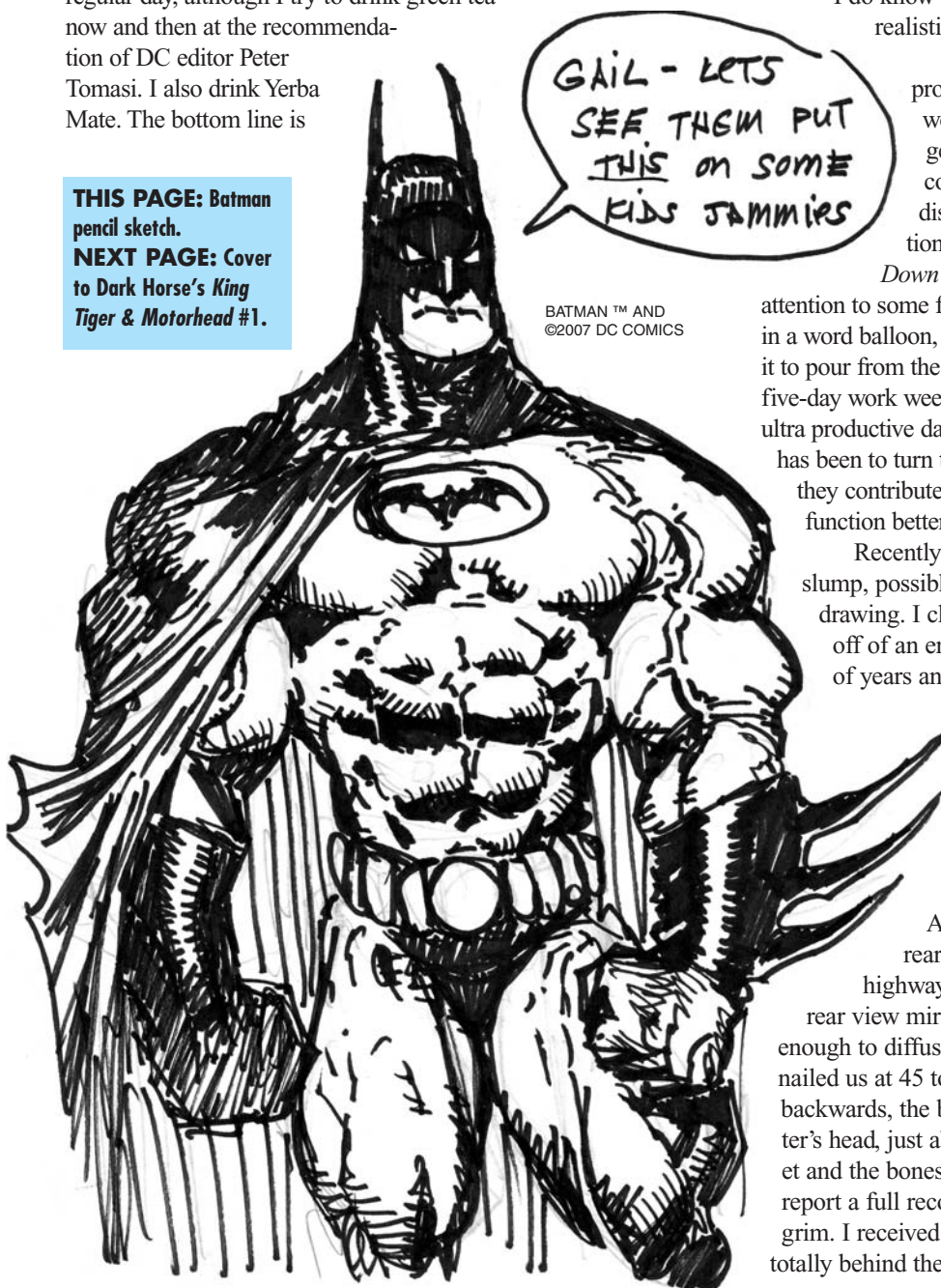
the unproductive day always gets the better deal as the productive one has to pick up the slack.

Productive day: I get up by 5 a.m. and go right down to the studio. The first thing I tend to do is turn on the computer to check e-mail and let my brain warm-up by visiting some of my favorite sites, all of which tend to be weightlifting-oriented. By 6:00 or 6:30 I get to work penciling or inking, whichever is the

priority at the moment. I might just sit in silence or turn on the radio. I get into ruts where my “atmosphere” is concerned, and will go for very long stretches doing one thing then suddenly shift and do another. It might be talk or sports radio for a month or three, then some local music station for a while, then I might listen to a Greek or Italian station on the net for days. I will also put in a movie to keep me company. Most recently on a long productive day—which actually stretched into two days—I watched the first season of *The Beverly Hillbillies* over and over again. I’m not actually watching it very often, just listening to it. Oddly, I did this recently with the Jet Li movie, *Hero*, which is in Chinese.

As I sit and work I hear the house wake up, as one after another my six kids and my wife rise until the house is full of noise. Usually after seven I go upstairs for a quick breakfast with the family, then back downstairs. It might be a bowl of oatmeal and some eggs or a protein drink. Coffee is a major player in my regular day, although I try to drink green tea now and then at the recommendation of DC editor Peter Tomasi. I also drink Yerba Mate. The bottom line is

THIS PAGE: Batman pencil sketch.
NEXT PAGE: Cover to *Dark Horse’s King Tiger & Motorhead #1*.



caffeine, which I am pretty sure is the secret to the success of the human race as we know it. Back to work after breakfast, and I try to get at least one page finished by 10 a.m. I eat a snack then... probably a piece of fruit and more protein. Back to work and try and get a little more done before lunch, which can happen at any time between 11:00 and noon, or whenever my kids have lost their minds with hunger. After lunch I will goof around on the computer for a little bit, but I keep it down on productive days. I find keeping off of the computer the best way to get work done. The computer can kill your day. I don’t play any games or do much with it, but time flies even when you’re looking for reference.

After my goof-off time, it’s back to work, which will be more of the same, penciling or inking. If everything has gone well, a productive day can have me finished with my work by 3:30. I’ll knock off then and lift weights until supper. I don’t have a set pattern for the amount of penciling I will do before inking, although I do know it’s best for me to mix the two, so I can make realistic projections of when I can finish a page.

Unproductive days for me are almost identical to productive days, except everything is *slower*. I get to work later, I eat longer, I linger on the computer, I get distracted by some pointless Internet thread. I could be looking up some military reference, then discover myself an hour later looking up information on the old *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* cartoon. I might find myself paying too much attention to some facet of a page that will probably end up covered in a word balloon, or using some ink that is so thick I can barely get it to pour from the dropper, let alone flow from my nib. Out of a five-day work week, if I have two slow days it takes a couple of ultra productive days to make up the difference. The problem lately has been to turn the heat up on the productive days, as they feel they contribute enough. Occasionally I will work late, but I just function better in the morning work-wise than in the evening.

Recently I’ve gone through a very long “anti-productive” slump, possibly the worst I’ve had in my 18 years of comic drawing. I chalk it up to a couple of things... one is coming off of an enormous productive stretch that lasted a couple of years and left me mentally exhausted. When I say “anti-productive” I mean in terms of quantity, as the quality is pretty high. I also was in a car wreck one year ago on October 14th, which is the date of my anniversary. My wife and I were going to go out for a quick bite at one of our favorite restaurants. To do so we were driving our kids to my sister-in-law’s place.

About one mile away from our home we were rear-ended, while waiting to turn left off of the highway. I saw the car coming at the last moment in my rear view mirror and hit the gas, getting us moving just enough to diffuse a little of the impact. The driver, a young guy, nailed us at 45 to 50 miles an hour. My seat broke and threw me backwards, the back of my head smashed into my oldest daughter’s head, just above her right eye, severely fracturing her socket and the bones on the right side of her face. (I’m happy to report a full recovery by the way)... it could have been pretty grim. I received a concussion, but being the true professional totally behind the eightball with a big deadline, I went home that

night while my daughter was in the intensive care unit and finished five or seven pages if I remember correctly. The injury also effected my sight for a while, but I managed to work. Honestly, there are a few months that are merely a blur for me, but when you have a job to do you have to do it.

DRAW!: What's your drawing pace like?

DM: In all actuality, when only penciling and if the pressure is on, I can pencil a page every two to three hours of straight work. If it's reference heavy, that can slow me down, but if I know what I'm doing, I can knock them out fast. I'm very fast with drawing and pretty accurate with laying out perspective without ruling lines. The only problem is it can fatigue me pretty bad these days, and leave me a mental pile of mush. I've penciled a complete book in a three-day tear with the help of my old assistant Shawn Moll. This is all fine and great but a sensible person would never put themselves into a position to find that kind of output necessary. Having to work that hard and fast is usually the result of taking on too much work—which I've done—or too many unproductive days.

DRAW!: What is your studio set up like?

DM: Very unimpressive. My studio is fairly small; it's in a 12' x 12' room in my basement. Thankfully I have a nice window. My most recent addition to it is a large desk where I can organize my paperwork and store books and supplies. The last time I bought something for my studio was 18 years ago. I've always been terribly frugal where my studio is concerned, and it wouldn't hurt me to invest in some new stuff now and then, but I've been comfortable enough to work with what I originally bought those many years ago. My desk and chair have seen better days, and I rule lines with an angle that is broken in two pieces. The angle has so many chips and dings in it that I have to watch out for the irregularities when inking with it. It does add character to a straight line though.

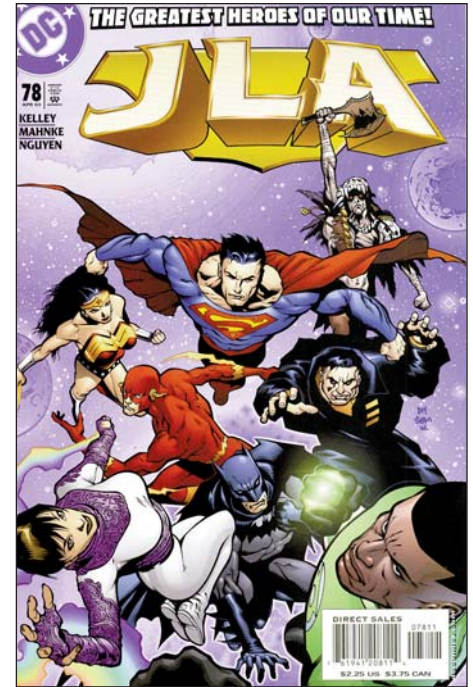
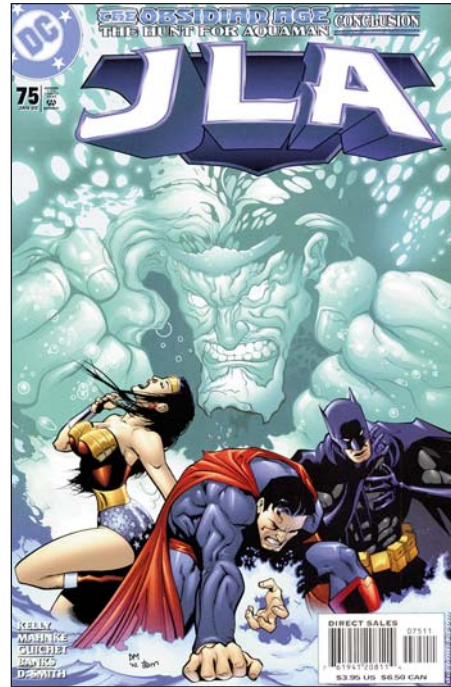
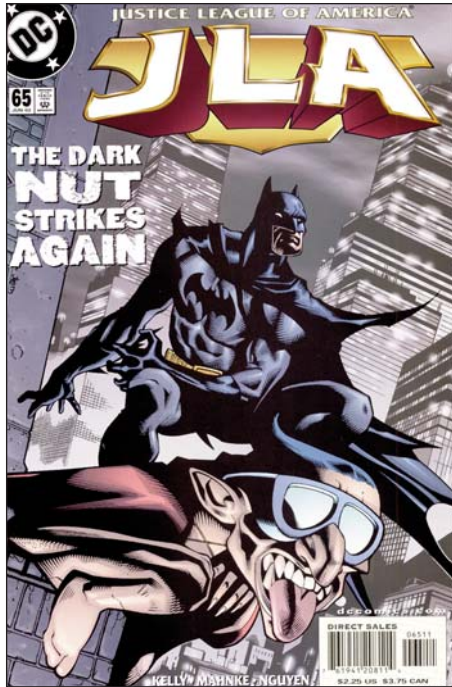
There is an old tabby tray on the left side of my desk that is nothing more than a glorified pencil holder and graveyard for old erasers. I also have a picture of my wife and my mom there, and a cool little piece of artwork one of my kids made for me that I always liked. Sitting next to me on my left is an old child's school desk that I use for a table. Reference material, opened ink

bottles and scratch paper is usually sitting here, while inside is a nice hand mirror that I swiped from one of my kids as well as my old broken one. Whichever ends up in my hand first is the one that gets used. Right behind me is a little piece of furniture with three open shelves, which I clear off a few times a year and slowly pile stuff on for the rest. I also tend to set coffee or food back there. I have a shelf that I line with knick-knacks and photos of my family, a Swedish horse, a little Greek vase, a Hmong tiger carved out of ivory, and my prized Lou Martin/Major Bummer Inaction Figure that my friend Joel made.

I have a second desk that I bought a few years ago when my friend Shawn Moll started to work with me as my assistant. Since then Shawn has gone on to do his own work, but the desk stays. It



KING TIGER, MOTORHEAD™ AND ©2007 DARK HORSE COMICS, INC.



JLA™ AND ©2007 DC COMICS.

has a nice chair, and my kids or wife come in to work or draw now and then. It has a light, which is something I should really get for my own desk, but as I sit by the window I enjoy the natural light.

On my walls I have a few pieces of artwork. A framed piece of *The Mask* holding a pie with a bomb in it, the wall hanging of the first *Justice League* cover that I did, a nice copy of Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" from the Sistine chapel. My friend and fan Kevin gave this to me as a gift. I also have a picture of me on the wall holding a weight over my head in the clean and jerk, with a bunch of medals hanging next to it. I'm an avid competitive weightlifter.

That's about it for the studio. I have a phone that is rarely charged and constantly goes missing, and the necessary computer with e-mail to keep me connected to the world.

DRAW!: Wow, that's some story, I'm really glad to hear everyone came out okay. Can you give me a bit of your background, your schooling or art schooling if you've had any?

DM: I had no formal training or art school. I never liked school and higher education wasn't for me, but I am always learning and I've had some direction here and there over my lifetime. When I was in 5th or 6th grade I took a special portrait drawing class from a very talented gentleman whose name escapes me, unfortunately. I was a little kid in an adult class, and learned a lot about proportion and lighting. I took some private art lessons as a child from a woman who was an artist. Joelle Waldo was her name, and she was a good teacher and lovely person. She showed me art beyond comics, and made it fun. I also took some private lessons from a commercial artist. He would give me an assignment and then provide me with the tools to execute the piece.

But my most influential teacher was a woman named Pat Wolf. She was my 9th grade art teacher and her personal focus was pottery, but she was an excellent teacher. The greatest "teaching moment" she ever gave me was when I was doing some drawing of a man... just something out of my head. She looked at it and told

me the legs were too short. I took immediate offense, and disagreed with her with all my self-centered artistic soul. She calmly picked out a few books that had some old masters art, mostly figure stuff, and had me take a look. I couldn't disagree with her after that. It opened my eyes from then on, and I was never the same since. I knew I was not God's gift to art, and that if I was open to learning I could at least always improve. I've been a bit detached from what I do since that day, and open to criticism. I look at what I do for how I can improve it, and I like to look to others to see what can be learned from their work. No matter how badly I might think someone draws, if they sell comics and have people interested in their art there has to be something there. Sometimes it's not the clarity with which they draw but the emotion they "draw out" from the person looking at it. Art is fascinating that way. Really, I am always learning something new. One day I'm going to sit down and learn how to draw women's hair. I think it's about time!

DRAW!: What are you currently working on?

DM: I'm penciling and inking *Stormwatch PHD* for Wildstorm. Christos Gage is writing it and David Baron is coloring it. My editor and friend Ben Abernathy is doing his best to keep me in line. It's a revamping of the old *Stormwatch* book, which I wasn't familiar with previously, so it's all new to me. Instead of a super-powered *Stormwatch* fighting super-bad people, they have a scaled down, budget conscious human division fighting super-bad people. Christos has come up with some very fun characters to draw, from vivacious to less than ordinary. One of them is a former super-villain called the Machinist, who is now a has-been with a growing paunch and receding hairline. I like to draw guys like that; it's fun for me. No matter how unimpressive they are they still have to go up against the exotic and super-powered, which is great contrast for the main cast of characters. As this article goes to press, I'll be working on a *Black Adam* miniseries, written by Peter Tomasi.

DRAW!: You know, there are a lot of comic artists from up in

your neck of the woods: Gordon Purcell, and I guess that's where Ordway is from, Milwaukee I think, and Terry Beatty, too.

DM: Yeah, Pete Krause, Tom Richmond, Pat Gleason, Tom Nguyen, Dan Thorsland, Shawn Moll, Sam Hiti, Peter Gross, Zander Cannon and Clint Hilinski. Not to mention other comics professionals, such as inker Barbara Schulz and writer Terrance Griep.

DRAW!: I guess there's a few little pockets in the Midwest. There were a lot of artists out of the Detroit area, from where I'm originally from, like Milgrom and Austin, Starlin and Vosburg and Keith Pollard.

DM: That's quite a list.

DRAW!: But yeah, there were several little areas like that. And then there's the Chicago area. So there's, I guess, what you call, little enclaves.

DM: Breeding grounds.

DRAW!: Yeah, yeah. And I know, like those artists that I mentioned before, guys like Milgrom and Terry Austin, they were all getting in I think around the same time, so I think that probably also facilitated that a little bit. You know, because once your buddy gets in, then you help your buddy.

DM: Always. What else are you going to do? You do kind of graduate towards those that you're friends with, but you also have desire as a limiting factor. If you don't have desire, you're not going to make it. And talent does sort of dictate, but a friend gives a word, which always helps to get editors to take a look. It certainly never hurts to have somebody work with you, and then they become familiar with an editor. It's as simple as that. Patrick Gleason, for example. He's been working at the DC offices and he's making a career. He used to be my assistant.

ASSISTANTS

DRAW!: When we first talked about this interview you mentioned you had an assistant?

DM: Yeah, Shawn Moll, he's doing some stuff for Ben Abernathy right now, over at Wildstorm.

PREVIOUS PAGE: A sampling of covers from Doug's run on *JLA*.

RIGHT: From Doug's recent *Stormwatch* series.

DRAW!: Now, how did having assistants work with you? What were their duties?

DM: Well, they're two entirely different kinds of guys. When Pat Gleason was working with me, he was just a kid. I mean just out of high school. But I knew that he would get into comics without a doubt when I saw his work. It's a pretty cool story, really. One Halloween this kid, not Pat, but a friend of Pat's, came to the door, and I'd set out some trinket that kind of identified me with comics or with *The Mask*, so the kid struck up a conversation. And he stated, "Oh, you draw comics? Well, you know, I really want to draw comics." You know, I kind of hear that from a lot of kids. I said, "Well, if you ever want to show me your stuff, I'll take a look." And for about a year, maybe two, this kid would



show me his stuff. And the truth is, to make a long story short, he never had the ambition, nor the talent. But he had the mouth to keep coming at me with stuff. He would call me up and say, “Oh, I’ve got some art to show you.” So I’d have him come over to the studio, and he’d have nothing. Every time, he had nothing. At best it was some hastily drawn figures or some designs of a character floating in space. I would always tell him, “You’ve got to draw comics. I can’t help you like this. I can’t show you anything because you’re doing nothing for me to critique.”

DRAW!: Right, that’s typical, too, of a lot of young artists.

DM: Oh, yeah. They don’t quite get it.

DRAW!: Yeah, they’ll show you a sketchbook full of dismembered figures and things floating around. You know, “Here’s something I drew five years ago,” and it’s all dirty and smudged.

DM: Yeah. Well, the worst part is, the first time he came over, his mom brought him, and she sat and talked to my wife upstairs while I took him to the studio and showed him art. And when I

went upstairs to see, she had his sketchbook, and of course, like any mother, she was extremely proud of her son and all of the good things that he had done. And I don’t blame her there. Great. And so I started flipping through the sketchbook, all this totally marginal stuff. She goes, “Yeah, yeah. How about this, though?” And she turns this one page, and it was a copy of a Mask drawing that I had done. You know, it was as best as he could, line for line. She goes, “Now, this is good!” I look over at the kid, and he looks at me, like I said, “I’m not going to rat you out, son, but that’s my drawing. That ain’t your drawing.” So his mom, the best thing that she could point out was something that he had just copied.

Anyway, this kind of dragged on for a while, and finally I said, “I don’t want to see you until you have something concrete to show me. I’ll give you one more chance.” So he calls me up and he says, “Yeah, I’ve got some stuff, and I got a friend, he wants to be in comics, too.” I’m thinking, “Oh, great, two of them.” So I met them at a local comic shop. I sat down and said, “Okay, what have you got?” He had nothin’. He pulled out some of the usual notebook paper, some hastily drawn stuff. I just laid into him. I said, “This is sh*t. I know you just did this. What are you wasting my time for?” And he was apologetic, but also defensive.

*For the rest of this interview, don't miss
DRAW! #14, on sale now!*

BELOW: Pencils from *The Mask*.



THE MASK™ AND ©2007 DARK HORSE COMICS, INC.