

elements into my stories. But I feel my style is a throwback. I try to make it big and dramatic, but it always looks dark and ponderous, but you gotta go with what you know.

X.P.: Besides *Subterranean By Design*, what other work have you done?

P.M.: Under contract from Malibu in California I did three issues for "Planet of the Apes" under an incredibly rushed deadline. Then they gave [me] two issues of a book called "Screamplay". It's been listed in the catalogues but I haven't received my copies yet. I'm currently in negotiations with a company in Florida called Conquest Comics. Alphonse, the guy I talk to, is very, very excited about it. I was upstairs cleaning out the junk room (we have no closets in our house, and all the junk ends up in one room) when the phone started ringing. I got so many calls: my mom, friends and so on... you know how it is when you're trying get a big project done and the phone won't stop ringing?

X.P.: Boy, do I.

P.M.: Anyway, I got downstairs after putting my youngest to bed and grabbed the phone and said "Three!" because I got it on the third ring. And a little voice with a thick accent says, "Allo, thees iz Alphonse from Conquest Comics in Florida calling you!" I thought it was a friend playing a sick joke. Then he says "I have your submission right here." I play along, uh huh, yeah sure and so on. Then he starts going on about how much he likes it (Alphonse is very excitable) and I realize he's serious. He's sending me some stuff to do. He does pulp stuff, old

horror stories by Ray Bradbury and Robert E. Howard. Before Howard got famous with Conan, he did almost Lovecraftian horror stories. Conquest is doing adaptations of those. One title is called "Masters of Midnight". One of the characters is a pulp-style hero called North West Smith (which I find hard to say for some reason). I got called in to ink after their regular inker got homesick and went back to the Phillipines. So Alphonse asks if I can do inking from a photocopy (which I can) and he sent it along. He also wants me to help out on a superhero comic about kids who get turned into werewolf-vampire hybrids by an evil government organization. He wants as much of the genres as he can fit in.

X.P.: So what are the names of these projects, so we can generate free advance hype?

P.M.: "Clean-Up Crew" is my own story. It's these three guys in a beat up truck. They're real space cadets. It takes place in Bedlam, Mass. It's part of a timeline which I hope to tie into my own series called *Artemis Grimm*. The idea is that the Earth is bad, and gets worse, and someone's got to hold the world together when Hell gets full up and the dead start to walk the earth. The first people who do it don't even know they're doing it, because they're just in it for kicks. They're the Clean-up Crew, the boys from Bedlam, and they're like something out of *Weekly World News*. Three long-haired guys with guns [and] trenchcoats who shoot weird things for fun. It's a kick. "Artemis Grimm" is something I've already written two stories for. I'm saving him for self-publication, but first I

have to establish myself in the industry. It's from the same timeline as the Crew, but far darker.

X.P.: Anything in the works for *Subterranean*? Supposedly the Special will be out in time for Christmas...

(Editor's note: they made it! The *Subterranean Special* is available now. Yes, now! Buy it!)

P.M.: The story I'm doing is called "Storm Warning". I wrote and Rob Walker did the pencils. Rob can draw anything, but he'd never done a comic book before. So I showed him the ropes and he went to work. He got back to me after a couple of weeks with pencils I could really work with. Brett came in to help, inking a couple of pages, doing layout. Brett's pretty much taken over all the layout for the last few issues. It's incredible. Just from doing this book that boy has grown so much. If a comic book company needs a guy who can step in at the last minute and organize a book, he's their man. And Steve Callbeck and I did a story called "Jobs From Hell", Sandy Carruthers has kicked in a superhero story called "Scorn". We've even got a Santa Claus/Batman parody called "Santa: The Red Knight Returns". It kicks butt. I mean, it's so visceral. This madman grabs a shopper and goes "Bah, humbug" and a huge Santa grabs [him] and they start whaling on each other. It's a terrific parody of "The Dark Knight Returns". Ho, ho, ho.

X.P.: Well, best of luck and thanks for your patience.

P.M.: You're welcome. ●

# UNDERGROUND ON PURPOSE

## The genesis of *Subterranean By Design*

For the last nine months or so, an interesting experiment in comics has been going on right here in Charlottetown. The experiment was to find out if an Island comic book featuring local talent could seduce P.E.I. away from traditional comic fare. Called *Subterranean By Design* (presumably to emphasize its underground nature) this attempt to subvert the minds of Islanders spearheads its operations through a local shop called "The Comic Hunter". At great risk to my own sanity (what little there is of it), this agent has infiltrated their operation in an attempt to bring the conspiracy to light. Here is my report.

The whole mess started in January of 1992 as a New Year's Resolution made by the Holland College graphic arts department. Like most New Year's Resolutions, nothing might have come of it had not Jeff Smith, Charlottetown comic shop owner, gotten involved during a

wild New Year's Party. Jeff, in an exuberant display of generosity, decided to give them a place to sell the comic if it was produced. Once word got around that the Holland College Comic had a base of operations, a few published artists from the Charlottetown area got involved, namely Pete Murphy (who worked as an inker and character model for Malibu's *Planet of the Apes*) and Sandy Carruthers (Professor at Holland College and artist on several issues of *Malibu's Men in Black*). Details are sketchy, but somehow Brett Taylor, John MacKenzie, Steve and Keith Callbeck and J. Jeffrey Lawless were also brought in to help carry the creative load.

After a number of meetings, several drinks and a great deal of personal turmoil, *Subterranean By Design* hit the stands like a wrecking ball in June of 1992. Aided by advance word of mouth, an article on *Compass*

and a really neat cover, issue number one sold out in a little under a week. Kinda takes your breath away, don't it?

Before too long, questions about the comic and its creators were flying fast and furious. Little was revealed, except that a second issue was in the offing and the bathrooms were on the top floor.

That second issue came out around Old Home Week, featuring another weird cover, the debut of *Mall Girl* (The Confederation Court Mall's answer to those awful Hostess Twinkies ads of the 1970s), and some longer stories. A larger print run meant that more people could enjoy the madness than ever before. Celebrations included a well-attended book signing and a T-shirt (featuring the cover illustration from issue two).

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