

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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ISSUE 118 · 19TH APR 2010

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EDITORIAL:

by lee harris

At Hub we're big fans of getting (and giving) free stuff. Sometimes, though, free stuff can work out very expensive in the long run!

Back in October I had the extreme good fortune to meet Dan Abnett. I'd previously chatted with him briefly over email, but didn't get the opportunity to talk to him in person until the Angry Robot UK Launch event in London.

After the launch event (at London's Forbidden Planet Megastore) a bunch of us retired to a local hostelry, and I quizzed Dan about his comics writing. We then started to reminisce about the cheesy humorous era of the 80s, when Giffen and DeMatteis were writing various *Justice League* titles, and when *Doctor Fate* was interesting (my quote, not Dan's).

It seems over the last 20-odd years I've missed all of Dan's titles, and he recommended his *Guardians of the Galaxy* for me as a jumping-on point, as it was intended to capture the daftness of 80s *JLA*.

Two days later, a parcel arrived for me at work – Dan had sent me a copy of *Guardians*.

Swine.

Why "swine"? Because it was good! Huge fun, and highly enjoyable. It meant I had to start hunting out his other titles. As a direct result, in the next month I bought five Abnett graphic novels at a cost of around £80 (*Nova*, volumes 1 to 5). I'm now hooked! And I now have a 20 year back catalogue to collect – it's going to cost a fortune!

Thanks, Dan!



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FICTION

Sescompandy

by joshua scribner

"Thanks for digging up the tank," said the smelly man in the stained coveralls. "I usually have to do that."

Beth and Jim looked at each other and then back at him.

"We didn't dig it up," Jim said. "We dropped off most our stuff last week, but otherwise, we've not been around."

"Huh?" said the septic man. "I saw another house down the road. Maybe it was them trying to be neighborly."

Beth had seen the guy that lived there, but not spoken to him. He was older and kind of handy looking.

"I guess that was nice of him," she said.

"Or intrusive," said Jim in his trademark cynical tone. "How did he even know we we're getting it pumped?"

"Hm?" said the septic man. "Well, I buried it for you, but as you probably heard, I didn't pump anything."

"Why not?" asked Jim.

"Because it was pretty much empty. Last owners must have just done it."

"Huh?" Jim said. "A strange thing to do right before being foreclosed on."

The septic man studied Jim for a few seconds and then said, "I won't charge you for coming here or for burying it." He smiled. "Just don't forget my name in three or four years when it's time to pump it again."

The man nodded and walked away.

Jim's furled expression made him look ten years older than he was.

"Well," Beth said. "Does that mean it's safe to use the toilets?"

Jim's face unfurled, and he looked handsome again. He smiled at her. "No, needing the septic pumped wouldn't have likely kept us from using the toilets. The reason we can't use the toilets is they're plugged really bad. We'll have to drive to the gas station down the road or use the woods until I get a plumber here."

Beth laughed. "At least this place was really cheap."

"Well, yeah, and we'll be able to fix it up easier than you think."

Such optimism meant a lot, coming from Jim.

That night, a horrible scream brought her from sleep.

The mattress they'd thrown on the floor shifted, and then she heard Jim moving across the floor.

"What was that?" she asked.

"No idea. Can you switch on the lamp?"

She did.

He was pulling on his pants. "I've never heard anything scream like that before. It kind of sounded human, but kind of wild too."

"Maybe it was some kind of bird. They can sound human."

She had expected her theory to be rejected, but he said, "Maybe."

"What are you going to do?"

"Just check it out."

The thing screamed again, and this time, hearing it from a more awakened state, she didn't think it

could be a bird.

Jim was standing very still. She knew why. You couldn't hear that scream without it getting inside and touching the "be still" parts of your spine. Something crashed against the outside wall of the house.

She screamed.

"Holy crap!" Jim exclaimed. "It's trying to get in. And we can't call for help because our cell phones don't get reception here."

"Where's your gun?"

He looked at her as if she'd asked the wrong question. "Packed."

"Packed where?"

He seemed to think for a few seconds and then said, "I haven't the foggiest."

There was another scream and then another smack.

"That was toward the back of the house," Jim said.

Beth gasped. "The backdoor is glass. Do you think?"

"Crap!"

Jim went to a box on the floor and pulled out two racquetball rackets. Beth almost laughed, but the gravity of the situation wouldn't let her. They'd never used the rackets they'd bought years ago.

He tossed her one. "I'll go check this out. You wait here."

She got up and slipped on her robe. "I don't think so."

He studied her. "Fine."

She snatched up his free hand and let him lead her into the hall. There were boxes all over place, and it was dark.

Jim said, "When we get to the kitchen, I think I know where the knives are packed."

Another scream and smack came from the back of the house, and that was followed immediately by a scream and smack at the side. Beth wondered how many things there were.

Jim and she moved out of the hall, into the dining area, in view of the back door, where the next one hit. Beth screamed and jumped, trying to pull Jim with her. He must have had the same idea but a different plan of direction. They ended up falling not far from where they'd started. Jim got up first. She let him drag her across the floor into the kitchen.

He came down to the floor with her.

"Did you see that? It looked like some kind of goblin!"

"Yeah," Beth replied. "Let's find the knives."

"Okay, but I'll need to turn on the light. I think it'll only take a few seconds, if I can see."

"Fine. Just hurry."

He went to turn on the light, but hit the wrong switch. The light that came on was outside, on the deck.

"Oh, my God!" Jim said, looking out the kitchen window.

"What?"

"They're coming from the ground. There's several. I think they may be organizing."

"Jim, we better find the knives. No, better yet, let's find your gun and see if we can shoot our way out of here."

An orchestra of screams went off just then. Then the smacks were happening all over the house. Somewhere, a window cracked.

"Jim!" she screamed. "What are we going to do?"

"Someone's here."

"What?"

"Listen. Someone's here."

She did listen, and for the moment, the things had grown silent enough for her to hear.

"It sounds like an engine," she said.

She heard a car door open, and then a man shouted, "Sescompandy! Sescompandy!"

He continued to shout and seemed to be moving. Pretty soon, there was a knock at the door.

"Should we answer it?" Jim asked in a tone so weak she was stunned it came from him.

"Yeah. He seems to have gotten them quiet."

She led the way to the door and opened it. It was dark, but she still thought she recognized the guy from down the street.

"They'll be fine for a while now," he said. "You better let me come in, though."

She stepped back, and he came in and turned on a light. He was dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, but, by his mangled hair, he'd just been asleep. He got right to the point.

"You brought your stuff over a week ago, so they probably thought it was safe to move in. They've been waiting. They probably got really upset that you came back and things still weren't happening. Let me guess, the toilets are clogged."

Beth and Jim looked at each other. She thought he looked as confused as she felt.

She turned back to their neighbor. "Well, yeah. Why?"

He smiled, warm and friendly. "Sescompany is the only phrase I know in their language."

"What does it mean?" Jim asked, and strangely enough, the cynicism was absent from his tone.

Their neighbor laughed. "I'm not positive, but I think it means something like, 'Shit is coming.'"

Again, Jim and Beth looked at each other.

"They don't eat a lot. The two of you should be able to keep them happy. They'll stay in the tank until you leave, and then they'll leave again until someone else moves in. I got my auger in the car. I'll take care of your toilets."

"Well," Jim responded. "What do you want us to do?"

Their neighbor smirked. "They've been waiting down there for a week now. They're probably starved. If you got some beans or some bran, I'd get to chowing down."

Joshua Scribner is the author of the novels [The Coma Lights](#) and [Nescata](#). His fiction won both second and fifth place in the 2008 [Whispering Spirits Flash Fiction](#) contest. Up to date information on his work can be found at joshuascribner.com. Joshua currently lives in Michigan with his wife and two daughters.



Necroscope: Harry and the Pirates

reviewed by martin willoughby



By Brian Lumley
Solaris Books
rrp £11.99

Necro - (From the Greek nekros, a corpse) A Necroscope is a human instrument with access to the minds of the dead. Harry Keogh is the Necroscope - he knows the thoughts of corpses in their graves.

That's the premise of the character and an interesting one. Harry can talk to the dead, the 'Great Majority' as Lumley describes them. These are the dead that haven't yet passed onto other places, but are waiting in a purgatory of sorts. Some stay there a long time, others for a short time, but all have a story to tell and Harry listens to as many of them as he can.

The book is a collection of six short stories, two of them VERY short. Three of the stories have appeared in another book, 'Harry Keogh: Necroscope: & Other Weird Heroes', which was published in 2003, the other three are brand new for this book.

The main character is a human, but a radically altered one. How he was altered, by who or what is covered in this collection, but not in great detail. The after effects of this transformation are shown, and they are not pleasant. He has been changed almost beyond recognition, to the point that his wife left him and took their child with her. His search for them forms a backdrop to many of these stories and is an ever present theme.

Essentially he has become a superhero, but one dedicated to the revenge of the dead. He rights wrongs and ensures that the dead can sleep more easily, in some cases, allowing them to pass onto what lies beyond their current existence. This is shown to its full effect in *Dinosaur Dreams*, the first story in this collection.

Harry comes across a dead man whose bones have mostly been washed out to sea. He died falling off a cliff, but suspected that he was murdered for a secret. Only he and his wife knew the whereabouts of a fossil that belonged to a new species of dinosaur. He was killed by someone who wanted to know where it was so he could dig it up and sell the bones for a huge profit. It's a delicious story and one with a very satisfying end to it.

The story also shows that Harry is not invincible. No muscles of steel, or x-ray vision for our Harry. Just an ability to commune with the dead and allow them to inhabit his body when the need arises. A trick that is excellent when one of your dead friends happens to be an ex-cop with a deep knowledge of martial arts.

He can also use a method of instantaneous transportation via something he calls 'The Möbius Continuum'.

Dinosaur Dreams was a very good read, well paced and, for me at least, had a surprising ending. For those who have read the *Necroscope* series, you may be less surprised. It won't come as a surprise to learn that Harry survives all these adventures, but it's a measure of how well written these stories are that I was still tense as the end of the story approached.

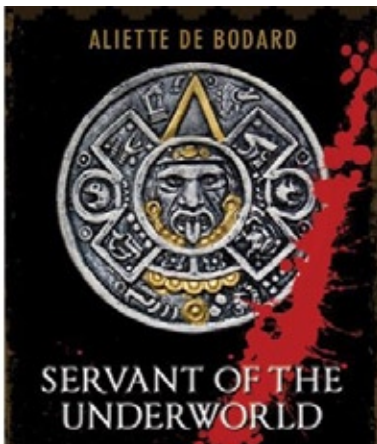
Three of the others are just as well written, though in my opinion the two very short ones are not so well written. Lumley is a good story teller, but the book is not something you want to read late at night if, like me, you are prone to nightmares!

The rest of collection are a pirate story, that's not really about pirates (*Harry and the Pirates*); a terrifying forest (*For the Dead Travel Slowly*); gambling in Las Vegas (*Dead Eddy*); a very scary dream about his mother (*Resurrection*) and a meeting with Death himself (*Old Man with a Blade*). These last two are the shortest stories.

If you have most of the series, this may not be worth buying, unless you like to have the complete set, as only three are new stories and only two of them are worthwhile. If, on the other hand you have never come across the Necroscope books before, then this a good introduction to the series and the characters.

Servant of the Underworld

reviewed by dave gullen



by **Alette de Bodard**
Angry Robot
rrp £7.99

When Acatl's brother, a renowned warrior, is implicated in a supernatural murder in the heart of the Aztec empire it seems only Acatl can save him. But the brothers are estranged, and Acatl's position as high priest of the God of the Underworld counts for little in the political and military hierarchies. In her first novel-length work Alette de Bodard tells a highly readable tale of danger and mystery, religion and obsession, where the cruel Aztec Gods can manifest in this world and send their creatures and powers to bring aid or destruction. With the right rituals a worshipper can visit these Gods in their own domains; with even better rituals it is possible to return.

Stakes are high – the future of the world, possibly its continued existence. As Acatl unravels the truth behind the murder he is drawn deeper into a lethal contest for power where players are backed by deities and their unhuman servants. His own resources are limited and he not only needs to solve the mystery, he needs to protect those close to him and sort friend from foe.

Contemporary fantasy writing has a substantial number of problems with originality, writing quality and sheer story-telling passion. You'll find little of those faults here, de Bodard's style is clean and focused, the narration vivid and as the story builds to the climax, exciting and urgent. You don't have to read the glossary or the historical and writing notes at the end of the book to know that this was a work of dedication, one that consumed the author during the months it took to research and write this book. The energy comes off the page in both the writing and the story.

The Aztec world is a strange one and it's interesting to remember every now and then as you read that despite the sketchiness of our knowledge and that this is book is fiction, it is based in a society that did exist and real people once lived their lives this way and believed in their bloodthirsty Gods. de Bodard makes the strange ancient world of Mexica believable and adds her own wonders and terrors. Some people have been bothered by the strange names like *Chalchiutlicue* and *Mihmatini* but these words have their own rhythm and they are no harder than the hyphenated and apostrophised mouthfuls of some traditional fantasy. It's not a problem.

For a civilisation with a reputation for blood and sacrifice this is in some ways a surprisingly gore-free book. If you are looking for still-beating hearts cut from chests and dropped into your lap you won't find them here, look for more subtle horrors. At times it does feel as if the sensibilities and thought processes of the characters are a little contemporary, and some of the male characters less masculine than might be,

but don't let my criticisms put you off. This is an original and entertaining book and while reading it I looked forwards to picking it up again at the end of each day.

Recommended.

Doctor Who: "Victory of the Daleks"

reviewed by scott harrison



Written by Mark Gatiss

Starring Matt Smith, Karen Gillan, Ian McNeice, Bill Paterson

Directed by Andrew Gunn

Saturday 17th April, BBC1

So, the Daleks are back and this time they've all got fancy new paint jobs. Just as we're all getting over the shock of a new look series with a new head writer and a brand spanking new Doctor we're now presented with a completely new set of Daleks whose redesign owes more than a passing nod to those Peter Cushing films from the mid-1960s.

And perhaps, therein lies series five's initial problem. For a show runner who professes to be such a dyed-in-the-wool *Doctor Who* fan a surprising amount of important decisions taken on the look and feel of this new series have been based solely upon those Peter Cushing movies. A dangerous thing indeed when you actually stop to consider the questionable quality of those two films.

The new TARDIS, both interior and exterior, uses the original Amicus film designs as its starting point; making the new police box shell more like the huge monolithic structures regularly seen on street corners in the 50s and 60s, while the interior is a messy jumble of wire and metal, of colours and levers, much less ordered than in previous series. Both Stephen Moffatt and writer Mark Gatiss freely admit in the accompanying *Doctor Who Confidential* programme that they looked to *Dr. Who & The Daleks*, the first of the two films, with its larger, more strikingly colourful metal creatures, as their main source of inspiration for this radical redesign.

The story itself plays out like a forty-five minute Saturday morning serial. Called back to Earth by friend and Prime Minister Winston Churchill the TARDIS materialises in the Cabinet War Rooms, the secret underground installation that housed the British government's Military command centre during World War II. As the air raid sirens wail across the capital city the Doctor and Amy are taken to the rooftops where they witness Professor Bracewell's new 'Ironside' project, Britain's latest secret weapon, shooting down and destroying an entire squadron of German bombers.

The Ironside is, of course, a Dalek, painted military green, something that only the Doctor recognises, which troubles him greatly as Amy really should remember them from the events of *The Stolen Earth / Journeys End*, but doesn't. They have been waiting for the Doctor, waiting for him to recognise them so they can beam his 'testimony' to their mothership waiting behind the moon and initiate the 'Progenitor Device', a device that holds the original Dalek DNA, that will create the new paradigm – a race of 'pure' Daleks.

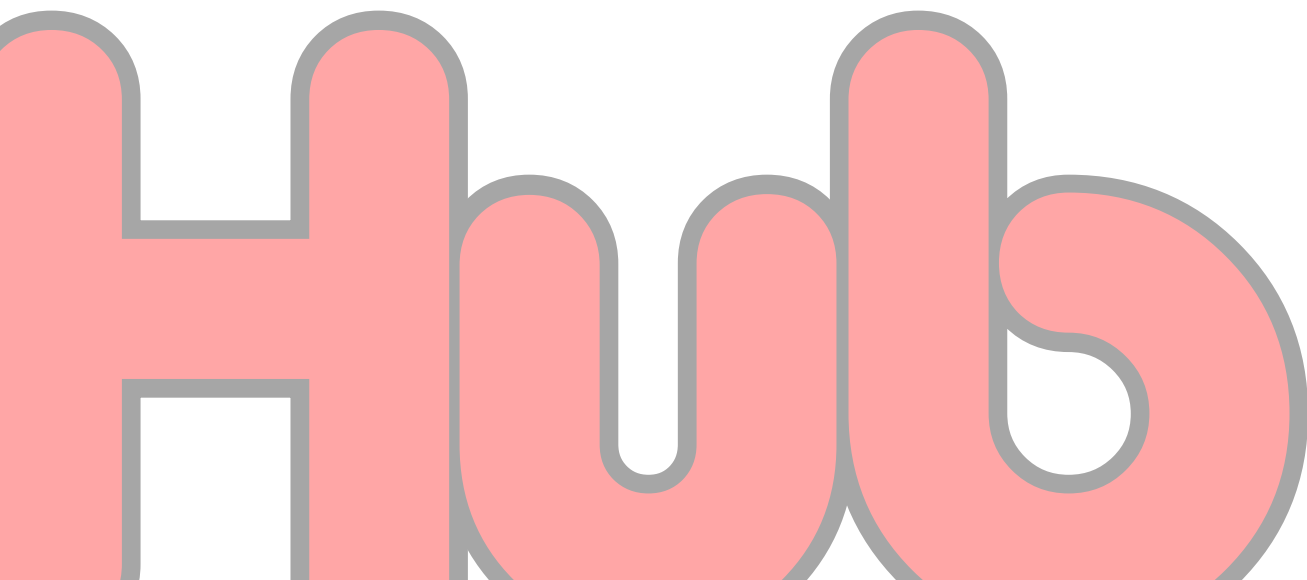
After the disappointment that was *The Beast Below* last week it comes as a considerable relief to all that the series has once more got itself back on track with this marvellous little tale of World War II London being menaced by Skaro's evil offspring. Arguably the best episode so far, it's a credit to both writer and production team that they've managed to present us with a Dalek story that, after umpteen years, actually feels fresh, exciting and new. Once again Matt Smith sparkles as the (relatively) new Eleventh Doctor, who, like his new TARDIS, is not quite run-in yet, all clumsy elbows and wagging fingers; his performances in just

these three episodes alone having hopefully put to bed all those rumours that he is nothing more than a poor-man's David Tennant.

Of greater concern is the shows run-time, which, for the last two episodes, has dropped to forty-two minutes, with last nights Dalek story being wrapped up at a mere thirty-six minutes. Tellingly, *Victory of the Daleks* only achieved its forty-two minutes with the help of a trailer for the forthcoming downloadable *Doctor Who* adventure games spliced into the end credits. Let us hope that this is, like series one back in 2005, something that will be rectified as time goes on.

Next week sees yet another familiar 'monster' returning to the programme, the weeping angels in series five's first two-part story. Until then, don't turn your back, don't look away, and don't blink!

Good luck.



FEATURES

Interview: John Romita Jr & Mark Millar

with richard whittaker

If there was ever a dream team for comics fans, it has to be the pairing behind *Kick-Ass*, the super-cult comic that has become one of the biggest indie films of all time. Mark Millar is a mainstay of Marvel Comics' team of power writers, responsible for the landmark *Civil War* plot. John Romita Jr. is the ultimate industry legacy, the son of Marvel mega-talent John Romita Sr. who has managed to equal his father's groundbreaking work on street-level hero titles like *Daredevil* and *Spiderman*. Yet now the pair are riding high on the success of their superhero pastiche, *Kick-Ass*. Self-published through Marvel's Icon imprint, the tale of vigilantes with no powers has become a massively successful dark comedy, adapted by Matthew Vaughn [*Layercake*]. The day of the film's world premiere at SXSW in Austin, Texas, Millar and Romita sat down to talk about dream jobs, classic costumes, avoiding Hollywood and how George Lucas inspired them to use the rudest word in the English language.

(Parts of this interview previously appeared in the *Austin Chronicle*.)

Hub Magazine: Mark, you got your start working for 2000AD in the UK.

Mark Millar: It was pure shite. I have the excuse that I was only 19. I was still at university and all the good guys like Alan Grant and John Wagner had bugged off to write *Batman* and everything, so there was just this massive vacancy. It was almost like squatters coming in, just people who were not worrying. It paid the bills, and I learned how to not write bad stuff eventually. All that stuff that never should have been printed, it was kind of like going through adolescence.

HM: Now you're an established talent in the US, and *Kick-Ass* isn't the first time you and John have worked together.

MM: Johnny and I had worked together on [Wolverine 2004 story arc] *Enemy of the State*. I always thought Johnny was one of those guys that was a great artist, but [*Daredevil* origin story] *Man Without Fear*, that was when - you know how Mel Gibson went from being a guy who did good movies to a guy who you thought, 'holy shit'? He just turned a corner and became amazing. For me, *Man without Fear* was when that happened. I don't know whether it was just that you became relaxed or -

John Romita: I think that was just what happened.

MM: Everything just clicked, and I became obsessed with working with Johnny. You probably didn't know this, but for a lot of writers it's like talking about girls you'd like to fuck. There're a few artists, like Travis Charest or Johnny, who you just want to work with.

JR: Now I know if a writer wants to take me out on a date, I know what I'm in for.

HM: Even by *Wolverine* standards, *Enemy of the State* is mass violence on an epic scale: Zombies, ninjas, sentinels -

JR: Some day I'm going to punch him in the gut over that scene with all those ninjas. You mother-

MM: A thousand ninjas fighting a giant robot. Stomp stomp stomp stomp.

JR: You should have read the script when he described what he wanted me to do. "Every ninja in the world

comes crashing in.”

MM: The thing I'm shocked by is how exciting it looks. When you're doing it, you're too close to really see, but when you have a couple years away and look back, there's something happening on every page.

HM: Considering how many people want to work with John, was it easy to get him?

MM: Jenny Lee was the editor at the time, and I said to her that I'd love to work with Johnny. I suggested Blade, and Jenny said 'they'll never give up Johnny for Blade.' I told her I wanted to work with Johnny more than anything, so what can I get? She said, 'Wolverine, d'you want to do that?' and it was just one of those things. After it was finished, we said, 'Let's do it again' and Kick-Ass just worked out.

JR: I completely concur. I just wanted to work with him, and it just happened that, from his sick mind, this thing developed and it could not have been a better collaboration.

HM: What made him your choice for this title?

MM: The honest truth is, I only ever had Johnny in my head doing this, and I told him I would wait a year for him. It's kind of like when a director has an actor in mind. Anyone with too clean a style, it just wouldn't have worked. I can't visualize these characters being drawn by anyone except you.

JR: There's a great compliment that he has imparted upon us artists, and that's there are projects that he has deemed worthy of a certain artist and vice-versa, and he said that I was great for Kick-Ass and other artists are great for other projects. He's got artists picked out, and to have a writer get that involved in that process, where most writers say, 'I have a great idea, give me a guy that's great and can do this,' that's a true compliment. And he's right, I'm better suited for that street-level stuff, as opposed to the supernatural stuff.

MM: Well, I think that celestial stuff like *The Eternals*, you do that well. But it's like Scorsese. He's a great director and can turn his hand to pretty much anything, and so can you, but whenever you come back to the thing you're best at, it's like Scorsese with *The Departed* and *Mean Streets*.

JR: The truth of the matter is that a good story teller, whether it's a writer or an artist, should be able to adapt to the story. So if Mark does something that's really out in space, if it's quality then he'll adjust to the subject matter, whether it's Scorsese or George Lucas.

MM: People are good at particular things. Steve McNiven, Lenil Yu are good at particular things, but Johnny has a wide range of things he can turn his hand to.

HM: You'd written what is clearly a hard-r comic: How did the process of getting it turned into a hard-r movie come about?

MM: Very organically. [Director] Matthew [Vaughn] and I became friends, and he was keen to do something with us because he liked the books I'd done at Marvel. So he asked, 'Do you have any creator-owned stuff' so I showed him some things and Kick-Ass was what he liked best. No agents were involved, much to their horror, and he just started writing the screen play. We were having a laugh - he'd ring me up and read me a line from the screenplay, and it was just pals really. We had a short hand, and he had such respect for Johnny's work, so he just did it exactly as we could have ever wanted it. One of the nice things is not feelings compromised. We feel that's as good a version as we could have hoped for.

HM: Generally when a comic gets adapted into a film, it's either a long-running series or a completed graphic novel. You guys were still writing and drawing while the film was in production. How did that work, and when did the film making process begin?

MM: It was exactly to the end of issue 4, because that's what I'd written the scripts for by the time Matthew started on the screenplay - but also issue 6, as well, because I'd written issue 6 before issue 1 because I was so excited about doing the Hit-Girl origin stuff. All that stuff made it in the film, and 5 and 7 are pretty close, but Matthew brought in the jet pack. It was as close as any adaptation would be for those scenes, but it was word for word with the other stuff, which is amazing. I couldn't believe it when I saw it and it was like the comic coming alive. Even Johnny's shots - I mean, I'm quite ADD about this stuff. I remember how Johnny drew this stuff and I looked at the pages so much that I recognized that he had the camera exactly where Johnny had the camera, like when Dave [Lizewski, Kick-Ass' alter-ego] gets hit by the car and comes over the back and lands on the ground. When you were watching it, you were freaked out, because it's even more like your work than even the animated scene.

JR: There was something Matthew said that, that I picked a distance back in the camera angles that he said was more like a true director than an artist. I always vary depth on the plane because I was taught as a kid, always vary. Close up, pull back, close up, pull back. If it's the same, you're gonna bore people. But I like to be explanatory, so I leave it in mid-range and Matthew told me the opposite [to everyone else], that he likes the mid-range because it's deliberate and explains easily. You can see everything, then you can pull in and out, and play with distances. And I said, 'shit, that's exactly what I had in mind.'

MM: I think you do it so naturally. Whenever I talk to other artists, they all say you know instinctively where to put the camera.

JR: If it came to a point of storytelling, try to explain first and worry about the camera angle later. What will happen is that, the moment that vignette is explaining an exciting moment, that scene will play out by itself. So if you have a moment where [Hit-Girl] cleaves a guy through the head - I forget how you ask for it, I think you wanted it right down the center of his head - I tried it directly in front of his face, but it wasn't clear as if I went along the middle, because then you can see the expression on his face. So I thought it would be more fun to see his expression showing before he's dead. So I'll try to be explanatory instead of worrying about how it looks in the art work, and it ends up better because you're explaining and the art work looks OK. So I never did it on purpose to be the best artist in the world. It just worked out that the story-telling makes the art better. That's the luckiest thing in the world. I have to ask: Did Matthew intend to do this going in or, after he looked at the series, did he say 'I want to use these camera angles?'

MM: When he started doing the screenplay, there wasn't really any art in yet. I think there were about six pages of issue one, so he knew what Dave looked like, but all that stuff came later, once they were storyboarding and working with the fight coordinators. So like the scene in Razul's apartment, all that stuff you added like the blades going through the door, they just had the comics in front of them and made sure the guys were wearing the right clothes. They were really meticulous. To hear sound on something that was drawings just two months before was really weird. It was like an *Avatar* experience, where something 2D becomes 3D.

HM: So you have a down-and-dirty script and a down-and-dirty artist for a down-and-dirty series like Kick-Ass. Even with that, you guys really pushed the envelope, especially with some of Hit-Girl's lines.

JR: You mean the one about the mayor having a signal shaped like a giant cock?

HM: That, but the one that gets everyone's attention is "Okay you cunts. Let's see what you can do now."

JR: A great little conversation, but probably more in my mind than his. I always imagined this being a girl from New York City. Now, in the UK, the word cunt is thrown around a lot more than in America. That word, for some reason, is so politically incorrect that if it's used it's shocking. So I emailed him and said, it's the last line of that particular book, and if a little girl was to curse like a truck driver, she would say, 'OK you motherfuckers, let's see what you can do.' And he said, 'absolutely not, I want to put this word in.' I forgot your reasoning, but look at the effect. If it had been 'motherfuckers,' then we wouldn't be sitting here discussing it.

MM: It was the g-spot. *Esquire* had it in their feature, and it was the cover of *Empire*, that quote with her picture next to it. And my reasoning was that George Lucas was told, 'Don't have the Death Star explosion have any sound, because there's no sound in space.' And he said, 'I don't care, it's cool,' and that was honestly my reasoning. I just thought it's funny, having her say it.

JR: Whether you knew it or not, that word will get more people getting that movie than if she'd said motherfuckers or cocksuckers. And it's so silly, because we're splitting hairs over three foul terms. And I will explain that it's a term that should never be used, and people will say, 'A little girl said what?'

HM: A lot of the killings are very bloody, but very creative. Is it hard to keep coming up with new ways to dispatch the bad guys?

JR: He wanted a decapitation, and this was in the first two books. This is what I was thinking: If I decapitate somebody now, how do I do it different later on? So I thought, I know, I'll just cut off part of a head, and go through different grades of cutting heads off: Halfway through, three-quarters of the way through. I couldn't waste the money-shot now.

HM: So, mandatory comic geek question, considering you've written and drawn both characters: Who would win - young Elektra or Hit-Girl?

MM: Hit Girl.

JR: Absolutely.

MM: Young Elektra didn't start training until she was about 13, so Hit Girl would just get in there before. head off.

JR: The best thing about the difference is that Hit Girl is unconsciously enjoying everything she does. Elektra was just a sorrowful character. Fuck that.

MM: One of my favorite scenes is when Hit-Girl is taking out all those drug dealers, and she's looking round every time she stabs someone and smiles over towards Kick-Ass. I was wondering why she did that, and Matthew explained to me that the idea was that she's been so used to killing and looking to her dad for approval, she's looking at Kick-Ass like, 'aren't I doing good?' like a little kid for approval.

HM: Speaking of Big Daddy, in the film Nick Cage plays him as a mixture of different iterations of Batman, but , John, when you first drew him he looked a lot like your design for the gang enforcer Bullet during your Daredevil run – just a guy in dark clothes with a simple mask.

JR: Unbelievable that you remembered that. The reason that I did that was with the complete intention of demagoging the old plain classic simplest character in the world. That's what I did with Bullet, a boring costume. [Mark] and Matthew thought of Batman, because the first thing that someone will do as an amateur is look like the Batman costume, which is iconic, and that's what I was thinking with Bullet. It was something I

had done, and I get railed for it online. Matthew gets supported for it and I get railed.

HM: Were you surprised that Nick changed the character so much?

JR: I was so concerned. I know he's an academy-award winning brilliant actor, but did he realize that people were going to go, 'Oh my god, Adam West!'"

MM: But it worked, because he juxtaposed it with the violence.

JR: The easy thing to do as an actor is to turn him into some psychotic Travis Bickle, and he's not that.

HM: So, there's an obvious set-up for a sequel in both the comic and film. When will we be seeing Kick-Ass volume 2 in print?

MM: September. I'm also going to launch a comic in the UK. Jonathan Ross and [comedian] Frankie Boyle are doing strips, and I'm going to edit it. It's my atonement for doing a shit job for 2000AD.



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