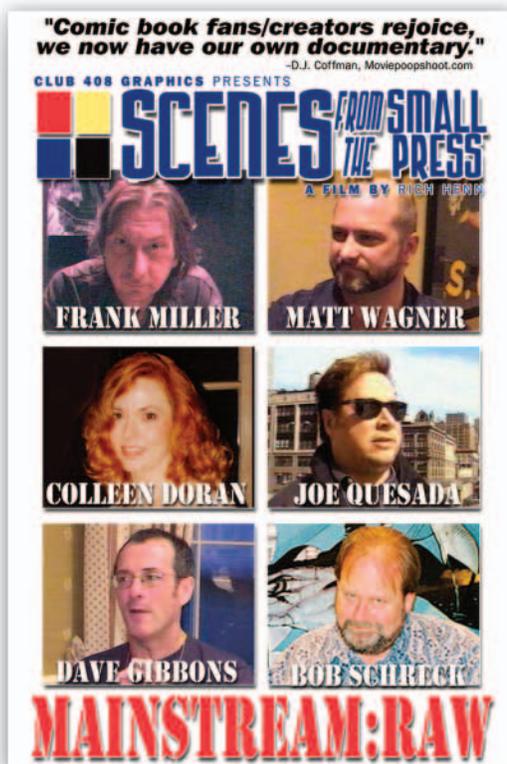


Rich Henn's in the



Rich Henn on the film "Scenes from the Small Press: Mainstream Raw"

This is the story of how Rich Henn, a small press publisher and regular on the convention scene, came to decide that he should direct a film about comics rather than draw and write a comic. So he did, and released it.

Not that he's giving up comics. Quite the opposite, as a matter of fact, since he's planning to start work on a new autobiographical graphic novel soon. Of course, that's **after** he finishes filming a few scenes and then editing the second film of the **trilogy** on the comics scene -- which is what that "little film about comics" evolved into during its two year shoot. All in between working full time and living a full family life with his wife and still-new baby daughter.

All of which makes perfect sense when Rich says it. Perfect. Sense. Honestly.

Which is why I'm going to let him explain it all to you.

Bill Baker: OK, what is *Scenes from the Small Press: Mainstream Raw*, and what does the mainstream have to do with the small press?

Rich Henn: I think that the common confusion here with the title is that *Mainstream Raw* is the sub-title to this film. The full title is *Scenes from the Small Press: Mainstream Raw*. Let's look at that title for a minute. *Mainstream Raw* is the first in a series of three films, all of which are taken from a [project of] much larger scope. That big project is the *Scenes from the Small Press* film series. There are three films in this series. The first of which is *Mainstream Raw* or, *Scenes from the Small Press: Mainstream Raw*, if you will. This film is currently available on DVD via Cold Cut, Diamond, and my own website, www.TimeSpell.com.

There are two more films to come ... *Scenes from the Small Press: The Road to SPX* and *Scenes from the Small Press: Colleen Doran*.

I do get some questions about the title of the first film having the words "Small Press" in it. The answer is simple: This is a trilogy of sorts, like *Star Wars: Phantom Menace* or *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*. Except that my film is a lot more interesting than that drivel. [General laughter]

The project, when it began, was to have been a film that focused on the independent publisher/creator, and the small press that surrounds said publisher. But I wanted to encapsulate the comic book industry as a whole [in the film, as well.] To that end, I conducted interviews with Frank Miller, Joe Quesada, Matt Wagner, Bob Schreck, Dave Gibbons, etc, to incorporate into the film.



Joe Quesada

Editor in Chief, Marvel Comics



Matt Wagner

Grendel, Mage, Trinity, Green Arrow



Bob Schreck

Editor DC Comics

Two and a half years later, and over 50 hours of footage, it was clear that there was more than one film here.

A lot of people ask me, for example, what does Joe Quesada have to do with small press? The answer is simple. His roots. Here is a guy who started off doing small work for Valiant Comics, a small press company at the time, certainly not a mainstream publisher. From there he formed Event Comics and [created] *Ash* with partner and long time friend Jimmy Palmiotti. Again, a self-published indy title. My aim for Joe was two-fold ... here's a guy who started off as small potatoes and is now EIC of the biggest comic book publisher in the world.

My second aim was that I wanted to focus on the subject of how this EIC of Marvel goes about bringing other self-publishers and indy creators into the Marvel Stable ... such as Brian Bendis, David Mack, etc. To that end, I generated a fifteen minute preview of the film and showed it at conventions throughout the 2002 convention year. Almost always, the response was the same. Very positive, and "Will we get to see the entire interview with Miller, Quesada, Wagner?" etc.

It became clear that these people **wanted** to see the entire Frank Miller keynote address speech from the Harvey Awards; they wanted to see the entire Miller interview, the entire Quesada interview, and so on. That material alone would generate well over two hours of a movie by itself. In the end, I gave them what they wanted. These are "scenes" taken from a much broader film entitled *Scenes from the Small Press*. The other thing you have to understand, is that the release that everyone signed clearly states that the working title of the film is "*Scenes from the Small Press*."

Miller may not be small press, but he is a huge advocate for the small press and creator rights. Gibbons, on the other hand, was influential to a lot of creators working today in aspect of his work, *The Watchmen*. I think it goes without saying that a lot of people who self publish today were highly motivated by what Miller and Gibbons have given us. We strive to achieve that same level of accomplishment our whole lives.



Dave Gibbons

Watchmen

BB: Why talk with folks who, like Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons, for instance, are better known for their mainstream work, and who might not have widely known small press credentials?

RH: My inclusion of Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons is pretty easy. Here's two of the most influential people working in comics today ... I'd be stupid not to include them on some level in a film **about** comics!

BB: What sparked this whole project?

RH: The project stemmed from the fact that I realized that there really wasn't a documentary out there about the comics industry per say, and the people behind today's projects. Or more to the point, **nothing** on the

struggling self-publisher, the artist/writer who puts up thousands of their hard earned dollars in an effort to have their work seen by the general public.

I was up late one night channel surfing and came across a small docu-film called *Trekkies*. For those of you unfamiliar with this project, it's a documentary on the *Star Trek* fanatics in the world. And it occurred to me, "If they can make a film about these guys, why is it that nobody has made a film about us?" And that was pretty much it. I typed up a thesis and a general goal for the film, and four to five weeks later, I was filming.

BB: So how'd you get from that simple thesis and goal to three films?

RH: Again, I think I pretty much answered this in the first question given, but to sum up -- I had so much footage that it was almost a project that created itself in scope and magnitude. While it was not my original intent to have more than one film, it soon became obvious with all the material at my disposal. For nobody but me to ever see a good chunk of this incredible footage would be a shame. I think how it effects the shape of the project as a whole is more positive than not.

BB: Call it synchronically or pure happenstance, but *Mainstream Raw* arrived at a time when there's a number of different films on comics being shown or sold. How does your film series differ from what they're doing?

RH: I recently saw the short docu-film on comics on the History Channel over the summer. It was an interesting enough film, but it really didn't say much past the first hour. It was also more a film on the history of some of the mythos than it was on the people who created them.

Earlier this Summer, Image came out with a film called *Countdown to Wednesday*. I almost didn't even take notice in it, nor did several others who heard of it, simply because of the title. Nobody really knew what that meant, and then after it was explained to them, I heard "Oh wait a minute ... didn't you already **do** that?" And I said, "Yeah, pretty much." Except that from what I've heard, *Countdown to Wednesday* is a film about the Image stable, and my film is about the **people** behind the books.

I found it interesting that after so many years and not a whole lot of documentaries being done about our

industry, all of a sudden they're popping up all over the place. It's about time, too! I think that we are an underappreciated community, the bastard step-children of pop-culture, who only recently are finally getting the recognition we deserve.

BB: What did you learn by doing this work? Also, what kind of surprises and moments of real interest did you encounter while filming?



Frank Miller at the 2001 Harvey Awards Ceremony

RH: I learned more than anything else, that these people are passionate about their work, and take it as serious as any other writer, artist or creator working in any medium today. These are people who have a genuine love for the art form and like to use sequential art as a means of storytelling. As Dave Gibbons puts it, "It's the space between the pictures that is the art of storytelling."

As for the second part of your question, "What moments of surprises and real interest did I encounter when filming?" Well, Frank Miller's trashing of *Wizard* magazine at the Harvey Awards was a real keeper.

And Colleen Doran's very honest and emotional interview was a real breath of fresh air. That may be an odd statement, but to see the entire hour and a half of her interview would make it painfully clear -- this is a woman who is honest and holds nothing back. She will happily tell you about the dark underbelly of this industry and will pull no punches. As a woman starting out over 20 years ago, it was difficult. Make no mistake. But as the woman who's been at this the longest in this field, speaks volumes to her credibility.

BB: Are you trying to get this distributed via traditional film venues? Are we going to be able to catch a showing of *Mainstream Raw* at our local cineplex any time soon?



Colleen Doran

RH: I sincerely doubt you will ever see *Mainstream Raw* at your local theater. This is a low budget production, with no distributor. Oddly enough, that's why Marvel turned me down when I asked to come into the building for an interview. Their legal department explained that until there was a budget and/or name producer attached, they didn't feel it was a good idea. They did, however, tell me that they had no problem with Joe Quesada meeting me on his own time, and that's exactly what we did. Joe was a prince of a man. Met me out on a cold Sunday morning in March, and after being up all night with his sick little girl. DC legal also shot me down, I am guessing also based on the fact that I was nobody they'd ever heard of before. But to be honest, that's okay. This film isn't about DC comics, and it's not about Marvel Comics.

BB: Well, how can interested people get a copy of this film for themselves?

RH: The most direct way to get this film is to go to my website at www.TimeSpell.com and go through the online ordering info. Or you can e-mail me directly at rasmus@timespell.com.

Diamond Comics Distribution did list it in their July catalog for items shipping in September, so I know it's already arrived in select comic book outlets. And Cold Cut listed it first through their catalogs as well.

For those that can't find it at their local shop, you can e-mail me direct or go to the site. Shipping is always free of charge!

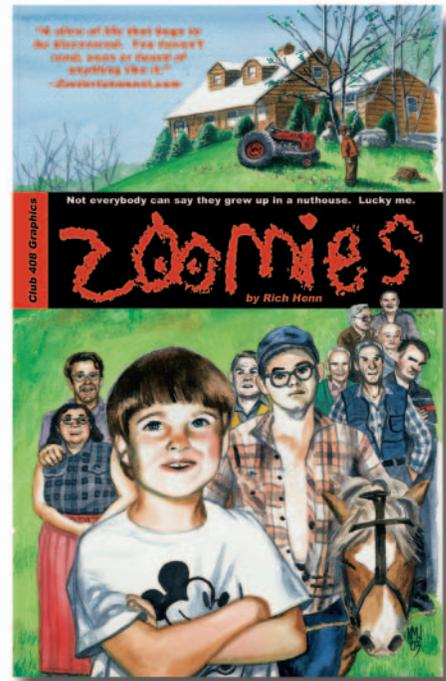
BB: What part of the trilogy will be coming out next?

RH: The original film, *Scenes from the Small Press: The Road to SPX* is half finished. There's a lot more editing to do, and right now my editor is filming his own movie. I expect the film to be finished editing by end of the year, and available in the open market by spring 2004.

While my editor is off filming his movie, this is giving me a chance to do some more filming with Colleen Doran, and Frank Cho, too. In addition, I am also utilizing the time to keep weeding through the 50 hours of footage, and work on my comic book projects as well.

BB: Well what can you tell us about those?

RH: I recently printed a book called *Zoomies*, which is getting some real attention right now. There is a very real possibility of a thick graphic novel of *Zoomies* next year.



RH: *Zoomies* was the kind of project that I was very reluctant to begin without finishing the current project I was working on. At the time that I first entertained the thought of doing a *Zoomies* project, I was working on *Timespell*. *Timespell* has a very finite storyline--three 4-issue arcs, making it a full 12-issue tale. I had just finished the first story arc, when my friend and fellow comic creator Carla Speed McNeil (*Finder*) started rattling my cage about *Zoomies*.

We would travel together on long road trips to conventions. I would entertain her with stories about the mental patients my parents took care of while I was growing up--the *Zoomies*. She would insist over and over that this material was so unique and original that people would be falling over themselves to read it. I kind of brushed it off at the time. But I finally began doing some strips and Carla would run them as a back-up feature in her book. The reader reaction was overwhelming.

RH: People really responded to the *Zoomies* strips and wanted more. I printed a limited edition book that collected all the material that ran in the back of *Finder* over almost a two year period. When I brought it to the San Diego Comicon International this past July, I was floored. People were coming up the booth who were either familiar with the material or just simply heard about it, wanting a copy of the book.

Several movie producers were inquiring about the material, agreeing that it was the most unique thing they had seen to date. I'm often told that what makes *Zoomies* work is the fact that it's unbelievably real. It's true, it's retro, it appeals to both the human condition, it's both funny and sad at the same time.

When I tell people that I grew up in a nuthouse...I'm not kidding around. And *Zoomies* is such a personal project to me, that I think it was also a matter of the time being right for *me*, to put these stories to paper.

It's truly the kind of stuff you simply can't make up. Growing up in my house was like living with Archie Bunker if he ran a mental institution.

BB: What do you get out of this kind of work that comics and your other creative endeavors don't give you?

RH: Creative motivation. Following around creators and documenting their work really helps motivate me to push on with my own comic work. Film and sequential art have always been my two first loves. I always wanted to work with movies and comic art allows that sequential storytelling to some degree, albeit minus the expensive budget.

BB: So, tell me the truth -- where do you get all the energy to do all that work? [General laughter]

RH: Other creators tend to motivate me more than I motivate myself.

BB: What do you hope viewers get out of the film?

RH: My hope is that people **outside** the comic book marketplace will walk away with much more than people within the industry. We as a collective already understand what it takes to produce a work of art. We understand where we have to dig within ourselves to produce an opus like Craig Thompson's *Blankets* or Carla Speed McNeil's *Finder*.

We live it.

The purpose of this film is to show the ordinary joe that we are much more than what they perceive us to be. I think that we are as important as any form of literary pop culture out there.

Neil Gaiman put it best in a speech he used to give years ago, when he made reference to our society; how we view paintings on a wall in museums as fine art and a widely accepted part of our culture ... and how these same people who view fine art tend to look at novels and literature as a widely appreciated form of our culture and history as well. But take these two art forms -- writing and art -- and put them together, and all of a sudden people outside comics have no idea how to view it. People tend to feel that comics are for kids. As Frank Miller says, "Comics haven't been for kids for quite a long time."

Only recently have people come to see comics as an art form.

I want people to walk away from this understanding that we take our work as seriously as any other artist or writer. To us it's as important as anyone else's day job ... to most it's not just a hobby, it's a source of income. But it's so much more than that ... it's a part of our soul.

It's more than what we do ... it's who we are.

BB: Any last thoughts?

RH: Last thoughts ...

Be sure to visit my website at www.Timespell.com for more on *Scenes from the Small Press: Mainstream Raw*, not to mention my new auto-bio comic book, *Zoomies* ... It's *The Wonder Years* meets *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. All true stories of a young boy growing up with the mentally ill. And last but not least, my first love, my baby ... *Timespell*. It's the *Sopranos* meets *Millennium*. Not your run of the mill supernatural thriller.