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FRANK QUITELY

CONCEPT TO COVER

THE DYNAMIC DUO!!!

FRANK IN RETROSPECT

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Frank Quitely
has been drawing
some of the most
dynamic images
in all of comics
for more than
20 years.
Together they have created powerful and moving stories for Marvel and DC. Their work together has won them awards, praise from peers and scores of fans.

Their first collaboration of on Flex Mentallo back in 1996 and the two have been friends and creative cohorts ever since. Collaborating on seminal works such as New X-Men, All Star Superman, We3, and Batman and Robin. I sat down with Frank to discuss Grant Morrison and the comics they’ve created together:

**On how easy it is to choose to work together:**

Frank: The choice is usually work with Grant or work with somebody else, so Grant’s always the better choice. Or what sometimes happens is Grant will say, “I’ve got a couple of things,” and he’ll run them past me to see which one I’m most interested in.

**On whether Frank runs screaming from the scripts:**

No, because in my short sighted way I immediately think this is amazing but it’s pretty complicated but I know it’ll be easy if I read and re-read it... With We3 and with Pax Americana it’s been much more complex and much more involved and I’m sure, I think it’ll be a good result when it’s finished. It’s shaping up really well.

Generally I find it easy working from Grant’s scripts, but what I learned from the first time we worked together on Flex Mentallo was that, it’s always a kind of leap of faith when you’re an artist working from someone else’s scripts anyway, and it’s not always easy when you get the first half a dozen pages of script in, y’know if you’re getting it in increments or it’s the first issue of something longer. It’s not always easy to know how good the thing is going to be when it’s finished, and obviously I learned on Flex Mentallo that when I’m working with Grant what we end up with, it’s always the time, it’s always worth the investment.

Illustration by Frank Quitely
Dynamic Duo cont.

On the two of them seeming very much in tune with each other:

It's funny because obviously, going back to Flex, when I got the Flex scripts in I really loved them, didn’t get everything about them, but really loved them. But in a way it was just like I had a really brilliant opportunity to have this really great script to work on and I just did the very best I could at the time. And looking back on it, I can see that there’s something like a kind of synchronicity there that I wasn’t really aware of at the time. And each of the projects has been different. In a way, on the one hand it’s tempting to think that the more we work together the more in sync we are but I think that’s probably a part of it but it’s also just the fact that Grant gives me a script that’s quite brilliant and then I’ll spend as long and work as hard as I have to make it as good as I can. For me it’s really been ideal — he’s my favorite writer! The fact that he wants to work with me, I just couldn’t ask for more.

On working with Grant on his new project “Multiversity”:

Well, what happened was I was getting the script and I’d receive the first four pages and then I’d get the next four pages and then I’d get three pages and then I’d get a bunch of pages and some of them were changed!” Quietly said with a grin. However, the pages shown Saturday morning hold a special place in his heart.

At the panel yesterday was like the front cover and the first three [pages] and it was the assassination of the president and time’s running backwards, so you go from the burning flag, which is the cover, to just moments before the assassination. I actually really liked the sequence and the way it worked out,” Quietly said. “I don’t really have a favorite character. They’re all kind of cool in different ways.
CONCEPT TO COVER
Talking with Frank about his creative process and the steps he takes to get from Concept to Cover.
by David Fernández

David Fernández (D.F.).- Last time we spoke, you were working on DC Universe: Legacies, a story that allowed you to ink again your own pencils, after a long period delegating such aspect of your work. How was the experience and what did you feel, considering the time passed since the last time you inked your own stuff?

Frank Quitely.- I was very nervous about inking again, after such a long time. I felt, when I had the pencil pages and was ready to start inking, that I wasn’t sure how to start. I wasn’t sure whether I should use pens, or technical pens, or the nibs and inks, or brushes and inks… I ended using all of them. I enjoyed, it was a good feeling, working with ink again, but I knew when I was doing it that some of the lines looked nervous or self-conscious. And I can see it still, when I look at the work. But… you know, I wanted to do it anyway, it was enjoyable.

D.F.- Regarding Pax Americana, when you came as a guest to Madrid International Comic-Book Convention, you barely knew any detail about this project integrated into Multiversity event, which means your reunion with Grant Morrison. In the exhibition organized at Viñetas desde o Atlántico, we have seen a page of that work. Have you finished drawing this assignment?

Frank Quitely.- No. I had back problems, ciatica. And I was spending the most of my time doing covers, because there was no problem with deadlines, as there some time is with join interior pages. Grant was very busy doing many other projects in comics and many other projects out of comics, as well. And I got the first pages of script for Pax Americana… I got four pages, and then, some weeks later I got another four pages. And then, a long time after that, I got another three… and then I got maybe… It’s a thirty eight page story, I got maybe the first half, but with some bits missing. It’s ok with me, because I was doing some covers, anyway. So, even now I’ve only done maybe twenty or twenty one pages of thirty eight. So I passed the halfway point at the script I have… was up to page thirty, and still there are two pages missing (laughs), so I only know twenty eight pages of the thirty eight. But what I know of it is very good.

D.F.- Don’t you find it difficult to work without knowing the end of the story, receiving the script pages so spaced?

Frank Quitely.- Is my preference to have the whole thing, but it’s ok, I don’t mind. It would be a preference to know what’s coming next, but it’s ok.

D.F.- We know that you are not allowed to reveal too many details about projects still unpublished, but thanks to the statements made by Grant Morrison we know that this event is somehow related to the old Charlton characters. Could you tell us some details about the history, or even the kind of storytelling approach that will require this work?
Frank Quitely.- Generally speaking, the pages are broken down into eight frames: four in the top and four in the bottom. Sometimes the pages are sixteen frames on a page. Normally, when I work with Grant the script is very simple: even if the story or the ideas on any particular page are very complicated, usually the script is very simple, the descriptions are very simple and I have room to interpret the descriptions of what Grant wants me to draw. I have room to interpret them the way I want to. And if there is something that Grant wants and is very specific, he will speak to me about it, rather than write a lot more in the script. That’s normally the way we work.

On this particular occasion, I have a script that is very thick (laughs), even though is not finished, there is a lot of description, and the description is very specific. For many of the pages, he has given me many simple thumbnail breakdowns of the way he wants the frames to look. So a simple way of describing it would be… where we3 we tried to create more depth in the page with the storytelling, in Pax Americana the complexities of the storytelling are more in two dimensions. Is more to do with pattern, flat pattern on the page, rather than depth. And where we3 Grant told that together we could suggest something of animal consciousness, or animal instinct in some sections of the storytelling, with Pax Americana is more to do with music, and vibration… musical vibrations, the octave, the eight as a repeated motive, and creating patterns leading the eye around the page in a specific way. So it’s actually been different from the way Grant and I normally work. So even though I don’t know how the story is going to end, yet, what I know of the story so far and particularly the way we are trying to tell the story, visually, is very interesting for me as an artist. I hope it will be interesting for you as a reader, but it’s good to work on it.

D.F.- Considering the time lapse and your evolution as an artist, didn’t you find your own line of pencil a little bit weird, when coloring it?

Frank Quitely.- A little bit… not so much with the image of Flex in the middle of the cover, but he is standing on a comic-book, and there are a lot of other comic pages floating around: they were all draw on a slightly simpler style, to me they looked more like drawings, and make them look even more realistic, even though is a comic-book drawing, but you understand what I mean. So when I was coloring all the background pages I kept forgetting they were my drawings, because I had deliberately drew them in a slightly different style. But yeah… it was a nice experience.

D.F.- OK, that’s a wrap on our part. Thank you so much for your time, patience and kindness.

Frank Quitely.- No problem, it was fun. Sorry it took so long until we could do the interview!
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NEW X-MEN
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OUR SENTENCE IS UP

MISCELLANEOUS