



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](#) and [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.

10 Questions with David Paul – Letterist, Rocker & Good Fella

Ever wonder who does all the funky caption balloons for those comics you read? It's blokes like my buddy David Paul, who not only is a talented letterist – but also is an accomplished drummer, babe magnet (chicks dig rockers) and overall Teddy Bear of a guy. David recently hooked up with Azurek Studios, an Italiano indie shop with some big league talent and knock-your-socks-off titles that if you don't know now – you *will* know very soon.



Drumroll please ... Mr. David Paul!

1. Tell us about Azurek Studios. What is it? What are some of the ultra-cool titles they have produced. And what is your new role there?

(DP) [Azurek Studios](#) was founded by Stefano Cardoselli and Rita Gorgoni. They are an independent studio out of Italy and they've done numerous titles for various independent publishers, including Alterna Comics and Studio 407. The title most readers may be familiar with right now is [Helix](#) for Studio 407. I actually became aware of them through *Heavy Metal* sometime around 2001. Since then they've been regular contributors. So what started for me as a matter of research for a column I was writing became a friendship. Over time Stefano, Rita and myself just chatted so much online we got to know each other. It may have started as mutual admiration for one another's work but a work relationship can often become a real friendship, and that's what happened. I think I've told them secrets about myself I wouldn't tell anyone else. That's friendship.



As English Supervisor, I'm reviewing scripts and suggesting edits to make the finished product more appealing to English readers. For example, I may take the phrase BEWARE THE DOG and suggest changing that to

BEWARE OF DOG. Sometimes what makes perfect sense in Italian doesn't always work in English, so I make sure it makes sense. I'll also be collaborating on stories and may be doing some lettering work. It's a job I'm very happy about.

2. I noticed on your bio that your book *Naked Vitality* was nominated for a National Poet Laureate's award. For those of us who are uncultured, what exactly is a National Poet Laureate's award? Pitch your book *Naked Vitality* in 2-3 sentences.

(DP) A Laureate's Award is seen in certain literary circles as something prestigious. It basically just means that your peers respect you and what you do. What it means outside of those circles doesn't amount to much. It doesn't earn you any street cred and it won't get you laid. But it does look good on your resume.

We are born naked into this world and we remain naked before God. Is there anything you can hide from

God? To realize this truth and incorporate it into your everyday life is to live a life of *Naked Vitality*.

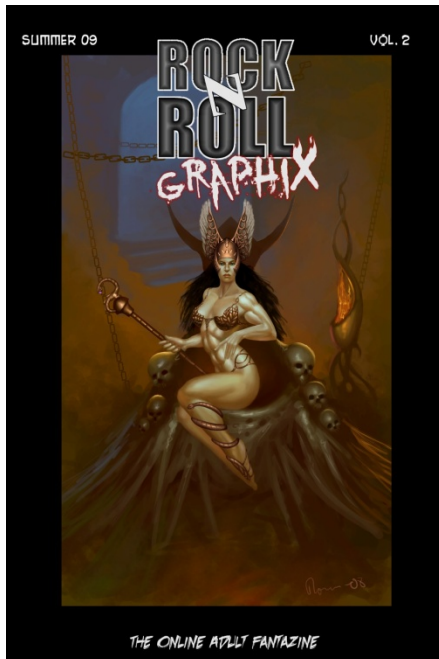


3. Besides being a letterist, poet, rock drummer and gainfully employed comic maestro, you also self publish a web magazine called *Rock N Roll Graphix*. Issue one was quite impressive. Tell us what inspired you to produce this work, what's your marketing niche, and what can we expect from future issues?

(DP) Wow. I hadn't realized I had such a compulsive need to keep myself busy. Our goal is to be the easiest user friendly site to navigate while blasting your eyes with all sorts of candy.

Here, again, is where I need to mention Stefano and Rita.

While we were busy chatting online I shared a dream with them that went all the way back to my childhood memories of *Heavy Metal*. I had always wanted to publish my own print magazine that would be filled with everything I love. Growing up I loved magazines like *Heavy Metal*, *Rolling Stone*, *Hot-Rod* and *Playboy*. These were staples of a teenage boy's life.



Over the years I fooled around with ideas about how to do this and the format of the magazine itself. I took a look at the world of comics and I realized there was something missing: A magazine in comic book format. There have been numerous comics magazines. *Heavy Metal* is perhaps the most successful. So I thought why can't there be a magazine published in comic book format? Now this is an idea I still very much want to see published as a print magazine. But to do it right it's going to take a lot of money. Independent publishers everywhere know exactly what I mean. I didn't want to let this dream go but I didn't have what it takes to get it up and in print. When I was sharing this dream with

Stefano and Rita they were very encouraging. I told them I had seen where a well-known video game magazine made the choice to go complete ezine and discontinued their print publication. We wondered if this was going to be a new trend and they were the ones who encouraged me to publish ROCKnROLL GraphiX as an ezine while keeping my eyes on the goal of a print publication. I have to stress that that is still the goal and hopefully the ezine will raise the money.

As for future issues of the ezine you're going to see more of a focus on independent music, artists and models. We've got great contributors and beautiful girls, and the best thing about it is it's all 100% free. No memberships, no subscriptions, no logging in all the damn time. No hassles. Just fun.

4. *Rock N Roll Graphix has some mind bending bikini-clad babes. How does a pasty white dude like you get all these hot women to participate without pay?*

(DP) Dude, models are the easiest people on the planet to talk to. The one thing they want is to be seen. All we offer is a global stage on which to be seen. ROCKnROLL GraphiX is seen by readers all over the world. I've gotten mail from Italy, France and South America. And that's what appeals to our girls. They are proud to be seen in our magazine and they're proud of the layouts that they can include in their portfolios. I'm not sure we'll be attracting any supermodels in the near future but our girls are real people. And for the record, they are some of the nicest people I've met.

5. *One other thing on your resume – you are a reviewer for Project FanBoy. Are you still doing this with your increased workload? What are the most impressive works you've come across in the past year?*

(DP) I kind of quietly left Project Fanboy. There's not really much I can contribute there. I'm a Metal guy and that's what I know. But Heavy Metal just doesn't fit in there. When I was writing Metal Madness there it was like trying to fit adult alternative into a family friendly environment. It didn't work. But I met some good people there and I wish them the best.



The underground stuff I'm into is horror. Two titles jumped at me this year: *Bump* by Fangoria Comics, which I think is being adapted as a movie, and your own *Cold Blooded Chillers*. Almost everything the critics wrote about CBC was positive. I mean, the very fact that people are the monsters in your stories is classic! I can't say enough about it so I better stop before I get on a rant.

6. *What's your perspective on Diamond revamping their minimum threshold and the resultant impact on indie comic creators? What are the best options that you see for indie creators to get their work in front of LCS eyes now?*

(DP) Screw Diamond. It's a monopoly. They're a business and any good business is going to do what it takes to either get to the top or stay on top, so I'm not down on them for their business practices. Independent creators are going to have to do one of two things: Either play with Diamond or don't. And they know that. But Diamond is just reacting to the market. They can clearly see that the market has once again become saturated. Maybe this is their way of separating the wheat from the chaf.

It's a tough time for comics as a whole, let alone for an indie creator. If you don't have the balls, then don't get into it. No one cares about your creation. You have to make them care. Or throw your crap into the shitter and cry yourself to sleep at night. But no one's

going to do the work for you. Is this just a little side project for you? Is this just doodling? Or is this your life? Pick one. And if you do decide this is your life then get out there and do it. There are so many ways a creator can be seen. Hell, you're a creator. Get creative about getting seen. No doubt the most instant method are the comic cons. Work the cons and work the contacts you make at the cons. Follow up with potential readers, build a fan base. And do not underestimate the power of a good website. Don't be afraid to adapt. There are always alternatives. Do whatever it takes. Point is do it. Or piss on it and go home.

7. Put on your Philip K. Dick "Substance D" scanner darkly glasses and tell us what the future of indie comics holds for creators and fans...OK, we're listening.

(DP) Man, anything is possible. I know there's a lot of talk recently about how print is on its way out. I'm not sure that's true but I'm also not sure it's too far off center. If the indies are going to be seen they will have to do one thing: Not compete with the big boys. Indies are going to have to do their own thing. What that thing is remains to be seen. Print is tough. Maybe ezine comics will become more popular in days to come. It's just too soon to tell. I think in the end, whatever comes, it will be the fans who decide what becomes of the indies. But I don't think print will die. There's nothing like a real book in your hands.

8. What comics books do you read? And what graphic novel that you've read would make a really great movie (but hasn't been made yet)?



(DP) I'm actually not a big comic book reader. Of course *Heavy Metal* I will never give up, but I'm not sure if that counts. I do read underground horror, as I mentioned. The only mainstream comic I had a subscription to was Marvel's *Ghost Rider* but I gave that up recently due to my frustration with the writing. On occasion I do enjoy a visit to the bookstore to catch up on mainstream titles but very little keeps my interest.

The one graphic novel I would love to see adapted for the big screen is *Ghost Rider: Trail of Tears* by Garth Ennis and Clayton Crain. That would seriously kick ass.

9. *Who are your favorite indie comic artists – we're not talking the big names here. Tell us about a few "undiscovered talents" who are flying under the radar but whom you predict will break out in a year or two.*

(DP) I know I talk this guy up a lot but I have to mention him again: Stefano Cardoselli. Check out his work on *Helix*. He's not exactly undiscovered but he's not mainstream either. And the stuff he's got in store for this coming year is fantastic. Someone else you have to check out is [G.T. Becks](#). Trust me.

10. *Okay, last chance to pimp your work and any new happenings at Azurek Studios. Go!*

(DP) I think the only thing I'd like readers to do now is click <http://rocknrollgraphix.com/> and just have a good time. For our Summer issue we have some very cool exciting things going on. Adult film star Sunset Thomas is writing an exclusive article and you don't want to miss that. And you're going to be seeing a lot more from Azurek Studios. So calm down. No need to start a riot.

Bonus Question: As the name implies, InvestComics is about uncovering the gems in comic book collecting – those books that are not only immensely enjoyable, but also have a high financial upside. Name 2-4 comics that you would rather cut off your left nut than give up (because the comics are worth more!).

(DP) OK, cutting off any of my nuts is asking too much. However, I don't think I'd be able to part with my *Heavy Metal* collection. I have the very first issue when Kevin Eastman took over as Publisher. I'm not sure of its value but I'd be curious to find 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) recently won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. Bob's works are available at Amazon, ComixPress, IndyPlanet, Haven Distribution, HeavyInk, SmallZone and DriveThruComics. You can email him at info@coldbloodedchillers.com.