

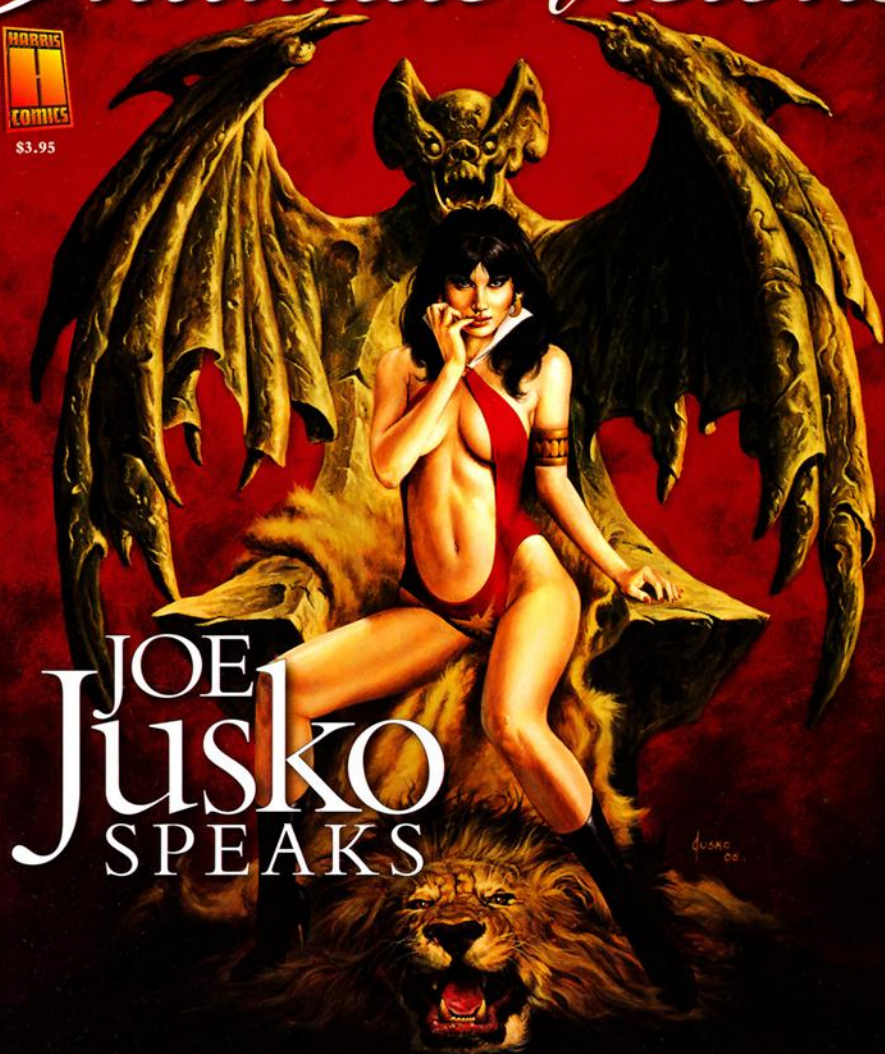
VAMPIRELLA®

#1

Intimate Visions

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JOE
JUSKO
SPEAKS

VAMPIRELLA

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Intimate Visions

JOE #1 Jusko

VAMPIRELLA: INTIMATE VISIONS is your look inside the minds of the greatest artists in Vampirella's storied history. Over the years, Joe Jusko has endlessly thrilled Vampirella fans with his renderings of the character he was seemingly born to paint. This special tribute includes a large excerpt of *Vampirella: Blood Lust Book I* with all-new "DVD-style commentary" by Jusko, Vampi sketches from throughout his career and an in-depth interview.

Pages 1-18

BLOOD LUST, BOOK I (JUNE 1997)

Writer **James Robinson**

Artist **Joe Jusko**

Letterer **Mike Conley**

Associate Editor **Lin Leng**

Editor **David Bogart**

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THE DEFINITIVE INTERVIEW: JOE JUSKO

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THE MAKING OF A COVER

Classic cover by Joe Jusko from
Vampirella: Blood Lust, Book II

Regular cover by Joe Jusko



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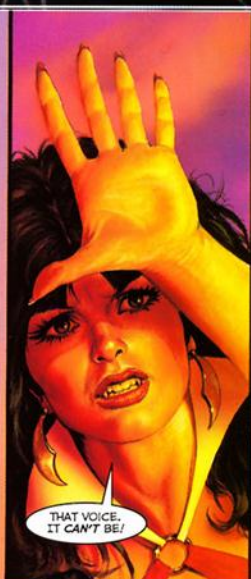
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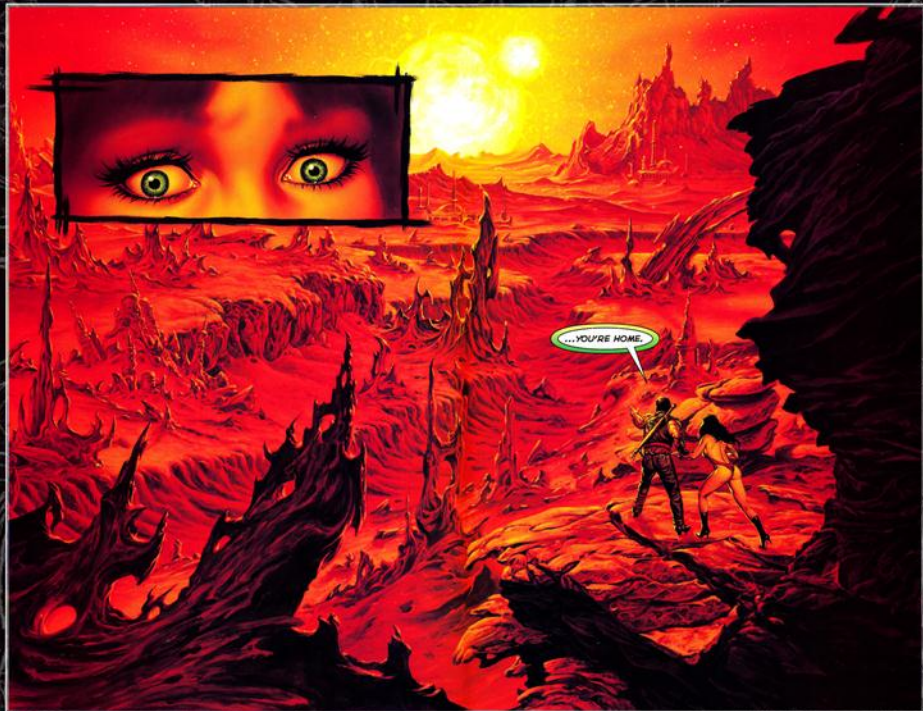
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RANDOM-DCP





JUSKO: James wrote a sword & sorcery story, essentially, to play off of my strengths. I chose a design that was part Conan and a LOT of Mad Max. I had seen a movie called "The Sentinel", that dealt with the pure person whom God chose to guard the gates of Hell. He was blinded to prevent him from being compromised in his duty by seeing the horrors before him. It's the key detail that made Adam a haunting presence, and helped to reinforce [Vampi and Adam's] relationship as one founded on love, and not the physical. You'll notice Vampi never once in the story even mentions his eyes, as she sees right past the deformity.



JUSKO: There's so much in the panel that color would have made it confusing, and since I was more concerned with mood over detail, the monochromatic color scheme was the best choice. It also played into what I had planned color wise for the next several pages. The reaction shot was not in the script. I felt the reader had to see the scene through Vampire's eyes for the full emotional impact to be felt. Something no one has ever caught is the fact that there are two suns in the sky, but only a single reflection in each eye. Oops!

JUSKO: This was the "big reveal", so it had to have an epic look to it. I love painting backgrounds and location shots, and really went to town here. It had to look alien and futuristic, yet old and decayed at the same time, with the major components being the intensely hot twin suns and the dried up Drakulosian river. By choosing the high horizon line, I was able to get an extensive panoramic shot that keeps receding with more and more devastation in the frame.



INTIMATE VISIONS: Was it difficult conveying the romance between Vampirella and Adam?

JUSKO: As the artist, you're the scene director and the actors. Once you understand their emotional connection, any competent artist should be able to get it across to the reader.



-- OH NO!

WHAT IS IT?

"FORAGERS."



WHAT?

THE CHANGE IN THE LAND BROUGHT ABOUT A CHANGE IN ITS PEOPLE. THE PEACEFUL NATURE OF DRAKULONIANS HAS BEEN ERODED BY THE NEED FOR SURVIVAL.

FORAGERS TRAVEL IN SMALL NUMBERS. THEY HUNT AND KILL ANY STRANGERS THEY FIND.

WHY?

THERE'S NO BLOOD ON THIS WORLD, VAMPIRELLA. NOT ANYMORE, EXCEPT IN PEOPLE'S VEINS.

THEY'VE SEEN US.

IT'S FIGHT OR DIE.



JUSKO: I don't remember if the tripedal nature of the "steeds" was my idea or James' (I think it was his), but the cycloptic eyes were mine, as were the blood globule "manes". I just thought one eye was more jarring than two. James wanted a barbarian vampire horde on monsterback, so that's what I gave him.



INTIMATE VISIONS: Did you ever deviate from Robinson's script?

JUSKO: James basically said, "Here's the script. If you have a better idea somewhere along the way, or need more or fewer panels on a page, do whatever you feel is right."

JUSKO: I added a panel here and there to help scene transitions or to alter pacing a little, but for the most part there was no reason to play with the script. James sure didn't need my help.



INTIMATE VISIONS: The red palette changes up here.

JUSKO: Well, if you follow the entire battle scene, it continuously gets a little darker, a little redder, a little more violet. The sun is setting through the entire fight, which is something I came up with to help carry the scene to its conclusion without looking the same from page to page. It didn't print with as much of the subtle color shifts as I would have liked, but that's a problem inherent in comics, so you learn to live with it. Grudgingly.



JUSKO: I'm a big movie fan, so I was thinking David Lean and *Lawrence of Arabia* widescreen action here. You just kind of motion capture the appropriate frames out of a continuous scene. Shifting the camera angle and breaking the panel border in the last panel adds to the motion and chaos.



JUSKO: We're getting Wagnerian here. You can almost hear the operatic movie score on this page (I hope)! A medium set-up shot transitions to a dramatic, semi-silhouette and then explodes to the money shot. [It's a] very cinematic approach that works to great effect.



JUSKO: I think the coolest part was since we just had ten pages of red hot color, we decided to make the campfire green. It's Drakulon. Who's to say what color fire is?



THESE BEASTS
TASTE GOOD.

LIKE CHICKEN.

BUT THEN
EVERYTHING STRANGE
SEEMS TO TASTE A BIT
LIKE CHICKEN.



ARE YOU
GOING TO
TRY SOME?

NO. I
HAVE THE BLOOD
OF THE FORAGERS
TO SUSTAIN ME.

I'M A
LITTLE SCARED,
ADAM.

THAT BATTLE. I
WAS MORE SAVAGE...
MORE WILD.



I'VE NEVER
FELT THAT WAY
BEFORE.

AND I WAS
HUNGRIER TOO.
I COULDN'T WAIT TO
DRINK THE BLOOD OF
MY ENEMIES.

THAT WORRIES
YOU?

YES, AND
DELIGHTS.



WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?
HAS THIS RETURN TO
DRAKULON CHANGED
ME SO? HAS DEATH?

MY RACE...WE
WERE SO GENTLE.
NOW, WE ROAM AND
KILL FOR SURVIVAL. NOW
I SLAUGHTER WITH
RELISH.

THIS IS
SO DIFFERENT
FROM THE PAST
I RECALL.



PERHAPS
YOUR DEATH AND
RETURN TO HELL
CHANGED YOU.

MY DEATH
CHANGED ME,
I KNOW.

THE MAN
I WAS WHO
WALKED THE EARTH
COULD NEVER HAVE
FOUGHT THOSE
RIDERS LIKE
I DID.

JUSKO: Since unlike film, there is no movement or vocal inflection to project feelings or chemistry, you have to rely on facial expressions, body posture and lighting to convey mood and emotion.



BUT AS TO
THE CHANGE IN YOUR
PEOPLE...THAT HAS NOTHING
TO DO WITH YOUR PASSING.
NO. FOR THAT YOU
CAN BLAME YOUR
MOTHER.

LILITH?

THAT'S RIGHT,
MOTHER OF ALL
VAMPIRES.

WHEN SHE
BETRAYED HER FATHER...
THE ALMIGHTY FATHER,
SHE WAS SENT
TO HELL.

HELL?



YES, AND
THERE ARE STILL
PARTS OF IT WHERE
THE FALLEN ANGELS'
SWEET, SAD WAIL OF
LAMENT CAN STILL
BE HEARD.

AND PARTS
OF IT WHERE THE
TERRAIN IS MADE OF
BONE, AND OTHER PARTS
WHERE ALL IS WHITE-- COOL,
CLEAN AND PURE. TORTURE
FOR THE SOULS CONIGNED
THERE FOR EONS OF
NOTHING.

THERE IS THE
LAND OF GLASS WIRE
AND THE LAND OF THE LAUGHING
EUNUCHS. THERE'S THE
REALM OF THE
GIBLET KING.



HELL IS ENDLESS
AND SHIFTING. IT IS MANY
LANDS AND PLACES, ALL ADRIPT
ON A FIERY SEA THAT NONE CAN
GAIN THE SCOPE OR SCALE TO
RISE ABOVE AND FULLY
COMPREHEND.

BUT IN ONE
SUCH AREA OF HELL,
LILITH MADE HER HOME
AND FASHIONED IT
INTO THE LAND
YOU KNEW.

DRAKULON.

THIS LAND'S
MIGHTY RIVER
IS ACTUALLY A
TRIBUTARY OF THE
RIVER STYX.

WHEN IT
FLOWED.

JUSKO: Jim Steranko once told me that it was obvious that I act out my characters as I draw them, and that's how I translated their interaction from James' script to the painted page. I'm a big *Film Noir* fan, so playing with the extreme lighting here was a lot of fun!



THE WORLD
STARTED DYING WHEN
GOD BEGAN HIS WAR ON
THOSE HE'D SPANNED
WHO HAD THEN GONE
TO DARKNESS.

WHEN HIS
ASSAULT ON LILITH
BEGAN, HER POWER
BEGAN TO WANE, AND
SO DID THE LAND.

PERHAPS THE
RIVER FED LILITH'S
LIFE-FORCE. PERHAPS LILITH
FEEDS THE RIVER. THE FACT
REMAINS THAT THERE IS NO
LONGER THE ENERGY FOR
THEM TO BOTH EXIST.

LILITH CHOSE HER
OWN LIFE OVER THAT
OF HER WORLD. THE
RIVER DRIED.

BUT THE
RIVER IS ALSO
LIFE FOR ALL THE
INHABITANTS OF
DRAKULON. ITS DRYING UP
HAS MEANT COUNTLESS
DEATHS AND THE WORLD
REDUCED TO A STATE
OF BARBARISM
UNHEARD OF EVEN IN
DRACULA'S TIME.

HOW COULD
MY MOTHER ALLOW THIS?
HOW COULD SHE BE SO SELFISH?
SHE WANTED GOOD. SHE'S SENT
ME TO EARTH AS AN AGENT OF
ATONEMENT FOR HER
PAST SINS.

AND THEN
THE CHOICE BECAME
TO LIVE OR LET LIVE. SHE
CHOSE TO SAVE HERSELF.
MANY WOULD HAVE.

I HAVE A
PURPOSE HERE.

AND YOU
MUST AID ME,
VAMPIRELLA. WE HAVE
TO FIND THE SOURCE
OF THE STYX AND BRING
IT BACK TO LIFE. IF IT'S
BLOCKED, WE MUST
UNBLOCK IT.

JUSKO: It's just a quiet scene where Vampi and Adam finally start to connect again, and feel the bond they share, even if it's only for a moment. I particularly like Vampi's attitude, and the comfort she obviously feels by having Adam's arm around her. It reminds you that Vampi's a woman, as well as a heroic figure. It also makes a really cool pin-up shot!



INTIMATE VISIONS: Vampirella is still incredibly sexy here even at her most conflicted... How did you do that?
JUSKO: She's wearing a bikini. Seriously, I think it's because you know how strong she is, both in will and physical power, but the vulnerability she shows in her body language makes her more human, and in return that makes her appealing. What do you think Dr. Phil would say?

EDEN WAS GONE.

A FLOATING PARADISE AMIDST THE STARS, THE STUFF OF CHILDREN'S STORYBOOKS WITH COLORFUL PICTURES AND HAPPY ENDINGS.

BUT NOW, WEAK AND CHILLED WITH FEAR OF DEATH AND GOD'S WRATH UPON HER, SHE COULD NO MORE SUSTAIN THAT THAN SHE COULD THE RIVER OF BLOOD.

THE GHOST OF A PARADISE LOST WAS ALL SHE HAD LEFT.

IT WAS ALL GONE. ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS SHE'D NOURISHED AND SEEN GROW FROM NOTHING. ALL SHE'D MADE.

SHE HAS THE POWER TO STAY ALIVE, THAT IS ALL, AND TO KEEP A LITTLE OF EDEN ALIVE AROUND.

NOT THE REAL THING, OF COURSE. JUST A GHOST.

JUSKO: Lilith had to have a totally different aura than Vampi. She was more regal, but also a bit more "harlot". Very "Salome", by my estimation. She carries herself differently, sits and stands differently. I also had to get the feeling across that she's totally drained of power. She had to look exhausted, but still authoritative. The shots of her lying down were poses I would never use for Vampi. I gave Lilith a slutty regality that would never work with Vampiella.



SIRE!
MOTHER LILITH!
IT'S YOUR
DAUGHTER!

I HAVE MANY
DAUGHTERS.



IN MY
GARDEN? BRING
HER TO ME.

I SPEAK OF
VAMPIRELLA.
SHE IS BACK.
SHE IS HERE.

NO, I MEANT
SHE HAS RETURNED
TO DRAKULON. SHE
IS WITH VAN HELSING.



VAN
HELSING?
SHE IS WITH
THE WHITE
LIGHT?

NO, THAT
WOULD BE TOO
CRUEL. EVEN MY
FATHER COULDN'T
BE THAT CRUEL.



BRING HER TO
ME ANYWAY. MARTIAL
A FORCE AND BRING
HER BACK. I MUST
SPEAK TO HER.
I MUST EXPLAIN.

OH, AND IF
VAN HELSING WERE
TO DIE IN THE PROCESS,
I WOULD BE
MOST PLEASED.



SHE CLOSES HER
EYES AND SLEEPS.

ONCE, SHE DIDN'T
SLEEP FOR MILLERIA
AT A TIME. ONCE.

NOW SHE
SLUMBERS
OFTEN.

JUSKO: Designing the garden surrounding her palace was a challenge. It had to be attractive, yet foreboding. I enjoyed painting the bizarre foliage and plant life, reasoning that if blood equated water on Drakulon, and fed all that plant life, then the foliage would reflect that, hence all the crimson and purple.



JUSKO: I shifted the color again when we got to Vampi's home city, to reflect the decay and ruin. Everything is bleached out and there is a grey smog hanging over the city. Red dust is blown all over and it's obvious that it's been abandoned for a long while. The river beds are dry, and there are past blood levels stained onto the banks. I was actually trying to duplicate the city that Tom Sutton drew in the very first Vampi story way back in 1969's *Vampirella* #1, only in ruins.



Above: Jusko sent this piece to Harris Comics as a "sample". It eventually served as cover for the *Vampirella: Dracula War* collection. Left: Jusko's original sketch for the piece.

The Definitive Interview **JOE JUSKO**



Joe Jusko's widely acknowledged as a master of the comics medium. Despite working on such icons as Conan and the Marvel superheroes, Vampirella holds a very special place in his heart. Fans of Vampirella, consider him one of the best to ever render the character. With *Vampirella: Blood Lust*, Jusko took his work and his favorite character to a new level. Masterful storytelling and classical technique combined to create a work of art. Here he reflects back on his career and the undeniable contribution he has—and continues to make—on Vampirella's storied artistic legacy.

What started your interest in painting?

I graduated NYC's High School of Art & Design in 1977. Although I won the DC Comics Excellence in Cartooning award, I was honest enough with myself to realize that I wasn't really fast enough at sequential work to earn a living producing a monthly book. I also found that I was drawn more toward the painted covers on many Sci-Fi and Fantasy paperbacks as well as those on many of the Marvel black and white magazines of the day (*Tales of the Zombie, Savage Sword of Conan, Monsters Unleashed*, etc.) and the great Warren mags (*Creepy, Eerie* and, of course, *Vampirella*).

I became enamored with the total control and creative input that painted work would afford me. I had seen how different pencilers looked inked and finished by other people to widely mixed results, and that just didn't appeal to me. I also found that my attention span was such (and still is today) that I became bored rather quickly by repeatedly drawing the same things, so moving from one painting to another, with varying subject matter was more conducive to me trying to produce quality work. I really admire the guys who can stay on the same book for years and turn out mesmerizing stuff issue after issue. Kirby's hundred issue run on the *Fantastic Four*, Romita's tenure on *Spider-Man* and, as a current



A 1975 rendering of Vampirella, made while Jusko was in high school

example, Rizzo on *100 Bullets* are the kinds of stretches I'm talking about. Just amazing to me!

Who were your major influences and how did they improve your work or guide you in a certain direction?

Wow, where to start? My earliest influences were comic book artists, most specifically the late John Buscema, whom I still consider to be one of the best figure artists to ever hold a pencil. It was actually discovering his work at a very early age that set me on this road in the first place. Until I got to high school, all of my figure drawing was learned from studying and trying to understand Buscema's work as best I could. I dedicated the original *Blood Lust* series to him as an acknowledgment of his impact on my style and career choice. You can still see a lot of Big

John in my work by the way I pose my action figures and break down a story. His work also taught me how to mix up the camera angles and compose the elements within the panels on a page. He was an absolutely brilliant storyteller who could make the most mundane scene interesting.

My first painting influences were the usual gang of suspects; Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo, Bob Larkin, etc. I also absolutely adored Enrich and Sanjulian. Still do. My home is wallpapered with their originals!

There is something about her that's just irresistible to me. Done right, she's a perfect blend of goth and glamour, of horror and heroine, of sex and savagery.



Jusko's sketch for the cover to *Vampirella: Sad Wings of Destiny*

It wasn't until I became comic artist Howard Chaykin's assistant for several months soon after graduation that I discovered all the great 20th century illustrators. Howard is extremely knowledgeable in this area of art and I learned a lot from him.

In the years since, I've picked up bits and pieces from myriad artists, but recently I've been looking at a lot of Wildlife Art (John Seerey Lester, Simon Combes, among others) to make my painting look more naturalistic, while at the same time referencing a lot of 1960's paperback artists (Robert McGinnis, Bob Abbott, Ron Lesser, Bob Maquire) in an attempt to loosen up my technique a little. Become a little more "painterly", as it were.

Truthfully, I try to expose myself to as many different artists as possible. I subscribe to a dozen different art magazines, and buy old paperbacks by the box full just so I can file the covers away. Every little bit you can learn serves only to make you a better artist.

How did you first get interested in comic books? What were some of the first ones you read?

My older brother read comics so they were around the house a lot, as were numerous copies of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and every Aurora monster kit. You know, all the 60's kid stuff! I guess the first books I remember seeing were Dell and Gold Key books like *Tirolk, Son of Stone* and *Dr. Solar, Man of the Atom*. Not a lot of mainstream Marvel

or DC, though. Odd, now that I think of it.

The epiphany for me came when I bought *Avengers* #57 and 58 from a kid in a playground when I was about eight years old. They were drawn by (who else?) John Buscema, and I knew from that point what I wanted to do! I had been toying with art since I could hold a pencil, mainly due to the fact that my brother Danny drew. As it turned out, I was the one who chose to pursue art as a career.

From that moment on I bought every, and I mean every, comic that came out: Marvel, DC, Gold Key, Harvey, Atlas. You name it, I bought it, though I must confess I was a Marvel junkie. I had complete runs of everything they published. Unfortunately, I sold them all when I graduated high school to buy studio supplies and start trying to get work. *Tales of Suspense* #39 was \$80 mint in the Price Guide back then. And mine was! <sigh!>

How did you first get interested in Vampirella? What is your favorite Vampirella cover, panel or sequence and why? Why is Vampirella one of your favorite characters to draw?

This I remember clear as a bell! I was coming home from school and I stopped at Andy's candy store because it was new comic day. As I scanned the racks for all the new stuff, my eyes caught sight of a book I had never noticed before, probably because it was stuck on the top rack with the more "mature" magazines.

This was a time when magazines weren't racked with comics, no matter what the content.

It was a copy of Warren's *Vampirella* #21, with that great Enrich cover of Vampi dying of thirst with the big Death's Head radiating behind her. After paging through the book and seeing Jose Gonzalez' art on the lead Vampi story, I had to buy it. This sure wasn't your typical comic art. It seemed like something so much more, somehow.

I found that book fascinating! So much so that I decided to send away for issue #1 from the back of the book. Like every comic geek in history, though, I didn't want to cut out the coupon, so I made my own! This turned out to be a great decision on my part, as it was probably so illegible that the clerk handling back issues obviously didn't understand it. About a month later (a looong month) I received a large package from Captain Company, the mail order service for Warren Publications. Inside were all twenty-one issues to date, plus the Annual with the incredible Gonzalez origin story! I couldn't believe it!

An unused cover idea for *Vampirella*: *Death and Destruction* #3



DEATH OF VAMPIRELLA #3

JUSKO

Truth be told, I was sure they would realize their error and send someone to take them back! What else would a twelve year old think? <Laughs>

Those books awed me! The Enrich covers were like nothing I had ever seen before, and Jose Gonzalez' work just seemed so much...more than the comic art I was used to. It was so illustrative and detailed, using a mixture of pen and ink, watercolor and pencil in ways one didn't see in the monthly issues of "Mighty Man" comics. My favorite page by far has always been the splash of Vampi biting Adam on the neck, and while I've yet to find that original page (and not for lack of trying) I'm proud to say I own a 19" x 26" Gonzalez recreation of that page that hangs prominently in my studio. Jose walks the line between the beautiful and the horrific in Vampi's face like an acrobat. It's just masterful.

My favorite Enrich cover is a no-brainer for me; the shot of Vampi on the tiger skin rug from issue #53 still makes me drool. It's just a great, classy painting that actually falls between what I think are his three best covers.

Joe JUSKO

Vampirella #s 52-54 are a trifecta of the best Enrich covers.

I had dreamed from then on that I'd one day be able to contribute to her legacy. Such was my luck, however, that when I had finally gotten the nerve to solicit work from Warren, they were going out of business. It seemed that dream was one that would pass me by. To this day, the fanboy in me regrets the fact that I never made it onto the cover of at least one issue of the Warren *Vampirella* mag. I would have loved to have had my name associated with that group of extraordinary artists.

Some years later Harris Comics resurrected her, and I did a sample piece to try and finally add my name to *Vampirella*'s artistic pantheon. Again, no such luck, as Michael Kaluta was doing the covers at the time.

I finally broke ground when the sample piece I had done was used for the cover of the *Vampirella: Dracula Wars* trade paperback. I've since done many more, and will continue to paint as many as I'm offered. There is something about her that's just irresistible to me. Done right, she's a perfect blend of goth and glamour, of horror and heroine, of sex and savagery. I've always strived to capture the essence of the old Enrich covers, which treated the character with a certain respect, and depicted her in a very non-exploitive way. I often look at the old Bob McGinnis "Carter Brown" book covers and wonder what she would look like painted by a master of the female form such as he.



Jusko's take on the classic Jose Gonzalez *Vampirella* door poster

What is your studio like: messy, ordered?

Ha! I like to think of it as "organized chaos"! A messy studio is the sign of a busy artist. At least that's what I tell my wife! Floor to ceiling bookshelves cover a lot of the wall space, holding every kind of art or reference book you could think of. The rest of the walls are covered in pieces from my art collection. There are some *Vampi* pieces by Enrich, Sanjulian and Gonzalez, some paperback covers by Bob Abbett and Ron Lesser, a Frazetta cat drawing inscribed to me hangs above my drawing board, as well as miscellaneous other pieces. There are shelves that rim the ceiling with Universal Monster figures, and various statues and models. The usual file cabinets and flat files, paint racks, computer station fill out the room. There's a drawing board on one end and an easel on the other. I actually do most of my painting on the drawing board. Go figure.

Oh, yeah. There's a dog bed where my Lab lays all day to protect me from homicidal mailmen and such evil things.

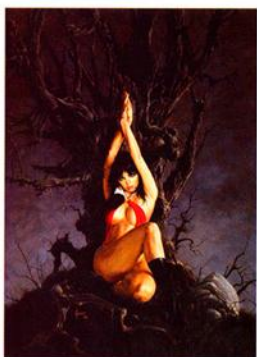
When do you know you're done and you should stop working on a piece?

They're never done, you just run out of time. I have learned, however, to not "overwork" a piece if it doesn't really call for it. Experience has taught me economy of detail. When you first start out, showing what you can do is an all-consuming obsession, which leads to busy and overworked images. I was guilty of that a lot early on. Most people are. Once you gain a certain level of confidence and acceptance, you're more comfortable and willing to forego the extraneous details that ultimately muddy a piece up.

I need to produce art. It's in my blood, and I don't feel whole



Evolution of a modern classic: The original sketch and final art for the cover of *Vampirella Revelations* #0



How has the development of technology changed your methods over time?

I still "paint". My computer is used for scanning images for print and web display, but the actual art is still all hand done. That's not to say I won't do digital art sometime in the future. I just feel I'm still learning one craft and don't want to compromise that learning curve by distracting myself with a new technology that I know will suck up all of my time.

Getting art to the publisher is sure a lot easier than it used to be, and by not having to send originals anymore the chance of lost or damaged art has been eliminated.

When and how do you use models? Have you used family or friends?

I use models a lot, but only when total

realism is required for the piece. Years of figure drawing has given me the ability to "fake" a lot of things, but elements such as draping or intricate lighting are pretty much impossible to make up if you paint realistically, as I do.

I use friends and family more now than in the past, as they don't feel as awkward as they might have when I was starting out. I've made friends with many of the models on the convention circuit, and where possible I still work with them, as I did extensively on the recent *Tomb Raider* book I painted.

How would you judge your work on *Blood Lust* now? Is there anything that stands out to you that has succeeded better than you thought? Anything you wish you could change?

For the time it was done, I think it's really pretty good and still holds up pretty well. It's not, to my eye, as consistent in execution as I would like it to be today, but that wasn't for lack of trying. I like a lot of the color choices I made, and I'm still happy with the overall depiction of the devastated Drakulon. I tried to change the color completely from scene to scene, and found the challenge of everything needing to have a primarily red color cast a great exercise. I'm a better painter, ten years removed, so there are a lot of rendering decisions I would rethink, but not lose sleep over. I'm really happy with the overall storytelling. I used every John Buscema



An abandoned cover idea for *Vampirella: Blood Lust, Book II*

if I'm not creating something.

lesson I learned on that book, and I think it shows.

I don't think there is much I would change, other than wish I knew then what I know now, so that the overall job was a little more even in quality from page to page. Maybe I'm the only one who sees it, but I guess that's always the way.

What advice would you give artists starting out?

Be honest with yourself, in your assessment of your work and in your desire to pursue art as a living. Not everyone gets in on the first try. Not everyone makes a gazillion dollars. I don't. Most don't. You really have to need to do this. I need to produce art. It's in my blood, and I don't feel whole if I'm not creating something. I actually go into a sort of artistic withdrawal and depression if I'm not in the studio for more than a few days. I can't fathom doing anything else with the rest of my life. I've said in the past that if I went blind, and could not only not produce art, but couldn't even appreciate it anymore, I'd have no reason to go on. You need that kind of passion and desire. People who don't create can't understand that philosophy. It may

sound extreme, but if it's not something you would do for free, don't try to make a living at it. You don't choose art, art chooses you.

Second, if you ask a pro's advice, take it. Don't get indignant because he or she didn't tell you you were great. If you knew more than him, you'd be giving the advice instead of getting it. That goes back to assessing your own work with an objective eye. I don't care if Grandma thinks Norman Rockwell sucks your shoes. Unless she owns a publishing company, she's not getting you any work. We're here. We know what we're talking about. Listen to us.

What advice would you seek from artistic veterans and contemporaries?

Mostly technical things, I think. Theory. I always find it interesting that guys whose work awes me are as insecure in their own work as I am in mine. I enjoy comparing similar experiences with the veterans, and knowing that they endured the same struggles and pitfalls we do today.

I like finding out how other artists handle the same media I do, and going home and trying it. Remember, you never stop learning. It's just not possible. ♥

THE MAKING of a COVER



1 This was the original idea until I realized it looked too much like a Witchblade cover done a couple of years before.



2 This is the final pencil that I painted the finished piece over. Since I work with a lot of glazes and washes, I like a nice tight pencil to work over.



3 After masking off the foreground elements with Windsor & Newton Art Masking Fluid, I paint in the background. When that's dry, I peel off the mask with a rubber cement pick up.



4 After remasking the figure, I render first the throne, and then the lion skin to 95% completion. **5** Masking fluid is again removed from the figure. Certain detail edges are reinforced so I don't lose them under the subsequent paint layers. **6** Pale skin tone base color is washed over appropriate areas. **7** Shadows and general rendering are built up on the figure. Base color is dropped in for costume and boots.



8 Highlights and reflected light and color are added to "flesh out" and bring the figure to life. Final rendering on hair, costume, boots and jewelry complete the figure, and the fur on the lion rug is fluffed to "seat" the figure into it. Highlights on the throne, as well as around the rest of the painting are adjusted, and the painting is done!



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