

MODERN MASTERS VOLUME THREE:

BRUCE TIMM



Edited by
Eric Nolen-Weathington

Modern Masters Volume Three:

BRUCE TIMM

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Part 1: “Monsters and Comics— That Was It for Me”



Above: Vampire in the Hammer Horror “vein.”

Right and Below: Two of many Frankenstein images Bruce has drawn over the years.

Next Page: Cover to *Essential Spider-Man, Volume One*.

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MM: You were born in 1961, is that correct?

BRUCE: Correct.

MM: Whereabouts did you grow up?

BRUCE: I was born in Oklahoma—we lived there for two years. We moved to Ohio and stayed there for a couple of years. Then we moved out here to California when I was, I think, five or six.

MM: You have siblings?

BRUCE: Yes, I have two older brothers, one younger.

MM: Was there a big gap in ages?

BRUCE: No, we were all about two years apart, so it wasn't anything drastic.

MM: So you were all having to share things as you went along?

BRUCE: No. They would have them occasionally, but they didn't really care that much about them. My older brother—that was my first exposure to comics—he had a couple of comics. But it was never a big deal to any of them. None of them were fans like I was.

MM: Was there anyone else in your family that had an artistic streak?

BRUCE: Not really. My mom painted some and drew, but never seriously. It was just an occasional hobby for her. I'm really the only one with that leaning.

MM: What did your parents do for a living? Is your career path far different from theirs?

BRUCE: Yeah, I would say so. My dad was an engineer, and my mom for years worked for the phone company.

MM: Were comics always just there for you, or did you get into them more as you got older?

BRUCE: We would occasionally have them around the house. I would mostly get comics when I was sick—pretty much a common story. I'd stay home from school sick and be miserable and when Mom would go to the drugstore to get medicine I would say, “Oooh, get me some comics.” [laughter] We weren't poor by any means, but we weren't wealthy, either, so comics were a luxury. Then when I got older and had allowance I would sometimes spend my money on comics, but I wasn't fanatical



about it. When I was a kid I was into so many other things, like Hot Wheels, and comics weren't a prime thing for me. I didn't seriously get into comics until I was 12 or 13. There was a period where I was interested in comics, but distribution was always really spotty.

MM: You weren't one of those kids who rode his bike five miles to the drugstore every week?

BRUCE: Later I was. Once I really got into it I had a whole route—I would cover the entire town. Because this one liquor store would get the Warren magazines, but wouldn't get the Marvel black-&-whites; this other liquor store over here would have the Marvel black-&-whites, but not the Warren magazines; the supermarket would have a rack of the regular comics. So to collect everything—before the days of comic book stores—you really had to cover some ground.

MM: Did you have to hide your Warrens from your parents?

BRUCE: No, fortunately my parents weren't too nosy about things like that. I mean, I wouldn't leave them lying around. I had an uncomfortable incident one time when my mom found one of my *National Lampoons*. [laughter]

MM: How old were you?

BRUCE: I don't know, 14 or 15 years old. But the Warren comics didn't raise too many eyebrows.

MM: What about cartoons? You were just the right age for stuff like *Space Ghost* and *Jonny Quest*.

BRUCE: Sure. I've told this story before, but my first serious exposure to super-heroes in any medium was the Adam West *Batman* show. I'd seen comics, and I think I'd seen a couple of episodes of the George Reeves *Superman* show, but when I saw the *Batman* show I thought, "Wow!" That was really something. And then the next

year, Saturday morning really capitalized on the *Batman* craze, and there were a zillion super-hero shows. I watched *Space Ghost* and *The Impossibles* and *Birdman* and all that crap. *Jonny Quest*.

MM: Were you, even back then, more interested in the adventure series?

BRUCE: I guess. I was like most kids—I was pretty uncritical. I would watch everything that was on. We would watch the funny cartoons as well, but, yeah, I particularly liked the adventure cartoons.

MM: Did you have a favorite?

BRUCE: Not especially. I really liked the Grantray-Lawrence *Spider-Man* show—that was one of my favorites when I was a kid. The Marvel super-hero shows, too; I really liked those, even though I could tell they were done on the cheap. Even as a kid I could tell they were pretty tatty, but I liked them.

MM: Was it the cartoons that sparked your interest in drawing, or had it been there all along?

BRUCE: I always drew, ever since I was really little. I have a pet theory that all kids draw when they're little—it's just something they do as part of their development—and at a certain point, most kids find other interests and don't go on with it. Not that every kid has within them the ability to become a great artist, but all kids do doodle. Some kids are obviously better than others and get encouragement and continue on with it.

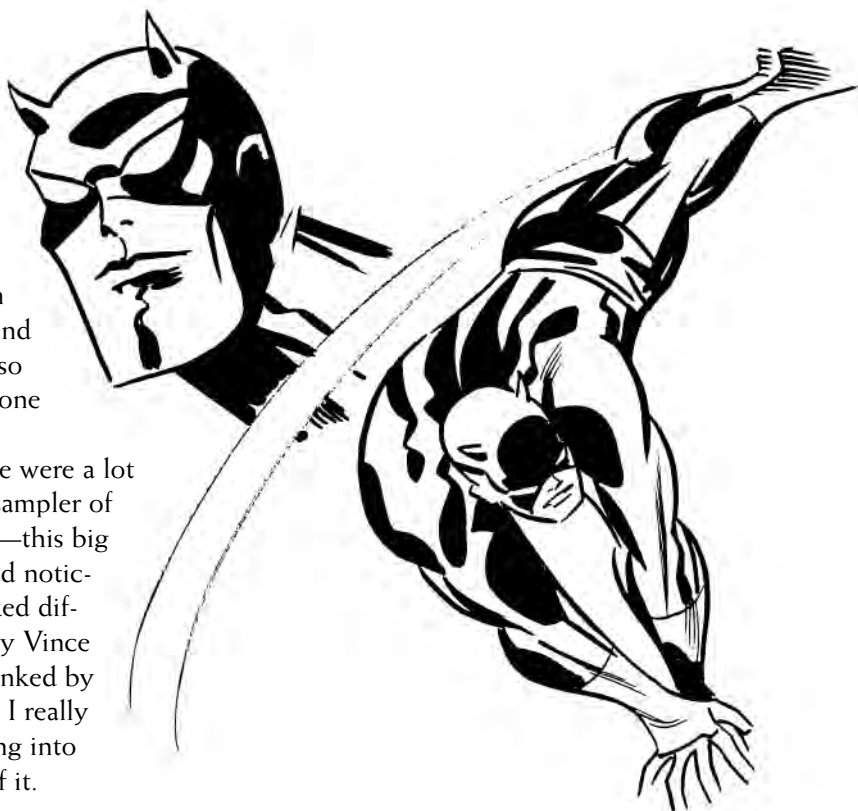
MM: Did you have any favorite comic titles that you had to have?

BRUCE: Whenever I would occasionally buy comics, it was not so much the characters, as much as whoever had a cool costume that appealed to me. I remember specifically buying *Captain America*, *Daredevil*... those are the two that I really, really liked a lot. I didn't actually buy a *Spider-Man* comic until I got older. Of course, when I got serious about it I got everything.



MM: When was it you started noticing and/or paying attention to artists' credits?

BRUCE: Around 12, 13. What happened was there was a kid on my street who had gotten a comic collection from a cousin of his. This cousin had apparently bought tons and tons of comics over the space of about two years and wasn't interested in them any more and gave them to my friend. My friend had no use for them—he wasn't into comics at all—so he basically gave me the whole set. It filled literally one whole drawer of his dresser, and it was all across the board. Lots of different comics from 1971, '72. There were a lot of DCs and Marvels and some Charltons—a broad sampler of what was in comics at that time. It was like, "Wow!"—this big treasure-trove that I studied and traced from. I started noticing that John Buscema looked different when he was inked by Vince Colletta than when he was inked by Sal Buscema. That was when I really started analyzing and getting into the artistic aspect of it.



MM: Were you a tracer at that point?

BRUCE: Of course. I would try to swipe or just draw from one occasionally, and if I couldn't get it right then I would literally try to trace the drawings. I didn't have a light box or anything, so I would hold them up to the window.

MM: Were you—like typical kids—just drawing fight scenes, or did you ever attempt to do sequential storytelling?

BRUCE: I had a short attention span—and do to this day [laughter]—so that seemed beyond my means and skill level. I'd do a couple of short, one-page bits of continuity, but very rarely. The only thing I have from that period that survives is—around this same period that I was getting seriously into comics, I was getting into *Mad* magazine, and I drew this... for want of a better term it was a mix of "Mad Monster Party" and "House of Dracula." It was a monster mash and each monster would have his own one-page story. It's really weird, because it's got Mort Drucker swipes all over the place. [laughter] It's very odd.



Interlude 1: Under the Influence

I'm influenced by anybody and everybody I've ever looked at—everybody from Ditko to Mike Mignola to Kevin Nowlan to Marc Hempel, but these are the main ones:

Jack Kirby

The funny thing about Kirby is that I actually became stylistically influenced by him pretty late—probably in my early 20s. I had seen his stuff and been influenced by other artists, but I was always a little ambivalent about his artwork. I would go through these love/hate periods with it, where I would look at it and think, "It's pretty good, but if only it wasn't so weird and abstract. If only he had a better inker"—I'm talking about the DC stuff. Of course, now I look back on the DC stuff and it's some of my favorite stuff. The Mike Royer stuff is killer. Somewhere in my early 20s, just from looking at it more and more, I just really started grooving on it and started aping it. There was a time when I was definitely trying to mimic Kirby's style. Everybody looks at Kirby and thinks it's so weird and obvious that anybody could swipe it, but it's a lot harder to do than you realize.

There're certain things in the staging and the exaggerated action poses, that are definitely in my work—some of his usage of those great slashy straight lines he uses in place of muscles. If you use those weird, straight lines as a crutch to cover up a bad drawing, they don't really have much purpose. But to get certain thrusts or lines of action into your drawings, they're a great tool. Some of the abstract ways he does wrinkles on clothing and things like that are good comic book tricks I use in my own work.

Every time we have done Kirby-based designs in our



shows, we have found that the more you try to stick to the actual Kirby-ness of it, the more it loses. Everything about animation is exaggeration. The Kirby style is somewhat abstract; it has to be translated. You have to find a middle ground between what Kirby did on the comic book page and what can actually be animated. We're always pushing Kirby onto our younger board artists who've never really been exposed to his work. "This is an example of good staging. This is an example of a good round-house punch. This is an example of a good explosion." Even though it will have to be translated, the dynamism of Kirby is a good starting point for animation.

Part 2: From Filimation to DIC & All Points in Between

Below: *Blackstar* marked Bruce's foray into animation. Looking back at his work from the show, Bruce said, "In retrospect, I'm stunned they actually hired me!"

Next Page Top: Bruce: "Done for my local comics shop—don'tcha love that fancy signature? Yeesh!"

Batman™ and ©2004 DC Comics. *Blackstar*™ and ©2004 Filimation. Captain America™ and ©2004 Marvel Characters, Inc.

MM: Did you know anything about the animation business when you applied with Filimation?

BRUCE: Very little. Like I said, I always wanted to be a comic book artist; getting into animation was not really a goal of mine. I watched cartoons, but I had no great love for them. What it came down to was that I was aware enough of my own limitations to realize that, even though I was the best artist anyone knew in school, my stuff was not quite as good as the professional comic book work I saw. But I'd look at these crummy cartoons on TV and say, "Well, geez, I'm probably at least *that* good." [laughter] Again, not being very ambitious and not having the greatest self-esteem, it just seemed like an easy way to get in the door. And it kind of was. If I look back at the drawings I was doing at Filimation, they were really pretty wretched by any kind of professional standard. There were a lot of artists who were quite a bit better than me.

MM: Speaking of crummy cartoons, you started at Filimation working on *Blackstar*. What was that first experience like?

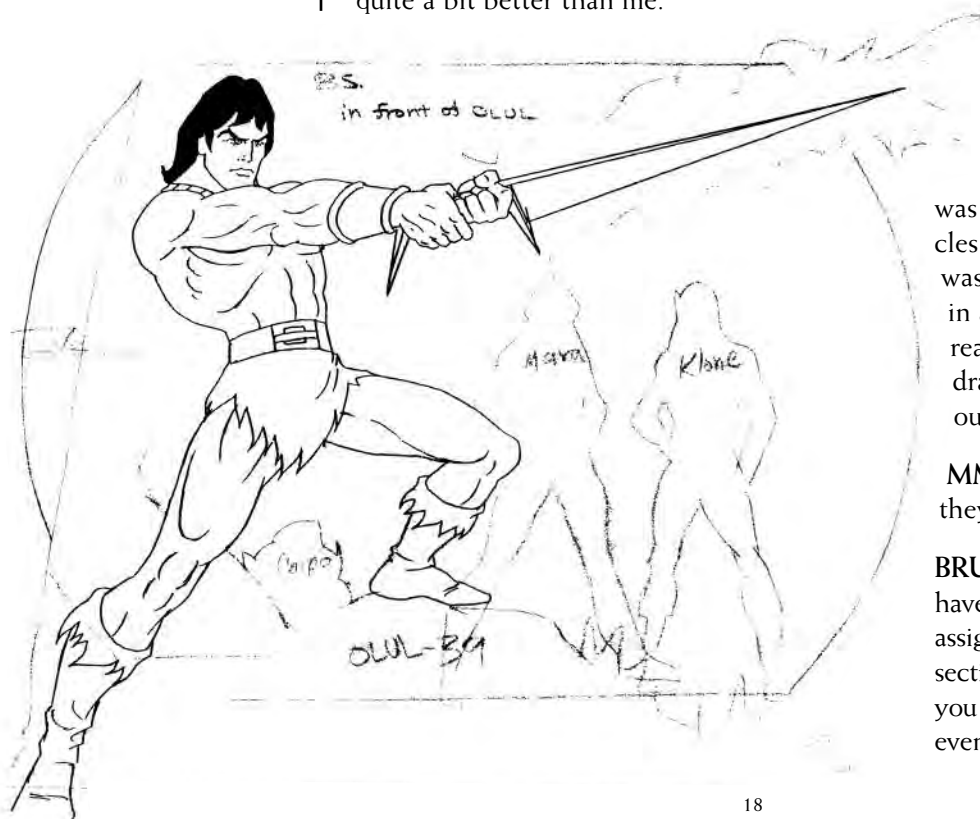
BRUCE: It was fun. There were good things and bad things about it. The pros were that it was an adventure cartoon, so I had some kind of affinity for that. Half-naked, muscular guy running around, I could do that. It had monsters in it, I could draw monsters. It had kind of a third-generation Conan/John Carter knock-off quality to it, and that was right up my alley.

On the other hand, artistically, it was like, "This is really crap." [laughter] "This is really dumbed-down Conan/John Carter." There's no violence, very little action. He would run, he would occasionally point his sword—he would never cut anything with it, but lazer beams would come out of his sword. But occasionally you could do a halfway decent action pose.

It was neat just to be paid to be a professional artist; to actually get up every morning, go to work, and be paid to draw. On the other hand, Filimation was really a factory. They would literally tell you, "Don't spend all your time doing a great drawing, just do a good one." Basically what that meant was if you spent extra time drawing muscles and knuckles and things like that, it wasn't going to animate well anyway, and in a nice way they were saying you don't really draw muscles well enough to be drawing them anyhow. [laughter] "Crank it out" was the order of the day.

MM: They had a lot of stock footage they would reuse over and over, too.

BRUCE: Half the time you wouldn't even have to draw anything. You would get your assignment for the week—you would get a section of the storyboard, say 40 scenes that you had to lay out that week. Before you even sat down to draw it, you would get



folders for each scene, and within the folders they would have the stock poses already Xeroxed for you. The storyboard artists would indicate right there on the storyboards, "Use this stock pose," "Use this close-up for Blackstar's close-up," "Use this running shot of Blackstar for this scene." All you had to do was paste them down. Half the time you wouldn't even have to do that—you'd just have to cut out the registration holes and number the scene and do the camera work layout. You'd have these field guides where, according to the storyboard, you'd have to indicate where the camera was supposed to move. Occasionally you'd have to doctor the drawing. You'd use the stock "Blackstar Standing" pose and then have him lift his arm and point, so maybe you'd get to draw his arm. Rarely did you get to draw a whole, new scene.

It was easy, easy work. I could get all my work done by Wednesday and then fart around the last two days of the week and just draw goofy stuff. Not exactly challenging.

MM: One of the highlights of working there had to be meeting Russ Heath.

BRUCE: Yeah, I was fortunate enough to share a room with Russ Heath. Russ was one of my idols in comic books. He was one of my favorite artists, so that was a kick. I kind of drove Russ crazy, because I would be pestering him all day with questions about working for DC and different people he knew in the business and did he really enjoy working on "Sgt. Rock." As great an artist as Russ is, he's very pragmatic. It all came down to, "What are you talking about, was it great working in comics? It was a job. I did 'Sgt. Rock' because, yeah, I was always interested in the war stuff, but it was no big deal. It paid well. If somebody paid better, I'd do that." It was an eye-opener. But Russ was fun. He was fun to hang out with and pester.

MM: Did you ever think to ask him for contacts at DC?

BRUCE: You know, strangely enough, I never did. I think it was self-awareness of my own abilities. I wasn't brave enough to actually say, "Could you give me Bob Kanigher's number so I can call him and ask him for work?" Russ probably would have said no. [laughter]

MM: You weren't in the business very long before there was a strike.

BRUCE: The way the business worked back then, at least for TV—this was before *G.I. Joe* and *He-Man*, before the whole syndication thing blew wide open—the only TV animation work that was available was for the networks: ABC, CBS, and NBC. Traditionally what that would mean was that Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears, and



Filmation

would hire everyone to work like crazy through the summer to get that fall's season of episodes done, and then lay everyone off in the fall. That was just the way it was. If you were lucky enough to get work at one of the feature divisions or commercial work or something, then you could continue working through the off-season, but a lot of people were just plain out of work from fall until late spring. With me being a newcomer and not being very good anyway, I was out of luck. By the time I got laid off there was no other work. I knew I wasn't good enough to get in at Disney. I applied over at Bakshi's—Bakshi was doing *Fire & Ice* at the time—but they were full up and weren't hiring. Then right around that time there was an animation strike, so everybody was out of work. Striking out, I ended up going back to K-Mart for the next half a year or so.

It was spring of '82 or summer of '82, the strike had ended, and I'd heard—I think through the union—that Don Bluth was hiring for *Secret of N.I.M.H.* They were finishing it up and they had this big push to try to get it done. On a whim, I went and applied over there. What I

Top: This piece was done for a mini comic-con held at Cal State Northridge.

Below: Bruce doing his best Mike Golden impersonation in this Batman panel, probably from the early '80s.

Next Page: A page from a *He-Man* mini-comic done in the mid-'80s.

Batman™ and ©2004 DC Comics. He-Man and all related characters™ and ©2004 Mattel.



ended up doing over there was animation in-betweens. I worked there for a few months while we finished the movie up. Don had all these grandiose plans: He was going to hopefully keep everyone employed, he had his follow-up to *Secret of N.I.M.H.* all planned—this movie called *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*—and supposedly had all the financing in place. Then *Secret of N.I.M.H.* came out and didn't do very well, so unfortunately Don had to lay almost everyone off. He kept a few of his key staff members on for as long as he could, but people like me were the first to be let go.

After that...

MM: It was back to Filmation wasn't it?

BRUCE: Yeah, I was fortunate that after Bluth let me go, Filmation was just starting

up on *He-Man*, which was a revolutionary thing for them, because it wasn't even summer yet—it was still spring. They said, "This isn't just 13 episodes. This a full run of 65 episodes, so we'll be able to keep you employed for the whole year." So that was cool, and, again, it was kind of a Conan/sword-&-sorcery knockoff, so it was up my alley. I mean, it was *He-Man*, it wasn't anything great. [laughter] But it was okay. There was a little more artistic freedom on it, if you can call it as such. Supposedly they had a bigger budget than they had with the network stuff. There was supposed to be much less a reliance on stock, but we ended up using stock quite a bit. But I stayed on *He-Man* for that whole first season.

When that was coming to the end of its run, they didn't really have anything in place to follow it. They were hoping to do more *He-Man*, but the financing for it wasn't really in place yet. In fact, *He-Man* wasn't even on the air yet, so they weren't sure how it was going to go. The only show they'd managed to sell to the networks that year was... either *Fat Albert* or *Gilligan's Island*—I can't remember which—it was one of the goofy shows. So they had everybody who was employed on *He-Man* test for that show, and they were going to pick the best because they could only afford a skeleton crew with just the one show.



Part 3: Warner Brothers— Home, Sweet Home

MM: Was there a time when you were only coloring for First?

BRUCE: Probably before and after *Beany & Cecil*. I was coloring stuff for First and for Malibu, or Eternity—whatever they were called at that time.

MM: They may have changed names while you were working for them.

BRUCE: Coloring an entire comic book takes a lot of work. I wasn't able to do it while I was working at *Beany & Cecil*. I was still coloring covers for First and Malibu/Eternity all throughout that, because it was easy money. Once I was done with *Beany & Cecil* I went back to coloring for First, and I even did one more *He-Man* comic at that time. Mattel in a kind of desperation were trying to resurrect *He-Man*. They reinvented him as a sci-fi hero rather than a fantasy hero. It was very, very short-lived.

From a combination of the disappointment of what happened with *Beany & Cecil* and a disappointment of just coloring comic books, which was not very fulfilling to me, I almost had a nervous breakdown. I had met my future wife at that time, and we were dating, and I was thinking, "I've got to make a living somehow. If I'm going to marry this woman and have kids and the whole schmeer, I can't just be living this freelance comic book coloring life." I wasn't able to color them fast enough to make really good money at it. I had an ulcer at the time, too—a lot of things were all happening at the same time. As part of my therapy for getting rid of the ulcer I had to quit smoking, I had to quit drinking coffee and alcohol, I had to quit sugar and fat, all at the same time. So I went cold turkey on all of those substance abuses for two weeks, and at the end of those two weeks I had a nervous breakdown. I couldn't even breathe.

MM: It's amazing you weren't just sitting in bed in a state of shock.

BRUCE: I *was*. I was just lying there in bed, watching TV, shaking. It was horrible. Once I was through all that and was able to deal with stuff, I said, "I've got to do something. I need a job. I can't just color comic books for a living. I'll never be able to afford to buy a house, raise a family, and all this stuff." The first place

I went to was Disney, strangely enough. A friend of mine from Bluth, Terry Shakespeare, was working in their publications department. This was at a time when they were doing *Disney Adventures* and overseeing all the overseas—

MM: This was when they were publishing it themselves, right?

BRUCE: They were publishing *Disney Adventures* themselves and they were technically publishing all the Disney comics throughout the world. They would farm out the artwork to overseas artists, but it all had to come back to Disney to be corrected. There was a skeleton crew who worked on the Disney lot just doing the publications work. And they were also doing licensing artwork. I interviewed there and took a test to see how well I could draw the Disney characters, and I couldn't draw them to save my life.





ACTION



BOOOOM!



ACTION

Storyboards™ and ©2004 Warner Bros.

MM: Your brief time drawing funny animals certainly wasn't in the Disney style.

BRUCE: That was the nice thing about working for John, was that the stuff was so out there and extreme and distorted, that in a way, he didn't mind ugly drawing. He was really good at the fundamentals of drawing. He knew what a three-dimensional drawing was and would try to impart that, but in the best of both worlds you would have a solid, three-dimensional drawing that was also very extreme and exaggerated, which is not really the Disney style. Disney style is all about drawing—all about the fundamentals. Looking back on it, it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me, that I didn't get hired at Disney, because I wouldn't be where I am today.

The next thing that happened was one of the guys I'd worked with on John's crew on *Beany & Cecil*—a guy named Bob Camp—called me up and said, "Hey, Warner Bros. is starting up a TV division and are going to be doing cartoons for syndication. Come on over, they need people." So I interviewed there with Art Vitello, who was my director on *Tiny Toons*, and he hired me.

MM: Bob had been putting together a *Batman* project earlier on, right?

BRUCE: Strangely enough, yeah. I first met Bob at DIC, before he started working for John. Bob got hired on *Ghostbusters* while I was working on *Ghostbusters*, so I met him there. The year before that he had done some freelance work for Nelvana, who was developing *Batman*. This was during a real fallow period in *Batman's* history,

way before the movie happened, and no one had done a *Batman* cartoon in 15, 20 years—unless you count the *Superfriends*. *Batman* was just laying there and nobody knew what to do with him. Somehow Nelvana got ahold of it and they pitched to one of the networks a very kid-friendly *Batman* show. Bob had done some presentation artwork for that.

MM: So when you came on board *Tiny Toons*, did they put you on background and character designs?

BRUCE: I actually did storyboards until the end. I did some character designs on the side, but that wasn't really my area. I did my first storyboard work on *Beany & Cecil* for John, so I had some of those boards in my portfolio when I went over to Warner Bros., and that's what got me hired to do storyboards for *Tiny Toons*.

MM: How long did you stay with *Tiny Toons*?

BRUCE: It was March of '89 when I started there, and the next year was when we started on *Batman*, so a little over a year.

MM: You worked on the *Bat-Duck* episode before you left. Did they specifically give that one to you?

BRUCE: It was the luck of the draw. Paul had written the script, but it was whatever scripts were available and whatever directing team was available at any given time. There was no rhyme or reason to it, you just got whatever script came down. Art Vitello's unit got the *Bat-Duck* script, and I probably said, "Hey! I want to do that one!" [laughter]



Storyboards™ and ©2004 Warner Bros.



Storyboards™ and ©2004 Warner Bros.

This Page: A nightmarish storyboard sequence from *B:TAS*.
Next Page Top: Kitten with a whip.
Next Page Bottom: The final design for Baby Doll, the psychotic child star who never grew up.

Baby Doll, Bruce Wayne, Catwoman, Joker™ and ©2004 DC Comics.

Was that going to basically follow the storyline from the comics?

BRUCE: Oh, yeah. That storyline in the comics was a really long, drawn out, soap operish kind of thing, and we were going to do at most a two-parter with it, trying to condense the best parts of those comics into one finite story. We never got very far with it, because we knew that it was going to be tricky. We called up Fox and said, "We're thinking about doing this story, blah, blah, blah," and the minute we said vampires they said no. "Well what if we—?" "No." [laughter] "What if we never ever see fangs?" "No." "What if when Nocturna bites Batman it's all in the shadows?" "No. No vampires, period." "Well that's one not worth doing then."

MM: You had also planned for the Creeper to show up that season.

BRUCE: Yeah, the Creeper show just didn't gel that first time around. We went back and forth on it, and a number of writers took a stab at it. It just never got to a point where we all felt happy with it, so we just dropped it.

MM: What changed in the third season that made it work?

BRUCE: I couldn't tell you exactly what the final thing that made it work was.

MM: Was it tying the Joker into his origin?

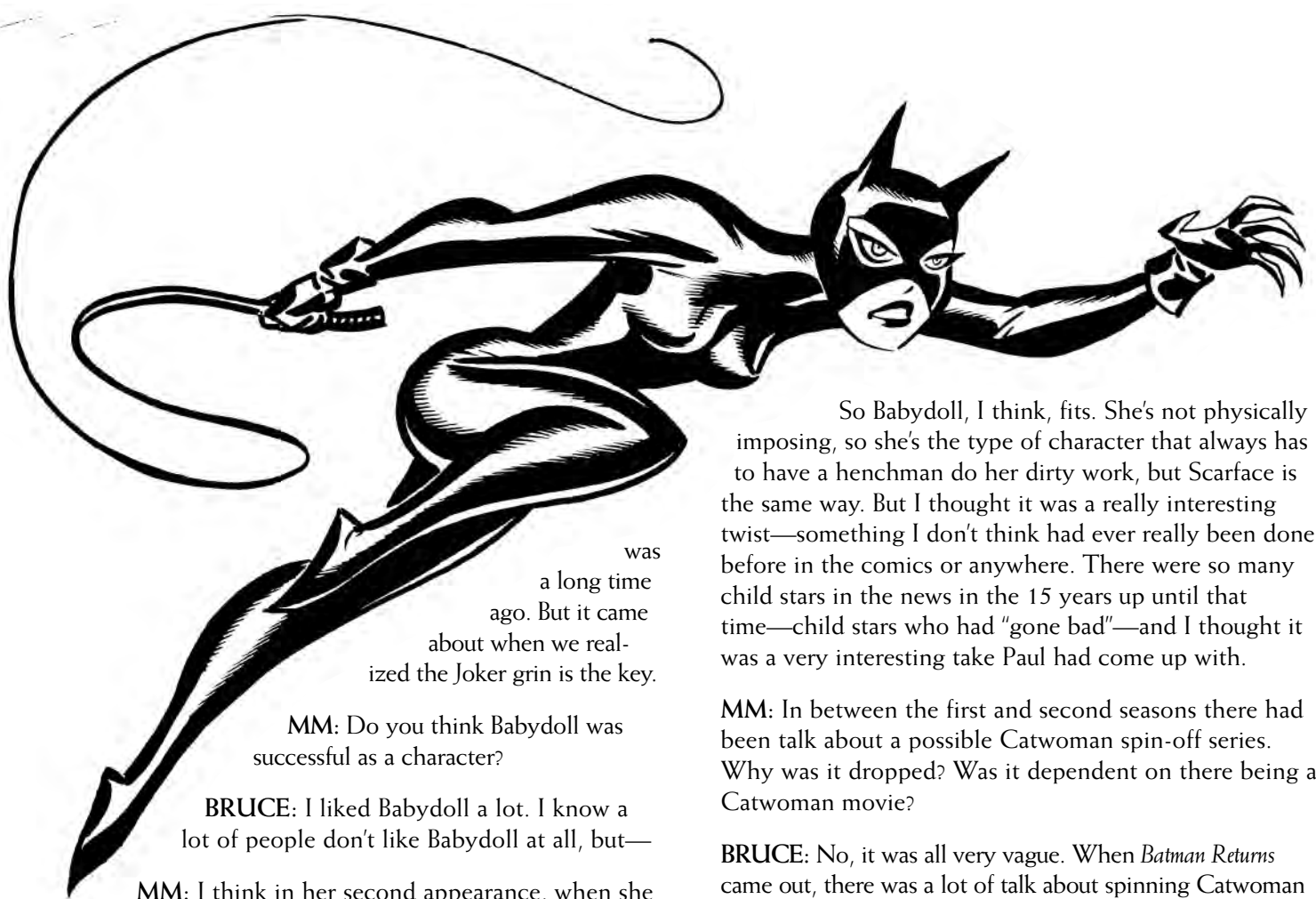
BRUCE: That was certainly an element that hadn't been there before. I don't know who came up with that shtick—actually... God, I think I might have. [laughter]

MM: It's not a bad, little twist. It helps explain the Creeper's insanity.

BRUCE: I was drawing him one day, just for fun, because we were talking about going back and trying the Creeper again, and I was having a hard time. Because we wanted him to be maniacal. I love the Ditko Creeper, but if you go back and read the actual comics, he laughs but you don't really see him laughing. It's always a long shot of his silhouette leaping over buildings and there's those big letters "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" He would use that to intimidate people, but it's a weird, absurd thing: He's a yellow guy with a feather boa and people are terrified of him. Why are they terrified of him? [laughter] It works in the comics, but not logically if you really think about it. We thought, "The laughing thing is good, and the reason people are afraid of him is because he's insane. He's maniacal, you never know what he's going to do." So I kept drawing him with this big rictus grin, and it just looked like the Joker again and I didn't want him to look like the Joker. I wanted him to look unique. I don't remember who it was, but somebody said, "Wait a minute, maybe he looks like the Joker for a reason." And I said, "Ahhhhh." It was probably Paul and I and maybe Glen Murakami—I don't know, it



Storyboards™ and ©2004 Warner Bros.



was a long time ago. But it came about when we realized the Joker grin is the key.

MM: Do you think Babydoll was successful as a character?

BRUCE: I liked Babydoll a lot. I know a lot of people don't like Babydoll at all, but—

MM: I think in her second appearance, when she was paired up with Killer Croc, she really worked.

BRUCE: See, generally, people hate that episode. It's just too weird; they can't wrap their head around it. I think both Babydoll episodes are terrific. I think she's a really cool character. That was the weird thing, we always kept trying to create new Batman villains who felt like Batman villains, and it's a tricky formula to get right. You think of the classic Batman villains like the Joker and Two-Face and the Penguin, they all have these really cool, weird visual gimmicks, and they all have some kind of weird, twisted psychological twist that makes them Batman villains. You have to have that combination. We were talking about it one day, and of all the Batman villains who'd been created over the last 30, 40 years, very few of them have those classic features. Man-Bat kind of works because he's literally the reverse of Batman and he's also got the obsessive interest in bats. Scarface is one of the few characters in the modern era who has that kind of edge. It's a real creepy, Dick Tracy kind of visual with a definite psychological malfunction.



So Babydoll, I think, fits. She's not physically imposing, so she's the type of character that always has to have a henchman do her dirty work, but Scarface is the same way. But I thought it was a really interesting twist—something I don't think had ever really been done before in the comics or anywhere. There were so many child stars in the news in the 15 years up until that time—child stars who had “gone bad”—and I thought it was a very interesting take Paul had come up with.

MM: In between the first and second seasons there had been talk about a possible Catwoman spin-off series. Why was it dropped? Was it dependent on there being a Catwoman movie?

BRUCE: No, it was all very vague. When *Batman Returns* came out, there was a lot of talk about spinning Catwoman off into her own movie. We were coming to the close of our first run of *Batman* episodes, and we said, “Well, what are we going to do next?” There were a number of proposals. We talked about the possibility of doing a Robin spin-off show, which didn't terribly appeal to me, but we did a little bit of development artwork on it. And the other possibility was, because of the popularity of the Catwoman character from the movie, we thought maybe we could do a Catwoman spin-off TV show. We talked about it a little bit—what would the premise be, and what would make it visually different from *Batman*—but I'm not sure if it was ever really pitched anywhere. I never pitched it to any executives, and I think it just died of inertia.

MM: As far as the second season goes, were there any episodes you were more heavily involved in than others? I know you were very involved in “Trial.”

BRUCE: There were a number of them: “Showdown,” the Jonah Hex episode—that was one that was really near and dear to my heart.



MM: How did that one come about? Even though I love the character, it was kind of odd seeing Jonah Hex show up in *Batman*.

BRUCE: I don't know where the initial idea for that one came from.

MM: But Joe Lansdale was an obvious choice to script that one.

BRUCE: Oh, yeah. He had already written a couple of episodes for us, and he had already done the Jonah Hex comics recently. It was natural to give him the script. But what happened there—again, the idea probably came from one of our lunch time conversations between myself and some other creative people from the show—it was probably Kevin Altieri. But I remember being at a recording session with Kevin, and during one of the breaks Kevin and I started fleshing out the story a little more—just brainstorming and coming up with ideas. Between the two of us we hit on the idea of doing the *Master of the World* thing. The character of Ra's al Ghul's son was something that came out of that conversation. We pretty much had the story plotted out in broad strokes within the space of 20, 25 minutes. It was, "Okay, I know what that story's about." Rather than verbally pitch it to anybody afterwards, I went home and plotted the episode out in longhand, just the main storybeats. I gave it to the writers and they went, "Okay. This

"YOU'VE ~~BEEN~~ ~~TEACHING~~ ME ACROSS 12 STATES ~~BE~~ BECAUSE OF ONE INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE STRUMPET -- FOR A MEASLY \$200 REWARD? YOU'RE EITHER A LIAR OR A FOOL."

FOR MONTHS. DUVAL DOESN'T BELIEVE HIM, GETS READY TO SHOOT HIM. RA'S INTERVENES -- "JUST TIE HIM UP, NO UNNECESSARY KILLING, ETC." (RA'S WAS A BIT MORE NAIVE, IDEALISTIC IN HIS YOUNGER DAYS) -- NEXT MORNING, HEX SOMEHOW GETS OUT OF HIS MAKESHIFT CELL JUST AS THE PHOENIX TAKES OFF. HE GRABS INTO A DANGLING MOORING LINE, CLIMBS ABOARD, STOWS AWAY. CUT TO --

EXT. RAILWAY BRIDGE OVER CHASM. HUGE CROWD OF PEOPLE, MARCHING BAND, NEWSPAPER REPORTERS, THE GOVERNOR, J.P. MORGAN-TYPE RAILROAD MAGNATE, U.S. CAVALRY TROOPS ON HORSEBACK. "J.P." CUTS RIBBON, DECLARES RAILWAY OFFICIALLY OPEN. TRAIN APPROACHES IN DISTANCE.



PHOENIX BOMBS INTO VIEW. -- WE HEAR A LOUD "DESCENDING WHISTLE" SOUND -- "BLAM!" CANNON-FIRE EXPLODES NEAR TRAIN-TRACK. (WARNING SHOT). OVER A VICTROLA-TYPE LOUDSPEAKER, RA'S WARNS: "COME NO FURTHER!" THE CROWD GAPES AS THE PHOENIX LUMBERS INTO VIEW. -- DECK OF PHOENIX: DUVAL STANDS NEXT TO RA'S AS HE WARNS THE CROWD TO CLEAR THE AREA. "MY NEXT SHOT WILL DESTROY THAT BRIDGE, ETC."

works." [laughter] Joe was available, so we sent it off to him and he stuck really close to the outline, and it just happened.

MM: How did "Trial" develop?

BRUCE: Well, when the home video people came to us and said they wanted to do a direct-to-video *Batman*, we all sat around and threw out ideas of what we would like to do. "Trial" was a story that Paul and I came up with, because we thought it would be a natural for a big budget direct-to-video to have all the main villains in it—kind of like the *Batman* movie from the '60s, but it would be our take on that. We were talking about it and mentioned it to Alan Burnett, and he shot it down. He didn't want to do it. He thought it was too gimmicky and that there wasn't enough of a story there to stretch it out for 70 minutes. Ultimately, I think he already had the germ of an idea for *Mask of the Phantasm* in his head, and I think that's probably the main reason why he shot it down. He really wanted to do something darker, something more personal, more—not soap operish, but definitely more backstory-oriented with Bruce Wayne. You know, an adult, dark love story.

MM: Well, let's go into *Mask of the Phantasm*. Originally it was to be a direct-to-video production—

BRUCE: For all intents and purposes, it was. It got theatrical release as an afterthought.

MM: Before you knew it was going to show in theaters, it was being produced to fit the TV format. At what point did you actually find out it would have a theatrical release?

BRUCE: Well, they had been talking about it as a possibility, and they kept going back and forth on it. We ultimately said it probably wasn't going to happen. There weren't a lot of direct-to-videos that got theatrical release. The *Aladdin* movie was one of the few that did, but that was Disney. We just thought, "Ah, there's no way that Warner Bros. is actually going to release this theatrically. They're just not into it to that degree." Eric Radomski and I were in Japan going over the storyboard with the animators in detail, explaining what we

wanted with it, when we got the call from the States that they were definitely going to release it theatrically. It was just... oh, man. Because the storyboard was done and were in that 4:3 TV format. It was really late in the production stage—we were handing it out to the animators—"Now what the hell are we going to do?" So I sat there with a piece of paper and an exacto knife and made a little 1.85:1 template and laid it over the storyboard and said, "Well, okay, it's not going to be that difficult." We had to go shot by shot, laying that template over it. "Is the shot going to work? Do we have to make it wider? Do we have to adjust the frame up or down?" Most of the shots worked without too much tweaking, but it was a nerve-wracking thing to have to do at the last minute.

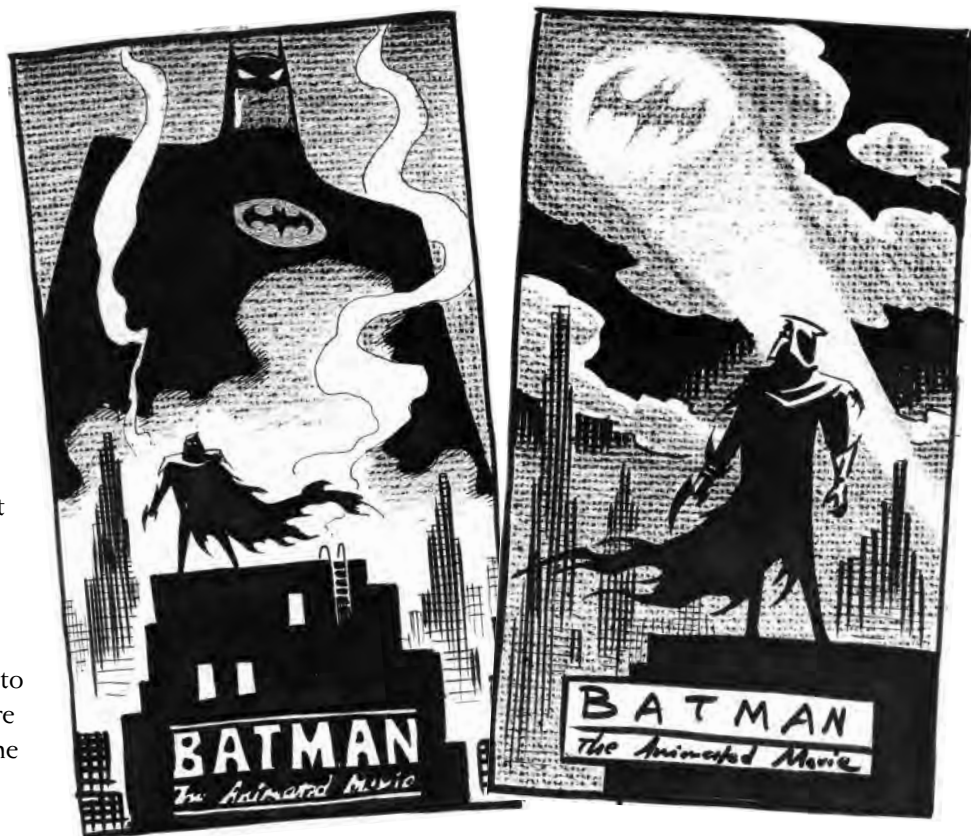
MM: Were you satisfied with the results as it came across on the big screen?

BRUCE: I think we could have done better. Which is really weird, because we spent a lot of money on it for the time. We had a much bigger budget for that show than we did for the regular TV show, and I don't think it really shows on the screen. I think it looks like an episode of *Batman*. I don't think it looks like a theatrical production. I mean, it's okay, the

Previous Page: A concept sketch and part of Bruce's handwritten plot for "Showdown," which featured a surprising guest-appearance from DC's western hero, Jonah Hex.

Below: Poster concepts for the theater release of *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*.

Batman, Jonah Hex, Phantasm, Ra's al Ghul™ and ©2004 DC Comics.



and too pat. But Rich and Alan both felt that we really needed to have that.

MM: Were there any problems with Standards & Practices over Turpin's death?

BRUCE: Oh, yeah, definitely. Not even with just BS&P, but with DC Comics. Any time you kill off a character who existed in the comics, they get in there and say "Wait a minute." This goes back to the very first conversation I had with Paul about Darkseid, when we came up with the idea of taking a hint from Kirby about the anti-life equation which Kirby never really gets around to defining in the comics. It was a cool sounding concept, and that's Darkseid's big motivation, but Kirby never really tells you what that is. So we took that to mean he's kind of a psychic vampire; he feeds off the despair of others. It's not enough to have a guy who wants to go conquer planets, there has to be

a reason why he wants to conquer planets. What he wants is to demean and debase and demoralize the people of each world and put them in abject misery so he can gain some level of power from their misery. While we were talking about that, I jumped ahead to the end of the story and went, "You know what? What he's got to do is after Superman has defeated him, Darkseid has got to kill someone who is very close to Superman just out of pure spite."

I didn't realize it at the time, but what I was doing was channeling the end of the Galactus trilogy. That's exactly what that is. It's Galactus saying, "Well, you've defeated me, but since you're not my herald anymore—bang!—you can't ever leave this planet." But the minute I said that, Paul said, "Yeah, that's the way to go. So who's he going to kill?" And I thought, "Who better? Ma and Pa Kent." We mentioned that to DC

Previous Page

Bottom: Leader of the Female Furies and servant of Darkseid—Lashina!

Previous Page Top:

Daily Planet funny page mock-up from "Mxyzplicated."

Below: Superman squares off against Darkseid.

Darkseid, Lashina, Mr. Mxyzptlk, Superman and all related characters™ and ©2004 DC Comics.



Comics and they said, "Sure you can kill them... as long as you bring them back." But whoever we killed, we wanted them to *stay* dead or it's a cheat. It was a good thing we didn't kill Ma and Pa Kent, because that would have been just wrong. So who can we kill? We can't kill off Lois, can't kill off Jimmy. We could kill off Professor Hamilton, but none of us really liked him anyway, so we figured if we killed him it would be "Oh, thank you, Darkseid." [laughter] It came down to Dan Turpin. It was one of those weird things, Kirby had just died within the past year or two, and Paul and I had gone to his funeral, so the minute we realized it should be Turpin—we had already based Turpin on Kirby visually—it was "Well, that's what we have to do, we have to kill him." I was able to channel Kirby's funeral into the show. I put Kirby's actual funeral into the show.

MM: You were kind of worried about Roz Kirby seeing the episode weren't you? That never happened though.

BRUCE: Yeah, she died right before the episode aired.

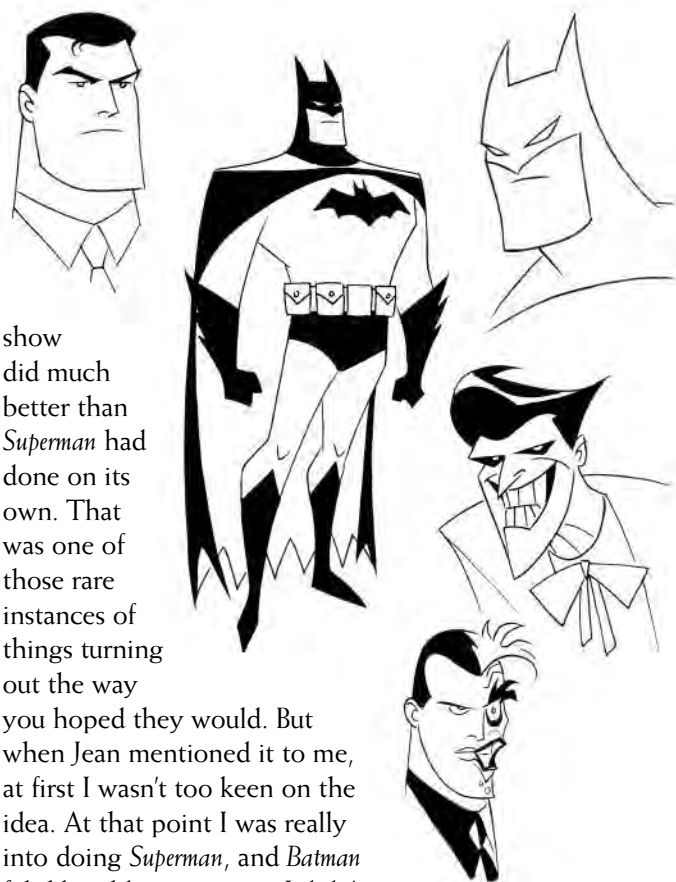
MM: Obviously it's a shame she passed away, being the sweet and generous person she was, but was it better that she didn't see it?

BRUCE: Probably. Who knows? Again, it had been a couple of years after he had died, so she might have been okay with it. But at the same time, I certainly didn't want to cause her any more pain. I'm sure Jack's death was a really horrible thing for her. They were so close for so many years. But she might have realized it was a touching tribute; she might have seen it in that respect. In a way, it was probably a blessing that she never got to see it.

MM: How did the decision come about to produce *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* as a package?

BRUCE: Well, what happened was that Warner Bros. had gotten the rights back to show *Batman* on the WB. The initial run was done for Fox, and they had the exclusive rights to run *Batman* cartoons for a number of years. That had run out, and Warner Bros. got the rights back to show the original episodes on the WB and they thought they would freshen the package with new episodes to give it a kick-start. We were already doing *Superman* at that time, and I don't know whose brilliant idea it was to combine the two, but it was a really good idea. *Superman* did well on the WB, but it didn't do quite the same numbers *Batman* had done on Fox for a variety of reasons. I don't think the character had as much broad appeal at that point as *Batman* did. *Batman* had a very public profile because of the movies, whereas *Superman* didn't have anything like that at that time, so he was kind of an also-ran. The WB had just started out, too, so they weren't on as many TVs as Fox was.

They hoped that by pairing him up with *Batman* that it would raise the ratings level, and it did. The combined

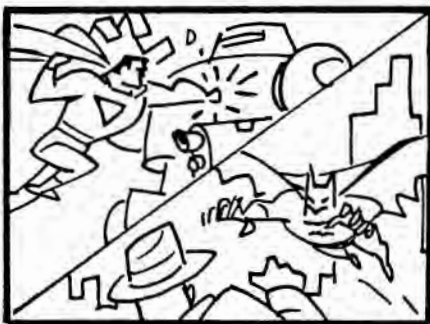


show did much better than *Superman* had done on its own. That was one of those rare instances of things turning out the way you hoped they would. But when Jean mentioned it to me, at first I wasn't too keen on the idea. At that point I was really into doing *Superman*, and *Batman* felt like old news to me. I didn't want to go back and do more episodes of *Batman*. But we had tweaked our in-house design theories on *Superman* a bit. *Superman* was a bit more angular than the original *Batman* show was, and I was pretty pleased with the results. I thought the animation was much more consistent on *Superman*. So I thought, if we took that idea and went even further with it, what would be the result? One night I was doodling and I did a couple of really designy drawings of *Batman* and the *Joker*, and I went, "Wow, that's kind of neat. That could get me excited about doing more *Batman*." So I mentioned it to Jean, and she was okay with it. She thought in a way it was probably a good thing to freshen up the design for licensing and toys and everything, to give them a slightly different look. Everybody was cool with that, so we took that and ran with it.

The inclusion of *Batgirl* and *Robin* was, again, influence from above. The consumer products division and the people at the WB wanted to make sure kids would watch the show, so they strongly suggested that we include *Batgirl* and *Robin* as a way of courting young girl audiences as well as young boys. At first we were a little reluctant to do it, but then we started thinking why not? We liked the *Batgirl* character and I certainly didn't mind putting her in the show. At that point, we reimagined *Robin*. Rather than just bringing *Dick Grayson* back, we reversed ourselves on our theories about *Robin* from the first season. The first season we thought it didn't really make sense to have a little boy going out into battle with *Batman*, so that's why we



20-SECOND "UMBRELLA" TITLE SEQUENCE STARTS WITH "COMBINED" LOGO TEXT...



NEW ANIMATION (NOT NECESSARILY SPLIT-SCREEN) SHOWCASING BOTH HEROES



...ENDS WITH "COMBINED" LOGO IMAGE



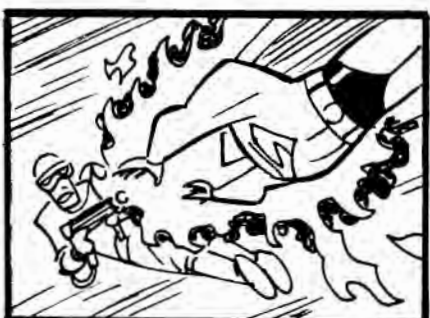
40-SECOND INDIVIDUAL OR 'SOLO' TITLE SEQUENCE FEATURES EXISTING ACTION CLIPS OF FIRST-1/2-HOUR'S HERO (IF ON SAT.) OR THAT EPISODE'S HERO (IF ON MON-FRI)



...ENDS WITH NEW "SOLO" LOGO IMAGE (WITHOUT TEXT)



ON SATURDAYS, AFTER THE FIRST 1/2-HOUR (AND COMMERCIAL) WE START 2ND HERO'S "SOLO" TITLE SEQUENCE --- WE'LL RUN CREDITS FOR BOTH EPISODES (COMBINED) AT THE END OF THE HOUR.



...ENDS WITH NEW "SOLO" LOGO IMAGE (WITHOUT TEXT)

INTERSTITIAL BUMPERS FEATURE THAT EPISODE'S HERO'S "SOLO" LOGO IMAGE BEHIND "COMBINED" LOGO TEXT



END CREDITS RUN OVER "UMBRELLA" LOGO IMAGE.

BIT
2/27/97

Previous Page: Where the new look began. Bruce's first design sketches utilizing a more angular style.

Above: Title boards for The New Batman/Superman Adventures.

Batgirl, Batman, Bruce Wayne, Clayface, Joker, Lois Lane, Nightwing, Robin, Superman, Two-Face and all related characters TM and ©2004 DC Comics.

made him older. It was the current trend in the comics as well. But we started thinking less literally and less logically about it and thinking more viscerally, that—going back to the original concept of Batman and Robin—Robin was supposed to be an audience surrogate so kids could imagine what it would be like to fight alongside Batman. It doesn't make any logical sense—there's no reason Batman would actually put a young boy in that kind of jeopardy—but viscerally there's something about it that works.

So we took that idea, and taking a cue from the comics, we used their current incarnation of the young Robin, Tim Drake, and incorporated him into the show. Which left us with "If we've got the new Tim Drake Robin, what happened to Dick Grayson?" And obviously the answer is he's grown up and become Nightwing. Strangely enough, I think that version of the Robin character, by splitting him up into two characters—one younger and one older—is much more interesting than the Robin we did in the original *Batman: The Animated Series*. I always felt like the original Robin we did was neither fish nor fowl. He wasn't a little kid and he wasn't a grown-up, and he wasn't dark and he wasn't light. By having a very young Robin, who's a real smartass and a real ball of fire type of character, and having an older, more disillusioned, a little bit more pissed off Nightwing makes him a much more interesting character. It certainly gave Loren Lester, the actor, more to work off of and a much more interesting character to play. I think his performance improved drastically as well. It was serendipity—it worked out really well.

MM: With Robin you weren't just using Tim Drake, you were also incorporating elements of the Jason Todd Robin.

BRUCE: Oh, sure. We've taken some critical hits for that. Some people don't like us messing around with the mythology that way, but there was no way to have three Robins. We don't have as many episodes to play with, and we have to keep the continuity a little bit more streamlined so that the casual viewer at home doesn't get completely lost. So we combined the best elements of the Jason Todd and Tim Drake characters and mashed them together.

MM: The season kicked off with the "World's Finest" crossover. Was that one of the first ideas you came up with?

BRUCE: Oh, sure. That was kind of a no-brainer. *Superman* was our current show and we were reintroducing *Batman* with a new look, and everything dovetailed. We always wanted to team them up anyway.

MM: My favorite scene was the Joker and Lex Luthor negotiating very businessman-like while

Harley and Mercy run across the background beating the snot out of each other. Who came up with that scene?

BRUCE: I couldn't tell you. We knew from the beginning that if we were going to pair Luthor and Joker up, they both had henchgirls, and the first thing that popped into our testosterone-driven heads was "cat fight!" [laughter]

MM: Overall, did the episode contrast the styles of the two shows in the way you wanted?

BRUCE: Yeah. More so than the styles of the shows, we really just wanted to contrast the two characters and their personalities—where they're similar and where they're different. Obviously, we were taking a hint from what they'd been doing in the comics ever since the John Byrne revamp back in the late '80s. The twist that we put on it that made it really interesting to me and that no one had really done before was the Lois Lane/Bruce Wayne thing. Actually, even that was kind of inspired by the comics. Dave Gibbons and Steve Rude had done a *World's Finest* mini-series where they



Part 4: Building a League of His Own

MM: For years and years you swore up and down that you would never do a *Justice League* show. What made you give in?

BRUCE: A number of things. Some of it had to do with coming to the end of one project and wondering what we were going to do next. We were already starting to lose some of our people because we were wrapping up on *Batman Beyond* and knew we weren't going to do any more. You know, you can't afford to keep people on if you don't have any work. So, that was part of it, and another part of it was there had been a resurgence of the Justice League in the comics in the very recent past. Grant Morrison had done his—it really wasn't so much a revamp of the Justice League, it was more of a back-to-basics approach and giving it a modern twist—version of the Justice League which got a lot of fan reaction and, obviously, sales spikes. At the same time that got us interested in doing the show, it got the fans rabid. All along, ever since the very beginning of *Batman: The Animated Series*, that was something people kept saying: "When are you going to do the Justice League? When are you going to do the Justice League?" And then Grant's version came out and then people *really* wanted to see an animated *Justice League*.

At that point it was like, "Well, you've got to bow to the inevitable," and with some hesitation, knowing how difficult the show was going to be, we said "Okay, let's do it." We called Mike Lazzo, who's the head of programming at Cartoon Network, and I barely got the words out of my mouth before he said, "Fine, let's do it." It was a very easy pitch.

I also have to say that on the *Batman Beyond* episode, "The Call," where we had the Justice League Unlimited—the future Justice League—that was almost a trial run for a Justice League show. We said, "How difficult is this going to be? Let's find out within the scope of a *Batman Beyond* episode." And it was actually *quite* difficult. Just staging an action sequence that has that many players in it is the single hardest thing to do about the show. Just trying to keep everybody moving all at the same time and not losing the audience. If you

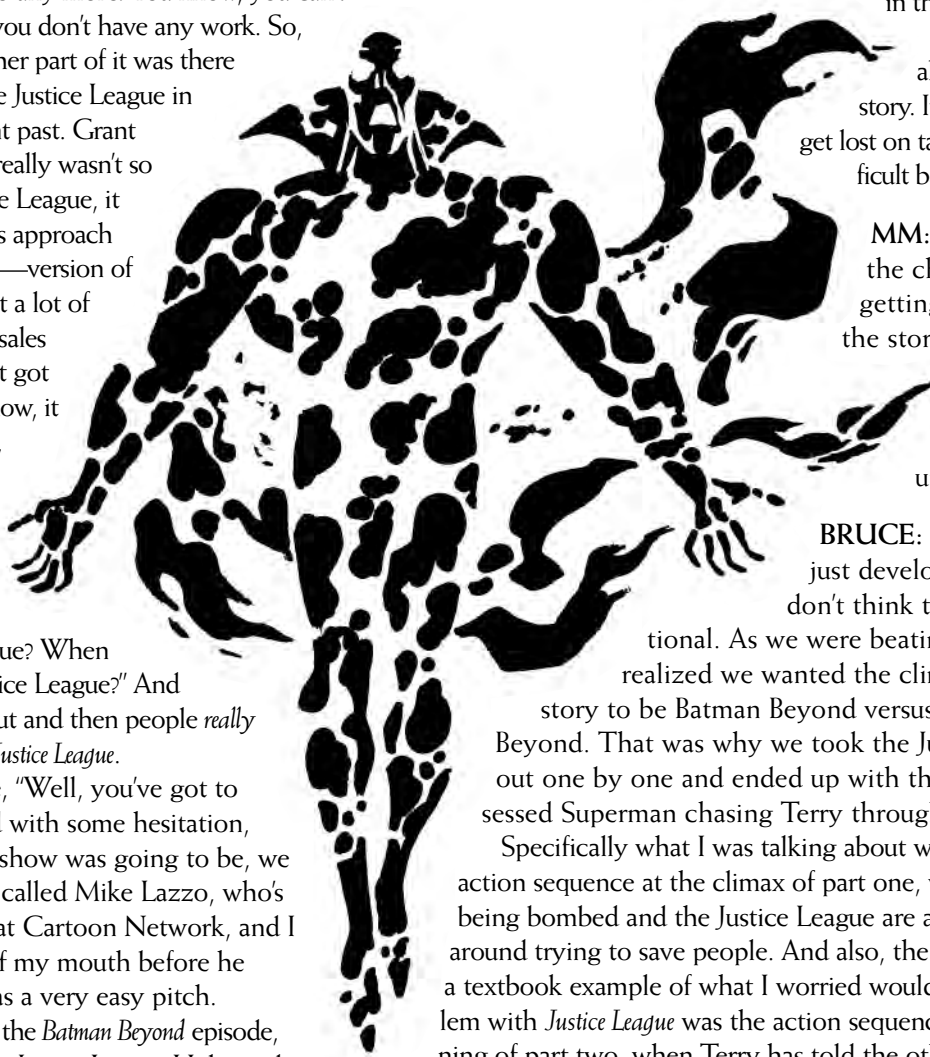
spend too much time with what Batman's doing, then you forget about what Wonder Woman's doing. It's hard to keep a group dynamic going during an action sequence. It's easy enough if you've got Batman all by himself fighting the Joker or even a group of thugs—it's easy to follow his storyline. An action sequence isn't just action, it's still part of the story. It's integrated into the story so that it starts at a certain point and it ends at a certain point. It's not just fight, fight, fight, fight, stop;

in the best of all possible worlds, it also advances the story. It's really easy to get lost on tangents; it's a difficult balancing act.

MM: In "The Call" the characters are getting picked off as the story progressed. Was that done as a way of freeing up some space?

BRUCE: No, I think it just developed that way. I don't think that was intentional. As we were beating it out, we realized we wanted the climax of that story to be *Batman Beyond* versus *Superman Beyond*. That was why we took the Justice League out one by one and ended up with that scary, possessed Superman chasing Terry throughout the arctic.

Specifically what I was talking about was that big action sequence at the climax of part one, where the city's being bombed and the Justice League are all running around trying to save people. And also, the thing that was a textbook example of what I worried would be the problem with *Justice League* was the action sequence in the beginning of part two, when Terry has told the other members of the Justice League about Superman going rogue, and then he goes crazy and starts attacking them. The way it was storyboarded, because the storyboard artist was trying to constantly remind the audience of where all the players were, you'd have a bit of action taking place with one character and then the camera would pan over and find out what was happening with another character. It was a nightmare in the





editing room. Just as you were building up a head of steam pacing-wise, suddenly you'd have to stop and pan over to somebody else and it was like, "Aagh!" It was driving us crazy.

It was a learning experience. We learned it's better to just cut to a character who's doing something and then cut to another character rather than panning over to them. Or, the other way to keep track of the characters is to have

something happening in the foreground with one group of characters while something's happening with another group of characters in the background, and then cut. But panning from one to another, that panning is dead time—it slows the pacing down and actually makes things more confusing. We sat there in the editing room pulling our hair out, but we developed a list of "dos" and "don'ts" about how to stage an action sequence with a large group of characters.

But there is no rulebook. To this day, every show has its own problems. Every time we get in the editing room we're kind of going, "Okay, Batman's story is coming along fine, but what about Wonder Woman's story?" It's a constant struggle of trying to juggle all these characters.

MM: Where did you start when it came time to begin production on *Justice League*? Was the first step simply figuring out which characters to use?

BRUCE: The first thing we wanted to do was to nail down which version of the Justice League we wanted to do. As I think I mentioned, one of our early Superman story ideas toyed with the idea of doing Superman and the Justice League. At that point we were thinking—again, this predates what Grant had done in the comics—rather than doing what everybody was expecting, which was doing the core characters, we would use some of the more offbeat DC characters, like The Question and some of the New Gods characters, as part of the Justice League. But times had changed and our feelings had changed, so we felt that when people think of the Justice League they think Superman, Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, etc. That was pretty much a no-brainer; that was something we all pretty much agreed upon right off the bat, so that's what we did.

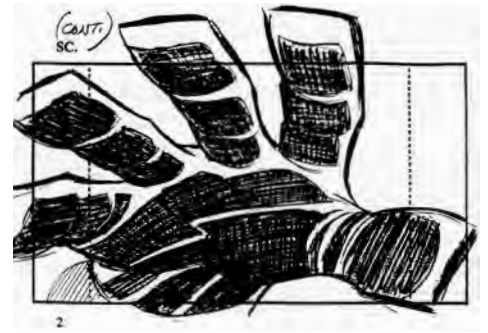
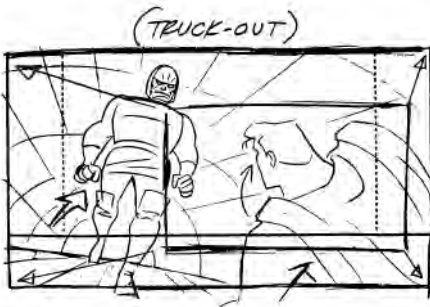
The only things that really needed to be settled on were which version of the Green Lantern were we going to use, because there's so many. We could have used Hal Jordan or Kyle Rayner or Guy Gardner, but for a number

of reasons, including ethnic diversity, we chose to go with John Stewart—which has turned out to be probably the single most controversial aspect of the show amongst die-hard comic book fans. John Stewart never really got a whole lot of face time in the comics. There was a small period of time back in the '80s when Steve Englehart was writing the comic, when John was the main Green Lantern, but aside from that he wasn't really one of the—

MM: His solo series in the early to mid-'90s, *Green Lantern: Mosaic*, wasn't a great seller, but it was one of my favorite series. And ever since *Cosmic Odyssey*, he's probably been my favorite of the Green Lanterns, so I was actually happy that he was the one you decided to use.

BRUCE: Well, good, good. I've always kind of liked him, too, and, again, aside from the ethnic diversity thing, we were looking at what the group dynamic was going to be. One of the things we really wanted to avoid was having a group of characters who were all pretty much interchangeable. Going back and rereading a lot of the Silver Age *Justice League* comics, they really are all the same character. Batman has no different a voice than Superman or Flash. They're all kind of the same character; the only thing that differentiates them is what colors they're wearing and what powers they have. So we really wanted to make sure they had a much more interesting group dynamic than that and that they all had different personalities. Going back to





the original version of John Stewart from Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams' day, the thing that made him interesting to us was that he was quite a bit more of a badass. If you go back and read those, he comes across as a stereotypical, angry, young black man. We knew we didn't want to do that exactly, but we still wanted to keep a little bit of that edge to him so that he would be one of the more strident of the characters. We hit upon the idea of the Green Lanterns being kind of a paramilitary force, so we said, "Ah, marine. Okay, Louis Gossett Jr., Samuel Jackson." So that became our take on him.

MM: The only complaint where I agree with general fandom—and I can see your side of the argument, too—is how he uses the ring. [laughter] The very simple

shields and beams. It seems like an animated series would be the perfect place to show off all the cool effects, but at the same time—

BRUCE: Well, it's one of those things: you never know when an idea is silly but cool, or when it's just silly. The idea of a guy making giant, green boxing gloves—at the time—struck us as being just plain silly. In retrospect I'd have to say it was probably a mistake. Yeah, it's a visual medium and that is kind of what the Green Lanterns were always about, even going back to the Golden Age. So we probably should have given him a little more variety in the kinds of things he makes. I mean, honestly, bottom-line, I have to say that it really doesn't make any sense for a guy who's got this powerful ring on his hand that he can shoot lazer beams with, there's no reason for him to make a giant, green lazer gun that shoots beams.

MM: No, but a giant, green battering ram is really cool.

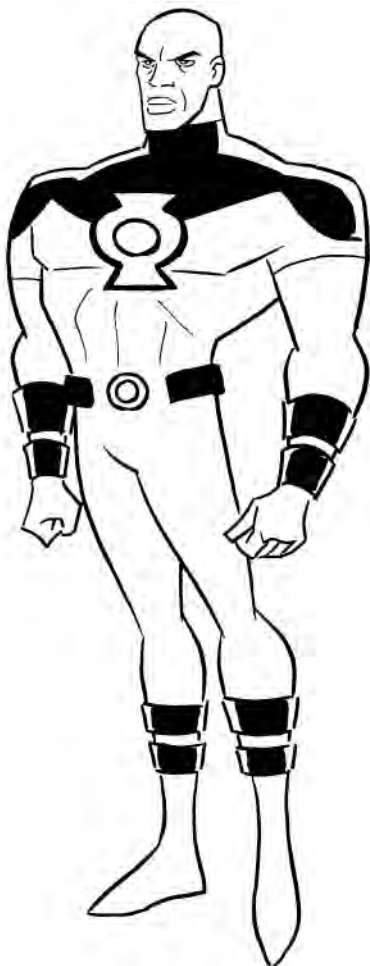
BRUCE: Yes. [laughter] Correct, correct. So we didn't really quite think that through. We limited what the ring is. We felt that it's just a weapon, so he'll use it as a lazer beam and make shields with it. And it does make sense for his personality to treat it that way, but at the same time, yeah, we could have been a little bit more imaginative with his usage of it. In fact, he does do a little bit more of that usual Green Lantern stuff in the second season.

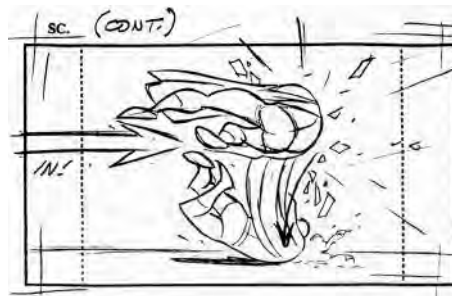
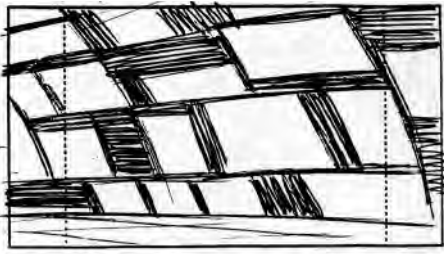
Previous Page: Bruce: "The infamous 'old, tired-looking' Superman re-design from *JL* Season One."

Above: Storyboards from the climactic Superman/Darkseid slugfest in "Twilight."

Left: Bruce: "For one mad instant, I toyed with the idea of giving the JL a 'uniform' costume design.... I got as far as doing Batman and GL designs before coming to my senses, realizing it would be a horrible, horrible mistake.... I did resurrect the concept for the 'evil, alt-universe JL' story, 'A Better World,' a few years later."

Batman, Darkseid, Green Lantern, Superman™ and ©2004 DC Comics.





MM: In the first season, Hawkgirl seems to get a bit of a short shrift. She does have some very interesting scenes, especially in "War World," where you can see her personality play off the other characters, but....

BRUCE: I would disagree with that. Yeah, we haven't said what her backstory is outside of the publicity material; we haven't dealt with her backstory as part of an episode yet. But other than that, I think she does come across as a fairly three-dimensional character within the scope of the show. People have a tendency to think, "Oh, well she's just the badass of the group. She's just the one who charges into battle and beats everything up." But that's not really true. We have shown her other sides to her. We've shown her compassionate side in the "Legends" episode, where she is empathizing with GL's loss of his childhood heroes.

MM: I think she's also the character with the best sense of humor.

BRUCE: She has the potential for it.

MM: It's a very sarcastic sense of humor that the other characters don't seem to display as much. Now as far as leaving Aquaman out of the lineup, were you just trying to avoid that whole *Superfriends* image?

BRUCE: Obviously we had a knee-jerk reaction to the *Superfriends*. That became a running joke. It's in the pop culture zeitgeist now that Aquaman is the lame one.

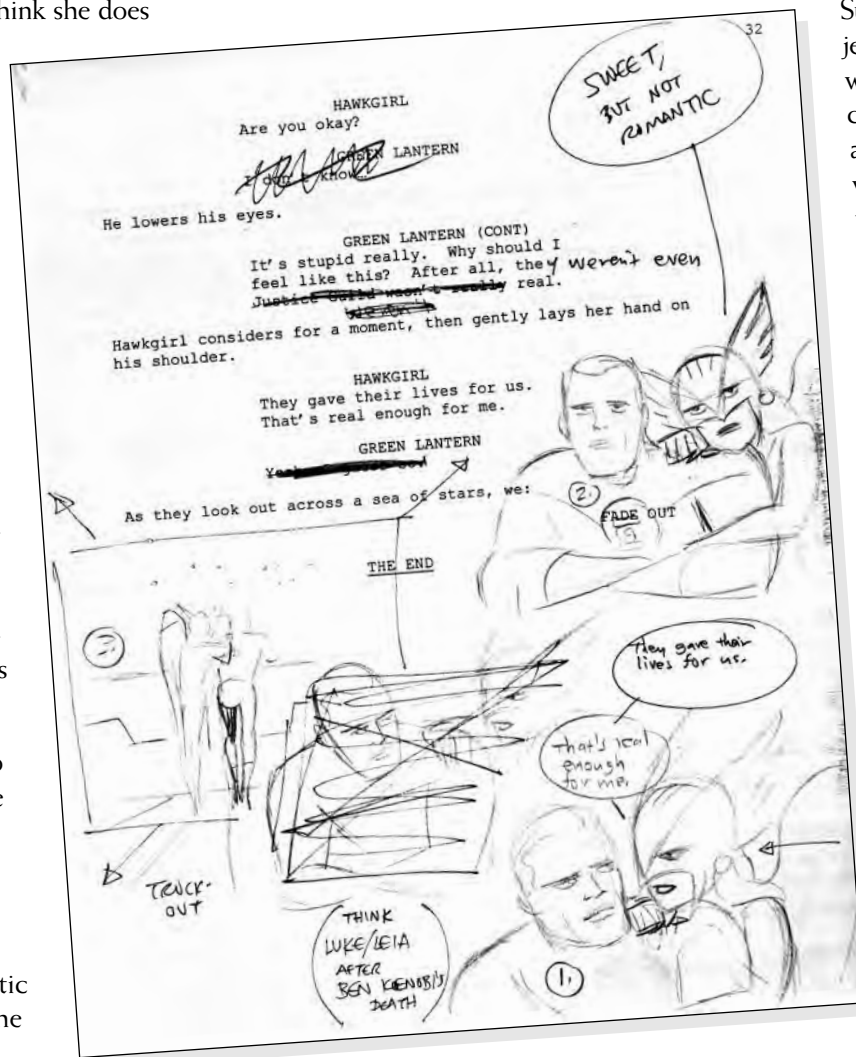
MM: Yeah, even the Cartoon Network commercials promote that viewpoint.

BRUCE: Right, exactly. Obviously we didn't want to fall into that trap. We knew we wanted to use—the Aquaman episode was one of the first stories we plotted for the show. Again, we kind of reversed ourselves. When we did the

Aquaman episode of Superman, we had a knee-jerk reaction to what they were doing with him in the comics, which we didn't agree with at the time. We were saying, "Oh, no, that's not Aquaman. Aquaman's not a guy with a giant hook on his hand. Aquaman's the seahorse-riding, orange-and-green guy." [laughter] But over the course of time, we took a second look at the character in the comics and went, "Well, you know, there's something about that. The hook has a Peter Pan/Captain Hook kind of piracy motif; the long hair makes him more of a barbarian, so that's more mythological." There were all these things that were gelling for us.

In retrospect we probably could have made him the seventh member of the

team instead of Hawkgirl, but it's all in the character dynamic balance—which characters will play off of each other interestingly. The other thing is we knew going in that having that many characters was going to be difficult, so we really wanted to keep the lineup down to no more than seven main characters, and even then we don't put all seven characters in very many episodes. So it was



Part 5: Oh Yeah... He Does Comics, Too

MM: To what extent do you think working in animation has affected the development of your style? Do you even consider yourself to have a style, per se?

BRUCE: I suppose. There are certain things, whether I'm doing comics or I'm doing animation—or a super-hero comic or a horror comic—that, I guess, are stylistically true from job to job. But I do try to apply different rules to different things. I've made a conscious decision in certain comics jobs I've done to try something different with each one. Even though you can look at them all and see it's Bruce Timm, "Red Romance" looks complete-

ly different than the Kirby homage stuff I was doing, which looks only somewhat similar to some of the *Batman: Animated* comics I've done.

To answer your first question, I definitely think animation has influenced my comics work. Strangely enough, there was quite a bit of back and forth between the *Batman: Animated* show and the *Batman: Animated* comics. We did the style for the animation, and then DC, I think, made a really smart choice in trying to adapt the animated style for the comics. I, in turn, was influenced a lot by what Ty Templeton and Rich Burchett and Mike Parobeck were doing in the comics.

Before I'd done *Batman: The Animated Series*, every time I'd tried to do comic book work, I was still stuck in not knowing who I was—trying to be Dave Stevens and Mike Golden and Jack Kirby and Walt Simonson all at the same time. I thought that's what comic book work looked like. If I was ever going to get comic book work, that's what I had to draw like. Fortunately, the styles have changed so drastically over the last ten years that even mainstream guys like DC and Marvel are much more accepting of more stylized artwork than they were. I remember ten years ago there was a Dutch Superman graphic album done by Teddy Kristiansen, which was really pretty; it was very nice. If anything it kind of looked like the stuff that Tim Sale does. At the time—and I think to this day—it was only published in Holland, because DC looked at it and said, "This doesn't look like a DC comic. We will not publish this." I remember thinking, "Wow, that's kind of short-sighted." But they've since opened up to—there's been the whole Vertigo movement. The indy scene has become a little more accepted by the mainstream. Guys like Ted McKeever and Mike Allred.



Previous Page Top: A revised rough design of Paran-Dul for her appearance in "Starcrossed."

Previous Page Bottom: Bruce drew this Green Arrow design as part of a development pitch "around 2000, I think, between *Batman Beyond* and *Justice League*. He's in *JL Season Three (Justice League Unlimited)*, but wearing his more traditional Neal Adams-era outfit." As for the Black Canary drawing, Bruce says, "This was done years ago, just for fun. Black Canary will show up in *JLU (Season Three)*, but she'll look a bit different."

Left: Batman on the move.

Batman, Black Canary, Green Arrow, Paran-Dul™ and ©2004 DC Comics.

MM: How does it feel to look on the comics stand and see a variety of titles based on your art style? And for my money, *Batman Adventures* has consistently been the best Batman title since it started.

BRUCE: I think it's cool. It's a little scary, because there are guys doing the "Bruce Timm" style as good, if not better, than I do it. [laughter] That's a little unnerving, but at the same time I'm not too freaked out by that, because the guys who have been influenced by my work have been influenced by other people as well, and they've become unique in their own way. There're still things that I do that nobody else does. If you look at someone like Mike Oeming or Darwyn Cooke, you might say, "Oh yeah, there's a Bruce Timm influence there." At the same time, Mike Oeming is easily as heavily influenced by Mike Mignola as he is by me, so there's a definite stylistic change there. And Darwyn wasn't influenced by my stuff until very late in the game, when he actually started working for me. He's my age, so he's had 40 years of influences as well outside of the animated style. I look at Darwyn, and knowing the stuff that he's into, I see it in his artwork. It may not be as obvious to other people, but—while I can see some of my tricks—I'm seeing Daniel Torres, I'm seeing Frank Robbins, I'm seeing Johnny Craig, I'm seeing Caniff, I'm seeing Sickles. We all might be in the same school, but we're all still unique.

As for the actual animated books, sometimes they'll go through slumps where they'll have an artist on the book who's okay, but not exactly dynamic. Right now, with Rick Burchett being the main artist, I think the book is awesome. Rick, to me, is the best



of those guys. Ty's really good, too.

MM: When you get stuck on something, what do you do to get yourself out of it? What do you look to for inspiration to spark the fires again? Or do you just have to put it away for a while and come back to it later?

BRUCE: Sometimes, yeah. If I'm working on something that's not happening, I just have to put it away and do something else and come back to it at a later date. Sometimes I'll come back and look at it and go, "Oh, that's not so bad." [laughter] I'm the world's worst procrastinator. I put things off until they absolutely have to be done, as you well know. [laughter]

MM: Yeah, well, I'm right there with you.

BRUCE: Sometimes it's just a matter of having to get the thing done. Sometimes I have no inspiration and still have to get the thing done.

When I'm doing animation work, quite often I will look at other people's work for inspiration. If I'm designing a character it'll be, "This design is really boring. It really needs a Kirby touch." At that point I will go to my Kirby library and pull out a bunch of stuff and go, "What would Kirby have done? Well, there's an interesting shape there. There's this weird-ass techno motif here. There's a weird sci-fi thing here." And I'll incorporate some of that into my design. We've designed so many hundreds of characters over the last ten years that we sometimes fall back on the same formulas and we need to look at something different. I'll either look at photographs



of movie stars or look at artists' work. For the very first version of Talia we did in *The Animated Series* I was looking at the way Frank Robbins drew women to come up with some different design theories. But there's no set answer really.

MM: As a fan of Harvey Kurtzman, do you fall in with his obsession for photo reference?

BRUCE: Hell, no. [laughter] That's where Kurtzman and I part company. [laughter] I am way too lazy for that. The more I learn about Kurtzman, the more I find out he had his own demons that hindered him, at least professionally. If you look at how he and Elder would do those "Little Annie Fanny" comics, that's the most anal way to do even a painted comic that I've ever, ever seen. I have some of his roughs from "Little Annie Fanny" and it's layer upon layer upon layer of tissues. He would do a really good rough and then tighten it up and change things. It's like, "Well, it's a little bit better, but not a thousand percent better. You could have just given us the original rough."

I should do more reference—and sometimes I'm forced to do it when I get a comic book story that has something I just don't know how to draw, like an airplane or something. Other than that, things like telephones or phone booths or other common objects, I can fake it just from observation and imagining in my head "What does a phone look like?" I can draw it out of my head without having to go find a phone to draw.

My work would definitely benefit from doing a little more research, but I just can't be bothered with it. When I'm in the middle of drawing, I'm in a white heat. I can't stop for anything. If I'm roughing the story out and I get to something I don't know how to draw, if I have to stop what I'm doing and go get reference, I'm thrown off. That's probably just rationalization and making excuses, but it's just the way I work. When I'm working I've got to keep working; I can't stop.

MM: Your first real comic book work—and we talked about this some earlier—was *Mad Love*. One of my favorite scenes—and probably a lot of people's

favorite scenes—was the seduction sequence. How much of that was you and Paul interplaying off each other, or was it all in the script?

BRUCE: The whole book was pretty much plotted out between the two of us, and then when Paul wrote the script, he added some bits of business and stage setting and stuff that we hadn't previously discussed—a lot of it I threw out. Paul's a great collaborator because he doesn't take offense if you change what he's written—as long as it not drastically different than what we talked about. I basically took what he had written and did my own editing on it as I was drawing. It was like, "Ah, I don't feel like drawing that," or "I think I can do this more effectively." I couldn't tell you which specific bits came from him and which ones came from me.

MM: Your Kurtzman influence really stands out in places in *Mad Love*. You used the Kurtzman nervous sweat quite a bit. Was that a conscious decision on your part?

BRUCE: As I was drawing it I wasn't even really aware that I was kind of channeling Kurtzman. I think my storytelling style is very meat-and-potatoes; it's not very flashy. My primary goal is to tell the story; I'm not

Previous Page Top: Rough layout for a *Superman Adventures* collection.

Previous Page Bottom : A variant cover of *Black Panther* #2. The guy in the shades firing two guns was later changed for the final cover.

Below: Harley loves her puddin'.

Harley Quinn, Joker, Superman™ and ©2004 DC Comics. Black Panther™ and ©2004 Marvel Characters, Inc.



Below: A rejected cover concept for the *Mad Love* one-shot.

Next Page: Rough layouts of pages 4 and 5 of "Cruise to Nightmare," which originally appeared in *Superman & Batman Magazine*.

Batman, Harley Quinn, Joker, Poison Ivy, and all related characters™ and ©2004 DC Comics.

even concerned with designing the whole page. Going from panel to panel, each panel is important. Obviously, the way the panels connect to each other, there's a rhythm. But other than that I don't look at a page and say, "Oh, this page is unbalanced because I've got three little, tiny heads up here and one giant figure down here."

It wasn't until I got to that one sequence towards the end of the book where Joker's pacing back and forth in front of the ringing telephone that a little bell started going off in my head. I went, "Wait a minute. This whole thing is kind of Kurtzman. What is it reminding me of?" It dawned on me that it was that sequence from "Batboy and Ruben" where they're driving past the building trying to throw the rope onto the build-

ing. "Missed! Missed!" When I realized that, I said, "I'd better not take a look at that, because then I'll just swipe it exactly." [laughter] I was just trying to remember what the rhythm of it was, and it's a tricky thing. I had to redraw it four or five times because it was like "There's too much of the Joker in this frame. There's not enough of him in this frame. He's got to be off here. There's got to be paper in the air here." It took me a while to get the rhythm just right.

MM: That was a very funny scene. That and the scene with the Joker dragging Harley down the stairs by her nose.

BRUCE: Oh, yeah. That was a little bit I threw in. That wasn't in the script. Yeah, it's very Kurtzman.

MM: The next story you did was for the *Superman & Batman Magazine*, which was canceled before it had a chance to appear, "Cruise to Nightmare." Were you approaching it as if it was the third act of an animated episode? That's the vibe I got from it.

BRUCE: Kind of. It was a challenge, because *Mad Love* was a big, sprawling 64-page book, and here it was six pages. Fortunately Paul didn't overwrite that one. It was very concise, and I didn't have to throw anything out. I wasn't thinking of it in terms of a third act of a longer story; it did seem to have a beginning, middle, and end, even though it's a short, little story.

The only thing really of interest for me in drawing that story was I always like to change up my drawing style. Around that time Marc Hempel was drawing *Sandman*, and I was really getting blown away by Marc's work. What I liked about it was—people think of my style as being very, very simplified, and what Marc was doing on *Sandman* was going even more simplified. His run became a little more stylized and noodly later on, but those first two issues were ultra-simple. It was about as simple as you could get and still be a drawing. I was influenced by that, and I was also influenced by Kevin Nowlan. You probably can't tell any of this, because it doesn't really look like it [laughter], but Kevin had drawn a Man-Bat story in *Secret Origins*—at that point it was probably ten years earlier. It's my favorite Kevin Nowlan story. It was completely different than any-



Bruce Timm



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Art Gallery

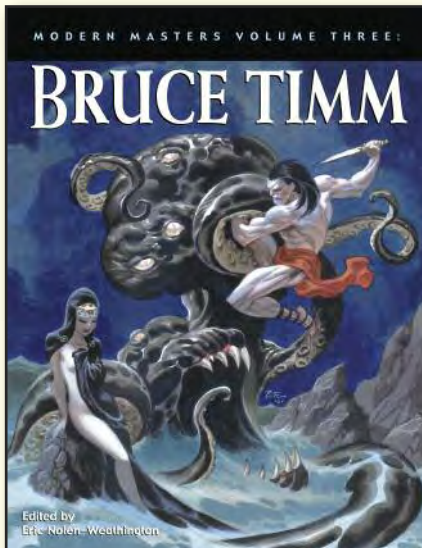




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