

Question: When Should You Find an Artist for Your Project?

Answer: A year ago.

Here's the deal – very few artists want to draw your story. They want buy in. They want creative freedoms. Coming to an artist with a 96-page script is like presenting them with shackles. It's a job, no matter how good the script is. And people get paid for a job. The fun gets sucked out. The collaboration gets sucked out. Everything takes on this “production house” feel.

Honestly – you should have already found an artist. Artists, actually. I email a new artist everyday just to tell them I like their work. Just to see what they're working on next. I follow-up with most of them, always keep their schedules in the back of my head. If I know a project is winding down I ask them what they have coming up next. If there's an opening in their schedule, then I try to work a collaboration. Maybe I have a project that's perfect for them. Maybe they have an idea I can write. Whatever the situation I'm always prepared to jump into a collaboration with an artist at any moment.

So...how do we do it?

Getting the Artist

1) Finding Them

a. Local Scene

- i. Does your area have a comic creator group? DC does...
- ii. Ask your comic shop retailer if he knows of any artists in the area
- iii. Use local message boards/live journal groups – just try to see who's out there

b. Conventions

- i. Visit every table. Talk to every creator.
- ii. The bar – if you don't hang out with creators after the show you might as well not go.
- iii. Panels – creators like when you go see their panels and it gives you something to talk about if you bump into them later

c. The internet

i. Websites for creators...

1. <http://www.panelandpixel.com> – lots of aspiring creators mixing it up with seasoned pros
2. <http://www.digitalwebbing.com> – lots of aspiring creators mixing it up with aspiring creators
3. <http://www.deviantart.com> – lots of artists, difficult to find the perfect one
4. <http://www.penciljack.com> – lots of artists
5. <http://www.comicspace.com> – pretty quite, honestly, but every comic creator in the universe signed up for it at some point. Lots of profiles to go through
6. <http://www.flightcomics.com/> - Kazu is attracting some of the most promising artists in comics to his site.

- ii. Creator's website
 - 1. Personal message boards: Brian Michael Bendis, Image Comics, Brian K. Vaughn, Steve Niles, and Mark Millar all have active message boards with fans and creators on them
 - 2. Blogs: Just do a google search for "sketchblog." Click on as many links as you can. Most sketchblogs link to other sketchblogs.
 - 3. Live Journal/MySpace/Facebook: Here's a hint: Search for Warren Ellis on any social networking site and then go through his friend list. You will find every comic creator that is using that social networking site on his friend list.
- 2) Getting in Touch
 - a. Email's really the best way to get in touch for somebody for the first time
 - i. Phone's kind of creepy
 - ii. Snail mail could be considered creepy unless you're sending something that's not creepy
 - iii. Showing up at the person's house can get you arrested.
 - b. What shouldn't you say in your first email?
 - i. Any variation of "I want to work with you."
 - c. Romance them. Say you love their work. Ask them what they're working on next. Ask where you can get their book. Congratulate them on some new project. If your first email is, "Hey, can you draw something for me," you'll either get no response or a polite "no".
- 3) Being Persistent
 - a. Not persistent in asking if they can draw your story once a day.
 - b. Persistent as in every time you see something new and awesome from them, tell them.
 - c. You see what we're doing here? We're building a friendship.
- 4) Meeting Them (If Possible)
 - a. You'll be amazed what people will agree to after a couple of beers.
 - b. Seriously...nothing will ever replace meeting someone face-to-face and just talking about ideas you have.
 - c. Listening, Listening, Listening – always listen for these words: "I'm so sick of this project, I want to do _____." Then you say, "I'd love to do _____, too. Maybe we should work together?"
- 5) Taking the Plunge
 - a. If you feel like you're ready to go for it I find it's always nice to present options.
 - b. "You know, I've been thinking I'd love to work with you on something. I have a couple of ideas I think you might dig. What do you think about these: x, y, z"

Working with the Artist

- 1) What an Artist Likes
 - a. Money (real or potential)
 - b. Big shots

- c. Some level of creative control
 - d. You to do your job so they can do their job
 - e. Time
 - f. Feedback and constructive criticism
 - g. Reference shots
 - h. Descriptive but not restrictive panels
 - i. An occasional action sequence
- 2) What You Need to Provide the Artist to Fulfill all the Things Above
- a. Money (real or potential)
 - b. Buy-in
 - c. A team atmosphere
- 3) What You Should Expect
- a. Paying projects come first
 - b. Emails will be answered...eventually
 - c. Phone calls will be ignored routinely
 - d. But constant communication – just checking in, seeing if their any questions, thoughts on life and love – will make it all move along
 - e. If you're paying you should be prepared to advance half up-front and half upon delivery of print-ready files. Some people do thirds – a third up-front, a third on low-res, and a third on print-ready.

After the Work

- 1) Constant Communication
- a. Once the pages are delivered you should keep your artist involved with every step of the process
 - b. Letters, who you're pitching too – every rejection and every promising lead
 - i. No-one likes to be kept in the dark.
- 2) Follow-Up Work
- a. The Thematic Sequel
 - b. The Next Big Thing
 - c. What would you like to do next?
 - d. If you had a good experience with an artist approach your next collaboration as a given.

Gia-Bao –

Jason Rodriguez again, Postcards guy. Hope all is well.

I've been sort of championing you on the home front – showing your work around to a bunch of cats. Turns out a space opened up in the first Postcards volume and the cat that was writing likes your stuff as much as you.

I'm going to likely call you this weekend if I don't hear from you, but let me lay this down a bit. Great book – Pekar, Hester, Beland – 30 solid creators. There's a good chance I'll know for sure on Friday (tomorrow) but we're likely publishing this book through Random House. It might be next week I get the official offer but the acquiring editor has been saying Friday we'll get our offer. And this is the lead story – it's a good friend of mine, Chris Stevens – he has an anthology in the works now where he collaborated with Art Adams, Jae Lee, Farel Dalrymple, James Jean, Nate Powell – a bunch of great guys. It's a story that blends fantasy with reality quite well – very open – takes place in Atlantic City. We were originally talking to James Jean for this story – fell through, scheduling knocked our second guy off. I'd just want to hook you two up and get you talking. Two months, 8 pages – the opening story for the book, bookended by Pekar and Kindt's story and, like I said, very loose. I don't know, I think you'd kill on it, and Chris is a great guy – there'd be a lot of going back and forth.

xxx-xxx-xxxx if you wanted to call me. Otherwise, I'm going to wait for the RH offer to see what we're working with and call you – I have the number from your postcard and I'm assuming that's alright. Let me know.

***Here's the full postcards pitch so you know who we're working with:
<http://www.jasonrodriguez.com/PitchInProgressLowResv5.pdf>***

Talk soon?

***Jason Rodriguez
<http://www.eximiouspress.com>
<http://www.jasonrodriguez.com>***

Abso-freakin'-lutely, Jason! Definitely interested and honored you're considering my work. Sorry I haven't responded, but I came back from SDCC to a mountain of unglamorous day job work that I've been trying to catch up with. Maybe a phone conversation is in order... I'll be around all weekend if you want to chat, but if not then I'll definitely elaborate in an email early next week...

Keep on keepin' on,
GB

xxx.xxx.xxxx

<http://www.gbtran.com>

We have a couple of stories open – four, actually. One’s Jay Busbee’s story that’s split between the past and the present, a mystery over a postcard and a taboo lesbian romance from the early 1900s – the lover was killed by the other lover’s father. Chris Steven’s is a stuffy o Atlantic City in the 70s, before the casinos came in, and how the at hold onto their heritage in the form of a giant, pink, elephant-hotel. Then there’s my story and James Powell (the editor’s) story – neither of which have been deciding on yet.

I see you more on Jay’s story – going back and forth between the antique style and a more modern style. Also, Chris might be bring Nate Powell on for his story.

It’s a great book, by the way. I know I told you Harvey Pekar’s in it but so is Phil Hester, Tom Beland, Rick Spears & Rob G, Damon Hurd & Jake Warrenfeltz, Neil Kleid & Jake Allen, Stuart Moore & Michael Gaydos, Bob Tinnell & Jason Copland, Ande Parks & Joseph Bergin III, A David Lewis & Danielle Corsetto – just a good group of people. The book’s going to have massive exposure, let me know what you think.

Jason Rodriguez

<http://www.allyouleave.com>

<http://www.jasonrodriguez.com>

"One’s Jay Busbee’s story that’s split between the past and the present, a mystery over a postcard and a taboo lesbian romance from the early 1900s – the lover was killed by the other lover’s father."

THat sounds awesome... I'd love to work on it. What do I have to send you to get in? –T

Micah -

This is Jason Rodriguez; I edit all of Josh Fialkov's work. I'm in the process of putting my own anthology together, Josh has a story in it, and he recommended I pair you two up and I couldn't agree more. So far the book's shaping up to contain Phil Hester, Tom Beland, Neil Kleid & Jake Allen, Rick Spears & Rob G, Stuart Moore, Damon Hurd, A David Lewis and I'm still going after some folks.

The book is called POSTCARDS and it's going to be a 144-page hardcover anthology. I went around to a variety of antique stores and purchased close to 75 Postcards that were sent in the early 1900s. Creators will be presented with two postcards and they'll be able to pick one and finish the story on the card. The cards are of different flavors, some are love stories and some are mysteries, some are kids writing home to mom before the war and others are people talking about quarantines - they all paint a picture of American life at the turn of the century, before World War II, and are all chosen to allow creators to bring out the drama, love and heartache that was likely in these people's lives at the time.

I'm a fan of your work and I think you're style will work well in this project. Drop me a line by email or phone (xxx) xxx-xxxx and let me know if you're interested.

Jason Rodriguez - <http://www.jasonrodriguez.com>

Hi Jason,

Thank's for the invitation. I've been wanting to collaborate with Josh for a long time now, I'm glad he thought of me. I'd like to know a little more about the project, but yes, I am interested. Is this a black and white book, or color, or both? About how long would a typical story be?

Also, I'm working on a book right now that will likely take me another four/five weeks or so to finish. I don't know if that will fit in with your timetable, but if it will, cool.

I'd also like to know what the payment situation is. I imagine this will be a project where creators will share in a part of profits based on the extent of their contribution. Or maybe not?

hope to hear from you soon,

-Micah F.

Phil -

This is Jason Rodriguez, I edited Western Tales of Terror (although not as involved for issue 2) and Elk's Run (as well as Josh's upcoming World's End). I'm pretty sure in the past I let you know how much I love your work, you're hands-down one of my favorite writer/illustrators in comics today, so now that I'm putting together an anthology of my own and you were one of the guys on the top of the list.

The book is called POSTCARDS, it's going to be a 144-page hardcover anthology marketed primarily outside of the current comic market and distributed through unconventional channels - it's an experiment in comic publishing but it should be an interesting one. I went around to a variety of antique stores and purchased close to 75 Postcards that were sent in the early 1900s. Creators will be presented with two postcards and they'll be able to pick one and finish the story presented on the card. The cards are of different flavors, some are love stories and some are mysteries, some are kids writing home to mom before the war and others are people talking about quarantines - they all paint a picture of American life at the turn of the century, before World War II, and are all chosen to allow creators to bring out the drama, love and heartache that was likely in these people's lives at the time.

There's plenty more in terms of the content, marketing and distribution but I don't want to be that guy that sends this long email that turns people off. There's more information on the website I set up for creators: <http://www.allyouleave.com> (username: postcards, password: creators) and I would be more than happy to answer any further questions you may have over email or phone (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

I'd be honored if you feel like you can contribute something to the book. I'm not sure how this all falls in with exclusive contracts and other commitments but I'm open to any suggestions you may have and I really hope we can work something out. Please send any questions my way, questions mean you're at least interested and that's a good thing.

Jason Rodriguez - <http://www.jasonrodriguez.com>

Editor: Hoarse & Buggy - <http://www.hoarseandbuggy.com>

Jason-

I'm not exclusive anywhere and it sounds like a fun experiment. As long as the timing works out I'm in.

-P

Tom -

First off, my name is Jason Rodriguez - I edit all of Josh Fialkov's stuff (Elk's Run, Western Tales of Terror, the upcoming World's End).

I've been enjoying TSSTG for some time now. It's just a great human drama, something you don't see too often in comics - this concept that everyday people live extraordinary lives with stories that are more relatable and moving than most fiction we get. Even in comics, when someone does an autobiographical comic, it's always played to be this struggle between parents and kids or God and logic - it never focuses on the day-to-day minutia that make life fun and exciting. Over a year ago I did this year-long writing experiment on my website - 5 days a week I told a true story from growing up in Brooklyn or going to school in Boston - and over time readership grew. The stories weren't fabrications or exaggerations, just little slices of life that people found relatable. Sometimes I'd post a story and ten, twenty people would comment with their own stories - it was a good time. That's what I love about TSSTG, people say it's a romance comic but it goes so much further than that - a romance comic, traditionally, was the girl out of her league and the Harvard Grad finding love.

TSWTG is a human story with romantic elements.

Gushing aside, I'm shifting over to publishing now and filling up an anthology that would be right up your alley, I'd imagine. So far we have Phil Hester, Neil Kleid and Jake Allen, Josh Fialkov and A David Lewis confirmed, several people at the half-way point, and a whole bunch on reserve for when the picture of who's contributing clears up a bit.

The book is called POSTCARDS, it's going to be a 144-page hardcover anthology. I went around to a variety of antique stores and purchased close to 75 Postcards that were sent in the early 1900s. Creators will be presented with two postcards and they'll be able to pick one and finish the story on the card. The cards are of different flavors, some are love stories and some are mysteries, some are kids writing home to mom before the war and others are people talking about quarantines - they all paint a picture of American life at the turn of the century, before World War II, and are all chosen to allow creators to bring out the drama, love and heartache that was likely in these people's lives at the time.

Anyway, I've had you on my mind since I first started planning this book and now that the people are signing up I wanted to come to you with it. It's going to be a good time - more information can be found here:

Either way, loving TSSTG and hoping that you find yourself with some more big-two work in the future, you deserve the love. Write me back when you can, my phone number is xxx-xxx-xxxx (although I can call you if you wanted to chat, long-distance and all). Look forward to (hopefully) hearing from you.

Jason Rodriguez - <http://www.jasonrodriguez.com>

I'd love to be a part of this... when's the deadline?

Let me know!

Panel 5

This is the big panel of the page and hopefully you have read this before hand and have left yourself enough room at the bottom. Here we have a nice and large shot of Daniel lying in the bathtub. He is slumped down low in the bathtub and still has his head hanging low. Though this time he has lifted it a little and is looking at the razor on the edge of the bathtub, wondering if he should end his pain. His arms dangle off the sides of the bathtub, like dead appendages.

PANEL 1. EXT. – DESERT - DAY

SPLASH PANEL shows five masked BANDITS on horseback, their guns ready, surrounding a STAGECOACH. We see the fear in the faces of the DRIVER and four PASSENGERS, three men and a woman. The masked CHARLIE DINGO confronts the driver.

Panel 5. Angle from in front of the gallows as Jasper's feet drop through the trap door and jerk to a halt halfway to the ground. Maggie stands in front of him, smiling triumphantly.

Page 1

1: Establishing shot across top of page: Old West mining town down main street. Slight hustle and bustle of the morning.

PANEL 2: The fleeing Native Americans react as bullets strike them in the backs and heads.

Page 1 (title page)

Among the title and the credits are the mementos hung up behind the bar from pages 4 and 5. This page will be repeated, but slightly different, on page 24, the final page.

Panel 5 -- Same shot as panel 1 page 2...except their horse is on the far right as it runs across the plain, and on the far left is a large amount of indians on horseback chasing them. Maybe 20 of them grouped together trailing off the left of the page (there's moe coming and we can't even see them all here).

Note: They've spent four pages in a cave and then we get to this...

Panel 2: JESSUP stumbles upon CAINE wrapped up in the nose filaments of what they believed to have been a mountain, but instead is an ancient creature from beyond the stars.

Page 1 of 6 (1 panel)

Panel 1

Description: SPLASH PANEL: A couple in bed, making love in a canopy bed in a sparsely lit room. He is dark haired, well muscled with angular, ruggedly handsome European features. She a statuesque young woman with long flowing blonde hair.