

INTERVIEW: 'DEFECTIVE' ARTIST MARK VOGER

DEFECTIVE COMICS

Artist pays homage to the masters with new card series

Comic book fans young and old should get a kick out of the latest trading card series to come from Active Marketing International (the company that brought you Hustler I and II and the James Dean series). AMI's latest venture is Defective Comics, a slick and

sometimes sick series that parodies comic book covers from the very dawn of the medium to the present day, in the tradition of Mad magazine and Wacky Packages.

The series was illustrated by relative newcomer Mark Voger — an artist best known for his work in rock and horror mags — who made his comic book debut last year, and has created, written, pencilled and inked two titles in 1993, one of which was the impetus for AMI's new



'DEFECTIVE' ARTIST Mark Voger with the various incarnations of his new trading card series from Active Marketing International.

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series. Voger is currently at work on his second issue of the comic book *Defective Comics*, which will be published by Comic Zone Productions in the fall.

Q: How did the trading card series come about?

A: I was at the New York con in January at Jacob Javitz promoting *Defective Comics* #1, which was being put out by Comic Zone. I had the original artwork for the cover up on a little stand. It was a takeoff on Jack Kirby's *Fantastic Four* #1 cover called the *Spastic Four*. A lot of little kids would laugh at it as they walked by, which I figured was a good sign. Then a grownup laughed at it — Bill Evans of Active Marketing. He just threw his card on the table, then a few *Hustler* cards, and then he asked me if I felt like doing a whole series based on the cover art I was displaying.

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Q: Right on the spot?

A: He had a strong vibe about it from the beginning. So later, we called back and forth, and I did four trial designs that wound up being the promo cards that we inserted in the catalogs.

Q: Your set starts with a parody of *Famous Funnies* #1 (1933) called *Lamest Funnies*, and ends with a parody of *Superman* #75 (the "Hangnail of Stupor-man"). How did you select your subject matter?

A: I wanted the set to read like a history of comics once you slip all the cards into your plastic pages in the correct order. The numbering order of the cards is

THE ORIGINAL, *Action Comics* #1 from 1938...

chronological, except for the *Supes* #75 parody. A few of the newer cards came out after that book, but we felt *Stupor-man* #75 made a fittingly-symbolic final card. Originally, I wanted the series to be called *Kooky Klassics*, and have every cover parodied be a vintage book. I'm really into the old stuff, especially Silver Age. But Bill insisted that at least 1/3rd of the series be modern books. As it turns out, he was right and I was wrong. It works much better with the abundance of newer books, because it relates much more to today.

Q: It's funny how the series goes from 1933 to 1969 in the first 2/3rds, then suddenly we're in the 1990s.

A: Yeah! In 15 years,

it'll seem very lopsided. But that will be the beauty of it.

There'll be no question of what time it was produced in. It's very mid-'90s.

Q: You totally skipped the '70s and early '80s.

A: But that's what we always do, isn't it? It takes a good 20 or more years before we're able to look back wistfully at an era and say, "Those were the days." That's why there's such strong "Brady" and "Partridge" vibes floating around nowadays.

Q: A few of the choices you made weren't exactly conventional.

A: Thank you for noticing. For the most part, I went with the obvious choices. *All-Stars* #3 — the first super-team issue — became *All-Bores*. I included the first appearances of Stupor-man, Ironc Man, the Human Dork, etc. But I snuck in a few rather eclectic choices of books that I feel will be recognized eventually as important books. Take the card *Blunder Woman* #178. That's an important book. Psychedelia hits the comics! Reality hits the funny books! Did you know that a copy of *Wonder Woman* #178 — the book that that card parodies — is being read by the little girl on the bus who studies Jon Voight at the beginning of "Midnight Cowboy"? If you watch that movie, and then read Mike Sewowsky's rein-



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vention of Wonder Woman, you'll see how powerfully significant that is.

I also put in *Schmoface* #37 and 75, *The Lame and the Old* #57 and *Lois Lane* #70. Look 'em up in the *Overstreet Guide* – you'll find that these overlooked books have great significance.

Q: The detail on your artwork is so tight – what size did you draw them at? And what was your medium?

A: I did them at a little more than twice their reproduction size. The medium was ink on Bristol board, marker for the base color (Design brand), colored pencils for shading (Berol Verithins), white paint for highlights, and more ink. I used Mars rapidographs, a crutch from college. I wish I could take inking lessons from Kurt Schaffenberger, who can speak volumes with one flick of his wrist. My wife, Kathy, did the base color for probably 2/3rds of the set – an uncredited colorist. It took about eight hours to do each card.

Q: What does the set consist of?

A: Every foil pack has a foil card, so you know you're getting something cool every time you buy a pack. Nine out of 10 packs will have a silver foil card, and one out of 10 will have a gold foil card. Also, each foil pack will have a sweepstakes entry. You can win every

Valiant comic book published up to January '94, or original artwork, or uncut gold foil sheets or uncut silver foil sheets.

There'll also be 5,000 randomly-inserted autograph cards.

And we're doing something that no one else has done before, that I think will catch on. We've created a concept called the "Sketch Card" – 500 randomly-inserted cards with original artwork by me. Each one is different, one-of-a-kind. It's the next logical step in the world of trading cards – a glorified autograph card, you could say. I think other artists will be doing Sketch Cards.

... AND THE parody, from the Defective Comics Trading Cards series.

Maybe a Todd McFarlane would only do 10 or 20 or 50 for his set, but when you open a pack and get one, you *know* it's a collectible.

Of course, you don't have to keep buying *Defective* foil packs to compete a set if you don't want to. They're also available in full sets, minus the foil sub-sets.

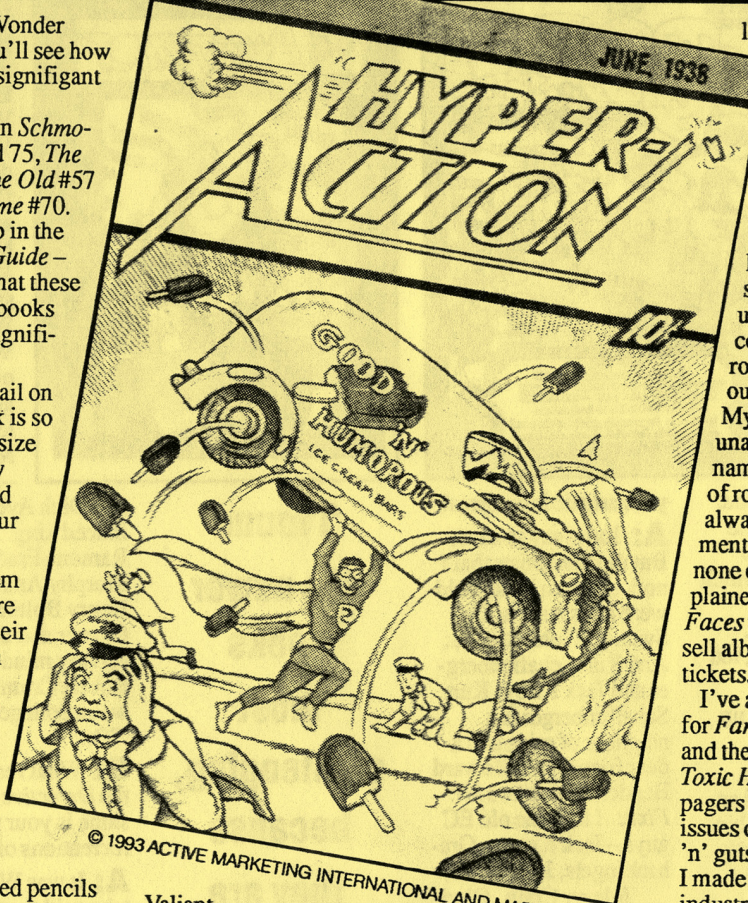
Q: What was your background before *Defective*?

A: For six years starting in 1986, I wrote and drew a color comic strip page for *Faces Rocks Magazine* called *Rocktoons*. The mag was all-heavy metal, so the strip reflected that. A lot of Ozzy, Motley Crue, Whitesnake and stuff

like that. I also wrote for them. I got drunk with Deep Purple once, and covered the MTV Music Awards. *Rocktoons* was kind of a precursor to all those unauthorized comic book bios of rock stars that came out in the early '90s. My strips unabashedly used the names and likenesses of rock stars – and not always in a complimentary way – but none of them ever complained. After all, *Faces* was helping them sell albums and concert tickets.

I've also done strips for *Fangoria*, *Gorezone*, and their shortlived mag *Toxic Horror*. I did five-pagers for the last four issues of *Toxic*. Blood 'n' guts – it was a blast. I made my "comics industry debut" in *Comics Scene Spectacular* #6 and 7 last year. I did five-page color strips in both issues. Stan Lee sent me a letter

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telling me he liked the first strip. It was called *Comictoons*, about a fat oaf who somehow gets hold of a machine that allows him to "visit" any comic book universe he desires. That led to my pen-cilling *XIV* #1 for Rick

Rankin at Comic Zone. Then, Rich put out the first issues of *Monster Sex* and *Defective*, which featured parodies of classic comic books. *Defective*, of course, led to the card series.

Q: What's coming up for you?

A: I have a way-out super-team idea, and an authorized celebrity bio book that I'm not really ready to talk about. In the meantime, the second issue of *Defective* will be a radical departure. It will be an EC homage issue with a very strange twist. I was inspired by Scott McCloud's book, *Understanding Comics*. I interviewed him for a newspaper article, and then met him and his wife and baby. His book is challenging, and yet freeing at the same time.

Q: Who are

your artistic influences?

A: Too many to name. But the first artists that I noticed when I was a kid were Ross Andru, Curt Swan and John Romita. And Kurt Schaffenberger and Jack Kirby. Kurt Schaffenberger is a neighbor of mine and a dear friend, as is Howard Bender, who draws *Mr. Fixitt*. I love the old EC guys — Jack Kamen, Graham Ingels, Jack Davis, Johnny Craig. Obviously, the early Mad guys made *Defective* possible. Harvey Kurtzman, John Severin, Wally Wood and particularly Will Elder. While I was drawing



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FOUR CARDS from the Defective Comics Trading Cards series.



Defective #1, I kept thinking, "What would Will Elder do? What would Will Elder do?" I won't flatter myself and say that I had even 1/64th the success that Will does — Will is an out-and-out genius. I love the old Marvel guys — Don Heck

and Dick Ayers. Kirby is indeed king. I adore Ramona Fradon and Murphy Anderson and Henry Boltinoff and Bob Oksner and those guys. I had my mind blown by Robert Crumb when I was a college kid in the '70s.

Q: What really makes the *Defective* series shine is your painstaking recreations of the covers.

A: It was Will Elder who said that the art of parody is to make people think they're looking at the real thing, to fool 'em. I tried to be faithful to every slip of the artist's wrist with the series. It was fun going back, trying to figure out how they did it. It was

an art lesson, a history lesson. I found the newer books most challenging, because they are generally more detailed and always "meaner." You can't help feeling mean when you draw mean, or sweet when you draw sweet. ■