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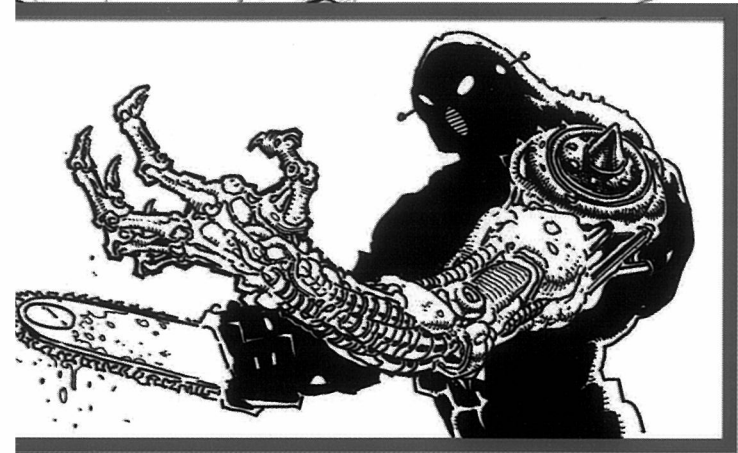
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HOW TO DRAW

CHARACTER CREATION

OVER

100

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INTRODUCTION BY JOHN ROMITA JR.

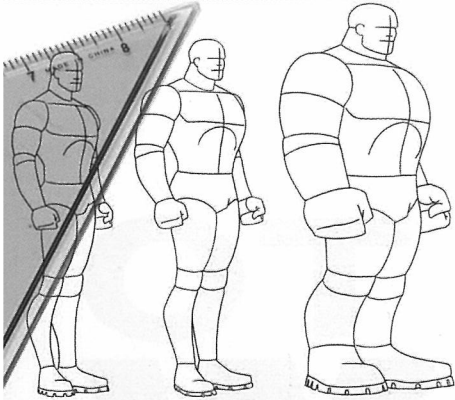# HOW TO DRAW

THE BEST OF
BASIC
TRAINING

CHARACTER CREATION

CONTENTS

JOHN ROMITA JR.

This was to be my introduction on how to create and/or draw characters. I am not the only artist who has attempted this, and I don't think my ideas on creating characters are any better than the next artist's. In fact, my art is, in my mind, average at best in comparison to my esteemed colleagues! Seriously. So I will attempt to discuss "*adding* character" as opposed to "*creating* a character."

There have been, and will continue to be, thousands of costumes, characters and visuals created by writers and artists. It is extremely difficult to come up with something original. So I don't concern myself with the creation of costumes, per se, as all I do is pick up the latest fashion magazines; he's on his way to work while singing an old Temptations tune. That's a story, as George Costanza would say! I walked past that guy one day a million years ago and used him in a Spidey story, with the Human Torch as the guest. I added an extra 30 pounds or so and maybe six inches in height, but it was that guy!

Character conveyed artistically is very difficult to achieve, but when done properly can help both the writer and one's career. I love to add some wild and weird backgrounders to a panel. I've done this numerous times in bar scenes and other mundane locations. I sometimes have used friends and family (especially in the Punisher stories). Add a busted nose, a

> ## The greatest thing an artist can do is 'people-watch.' That's what I do, so long as my wife knows it's not 'women-watching.'
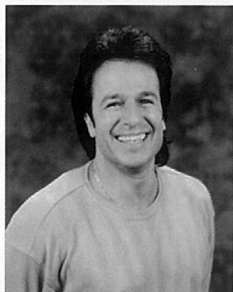
I can find some of the wildest ideas and go from there. It really gives one a sense of fantasy in the real world, which is right up a comic artist's alley.

But let me address what I referred to as "character" and not "*a* character." Firstly, as an artist...*observe*! The greatest thing an artist can do is observe. Next is *absorb*. "People-watch." That's what I do, whenever I can and so long as my wife knows it's not "women-watching." Check out the faces, bodies, movements and actions of every person that comes into your peripheral vision!

The world, and specifically New York City, has an abundance of "characters." Walk through Penn Station on any given day and an artist can come up with a million characters for a story. I don't mean just visually; I mean emotionally. Look into some of the faces of any one of these wonderful people and an artist can create a character.

Imagine a guy, six feet, 200 pounds, with a handlebar moustache, balding, tattoos galore, walking through Manhattan. In the bitter cold, he wears a short sleeve shirt, impervious to the temperature, and squint, an eye that's larger than the other and a large facial feature (not just facial hair) to make your characters distinct.

This includes women, also, in that not all female characters in comics must be Pamela Anderson. They can be as individual as the males can.

That's the trick. Don't use a stock visual on *any* character, *anywhere*! Even in the background, throw in people that you know, so you can convey the character of that, er, character. If a person is a wise-ass, they don't carry themselves like all others—they smile a "wise-ass" smile—and so on and so on!

Just remember, character, once found, can be conveyed by the simplest strokes of a pen or pencil.

John Romita Jr.
December 2005

John Romita Jr. follows in the legendary tradition of his father with exceptional work on Marvel classics such as Amazing Spider-Man, Thor, The Sentry, Wolverine *and* Uncanny X-Men.
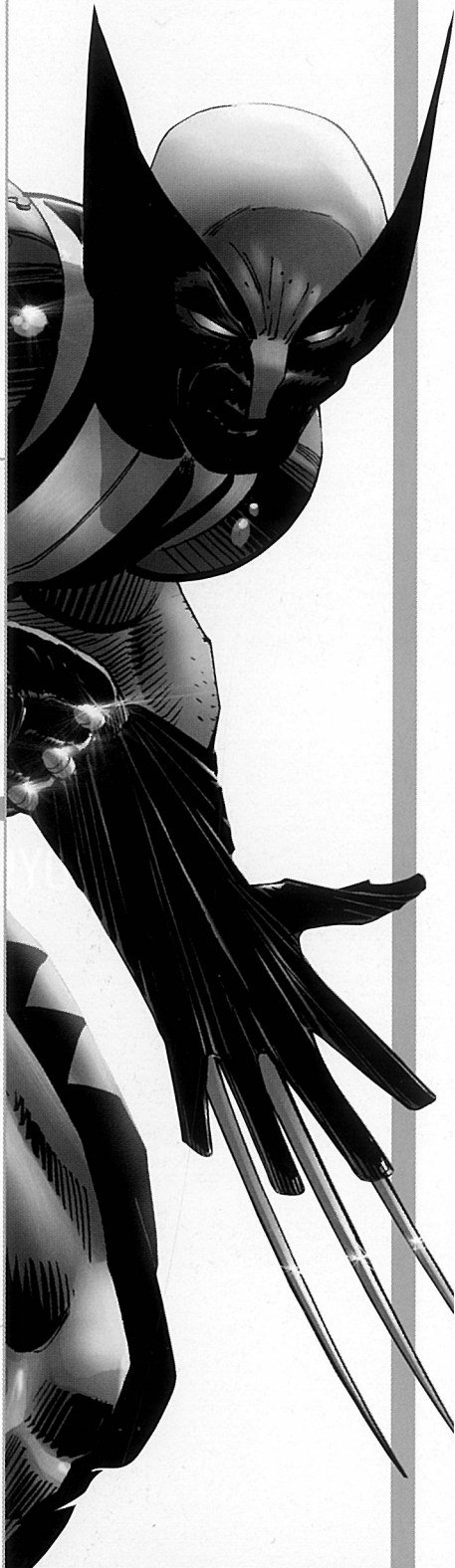
CHAPTER ONE:
CHARACTERS

CREATING CHARACTERS BY JOE KUBERT
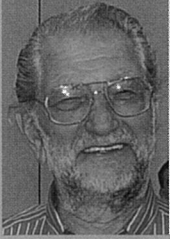
I hope you've been practicing a lot recently. Don't forget—your rate of improvement is in direct ratio to the amount of time you spend drawing. The more you draw, the more you will improve. It's like physical exercise. If you do a little every day the effectiveness is much more positive than if you do it only one day every two weeks. And after two weeks, it's like starting all over again.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Making mistakes, recognizing those mistakes and correcting them is the *best* way to learn and improve your drawing.

The suggestions that I make in these articles are based on the artwork of thousands of aspiring cartoonists that I've critiqued. Many have gone on to become successful professional cartoonists, graduates from the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc. and my series of correspondence courses.

IN THIS SESSION, I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU HOW TO *CREATE CHARACTERS.* THINK OF YOURSELF AS A MOVIE DIRECTOR CASTING ACTORS TO PLAY SPECIFIC ROLES.

BY DRAWING THEM, *YOU* CAN *CREATE* THE ACTORS. YOU TELL THEM HOW TO *ACT* AND TO EXHIBIT THE CORRECT *EXPRESSIONS* AT THE RIGHT TIME.

FIRST, GET TO KNOW *BASIC PROPER FIGURE PROPORTIONS.* *EXAGGERATION* IS IMPORTANT, BUT TOO MUCH BECOMES *DISTORTED.*

IF THAT HAPPENS, YOUR CHARACTER WILL NOT SEEM CREDIBLE. IF THE READER DOESN'T BELIEVE THE CHARACTER EXISTS, THE STORY'S EFFECTIVE-NESS WILL BE *LOST.*
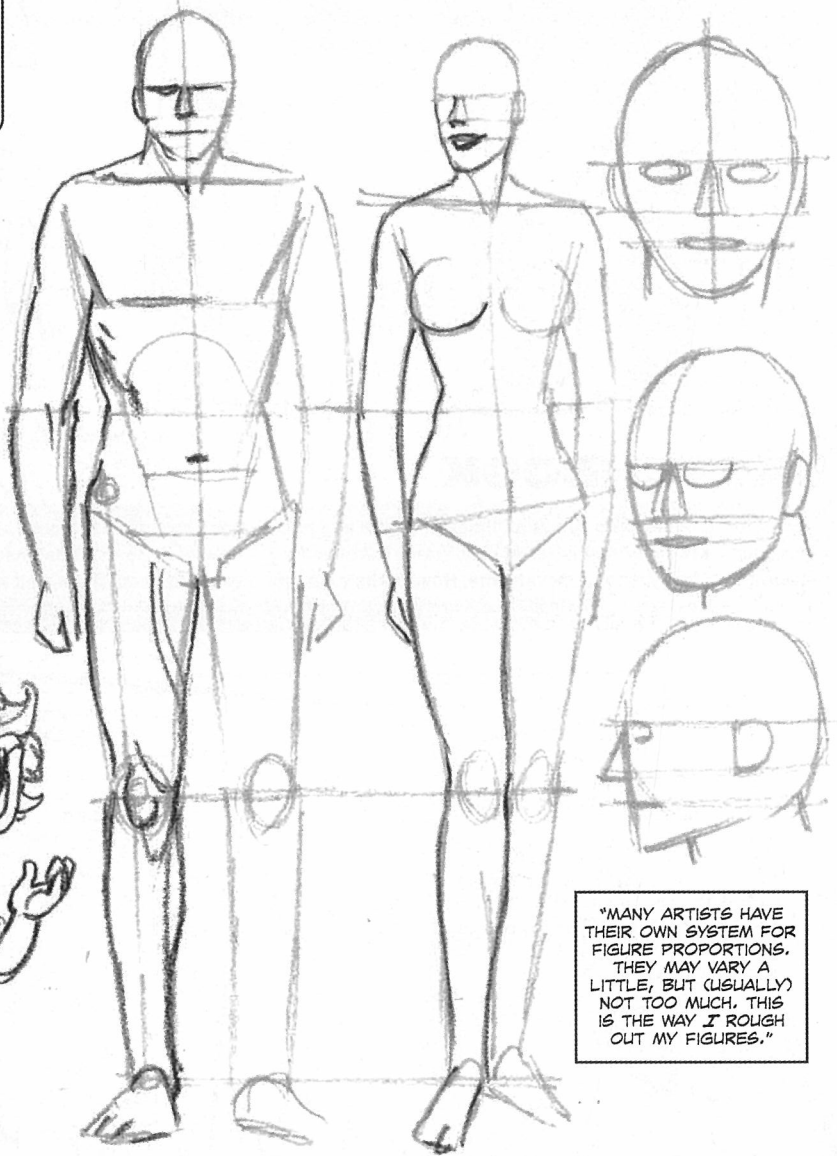
"MANY ARTISTS HAVE THEIR OWN SYSTEM FOR FIGURE PROPORTIONS. THEY MAY VARY A LITTLE, BUT (USUALLY) NOT TOO MUCH. THIS IS THE WAY *I* ROUGH OUT MY FIGURES."

CREATINGCHARACTERS

AN ARTIST (OR CARTOONIST) MUST KEEP HIS EYES OPEN. NOT ONLY TO LOOK, BUT TO *SEE*.

Notice how an *old* man rises from a chair. Quite different from the way a *young* man stands up—or walks. An old man may be unsteady on his feet, while a younger man may walk with little effort. These movements reflect each individual's physical and emotional characteristics.

FEAR

ANGER

SORROW
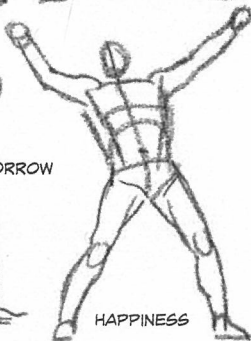
HAPPINESS

SKETCHBOOK

Keep a sketchbook with you at all times. If you're in a park, make quick sketches of children at play. Watch the older kids playing ball. Analyze their movements. How do their actions differ from teenagers or adults? Make more sketches. They don't have to be complete. Just sketch a few lines to show the flow of action and balance. Their body movements will tell you a lot about them, and you can incorporate your sketches into the characters that you create.
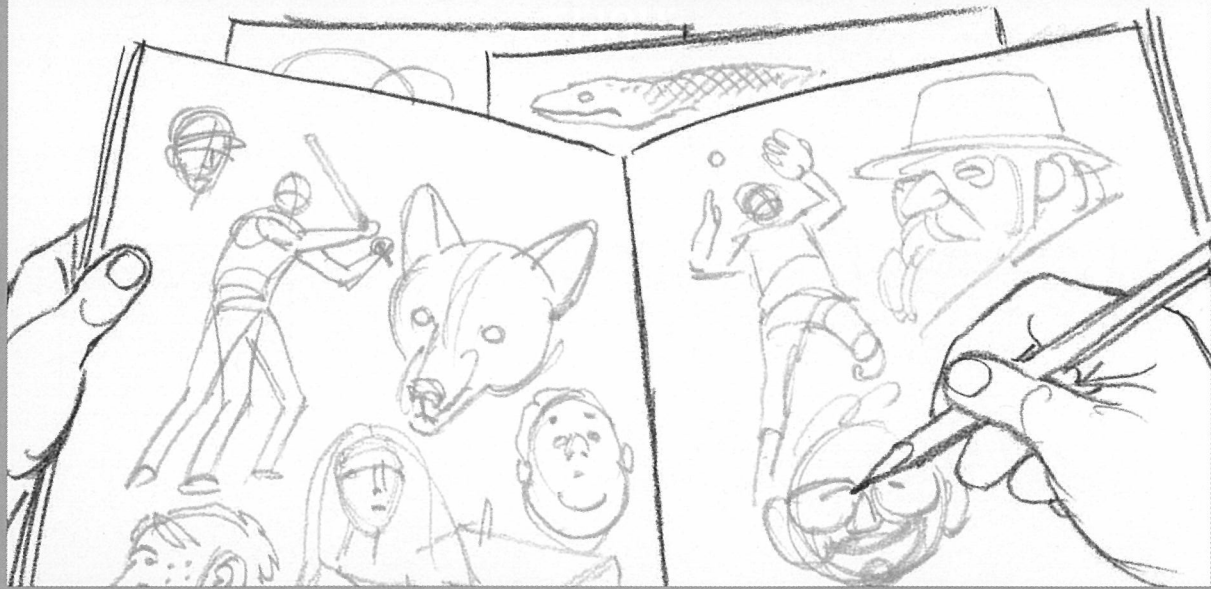
The character you design should *physically* reflect the *characteristics* with which you have endowed him. The character's *attitude* should also be clearly delineated. Ask yourself: what do I know about this character? How should he look? Analyze your character. Give him a history—a life. Your drawing should be a graphic description containing as much information as a written biography.

1. The *hero* is clean cut, clear-eyed and square-jawed, with a thick head of hair.
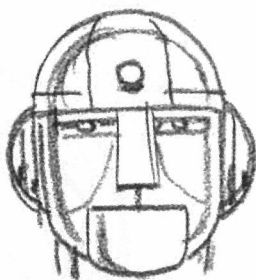
2. The *robotic* hero is essentially expressionless.

3. The oversized *bruiser* hero has a thick neck, heavily furrowed brow and unkempt hair.

4. The *detective* may look a bit dissipated due to his profession.
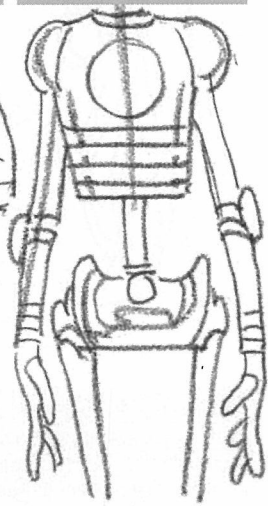
WHOSE BODY BELONGS TO WHO?

THE HERO'S *BODY* SHOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH HIS HEAD AND FEATURES.

IF THE CHARACTER'S BODY DOESN'T MATCH THE HEAD, IT WILL CREATE THE APPEARANCE OF UNCERTAINTY.

THINK OF YOUR CHARACTER AS A *REAL PERSON.* THEN, THE READER WILL ALSO BELIEVE THAT YOUR CHARACTER IS REAL.

CREATINGCHARACTERS

WOMEN

Many male students have told me that they find it more difficult to draw women. Conversely, female students generally find it more difficult to draw men. The reason is obvious. Women tend to draw women and men tend to draw men. This, however, does not lessen the need for the cartoonist to be able to draw *anything* and *everything*.

Women are as important as their male counterparts in the world of comic strip art. Sexual distortions may titillate, but it also diminishes credibility.

VILLAINS

A female may play the role of villain as effectively as a male. She may be as powerful physically, but she should still maintain a high degree of femininity.
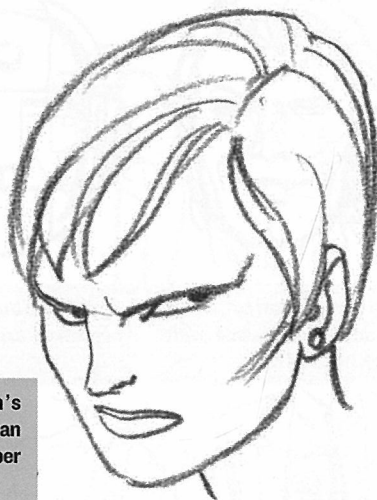
A villain's anatomy can reflect super powers...

...but if overly exaggerated, he can look silly.

A villain may be handsome—with a dangerous look.

AN UGLY VILLAIN MUST STILL BE A CONVINCING ONE. YOUR CHARACTERS SHOULD BE SO DISTINGUISHABLE THAT THEY CAN BE RECOGNIZED EVEN IF THEIR FACES ARE HIDDEN. BODY LANGUAGE IS A FORM OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION.

A HERO'S ABILITY IS MEASURED AGAINST THE POWERS OF A VILLAIN. THE MORE EVIL OR POWERFUL THE VILLAIN, THE GREATER THE HERO'S ACCOMPLISHMENT IN VANQUISHING A NEMESIS.

No matter how well you think you know your character, there is always a tendency to add or subtract or change little nuances. A nose; a bit too long or too short. Eyes; too large or too small. A mouth; too wide or too narrow. A figure; too short or too tall, too thin or too fat.
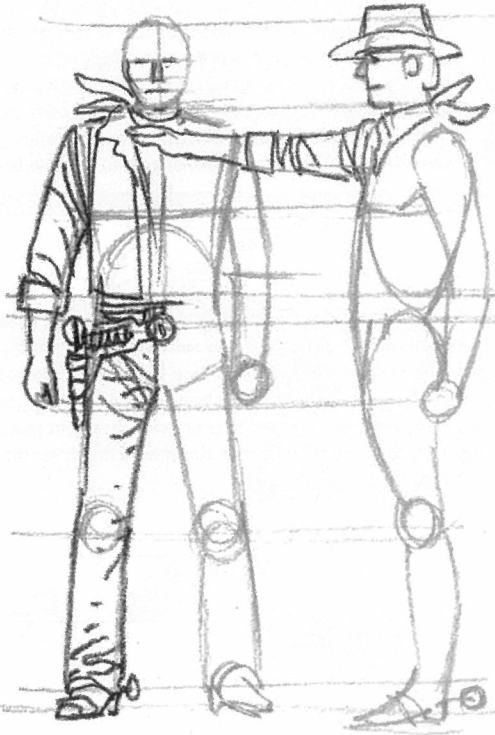
THE "TOMBSTONE KID"

IN ORDER FOR YOU TO MAINTAIN A CLEAR AND CONSISTENT IMAGE OF YOUR CHARACTER, DO A *CHARACTER SHEET.*

DEMONSTRATE THE VARIOUS ANGLES OF YOUR CHARACTER FEATURING HIS HEAD, FACE AND BODY.

IF YOU REFER TO YOUR CHARACTER SHEET IT WILL MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF INADVERTENT CHANGES.
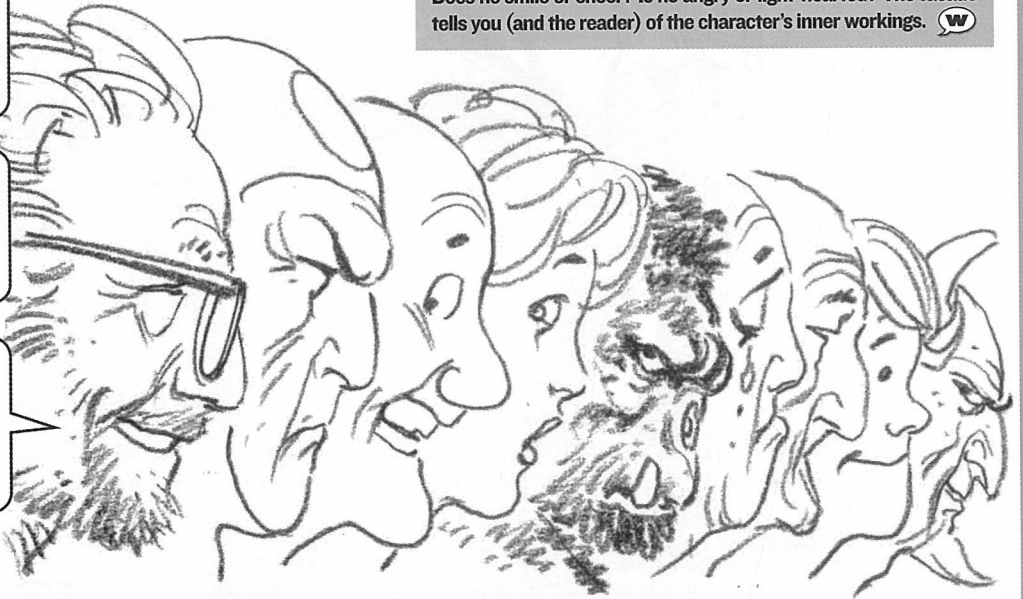
Facial expressions must reflect your character's emotional intent. Does he smile or sneer? Is he angry or light-hearted? The facade tells you (and the reader) of the character's inner workings.

Comics legend Joe Kubert is the founder of the Joe Kubert School of Cartooning and Graphic Art. For more information, head over to www.kubertsworld.com. Also, check out his graphic novel Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place *from DC.*

BODY LANGUAGE BY MATT HALEY
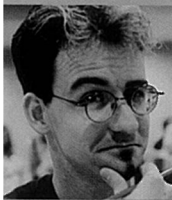
Body language is one of the most misunderstood parts of the drawing process. I know some of you out there are thinking, "Just draw a guy punching another guy, and you're done!" But it's not that simple. The term "body language" refers to the pose one's body adopts to convey a particular attitude or emotion.

It's something we all do every day, consciously or not.

In the following pages, I'm going to show you just how to "pose" your characters so they seem a little more believable. Ideally, you want the reader to understand what's happening without reading the word balloons, and an evocative pose can really pull the reader in! Now, let's get into trouble, baby...

PERFECTPOSTURE

A good, believable pose should tell the audience just what mood your character's in and what he intends to do. A bad pose, on the other hand, can make your character look ridiculous! Take poor Hawkeye here (**Figure A**). He needs a chiropractor! He doesn't look heroic, he looks uncomfortable. Look at how his back is arched and how stiffly his arms are held. It's hard to take him seriously.

On the other hand, Captain America looks confident, heroic and believable (**Figure B**). Even though he's standing still, he looks as if he might spring into action at any moment. Notice how it's not just the calm, self-assured look on his face, but his overall pose that tells us who he is. His arms are away from his body slightly (telling us he's ready for anything), his fists are clenched (but relaxed) and he's moving forward (to face whatever evils the writer throws at him), ready to kick Nazi butt!

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

GETAGRIP

One of the most important things I learned about drawing good body language was how to hold the pencil! For years, I'd been trying to sketch my basic drawings with a firm grip meant for rendering, resulting in stiff, unnatural-looking poses. Once I was shown how to use a light, "sketching" grip when breaking down a figure, my drawings suddenly became lifelike and natural! This sketching grip allows you to use the whole arm to create broad, sweeping lines. Try it.
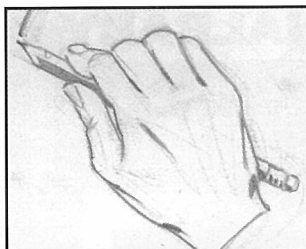
LIGHT SKETCH GRIP
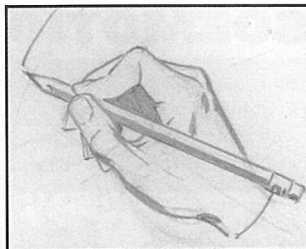
FIRM RENDERING GRIP

FIGURE C
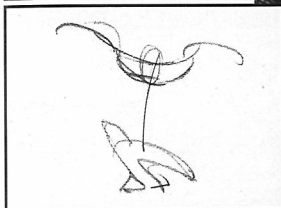
FIGURE D
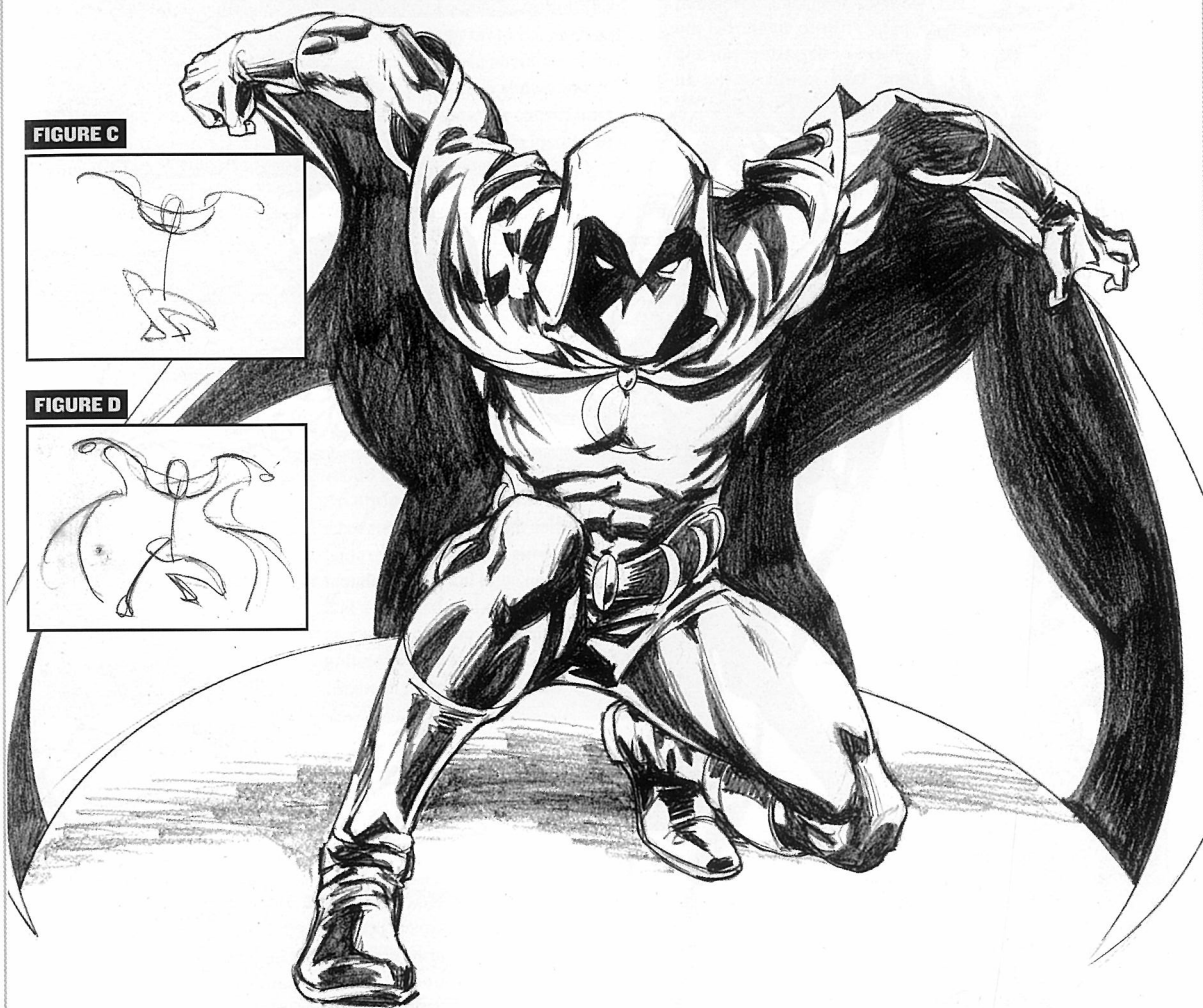
STRIKEAPOSE

No matter what emotion you're trying to convey, you should always break down your figure. Here's how I ensure the most lifelike pose. First, I choose the attitude I want the character to convey. Let's say I want to draw a menacing-looking Moon Knight. "Menacing" brings to mind an image of Dracula, especially when applying it to a night-time character like Moon Knight, but since he's a superhero, Moon Knight also needs to be dynamic.

In the first sketch (**Figure C**), I draw the basic line for his spine, head, arms and legs. But I realize his left leg needs a more dynamic angle, so I change it and add the cape (**Figure D**), which helps add motion to the figure. Now here's the key: I sketch the pose as fast as I can, drawing only the lines needed to "read" the pose. Once I'm satisfied that the pose conveys the attitude I want, I start drawing Moon Knight's body over my initial sketch, still using the "sketching" grip. I try not to use the "rendering" grip until I start to draw details like his hands and face. That way, the figure will retain the menacing attitude I want without stiffening up.

BODYLANGUAGE

SOEMOTIONALBABY

Body language can convey a number of different emotions. Everything from love to shock to pain can be expressed through your movements. Here are a few examples to get you thinking about just what your body's trying to say.

LOVE The pose Black Cat's striking here is the typical pose for a girl in love. Her hands clasped over one shoulder, head tilted towards the object of her affection, and one foot swept back, all seem to say, "I'm in love!"

DEFEAT Poor Frank Castle. Shoulders slumped, head bowed, back hunched over. Sort of gives the impression of defeat, despondency and depression. Sniff. Cheer up, Punisher— I hear they raised the minimum wage...
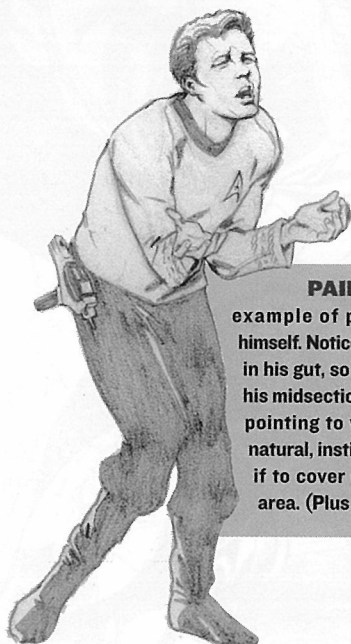
PAIN I can't think of a better example of pain than Captain Kirk himself. Notice that the pain seems to be in his gut, so his body is folded around his midsection, with his elbows almost pointing to where it hurts. This is a natural, instinctive reaction to pain, as if to cover or protect the offending area. (Plus it looks great on camera!)
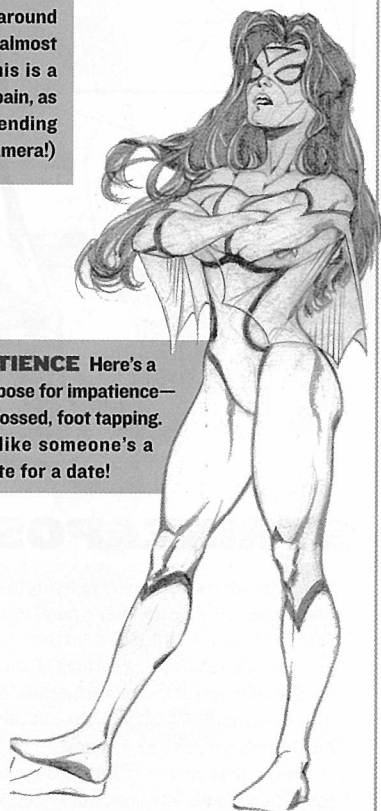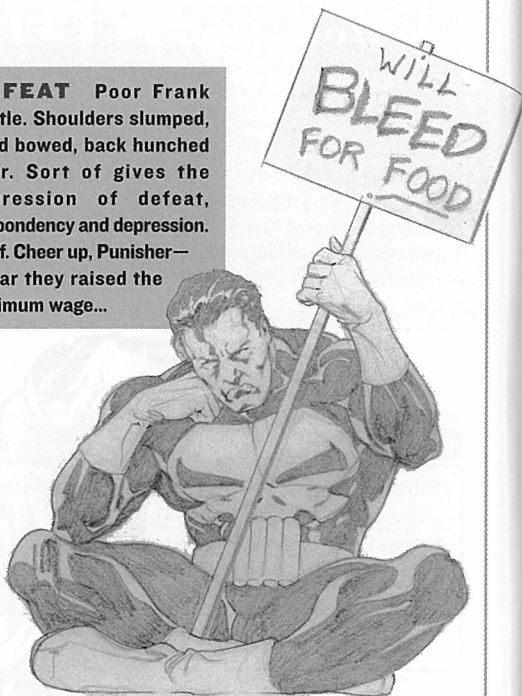
IMPATIENCE Here's a typical pose for impatience— arms crossed, foot tapping. Looks like someone's a little late for a date!

SURPRISE Surprise? That's simple, right? Not so fast! What if your character is wearing a full-face mask, like Spidey? Sure, you could cheat and have his eyeholes open wide, but let's say they're actually stitched onto his mask and can't move. Now you have to use body language to tell the story.

WHERETHEGIRLSARE

All right, listen up, 'cause I'm only going to say this once! (Ahem) **WOMEN HAVE SPINES.** Yep, just like real people! They hardly ever stand (well, float) like Mary Jane Watson here (**Figure E**). Man, that looks painful...and what the heck is she standing on? I know you want your female characters to be appealing, guys, but just because your favorite artist draws his female character in the same "sexy-swimsuit pose" whether she's fighting demons or burning toast doesn't mean you have to!

With a character like She-Hulk (**Figure F**), for example, you have to depict her as strong, courageous, able and, of course, beautiful. The way she's standing—balanced, poised, with a slight tilt to the head as she looks at us over her shoulder—tells us a lot more about her than a ripped T-shirt ever could. (And hey, this example also shows how to make a woman look appealing without having to show her chest!) Just remember to treat your female characters like real people instead of swimsuit images, and they'll be a lot more memorable!

FIGURE F

FIGURE E

I COULD GO ON FOR PAGES about the many different emotions that body language displays, but unfortunately I just don't have the room. So don't forget that ultimately, the best poses come from life—watch other people and sketch them! For a perspective on the use of body language from a master, track down Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* or any work by Alex Toth and Jack Kirby (Toth being subtle and Kirby being ultra-dynamic). Whether you draw for a living or just as a hobby, giving your characters convincing body language will make the difference between an ordinary picture and an unforgettable work of art! Ⓦ

Matt Haley speaks to the fans with body language in DC's Birds of Prey *and the Superman found in Jerry Seinfeld's American Express ads.*

ADVANCED BODY LANGUAGE BY JIM CALAFIORE

Despite being a static medium, comics is not an inactive one. Even in the still image of a panel, characters are—and must be—conveying their thoughts through dialogue of the voice and/or dialogue of the body. If, in moments where a character is speaking, the body language doesn't match the voiced language (narration or spoken), there's a "disconnect" that hinders the reader's belief in the world we're trying so hard to create. And, of course, if there's no dialogue or narration at all, the language of the body is all that's left.

Usually in my advice to aspiring artists, I recommend researching real life. For studying body language, I say don't. Study film. Actors perform with their whole bodies, not just their voices. They're trained to convey meaning with their body, and the better the actor, the more you'll see.

So I'm recommending that you spend countless hours on the couch with a drink and munchies and watch movie after movie after movie. Tell your parents I said it's okay.

But there's a lesson waiting....

WHODUNNIT?

This first example is just a quick exercise. Something big has gone down, and the heroes have been forced to round up the usual suspects. Who's the guilty party?

The Leader (second from right) is the obvious choice; the little runt sure looks guilty, not happy about the lineup at all. But, let's not be hasty. Consider the body language with the other characters. Namor (far left), arrogant as ever, is daring us to discover it's him. Bullseye (middle), while confident, is also the epitome of cavalier;

he could care less if we figured out it was him. And Kang (far right), as always, is overconfident; he's sure we'll never guess it was him.

When posing figures, you have to take in to account who the character is. There are some postures a character will never assume. (Like the Leader, who would never stand like that, but I needed somebody to look really guilty.)

Oh, and Loki? He's just a sadistic nut-job; don't bother trying to read him.
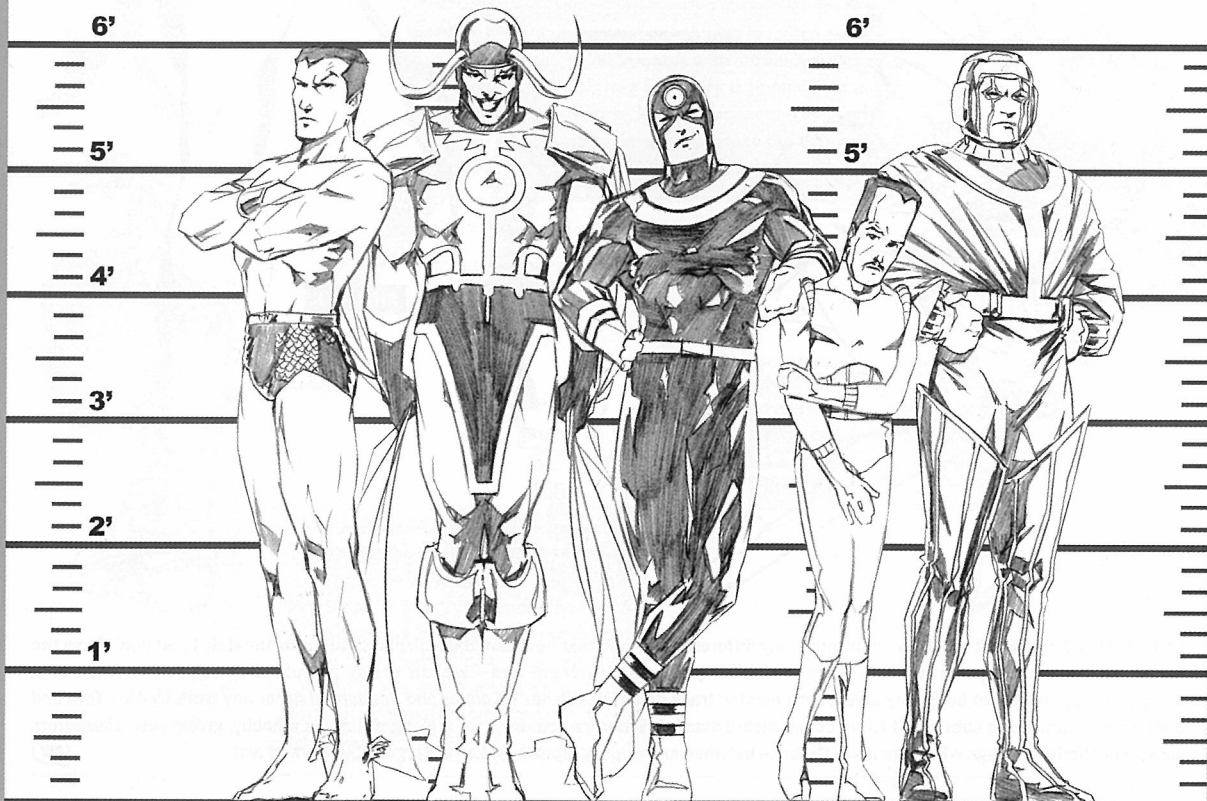
BACKTALK

For this lesson, I'm not going over the extreme body positions and posing. Obvious physical expressions (extreme anguish, pain, etc.) are the easy stuff, and you should be able to recognize them right off. I'm concentrating here on the subtler body language. For most of the time in a comic, your characters are going to be at rest, not in action.

For example, take the nondescript figure at right. When one character speaks with his back to another, that's a posture of avoidance, hiding anything from the inconsequential to the malevolent. In the first pose, the figure is simply standing there, presenting his back. There's little intent to his posture. His rigid body could be a further effort to disguise his intentions, but we really don't know. But by turning the head down and to the left (and having his eye turned back towards us), the body language is now sneaky, if not downright sinister. A subtle change has given us a mountain of information.
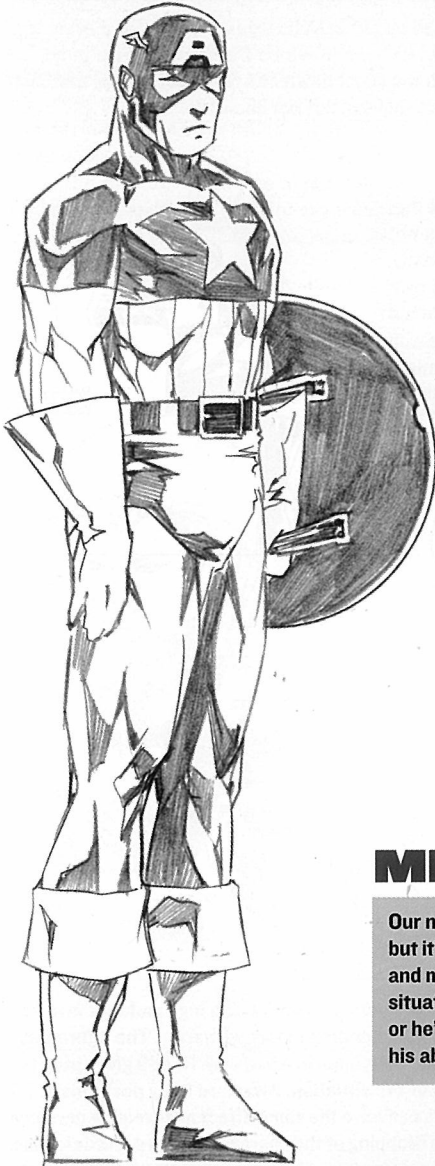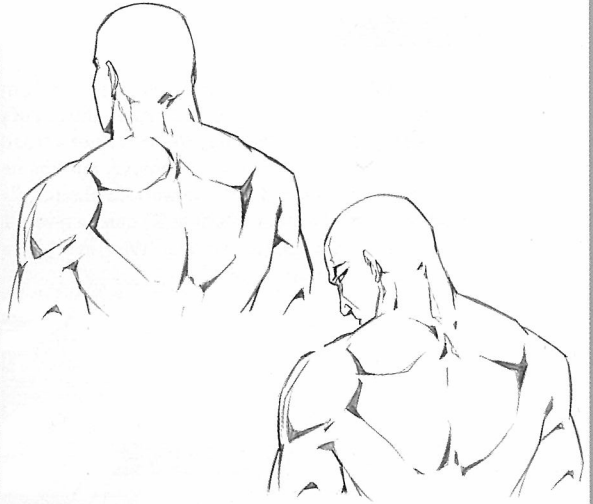
ROLLCALL

We'll start with some standing body language. When drawing a 22-page monthly book, you'd be surprised how much standing around the characters can do. Having them stand stiffly is boring, like filling a room with mannequins. (Unless you're into that sort of thing. We won't judge...) If you've ever seen an amateur theater production, you can always pick out the inexperienced actors, because they don't know what to do with their bodies when they're not speaking.

Of course, some characters can be stiff by their nature. Captain "Pole-Up-His-Butt" America is very comfortable standing like this, at almost military attention. Balanced poses, weight equally distributed on both feet, are a way of having a character display that he's ever-vigilant, ready for action even when at rest.

MR.CONFIDENCE

Our next character to the right also has a "balanced" stance, but it's more relaxed. The character is sagging in to the pose and more rooted to the ground. He's very comfortable in his situation, feeling no need for defense or action of any kind; or he's supremely confident (maybe even overconfident) in his ability to jump in to action if need be.

WHO, ME?

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

Figure A is an inherently relaxed pose. With all the body weight on one foot, the hip on that side is forced higher and out of position. Whether sexy or arrogant or even impatient, it's not a "ready" pose. Springing in to action, offensive or defensive, isn't as easy from here, and it's not what the character is worried about.

Standing with feet together (**Figure B**) can be a very innocent pose, but can also be a deceptive stance. "Who, me?" Do we really believe she's an innocent little girl?
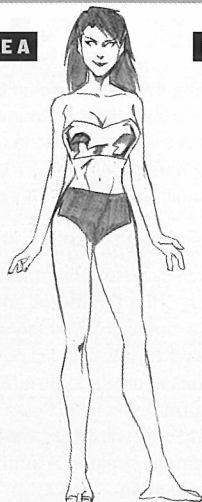
REST YOUR CASE

Characters in comics sit as much as they stand, but that won't keep you from conveying information. Often where they're sitting will dictate some of the posture. Are they on a throne or on "the throne"? Are they on a comfy sofa or a Judas Cradle? (Google it; not pleasant.) But for now, let's just consider the figure on a generic seat.

In **Figure C**, Reed Richards is looking pretty comfortable and relaxed. His upper body has sagged off-center, and he's resting his head on his fist. His legs are parted and even, feet planted firmly; like the previous Captain America pose, it's balanced from the waist down and ready for abrupt motion if necessary. He's relaxed, but not immobile.

FIGURE C
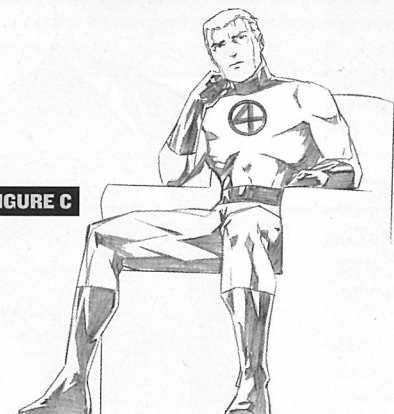
To the right, not so much. The legs are crossed. This figure is not springing from the chair easily. When a figure restricts its own movements in a natural, unforced way, it conveys complete ease with the situation (even if that might be evil, megalomaniacal ease, like Dr. Doom might display).

With this figure, by simply rotating the arm down and dropping the head, I've changed the whole mood of the character (compare this to **Figure C**). Not only is his attention wholly internal, the droop of the head and the limp almost useless attitude of the arm infer some despair; a slight amount of despondency.

In this final illustration, I've gotten the legs and feet involved to push that mood, bending them awkwardly. The figure feels more vulnerable now, open in a bad way. Reed's given in to the hopelessness of the situation. Awkward body positions in "at rest" moments can have the same effect as revealing personal dialogue; it's a dropping of the character's guard and defenses.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Arms are the spice of body language. They can take a comfortable pose and make it pensive; take a secure moment and make it apprehensive. You will get the most mileage out of arm positions.

Figure D shows a fairly common arms-crossed posture, and while still a "closed" body language, it's a pretty confident stance, more challenging than defensive. However, in **Figure E** by dropping the head again, the physical expression is now introspective and thoughtful.

Now let's get the arms involved. During insecure moments, having the arms crossed is a definitely defensive posture, closing off physically. Stacking the arms as in **Figure F** intensifies that, covering one arm with the other completely, protectively, closing the figure off visually as much as the arms can. **Figure G** ratchets up the emotion. Whatever has her feeling anxious chills her insides unnaturally.

If the character has no arms, as in **Figure H**, they're not going to say much. But they are up for the lead in the Venus De Milo biopic.

FIGURE D

FIGURE E

FIGURE F

FIGURE G

FIGURE H

FACE VS. ARMS

Okay, some of you at this point might be saying, "Yeah, but in all the examples, the facial expressions really make the emotion." Fair point. So let's try an experiment. Take General Thunderbolt Ross (below) and fix his facial expression (and if there's a character with limited emotional range, boy, is he one) and see what we can do.

In **Figure I**, he's a roadblock, confronting us—or teenage Betty has apparently gotten home at three in the morning.

In **Figure J**, he's accusing us or making a point. Either way, it's less threatening than the previous. **Figure K** is his best Cowardly Lion impersonation: "Put 'em up, put 'em up!" **Figure L** is more agitated, arms away from the body, making a heated or emphatic point during a discussion.

We were limited here by the facial expression to a certain extent, but we managed to have all four figures display different emotional levels.

FIGURE I

FIGURE J
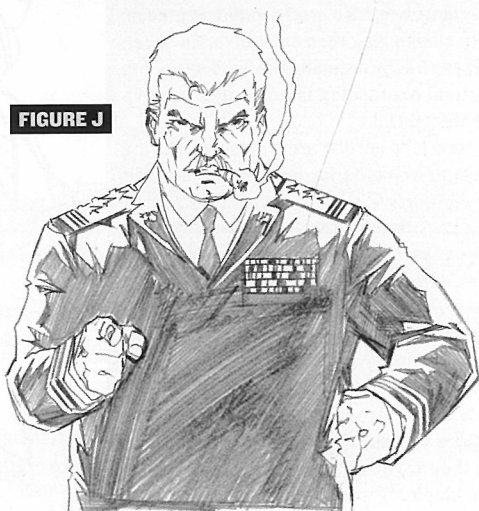
FIGURE K
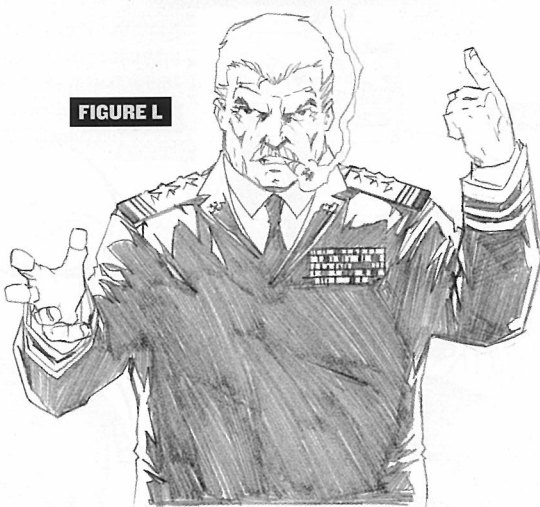
FIGURE L

EVEN SILHOUETTES can be recognizable if the body language is very "readable." You can't look through a comic without finding at least one or two silhouetted figures. (And it's not just a way for the artist to make his deadline... It's not... No, really...) **Figure M** is one position I use frequently in my daily real-world life, and find very useful: "Beats me." And **Figure N** is, of course, the universal symbol for "Let's get outta here."

So let's. Bye. Ⓦ

FIGURE M

FIGURE N

Jim Calafiore's fine craftsmanship has improved the pages of many comic books, including DC's Aquaman *and Marvel's* Exiles.
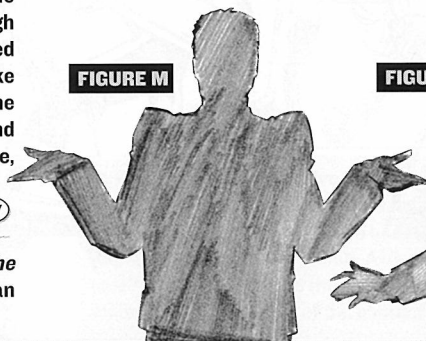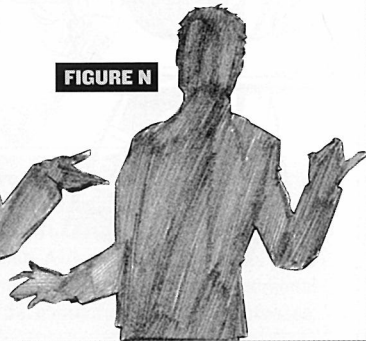
MOVEMENT & MOTION BY BART SEARS

Hello there! We're going to talk about how to create the feeling of life in your drawings by the use of movement and motion. You must remember that even when someone or something is at rest (standing still), it is moving and alive. You have to breathe this life into the things that you draw, and not just with speed lines and effects, but with actual motion drawn into the people (or whatever) you illustrate. So bear with me. There are some relatively simple rules and guidelines to follow that can help you learn how to capture movement in immobile, two-dimensional drawings. Let's get on with it!

LINEUP!

The simplest way to start to create motion in figures, or whatever's moving, is with the center line. The center line is the line drawn through the center of a figure, following the line of the backbone, which describes the general action of that figure. Take a look at the center lines, which can, from this point onward, also be referred to as action lines, which I have drawn to the right. Notice that a line drawn parallel to a border, or to the side or bottom of the page, creates a feeling of stillness or no motion. Note that if you tip this line forward or backward, even very slightly, you start to create movement. Now look at the last action line drawn below...the one labeled SWEEP. This type of center line, alone and in conjunction with its relations, is responsible for most, if not all, of those pulse-pounding fight scenes that everyone really loves in their favorite comics. Sweeping action lines are the most noticeable, and the easiest to execute, because the actions they generally describe are of a grossly exaggerated kind. As in acting (I believe, anyway), it is always easier to draw (or play) characters acting larger than life than it is to draw (or play) the characters whose movements and mannerisms are of a subtler nature. Therefore, we will start with the big, sweeping action lines.

STILL   **FORWARD**

BACKWARD   **SWEEP**

In the illustration to the left, notice how the center line, which is tilted slightly backwards, creates a feeling of the character snatching her head back, away from something or in reaction to something. Center lines are the basics of action.

MOVEMENT&MOTION

ACTIONFIGURES

Now that we've taken a look at center lines, let's see how they translate into figures. Here are a couple of simple sweeping action lines, and next to them are a couple of figures drawn using these action lines as center lines (those two words are virtually interchangeable). Take a good look at the figures. Obviously, there is more going on with them than a simple center line, which we'll get into shortly, but notice how the flow of the figures matches the flow of the corresponding action line. Like everything else in drawing powerful comics, motion and movement are built up in stages, and each stage has to be done correctly before going onto the next one or your finished work will have problems, starting from the first rushed mistake and continuing on through each successive stage. Approach your work intelligently, think things through and try not to rush through it while you're learning. Spend the time now, and down the road things will come together easier, and your work will be better and more successful because of it.

When drawing over a center line, construct your figure strongly, remembering to use the action line as the basis for the spine, and build off of that. For simple, straightforward actions, keep the flow of the arms, legs and head within the same basic sweep of the action line.
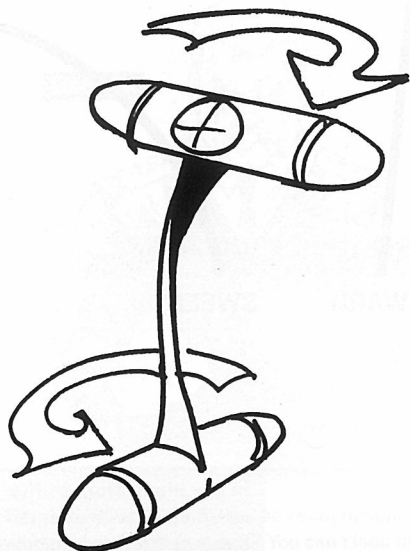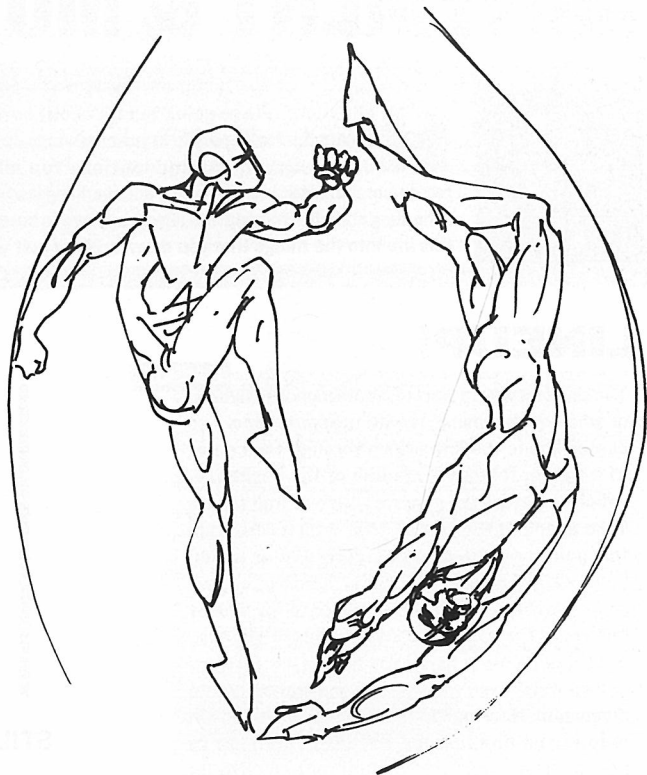
TWISTED

To create even more motion within a figure, try twisting the torso. What that means is turning the shoulder line to an angle with the hip line, as better explained in the drawing to the left. The shoulder can dip towards the hip, but not too much. Remember, don't twist the shoulders to an angle of more than 45 degrees to the hips in any direction! By twisting the hips and shoulders, you create tension within a figure, which creates motion.

OPPOSINGLINES

If it's true that parallel lines suggest no motion (and I believe it is), then opposing lines create motion. Look at the two action lines drawn to the right. Two simple opposing action lines, by their very nature, create force and tension (they don't even have to cross). Imagine a hero and villain locked in a titanic struggle far above the Earth—energy glittering wildly about them, the fate of world in the balance, their muscles rippling and surging with power, etc. Now, using these action lines, you can draw it!
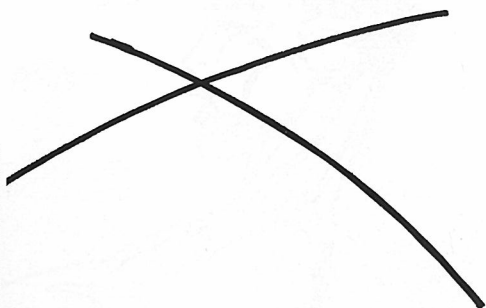
ALITTLEDOES MORE&MORE

Now we have to talk a little about the difficult part of movement and motion, the subtleties. Anyone sitting, laying, standing, hanging around, talking, watching TV, etc., is moving and has life and motion, even if it's only breathing. Even comic book characters have to appear to breathe. People aren't wooden statues. They slouch and shift and fidget all of the time, and so should your characters. You can make your characters real and alive by giving them motion, especially subtle motion. Creating subtle motion is just like creating those bold actions, but just tone it down. Instead of broad, sweeping, aggravated, opposing lines of action, draw smaller, straighter, more similar lines, closer to parallel action lines.

Look at the figure drawn to the right. He has motion and movement—not a lot, but still, he is obviously a living, breathing, two-dimensional drawing. Notice his center line, only slightly curved, almost parallel with the edge of the page, yet still implying motion. Also notice the gently sweeping line of the arm, not parallel, but also more a part of the center line than opposing it. Then, just to give it a little something extra, I thrust the head forward, giving purpose and intent to the movement, and perhaps suggesting a more action-filled movement to come.
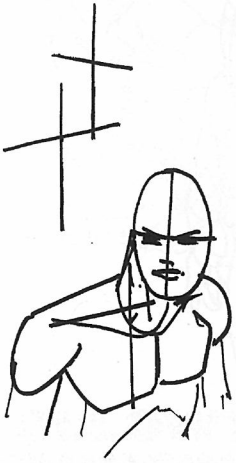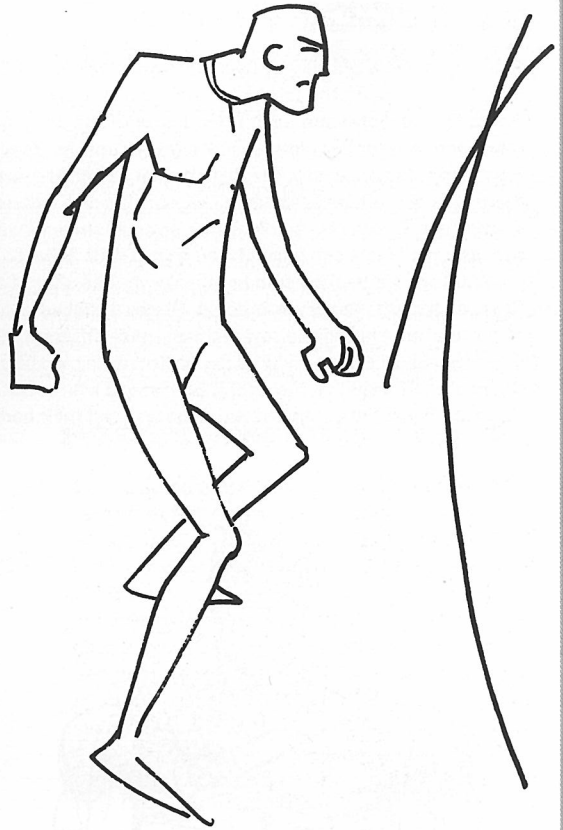
To the left we have a quick angle line drawing and the quick figure using those action lines. That's the subtle use of opposing action lines. Look how just by turning the shoulders slightly (actually in perspective—keep reading) and putting the head on a separate, though parallel, center line, and by twisting the eye line away from the shoulder line (kind of like twisting the hip and shoulder lines), the figure, though not detailed, almost lives and breathes. Maybe that's something of an exaggeration, but the figure is no longer static or boring. It has movement and motion.

AMATTEROF PERSPECTIVE

Throwing a figure into perspective, as in the drawing to the right, is also a good way to imply movement, as does putting a figure into perspective. These two things are almost the same, but the first deals with creating a perspective for the figure, and foreshortening the figure within it. The drawing to the lower right deals with having a perspective background shot and placing a figure within that. For more, see **page 27** for "Dynamic Foreshortening."
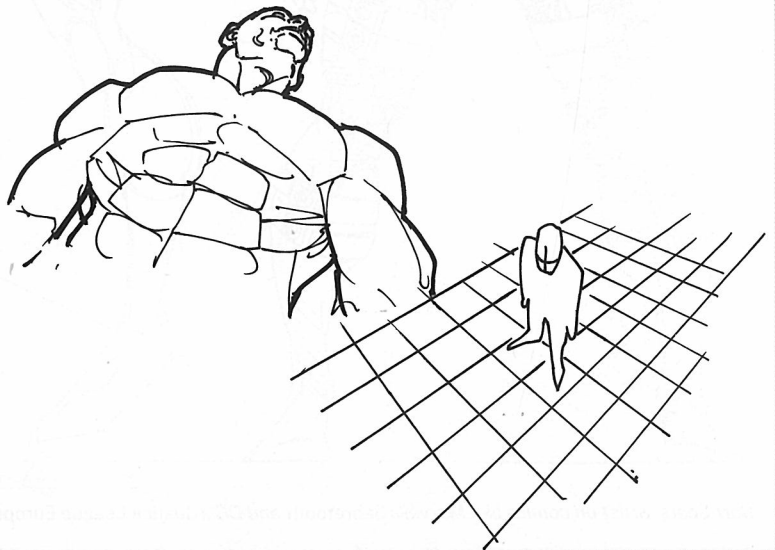
GOINGDEEP

Below we have a drawing of Cyclops. Notice how static and still the drawing on the left looks, almost as if Cyclops was asked to stand still and pose for a costume and body type reference shot for a sculpture, which is very stiff for comics. Now look at the drawing to the right. It's not as finished as the drawing on the left, but look how much more life and action the drawing has. Cyclops actually looks like he could strike forward, fire his optic blasts and jump off the page! (Well, almost...)

What we are dealing with here is depth. The shot of the figure on the left has very little depth. (It was designed as part of a sculpture sheet for a toy, and two other different view drawings, side and back, make up the whole drawing and display thickness.) The shot on the right is just loaded with it. Notice that both figures are standing the same way and their bodies are in the same position, but see how the figure on the right is drawn from a slight angle and has been drawn in a slight perspective. (Note the vanishing lines drawn from the feet and shoulders of Cyclops. For fun, find the point of convergence of these lines, the vanishing point, and draw in a horizon line. Note that the vanishing point will be off of the page.) My point is that you can create movement and motion simply by how you place the figure within the panel. If you draw the figure from straight ahead, with no depth to his stance or body, he will appear flat and lifeless.

Look at the drawings, read and study them, and see how all of these concepts are related and how almost all of them work together in every figure and every drawing. Finally, practice! Ⓦ
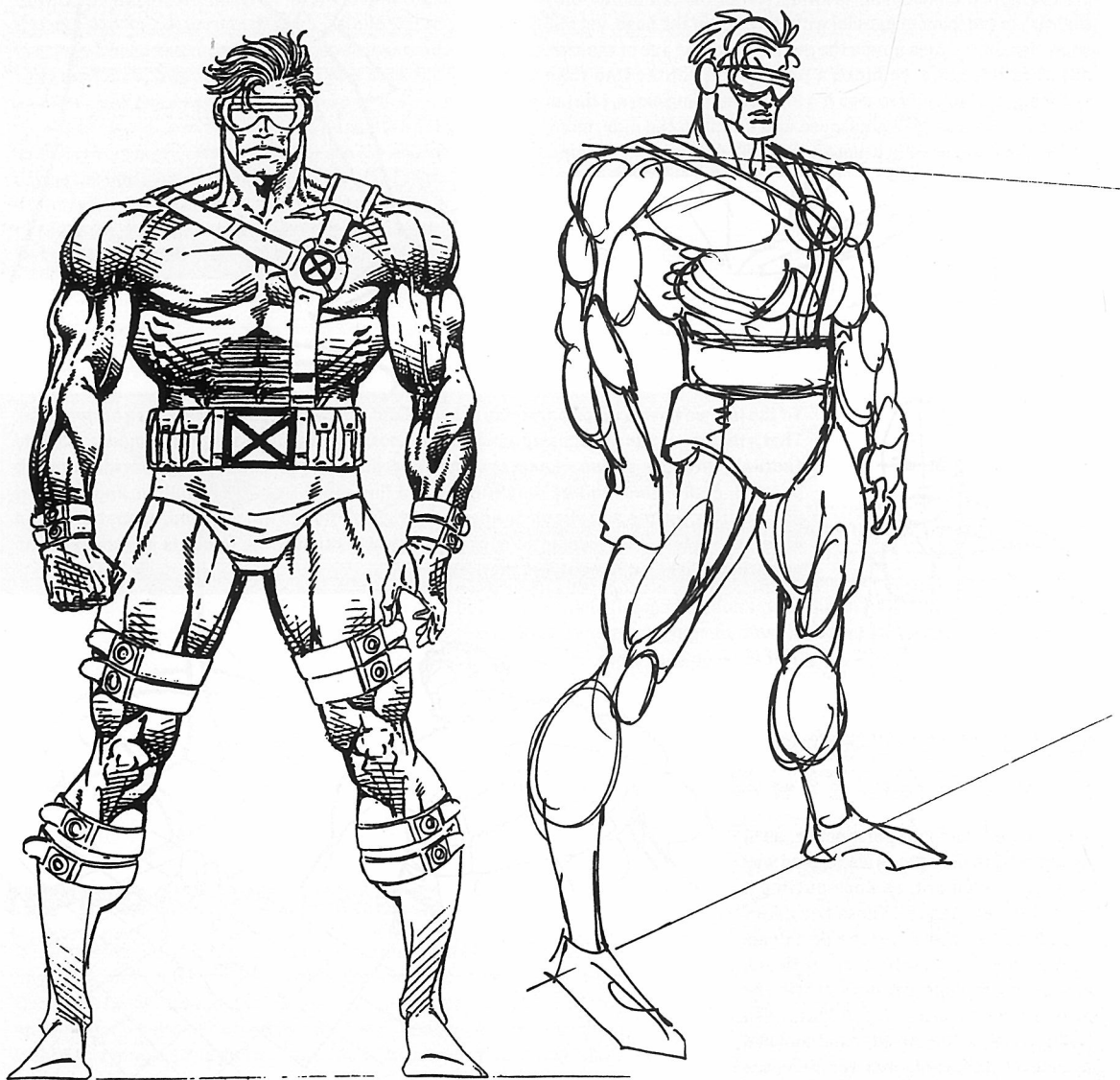
Bart Sears, artist on comics like Marvel's Sabretooth *and DC's* Justice League Europe, *moves mountains to jump-start his heroes.*

MAKING CHARACTERS MOVE BY MIKE WIERINGO

> C'MON, LET'S MOVE!!

Hey, all you artists out there. I've drawn a wide variety of characters, from Flash to the Fantastic Four—and one big thing they all have in common is they gotta move! They're all high-action heroes, so they give you lots of opportunity to explore ways to create "movement." I'm going to share with you just how I like bringing life to the stuff I draw! Giving your characters the illusion of life is one of the most important elements of drawing comics. Not only does it help your storytelling and the believability of your characters, but it's just downright fun. The best way to learn how to draw motion, of course, is by watching it. Check out the people around you. Watch TV, especially sporting events like gymnastics. Basically, look everywhere. Now, with that said, let's get moving!
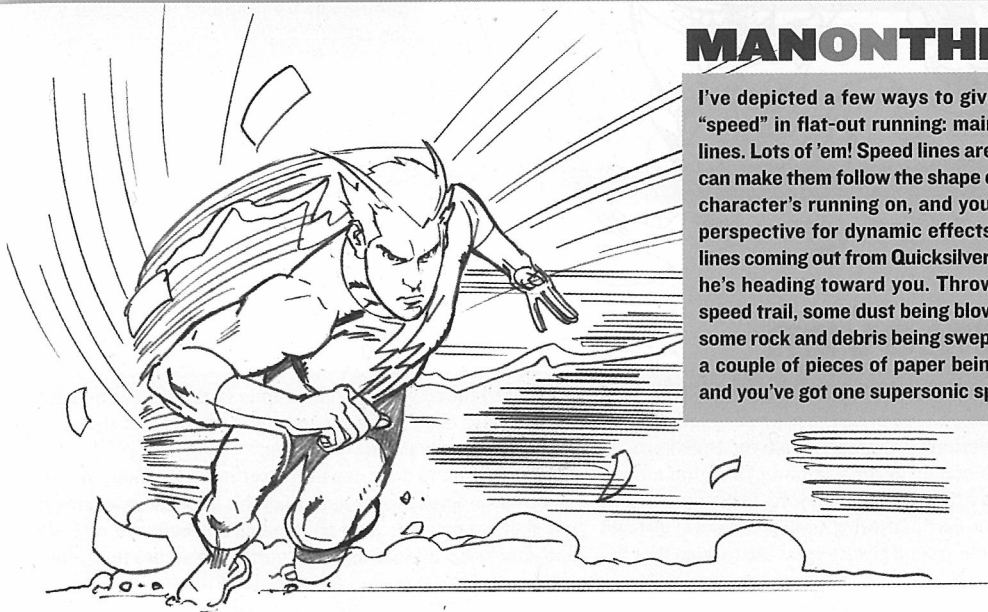
MANONTHERUN

I've depicted a few ways to give Quicksilver his "speed" in flat-out running: mainly, there's speed lines. Lots of 'em! Speed lines are fun because you can make them follow the shape of the terrain your character's running on, and you can use them in perspective for dynamic effects! Notice how the lines coming out from Quicksilver make it seem like he's heading toward you. Throw in Quicksilver's speed trail, some dust being blown up in his wake, some rock and debris being swept along, as well as a couple of pieces of paper being whipped about, and you've got one supersonic speedster!

FOLLOWTHE BOUNCING SUPERHERO

One of the coolest ways to show the incredible combination of speed and agility Spider-Man has is through multiple images! You can show Spidey bouncing, twisting and turning in any way you can imagine. Just draw smooth transitions between the moves (as if you were an animator). Making the images flow from one to another will help Web-head look even more fluid and graceful. Multiple images are also a great way to show Quicksilver's blazing speed as he super-speed-punches some overgrown baddie into submission!

WATERWORLD

Even though there's probably very little pure oxygen to produce bubbles at the depths Namor hangs out (and rumbles) in, it's fun to take a little artistic license and use them to indicate just where ol' Sub-Mariner's coming from. They also create a sense of the water being stirred up around him as he rockets on through! Notice how the bubbles from his hand to his head help show movement in his right arm, while the smaller bubbles trailing off by his feet project the image that he's swimming towards us. Some schools of fish tagging along help with the effect!

EARTHMOVER

Good old *terra firma* (That's "solid ground" for you folks without dictionaries!) comes in handy, especially when you're drawing huge, powerhouse characters like the Hulk here. As the Green Goliath comes in for a landing (Imagine a huge "THOOOM" sound effect behind him!), he kicks up massive amounts of dust and earth. Drawing several chunks of dirt and rock bouncing off the ground gives a great impression that the

Hulkster landed with a tremendous impact! His squatting position also adds to the dynamic of the figure and shows the realism of gravity pulling him down.

It's also fun to draw one big powerhouse knocking another powerhouse across the ground! Show his back and rear end (the one that got pounded, that is) grinding up chunks of rock, dirt and dust as his bruised ego (and butt) drag across the ground!

AIRWALKER

You can use air, or more specifically wind, to create some really cool, lively effects. Capes are great for this type of thing! You can liven up even the most static of scenes with capes and wind—like this Moon Knight I drew! He's tensed up, stalking, ready to strike...but he's not doin' a lotta moving. So how do you add some motion? Simple. Make his cape billow ominously in the night air. Toss in some blowin' papers and some cool bats, and you've got one awesome scene!

FIRESTORM

Firelord's whippin' that blazing staff of his around, leaving a funky trail of fire that you can follow, and giving it that cool sense of motion! Notice how the different thicknesses of the fire help convey motion. As with speed lines, the fire trail gets smaller as the motion has passed. You can do the same thing with the Human Torch and his fire trail when he's flying!

PRO TIPS

SLOW AND STEADY

"I used to just take too long and I always wished I could have drawn things faster. There were a lot of stories I wanted to do that I never got a chance to because I was slow. But on the other hand, the fact that I was careful and very story-conscious and conscientious about making it as good as I possibly could had people remembering my stuff." —John Romita Sr., *Amazing Spider-Man*
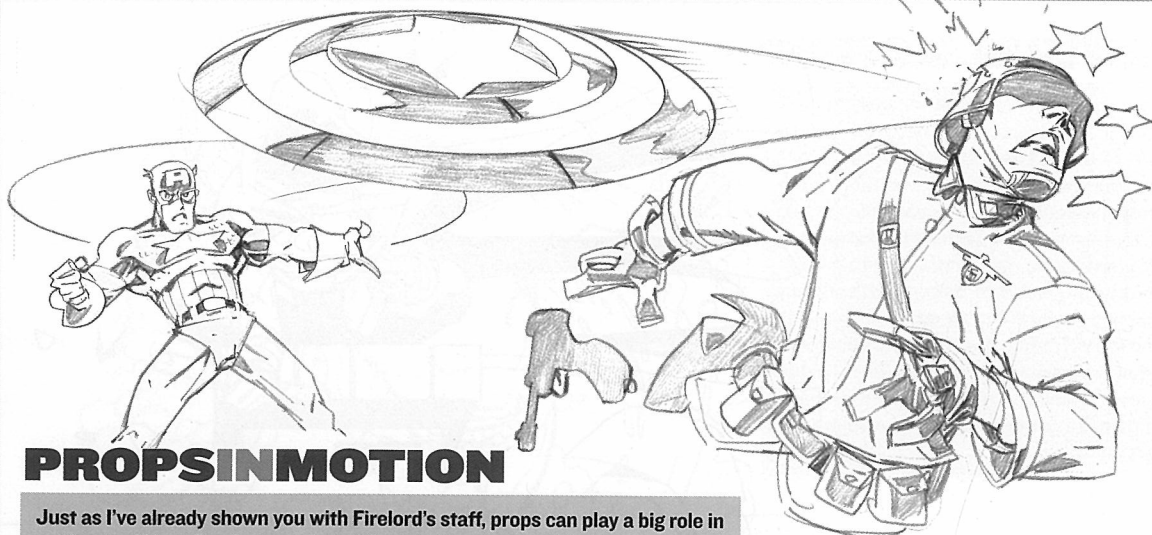
PROPSINMOTION

Just as I've already shown you with Firelord's staff, props can play a big role in motion, too! Here, I've drawn a shot of Captain America bustin' a Nazi upside the head with his shield, using some simple single and double motion lines. The single line by Cap's hands conveys his arm-slingin' action, while the double lines coming off the Nazi's head portray the ricochet effect. Drawing ricochet shots is a cool way to indicate motion—but any character with a prop-shtick can be great for motion tricks. Think of Hawkeye's arrows surrounded by speed lines or Daredevil's billy club zingin' around. You get the idea!
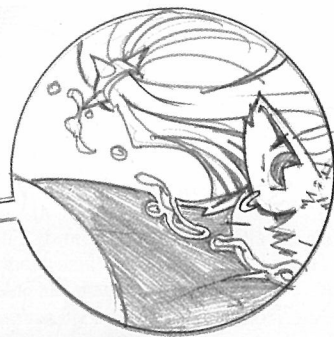
SLIPPERY WHENWET

And finally, there's the ultimate motion: bodily fluids. No, no, no. Get your mind outta the gutter. I'm talkin' about blood, sweat and tears! Here's something I like to do when I draw one character bustin' another in the chops! I've drawn my own character Wing spin-kicking his other-dimensional adversary in the head. Notice that, as the big guy's head spins across from the blow, there's a trail of saliva (or blood, depending on how mean ya are) flying off his face! It's kinda a subtle thing, but even these little aspects can help.

SO LONG!

BYE!

WELL FOLKS, it's been great sharing some of my "tricks" with you! Unfortunately, due to space constraints, I could only present a few examples. But remember, just think of your characters as always moving, always in motion...you're just freezing them at one specific point where as much stuff is happenin' as you've got the gumption (or time) to squeeze in!

Mike Wieringo's fluid pencils have graced the pages of Marvel's Fantastic Four, *DC's* Flash *and his creator-owned project,* Tellos.

DYNAMIC FORESHORTENING BY MATT HALEY

That's right, I said dynamic foreshortening, because while making people and objects appear to shrink and grow in proper perspective is crucial for any kind of art, we're talking about applying this technique to making comics more exciting—and that's what it's all about, isn't it? Simply put, the term "foreshortening" means that an object appears to get shorter as it is tilted away from the viewer; foreshortening is an artist's main tool to make a 2-D object look 3-D on paper. Using it dynamically can transform a superhero's punch into a mighty wallop instead of a love tap. Let's break some lead...

FORESCORE

The first thing we should do is show the difference between foreshortening in real life (say, in a movie) and dynamic foreshortening on a comics page. In the real world, the fist at the end of an outstretched arm will not appear any larger than when it's held at one's side. In comics, however, the fist must look larger as it comes toward the viewer, in order to simulate action and increase tension. Notice how Spidey's "real life" punch (**Figure A**) looks pretty boring? There's nothing wrong with the pose itself; it's just not terribly involving. But the "comics" punch (**Figure B**) looks like it's gonna take your head off— which is what we want! This is because we've treated the arm as a pillar: It gradually gets wider as it gets nearer to us, and ends with a larger-than-normal fist (not too big, though!). The great thing about this effect is that you don't need to add any speed lines or sound effects to get your point across; the figure itself tells the story.

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

YOU DUMMY

It's extremely important to get an artist's mannequin. It's an invaluable tool for wrapping your brain around foreshortening, since you can pose it pretty much any way you want. Some people use a computer program called "Poser," but sometimes there's no substitute for the real thing. Any art supply store sells mannequins, and they ain't expensive.

FIGURE C

FIGURE D

FIGURE E
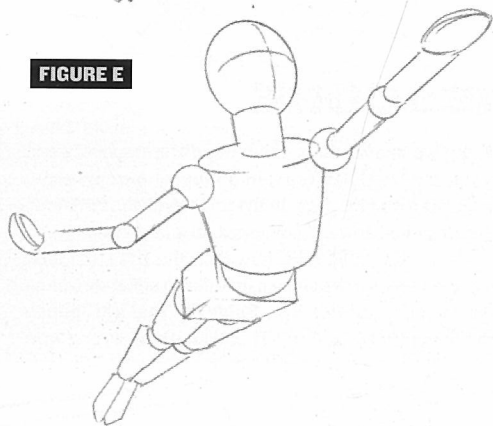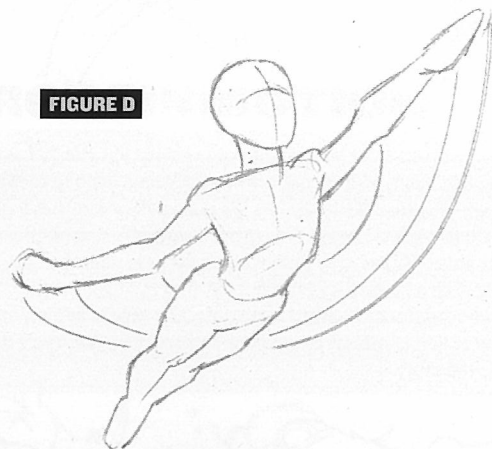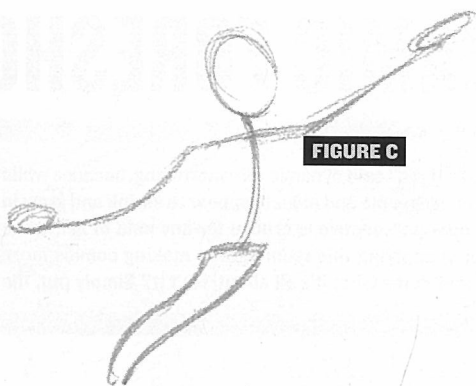
TO THE FORE

Okay, here's my personal, step-by-step method to plan out foreshortening. Let's say we want to do a dynamic shot of Rogue flying powerfully across the page. Well, first we have to decide on a pose (this is where the mannequin comes in handy) and sketch it out (**Figure C**). The next step is to get the proportions right (the mannequin can also help here, or you can even use an action figure!). Next, sketch the body part you want to foreshorten in its natural position (in this case, the arms parallel to the torso), and then plot the arc of movement each arm makes up to the position you want to place it in, again referring to the mannequin (**Figure D**). Pretty simple, eh?

PILLAR OF STRENGTH

Once the arms are proportioned correctly, it's time to "build mass," as Arnold would say. To do this, we fall back on the tried-and-true method of viewing the body parts as combinations of spheres, cylinders and cubes. Notice in **Figure E** how our sketch of Rogue is composed of just that—geometric solids. This is the "pillar" method I mentioned earlier. By thinking of Rogue's arms as pillars or columns, it's easier to envision them in forced perspective; then you modify them in the final drawing to resemble human arms. In the final piece, Rogue is flying like a superheroine should—dynamically!

SUPERPUNCH

Alright, now that we've mastered foreshortening in one easy lesson, let's practice a few...here's a shot of the King of the Sea himself, Namor, in a shot you'd probably see on a cover or splash page. This shot has the same challenges as the previous one, except it's a little more difficult because he's coming right at us! We simply foreshorten the main figure first, and then foreshorten his left arm separately. Notice how he seems to leap off the page? That's the effect we want, right?

PRO TIPS

KEEP IT REAL

"People groan when I talk about reference, but please bear with me. Lack of visual information is a clear sign that you made everything up, and that just takes away from the realism. Boring!"
—Mike Mignola, *Hellboy*

PRATFALL

Okay, sure, but what about a shot of someone leaping instead of flying? Well here, it's the pose that's all-important. See how both of Elektra's arms are held out in front of her as if to break her fall? In order to make this shot more involving, I've put Elektra's right hand in front of her shoulder. We still have to draw the entire arm when constructing the figure, but we only have to render the shoulder and hand (which can occasionally be a time-saver). The result? Elektra better have a grappling hook handy.

BLINDSIDE

Here's a toughie—Daredevil swinging down at us. Up till now, we've foreshortened figures from the top down, but how the heck are we gonna do this? Easy—we apply the same principles as before. Once we've sketched the correct pose (the mannequin was a big help in posing this one!), we make sure the torso is in the proper perspective, then we foreshorten each of DD's limbs separately, paying extra attention to the right leg since it's about to kick us in the head. Pay close attention to the feet in this one, because even though we only see the soles of his boots in the rendering, we have to draw the whole foot in the sketch phase to make it look right.
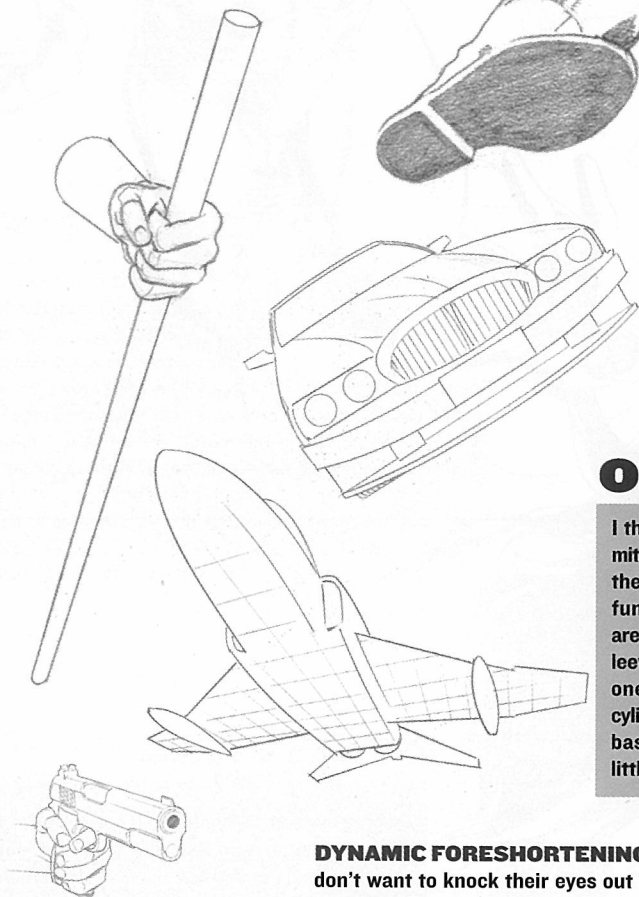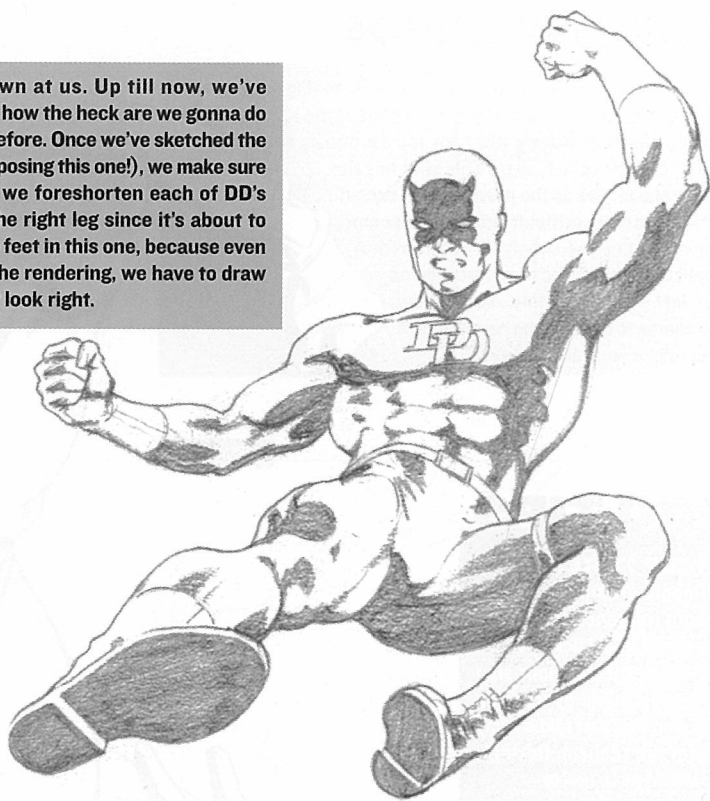
OBJECTIFY ME

I think that foreshortening objects dynamically is a mite easier than foreshortening people, mainly because the reader's eye will really notice if a person looks funny or out of perspective. But since most of us aren't walking encyclopedias, artists have a little more leeway when it comes to inanimate objects, like the ones on this page. Also, we can use our spheres/cylinders/cubes technique here, since most objects are basically spheres, cylinders or cubes, and thus a little easier to draw.

DYNAMIC FORESHORTENING can be a very powerful tool, so use it sparingly. You don't want to knock their eyes out in every panel, do you? Balancing dynamism with subtlety will keep the reader turning the pages. Of course, we stand on the shoulders of giants, so if you want to see how the masters did it, start by studying the comic works of the King of Comics, Jack Kirby, or those of Neal Adams and John Romita (Sr. or Jr.!). No matter what style of art you draw—be it illustrative, cartoony or manga-inspired—using dynamic foreshortening will make your stories more thrilling, give them more impact and keep readers coming back for more! (w)

ACTION SCENES BY JIM LEE

O ne of the chief defining characteristics of superhero comics is action. After all, nobody likes a dull fight scene. So, as artists, it's our job to fully bring forth intense dynamics. It's not as easy as it sounds, though, since we're constantly torn between maintaining a sense of reality and making a scene bigger and bolder than it could ever possibly be.

Now, there are many ways to get the most excitement out of your figurework. But given the space I have in this column, I've narrowed it down to a few important ones that can help bring more zing to your work. So grab a pencil, hit your board and let's go!

STORYARCS

Each figure makes a statement and brings with it a sense of life and movement. While we still have to remember proper anatomy, if we lose the overall flow or arc of a figure's movement, then we lose a lot of that figure's impact and power.

Many artists think of the body as connected parts. That's fine, except by doing that, we sometimes overlook trying to make a general, forceful statement with the figure. Only after we determine a figure's gesture should we break it down into parts. The more we can retain of our initial arc, the more we maximize our figure's dynamics.

You should try to have one or two arcs that define your figure's overall movement or gesture. Establish simple arcs flowing through the shoulders and arms, or through the arc of the legs. The greater the arc, the more energy your figure will have. Notice how **Figure A** has more zing to its step than **Figure B**. Note that the more we simplify our drawings, the more they'll resemble very simple arcs.

FIGURE A
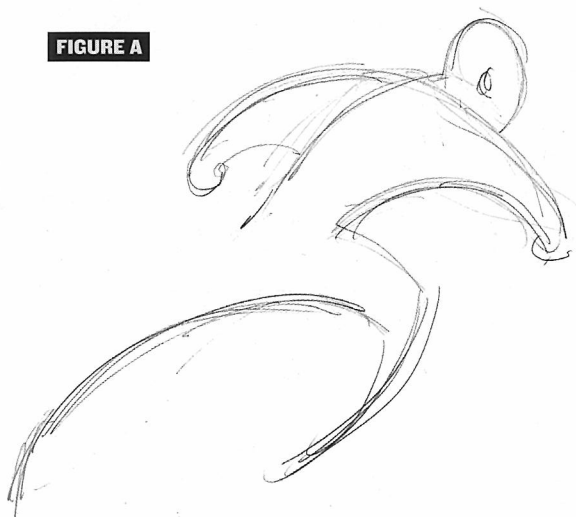
FIGURE B
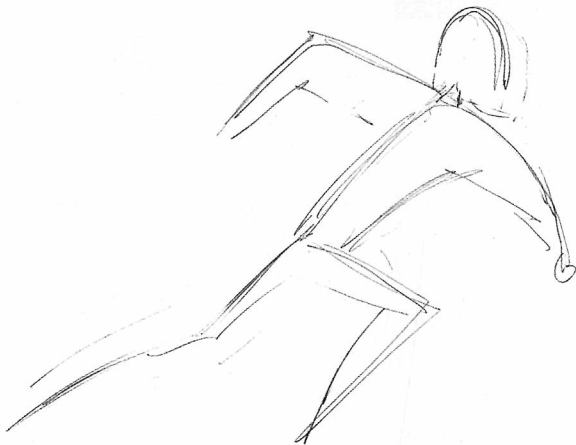
PRO TIPS

THE RAVE AND THE BOLD

"Many great artists like Jack Kirby and John Buscema accomplished the contradictory task of balancing reality and making the action bolder, and their work has served as the cornerstones of modern American superhero figurework. They never faltered from maintaining a realistic environment, which made the unbelievable that much more believable. Then there's non-comic artist George Bridgman, whose book, *George Bridgman's Guide to Life Drawing*, really unlocked some doors for me as to how the human body twists and turns as a series of connected masses." —Jim Lee, *All Star Batman & Robin*

FIGURE C
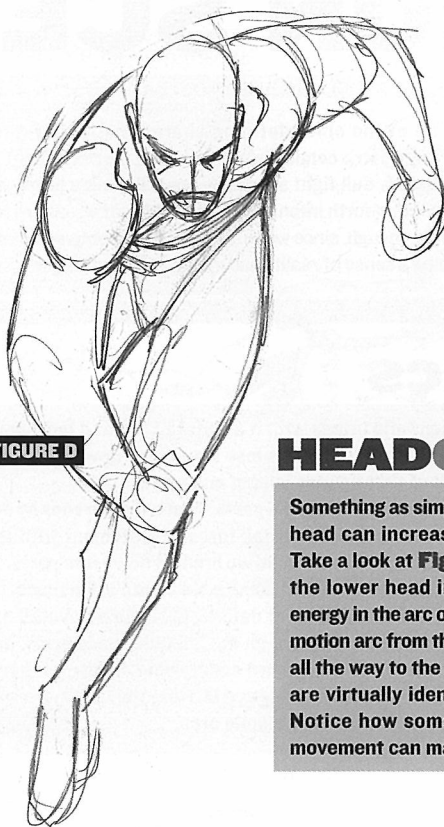
FIGURE D

HEADONDOWN

Something as simple as lowering your figure's head can increase his action dramatically. Take a look at **Figures C** and **D**. Notice how the lower head in **Figure D** creates more energy in the arc of the shoulders, and a better motion arc from the fist through the shoulders all the way to the other fist. The two pictures are virtually identical, except for the head. Notice how something as simple as slight movement can make a big difference.

FIGURE E
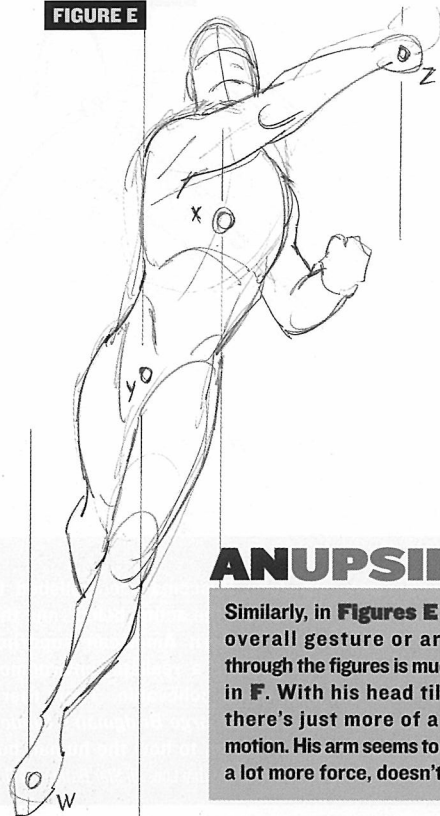
ANUPSIDE

Similarly, in **Figures E** and **F**, the overall gesture or arc flowing through the figures is much stronger in **F**. With his head tilted down, there's just more of a sweeping motion. His arm seems to be exerting a lot more force, doesn't it?
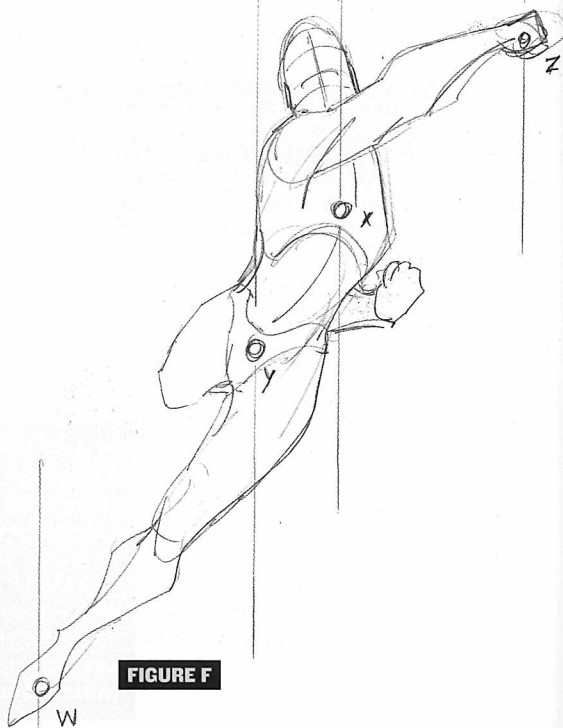
FIGURE F
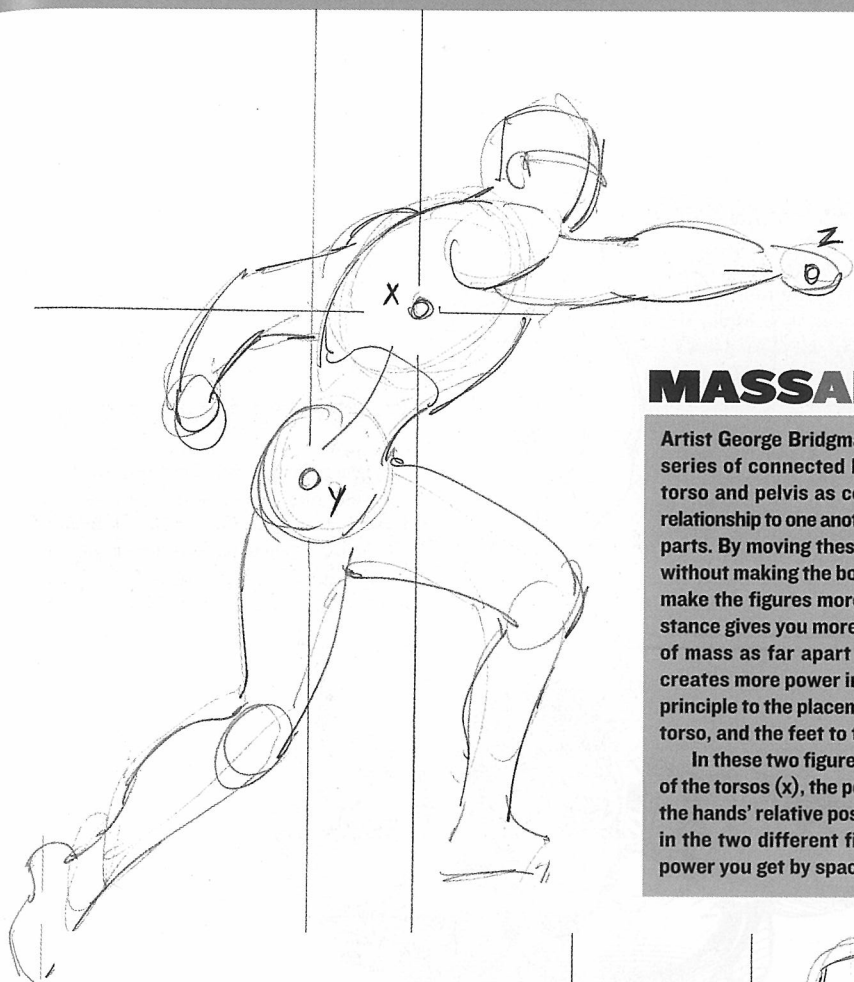
MASSAPPEAL

Artist George Bridgman spoke of the human body as a series of connected body masses. He would take the torso and pelvis as connected units, which rotated in relationship to one another almost as if they were socketed parts. By moving these masses as far apart as possible without making the body seem overly elongated, we can make the figures more dynamic. Just as widening your stance gives you more power, moving the torso's center of mass as far apart from the pelvis' center of mass creates more power in your figure. Now apply the same principle to the placement of the hands in relation to the torso, and the feet to the pelvis.

In these two figures, I've labeled the centers of mass of the torsos (x), the pelvises (y) and the hands (z). Note the hands' relative positions in relation to points x and y in the two different figures and you'll start to see the power you get by spacing your centers of mass out.
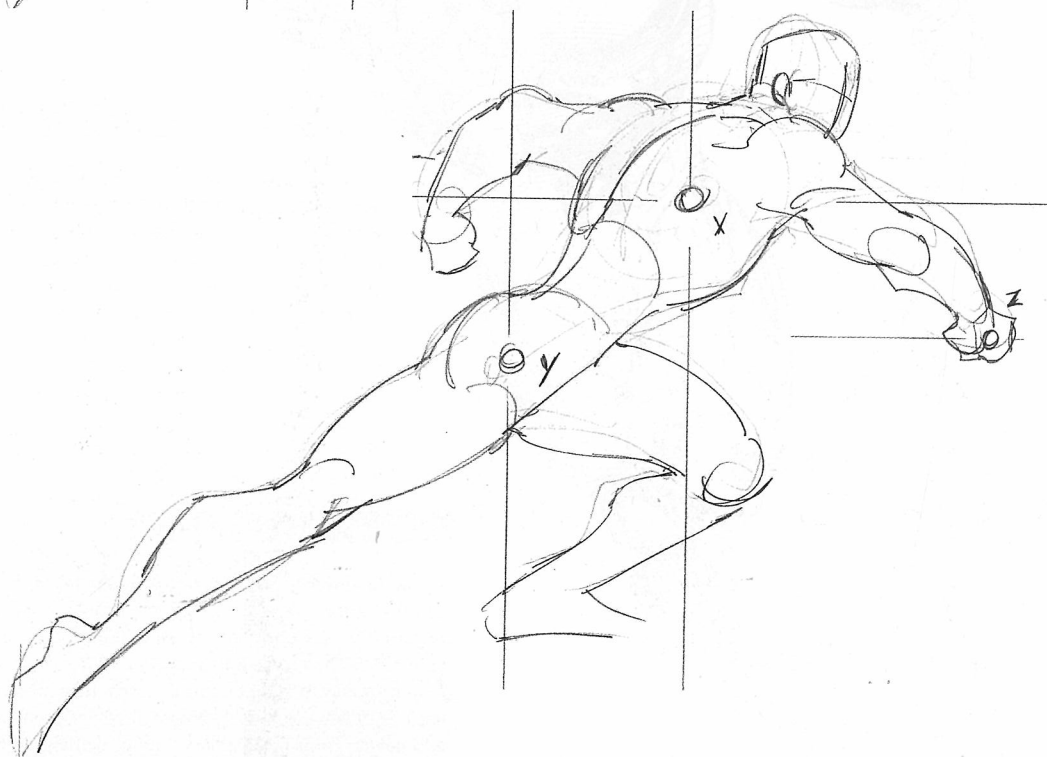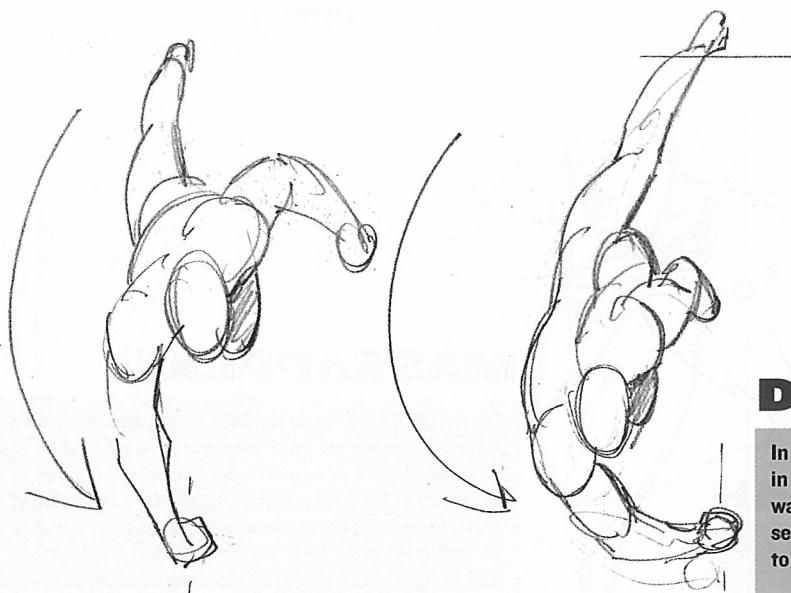
DOWNWITHIT

In these figures, you'll see how moving z in relationship to x and y from a downward perspective further accentuates the sense of movement and direction we want to create in our figurework.
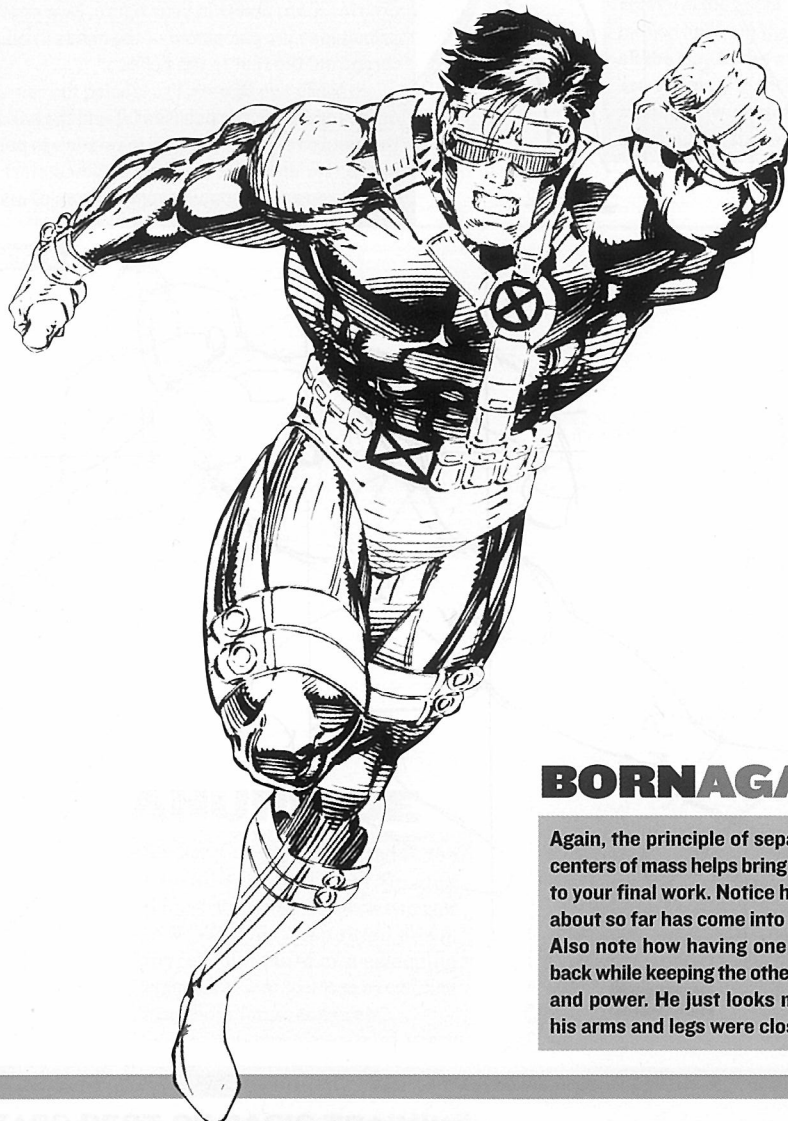
BORNAGAIN

Again, the principle of separating the body's different centers of mass helps bring a greater sense of dynamics to your final work. Notice how everything we've talked about so far has come into play in this shot of Cyclops. Also note how having one of Cyclops' legs stretched back while keeping the other bent gives him more thrust and power. He just looks much more dynamic than if his arms and legs were closer to his body.

TWISTANDSHOUT

We can squeeze a little more life into our figures by playing around with the details—namely the wrist and ankle joints.

Look back at the front ankle of the figures on page 33. In the second figure the ankle has a much tighter angle to it than the first. The energy in that joint, created by the sharpness of the ankle's angle, helps bring more energy to the overall figure in a subtle yet powerful way.

Now compare and contrast these two figures. In the one on the right, we see how simply twisting the wrist down creates more drama and life in the final pose.
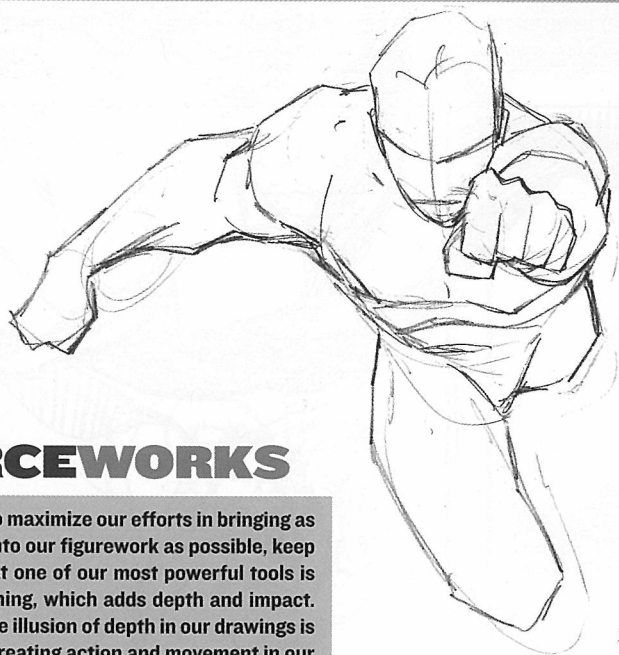
FORCEWORKS

As we try to maximize our efforts in bringing as much life into our figurework as possible, keep in mind that one of our most powerful tools is foreshortening, which adds depth and impact. Creating the illusion of depth in our drawings is crucial to creating action and movement in our figures. By forcing perspective, we can heighten the sense of depth and three-dimensionality in the final work. By comparing and contrasting these two figures, we see how bringing the foreground fist to the front in an extreme way makes it feel much closer to us and pushes the rest of the body farther back. It helps bring more three-dimensionality to the final shot, bringing more "space" to the charging figure.

Remember: In these figures, the farther centers of mass are apart, the more energy the figure has. So by bringing forward the outstretched fist from the center of the figure's torso, we create movement. For another example, look how foreshortening the bent leg back in **Figure G** makes all the other parts of that figure come forward in space.
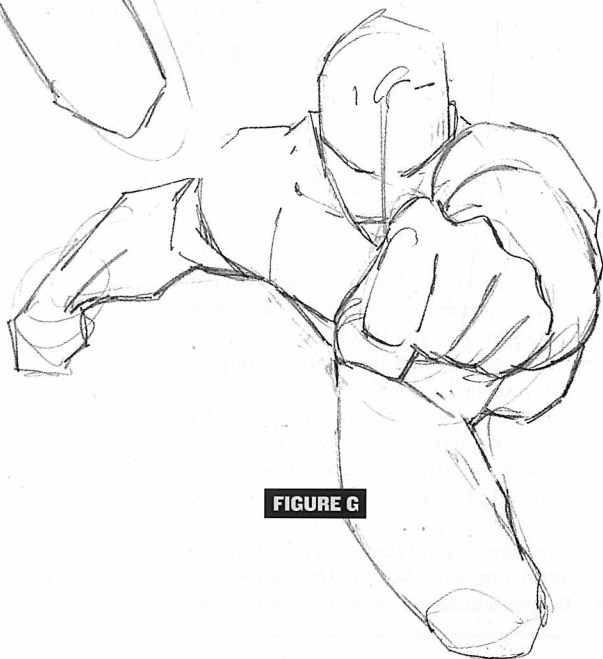
FIGURE G

DEPTHCHARGE

The more depth you have in your figurework, the more impact you'll achieve with your pose. Exaggerating foreshortened shots really makes for eye-popping art and brings a real in-your-face feel to your figures. Don't be afraid to play around with the relative sizes of hands to bodies, bodies to legs, etc. It can really add impact and make figures like the one below feel more three-dimensional.

PRO TIPS

IMPROV ARTIST

"This sounds delirious, but I have used everything from a little toothpick to a bottlecap to ink. Don't be afraid to improvise with those strange elements. A good, unexpected result can be obtained—and if not, you always can change it, cover it or erase it!"
—Eduardo Risso, *100 Bullets*
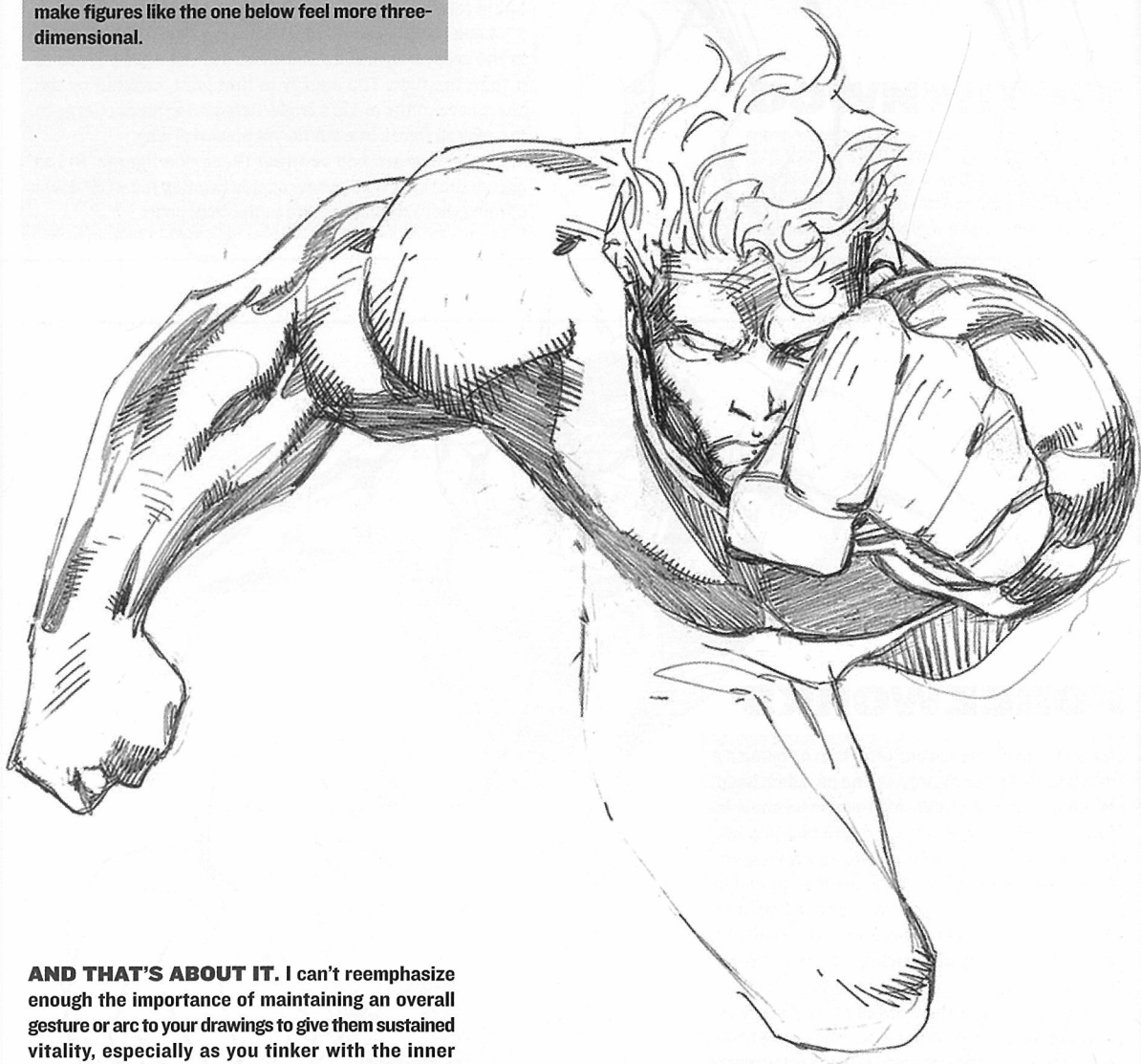
AND THAT'S ABOUT IT. I can't reemphasize enough the importance of maintaining an overall gesture or arc to your drawings to give them sustained vitality, especially as you tinker with the inner anatomies of the figures themselves. Only by stretching your figures, making them as three-dimensional as possible, can you hope to make them leap off the pages themselves. Hopefully, these few tips will help bring more pizzazz into your figurework. Thanks for listening. Ⓦ

Jim Lee can draw action-packed scenes with the best of them. Check out Marvel's Uncanny X-Men *or DC's* Batman *and* Superman *for the blow-by-blow.*

FLIGHT BY PHIL JIMENEZ
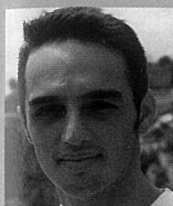
Well, the *Wizard* folks have asked me to share a few tricks I've learned from some good teachers and years of experience in the comics biz. I've been asked to talk about flying—that amazing superpower just about all of us wish we had at one time or another. There are all sorts of ways to convey a super-being flying, and all sorts of fliers—from the ultimate flyguy, Thor, and the wind-riding Storm, to the winged Angel, or even Iron Man. Each character flies differently, based on his or her power, but the same set of rules applies to each when you draw them soaring through the air. So let's cover a few of the basics about crafting the illusion of flight.

UP, UP AND AWAY

Visual clues—the direction the character is flying, the position of their hands and heads, the environment around them and most importantly, composition—all help create the illusion of flight. Take Vision, for example (**Figure A**). His lowered head, trajectory, closed fists and forced perspective give readers the illusion that he's flying fast, hard and almost right at us. The city falling away below him lets us know he's soaring away from the buildings into the skies above to some unknown destination. With Iron Man, we have a more hesitant, but still forceful, pose (**Figure B**)—his head is looking toward us, not up in the direction he's headed. And his uneven legs are about balance, not direction, as he makes his decision.

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FLIGHT
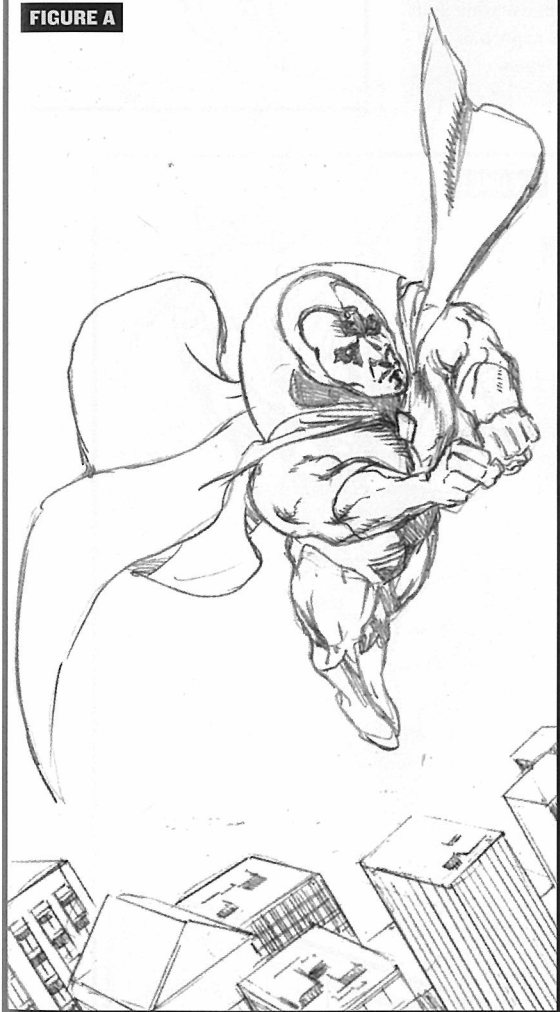
WINGEDWONDER

With Angel (**Figure C**), we get the determination of Vision in **Figure A**, but with much more grace—the arch in his back and his open hands tell us he's flying quickly, with purpose, but isn't out to punch the next thing he sees.

FIGURE C

LIFTOFFANDLANDING

Composition is key in creating the illusion that a character is floating above the ground. To indicate liftoff, you must show the environment from which the character is leaving and draw the figure above the ground of that environment, letting us know he's already in midair. Check out Thor's powerful, determined liftoff (**Figure D**). We see that he's flying up from a rooftop (the shadow on the building's edge tells us he's not on it, but apart from it). His cape and hair billow behind him, showing us the rush of air and his direction. And the fact that Thor is heading up towards the top of the page lets us know he's headed up towards the sky.

Now look at Thor landing (**Figure E**). Here, he almost looks like he's leaping down from a higher building. That's a very helpful key. A character landing has his or her weight behind him, and his body will bend appropriately. Unless it's the most graceful touchdown, a character should have some bend to his knees, arms and torso to clue us in on the pressure of his landing. Furthermore, his cape, hair and arms, all pointed towards the sky, let us know where he's coming from.

FIGURE D

FIGURE E

SWINGINGMYWAY

Flying characters should be handled very differently from swinging characters, although some similarities remain. Note the position of the Human Torch (**Figure F**). He looks like he's gliding through the air, his head and outstretched arms and hands leading him with determination through the sky. Spider-Man, on the other hand, is swinging from building to building. He leads with his feet, and his arms are stretched out in both directions as he leaves one web behind to use another. He's held aloft not by any ability to float in the air, but by the delicate distribution of weight between his arms and legs, torso and head as he swings. He should look as though he could fall to his doom if his weblines were to suddenly disappear.
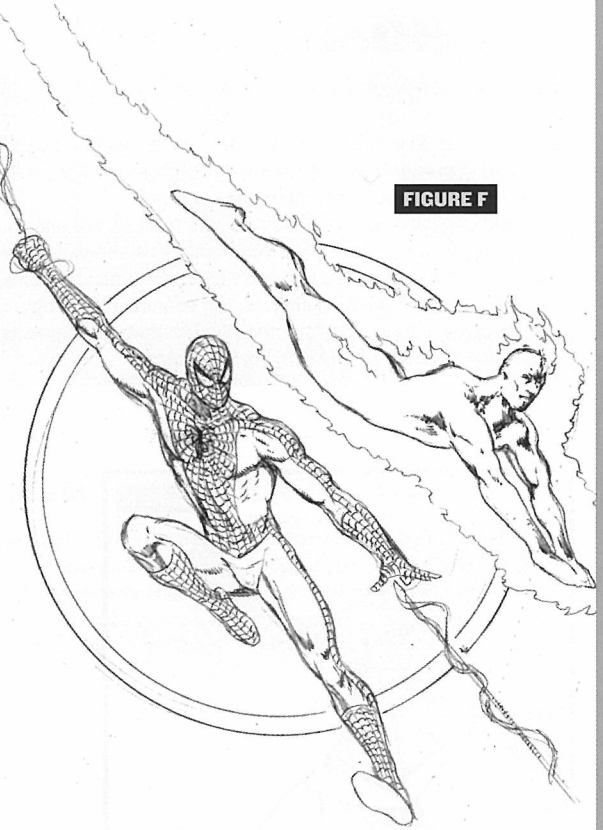
FIGURE F

BREAKINGBORDERS

With Rogue here, we see another example of composition giving us the visual cues we need to believe she's flying—her outstretched arms, hair flying behind her and speed lines all indicate her direction, and the planetary background indicates her environment. Her arcing figure is bold enough to break through the panel borders. This final choice is one a lot of artists like to use, but it also leads to a common compositional mistake many artists use that destroy the illusion of flying...

PRO TIPS

COLLABORATE: GREAT!

"Personally, I've taken the biggest leaps of growth from collaborating—i.e., inking someone's pencils, someone inking my pencils, drawing from someone else's script, and so on. Remember that in a collaboration, it's important to respect everyone's contribution while simultaneously standing strong for your own efforts if you believe in what you're doing." —Mike Allred, *X-Statix*

FLIGHT

ANCHORSAWEIGH

One of the easiest ways to craft the illusion of flight in a comic book is to position the figure in the panel unattached to any panel borders. Notice how Warbird in **Figure G** seems to be floating in midair. This is because she has no anchor—that is, nothing attaches her to the panel border.

But in **Figure H**, Warbird's toes and forearm are cut off. Many artists draw figures that don't quite fit in the panel and cut them off at awkward points on their extremities. Not only are these bad composition choices, but connecting the figure to the panel border destroys the illusion that the figure is free-floating and, therefore, flying in midair.
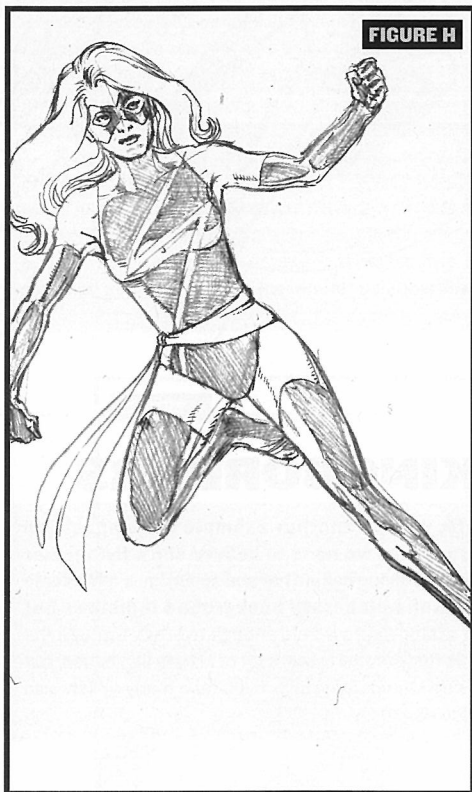
FIGURE G

FIGURE H

THERIGHTFRAME

Composition is important in other ways here. In **Figure H**, Warbird is posed diagonally—always the best for dynamism in a panel. But she looks awkward, like she's leading with her leg and torso, not her head.

In **Figure G**, Warbird keeps her diagonal composition, but her body is more solidly posed. She looks like she's in control of her arms and muscles, not the other way around. Her head, twisted the opposite way of her legs, is still poised solidly on her shoulders. Even if she was to turn direction in midair, she looks in control.

CAPETOWN

Here's another easy indicator of flight: A billowing cape, like Guardian's to the right, suggests the wind whipping through it, and helps indicate direction and motion. The more dynamic the cape, the more dynamic the figure and the composition (but don't go overboard, and don't connect the cape to the border).

HAIRSPRAY

A character's hair is another great indicator that they are flying, leaping or in motion. The wind pushing through She-Hulk's hair (right) indicates speed and direction, important considerations while crafting the illusion of motion.

LITTLESWIMMERBOY

A great model for characters flying is characters swimming. The poses, angles, billowing hair, wind- (or water-) whipped cape, diagonal composition and the environment the character is in are all just as applicable to a swimming figure as they are to a flying one. Just something for you and Prince Namor (left) to think about.

AERIALCOMBAT

What about two characters fighting while they're flying? The same rules apply. Composition is key— remove the figures from the panel borders to create the illusion they're floating in mid-air, like Iron Man and Super-Skrull. Create backgrounds now and then to let us know that the characters are not grounded and, in many cases, are flying hundreds of feet above the Earth. Keep diagonal lines in the panel to create a dynamic composition. And keep the figures' legs flung about—they should never look like they can stand on the ground the minute they're upright! They should look like they're in constant freefall.

I HOPE this was helpful and gets you started thinking about some ways to draw superheroes and their adversaries flying and fighting. I highly recommend a great book, Thomas Easley's *The Figure in Motion*, for great poses and some terrific figures in midair, apparently flying. Also look at any books of dancers with similar photography. They'll really get you thinking about what people would look like if they could really fly...and isn't that why we're in this business anyway, to make people believe just that? (W)

Phil Jimenez has taken flight as both artist and writer in books like DC's Infinite Crisis, Wonder Woman *and DC/Vertigo's* Otherworld.
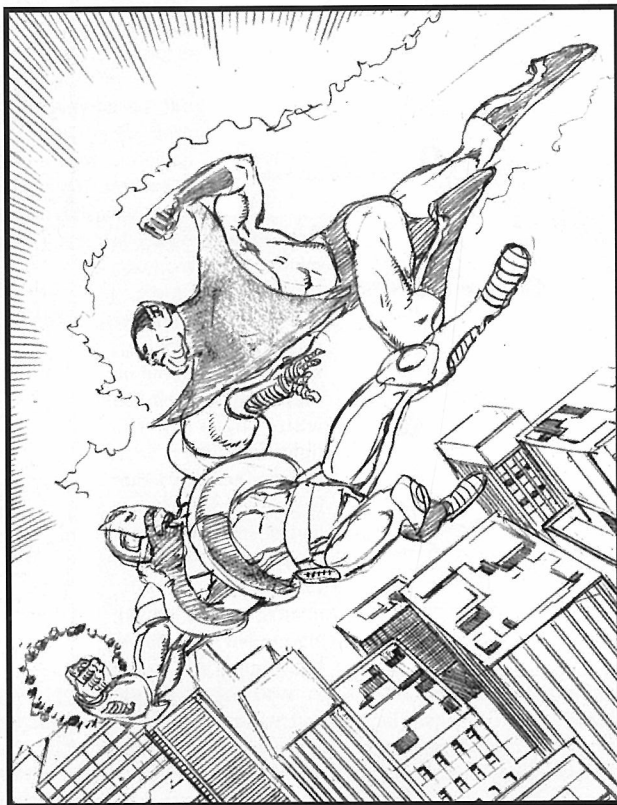
ENERGY EFFECTS BY PHIL JIMENEZ

Y'know, during the thirteen or so years I've been in comics, I've worked on a variety of characters with powers ranging from optic blasts to the elemental manipulation of the ocean. In that time, I've had to learn how to draw quite a few different types of "energy effects"—from fire to lightning to smoke and beyond—and their effects on the heroes and villains using them. Well, I'm here to

suggest a few ways that you can draw these energies.

I can't stress enough, however, how important photo reference was and is to my learning about how these energy patterns really work, and what they look like. I hope you'll whip out those ol' science books and magazines, and check out the photos. Nothing like knowing the reality before drawing the fantasy, I say!

WHITE LIGHTNING

Say you're drawing Storm or Thor raining lightning down on some loser supervillain. Keep in mind, lightning never travels in a straight line; it often ripples and splits into smaller (and sometimes larger) bolts along the way. A good way to start is by drawing a single, curvy line to begin the shape of the actual lightning bolt (**Figure A-1**). Once that's done, go in and add single lines for the tendrils attached

(**Figure A-2**). Space them out any way you wish—cluster them, or add new ones at an even distance from each other. When the first lightning line is finished, add some "weight" to it by drawing another line parallel to the first (**Figure A-3**), but vary it enough so that parts of the tendril appear thicker in some spots than others. Just keep it moving, with a real "rhythm."

FIGURE A
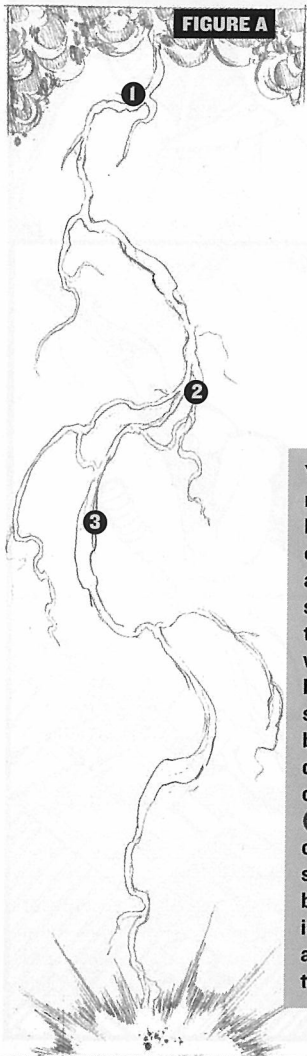
You should also keep in mind that lightning is a light source, and its effects (like shadows and harsh lighting) should be reflected on the person casting it. The white light of the lightning is best seen splashed across a darker background: I suggest dark storm clouds, which only add to the mood (**Figure B**). Finally, creating a lightning storm—not just a simple bolt—helps add to the intensity of the effect, and makes the character look more powerful .

FIGURE B

FIGURE C

FIGURE D

FIGURE F
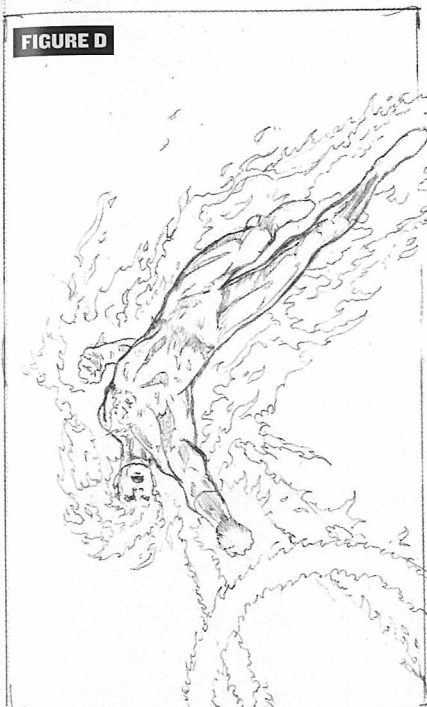
FIRE IN THE HOLE

There are a couple of ways to approach fire in comics: There's the "cartoon" version, where the fire is defined by a rippling line, or the more "reality-based" version, where the fire is defined by its destruction. I'm a sucker for a combination of both (**Figure C-1**). Fire is a constantly changing object, and your drawing should reflect that. It's also a light source, so think harsh lighting (**Figure C-2**) and heavy shadows (**Figure C-3**).

If you're going to draw "cartoony" fire—like the Human Torch's—use a series of curvy "waves," one in rapid succession of the other, making a jagged pattern (**Figure D**). These little waves should vary in size, and their curls work best when pointing in one direction (**Figure E**).

The more "reality-based" fire is created by drawing the dark areas and patterns of motion an inferno causes: small patches of black, contrasted with white, open areas (**Figure F**). Where the flame is most intense, these smaller "licks" or "swirls" of black help indicate movement (**Figure G**).
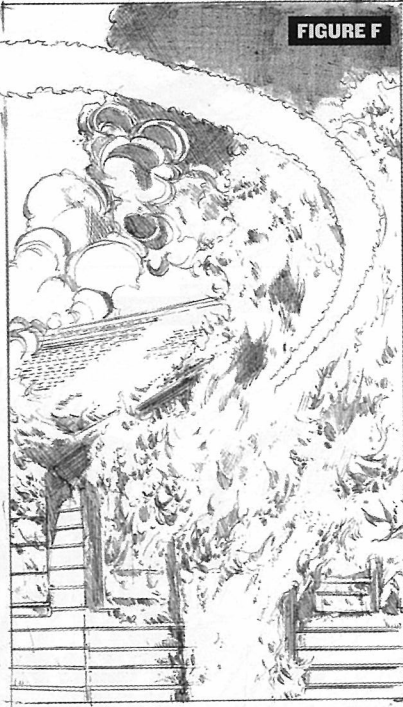
FIGURE E

FIGURE G

FIGURE H
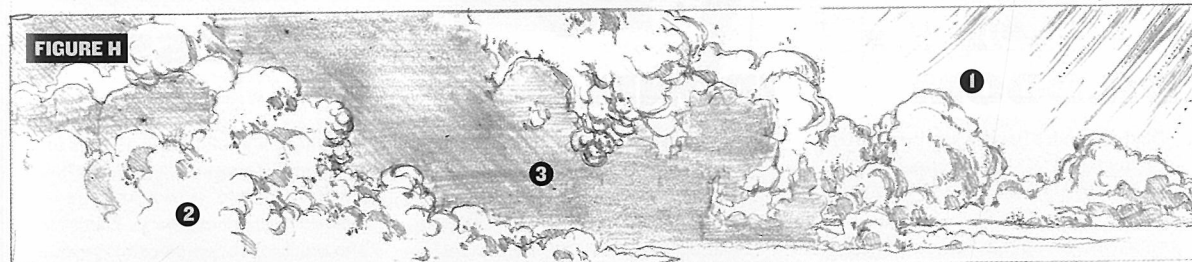
SMOKING SECTION

Another constantly shifting element, smoke can often be exchanged for storm clouds in comics. Just imagine the lumpy consistency of mashed potatoes when you're drawing smoke, and you're on the right track (**Figure H-1**). An easy way to start is by drawing a series of interconnecting circles, all varying greatly in size. After erasing most of the lines where the circles intersect, but still keeping their overall shape, you can go in and add the darker shadows on the circle edges to help define the cloud's shape (**Figure H-2**). Also, smoke is often filled with large areas of solid black (**Figure H-3**).

ENERGY EFFECTS

ENERGY CRISIS

Each of these characters projects energy signatures and "halos" surrounding their hands that are different and from one another. (I'll tell you more about "energy halos" later.)
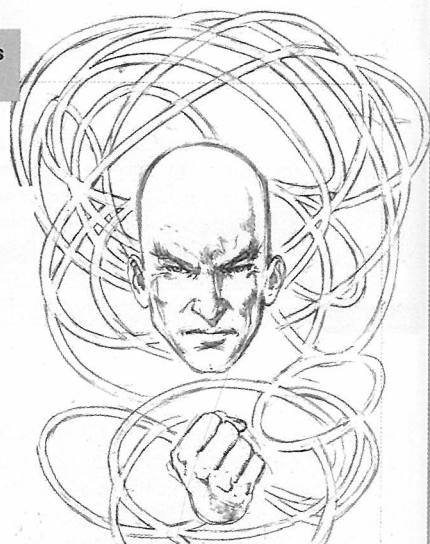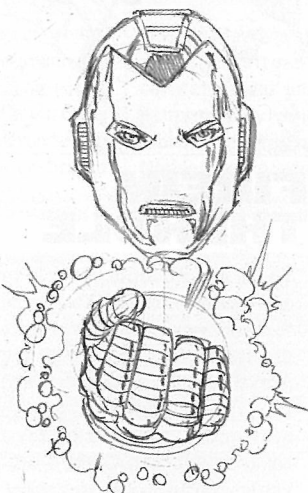
FIGURE I
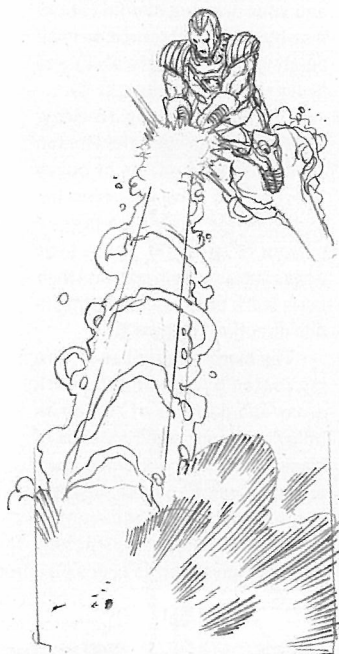
DR. DOOM

Doctor Doom's hand is surrounded by "Kirby Crackle"—a ring composed of a rippling black band of small black circles. The band should look like it's constantly shifting and moving. Doom's energy blasts are composed of two jagged parallel lines emanating not from his hand, but from the energy halo surrounding it (**Figure I-1**). The energy blast itself is made of harsh, jagged lines, spreading out much like an ink splatter (**Figure I-2**).

IRON MAN

Iron Man projects a very clean, slick-looking energy. His energy halo is a circle around his hand, with clear circles that occasionally "burst" to indicate a clean, technological "crackle." His blast, is simply two straight parallel lines, with streams of energy wrapping around the length of the blast. When firing, all of the clear circles in his energy halo burst, transforming the halo into a collection of sharp, clean points emanating in all directions.

PROFESSOR XAVIER

Professor X's telepathic powers are handled differently. The energy halo surrounds his hand and head, indicating his psionic energy. This is just one approach to the telepathic powers: thin, even lines in a wild swirl around his head. Telepathic powers are best defined when the body is almost stagnant, and the entirety of the energy and the blast comes from the figure's head. Keep in mind, though, that this method makes for a far less dynamic figure.
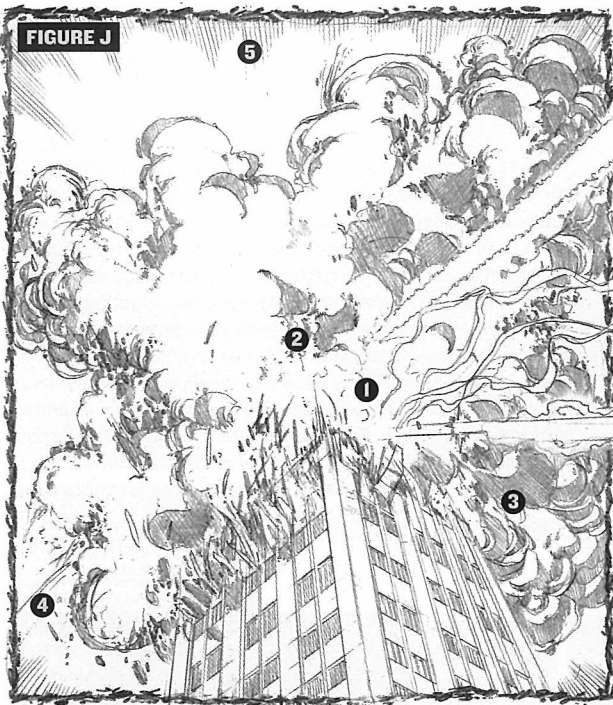
FIGURE J

FIGURE K

BLOWING IT ALL UP

You use a little bit of everything when you draw explosions: rules for lightning, smoke and fire apply. When energy blasts are the source of the explosion, those blasts should travel right into the center of it (**Figure J-1**).

Explosions are a great source of light, movement, smoke and debris. So think big! Draw a big circle around what's exploding, and work out from there. Remember that the heart of the explosion is going to be white-hot, and therefore mostly white, with a few "swirls" of darkness thrown in (**Figure J-2**). The dark clouds emanate from the edge of the circle you drew, becoming fuller and darker as they billow out (**Figure J-3**). Sparks should be flying from the edges of the smoke (**Figure J-4**), while jagged lines attached to the panel border help add to the explosiveness of the scene (**Figure J-5**). Remember, an explosion is also an intense source of light.

The best example I've seen of something blowing up is the Hindenburg dirigible explosion in the '30s. If you can dig up that picture and use it for reference, you should do just fine!

MYSTIC MAYHEM

I call the energy patterns that surround characters' hands or heads "energy halos." They're simply rings of energy that surround the head or hand. As we've seen earlier, there's an infinite variety to the way these halos, and the beams they emit, can look. Take a look at Dr. Strange here (**Figure K**). The energy he projects emanates in strange, wavy bands and ribbons, for a very psychedelic effect. Even his hands are contorted (most energy-projecting characters keep them either open or clenched into a fist), lending to the otherworldly, spell-casting effect you want when you draw the Sorcerer Supreme.

A little aside: Doc Strange's energy halos are actually based on the designs of '60s-era rock posters in an art book I found. I think it's a perfect example of the sort of cool stuff you can find by looking at photographs and images in all sorts of books besides comics.

I HOPE YOU FOUND something useful here, something you can add to your repertoire of techniques which so many other great artists have shown you through the pages of this book. Whatever you do, just keep drawing because you love it, and never lose sight of how much fun it can actually be.

COSTUMES BY RAMA GOTTUMUKKALA

It's all been one giant mistake. Superhero costumes are a fluke, a happy accident. Back in 1936 on comic strips like the "Phantom," costumes were implemented solely to differentiate tiny characters in early comic book pages. With poor printing quality, bad resolution, limited colors—and no Photoshop effects—superhero books lived and died on the strength of flashy costumes convincing customers to part with their dimes.

Since then, comic book technology has advanced forward in leaps and bounds. But one thing hasn't changed. Costumes still hold the superhero genre in a vice grip. "When you ask the average person, 'Who is Spider-Man?' they're going to say, 'Well, he's this guy who's got spider powers and he wears a red-and-blue costume,'" says *Ultimate Extinction* artist Brandon Peterson.

"They're not going to say, 'Well, he's this young guy named Peter Parker, who lives with his aunt.' They're going to describe the surface, the most basic blatant things.

"That's the thing with a costume. It's so easily identifiable, so easy to grab onto, that it just becomes part of the superhero mythos. There has to be a costume if you're a superhero."

In honor of these beloved superhero costumes, we talked with a handful of artists who have as many opinions on these costumes as you do. Finally, once and for all, you can hear John Romita Sr.'s thoughts on whether Thor would have looked better in horns, or learn how Frank Quitely defied gravity itself when designing Emma Frost's outrageously sexy getup. Who knows, you might even get some costume ideas for your own creations!

SPIDER-MAN

Original Design: Steve Ditko, 1962.
He's not the first red-and-blue-garbed hero to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but Spider-Man's classic suit has set the gold standard for sleek, aerodynamic costumes, and has stayed remarkably consistent throughout the years. "The Spider-Man costume followed the basic rules of costume-making back [in the '60s], which are still really relevant today–strong bold colors, which tend to stand out and make more of a punch on the page," says Peterson.

EYE FOR AN EYE Artists have drawn Spidey's eyes as big as watermelon slices or as small as goggles. "When you locate the eyes so hugely, covering like half the face, it lost the humanity to me," says legendary Spider-Man artist John Romita Sr. "I liked the reader to be constantly aware that there's a young person inside with a bone structure. Other people have adapted to make it look like a creature from outer space."

SYMBOLIC GESTURE The only element of Ditko's original costume to pass through the cracks, Peter's spider symbol has been enlarged and warped to become more spider-like. "I just don't like it looking like two tridents jammed on two ends of a short stick," laughs Romita Sr.

BULKING UP Spidey's web pattern does more than accentuate Peter's ripped body. "It can allow you to show a lot of form and dimension, a lot of rounding," says Peterson. "You can form the webs in a 3-D pattern that shows the shape of his [body]."

BUG OUT There are dozens of reasons why Spider-Man could've ended up forgotten in comic quarter bins. Thankfully, Steve Ditko and Stan Lee passed over a hairy, bulgy-eyed look for Spidey. "There would have been a million things that could have been done to make him exotic-looking—fangs, antennae—which would have made him less classical," says Romita Sr.

WEB CAST Nothing causes carpel tunnel syndrome faster than drawing repetitive, interlacing web lines for hours at a time. "[The costume is] compact and economical, although there's a hell of a lot of webs!" laughs Romita Sr. "As an artist, I always got tired of that. But as an observer, I always thought that was a great look."
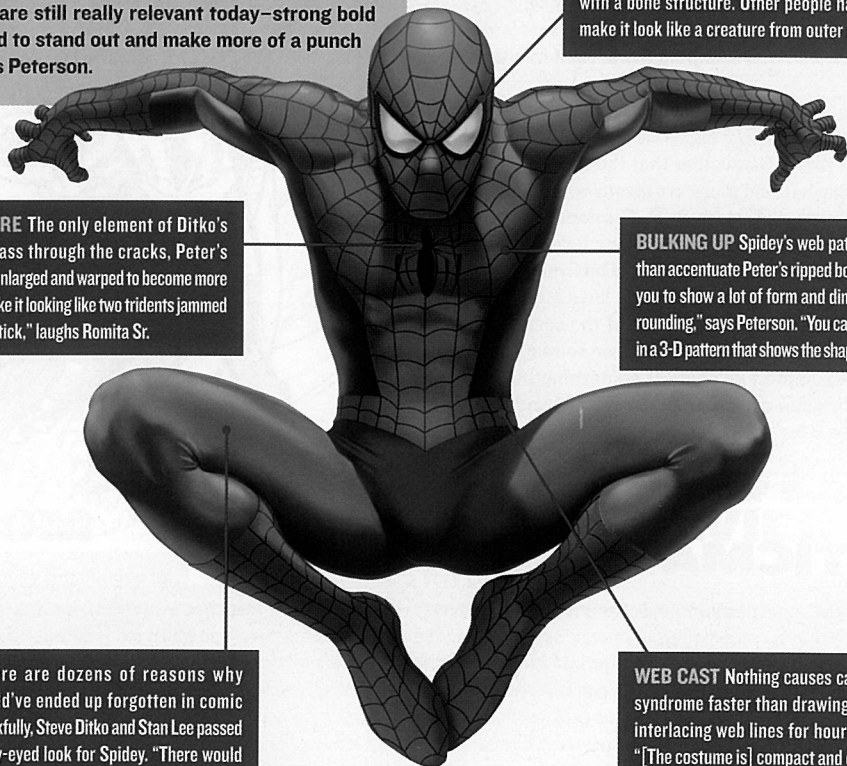
WOLVERINE

Redesign: John Cassaday, 2004. Original Design: John Romita Sr., Herb Trimpe, Gil Kane, 1974. *Gaijin,* Japanese for "foreigner," is a word that's haunted Wolverine for most of his life. Crime lords, arch villains and even his one-time fiancé have all taken potshots at Logan with that barb. No wonder he takes criticism about his outlandish fashion sense a tad seriously. When asked to put the X-Men's hairy pug back in spandex, *Astonishing X-Men* artist John Cassaday fashioned a costume that combined many of the popular elements from previous costumes, fusing a zestful past with a modern flavor.

MASKED MARVEL "Although the mask probably wouldn't function as well in real life, there's something about the shape of it—the almost horns that you get, the way it fits on his face—that is just instant iconography," says Jimenez.

NATURE CALLS Short and stocky, Logan draws his namesake from the animal kingdom. "As a kid, I always loved the stripes because it suggested he was like the animal," says Van Sciver.

GIVE HIM A HAND Screw around with Wolverine's mask and fans brandish pitchforks. Mess with his gloves? Meh. "I think you can give him short gloves, leather gloves or sort of longer forearm gloves," says *Infinite Crisis* artist Phil Jimenez. "But I don't see them as quite as important to the overall look of the costume."

BRAWLING BOOTS During his redesign, Cassaday sheared off a large portion of Wolverine's clown-sized boots. "I always looked at those and thought they were pretty useless," laughs *Green Lantern* artist Ethan Van Sciver. "They would certainly rub up against each other and cause him to trip."

MELLOW YELLOW "Wolverine's yellow-and-blue costume, while a lot less simple and classy than the brown [costume], is ultimately more bold and a more comic page-friendly costume," says Jimenez.

ELEKTRA

Original Design: Frank Miller, 1981.
Elektra's vivid red costume isn't very subtle, but it does help her multitask. Blood spilled while on the job blends right in, so trips to the Laundromat are minimized. Plus the tidy, figure-hugging number serves as a distraction. "If you've got to get beaten up by somebody, you want to get beaten up by someone wearing a costume like that," jokes *All Star Superman* artist Frank Quitely.

NINJA QUEEN A strong theme can make or break a costume. In Elektra's case, her martial arts background influenced several themes, including her sais and flowing ribbons. "It's a fairly striking-looking costume," says Quitely. "It has lots of little ribbon pieces that hang off and make nice patterns when she's leaping around."

SLEEK AND SEXY Much like Daredevil, the one-time love of her life, Elektra's apparel is composed of a sleek red garment, both immediately recognizable and highly functional. "Simplicity is good in automobile designs, aircraft designs, and is certainly true in any creature that has to be flying around and jumping around," says Romita Sr. "You need that great silhouette and the ability to move."

BARBECUE SKEWERS While Elektra enjoys a good swordfight, her weapons of choice are her trademark sais. After years of practice, they've become secondary extensions of her hands. "If you're trained and adept with a weapon, you have to figure in that weapon as part of the look," says Peterson. "Elektra's got martial arts weaponry from the Far East, so obviously that's going to fit in."

RED HANDED When Frank Miller introduced Elektra in *Daredevil* #168, she was a merciless warrior, and that steely quality is reflected in her costume. "It's a very striking costume," says Peterson. "Having big red swatches on the arms invokes a feeling of violence automatically."

COSTUMES

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Redesign: John Cassaday, 2002. Original Design: Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, 1941.
For those who prefer their Coca-Cola to be classic, Captain America has always been the right choice. A venerable legend during the World War II era, Steve Rogers' humbling origin of a man serving his country struck a cord with readers. Since then, Cap has been reintroduced for new generations of readers, but his costume has changed very little. After all, asks Romita Sr., why mess with success? "I accepted [the costume] because it was a flag draped around a man. What could be more appropriate? It was perfect."

MIGHTY WINGMAN Cap's wings represent the freedom of a soaring eagle. But not everyone agrees with the look. "They looked a bit awkward when I first saw them," admits Romita Sr. "But some artists have learned to tuck them in and not leave them sticking straight out."

ARMANI ARMOR Protecting Cap is a full-time job for artists. "I love that Cassaday is willing to take the time to [draw the chainmail] because it adds this real texture to a costume that didn't have it before," says Jimenez. "Captain America wears armor. It makes sense that he's protected and padded, and thus he can do the things that he is able to do."

AMERICAN PRIDE Steve Rogers is so hardcore, he probably asked for his costume's red-and-white midsection to be cut from a White House flag. "I actually like those colors in comics," says Jimenez. "Part of it again is printing—red and blue being these primary colors that pop and suggest importance because they're so powerful and they resonate. I actually think the American flag is very strong graphically."

SHIELD OF DREAMS "Captain America without the shield is sort of like Wolverine without the claws," says Jimenez. But in his debut, Cap marched into battle with a different, triangular shield. "The first shield was a riot," chuckles Romita Sr. "Making it a round shield was a smart move. That first one looked like a knight's shield in the ancient days. The fact that [the new shield] could be used like a boomerang was a tremendous idea."

THOR

CHEST PAINS A plain blue tunic, perhaps with a gaudy "T" on the chest, might've been enough for most creators. Not for Kirby. "It's a complex costume," says Van Sciver. "It reminds me of Wonder Woman; there're so many interesting elements to it. It's not just one sleek design, like say the Flash's."

Original Design: Jack Kirby, 1962.
Recalling all the garish choices that creator Jack Kirby dismissed while designing Thor's costume, Romita Sr. chuckles. "He could've had horns like Hagar the Horrible, you know." Inspired by his love of mythology, Kirby instead chose a classy, simple look befitting the Norse God of Thunder. "The reason it has lasted is because it's got all the elements of ancient Norse mythology and a lot of [the] polish, brightness and simplicity of the modern age," says Romita Sr.

CAPED CRUSADER Thor's awfully proud of his noble lineage, and nowhere is that sense of royalty more apparent than his flowing red cloak. "It gives you a great opportunity to have sweeping curves and movement," says Romita Sr. "He could be standing still, but the wind could be blowing the cloak all over the place."

HAMMER TIME "[Medieval] valkyrie weapons, the huge awkward things, would've been hard to store in your belt," laughs Romita Sr. "You can't take [Mjolnir] for granted, because if you try to design a costume, you'll see how many stupid things you can do before you finally boil it down to the essentials."

THE CLASH The Fab Five wouldn't be caught dead in Thor's wacky yellow-and-black boots. But that doesn't stop these eye-catching stompers from complementing the costume's blue tones and winged helmet. "None of those elements clash," says Van Sciver. "The striped yellow-and-black boots with the silver, winged helmet? They go together, and they rock."

EMMA FROST

Redesigns: Frank Quitely, 2001, and John Cassaday, 2004.
Original Design: John Byrne, 1980.
August 22, 2001 will go down in comics' lore as the day Emma Frost became a superstar. Haloed with a blinding hot pink background, the babe formerly known as the White Queen gazed out from Frank Quitely's cover to *New X-Men* #116 sporting a gravity-defying outfit, scornfully pouty lips, and showing more skin than on any catwalk this side of Europe. "The Emma Frost before that, with Generation X and the Hellfire Club, was an interesting character, but she never became a superstar until Frank Quitely designed her with her snobby little scandalous white leather costume," says Van Sciver.

MIND CONTROL? Emma's unique and ever-changing look was designed to take advantage of her other mutant ability—turning men's heads in any garment. "My preference was to draw her in ordinary street clothes because it gives it a contemporary feel," says Quitely. "It also sets it in a broader popular culture when you go back and look at it when it's 20 or 30 years old."

SHE'S ALL THAT Quitely's scandalous redesign perfectly matched the saucy British tartlet that Grant Morrison wrote into the *New X-Men* forefront. "The delight of that costume is that it matches the character's personality," says Jimenez. "What I really like about that costume is that it's the embodiment of the character's aesthetic, where she uses sex and sex appeal, and always has, to get what she wants."

CROWD CONTROL Competing for attention from fickle fanboys is a cut-throat business, and any visual edge you have to leapfrog the next gal is a good one. Enter Ms. Frost's sultry white leather getup. "Emma Frost looked like some sort of David Bowie fashion plate," says Van Sciver. "She was the only one wearing white Kevlar, while everybody else was wearing yellow and black—just a neat, inspired idea."

QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST Emma enjoys her outfits so much it seems she races to the dressing room between panels. "The idea was that her costume would change from time to time," says Quitely. "Sometimes a micro-skirt and boob-tube, sometimes hot pants and waistcoat, but always white rubber or leather."

IRON MAN

MAN IN THE IRON MASK There's only so much emotion you can get from a face that could double as a Vegas slot machine. "Iron Man has the same elements as Dr. Doom—very difficult to animate that face," says Romita Sr. "But [artists have drawn] him to look like he was practically crying in one scene and triumphant in another."

Original Design: Jack Kirby, Don Heck, Steve Ditko, 1963.
Billionaire Tony Stark's used to getting all the cars, babes and booze that money can buy. Fittingly, Stark's bling is also funneled into the latest costume tweaks for his armored alter ego. While Iron Man's look is fairly open-ended, the recipe for his success has a few key ingredients. "With Iron Man, it's definitely that super simplified, skull-like face and that glowing [symbol] on his chest," says Van Sciver. "If you show me those two elements, I can definitely point out that it's Iron Man."

HEART OF THE MATTER In the Marvel Universe, money can't stop writers from continually screwing with your bum ticker. Stark's had more heart problems than the Blob has chin rolls. Luckily, Tony can always rely on the chest-mounted life-support systems of his suit. "[Iron Man's] gotta have some sort of window on his chest that represents his heart problems," says Van Sciver.

ASSEMBLY LINE Modern Iron Man's probably forgotten his initial gray tin can armor in a wine cellar, but Van Sciver hasn't. "In general, I like to stick with the original version for each character. Distill that down to, 'I'm wearing this suit because it's keeping me alive.' That's what's so cool about Iron Man."

METAL MATE Iron Man's armor has saved Tony's hide so many times, it's easy to see the pair as equal partners on Stark's rescue missions. "The costume can be a character, as you know from when they evolved the black Spider-Man costume into a villain," says Romita Sr. "When a costume can be contributing as a character, you've really got something. And I think Iron Man's costume qualifies as a separate character."

COSTUMES

DAREDEVIL

CODE RED A rarity in multi-colored pages, DD's monochromatic red costume highlights his "avenging devil" calling card. Readers don't usually think of devils being yellow and black, notes Jimenez. "On some level, he's trying to inspire a touch of fear in the criminals of Hell's Kitchen."

Redesign: Wally Wood, 1965. Original Design: Bill Everett, 1964.
A masked man swooping down from the rooftops, protecting the innocent? Not that uncommon in a superhero's line of work. But wearing a gaudy yellow-and-black leotard that would put Elton John to shame? Not exactly the best way to make a fearless, awe-inspiring entrance. Daredevil's classic red threads are a healthy step away from the costume's garish beginnings, leaving a sleek look that is much easier on the eyes—and imaginations—of readers.
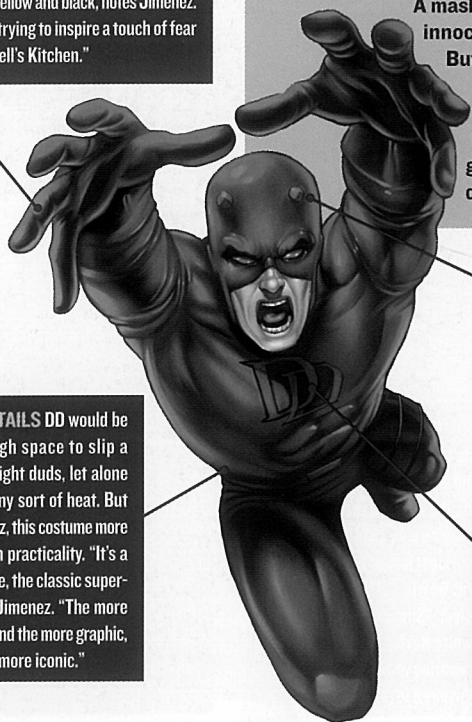
HORNING IN DD's signature cowl, spiced up with two matching devil's horns, has never been one to chuckle at. Creators have carefully chosen to omit other bizarre elements, such as a forked tail, that would have cheapened the sleek design. "The horns on there had nothing to do with the character because he was supposed to be an acrobatic daredevil," says Romita Sr. "But it would've been rather dull without them."

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS DD would be lucky to find enough space to slip a wallet into his skintight duds, let alone space for packing any sort of heat. But what it lacks in pizzazz, this costume more than makes up for in practicality. "It's a fairly simple costume, the classic super-hero leotard," says Jimenez. "The more simple the costume and the more graphic, I think they become more iconic."

DOUBLE D'S A pair of double D's at chest level typically demands attention. Here, Daredevil seems to have taken note, adorning himself with a logo that hints at both the character's physical prowess and taste for the occult. "A daredevil is an acrobat, and the fact that the word devil influenced the elements of design is amazing," says Romita Sr.

DR. STRANGE

Original Design: Steve Ditko, 1963.
If this were the 1960s, Dr. Strange would be one happening cat. Co-creator Steve Ditko's design for the Sorcerer Supreme was both outlandish and had the counter-culture look that was adored in the freewheeling '60s. While the sheer number of elements densely packed into the costume is staggering, it also boasts a mystical elegance befitting the heroic wizard underneath the robes. "The whole thing was like a musical composition with all the right notes," says Romita Sr.
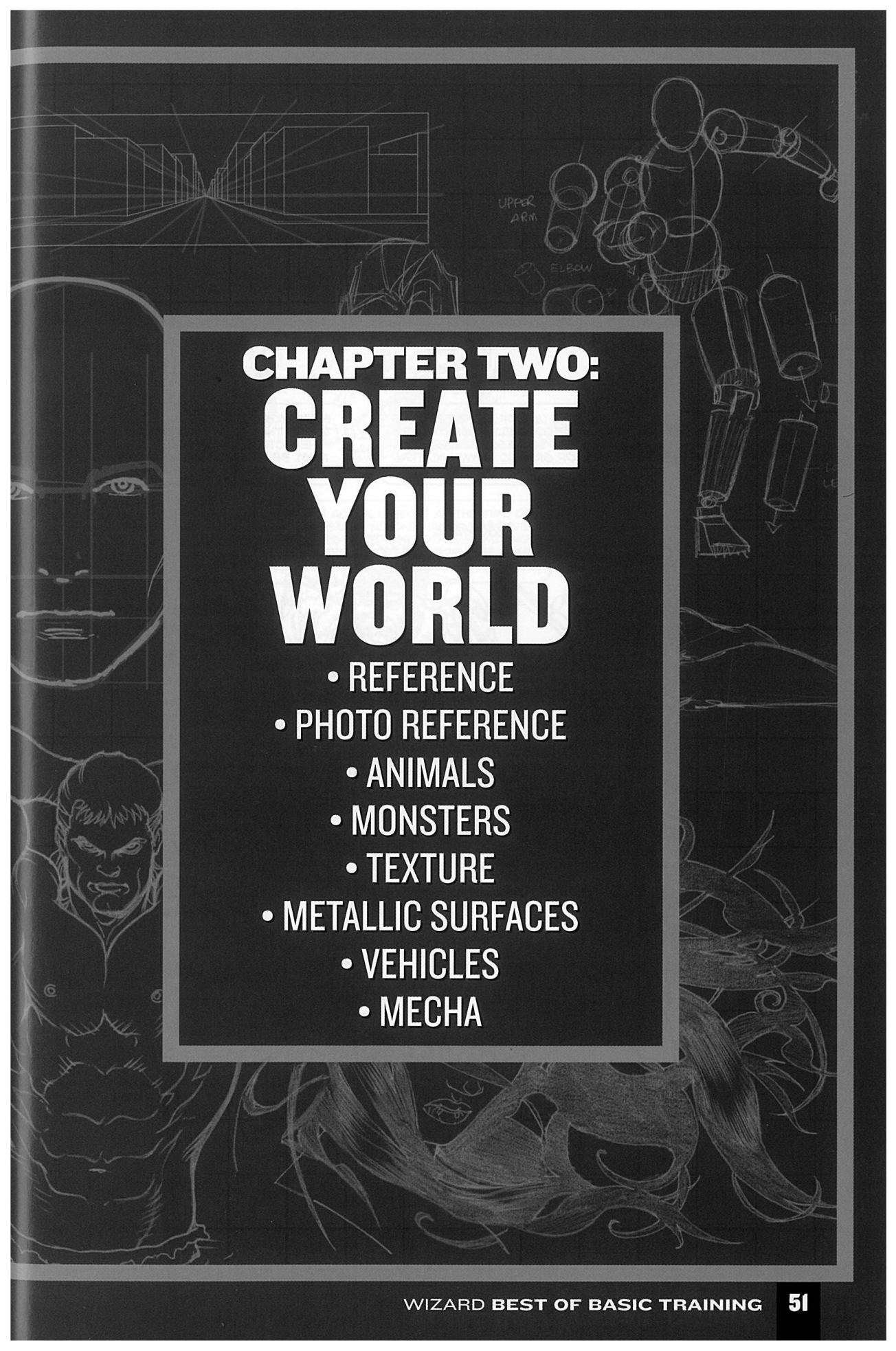
SUNNY DELIGHT No one will accuse Dr. Strange of being a sunny, warm-hearted trickster, but a darker costume could easily have made him an eerie magician, contentedly muttering to himself in a corner. "[His costume] covers everything and makes him very decorative, which is a great accomplishment because he could have been a brooding, shadowy character," says Romita Sr.

STYLIN' SASH Does Dr. Strange even need a belt if he can just use magic to hold his trousers up? He probably reasoned it was better to be safe rather than sorry, going with a colorful sash. "The fact that he had the belt that ties and flows around [makes] it look like a medieval costume, but it looks modern, and it just looks amazing," says Romita Sr.

OUT OF THIS WORLD Ditko, who concocted the looks for Spider-Man and the Creeper among others, took some daring chances with Dr. Strange, who's part magician and part wacky science project. "Dr. Strange is the most original, creative departure from reality that I have ever seen on paper, outside of some of Kirby's grander characters like Galactus," says Romita Sr. "He's out of this world because it was decorative, but he still had a wizard look about him."

ALIEN WIZARDRY When recalling the costume, Quitely calls Dr. Strange out on his "psychedelic Dracula" look, mixing something otherworldy with a traditional wizard style. "It makes sense when you take all these elements of favorite characters, but surely the danger is like taking all your favorite foods and putting them in a blender and expecting to get the best meal ever." 🅦

CHAPTER TWO:
CREATE YOUR WORLD

- REFERENCE
- PHOTO REFERENCE
- ANIMALS
- MONSTERS
- TEXTURE
- METALLIC SURFACES
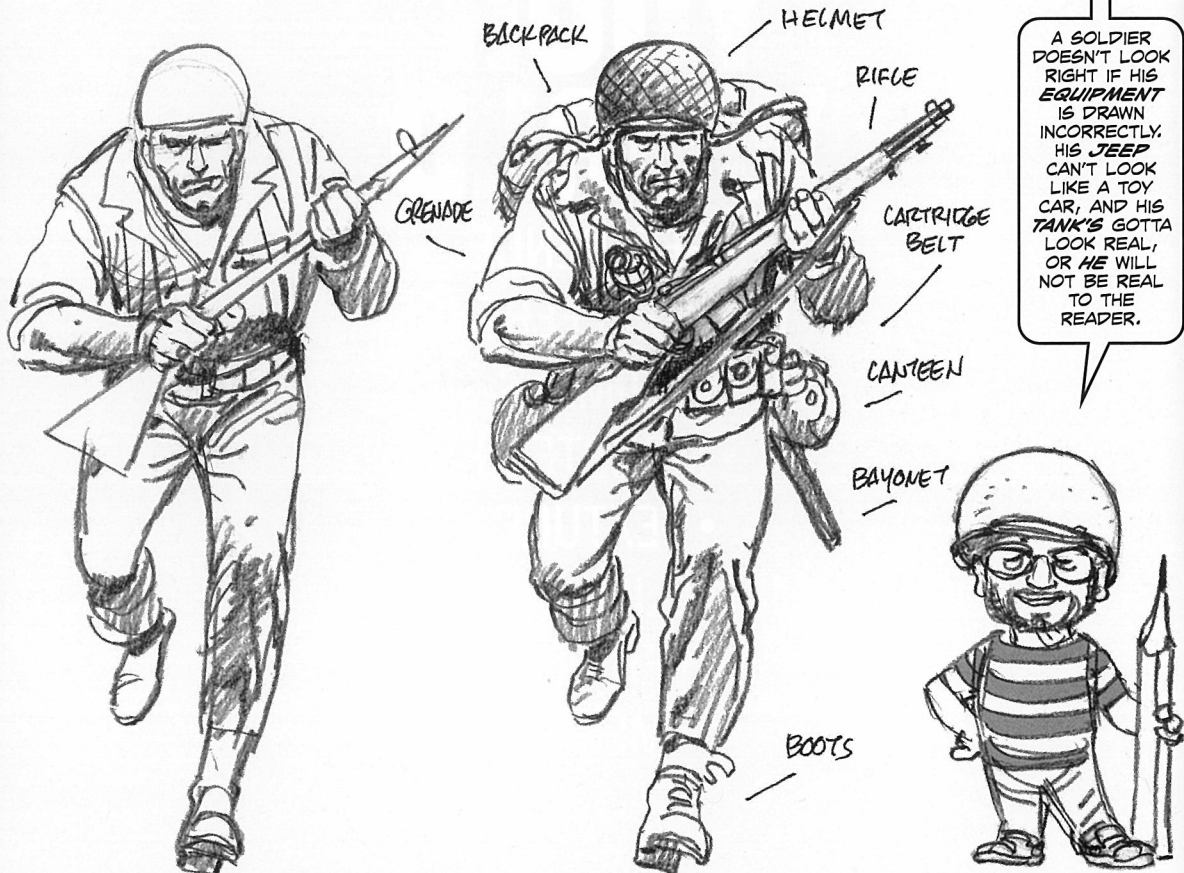- VEHICLES
- MECHA

REFERENCE BY JOE KUBERT

Glad you were able to make it to this course. I hope you've been practicing your fundamental figure construction, perspective, anatomy and body language. I think it's important to remind you that *none* of these lessons are *easy*. Benefit derived depends on the effort you put into it. No one becomes a cartoonist as a result of *one* drawing. It takes time, patience, motivation and work. Making mistakes and *learning* from those mistakes. And drawing and drawing, and then drawing some more.

Stick to it! Keep at it! Your improvement is in exact ratio to the amount of time you spend at drawing. *That's* the magic formula. Anyone can do it. All you gotta do is *work* at it.

> THE USE OF *REFERENCE* IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION OF GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION. NAMELY: CARTOONING.

> SINCE MOST COMIC BOOK STORIES DEAL WITH TOPICS THAT EXIST ONLY IN OUR IMAGINATION, THE PICTURES THAT ILLUSTRATE THE STORY MUST BE *CREDIBLE* AND *BELIEVABLE,* NO MATTER THE CHOSEN SUBJECT.

> A SOLDIER DOESN'T LOOK RIGHT IF HIS *EQUIPMENT* IS DRAWN INCORRECTLY. HIS *JEEP* CAN'T LOOK LIKE A TOY CAR, AND HIS *TANK'S* GOTTA LOOK REAL, OR *HE* WILL NOT BE REAL TO THE READER.

GRENADE

BACKPACK

HELMET

RIFLE

CARTRIDGE BELT

CANTEEN

BAYONET

BOOTS

Don't limit yourself to only one picture reference of the subject in need. You need views from all angles, not to be limited to a specific pose. If, for instance, your subject is dinosaurs, you have to know what the creature looked like from all angles. Having only one picture reference means drawing the same thing with no variations, because you don't know what the subject looks like from a different angle. When that happens, the reference is using you, instead of you using the reference.

So—get as many pictures as you can, and make sure they're good references. Check the credentials of the dinosaur illustrations (the artists). There were very few cameras around at the time.

If possible, visit your local museums and do some sketches of the dinosaurs on exhibit. There are many good books containing well-researched illustrations. Study the skeletons.

How did they move? How big were they? The more you learn about them, the more effective your drawings will be.

Moviemakers have done astounding things in creating worlds that no longer exist—or have never existed. I can only begin to imagine the mountains of research they had to dig through in order to achieve the necessary level of credibility reflected in their films.
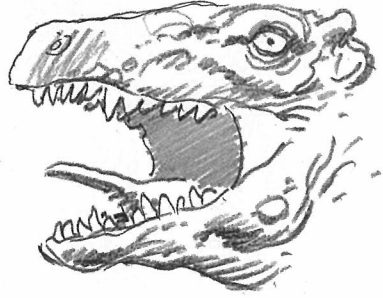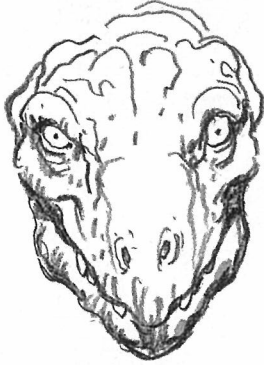
WHEN I CREATED MY CHARACTER *TOR,* I HAD TO FIND OUT WHAT THE WORLD LOOKED LIKE PERHAPS A MILLION YEARS AGO. I HAD TO MAKE MY STORY *LOOK* BELIEVABLE.

DID MAN ACTUALLY EXIST AT THE TIME OF THE DINOSAUR? NO ONE HAS EVER PROVEN OR DISPROVEN THAT HYPOTHESIS. WE KNOW THERE WERE DINOSAURS. *TOR,* THE *MAN,* HAD TO BE BELIEVABLE AS WELL.

I felt Tor needed to resemble today's man, yet be quite different. Since his very existence would depend on his physical strength, he would be heavily muscled with thick shoulders. Muscles would not stick out like inflated balloons, unless he was exerting himself. Otherwise, he'd look stiff in movement. Besides proper anatomical proportions, I gave him a strong jaw, thicker lips and dark eyes, shaded by a prominent brow. On closer examination, he bore scars from previous encounters with fellow inhabitants both animal and human.

I FOUND REFERENCES FOR THE CRUDE FLINT-HEAD SPEARS, STONE AXES AND BRAIDED ROPE HIDE SAID TO BE USED BY EARLY MAN.
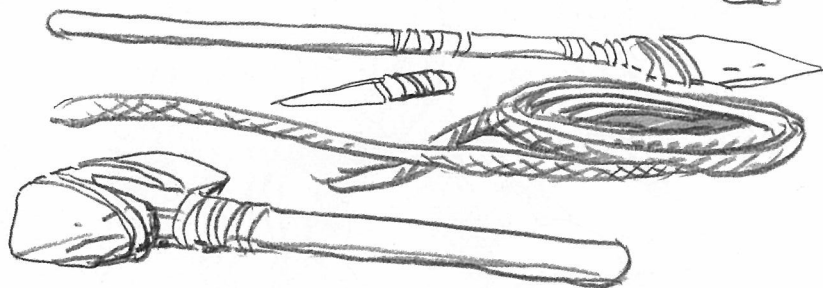
HIS WILD BLACK HAIR IS LONG, TO PROTECT HIS NECK AND BACK. HIS HAIR IS CUT SHORT IN FRONT SO HIS VISION WILL NOT BE OBSTRUCTED.

Tor, to me, isn't just a drawing. He's someone I know, someone I want my readers to accept and believe. If you'd like to learn about the entire history and development of Tor starting from his inception about 50 years ago, get the three-volume archive editions of *Tor* published by DC Comics.

Within the last 100 years, the development of flight has gone from small, single-seater wood and canvas airplanes held together by baling wire to interplanetary spacecraft.

I was asked to illustrate a story about air combat during World War I. In addition to the pilots, the other major characters were the airplanes. The story's title was "Enemy Ace," written by Robert Kanigher. He had researched flight tactics, airplane armaments and the kind of men who flew those "flying coffins."


I HAD TO DO *MY* RESEARCH AS WELL.
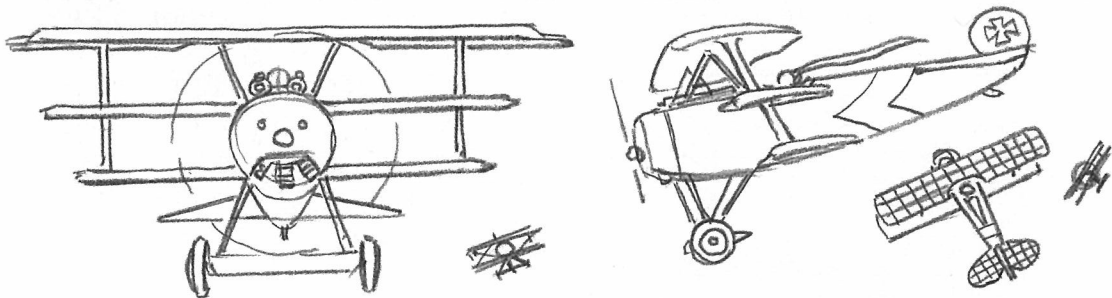
I read books and got as many pictures of vintage aircraft as I could find, showing all angles, including details of construction both exterior and interior. I felt that only then could I convey to the reader what it would have been like to actually fly in one of those airplanes.
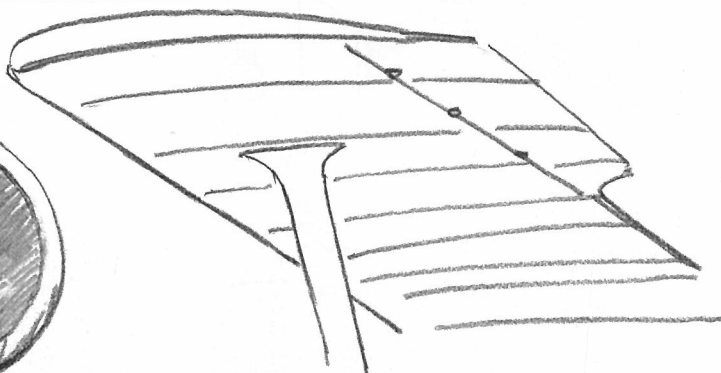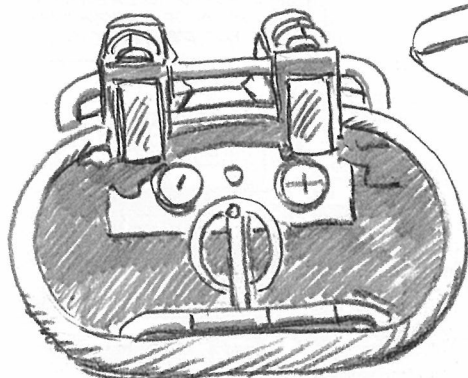
IN ADDITION TO THE VARIETY OF *PLANES* FLOWN BY FRENCH, BRITISH, AMERICAN AND GERMAN ACES, I ALSO HAD TO KNOW HOW THEY *DRESSED* FOR FLIGHT.
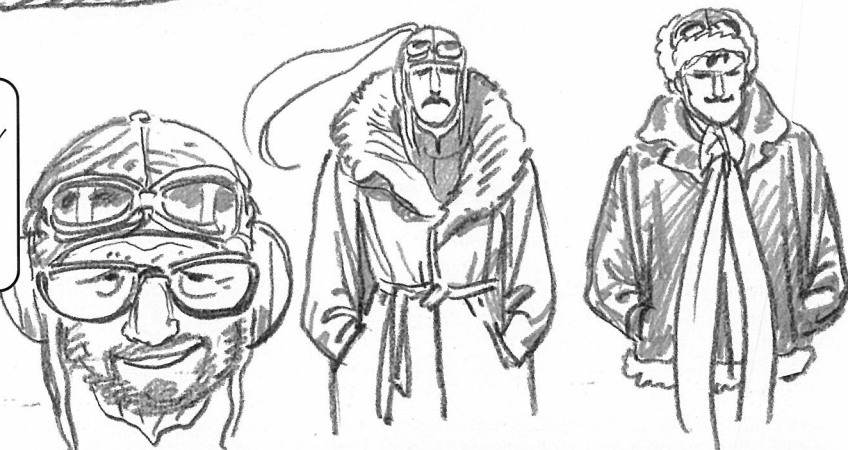
There were few standards as far as uniforms were concerned. Some wore leather, fur-trimmed jackets. Others attached bright-colored ribbons to their helmets (like knights of old) and long scarfs that trailed in the wind. They painted their aircraft distinctively, so they could identify their opponents. I included all these elements and more. It made the story and the characters more meaningful to me, and much more enjoyable to draw.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU READ A COMIC BOOK STORY WHERE THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN A BIG CITY?

A CITY SUPPOSEDLY COMPOSED OF STREETS, CARS, SHOPS AND PEOPLE.

WE SEE THE HERO AND THE VILLAIN FIGHTING ON THE ROOF OF—A *BOX?* A *CARDBOARD BOX.* NO. IT *CAN'T* BE. BUT, IT'S *TRUE.*

"THE FIGURES ARE OKAY, BUT THE BUILDING THAT LOOKS LIKE A CARDBOARD BOX HAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED THE ILLUSION. WE CARTOONISTS ARE SUPPOSED TO *CREATE* AN ILLUSION OF *CREDIBILITY;* NOT *DESTROY* IT."

GET YOUR REFERENCES BEFORE YOU START TO DRAW!

1. Get as many pictures as you can of the subjects you intend to draw, from as many angles as possible.

2. Become a "regular" at your public library and local bookstore. Those places contain a wealth of information for every artist and cartoonist.

3. Log on to the Internet and in minutes you can find pictures of every conceivable subject.

4. Build your own models. Then, you've got a permanent, three-dimensional example of your subject from every angle.

5. Videos, featuring animals, places and things.

6. Visit your local museums and don't forget your sketchbooks. Draw anything you see that might interest you. You never know when you'll be using those sketches as subjects in a cartoon strip you'll be drawing.

PHOTO REFERENCE BY GREG LAND

Hey, everybody, Greg "Big Red" Land here. This time around, the topic is using reference. An artist uses reference to get a strong visualization of the object(s) to be illustrated. Let's say the story calls for a specific type of early locomotive. Unless the artist is a train enthusiast, he or she won't know what the specific object looks like. Looking up the locomotive in books would be the best way to be sure of accuracy. The list of artists who use reference is long, but a few that I admire are Alphonse Mucha, Olivia, James Bama, Joe Jusko and the great American illustrator, Norman Rockwell. Let's go ahead and take a look at a few examples I've put together.

AFEWMOREQUESTIONS

What exactly is reference? Photos, still-life set-ups, a friend posing, pets, cars, the house across the street, virtually anything. Reference helps give the illustration a sense of accuracy. An example is the way clothes drape across a person's body.

Reference should be used as little or as much as the artist feels comfortable with in order to get the desired illustration, and can be gotten from books, magazines, newspapers, photos by the artist, the environment, almost anywhere.

FIGURE A
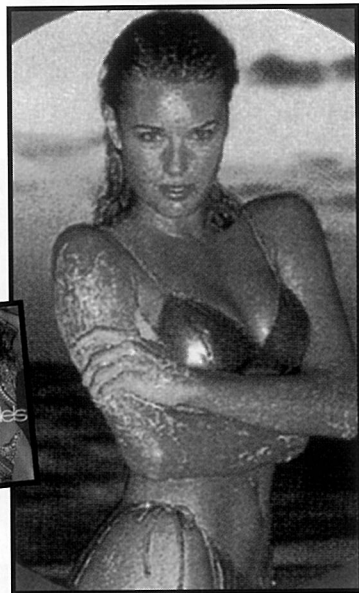
STRIKEAPOSE

This example shows the heroine Arwyn from *Sojourn* in a relaxed pose (**Figure A**). I found an appealing model (Rebecca Romijn!) in a swimsuit magazine and used her basic stance (the crossed arms and the slight twist of the torso) as my starting point, then added Arwyn's expression, hair and costume. In this example, it was the pose I was after, not the clothes, hairstyle or facial expression.
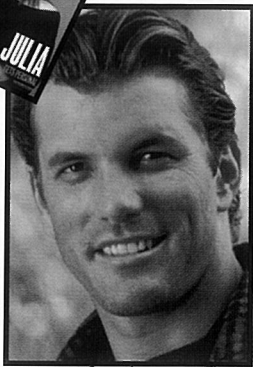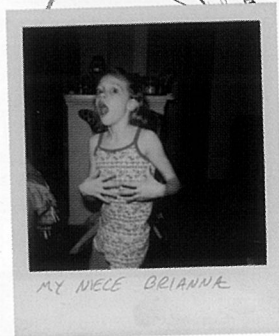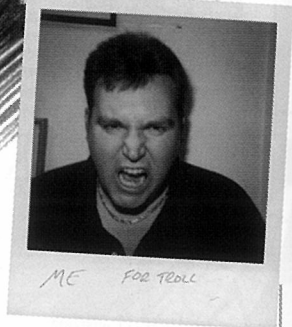
FIGURE B

FIGURE D

MY NIECE BRIANNA

FIGURE C

ME   FOR TROLL

CLOSE-UPS

I pull photos from my clip files (organized files of cut-out photos from magazines and newspapers), or take photos of my friends or myself for facial expression reference. These examples show how I've used the basic expression from the photo and changed hairstyles and clothing to make the drawing appropriate for the character. *Sojourn's* Gareth **(Figure B)** is based off a model from a clothing ad. The young girl with the fearful expression is my niece, Brianna. In this example, the character **(Figure C)** looks very much like the photo to the left. On the other end of the spectrum is the troll drawing **(Figure D)**. Looking at the model's exaggerated facial expression (Okay, it's me), I was able to draw the features to get this character. I like to visualize the trolls as actors with Hollywood-style make-up applications. Finally, I drew the lovely Neven **(Figure E)** inspired by this model from an issue of *Sports Illustrated*.
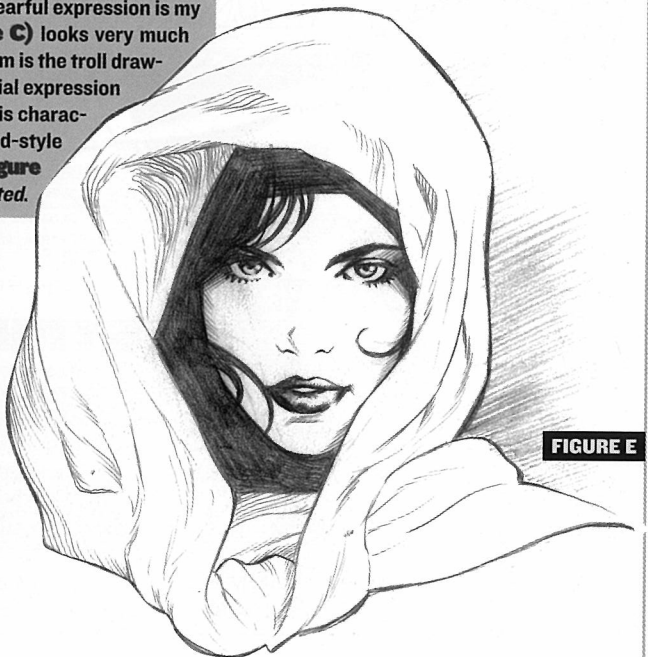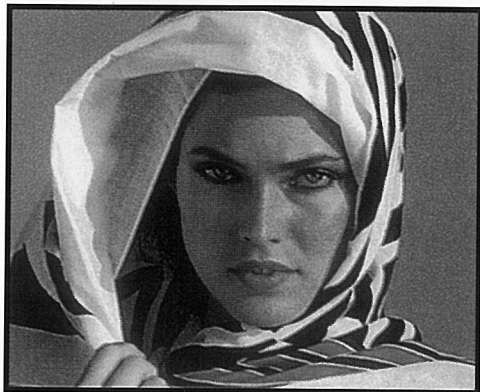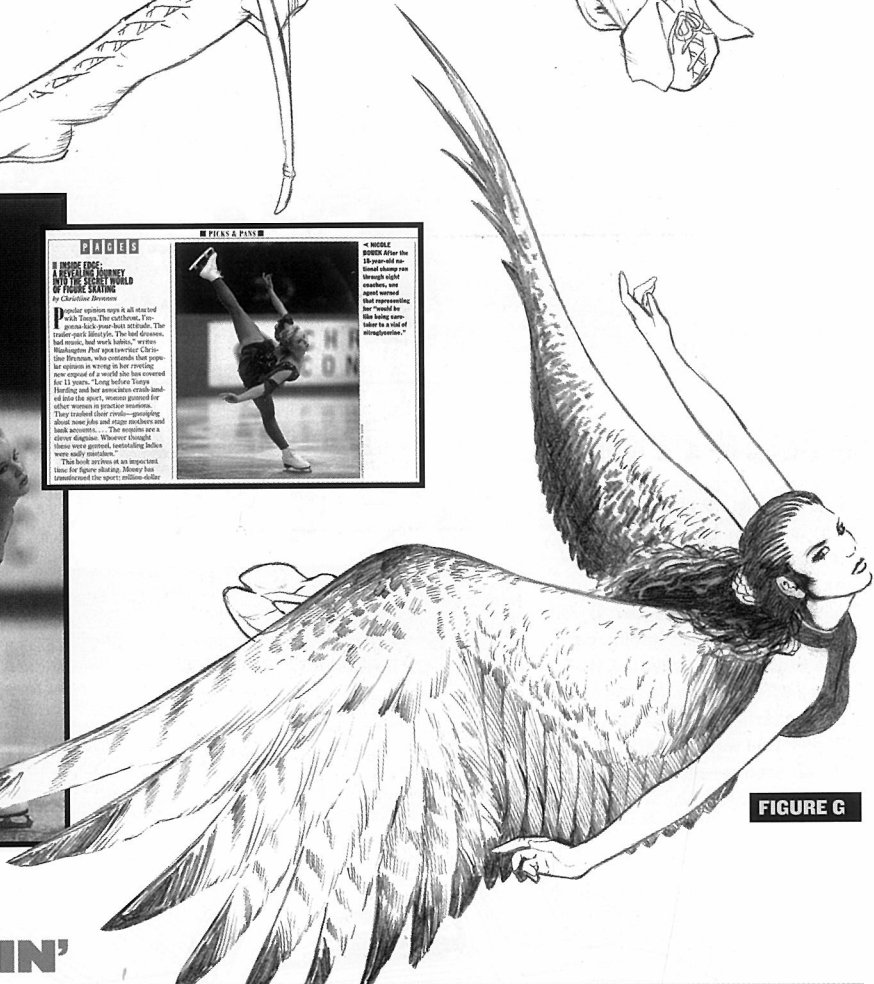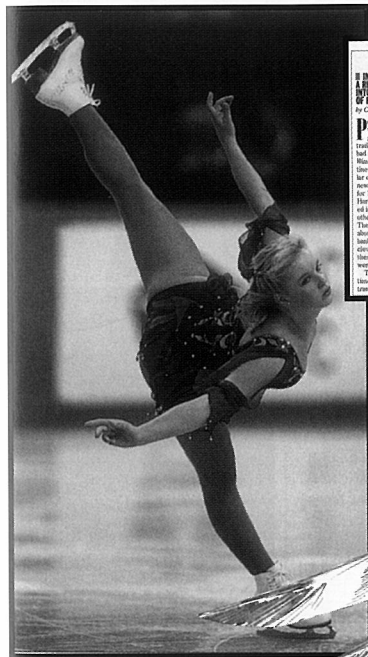
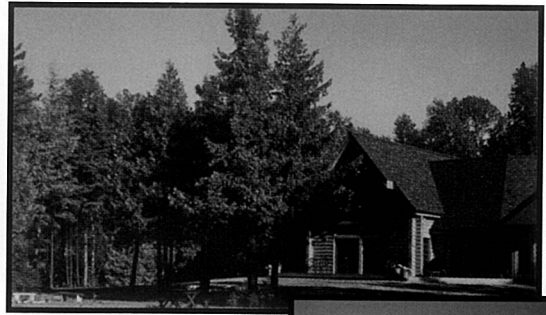**FIGURE E**
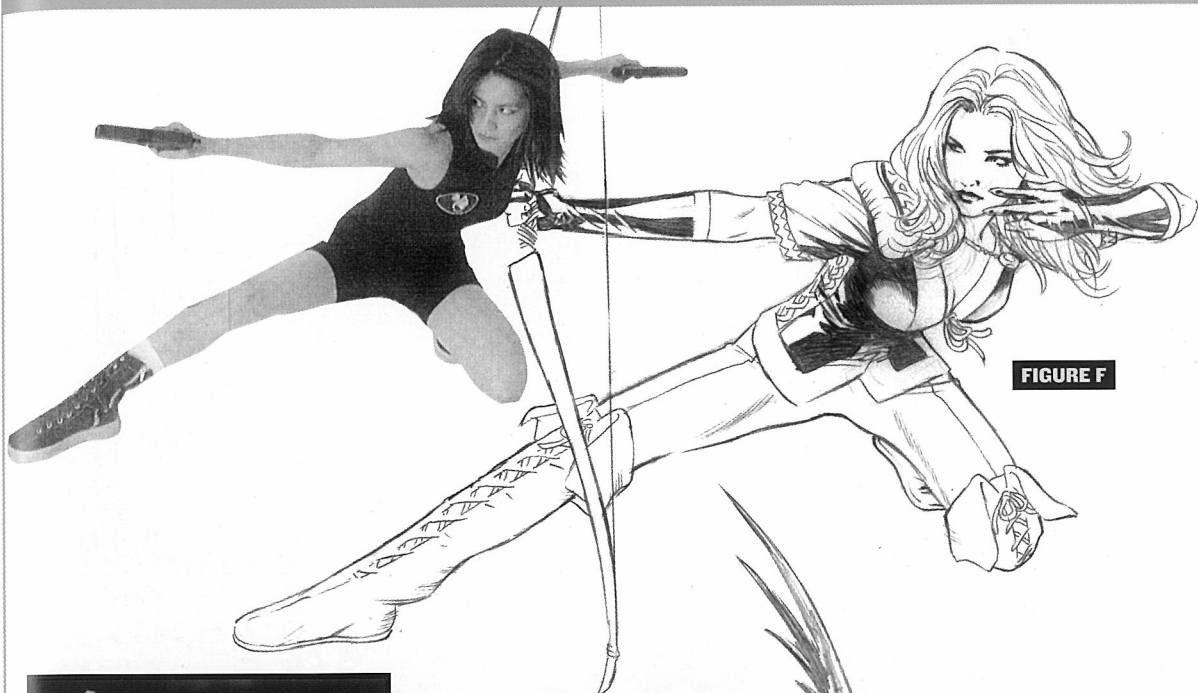
FIGURE F

FIGURE G

BODYMOVIN'

These examples show full figures. The first is an action pose of Arwyn firing an arrow (**Figure F**). My reference for this is a woman shooting a pair of guns. The second drawing is a winged female (**Figure G**). I'm probably not going to find this in any reference book, but the gracefulness found in many athletes can be helpful. In this case, an ice skater helped with the pose for this flying woman. I got the wings by looking at different photos of birds. (Notice the different tones added to the wings, which are based on an osprey's.) Many times I have asked my wife and friends to act out character movements. I like to use a Polaroid camera to get a quick shot of the action. This is extremely helpful with panel composition, since I can move the model(s) around to get a variety of angles—upshots, downshots, close-ups, medium shots and distant shots. These all help to make the storytelling interesting.

NATURE TOUR

Environments—cities, water, castles, houses, woods or any other place the story takes us—are the places where the characters interact. The example I've drawn here is an open clearing leading up to a wooded area **(Figure H)**. Using a photo from *Country's Best Log Homes* helps to show the different shapes that the trees make. By drawing light and dark areas, a believable wooded setting is achieved.

FIGURE H

PROP IT UP

Props help to round out the environments and make the stories even more believable. The example I've drawn here is a custom street rod **(Figure I)**. All too often in comic books, cars are incorrectly drawn. A little extra effort of looking through car magazines or even Polaroids of personal vehicles can make all the difference—my model is from *Hot Rod Magazine*.
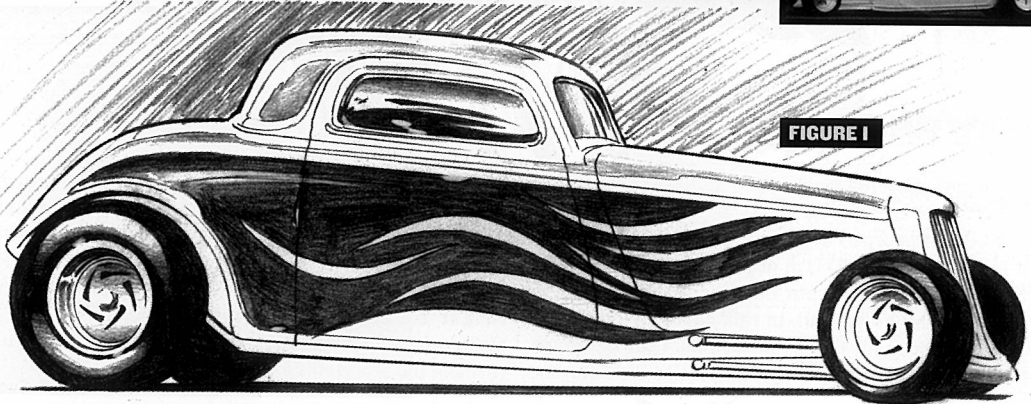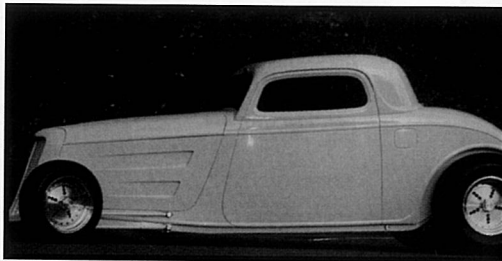
FIGURE I

THIS IS A MONTAGE of some of the female characters from *Sojourn*. By using the previous drawings, I created this pin-up illustration. I've used heads, figures, props and environments along with some design elements to tie the piece together.

Hope this helps to show how important reference can be when drawing. Have fun with it—clip your magazines, save catalogues (I use my wife's catalogues after she's done with them) and save newspaper ads. Have your friends and family pose for you—this can be pretty funny. If something in a book looks interesting but you have no place to use it at present, make a copy and hang on to it; chances are you will find a place for it eventually. Good luck and keep drawing. Ⓦ

Greg Land's detailed and referenced art has enhanced the pages of CrossGen's Sojourn *and Marvel's* X-Men: Phoenix—Endsong.

ANIMALS BY SEAN CHEN

As artists, so much of our effort is directed toward the daunting task of mastering human anatomy. Inevitably, however, we will be called upon to draw a myriad of animals and must depict them convincingly, with the same level of accuracy that we do people. Chances are we don't have the same level of experience needed to develop the expertise in drawing specific animals; add to that the fact that animals are just as anatomically complex. For this reason, it is essential to seek out reference. With a little practice, drawing animals will become as easy as drawing people!

DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The fact that we see domestic animals on a daily basis presents a challenge when it comes to drawing them. This is because the viewer is more likely to be very familiar with their appearance, which means you must be particularly accurate in their depiction. This also means that you will probably be called upon to draw dogs and cats more than most any other type of animal. Pets often become secondary characters in stories since they often interact with us so closely. Because of this, you may find yourself called upon to convey certain emotions in their body language and facial expressions. This will most often be done through their eyes.
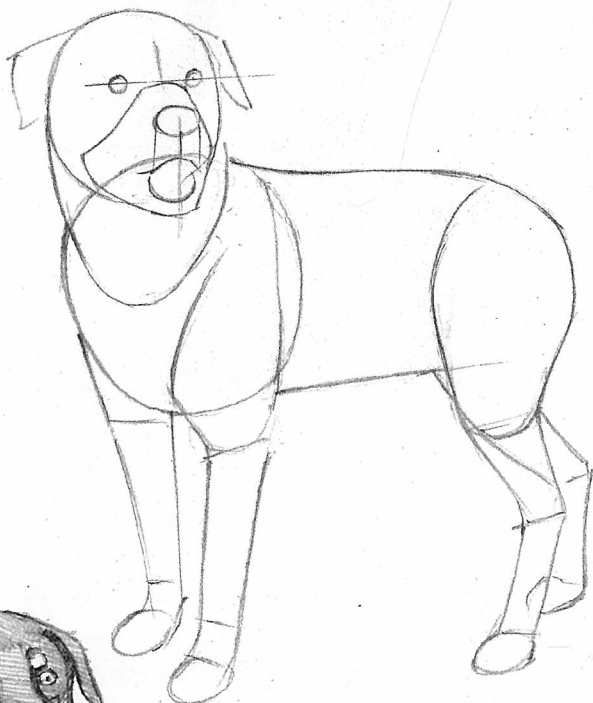
DOGS

Train your eye to see past the complex details and textures to the general shapes and anatomical masses that make up the animal's form. At this stage, shape, proportion and placement of major body parts are your only concerns. Mark off joints in the limbs and draw through the animal where necessary to give it a convincing structure.

Identify the leg joints and keep in mind the direction that each leg segment bends. Try to keep the shading lines consistent with the direction the hairs would grow.
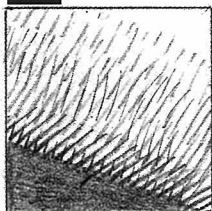
CATS

The next step after mastering the general shapes is to refine the drawing by getting more specific and locating smaller shapes such as facial features, fingers and toes.

On a cat, try to convey a handsome coat of fur. The technique here is to draw the hatch lines in the direction the hair grows. The white fur areas are left completely blank except for some touches in the shadow areas. Hairs are drawn to extend beyond the outline in places to soften its overall form.
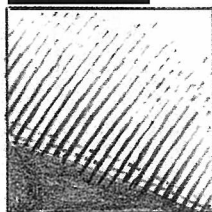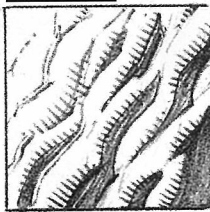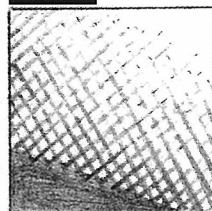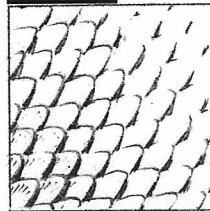

TEXTURECHART

Eventually you will get to the point where we need to engage surface texture and shading. This is where we make use of what I call a "mark-making system." This is a method of representing specific types of animal skin through stylized lines or marks.

There are three main duties of the mark-making system:

First and most importantly is shading. Most shading in drawing is achieved through hatching or cross-hatching. The marks get more dense toward the shadow or darker areas and more sparse toward the lit areas of the animal. This gives the illusion of light and shadow and gives the animal a convincing sense of volume and solidity.

Secondly, the mark-making system conveys the specific type of hide that covers the animal. The hatching lines employed for shading are stylized in a way that we all recognize and can identify such as fur, scales or "lizardy" skin.

Lastly, the mark-making system is a great opportunity for you to express yourself artistically. While your animal drawing may be accurately and expertly executed, it might still come across cold or like a diagram. This is your chance to show off your artistic flair and add real aesthetic appeal in the way you make your marks.

In the chart to the left, I show three different examples of mark-making systems: fur or hair, lizardy skin and scales. The second column is how I handle the same type of skin in close-up.

FUR

CLOSE-UP

LIZARD SKIN

CLOSE-UP

SCALES

CLOSE-UP

ANIMALS

BARNYARDANIMALS

The category of animals that we find second-most familiar are farm animals. These animals are not as likely to convey emotion since they are most often treated as props. They appear most in Western-type stories of which the horse is a staple. In that case, mastering them artistically becomes essential.
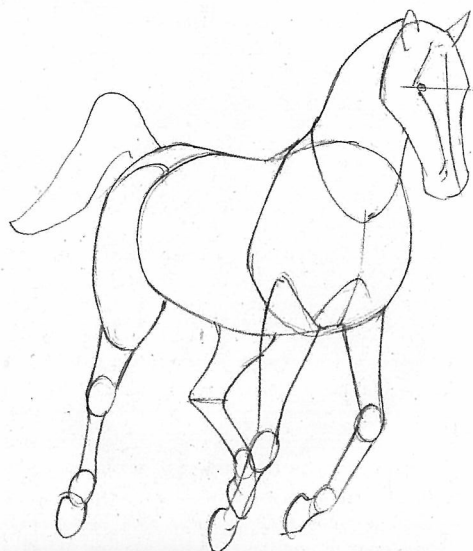
HORSES

After blocking in the major anatomical parts, I mark off the joints and pay careful attention to the angle and length of each leg segment. The short hair and the velvety texture only serve to amplify a complex muscle structure that can seem overwhelming. The saving grace here is that since this horse is black or dark in color, most of the complex muscle nuances are hidden in darkness, leaving only the chest area to carefully render. All the important information in representing this horse is in its great silhouette.
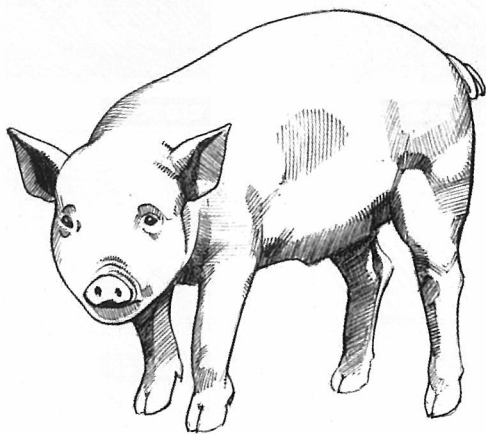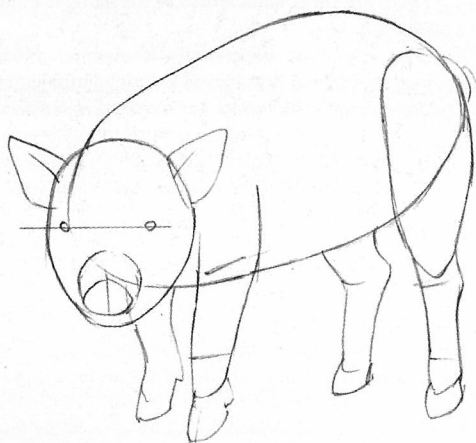
PIGS

A pig is a great starting point in learning to draw animals because its simple volumetric round shape has less complex detail. Also, since this pig has smooth skin, a neutral hatching technique is used to show an absence of a complex skin texture. Pigs are often seen as comical animals. If this is the sense you want to convey, play up the roundness of the forms, which come across as non-threatening.

WILDLIFE

Animals in this category start to appear on the fringes of our civilization and roam mostly unpopulated lands. Because of this, these creatures have a bit of mystery and majesty to them and often come to symbolize freedom. Keep this in mind when drawing them. They should look a bit more proud and exotic than the everyday pet or farm animal.
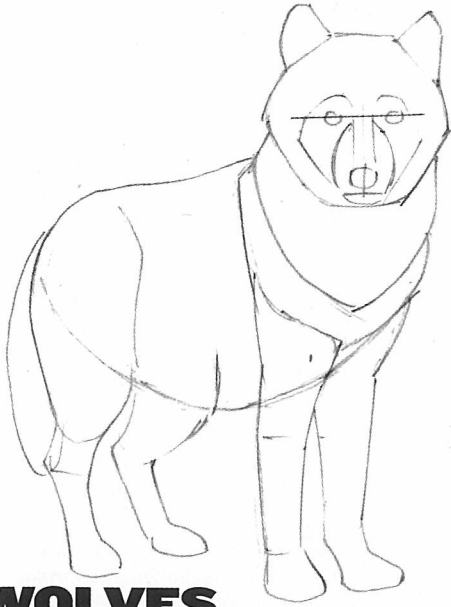
WOLVES

Referring back to the texture chart at the start of the lesson, a good skill to develop here is being able to represent a full tonal range from complete black to light with each particular mark-making system. In the fur close-up, the curved lines are grouped in tapered "C" or "S" shaped locks, where the foreground locks overlap the ones behind it to give the illusion of depth. You can apply this thinking to drawing animals such as wolves.

With a wolf, the body construction is very similar to its close cousin the dog. A different mark-making system represents different types of fur. Its upper body is covered by a layered, lush, mink-like coat, and on the legs I used a coarser texture.
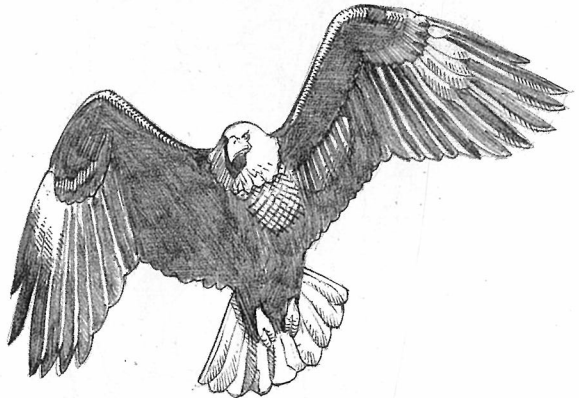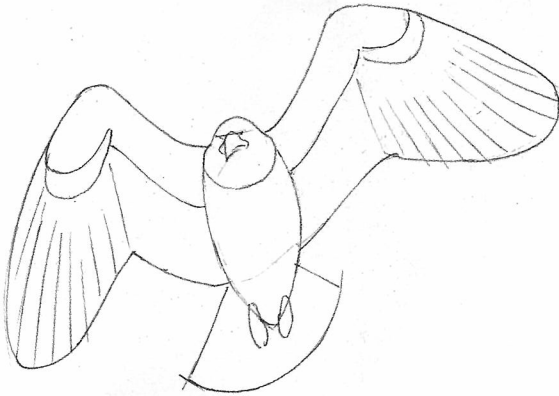
BIRDS

In most cases, you don't need to and shouldn't draw every feather or hair on an animal. To do so might only serve to flatten it out. In this drawing of an eagle, only some feathers are drawn. The rest are obscured in shadow or light. Your mind's eye has a way of filling in the rest.

Because of the constraints necessary for flight, birds have an anatomy that is vastly different from all other animals. The upside is that its body has evolved into very basic shapes and the legs are very much downplayed. It's all about the wings, however. Before you get bogged down trying to draw the individual feathers in the large array, find and draw the basic overall shapes and subdivide them into the smaller shapes.

ANIMALS

THE JUNGLE

Here is where we find the most exotic animals. As we move farther out from our world and into foreign lands, we come across animals that are truly out of the ordinary. There is a diversity in size, shape and color with jungle animals that can make them downright fun to draw. This is where your variety and expertise in mark-making systems are pushed to the limits.
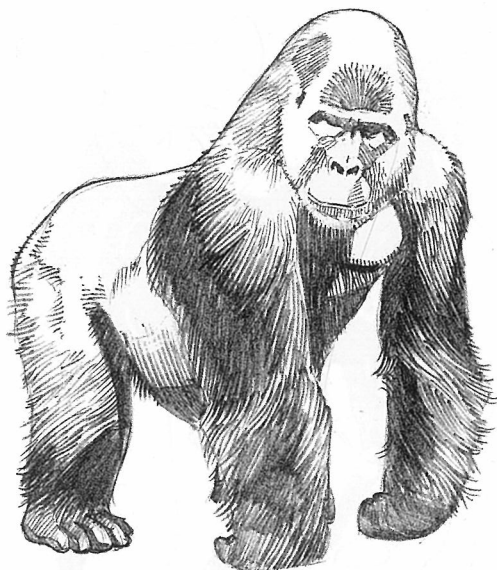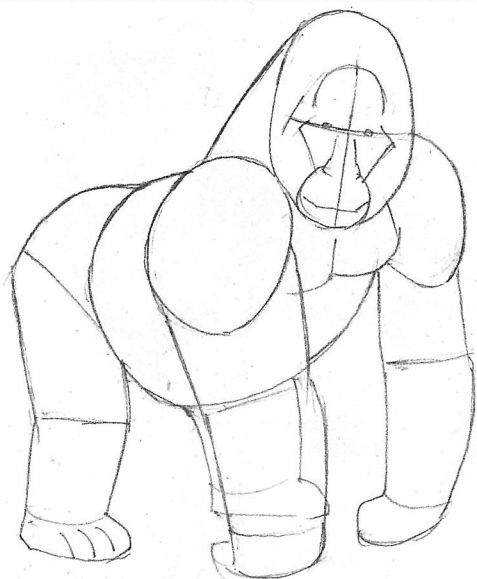

GORILLAS

The limbs of this gorilla become like large cylindrical tree trunks in which the specific anatomy is conveniently obscured by long hair. The important thing to convey is the sheer brute power through the proportionally larger upper body.

Unlike our appendages, the gorilla's arms are longer and more powerful than its legs. There are two differing characteristics that are often associated with gorillas that you may want to focus on when drawing them: raw power or quiet intelligence. The latter is achieved through their eyes that can emote much like our own.
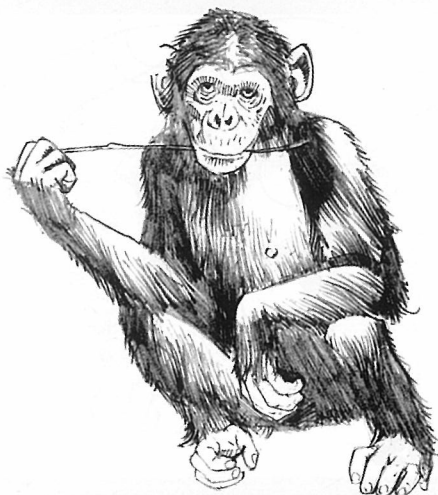
CHIMPS

The chimpanzee is our closest relative and therefore we see a lot of us in them. The body and limbs are covered in long fur, which means you only have to capture their basic shapes. In general, the arms are the dominant limbs, leaving the legs to seem under-scaled to us. The feet resemble the hands, which are also only capable of simple grasping.

There is a definite similarity to the gorilla except that the basic anatomy is linier rather than massive. This causes us to see them as much less threatening and therefore more playful and clowning. The forward-set eyes give them an undeniably humanlike face and make them the animal with the most expressive face.
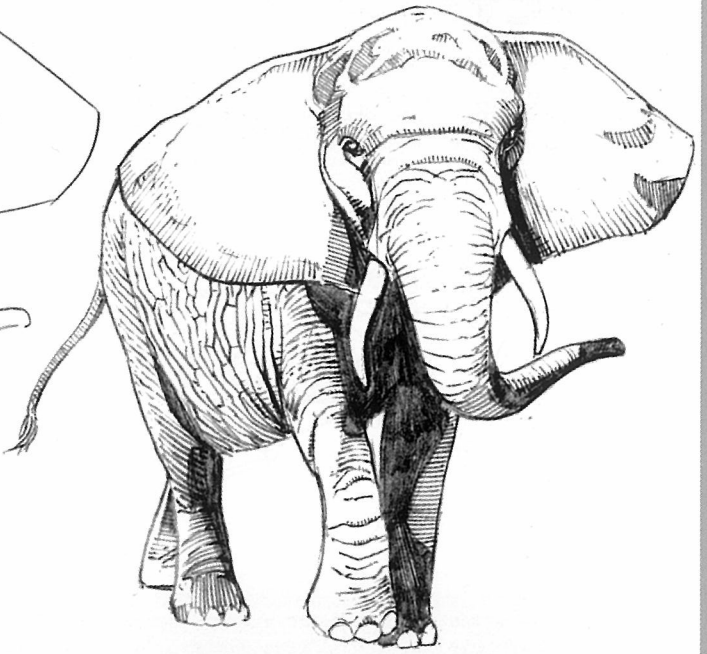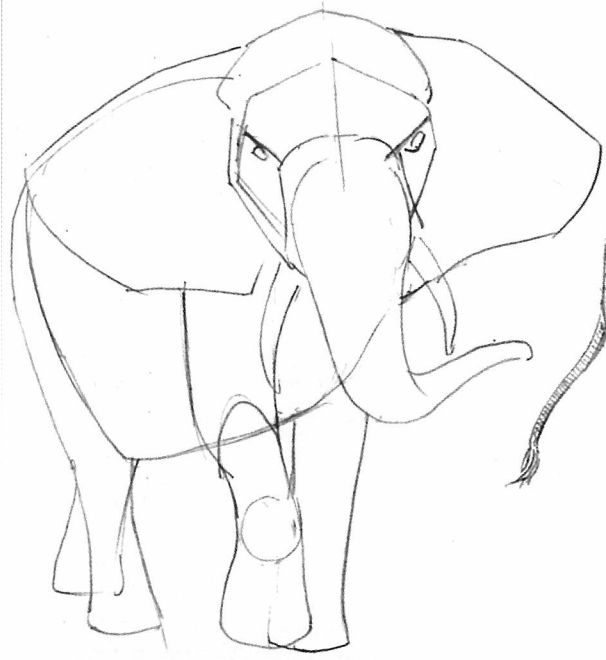
ELEPHANTS

The elephant's skin can best be described as coarse and wrinkly, hanging loosely on its massive frame. All of the complex anatomy is obscured by this thick blanket of hide. The wrinkles help describe round volumes by following the contours of the body. Try to capture the effect of tons of weight on this frame transferred down the legs into the ground. Elephants are known as noble creatures. This characteristic might come across by playing up the wrinkles, which imply wisdom that comes with age.
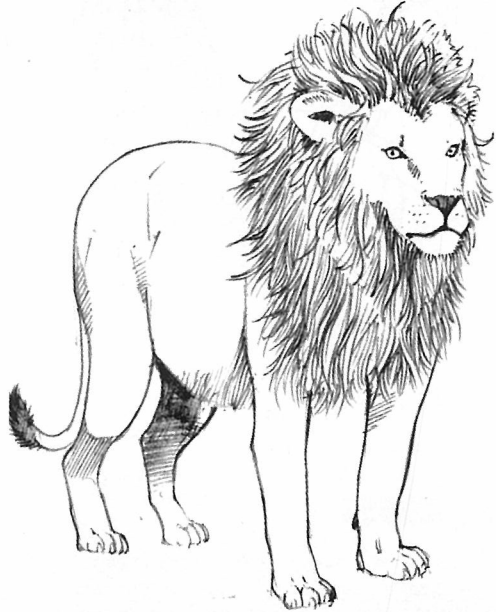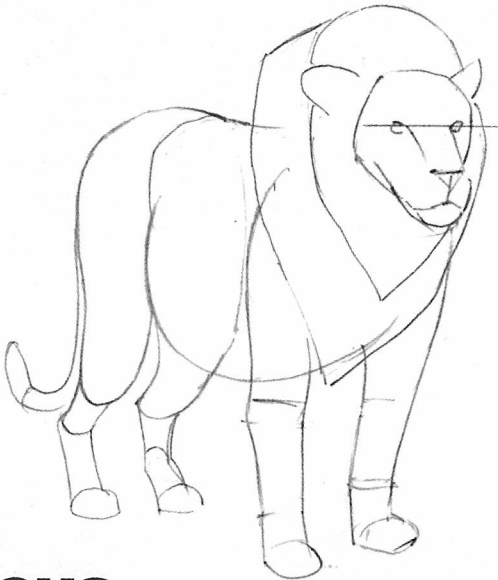
LIONS

Often proclaimed "king of the jungle," the lion is depicted as both regal and dangerous. This reputation is reflected in its appearance. The body is proportioned to accentuate the features of power and speed. The anatomy is lean and muscular; the jaws are massive, as are its paws. The long flowing mane befits its regal nature. To capture this all-important feature, draw the "C" and "S" shaped lines that are gathered together in locks and are layered back to get the full and soft look. All in all, look to capture the elements that put this predator confidently on the top of the food chain.

INSECTS&REPTILES

This creature category is far removed from anatomy that we are familiar with. For this reason, they are often used in stories to evoke creepiness or mistrust. However, it is their alien bodies that make them so fun to draw. You almost have to throw out what you know about mammalian anatomy because it won't help you here. Insects and reptiles employ the more unusual mark-making systems, such as scales and hard, shiny plates.
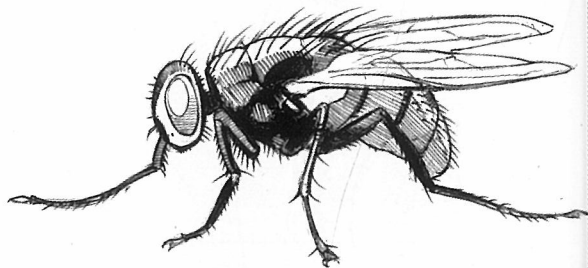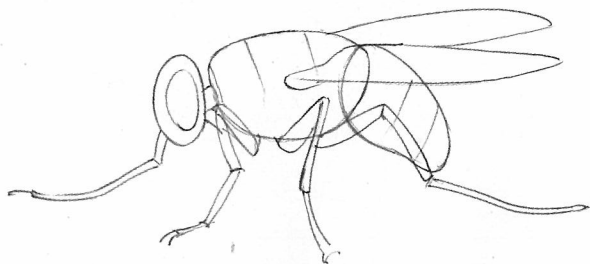
FLIES

The main difference that separates insects from all other animals is that they have an exoskeleton. This is drawn as hard organic segments. Its tiny body is made up of interesting basic shapes covered in segmented armor plates. Insects, like the fly shown above, are the few of nature's creations that allow you to engage the shiny metallic texture usually reserved for manmade objects. Insects have more of a precise structure to them that allows you to see the shapes clearly without being obscured by flesh.
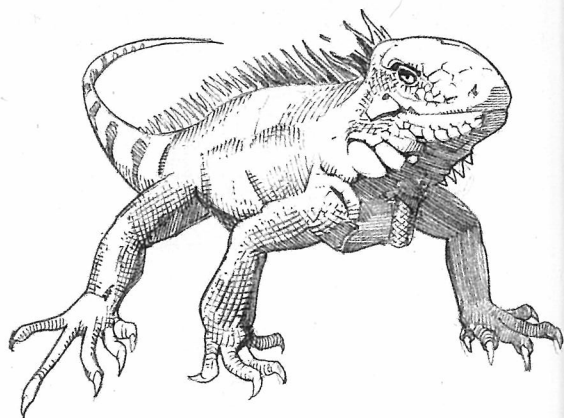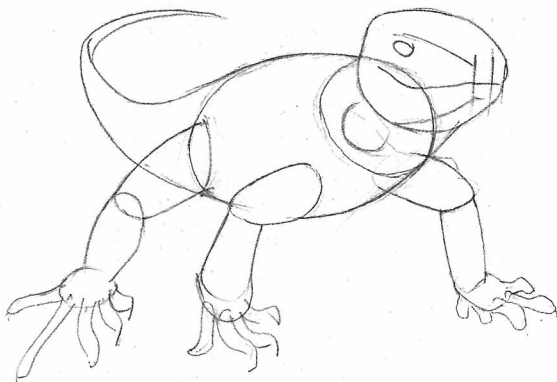
LIZARDS

This lizard is an exercise in representing a scaly texture. In this case a fine grid pattern represents the mid tones that fade off as they move towards areas awash in light. Overall its body is very linear. Pay attention to the curve or curves of its length as it tapers toward the tail.

When drawing the scales close up, drawing every scale with an outline will result in a flat wallpaper look. Instead, I focused on its shadow side and dropped out the outline altogether as the scales moved toward the light. This gives the texture a more realistic natural feel.

THE SEA

Because the sea is a completely different environment, it makes sense that it drastically affects all the creatures that make it their world. Most noticeably, it tends to make them all streamlined and tapered. Hands and feet give way to flippers and fins. Other than that, there seems to be an infinite variety of sizes and shapes, and sometimes dramatic color and patterns too diverse to be generalized. Like insects, they tend to have a more precise structure that is simplified to be aerodynamic and uncomplicated by obscuring hide.
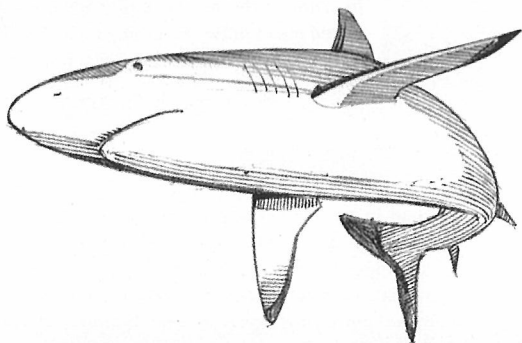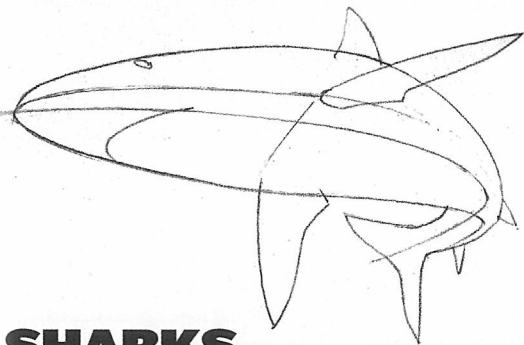
SHARKS

Try to capture the simple gestural sweep of its aerodynamic shape. The challenge here is to represent the smooth skin by choosing a mark-making system that doesn't imply any texture. I chose to do this by having the shading lines run parallel along the length and follow the curve of its body.

Sharks are the ultimate predator of the deep and their bodies reflect that. They resemble a fighter jet with razor sharp-teeth in numbers that shock and awe.

FANTASY CREATURES

You can apply your knowledge of real-world animals to create anything your mind can imagine. Since the anatomy is completely made up for our dragon here, to make it convincing, draw your influence from other animals. In this case, I used the lizard. Avoid letting human anatomy creep in. I tried to use a variety of mark-making systems to help sell the idea that this fantasy creature is real. Some areas are scaly, while others have a lizardy feel. The wings have a leathery feel achieved by laying down random scratchy lines. Its body is a combination of linear and massive portions. A big part of the effect is to capture the meandering snakelike curves in the neck and tail that we come to recognize in creepy lizards.

ANYTIME YOU ARE CALLED UPON to draw an animal, there is always a purpose behind its appearance, as they embody characteristics that elicit an emotional response from the viewer. Whether it is to evoke a warm fuzzy feeling by showing a loyal dog or creeping you out with the sudden appearance of a giant spider, animals have become props and even characters in stories because they come charged with an emotional context that is universal. The characteristics we attribute to each animal comes from its design. Nature has done almost all the work for you. Your part is to identify how the forms convey the feeling and capture it to maximize the effect.

Sean Chen can draw any creature, from sharks to superheroes, and has proven it expertly in titles such as Marvel's Iron Man, Wolverine *and* X-Men: The End.
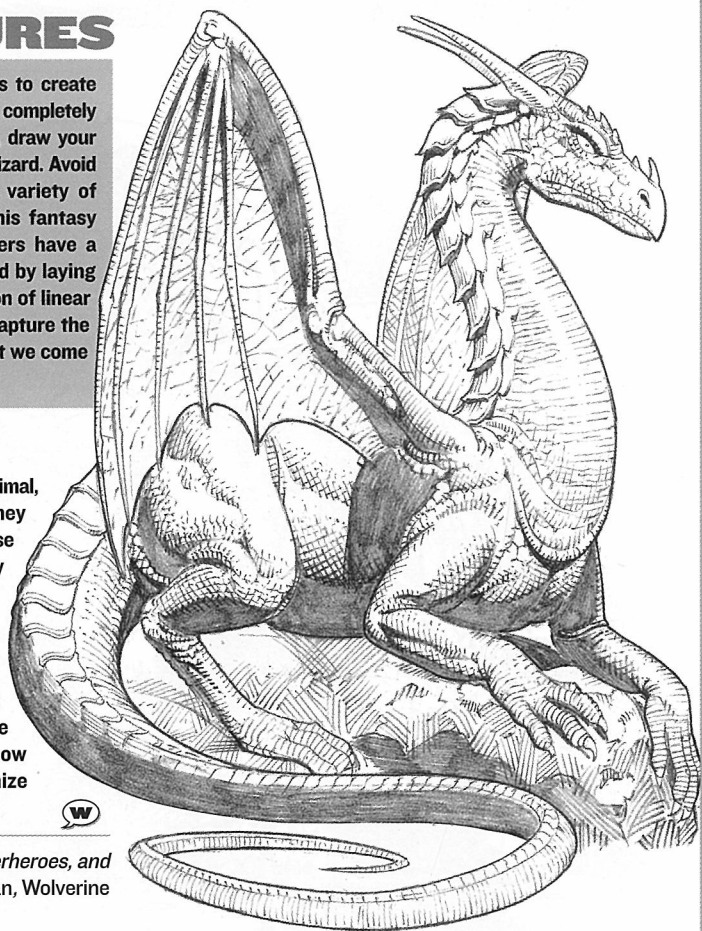
MONSTERS BY DOUG MAHNKE

When I first began to draw at the ripe old age of 2, monsters were on my A-list. Day and night I penciled out mindless beasts in crude fashion. At roughly age 5 my grandmother asked me to draw something nice. The best I could do was a face filled with ladybugs. Many of my teachers were consumed, stomped or gutted by monsters on the backs of homework assignments.

Basically, monsters were a big part of my childhood, so I feel kinda qualified to teach a thing or two about drawing them. Sometimes the mind just needs a little spark to get going. So let the horror-fest begin...

BODYSHOP

Monsters come in an endless variety of shapes and sizes, limited only by your sick, twisted imagination. To simplify things, let's concentrate on humanoid monsters—those which resemble us somewhat as opposed to some quivering, globulous mass slithering up from the bounds of Hell. (Although that's a lot of fun to draw, too!)

To start, let's imagine a few templates—monsters most of us are familiar with. From left to right, they include the ill-formed hunchback, the rotting zombie, the mindless brute and the winged devil. Toss in a snake and a spider for good measure.

A closer look at our hunchback reveals a simple yet effective approach to any monster: a lack of symmetry or alignment of body parts. The arms and legs are mismatched and the head's at an odd angle. Imagine that any movement causes pain. As for the others, the zombie's more bones than muscle, the brute is muscle on muscle (note how his knees buckle inward and his torso rolls in upon itself), and the devil's just real sneaky-looking as he tiptoes on his goat legs.

MONSTERCOMBOS

Here's the fun part. I've made some simple amalgams based on our previous group and come up with three new monsters. When creating freakish creatures, it can be as simple as stitching ill-matched parts together. Look closely to see exactly what I used. Notice how the snake and spider (at a much larger size) were incorporated.

Now, some combinations may not work as well as others. Putting large devil wings on our little hunchback, or just two little spindly arms on our brute, wouldn't exactly create a more frightening image. On the other hand, having the snake coiled about the zombie while the spider crawled out of his mouth would most certainly work. Just keep practicing and you'll soon learn what works and what doesn't. Basically, show your mom: If she screams, it works.
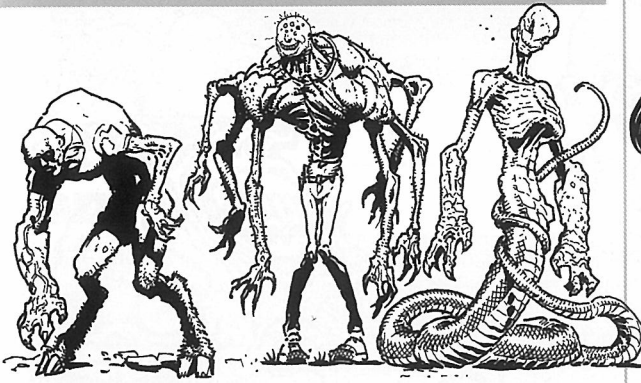
GETTINGHANDY

When looking for inspiration, the animal world offers excellent opportunities. These hands are based on what should be obvious: the talon of a raptor, the hand of an ape and the claw of a crab. And they're all suitable for monster use. Talons are actually my favorite for monster use since they're seriously adapted to grasping soft flesh tightly (ugh) and tearing humans to pieces. The hands of lizards are also great, as are octopus tentacles, with their suckers and merciless grasp. When adding animal parts to human form, however, you have to decide: How much will make a monster of the man, or a bit of a man out of a monster? In other words, do you want your creature looking more like a human or an animal?
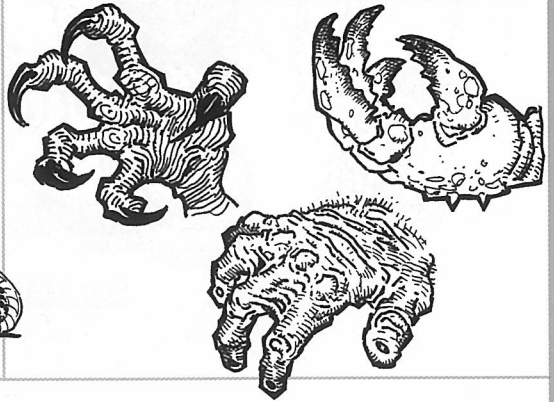
MACHINEMAN

Machines can provide excellent inspiration for monster design. A mingling of flesh with everyday household tools and gadgetry can be frightening. Traditional horror movie props such as the chainsaw give our creature that non-symmetrical edge. I could have just as well used an outboard motor, circular saw, drill ax or any other instrument that can cut or smash us humans to pieces. Just remember to mix the metal with flesh anywhere you can. Sinew and tendons next to cables and wires give most people the creeps. Then there's the sharp metal spikes, speaker-phone mouth, almond-shaped unblinking eyes, etc.

MONSTERS
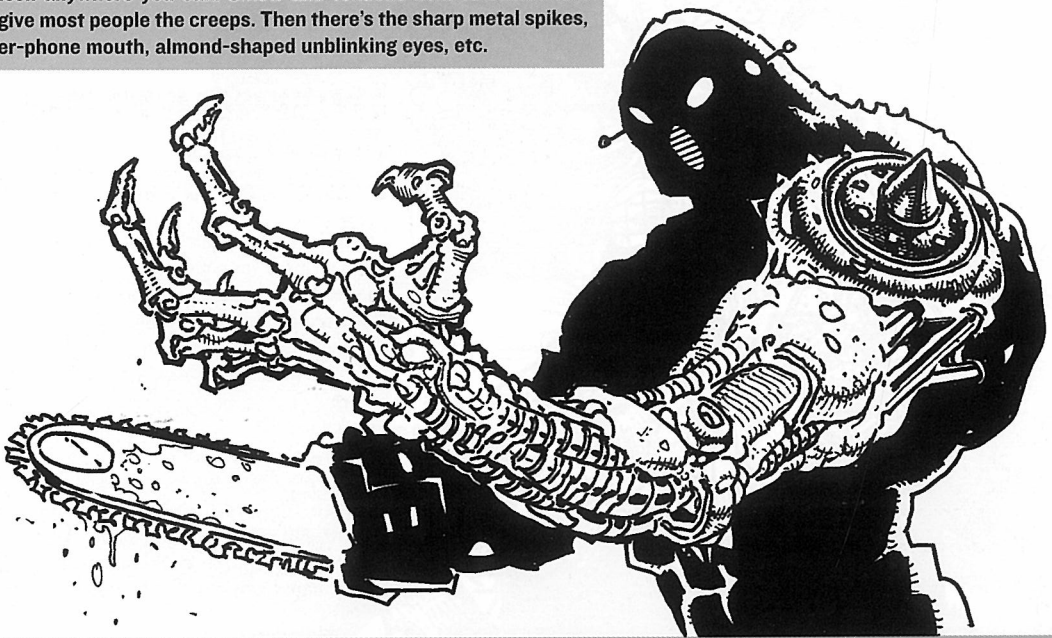
PUT YOUR HEADS TOGETHER

Here's a closer look at head design. We have two very different creatures—the zombie (**Figure A**), with his shriveled, dehydrated look, and the thickly featured brute (**Figure B**). By combining elements of both we achieve a "zombrutie" (**Figure C**). This is only one of many possible combinations, but you get the idea.
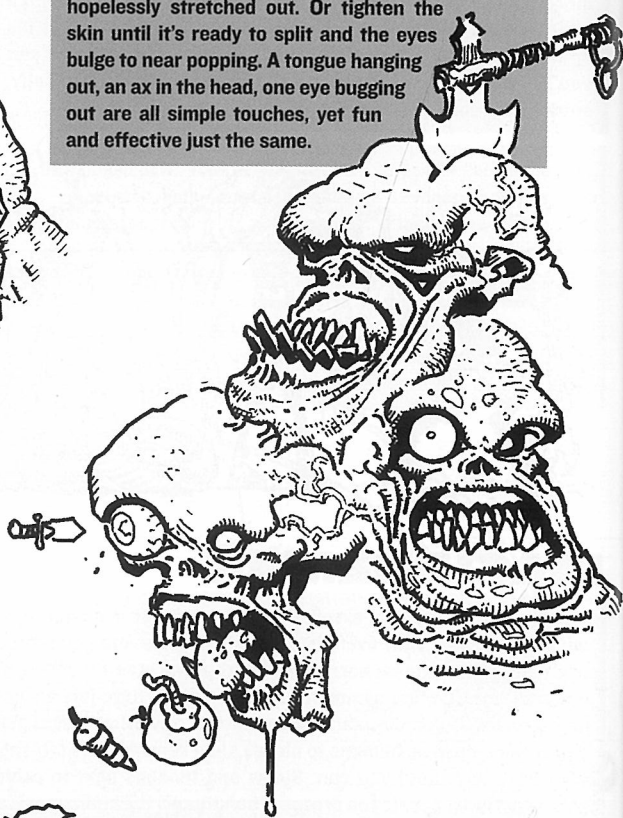
Now that we've established a look, let's take it a step further and put a funhouse-mirror spin on it. This is always a good approach for any monster when you're looking for something new.

Squash, stretch and twist to your heart's content. If the brow is thick and protruding, smash it way down over the eyes until the entire head is mashed in. Or pull a protruding jaw way out and don't spare the teeth—separate them, crowd them, blunt them, sharpen them, whatever. Pull the lips until they're hopelessly stretched out. Or tighten the skin until it's ready to split and the eyes bulge to near popping. A tongue hanging out, an ax in the head, one eye bugging out are all simple touches, yet fun and effective just the same.

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C
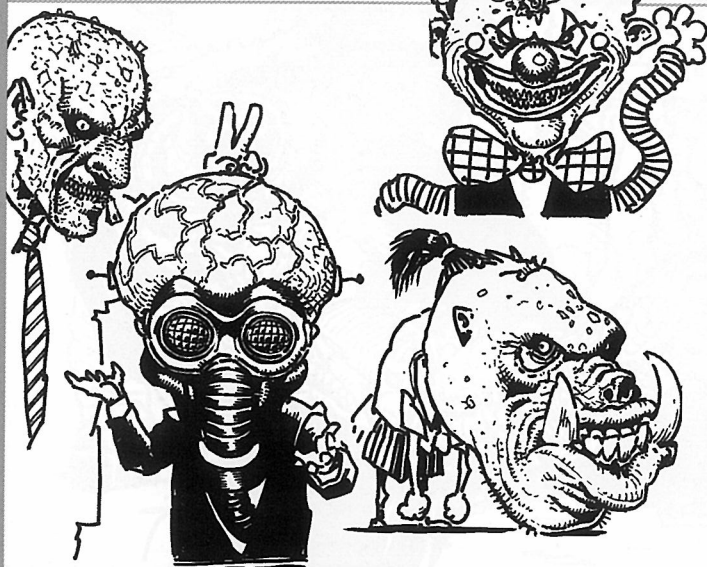
INSPIRATION MEANS PERSPIRATION

It doesn't take much sometimes—charred flesh and a zipper for a mouth, a bulbous head with a strange gas mask. Inspiration can come from just about anywhere. Sometimes you're lucky and odd things just pop into your head. The big, swollen head with the weird gas-mask face was actually based on an elephant. The tusky fellow came about because I asked my two daughters what was scary. One said a big dog, the other said a pig. I blended the two and added a bit of human. Children already think clowns are scary, so I added an impossibly large, evil grin and small, sharp, cannibal teeth. Children's nightmares just got a bit spookier.

FACE THE HORROR

Okay, let's pull some of this together and fine-tune it. Start with the head, modeled after our "zombrutie." One eye is large and bloodshot, staring out with evil intentions. I like to put extra baggage around eyes like these, giving 'em that weird, never-sleeps look. The other eye is small and dead, probably made lifeless from some horrible wound, now sewn up and scarred. The ears are rotting with bits missing, the jaw misaligned with a serious underbite. The lower lip hangs, almost flapping, with a bit of drool (not too much). Warts and a generally bad complexion cover the face. Yep, definitely someone you'd like to bring home to meet the folks.

BODY BAG

The body is based on one of our first amalgams. I elongated the neck, with tendons and veins bulging from it. The smaller arm is webbed at the forearm, tight and springy-looking, with a bony, nervous hand just waiting to grab someone. The big arm almost drags on the ground with a huge, clawed talon for crushing, clawing and destroying. The clothes are dirty and in tatters as if ripped by a hideous transformation. The torso is hopelessly bent over the legs.

This guy's just an ugly, ambulating mess, stumbling through a foggy, old cemetery. I tried to imagine a monster crushed and deformed by its own wickedness—chronically uncomfortable, hating the living. Being evil will do that to you.

ALIENNATION

Nothing in this world is going to provide you with as much freedom to be creative as drawing aliens, or "space monsters." Let's start by defining a few basic, standard alien templates. This way, we'll have a springboard from which to launch ourselves into drawing more interesting aliens.

Alien A: Basic humanoid. Easy to relate to, with standard-issue arms, legs and head. Mix in a few animal properties (note the hooves and horns), and he's finished. We've seen many of these types.

Alien B: Pretty common as well. Very 1950s: A humanoid evolved into a skinny, hairless guy with a massive intellect. (Yawn.)

Alien C: This alien is much more disturbing. Based upon insects—which seem to frighten most people—large, scary bug-aliens like this definitely earn their place on my cool list.

Alien D: A disgusting pile of puckering, tentacled, alien freakishness. Now this is my idea of an alien!
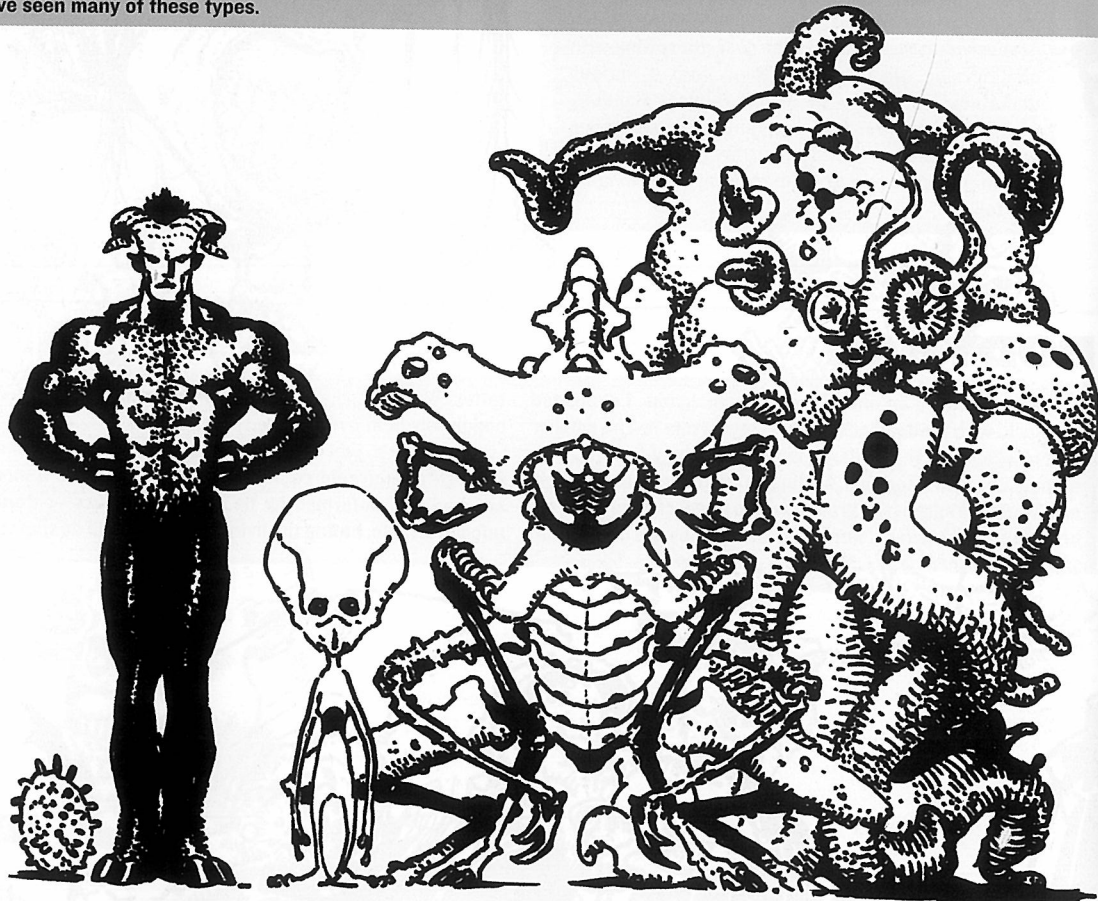
ALIEN A   ALIEN B   ALIEN C   ALIEN D

I'VE JUST SEEN A FACE

Now let's use what you know to create something better. First, take a look at **Alien E**—it's not too far off the beaten path. Most of us create the basic alien by slightly altering the independent features of your neighbor next door—adding more cranium space, tweaking the ears, etc. This can be done in a thousand variations.

Aliens F and **G:** These are derived from mixing in some bug (fly for **F**, spider for **G**). These two appear a bit comical, so we may want to scare them up a bit in the next example.
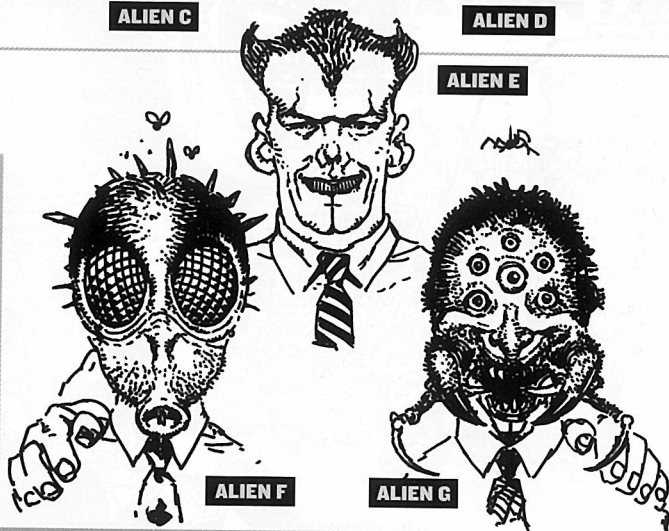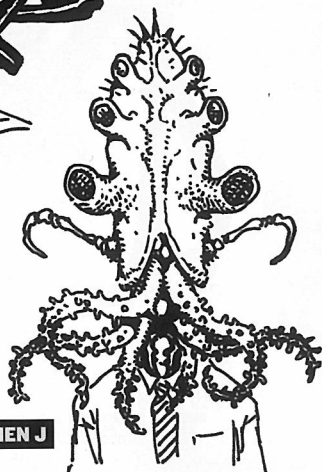
ALIEN E

ALIEN F   ALIEN G

ALIEN H

ALIEN I

ALIEN J

UGLYMUGS

Remember those fly and spider aliens from before? Let's mash them together for **Alien H**. Now we're getting somewhere. Very alien.

This technique of combining sources has always been very helpful to me, which brings us to **Aliens I** and **J**. Keeping with the basic concept arrived at in **Alien H**, I created new images.

In **Alien I**, I softened the face by adding some "squidness": tentacles with claws, elongated head, etc. **Alien J** gained protruding eyes and polyps on the tentacles. Note how one idea breeds another, which builds the ugliest dang family tree an alien could hope for.

ARMORALL

Now we'll apply texture and form to these alien bodies. Using the basic humanoid, let's explore some options.

Alien K: Big and Hard. Crusty exoskeleton based on crabs. Good for aliens big or small, characterized here by plates of armor with random nodules.

**Alien L:** Soft and Segmented. I'm thinking caterpillars and worms here...rubbery on the outside, cream-filled on the inside. Mmm!

Alien M: Soft and Hard. This was inspired by the obvious contrast. An ultra-soft globular body and head, held together by hard appliances or clothing. Spiky hair protrudes from soft flesh. I like this idea. It's definitely an alien we could take pretty far.
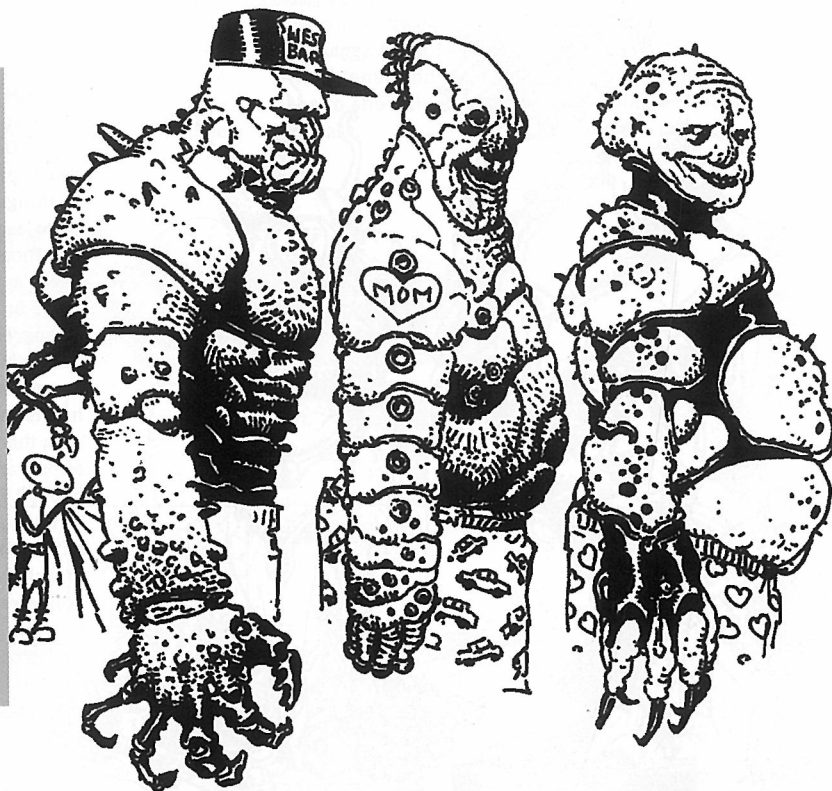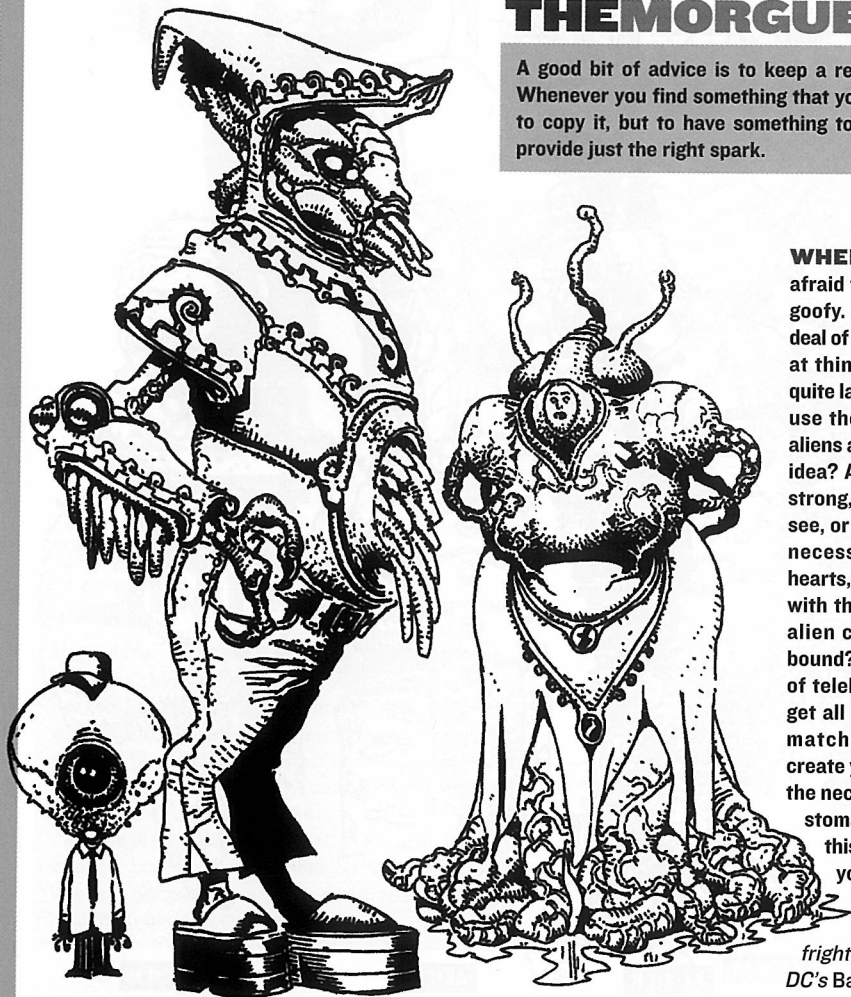
ALIEN K

ALIEN L

ALIEN M

THE ALIENIST

Let's take all we've looked at so far and push it off the deep end. Start by borrowing the craggy, lobster-esque limbs from **Alien K**, the symmetrical worm-ness from **Alien L**, and the soft, droopy flesh, hard appliances and stiff, spiky body hair from **Alien M**. As far as posture goes, let's make it anything but human—check out the wacky ideas I came up with for the alien on the right. The end result? I went through several compositions to arrive at it. The point is to keep stretching your ideas until you hit upon the right one. Mix and match your possibilities until you feel it's right.
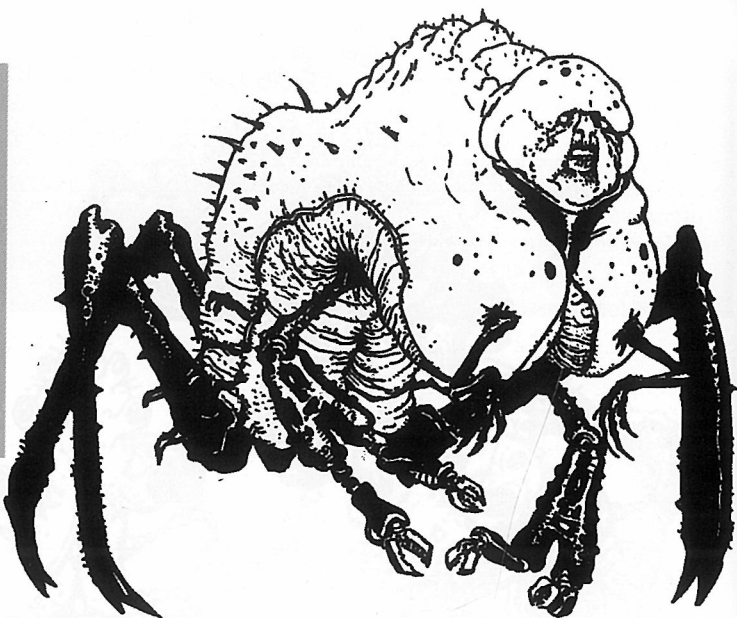
THE MORGUE

A good bit of advice is to keep a reference or idea file always growing. Whenever you find something that you like, put it on file. There is no need to copy it, but to have something to look at when your brain is dry can provide just the right spark.

WHEN CREATING ALIENS, don't be afraid to embrace the weird—nothing's too goofy. Designing an alien can take a great deal of patience, and you may routinely arrive at things that not only are alien, but also quite laughable. Don't reject these ideas, but use them as a challenge. It's okay if your aliens are a bit different. Isn't that the whole idea? An alien doesn't have to be big to be strong, long-legged to be fast, have eyes to see, or mouths to speak. These aliens don't necessarily strike fear or wonder in our hearts, but we could have a great deal of fun with them. Besides, who's to say the small alien can't leap tall buildings in a single bound? That the middle alien isn't a master of telekinesis? That the last alien doesn't get all the fellas? Always be ready to mix, match and distort various elements to create your aliens. Bend the spine, elongate the neck, put eyes on the fingertips, put the stomach on the outside of the body! All of this is going to look alien to me, let alone your grandmother! Ⓦ

You can see Doug Mahnke's frighteningly good pencils in the pages of DC's Batman *and* Major Bummer.

TEXTURE BY ART ADAMS
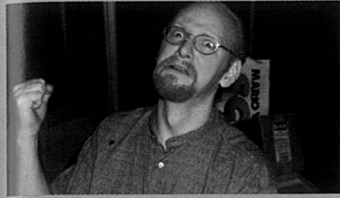
All right, you useless maggots, listen up! Today we're going to talk about texture in comic book drawing! Don't get scared yet, ya pansies! If used properly, texture won't hurt ya!

For those of you who don't know me, my name's Arthur Adams, but you can call me "sir"! Now move, move, MOVE!

ORANGE ALERT

Let's start with something simple: a bunch of oranges. Some of them have been through a lot. And even though the oranges all have different textures, the texture helps to give them shape.
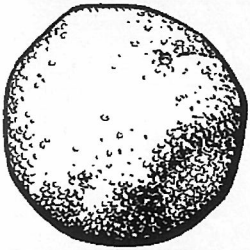

Here's a nice, fresh orange. You might notice I've used tiny, curved lines (more toward the edges, fewer in the middle) to show the orange has depth (thickness) and mass.

This fruit's been chrome-plated. I've used stylized, curved lines inside the orange's outline. This helps convey a sense of reflectivity without going to the trouble of actually drawing everything around the orange reflected in its surface.
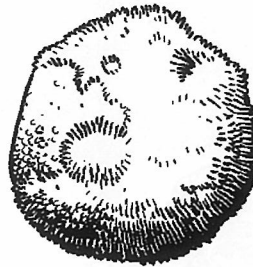
This one's seen better days. I wanted it to look really moldy, so I used short, dashy lines to make it look all nasty and shaggy. Again, I worked with thinner and thicker lines to show this object has mass.
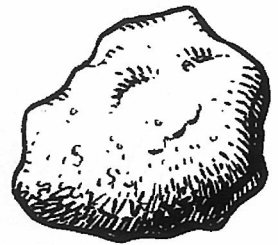
This is ancient! Petrified! Rock hard! You may notice that I used little curve lines and short, dashy strokes. I did this to show it's still an orange, but that it's also hard and dry. Notice the outline isn't as smooth as the first orange, which makes the orange look sort of deflated. Ewwww.

MIX AND MATCH

Here are some random textures. Some might be stone or brick, others might be a fingerprint or wood. Could one be a leather-clad forearm? Perhaps some are different skin types: fish, lizard, human, shaggy ape or even a sort of Godzilla skin. You figure 'em out. I'm bitter.
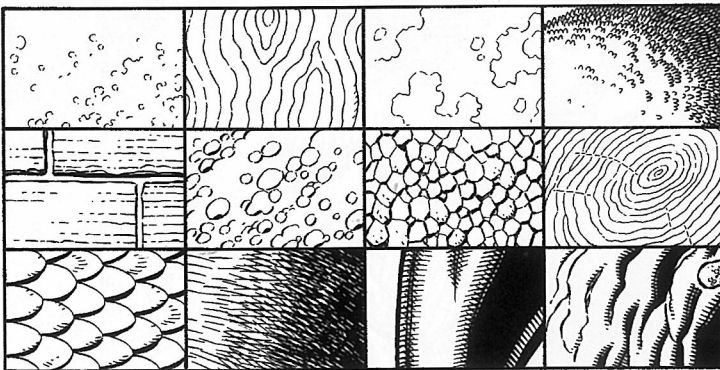
TEXTURE

DEPTH DEFINING

The reason I like using a lot of texture on characters and objects is that it helps convey a sense of depth, weight and mass. One of the most important parts of comic book storytelling is convincing the reader of the reality of the story. Yes, I know comic books are two-dimensional drawings and are therefore clearly not real. But adding texture to your forms helps the reader suspend his disbelief, like in the example to the right.
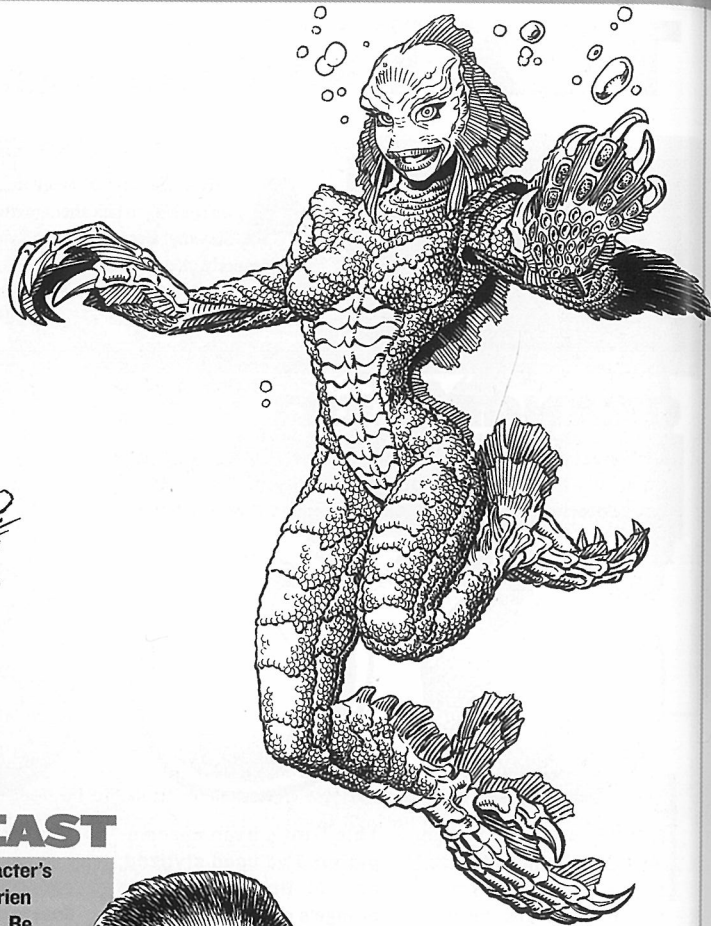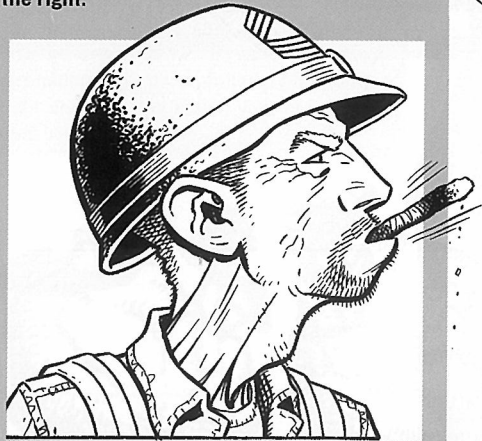
NATURE OF THE BEAST

Texture can also help define or at least hint at a character's nature. The relative lack of texture on young Ann O'Brien helps to convey a sense of youth and wholesomeness. Be careful not to put too many lines on her face. You don't want to make Ann look old.

The texture for Monkeyman is a little rougher. I've drawn deep wrinkles on Monkeyman's face to show that he's older than Ann. I'm also trying to convey a sense of maturity and wisdom. And notice how the very simple detail in the eyes looks kind of spooky and otherworldly. (At least, I think so.)

While the Shrewmanoid calls for similar textural techniques as Monkeyman, little differences help to show him for the filthy little degenerate that he is. What differences? Well, just look at him! Take note of the little circles and partial circles I drew on him, which just help to make him look dirty. He just looks nasty, don't he?

STONECOLDCRAZY

The Thing is a good example of a rough, stony texture. Short, choppy dash strokes help to show this. Use fewer and thinner dash strokes towards the areas you want highlighted on your figure, and thicker, and more lines toward your shaded areas.

When the rendering is done properly, it can help give the illusion of weight and mass. This sort of rendering works well on brick and other dry and hard materials. Also, sharp edges help to show hardness.
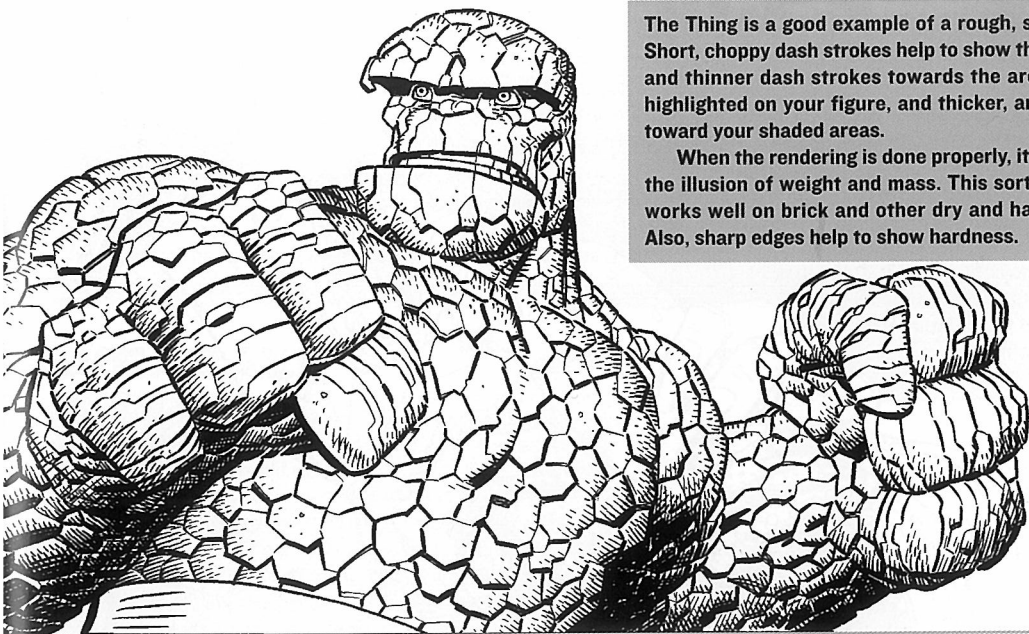
MOISTANDSQUISHY

This is Gorhemoth, the monster made of living garbage from *Dark Horse Presents* #118-#119. With him, we strive for a sort of foul, moist, juicy kind of look. To show this, I draw randomly shaped patches to indicate an uneven tone, and then I tried showing that he's moist by highlighting the undersides of his arms. This shows he's slightly reflective of his surroundings, which to me, makes him look kinda moist. Being made of garbage, he could have many textures, but this time I wanted him gooey. Also, adding nice little touches like buzzing insects can help indicate unpleasant odors.

CRUNCHY CRITTERS

This fellow with the oddly shaped noggin illustrates another sort of hardness. With this guy, I was going for an organic, chitinous, oily shell quality. Fairly smooth lines on his head help show his smooth, polished nature. Remember to vary your line weights when you do this or else it'll just look wrong. Also, drawing thick black rectangles, like the details on his arms, helps make our monster look more mechanical.

Remember, always try to show a sense of depth, weight and mass. While you only see one side of an object, its opposite side (the one you can't see), still exists in the reality of your comic book.
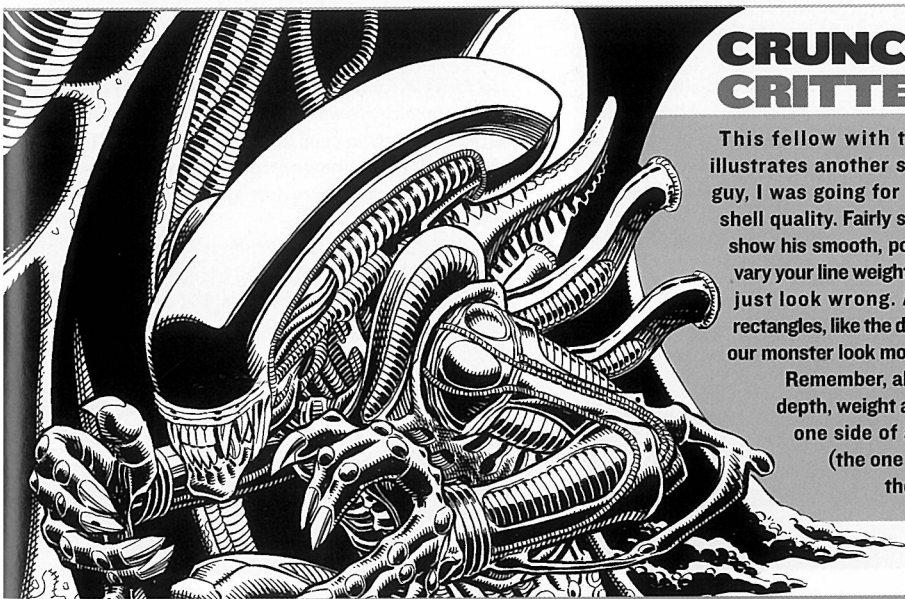
OUTOFSHAPE

For a nasty, ill-tempered, somewhat overweight and definitely unsanitary guy like Mojo, we go for a kind of blotchy look. These extra bits of rendering help us show, again, mass and bulk. Just how this is achieved in this case is difficult to put into words (for me, anyway). But partly it has to do with the angle of the rendering or feathering near the shaded areas on Mojo, as well as all those splotches drawn on his body. Just practice, you'll get it right.

You may also notice that the bread on Mojo's sandwich has texture similar to the orange's on the first page. That's okay. This isn't really a piece of bread, it's a drawing of bread. So you don't have to actually eat it. Your job is simply to convey a sense of reality to whatever object you're illustrating. This is drawing, not photography.
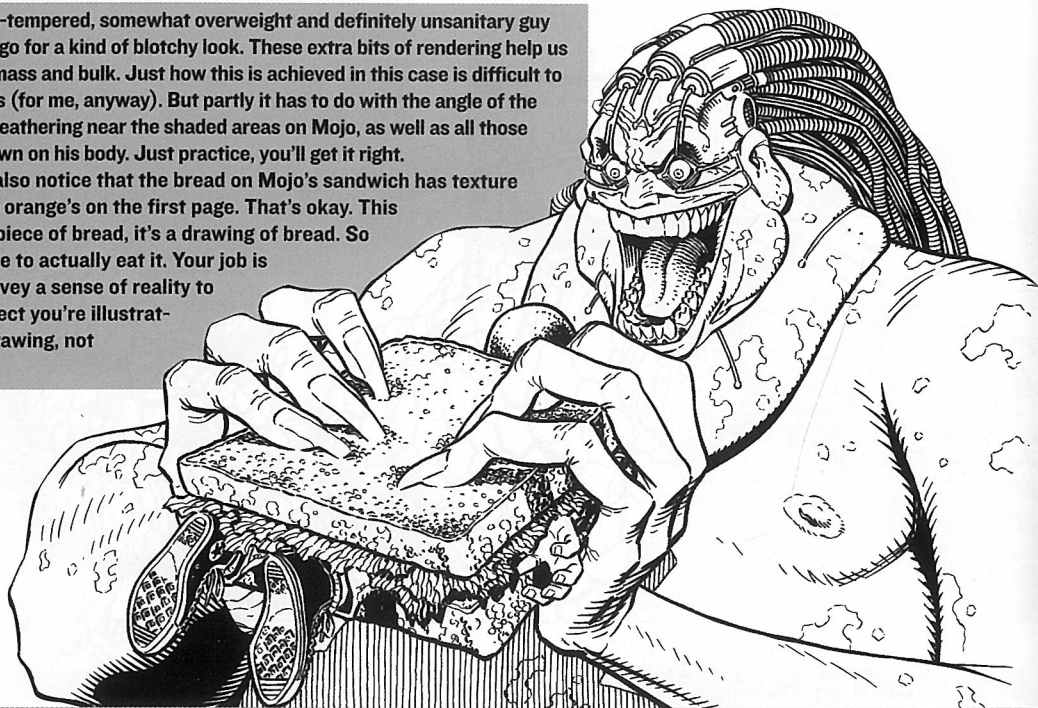
MIRROR, MIRROR

How about drawing a super-reflective, ultra-smooth character. You could try drawing all the objects near her reflected on her surface, but you want to finish this drawing in your lifetime, right? Try drawing lines of various thicknesses parallel to the outlines of her form. Also suggest some highlights or gleams in various areas. All these things help show that our character is highly reflective without actually drawing all the reflections and driving ourselves insane. Remember, you're just trying to give the illusion of reality, not create reality itself. Believe me, you can't. I've tried.
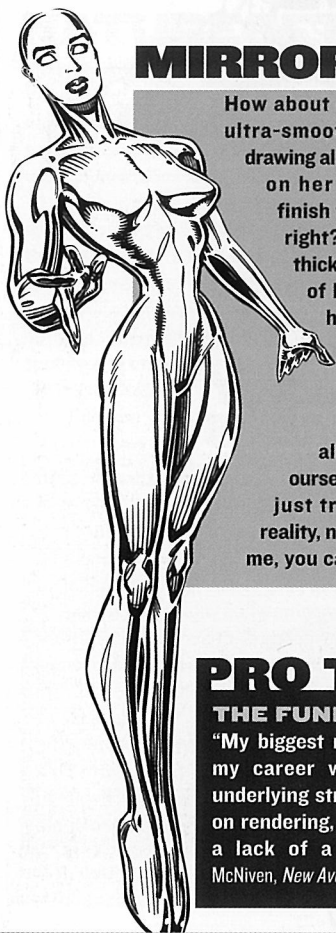
PRO TIPS

THE FUNDAMENTALS

"My biggest mistake in the beginning of my career was not concentrating on underlying structure. I was more focused on rendering, and my work suffered from a lack of a solid foundation." —Steve McNiven, *New Avengers*

AND THAT ENDS today's drill. Remember, just 'cause I draw texture this way doesn't mean you have to. There are other terrific comics artists like Bruce Timm or Mike Mignola who can convey a whole world of textures with just three dots and a dash. (God, I hate those guys!)

And remember this: When it's time to draw an orange, **GO GET AN ORANGE!** It's okay to look at the ways other artists draw things, but every once in a while, look at real life things! Believe me, it will only help your drawing.

A final note, before I go: As long as you treat it with respect, texture can be your friend! Now hit the road, ya wusses! ⓦ

Art Adams' funky textures can be seen on all sorts of neato comics, from Marvel's X-Men *to Dark Horse's* Monkeyman & O'Brien *to DC's* Action Comics.

METALLIC SURFACES BY JIM CALAFIORE

Metal. Along with spandex and leather, it's an important texture within the world of comics. Take it away, and a lot of superheroes would be running around empty-handed, half-naked or missing an appendage or two (or six or seven).

Unfortunately, polished metal can't be graphically represented as it really exists, reflecting everything around it like a tinted mirror. That just wouldn't work in panel-to-panel comics (except for specific effect shots, like a face reflected in a shield). So we cheat. We rely on areas of light, shading and highlights to simulate the effect well enough so readers see it as metal. Which isn't all that easy, either...

HAVE A BALL

A good place to start is with a simple exercise using a chrome sphere. In **Figure A**, we divide the sphere with a strong black line across its equator, designating the top half as reflecting "light," and the bottom half as "shadow." The light source in **Figure B** is now behind the sphere, back-lighting it, which creates a large shadowed area. **Figure C** brings the light source to "our" side of the sphere, expanding the reflected light area. In **Figure D**, the light has moved to about 10 o'clock. Note how the upper edge of the shaded area curves to the shape of the sphere differently as it changes position.

There are two important points here: First, always be aware of and stay consistent with light sources. Second, perceive the sphere as a three-dimensional shape, not just a circle. To interpret how light plays across an object, you have to think of the object as occupying space in the real world, especially when dealing with something like the geometric shapes of bulky armor plating.

FIGURE A

FIGURE B
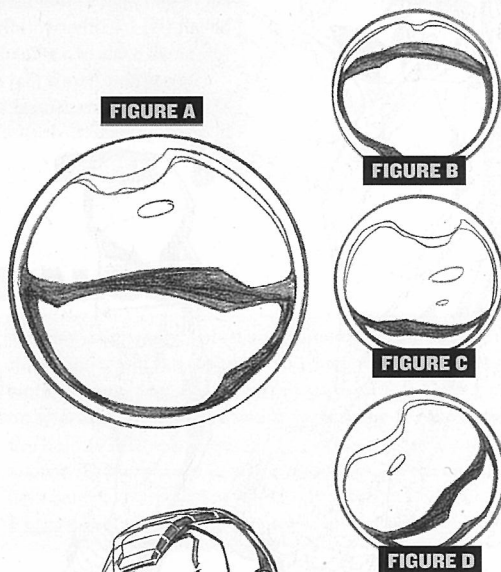
FIGURE C

FIGURE D

KEEP YOUR PLATES CLEAN

Here are two good examples of armor plating. Juggernaut's simple armor (**Figure E**) is great to draw, especially that bullet helmet. Bulky armor is basically made up of smooth geometric shapes and requires simple shapes in the rendering. On Juggy, I've used a back-light similar to **Figure B**, and separated the light from shadow with strong, clean black shading. Although I highlighted the upper edge of his helmet and shoulders with a looser "reflection" line, the overall shading is kept very simple. (I usually render the shadowed area in black, but I left it open on Juggy for a mood effect.)

FIGURE E
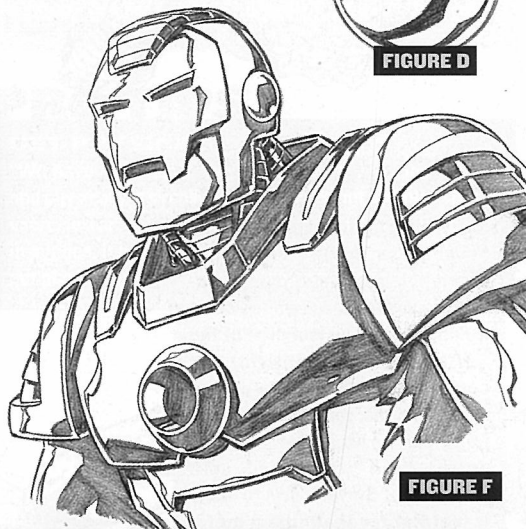
FIGURE F

The War Machine armor (**Figure F**) might seem much more difficult to interpret than Juggy's, but if you concentrate on its parts rather than the whole, it's not. Most bulky armor can be broken down into various geometric shapes: the semicircle of the shoulder pad, the vertical walls of the octagonal collar, the half-sphere of the ear cap, the squareness of the chest plates, etc. With a consistent light source, each item can be rendered to its particular dimensions.

FIGURE G

TO ARMS!
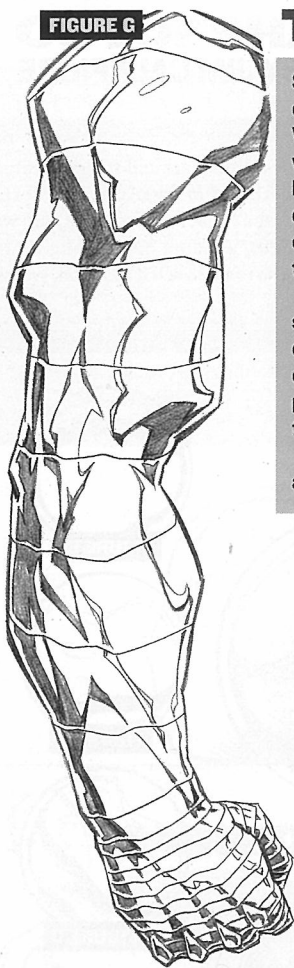
Skintight metal presents specifically different problems, most of which depend on a good knowledge of the underlying structure (bone, muscle, etc.), since that's what influences the reflective patterns. With this right arm (**Figure G**), I first chose a light source (on "our side" of the arm, at about two o'clock), which led to define the areas of deep shadow created by the muscle forms. I then added reflection lines, delineating the reflected light source to the arm's right side. For internal lighting, I used some doubled linework to follow and accentuate the dramatic way in which the irregular musculature catches the light. The linework on skintight metal can have more life and flair to it, but be careful not to go too crazy and obliterate the structure underneath.

    Figures G-1 through **G-4** illustrate varying degrees of shine. For a dull, unpolished look (**1**), shade only the areas of deep shadow, leaving the rest unhighlighted. A single highlight line along the opposite edge of the arm (**2**) gives it an instant soft polish. **Number 3** is highly polished where every curve and indentation picks up shadow and light and reflects it back. I usually reserve a sparkling polish (**4**) for otherworldly or fresh-off-the-rack armor. A couple of starbursts off the edges, and a few small ovals of a reflected light source, make for super-shininess.

    Also of note here is that these arms are sheathed in banded metal. By leaving a small gap in the shading at the bottom of each band, I've accentuated the fact that all this metal is layered and pieced together.

①   **②**   **③**   **④**
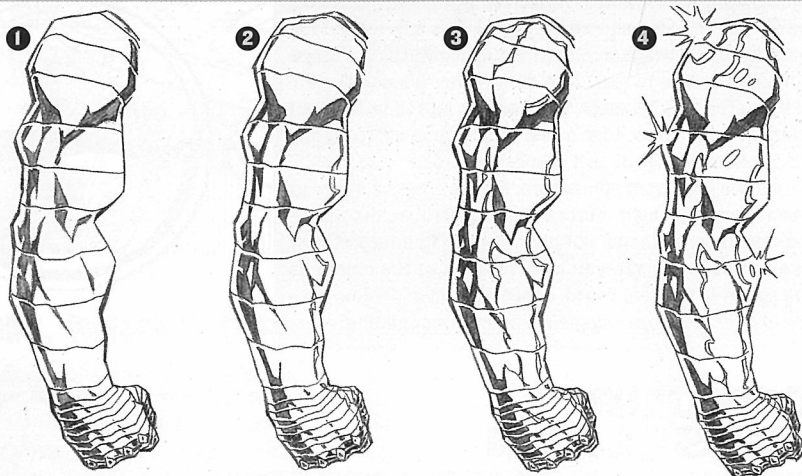
METAL MEN

Metal as skin, for characters like Silver Surfer, doesn't present any new problems, except you need to express more of an overall fluidity. Taking an isolation of the Surfer's right arm (at right) and comparing it with the previous section's arms, you can see they're pretty similar, except for a bit more delineation of the muscle structure of Surfer's arm to make it feel tighter than just a metal sheath. This effect can be pushed even further, to the point where each muscle is its own bundle of metal—each shiny muscle distinctly separated from the other by hard outlines (Colossus' metal form, for example). This again demands a strong knowledge of the muscle structures involved.

METALLIVES!

Here are some quick techniques with drop-shadows that let your metal exist in real three-dimensional space. Referring back to the previous examples, you can see I've been using these tricks all along.

Using War Machine's left arm (**Figure H**), I've shaded the individual components (shoulder pad, arm and gauntlet) as if they weren't connected to each other. Each part has its own shape, but as a whole, it's pretty flat. In **Figure I**, I've made an effort to consider how each component affects the other. The gauntlet casts a shadow across the forearm, as the shoulder pad does across the biceps. Comparing the two, the whole illustration "pops" out considerably more in **Figure I**.
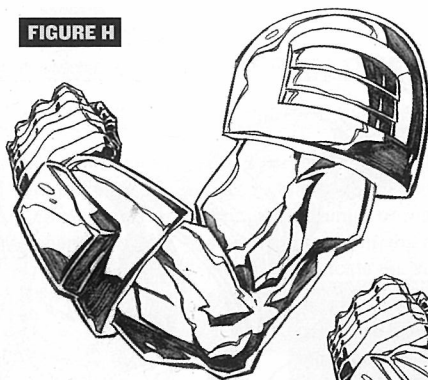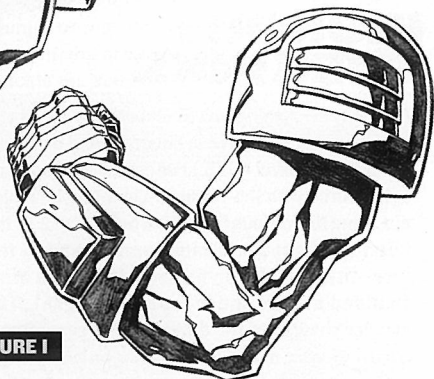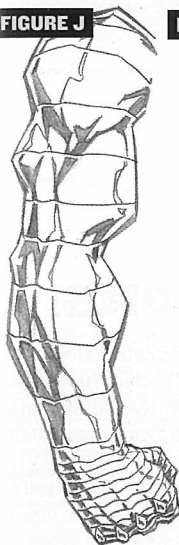

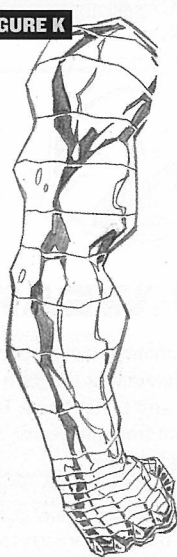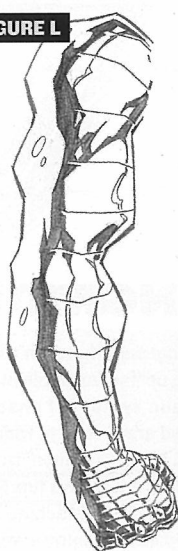FIGURE H

FIGURE I

FIGURE J

FIGURE K

FIGURE L

HALOS

Leaving a thin margin of white (known as a halo) between the shading and the outline of the arm (**Figure J**) is the simplest way to imply a reflective surface. The halos can be altered for different effects. Increasing the depth of the halo (**Figure K**) indicates a strong secondary light source. To increase it to an extremely bright secondary light source, I removed any detail from the haloed area in **Figure L**. Save this one for special moments.

PRO TIPS

GET PHYSICAL

"We have such sedentary jobs and we work late hours, and physically, it's really grinding. So go out and play sports, exercise, run, jog, something. If you're thinking of a career in comics, it helps to have that sense of competition you get playing sports." —Jim Lee, *All Star Batman & Robin*

GRUNGYMETAL

Rust is surprisingly easy to depict. Using a banded metal hose, I started by shading its surface as "dull," just like I showed you back in the "arms" section. Then I just had fun mucking it up, starting with the hose fairly clean at one end and getting progressively worse as I worked my way to the other.
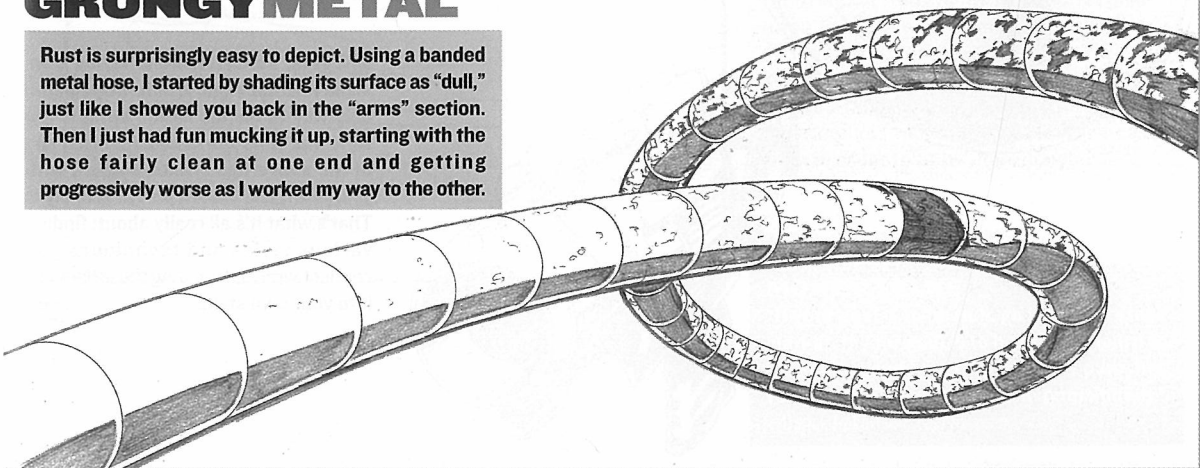
IRON OUT THE KINKS

Basically everything we've discussed so far can be seen here in this Iron Man illustration. (I drew this armor in *Iron Man* #325.) I've established a strong light source with the repulsor blast, and let it play out along the various forms: the bulky armor of the helmet, chest plate and gauntlets, and the form-fitting metal on his legs, torso and arms (banded around the biceps and thighs). The simpler shading of the armor plating separates it from the looser, more fluid rendering on the skintight metal. The drop-shadows push the overlapping armor forward, especially the extreme shadow filling behind the helmet and along the shoulder, which allows the helmet to thrust forward convincingly. I've played with some of the loose reflective highlights (mostly along the skintight metal, but also across the helmet), adding a few oval "points" of reflected light for spice. I stayed away from any sparkles, though, since Iron Man's armor always looked best to me when it wasn't off-the-shelf dazzling.
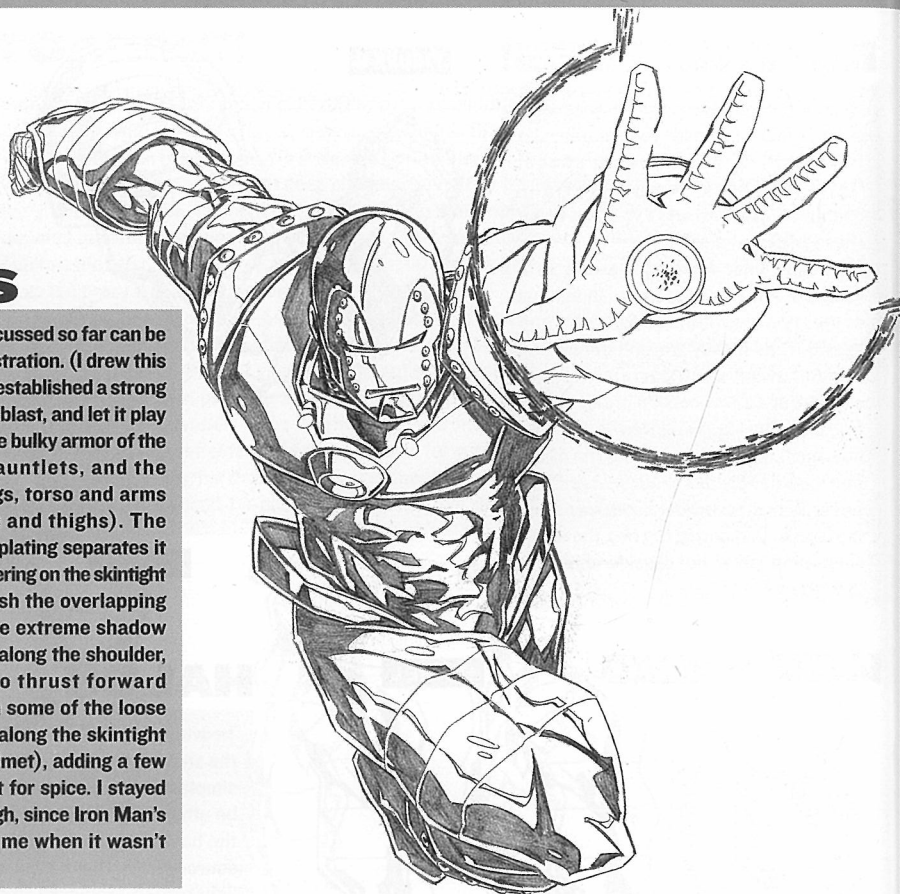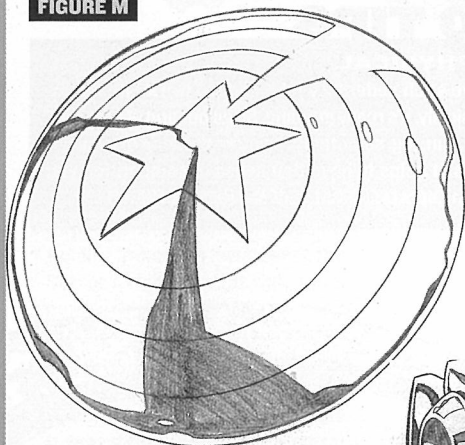
FIGURE M

BRING MORE WEAPONS!

Finally, what superhero isn't lost without his accessories? Captain America's shield is a perfect example of shallow domes (**Figure M**), which have their own unique system of shadows and reflections. Both the shaded and highlighted areas tend to radiate out from the center. I've over-exaggerated the effect here for demonstration purposes.

And guns are always fun. Plus, they're easier to render in metal than you'd think. Like the War Machine armor, just about any gun can be broken down into its separate geometric shapes. Simply pick a light source and go to town.
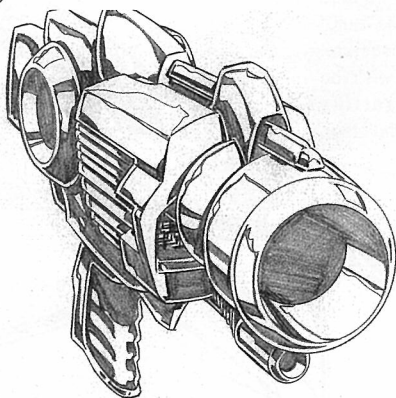
METAL TECHNIQUE varies from artist to artist. Mine is definitely not the only way to handle metal, but it is the style that I find works best for me. If any of the above tips strikes a chord with you, take it and make it part of your style. That's what it's all really about: finding various styles and techniques you connect with and molding the influences into your own style. ⓦ

VEHICLES BY SEAN CHEN

Y ou may think it's unfair that some superheroes can fly while others can't. But don't feel bad, because the flightless ones have something their soaring counterparts don't: cool rides! Just how cool depends on your ability to design and draw them.

In college, I majored in industrial design; this instilled in me a love for the design and rendering of man-made objects. So I'm here to teach you all about drawing vehicles. Whether it's the Avengers' Quinjet or just the necessary props of an average street scene, vehicles are everywhere. Grab your learner's permit and buckle up. You're well on your way to getting your artistic license.

CARCARE

Let's start with a basic car—drawing one can be broken down into four easy steps. First, I box in the general shape to determine the size, proportion and view (Figure A). All we're trying to do at this stage is rough out the shape and provide guidelines for the later stages. It's always a good idea to evaluate what you have at each step to make sure it's in line with your original vision before proceeding.
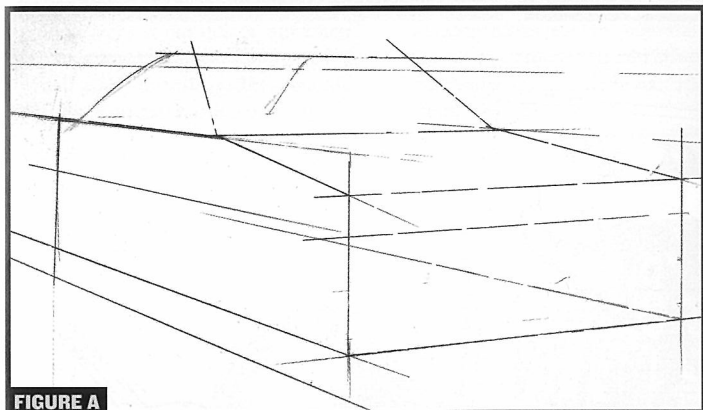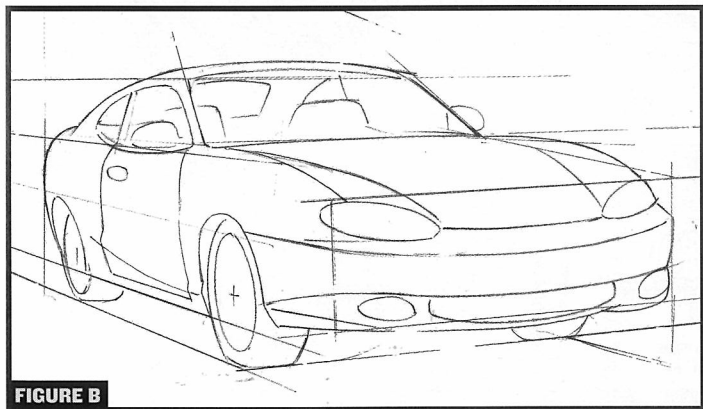
OH YEAH, THAT'S THE *STUFF!*

HEY THERE, METAL FANS. EVER WONDER WHY I LOOK SO GOOD?

JUST ASK MY BUDDY SEAN...

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

Second, I draw the major shapes of the car, referring carefully to the perspective guidelines to assure structure and symmetry (Figure B). Most cars—especially the sporty variety—are made entirely of curves, but you need to be aware of the straight perspective lines that those curves came from in order to draw them convincingly.

PRO TIPS
MONEY TALKS
"If your goal is to be rich, go learn the stock market. If your goal is to be adored, learn to play guitar and be a rock star. Art punishes you, and you have to love the punishment."
—Darick Robertson, *Nightcrawler*

FIGURE C

Third, I continue to add more of the lines that embellish the car and all of its parts and shapes (**Figure C**). Always work from the general to the specific; that is, make sure that the general form of the headlight is in the right place and of the right size and shape before adding any detail, like shapes within or glass texture. At this stage, we have a finished line drawing.
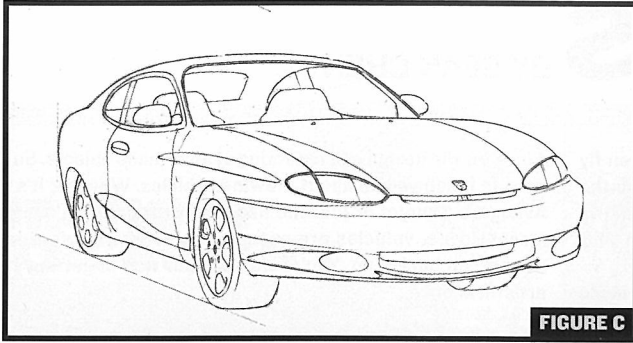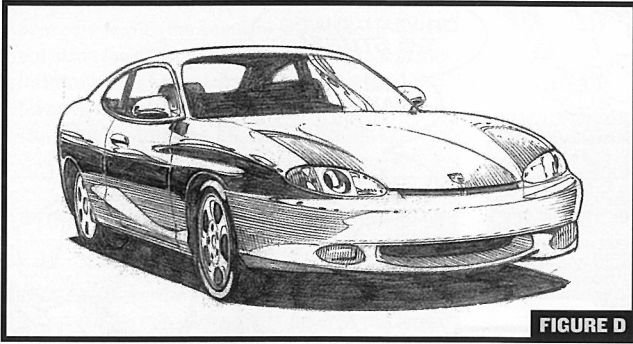

FIGURE D

Fourth, I add the rendering (**Figure D**). This adds weight and solidity to the drawing and provides realism. On any given car, we are rendering painted metal, shiny chrome, transparent glass, etc. Observe how these materials appear in real life, and stylize them to convey the unique properties of each. Don't forget they cast shadow on the ground! And since the windows are transparent, you can usually see a silhouette of the interior through the other windows. Notice how the partial glare on the right suggests the presence of a windshield by obscuring the interior silhouette. Ah, can't you practically smell that new car smell?
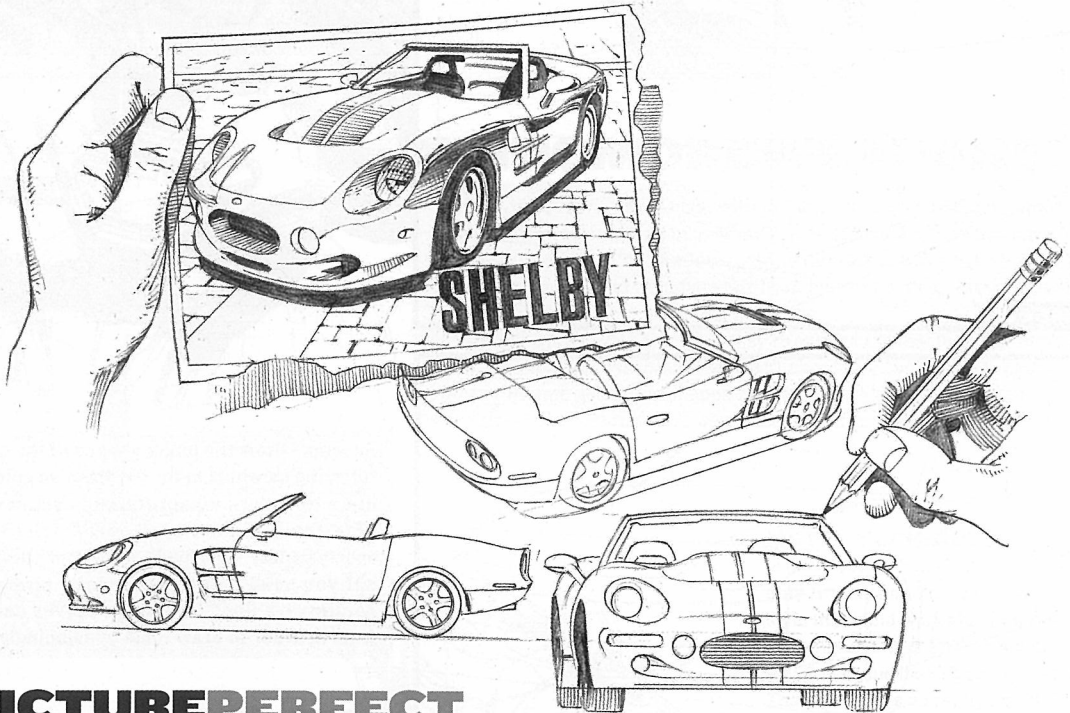
PICTURE PERFECT

Because cars are such complex machines, I like to use reference material, especially if the car is featured fairly prominently. Most of the time, the angle of the car you're drawing won't match the shot of the car in your photo, so you'll have to improvise. A very useful skill to develop is the ability to rotate the car in your mind and extrapolate any view you need.

It's not as hard as you think; nearly all the information you need is provided in a good three-fourths view. The only side we don't see is the back. Remember, the car is symmetrical, and fits within a basic perspective box. Just make sure that the car maintains the same proportions and doesn't become too long or too compact as the viewing angle changes.

GETTHEREFERENCE

I can't stress enough how important reference is—whether you use photographs, magazines, TV commercials or even your own car sitting in the driveway.
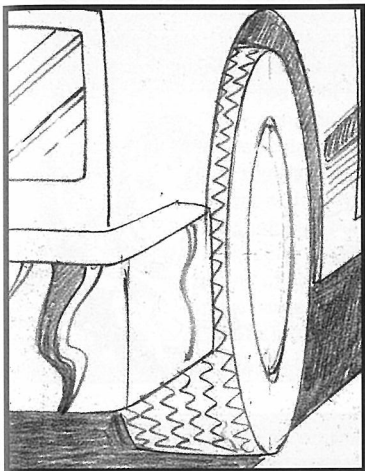
The drawing above suffers from a lack of observed information. We all can picture a car in our minds, but when it comes down to drawing one, we can't recall many specifics. This usually results in an amateurish drawing.

Now this is more like it. This drawing wasn't traced or copied, but reference was used to understand the specifics of the forms and inform the rendering, which says to us, "This is a shiny new car."
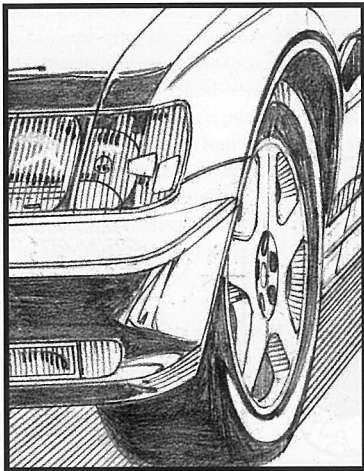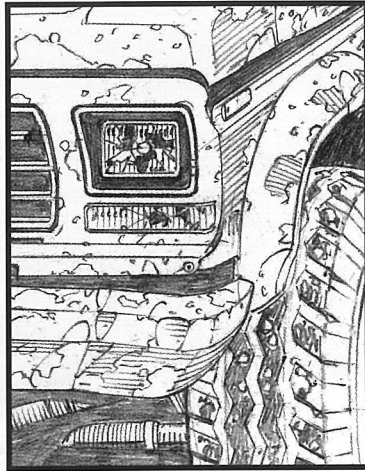
This is not. To get this effect, be observant. What makes a car look run-down? Employing a different rendering technique adds realism of a different variety. Remember, don't draw every car with a show-room shine.

SPEEDRACER

You may have noticed a phenomenon about cars in comics: They can all fly! This rarely happens in real life, but in comics, there's no such thing as tire wear, because, unless parked, the tires never touch the ground! The rule here is: Always draw your car as if it's involved in a high-speed chase in San Francisco.

I'M LATE FOR "THE O.C."!

SLOW
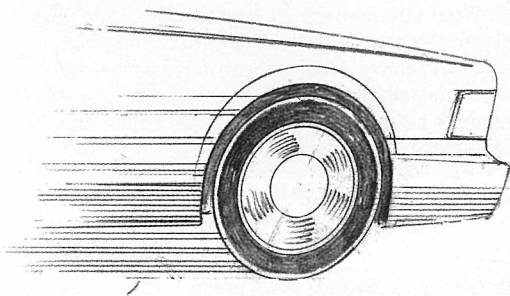
Disclaimer: Professional driver on a closed track. Do NOT try this at home.

MAKINGITCOOL

Even more fun than drawing an existing vehicle is coming up with your own unique design. Vehicles are getting sleeker as hard lines give way to sexy curves, but this isn't a hard and fast rule. Some very cool vehicles—stealth fighters, Humvees and Lamborghinis—are more planar in nature. Expose yourself to as many sources of cool vehicle designs as possible: military crafts, sports cars, anime, sci-fi movies and so on. A word or two about design: I've drawn three distinctly different ships here to show you what their design conveys. Your primary concern when designing a vehicle is to know what the shapes and details you choose to employ say about the vehicle's purpose. After that, you can work on making it look cool.
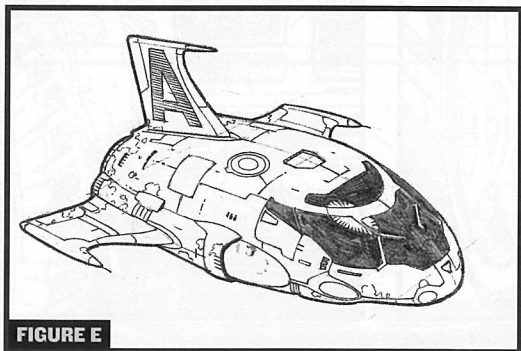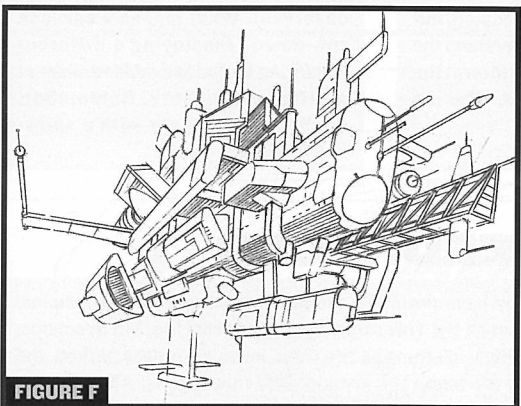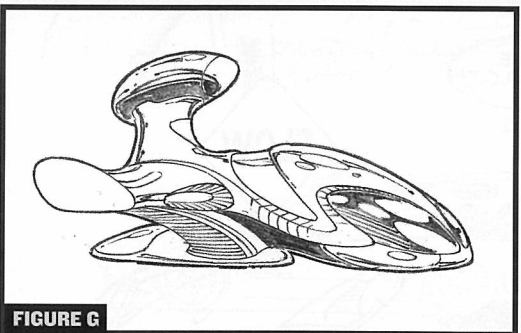

FIGURE E

HE CAN DRAW A *QUINJET*, BUT HE CAN'T GIVE ME ANY FRIGGIN' *ARMS?*

HACK.
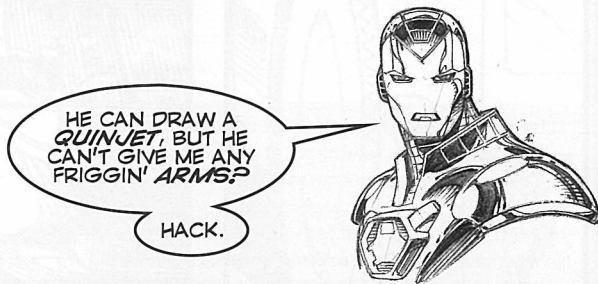
Figure E. What information are we getting from this Avengers Quinjet? We know that it is near-future technology because of the recognizable parts derived from current aircraft, such as the wings, windshield, air intakes, gun ports, etc. We get an indication of its size (about as big as a bus) because of the overall simplistic shape and scale of its recognizable parts. Notice the wear and tear on its surface. This says that this ship is "real" and has been in use for a while.

FIGURE F

Figure F. What information can we derive from the design and drawing of this ship? Notice the upward viewing angle and the extreme perspective. That, along with the complexity and rectilinear forms, tells us this thing is huge (about the size of a skyscraper or bigger). The angular design also indicates far-future, but man-made, technology.

FIGURE G

Figure G. The bizarre, organic forms of this vehicle, along with the total lack of recognizable, man-made technology, tell us that this ship is completely alien in nature. It also has an otherworldly sheen to it. Even with its bizarre, alien design, it's still possible to give some indication of its size. The proportions of its parts tell us that it's probably between the sizes of the two previous ships.

THAT'S A GENERAL LOOK at a fairly complex lesson. If your results leave a lot to be desired, have patience. The key here is practice, and tons of it—which, if you're like me, you won't mind doing one bit. The best way to become good at drawing vehicles is to love drawing them. Once you master the art of transportation design and drawing, your heroes will be cruisin' in style, whether on land, sea, air or even space.

Ⓦ

MECHA BY PAT LEE

So, you wanna create some mecha? Here're some easy steps to get you heading in the right direction. First, you'll need to decide what kinda robot you want to create—whether it's a self-aware Transformer like the mighty Optimus Prime or a piloted war machine like the Wing Gundam Zero. Then your 'bot's gotta have some soul, anything that'll make it unique and groovy. F'r instance, the shiny leader of the Autobots has the great Matrix of Leadership hidden within his chest, which when opened, unleashes the power of every great Autobot leader...along with '80s retro music. See? That's original!

The next need is a given: a sick, killer body. Without one, how cool can your 'bot really be? It's not like anyone's ever going to make a Transformer out of a Dodge Pinto. Add sleek lines, sexy curves, and most of all, lots of devices that blow things up. Need something to fill space under the armpit? Why not put a bazooka? Originality always counts.

Last but not least, a killer 'bot needs killer attitude. Or at least a pilot with one. Look at Starscream—he probably took one too many wet willies as a kid. Kup? An old-timer that's seen more than enough action. Keep your characters real and alive, not just walking walls. And create to suit your style. If you draw skinny, lean towards *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Draw bulky? Go towards *Mechwarrior*.

GETAHEAD

This is a bust shot of Sunstreaker from *Transformers*. When penciling a piece, I often color it with blue line to see where the shadows will lie. I use a thin red marker to separate the shadows, then apply them accordingly. Remember, there are different textures to a robot. Some have a reflective look to them. For example, take a spoon and look at all the shadows and shines it has when you reflect light on it. Many lines on one specific object make it look rusted and scarred. I do this a lot to rough metal surfaces, then I add color on top of it to give the texture highlights.
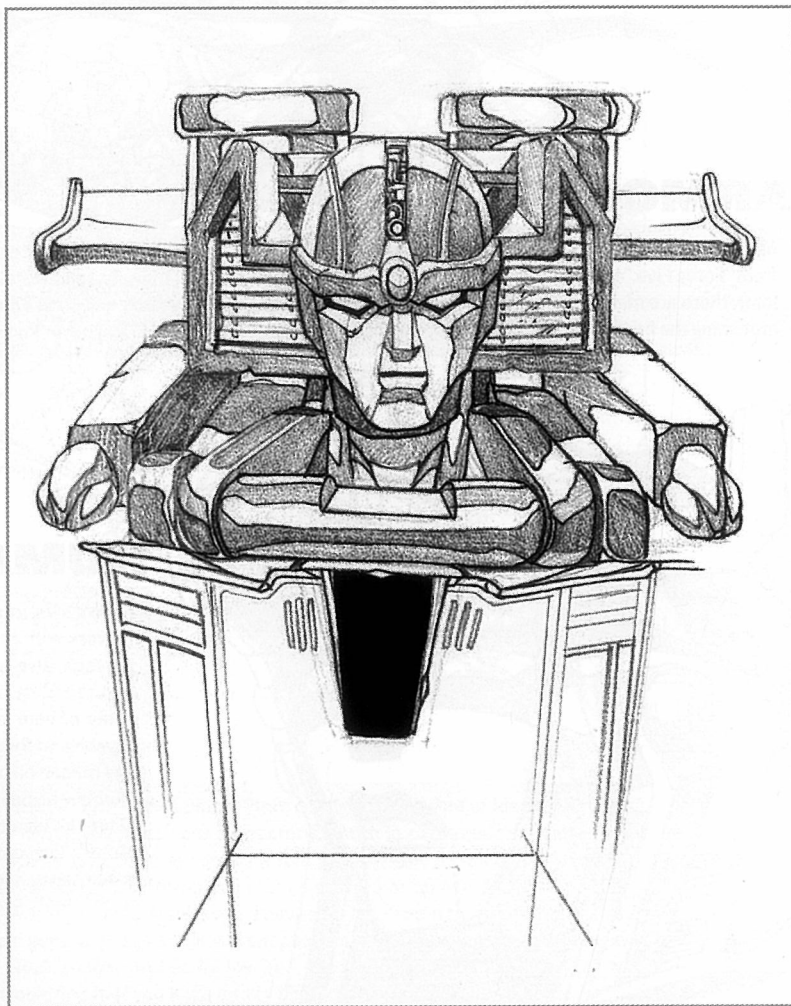
PRO TIPS

NO LIMITS

"Don't limit your media. Practice all areas of comic book art—penciling, inking and coloring. You never know which one will be your ticket to success."
—Greg Horn, *Emma Frost*

MECHA

ADDCURVES

On the left is a shot of Sideswipe's head. I sat down for a good 10 minutes and observed the aerodynamics and design structure of this specific robot. Notice a lot of curved lines that streak in an upward arc, giving Sideswipe speed as wind blasts by him while in robot form. This will help your robots look more futuristic and sleek. Look at sports cars, for example. Sports cars are created to handle high-velocity winds. So should your Robots in Disguise, because they must travel fast in robot form just as much as when they're cars or planes.
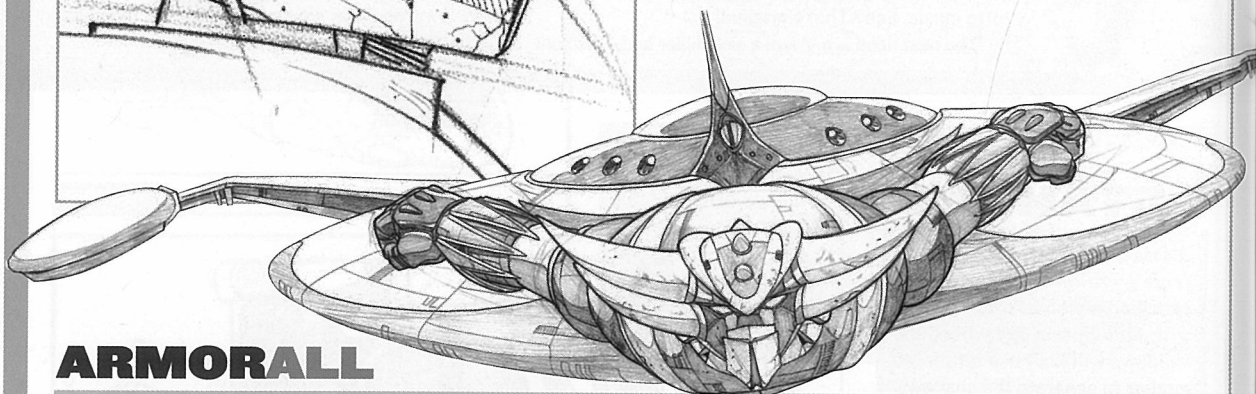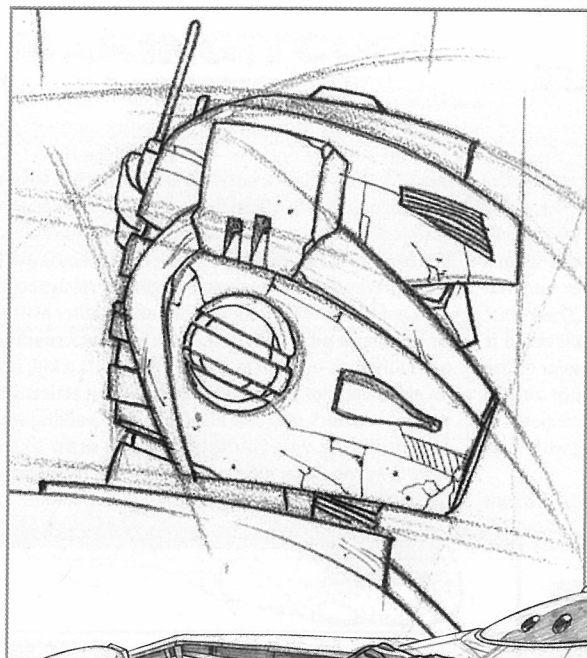
ARMORALL

Man, I had a blast on this one! Above is my take on Grandizer from "Force Five." If you look at his shell (the UFO section behind him), there are metal plates constructed on top, like a jet plane, protecting the fragile components inside. I gave him a more rugged look, since Grandizer in real life would be enormous. Pay attention to small detail, and make that detail really stand out. Grandizer was such a cool invention! A robot flying out of a space saucer? You never know, he could be real.

HUMANIZE'EM

Here's a Voltron head shot. I only had small JPEG files to work with as reference, so I had to make up some of the tech. Give your mecha a 3-D look by adding crevices and rounding off edges and corners. Remember that some of your robot designs should have human-like qualities to them. Look at Voltron, for example. His lips say human all over him. This is what makes Voltron so likable—he has human features, like the Transformers. I love the idea of how the face comes out of the Lion's mouth. Try something like this—it forces your tech to make sense and look very cool.

omega.

OPTIMUS.

swoop

Grim Lock

Ultra mag.

Bee

JAZZ

PINUP PIECE

Let's get into the steps to produce a mecha pinup. First, configure your shot or idea for a panel or splash shot. Think of where you place your characters, where to cast shadows and/or the meaning of the drawing. Just because you can draw fancy doesn't mean you can tell a story with robots. You can show personality through a robot's gesture or stance. Produce a basic layout before plotting down any details. In this case, I have a 23 cm.-length rough of what I want. Without reference, I use general poses and basic shapes to put the piece together, and most parts look like simple block shapes and scribbles. You can show the weight of your mecha drawings when you are coloring it. If you have lots of characters in your shot, label 'em.

TIGHTEN IT UP

This stage will take most of your time. After blowing the layout up and enlarging it onto 11-by-17-inch board, I tighten up the lines a little using the character design sheets from my personal Transformers archive (see below). Pay attention to perspective, angles and shapes before adding any details. Reshape your cubes and cylindrical shapes as desired. Optimus Prime is the center of attention, so I made him large in comparison to the others—well, except Omega Supreme there in the background. You can still be a little rough at this point. I personally use blue lead for this particular stage. Concentrate on making sense when you draw tech: try to make it look like it works. In between joints, you can draw rotational devices

and electrical wires, depending on how hi-tech you want to be.

I named this pinup "The Front Line" because it's the last clash of the Autobots and Decepticons to conclude the ongoing war. I love epic tales, so this piece has epic imagery. Optimus is in the middle: He's the main focus, so he must stand out in comparison to the other Autobots. If I had colored this piece, I would have added many textures to the Autobots and rusted them up as if they have been warring for months. This piece also shows Optimus' leadership; he's standing in an unworried, human-like pose. Ultra Magnus is behind Optimus, since he's his right-hand man, and Rodimus Prime is looking at Optimus with a worried expression since he's got doubts about winning the war.

THE GRAND FINALE

Now we finalize our piece. I usually draw small heads to emphasize the sheer mass of the body. Round off the edges of each corner and add lines for rust as if they've been through hell and back. Have a lot of open space, but balance that out by making the small areas extremely detailed. Robots created in the far future, like Gundam, have less bolts, and if they do have any, they are well hidden due to the metal plates that protect the main components. When I'm finished, James Raiz, my right-hand man, will fill in background detail to complete the page—in this case, broken-down buildings.
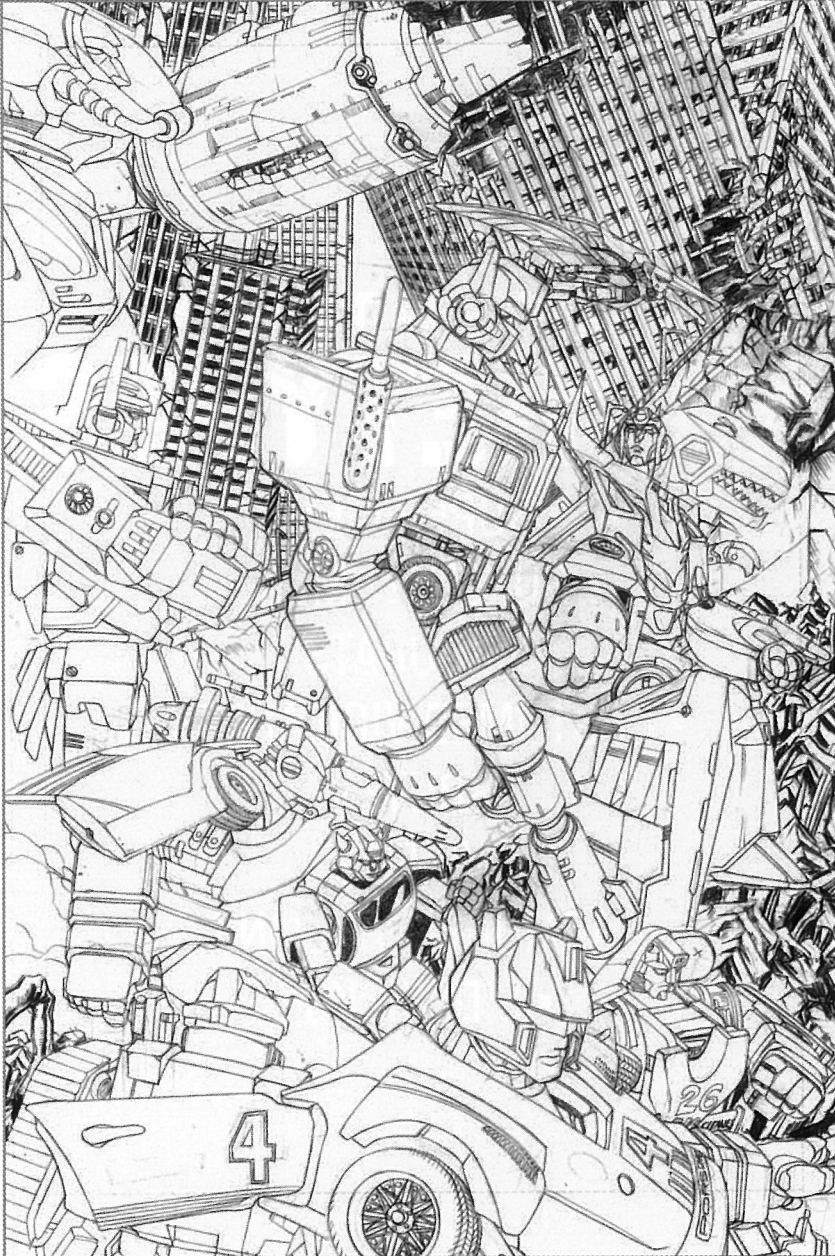
PRACTICE DRAWING MECHA, and sooner or later you'll end up with something as cool as the Transformers or Voltron. Remember to ask yourself what kind of robot you're drawing—does it have human-like qualities? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your robot or robot race? Does it have artificial intelligence, or is someone behind the machine controlling it? Remember your basic shapes, and keep multiplying shapes on top of one another to form your robot. I hope this has helped you a little—good luck on them robots!

Dream Engine honcho Pat Lee's pencils fight their battles in Transformers/G.I. Joe, X-Men/Fantastic Four *and* Devil May Cry *.*

CHAPTER THREE:
ARCHETYPES

- SUPER MEN
- SUPER WOMEN
- ACROBATS
- COSTUMED VIGILANTES
- BRUTES
- VIXENS
- ARMORED VILLAINS
- SIDEKICKS

SUPER MEN BY SCOTT KOLINS

Greetings, everyone. Scott Kolins here! I've penciled lots of big guys in my comic career—plus plenty of rogues and guest stars while doing *The Flash* and too many characters to name on *Marvel Team-Up*—so I definitely have a few things to say on the topic of "super men."

You know, the big guys that not only save the day, but usually the whole world! They are core to this industry, and knowing how to draw them is essential for any mainstream comic book artist. So let's take a closer look at these *uber* heroes and how they work visually.

BIGMAN ONCAMPUS

Iconic male superheroes are generally extremely fit and impressive looking. Whether you're talking about Superman, Thor or Captain America—regardless of different outfits and even different levels of power—they all exude the same larger-than-life qualities. They look, stand and act in a fashion that impresses people and exudes confidence and trust instantaneously. It may seem obvious, but there's a lot to think about when portraying these kind of noble heroes, especially in contrast to the average man/woman or other types of heroes around them. Their builds, poise, muscles and facial features are unmistakable and recognized around the world.

SUPERMEN

BUILDINGTHE PERFECTMAN

These characters must perform incredible feats and make the impossible look natural. Their size alone must grant their actions an inherent believability. They must look like they are up to the task at hand!

In **Figure A**, we have a semi-realistic hero in proportion and overall size, yet still he's remarkable. This size may be more fitting for a street hero. Enough poise and muscle may still convince the reader this character could lift a car or swing across the city. This hero clocks in at 6' tall, about 7 heads high and 3 heads wide.

In **Figure B**, we go with a more exaggerated and obviously more powerful form. This is the standard size of a Superman or Thor. Note the larger hands and feet, large barrel chest and smaller head size. This hero is 6' 6" tall, about 8 heads high and 4 heads wide.

Figure C goes beyond the norm and becomes monstrous. This body type loses some connection to a natural human form, but can be used effectively for extreme levels of power. It's about 8' tall, about 7 1/2 heads high and 4 heads wide.
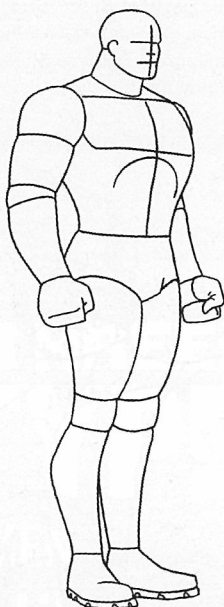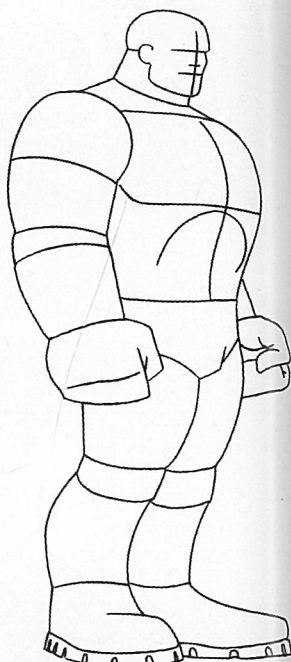
FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C

POISEDTOSTRIKE

The attitude emanating from a character's stance strongly plays into his believability and attractiveness. These characters exude grace and strength whether standing, sitting or punching.

In **Figure D**, we don't have so many heroic-looking poses. Depressing, unbalanced or feminine poses like these defeat any attempt to convince a reader of the male hero being awe-inspiring.

However, in **Figure E**, you can see the power of the pose. Energetic, balanced and masculine poses like these are convincing and bring admiration to our super men.
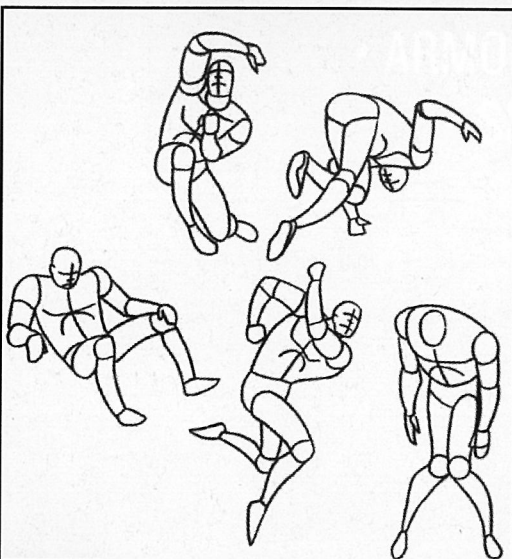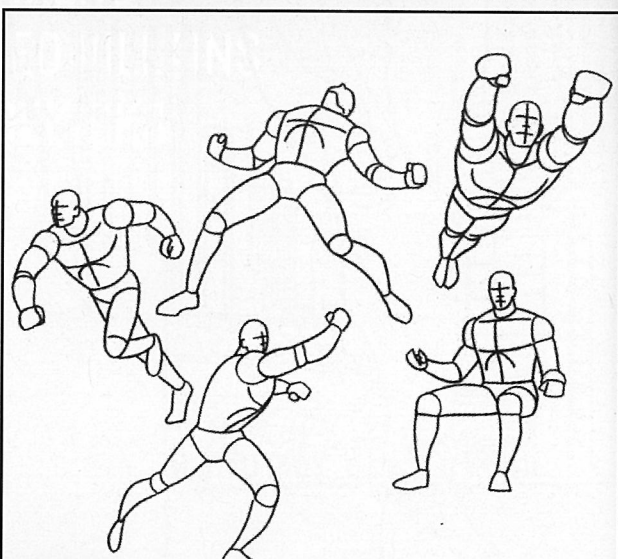
FIGURE D

FIGURE E

MUSCLELAYERS

This is icing on the cake. The detail of muscles should be sensible; enough to embolden our hero, while avoiding a skinless anatomy lesson look. Pay more attention to the muscles that are flexing or are most notable with light and shadow. Ironically, the more you know, the less you actually draw.

Figure F shows enough separation of major muscles with the hint of veins and/or striations to convince the reader of the character's power. You get the feeling of the character's strength, while still allowing for the continuance and flow of story.

Figure G is over the top. This figure becomes a sideshow freak that stops the story dead and, at best, only inspires morbid curiosity.
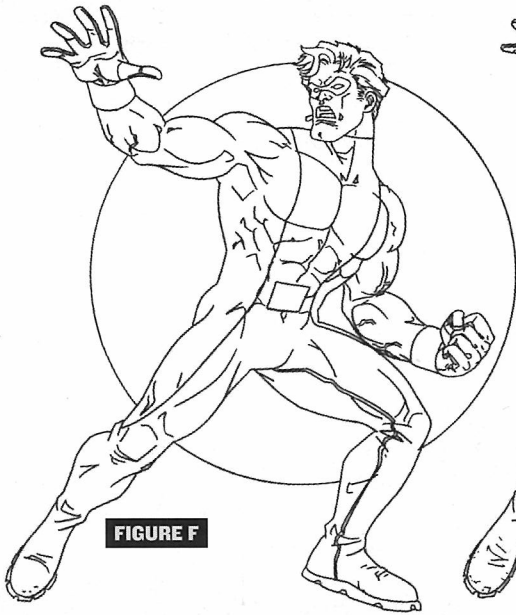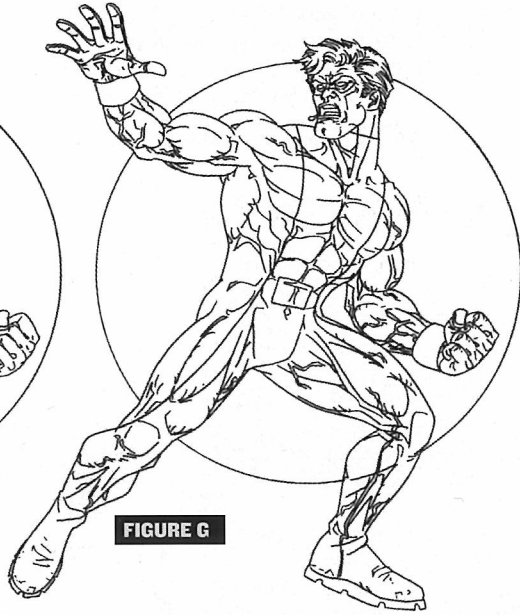
FIGURE F

FIGURE G

FACETHEFACTS

The face is a very important part of your drawing. It communicates the personality and strength of the character. It's how you really know your hero.

Let's look at **Figure H**. It's the iconic hero face—front, side and angle. Note the eye placement, size of nose, strong cheeks and chin, and slightly less forehead still allowing for a recognizable face and expressiveness.

In **Figure I**, I've drawn various typical expressions of the ideal hero. Not wild or crazy; this likeable yet determined hero rises above the chaos to show us the way.

FIGURE H

FIGURE I

THERE ARE OTHER IMPORTANT VISUAL TRAITS to the noble superhero (clothing, color scheme, powers and uniqueness), but this "how to" covers enough to get you started. The main thing to remember is to get into the character's head and heart. Once you figure out who the character is, you are sure to know how the character looks. Good luck! (w)

With work on DC's The Flash *and Marvel's* Marvel Team-Up, *Scott Kolins puts the "super" in "superhero" every chance he gets.*

SUPER WOMEN BY DON KRAMER

Some of the most popular characters in comics today are female. Maybe it has something to do with our male-dominated industry's obsession with sexy women, or perhaps our female superheroines provide untapped fertile ground for great female-driven stories. I don't know, I'm just a comic book artist. (But my bet is on the former.)

Of all the female characters out there, few are more popular than the "super woman." Strong, assertive, confident, beautiful and with the biggest bust outside of California; no wonder that character type is a favorite among comic book fandom.

As the artist on *JSA*, I've been fortunate enough to draw superpowered women for the past three years. For any aspiring artist out there, let me give you some of the finer points I've learned while drawing characters like Power Girl and Wonder Woman. Here's my first hint: It's not about the boobs. Leave that circle template alone.

So grab your pencil and let's get started.

BASICINSTINCT

In order to draw a character, you must understand his or her personality. Super women basically represent the alpha-female—strong, aggressive, confident. She becomes the center of attention in any room she enters. She is willing to take control of any situation she finds herself in. She is self-assured and confident to the point of arrogance. She fears nothing and will lead the charge into any battle. All men want her, and all women want to be her.

Physically, she is stunningly beautiful, knows it, but never feels the need to flaunt it, so ignore the more suggestive, boy-toy poses. Her stance is always poised, confident and commanding of respect (or at least your attention).

She is serious and tough while retaining her charm and sexiness. She is capable of kicking some serious tail, so she should appear in shape and muscular, though not overly muscled or she will lose some of her femininity. It can be a tough balance to strive for if you wish to maintain that powerhouse look.

With this personality in mind, a clearer picture should form as to how she should look.

RACK'EMUP

This is not your average woman, so she should not have the average body. Her body should match her personality. She should be taller, more muscular, curvier and sexier than the average female. With that in mind, yes, she is more likely to have larger breasts, as shown in the figure on the left. The middle figure represents the slightly more average superheroine, a la Black Widow or Catwoman. The figure on the right depicts the average female. She's feeling slightly inferior standing next to these women.
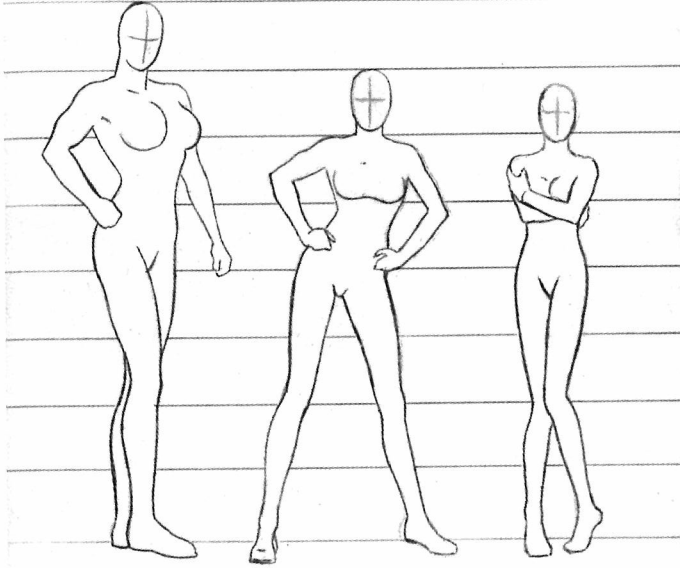
SIDEBYSIDE

For the most part, a super woman's body language will vary depending on the situation she is in. Every scene is different, and her body language and facial expressions will represent what the scene calls for.

However, the way she carries herself should reflect her personality. She should carry herself with a great sense of dignity, confidence and strength. Typically, her posture is perfect. She should always appear in control of herself, even when the situation is out of control.

Notice the figure on the left standing in a much more confident, self-assured manner than the one on the right. Her feet are shoulder-width apart, providing her with a solid base; placing her hand on her hip gives her a little attitude and an appearance of self-confidence. By contrast, the figure on the right appears much more unsure of herself standing next to such a woman. Her arms crossed in front of her and knees bowed inward give her an appearance of insecurity. It is obvious from her body language that she feels inferior next to her mentor.
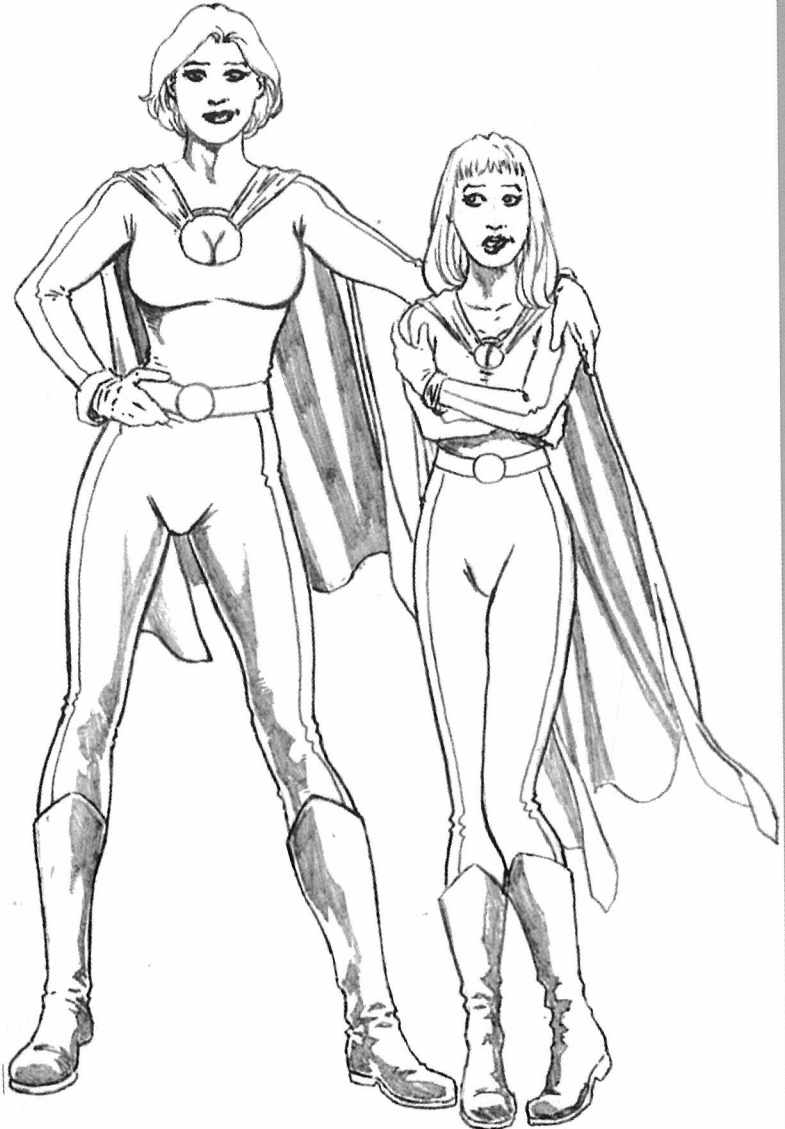
ABOUTFACE

Obviously, her face should be gorgeous and her facial expressions are indicative of the situation she is placed in. However, her typical look should represent one of self-control and seriousness (as in the face on the upper left). Her look should often exude a dignity and self-confidence to the point of arrogance, as in the face on the middle bottom. She is a proud woman, so this look is a staple of the superpowered woman.

Her facial expressions should be indicative of her self-control. Where other characters that cannot control their emotions will fly off the handle with extreme facial expressions, the alpha female does not. She maintains her composure and remains quite reserved. For example, she will show anger, but rarely will she show rage as in the two faces on the far right. It would take one serious situation to cause this woman to lose control. With this character, the turmoil is internalized and should only register slightly. There is a fine line to drawing facial expressions on such a character. Too reserved and the character becomes wooden and loses personality; too extreme and she is no longer the self-confident character we have strived to create.
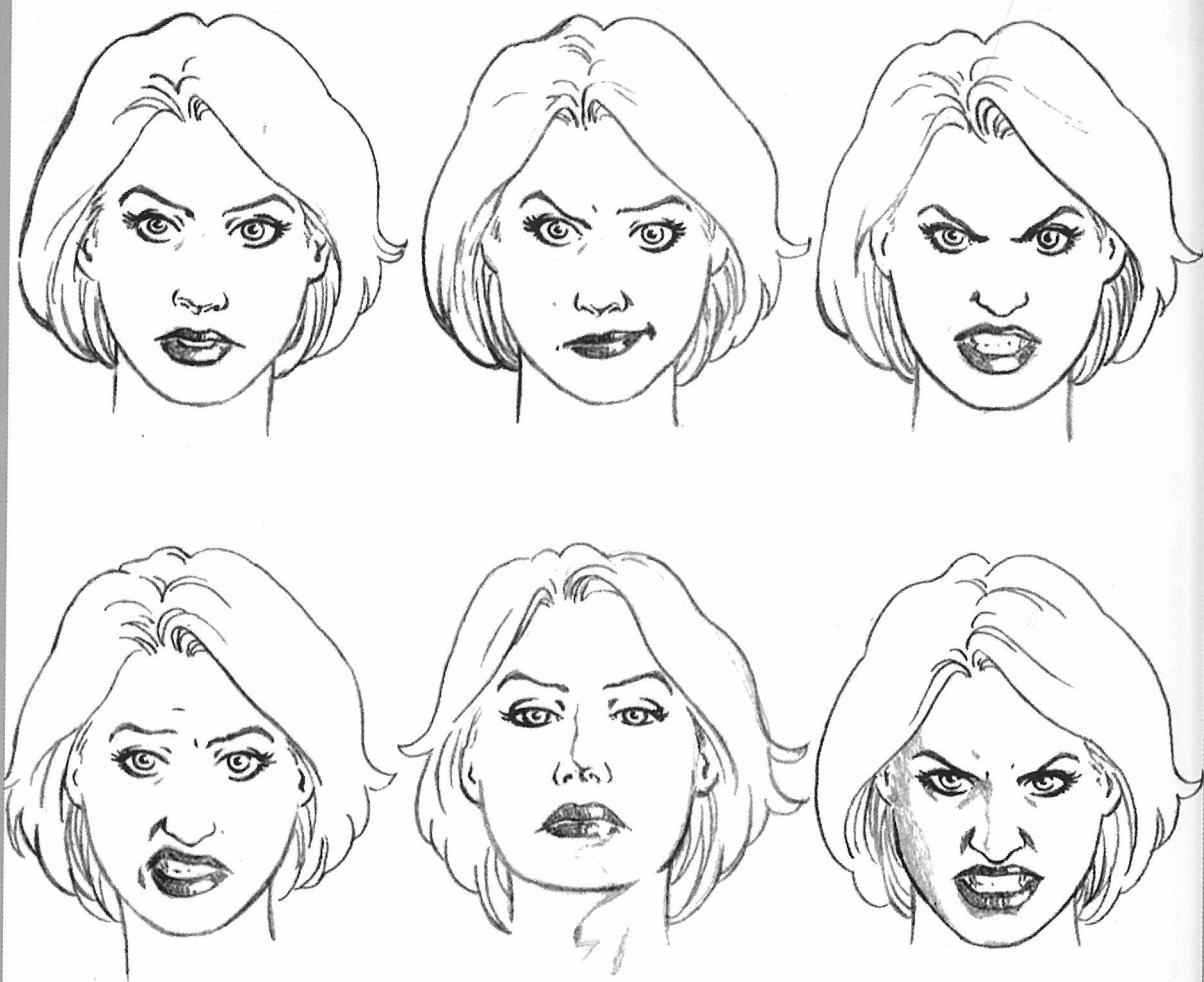
DRAWING A TYPE OF CHARACTER is not so much about drawing a type of figure as it is about drawing a type of personality. Understanding the personality is key to successfully creating a character type. Honestly, it's not about the size of the boobs. If you concentrate on that, that's all people will see. Your character will simply be a showcase for her endowments. To truly create a character, it's what's underneath that counts. Ⓦ

Don Kramer bulks up his superior portfolio, and his super women, on titles like DC's JSA and 52.

ACROBATS BY ADRIAN ALPHONA

Hi, everyone. To those who don't know me, I'm the fellow who draws *Runaways* for Marvel, a book that gives me the opportunity to draw lots of different scenes, from dialogue and romance to action and comedy. Anyways, some of that experience came in handy when the kind folks at

Wizard asked me to do a mini-tutorial on conveying the nuts and bolts of drawing the acrobatic, flexible type of hero. (Think Spider-Man.) I had a lot of fun with this lesson, and I hope a few of you might be able to pick up a few things from these three pages and apply them to your own work.

GOWITHTHEFLOW

With acrobatic, flexible heroes, it's all about exaggerated poses, so it's a good idea to practice your gestures and get a natural flow going. Try to be as quick and loose as possible and keep the focus on the pose and not the details. In the

words of Bruce Lee: "Don't think, feeeeeel."
A lean physique usually works best for the acrobatic, flexible character. But it's really up to you what body type(s) you want to work with. Here are some examples below.

ACROBATS

THE RUNNING MAN

It's best to practice from life whenever you can. Don't worry about getting the "likeness" of your subject right, just worry about making it a good drawing by itself.

This running man is just a little example of getting the most out of a pose. 'A' is looking kinda stiff, while 'C' is getting more dynamic. 'E' goes too far...maybe.

FIGURE A   **FIGURE B**   **FIGURE C**   **FIGURE D**   **FIGURE E**

EXAGGERATION AGENDA

The relationship between body language and character is very important, and from exaggerated poses come exaggerated characters. In this case, all of these guys are bouncy, energetic types. When starting off, I loosely drop very basic lines that indicate movement. I usually start with the center line, or spine. Anatomical correctness isn't something I'm thinking about yet. That will come as I "flesh out" the rest of the figure

on top of the basic lines in the same way a sculptor adds clay to an armature, only instead of clay I'm just scribbling. Again, if you worry about the details too soon, the stiffer and more unnatural your character will look. So have fun with it!

I'll be the first to admit that these examples look really, really goofy, but hopefully you can tell a lot about the characters just by looking at them and their kooky poses.

EXPRESSIONS

In keeping with the theme of exaggeration, try to be loose and whimsical when dropping the breakdowns for expressions. Just let it flow.

Not really sure how to pull off an expression? Act it out. It's fun, if a little embarrassing. A small mirror kept by your drawing table may come in handy. (I also use a mirror to look at my art as I'm working on it. It's a good way to spot mistakes.) Body and hand gestures go a long way in adding to

a facial expression, as they help to hammer a point home.

Of course, if you're working with a script, you need to keep it in mind. You don't want to go over the top if the story calls for subtlety. The goal is for people to feel the mood/vibe of a scene without necessarily having to read what the characters are saying. What exactly did Super Drama Gossip Queen whisper to Blind Bunny Rabbit Ninja Man? I have no idea, but he doesn't look too happy.

I REALLY HOPE I didn't sound like some know-it-all, especially since I'm not exactly a veteran at this. But, hopefully there was a little tidbit of info here that you can use to make your acrobats leap off the page.

Adrian Alphona has stretched his creative muscle on Marvel's Runaways *and Udon's* Street Fighter.

COSTUMED VIGILANTES BY SCOTT McDANIEL

My name is Scott McDaniel. I'm not a dark, driven vigilante, but I live vicariously like one every day as a comic book artist! My 10 years of experience drawing the adventures of *Batman*, *Nightwing*, *Robin* and *Daredevil* have given me an exhaustive, absolutely authoritative knowledge of the costumed vigilante superhero. In order to make the world a safer place, and to better equip you to design and draw these types of characters, I will pass on all I've learned to *you*.

BATTOBASICS

When we say, "costumed vigilante hero," we're talking about the type of character of whom Batman is the archetype. The vigilante hero's mission? The self-appointed authority to capture, judge and/or punish criminals. Discover the particular mission of your vigilante hero and the type of criminals he will likely face, and you will begin to get a handle on how he should look, behave, move and fight.

Generally, costumed vigilante characters can share similar qualities. They take tactical advantage of the night (that's when most monsters come out) and of their operating environment (from city to jungle). They possess some form of combat skill or training, whether police, military or some other form of martial arts. Because of combat requirements, they usually vary in size from a boxing heavyweight to an Olympic gymnast. They are usually expert in the use of various weapons, either lethal or non-lethal. They are most often serious-minded, if not single-minded, in their mission. But these similarities are just guides, not limitations. Within this set of similarities, a great variety can emerge.
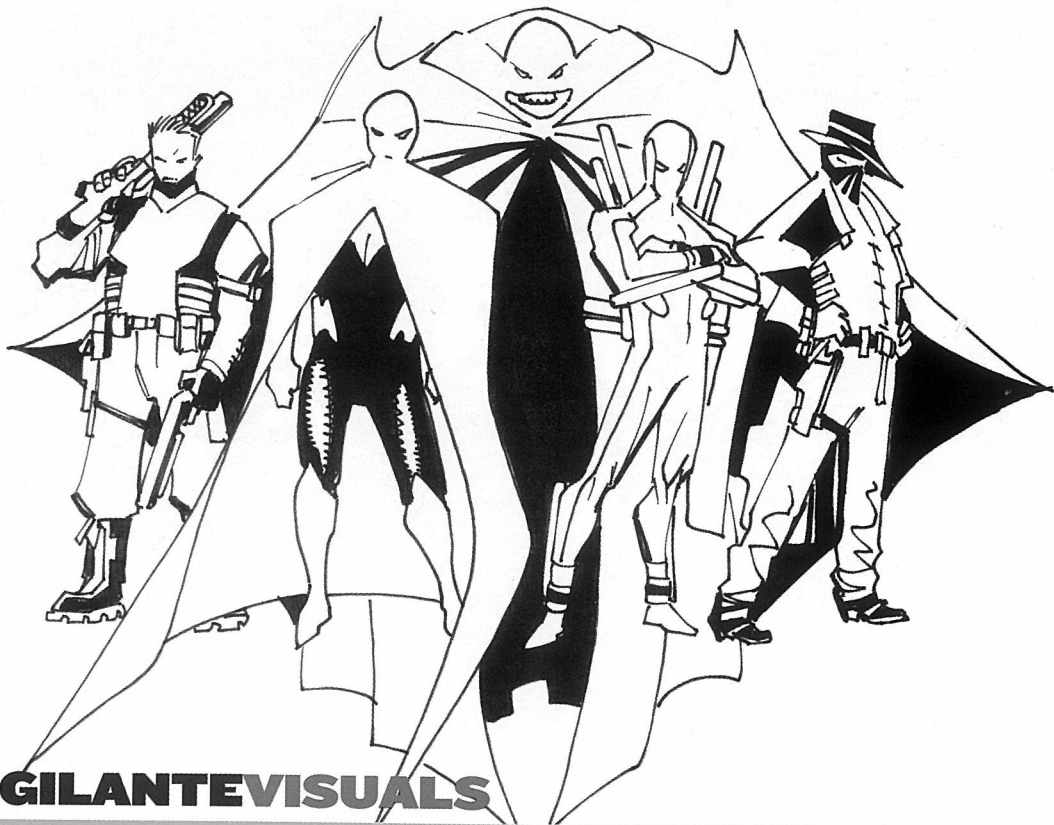

VIGILANTEVISUALS

There is no rule that says, "All vigilante heroes look like *this*." A vigilante hero can take any form: massively muscled or sleekly built, with or without a cape, with or without weapons, with or without a mask, with or without a costume. There is no rule for this archetype.

What matters are his *motivations* and his *targets*. Let his form follow his *function*. You control the creative muses and do purposeful visual design work by making reasoned choices, then evaluating those choices. Ask yourself a few questions about your character's motivations and his targets, and your answers will lead you to an appropriate costume.

EXTERNAL MOTIVATIONS

Does he veil himself from the population? Does he make himself a deterrent by being publicly seen? Is his costume symbolic or functional? Does he wear a cape to conceal and change his contour, or does he rely on acrobatics or a fighting style that prohibits a cape? Does he stick out in a crowd, or can he blend in and disappear among the masses? Is his costume meant to scare the pants off his adversaries, or is it meant to be efficiently utilitarian? Does your character employ modern, lethal weapons, or ancient, non-lethal, martial-arts style weapons? Is your vigilante a man or a woman? Is he old or young?
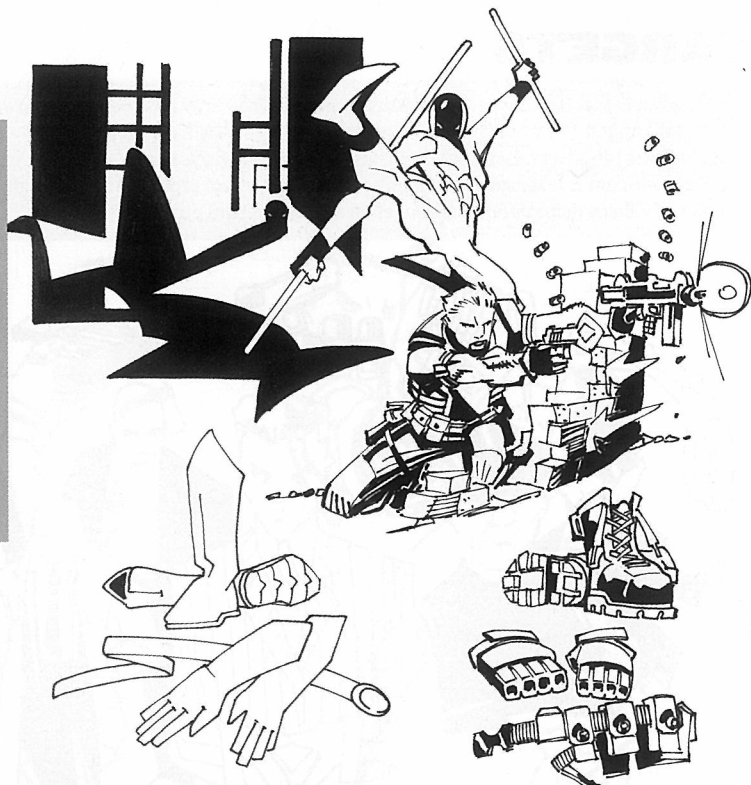
INTERNAL MOTIVATIONS

Is your vigilante hero out to capture, judge or punish criminals? Does being a vigilante offer your character some sinister satisfaction, or is it a source of pain and moral/ethical turmoil? Is his attitude emotionally charged (obsessed, passionate, sullen and/or threatening) or emotionally neutral (clinical, business-like, precise)? Does your character employ physically savage and brutal tactics, or does he act with precise and non-lethal methods? Answering all these questions helps flesh out your costumed vigilante.

COSTUMED VIGILANTES

TARGETS

Will he face street criminals, criminal masterminds, criminal kingpins, international criminals or super-villains? Are his adversaries armed with knives, guns, rocket launchers, laser guns or superpowers? The choice of villains helps determine your choice of hero.

By now, your character is pretty solid. You know how he sees the world, you know his mission, you know his adversaries, and you know what he looks like and how he fights. Now bring him to life on the page.
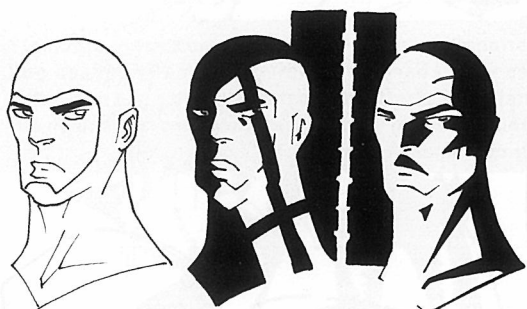
LIGHTING

Almost by definition, these guys operate at night. Take advantage of the tremendous variety of light and shadow available in the environments (streetlights, spotlights, moonlight, fires, etc). Use light and shadow to create intensity, fear and mystery.

COMPOSITION

These vigilante guys are in charge. Take advantage of shot composition to make this point. A high position is *dominant* (see the check-marked illustration); you should avoid a low position, which is interpreted as *submissive*.

BODYTALK

These guys are warriors constantly ready for battle. They must look balanced and ready to explode into action at any moment. Their actions should be exaggerated and balanced and fluid. Use actions that take advantage of the third dimension, popping out of the paper and toward the reader (i.e., the check-marked illustration).
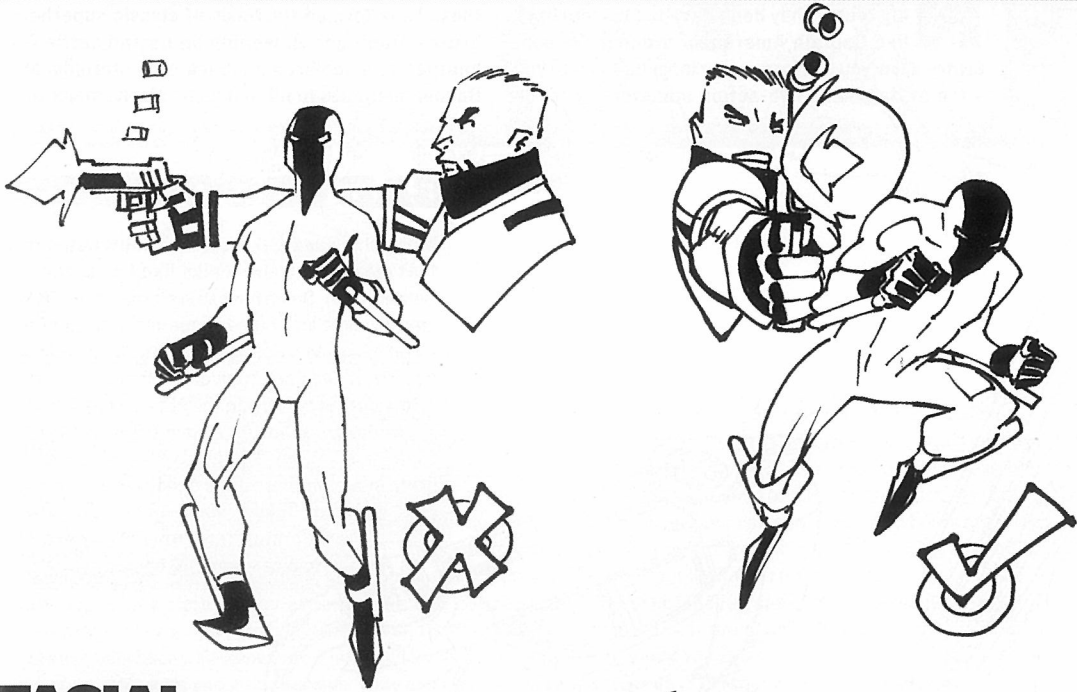
FACIAL MANIPULATION

A vigilante is a person who can feel the full range of emotions and thus present the full range of facial expressions, and you must be capable of rendering them all. Even masked characters must emote, so feel free to take artistic license when needed to melodramatically manipulate the eye and mouth areas of the mask to convey the desired emotion. As you may have guessed, some expressions will be far more common than others.
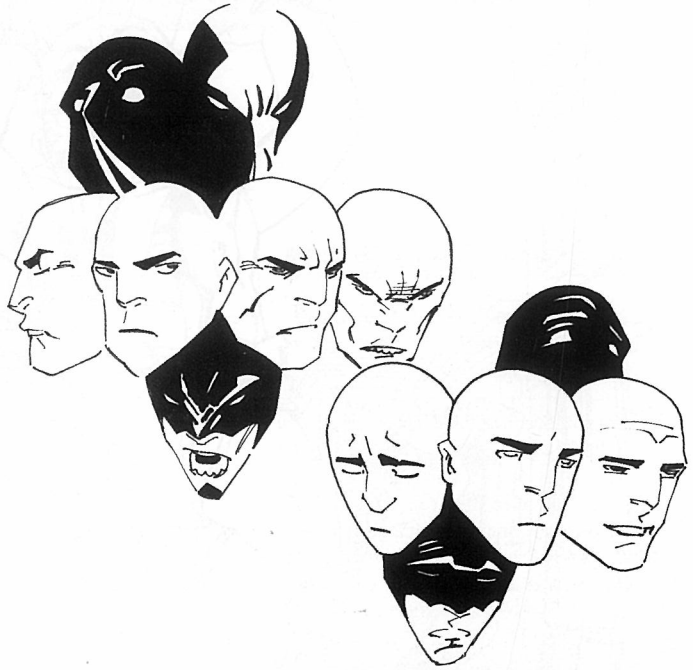
I HOPE THIS LESSON has better equipped you to design and draw cool, costumed vigilante heroes. When properly applied, these techniques can make almost any character cool!

Titles such as DC's Nightwing and Marvel's Daredevil spotlight Scott McDaniel's talented use of shadowy vigilantes.
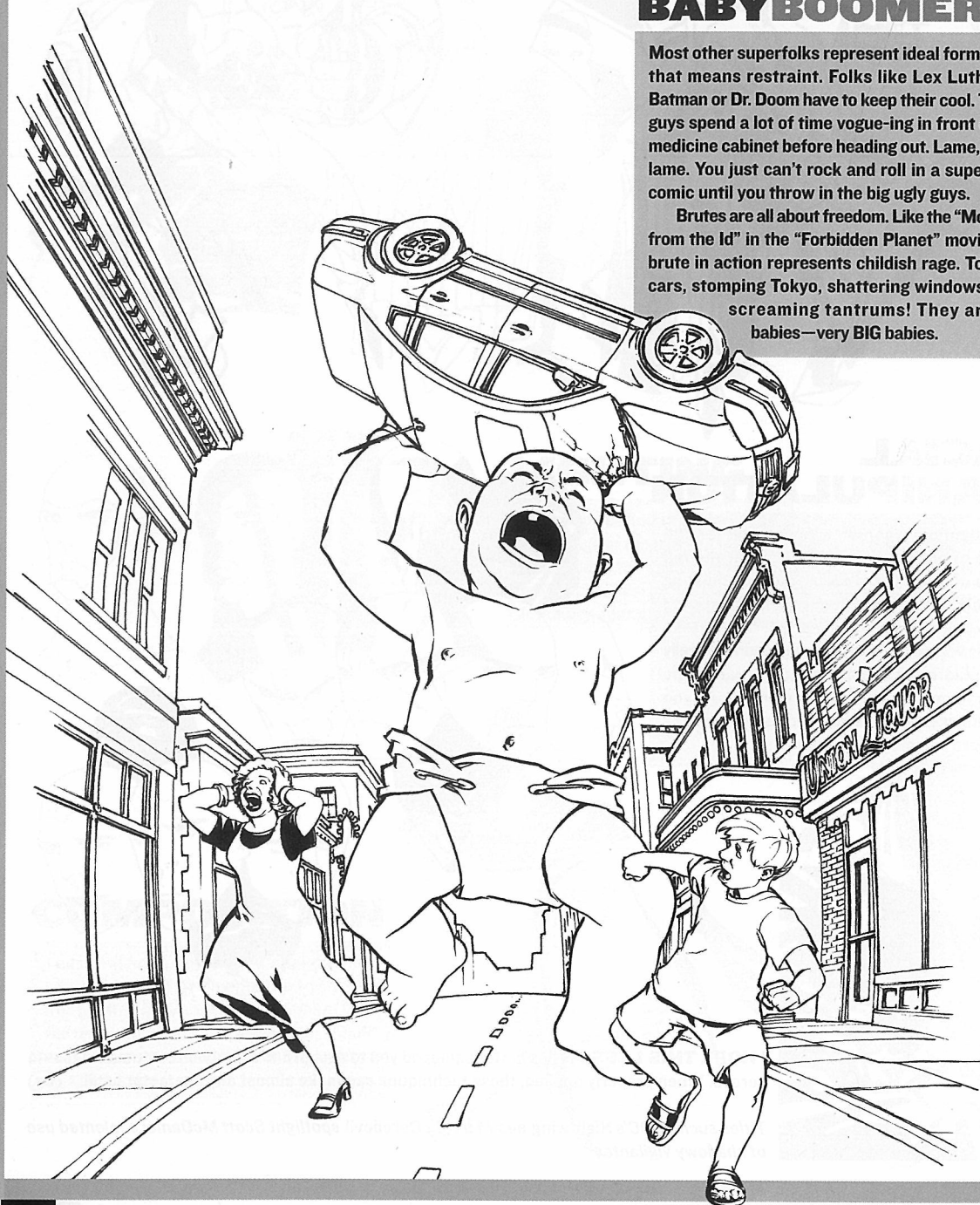
BRUTES
BY GENE HA

N o superhero is more fun to draw than the big brute. They don't have to look idealized like Captain America or Wonder Woman. Brutes allow you to express your inner quirks. Are you a fan of Japanese live-action monsters? Female body builders? Do you collect old toasters? All of these have formed the basis of classic superhero brutes. Don't get all wobbly on us and settle for another oddly colored linebacker on steroids. Mr. Banner continues to fill that niche nicely, thank you.

BABYBOOMERS

Most other superfolks represent ideal forms, and that means restraint. Folks like Lex Luthor or Batman or Dr. Doom have to keep their cool. Those guys spend a lot of time vogue-ing in front of the medicine cabinet before heading out. Lame, lame, lame. You just can't rock and roll in a superhero comic until you throw in the big ugly guys.

Brutes are all about freedom. Like the "Monster from the Id" in the "Forbidden Planet" movie, the brute in action represents childish rage. Tossing cars, stomping Tokyo, shattering windows with screaming tantrums! They are big babies—very BIG babies.

BEAUTYINTHEBEAST?

The brute is the most varied of all the superhero archetypes. They range from big, Jack Kirby-style reptile monsters to talking gorillas to cigar-chomping grumps to sculpted body builders (the "Governator" fits into all of these categories). It's hard to find inviolable rules for them. But even female brutes tend to have exaggerated secondary male characteristics: pronounced brows and jaws, broad shoulders, large arms and hands and powerful thick limbs. Play around with the concept of "masculine": hairy and rough, perhaps even flinty or scaled. Fists like ham hocks. Caveman brow lines and knuckle-dragging slouches. Beer guts and grease stains. They can make Stanley Kowalski (from "A Streetcar Named Desire") look effete.

We tend to think of brutes bursting with huge ripped muscles a la the Hulk, but some of them have no muscles at all. The Big Guy (of *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* fame) looks like a soup can collection, and I defy anyone to show me Ben Grimm's *palmaris longus* since he got hit by them cosmic rays. Don't limit your imagination.

Part of the fun can come from mixing the brutish with the delicate. A brute doesn't have to prove his manliness. What fun would the Beast be if he didn't read Shakespeare? And Big Barda is much man and much woman.

FASHIONSHOW

Costumes for the modern superbrute swing from slick science-hero tights to street clothes. You have to ask yourself what you want to emphasize.

Usually you want to show off a lot of skin. Let your audience see those giant arms and toes like a row of bricks. If you've played with textures (like fur or stone) this is doubly important. Shirts and shoes are not required. Capes are positively rare. Some brutes don't wear any clothes at all. What costume there is should accentuate the shoulders and fists. Minimize the hips: The Thing's shorts make the rest of him look bigger.

Because of their poor impulse control, it can be fun to dress brutes as overgrown kids. They can do what they want. You know the joke: What do you call a 500-pound gorilla wearing a diaper? "Sir."

BIGPICTURE

All the normal rules of comics storytelling apply to your basic brute, but they have a special requirement: You need to make them look big. The easiest trick is to use a worm's-eye perspective, as if the viewer were especially tiny (**Figure A**).

Create a sense of scale. Put them next to smaller objects and characters, like a Hummer H2 or broken rubble (**Figure B**). Let them loom over other characters (**Figure C**). They should stick up a little higher in the panel than everyone else. This can be tricky if they're in the background or in a hole, but careful use of camera angles can pull it off.

Remember, if you stick your brute in the midst of large scenery, he'll look small (**Figure D**). But if he's supposed to feel small, then go ahead!

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C

FIGURE D
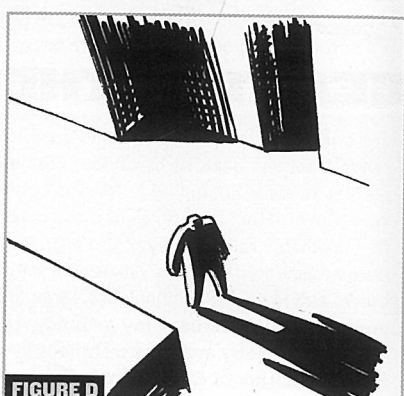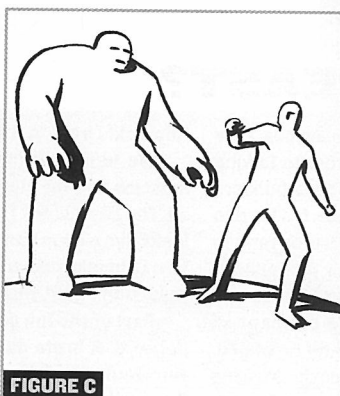
WILDTHING

Like other superheroes, brutes move in an exaggerated manner. They just exaggerate more than everyone else. Most heroes need to look graceful and in control, with their feet "*en pointe*" like a ballet dancer. Brutes can swing about more wildly than them.
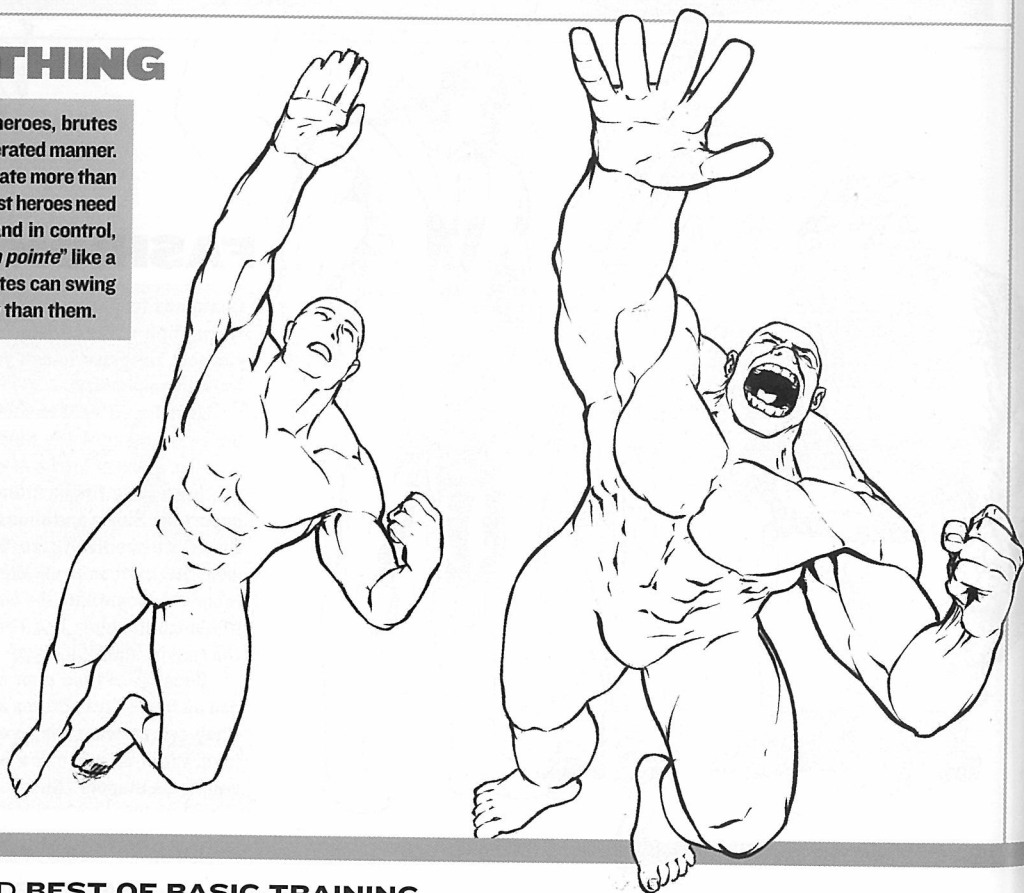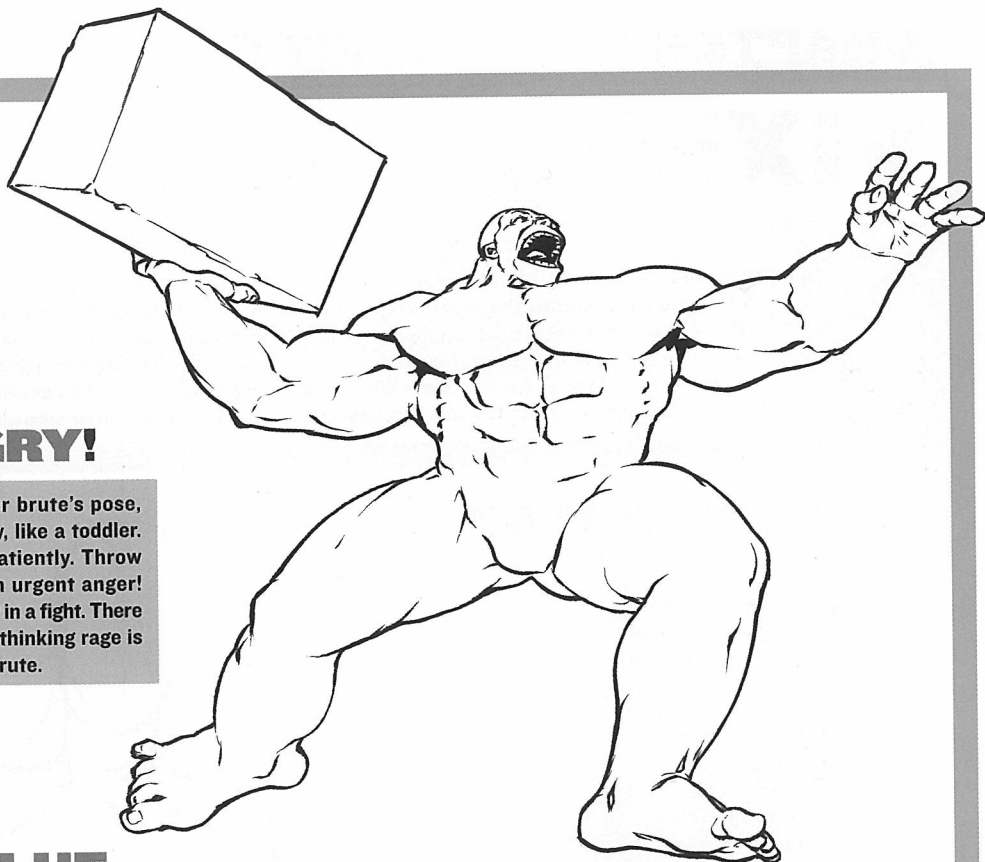
GETANGRY!

When you lay out your brute's pose, place the feet clumsily, like a toddler. Splay the fingers impatiently. Throw them off balance with urgent anger! Brutes lose all restraint in a fight. There are exceptions, but unthinking rage is what distinguishes a brute.

FACEVALUE

The same rules apply to brutes' faces. These are not wily tricksters or dissemblers. The brute's emotions are obvious and intense. It helps to show a lot of teeth: big frowns, glaring smiles, snarling screams. If you've got teeth that big, you want to show them off!

HOPEFULLY this has gotten you off to a good start. For more information on drawing big—and little—guys, read through the rest of the chapters on superhero archetypes.

Beyond that, remember to eat your vegetables and study lots of old Kirby comics. Get drawing! Ⓦ

Gene Ha creates brilliant brutes, and characters of all other shapes and sizes, for such noted works as Alan Moore's Top 10 *and* Top 10: The Forty-Niners.

VIXENS BY FRAZER IRVING

The most difficult thing about drawing vixens (for me, at least) is getting the *balance* right. What balance? The balance between the normal and the "super normal." As with all comics characters, vixens—from Catwoman and Harley Quinn to Black Widow and Elektra—are based partly on reality (i.e., arms, legs, head, etc.) and partly on fantasy (idealized physique, impossible poses, etc.). For me, the balance has to be just right to prevent your vixens from being either a) some average chick in badly fitting spandex or b) a grossly distorted and profoundly disgusting mixture of balloons and cotton candy. Trust me, you can draw your super-babe without over-compensating.

THE WRONG WAY

All things have a grounding in reality, which means elbows must bend properly, breasts must hang naturally and faces must contort realistically. Here's an example of what *not* to draw when it comes to body type (too many muscles), chest size (too big) and face (too much rendering).

Remember, women are not just men with boobs: Muscles are different on the ladies. When you come to drawing a part with pronounced muscles, try to be subtle about it, as women's muscles are covered by a softer sheet of skin and fat which lessens the lumps 'n' bumps of manly muscles. Also, super-ladies are fit from all the super-antics they get up to, so keep 'em lean, without any big biceps or thighs.

Also, avoid over-enlarged breasts on super-women. If you have trouble with getting it right, then I suggest you try looking around you and drawing from life. It's the best way to get the accuracy.
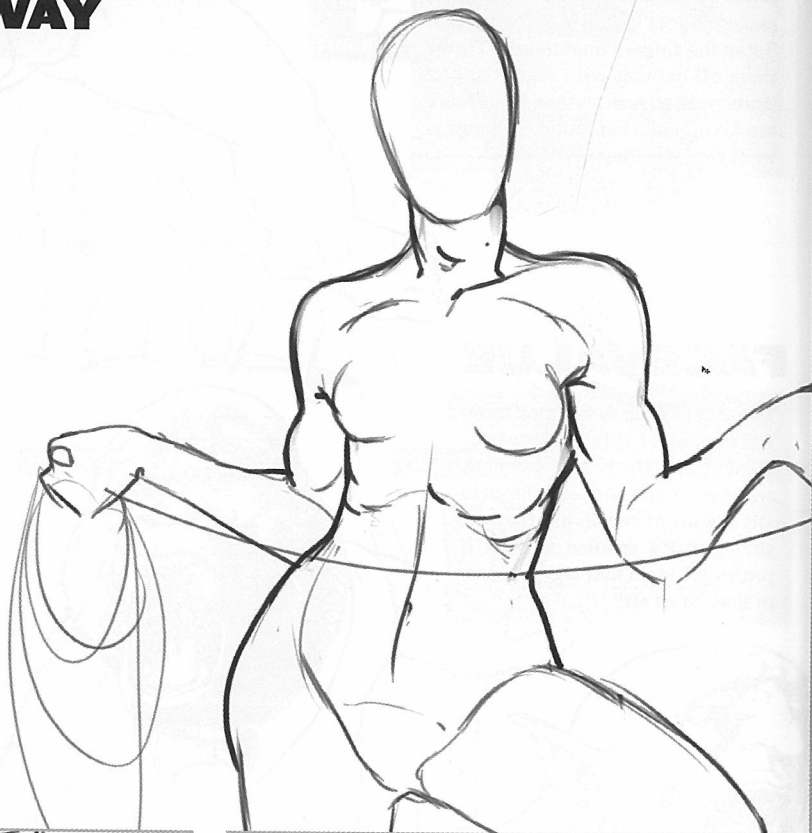
THE RIGHT WAY

It's all in the eyes, baby: Well, not strictly speaking, but the slinky moon-babe you wanna draw will be *far* more convincing, *even if the anatomy is a little off*, if she has attitude in her expression. Art just imitates life, man. Avoid macho expressions and, like I said, look around you and draw what you see. Women have subtle faces, so avoid too many lines or lumps. If you can, just do the eyes, mouth and nostrils and that will be enough to convey any emotion.

Compare this set of illustrations to the last set. Notice the breasts are more realistic, the face cleaner and thus prettier, and the pose is leaner and more athletic.
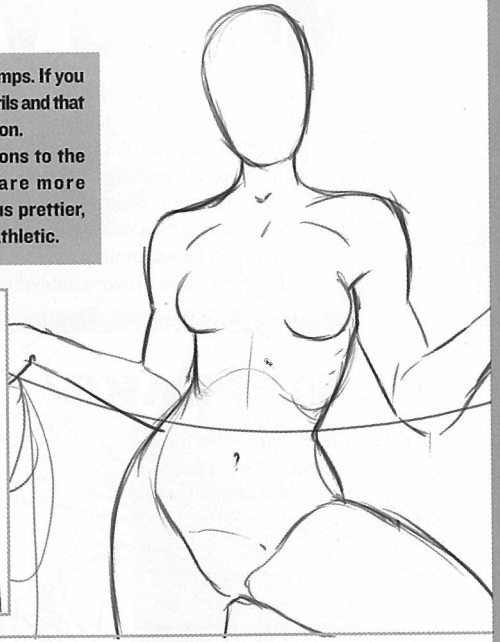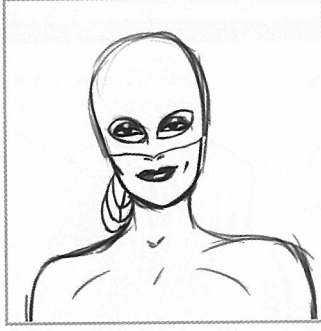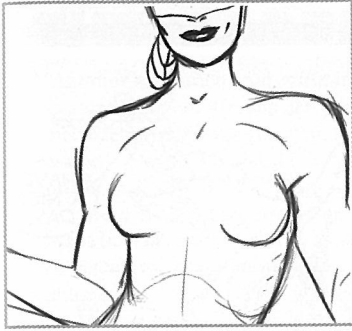
CLOTHES MAKE THE WOMAN

Slinky sexy super-chicas need to look good, but that doesn't mean they have to look like they're at the beach, right? Any costume can be sexy as long as it suits the personality of the character. Looking at fashion around you can give you ideas for what makes a woman radiate sexiness as well as confidence and power...three things our vixen needs.

Graphic patterns and shapes work better than vast expanses of exposed flesh. *No one* fights evil in a thong. Period. Ditto for high heels. Hair is cool, but remember these women are designed for *action*, not posing, so long flowing hair is likely to get caught up. Best stick with hairstyles that athletes use or masks.

THE BEST THING is to take from reality and just spice it up a little bit...this way you get a plausible figure, yet with those super-characteristics which justify all the spandex and swinging-from-rooftops that we love. Ⓦ

Frazer Irving's sexy and shadowy women can be found in his work on Marvel's Iron Man: Inevitable *and DC's* Klarion the Witch-Boy.

F.05
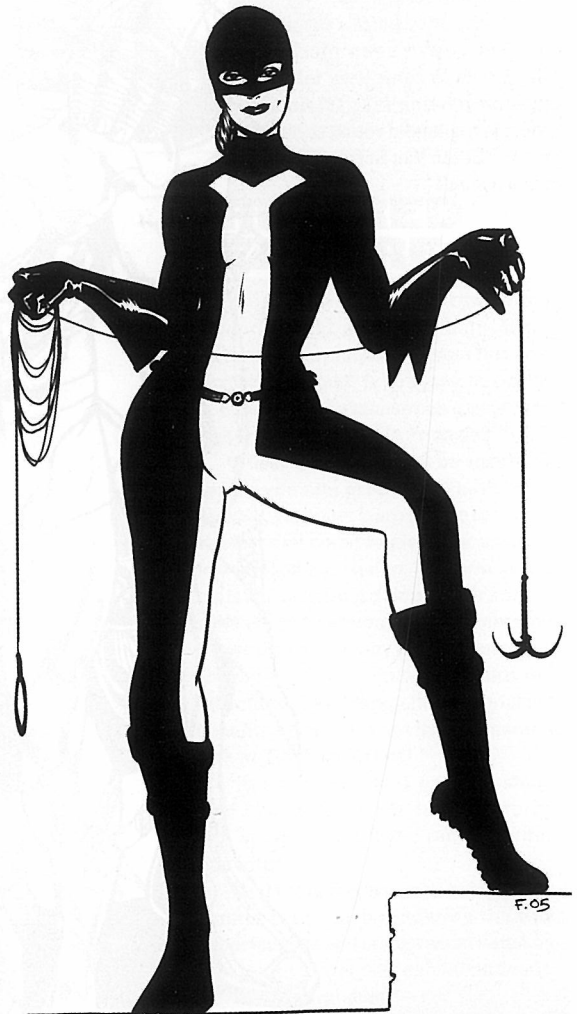
ARMORED VILLAINS BY ETHAN VAN SCIVER

I've been instructed by dark and powerful secret factions deep within Wizard Entertainment to pass along any knowledge or information I've gathered that may help you, the reader, in your efforts to draw armored characters. We'll concentrate on villains, but it can easily be adapted to heroes, too.

I myself have drawn somewhere between many and absolutely no armored characters in my short career, but because I fear for the safety of family, friends and myself, I will fake it and hope it edifies and enlightens one of us. Better yet, allow me to use someone who knows all there is to know about armored supervillains as a stand-in and a mouthpiece.

Meet your Doom. Doctor Doom.

DOOMSPEAKS

"T'would appear that you've been cored by Iron Man, my good fellow. Those repulsor rays are unkind to ambitious young career criminals that go about unprotected by a suit of molecularly aligned, crystallized iron over a base of titanium nitride. Or bony exoskeletons. It may be time for a redesign.

"Fortunately, pencils and pigma markers have been placed in the hands of some very talented up-and-coming artists. Among them is a splendid young scribbler named Ethan Van Sciver. Shall we have a look?"

HAVE A NICE DAY!
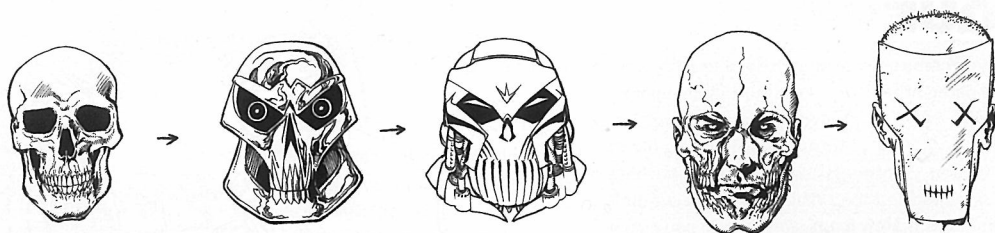
THEHEADPIECE

"Another man once said, 'Criminals are a cowardly and superstitious lot.' Heroes are worse. In choosing a head-piece design, start with an elemental symbol of fear or evil. A wolf? A snake? Richard Nixon? The pagan images of a tattoo parlor will present many intriguing options.

"Here are the very frightening bones that are located in the human head: a skull. By simplifying, caricaturing and rethinking the shape and the lines, one can invent countless unique and yet familiar designs to terrify simpletons such as Captain America. It's plainly obvious that Doom's own mask was loosely designed with a skull in mind. Doom terrifies. So can you."

ARMORED TEXTURE

"Textures are very important when rendering your armored villain. What horror are you unleashing upon this tiny, pissant little world? Is he a galactic would-be conqueror or a monstrous crustacean man from the Bermuda Triangle?

"These questions must be answered before you can proceed. Whatever is decided, you must learn how to use light, shadow and detail to give your drawing texture and dimension. The arm at the top is highly reflective chrome. This offers a pleasant diversion, because chrome allows the opportunity for an industrious and daring artist to draw clear, mirrored reflections. Besides potential storytelling benefits, reflections are fun to draw and look at. Do them justice!

"The second arm is brushed steel, kind of a matte-finish. It looks sturdy and artificial. Limit the rendering for this effect.

"And the last arm is rock or bone. You cannot ever finish rendering the tiny imperfections and cracks when detailing this texture. You can only abandon it. Have fun. Be random."

UNIQUE VISION

"Whatever you come up with should be uniquely yours. Try to avoid using other armored supervillain designs for reference; rather, go straight to primary sources. Your imagination, your nightmares, the crazy ideas you have at 4 a.m.—nothing is out of bounds, nothing is too outrageous, and everything is worth a quick experimental sketch. How many sketches do you guess Doom did before he came up with his finalized Doombot design? None! He delegated to punks like you! So what else have you got?!"
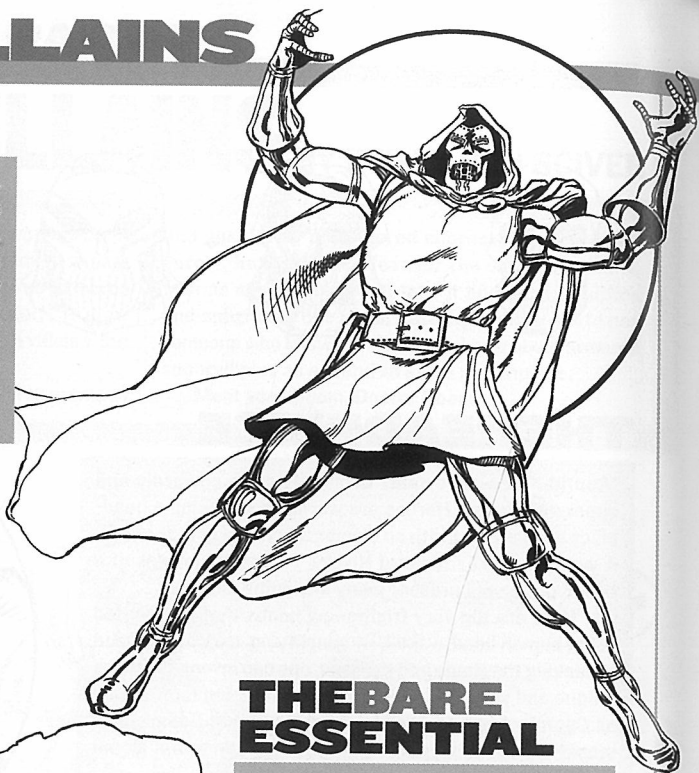
THE BARE ESSENTIAL

"Finally, the best designed villains are the ones that can be stripped down to bare essentials and still be recognizable. A silhouette. A few lines. When you can immediately identify a character from his outline, you know you have something. Would you not guess Doom from his fearsome shadow?" ⓦ

> QUICK, WHAT DOES THIS *RORSCHACH* INKBLOT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

> *REALLY?* SCHEDULE THREE MORE APPOINTMENTS WITH MY RECEPTIONIST AT ONCE!

> HOW ABOUT WE LOOK IN ON OUR REDESIGNED SUPERVILLAIN--

> WHAT TH--?!

> ETHAN WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION.

> HEY, WAS THAT THE GUY FROM *NIP/TUCK'?*

> ...TIME... WASTED!!!

Ethan Van Sciver's artwork shines like armored warriors in such titles as Harris' Cyberfrog, *Marvel's* New X-Men *and DC's* Green Lantern *and* Superman/Batman.

SIDEKICKS BY TODD NAUCK

Holy child endangerment laws! When Robin first premiered in *Detective Comics* #38 (April 1940), sales shot through the roof. The sidekick brought a lighter side to the dark, edgier hero. It was a tension that played off like yin and yang.

I've spent a majority of my comics career drawing teenage super heroes, most notably in my run on DC Comics' *Young Justice*. That comic featured a team full of sidekicks!

So what does it take to be a sidekick? I'm here to walk you through some of the basics of the sidekick archetype: body type, poses, facial expressions and costuming. Quickly, chums! To the drawing table!

BODYTYPE

When I approach the design of a stereotypical sidekick, I think lean, but there's some muscle too. Gotta pack *some* power when fighting guys three times your size!

As for height, most sidekicks run from 5'1" to 5'7", generally. There's a hope and enthusiasm conveyed in their posture. Chest out, shoulders back and a wide stance can portray a youthful confidence, such as with our rough sketch of our new character (left) and the finished piece (right).
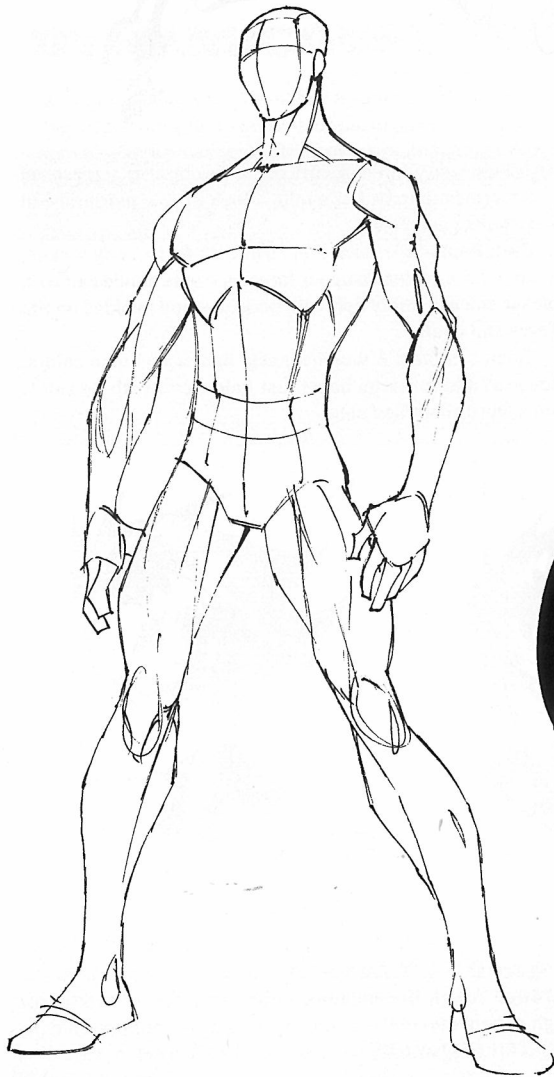
DOUBLE TROUBLE

As we look at the sidekick next to the hero, there's a noticeable difference in height, muscle mass and stance. Drawing a teen sidekick isn't about drawing a "smaller adult." The sidekick, though muscular, is not quite as pumped as the hero. Keep him lean. The head size would be proportionate between adult and teen, with bodies to match. Note in the stance that the hero has more bulk to move, while the sidekick is in a more youthful pose to complement his build.

It's been a classic standby for hero and sidekick to share a theme in regards to abilities and costumes. Where the hero has a darker more intricate costume, the sidekick is approached with more simplicity. Let's take a look at this pairing I call Dark Raptor and Talon.

Dark Raptor costume: Full cowl with mask, longer cape, darker colors, gloves to upper forearm, boots at mid calf with thicker soles, a utility belt with pouches, and buckles on the gloves and boots.

Talon costume: A domino mask, lighter costume colors, gloves at mid forearm, boots just below calf with no soles, and a more simplified belt.


FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Sidekicks bring a wide-eyed optimism and I like to play up on that. A cocky, confident smile gives us a "ready to take on the world" feel (**Figure A**). But when times get dark, he's not afraid to grit his teeth and show his anger (**Figure B**). As Talon's perceptions of the world change through tough life lessons fighting crime or awkward high school moments, a look of thoughtful confusion can say a lot (**Figure C**).

POSE AND MOVEMENT

I like to use a lot of foreshortening with teen heroes. This conveys a lot of energy and movement. Throw the fist out into the foreground or have the legs move way back. Let the character move with as much energy as you can muster. Who wants to see Talon put on a costume and stroll into battle? Don't be afraid to experiment and let the character come to life!
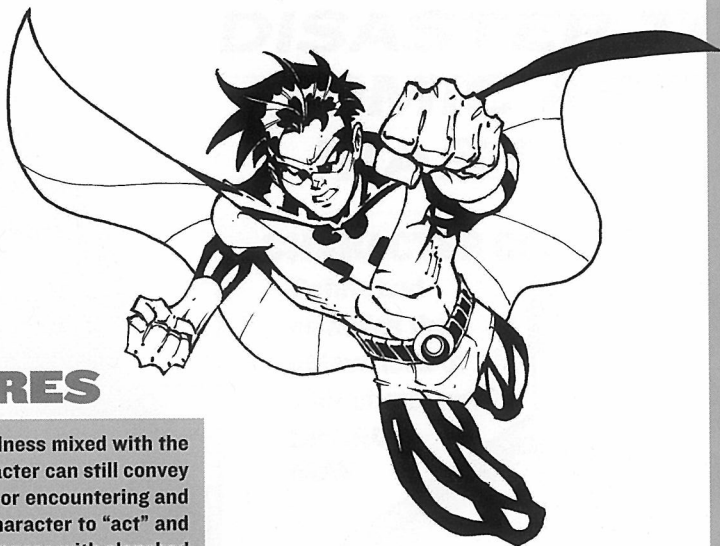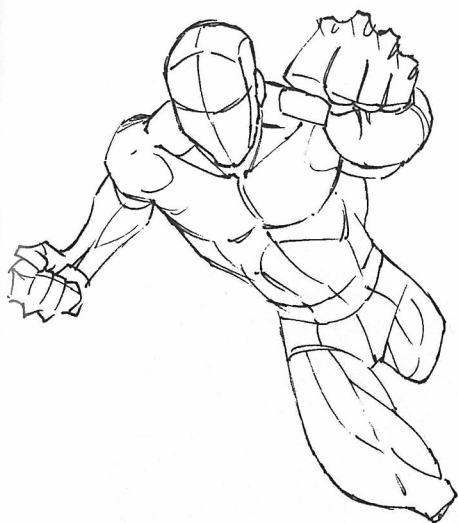
DYNAMIC GESTURES

More acrobatic poses can give a sense of playfulness mixed with the heroics. Even when standing or posing, the character can still convey movement. Consider what the sidekick is seeing or encountering and put his reaction into the pose. This allows the character to "act" and gives the reader more than an overused standing pose with clenched fists and gritted teeth. Just take your time and think through the action.
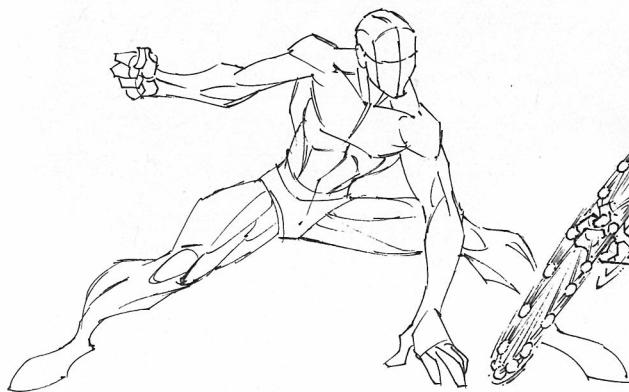
THE SIDEKICK CAN BRING FUN AND A LIGHTER SIDE that can contrast against the darker, grimmer hero. Don't be afraid to allow that tension to spark interesting stories and visuals. And when creating the classic teen sidekick, keep these pointers in mind: lean but not overly muscular, simplify the costume and be expressive and energetic in poses and facial features. Now you've got a character ready to bust some heads while he worries about his girl troubles! Ⓦ

Known for his sidekick characters in titles such as DC's Young Justice *and* Teen Titans Go!*, Todd Nauck has never been on our second-string bench.*