



IndieCreator: Insights from a Newbie Comic Creator & Other Industry Pros

This is a series of bi-weekly columns by Bob Heske @ Heske Horror, creator of [The Night Projectionist](#), [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), and [2012: Final Prayer](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.

11 Questions with “Working Title’s” Alex Rodrik @ Comics Bulletin

Alex Rodrik writes one of the most enjoyable and thoughtful columns in the comic industry called *Working Title* at www.comicsbulletin.com. He’s a man who loves his comics and, if they fall short of expectations, is not afraid to give them a good spanking. I asked Alex to tell us what makes him tick – what turned him onto the comic genre – and here’s his (as usual) eloquent response:

I’ve loved comics for as long as I can remember. But there are two distinct moments that I remember vividly that really made me decide that this was the way for me to go.

First was at a showing of the original [Spider-Man](#) film (2002). I must have seen that movie 10 times in the theatre, dragging someone new with me each time. And I’ll never forget sitting in the very last row against the wall and as the credits began to roll I propped myself up on the head of the seat, leaned my back flat against the wall, and kept myself to the wall with just my finger tips. Now, I was doing this just to entertain some friends, but as I’m looking down on the theatre this little boy, he must have been maybe 6, looks up and spots me on the wall. The way he lit up changed my life forever. He froze and stared right at me. He wouldn’t move. So I did the only fair thing I could think of. I nodded my head, confirming his belief, and put my finger over my mouth, asking him to keep my secret. That boy shook his head with an affirmation so powerful that I could see the magic in his eyes.



*The second was the day that I saw the trailer for [The Dark Knight](#) which unveiled Heath Ledger as the Joker – standing in the middle of the street, head cocked to the side. There was something about that moment that just – click! **On.** I watched that trailer on a loop for nearly an hour. It just spoke to me and ever since then I’ve ate, drank, slept, dreamt, and breathed comics.*

I feel that those moments really encapsulate everything I love about comics and just plain fantasy.

Now that you’ve got a glimpse into the man, let’s get into his head. Here’s our interview...

1. How did you come up with the "Working Title" moniker for your column at Comics Bulletin? And who did the nifty design for your column banner?

(ALEX:) The title, comically enough, was actually the “working title” for the column. When I had originally decided that I wanted to move forward with a regular column I had been batting around a few names, throwing “Working Title” on the column in the interim and, honestly, it just kind of stuck.



I am proud to say that it was I who made the banner. Thanks for callin' it nifty! The idea came about from watching an episode of *Lie to Me*. There was a shot of a wall full of photos of expressions, subtleties...and I became completely enamored with how unapologetically clinical, technical, and raw the pictures were. The style captured that unguarded feel I wanted for the tone of the column. So a few concepts later, and I found "the one."

2. You do a lot of research for your column when others in the industry often provide knee-jerk reactions or e-mail their columns in. For example, for your review of Marvel's *THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ*, you not only read their adaptation but you also went back to re-read the L. Frank Baum classic. And you were the only reviewer who took the time to critique EVERY STORY in my 2012: *Final Prayer end times anthology*. How much time do you spend on each column?

(ALEX:) Each column takes me about a week to write. I make it a point to thoroughly research what I read before I commit my critiques to print. As a columnist, I find it's important to remember that the people whose work you're talking about will probably read what you put out there. More importantly, if you make negative remarks about their work they may get, let's just say . . . upset. And, as I've had the "pleasure" of experiencing firsthand, they WILL email you or confront you face-to-face and let you know what they think of your opinion. For better or for worse.

I believe that the most important thing to consider is that everyone you critique deserves an explanation of your criticism. The Internet tends to make giants out of ants, and people will say anything with the ill-conceived perception that they're hidden behind the digital veil. Well I don't hide. There's nothing on my column that I wouldn't be more than willing to say to the creative team face-to-face. I have an incredible respect for what these people do and that's why I demand so much from them. And just to get preachy ... "For that I will NEVA apologize!" (Just imagine I yelled that in a very Spartan way . . .)



I've also found that far too many people still don't view comics as a legitimate form of literature. And it is! So when I sit down to read these books and write the column, I hold the creative team in very high regard. I expect no less from a comic than I would expect from a play, a novel, or a film for that matter. I feel that, if we are ever to do away with that stigma, we need to treat the medium by the same standard. And no, I don't think, "Oh, well it's primarily for children," is any excuse for poorly executed storytelling.

That's why I take the time to do my research and provide a solid final product.

3. How big is the pile in your in-box with comics waiting to be read? How do you decide which ones to pull to the top of the stack?

(ALEX:) It's not as big as you might think. I'm pretty particular about my tastes. I like to try new things regularly and I take a look. I never like to close out a possible market, genre, or storytelling style. But I won't torture myself to keep up with a trend. If it grabs me – fantastic! If it doesn't, I may not check it out again for a while. Series change as creative teams change and sometimes you get an amazing team that gives you a great run and other times, not so much.

I tend to choose what gets pulled up by writer. If it's a writer I like – BAM! – straight to the top. And sometimes, if it's a writer I'm not a fan of that may be what actually slides them to the top of the list.

4. What's the best thing you've gotten from a creator? Have creators sent you other "goodies" besides the comics in hopes of eliciting a more favorable response?

(ALEX:) As corny as it sounds . . . friendship and respect. Working with *Comics Bulletin* has put me in a position to meet a lot of people I've really looked up to for a long time. In just the past couple years, I've been lucky enough to not only get to know, but also befriend, some of these guys and they've really provided some great insight to me on the workings of the industry and the art of comics. It's really inspiring to know that I've been able to earn their respect, and I really look forward to working with them in the future.

5. Do you prefer reviewing unknown indie b&w comic gems or slick color releases from The Big Four (Marvel, DC, Image, Dark Horse)?

(ALEX:) Truth be told, I'm just looking for a good story. I don't really have a preference. Obviously it's easier to find stuff (not necessarily good stuff, but stuff nonetheless) from the Big Four because they hold such a wide portion of the market. But if I find a comic that was written and drawn by some unknowns and released by some company I've never heard of – if the magic is there, the magic is there.

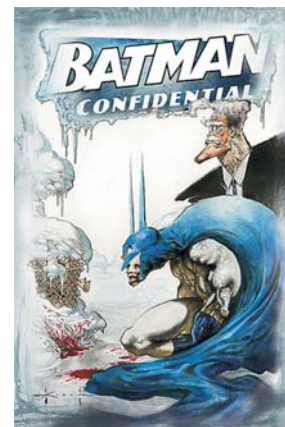
6. Name your top five picks for 2009 (that you've either reviewed or read for enjoyment). Also, name one comic you've seen in 2010 that floored you.

(ALEX:) My five picks for 2009 would be:



- 1.) *Spider-Man Noir* (hands down best series of last year);
- 2.) *Hotwire: Requiem for the Dead* (the art in this book is absolutely phenomenal and the story is an exciting, punchy, smart-assed thrill ride);
- 3.) *Road* (this is a webcomic that I've really become taken with . . . you can check it out at www.zuda.com/road);
- 4.) *Punisher Noir* (this is just plain good); and
- 5.) *Daredevil Noir* (simple and effective)

I know . . . three noir titles. What can I say? I love the genre. As for something that's floored me this year? Well, I wouldn't say anything's floored me yet. And truth be told it's pretty hard to floor me to begin with, but I'll say this, we're two issues in on Sam Kieth's 4-issue run on [Batman Confidential](#) and I'm in love



(Sam is one of those writers that has a way with word and art that just sort of leaves you really uncomfortable every time you turn the page . . . I love that!), and I haven't missed an issue of [Spider-Man Noir: Eyes Without a Face](#).

7. What OGN that hasn't been made into a movie would you like to see on the Big Screen?

(ALEX:) This is a hard question to answer. The real question becomes what would make a good movie? If I had to choose one title that really screamed "MOVIE" at me, it'd have to be [Road](#). It's a webcomic created, drawn, and co-written by the very talented Eddie Sharam. *Road* has all the trappings of a badass movie. Radical's also got a lot of titles which could easily translate to some great movies. *Shrapnel* and *Hotwire* are two that come to mind.



8. What's next for Alex Rodrik after Comics Bulletin?

(ALEX:) That's a mighty fine question. Marvel? DC? Care to take this one? **[INSERT JOB OFFER HERE]** Well, while they type up their official job proposals . . . I'd really love to get more involved in the creative aspect of the comics industry. I've got some really cool ideas that I'd love to see come to life – some creator-owned titles, some stories to shake up the worlds of some of our favorites...

Along with the column, I also work as a Creative Consultant and ghost writer, for hire. For anyone interested in those services I can be reached via email (alex.rodrik@gmail.com) to set up a call and/or meeting to discuss your projects further and see what magic we can make.

This April, I'll be teaming up with a group of comic book connoisseurs and presenting at the 55th Annual International Reading Association Convention in Chicago. During our day-long presentation, spearheaded by [Katie Monnin](#), we will be looking at the importance of comics and graphic novels as a literary medium as well as a tool to promote literacy.

Comics are a very powerful medium and their truest potential has yet to be tapped. I truly believe that comics and graphic novels can really help bring not only children, but adults as well, into the world of literature, with the visual element serving to enrich the reading experience. And also serving as a gateway to other forms of literature and text.

9. From reading your reviews, it is obvious you are a strong writer with a distinctive "voice" for telling a story and getting your point across. Are you a closet creator with a few books/titles up your sleeve that you plan to unleash in the future?

(ALEX:) Oh yeah! I just got a sneak peek at an interview with the man behind **Heske Horror**, do you know him? You should meet; he's a really cool guy . . . Word on the street is that I'll be seeing some page time in his next anthology. That's something I'm real excited for!

I'd also really love to work with [Radical Comics](#). The work coming from those guys is really amazing! And like I mentioned before, I've got some big ideas for creator-owned titles that I'd love to see become regulars; and some stories up my sleeve for some of our favorites. *nudge nudge, wink wink* and why not *COUGH* – DC and Marvel! :)

10. You are fair but firm in your reviews, both in the commentary and in the letter grades. In short, you frankly "tell it like it is". How would you rate yourself now that you have a few "Working Title" columns under your belt?

(ALEX:) I'm going to have to plead the fifth on this one. I'll leave the rating of my column up to my readers.

11. Tell us where we can read your reviews or catch up on your other musings.

(ALEX:) My general rants and raves can be found over at Comics Bulletin where I've got **Working Title** running as a bi-monthly column – www.comicsbulletin.com/title. I am also the Editor of Features and Interviews over at Comics Bulletin, where some of our writers and I get to sit down and pick the brains of some living legends and up-and-comers – www.comicsbulletin.com/features.

I've also got a blog called *Beyond the Working Title* which I'll be utilizing to discuss films, music, and general queries I may think of while reading some [Sam] Beckett, and where you can check out the latest news on my writings – <http://alexrodrik.blogspot.com>. You can also follow me on Twitter at www.twitter.com/alexrodrik.

Thanks for the interview, Alex!

NOTE TO READERS: Stop by the InvestComics forum and visit me in the IndieCreator thread to give me your thoughts on this column. If you haven't signed up, you're missing out!

Bob Heske is creator of [The Night Projectionist](#), a vampire horror series by publisher [Studio 407](#) with film rights optioned by [Myriad Pictures](#). Through his Heske Horror shingle, Bob self-published his critically acclaimed horror series [Cold Blooded Chillers](#). Bob's trade paperback [Bone Chiller](#) (a "best of" CBC anthology) won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. His "end times" anthology [2012: Final Prayer](#) was released on November 13, 2009. Bob's works are available online at Amazon.com Zaldiva.com, ComixPress, IndyPlanet, HeavyInk, SmallZone, DriveThruComics and YuDu.com (store). You can email Bob at info@coldbloodedchillers.com.

