

# Ray X *X-Rayer* #135

13 May, 2017

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<http://x-rayer.com>



Doug Arthur and an array of his works from Dougside Syndicate

## CIY: Comic It Yourself

Impetus: Cerebus The Aardvark.

When he was around twelve years old Doug Arthur's three-years-older brother brought home a number of independent/underground comic books. Cerebus The Aardvark left such an impression on him that today he produces his own independent comics.

He and his brother Rick were really into comic books, frequenting the FantaCo comic book shop in Albany, NY. Each brother grew from a fan into a creator, a writer/artist in the comic book medium. (In Doug's case he developed an enthusiastic writing style apparently inspired by comic book dialogue that relied heavily on exclamation points.)

Doug: "[Rick and I] started reading comics regularly in the late 70's around the time of Star Wars. It was a good time to be a kid!"

The FantaCo shop offered more than the usual DC and Marvel superhero comics. As a neophyte comic book fan Doug was exposed to independent titles like Eflquest and The Spirit reprints.

One day Doug's father brought home a book that piqued Doug's interest in nonsuperhero comics even more, a work by Les Daniels called *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America*. It was an eye-opener for him.

Doug: "It covered not only the superheroes I loved but stuff I never knew existed like EC comics, crime comics, and more importantly underground comix, all of them illustrated with full story reprints! I was enraptured by what I was seeing on the page and it loosened the grip of superheroes in my mind.

"That one book showed me that comics were capable of telling so many kinds of stories. Whether it was the EC brand of horror with a twist, Charles Biro's criminal biographies, or the surrealism of Robert Crumb and Spain Rodriguez! I began to experiment with these other types of books, which FantaCo carried along with the Marvel and DC books."



The aardvark that inspired Doug Arthur

Doug and his brother Rick took different paths as comic book fans. Rick concentrated on breaking into the mainstream comic book field, doing some work for Marvel and DC. As for independent publishers he sold one story to Mirage Studios featuring the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Rick: "For Marvel, I worked indirectly as a background artist for inker Bill Anderson, a true artist and unsung hero toiling in the background of comics. I would be on call when he was busy and needed a little time shaved off a deadline."

It was menial work -- ruling radiograph lines, fixing perspective and occasionally a filling in blacks -- but it was a way of breaking in. His work with Bill was a great learning experience.

Rick did have some success.

Rick: "For DC, I produced an art recreation that ended up on the first Dark Knight hardcover (thanks, Brian). I redrew and inked a panel from the first Batman story to match the original art style of Bob Kane. That came out great. Never got any more momentum with the big two and this was mid 80s to early 90s when I was in my prime."

He watched as the mainstream comic book industry changed.

Rick: "As the pendulum swung in the industry, the time when you could show a portfolio, develop a relationship with working artists or editors, and get a small job which might lead to something else had passed at the big companies. I found most professionals on the editorial side to be friendly, hard working 'super geeks' who loved comics. Over time attitudes have changed and [that] made the big companies much less approachable for work."

Another factor was Rick's personal work style.



Rick Arthur manning the Dougside Syndicate table at a recent convention.

Rick: "I was slow and had a very methodical, jack-of-all-trades approach. My genuine interest was in telling stories which grew to be less a priority with the big companies as time went on. My varied skill set fit much more handily with the independents."

Later he would find the opportunity to create and publish his own way.

While Rick was trying to establish himself in the mainstream his brother Doug concentrated on building an independent company in the spirit of DIY: Do It Yourself. Over the years his project evolved into the Dougside Syndicate, a business entity that includes his books and more.

Doug: "I have no experience with the major publishers at all. I have been strictly independent from the start. I realized early enough that my style and skills were not

suited for mainstream comics, and my interests were elsewhere."

Over the years other creators have taken the independent path, bypassing the big publishers.

Doug: "[The independent market] is extremely competitive and getting more so as more creators are turning to self-publishing (including industry legends like Rick Veitch). The mainstream publishers of course have the lion's share of the market, so I don't feel competitive with them at all. The typical X-Men or Batman reader could care less about what I am doing, especially since it does not involve superheroes. So to me, the real 'competition' is with other self-publishers...and their numbers have grown legion in the last 20 years."

To promote his company Doug attends comic book conventions, manning a dealer table. He has noticed increased interest as he has added more items. In the beginning it was hard to sell with only one book but now with more books and artwork there's greater interest. But it's mainly promotion, not profit, when he attends a convention.

Doug: "For me, it is mostly about getting the word out, but man cannot live on bread alone. Making enough to cover expenses is a good way to avoid a dismal feeling at the end of the day."



Doug and Rick Arthur 1990  
Buffalo, NY

However, I have had shows where I lost my shirt but had a lot of great conversations and interactions. These can pay off down the road, so look at every encounter as an opportunity. If you go in solely to make money you will almost always be disappointed."

He mentioned an experience that meant more to him than money.

Doug: "A couple of years ago in Buffalo, I had a man in his 30's walk up to my table excitedly and introduce himself. He had been looking forward to seeing me when he saw my name on the advertising. Turns out that as a 15 year old kid back in 1995 he picked up a copy of my first book, Slackjaw, and had been a fan ever since. I had not done a convention in Buffalo since 1997 so he had wondered what had happened to me...he

wound up buying 2 pages of original art and several books...

"It was an amazing experience to know comics had resonated with him so much. It made my entire weekend! (Heck, I still think about it sometimes!) I imagine that pros hear those stories all the time, but for a completely independent creator like me, it is a rare, but euphoric event!"

Asked for advice he offered some tips for anyone interested in operating a dealer's table.

Doug: "Pay attention to how your table is merchandised. Make sure you have legible signs, and things are logically and neatly laid out. You want to attract eyeballs. Be friendly, make eye contact, and don't be afraid to use a little carnival style hucksterism from time to time..."

"Create sales bundles or use incentives. People love getting a deal. I will often offer a free print with a book purchase, for example, or \$5 off purchases over \$25. Create a bit of excitement.

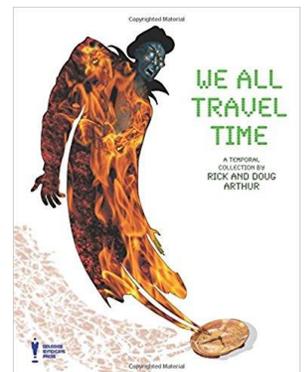
"Also...ALWAYS be nice to the kids! Especially if they are budding artists and want to show you their art. Be positive and supportive...tell them to keep practicing!"

Doug's latest project is his first full color book, We All Travel Time, produced with his brother Rick.

Doug: "Rick did a bang up job on his end of things and the book is terrific!"

More information on Doug's books can be found at his official Facebook page, Facebook.com/TalesFromTheDougside. His books are available on Amazon.com --

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/s//ref=mw\\_dp\\_a\\_s?ie=UTF8&i=books&k=M+r+Douglas+J+Arthur](https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/s//ref=mw_dp_a_s?ie=UTF8&i=books&k=M+r+Douglas+J+Arthur) -- and at his Square online store --  
<https://squareup.com/store/Douglas-Arthur-2>.



## **After All What Are "Friends" For?**

I mentioned to a "friend" how I hated living in Plattsburgh, NY.

This is a person who is not rich but not poor either. He can afford to take two weeks off to go to Florida, a nice break from the long six months of winter around here. On some weekends he travels to Montreal for a change of scenery.

So it was so easy for him to say to me: "If you don't like it just move!".

Yes, the answer is so simple, so doable.

I've been living with a fixed limited income for years. I don't have the financial resources to just get up and relocate to a better area.

Recently I moved to a new apartment just a few blocks away from my old place. A short move that still has set me back financially.

After living in the same apartment for over two decades and being treated like crap by my landlord I decided I had enough. My previous apartment was in a building with a flat roof that leaked different five times into my apartment over the years. The roof would be fixed, time would pass, and it turned out the fix wasn't permanent. With the last flood I wanted to move into another unit in the building where the ceiling didn't shower rainwater but the landlord said no.

Apparently you really build up positive karma when you're a good tenant, paying rent on time, not causing any problems.

It was stressful finding someone to help me move, getting a pickup truck to haul my stuff. I told another "friend" how again and again my plan to move was being held up by this one major factor. I would get a lead that turned out to be a dead end. I wasn't whining about my fate. I didn't say that I was giving up; I was still pressing on. I only stated the basic facts of the situation.

My "friend" replied: "You're being too negative."

Once again another person so well off compared to me who had no understanding what it's like to live with limited resources. He could easily hire a moving company to do all the work.

Before the move I had to throw out a lot of stuff I had accumulated over two decades plus. Even after the move I have an excess of material I have to purge.

But there's material I don't want to trash, my writing and photography. Like any creative person I want to leave something behind that others might appreciate.

The day may be coming that it's all going into the dumpster. It seems to be the only way to escape.

One of my real friends took the opportunity to get away. He had the money to relocate to a place where a new job was waiting. He summed up his feelings this way: "Now I don't have to worry about dying in Plattsburgh."

I've never been alone in hating this podunk pimple.

Others have moved away but didn't properly plan their escape. They ended up returning. And regretting that decision.

When I leave it will be forever, no looking back.

There are better places where to die than Plattsburgh.

## MailboX

Comment? Question? [raypalmx@gmail.com](mailto:raypalmx@gmail.com)

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Letter of comment for RXXR #134  
From: Dale Speirs Calgary, Alberta

I agree with everything James Dawson says about publishing zines mechanically. Having said that, my zine OPUNTIA is now only pdf due to a confluence of two forces.

The first is postage rates. The print version of OPUNTIA died a few years ago when Canada Post jacked up the domestic rate to 85 cents, USA to \$1.20, and Overseas to \$2.50. It would have cost me an extra \$1,200 per year to keep a print version going. I'm not poor, but I'm not rich either.

Another deciding factor is that the younger generation reads books or magazines only on tablets or smartphones. They are not going to search out OPUNTIA on the Papernet, but will read it online as pdfs. I want my words to be carried on to future generations, but they will only read those words on electronic screens.

Just a reminder for everyone to celebrate the 24th annual World Wide Party on June 21st. At 21h00 your local time, raise a glass and toast your fellow zinesters around the world. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the world.

*RX: I recently moved and became aware of one key digital advantage. A lot of info can be stored on one small lightweight external drive as opposed to heavy boxes of paper. If I had room I would prefer paper but I can easily live with PDFs. My back agrees.*

\* \* \*

tyrbolo@comcast.net

Hi Ray,

That was the issue in question (front cover illo), the interior has a bunch of other illustrations as well. Most notably page 6 of the PDF version. It is located in the pulp magazine collection section at archive.org.

HP put me out of business for using refilled ink packs or I'd print them from the PDF and then scan them back into a viewable format. The printer business is just as ugly as bankstering. They can give away the printers as the major profit is in price gouging over ink cartridges. One of these days someone is going to market a printer with user refillable cartridges and kill their golden goose into a goose egg of profit.

HSBC is a prime candidate for a worldwide boycott because of their behaviors. If you did only one of their criminal acts you'd never get out of jail again.

Lloyd can relax now, Trump is starting to act like Hilary would have. USA taxpayers might not be so thrilled if they paid attention to the cost of 59 Tomahawks to make a few holes in a runway. If you think there is poison gas in an ammo dump blowing it up is a maniacal disposal method. Since there was no secondary effect from the strikes it looks like we are helping Al Queda again. Syria is an ugly worm can rational folk would rather avoid.

The use of the (Massively Overexpensive American Bomb) MOAB to blast a gopher hole in Afghanistan seems to be a result of Bannon (apparently the brains of the Trump gang) departing to allow the sabrerattlers to play with their toys.

Maybe Great grandpa is too cynical for the moderne era.

: ^ )

I think I should call Doc Cummings (publisher of Strategy and Tactics) and tell him to reprint After the Holocaust. It was a simulation of trying to rebuild society after a nuclear exchange. At least it kept people thinking about some kind of a future even if it was a grim one.

Warm Regards.

Dave

Taibbi is always fun to read.

\* \* \*

Lloyd & Yvonne Penne 1706-24 Eva Rd. Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

April 27, 2017

Dear Ray:

Thanks for X-Rayer 134. I am still at home these days, so I get to write letters every day. I'd rather be working, but until that happens, here a loc on your newest issue.

James Dawson is right, old tech is not bad tech. Our modern tech could break down very easily. I do have a manual typewriter, plus paper, envelopes and stamps if they were needed; I used them all when I started out in this in the early 80s. I also have a tablet and Bluetooth keyboard. Somehow, I think if we had to go back to the older tech of typers and mimeos, we might appreciate them more, and value each zine more. And, I certainly agree with him re Charles Beaumont and Richard Matheson. They wrote just about any Twilight Zone episode that Rod Serling didn't,

Trump thinks he's being the firm leader by trying to bully his allies. It's not working...he just looks foolish. He was going to issue yet another executive order taking the US out of NAFTA, but calls from Canada and Mexico made him change his mind entirely. I expect more bullying will come with the NAFTA negotiations, but I expect we'll just smile and roll our eyes.

Canada also has a bank regulatory commission, and it has been given new powers that make it not quite the toothless tiger it was before. It doesn't exercise those new powers much, and I think the quotation from Matt Taibbi's article explains why perfectly, that any action might destabilize an easily upsettable banking industry. The worst think is, they know how unstable they are, they keep the industry as unstable as it is, and with all of that, they can get away with just about any illegal transaction they can think of.

I am done for now...wish me luck, as I've had more interviews, and I am, as usual, waiting to hear back from them. More often than not, I don't, but I have to keep trying. Thanks for this issue, and see you with the next one.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney.

*RX: Good luck with your job search. Your considerable LOC activity proves that you're willing to devote energy to a particular task, staying focused, which is a valuable job skill. Unfortunately zining and LOC-writing don't pay the bills.*

– END XR #135 –