

# COMIC CASSEROLE

## Hints for getting into the comic industry

With the increasing popularity of comic books, more and more people are becoming interested in working within the comic book industry. While there are hundreds of different types of jobs available, the two most popular jobs are writer and artist.

Although each company has its own set of guidelines regarding submissions, they are basically the same. To get started as an artist — either a penciler or an inker — it is recommended that you submit several pages of sequential art.

Comic books are a story-oriented medium, and as a prospective artist, you must prove your ability to tell a story with pictures. Although large splash pages are in vogue, companies require you to submit several pages of everyday people doing everyday things.

Look at the artists who have been around for a long time, such as John Byrne, Frank Miller, Bernie Wrightson and Barry Smith. They have enjoyed more than 20 years of success because their art tells a good story, not because they can draw 20 pages of muscle men beating each other up.

If you wish to submit pencil art, send in good

photocopies, not your originals. If your interests lie in inking, write to the submissions editor of the company and ask for sample pencil art that you can ink.

Breaking in as a writer is much more difficult than breaking in as an artist, mainly because it takes more time to review written material than it does to review art. Although most companies ask that you send your work to their submission editors, it is my experience that you get a better response if you send it directly to an editor who edits the type of books on which you would like to work.

For Marvel and DC, your submission should be a one- or two-page typed synopsis of your story. Do not send complete scripts or other material, because they will not read them. Also, if you are a beginning writer, do not submit a 12-part epic or try to take over a title like "X-Men" or "Batman." Submit a story that will take only one issue, because this is more likely to be purchased. Dark Horse Comics requires a more extensive submission, so it is best to write and ask for its guidelines.

Larger companies rarely purchase unsolicited

work. Your best bet is to submit your material to an independent publisher and slowly build up your credentials. Smaller publishers are more willing to work with unknowns and offer them more freedom.

The biggest question is how much you make. The larger publishers pay a certain page rate, but most of the independents pay little or nothing. Pay is usually based upon sales of the book.

Although working for free is not that appealing, in the long run it could pay off. If you meet editors and have a slew of small press books to show that you have been published, they will take you more seriously. Also, remember that most current comic professionals got their start in the small press.

With the current explosion of comic book publishers, there are more opportunities and venues available than ever before. Always make sure your submission is neat and free of errors and include a brief cover letter. And always include a self-addressed stamped envelope. If you don't, the publisher will not reply to you. And be patient.

--William Harms

## Artists treading into new territory

By William Harms

Staff Reporter

During his 17 years as a comic book professional, Frank Miller has worked on nearly every major comic book character.

When he took over "Daredevil" in the late seventies, he brought a book back from the verge of cancellation to popularity.

When "Batman: The Dark Knight Returns" came out, Miller forever changed the face of comics, presenting a Batman the world had never seen before.

As influential as Miller has become, it's hard to believe that he was once a young artist trying to get his foot in the door.

"I didn't have any formal art training," Miller said in a phone interview from his home in Southern California. "It was just a lot of practice. I got some instruction from Neal Adams, who would look at my stuff and then give me a verbal lashing over what I did wrong.

nuisance of myself," he said.

Miller said the world of comics was much different in those days. Sales on most books were falling and the general notion was that there would be no comics in five years, he said. Pay for the creators also was poor.

"Artists would dry up and burn out," Miller said. "The rules were so bad. The pay was bad. I could have never have done a book like 'Sin City' back then."

Times have changed, Miller said. When seven of Marvel's most popular creators bolted from the company and formed Image comics in 1992, it was the straw that broke the camel's back.

"Image really changed the face of comics forever," Miller said. "They proved that books based on the talents of the creators, instead of the characters, could sell."

The success of Image, Miller said, was partially responsible for the formation of the Legend line of comics.

About a year ago Miller, along with John Byrne, came up with the idea for Legend. Other Legend creators included Arthur Adams, Mike Mignola, Geoff Darrow, Paul Chadwick and Dave Gibbons.

"Basically we're a gang of lunatics sharing a flag as we all run in different directions," Miller said.

So far Miller has run the farthest and in the most directions. The fourth issue of the six part "Sin City: A Dame To Kill For" should be released soon, and in May the second series will be released featuring the character, Martha Washington, who appeared in the mini-series "Give Me Liberty" a couple years ago.

Entitled "Martha Washington Goes to War," the series will begin two years after the first one ended, and Martha will have spent those years fighting in the Second U.S. Civil War.

The Fall of 1994 will also see the release of "The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot,"

which will feature the artwork of Darrow. He teamed with Miller before in the series "Hard Boiled." Next Fall also will see the release of the third "Sin City" series.

With the trends in the comic book industry pointing toward more and more super-hero universes, Miller said, Legend is a breath of fresh air.

"I'm very tired of the Universe of the Month Club," Miller said. "And I've never been one to follow trends. I'm having the time of my life. These are the kind of comics I used to do when I was 14 years old. When you put your heart and soul into something, it shows."



"Generally I hung around lobbies a lot and made a

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